Issues in Developing Hydrogen Fuel Cell Commuter Aircraft: Retrofit vs From Scratch

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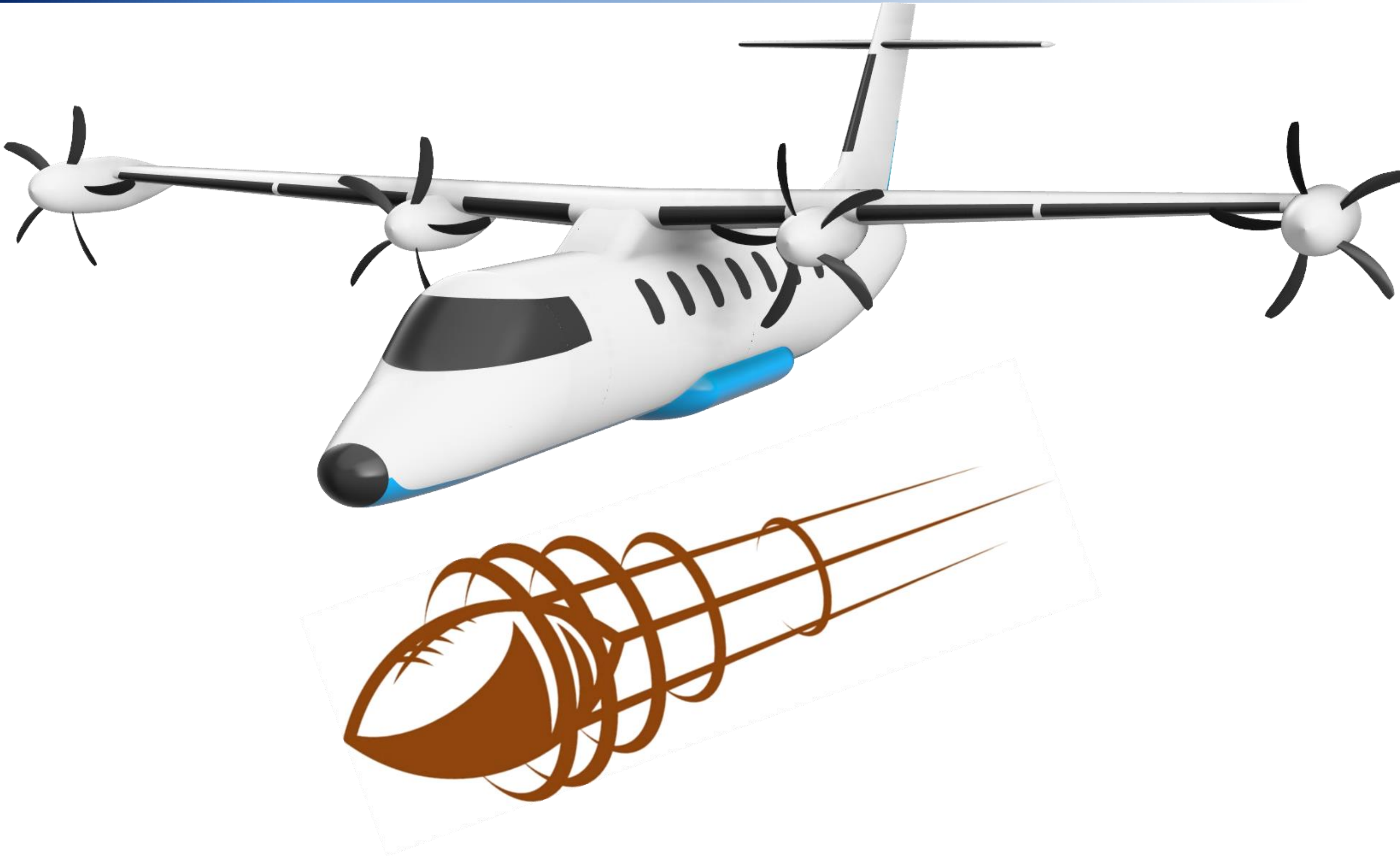
Flying

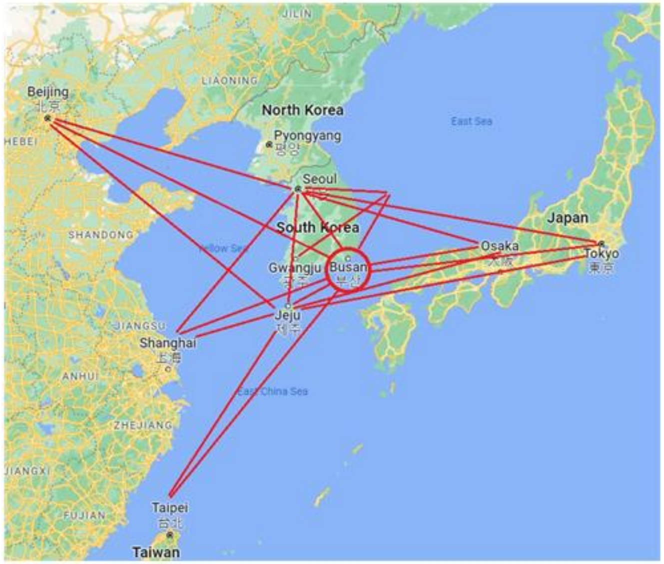


Overview of Hydrogen Commuter Mega Project

Project Title: Technology for commuter-class aircraft using hydrogen-fuel-cell-powered hybrid distributed electric propulsion

Participating Organizations: 10 including GNU (Leading), UNIST, KERI, KAI, Hanwha Aerospace Co.
2 Local Government: Gyeongnam & Ulsan

Budget: 6.42 Million USD (1 Phase; 2023-25)
61.1 Million USD (2-3 Phase; 2026-2032)



