

FEATURED GOVERNMENT

Puerto Rico Ports Authority issues RFP for a spaceport in Ceiba

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The José Aponte de la Torre regional airport in Ceiba.

The Puerto Rico Ports Authority has issued a request for proposals (RFP) seeking candidates to handle the leasing, development, construction, operation, marketing and maintenance of a spaceport at José Aponte de la Torre (JAT) airport in Ceiba.

In the document, the agency established that it wishes to select a spaceport operator to achieve two public policy goals: sustainable job creation and economic redevelopment for the region focused on space-related activities and international cargo hub ecosystems; and sustainable design principles, which encourage smart growth and best practices for airport redevelopment that will reduce environmental impacts, realize economic benefits and improve community relations.

The RFP was discussed during the third meeting of the island's Puerto Rico Aerospace and Aeronautical Industry Council, chaired by Ports Authority Executive Director Joel Pizá.

During the meeting, he said it is expected that between the summer and September 2024, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will grant the government of Puerto Rico the spaceport license.

He recalled that in June 2022 the contract was filed with RS&H, a firm specialized in airport infrastructure consulting — and that worked with the design of the Spaceport Launch Facilities-National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) — to transform the Ceiba airport into a spaceport.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

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— Leslie Adames, director, Estudios Técnicos Economic Analysis and Policy Division.

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The chosen proponent for the Ceiba facility would “engage in energetic, effective, and diligent marketing, public relations, and industry outreach initiatives, with the purpose to achieve contracts and tangible business relations with launch services providers, and space-related commercial activities and creating a space economic ecosystem in JAT,” according to the RFP.

The developer — which would operate the Spaceport for several years, depending on the negotiation — would design and build the infrastructure needed for horizontal launches at JAT, using private capital, equity and investment.

“The envisioned financial model is a concession contract, and not an operation and maintenance (O&M) contract,” the RFP states.

“Vertical launches in Puerto Rico are challenging, considering the population density, among others. However, we want to do a feasibility study for vertical launches in Puerto Rico, with an emphasis on the use of barges and launches in high seas,” the agency stated in the RFP.

The project also calls for developing a business plan for the integration of biosciences and biomanufacturing in the spaceport in Ceiba, “with an emphasis on reentry and retrieval operations of highly sophisticated cargo.”

During the meeting, Pizá confirmed that a delegation from Puerto Rico will participate in the upcoming Space Symposium in Colorado, representing all sectors of the international space community, namely space agencies; businesses and associated subcontractors; military, national security and intelligence organizations; cyber security organizations; federal and state government agencies; research and development facilities; educational institutions; private providers of commercial space exploration and travel; space-related companies engaged in the adaptation, manufacture or sale of space technologies for commercial use; and media outlets “that inspire and educate the general public on the subject.”



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Tags: Ceiba José Aponso de la Torre Airport Puerto Rico Puerto Rico Ports Authority spaceport