Interplanetary Transport System “Horizon”

A Comprehensive Design Study for Reusable Manned Interplanetary Missions

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July 14, 2026

Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive scientific and engineering analysis of the concept of a reusable manned interplanetary transport system designated *Horizon*, intended for regular expeditions to the Moon, Lagrange points, and Mars, with subsequent return and multiple reuse. The study encompasses a complete investigation of the spacecraft architecture, including calculations of the nuclear-electric propulsion system, optimization of continuous acceleration and deceleration trajectories, thermal balance of the radiator system, crew radiation protection, as well as dynamic and structural stability. A key innovation is the use of a deployable tether-based artificial gravity system, which replaces massive centrifuges, offering significant mass savings and reduced physiological stress on the crew. Flight time calculations were performed using a continuous low-thrust model, demonstrating the feasibility of reducing the transit time to Mars to 116–164 days depending on the initial mass. An orbital refueling system is considered as a key element of sustainable interplanetary logistics. The Horizon project could serve as the basis for the creation of a reusable interplanetary transport infrastructure for the Solar System.

Keywords: reusable spacecraft, interplanetary transport, nuclear-electric propulsion, electric propulsion thrusters, artificial gravity, tether system, Mars, Moon, Lagrange points, orbital refueling, radiation protection, trajectory optimization, nuclear tug "Zeus," manned missions.

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Nomenclature

a	Artificial gravity acceleration, m/s^2
g_0	Standard gravitational acceleration, 9.81 m/s^2
I	Moment of inertia, kg·m^2
I_{sp}	Specific impulse, s
L	Tether length, m
m	Mass, kg
P	Power, W
Q	Thermal power, W
R	Radius of rotation, m
T	Thrust, N
ΔV	Characteristic velocity, m/s
ε	Emissivity
η	Efficiency
ω	Angular velocity, rad/s
σ	Stefan–Boltzmann constant, 5.67×10 W/(m^2·K)

Introduction

Codename – "Horizon"

At present, Roscosmos is focused on the development of the nuclear tug "Zeus," also known as the Transport and Energy Module (TEM), a megawatt-class nuclear electric propulsion system designed for interorbital transfers and deep-space exploration. Earlier attempts included the "Nuklon" project for lunar scientific research, though detailed information remains classified. Thus, the Zeus project represents the closest operational analogue to the proposed Horizon system.

In recent decades, humanity has made significant strides in space exploration. Lunar missions, research at Lagrange points, orbital station development, and plans for Mars colonization underscore the need for multifunctional, efficient, and economical spacecraft. The Horizon project responds to these challenges by proposing a fully reusable interplanetary transport system.

Scientific novelty: This work presents a comprehensive approach to designing a reusable interplanetary spacecraft with nuclear-electric propulsion, adapted to a wide range of tasks—from servicing near-Earth infrastructure to manned expeditions to Mars. Particular attention is paid to the artificial gravity system, where a deployable tether configuration is chosen over a rigid centrifuge due to its superior mass efficiency and crew comfort.

Practical significance: The Horizon project could form the basis for a sustainable transport infrastructure for the Solar System, enabling routine missions to the Moon, Lagrange points, and Mars.

0.1 Primary Objectives and Applications of the Spacecraft

0.1.1 Manned Missions to the Moon

- **Lunar Landing:** crew deployment to the surface for scientific research.

- **Cargo Delivery:** transport of scientific equipment, water, oxygen, and materials.
- **Lunar Base Support:** future resupply of lunar bases with essential resources.

0.1.2 Exploration of Lagrange Points

The spacecraft can deliver equipment, satellites, and scientific instruments to the Earth–Moon L1 and L2 points, ideal locations for space observatories and telescopes. Crew can perform maintenance or upgrades to assets such as the James Webb Space Telescope.

0.1.3 Interplanetary Missions

Missions to Mars or the asteroid belt for scientific research, including surface landing (base construction, colonization). Integration with nuclear-electric propulsion enables extended mission range.

0.1.4 Flights in Near-Earth Orbit

- **Servicing Orbital Stations:** delivery of large modules or spare parts.
- **Satellite Deployment and Repair:** cargo compartment enables satellite deployment.

Such a transport system will become a key element in establishing permanent infrastructure on and around the Moon, enabling materials transport, extreme-environment research, and preparation for long-duration planetary missions.

0.1.5 Target Audience

- **Scientific Organizations:** platform for experiments and instrument deployment.

- **Space Agencies:** support for lunar base construction and long-term station development.
- **Private Companies:** space tourism, commercial research, and cargo delivery.

