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NEAR IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Why NEAR matters for AI agents, cross-chain trading, and the next wave of crypto adoption

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The Problem That NEAR Solves

Crypto has a usability problem.

There are now hundreds of blockchains, each with its own assets, applications, and rules. Moving money between them has historically been costly, cumbersome, and risky. For crypto to serve billions of people, this fragmented system has to feel like one seamless network.

Artificial intelligence has a different problem: centralization. A handful of companies control the world's most powerful AI models, along with the data users and companies share with them. As AI systems begin to act on our behalf—managing money, booking travel, negotiating purchases—they will need infrastructure that lets them transact securely without broadcasting all of our data and our decisions to a few large corporations.

NEAR sits at the intersection of these two problems.

NEAR was co-founded in 2018 by Alex Skidanov and Illia Polosukhin, one of the co-authors of the landmark research paper that introduced the architecture behind ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini. With NEAR, Polosukhin's team set out to build a blockchain fast enough, cheap enough, and simple enough to serve not just millions of people, but billions of AI agents transacting on their behalf.

That work is now paying off. NEAR's flagship product, NEAR Intents, simplifies trading assets across different blockchains into a single step. A user who wants to swap, say, \$1,000 of stablecoins for Ethereum simply picks the assets and the amount, and a network of specialist bots (known as "solvers") competes to execute it for the best available price. The user experience is seamless, and the product supports more than 35 blockchains. Executing that same transaction without NEAR Intents would typically involve multiple steps, bridges, and layers of fees.

Introduced in late 2024 and scaled through 2025, NEAR Intents has processed more than \$30 billion in cumulative volume, with \$4 billion of that occurring in the past 30 days. NEAR recently added perpetual futures (or "perps") on Hyperliquid, giving Intents users access to the world's largest onchain derivatives exchange. They have also partnered with Ondo Finance, a leader in tokenized equities, to enable users to buy, sell, and hold tokenized stocks and ETFs in a crypto wallet.

NEAR has also built a confidential AI cloud. This lets people and businesses add privacy protections while running leading AI models, such as Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, or DeepSeek, by removing sensitive information from requests before they reach the model provider. The highest privacy levels, built on leading open-weight models like DeepSeek, ensure no one—not the cloud operator, not NEAR, not the model provider—can see the user's prompts, conversations, or information. Simply put, NEAR's AI Cloud lets users get access to AI without handing over their sensitive or proprietary data.

In the rest of this paper, we explain how these pieces fit together, why the NEAR token is designed to capture the value they create, and what it means for investors.

Overview of the NEAR Ecosystem

NEAR's platform spans three layers that build on each other: a high-performance blockchain, a cross-chain execution layer, and confidential AI infrastructure.

NEAR's High-Performance Blockchain: NEAR Protocol

Every blockchain faces the same bottleneck: how to process more transactions without sacrificing security or decentralization. Ethereum answered with rollups (separate networks that batch transactions back to Ethereum), and Solana with one giant, ultrafast chain. NEAR took a third path, known as "sharding," which splits the network into parallel lanes that process transactions simultaneously. With "dynamic resharding," live since 2026, the network automatically adds lanes when traffic builds—like a highway that can automatically add lanes at rush hour.

The results are among some of the best in crypto. In 2025, NEAR demonstrated it could handle one million transactions per second in a public test, a level far beyond what leading blockchains handle today. The network settles transactions in roughly a second, charges fees often less than a penny, and has run essentially without interruption since launching in 2020. The protocol is also futureproofing itself against future risks: It was one of the first major L1s to adopt quantum-safe signatures in July 2026, raising confidence in its long-term positioning.

NEAR's Cross-Chain Execution Layer: NEAR Intents

The bulk of the economic activity across the NEAR network is tied to its flagship product, NEAR Intents, a smart-contract-based platform built on the NEAR protocol that lets users swap assets and trade perpetual futures across 35+ blockchains by enlisting "solvers" to find the best deal.

