

COMPACT VERTIPORT WITH EFFICIENT SPACE UTILIZATION

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims benefit under 35 USC§ 119(e) to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 63/111,522 filed November 9, 2020 and entitled "Vertiport And Charge Cart System," the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference herein in their entirety for all purposes.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Small, personal, automated aircraft can provide efficient transportation, as they can travel direct routes. They may be especially efficient in areas of dense population with heavy road traffic. However, dense traffic areas such as cities typically have limited and expensive real estate, and there typically are not large areas of available land that would be suitable for an airport within cities.

SUMMARY

[0003] Described herein are examples (or embodiments) of a compact vertiport system with efficient space utilization. The vertiport system may be efficient and compact by combining, into one space and time period, multiple activities that typically take place in different spaces and at different times. For example, when an electric aircraft is being moved from a landing zone to a takeoff zone, one or more batteries of the electric aircraft may also be charged simultaneously. Also, passenger exchange may take place while the aircraft is being moved (e.g., in a slow, steady, safe manner). As a result, compact vertiport systems may fit into smaller spaces (e.g., tops of buildings, car parking areas, or other smaller plots of land).

[0004] Further, efficient configuration of different zones of a vertiport system may further improve the usage of limited space. As an example, a landing zone may connect directly to a transition zone (e.g., for recharging batteries and/or passenger exchange), and the transition zone may connect directly to a takeoff zone. This can enable an aircraft to be delivered directly from the end of a landing zone (e.g., a first runway or pad) to the beginning of a takeoff zone (e.g., a second runway or pad). In some embodiments, different zones of a

vertiport system can be arranged in a z-shape. Further, multiple versions of similar zone-arrangements can be combined. For example, multiple z-shaped configurations may be adjacently positioned to fully utilize a rectangular space.

[0005] According to various embodiments, a system is provided that comprises a landing zone, a takeoff zone, and a transition zone including at least one surface positioned between the landing zone and the takeoff zone. The system further includes transport equipment configured to physically transport a plurality of aircraft simultaneously across the transition zone from the landing zone to the takeoff zone, and configured to allow passenger exchange at each of the plurality of aircraft while each of the plurality of aircraft is coupled to the transport equipment and located at the transition zone. The system also includes a plurality of chargers, wherein each charger is configured to electrically charge a battery of an aircraft from the plurality of aircraft while the aircraft is coupled to the transport equipment and located at the transition zone. Each charger includes a power source and an electrical coupler coupled to the power source, the electrical coupler configured to couple to and supply power to the battery of the aircraft.

[0006] According to further embodiments, the at least one surface includes at least one pathway. The transport equipment includes a plurality of carts configured to physically transport the plurality of aircraft simultaneously across the at least one pathway from the landing zone to the takeoff zone. The plurality of chargers are disposed on the plurality of carts such that each of the plurality of carts includes a charger from the plurality of chargers, and such that each cart from the plurality of carts is configured to simultaneously physically transport the aircraft and electrically charge the battery of the aircraft.

[0007] According to further embodiments, the at least one surface is a single pathway, where a beginning of the single pathway is adjacent to an end of the landing zone, and an end of the single pathway is adjacent to a beginning of the takeoff zone. The landing zone is oriented in a first direction, the takeoff zone is oriented in a second direction, and the single pathway is oriented in a third direction.

[0008] According to further embodiments, the first direction is parallel to the second direction, and the first direction and the second direction are both perpendicular to the third direction.

[0009] According to further embodiments, the first direction is parallel to the second direction, and the first direction and the second direction are both antiparallel to the third direction.

[0010] According to further embodiments, the at least one surface is in a form of a circular platform configured to physically support the plurality of aircraft simultaneously, and the transport equipment includes a motor coupled to the circular platform and configured to rotate the circular platform.

[0011] Embodiments further provide a method comprising receiving, by a system, an aircraft at a landing zone, physically transporting the aircraft from the landing zone across a transition zone to a takeoff zone, electrically charging one or more batteries of the aircraft while transporting the aircraft, allowing passenger exchange to take place at the aircraft while transporting the aircraft, depositing the aircraft at the takeoff zone, and allowing the aircraft to depart from the takeoff zone.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] Various embodiments of the invention are disclosed in the following detailed description and the accompanying drawings.

[0013] **FIG. 1** illustrates an example of a vertiport system, according to various embodiments.

[0014] **FIG. 2A-2B** illustrate examples of a cart, according to various embodiments.

[0015] **FIG. 3** illustrates an example of a vertiport system with an alternative configuration of zones, according to various embodiments.

[0016] **FIG. 4** illustrates an example of a vertiport system with alternative entry and exit points, according to various embodiments.

[0017] **FIG. 5A** illustrates an example of a vertiport system with separate areas for passenger exchange and aircraft reset, according to various embodiments.

[0018] **FIG. 5B** illustrates an example of a vertiport system with a combined takeoff and landing zone, according to various embodiments.

[0019] **FIG. 6** illustrates an example of a vertiport system with multiple pathways in a transition zone, according to various embodiments.

[0020] FIG. 7 illustrates an example of a vertiport system with multiple sets of zones, according to various embodiments.

[0021] FIG. 8 illustrates an example of a vertiport system with interconnected sets of zones, according to various embodiments.

[0022] FIG. 9 illustrates an exemplary method and schedule for alternating the use of various zones of a vertiport system, according to some embodiments.

[0023] FIG. 10 illustrates an example of a carousel-style vertiport system, according to various embodiments.

[0024] FIG. 11 illustrates a method for resetting an aircraft, according to various embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0025] Embodiments may be implemented in numerous ways, including as a process; an apparatus; and/or a system. In this specification, these implementations, or any other form that the invention may take, may be referred to as techniques. In general, the order of the steps of disclosed processes may be altered within the scope of the invention. Unless stated otherwise, a component may be implemented as a general component that is temporarily configured to perform the task at a given time or a specific component that is manufactured to perform the task.

[0026] Various embodiments provide a compact vertiport system with efficient space utilization. The vertiport system may be efficient and compact by combining, into one space and time period, multiple activities that typically take place in different spaces and at different times. For example, when an electric aircraft is being moved from a landing zone to a takeoff zone, one or more batteries of the electric aircraft may also be charged simultaneously. Also, passenger exchange may take place while the aircraft is being moved (e.g., in a slow, steady, safe manner). As a result, compact vertiport systems may fit into smaller spaces (e.g., tops of buildings, car parking areas, or other smaller plots of land).

[0027] Further, efficient configuration of different zones of a vertiport system may further improve the usage of limited space. As an example, a landing zone may connect directly to a transition zone (e.g., for recharging batteries and/or passenger exchange), and the transition zone may connect directly to a takeoff zone. This can enable an aircraft to be delivered

directly from the end of a landing zone to the beginning of a takeoff zone. In some embodiments, different zones of a vertiport system can be arranged in a z-shape. Further, multiple versions of similar zone-arrangements can be combined. For example, multiple z-shaped configurations may be adjacently positioned to fully utilize a rectangular space.

[0028] FIG. 1 illustrates an example of vertiport system 105, according to some embodiments. A vertiport system 105 may include infrastructure for receiving aircraft from flight, resetting the aircraft for a subsequent flight, and allowing the aircraft to depart for the subsequent flight. According to some embodiments, a vertiport may be similar to an airport, including at least some similar components. In contrast with a typical airport, a vertiport may further be configured for usage with aircraft that are capable of vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL). In some embodiments, a vertiport specifically configured for VTOL aircraft can have a smaller footprint, with smaller landing and takeoff areas as compared to a typical airport with typical runways.

[0029] As shown in FIG. 1, the vertiport system 105 may include a landing zone 110, a transition zone 115, and a takeoff zone 120. An aircraft 112 may arrive at the landing zone 110, and may later depart the vertiport system 105 via the takeoff zone 120. A transition zone 115 may connect the landing zone 110 to the takeoff zone 120. The transition zone 115 may host equipment and provide space for the aircraft 112 to finish a first flight, and for the aircraft 112 to become prepared for second flight. This can include equipment and space for recharging the aircraft 112 power supply (e.g., battery), exchanging passengers (e.g., disembarking passengers from the first flight, and embarking passengers for the second flight), and/or transporting the aircraft 112 from the landing zone 110 to the takeoff zone 120.

[0030] According to various embodiments, the aircraft 112 may be moved across the transition zone 115 continuously or iteratively. FIG. 1 illustrates several example positions of the aircraft 112 as it is moved from the landing zone 110 to the takeoff zone 120.

[0031] According to some embodiments, a plurality of aircraft may be present at the same time at the vertiport system 105. Each aircraft can be reset and processed simultaneously, being moved from the landing zone 110 to the takeoff zone 120, being recharged, and undergoing passenger exchange. For example, instead of illustrating the same aircraft 112 at different positions/times, FIG. 1 may be interpreted as an illustration of multiple different aircraft simultaneously present at the vertiport system 105, and in various different locations.

[0032] Embodiments provide various types of transport equipment configured to physically transport the aircraft 112 from the landing zone 110 to the takeoff zone 120. Transport equipment can include any suitable equipment that can support and/or move one or more aircraft 112. For example, transport equipment can include one or more carts, lifts, tugs, conveyor belts, track systems, and/or any other suitable mechanism. In FIG. 1, the transport equipment takes the form of a cart 150. There may be a plurality of carts, where each cart 150 is configured to physically transport one aircraft 112 at a time.

[0033] In various embodiments, the vertiport system 105 also includes one or more chargers 160 that are configured to electrically charge (e.g., recharge) one or more aircraft batteries. The chargers 160 may take various forms and be in various locations that allow the aircraft 112 to be charged while located in the transition zone 115 and/or while coupled to the transport equipment (e.g., a cart 150). A charger 160 can include a power source (e.g., battery) coupled to an electrical coupler (e.g., wires, cables, plugs, and/or other electrical contacts) that is configured to couple to and supply power to one or more batteries of the aircraft 112. In FIG. 1, one charger 160 is disposed on each cart 150. As a result, each cart 150 can simultaneously recharge the aircraft 112 and physically transport the aircraft 112.

I. CARTS

[0034] An example cart 150 is shown in FIG. 2A, according to embodiments. As shown, the cart 150 can include a support structure such as a platform 151. The platform 151 can include a weight-bearing surface configured to physically support one or more aircraft 112, upon which an aircraft 112 can rest. The cart 150 can further include one or more mechanical couplers 152 which may couple to the aircraft 112 to provide additional stability and support to the aircraft 112 during transit. The cart 150 can also include mobility components, such as a motor 153 (e.g., which may be powered by a power source) and/or wheels 154. The motor 153 can be coupled to the set of one or more wheels 154 and configured to cause the set of one or more wheels 154 to rotate so that the cart 150 moves (and therefore the platform 151 moves). In some embodiments, the cart 150 may include components that assist in passengers boarding the cart 150 and/or aircraft 112, such as stairs 155 and/or ladders. Components that assist in passengers boarding the cart 150 and/or aircraft 112, such as stairs 155 and/or ladders, may be retractable and extendable. For example, stairs 155 may extend for passenger loading and unloading, and may retract when the cart 150 and/or aircraft 112 are moving.

