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What's Next For The Advanced Air Mobility Sector

By **Jennifer Trock, Levi McAllister and Ksenia Andreeva** (March 20, 2026, 5:51 PM EDT)

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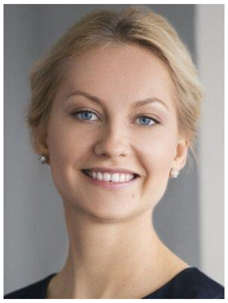

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Advanced air mobility represents an emerging sector dedicated to the safe and efficient integration of highly automated technologies into the national airspace. Advanced air mobility, or AAM, encompasses a range of innovations, including new and increasingly automated aircraft types powered by new technologies, such as electric vertical takeoff and landing, or eVTOL, aircraft that can operate below 5,000 feet.

The AAM ecosystem requires modern support systems, including a skilled workforce, upgraded infrastructure and clear regulatory frameworks. AAM is poised to reshape transportation, cargo and connectivity for rural and urban communities alike.

The U.S. administration has been focused on accelerating a federal framework to enable the AAM sector to truly take flight. On Dec. 17, 2025, the U.S. Department of Transportation unveiled its first national advanced air mobility strategy, marking the federal government's most comprehensive road map to date for integrating AAM into U.S. airspace. And on March 9, the DOT and the Federal Aviation Administration announced the eight selected proposals for the new eVTOL Integration Pilot Program, or eIPP, with flight operations expected to begin as early as this summer.

Together, these two developments shift the focus on AAM from a framework-building exercise into live operational deployment, making 2026 the first year in which real-world applications and liability allocation move from theory to reality.

At the same time, regulators in Europe, the Middle East and multilateral aviation bodies are advancing their own AAM certification and operational frameworks. These developments may influence how U.S. companies approach cross-border deployment and long-term strategy.

This article examines how these recent U.S. milestones, alongside evolving international frameworks, are shaping the regulatory, operational and strategic landscape for AAM this year.

Development of the National Advanced Air Mobility Strategy

As part of the 2022 Advanced Air Mobility Coordination and Leadership Act, the DOT convened an interagency working group to develop a concrete strategy for the next decade. The working group included 25 federal agencies and over 100 experts. In December 2025, the department unveiled the Advanced Air Mobility National Strategy and accompanying implementation plan, marking a pivotal milestone in the evolution of U.S. aviation policy.

Importantly, as federal recommendations begin translating into concrete operational benchmarks, companies should anticipate increased scrutiny around certification pathways, cybersecurity protections for automated systems, airspace integration and data-sharing obligations.

The new framework and its corresponding AAM Comprehensive Plan set forth a coordinated road map for accelerating the integration of AAM into U.S. airspace.

The AAM Strategy, which emphasizes the importance of regulatory clarity, infrastructure modernization and workforce development as prerequisites for successful AAM integration, sets forth 40 recommendations organized around seven foundational pillars:

- Airspace modernization;
- Advanced infrastructure;
- Adaptive security;
- Community planning and engagement;
- Ready workforce;
- Applied automation; and
- Overarching recommendations.

The accompanying action plan outlines four strategic steps to guide implementation:

- Leverage existing programs to support innovation, and begin operations by harnessing current aviation programs and regulatory frameworks to foster innovation and enable initial AAM deployments.

- Initiate engagement with partners, research and development, and smart planning by collaborating with stakeholders — including federal agencies, industry and local communities — to advance research, development and coordinated planning for AAM adoption.

- Forge new policy and models responsive to public needs by creating adaptable regulatory and operational models that address evolving public needs, safety and security concerns.

- Transform the aviation ecosystem by fully integrating AAM technologies into aviation infrastructure, workforce and operational paradigms nationwide.

The launch of the national strategy carries significant legal and business implications for the AAM sector, infrastructure providers, technology companies and communities.

These include the need for proactive regulatory and compliance programs; the assessment of infrastructure needs to meet growing AAM demand; consideration of workforce requirements to design, build and operate AAM aircraft; and stakeholder collaboration via strategic partnerships, joint ventures, research initiatives and public-private partnerships to accelerate deployment and adoption.

The strategy's emphasis on applied automation and adaptive security also suggests that oversight of software, autonomy systems and digital infrastructure will evolve in tandem with other necessary milestones.

The EIPP Program

On March 9, the DOT and the FAA formally unveiled the eight selected projects for the eIPP, creating what the agency described as one of the largest real-world testing environments for next-generation aircraft in the world. The program will allow state and local governments to apply to run flight-testing programs in partnership with private AAM developers.

Established by a June 2025 executive order, the program will cover a broad spectrum of eVTOL use cases, including short-range air taxis, novel cargo aircraft, and logistics and supply services.

The significance of the eIPP lies in its role as a regulatory sandbox. Data gathered from the program will be instrumental in developing integrated safety standards, certification pathways and airspace integration policies. In effect, the first wave of pilot participants may help shape the compliance expectations that apply to the broader industry.

As part of the eIPP, the FAA will enter into public-private partnership agreements between U.S. private-sector partners with demonstrated experience in AAM-eVTOL and aircraft-type certification, and the FAA and selected state, local, tribal or territorial governments. Participants receive no federal funding, and the program will run for three years after the first project is operational.

