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The Largest Electric Aircraft Ever Just Flew on \$5 of Electricity

Swedish startup Heart Aerospace spent \$5 on electricity to fly its 106-foot X1 over New York as jet fuel costs near \$152 a barrel



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By **Alex Barrientos**



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Image: Heart Aerospace

KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- Heart Aerospace's X1 flew 27 minutes consuming just \$5 of electricity versus \$400 in jet fuel.
- The ES-30 targets 40% lower operating costs, backed by United Airlines' 100-aircraft purchase commitment.
- Jet fuel costs projected at \$152 per barrel push airline fuel spending to \$350 billion in 2026.

On August 12, 2026, [Heart Aerospace](#) flew its X1 electric demonstrator for roughly 27 minutes at Plattsburgh International Airport in New York. Total electricity cost: about \$5. For context, a conventional CRJ200 regional jet burns approximately **750 pounds** of [jet fuel](#) over the same duration — costing at least \$400 at current prices, according to AirInsight analysis. That gap is not an engineering footnote. It's the entire argument.



What the X1 Actually Is (and Isn't)

A 106-foot wingspan and four megawatt-class motors — built entirely to prove a point.

The **X1** features:

- Four wing-mounted electric motors
- A **106-foot** wingspan
- Maximum takeoff weight exceeding 25,000 pounds
- Over one megawatt of power on tap

Heart Aerospace calls the X1 the world's largest battery-electric fixed-wing aircraft to have flown. What it won't do is carry passengers. The X1 is a technology demonstrator — its entire purpose is generating data to refine the [ES-30](#), Heart's actual commercial product.

The ES-30 is a **30-seat** hybrid-electric regional aircraft combining electric motors with turboprop engines, designed for the short-haul corridors where fuel costs bite hardest. It targets:

- All-electric range of roughly 125 miles
- Hybrid range of around 500 miles
- Approximately 30 minutes of charging time between flights

Heart claims operating costs more than **40% lower** than conventional regional jets — a figure that originates from Heart's own materials and warrants independent verification as the program matures. Flight testing is targeted for around 2028, with commercial entry planned for 2031. Like [supersonic flight](#) initiatives, these timelines hinge on regulatory and engineering milestones that remain years away.

The Fuel Crisis That Makes This Flight Urgent

Jet fuel up 70% in a year tends to focus the mind.

Jet fuel is projected to average roughly **\$152 per barrel** in 2026 — nearly 70% higher than 2025's \$90 per barrel, according to IATA. Middle East disruptions linked to the conflict involving Iran have constrained Strait of Hormuz shipments and driven up global energy costs. [Airline fuel spending is forecast](#) to jump from \$252 billion in 2025 to **\$350 billion** in 2026, consuming roughly 31% of total operating costs. That is not a manageable trend. That is a structural shock.

United Airlines CFO Michael Leskinen has stated that “electric commercial aircraft have real potential to deliver a better travel experience while strengthening the airline's business.” United has backed that conviction with a commitment to purchase **100 ES-30** aircraft. Air Canada and

Mesa Air Group have also invested or signed letters of intent. IATA warns the fuel shock [will roughly halve global airline](#) industry profits in 2026. When your margin is compressing in real time, a 40% operating cost reduction stops being a marketing slide and starts looking like a survival calculation.

The \$5 Number Needs One Honest Caveat

Symbolic and real — but not the whole story.

That \$5 figure covers **energy cost** only. Maintenance, battery depreciation, crew, airport fees — none of that is in the number. Heart frames it as a demonstrator data point, not a commercial operating benchmark, and that framing is accurate. But symbols matter when an entire industry is scanning the horizon for proof that something structurally different is possible. Commercial service is still five years out. The clock is already running.

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