Roadmap: Europe's Future Aviation

Key features of zero-carbon and zero-emissions aircraft by 2040

Hydrogen fuel cell electric aircraft

Up to 1000 km
Distance range

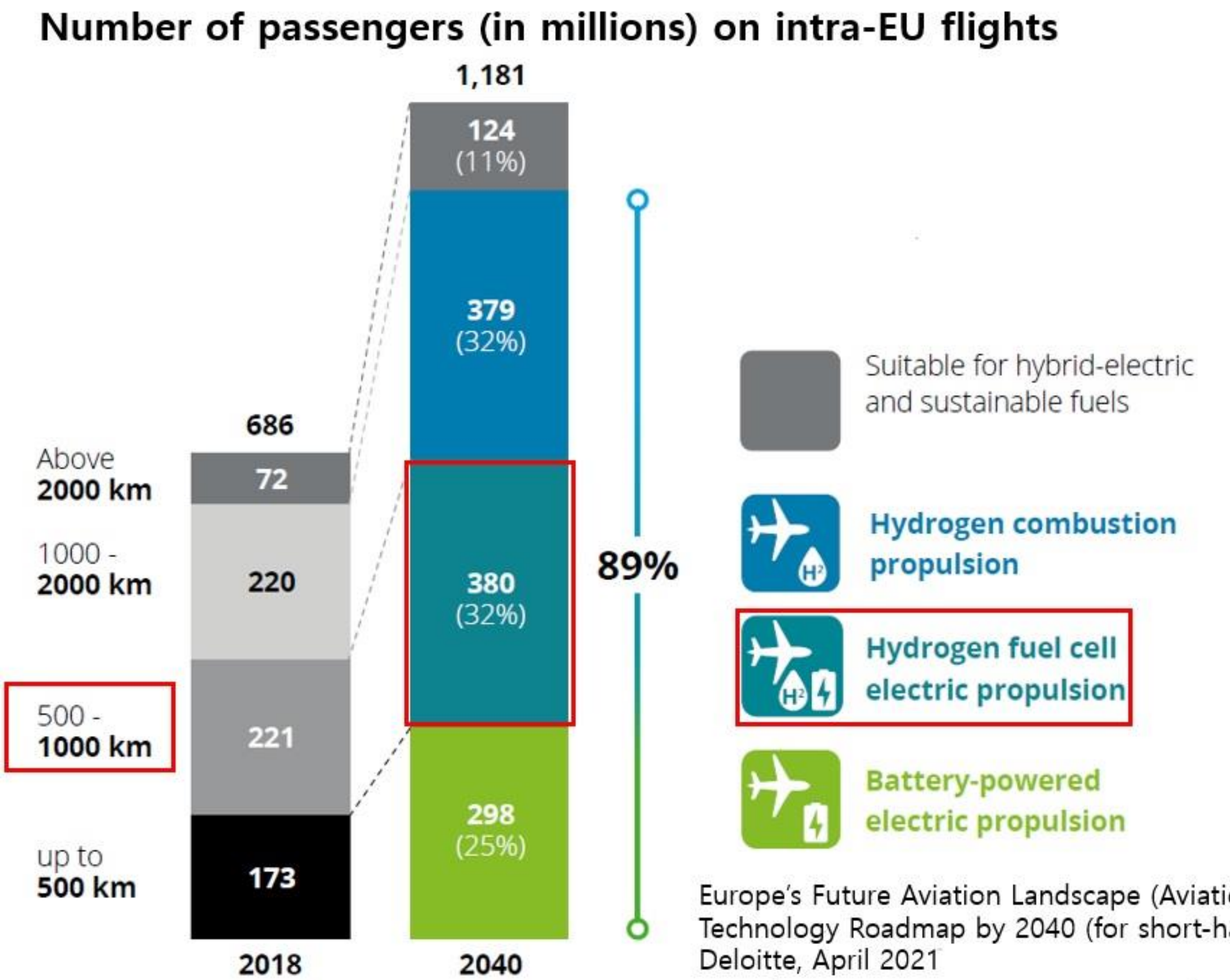
Hydrogen is reacted in a fuel cell to provide electricity to electric motors and then spin propellers or ducted fans to generate thrust

– 75-90% Climate impact reduction potential	**+ 20-30%** Flight time	**+ 0-15%** Ticket price

- ✓ Near-Zero emissions (water is still produced)
- ✓ Quieter engines
- ✓ Economy of scale benefits from synergies with other hydrogen dependent industries

Europe's Future Aviation Landscape (Aviation Technology Roadmap by 2040 (for short-haul flights)), Deloitte, April 2021

Europe's Future Aviation Landscape



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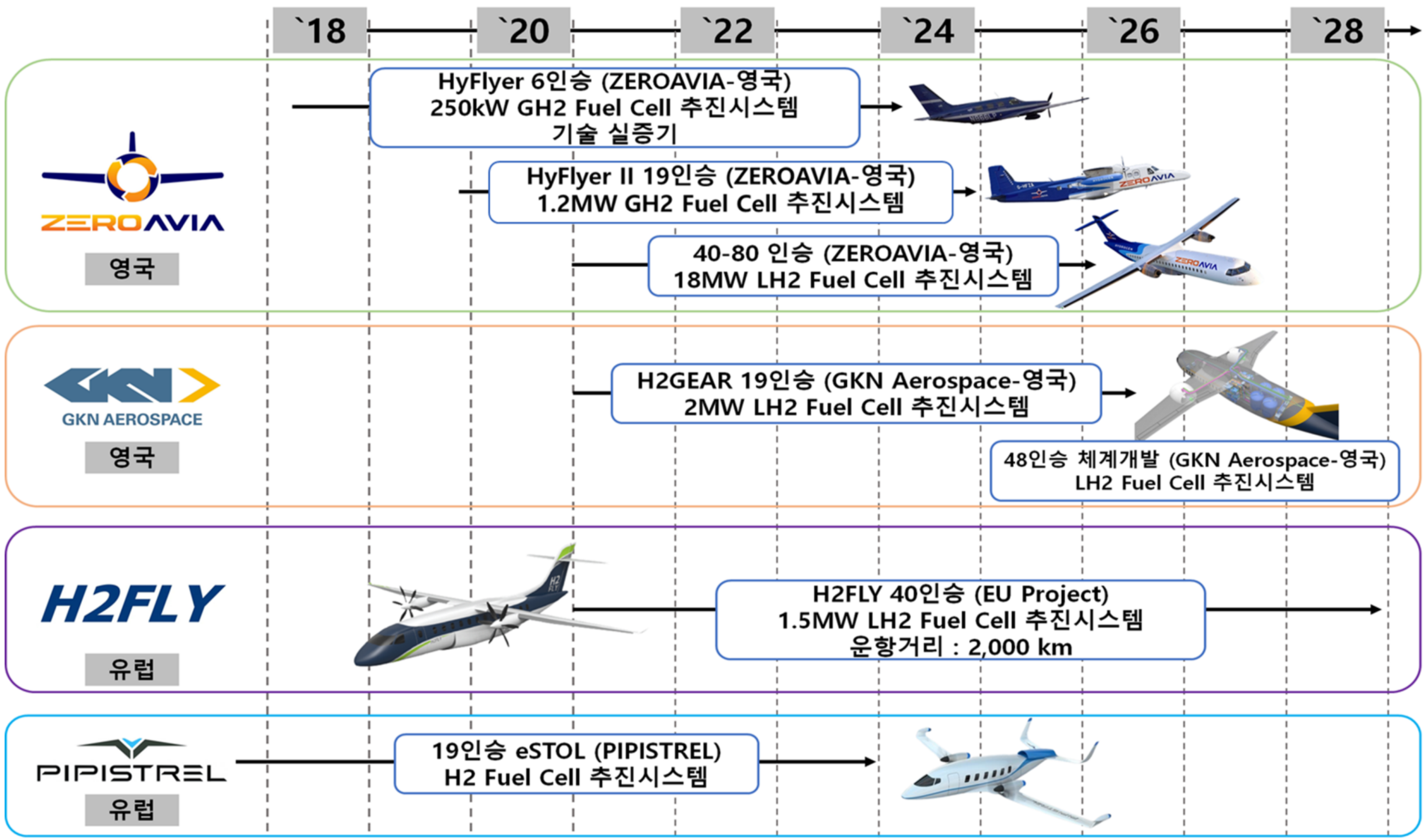
Hydrogen Aircraft Programs Worldwide



