



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Media Contacts: Heather Vaughan, Bridget Dunn
(202) 225-6371

Statement by Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

Urban Air Mobility – Are Flying Cars Ready for Take-Off?

Chairman Smith: For decades, flying cars have been the object of our imagination. They represent aspiration, innovation and the freedom of exploration.

The entertainment industry has popularized the concept in everything from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* to *The Jetsons*, from *Star Wars* to *Back to the Future*.

Several weeks ago, I was walking on the Mall and noticed a boy operating a remote-control flying car—the first one I've ever seen. I immediately sent off for one and flew it recently with a young friend. It exceeded my expectations.

In fact, I liked it so much that I ordered one for each of our witnesses today and for all the Members who attend this hearing.

I've been keeping articles about flying cars since I was in elementary school. Here are some from the last few years.

Just this week there was an article about flying cars in the *Economist* that also mentioned James Bond, so it covered two personal interests!

Our focus today is on Urban Air Mobility (UAM), a concept that can include delivery drones and personal air vehicles as well as cars that can both be driven and flown. (That's different than flying down the highway at high speeds.)

Advances in lithium-ion battery technology, computing power and electric propulsion are providing companies with the tools they need to turn science fiction into science fact.

This is the first congressional hearing dedicated to the topic of flying cars. One company, Terrafugia, says that their vehicle could be available as soon as next year. It's called the *Transition* and can drive like a car, fit into a standard garage, and be flown in and out of over 5,000 local airports.

And Uber has a bold timeline to make air-based on-demand transportation available to the public in five years.

Companies like Bell are working to design and build the vehicles that will operate on the network envisioned by Uber.

Autonomous cars, which are impressive and already have been the subject of Science Committee hearings, don't have the same benefits as Urban Air Mobility.

Traffic and gridlock challenges are better overcome by cars that fly rather than drive.

Flying cars also have the benefit of enabling emergency vehicles to reach their destinations faster and provide more mobility options for those who cannot operate a car.

Although it will be a while before we see widespread ownership and use of personal vehicles that can both be driven and flown, these advances are visible on the horizon.

As policymakers, we can examine how we can support such technological advances while pursuing a safe, reliable and efficient regulatory framework.

We thank our witnesses for being here today. And I look forward to the day when I can take off in a flying car.

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