[0035] According to various embodiments, the cart **150**, which may be automated, may mechanically lift and/or support the aircraft **112** (e.g., using the mechanical couplers **152** and/or platform **151**), and then transport the aircraft **112** across the transition zone **115** while it is in the lifted and/or supported position. The mechanical couplers **152** can include support beams, a forklift, tension lines, hooks, mechanical contacts, or any other suitable tools for lifting (e.g., moving in vertical direction), holding, and/or moving the aircraft **112**.

[0036] In some embodiments, the aircraft **112** may land directly onto the cart **150**. For example, the aircraft **112** may land directly onto the platform **151**. Alternatively, after the aircraft **112** has landed at the landing zone **110**, the cart **150** may move to a position underneath the aircraft **112**. For example, the cart **150** may drive under the aircraft **112** from behind the aircraft **112**, from in front of the aircraft **112**, or from any other suitable angle of approach. In some embodiments, aircraft skids may be located on the sides of the aircraft **112**, so the cart **150** may not enter from the side. The cart **150** then may proceed to lift the aircraft **112**. In this case, the cart **150** may not use and/or include the platform **151**, and may instead couple to and lift the aircraft **112** with the mechanical couplers **152**.

[0037] In some embodiments, the aircraft **112** may have landing gear that does not enable independent ground movement, such as skids. In other embodiments, the aircraft **112** can include wheels instead of skids, and the cart **150** may pull the aircraft **112** instead of lifting the aircraft **112**.

[0038] According to various embodiments, the cart **150** may travel independently over various surfaces, moving from the landing zone **110** to the transition zone **115** and then to the takeoff zone **120**. In other embodiments, the cart **150** may follow and/or be connected to a defined track or pathway.

[0039] As mentioned above, one or more carts **150** can transport one or more aircraft **112** between the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120** through the transition zone **115**. While transporting the aircraft **112**, the cart **150** may also provide electrical power to recharge one or more batteries of the aircraft **112**. This may advantageously improve vertiport space efficiency and time efficiency, as the transition zone **115** may be used for both re-positioning and recharging, instead of those activities happening at different times and in different spaces.

[0040] In order to provide electrical power to recharge the electric aircraft **112**, a charger **160** can be included as a component of the cart **150**. Each of a plurality of carts **150** can include one of a plurality of chargers **160**. A charger **160** can include a power source **161** (e.g., an on-cart battery or a wired connection to an off-cart vertiport power source) and an electrical coupler **162** that is configured to couple to and supply power to one or more batteries of the aircraft **112**. Further, the cart **150** can include additional electrical couplers **162** for recharging an on-cart power source by connecting to a separate off-cart vertiport power source **161**. In some embodiments, the charger's power source **161** may also provide power to the motor **153**.

[0041] In one example, the electrical couplers **162** may be housed in a recessed trough of the cart **150**. When the cart **150** approaches and mechanically couples to the aircraft **112**, the electrical couplers **162** may automatically emerge from the cart (e.g., in a vertical direction or a horizontal direction) and connect to a charging port of the aircraft **112** without a user/operator involvement.

[0042] In some embodiments, one or more mechanical couplers **152** and one or more electric couplers **162** may be integrated into a single component that provides both mechanical support and electrical charging to the aircraft **112** through one multi-purpose coupling.

[0043] Each of the mechanical couplers **152** and the electric couplers **162** may become removably-attached to any suitable part of an aircraft **112**, such as the main body of the aircraft **112**, wings of the aircraft **112**, and/or one or more ports or coupling points of the aircraft **112**. According to various embodiments, electrical coupling points and mechanical coupling points on the aircraft **112** may be adjacent to one another, or may instead may be in distant or unrelated locations of the aircraft **112**.

[0044] In further embodiments, the charger **160** may be equipped for wireless charging. Accordingly, in addition to or instead of electrical couplers **162** that physically connect to the aircraft **112**, the charger **160** may include a wireless charging module that may transmit power to the aircraft **112** (e.g., to a corresponding wireless charge receiving module at the aircraft **112**) without physical contact between the charger **160** and a charging module of the aircraft **112**.

[0045] According to various embodiments, the cart **150** may be configured to sufficiently charge and/or completely charge one or more batteries of the aircraft **112** while traveling across the transition zone **115**. An optimal cart speed may be calculated by dividing the travel distance (e.g., 20 meters) between the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120** (or the width of the transition zone **115**) by the time needed to charge the aircraft (e.g., 30 minutes).

[0046] As mentioned above, the cart **150** may allow passenger exchange to take place while the aircraft **112** is in transit (e.g., coupled to transport equipment and/or located within the transition zone **115**). For example, a first set of one or more passengers may exit the aircraft **112** after the aircraft **112** arrives at the landing zone **110**, and a second set of one or more passengers may enter the aircraft **112** before the aircraft departs from the takeoff zone **120**. The cart speed may be set below a maximum threshold so that passengers may safely enter and exit the aircraft (at a slow and steady speed), even while it is being moved by the cart **150**. In some embodiments, the cart **150** may have a variable speed, the speed being lowered (or stopped) for times when passengers are entering or exiting the aircraft **112**.

[0047] Further, the cart **150** may additionally include a scale module **156** that may determine the total weight and/or balance (e.g., center of gravity) of the aircraft **112**. For example, after a new set of passengers boards the aircraft **112** (e.g., with or without luggage), the cart **150** may use one or more on-cart scale modules **156** to calculate a new total weight and/or balance of the aircraft **112**. The calculated weight and/or balance data may then be provided to the aircraft **112** (e.g., an aircraft computer) for use in the next flight. In some embodiments, the cart **150** and/or aircraft **112** may use the weight and balance information to determine needed or recommended changes to passenger and/or luggage positioning within the aircraft **112** to improve balance and weight distribution. Incorporating a scale function into the cart may advantageously eliminate the need for a separate scale, a separate process of weighing passengers and/or luggage before boarding the aircraft **112**, and a separate determination of optimal passenger and/or luggage placement within the aircraft **112**.

[0048] One example of a cart **150** as coupled to an aircraft **112** is shown in **FIG. 2B**, according to embodiments. As shown, the cart **150** can include a platform **151**, mechanical couplers **152**, wheels **154**, stairs **155** (e.g., shown in a retracted position), and/or a charger **160**. Both an on-cart power source **161** and an off-cart power source **161** are shown, although embodiments allow one or both to be included. Also, two electrical couplers **162**

are shown; a cart-to-aircraft electrical coupler **162** and an off-cart power source to cart power source electrical coupler **162**, although embodiments allow one or both to be included. A coupling point **113** of the aircraft **112** is illustrated. The coupling point **113** may provide a connection to one or more aircraft batteries, and may be configured for removable coupling to a corresponding electrical coupler **162** of the cart **150**.

II. VERTIPORT ZONES

[0049] Referring back to **FIG. 1**, the landing zone **110** can include a first space or surface (e.g., a first aircraft runway) configured to receive an incoming aircraft **112**. The takeoff zone **120** can include a second space or surface (e.g., a second aircraft runway) configured to allow the aircraft **112** to depart. The landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120** can each support an aircraft **112**, and can provide sufficient space for the aircraft **112** to land from flying and/or depart from the ground. The landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120** can each include any suitable materials, such as asphalt, concrete, tarmac, wood, metal, and/or natural surface materials (e.g., grass, dirt, gravel, ice, sand, salt). Further, the landing zone **110** and/or takeoff zone **120** may include heating elements on or below the surface (e.g., to prevent ice from forming), draining systems, markings and indicators, and/or any other suitable elements.

[0050] In some embodiments, the width of the landing zone **110** and/or the takeoff zone **120** may be at least twice the size of the aircraft **112**. For example, the width may be 3 meters, 5 meters, 10 meters, 20 meters, or any other suitable width. The length of the landing zone **110** and/or the takeoff zone **120** can be configured based on the space needed for accelerating to takeoff and/or decelerating when landing. For example, the length may be 10 meters, 20 meters, 30 meters, 50 meters, 100 meters, or any other suitable length.

[0051] In some embodiments, the vertiport system **105** may be configured for aircraft that utilize horizontal takeoff and landing (HTHL). For example, length of the landing zone **110** and/or the takeoff zone **120** can take the form of runways that are configured to accommodate HTHL aircraft.

[0052] In other embodiments, the vertiport system **105** may be configured for aircraft capable of vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL). In this case, less space may be needed for takeoff and landing, and the lengths of the landing zone **110** and/or the takeoff zone **120** can be reduced relative to typical runways. Instead of a runway, such a landing zone **110** and/or

the takeoff zone **120** may take the form of a pad (e.g., a landing pad or a takeoff pad). For example, the shape and size (e.g., length and width) may be configured to be smaller than a typical runway, but may be at least twice the size (e.g., corresponding length or width) of the aircraft **112**. Embodiments allow the landing zone **110** and/or the takeoff zone **120** to have dimension sizes of runways, pads, hybrid runway-pads, and any other suitable sizes.

[0053] Each of the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120** can include three distinct regions: (1) a Touchdown and Liftoff (TLOF) area, (2) a Final Approach and Takeoff (FATO) area, and (3) a Safety Area. The TLOF can be a load-bearing, generally paved area on which the aircraft **112** lands and/or takes off. The FATO may be an area in space over which the aircraft **112** completes the final phase of the approach to a hover or a landing, and/or an area in space over which the aircraft **112** starts the initial phase of the takeoff from a position of hovering or a landing position. The TLOF may be in the centered of the FATO. The Safety Area can be an area in space surrounding the FATO that provides additional buffer space.

[0054] According to embodiments, the transition zone **115** may include at least one space or surface positioned between the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120**. For example, the transition zone **115** can include one or more surfaces (e.g., which may be paved) each of which can include one or more pathways, one or more platforms (e.g., which may rotate), and/or any other suitable surface that can be used when transporting a cart and/or aircraft from the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120**. The transition zone **115** may provide space outside of the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120** for completing flights (e.g., passenger unloading), starting new flights (e.g., passenger loading), and/or resetting the aircraft **112** for a subsequent flight (e.g., relocating the aircraft, charging batteries, cleaning, etc.). The transition zone **115** may host equipment that assists in performing these tasks, such as transport equipment and/or chargers.

[0055] In the example shown in **FIG. 1**, the transition zone **115** includes one surface. The surface includes one elongated pathway that can simultaneously accommodate a plurality of aircraft **112** (e.g., in a single-file line), each aircraft **112** at a different point of progress across the transition zone **115**. Such a surface can physically support an aircraft **112**, and can include any suitable materials, such as asphalt, concrete, tarmac, wood, metal, and/or natural surface materials (e.g., grass, dirt, gravel, ice, sand, salt). The transition zone **115** can also

include heating elements on or below the surface (e.g., to prevent ice from forming), draining systems, markings and indicators, and/or any other suitable elements.

[0056] In some embodiments, the width of the transition zone **115** may be similar to or slightly larger than the width of aircraft **112**. For example, if the aircraft width is 10 meters, the transition zone **115** may have a width of 11 meters. The transition zone **115** may not require the same amount of buffer space as the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120**, as aircraft **112** may not begin a flight or finish a flight at the transition zone **115**.

