



# Electric Aircraft – Recent Technology Developments in US

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SPARK Laboratory, Stanley and Karen Pigman College of Engineering

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, USA

# Outline

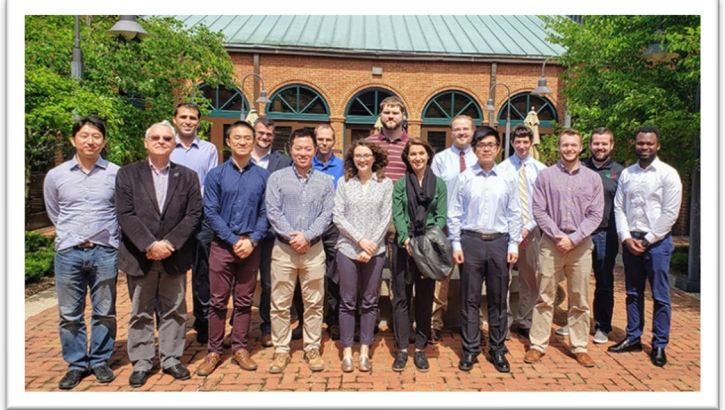
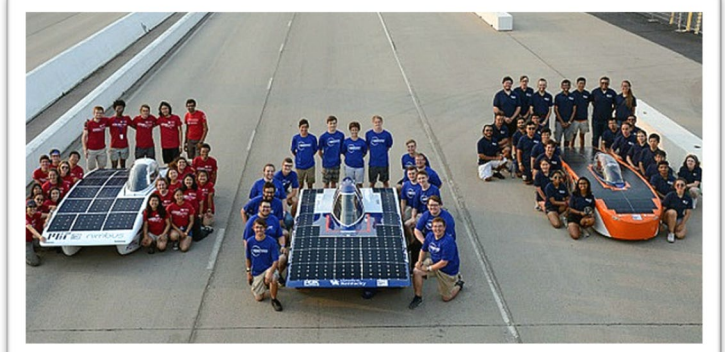
## *Ongoing Research for Large Electric Aircraft Components and Systems*

- Introduction
- Major technical concepts and initiatives
- Optimal design of electric aircraft systems
- Battery-powered electric aircraft, NASA X-57
- Hydrogen-fueled electric aircraft, NASA ULI IZEA
- Electric aircraft propulsion motor drive
  - Review
  - Innovative concept
- Conclusion.



# PEIK and SPARK at University of Kentucky (UK)

- Power and Energy Institute of Kentucky (PEIK), launched with DOE grant in 2010 at UK; 15 affiliated faculty; very large undergraduate and graduate certificate programs; <https://www.engr.uky.edu/power>
- SPARK Lab, established in 2015 with support from the L. Stanley Pigman Chair Endowment; one of the PEIK and ECE affiliated faculty-led research groups with approx. 10 researchers; <http://sparklab.engr.uky.edu/>
- Research sponsored by industry and utility, and by federal funded projects and grants from NASA, DOE, NSF, DoD, and DoEd on topics of electrification of transportation, renewable and distributed energy resources, smart homes and grids, electric machines and drives.



# Examples of Electric Transportation Projects and SPARK Lab

- First generation Tesla Roadster (PC-IMD late 90's)
- ...
- ANSYS (2010-present)
- GM Research (2012-2015)
- First generation Formula E (2015-2016)
- UK Gato del Sol cars (2016-present)
- DOE electric traction challenge (2019-2023)
- NASA electric aircraft (2017-present).



Students taught



Papers published



Major awards



One academic family, the SPARK Lab

Grad degrees and postdocs



# NASA and US Electric Airplane Efforts



Market: National/International

Impact: Fuel Burn/Emission Reduction



Market: On demand mobility

Impact: New mobility capability



Market: Regional

Impact: Revitalization of smaller routes



See also, for example

- <https://www1.grc.nasa.gov/aeronautics/eap/Websites>
- <https://www.ampaire.com/>
- <https://www.jobyaviation.com/>

# Airbus Plans for Electric Aircraft



Source: Airbus Future aircraft  
<https://www.airbus.com/en/innovation/disruptive-concepts/disruptive-design/future-aircraft>



**ZERO  
EMISSION  
FLIGHT**

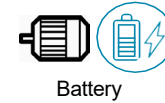


**MODULAR  
HYBRIDIZATION**



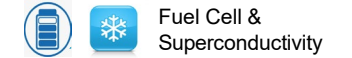
**INCREMENTAL  
IMPROVEMENT**

**CityAirbus  
NextGen**



Battery

**ZEROe**



Fuel Cell & Superconductivity



H2 combustion



**ZEROe**



Battery and/or Fuel Cell



H2 combustion



**EcoPulse**



Battery



Kerosene, SAF

**LEGEND**

- eMotor/Generator
- Battery
- Fuel
- Thermal Engine
- Fuel Cell



100%SAF



**A319neo**



**H225**



Commercial Aircraft

Power Offtake Mgt

eAssisted Idle

eTaxi & eDescent

eBoost at Take-off

Distributed Propulsion

Helicopters

Emergency Backup System

Hybrid Parallel Hybrid

eVTOL

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# DOE ARPA-E Programs for Aviation

## Climate-Friendly Commercial Aviation

Source: Arpa-e, 2022 REEACH & ASCEND Annual Review Meetings  
<https://arpa-e.energy.gov/2022-reeach-ascend-annual-review-meetings>.

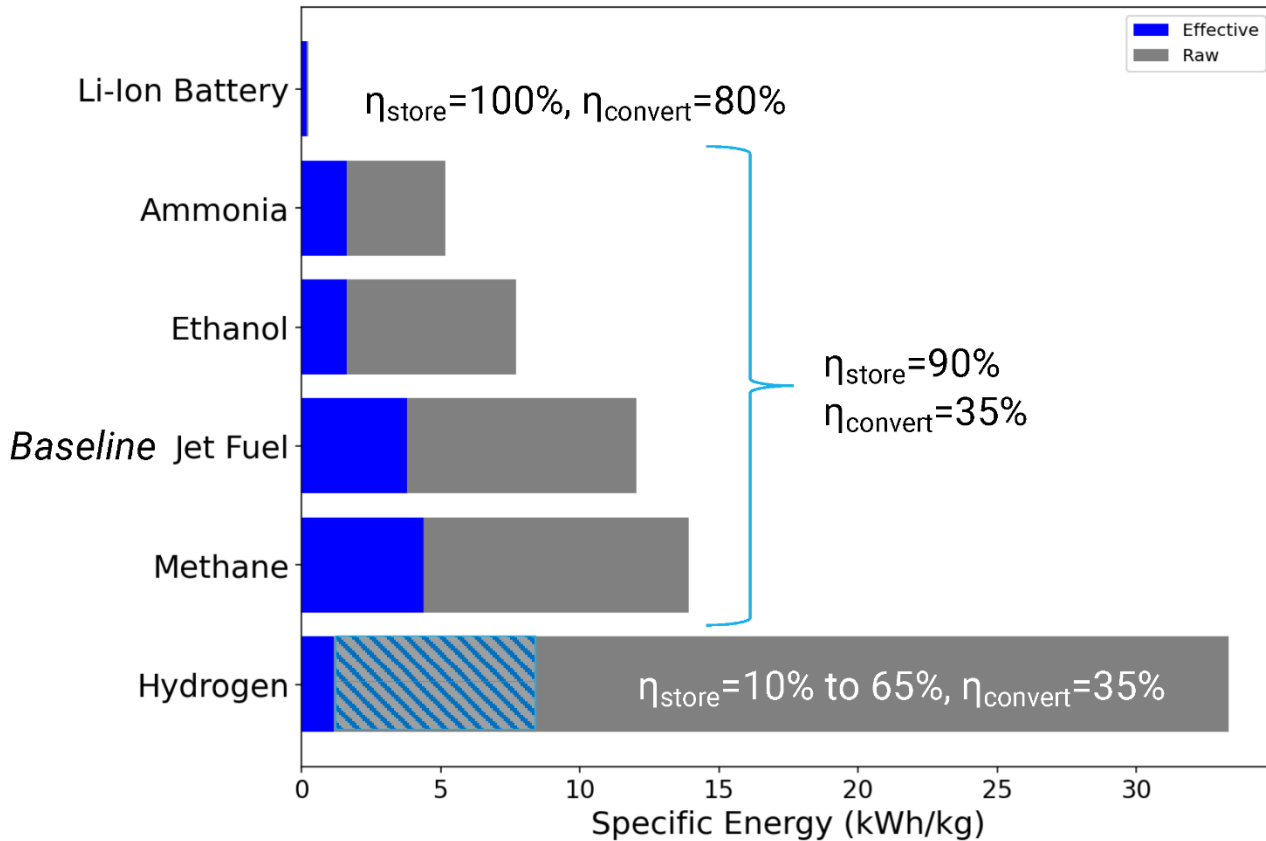




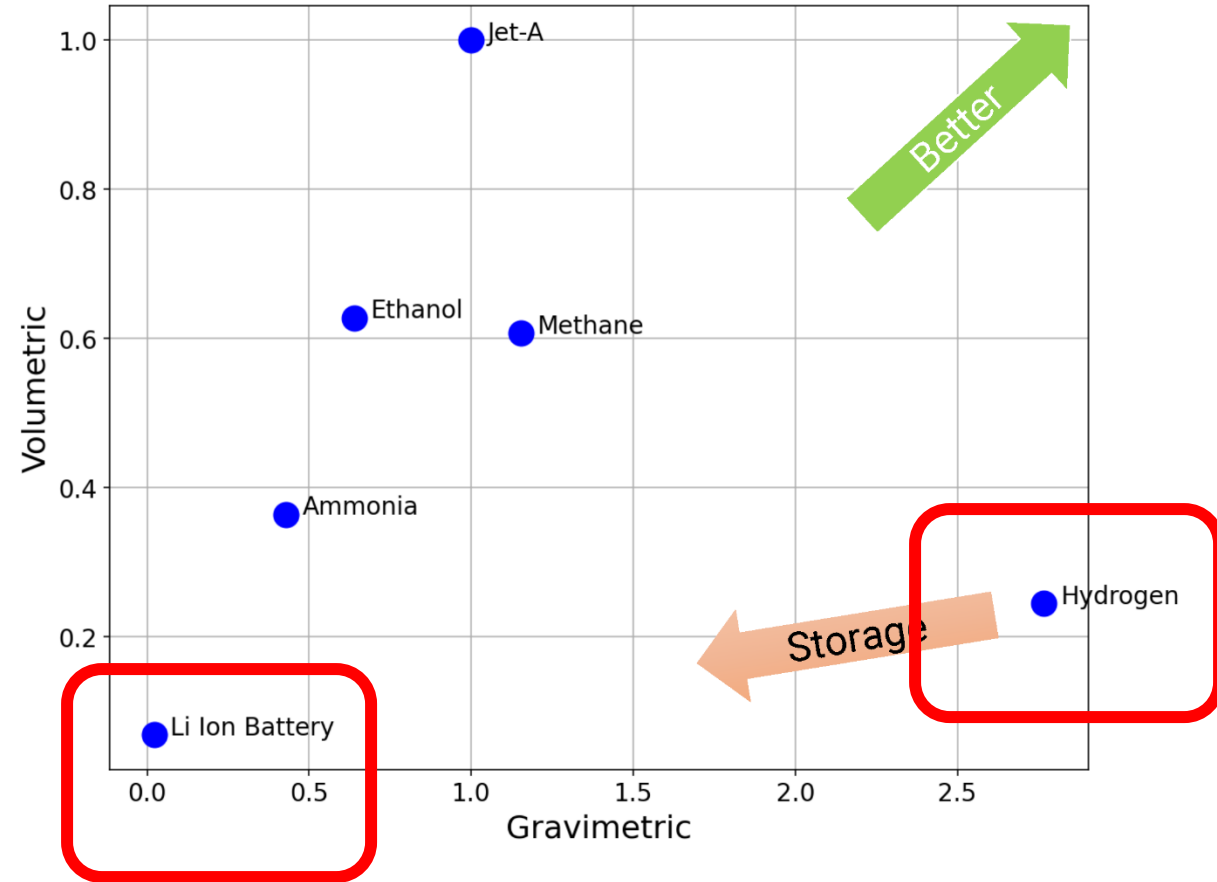
# Aircraft Fuel and Energy Storage Options

Source: Arpa-e, 2022 REEACH & ASCEND Annual Review Meetings  
<https://arpa-e.energy.gov/2022-reeach-ascend-annual-review-meetings>

Fuels necessary for long-distance (>200 miles) flights



Fuel/Jet-A Volumetric vs Gravimetric Specific Energy



\*Effective not inclusive of fuel to electric energy conversion systems

# Electric Aircraft Propulsion Systems (EAPS)

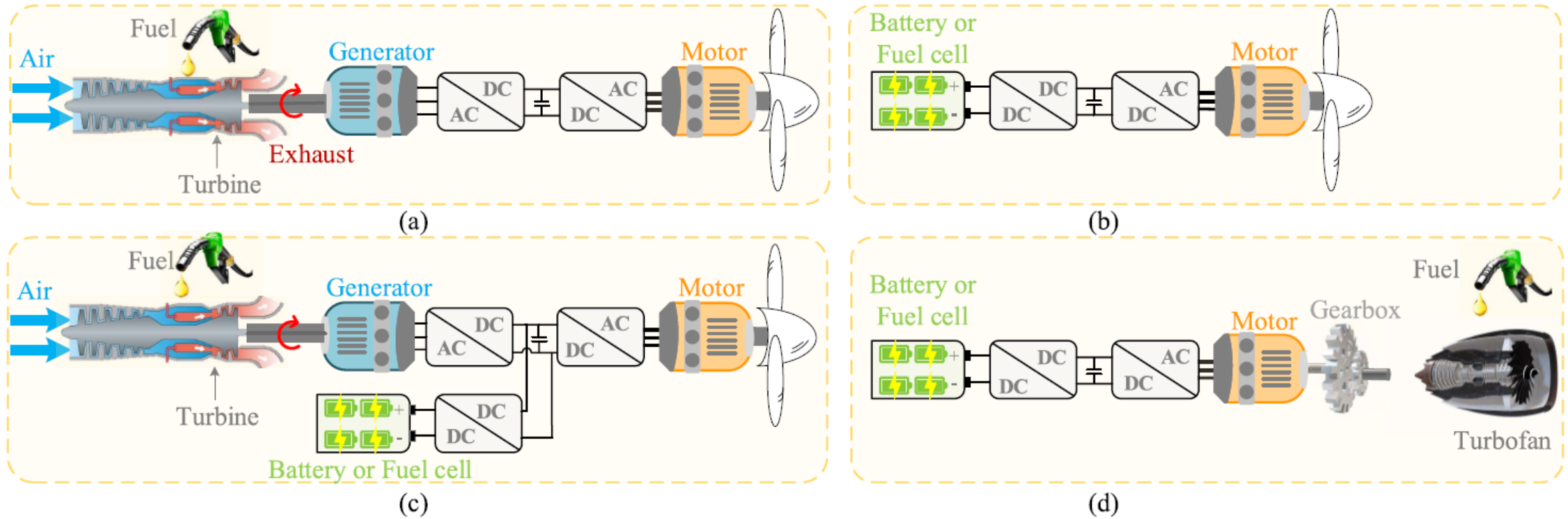
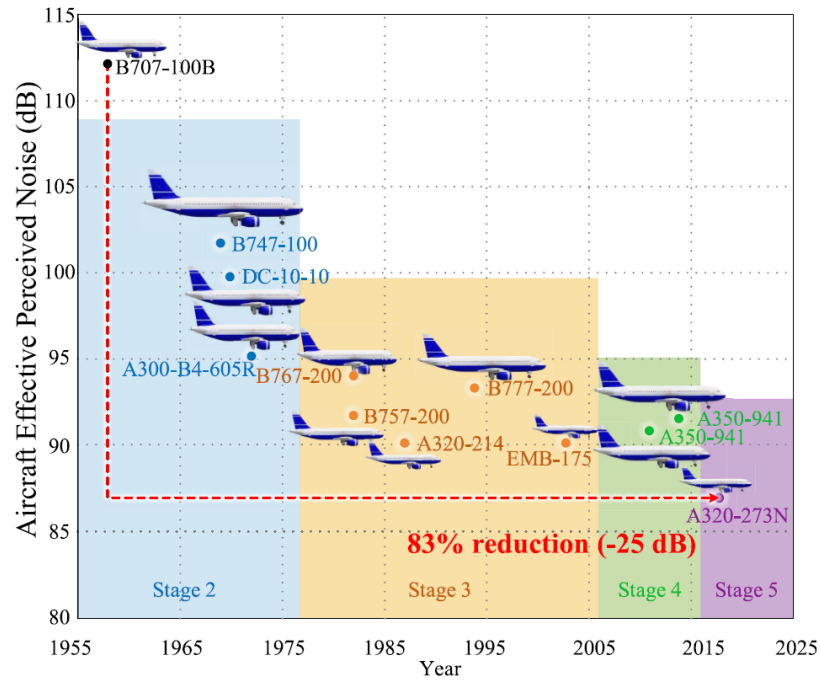


Fig. 2. Aircraft propulsion based on various powertrain structures: (a) turboelectric, (b) all-electric, (c) series hybrid-electric, and (d) parallel hybrid-electric.

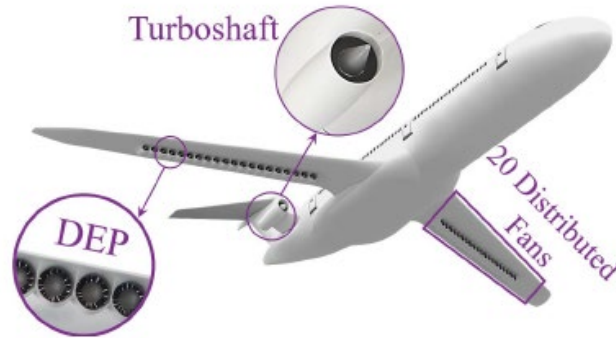
Source: University of Kentucky, M. T. Fard *et al*, "Aircraft Distributed Electric Propulsion Technologies—A Review," in *IEEE Transactions on Transportation Electrification*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 4067-4090, Dec. 2022, doi: 10.1109/TTE.2022.3197332.

- Hybrid and distributed propulsion options to be discussed
- Multiple propulsors, each with their own electric motor.

# Electric Aircraft Main Advantages



- Emission reduction
- Noise reduction
- Distributed propulsion
  - Boundary layer ingestion – increased efficiency
  - Fault tolerance and redundancy
- Blended wing body (BWB) aerodynamics – increased efficiency.



Source: University of Kentucky, M. T. Fard *et al*, "Aircraft Distributed Electric Propulsion Technologies—A Review," in *IEEE Transactions on Transportation Electrification*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 4067-4090, Dec. 2022, doi: 10.1109/TTE.2022.3197332.