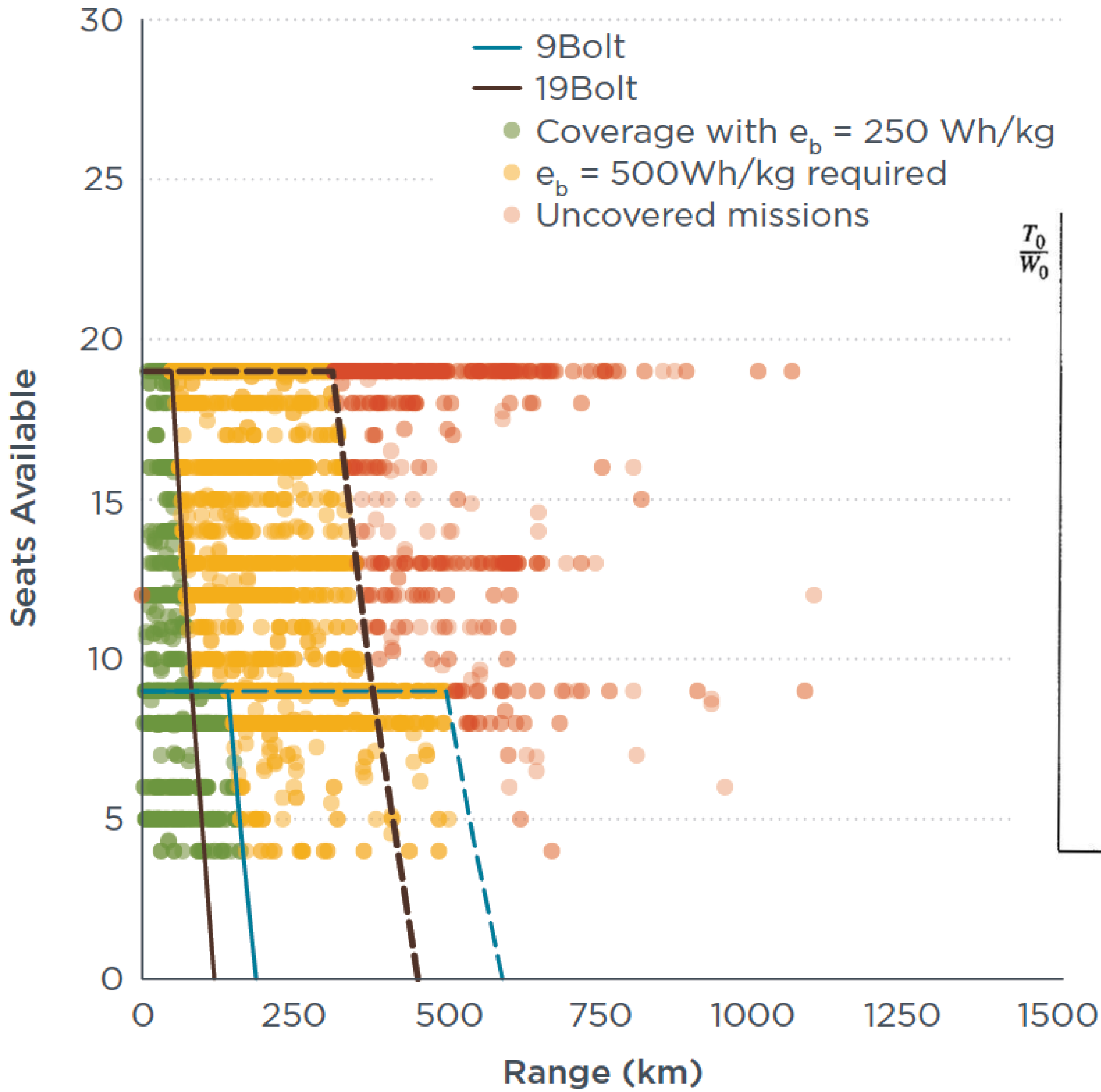
19-passenger (Part 23) Conventional Aircraft