[0057] The length **116** of the transition zone **115** may be configured based on the time needed to charge an aircraft **112**, the number of aircraft **112** desired to be accommodated on the vertiport system **105** at any given point in time, and/or the space needed for each aircraft **112** and cart **150**. For example, if the vertiport system **105** is designed to accommodate a new aircraft arrival every 5 minutes, and it takes 30 minutes to charge an aircraft **112**, then after the first aircraft **112** arrives and begins a charging process, five additional aircraft may arrive while the first aircraft **112** is still undergoing the charging process. If each aircraft/cart system has a length of 10 meters (e.g., including a buffer space between aircraft and/or carts), then the transition zone may be designed to have a length **116** of at least 60 meters. That would allow enough space for all six aircraft to be charging and moving between across the transition zone **115** at the same time without any delay for any of the aircraft upon arrival at the landing zone **110**. Alternatively, the length **116** of the transition zone **115** in **FIG. 1** may be configured based on the space available. For example, size dimensions of a building rooftop may limit the length **116** of the transition zone **115** to be 20 meters.

[0058] According to various embodiments, the transition zone **115** may be wide enough, or have sections that are wide enough, to allow one cart **150** and aircraft **112** to pass another cart **150** and aircraft **112**. For example, an aircraft **112** may arrive that still has some amount of charge/power left after the previous flight, and therefore does not need the full time to under a recharge process. As a result, that aircraft **112** may become ready for a subsequent flight before another aircraft **112** that is further ahead in the line to the takeoff zone **120**. Using the surplus width in the transition zone **115**, whichever aircraft **112** is nearer to being sufficiently charged may be moved around one or more other aircraft **112** and thereby placed closer to the front of the line.

[0059] According to various embodiments, passengers may be loaded and unloaded from the aircraft **112** at any suitable time, which may advantageously include times when the

aircraft **112** is being transported and charging so that there is no need to allocate additional space for a separate passenger exchange zone. As shown in **FIG. 1**, a passenger deplaning position **130** may be located in a first section of the transition zone **115**, which may be the first area the cart **150** and aircraft **112** enter after the aircraft **112** arrives in the landing zone **110**. Also, a passenger boarding position **135** may be located at a last section of the transition zone **115**, which may be the last area the cart **150** and aircraft **112** is transported through before departing the vertiport system **105** from the takeoff zone **120**. However, embodiments allow passengers to enter and/or exit the aircraft **112** at other times and positions as well. For example, when a passenger arrives at the vertiport system **105**, the next available aircraft **112** may be not be at the last section of the transition zone **115** (e.g., it may be in the middle of the transition zone **115**). The passenger may be allowed to board the aircraft **112** at this point, and wait inside the aircraft **112** while the cart **150** completes the charging and transporting of the aircraft **112**.

[0060] The vertiport system **105** may further include one or more access portals through which passengers may enter and/or exit the vertiport system **105**. For example, the vertiport system **105** may include a passenger exit point **175** and/or passenger entry point **170**. According to various embodiments, the passenger exit point **175** and/or passenger entry point **170** may include any suitable type of access portal, such as stairs, escalators, elevators, and/or walkways. The access portals may connect to corridors located underneath the surface level of the vertiport system **105**. For example, if the vertiport system **105** is located on the roof of a building, the passenger exit point **175** and passenger entry point **170** may be connected to lower levels of the building. If the vertiport system **305** is located on the ground, the passenger exit point **175** and passenger entry point **170** may be connected to tunnels and/or passageways underneath the ground.

[0061] In some embodiments, one or more passages (e.g., tunnels, walkways, etc.), which may be coupled to the passenger exit point **175** and/or the passenger entry point **170**, may be considered a part of the vertiport system **105**. The one or more passages may be located underneath the takeoff zone **120**, the landing zone **110**, and/or the transition zone **115**.

[0062] According to embodiments, the passenger exit point **175** and/or passenger entry point **170** may be located in any suitable area of the vertiport system **105**. As illustrated in **FIG. 1**, the passenger exit point **175** may be located adjacent to the beginning of the transition zone **115**, near to where the aircraft **112** and/or cart **150** may first enter the

transition zone **115** from the landing zone **110**. As shown, the passenger exit point **175** may thereby be conveniently located near to a passenger deplaning position **130**. Also as illustrated in **FIG. 1**, the passenger entry point **170** may be located adjacent to the end of the transition zone **115**, near to where the aircraft **112** and/or cart **150** may leave the transition zone **115** to enter the takeoff zone **120**. As shown, the passenger entry point **170** may thereby be conveniently located near to a passenger boarding position **135**.

[0063] In some embodiments, the passenger exit point **175** and/or passenger entry point **170** may be located within the transition zone **115**. In some embodiments, the locations of the passenger exit point **175** and/or passenger entry point **170** illustrated in **FIG. 1** (e.g., adjacent to the elongated surface pathway of the transition zone **115**) may also be considered part of (e.g., within) the transition zone **115**.

[0064] In some embodiments, an air traffic controller or an automated aircraft communication network may coordinate the arrival times of different aircraft **112**. In this scenario, each arrival may be spaced apart in time (e.g., at least 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 minutes apart) so that there is always a space available in the landing zone **110** and/or the transition zone **115** for an arriving aircraft **112**. As a result, each arriving aircraft **112** may immediately become coupled to a cart **150** and moved from the landing zone **110** to the transition zone **115**, as well as immediately begin charging.

[0065] In other embodiments, aircraft may be permitted to arrive even when there is not available space in the transition zone **115**. In this case, the landing zone **110** may include an extra space used as a waiting/storage area (e.g., at the end of the landing zone **110**). Overflow aircraft may wait in the waiting area (either with or without a cart **150**) until space in the transition zone **115** and/or a cart **150** become available. Additional aircraft **112** may be able to arrive in the landing zone **110** as overflow aircraft may be located out of the way (e.g., in the waiting area).

[0066] In some embodiments, a cart **150** with the next available aircraft **112** may wait at the end of the transition zone **115** until the next passenger boards the aircraft **112**, then the cart **150** may deposit the aircraft **112** in the takeoff zone **120**. Alternatively, the cart **150** may deposit the aircraft into the takeoff zone **120** when finished charging, and the aircraft **112** may wait there until the next passenger arrives.

[0067] In some embodiments, if multiple aircraft **112** finish charging before the next passenger arrives, each of the multiple aircraft **112** may be deposited by their respective carts in an extra waiting/storage area of the takeoff zone **120** (e.g., at the beginning of the takeoff zone **120**). As a result, the carts **150** and space in the transition zone **115** may be made available for additional arriving aircraft **112**. Once the takeoff zone **120** and/or waiting area become fully occupied, additional aircraft(s) may wait in the transition zone **115**, where carts **150** may stop moving toward the takeoff area **120**, but may continue charging the aircraft **112**.

[0068] In some embodiments, if space at the vertiport system **105** is fully occupied with aircraft **112**, the vertiport system **105** may cause one or more aircraft **112** to depart from the takeoff zone **120** even if there are no departing passengers. For example, it may be considered a high priority to allow an incoming aircraft **112** with arriving passengers to land, so some present aircraft **112** may be instructed to depart without passengers. In some embodiments, such a non-occupied aircraft **112** may be distributed to another vertiport system that is low on aircraft **112** but has demand from passengers who would like to depart. Embodiments, allow aircraft **112** to be automatically re-distributed among multiple different vertiports based on real-time demand, time of day, or any other suitable consideration.

[0069] As described above, the cart **150** together with the transition zone **115** may efficiently combine the space and time needed for (1) resetting the aircraft **112** from the landing zone **110** to the takeoff zone **120**, (2) recharging the aircraft **112**, and (3) exchanging passengers.

III. CHARGING STATIONS

[0070] As discussed above with respect to **FIG. 1**, the chargers **160** may take various forms and be in various locations that allow the aircraft **112** to be charged while located in the transition zone **115** and/or while coupled to the transport equipment. As already discussed, in some embodiments, the chargers **160** can be disposed on the carts **150**. In other embodiments, one or more chargers **160** can instead be disposed at one or more fixed locations on one or more surfaces of the transition zone **115**.

[0071] For example, one or more chargers can be installed in fixed locations on the ground. The transport equipment can still be embodied as including carts that couple to aircraft **112** to physical transport the aircraft **112** across the transition zone **115**. However, instead of

equipping the carts **150** with aircraft-charging capabilities and components, the carts **150** can be configured to temporarily stop at a one or more ground-based chargers **160** for a certain amount of time. When stopped at a charger **160**, the aircraft **112** can become electrically coupled to the charger **160** and undergo some or all of a recharging process.

[0072] In some embodiments, a surface of the transition zone **115** can include an elongated pathway with a plurality of charging station positions, which can be arranged in a row along the pathway, consecutively. For example, a charger **160** can be installed at each aircraft **112** position on the transition zone **115** shown in **FIG. 1**. A cart **150** can iteratively move an aircraft **112** from one charging station to the next. For example, the cart **150** can stop at a first charger **160** for a first time period, and the aircraft **112** can become electrically coupled to a first charger **160** and undergo a first portion of a battery recharging process. Then, either after a certain pre-determined amount of time, or in response to an event (e.g., a new aircraft arrived or another aircraft departed and therefore each waiting aircraft can move forward a position), the aircraft **112** can decouple from the charger **160** and the cart **150** can move the aircraft **112** to a second position with a second charger **160**. At the second position, the cart **150** can again stop and allow the aircraft **112** to connect to the second charger **160**. The cart **150** and aircraft **112** can proceed iteratively from station to station in this manner until the aircraft **112** is fully charged, sufficiently charged, and/or the cart **150** deposits the aircraft **112** into the takeoff zone.

[0073] A surface-disposed charger **160** can include a power source **161** (e.g., a central power source for the vertiport system **105** or a local battery) and one or more electrical couplers **162** that are configured to couple to and supply power to one or more batteries of the aircraft **112**. In one example, the electrical couplers **162** may be housed in a console. When the cart **150** and aircraft **112** come within a certain range of the console, the electrical couplers **162** may automatically emerge from the console (e.g., in a vertical direction or a horizontal direction) and connect to a charging port of the aircraft **112**. In further embodiments, the charger **160** may be equipped for wireless charging. Accordingly, in addition to or instead of electrical couplers **162** that physically connect to the aircraft **112**, the charger **160** may include a wireless charging module that may transmit power to the aircraft **112** (e.g., to a corresponding wireless charge receiving module at the aircraft **112**) without physical contact between the charger **160** and a charging module of the aircraft **112**.

[0074] Embodiments allow any of the vertiport systems discussed herein or illustrated in the Figures to include chargers that are disposed on carts or chargers that are installed in fixed ground positions.

IV. VERTIPORT CONFIGURATION: ZONES IN Z-SHAPE

[0075] According to various embodiments, additional compact vertiport efficiencies can be achieved through efficient arrangement and configuration of the various zones of the vertiport system 105. For example, as shown in FIG. 1, the landing zone 110, transition zone 115, and takeoff zone 120, in combination, may form an efficient z-shape for the vertiport system 105. This z-shaped configuration may minimize the energy and time needed to reset an aircraft 112 for a subsequent flight by minimizing and aircraft's travel distance between landing and subsequent takeoff.

[0076] As shown, the end of the landing zone 110, where the aircraft 112 may most naturally come to a stop, may be the part of the landing zone 110 that is adjacent to and/or connected to the transition zone 115. This connection may happen at the true end of the landing zone 110, or near the end (e.g., within 2 meters, 5 meters, 10 meters, or 20 meters) of the landing zone 110.