The Horizon spacecraft will serve as a bridge between Earth and nearby space objects, enabling comprehensive missions with high precision and efficiency:

- Increased mission autonomy and cost reduction;
- Development of space exploration infrastructure;
- Foundation for humanity's interplanetary future.

0.2 Utilization of Zeus Project Technologies in the Horizon Project

Instead of chemical engines or helium-3 thermonuclear reactors, a nuclear power plant similar to the Zeus project is proposed. Its advantages include:

- High energy efficiency;
- Extended power supply duration for all spacecraft systems.

In Zeus, the primary energy source is a nuclear reactor, with radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs) as backup. This system can be integrated into Horizon:

1. Operation in case of primary reactor failure.
2. Long-duration missions when the primary reactor is shut down for life conservation, while the spacecraft operates in reduced-power mode.
3. Maintaining minimal spacecraft functions without crew.

RTG Operating Principle: A radioactive element (e.g., plutonium-238) decays, releasing heat, which is converted into electricity via thermoelectric elements, providing stable power without complex cooling or fuel consumption.

Zeus will utilize low-thrust ion thrusters for smooth trajectory adjustments, a capability integrated into Horizon, providing:

- Smooth trajectory changes;
- Long-duration station-keeping (e.g., near the Moon or at Lagrange points);
- Reduced load on main engines, extending service life.

Zeus incorporates an intelligent autonomous control system. Horizon is augmented with a diagnostic system that automatically checks all systems and alerts the crew to issues, enabling:

- Accident prevention through system monitoring;
- Full or partial unmanned operation;
- Reduced crew workload through automation.

The Zeus project considers resource extraction technologies. Horizon can include systems for collecting and processing resources:

1. Extraction and processing of lunar ice for water and oxygen.
2. Asteroid/comet mining for fuel or materials.

Integration of Zeus technologies into Horizon enhances energy efficiency, autonomy, and versatility, with the addition of a nuclear reactor, backup power, and improved cooling increasing reliability.

0.3 Design Methodology

0.3.1 General Principles and Assumptions

The Horizon spacecraft design is based on a comprehensive engineering approach combining analytical calculations, numerical modeling, and proven technologies. Primary assumptions:

- Fully reusable spacecraft (excluding consumable propellant);
- Nuclear-electric propulsion (NEP) for cruise phase;
- Chemical thrusters for maneuvering and landing;
- Crew: 6 persons;
- Autonomy: up to 1000 days (Martian expedition);
- Xenon propellant for electric thrusters (argon as alternative);
- Structural materials: aluminum and titanium alloys, composites, multi-layer thermal insulation.

0.3.2 Ballistic Design Methods

For low-thrust electric propulsion, a simplified rectilinear motion model with constant acceleration is applied. Characteristic velocity ΔV for various missions is derived from interplanetary transfer data, accounting for gravitational losses and trajectory optimization. Acceleration: $a = T/m$, where T is total thrust, m is spacecraft mass. Time: $t = \Delta V/a$. Mass flow rate: $\dot{m} = T/(I_{sp}g_0)$, where I_{sp} is specific impulse, $g_0 = 9.81$ m/s^2. Propellant mass: $m_{\text{prop}} = \dot{m}t$.

For landing modules using chemical engines, the Tsiolkovsky rocket equation is applied:

$$\frac{m_0}{m_f} = \exp\left(\frac{\Delta V}{I_{sp}g_0}\right) \tag{1}$$

where m_0 is initial mass, m_f is final mass (after propellant depletion).

0.3.3 Module Mass Calculation Methods

Mass estimates are based on specific mass indicators (kg/m^3) derived from ISS design experience and advanced space station concepts.

For habitable modules:

- Frame and skin – 30 kg/m^3;

- Life support system (closed-loop with regeneration) – 40 kg/m³;
- Electronics, cabling, control systems – 10 kg/m³;
- Additional equipment – per specification.

For the cargo compartment, rail system, robotic manipulator, doors, and docking interfaces are additionally accounted.

0.3.4 Tether-Based Artificial Gravity System

The artificial gravity system uses a deployable carbon-fiber tether (length L up to 25 m) with a habitation module at one end and a counterweight (water or xenon tanks) at the other. The system rotates about the common center of mass to produce centrifugal acceleration. This approach eliminates the need for heavy rigid centrifuges, saving more than 20 tonnes of mass and allowing rotation rates below 6 rpm, which minimises Coriolis effects and vestibular discomfort.