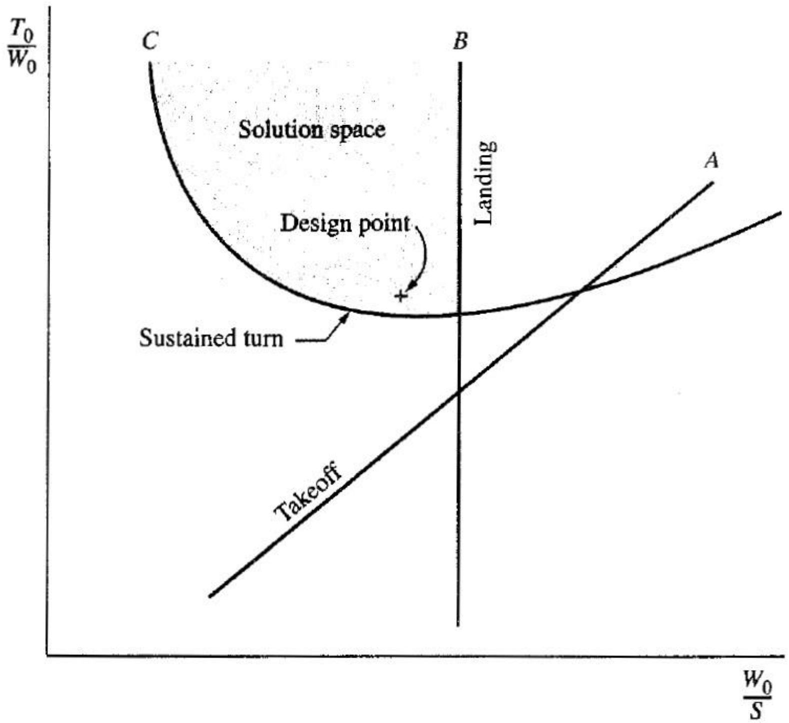
Aircraft	Beechcraft 1900	Embraer 110	Jetstream 31
Image			
MTOW (lb)	16,600	13,000	16,200
Empty Weight (lb)	10,140	8,490	10,400
Range (km)	2,370	1,960	1,260
Take-off/Landing Distance (m)	1,750 or 1,160	1,230	1,380
CO_2 Emissions (kg) (TO/L)	392.8	242.2	295.3
CO_2 Emissions (kg/min) (Cruise)	12.3	7.1	14.3

19-passenger (Part 23) Hydrogen Aircraft

Program	HyFlyerⅡ	H2GEAR	Miniliner
Image			
Company	ZEROAVIA (UK)	GKN Aerospace (UK)	Pipistrel Aircraft (Slovenia) & Textron eAviation (US)
Fuel Type	Compressed Gaseous H2 Fuel Cell	Liquid H2 Fuel Cell	Liquid H2 Hybrid
Powertrain	1.2 MW	1 MW	2 MW (1 MW Each for FC and Battery)
Investment	36 Million USD	57 Million USD	-

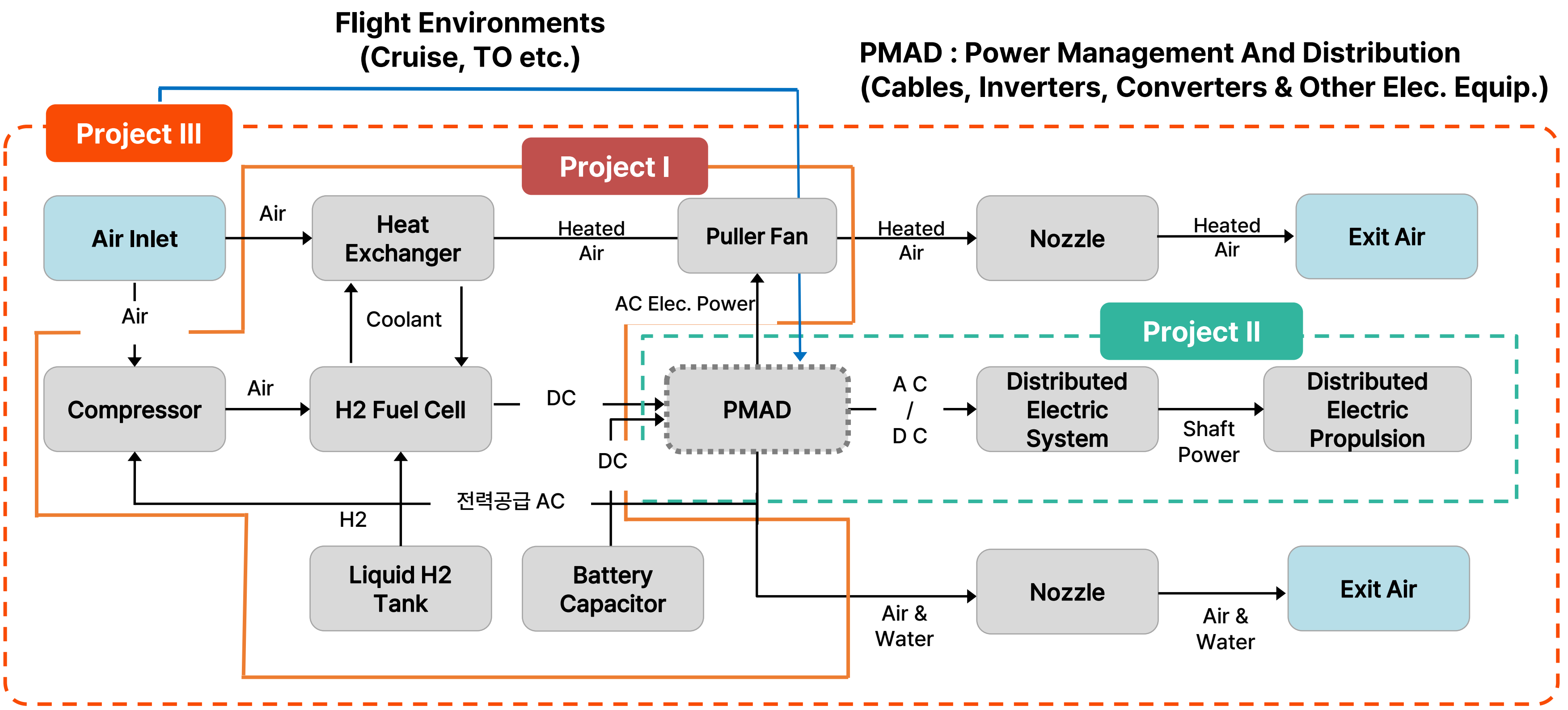
Challenges of Developing Hydrogen Commuter