[0077] Similarly, the beginning of the takeoff zone 120, from where the aircraft 112 may typically begin the takeoff process, may be the part of the takeoff zone 120 that is adjacent to and/or connected to the transition zone 115. This arrangement allows the aircraft 112 to be positioned for takeoff without any unnecessary travel along the takeoff zone 120. This connection may happen at the true beginning of the takeoff zone 120, or near the beginning (e.g., within 2 meters, 5 meters, 10 meters, or 20 meters) of the takeoff zone 120.

[0078] This combination of end-to-beginning connections provides the shortest, most efficient way to connect the landing zone 110 to the takeoff zone 120. For example, in contrast, if the beginning (instead of the end) of the landing zone 110 were connected to the transition zone 115, the aircraft 112 (e.g., via the cart 150) may, after landing, have to travel back down the length of the landing zone 110 before entering the transition zone 115. This may inefficiently take more time and energy to reset the aircraft 112 for a subsequent flight, and may occupy the landing zone 110 for a longer time which may prevent additional aircraft from landing. While not being the most efficient configuration, such configurations (e.g. the beginning (instead of the end) of the landing zone 110 were connected to the transition zone

115 or similar configurations) are also within the scope of the present disclosure as the configuration may be warranted by real estate restrictions, zoning requirement, etc.

[0079] As shown in **FIG. 1**, the landing zone 110 (e.g., a first surface) may be oriented in a first direction, the takeoff zone 120 (e.g., a second surface) may be oriented in a second direction, and the first and second directions can parallel or otherwise similar. For example, it may be desired to orient both the landing zone 110 and the takeoff zone 120 such that they both oppose the prevailing wind direction.

[0080] The transition zone 115 (e.g., a third surface) may be oriented in a third direction. As shown in **FIG. 1**, the third direction can be angled relative to the first and second directions. In some embodiments, the third direction may be perpendicular to the first and second directions. The angle between the transition zone 115 and the other zones may be determined based on the shape of the overall space allotted for the vertiport system 105.

[0081] In some embodiments, the transition zone 115 can allow travel in either direction (e.g., the carts 150 can travel in either direction). Further, the landing zone 110 and the takeoff zone 120 may be able to switch designations (e.g., the landing zone 110 becomes the takeoff zone 120, and vice versa). This can be useful in certain situations, such as if the wind is moving opposite the typical direction. It may be desired to land and takeoff into the wind. Accordingly, if the wind is blowing from behind the landing zone 110 and the takeoff zone 120 (e.g., back to front), the landing zone 110 and the takeoff zone 120 can switch designations, and traffic across the transitions zone 115 can switch directions.

[0082] Embodiments of the invention allow additional configurations to be used that may achieve similar benefits as the z-shape configuration. For example, in contrast with the z-shape configuration where the aircraft 112 lands and takes off with the same directional heading, the takeoff zone 120 may instead be oriented in the opposite direction of (e.g., antiparallel to) the landing zone 110, so that aircraft takes off with a heading opposite to the landing heading. This may resemble a u-shape. The u-shape configuration enables efficient resetting of aircraft 112 across a short transition zone 115 in a manner similar to that of the z-shape configuration. However, a u-shape configuration may fit well into a typical rectangular-shaped real estate space. While the u-shape may make efficient use of rectangular spaces, in some situations, wind direction may make a u-shape configuration undesirable or impractical, as it is typically preferred for aircraft to both takeoff and land

against the prevailing wind direction. In some embodiments, such as for VTOL aircraft, wind direction may not be a concern or may be less of a concern.

[0083] The configuration and arrangement of the landing zone **110**, transition zone **115**, and takeoff zone **120** may be modified on a case-by-case basis, and may be determined based on a number of external factors, such as the shape of the available real estate land or surface, surrounding obstacles (e.g., buildings, hills, mountains, wind currents), surrounding flight regulations (e.g., restricted airspace or regulated flight paths), aircraft capability (e.g., vertical vs horizontal takeoff and landing), etc. Accordingly, depending on the external factors, the optimal configuration may involve, relative to the configuration shown in **FIG. 1**, modifying the sizes (e.g., lengths) of one or more zones, modifying the orientations and/or relative angles of one or more zones, and/or modifying the relative positions and/or connection points of one or more zones. As one example, in a case where a long-narrow surface strip is available, the landing zone **110**, transition zone **115**, and takeoff zone **120** may all be lined-up in the same direction in one long, continuous strip.

[0084] While configurations like the z-shape and the u-shape enable a short transition zone **115**, a short transition zone **115** may limit the number of aircraft that may be accommodated (e.g., placed on carts and charged) at a given point in time. Accordingly, in some embodiments, alternative configurations may be used to extend the transition zone **115** so that additional aircraft **112** may be accommodated. For example, the transition zone **115** may be lengthened by making any suitable number of turns, bends, switchbacks, or other diversions on the way to the takeoff zone **120**. Also, the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120** can be further staggered in any direction so that the transition zone **115** travels further to connect them (e.g., use non-90 degree angles). Alternatively, instead of staggering the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120** as shown in **FIG. 1**, the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120** may be parallel to one another and lined up with one another (e.g., as in the u-shaped configuration, except here landing and takeoff directions may be the same). In this case, the transition zone **115** may primarily travel in an equal and opposite direction to the takeoff/landing direction (e.g., downward in **FIG. 1**) in order to travel from the end of the landing zone **110** to the beginning of the takeoff zone **120**. This may both elongate the transition zone **115** and at the same time create an efficient use of available space in a rectangular real estate area or a rectangular rooftop. Examples of such a vertiport configuration are shown below with respect to **FIGS. 3-5**. In **FIGS. 3-5**, the transition zones **115** is straight, relatively short, and antiparallel to the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone

120. If a longer transition zone **115** is desired, it can be angled (e.g., not antiparallel) relative to the landing zone **110** and the takeoff zone **120**, and/or include any suitable number of twists and turns (e.g., based on the width of the available real estate space), as mentioned above.

[0085] While not shown in **FIG. 1**, the vertiport system **105** may also include a return path for carts that have dropped-off an aircraft **112** at the takeoff zone **120**. As an example, the return path may be adjacent to the transition zone **115**, but with empty carts traveling in the opposite direction to the carts in the transition zone **115**. In some embodiments, the return path may involve twists and turns in order to elongate the path. This may take advantage of any unused real estate space, may enable the vertiport system **105** to store extra carts, and/or may provide carts with space/time to recharge on-cart cart power sources **161** (e.g., by stopping at and connecting to a vertiport ground power supply).

V. VERTIPORT CONFIGURATION: PARALLEL LANES

[0086] **FIG. 3** illustrates an example of a vertiport system **305** with an alternative configuration of zones. As shown, the landing zone **310** and the takeoff zone **320** can be substantially aligned (e.g., vertically aligned from the perspective of **FIG. 3**). For example, the beginnings of the landing zone **310** and the takeoff zone **320** can be vertically aligned and/or the endings of the landing zone **310** and the takeoff zone **320** can be vertically aligned. The landing zone **310** and the takeoff zone **320** may also be oriented in the same or similar directions (e.g., parallel).

[0087] The transition zone **315** may be adjacent to both the landing zone **310** and the takeoff zone **320**, and located between the landing zone **310** and the takeoff zone **320**. The transition zone **315** can also be aligned with the landing zone **310** and/or the takeoff zone **320** (e.g., vertically aligned from the perspective of **FIG. 3**). Further, the transition zone **315** may be oriented in an opposite direction relative to (e.g., antiparallel to) the landing zone **310** and/or the takeoff zone **320**.

[0088] The aircraft landing and takeoff directions (e.g., first and second directions) may both be oriented from bottom to top of the landing zone **310** and the takeoff zone **320** (e.g., upward from the perspective of **FIG. 3**). In order to travel from the end of the landing zone **310** to the beginning of the takeoff zone **320**, the aircraft may be transported (e.g., via carts) across the transition zone **315** in an equal and opposite (e.g., antiparallel) direction (e.g., a third direction) relative to the takeoff/landing direction (e.g., downward in **FIG. 3**).

[0089] The zone arrangement of the vertiport system **305** shown in **FIG. 3** may simultaneously provide efficient and direct transport from the landing zone **310** and the takeoff zone **320**, allow both the landing and takeoff directions to be oriented in the same direction (e.g., against the wind), and create a rectangular shape which may fit well into a rectangular space (e.g., a rectangular land plot or rooftop).

[0090] The vertiport system **305** may further include one or more protective barriers (e.g., **380A** and **380B**) and/or one or more walkways (e.g., **385A** and **385B**). The barriers **380A** and **380B** can take the form of walls, fences, gaps, textured ground, or any other suitable type of barrier or indicator. The first barrier **380A** may be positioned along at least some of a first border between the transition zone **315** and the landing zone **310**. The second barrier **380B** may be positioned along at least some of a second border between the transition zone **315** and the takeoff zone **320**.

[0091] The walkways **385A** and **385B** can take the form of paved stationary pathways, moving pathways (e.g., conveyer belt), escalators, stairs, or any other suitable type of passenger corridor. The walkways **385A** and **385B** can be positioned between and adjacent to both of the transition zone **315** and respective barriers **380A** and **380B**.

[0092] According to various embodiments, separate walkways **385A** and **385B** can be used for entering passengers and exit passengers. The first barrier **380A** and the first walkway **385A** can guide deplaning passengers through the vertiport system **305** from an aircraft **312** to an exit area or exit portal. The second barrier **380B** and the second walkway **385B** can guide boarding passengers through the vertiport system **305** from an entry area or entry portal to an aircraft **312**. The barriers **380A** and **380B** and walkways **385A** and **385B** can prevent passengers from entering the landing zone **310** and/or takeoff zone **320** on foot. The barriers **380A** and **380B** can surround the transition zone **315**, and the barriers **380A** and **380B** may include gaps at one or more ends to allow aircraft **312** to enter and exit the transition zone **315** from the landing zone **310** and takeoff zone **320**.

[0093] **FIG. 4** illustrates another example of a vertiport system **405**. The vertiport system **405** shown in **FIG. 4** shares a number of similarities to the vertiport system **305** shown in **FIG. 3**. However, the vertiport system **405** shown in **FIG. 4** further includes a passenger exit point **475** and a passenger entry point **470**. As indicated, a deplaning passenger can proceed directly from an aircraft **412** to the conveniently located passenger exit point **475** (e.g., stairs, elevator, escalator, etc.). Similarly, a boarding passenger can proceed directly from the

conveniently located passenger entry point **470** (e.g., stairs, elevator, escalator, etc.) to an aircraft **412**. This can advantageously reduce the amount of space and time that the passengers spend on foot within the vertiport system **405**, as passengers may not need to travel across the length of a walkway adjacent to the transition zone **415**. As shown, the passenger exit point **475** and the passenger entry point **470** are located at ends of respective walkways and protective barriers. However, embodiments allow the passenger exit point **475** and the passenger entry point **470** to be located at central areas of respective walkways, or at any other suitable locations.

[0094] FIG. 5A illustrates another example of a vertiport system **505A**. The vertiport system **505A** shown in FIG. 5A shares a number of similarities to the vertiport system **405** shown in FIG. 4. However, in contrast with FIG. 4, the vertiport system **505A** shown in FIG. 5A positions the passenger exit point **575A** and the passenger entry point **570A** at the beginning and end, respectively, of the transition zone **515A**. Further, a passenger deplaning zone **530A** can be limited to a first portion of the transition zone **515A** at the beginning of the transition zone **515A**. Similarly, a passenger boarding zone **535A** can be limited to a third portion of the transition zone **515A**. The passenger exit point **575A** can be located within the passenger deplaning zone **530A** (which can also be referred to as an egress point), and the passenger entry point **570A** can be located within the passenger boarding zone **535A** (which can also be referred to as an ingress point).