In February 2026, NEAR launched NEAR.com, a consumer app that allows users to access Intents through a single user account. NEAR also introduced Confidential Intents the same month, which shields transaction details—like the asset being traded, the amount, and the counterparty—from public view before settlement while keeping execution verifiable and auditable. In September 2026, NEAR Intents added perpetual futures on Hyperliquid, giving users access to the world's largest onchain derivatives exchange with built-in confidentiality. Built for traders and institutions that need to trade without publicizing their strategies, NEAR Confidential Intents already accounts for 50.6% of the total value held in Intents.

Importantly, NEAR Intents demonstrated significant growth through the late stages of the recent crypto winter, and demand surged when the market rebounded in Q3. That suggests demand could grow further if crypto markets strengthen in 2027 and beyond.

NEAR's Private AI Infrastructure: NEAR AI Cloud

The third layer is where NEAR's founding vision comes into focus. NEAR AI runs AI models and agents inside trusted execution environments ("TEEs"). TEEs are like encrypted vaults inside a computer chip that even the machine's owner cannot see into. On that foundation, NEAR has launched NEAR AI Cloud, which gives companies private access to AI models, from leading open-weight models like DeepSeek to frontier models like GPT, Claude, and Gemini.¹ NEAR also built an embedded agent experience on NEAR.com that lets AI agents operate 24/7 without exposing credentials or confidential user data to them (like names, passwords, and API keys), and a confidential GPU marketplace where enterprises and governments can rent computing power for sensitive AI workloads. Since July 2026, customers have been able to pay for NEAR AI Cloud and for hosting embedded agents by staking NEAR tokens, with credits scaling with the amount of NEAR staked.

Put together, the three layers form a valuable technology stack. NEAR Protocol is the foundation, providing a settlement engine fast and cheap enough for AI-scale commerce. NEAR Intents builds on that foundation, enabling people and institutions to transact across dozens of blockchains. Confidential Intents adds privacy to those features, leveraging the same trusted hardware NEAR uses to run AI models confidentially. NEAR AI gives people and AI agents confidential access to leading AI models, and gives agents a way to transact through Intents, allowing agents to pay for things across dozens of blockchains.

Each layer is built to feed the one beneath it. More AI agents mean more Intents transactions, and more Intents transactions mean more settlement on NEAR Protocol. It is infrastructure for a world where humans, institutions, and AI agents do business onchain.

(1) NEAR AI Cloud offers two levels of privacy. Open-weight models like DeepSeek run entirely inside the TEE, and NEAR can produce a cryptographic proof that the expected model ran and that no one, including NEAR, could see the data. Frontier models like GPT, Claude, and Gemini are proprietary, so they cannot be accessed with full privacy and encryption like open-weight models. For these, NEAR runs a gateway inside a TEE that strips the user's identity before passing the request along, which gives anonymity from the model provider rather than fully confidential use.

THE NEAR ECOSYSTEM



Humans



Institutions



AI Agents



Use NEAR AI and NEAR Intents directly, or through AI agents acting on their behalf.



NEAR AI

Runs AI on encrypted hardware that hides data, even from NEAR itself.

- Open-weight models like DeepSeek run fully encrypted
- Frontier models like Claude and GPT can be used anonymously
- Embedded AI agents keep your sensitive information protected
- Compute and agent hosting can be paid for by staking NEAR

CONFIDENTIAL AI CLOUD



Agents and apps on NEAR AI can trade assets and move money through NEAR Intents.



NEAR INTENTS

Powers apps like near.com that transact across 35+ blockchains.

- Send payments, swap crypto assets and tokenized equities, or trade perpetual futures
- Confidential mode hides transaction details from public view
- One user account holds assets from every supported blockchain
- A portion of revenue earned by NEAR Intents is used to buy back NEAR

CROSS-CHAIN EXECUTION



Solvers compete to offer the best price, and the NEAR Protocol settles every transaction.



NEAR PROTOCOL

A settlement engine built for AI-scale commerce.

- Finalizes transactions in about a second
- Most transactions cost less than a penny
- At least 70% of every fee is burned (permanently removing NEAR from circulation)
- Adds capacity automatically as the network grows

HIGH-PERFORMANCE BLOCKCHAIN

Source: Bitwise Asset Management

Why the NEAR Token Has Value

NEAR's native token, NEAR, is the economic engine of the ecosystem. The NEAR token is designed to benefit from the network's growth in three ways.

