Startup wants to make air taxis affordable for commuters

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We have recently heard a lot about driverless cars, trucks, and even ships as the disruptive technology of the future. But a German startup is proposing a new travel solution that promises to be as disruptive – personal air taxis. Lilium has developed the world's first fully electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) jet. Seating five, with an estimated range of 180 miles, a top speed of 180 miles per hour and zero emissions, the craft offers the possibility of turning a traffic-clogged, hour-long commute into a 15-minute journey.

Lilium plans to develop a network of landing pads that will allow travellers to summon the air taxis on demand. The company has recently completed a 90 million USD Series B funding round, which will be used to finalize development of the commercial jet. Lilium has already developed a working full-scale prototype and hopes to complete a fully functional jet by 2019, with a fully operational taxi service running by 2025.

The Lilium Jet's electric engines can travel up to 300 kilometres on a single charge and produces very little sound, allowing for operation in densely populated urban areas. With only a very small landing area needed, there will be no need to develop an expensive infrastructure, and the company anticipates that flights could cost the same as a normal road taxi. According to David Wallerstein, Chief Exploration Officer at Lilium investor Tencent Holdings, "From under-developed regions with poor road infrastructure, to the developed world with traffic congestion and sprawl, new possibilities emerge when convenient daily flight becomes an option for all of us. Lilium offers a substantial and

environmentally-friendly transportation breakthrough for humanity." In what ways might an affordable and practical air taxi service disrupt transportation and travel in the future?

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