White Paper (July 2022)
The Int. Council on Clean Transportation

Core Technology for Hydrogen Commuter Project



Requirements

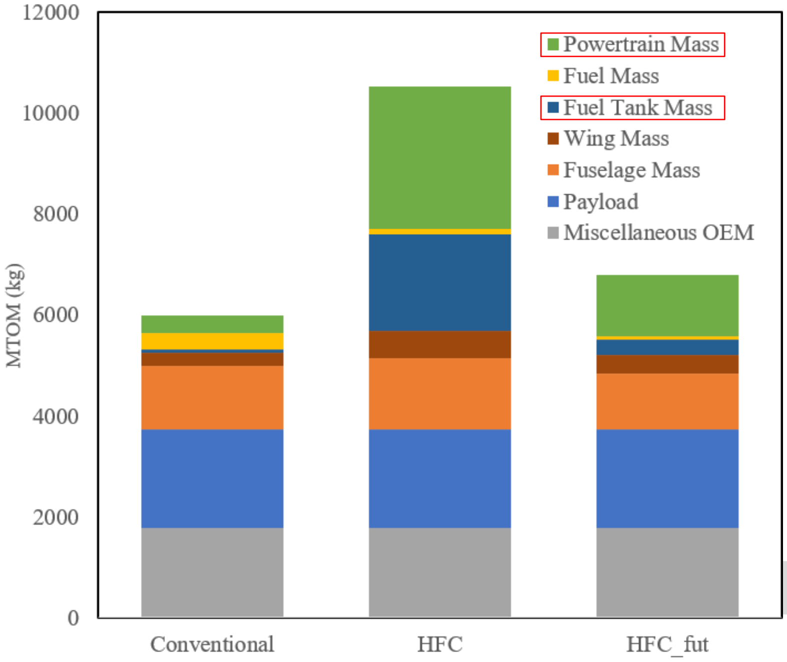
19 Passenger (Part 23), Range (500~1,000 km), Payload (30%), TO/Landing Distance (500~800 m), Carbon Reduction (75~90%), Low Noise (Below 75 dB)

Hydrogen Fuel Cell Commuter: A Case Study

	Conventional	HFC	HFC_{future}
Propeller efficiency	0.8	0.8	0.8
SFC [kg/(kN·s))]	$1.141 \cdot 10^{-6}$	$2.492 \cdot 10^{-7}$	$2.361 \cdot 10^{-7}$
C_L/C_D	10.98	14.5	14.5
W_{empty} [kg]	3725	8461	4654
Cruise - W_{fuel} [kg]	269.1	76.1	45.75
Climb, Descent - W_{fuel} [kg]	40.4	19.12	12.44
$W_{fuel\ total}$	309.5	95.22	58.19
$W_{payload}$ [kg]	1960	1960	1960
MTOM [kg]	**5995**	**10517**	**6672**
$Range_{cruise}$ [km]	338.1	338.1	338.1
$Range_{climb,descent}$ [km]	57.9	57.9	57.9

$$Range_{cruise} = \frac{\eta_{prop}}{SFC}\frac{C_L}{C_D}\ln\left(\frac{W_{empty}+W_{payload}+W_{fuel}}{W_{empty}+W_{payload}}\right)$$

Hydrogen Fuel Cell Commuter: A Case Study

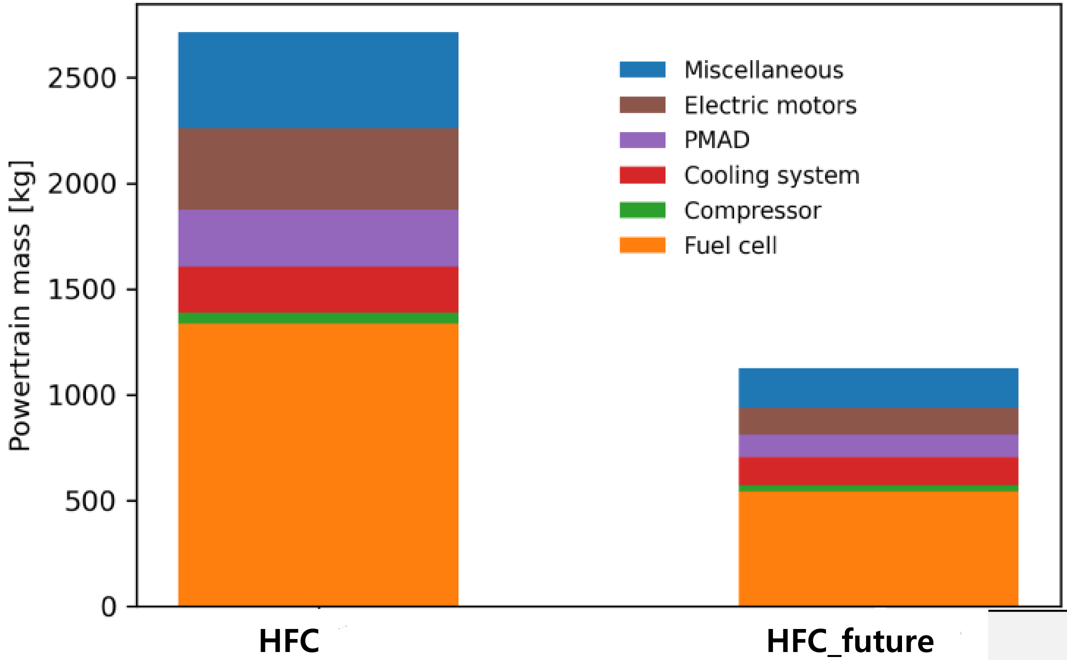


Required power increasing in HFC using electric motors and PMAD, compressor etc.