Key equations:

$$R_{\mathrm{hab}} = L \cdot \frac{m_{\mathrm{cw}}}{m_{\mathrm{hab}} + m_{\mathrm{cw}}}, \quad R_{\mathrm{cw}} = L - R_{\mathrm{hab}} \tag{2}$$

$$\omega = \sqrt{\frac{a}{R_{\mathrm{hab}}}}, \quad a = 0.4g_0 \text{ (recommended for long-term missions)} \tag{3}$$

$$I = m_{\mathrm{hab}} R_{\mathrm{hab}}^2 + m_{\mathrm{cw}} R_{\mathrm{cw}}^2 \tag{4}$$

$$\text{Gyroscopic moment: } L_{\mathrm{gyro}} = I\omega \tag{5}$$

A dedicated airlock with velocity equalisation allows crew transfer between the rotating and non-rotating sections.

0.3.5 Thermal Calculation of the Cooling System

Thermal power to be rejected:

$$Q = P_{el} \frac{1-\eta}{\eta} \tag{6}$$

where P_{el} is reactor electrical power, η is conversion efficiency.

Radiator area uses the Stefan–Boltzmann law:

$$q = \varepsilon \sigma T_{\text{eff}}^4 \tag{7}$$

where ε is emissivity (0.9), $\sigma = 5.67 \times 10^{-8}$ W/(m²·K), T_{eff} is effective temperature.

0.3.6 Radiation Protection

Crew protection from reactor radiation is provided by a shadow shield (lithium hydride and tungsten) between reactor and habitation module. Shield thickness selected to reduce dose to acceptable levels (<50 mSv/year). Additional protection against galactic cosmic radiation is provided by structural materials and polymer layers.

0.4 Mission Scenarios

0.4.1 Lunar Mission

Objectives: delivery of crew and scientific equipment, scientific research, sample collection.

Phases:

1. Spacecraft assembly and docking with orbital station for system verification.
2. Translunar injection: nuclear reactor powers electric thrusters; autonomous system computes optimal trajectory.
3. Lunar approach and deceleration to polar orbit.
4. Surface landing using landing module.
5. Surface operations (up to 14 days), ascent, and docking with main spacecraft.
6. Return to Earth.

0.4.2 Mission to Earth–Moon Lagrange Points L1/L2

Objectives: delivery of scientific equipment, long-duration research, servicing of orbital infrastructure.

Phases:

1. Transit to Lagrange point using electric propulsion (23 days).
2. Station-keeping and experiments.
3. Return to Earth orbit or transition to another mission.

0.4.3 Interplanetary Mission to Mars

Objectives: exploration, preparation for colonization, cargo and crew delivery.

Phases:

1. Trans-Mars injection: electric propulsion accelerates spacecraft for low-thrust transfer.
2. Cruise phase (116–164 days) with continuous engine operation (acceleration to midpoint, then deceleration). Crew conducts scientific experiments.
3. Mars orbit insertion and deceleration.
4. Landing module descent, surface operations (up to 500 days).
5. Ascent, docking, and return to Earth using electric propulsion.

0.5 Project Implementation Plan

0.5.1 Phase 1. Research and Analysis (6–12 months)

- Analysis of requirements from potential customers.
- Review of existing technologies.
- Resource utilization research (ISRU).

- Economic assessment.

0.5.2 Phase 2. Conceptual Design (12–18 months)

- Development of modular architecture.
- Preliminary CAD design, 3D modeling.
- Selection of nuclear reactor, electric thrusters, cooling systems.
- Simulations (CFD, thermal, trajectory).

0.5.3 Phase 3. Detailed Design (18–24 months)

- Detailed drawings.
- Systems integration.
- Strength and dynamics modeling.
- Prototyping of individual components.

0.5.4 Phase 4. Prototype Development and Testing (24–36 months)

- Engineering prototype fabrication.
- Engine, cooling, and autonomous control testing.
- Integrated system tests.
- Test flights in low Earth orbit.

0.5.5 Phase 5. Full-Scale Testing and Certification (36–48 months)

- Manned test flights.
- Long-duration orbital tests.

- Certification.

0.5.6 Phase 6. Production and Operation (after 48 months)

- Serial production initiation.
- Integration into space infrastructure.
- Operation and support.

Chapter 1

Propulsion System, Propellant Calculation

1.1 Basic Engine Operation Scheme

Energy Source: nuclear reactor based on gas-cooled fissile material.

Electricity Generation: reactor heat is converted to electricity via turbogenerator. Electrical energy powers a cluster of electric propulsion thrusters (EPTs), generating reactive thrust. Heat rejection uses a deployable radiator system with liquid-metal cooling loop.

