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Is It a Car, a Plane? No It's the Terrafugia Transition, a Bit of Both

By [Kit Eaton](#)

Now we can all look forward to a near future where sidewalks are replaced with conveyor belts and robot maids bring us nicely chilled cocktails as we relax after work and all that sci-fi like stuff...because someone's gone and built a successful flying car. It's called the Terrafugia Transition, and it completed a successful first flight on March 5.

It's not quite as advanced as, say, the flying DeLorean from *Back to the Future*, but Terrafugia's (roughly meaning "flees the Earth") invention is nevertheless a carbon-fiber framed full road-going vehicle that automatically transforms between light aircraft and car in around 30 seconds, complete with fold-away flight controls inside the cabin. Its styling is odd, as you may expect from such a strange hybrid, but perhaps in a world where the not-so-dissimilar looking [Aptera electric car](#) [0] is on the road it's not too shocking. Maybe that's why Terrafugia's calling it by the slightly clumsy title "roadable aircraft" instead of "flying car."



In road-going mode the Transition's driven by a 30MPG regular gasoline engine that powers its front wheels. And fantastically the same engine also drives the vehicle's pusher-propeller. When its flying it can manage 115mph (its unclear whether that's air-speed or ground speed) and has a 450-mile range. The wings electrically crank in on the ground, meaning it'll fit into a regular garage, and it even has regular car-like access doors--that automotive design is continued into the vehicle's crash structures too. Flying it requires a Sport Pilot's License.



The Transition is just a pre-prototype test vehicle, of course--it's undergone a hefty series of ground and airborne tests, during which its former Air Force pilot said it "flew like a really nice airplane"--and the team now plans to take those lessons into a next-gen prototype before hopefully going into production as a certified Light Sport Aircraft.

Does the world really need a flying car? Well, there's no particular case against the Transition--and from a green point of view, the fact it uses regular gas is actually a good thing, since other light aircraft tend to use leaded aviation fuel. Assuming it doesn't cost too much to purchase it may also bring the joys of private flying to a group of individuals who may not otherwise have thought of it.

[[Terrafugia](#) [1] and [AVWeb](#) [2]]

Links:

[1] <http://www.terrafugia.com/>

[2]

http://www.avweb.com/avwebflash/exclusivevids/ExclusiveVideo_TerrafugiaTransition_FirstFlight_199980-1.html