

\$7.45M Investment Prepares Monterey Bay Tech Hub to Build FAA-Compliant Multi-Airport Flight Corridor Network

Funding accelerates advanced air mobility growth, jobs, and innovation on the Central Coast

MARINA, CA, UNITED STATES, August 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- It's an exciting time in the Monterey Bay region, where a cluster of leading-edge companies is revolutionizing key sectors in drone and advanced aerospace technology. Today, the [Monterey Bay Tech Hub](#), a coalition of regional stakeholders dedicated to strengthening opportunities for AAM-based economic growth and job creation in the tri-county region, received a resounding endorsement by state leaders of its efforts to support the emerging field of drones and advanced air mobility. Led by the Monterey Bay Tech Hub, a cross-sector coalition of regional partners and industry leaders is reimagining the ways in which we travel, deliver goods to rural areas, respond to natural disasters, more effectively grow crops, and ensure national security. In doing so, they are fueling economic growth across the tri-county region.

The state of California announced a \$7,450,000 grant to the [Monterey Bay Economic Partnership \(MBEP\)](#) on behalf of the Monterey Bay Tech Hub to support expansion of an advanced air mobility and drone ecosystem on the Central Coast. Awarded by the California Jobs First Council from the state's Regional Investment Initiative Implementation Phase Round One, the funding supports regionally led investment in one of the tri-county's most dynamic and critical strategic sectors: Space, Defense, and Satellites.



MAJOR WIN FOR THE CENTRAL COAST!

On behalf of the Monterey Bay Tech Hub MBEP has secured **\$7.45M** to launch California's first **FAA-compliant multi-airport advanced air mobility corridor** – bringing jobs, clean transportation, and new opportunities to our region.



 **Monterey Bay**
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

 **MONTEREY BAY**
TECH HUB
Advancing Opportunities

In Partnership with
 **CALIFORNIA**
JOBS FIRST

MBEP Secures Nearly \$7.5 Million to Develop AAM Flight Corridor Network

The Monterey Bay region is already a leader in advanced air mobility and drone technology, with the highest concentration of advanced air mobility companies in the nation. And while a string of public general aviation airports across a rural stretch of the Central Coast are already being used for drone and eVOTL flight testing, those facilities — in Marina, Salinas, Hollister, and Watsonville — currently lack the connected infrastructure to support future growth in advanced aerospace sectors.

The California Job First Council's historic investment in the California Advanced Air Mobility Corridor Initiative (CAAMCI) will help our public general aviation airports develop a safe, scalable AAM corridor that enhances flight capabilities and testing on the Central Coast, giving our region the competitive edge to emerge as a leader in aerospace and defense-related technologies.

Regional airport and workforce development investments are key elements in the creation of California's first FAA-compliant test corridor for clean energy-powered drones and advanced aerospace vehicles.



Monterey Bay Economic Partnership CEO & President
Tahra Goraya

"The development of an FAA-compliant test corridor will be transformational for the Monterey Bay region, already at the forefront of innovation in electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVOTL) aircraft and drone technology that is revolutionizing many aspects of our day-to-day lives," said

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This is what MBEP does best — convene stakeholders, identify challenges, and leverage resources for the growth and betterment of our businesses, government and communities.”

*Krista Snelling, MBEP Board
President*

Tahra Goraya, CEO and President of Monterey Bay Economic Partnership. “CAAMCI charts a clear path forward for how we can embrace the full AAM potential of our region and bring the kind of jobs that will help our regional economy thrive.”

The grant was submitted by the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) on behalf of the Monterey Bay Tech Hub. MBEP is a co-founder of the Monterey Bay Tech Hub alongside UC Santa Cruz and DART.

“This award illustrates California's recognition of the unique concentration of Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) activity in the Monterey Bay region, and the convening role that the Monterey Bay Tech Hub (MBTH) has played in organizing regional government, higher education and AAM industry leaders,” said Larry Samuels, Special Advisor to the Chancellor, UC Santa Cruz. “As a founding partner of MBTH, UC Santa Cruz is excited to begin

working with fellow UC campuses, AAM companies, and regional municipal airports in establishing California's first AAM test network. The Monterey Bay region has had the highest concentration of AAM activity in the United States for the past decade. With these funds, we are ready to expand that activity to provide an environment for more AAM companies to locate their research and manufacturing facilities within the region, strengthening economic development and establishing a next generation corridor network for AAM research and development in California."

"This significant grant award is a testament to the Monterey Bay region's growing leadership in cutting-edge technologies, particularly in the field of air mobility. The award underscores the Central Coast's strategic position as a hub for innovation," said Rene Mendez, City Manager, City of Salinas. "This initiative will drive economic growth and pave the way for the region to be at the forefront of shaping the future of sustainable, air-based transportation while creating new opportunities for local businesses, technology developers, and the broader community."

"This award is the culmination of years of coordinated leadership across the Monterey Bay region," said Josh Metz, Executive Director of DART. "From early stakeholder engagement and the SOAR Airport Readiness Assessment, to co-founding the MBTH, convening the Infrastructure Working Group, and advancing multiple workforce development pilots with the strong support of The James Irvine Foundation, DART has worked alongside MBEP, UCSC, and many regional partners to ensure our communities are ready to seize the opportunities of advanced air mobility."

"This award is a game-changer for our region's economic development and growth," said Krista Snelling, President of the MBEP Board and President of West Coast Community Bank. "This is what MBEP does best — convene stakeholders, identify challenges, and leverage resources for the growth and betterment of our businesses, government and communities. The Board and I are very proud of our team and we look forward to bringing in additional partners to invest in this important ecosystem."

"Tahra's visionary, collaborative leadership — rooted in fierce advocacy for the Central Coast and an unshakable commitment to our communities — set the tone for our success," said Lavera



Alexander, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) Chief Growth Officer and CAAMCI Lead. "I'm grateful she entrusted me to lead the proposal and represent CAAMCI at the RII Pitch Summit, securing a transformative investment for Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito counties. This funding positions our majority-minority region as a national leader in advanced air mobility — fueling innovation, attracting industry partners, and opening doors for the next generation of talent."

About Monterey Bay Tech Hub: The Monterey Bay Tech Hub is a coalition of regional stakeholders who recognize the need for collective action to strengthen the opportunity for AAM and drone -based economic growth and job creation in the Tri-County region. Monterey Bay Economic Partnership, UC Santa Cruz, and Monterey Bay DART are founding members.

About Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP): About Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP): Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) is a regional member-supported nonprofit organization consisting of public, private, and civic entities located throughout the counties of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz. Founded in 2015, our mission is to improve the economic health and quality of life in the region.

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