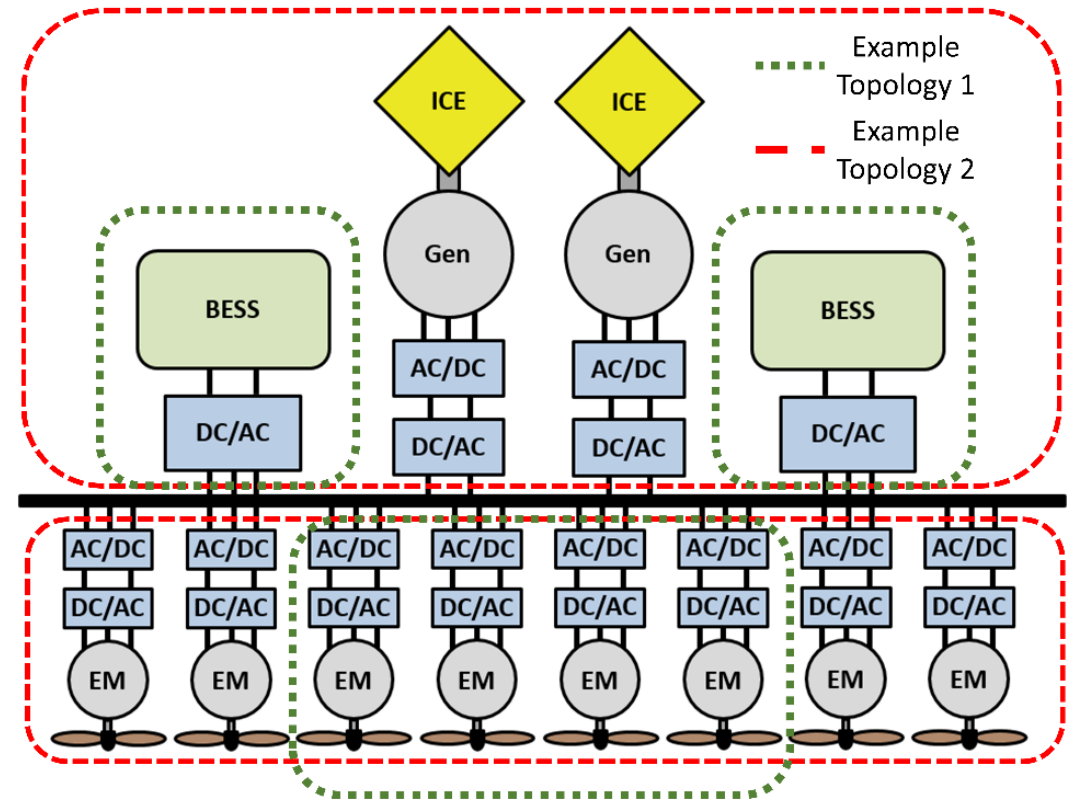
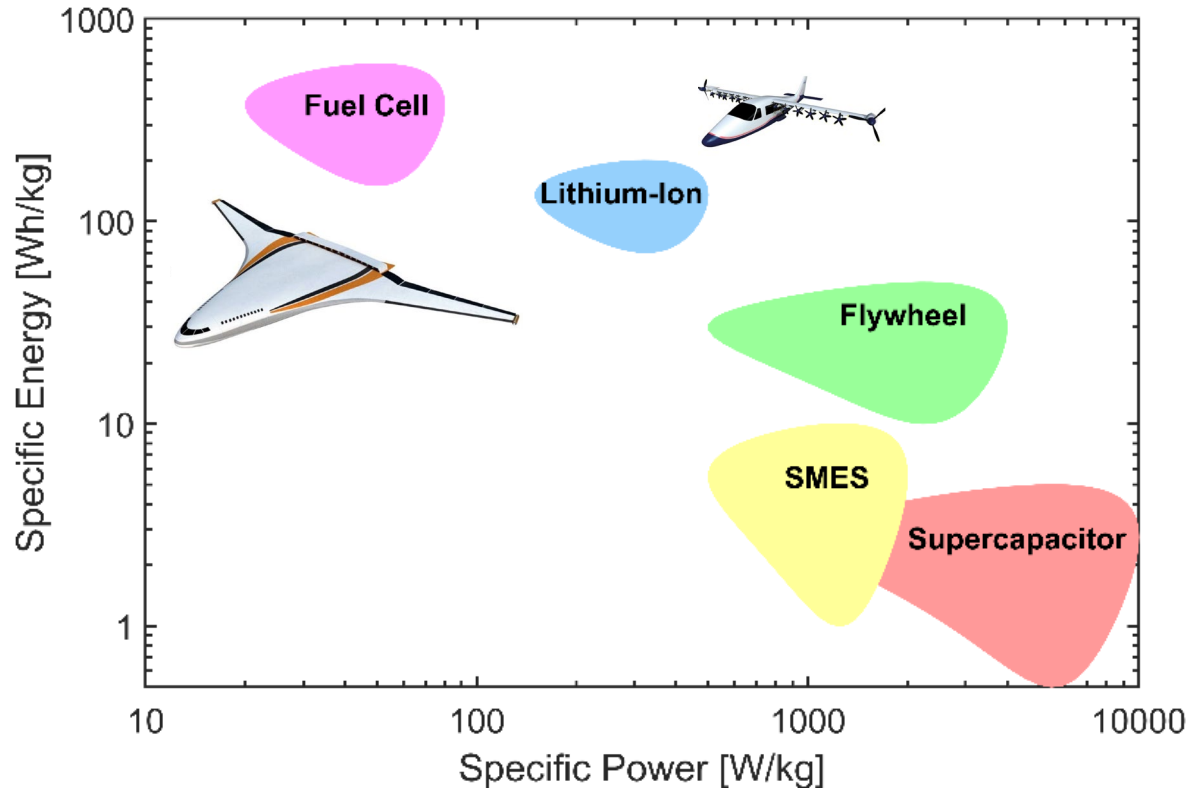
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# Optimal EAPS Design

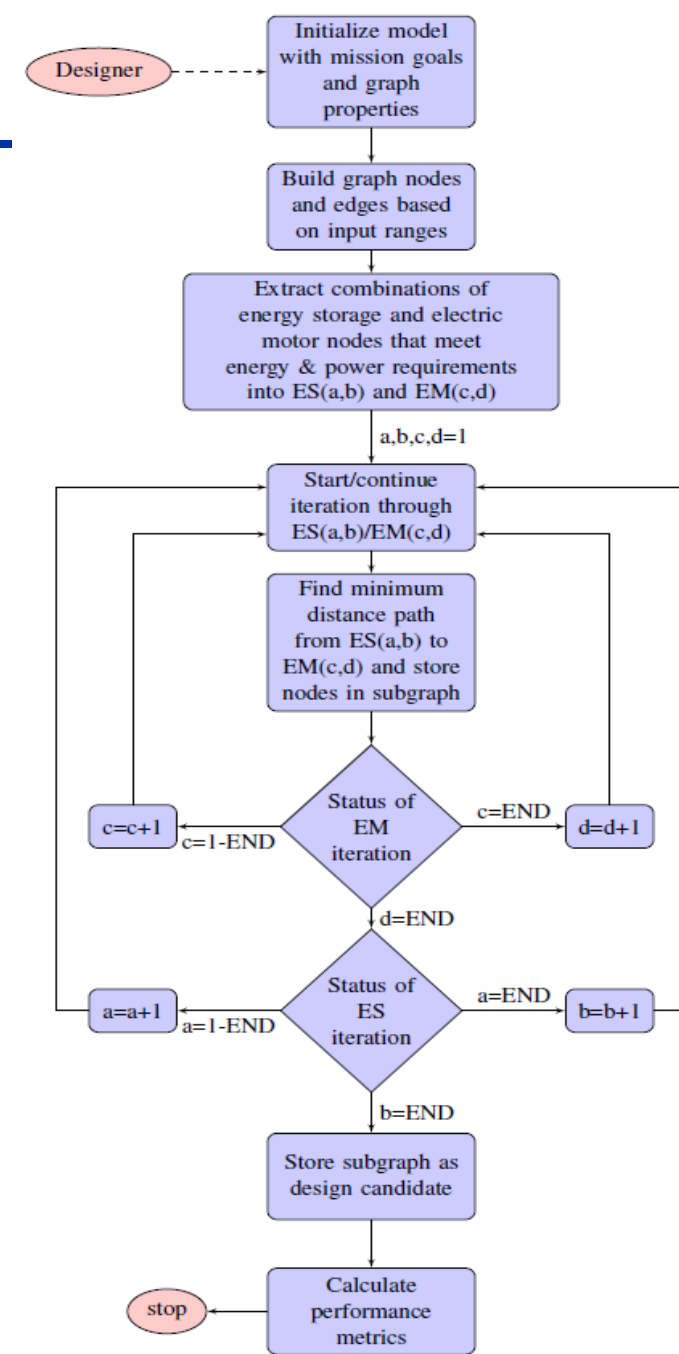
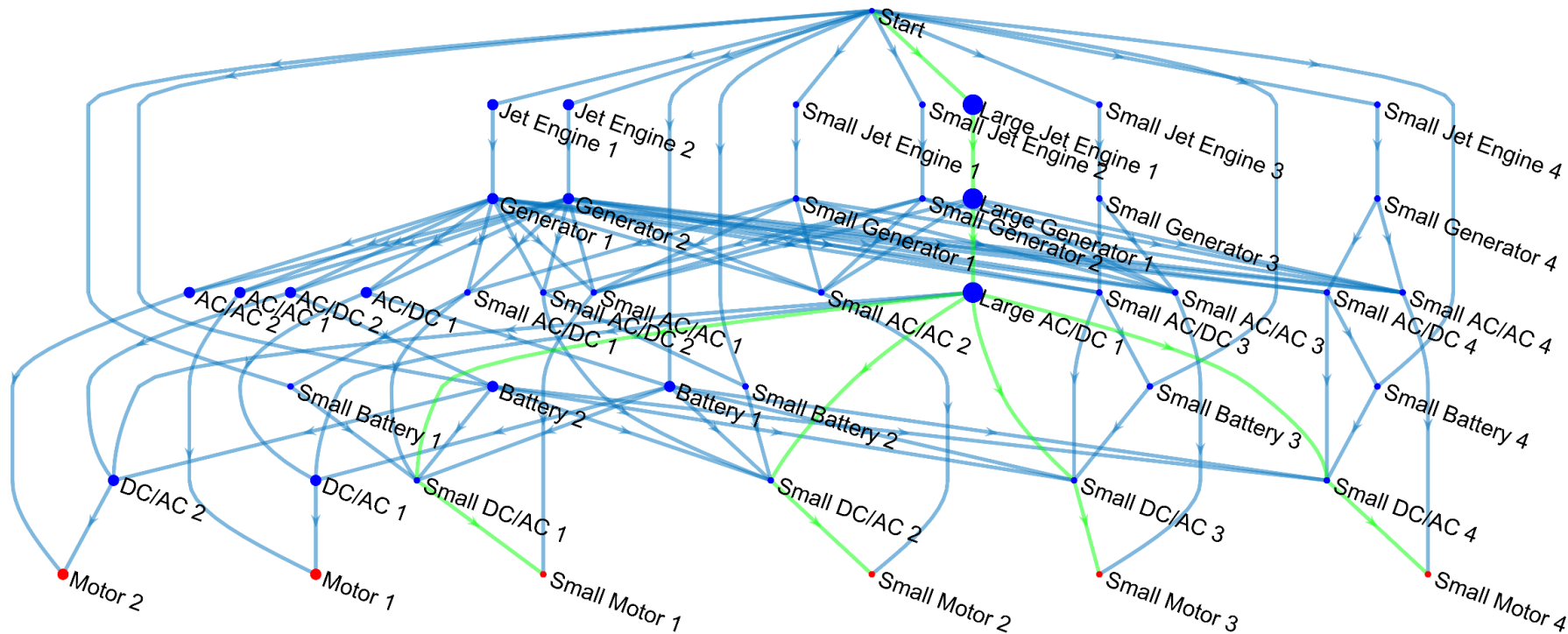


- Derivation of optimal topologies and component ratings based on an automated process
- Systematic literature survey to establish available technology and characteristics at component and subsystem level
- Multi-objective study with interpretation of pareto front design candidates.

Source: University of Kentucky, Lawhorn, D. *et al.*, "Multi-objective Optimization for Aircraft Power Systems using a Network Graph Representation," IEEE Transactions on Transportation Electrification, Vol. 7, No. 4, doi: 10.1109/TTE.2021.3066123., pp. 3021-3031 (2021)

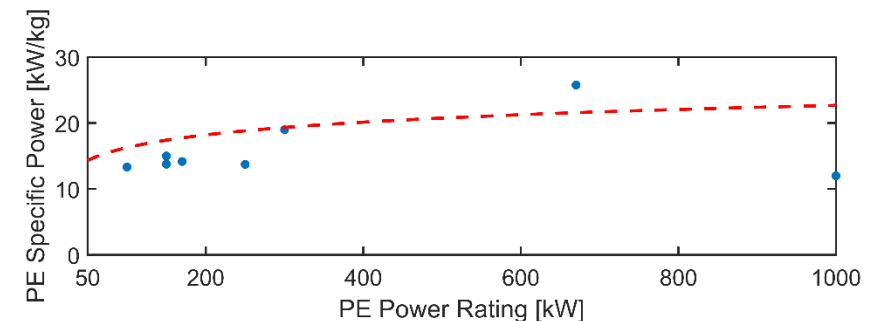
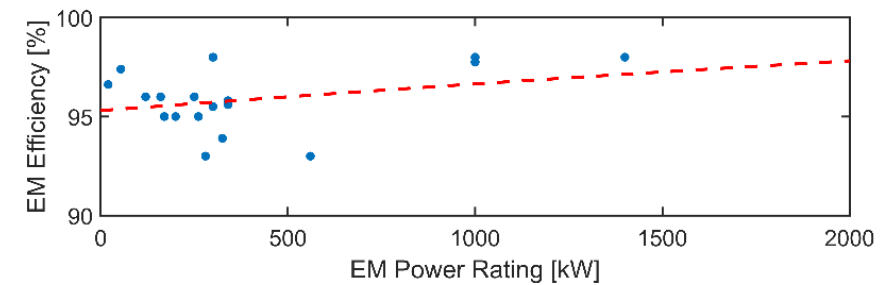
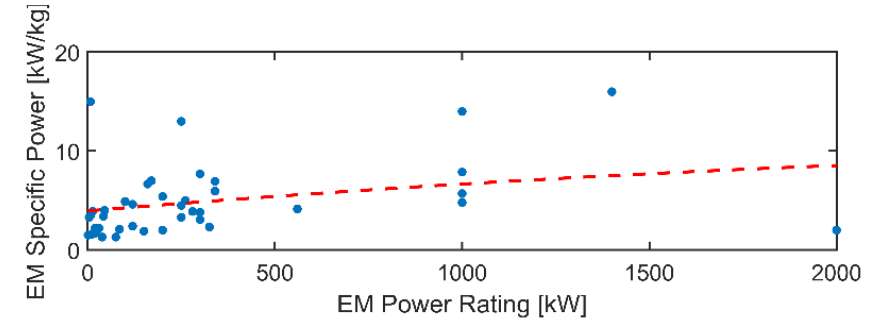
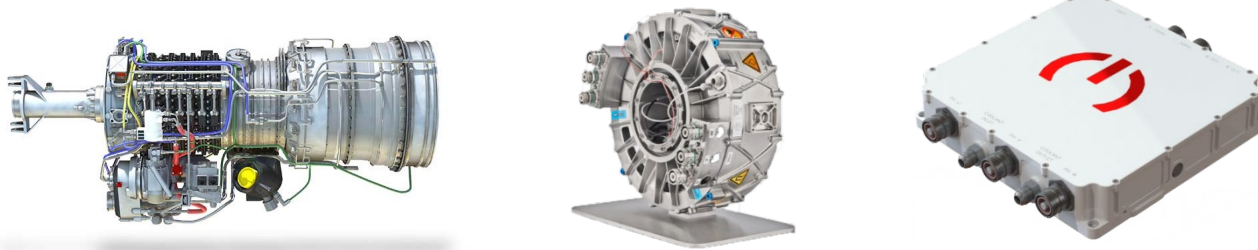
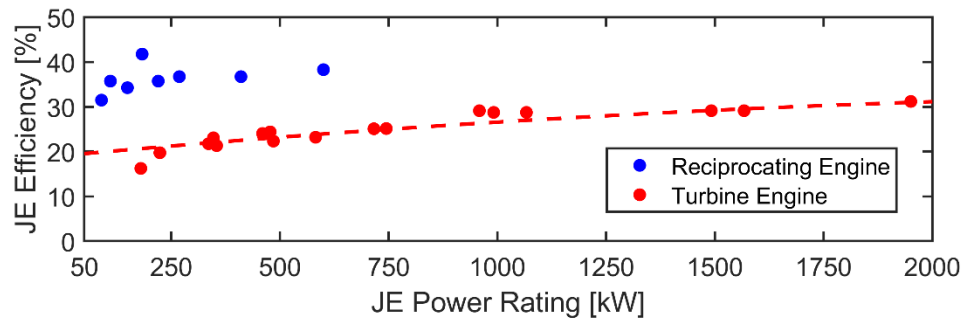
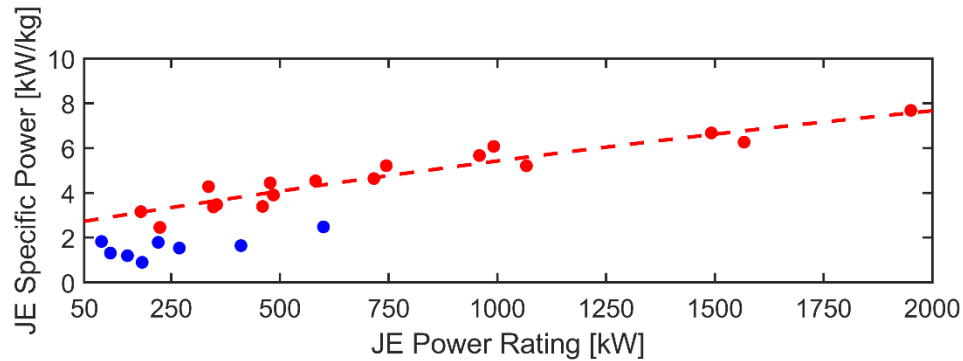
# EAPS Optimization based on Graph Network

- Network flow optimization problem with a single objective or multiple/concurrent objective functions: losses (efficiency), mass, reliability
- Approaches:
  - Minimal cut sets have been used to evaluate reliability in several studies
  - Dijkstra's type algorithms offer ways to find minimal cost paths between source and sink nodes.



Source: University of Kentucky, Lawhorn, D. et al., "Multi-objective Optimization for Aircraft Power Systems using a Network Graph Representation," IEEE Transactions on Transportation Electrification, Vol. 7, No. 4, doi: 10.1109/TTE.2021.3066123., pp. 3021-3031 (2021)

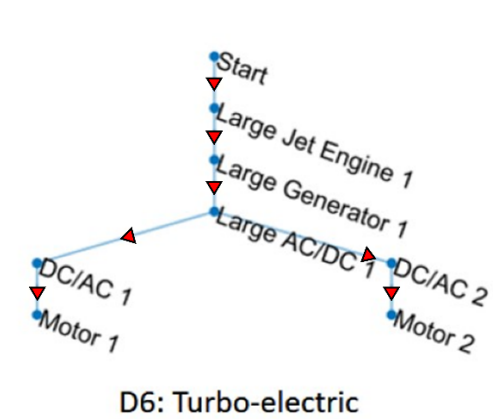
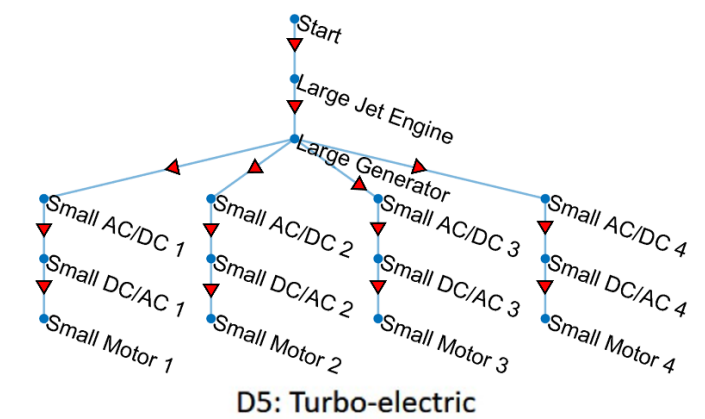
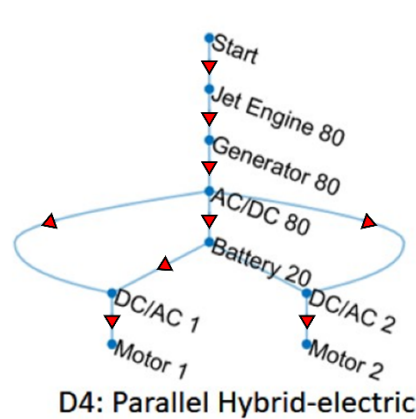
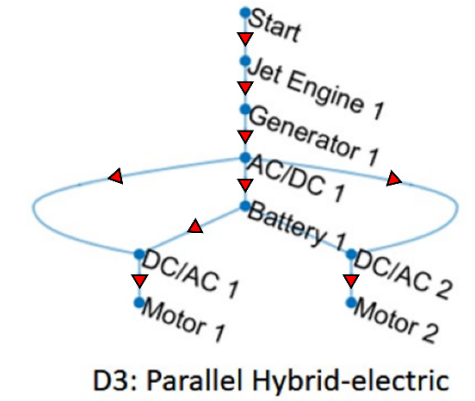
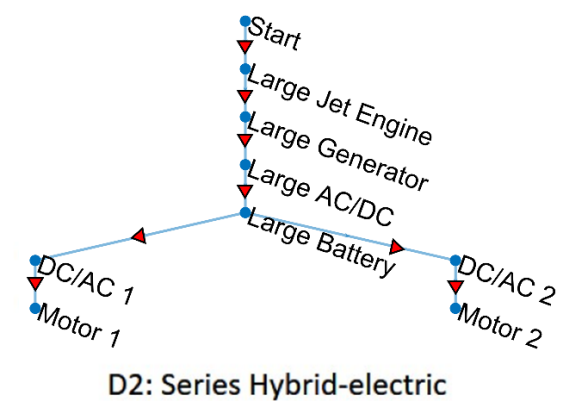
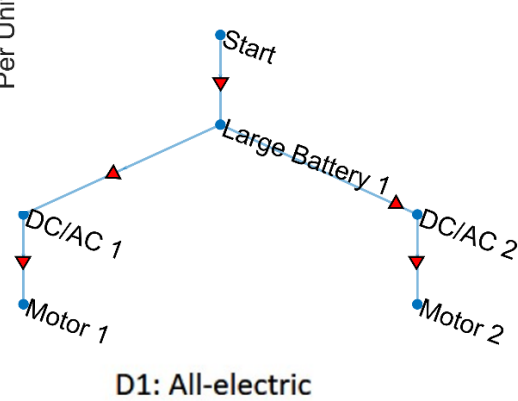
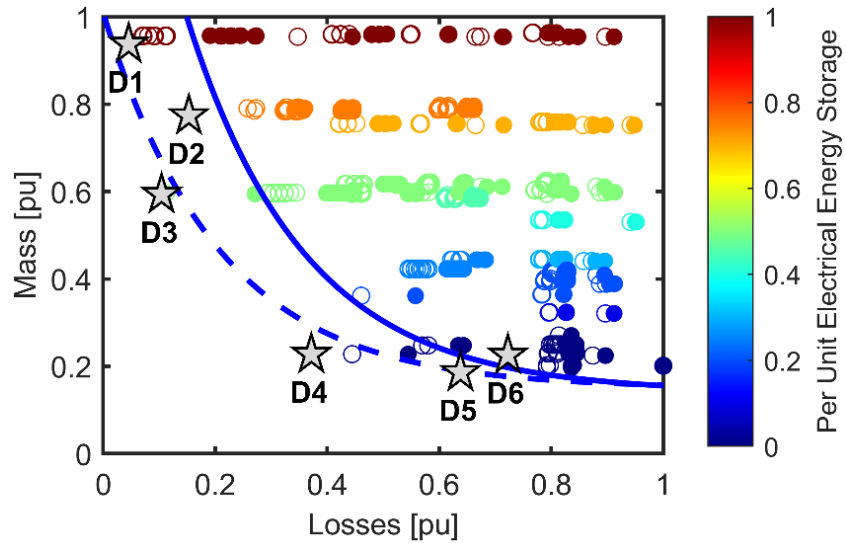
# Performance of Aircraft Components



- Systematic literature search for jet engines, electric machines, and power electronics (PE)
- Efficiency of PE is typically very high.

