

# Tapping Tapis

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Low-cost carrier Breeze Airways has selected Tapis to customize its seating

With air travel expected to increase in the post-pandemic world, airlines old and new are teaming up with interiors companies such as [Tapis Corporation](#) to make the cabin experience as pleasant as possible.

In February, [JetBlue](#) kicked off the year with the delivery of its first order of A220s, featuring Ultraleather PromessaAV from Ultrafabrics distributed by Tapis. Through the summer, Tapis touted its latest contracts with a supersonic aircraft concept and a new airline. Currently in R&D, seating for the Exosonic supersonic aircraft will feature Tapis' Ultraleather and Ultrasuede products. A new low-cost carrier [Breeze Airways](#), tapped the company for a blend of Ultrafabrics' PromessaAV seat cover textiles. In October, *PAX Tech* spoke to Jason Estes, Vice President of Global Sales and Marketing at Tapis, about the project following the public reveal of Breeze's first A220.

## **The birth of Breeze**

David Neeleman founded Breeze Airways secretly in 2018 under the codename Moxy. Neeleman, a notable name in the realm of airline startups, also founded [JetBlue](#), [WestJet](#), [Azul Airlines](#), and Morris Air - which was eventually sold to Southwest Airlines.

Tapis became involved with Breeze when representatives from the airline approached the company at Aircraft Interiors Expo (AIX) in Hamburg in 2018.

“Originally we thought it might be a JetBlue project. Then we thought it might be an Azul project. And then we realized this was something new,” Estes tells PAX. “They were very tight-lipped.”



Jason Estes, Vice President of Global Sales and Marketing, Tapis

The identity of Moxy was revealed in the following months. Offices in Darien, Connecticut, became a shared workspace for collaboration. It was here that Estes learned that Breeze had selected Safran’s Z600 and Z110i seats for its fleet of A220-300 aircraft – and it would be tasked with customizing the materials.

“It was a very different and extremely fun project. I’ve been in the industry for about 15 years, and it was unique being able to work with a team that early on when it wasn’t even public what the name of the airline was going to be,” Estes says.

### **Nice, Nicer, or Nicest**

Breeze has a [purchase agreement](#) with [Airbus](#) for 80 A220-300s. The October A220 reveal is but a kick-off for the next six and a half years, as Breeze is set to receive one aircraft per month from October 2021 onward. The aircraft will be introduced to existing routes in the coming months, but Breeze said in a [release](#) that they will add transcontinental flights in early 2022.

“The A220-300 is a game-changer for us as we add long-haul flights that can average five hours, including transcontinental service,” Neeleman said in the [press release](#). “By the end of 2022, Breeze will have 15 A220s in service.”

The aircraft features 36 premium seats in a two-by-two configuration, 10 extra-legroom seats, and 80 standard legroom seats in a two-by-three configuration.

When booking a flight with Breeze, passengers can select from Nice, Nicer, or Nicest classes. 'Nice' is similar to standard Economy; 'Nicer' fare includes a complimentary carry-on, checked bag, and seat with extra legroom; and, 'Nicest' includes a premium front-of-cabin seat with a 39-inch seat pitch, 20.5-inch seat width and a footrest for added comfort.

The premium seat available in 'Nicest' fare provides a comfortable and attainable Business Class experience at an affordable price, [according to Breeze](#).

Safran's Z600 Business Class seat for short- and medium-haul flights offers comfort and living space for passengers with its "unique cradling motion kinematic," privacy features and weight optimization. The Z110i Economy Class seat is "versatile and efficient," ideal for flights six to eight hours and convenient for single-aisle aircraft including A220s. All seats are fitted with in-seat power and USB ports.

The airline said it plans to announce its high-speed connectivity and inflight entertainment partners soon.

All A220-300 aircraft will have the technology for passengers to stream TV or movies, check email, browse the internet and stay connected via social media or messaging apps while inflight.

### **A comfortable pairing**

Estes says Breeze wanted their seats to have a two-product automotive look and feel, resembling a high-performance fabric combined with durable leather. The airline selected textures and finishes from Ultrafabrics' Promessa AV product line.

Breeze has chosen [Promessa AV Apex](#), Ultrafabrics engineered synthetic leather, and a custom Promessa AV with a technical, matte grain texture, called Nitrotech. This specific seating fabric was designed for commercial seating.

"Nitrotech and Promessa AV is the perfect combination of comfort and durability," Estes says. "The Nitrotech has a fabric look and feel, but all of the attributes of a performance synthetic leather. The Breeze team really emphasized the importance of comfort and durability and we were really impressed with their insistence on comfort for the best passenger experience."

Ultrafabrics engineered synthetic leather and Nitrotech may look different but are actually identical in construction.

"They visually look and feel different but aesthetically they're going to perform the same," he says. "In this case, we were able to build a product that covers all the specification requirements they had for the seat while giving it two totally different looks. Here is a product that's built to mimic all the great things about leather but is also built to outperform it in certain areas."

Tapis explained that in the past having two fabrics in one seat could prove difficult to clean. In this case, the custom material for Breeze can be spot cleaned and disinfected, without the need for dry cleaning.

"You don't always get that with a low-cost carrier. Breeze cares so much about small details and brand loyalty. Putting in those little extra steps to create a special experience, even if it is a cost-affordable ticket, was important," Estes says.

### **Sustainable and COVID friendly**

Estes says Ultrafabrics is better for the environment, light weight, more cost-controlled, and could also be considered more humane as it is synthetic and not made from animal hide. It eliminates the challenges of choosing between durability or comfort.

“I think we brought it all together into something great for the passenger experience and comfort. Our product is built around comfort,” Estes says.

The Promessa product line does is inherently anti-microbial. Estes says that the technology has always been in the product and that it is not something that was a reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It’s an added benefit that became much more important to airlines after COVID hit, but this technology is built into the products. It’s not an after-finish, it’s not a second thought, it’s built into the resin technology of the product. It doesn’t mean that it kills COVID, but if it helps bring down the viral load and kill germs, it’s something to help keep the skies safe.”