Proposals will be evaluated on a number of factors, including:

- Economic and geographic representation;
- Strength of the partnership model;
- Operations scope, diversity and technical/operational detail;
- Policy and regulatory insight potential;
- Aircraft and operational readiness; and
- Support for operations.

The FAA received more than 30 proposals nationwide before selecting the final eight projects, signaling significant industry- and state-level interest in early operational deployment.

The eight selected projects span 26 states and involve a range of aircraft manufacturers, operators and state partners. The selected concepts include urban air taxi services; regional passenger transportation, including short takeoff and landing aircraft; cargo and logistics networks; emergency medical response operations; autonomous flight technologies; and offshore and energy-sector transportation.

Participating industry partners include leading eVTOL and advanced aircraft developers such as Archer Aviation Inc., Beta Technologies, Joby Aviation Inc., Electra.aero Inc., Wisk Aero LLC, Elroy Air, Ampaire Inc. and Reliable Robotics Corp., among others, working alongside state and local government collaboratives across 26 states. The collaboratives include the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the Texas Department of Transportation, and the Florida Department of Transportation.

Chosen projects are expected to begin operations within 90 days of selection, as early as this summer.

For manufacturers and operators, the eIPP presents important legal considerations. Public-private partnership agreements will require careful allocation of liability among aircraft manufacturers, operators, infrastructure developers and government entities.

Insurance coverage thresholds, indemnification provisions and incident-reporting obligations may evolve rapidly once aircraft begin operating in more public and commercially relevant settings.

The program will also raise potential federal preemption questions as municipalities engage in vertiport siting, as well as zoning and local infrastructure decisions.

International Developments

While these U.S. developments will shape near-term domestic AAM deployment, other jurisdictions are moving forward with their own regulatory approaches, creating potential friction for U.S.-based manufacturers and operators with cross-border operations.

Last year, the United Arab Emirates' General Civil Aviation Authority released a regulatory framework for hybrid operations, enabling eVTOL and conventional helicopters to operate within shared infrastructure. And in 2024, Abu Dhabi inaugurated the UAE's first operational vertiport, which could begin limited commercial passenger operations this year. The UAE's early operational posture may generate real-world data and influence emerging international norms for passenger services.

In Europe, regulators continue to advance certification frameworks for eVTOL aircraft under the European Union Aviation Safety Agency, which has published special condition requirements for eVTOL aircraft, and continues refining operational and safety standards. As European and U.S. frameworks evolve in parallel, differences in certification assumptions, operational limitations and infrastructure requirements may affect multinational deployment strategies.

More broadly, international coordination through bodies such as the International Civil Aviation Organization remains in development, and no harmonized global framework for AAM operations yet exists. In the absence of uniform standards, companies may face divergent requirements relating to certification reciprocity, automation thresholds, cybersecurity obligations and vertiport infrastructure design.

These international developments are not simply market opportunities for U.S. companies, but also key variables that may influence domestic rulemaking, capital allocation decisions and long-term fleet deployment strategies.

Key Takeaways for U.S. Stakeholders

Against this backdrop of accelerating U.S. deployment and evolving international frameworks, several practical considerations stand out for U.S. manufacturers, operators, infrastructure developers and investors.

First, the December 2025 national AAM strategy and the announced eIPP selections move AAM into a nascent operational phase in which exposure and future regulations will be affected by real-world deployment rather than policy alone.

Second, early pilot program participants may help define future certification and compliance baselines, potentially creating competitive advantages tied to regulatory insight and operational data.

Third, public-private partnership agreements and vertiport development arrangements will require careful attention to liability allocation, insurance coverage, cybersecurity standards and data governance.

Fourth, fragmented international rulemaking may complicate cross-border operations and influence domestic regulatory debates, underscoring the importance of monitoring global developments alongside U.S. policy.

Fifth, as pilot projects, frameworks and standards continue to evolve, all stakeholders will be affected by the adequacy of vertiport-charging infrastructure. Already, some stakeholders have identified inadequate charging infrastructure as a key issue that could affect AAM operational success.

Unlike traditional electric charging infrastructure in the automotive sector, aviation charging infrastructure cannot be a stationary source, and instead must balance both mobility and energy density considerations.

In addition, infrastructure considerations must take into account resource supply availability and constraints, which are particularly important in energy-constrained regions and in locations where electricity is likely to experience price volatility or supply concerns due to increased load as a result of substantial new demand — for example, data center demand.

Looking Ahead

This promises to be a year of significant development for the AAM sector as regulatory frameworks begin transitioning into operational reality. With the national AAM strategy in place and the first round of eIPP pilot projects now selected, stakeholders should anticipate increased scrutiny around certification, safety oversight, infrastructure readiness and automated systems governance.

As live pilot programs begin operations, however limited in scale and application, legal and compliance questions will shift from hypothetical to practical. Companies should evaluate whether their regulatory strategies, insurance programs, partnership agreements and cross-border deployment plans are aligned with an environment in which federal guidance is increasingly tied to observed operational performance.

In the absence of harmonized international standards, manufacturers and operators must also continue to assess how divergent regulatory approaches could affect fleet design, certification sequencing and market entry decisions.

While widespread commercial deployment of passenger air taxis won't arrive this year, these developments do mark a transition for the industry from aspirational policy to accountable implementation, placing regulatory strategy at the center of business planning across the AAM ecosystem.

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