Transaction Fees and Token Burns

Every transaction processed on the NEAR blockchain requires a fee that is paid in NEAR. For simple transactions, such as sending NEAR from one wallet to another, the entire fee is subsequently burned—that is, an equivalent number of NEAR tokens are permanently removed from circulation. Transactions that involve applications, like lending, borrowing, or trading on a DeFi app or using NEAR Intents, pay out 30% of the fee to the application and burn the remaining 70%. NEAR recently approved an upgrade that eliminates the 30% payment; once it goes live, NEAR will burn 100% of transaction fees, strengthening the token's value accrual and simplifying protocol economics.

Staking

Roughly 45% of all NEAR is staked. This refers to NEAR that is pledged by holders to the validators that process NEAR transactions and help secure the network. In exchange for staking NEAR, holders receive rewards that currently yield 4.5% per year. Staking keeps nearly half of the supply committed to the network, reducing the amount in circulation. In late 2025, the NEAR community improved the supply-side dynamics of the NEAR token by cutting the protocol's inflation rate in half, from 5% to 2.5% per year, and proposals could push it lower still. While this change reduces the yield earned by stakers, the net impact is lower NEAR token inflation and more sound tokenomics.

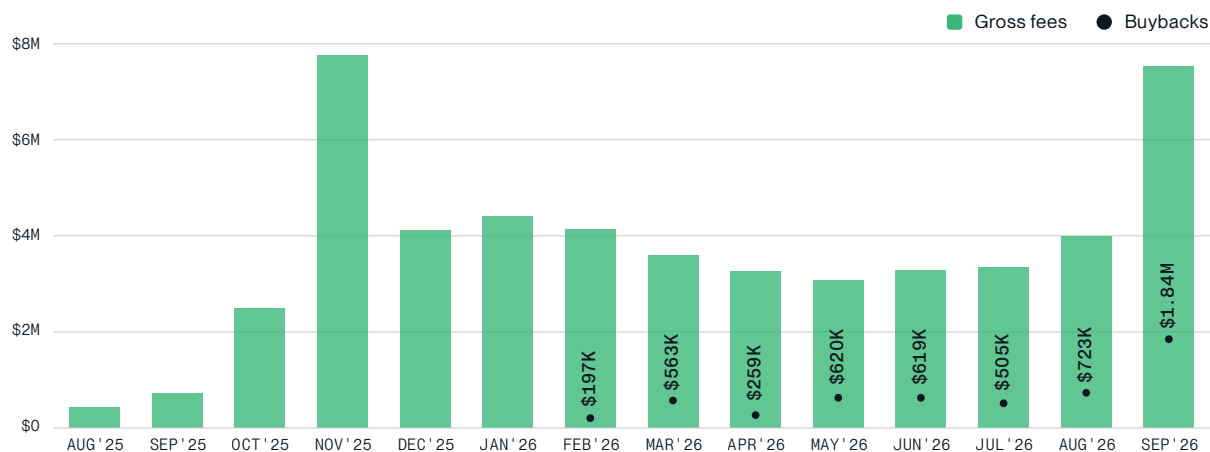
Revenue-Driven Buybacks

In addition to transaction fees on the NEAR blockchain, NEAR also generates revenue from cross-chain swaps facilitated by NEAR Intents. Most importantly for NEAR's long-term investment case, a "fee switch" was activated in February 2026 that began using NEAR's share of those fees (after payouts to its partners and the applications leveraging Intents) to buy back NEAR tokens on the open market. Since the fee switch was turned on, NEAR Intents users have paid over \$29 million in fees, leading to \$5.3 million in NEAR token buybacks.²

Collectively, the value-accrual story is simple. As more activity routes through NEAR's infrastructure, its revenue grows, and buybacks grow with it. Additionally, increasing activity means more fees are burned, reducing supply further. And staking keeps additional supply locked up and committed to the network. If NEAR's infrastructure becomes the default home of the AI agent economy, NEAR's fees and demand for NEAR tokens should scale with that economy.

(2) Source: Bitwise Asset Management with data from Dune and NEAR Revenue Tracker. Data as of September 30, 2026.