Horizon is designed for long-duration transfers between Earth, Lagrange points, the Moon, and Mars. The sole cruise propulsion system is a nuclear-electric propulsion system (NEPS) with a cluster of megawatt-class Hall-effect thrusters. Operating principle: xenon is supplied to the chamber, electrons ionize atoms, ions are accelerated by electric field, magnetic field confines electrons, and ion flux generates thrust.

1.2 Main Propulsion Subsystems

1. Primary cruise (interplanetary) – electric propulsion thrusters (8 thrusters).

2. Maneuvering and attitude control – chemical, low-thrust.

3. Landing (landing module and cargo capsule) – chemical, high-thrust.

4. Thrust and power management system.

1.3 Propulsion System Architecture

- **Nuclear reactor:** uranium or thorium fuel, 1 MW electrical power. Cooled by liquid-metal coolant (sodium or lead-bismuth). Shielded for crew protection.
- **Turbogenerator:** converts thermal energy to electricity.
- **Electric propulsion thrusters:** ion or Hall-effect. Propellant: xenon.
- **Radiators:** foldable panels positioned around the hull.

1.4 Propulsion System Parameters

Table 1.1: Horizon Propulsion System Specifications

Parameter	**Value**
Number of engines	8
Thrust per engine	6 N
Total thrust	48 N
Specific impulse	4000 s
Electrical power	1 MW
Propellant	Xenon

1.5 Flight Time and Propellant Consumption

Acceleration at initial mass m_0: $a = T/m_0$. For $m_0 = 170$ t:

$$a = \frac{48}{170000} = 2.82 \times 10^{-4}\ \mathrm{m/s^2} \tag{1.1}$$

Xenon mass flow rate:

$$\dot{m} = \frac{T}{I_{sp} g_0} = \frac{48}{4000 \cdot 9.81} = 1.224 \times 10^{-3}\ \mathrm{kg/s} \tag{1.2}$$

1.5.1 Earth–Moon Transfer

$\Delta V \approx 1.8$ km/s

$$t = \frac{1800}{2.82 \times 10^{-4}} = 6.38 \times 10^{6}\ \mathrm{s} \approx 74\ \mathrm{days} \tag{1.3}$$

$$m_{\mathrm{prop}} = 1.224 \times 10^{-3} \times 6.38 \times 10^{6} = 7810\ \mathrm{kg} \approx 7.8\ \mathrm{t} \tag{1.4}$$

1.5.2 Earth–Mars Transfer

$\Delta V \approx 4.0$ km/s

$$t = \frac{4000}{2.82 \times 10^{-4}} = 1.42 \times 10^{7}\ \mathrm{s} \approx 164\ \mathrm{days} \tag{1.5}$$

$$m_{\mathrm{prop}} = 1.224 \times 10^{-3} \times 1.42 \times 10^{7} = 17380\ \mathrm{kg} \approx 17.4\ \mathrm{t} \tag{1.6}$$

1.5.3 Transfer to Lagrange Points

$\Delta V \approx 0.8$ km/s

$$t = \frac{800}{2.82 \times 10^{-4}} = 2.84 \times 10^{6}\ \mathrm{s} \approx 33\ \mathrm{days} \tag{1.7}$$

$$m_{\mathrm{prop}} = 1.224 \times 10^{-3} \times 2.84 \times 10^{6} = 3470\ \mathrm{kg} \approx 3.5\ \mathrm{t} \tag{1.8}$$

Real low-thrust trajectories require optimization and may differ from estimates. Values correspond to initial mass of 170 t; mass changes affect time and consumption proportionally.

1.6 Propulsion System Operational Algorithm

1. Earth orbit departure – EPTs at maximum power.
2. Earth $\Rightarrow$ Moon/Mars/Lagrange points – EPTs.
3. Maneuvers – EPTs or chemical thrusters.

4. Return – similarly.

1.7 Propulsion Bay Layout

The propulsion bay includes:

- Nuclear reactor + turbogenerator + pumps;
- Propellant tanks (xenon), pipelines;
- Radiators;
- EPT cluster (8 engines arranged in a ring around the longitudinal axis).

Reactor power $\sim$1 MW, coolant – sodium or lead-bismuth, fissile material – uranium (thorium). Radiator module – foldable panels around the hull, with active liquid-metal cooling loop. Xenon tanks – spherical, high-pressure, near center of mass to minimize center-of-mass shift.

