

[< Back to News overview](#)

News

Ethiopian Airlines awards consultancy contract for Ethiopia's new international airport to consortium led by Dar



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Within its vision to enhance Ethiopia's role as a leading global gateway to Africa, Ethiopian Airlines Group has announced plans to deliver one of Africa's largest and most ambitious new airports, in Bishoftu City in Abusera, south of the capital of Addis Ababa.

A critical element of Ethiopian Airlines' 15-year strategic plan to become one of the most competitive aviation groups in the world, the state-of-the-art airport is envisioned to revolutionise air travel in Ethiopia and cement the country's position as the crossroads of the world's most rapidly expanding air travel markets – Africa, Asia, and the Middle East – and Africa's global transportation hub for the 21st century.

With more than threefold growth in the past ten years and planning similar expansion over coming decades, Ethiopian has become Africa's largest airline - and one of the fastest-growing airlines worldwide. Ethiopian now commands the lion's share of Africa's passenger and cargo network, operating to more than 150 domestic and international destinations across five continents. The new airport will empower Ethiopian to meet the International Air Transport Association's forecasts of more than 200% growth over the next decade. It will unlock the airline's potential that is currently restricted within their existing base at Bole International Airport which offers no possibilities for significant expansion. The new airport's location allows for progressive growth to meet future demand.

The new airport's location also has another key advantage; Abusera's much lower altitude above sea-level will greatly increase aircraft take-off performance. This will enable Ethiopian to take full advantage of its modern fleet of aircraft to carry more passengers and cargo to more global destinations on longer-range, non-stop flights using significantly less fuel

In its first phase scheduled for 2029, the new airport will have capacity for 60 million passengers annually – almost three times the number of passengers registered in Africa's busiest airport in 2022. Ultimately, the new airport will host 110 million passengers a year – quadrupling the capacity of Bole International Airport and bolstering Ethiopian Airlines' position as one of Africa's greatest airlines.

To deliver this transformational new project, Ethiopian Airlines awarded a technical advisory and consultancy contract to a consortium of architecture, engineering, and project management firms led by Dar and comprising world-renowned signature architects Zaha Hadid

Architects and Pascall+Watson Architects as well as Dar's sister Sidara companies Landrum&Brown and TYLin.

Designing Africa's greatest upcoming airport

Envisioned to provide vital global air connectivity and contribute to the socio-economic development of Ethiopia, the ambitious new airport will create thousands of jobs in the aviation sector, primarily serving Ethiopian's expanding customer base and fleet.

Building on Dar's deep-rooted presence in Ethiopia and the company's extensive experience delivering projects for Ethiopian Airlines, the consortium proposed an architectural approach that draws heavily on insights into local communities and cultures to create a new national landmark for Ethiopia. The new airport will be people-centric and intuitive, characterized by sustainability, resilience, and future-fitness.

Announcing the new airport, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew highlighted the project's role in establishing Ethiopia as a global aviation hub, stating: "The project will not only enhance connectivity but also drive economic growth and prioritise environmentally responsible practices in our country and beyond, reflecting the airline's commitment to innovation and sustainability. With its exceptional capacity and world-class facilities, this new airport promises to elevate African aviation and strengthen partnerships, marking a significant advancement for the region's air travel infrastructure".

Dar's Director of Operations in Ethiopia Tariq Al-Qanni stated, "We are privileged to be supporting Ethiopian Airlines on this visionary new airport, which will provide vital global air connectivity, accelerate economic growth in Ethiopia, and elevate Ethiopian Airlines into Africa's most strategic and most competitive aviation group."

ZHA's Director of Aviation, Cristiano Ceccato, said, "The new airport at Abusera will be a global gateway for Africa and place Ethiopia at the very heart of the continent's transportation networks; connecting communities around the world with the most integrated air transport system. We are honoured to be part of this amazing project for Ethiopia."

Led by Dar, the consortium will cover technical advisory, engineering, project management, and construction supervision services for 600,000 m² of passenger facilities, 126,190 m² of airline support facilities, two Code 4E parallel runways along with associated airfield infrastructure, over 100,000 m² of cargo and airport support facilities, and other major airport facilities and infrastructure.

Resilience, sustainability, connectivity, and future-fitness

The vision for the airport spotlights sustainability – taking advantage of Abusera's high-elevation, arid climate, mild temperatures, and abundant sunshine to design an airport that harnesses renewable energy, maximises natural ventilation and illumination, and conserves natural resources.

Served by an express rail link to the centre of Addis Ababa, the new Abusera International Airport will combine proven innovations in aviation architecture with ecologically sound materials and sustainable construction practices. Providing the highest standards of passenger experience, the airport's terminal will be intuitive to navigate and characterized by its future-readiness with on-site renewable power generation as well as the collection, storage and reuse of rainwater.

The design team will draw on local culture to create one of the world's most efficient

international transport hubs with a distinctly Ethiopian signature. Shaped by the landscapes of Abusera, the design will bring nature into the heart of the terminal.

Ethiopia's new airport – at a glance

- **600,000 m²** passenger facilities
- **2,450 m²** air navigation facilities
- **28,050 m²** cargo facilities
- **87,130 m²** airport support facilities
- **126,190 m²** airline support facilities
- **9,090 m²** telecommunication facilities
- **43,200 m²** utility buildings
- **174,825 m²** roads, parking, and landscaping
- **Utility systems and distribution**
- **Offsite links**

A consortium of award-winning aviation specialists, led by Dar

The consortium brings together some of the industry's leading aviation design and engineering specialists.

As sister companies under Sidara, Dar, Landrum&Brown, and TYLin belong to a global collaborative of industry-leading firms that ranks 1st among international design firms in the aviation sector (Engineering News Record 2023). Sidara companies have advised on 23 of the top 30 global airports and delivered projects in over 300 airports, including Ethiopia's Bole International Airport as well as strategic global hubs such as Chicago O'Hare International Airport, Dubai International Airport, Hong Kong International Airport, King Abdulaziz International Airport, Melbourne Airport, and many more.

Meanwhile, Zaha Hadid Architects brings award-winning capabilities and a global track record of iconic airport projects, such as China's Beijing Daxing International Airport, Australia's Western Sydney International Airport, and the Navi Mumbai International Airport in India.

The consortium is also complemented by the airport interior designer Pascall+Watson Architects. An award-winning international design practice, Pascall+Watson are market leaders in designing and delivering aviation projects, having successfully completed 2,000+ aviation projects across 70 airports in 35 countries.

Together, the companies will deliver world-class services from concept design to supervision of construction – to deliver this exceptional and transformational project for Ethiopia and for all of Africa.