Specific energy: 3kW/kg (Kerosene) vs 2kW/kg (HFC)
Storage efficiency of fuel tank: 0.95 vs 0.2

	Conventional	HFC	HFC_future
Fuel Mass	309.6	95.22	59.16
Payload	1960	1960	1960
Powertrain Mass	**358.8**	**2823**	**1214**
Fuel Tank Mass	**81.47**	**1904**	**295.8**
Wing Mass	257.4	545.7	385.9
Fuselage Mass	1260	1422	1100
Miscellaneous OEM	1767	1767	1767
MTOM	5995	1052	6782
OEM	3725	8463	4763

Hydrogen Fuel Cell Commuter: A Case Study

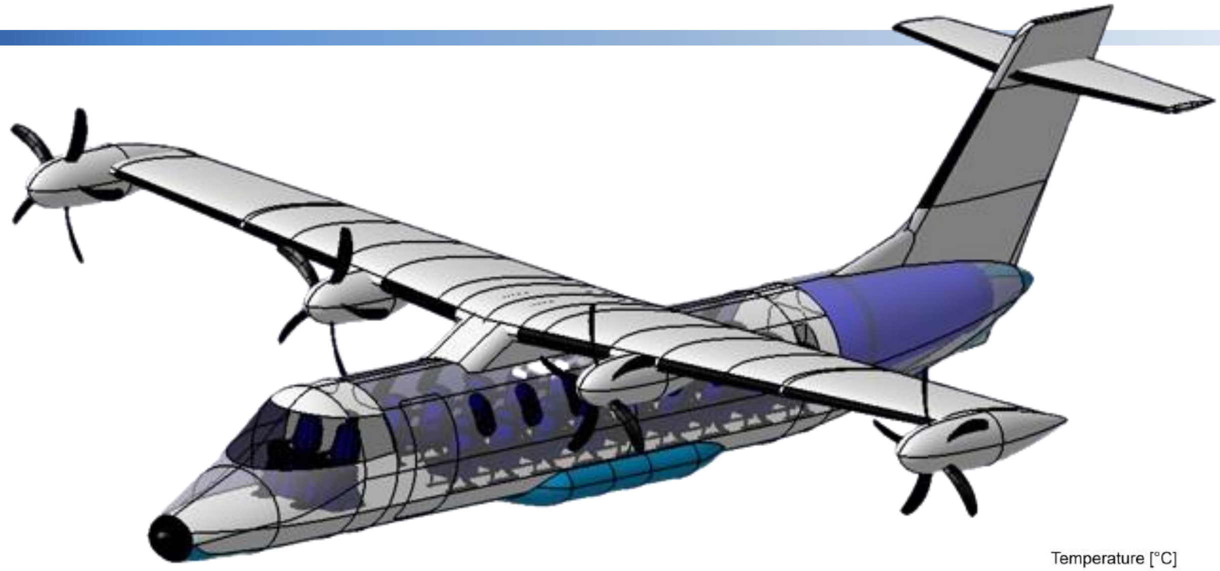


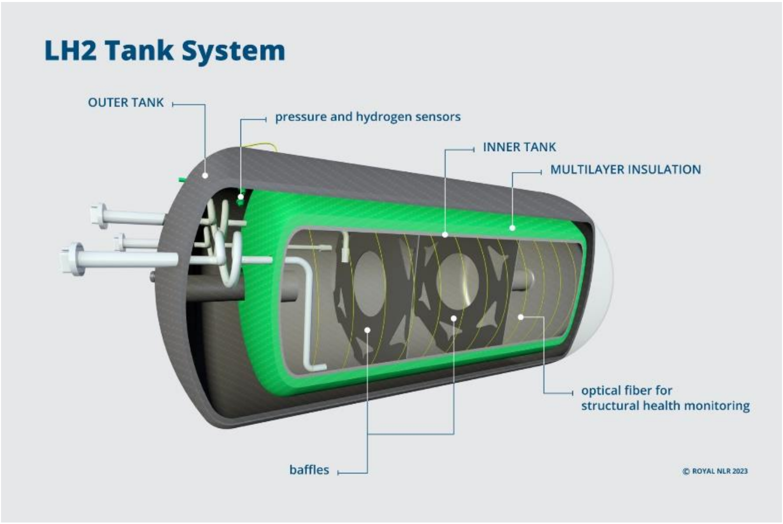
Electric motor specific energy:
5kW/kg vs 10kw/kg (Future)

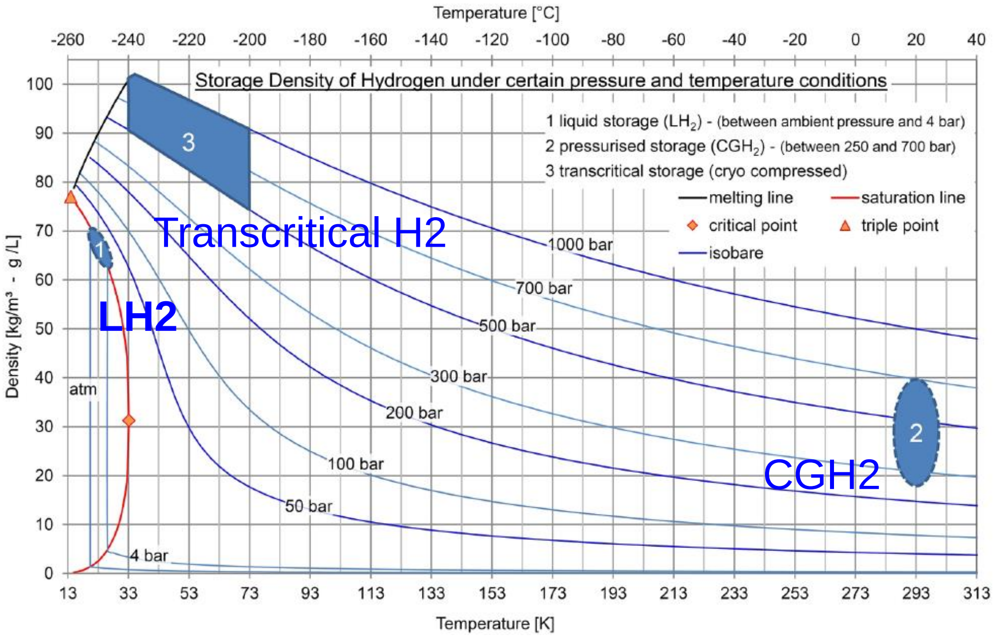
Fuel cell specific energy:
2kW/kg vs 3kW/kg (Future)