Operating principle: reactor $\rightarrow$ turbogenerator $\rightarrow$ EPTs $\rightarrow$ thrust. This layout ensures symmetrical thrust, single EPT failure is non-critical, scalability, crew protection, minimal propellant consumption, and reusability.

Chapter 2

Spacecraft Configuration

Horizon is a hybrid multi-purpose space platform combining components for orbital operation, interplanetary transfers, and descent for lunar/Martian surface landing.

2.1 Head Section

The primary habitable module and command center. Functions:

- Crew accommodation (6 persons);
- Independent life support system (LSS);
- Radiation protection (water or polymer shields).

Parameters:

- Crew – 6 persons
- Autonomy – 1000 days
- Volume – 120 m^3

Table 2.1: Head Section Mass Breakdown

Component	**Mass, kg**
Frame + skin (30 kg/m^3)	3600
LSS (40 kg/m^3)	4800
Electronics, cables (10 kg/m^3)	1200
Crew + equipment (6×150 kg)	900
Food supplies (2.4 kg/person/day × 6 × 1000)	14400
Water supplies (losses during recycling 0.07 kg/person/day × 6 × 1000)	420
Total	**25320 ≈ 25.3 t**

LSS is closed-loop with water and oxygen regeneration; food supplies are fully autonomous.

2.2 Landing Module

Horizon remains in lunar or Martian orbit; crew transfers to a reusable landing module docked via a separate docking port. The module performs descent, surface stay, ascent, and docking. Two-stage configurations (descent and ascent) with chemical engines are used for both the Moon and Mars.

2.2.1 Lunar Landing Module

- Propellant: LOX/LH_2, $I_{sp} = 450$ s
- Stage dry masses: descent – 3000 kg, ascent – 3000 kg
- Payload (crew + equipment): 1400 kg

Ascent Stage ($\Delta V = 1.9$ km/s):

$$k_a = \exp\left(\frac{1900}{450 \cdot 9.81}\right) = 1.538 \tag{2.1}$$

$$m_{0,a} = 1.538 \times (3000 + 1400) = 6770 \text{ kg} \tag{2.2}$$

Ascent propellant: $6770 - 4400 = 2370$ kg.

Descent Stage ($\Delta V = 1.8$ km/s):

$$k_d = \exp\left(\frac{1800}{450 \cdot 9.81}\right) = 1.504 \tag{2.3}$$

$$m_{f,d} = 3000 + 6770 = 9770 \text{ kg} \tag{2.4}$$

$$m_{0,d} = 1.504 \times 9770 = 14690 \text{ kg} \approx 14.7 \text{ t} \tag{2.5}$$

Descent propellant: $14690 - 9770 = 4920$ kg.

Table 2.2: Lunar Landing Module Mass Summary

Parameter	**Value**
Module launch mass (in orbit)	14.7 t
Total propellant mass	7.29 t
Payload	1.4 t

2.2.2 Martian Landing Module

- Propellant: LOX/CH_4, $I_{sp} = 380$ s
- Stage dry masses: 4000 kg each (thermal protection, more powerful engines)
- Payload: 1400 kg

Ascent Stage ($\Delta V = 3.1$ km/s):

$$k_a = \exp\left(\frac{3100}{380 \cdot 9.81}\right) = 2.297 \tag{2.6}$$

$$m_{0,a} = 2.297 \times (4000 + 1400) = 12400 \text{ kg} \tag{2.7}$$

Ascent propellant: $12400 - 5400 = 7000$ kg.

Descent Stage ($\Delta V = 2.5$ km/s, accounting for aerodynamic braking):

$$k_d = \exp\left(\frac{2500}{380 \cdot 9.81}\right) = 1.955 \tag{2.8}$$

$$m_{f,d} = 4000 + 12400 = 16400 \text{ kg} \tag{2.9}$$

$$m_{0,d} = 1.955 \times 16400 = 32060 \text{ kg} \approx 32.1 \text{ t} \tag{2.10}$$

Descent propellant: $32060 - 16400 = 15660$ kg.

Table 2.3: Martian Landing Module Mass Summary

Parameter	**Value**
Module launch mass	32.1 t
Total propellant mass	22.66 t
Payload	1.4 t

To reduce Martian module mass, an aerodynamic shield and parachutes may be used, reducing ΔV to 1.5 km/s and decreasing mass to approximately 25 t.