Source: University of Kentucky, Lawhorn, D. et al., "Multi-objective Optimization for Aircraft Power Systems using a Network Graph Representation," IEEE Transactions on Transportation Electrification, Vol. 7, No. 4, doi: 10.1109/TTE.2021.3066123., pp. 3021-3031 (2021)

# Pareto Front Designs, incl. All-electric, Hybrid, and Turbo



Source: University of Kentucky, Lawhorn, D. et al., "Multi-objective Optimization for Aircraft Power Systems using a Network Graph Representation," IEEE Transactions on Transportation Electrification, Vol. 7, No. 4, doi: 10.1109/TTE.2021.3066123., pp. 3021-3031 (2021)



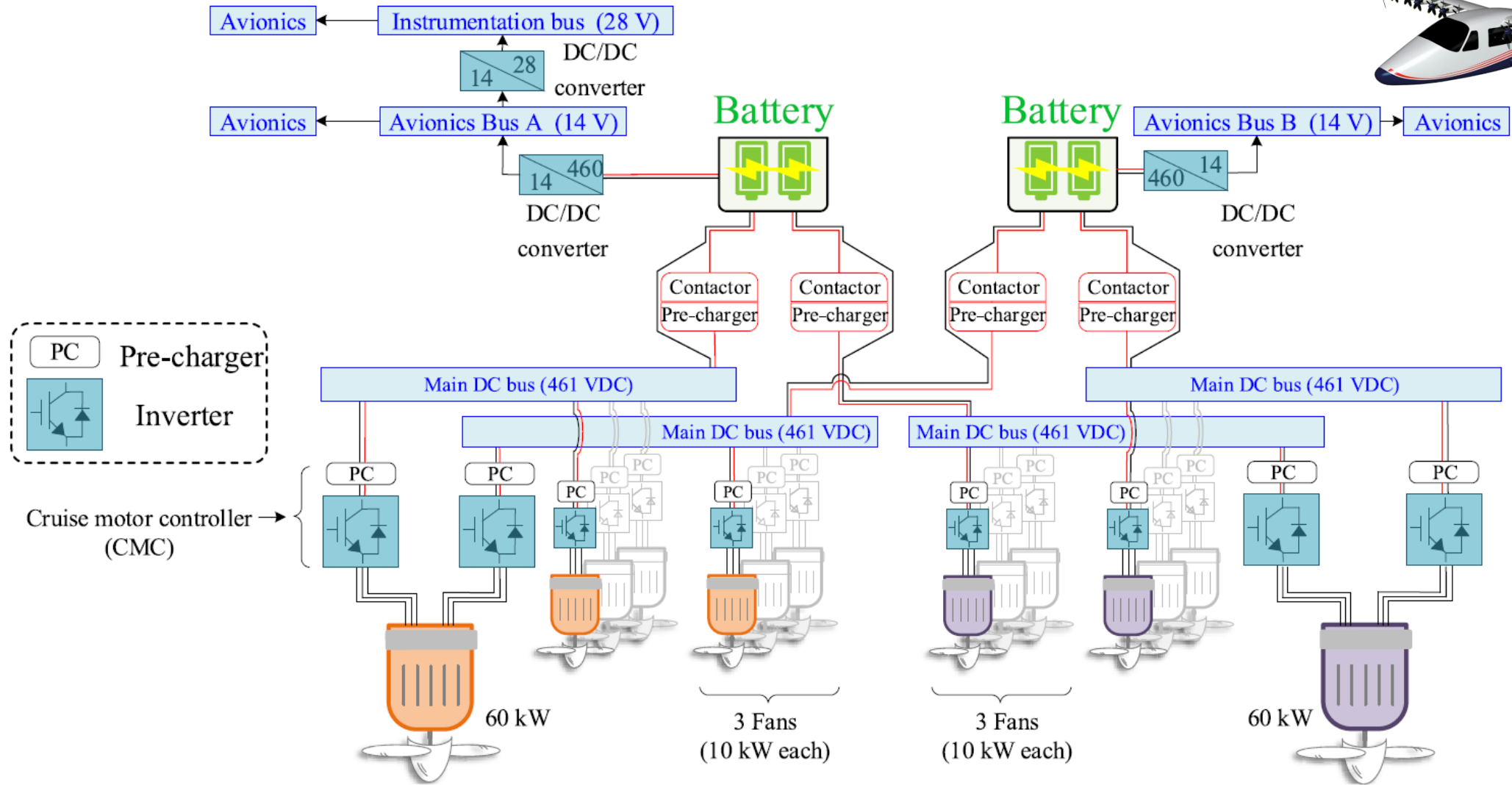
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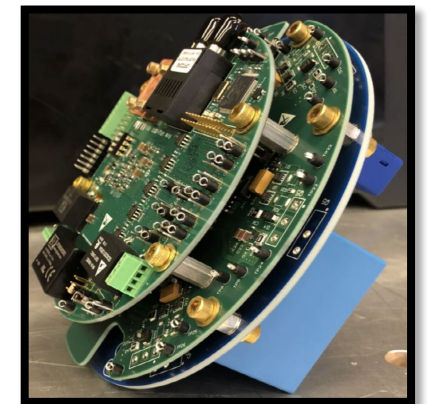
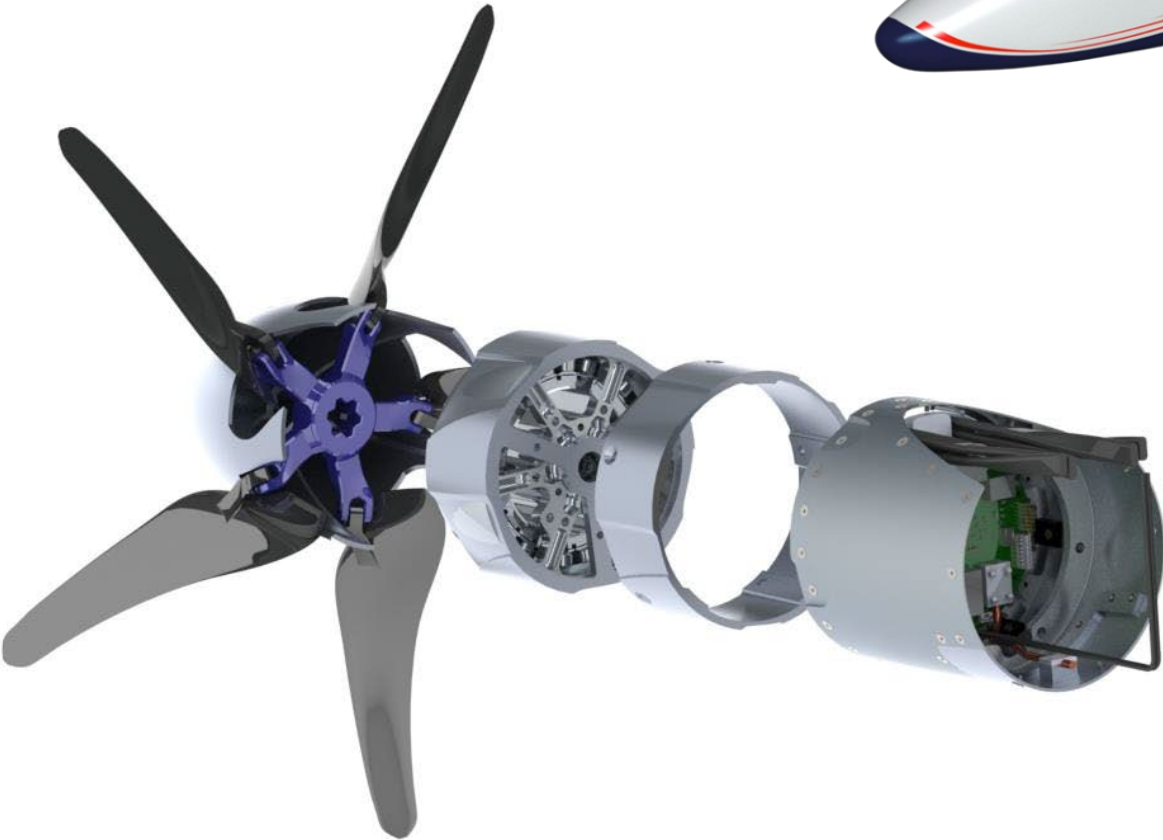


# NASA X-57 (Mod IV) Battery Operated Aircraft – EAPS



Source: University of Kentucky, M. T. Fard et al, "Aircraft Distributed Electric Propulsion Technologies—A Review," in *IEEE Transactions on Transportation Electrification*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 4067-4090, Dec. 2022, doi: 10.1109/TTE.2022.3197332.

# NASA X-57 – Example Electric Propulsion Components



# Rolls-Royce Experimental Battery-Operated Aircraft

**ROLLS ROYCE**

Partners  
ELECTRO ENERGY YASA AEROSPACE TECHNOLOGIES INSTITUTE

## THE WORLD'S FASTEST ALL-ELECTRIC VEHICLE

Rolls-Royce have staked a claim for the world's fastest all-electric aircraft, setting 3 new world records. The data has been submitted to the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) showing that the 'Spirit of Innovation' aircraft reached a top speed of 345 mph over 3 kilometres, smashing the existing record by 132 mph. The aircraft also achieved 331 mph over 15 kilometres and broke the fastest time to climb to 3000 metres by 60 seconds with a time of 3 minutes 22 seconds. During its runs, the aircraft clocked up a maximum speed of 387.4 mph which makes the 'Spirit of Innovation' the world's fastest all-electric vehicle.

Spirit of Innovation

### WORLD RECORD CLAIMS

- 345** mph – 3 kilometres
- 331** mph – 15 kilometres
- 202** seconds – 3000 metre climb

**THERMAL PROTECTION**  
**Portuguese Cork**  
Battery heat is insulated using the same cork you find bottling wine.

**BATTERY**  
**6480** cells  
Enough power to charge 7,500 phones.

**CONTROLS**  
This all-electric racer features a state-of-the-art controls system, providing the pilot all the information required to fly safely and quickly.

**AUXILIARY SYSTEMS**  
The Spirit of Innovation avionics bay contains the control hardware, including the engine control unit (ECU), power distribution unit (PDU), and flight sensors.

**PROPELLER ROTATION**  
**2200** rpm  
Twice as fast as a washing machine on high spin.

**MOTOR POWER**  
**400** kW  
Equivalent of a 535 BHP supercar.

**SYSTEM VOLTAGE**  
**750** volts  
High power output at low weight similar to a Formula E racer.

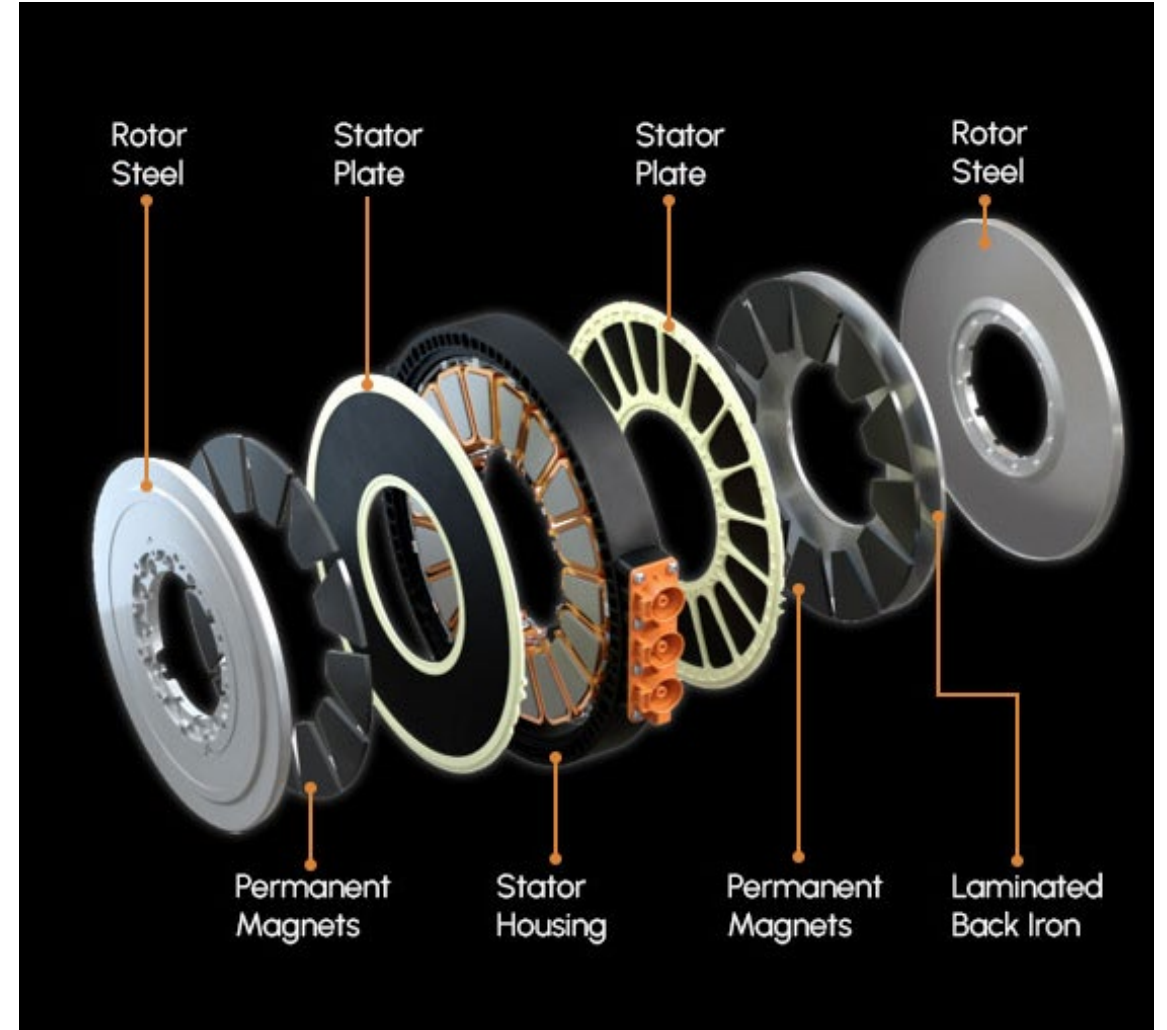
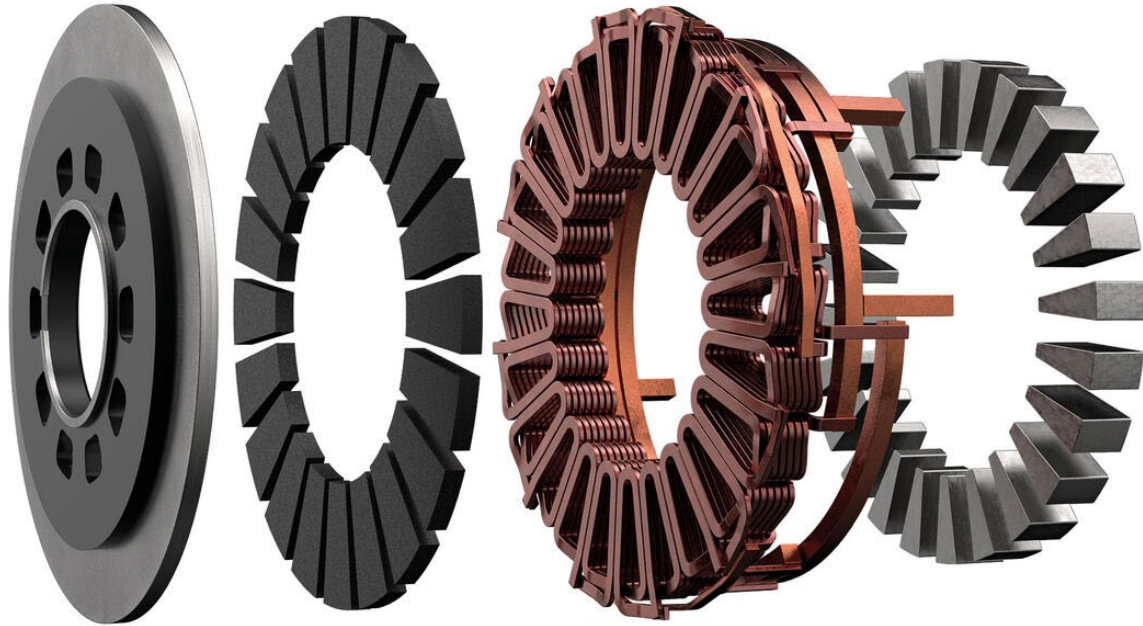
**AIRFRAME**  
**Nemesis NXT**  
An ultra-fast kit plane was chosen for the challenge.

**Rolls-Royce**

[www.rolls-royce.com](http://www.rolls-royce.com)

# YASA and EvoLito

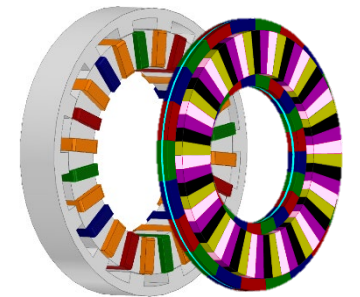
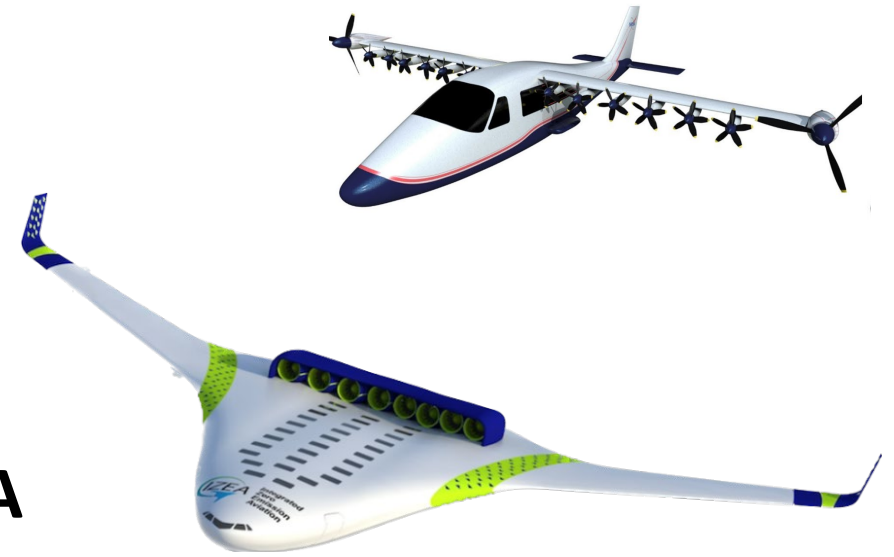
Source: YASA and EvoLito  
<https://evolito.aero/about/>



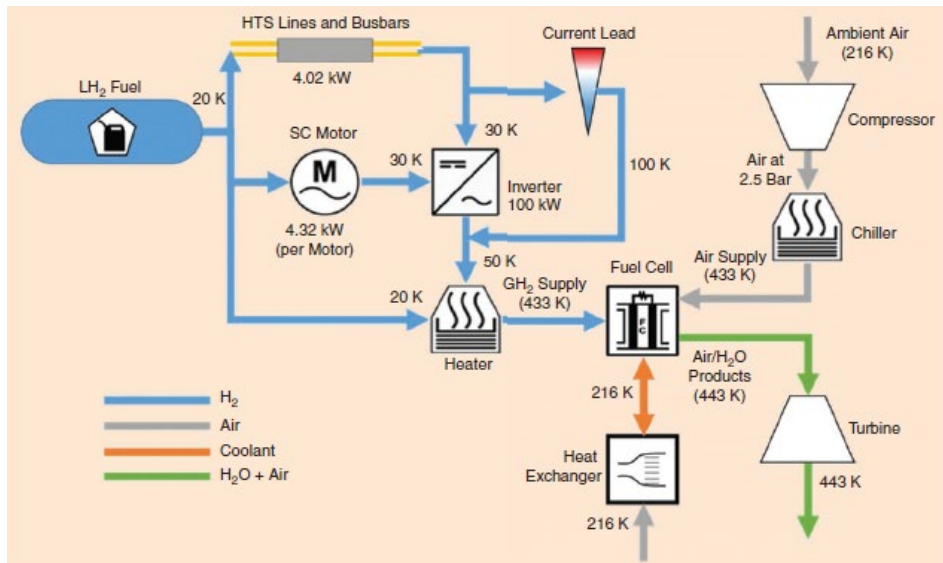
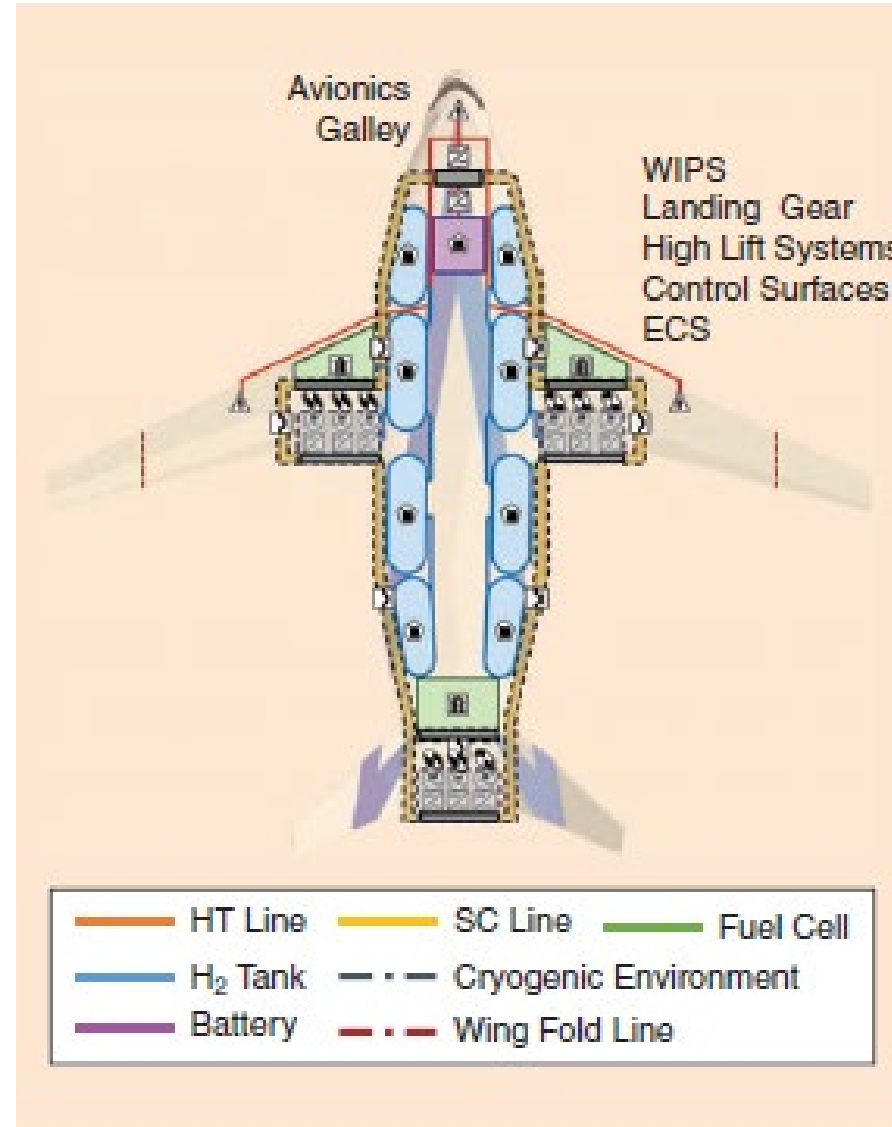
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# Example NASA ULI Project – CHEETA Led by UIC



- NASA University Leadership Initiative (ULI)
- Circa 2017 - 2022
- Integrated liquid hydrogen and cryogenic superconducting machines: generators and motors
- Also superconducting HTS lines and busbars
- Liquid flow to cryogenic inverters and power electronic components heatsinked to run at their nominal operating temperature.