[0095] This arrangement can contain passenger exchange areas to limited portions of the transition zone **515A**, and therefore make available the rest of the transition zone **515A** for other activities. For example, a second portion of the transition zone **515A** located between the passenger deplaning zone **530A** and the passenger boarding zone **535A** can be used for cleaning the aircraft **512A**, preconditioning the aircraft cabin environment, recharging, maintenance, and/or otherwise preparing or resetting aircraft **512A** for a subsequent flight. This second portion of the transition zone **515A** can be referred to as a reset zone **537A**. In some embodiments, the reset zone **537A** may be maximized so that a ground crew can have as much time as possible to reset and prepare the aircraft **512A**.

[0096] In some embodiments, recharging can be performed only within the reset zone **537A**. In other embodiments, recharging can take place in other zones as well, such as the passenger deplaning zone **530A** and the passenger boarding zone **535A**. For example,

charging can begin when the aircraft **512A** becomes electrically coupled to a cart (e.g., which can happen in the landing zone **510A**).

[0097] **FIG. 5B** illustrates another example of a vertiport system **505B**. The vertiport system **505B** shown in **FIG. 5B** is more compact due to combining the landing zone and the takeoff zone into a single unified multipurpose surface used for both landing and takeoff. In other words, the landing zone and the takeoff zone may be in the same location. This unified zone can be referred to as a landing and takeoff zone **511B**. In this case, the transition zone **515B** may be a surface that connects the end of a runway to the beginning of the same runway. The transition zone **515B** may be positioned adjacent to and oriented antiparallel to the landing and takeoff zone **511B**, as shown in **FIG. 5B**. In some embodiments, the landing and takeoff zone **511B** can include curves or bends, or have any other suitable shape pathway. In other embodiments, the transition zone **515B** may be a loop that brings the cart **550B** and/or aircraft **512B** back to the same point on the runway after completing a recharge and/or passenger exchange. The transition zone **515B** may still be considered positioned between the landing zone and the takeoff zone even when the landing zone and the takeoff zone occupy the same space, because that space (e.g., a single runway) may first be used as the landing zone (e.g., receive an aircraft), and then may be used as the takeoff zone (e.g., allow aircraft to depart) after the aircraft **512B** travels across the transition zone **515B**.

VI. VERTIPORT CONFIGURATION: ONE-STOP PATHWAY

[0098] **FIG. 6** illustrates another example of a vertiport system **605**. The vertiport system **605** shown in **FIG. 6** shares a number of similarities to the vertiport system **305** shown in **FIG. 3**. However, in the vertiport system **605** shown in **FIG. 6**, the transition zone **615** includes a surface with multiple pathways **616A**, **616B**, **616C**, and **616D**.

[0099] As indicated in **FIG. 6**, each of the pathways **616A**, **616B**, **616C**, and **616D** can connect directly from the landing zone **610** to the takeoff zone **620**. As a result, each aircraft **612** can reach the takeoff zone **620** by moving across just one of the pathways **616A**, **616B**, **616C**, and **616D**, as opposed to traveling down the entire transition zone **615** (e.g., as in **FIG. 3**). After entering the takeoff zone **620**, the aircraft **612** may move to a bottom or starting area of the takeoff zone **620**. Also, each aircraft **612** can move directly from the landing zone **310** into an available space at any of the available pathways **616A**, **616B**, **616C**, and **616D**.

(e.g., instead of all aircraft entering at the top of the transition zone **615** from the top/end of the landing zone **610**).

[0100] As opposed to the elongated pathway in **FIG. 3**, each of the pathways **616A**, **616B**, **616C**, and **616D** can be relatively short (e.g., about the size of an aircraft). Each pathway may be configured to accommodate one aircraft **612** at a time. In this case, an aircraft **612** can remain in one place for the duration of the charging process, passenger exchange process, and/or other reset processes.

[0101] Embodiments allow the chargers to be disposed on carts or separately on the transition zone **615**, as discussed above. In some embodiments, each of the pathways **616A**, **616B**, **616C**, and **616D** may include a fixed charging station. This may be suitable for the configuration of **FIG. 6**, because each aircraft **612** may couple to a single ground-based charger and complete a charging process without having to move to another ground-based charger.

[0102] The separation of the transition zone **615** into multiple separate pathways can eliminate a single-file queue of aircraft **612**, which may cause delays or backups. For example, each aircraft **612** can take as much time charging as needed without causing delays or interruptions for other aircraft **612**.

VII. VERTIPORT CONFIGURATION: MULTIPLE STACKED SETS OF ZONES

[0103] **FIG. 7** illustrates an example of a vertiport system **705** that includes multiples of each zone. As shown, multiple versions of each zone can be stacked together into one area. This example uses multiple stacks sets of the z-shape configuration as shown in **FIG. 1**, but embodiments allow other configurations to be stacked as well (e.g., the configuration shown in **FIG. 3**).

[0104] A first set of zones including a first landing zone **710A**, transition zone **715A**, and/or takeoff zone **720A** may be positioned adjacent to a second set of zones including a second landing zone **710B**, transition zone **715B**, and/or takeoff zone **720B**. While two sets of zones (e.g., landing, transition, and takeoff) are shown, any suitable number of sets of zones can be included and stacked above or below the zones shown in **FIG. 7** to create one combined vertiport system **705**.

[0105] The two sets of zones can be arranged relative to one another in any suitable manner. In one example, the two sets of zones are aligned (e.g., horizontally aligned from the perspective of FIG. 7). For example, as shown in FIG. 7, the first landing zone 710A may be oriented in the same direction as and/or horizontally aligned with the second landing zone 710B, such that the end of the first landing zone 710A is adjacent to and/or connects to the beginning of the second landing zone 710B. Similarly, the first takeoff zone 720A may be oriented in the same direction as and/or horizontally aligned with the second takeoff zone 720B, such that the end of the first takeoff zone 720A is adjacent to and/or connects to the beginning of the second takeoff zone 720B. Further, the first transition zone 715A may be parallel to the second transition zone 715B.

[0106] Including multiple stacked zones may more fully utilize the available space while maintaining the advantages of the efficient zone configurations described above (e.g., z-shape). For example, a z-shaped zone configuration may not utilize some of a rectangular real estate space (e.g., a rectangular plot of land or a rectangular rooftop). However, several z-shaped configurations stacked together may better utilize a rectangular space.

[0107] Additionally, the presence of multiple landing zones, takeoff zones, and transition zones, may enable a greater frequency of aircraft arrivals, departures, and recharging sessions. For example, if a single set of zones (e.g., landing, transition, and takeoff) may receive and process one aircraft per five minutes, and there are five sets of zones in the vertiport system 705, then the vertiport system 705 as a whole may receive one aircraft per minute.

[0108] According to various embodiments, the vertiport system 705 (e.g., via a vertiport computer and/or communication system) may instruct an approaching aircraft to land in a certain landing zone (e.g., 710A or 710B) based on any suitable criteria. For example, the landing zones may be cycled iteratively (e.g., first use landing zone 710A, then landing zone 710B, then another landing zone if included, and so forth). Alternatively, the vertiport system 705 may utilize whichever set of zones (e.g., landing, transition, and takeoff) that currently has the shortest wait-time (e.g., for the passengers to exit the aircraft, or for the aircraft to be recharged and reset for subsequent use).

[0109] According to various embodiments, one or more sets of zones may share certain components and/or zones. For example, a plurality carts may be shared by the first set of zones and the second set of zones. In such an embodiment, the carts may be distributed

intelligently among different sets of zones, based on where there is need. Alternatively, different carts may be dedicated to different sets of zones. For example, a first plurality of carts may be provided for the first set of zones, configured to physically transport a first plurality of aircraft across the first transition zone **715A** from the first landing zone **710A** to the first takeoff zone **720A**. Similarly, a second plurality of carts may be provided for the second set of zones, configured to physically transport a second plurality of aircraft across the second transition zone **715B** from the second landing zone **710B** to the second takeoff zone **720B**.

[0110] Additionally, in some embodiments, the different landing zones **710A** and **710B** may be combined into one continuous landing zone. Multiple transition zones **715A** and **715B** may lead away from different parts of the single continuous landing zone. Similarly, the different takeoff zones **720A** and **720B** may be combined into one continuous takeoff zone.

[0111] The vertiport system **705** may include one or more passenger exit points (e.g., **775A** and **775B**), as well as one or more passenger entry points (e.g., **770A** and **770B**). According to embodiments, the passenger exit points **775A** and **775B** and passenger entry points **770A** and **770B** may be located in any suitable area of the vertiport system **705**, such as in-between sets of zones to take advantage of space that is not occupied by a zone. As illustrated in **FIG. 7**, passenger exit points **775A** and **775B** may be located adjacent to the beginning of a corresponding transition zone (e.g., **715A** and **715B**), near to where an aircraft and/or cart may first enter the transition zone from a landing zone (e.g., **710A** and **710B**). Also as illustrated in **FIG. 7**, passenger entry points **770A** and **770B** may be located adjacent to the end of a corresponding transition zone (e.g., **715A** and **715B**), near to where an aircraft and/or cart may leave the transition zone to enter a takeoff zone (e.g., **720A** and **720B**).

VIII. VERTIPORT CONFIGURATION: INTERCONNECTED SETS OF ZONES

[0112] **FIG. 8** illustrates an example of a vertiport system **805** with interconnected sets of zones, according to various embodiments. As shown, multiple versions of each zone can be interconnected in a single vertiport system **805**. This example uses transition zones with multiple single-aircraft pathways, similar to the transition zone **615** shown in **FIG. 6**, but embodiments allow other configurations to be interconnected as well (e.g., the configurations shown in **FIGS. 1, 3, 4, and 5**).

[0113] The vertiport system **805** can include two separate landing zones **810A-B** (e.g., two separate surfaces), two separate takeoff zones **820A-B** (e.g., two separate surfaces), and four separate transition zones **815A-D** (e.g., four separate surfaces). The landing zones **810A-B** and takeoff zones **820A-B** can each be located in a respective corner of the rectangular-shaped vertiport system **805**, and each of the transition zones **815A-D** can be located in between and connected to a different pair of location zones and takeoff zones. As a result, the transition zones **815A-D**, taken together, can form a plus-shape.

[0114] In one embodiment, the two landing zones **810A-B** are positioned in opposite corners (e.g., top-left and bottom-right), and the two takeoff zones **820A-B** are positioned in the remaining opposite corners (e.g., top-right and bottom-left). Each of these corner zones are separated by the four transition zones **815A-D**. Each of the transition zones **815A-D** provides a unique connecting route from one of the landing zones **810A-B** to one of the takeoff zones **820A-B**. The geometrical arrangement enables each of the landing zones **810A-B** to be connected by the transition zones **815A-D** to both takeoff zones **820A-B** (instead of the other landing zone). As a result, a landing aircraft can have multiple options for movement within the vertiport system **805**, as it may be able to move to either of the takeoff zones **820A-B**.

[0115] In some embodiments, the vertiport system **805** may comprise one large, continuous surface. The different zones (which may be described as different surfaces) may be part of the same surface but separated by markings or other indicators.