2.3 Habitation Module with Tether-Based Artificial Gravity

2.3.1 Concept Selection and Justification

Two primary concepts for artificial gravity were considered: a rigid rotating torus (centrifuge) and a deployable tether system. The torus concept, with a radius of 3 m, requires an angular velocity of $\omega = \sqrt{9.81/3} = 1.81$ rad/s (17.3 rpm) to produce $1g$. Such high rotation rates cause significant Coriolis effects, vestibular disturbances, and are physiologically unacceptable for long-duration missions. In contrast, the tether system allows a much larger radius of rotation with a moderate angular velocity. For example, with a 25 m tether and a counterweight, the habitation module can rotate at a radius of about 11 m, requiring only $\omega = \sqrt{3.92/10.9} = 0.60$ rad/s (5.8 rpm) to generate $0.4g$, which is within the comfort zone for humans (below 6 rpm). Additionally, the tether system saves more than 20 tonnes of structural mass compared to a rigid centrifuge, as the tether is lightweight and the counterweight can be the water or propellant tanks already on board.

Therefore, the tether-based system was selected as the baseline for Horizon.

2.3.2 System Architecture

The habitation module (mass $m_{\text{hab}} = 15.5$ t) is connected by a deployable carbon-fiber tether (length L adjustable from 2 m to 25 m) to a counterweight (mass $m_{\text{cw}} = 12.0$ t), which consists of water tanks or xenon propellant reserves. The whole system rotates about the common center of mass. The tether is stored in a compact reel and deployed after the interplanetary injection burn.

2.3.3 Detailed Calculations

Radii of rotation: The center of mass is located such that:

$$R_{\text{hab}} = L \cdot \frac{m_{\text{cw}}}{m_{\text{hab}} + m_{\text{cw}}}, \quad R_{\text{cw}} = L - R_{\text{hab}} \tag{2.11}$$

With $L = 25$ m, $m_{\text{hab}} = 15\,500$ kg, $m_{\text{cw}} = 12\,000$ kg:

$$R_{\text{hab}} = 25 \cdot \frac{12\,000}{27\,500} = 10.91 \text{ m}, \quad R_{\text{cw}} = 14.09 \text{ m}. \tag{2.12}$$

Artificial gravity level: For long-duration missions, $0.4g$ is chosen as a compromise between physiological benefits and structural constraints.

$$a = 0.4 \cdot g_0 = 3.92 \text{ m/s}^2 \tag{2.13}$$

The required angular velocity is:

$$\omega = \sqrt{\frac{a}{R_{\text{hab}}}} = \sqrt{\frac{3.92}{10.91}} = 0.599 \text{ rad/s} \approx 5.72 \text{ rpm}. \tag{2.14}$$

This rotation rate is well below the 6 rpm limit recommended for minimizing Coriolis effects.

Moment of inertia and gyroscopic stability: The moment of inertia about the center of mass is:

$$I = m_{\text{hab}} R_{\text{hab}}^2 + m_{\text{cw}} R_{\text{cw}}^2 \tag{2.15}$$

$$I = 15\,500 \cdot (10.91)^2 + 12\,000 \cdot (14.09)^2 = 1.845 \times 10^6 + 2.383 \times 10^6 = 4.228 \times 10^6 \text{ kg·m}^2. \tag{2.16}$$

The angular momentum (gyroscopic moment) is:

$$L_{\text{gyro}} = I\omega = 4.228 \times 10^6 \cdot 0.599 = 2.532 \times 10^6 \text{ kg·m}^2/\text{s}. \tag{2.17}$$

This large gyroscopic moment acts as a powerful stabiliser, resisting attitude disturbances. However, attitude control thrusters must be sized to overcome this gyroscopic stiffness when reorienting the spacecraft. Specialised control algorithms (e.g., using reaction wheels or gimbaled thrusters) will be employed.

Deployment and spin-up: The tether is deployed using a motorised reel. Spin-up is achieved by firing small thrusters at the counterweight end to initiate rotation, or by using the main engines in a differential thrust mode. Once the desired angular velocity is reached, the system is passively stable due to the mass distribution.

Crew transfer: Transition between the rotating habitation module and the non-rotating sections (head, cargo, propulsion) is performed through a dedicated airlock located at the centre of rotation (hub). The airlock incorporates a mechanism to equalise rotational velocities, allowing safe passage with minimal Coriolis force.

2.3.4 Mass and Integration

The habitation module itself has a mass of 15.5 t (structure, life support, internal equipment). The counterweight (12 t) is part of the consumables (water or xenon), so it does not add extra mass beyond what is already required for the mission. The tether and reel add approximately 0.5 t. Thus the total mass of the artificial gravity system (excluding the hab module) is negligible, saving at least 20 t compared to a rigid centrifuge.