*Source:* P. J. Ansell, "Hydrogen-Electric Aircraft Technologies and Integration: Enabling an environmentally sustainable aviation future," in IEEE Electrification Magazine, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 6-16, June 2022, doi: 10.1109/MELE.2022.3165721.

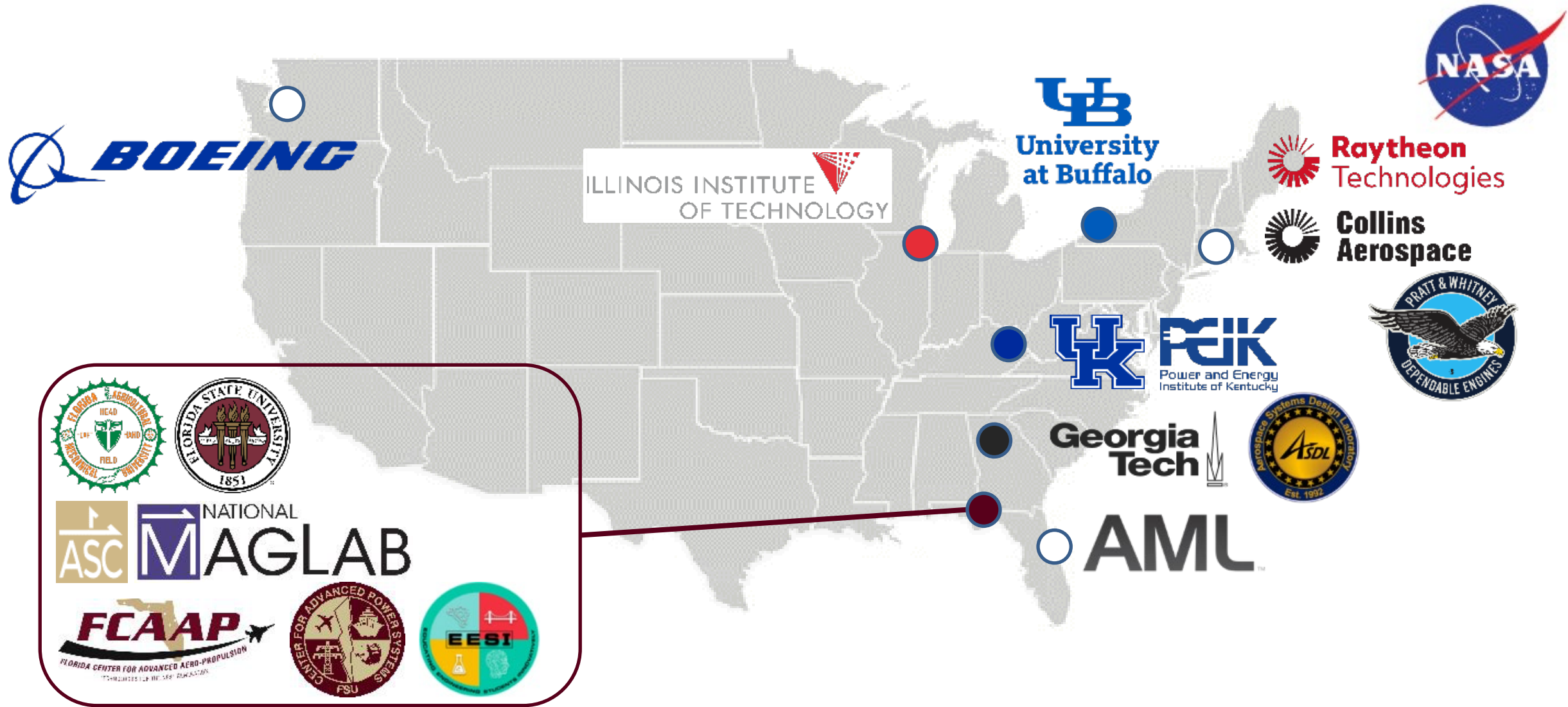
# NASA ULI IZEA – Integrated Zero Emission Aviation



Source: NASA IZEA Annual Review 2023.



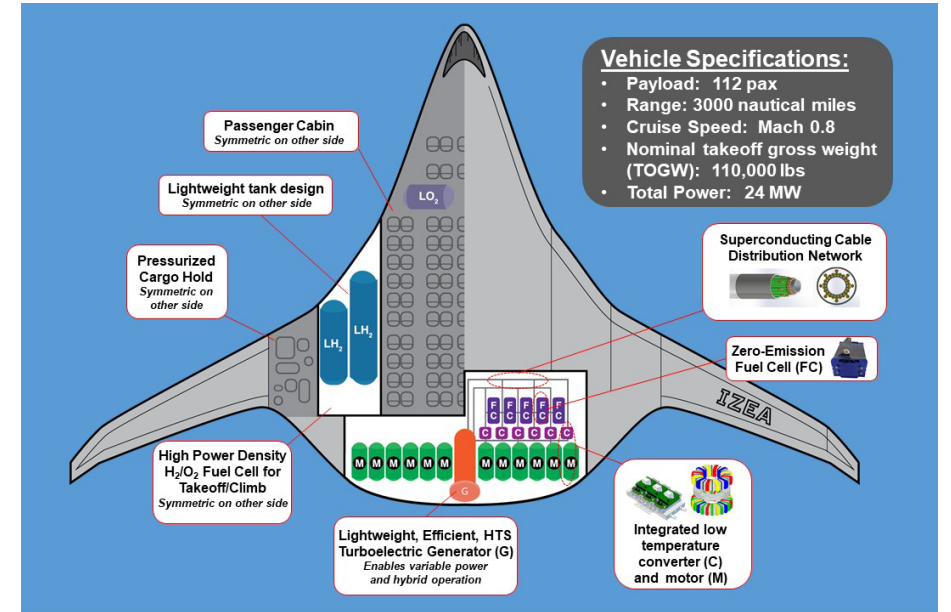
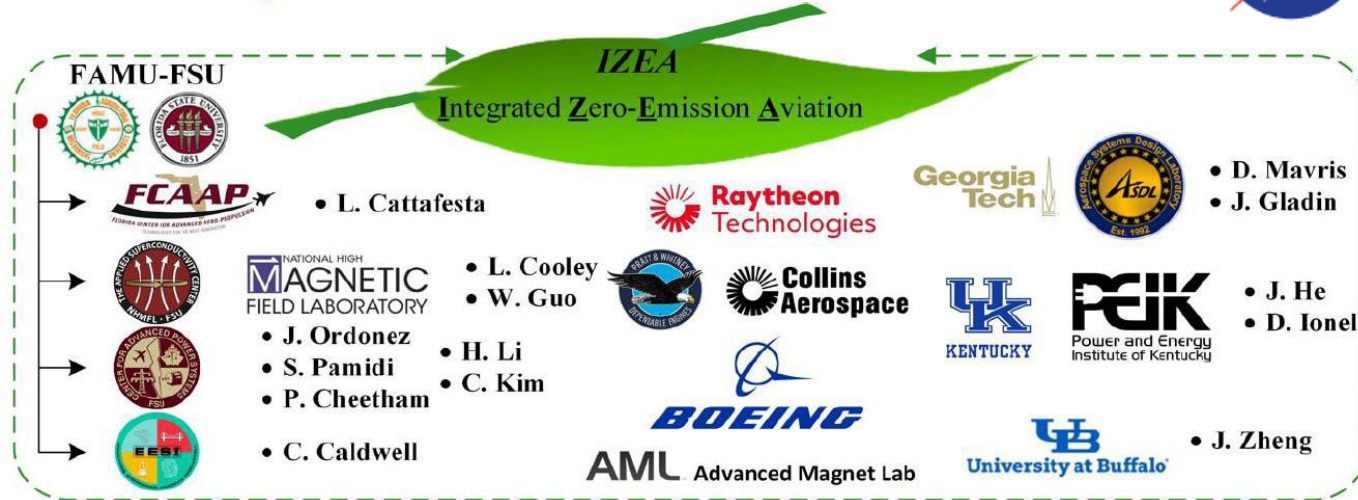
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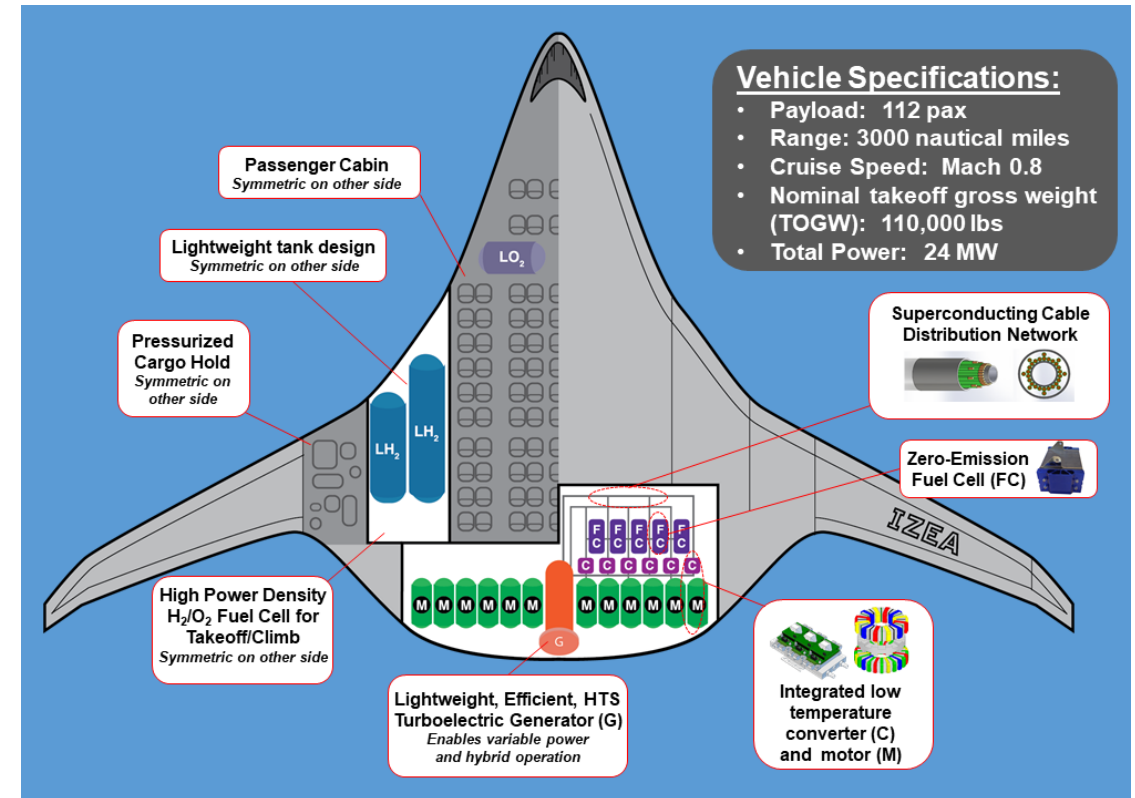
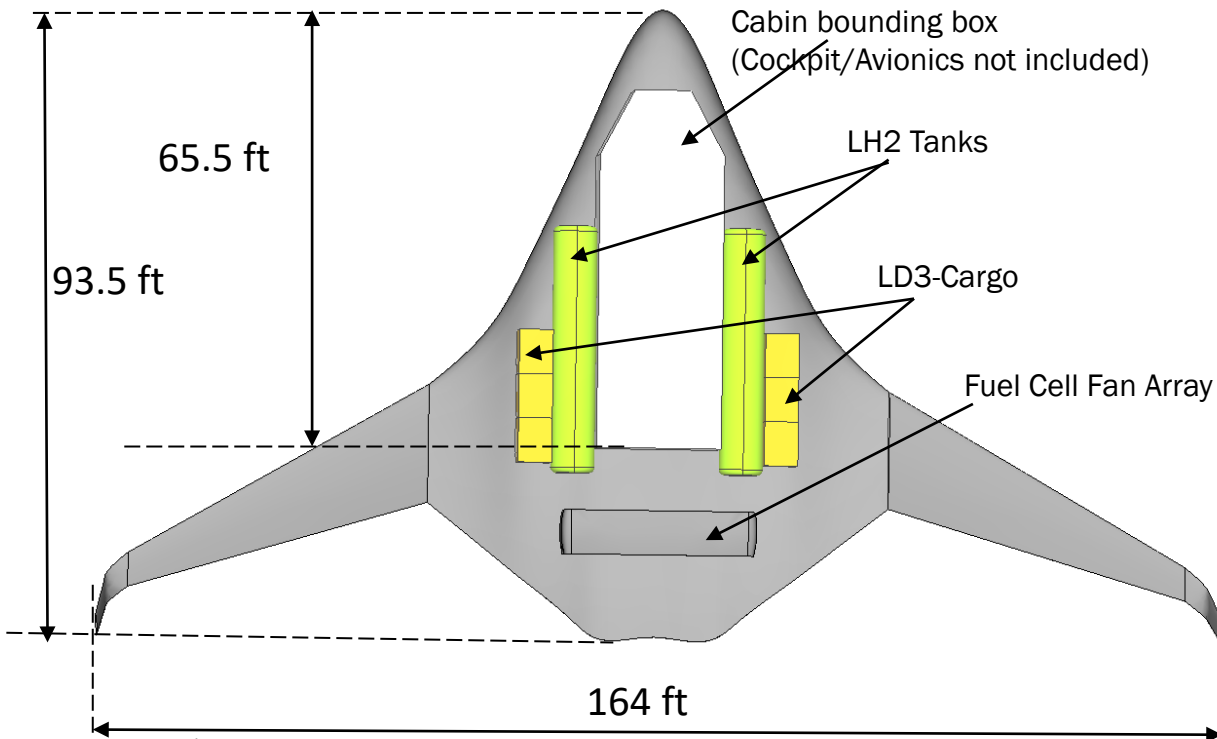
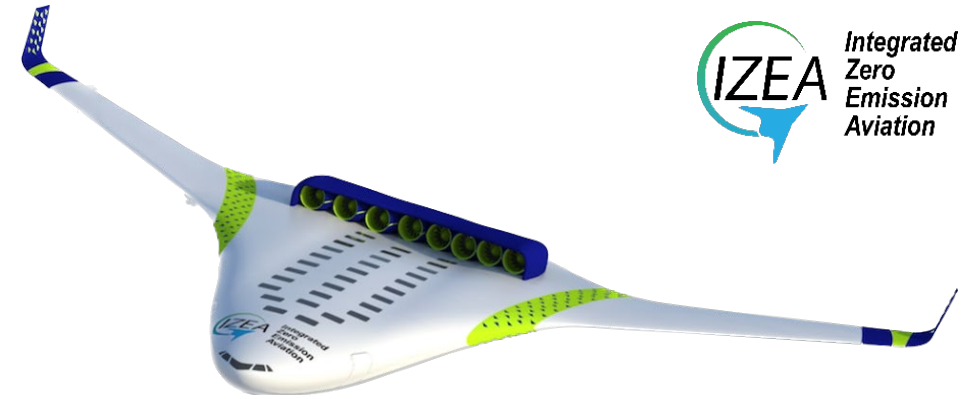
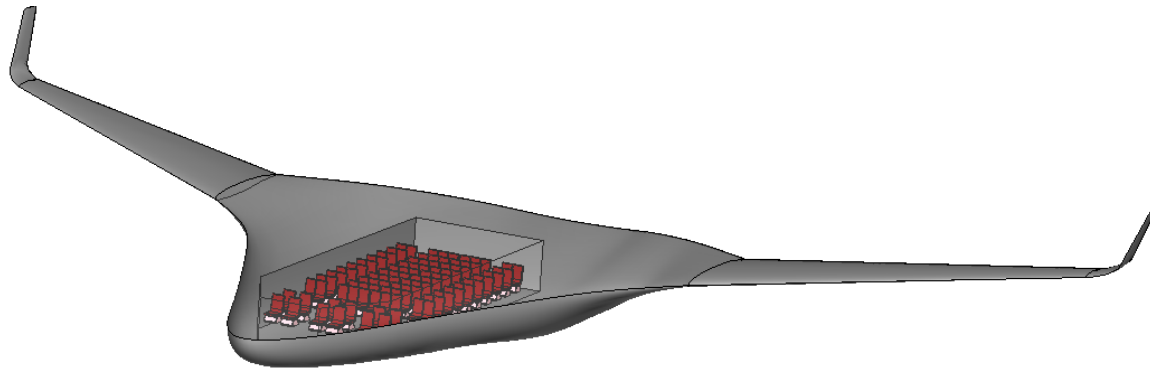
# NASA ULI Project IZEA – Framework and Concept

- NASA ULI program was established in 2017 and includes multiple projects
- Our project: Integrated Zero-Emission Aviation using a Robust Hybrid Architecture (IZEA)
- Five (5) years: 2022 - 2027
- Team members: 4 universities and 5 companies
- Lead, Florida State University
- At UK, electric machines and drives.