[0116] In this example, each of the transition zones **815A-D** includes a surface, and each surface includes two pathways (e.g., two of the eight pathways **816A-H**), although embodiments allow each transition zone surface to include any suitable number of pathways. Each pathway connects one of the landing zones **810A-B** to one of the takeoff zones **820A-B**. This provides a landing aircraft with even more options for movement within the vertiport system **805**. For example, an aircraft **812** that lands in the first landing zone **810A** may have four different options of positions to move to next. The aircraft **812** may move into either the first transition zone **815A** or the second transition zone **815B**, and within those options the aircraft **812** may move into the first pathway **816A**, the second pathway **816B**, the third pathway **816C**, or the fourth pathway **816D**. Depending on which transition zone the aircraft **812** uses, the aircraft **812** can subsequently move to the first takeoff zone **820A** or the second takeoff zone **820B**.

[0117] Thus it can be seen that the interconnected zones of the vertiport system **805** provide routing flexibility when receiving, resetting, and sending off aircraft **812**. This can assist in efficiently coordinating a plurality of aircraft that may be simultaneously arriving, resetting, and/or departing at any given time.

[0118] Similar to **FIG. 6**, in **FIG. 8**, each aircraft **812** (e.g., via a cart) can move directly from one of the landing zones **810A-B** into an available pathway in one of the adjacent transition zones **815A-D**. Each of the pathways **816A-H** may be configured to accommodate one aircraft **812** at a time. An aircraft **812** can remain in one place for the duration of the charging process, passenger exchange process, and/or other reset processes. Then, the aircraft **812** can move directly into to the nearest of the takeoff zones **820A-B**.

[0119] Also, as mentioned above with respect to **FIG. 6**, the vertiport system **805** of **FIG. 8** allows fixed chargers to be placed at each of the pathways **816A-H**. Because each aircraft **812** can charge while stationary in one location, the carts may not need to be equipped with charging equipment. Instead, an aircraft **812** can be coupled to fixed charging equipment located within a designated charging area in a pathway **816A-H** of a transition zone **815A-D**. Simplifying the carts in this way may provide a more resilient and efficient vertiport system **805**.

[0120] The vertiport system **805** may provide at least some similar benefits to those described above with respect to **FIG. 7**. For example, the vertiport system **805** can create an efficient use of all available space in a rectangular real estate area or a rectangular rooftop. Also, with this arrangement, carts can be shared and distributed based on demand. Alternatively, separate sets of carts can be dedicated to each pairing of landing zone to transition zone (e.g., four sets). Further, the multiple landing zones **810A-B** and takeoff zones **820A-B** can enable a higher frequency of aircraft exchange, as multiple aircraft can land and/or takeoff simultaneously, and the landing zones **810A-B** and takeoff zones **820A-B** can otherwise be operated simultaneously. Additionally, this arrangement may be well-suited for VTOL aircraft which may not require an elongated runway but can function with smaller square-shaped landing pads and takeoff pads.

[0121] A passenger entry/exit area **870** can be located in the center of the vertiport system **805**. The passenger entry/exit area **870** can be similar to the passenger exit point **175** and/or the passenger entry point **170** described above with respect to **FIG. 1**. However, here, the passenger entry/exit area **870** can be one unified access portal for both entrance and exit.

Alternatively, two different pathways for entrance and exit, respectively, can be located adjacent to one another in the same area **870**.

[0122] In some embodiments, each of the landing zones **810A-B** and takeoff zones **820A-B** may be at least twice the size (e.g., length and width) of an aircraft **812**, while a pathway **816A-H** of a transition zone **815A-D** may have a same or similar size as an aircraft **812**. Accordingly, each of the landing zones **810A-B** and takeoff zones **820A-B** may be twice the size of each of the pathways **816A-H**. For example, each of the landing zones **810A-B** and takeoff zones **820A-B** may have a length equal to the length of two pathways **816A-H** and/or a width equal to the width of two pathways **816A-H**. As a result, two pathways **816A-H** (e.g., with chargers) may conveniently fit in between each landing zone and takeoff zone.

[0123] While two pathways (e.g., with charging stations) per transition zone are shown in the **FIG. 8**, embodiments of the invention allow each of the transition zones to include any suitable number of pathways and/or chargers (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, etc.).

IX. METHOD FOR ALTERNATING ZONES

[0124] **FIG. 9** illustrates an exemplary method and schedule for alternating the use of various zones of the vertiport system **805**, according to some embodiments.

[0125] In the table shown in **FIG. 9**, the columns represent time periods. For example, the first column labeled “**1**” represents a first time period, the second column labeled “**2**” represents a second time period, and so forth. Each time period may have the same duration, according to some embodiments. For example, each time period may have a duration of 15 minutes. Other amounts of time can be used (e.g., 1 minutes, 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes, 1 hour).

[0126] In the table shown in **FIG. 9**, the rows represent different locations. For example, the rows include both landing zones **810A-B**, both takeoff zones **820A-B**, and each pathway **816A-H** of each transition zone **815A-D**.

[0127] As mentioned above, multiple aircraft can arrive and be processed by the vertiport system **805** simultaneously. Each aircraft may spend a certain amount of time in each location. For example, each aircraft may spend up to four time periods in a given pathway in order to sufficiently charge aircraft batteries and/or exchange passengers. In the table shown

in **FIG. 9**, each cell shows the location of a plurality of aircraft across a set of time periods **1-13**.

[0128] As shown, two aircraft can arrive at two different landing zones at the same or similar times. Those two aircraft can then be moved to a pathway with a charging station (e.g., or while attached to a charging cart), where they will pause and charge (e.g., for a duration of 4 time periods). Once finished charging, an aircraft can be moved into a suitable takeoff zone and then depart.

[0129] As a specific example, aircraft **1** and **2** both arrive landing zones **810A** and **810B**, respectively, at time period **1**. Then they are moved into pathways **816A** and **816E**, respectively, at time period **2**. They remain at pathways **816A** and **816E** through time period **5**. Then, at time period **6**, they are moved into takeoff zones **820A** and **820B**, respectively, from which they can depart before time period **7**. While aircraft **1** and **2** are charging and/or exchanging passengers, additional aircraft **3-10** arrive. Aircraft **3-8** are each moved into one of the other available pathways **816B**, **816C**, **816D**, **816F**, **816G**, and **816H**. Once aircraft **1** and **2** move out of pathways **816A** and **816E**, leaving them vacant, aircraft **9** and **10** can be moved into those pathways at time period **6**.

[0130] It may be preferred to spread the usage of the takeoff zones **820A** and **820B** by sending two simultaneously-arriving aircraft in different directions. For example, as shown, aircraft **1** is sent to pathway **816A** which leads to takeoff zone **820A**, while aircraft **2** is sent to pathway **816E** which leads to takeoff zone **820B**. That way, if both aircraft finish recharging at the same time (which they do in this example), they can both be immediately moved into separate takeoff zones instead of competing for the same takeoff zone.

X. VERTIPORT CONFIGURATION: CAROUSEL

[0131] **FIG. 10** illustrates an example of a carousel-style vertiport system **1005**. In this example, instead of a stationary, elongated pathway (e.g., as shown in **FIGS. 1** and **3-5**), the surface of the transition zone can take the form of a circular platform **1023**. The circular platform **1023** can be configured to physically rotate (for example, counter-clockwise). Due to the rotation, aircraft **1012** and/or coupled carts **1050** located on edges of the circular platform **1023** can be transported from the landing zone **1010** on a first side of the circular platform **1023** to the takeoff zone **1020** on a second side of the circular platform **1023**.

[0132] The circular platform **1023** can be coupled to rotationally driven by a motor. The circular platform can be a flat surface that is configured to physically support one or more aircraft **1012** simultaneously while rotating. Embodiments allow the platform to take other shapes besides a circle, such as an oval, a rectangle, a hexagon, an octagon, or any other suitable shape.

[0133] The transport equipment can still include carts **1050**, as shown in **FIG. 10**. The carts **1050** can be configured to move the aircraft **1012** from the landing zone **1010** to the circular platform **1023**, and later from the circular platform **1023** to the takeoff zone **1020**. As shown, an aircraft **1012** can arrive at the landing zone **1010** and become coupled to and/or supported by a cart **1050**. An aircraft **1012** can land directly on top of a cart **1050**. The aircraft **1012** will then be transported by the cart **1050** onto the circular platform **1023**. For example, the cart **1050**, which may be self-propelled or moved by a moving track in the landing zone **1010**, can move or be moved over from the landing zone **1010** to the circular platform **1023**. Once at the circular platform **1023**, the cart **1050** may rest on the circular platform **1023** without being connected to the circular platform **1023**, or alternatively may physically attach to the circular platform **1023**. At that point, rotation of the circular platform **1023** can continue moving the cart **1050** and aircraft **1012** toward the takeoff zone **1020**. Thus, the cart **1050** and circular platform **1023** may together cause an aircraft **1012** to travel the indicated route **1028** from the landing zone **1010** to the takeoff zone **1020**. In addition to being part of the transition zone, the circular platform **1023** can also be considered part of the transport equipment, as it assists in movement of the aircraft **1012**.

[0134] As mentioned above, chargers can be installed on the carts **1050** or installed in other location at the transition zone. As illustrated in **FIG. 10**, the chargers may be coupled to the circular platform **1023** of the transition zone. Electrical couplers **1062** (e.g., components of the chargers) can extend from a center area **1026** (e.g., the central axis) of the circular platform **1023**, via an opening in the circular platform **1023** or from a console fixture, for example. The electrical couplers **1022**, which may take the form of wires or cables, can couple an aircraft **1012** to a power source (e.g., which may be located at, within, or underneath the circular platform **1023**), and thereby charge the aircraft battery or batteries. This can take the form of a single charger with multiple electrical couplers. In other embodiments, separate chargers (e.g., power sources and/or electrical couplers) can be distributed around the circular platform **1023** at different locations, such as around the edge of the circular platform **1023**.

[0135] The circular platform **1023** can rotate while the aircraft battery is being recharged. As a result, the aircraft **1012** can be transported along the route **1028** while charging occurs.

[0136] The circular platform **1023** can rotate, for example, counter-clockwise. Once the circular platform **1023** has rotated far enough (and/or charging is complete), the aircraft **1012** can detach from the electrical coupler **1022** and then the cart **1050** can move or be moved into the takeoff zone **1020**. In some embodiments, the circular platform **1023** may rotate 270 degrees, 180 degrees, 90 degrees, or any other suitable rotational distance (e.g. clockwise or counter-clockwise) before the aircraft **1012** and/or cart **1050** depart. Once the aircraft **1012** is at the takeoff zone **1020**, the aircraft **1012** can depart by initiating flight. The now available position on the circular platform **1023** can be filled by another cart and/or aircraft once that position rotates back to be aligned with the landing zone **1010**. In some embodiments, an aircraft **1012** may stay on the platform **1023** for one or more additional revolutions in order to have more charging time, to wait for passengers, or for any other suitable purpose.