NEAR INTENTS: FEES AND TOKEN BUYBACKS



Source: Bitwise Asset Management with data from Dune and DefiLlama. Data as of September 30, 2026.

NEAR in Context

As crypto goes mainstream, more and more activity involves moving assets across blockchains, and, increasingly, AI agents acting on people's behalf. NEAR's services sit underneath several of the market's most important growth stories.

- Stablecoins, bitcoin, altcoins, and tokenized real-world assets (like stocks and ETFs) live on different networks, and the demand for moving and reconciling them is likely to increase. Intents already routes billions of dollars between chains every month.
- Institutions need confidentiality. Confidential Intents brings private execution to public blockchains.
- For an agent to manage money or data on your behalf, it needs verifiable, confidential, and tamper-resistant access to AI infrastructure. That is precisely what NEAR's hardware-secured AI stack provides.

It's worth being direct about where NEAR stands today. While Intents has achieved measurable traction in cross-chain trading, the AI business is still in its early days. NEAR AI has real products and credible partners, but reported revenues have been modest so far.

That makes NEAR a two-part story: a working, fast-growing execution layer today, and a moonshot built on top of it. If AI agents become the dominant users of digital infrastructure—as many technologists expect—and NEAR becomes the settlement layer where they transact, the value unlock would be enormous. The moonshot is not required for NEAR to matter. But if it hits, it changes everything.

MARKET CAPITALIZATION

\$7.0B

+111.8% Change YoY

NEAR INTENTS 30-DAY VOLUME

\$4.8B

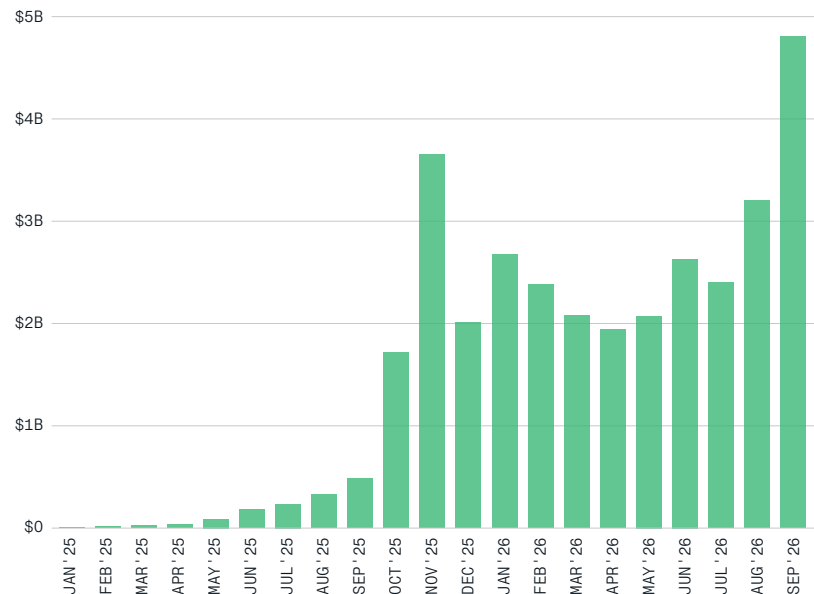
+896% Growth YoY

NEAR INTENTS 30-DAY REVENUE

\$2.2M

+512.5% Growth YoY

NEAR INTENTS: MONTHLY VOLUME



Source: Bitwise Asset Management with data from CoinGecko and Dune.
Data as of September 30, 2026.

near



Brave is a privacy-focused web browser used by 126 million people every month, with a crypto wallet and an AI assistant built in. When Brave users trade one crypto asset for another, such as Bitcoin for Ethereum, NEAR's network handles the trade behind the scenes and can hide the details of that trade from the public. Brave is also piloting NEAR AI Cloud for its Leo AI assistant, so users can chat with leading AI models like DeepSeek and verify that their conversations stay private.

Risks and Considerations

As with any early technology, the future holds risks for NEAR. The biggest is execution. NEAR's AI ambition is a swing-for-the-fences bet on a market that is still taking shape. Centralized AI platforms could keep users inside their own walled gardens, agent commerce could develop more slowly than expected, or it could settle on rails other than NEAR's. Investors should size positions with that binary quality in mind: The AI upside is enormous, but it is not guaranteed.