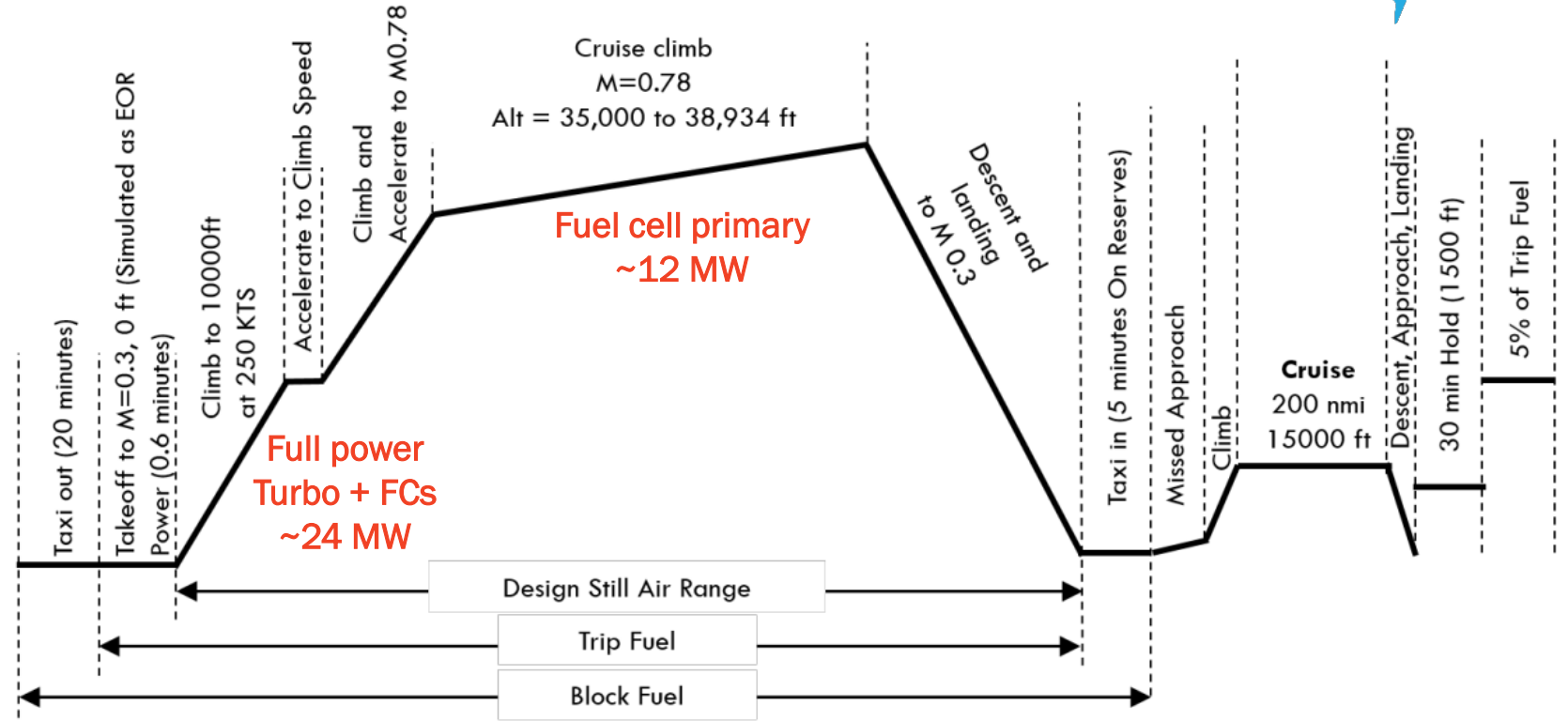
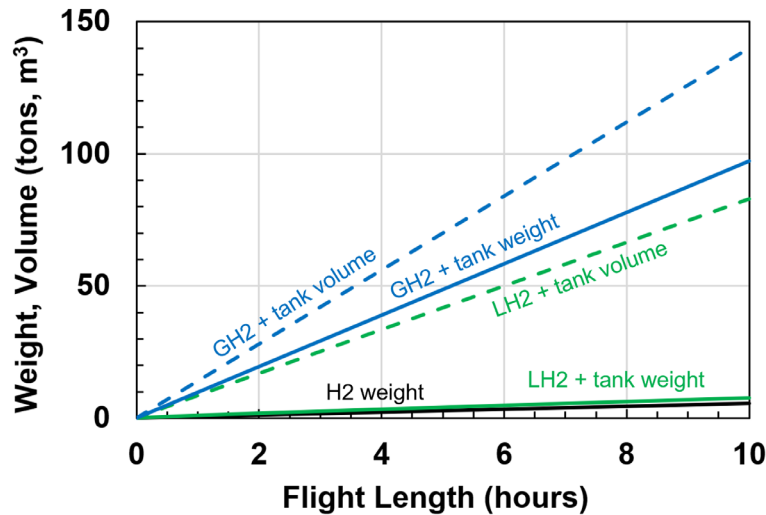
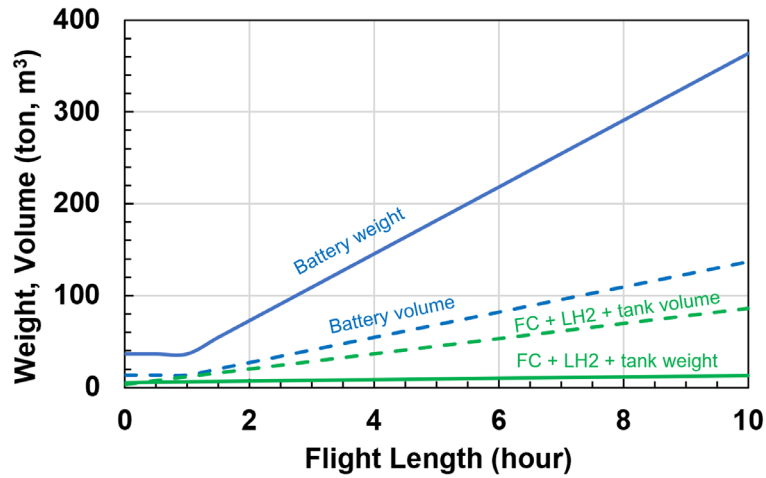
Source: NASA IZEA Annual Review 2023.

# IZEA Concept Aircraft



Source: NASA IZEA Annual Review 2023.

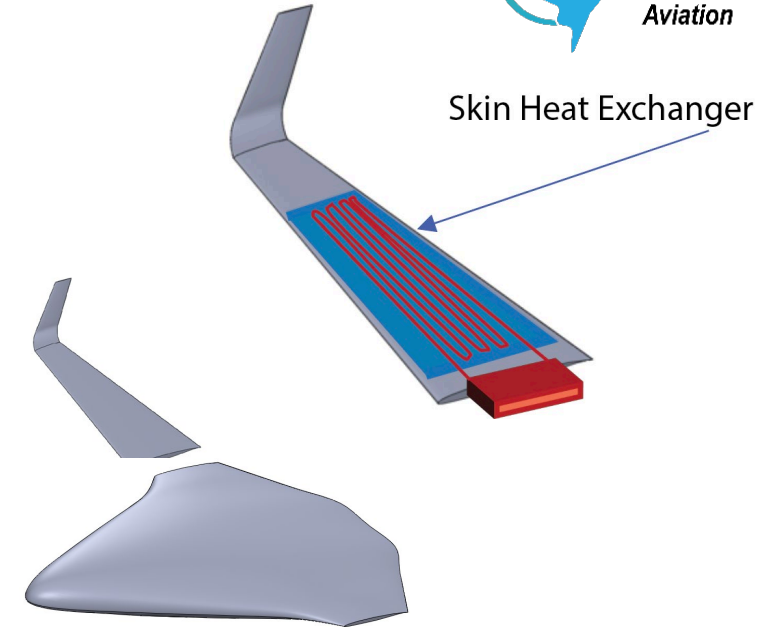
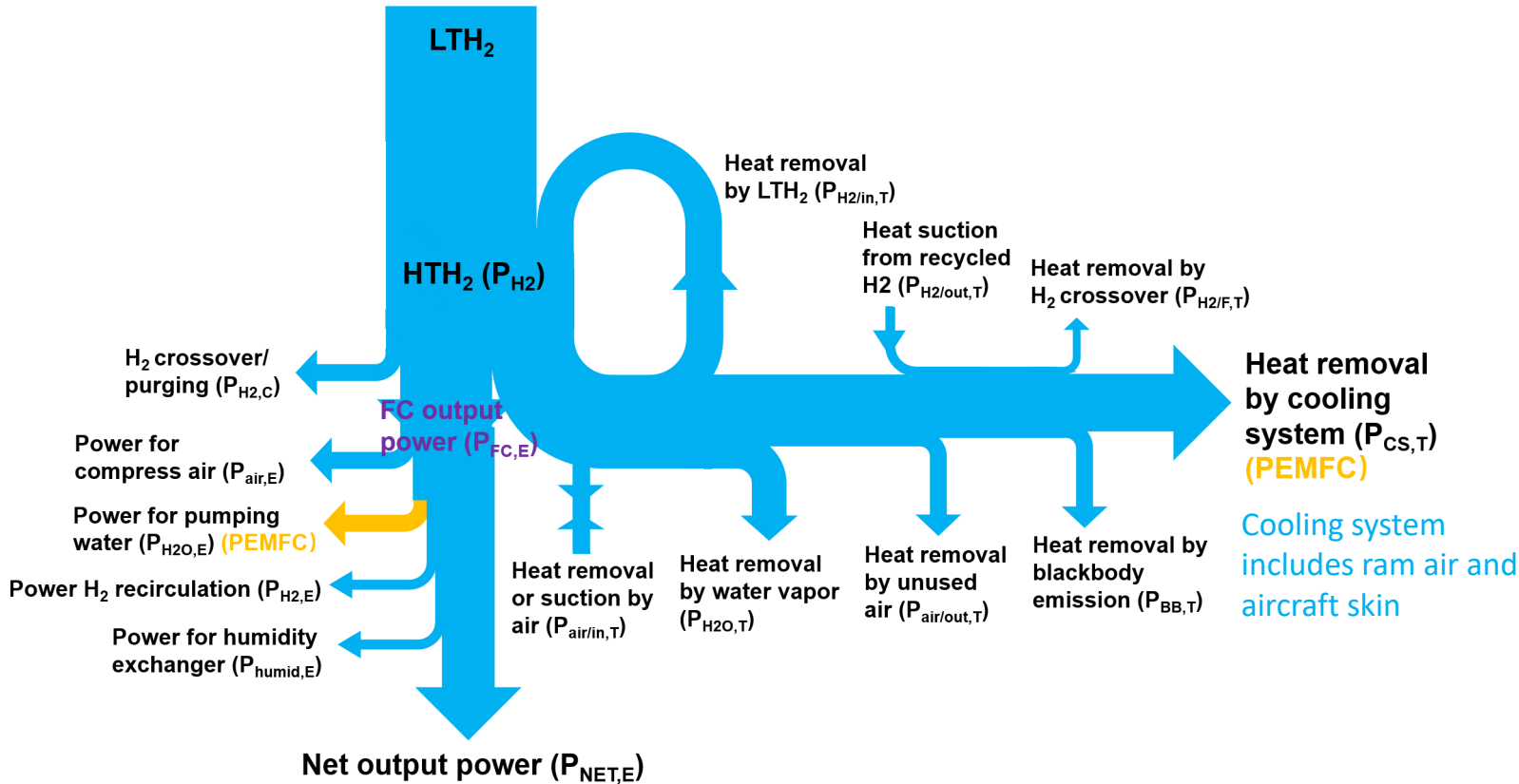
# Fuel and Typical Mission Profile



The liquid hydrogen significant advantage in gravimetric energy density vs. rechargeable batteries and compressed hydrogen. Example left graphs for a reference 10MW output power.

Source: NASA IZEA Annual Review 2023.

# Fuel Cell, Energy Conversion Efficiency, and Cooling



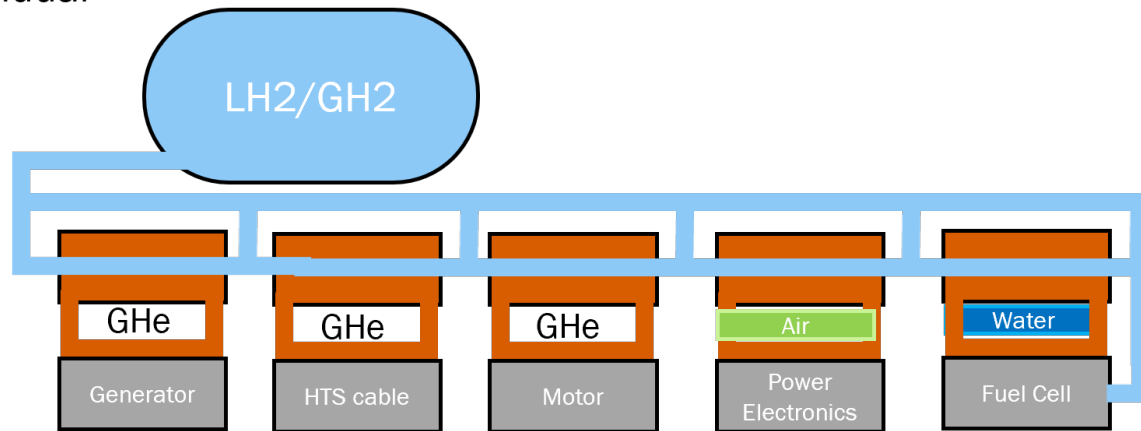
- Fuel Cells (FC), Proton Exchange Membrane (PEMFC), Solid Oxid Fuel Cells (SOFC)
- Energy conversion overall efficiency approx. 50%
- Substantial losses and hence cooling required, approx. 2/3 through radiator and the rest through skin heat exchanger.



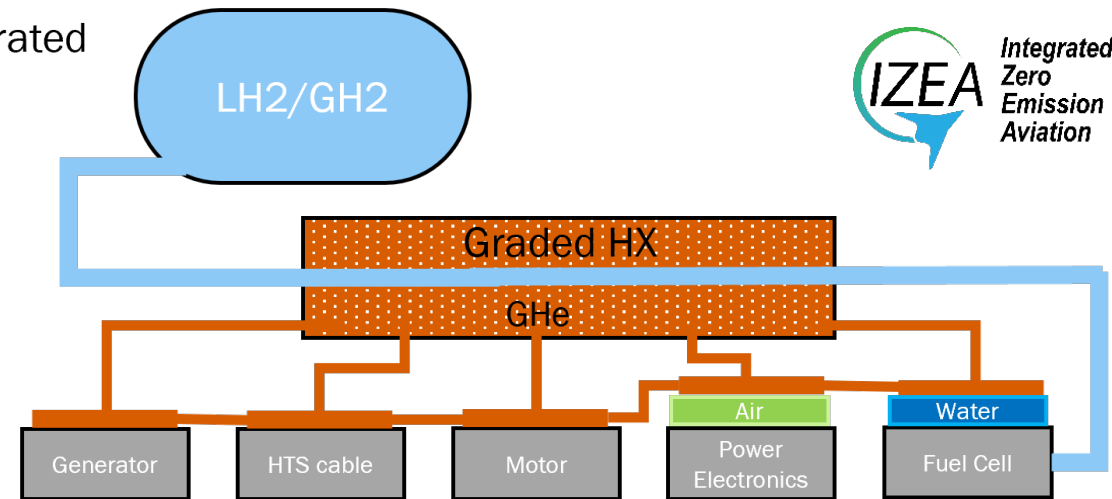
Source: NASA IZEA Annual Review 2023.

# Integrated Thermal Management System

Individual

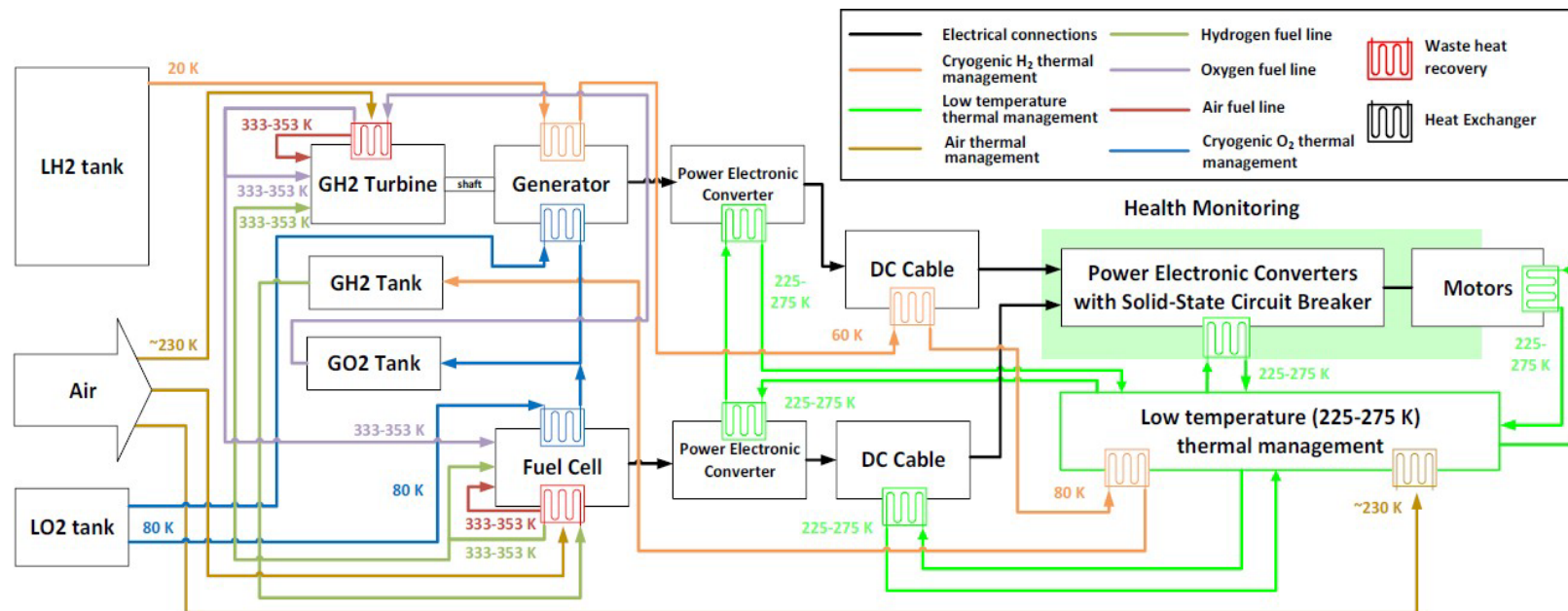


Integrated



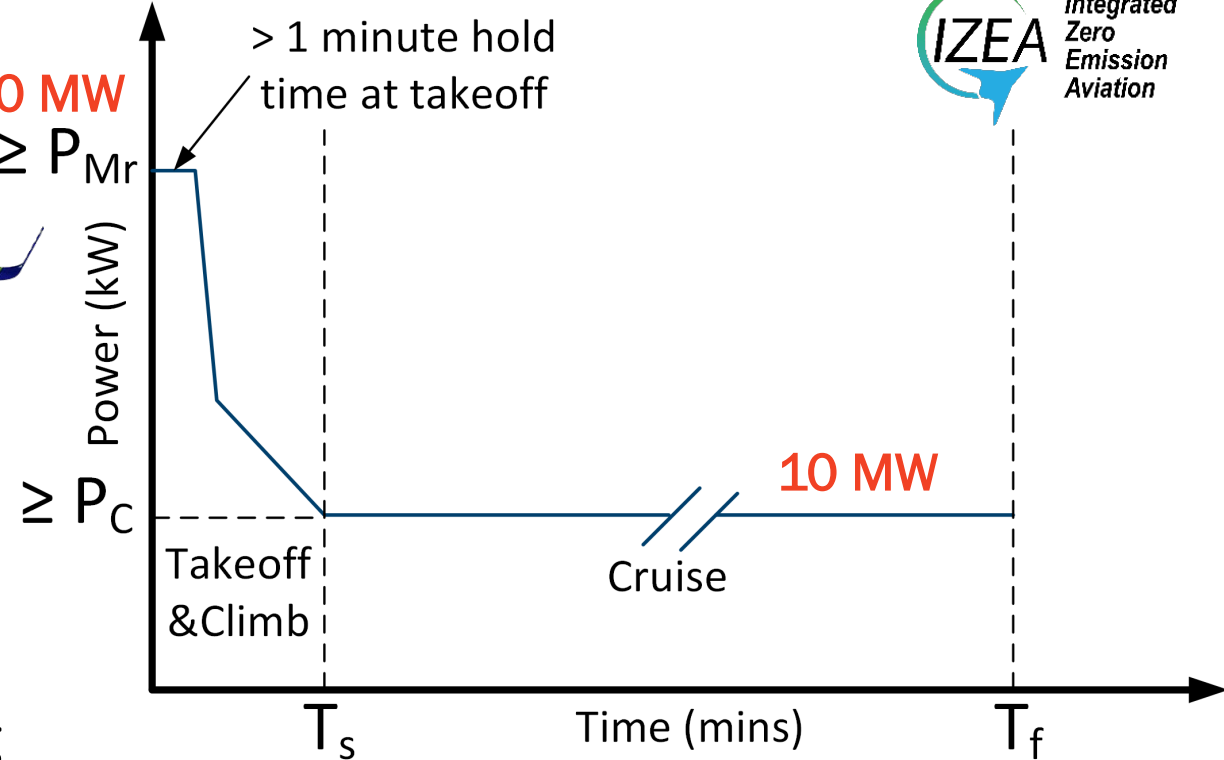
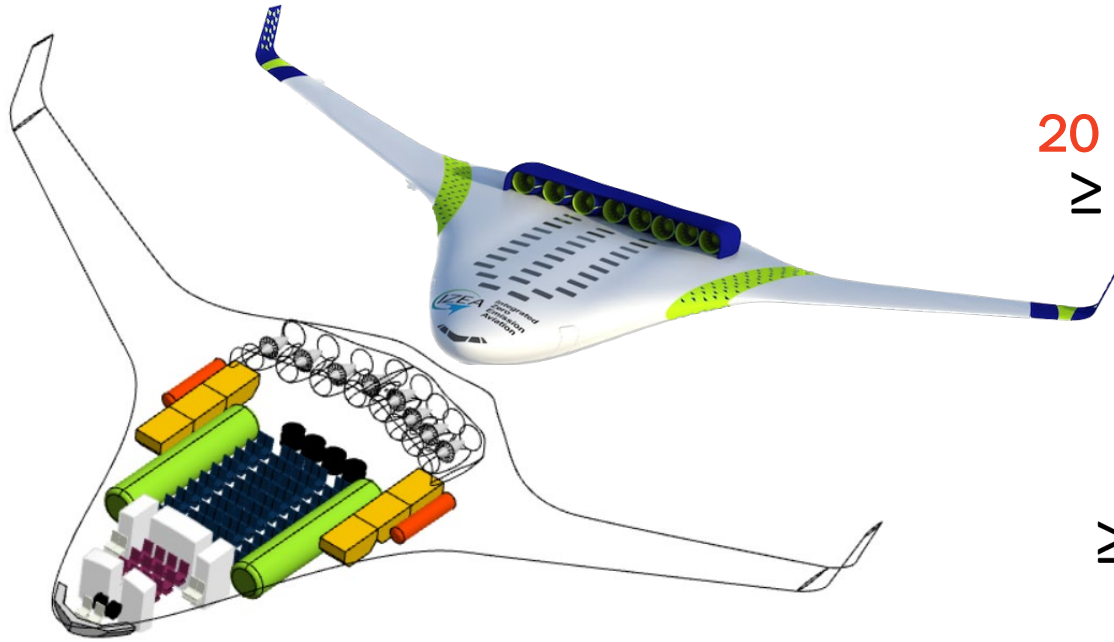
## Integration advantages

- Minimize heat leaks in HXs
- Simpler plumbing for LH2
- Versatile cooling on each component/subsystems
- Independent flow controls for resilient cooling.