[0137] The circular platform **1023** may rotate at any suitable speed, such as completing 90 degrees of rotation in 15 minutes, or otherwise stated as one hour per complete revolution. The circular platform **1023** may temporarily stop and/or slow down when a cart **1050** is entering or exiting the circular platform **1023**, according to some embodiments. Alternatively, the circular platform **1023** can continuously rotate without stopping and/or slowing. As a further alternative, the circular platform **1023** may undergo iterative rotation. For example, the circular platform **1023** may pause for a certain time interval (e.g., 15 minutes), then rotate a certain distance (e.g., 45 degrees, 90 degrees, etc.) in order to advance to a next position, and then stop for another time interval (e.g., another 15 minutes).

[0138] When the aircraft **1012** and/or cart **1050** first arrive onto the circular platform **1023**, an electrical coupler **1022** at the circular platform can be coupled to the aircraft **1012**, so that the aircraft can become coupled to and charged by a power source in order to begin a battery charging process while the aircraft is being moved. This can happen during a first time period (e.g., with a duration of 15 minutes). The aircraft **1012** may be allowed to arrive at the circular platform **1023** at any time during the first time period, or it may only be allowed to arrive at the beginning or end of the first time period (e.g., when an available position on the circular platform **1023** becomes aligned with the landing zone **1010**). At a second time period (e.g., with a duration of 15 minutes), the circular platform can rotate, thereby transporting the aircraft **1012** toward the takeoff zone. The circular platform **1023** may rotate

from a first position into a second position. This can include a rotation of a certain amount, such as a 90 degree rotation. In some embodiments, the circular platform **1023** rotates this amount via continuous rotation over a certain time period (e.g., 15 minutes). In other embodiments, the circular platform **1023** iteratively performs a rotation after a certain time period has already elapsed (e.g., 15 minutes). At a third time period (e.g., with a duration of 15 minutes), the circular platform **1023** can rotate from the second position to a third position (e.g., another 90 degrees in the same direction). At a third time period (e.g., with a duration of 15 minutes), the circular platform **1023** can rotate from the third position to a fourth position (e.g., another 90 degrees in the same direction). At this point, the circular platform may have rotated 270 degrees total from the first position to the fourth position, and the aircraft **1012** can be in a location that is aligned with the takeoff zone **1020**. The aircraft can then be disconnected from the electrical coupler **1022** (e.g., after completing a re-charging process) and moved (e.g., by the cart **1050**) to the takeoff zone **1020**, and the aircraft **1012** can depart. Then, the circular platform **1023** may rotate from the fourth position to a fifth position (e.g., another 90 degrees in the same direction). In some cases, the fifth position may be the same as the first position. In other words, the circular platform **1023** can finish one full rotation cycle at this point. At this point, this same area of the circular platform **1023** can be used to transport another aircraft. Additional aircraft may already be located on the circular platform **1023**, but at different locations on the circular platform.

[0139] Four carts **1050** and four aircraft **1012** are shown being simultaneously charged (e.g., by electrical couplers **1022**) and transported by the circular platform **1023**, but embodiments allow the circular platform **1023** to support, charge, and transport any suitable number of carts **1050** and/or aircraft **1012** at the same time.

[0140] In some embodiments, the ends of the electrical couplers **1022** located at the center **1026** of the circular platform **1023** may not rotate with the circular platform **1023**, as the electrical couplers **1022** may be unplugged from one aircraft and move to the next after each iterative movement of the circular platform **1023**. Accordingly, slip rings may not be necessary for the electrical couplers **1022**, according to some embodiments. In other embodiments, an electrical coupler **1022** may remain coupled to the same aircraft **112** while the circular platform **1023** rotates (e.g., one electric coupler for the aircraft's entire charging process), and a slip ring can be used with the electrical coupler **1022**.

[0141] The combination of the circular platform **1023** and electrical couplers **1022** protruding from the center area **1026** can advantageously centralize and simplify the charging components and cable routing. For example, instead of equipping multiple carts with their own batteries and cables, or having multiple carts that maintain connections to a central charging system, **FIG. 10** can provide a single charging system with multiple couplers coming from a central area. Because of the spatial arrangement of a rotating circular platform **1023**, each aircraft **1012** can be simultaneously connected to the charging system while moving toward the takeoff zone **1020** without needing to move the charging system itself.

[0142] In some embodiments, each of the carts **1012** illustrated in **FIG. 10** can instead take the form of stationary platforms. In this case, other separate carts or transportation mechanisms (e.g., lifts or cranes) can move an aircraft from one platform to another (e.g., when two platforms are located adjacent to another due to the current rotational position of the circular platform **1023**).

XI. METHOD FOR RESETTING AIRCRAFT

[0143] **FIG. 11** illustrates a flowchart of steps performed by an exemplary vertiport system for resetting an aircraft.

[0144] At step **S702**, the vertiport system may receive an aircraft. The aircraft may land at a landing zone of the vertiport system.

[0145] At step **S704**, the vertiport system may transport the aircraft through a transition zone. For example, a cart of the vertiport system may mechanically couple to and/or lift the aircraft, and begin transporting the aircraft away from the landing zone toward a takeoff zone via the transition zone. The cart may travel continuously, or iteratively from station to station in the transition zone. The cart may travel at a continuous speed or a variable speed. Eventually the cart can enter the takeoff zone from the transition zone.

[0146] In some embodiments, the vertiport system may include a rotating platform. The aircraft can be transported from the landing zone onto an adjacent edge of the rotating platform (e.g., via cart), and then the platform may rotate (e.g., continuously or iteratively) until the aircraft is adjacent to the takeoff zone. Then, the aircraft can be transported from the rotating platform to the takeoff zone (e.g., via cart).

[0147] At step **S706**, the vertiport system may charge one or more aircraft batteries. The charging step **S706** can happen at the same time and/or overlap with the transporting step **S704**. A transport cart (e.g., from **S704**) may include a charger, which can electrically couple to the aircraft batteries. The charger can recharge the one or more aircraft batteries while the cart transports the aircraft.

[0148] In other embodiments, one or more chargers may be disposed on a surface of the transition zone. For example, a set of chargers may be placed in sequence along an elongated pathway, or one charger can be placed in a short pathway. The cart may stop at one or more of the chargers, allow the aircraft to electrically couple to a charger for a period of time, and then move the aircraft along to a next charger (or into the takeoff zone).

[0149] In other example, one or more chargers are disposed on the rotating platform. The aircraft may electrically couple to a charger on the rotating platform and receive electrical charging while the platform rotates. The aircraft may then decouple from the charger before being transported off the platform and into the transition zone.

[0150] At step **S708**, the vertiport system may allow passenger exchange. The passenger exchange step **S708** can happen at the same time and/or overlap with the transporting step **S704** and/or the charging step **S706**. Arriving passengers can exit the aircraft and then exit the vertiport system. Departing passengers can enter the vertiport system and then enter the aircraft. The aircraft may be transported in a slow (e.g., at a speed that is less than a predetermined maximum speed) and steady manner so that passenger exchange can happen safely. In some embodiments, a cart transporting the aircraft may slow down or come to a stop to allow passenger exchange.

[0151] At step **S710**, the vertiport system may deposit the aircraft in a takeoff zone. For example, after the one or more aircraft batteries have been fully (or adequately) recharged, after the aircraft has been transported across the transition zone, and/or after passenger exchange has been completed, the aircraft may be placed in the takeoff zone for takeoff. This can include mechanically and/or electrically decoupling from the aircraft. In some embodiments, a cart may then leave the area and return to the landing zone to pick up another aircraft.

[0152] At step **S712**, the vertiport system may allow the aircraft to depart. The aircraft may takeoff and fly to another destination and/or vertiport system.

[0153] Embodiments allow the process to be performed for multiple aircraft simultaneously. For example, multiple aircraft can arrive in sequence, each aircraft can be coupled to a different cart and/or placed on different positions of a rotating platform, and each aircraft can be transported and recharged. Each aircraft can be located in a different place at any given moment and be processed in a staggered manner.

[0154] Embodiments of the invention advantageously enable a compact vertiport system that efficiently uses available space and time. For example, a transition zone may be used to accomplish the tasks of (1) moving an aircraft from a landing zone to a takeoff zone, (2) recharge an aircraft power source (or otherwise refuel an aircraft), and (3) exchange passengers. As a result, activities that typically use three different spaces and that are performed separately at three different times may now be performed at the same time within a one allotted area.

XII. ADDITIONAL EMBODIMENTS

[0155] According to some embodiments, a system comprises a landing zone; a takeoff zone; and a transition zone including at least one surface positioned between the landing zone and the takeoff zone; transport equipment configured to physically transport a plurality of aircraft simultaneously across the transition zone from the landing zone to the takeoff zone, and configured to allow passenger exchange at each of the plurality of aircraft while each of the plurality of aircraft is coupled to the transport equipment and located at the transition zone; and a plurality of chargers, wherein each charger of the plurality of chargers is configured to electrically charge a battery of an aircraft from the plurality of aircraft while the aircraft is coupled to the transport equipment and located at the transition zone, and wherein each charger of the plurality of chargers includes: a power source; and an electrical coupler coupled to the power source, the electrical coupler configured to couple to and supply power to the battery of the aircraft.

[0156] In further embodiments, the landing zone is a first landing zone, the takeoff zone is a first takeoff zone, the transition zone is a first transition zone, the at least one surface is a first surface, the plurality of aircraft is a first plurality of aircraft, and the system further comprises: a second landing zone; a second takeoff zone; a second transition zone including a second surface positioned between the second landing zone and the second takeoff zone; wherein the transport equipment includes: a first plurality of carts configured to physically

transport the first plurality of aircraft across the first surface from the first landing zone to the first takeoff zone; and a second plurality of carts configured to physically transport a second plurality of aircraft across the second surface from the second landing zone to the second takeoff zone.

[0157] In further embodiments, a beginning of the first transition zone is adjacent to an end of the first landing zone, an end of the first transition zone is adjacent to a beginning of the first takeoff zone, the first landing zone is oriented in a first direction, the first takeoff zone is oriented in a second direction that is parallel to the first direction, the first transition zone is oriented in a third direction that is perpendicular to the first direction and the second direction, wherein a beginning of the second transition zone is adjacent to an end of the second landing zone, an end of the second transition zone is adjacent to a beginning of the second takeoff zone, the second landing zone is oriented in the first direction, the second takeoff zone is oriented in the second direction, the second transition zone is oriented in the third direction, the end of the first landing zone is adjacent to a beginning of the second landing zone, and the end of the first takeoff zone is adjacent to a beginning of the second takeoff zone.

[0158] In further embodiments, the system further includes a third transition zone including a third surface positioned between the first landing zone and the second takeoff zone, wherein the first plurality of carts are further configured to physically transport the first plurality of aircraft across the third surface from the first landing zone to the second takeoff zone; and a fourth transition zone including a fourth surface positioned between the second landing zone and the first takeoff zone, wherein the second plurality of carts are further configured to physically transport the second plurality of aircraft across the fourth surface from the second landing zone to the first takeoff zone.

[0159] In further embodiments, the first surface includes a first set of at least two pathways from the first landing zone to the first takeoff zone, wherein the second surface includes a second set of at least two pathways from the second landing zone to the second takeoff zone, wherein the third surface includes a third set of at least two pathways from the first landing zone to the second takeoff zone, and wherein the fourth surface includes a fourth set of at least two pathways from the second landing zone to the first takeoff zone.

[0160] In further embodiments, each of the first set of at least two pathways is configured to accommodate one aircraft at a time, wherein each of the second set of at least two

pathways is configured to accommodate one aircraft at a time, wherein each of the third set of at least two pathways is configured to accommodate one aircraft at a time, and wherein each of the fourth set of at least two pathways is configured to accommodate one aircraft at a time.