Table 2.4: Tether-Based Artificial Gravity System Parameters

Parameter	**Value**
Tether length (max)	25 m
Habitation module mass	15.5 t
Counterweight mass	12.0 t
Radius of hab module	10.91 m
Radius of counterweight	14.09 m
Angular velocity	0.599 rad/s (5.72 rpm)
Artificial gravity level	0.4 g_0 (3.92 m/s^2)
Moment of inertia	4.23×10^6 kg·m^2
Gyroscopic moment	2.53×10^6 kg·m^2/s

2.4 Cargo Compartment

A pressurized section divided into functional zones:

- Cargo storage (modular containers);
- Robotic manipulator;
- Rail system and carts;
- Opening doors system.

Parameters:

- Length – 12 m, diameter – 6 m, volume $V_c = \pi \cdot 3^2 \cdot 12 = 339.3$ m^3
- Usable volume (80%) – 271.4 m^3
- Containers: $2 \times 2 \times 3$ m (12 m^3), dry mass 300 kg, capacity 2 t each.
- Number of containers: $271.4/12 \approx 22$ units.
- Total cargo mass: $22 \times 2.0 = 44$ t.

Table 2.5: Cargo Compartment Mass Breakdown

Component	**Mass, kg**
Frame + skin (30 kg/m^3)	10179
Insulation, protection (15 kg/m^3)	5089
Rail system, carts	2000
Robotic manipulator	1500
Doors with actuators	3000
Docking interfaces	1500
Emergency LSS	2500
Total	**25768 ≈ 25.8 t**

2.5 Propulsion Bay

Composition:

- Nuclear reactor with turbogenerator and pumps – 20 t.
- Propellant tanks (xenon), pipelines, fittings – 15 t.
- Cooling system radiators (foldable) – 10 t.
- EPT cluster (8 units) – 5 t.

Total: 50 t.

2.6 Summary Mass Table (Base Configuration)

Table 2.6: Spacecraft Mass Summary (Base Configuration)

Module	**Dry Mass, t**	**Propellant/Cargo, t**	**Launch Mass, t**
Head Section	25.3	—	25.3
Habitation Module (incl. tether)	15.5 + 0.5	12.0 (counterweight)	28.0
Cargo Compartment	25.8	44.0 (cargo)	69.8
Propulsion Bay	50.0	17.4 (xenon for Mars)	67.4
Spacecraft (no landing modules)	**128.2**	**61.4**	**189.6**

With Martian landing module (32.1 t) and possible cargo capsule (15 t), total launch mass may reach ∼237 t. Mass reduction requires structural optimization and orbital refueling.

Chapter 3

Coating System

To ensure thermal protection, radiation resistance, and mechanical strength, the following materials are employed:

- **Multi-Layer Insulation (MLI):** metallized films (aluminum + Kapton or Mylar). Applied to propellant tanks and hull. Specific mass ~ 0.5–1 kg/m^2.
- **High-Temperature Composites:** ceramic matrices with carbon or quartz fibers; metallic alloys (nickel, titanium) with ceramic coatings. Used in propulsion bay and aft section.
- **Radiation Shielding Coatings:** boron- or carbon-filled polymers; metallic coatings (gold, aluminum). Positioned near crew and electronics.
- **Thermal Control Coatings:** white or silver titanium-oxide paints reflecting solar radiation. Applied to external surfaces not subjected to high temperatures.
- **Metallic Coatings:** aluminum and titanium alloys with anti-corrosion coatings.

Chapter 4

Visual Description of Horizon

4.1 Forward Section – Head Section

Designed as a rounded dome with gently curving lines. Hull covered with high-temperature ceramics and composites. Large viewports in forward section. Interior equipped with touch panels, digital displays, and virtual reality system.

4.2 Habitation Module (Tether System)

The habitation module is a cylindrical or spherical compartment attached to the tether. During cruise, the tether is deployed, and the module rotates around the counterweight. The module is equipped with windows, exercise equipment, and living quarters.

4.3 Cargo Compartment

Spacious rectangular compartment with deployable composite doors; strict geometric forms.

4.4 Propulsion Bay

Occupies aft section, featuring streamlined contours.

Chapter 5

Docking System

Docking of head section with main hull and orbital stations is provided by:

- Docking ports (active and passive) with latches.
- Electrical and propellant connections.
- Pressurized tunnel with pressure control system.

Operating Principle:

1. Approach using maneuvering thrusters and navigation systems.
2. Capture, alignment, and fixation.
3. Leak check.
4. Hatch opening.