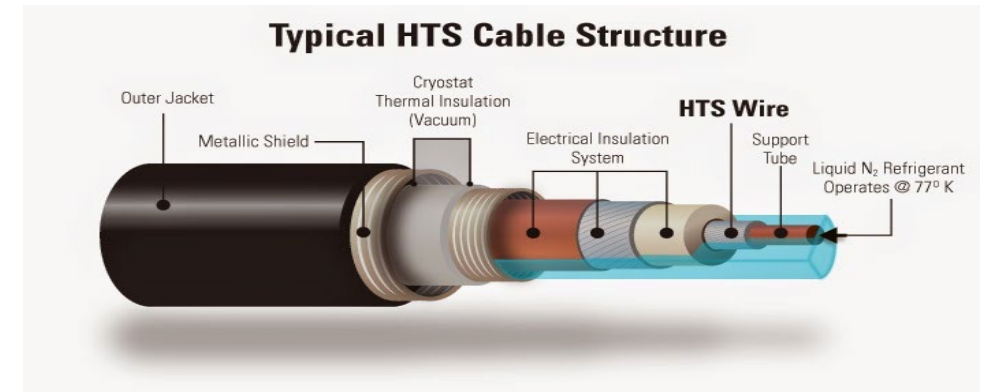


Source: NASA IZEA Annual Review 2023.

# H2, Tanks, Motors and Drives, Cables, and Mass Estimates



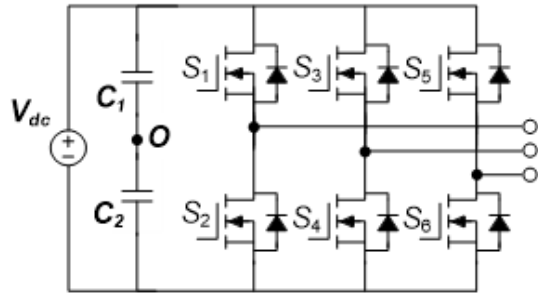
- Discussion; example ratings and estimates
- Tank mass incl. wall and insulation 2 x 500 kg
- Required hydrogen 2,000 kg for short mission (100min) incl. take off
- Consider 10 kW/kg for motor and PE drive
- IZEA plans to use HTS superconducting cables.



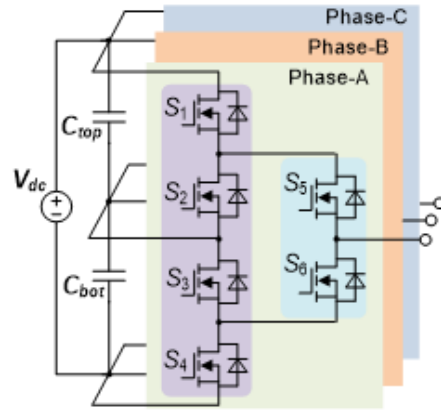
Source: NASA IZEA Annual Review 2023.

# IZEA Motor Drive Power Electronics – Topologies

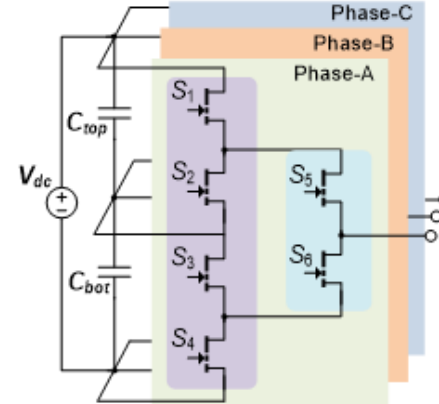
(1) SiC 2-Level



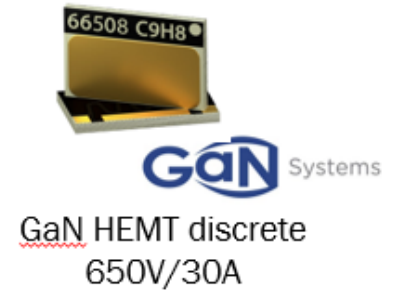
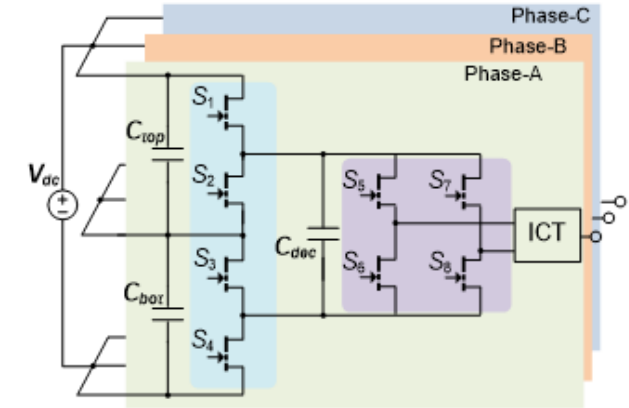
(2) SiC 3-Level



(3) Cryogenic GaN 3-Level



(4) Proposed cryogenic GaN 5-Level



- Constant DC-link voltage of 800V and selected switching frequency (by given rms phase current ripple percentage <3%) for each topology's simulation
- Losses calculated using  $E_{on}/E_{off}(I_{sw})$ ,  $R_{dson}(T_j)$  curves, based on experimental data at cryogenic temperatures for GaN.



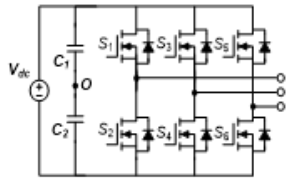
Source: NASA IZEA Annual Review 2023.



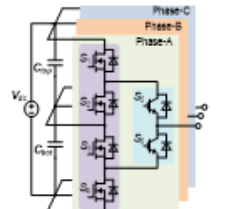
# IZEA Motor Drive Power Electronics – Losses and Efficiency

## Losses Comparison

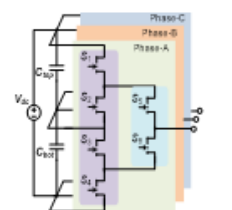
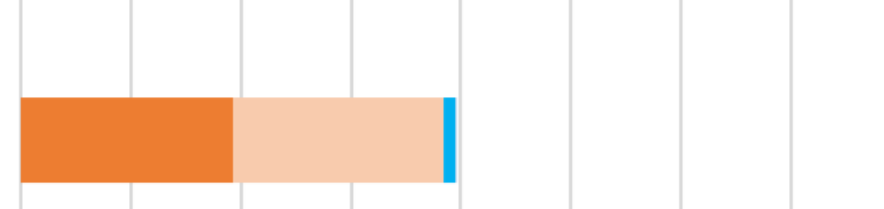
## Efficiency Comparison



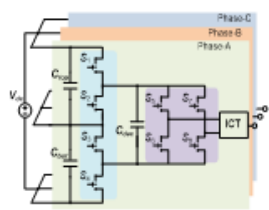
**SiC 2-Level**  
 $f_{sw} = 77\text{kHz}$



**SiC 3-Level**  
 $f_{sw} = 38.5\text{kHz}$



**Cryogenic GaN 3-Level**  
 $f_{sw} = 38.5\text{kHz}$



**Proposed Cryogenic GaN 5-Level**  
 $f_{sw} = 17.5\text{kHz}$



- HF Devices Conduction Losses
- LF Devices Conduction Losses
- HF Devices Switching Losses
- LF Devices Switching Losses

0 2000 4000 6000 8000 10000 12000 14000 16000 98.2 98.4 98.6 98.8 99 99.2 99.4 99.6  
 Device Losses (W) Efficiency (%)

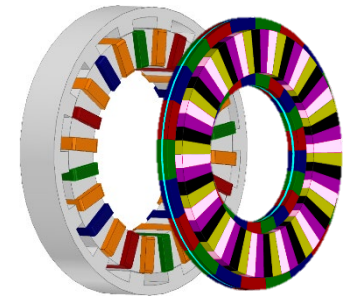
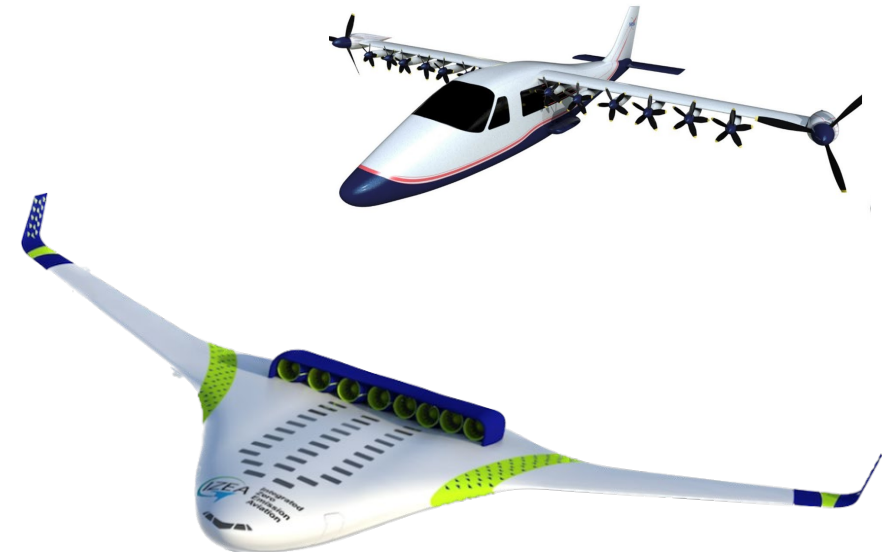


Source: NASA IZEA Annual Review 2023.

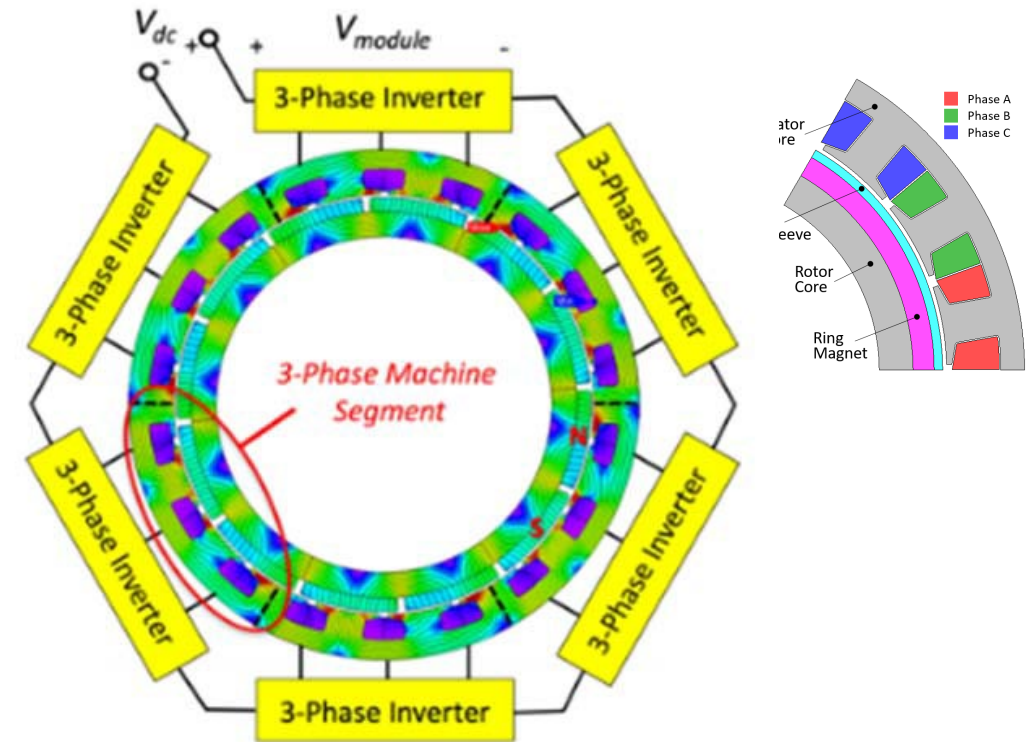
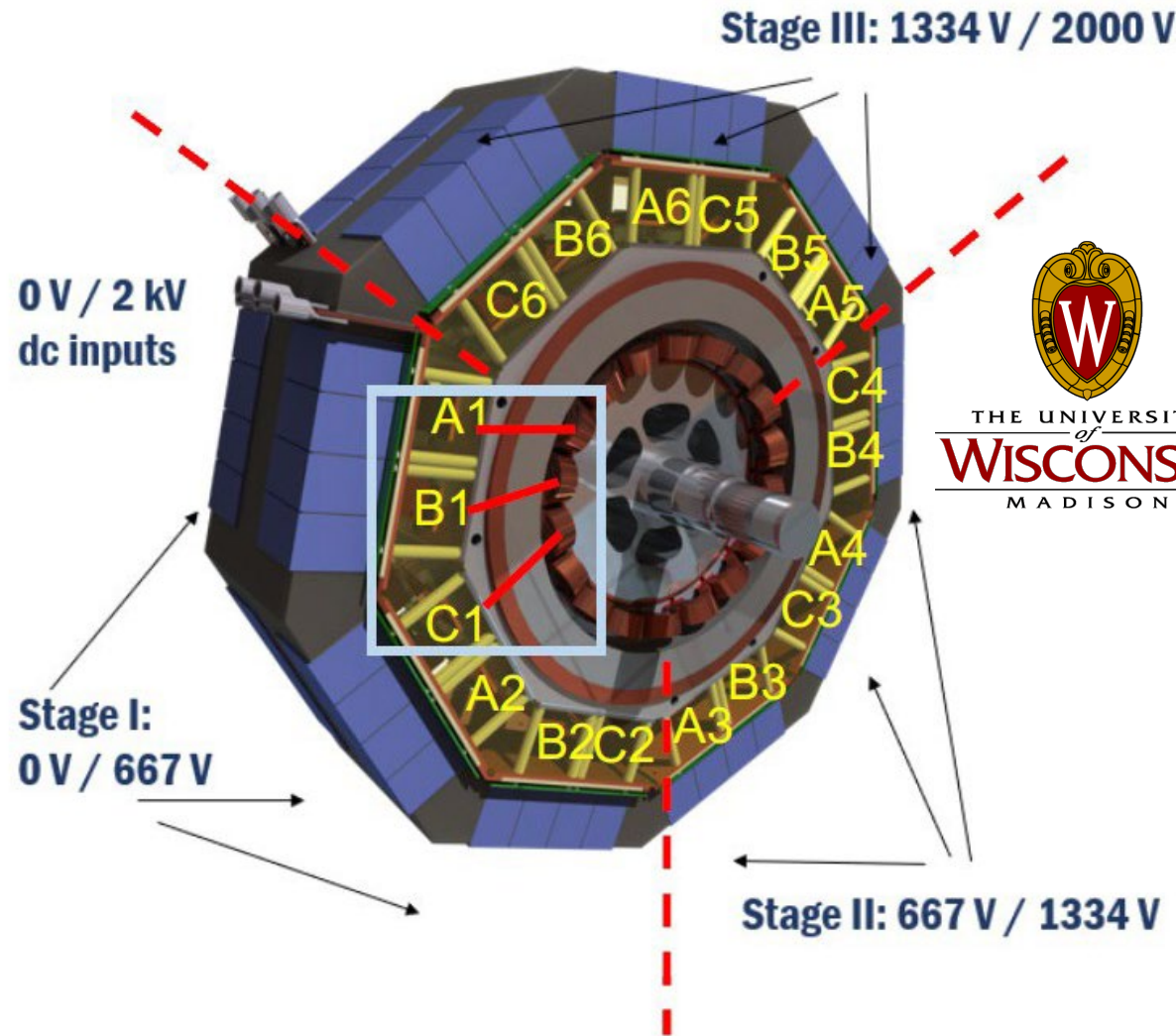
# Outline

## *Ongoing Research for Large Electric Aircraft Components and Systems*

- Introduction
- Major technical concepts and initiatives
- Optimal design of electric aircraft systems
- Battery-powered electric aircraft, NASA X-57
- Hydrogen-fueled electric aircraft, NASA ULI IZEA
- **Electric aircraft propulsion motor drive**
  - Review
  - **Innovative concept**
- Conclusion.



# Example Previous NASA ULI Sponsored Project - Wisconsin



- Integrated Motor Drive (IMD)
- Rated 1MW @ 20,000rpm
- Voltage 2kV, SiC
- Multiple stages/modules
- Special materials and technology.

Source: University of Wisconsin, J. Swanke et al., "Comparison of Modular PM Propulsion Machines for High Power Density," 2019 IEEE Transportation Electrification Conference and Expo (ITEC), Detroit, MI, USA, 2019, pp. 1-7, doi: 10.1109/ITEC.2019.8790587.

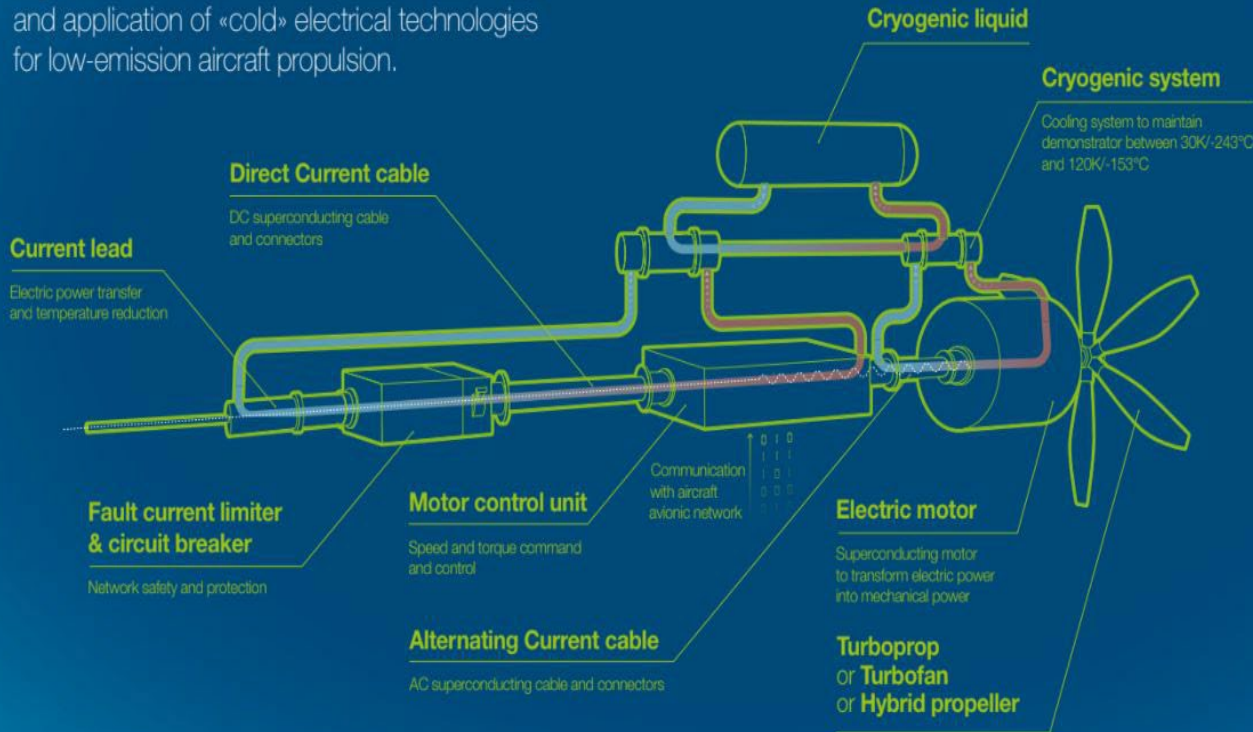
# Airbus ASCEND Project



## ASCEND

Advanced Superconducting & Cryogenic Experimental powertrain Demonstrator

A ground demonstrator to explore the feasibility and application of «cold» electrical technologies for low-emission aircraft propulsion.