[0161] In further embodiments, the first landing zone has a size that is at least twice the size of each of the first set of at least two pathways.

[0162] In further embodiments, the first landing zone, the first takeoff zone, the second landing zone, the second takeoff zone, the first transition zone, the second transition zone, the third transition zone, and the fourth transition zone, taken together, form a rectangular shape, wherein the first landing zone, the first takeoff zone, the second landing zone, and the second takeoff zone each occupy a respective corner of the rectangular shape, wherein the first landing zone and the second landing zone occupy a first set of opposite corners, and wherein the first takeoff zone and the second takeoff zone occupy a second set of opposite corners.

[0163] In further embodiments, the at least one surface is in a form of a circular platform configured to physically support the plurality of aircraft simultaneously, and wherein the transport equipment includes a motor coupled to the circular platform and configured to rotate the circular platform.

[0164] In further embodiments, the transport equipment further includes a plurality of carts, each cart of the plurality of carts being configured to physically transport one of the plurality of aircraft from the landing zone to the circular platform.

[0165] In further embodiments, the plurality of chargers are disposed at one or more fixed locations on the circular platform.

[0166] According to some embodiments, a method comprises: receiving, by a system, an aircraft at a landing zone; physically transporting, by the system, the aircraft from the landing zone across a transition zone to a takeoff zone; while transporting the aircraft, electrically charging, by the system, one or more batteries of the aircraft; while transporting the aircraft, allowing passenger exchange to take place at the aircraft; depositing, by the system, the aircraft at the takeoff zone; and allowing, by the system, the aircraft to depart from the takeoff zone.

[0167] In further embodiments, physically transporting the aircraft includes mechanically coupling, by a cart of the system, to the aircraft, and wherein depositing the aircraft at the takeoff zone includes mechanically decoupling, by the cart of the system, from the aircraft.

[0168] In further embodiments, allowing the passenger exchange to take place at the aircraft includes physically transporting the aircraft at a speed that is less than a predetermined maximum speed.

[0169] While the invention has been described with reference to specific embodiments, those skilled in the art with access to this disclosure will appreciate that variations and modifications are possible.

[0170] It should be understood that all numerical values used herein are for purposes of illustration and may be varied. In some instances, ranges are specified to provide a sense of scale, but numerical values outside a disclosed range are not precluded.

[0171] It should also be understood that all diagrams herein are intended as schematic. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, the drawings are not intended to imply any particular physical arrangement of the elements shown therein, or that all elements shown are necessary. Those skilled in the art with access to this disclosure will understand that elements shown in drawings or otherwise described in this disclosure may be modified or omitted and that other elements not shown or described may be added.

[0172] The above description is illustrative and is not restrictive. Many variations of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon review of the disclosure. The scope of patent protection should, therefore, be determined not with reference to the above description, but instead should be determined with reference to the following claims along with their full scope or equivalents.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system comprising:
 - a landing zone;
 - a takeoff zone; and
 - a transition zone including at least one surface positioned between the landing zone and the takeoff zone;transport equipment configured to physically transport a plurality of aircraft simultaneously across the transition zone from the landing zone to the takeoff zone, and configured to allow passenger exchange at each of the plurality of aircraft while each of the plurality of aircraft is coupled to the transport equipment and located at the transition zone; and
 - a plurality of chargers, wherein each charger of the plurality of chargers is configured to electrically charge a battery of an aircraft from the plurality of aircraft while the aircraft is coupled to the transport equipment and located at the transition zone, and wherein each charger of the plurality of chargers includes:
 - a power source; and
 - an electrical coupler coupled to the power source, the electrical coupler configured to couple to and supply power to the battery of the aircraft.
2. The system of claim 1, further comprising:
 - a passage underneath one or more of the takeoff zone, the landing zone or the transition zone; and
 - at least one passenger entry point adjacent to the transition zone or within the transition zone, the passenger entry point coupled to the passage.
3. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one surface includes at least one pathway, and the transport equipment includes a plurality of carts configured to physically transport the plurality of aircraft simultaneously across the at least one pathway from the landing zone to the takeoff zone.
4. The system of claim 3, wherein each cart of the plurality of carts is configured to physically transport one aircraft at a time, and wherein each cart of the plurality of carts is located at a different position in the transition zone at any given point in time.

5. The system of claim 3, wherein the plurality of chargers are disposed on the plurality of carts such that each of the plurality of carts includes a charger from the plurality of chargers, such that each cart from the plurality of carts is configured to simultaneously physically transport the aircraft and electrically charge the battery of the aircraft.
6. The system of claim 5, wherein each cart of the plurality of carts includes a platform configured to physically support the aircraft.
7. The system of claim 6, wherein each cart of the plurality of carts further includes at least one mechanical coupler configured to move in a vertical direction so as to mechanically lift the aircraft.
8. The system of claim 6, wherein each cart of the plurality of carts further includes:
 - a set of one or more wheels coupled to the platform; and
 - a motor coupled to the power source and the set of one or more wheels, the motor being configured to cause the set of one or more wheels to rotate so that the platform moves.
9. The system of claim 3, wherein the plurality of chargers are disposed on the at least one pathway at fixed locations, wherein each cart of the plurality of carts is configured to temporarily stop when passing at least one of the plurality of chargers.
10. The system of claim 9, wherein the at least one pathway is a single pathway, and wherein the plurality of chargers are arranged in a row along the single pathway.
11. The system of claim 9, wherein the at least one pathway is a plurality of pathways, and wherein each of the plurality of pathways includes one of the plurality of chargers, such that each aircraft of the plurality of aircraft passes only one of the plurality of chargers when being moved from the landing zone to the takeoff zone.
12. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one surface is a single pathway, wherein a beginning of the single pathway is adjacent to an end of the landing zone, and an end of the single pathway is adjacent to a beginning of the takeoff zone.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein the landing zone is oriented in a first direction, the takeoff zone is oriented in a second direction, and the single pathway is oriented in a third direction.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein the first direction is parallel to the second direction, and the first direction and the second direction are both perpendicular to the third direction.

15. The system of claim 13, wherein the first direction is parallel to the second direction, and the third direction is angled relative to the first direction and the second direction.

16. The system of claim 13, wherein the first direction is parallel to the second direction, and the first direction and the second direction are both antiparallel to the third direction.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the transition zone is adjacent to the landing zone, adjacent to the takeoff zone, and positioned between the landing zone and the takeoff zone.

18. The system of claim 17, further comprising:
a first barrier positioned along at least some of a first border between the transition zone and the landing zone;
a second barrier positioned along at least some of a second border between the transition zone and the takeoff zone;
a first walkway positioned adjacent to the first barrier; and
a second walkway positioned adjacent to the second barrier

19. The system of claim 1, wherein the landing zone and the takeoff zone are in the same location.

20. The system of claim 1, wherein the landing zone is a first landing zone, the takeoff zone is a first takeoff zone, the transition zone is a first transition zone, the at least one surface is a first surface, the plurality of aircraft is a first plurality of aircraft, and further comprising:

a second landing zone;

a second takeoff zone;
a second transition zone including a second surface positioned between the second landing zone and the second takeoff zone;
wherein the transport equipment includes:
a first plurality of carts configured to physically transport the first plurality of aircraft across the first surface from the first landing zone to the first takeoff zone; and
a second plurality of carts configured to physically transport a second plurality of aircraft across the second surface from the second landing zone to the second takeoff zone.

21. The system of claim 20, wherein a beginning of the first transition zone is adjacent to an end of the first landing zone, an end of the first transition zone is adjacent to a beginning of the first takeoff zone, the first landing zone is oriented in a first direction, the first takeoff zone is oriented in a second direction that is parallel to the first direction, the first transition zone is oriented in a third direction that is perpendicular to the first direction and the second direction, wherein a beginning of the second transition zone is adjacent to an end of the second landing zone, an end of the second transition zone is adjacent to a beginning of the second takeoff zone, the second landing zone is oriented in the first direction, the second takeoff zone is oriented in the second direction, the second transition zone is oriented in the third direction, the end of the first landing zone is adjacent to a beginning of the second landing zone, and the end of the first takeoff zone is adjacent to a beginning of the second takeoff zone.

22. The system of claim 20, further comprising:
a third transition zone including a third surface positioned between the first landing zone and the second takeoff zone, wherein the first plurality of carts are further configured to physically transport the first plurality of aircraft across the third surface from the first landing zone to the second takeoff zone; and
a fourth transition zone including a fourth surface positioned between the second landing zone and the first takeoff zone, wherein the second plurality of carts are further configured to physically transport the second plurality of aircraft across the fourth surface from the second landing zone to the first takeoff zone.

23. The system of claim 22, wherein the first surface includes a first set of at least two pathways from the first landing zone to the first takeoff zone, wherein the second surface includes a second set of at least two pathways from the second landing zone to the second takeoff zone, wherein the third surface includes a third set of at least two pathways from the first landing zone to the second takeoff zone, and wherein the fourth surface includes a fourth set of at least two pathways from the second landing zone to the first takeoff zone.

24. The system of claim 23, wherein each of the first set of at least two pathways is configured to accommodate one aircraft at a time, wherein each of the second set of at least two pathways is configured to accommodate one aircraft at a time, wherein each of the third set of at least two pathways is configured to accommodate one aircraft at a time, and wherein each of the fourth set of at least two pathways is configured to accommodate one aircraft at a time.

25. The system of claim 23, wherein the first landing zone has a size that is at least twice the size of each of the first set of at least two pathways.

26. The system of claim 22, wherein the first landing zone, the first takeoff zone, the second landing zone, the second takeoff zone, the first transition zone, the second transition zone, the third transition zone, and the fourth transition zone, taken together, form a rectangular shape, wherein the first landing zone, the first takeoff zone, the second landing zone, and the second takeoff zone each occupy a respective corner of the rectangular shape, wherein the first landing zone and the second landing zone occupy a first set of opposite corners, and wherein the first takeoff zone and the second takeoff zone occupy a second set of opposite corners.

27. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one surface is in a form of a circular platform configured to physically support the plurality of aircraft simultaneously, and wherein the transport equipment includes a motor coupled to the circular platform and configured to rotate the circular platform.

28. The system of claim 27, wherein the transport equipment further includes a plurality of carts, each cart of the plurality of carts being configured to physically transport one of the plurality of aircraft from the landing zone to the circular platform.

29. The system of claim 27, wherein the plurality of chargers are disposed at one or more fixed locations on the circular platform.

30. A method comprising:
receiving, by a system, an aircraft at a landing zone;
physically transporting, by the system, the aircraft from the landing zone across a transition zone to a takeoff zone;
while transporting the aircraft, electrically charging, by the system, one or more batteries of the aircraft;
while transporting the aircraft, allowing passenger exchange to take place at the aircraft;
depositing, by the system, the aircraft at the takeoff zone; and
allowing, by the system, the aircraft to depart from the takeoff zone.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein physically transporting the aircraft includes mechanically coupling, by a cart of the system, to the aircraft, and wherein depositing the aircraft at the takeoff zone includes mechanically decoupling, by the cart of the system, from the aircraft.

32. The method of claim 30, wherein allowing the passenger exchange to take place at the aircraft includes physically transporting the aircraft at a speed that is less than a predetermined maximum speed.