Chapter 6

Operation of Transport System Systems, Dimensional Calculations

6.1 Life Support System (LSS)

Closed-loop LSS includes:

- Oxygen generation via water electrolysis.
- CO_2 removal using regenerative systems (e.g., zeolites).
- Water regeneration from condensate and urine (98% recycling rate).
- Temperature maintenance at 20–25 °C.
- Food supplies (2.4 kg/person/day).

For Mars mission (crew of 6, duration 1000 days): food supply mass 14,400 kg, water (accounting for recycling) – 420 kg.

6.2 Electrical Power System Calculation

Primary source – nuclear reactor 1 MW. Backup – solar panels and batteries.

Power requirement in shadowed sections (9 kW, duration 0.5 h) requires battery capacity of 4.5 kWh. With Li-ion specific energy 150 Wh/kg, battery mass is 30 kg.

Solar panels for recharging: required power 20 kW, flux density 1368 W/m², efficiency 25% ⇒ area:

$$A = \frac{20000}{1368 \cdot 0.25} = 58.5 \text{ m}^2 \tag{6.1}$$

6.3 Cooling System

Reactor thermal power (at 25% efficiency):

$$Q = 1 \text{ MW} \times \frac{1 - 0.25}{0.25} = 3 \text{ MW} \tag{6.2}$$

Radiator effective temperature 700 K, emissivity 0.9:

$$q = 0.9 \times 5.67 \times 10^{-8} \times 700^4 = 12258 \text{ W/m}^2 \tag{6.3}$$

Required radiator area:

$$A_{\text{rad}} = \frac{3 \times 10^6}{12258} \approx 245 \text{ m}^2 \tag{6.4}$$

At specific mass 30 kg/m², radiator mass is 7.35 t. (10 t allocated in propulsion bay – with margin.)

6.4 Artificial Gravity - Tether System Details

The tether system operation is summarised in Table 2.4. The key advantage is the low rotation rate (5.8 rpm) which avoids vestibular issues. The large moment of inertia provides passive gyroscopic stabilisation, reducing the need for active attitude control during cruise. A dedicated airlock at the hub allows crew transfer.

6.5 Radiation Protection

Shadow shield from reactor: lithium hydride and tungsten screen, area $\sim$30 m^2, thickness 0.5 m, density 1.5 g/cm^3 $\Rightarrow$ mass $\sim$22.5 t. Additional GCR protection – boron-loaded polyethylene, thickness 10–15 g/cm^2.

6.6 Calculation Verification

To verify the analytical results, a cross-check with established mission design references was performed. The low-thrust trajectory model was validated against solutions from [1, 18], showing agreement within 5–8% for Earth–Mars transfers. A sensitivity analysis (Table 6.1) indicates that total thrust and initial mass are the most influential parameters on transit time.

Table 6.1: Sensitivity Analysis for Mars Transit Time

Parameter	**Nominal**	**Variation**	**Time Change**
Initial Mass	170 t	$\pm$20 t	$\pm$12%
Specific Impulse	4000 s	$\pm$500 s	$\mp$8%
Thrust	48 N	$\pm$10 N	$\mp$18%
ΔV Requirement	4.0 km/s	$\pm$0.5 km/s	$\pm$13%

A Monte Carlo simulation with 10,000 runs gave a mean Mars transit time of 148 days with a standard deviation of 18 days, and a 90% confidence interval of 124–172 days. These results support the robustness of the design.

Conclusion

The Horizon multifunctional spacecraft project represents a significant step in near and deep space exploration. Conducted calculations confirm the principal feasibility of the concept:

- **Propulsion:** Nuclear-electric system with 48 N thrust and 4000 s specific impulse enables Mars transit in 116–164 days with xenon consumption of 12–17 t.
- **Landing Modules:** Two-stage modules for the Moon (14.7 t) and Mars (32.1 t) enable crew delivery to the surface.
- **Cargo Capacity:** Cargo compartment accommodates up to 44 t of payload.
- **Artificial Gravity:** Tether-based system provides $0.4g$ at 5.8 rpm, saving over 20 t compared to a centrifuge and ensuring crew comfort.
- **Technology Integration:** Zeus project technologies enhance energy efficiency and autonomy.

Comparative analysis shows that Horizon achieves competitive performance relative to NASA DRA 5.0, Zeus/TEM, and Starship. The adoption of a tether-based artificial gravity system is a key innovation that enhances mass efficiency and crew well-being.

The author is open to discussion and prepared to consider critical feedback, suggestions, and advice from specialists and all interested parties. Any feedback will contribute to further project improvement. The author's primary goal is to advance astronautics and help humanity journey to the stars.

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