Usage of superconducting and cryogenic technologies allows to\*:



Halve weight of components



Reduce voltage to below 500V



Halve electrical losses

\*compared to conventional technologies

AIRBUS

## Breakthrough high power electric systems

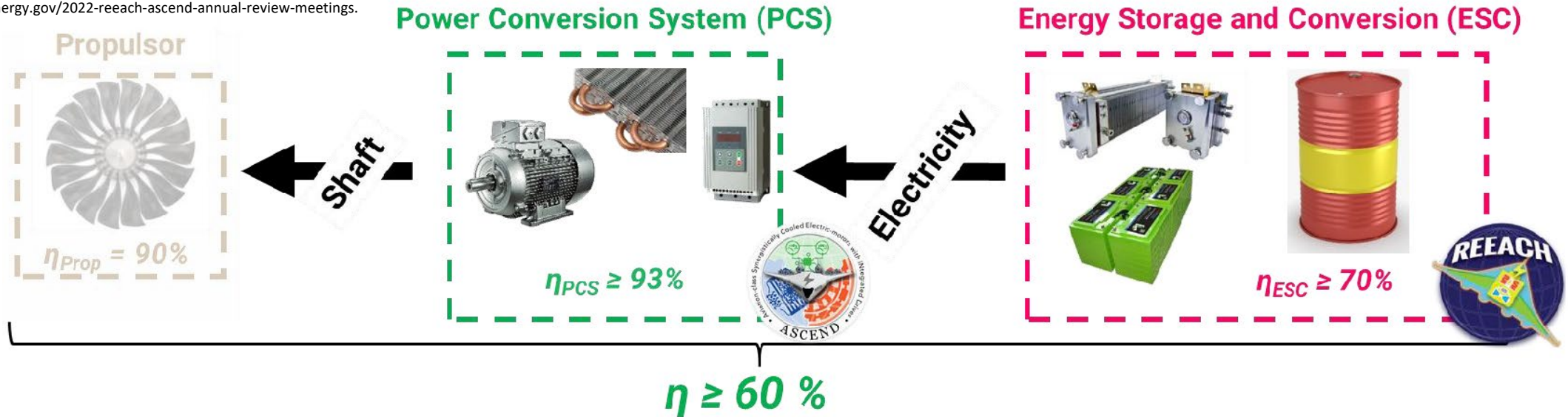
- Low voltage (< 500V)
- Reduce weight and volume
- Increase efficiency (+ 5-10%)
- Enable high torque motors, fault current limiters

## Cryogenic and Superconductivity

Source: Airbus ASCEND Project 2021  
<https://www.airbus.com/en/newsroom/stories/2021-03-cryogenics-and-superconductivity-for-aircraft-explained>

# ARPA- E ASCEND Specific Objectives

Source: Arpa-e, 2022 REEACH & ASCEND Annual Review Meetings  
<https://arpa-e.energy.gov/2022-reeach-ascend-annual-review-meetings>.



- Motor + PE + TMS system
- Electric aircrafts with high propulsive power during the takeoff and climb phases
- A fraction (25-35%) of the peak propulsive power during the cruise phase
- Typical demonstrator ratings
  - 250kW at 5,000rpm
  - All-electric propulsion:  $\geq 12$  kW/kg
  - All-electric propulsion cruise nominal eff:  $\geq 93\%$
  - Power electronics PE (including TMS): 30kW/kg and 98% eff
  - Electric motor: 5kW/kg.

# ARPA-E ASCEND Technology Chart

Source: Arpa-e, 2022 REEACH & ASCEND Annual Review Meetings  
<https://arpa-e.energy.gov/2022-reeach-ascend-annual-review-meetings>.

## Motor Cooling Technology

Superconducting – 20 K

Superconducting – 65K

Cryogenic – 120K

Adv. Coolants

Zeolite assisted,  
Mic.channel

Embedded heat pipes

Two-phase liquid-vapor

Direct liquid cooling

Air cooled



GE Global Research



MARQUETTE  
UNIVERSITY



Honeywell  
Aerospace

AML



Raytheon  
Technologies  
Research Center

Hyper Tech Research, Inc.



Raytheon  
Technologies  
Research Center

Motor Technology

Radial flux  
Halbach PM

Radial flux  
dual Halbach

Axial flux  
dual Halbach

3D / U-shape  
array magnets

Induction

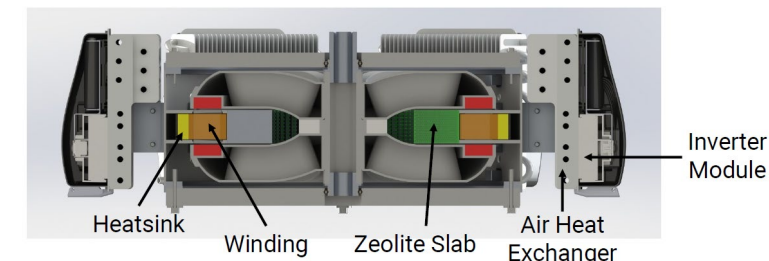
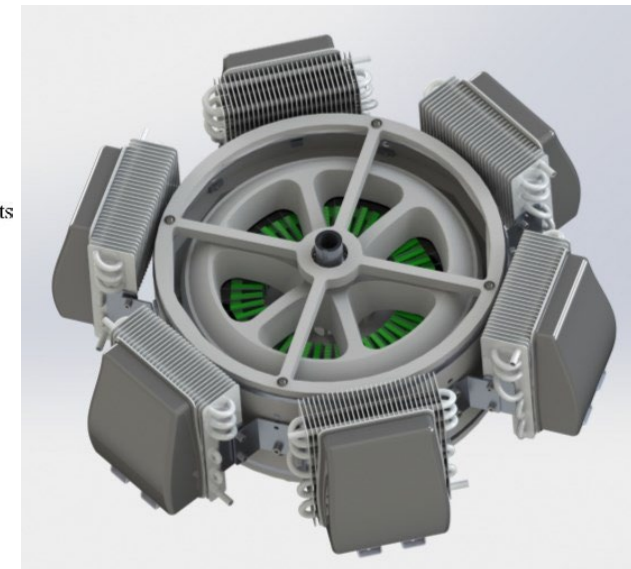
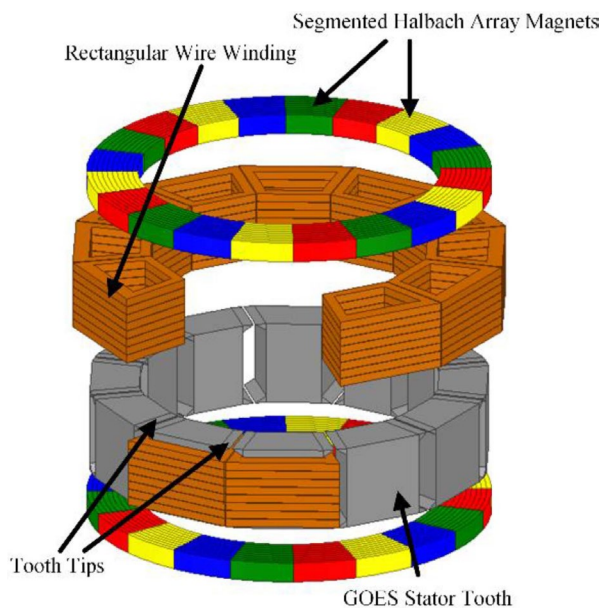
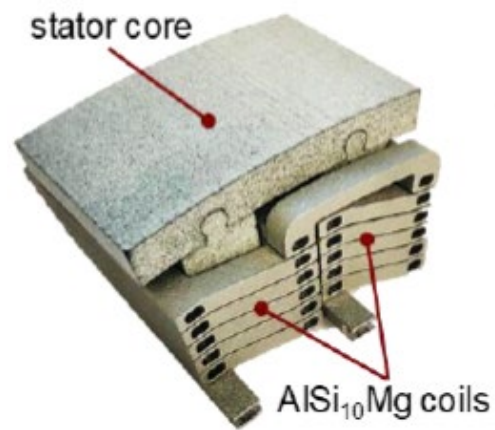
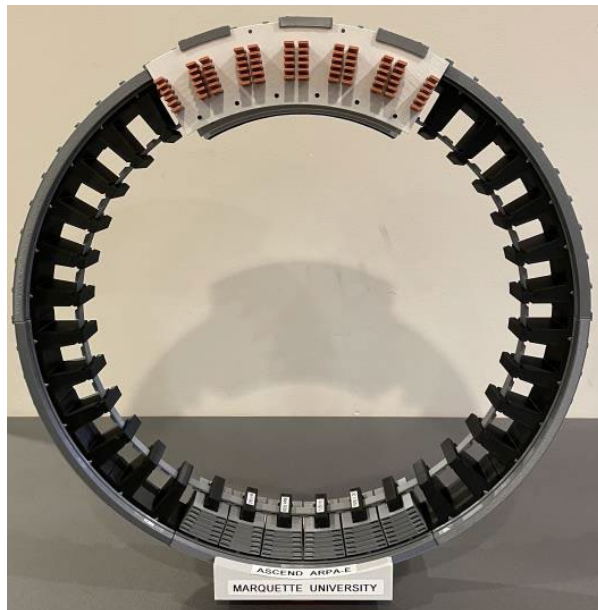
Axial flux  
Reluctance

Radial flux  
Air core



... Note the equivalent search for the one-best topology ...

# Halbach Array and Integrated Cooling Examples



**Source:** Texas A&M, Talebi, Dorsa, et al. "Electromagnetic design characterization of a dual rotor axial flux motor for electric aircraft." IEEE Transactions on Industry Applications 58.6 (2022): 7088-7098  
**See also:** Arpa-e, 2022 REEACH & ASCEND Annual Review Meetings <https://arpa-e.energy.gov/2022-reeach-ascend-annual-review-meetings>.

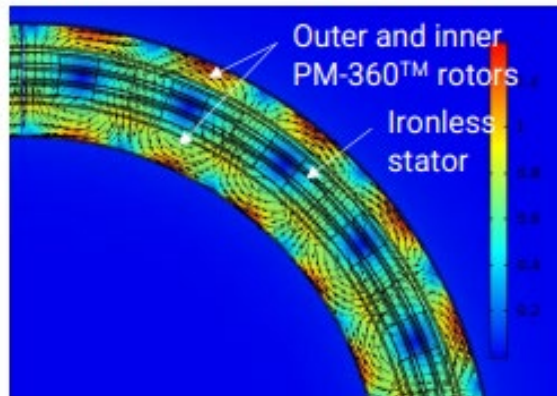
**Main source:** ARPA-E 2022 annual review public presentations

**Credits:** Left – Marquette University *et al*, Right – Texas A&M *et al*.

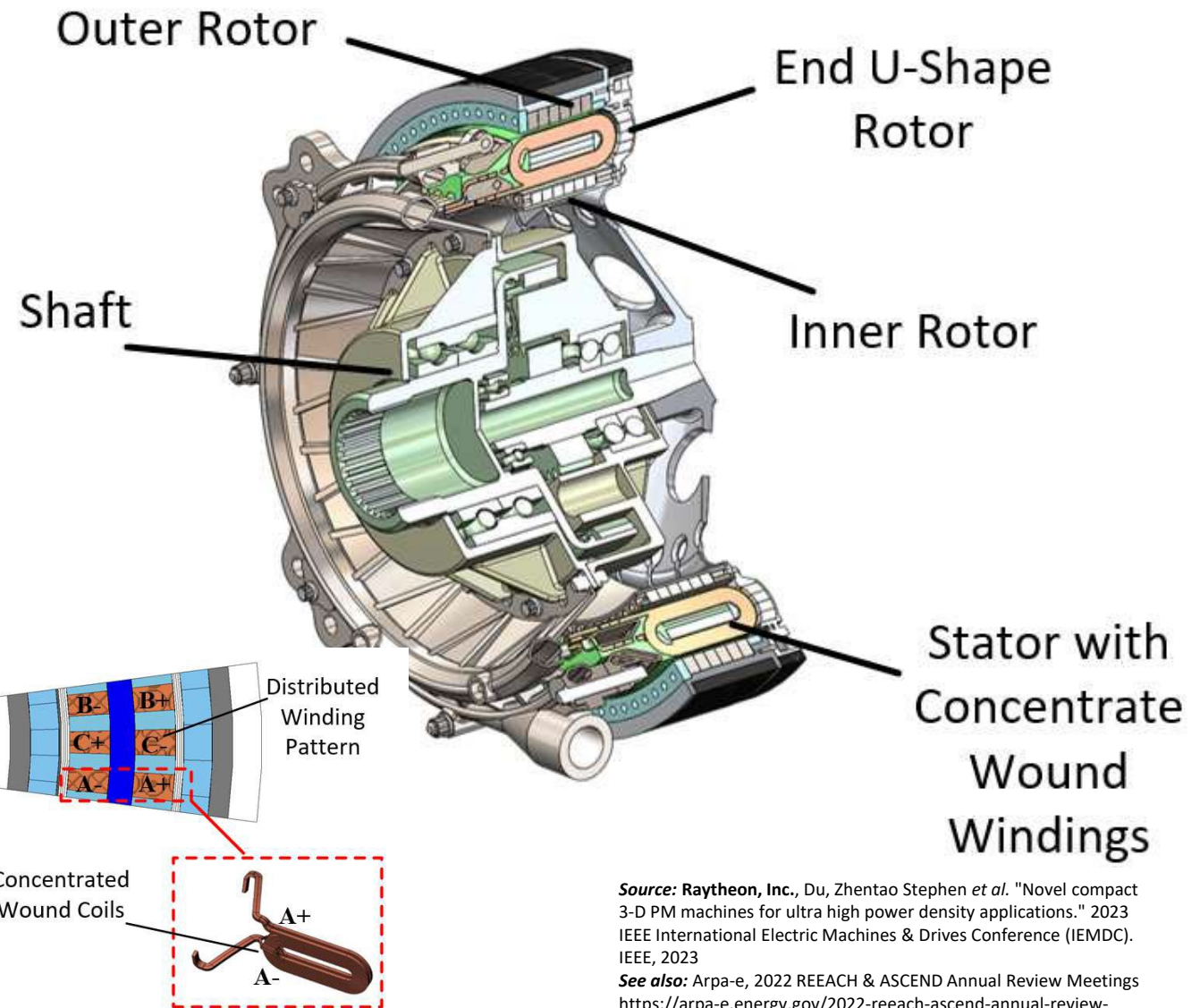
# Halbach Arrays and Multiple Airgaps Examples



**Source:** AML, Inc., Luongo, Cesar A. *et al.* "Next generation more-electric aircraft: A potential application for HTS superconductors." IEEE Transactions on applied superconductivity 19.3 (2009): 1055-1068  
**See also:** Arpa-e, 2022 REEACH & ASCEND Annual Review Meetings <https://arpa-e.energy.gov/2022-reeach-ascend-annual-review-meetings>.



PM-360™

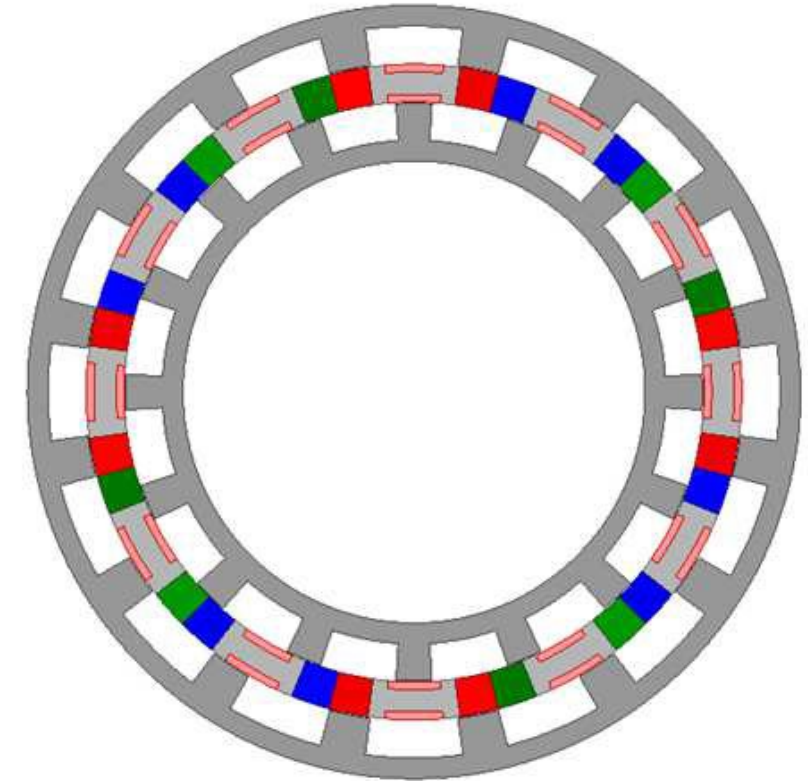
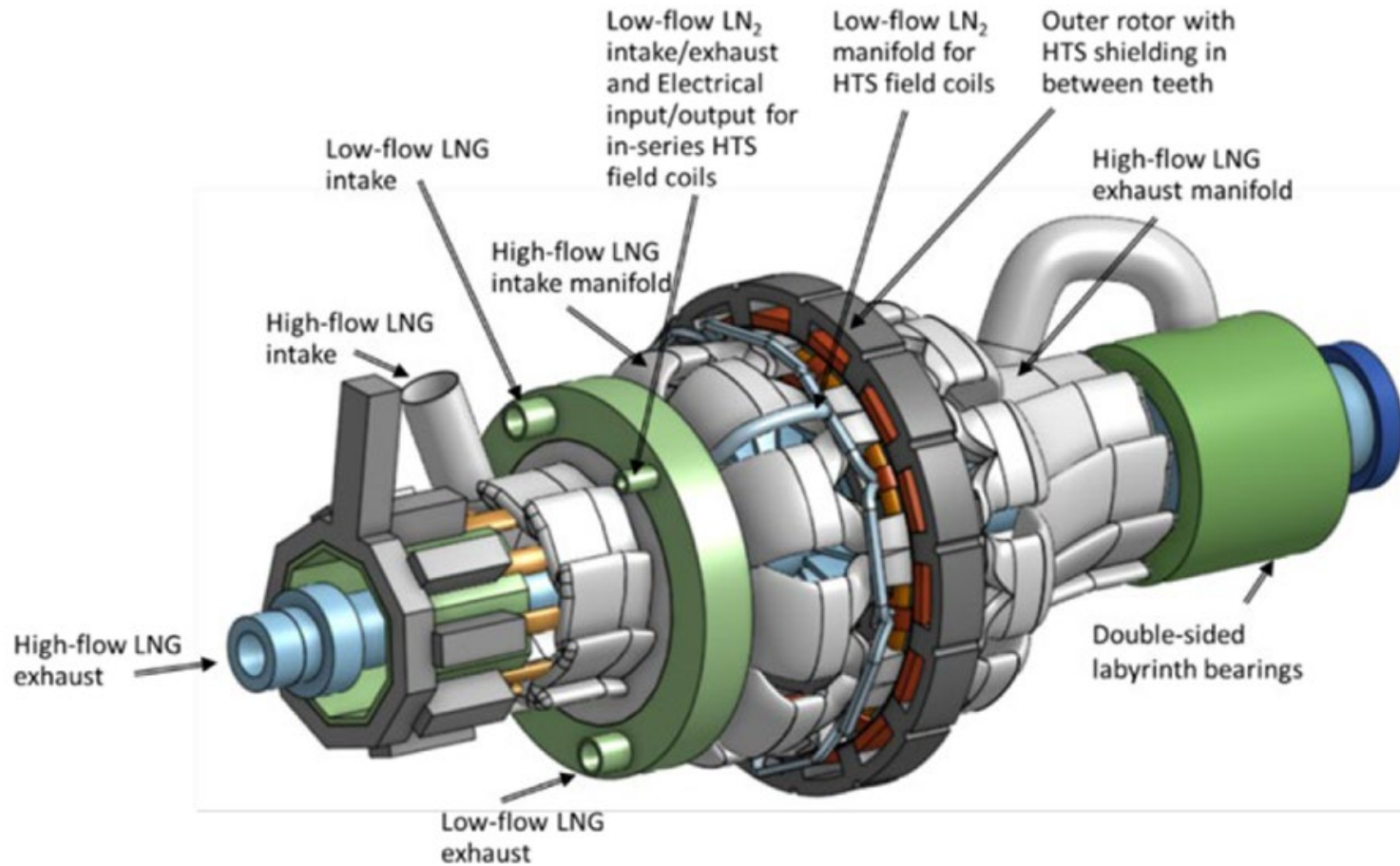


**Source:** Raytheon, Inc., Du, Zhenao Stephen *et al.* "Novel compact 3-D PM machines for ultra high power density applications." 2023 IEEE International Electric Machines & Drives Conference (IEMDC). IEEE, 2023  
**See also:** Arpa-e, 2022 REEACH & ASCEND Annual Review Meetings <https://arpa-e.energy.gov/2022-reeach-ascend-annual-review-meetings>.

**Main source:** ARPA-E 2022 annual review public presentations  
**Credits:** Left – AML, Inc. *et al*, Right – Raytheon, Inc. *et al*.



