

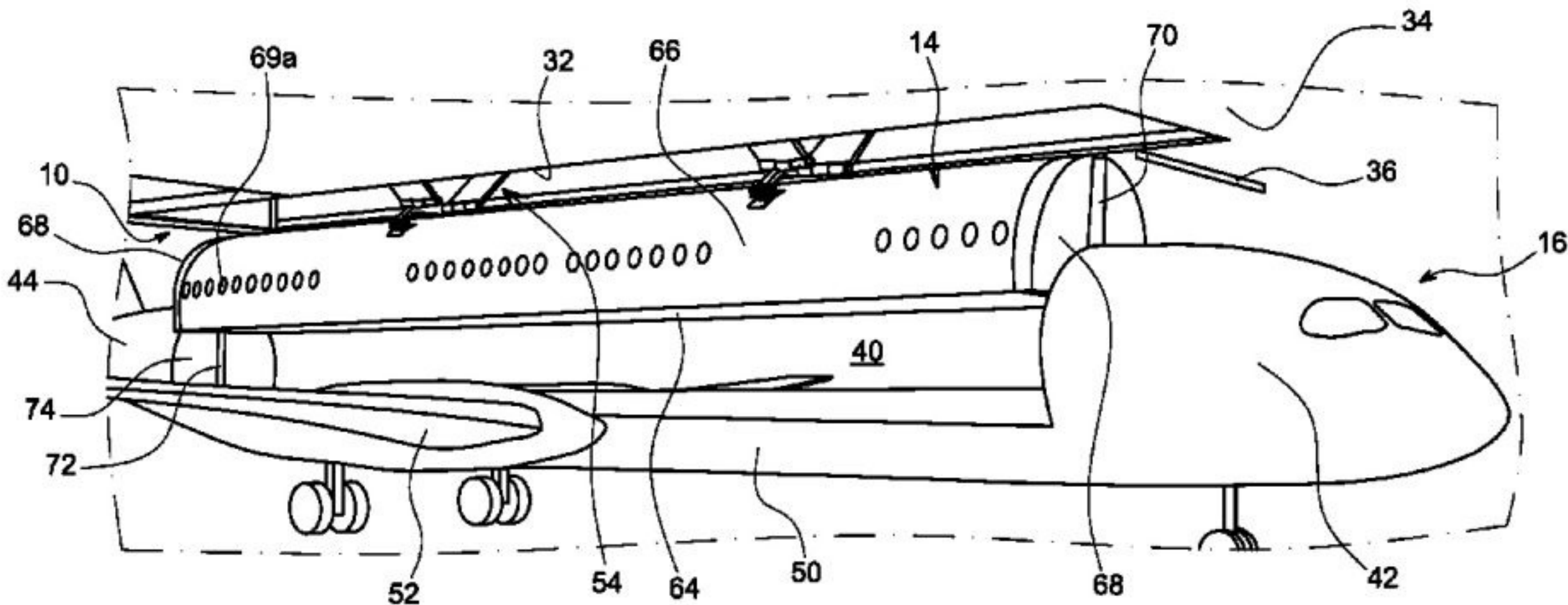
# CARS TECHNICA / ALL THINGS AUTOMOTIVE

## Airbus proposes new drop-in airplane “cabin modules” to speed up boarding

Take your seat in the departure lounge, then be dropped straight down into the plane. Cool.