	HFC	HFC_future
Miscellaneous	430.1	202.3
Electric motors	**371.4**	**135.3**
PMAD	254.7	117.2
Cooling system	202.8	140.1
Compressor	48.14	33.22
Fuel Cell	**1274**	**585.9**

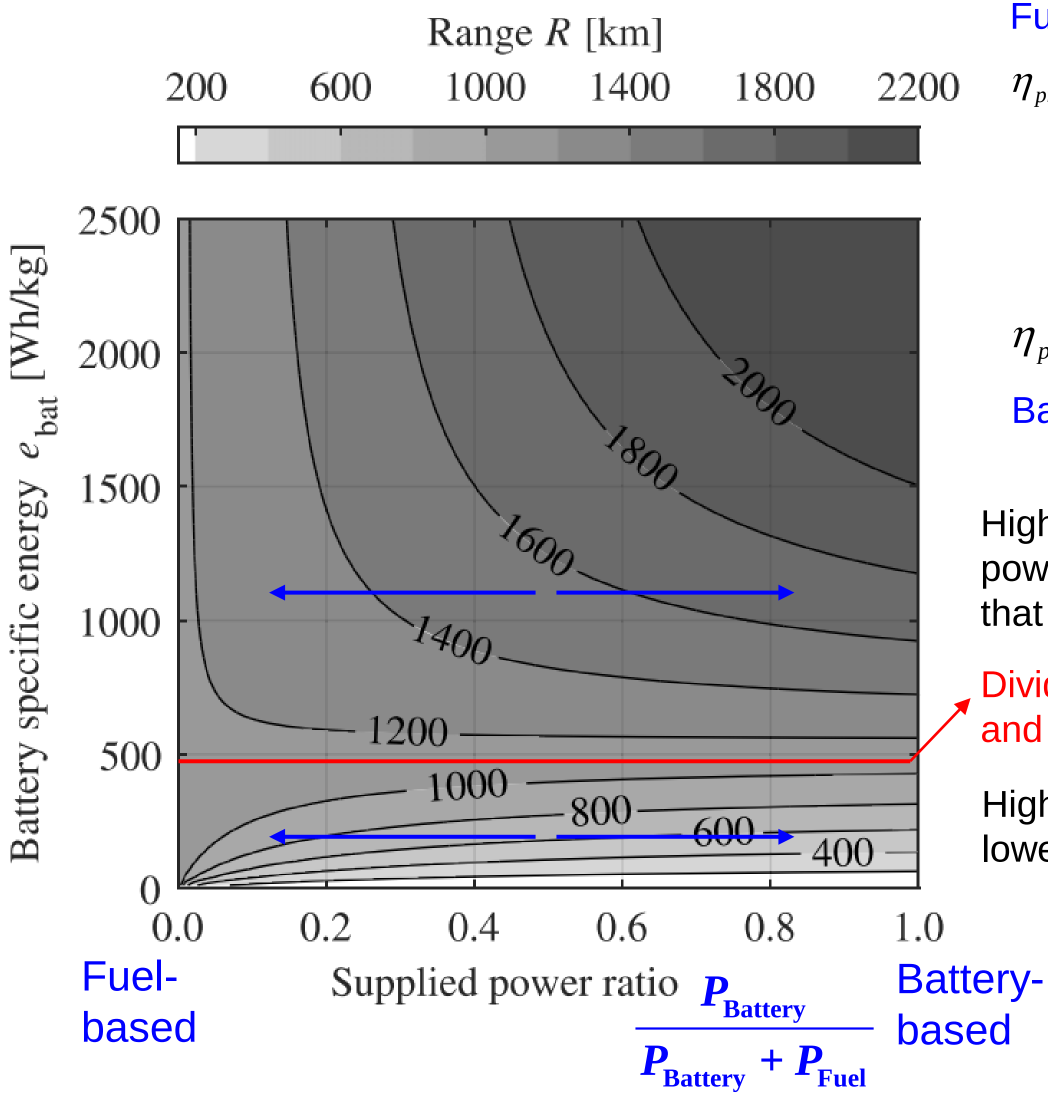
Hydrogen Fuel Cell Commuter: RIMP Version 1







Hybrid: Combination of Fuel Cell and Battery



Fuel cell only

$$\eta_{prop} e_{fuel} \frac{C_L}{C_D} \eta_{fuel-cell} \mathbf{Log}_{\mathbf{exp}} \left(\frac{W_{empty} + W_{payload} + W_{fuel}}{W_{empty} + W_{payload}} \right)$$

Hybrid

$$\eta_{prop} e_{battery} \frac{C_L}{C_D} \eta_{elec.-motor} \left(\frac{W_{empty} + W_{payload} + W_{fuel}}{W_{empty} + W_{payload}} \right)$$

Battery only

High transmission efficiency of the electrical powertrain branch leading to an energy saving that offsets the weight penalty of the batteries

Dividing line depending on the weight breakdown and the transmission efficiency of the powertrain

High energy density of fuel compensating the lower conversion efficiency

Challenges: Land Operation vs Aviation

	Fuel Cell for Land Operation	Fuel Cell for Aviation
Characteristics	Frequent stop & easy refueling (fast charging critical) Compressed hydrogen gas tank	Non-stop & no refueling (high-capacity charging) Liquid hydrogen tank
Weight & Thermal Management	Moderate	Critical in performance
Required Power	Low required power (100kw for NEXO)	High power required (1.2 MW for 19-passenger commuter) leading to HFC efficiency degradation
Operational Environment	Moderate change (15℃ / 1 atm)	Severe change (-30℃ / 0.41 atm at altitude of 7 km)
Missions	Moderate variations	High power : TO, landing, re-climbing Low power : cruise, descent, turn
Certification	Standards established	Challenging
Reliability	High level	High reliability required

