

# The Asian Reporter

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## Japan's "flying car" gets off ground, with a person aboard



**FUTURISTIC FLIGHT.** This photo taken last month shows a test flight of a manned "flying car" at the Toyota Test Field in Toyota, central Japan. Japan's SkyDrive Inc., among a myriad of "flying car" projects around the world, has carried out a successful though modest test flight with one person aboard. (©SkyDrive/Cartivator 2020 via AP)

By Yuri Kageyama  
AP Business Writer

**T**OKYO — The decades-old dream of zipping around in the sky as simply as driving on highways may be becoming less illusory.

Japan's SkyDrive Inc., among a myriad of "flying car" projects around the world, has carried out a successful though modest test flight with one person aboard.

In a video shown to reporters in August, a contraption that looked like a slick motorcycle with propellers lifted several

feet off the ground then hovered in a netted area for four minutes.

Tomohiro Fukuzawa, who heads the SkyDrive effort, said he hopes "the flying car" can be made into a real-life product by 2023, but he acknowledged that making it safe was critical.

"Of the world's more than 100 flying car projects, only a handful has succeeded with a person on board," he told The Associated Press.

"I hope many people will want to ride it and feel safe."

The machine so far can fly for just five to

10 minutes, but if that can become 30 minutes, it will have more potential, including exports to places like China, Fukuzawa said.

Unlike airplanes and helicopters, eVTOL, or "electric vertical takeoff and landing," vehicles offer quick point-to-point personal travel, at least in principle.

They could do away with the hassle of airports and traffic jams and the cost of hiring pilots, if they could fly automatically.

Battery sizes, air traffic control, and other infrastructure issues are among the

many potential challenges to commercializing them.

"Many things have to happen," said Sanjiv Singh, professor at the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, who co-founded Near Earth Autonomy, near Pittsburgh, which is also working on an eVTOL aircraft.

"If they cost \$10 million, no one is going to buy them. If they fly for five minutes, no one is going to buy them. If they fall out of the sky every so often, no one is going to buy them," Singh said in a telephone inter-

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