

11 firms interested in developing ‘spaceport’ at Ceiba airport

[Contributor](#) July 14, 2021



The José Aponte de la Torre regional airport in Ceiba.

The Puerto Rico Ports Authority announced it has stirred interest from 11 aerospace firms interested in becoming a master developer of services to establish a “spaceport” at the José Aponte de la Torre regional airport in Ceiba.

Ports Authority Executive Director Joel A. Pizá-Batiz said the Request for Information (RFI) began in March, and 27 aerospace firms were invited to submit their information, of which 11 responded before the May 26 deadline.

The aerospace firms that responded are: Spaceinnova; ASTRA; Jacobs; VAS Corporation; Kimley-Horn; McFarland Johnson; Ceiba World Spaceport Development Group; Javier E. Bidot & Associates; Watkins Cerny Architects & Planners Inc.; Maritime Launch; and BRPH Mission Solutions.

Next, Ports will evaluate the companies, and will decide the next steps in coordination with the Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DDEC, in Spanish) and the Roosevelt Roads Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA).

“This is a preliminary stage to examine future development alternatives,” Pizá-Batiz said.

The RFI process responds to a Desirability Study commissioned in 2019 to firm RS&H, which concluded that the regional airport in Ceiba, and the surrounding facilities, could represent geographically strategic space for aerospace equipment manufacturing and storage activities, which, in the future, could include launch activities, subject to the approval of a space vehicle launch operator license (LSOL), the government official said.

“The fact that 11 aerospace firms have submitted their documentation to the government’s RFI shows that there’s interest and that Puerto Rico has the potential to become a key player in the development of this industry,” Economic Development Secretary Manuel Cidre said.

“We have all the elements to be successful in this field — the appropriate geographic location, the climate, a solid incentive program, and we have a skilled workforce in the field of engineering. We’re confident that this new industry will result in economic development for our island,” said Miranda.

Since the 2004 XPrize competition to launch humans on suborbital missions without using NASA space agency vehicles, aerospace launch activity in the has seen growth in the US mainland.

There are currently 12 aerospace ports certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and another 12 firms have begun the certification process or have announced plans to do so. In addition, there are already four launch sites developed by private commercial operators.

A study by Bryce Space and Technology firm estimated the global aerospace economy at \$360 billion in 2018, \$805 billion in 10 years, and \$1 trillion in 20 years, government officials said.

Launch activity can range from balloons and nano-satellites to space shuttle ships, subject to approval by the FAA certification process, Pizá-Batiz said.

Until recently, Google used the facilities of the Ceiba regional airport for its Loon pilot project, from where balloons were launched to provide internet to regions that are inaccessible or have little internet connectivity.