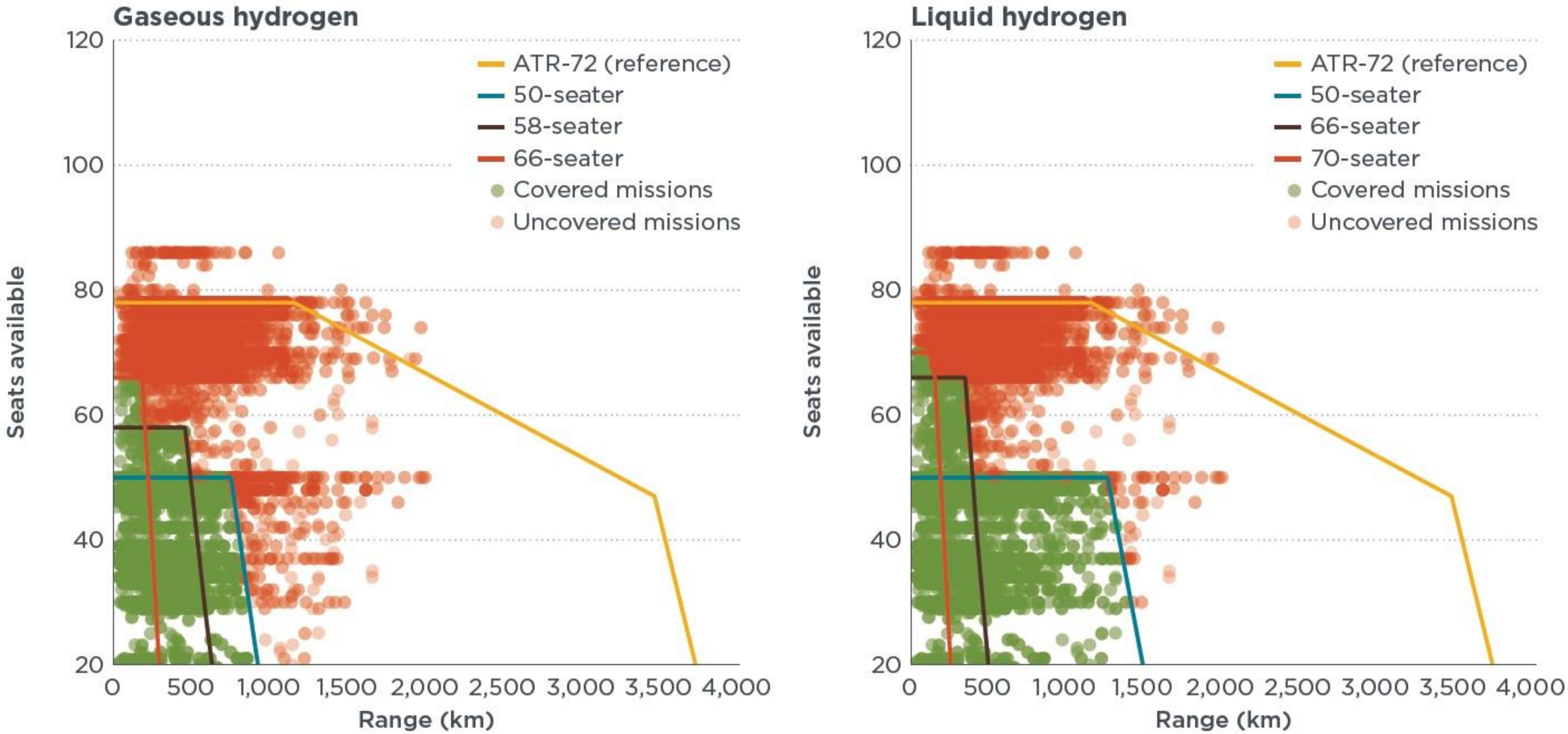
Critical Future Technologies

Hybrid power system	Optimization of insulation thickness of storage tank Optimal control of fuel cell and battery energy considering flight phases Fuel cell power system considering low-density flight environments Hybrid system involving battery and super-capacitor
Distributed electric propulsion system	High-fidelity methods for computing air flows over wing-fuselage-propeller
High performance commuter	Reducing mass of powertrain and fuel tank (while increasing various efficiency) Sophisticated weight estimation modeling technique for powertrain and fuel tank High-lift, low-noise aerodynamic shape design

Standardization and Certification

Standardization	**Gaseous and liquid hydrogen storage tanks** - US CGA H-3-2019: Minimum design and performance applied to cryogenic hydrogen storage tanks) - ISO 21011:2008: Design, manufacturing and testing requirements for valves for temperatures below -40 degrees Celsius **Hydrogen fuel cell power system** (IEC, EUROCAE, SEC, ANSI) **Distributed electric propulsion system** (ASTM, EASA, SAE)
Certification	**Certification standards for hydrogen fuel cell hybrid power systems for aviation** (AIR 6464, AS 6858, 6679, 7373) **No guideline for PMAD** **Certification standards for distributed electric propulsion system** (DO-311A, F3338-21, AIR 7765 **FAR Part 23**: In 2016, it was significantly reduced and integrated, but major safety standards such as SLD (supercooled large droplet) icing condition and crashworthiness were strengthened. Issues in certification of **retrofitted aircraft** with new carbon-free propulsion systems?

Retrofit



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Retrofit vs From Scratch: Pros & Cons

First deliveries of hydrogen/battery-powered passenger aircraft expected **between 2035 and 2040**. The complete renewal might take decades. (The lifetime of an aircraft 25 years)
The renewal can be accelerated by **mostly economics** (fuel-efficient aircraft, variation in air traffic demand, lower maintenance costs) and by stricter **governmental environmental regulations and financial incentives**.

Retrofit	From Scratch
Based on proven technology (but sometimes things can get out of control like the B737-Max)	Taking advantage of new technology developed in last 30-50 years (but sometimes things can get out of control like the MRJ)
Low development cost and certification risk	High development cost and certification risk
Short lifetime (10 years + new 15 years) Performance penalties & inevitable consequences like uselessness of fuel tank inside wings	Full lifetime and popular with customers Good performance and no penalty associated with retrofit
Not an option for everyone (because an aircraft to retrofit must be available) (Mainly for the purpose of demonstrating the feasibility)	Attractive option for latecomers (but investment resources and related infrastructure will be key)