

BEATING THE FUNDING DILEMMA: LSA FRACTIONAL OWNERSHIP MAY BE ANSWER TO HIGH COSTS

Since the Sport Pilot/Light-Sport Aircraft Rule became reality in 2004, industry advocates continue to look for new ways to draw attention to SP/LSA and its potential for a mass revival of General Aviation. As progress is being made, they are nonetheless meeting a formidable concern: the high cost of obtaining new, factory-built light-sport aircraft (LSA). The Rule has attracted renewed interest from old-time pilots of cub-type aircraft and other certificated, Light-Sport-eligible aircraft from the 30s, 40s 50s. It has also seen over 80 new SP-eligible aircraft come on the scene and into the marketplace. As alluring as reduced training and medical requirements may be for Sport Pilot, the sticker prices on factory-built light sport aircraft (LSA) prove daunting—especially as newcomers to the sport find aircraft rental and purchase costs out of proportion with other options for weekend fun. One solution is to buy just part of an airplane, and LetsFly.org (<http://letsfly.org/>) has made that option available for LSA with its own form of fractional/cooperative ownership. *LetsFly* helps pilots to buy a share in a new sport plane. One popular option requires just \$2,900 up front, a monthly fee of about \$300, and about \$30 an hour to fly. Other options, such as straight rental put hourly rates in the \$85-\$90 range. Choosing *LetsFly's* share option would put a pilot ahead of straight rental if he chooses to fly for at least 4 hours per month.

ENGINE OPTION: ROTAX 2-STROKE TO MAKE LSAs AFFORDABLE?

Rotax recently announced a development that may lead to a lower-priced engine option for LSA: the good news is that the Rotax 65-hp R-582 2-stroke engine (<http://www.rotax.com/en/Engine>) has met ASTM standards. The two-stroke is commonly used in smaller aircraft such as ultralights, trikes, and powered parachutes. Until recently, these aircraft had to install a heavier four-stroke engine to qualify for LSA certification, because no certified two-stroke was available. LSA advocate, Sport Pilot and author Dan Johnson stated, "I'm excited that they finally did this. It could mean more lower-priced sport aircraft entering the market."