by Sebastian Anthony (UK) - Nov 26, 2015 1:53pm UTC

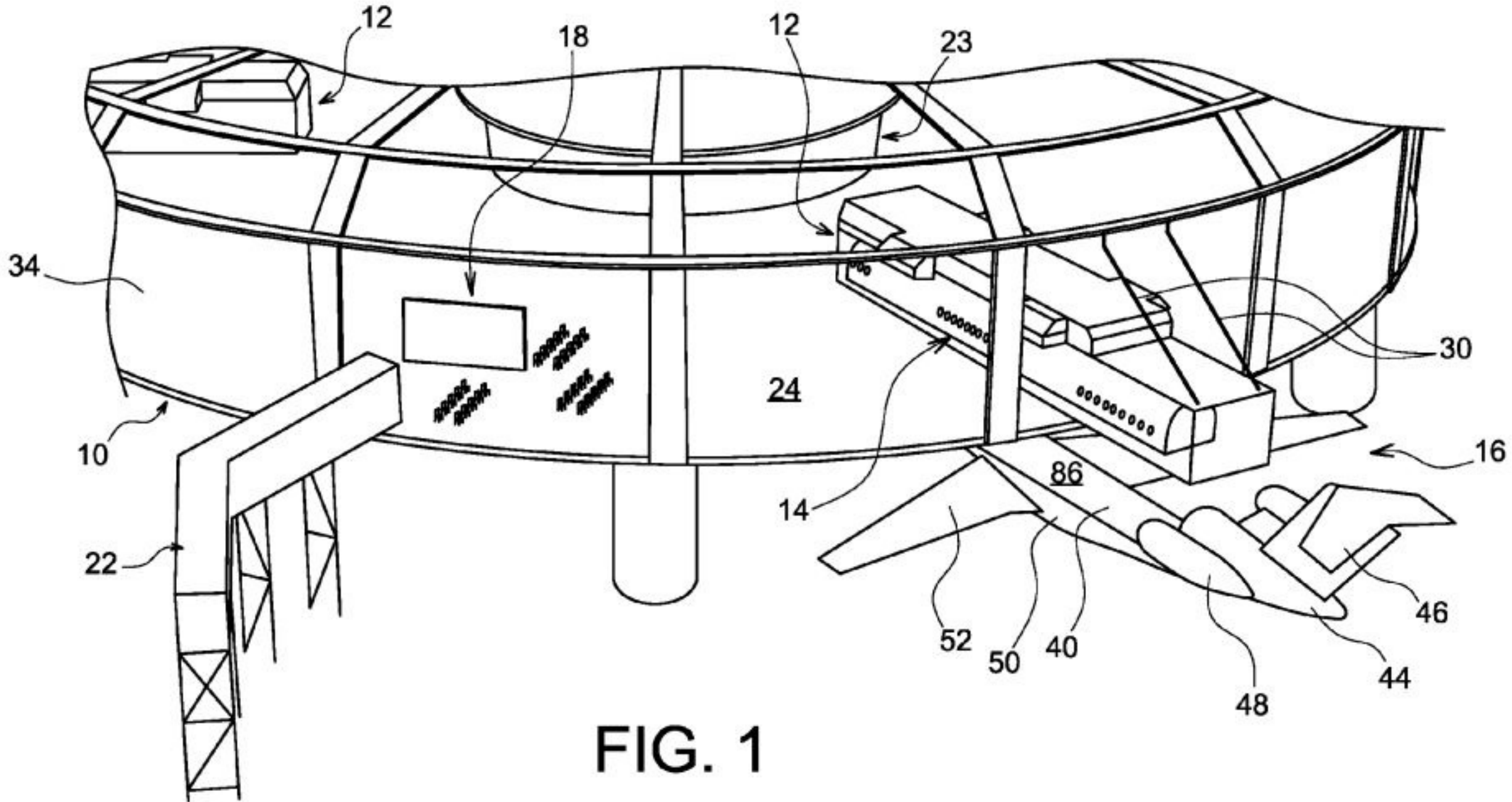
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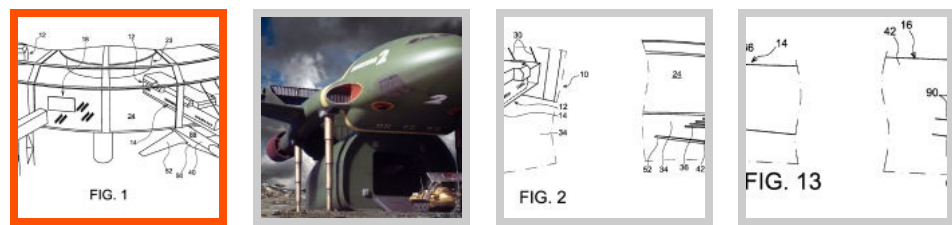
Every few months, a crazy patent or research paper pops up that promises to revolutionise air travel. A few years ago, an astrophysicist devised [a dehumanising algorithm](#) that can decrease airplane boarding times by almost half, as long as you don't mind being split up from whoever else you're travelling with. Then, of course, there was Ryanair's idea of [replacing normal seats with standing seats](#): near-vertical seats that have a tiny little ledge to rest your bum on.

Today, Airbus has been granted a patent ([US 9,193,460](#)) on a method that essentially turns an airplane into an articulated truck. The plane, instead of being a single, contiguous hull, would have a huge hole in the middle where the passengers and luggage would normally be. Instead of boarding the plane directly, passengers and luggage would be loaded into a separate "cabin module." Then, when the module is ready to go, it's simply dropped into the airplane. If you ever watched *Thunderbirds* as a kid, it's a lot like [Thunderbird 2](#).

The purpose of the patent, in Airbus' own words, is to "reduce the immobilisation time of the aircraft and air terminal." In more human terms, this patent is all about reducing turnaround time. Instead of milling around in the departure lounge while an incoming plane is disembarked, cleaned, and restocked, you could already be taking your place in the drop-in cabin module. Likewise, hold luggage could be loaded up instantly, rather than waiting for the incoming plane to be emptied.



You would take your seat in the module, from the comfort of the departure lounge... and then descend into the airplane when it's ready to go.



The gallery above shows one possible way that these cabin modules could be filled and then dropped into an airplane chassis. The patent's sketches seem to assume that the departure lounge itself has been retrofitted/updated to cater for these drop-in modules.

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The patent doesn't say how much time would be saved by these processes, but presumably it would be a few minutes at least. Turnaround time is one of the main limiting factors on how many flights can be flown each day: if an airline could squeeze in another flight, or even just reduce the number of late-in-the-day flights being delayed, that would be a huge deal.

Personally, I think cabin modules are a lot better than Airbus' other recent patent for [stacked overhead seating](#), or the aforementioned standing seats.

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