

# Could Atlantic City International Airport become a space launch site?

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EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP — State lawmakers want to explore the idea of launching commercial spacecrafts from the Atlantic City International Airport.

State Sens. Chris Brown, R-Atlantic, and Vin Gopal, D-Monmouth, introduced a bill earlier this year which would create a nine-member commission to study the feasibility of the airport "successfully pursuing, and economically maintaining" licensing as a lateral or captive carry launch site.

According to the legislation — which was introduced in January and referred to the Senate Transportation Committee — space tourism is expected to be a \$34 billion industry by 2021.

The federal Commercial Space Launch Act of 1984 "encourages, promotes, and facilitates" the growth of commercial space launches, the bill states. Currently, there are 11 launch sites in the United States that have been licensed, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

Under the state's Garden State Growth Zone Program, economic development is being encouraged in the area encompassing the Atlantic City International Airport, the National Aviation Research and Technology Park and the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center and through the area's designation as a federal Opportunity Zone.

Earlier this year, Brown asked area stakeholders to serve on the Economic Revitalization Advisory Committee to develop a plan to diversify Atlantic County's economy. One of the recommendations from the committee was a request to introduce the bill.

"With private companies like Virgin Galactic, Blue Origin and Orion Span investing millions of dollars in new technologies and infrastructure to create a space tourism industry, it just make sense to explore the possibility of marrying our local tourism industry with the FAA Tech Center and the National Aviation Technology and Research Park to bring in new, hi-tech jobs for our local families," said Brown.