# Cryogenically-cooled Superconducting Flux Switching



**Source:** UC Santa Cruz, Saeidabadi, Saeid, et al. "Flux switching machines-for all-electric aircraft applications." 2022 International Conference on Electrical Machines (ICEM). IEEE, 2022

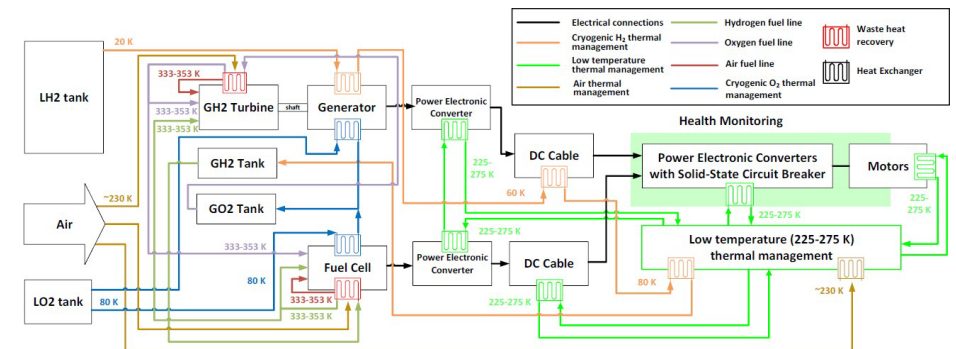
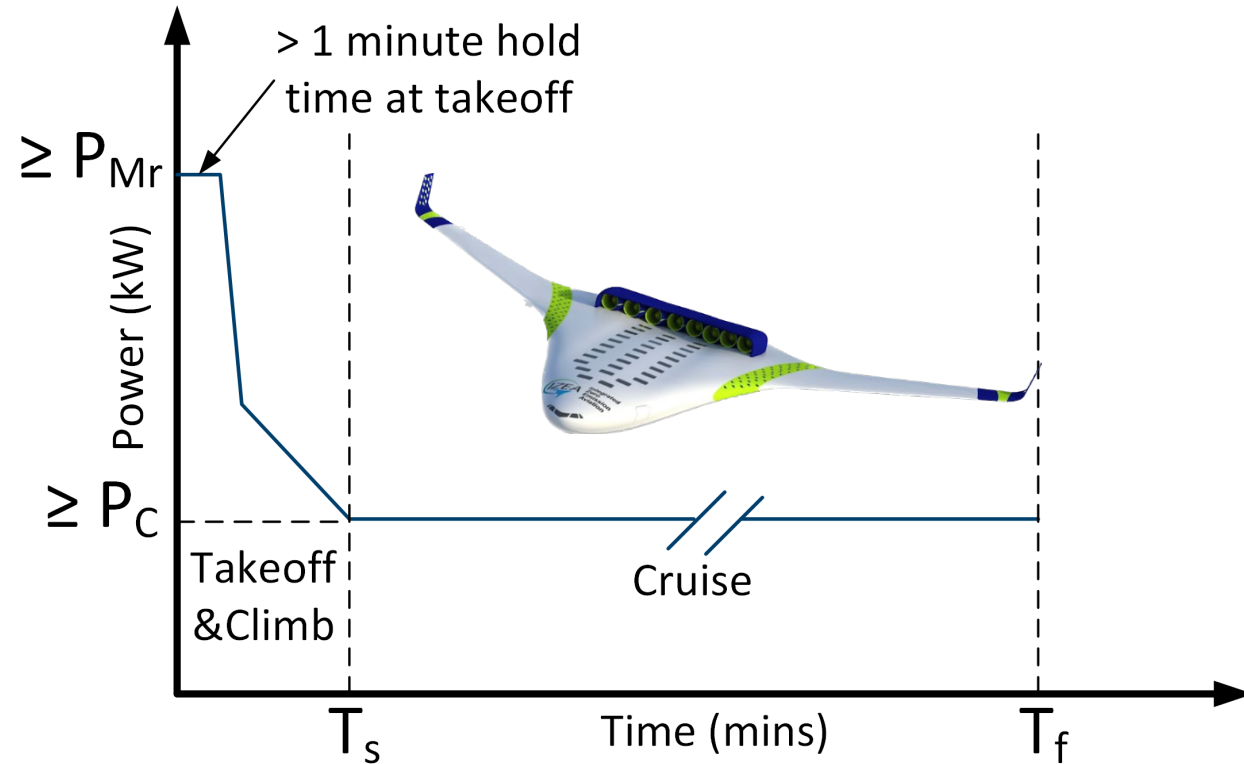
**See also:** Arpa-e, 2022 REEACH & ASCEND Annual Review Meetings <https://arpa-e.energy.gov/2022-reeach-ascend-annual-review-meetings>.

**Main source:** ARPA-E 2022 annual review public presentations

**Credits:** University of California Santa Cruz and AFRL

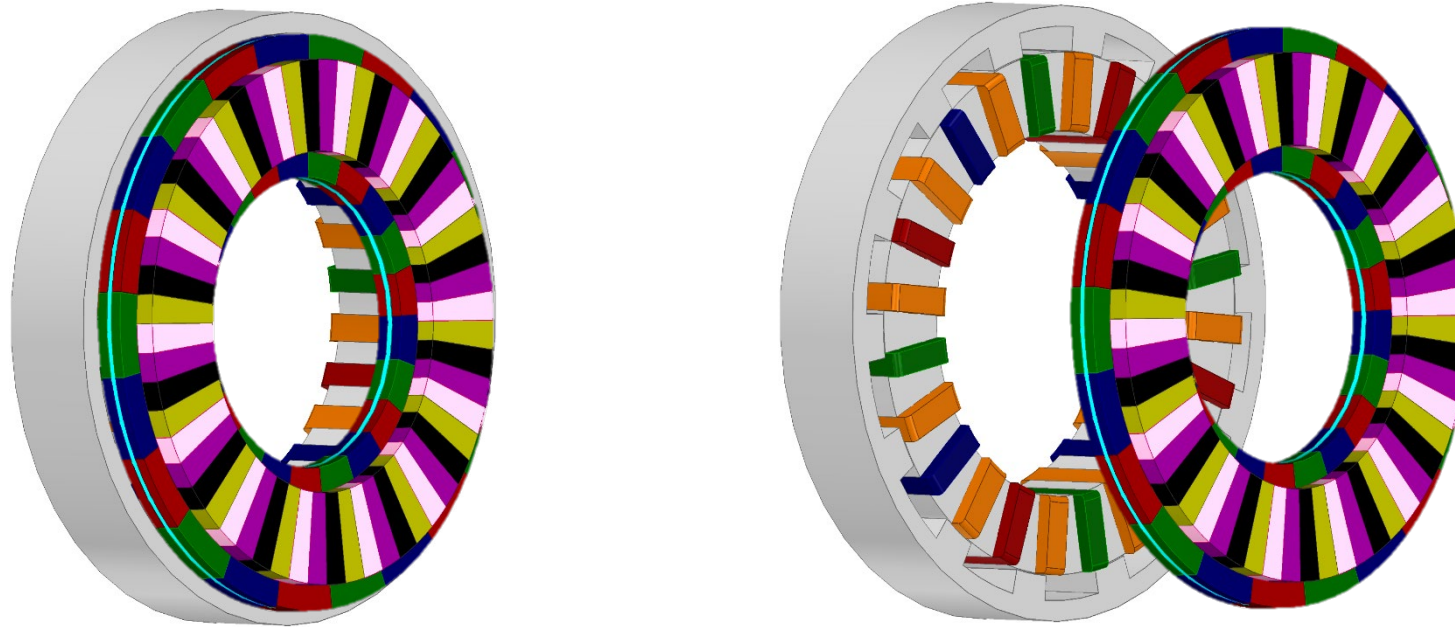
# IZEA - Electric Propulsion Motor Requirements

- Multiple (8) multi-MW motors
- Conflicting objectives
  - Ultra-high efficiency
  - Light and small, i.e. very high kW/kg
  - Best fault tolerance
  - Most reliable
- Note the high ratio between short and long-term power rating
- Cryogenically cooled, but not superconducting winding
- Considered voltage 800-1,100Vdc.



Source: NASA IZEA Annual Review 2023.

# Innovative One-Motor Two-Stages Four-Modules Concept

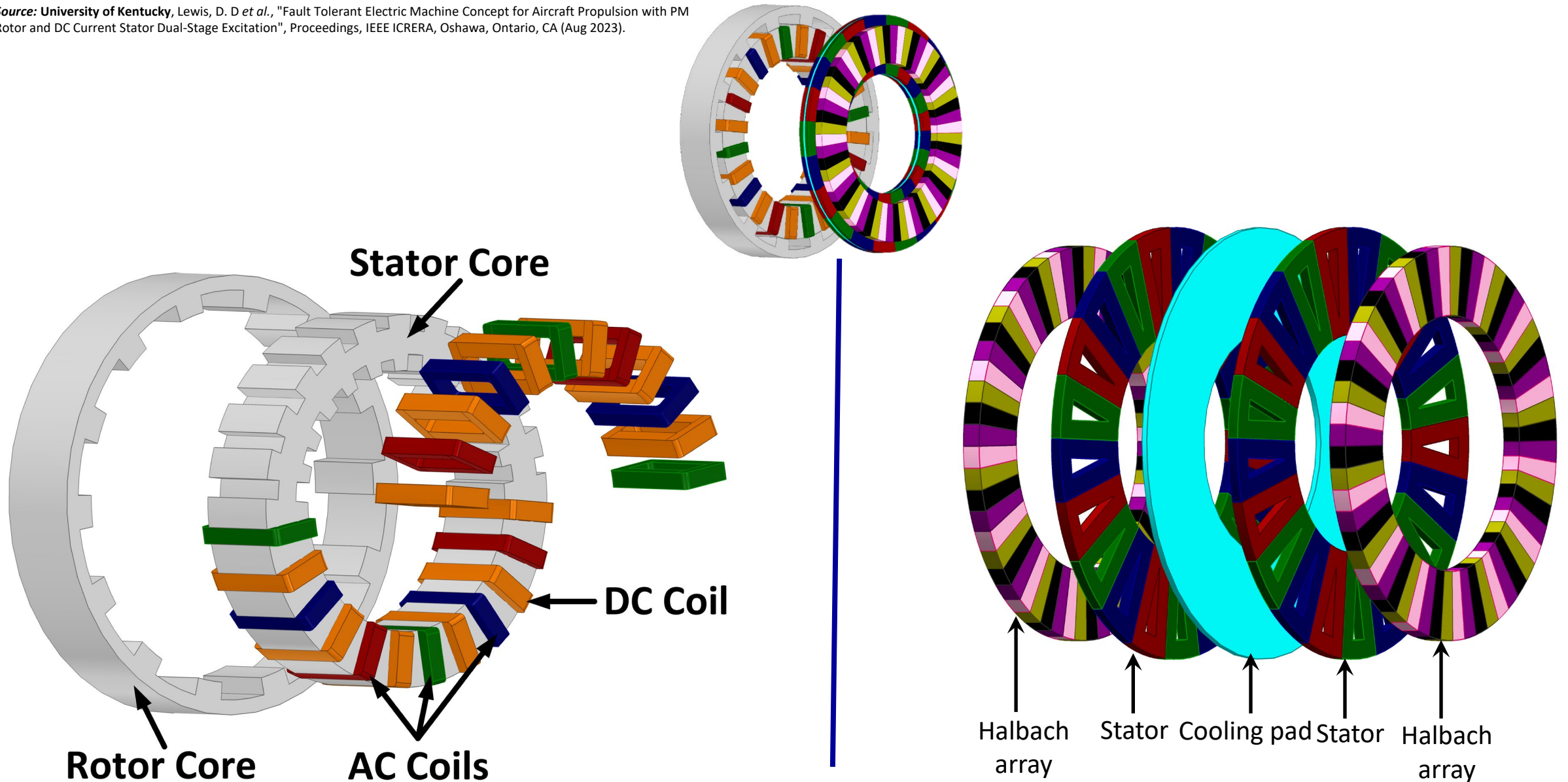


- **Aim for best combination of fault tolerance, specific power, and efficiency.**
- Two stages / electromagnetic units, each with two stator modules and two inverters
- One special emag sync (no PM): radial flux with outer rotor, AC 3-phase, winding, DC stator excitation, concentrated non-overlapping toroidal coils, robust reluctance consequent-pole rotor, *operates only during take off and max power regime*
- One special PM sync: axial flux dual rotor, Halbach PM arrays, coreless stator(s); *operates at all times.*

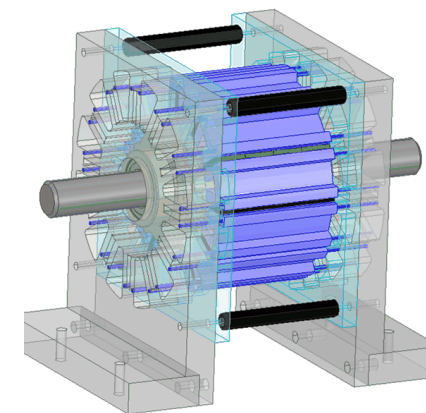
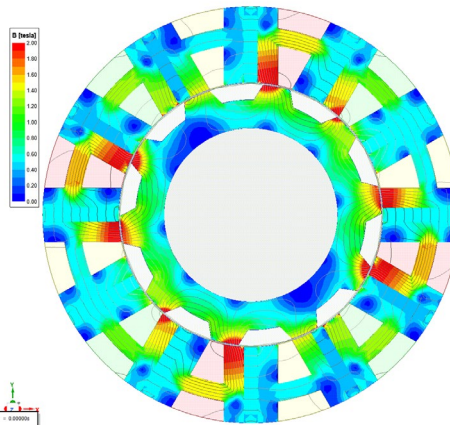
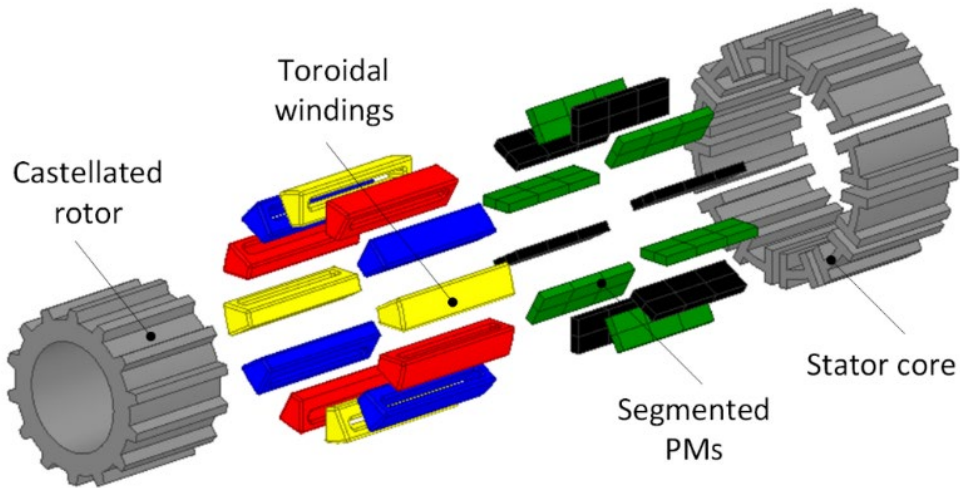
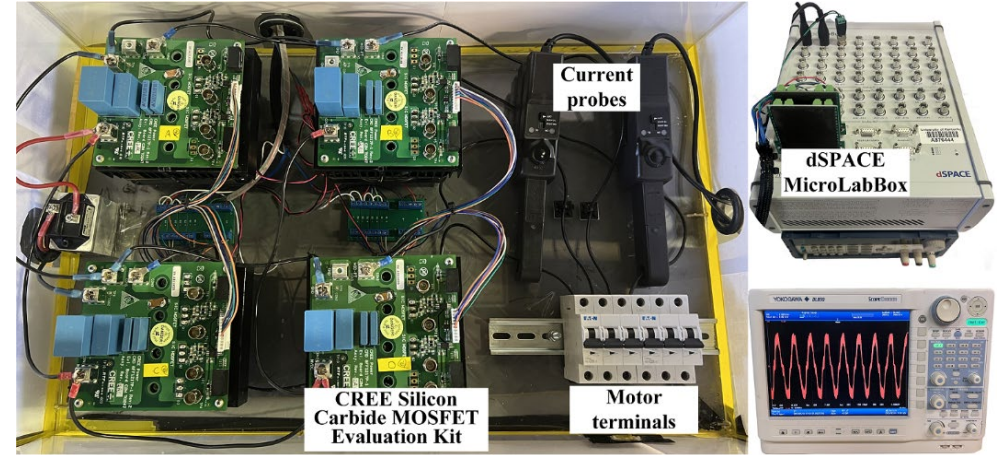
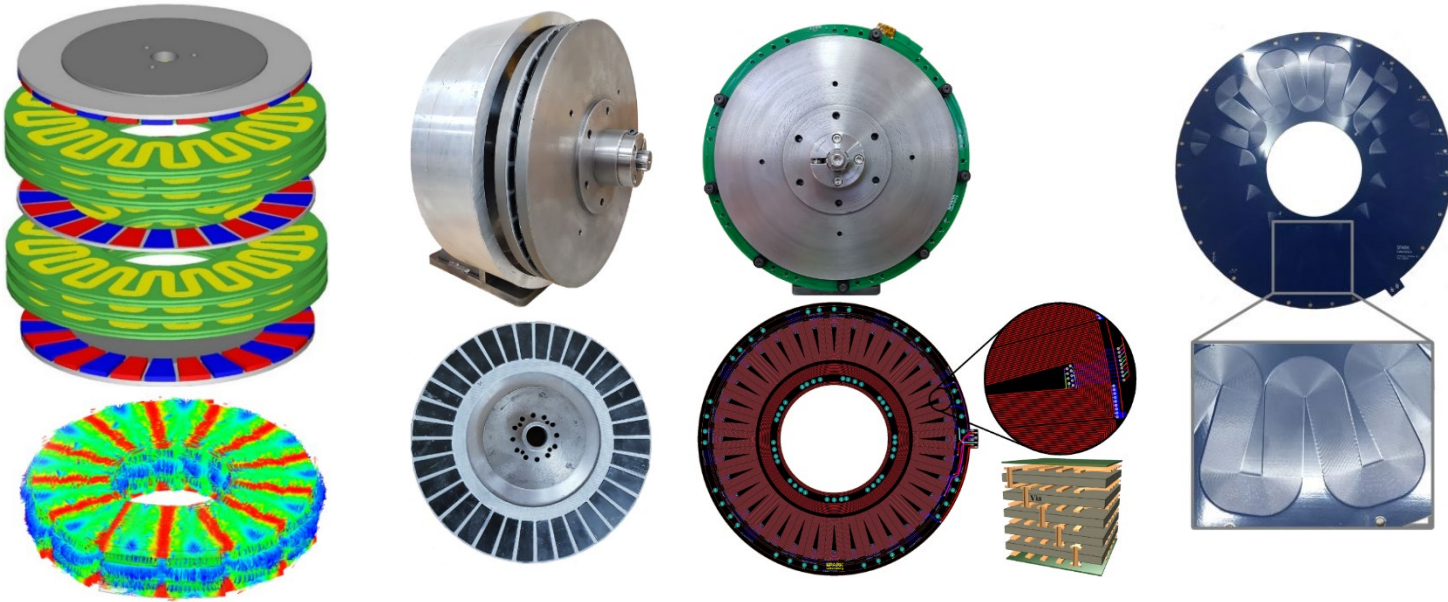
Source: University of Kentucky, Lewis, D. D *et al.*, "Fault Tolerant Electric Machine Concept for Aircraft Propulsion with PM Rotor and DC Current Stator Dual-Stage Excitation", Proceedings, IEEE ICRERA, Oshawa, Ontario, CA (Aug 2023)

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Source: University of Kentucky, Lewis, D. D *et al.*, "Fault Tolerant Electric Machine Concept for Aircraft Propulsion with PM Rotor and DC Current Stator Dual-Stage Excitation", Proceedings, IEEE ICRERA, Oshawa, Ontario, CA (Aug 2023).



# SPARK Laboratory Demonstrators



# Outline

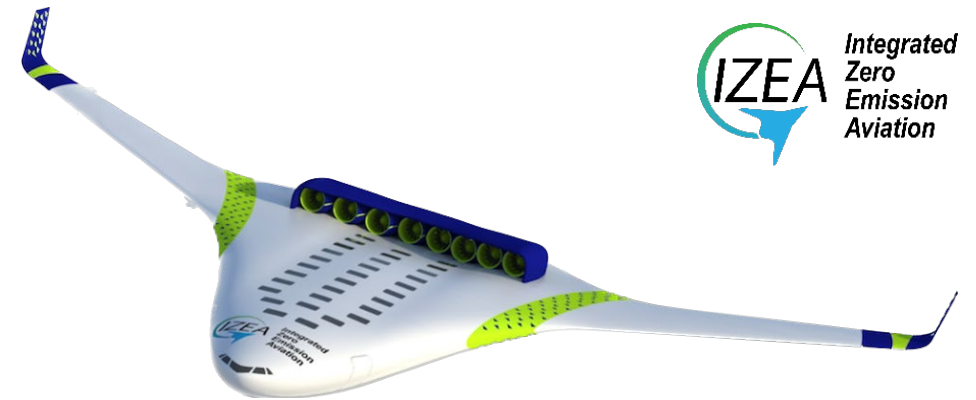
## *Ongoing Research for Large Electric Aircraft Components and Systems*

- Introduction
- Major technical concepts and initiatives
- Optimal design of electric aircraft systems
- Battery-powered electric aircraft, NASA X-57
- Hydrogen-fueled electric aircraft, NASA ULI IZEA
- Electric aircraft propulsion motor drive
  - Review
  - Innovative concept
- **Conclusion.**



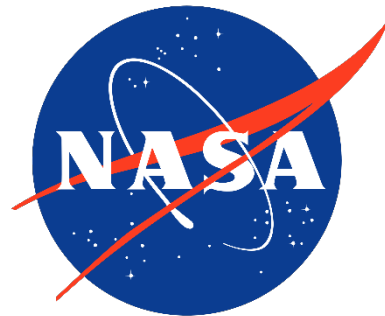
# Conclusion

- *Follow-up research paper on the innovative motor concept*
- Ongoing research for large electric aircraft components and systems – multi-disciplinary advanced engineering research
- Major public and private initiatives and programs
- Technical feasibility?
  - Hydrogen vs. battery
  - Superconducting vs. just cryogenic
- Economic feasibility?
- Industry transformation?
  - Development
  - Major investments and new infrastructure
- Large-scale field deployment?





Thank you!



**UK** Pigman  
College of Engineering  
University of Kentucky