Competition is real on every front. In one sense, NEAR competes with Ethereum, Solana, and other Layer 1 blockchains for developers and applications (although it also supports those ecosystems by improving cross-chain functionality). And it certainly competes with a crowded field of interoperability providers for cross-chain activity, as well as with well-funded centralized AI companies for the future of the agent economy.

NEAR's usage metrics can also be volatile. In early 2026, activity on the NEAR base chain fell sharply when activity on a single large consumer app dropped off. Today's growth engine, NEAR Intents, is dominated by stablecoin and trading flows, and its fee and buyback mechanisms have been live for less than a year.

Lastly, NEAR's tokenomics remain a work in progress. The inflation reduction, fee switch, and buyback programs are recent, and future governance decisions could refine or reshape how value accrues to the NEAR token. Regulation also remains a variable. While the U.S. regulatory environment has turned constructive, rules governing core elements that NEAR's success depends on, from DeFi to privacy tools to AI, are still being written.

The Bitwise NEAR ETF (NRR)

The Bitwise NEAR ETF is an exchange-traded product that allows investors to gain cost-efficient exposure to NEAR, the blockchain network building the infrastructure for confidential, cross-chain commerce and AI agents. As adoption of cross-chain trading, private execution, and AI agents grows, NEAR is positioned to benefit.

With NRR, investors can participate in NEAR's upside potential and potential staking rewards through an ETP backed by crypto specialists.³ In choosing NRR, investors gain access to a team of crypto experts with the tools, insights, and specialized experience to help them navigate the space with confidence.

(3) Staking rewards are earned by the Trust and accrue to shareholders as an increase in the Trust's Net Asset Value (NAV) per share. Rewards are not guaranteed and are subject to change.

TICKER
NRR

EXCHANGE
NYSE ARCA

INCEPTION DATE
09/28/2026

SPONSOR FEE
0.75%

The Bitwise NEAR ETF (NRR) is not suitable for all investors. An investment in NRR is subject to a high degree of risk, has the potential for significant volatility, and could result in significant or complete loss of investment. NRR is not an investment company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended (the "1940 Act") and therefore is not subject to the same protections as ETFs and mutual funds registered under the 1940 Act. An investment in NRR is not the same as a direct investment in the NEAR token.

Risks and Important Information

This material must be accompanied by a prospectus. Please read the prospectus carefully before investing. To obtain a current prospectus visit nrrtf.com/welcome.

Shares of ETPs are bought and sold at market price (not NAV) and are not individually redeemed from the fund. Brokerage commissions will reduce returns. The NAV may not always correspond to the market price of NRR and, as a result, creation units may be created or redeemed at a value that is different from the market price of the shares. Authorized participants' buying and selling activity associated with the creation and redemption of Creation Units may adversely affect an investment in the Shares.

The amount of NEAR represented by a Share will continue to be reduced during the life of the Fund due to the transfer of the Fund's NEAR to pay for the sponsor's management fee, and to pay for litigation expenses or other extraordinary expenses. This dynamic will occur irrespective of whether the trading price of the Shares rises or falls in response to changes in the price of NEAR.

There is no guarantee or assurance that the Fund's methodology will result in the Fund achieving positive investment returns or outperforming other investment products.

Investors may choose to use the Fund as a means of investing indirectly in NEAR. Because the value of the Shares is correlated with the value of the NEAR held by the Fund, it is important to understand the investment attributes of, and the market for, NEAR.

NEAR Risk. There are significant risks and hazards inherent in the NEAR market that may cause the price of NEAR to fluctuate widely. The Fund's NEAR may be subject to loss, damage, theft, or restriction on access. Investors considering a purchase of Shares should carefully consider how much of their total assets should be exposed to the NEAR market, and should fully understand, be willing to assume, and have the financial resources necessary to withstand the risks involved in the Fund's investment strategy.

Liquidity Risk. The market for NEAR is still developing and may be subject to periods of illiquidity. During such times it may be difficult or impossible to buy or sell a position at the desired price. Possible illiquid markets may exacerbate losses or increase the variability between the Fund's NAV and its market price. The lack of active trading markets for the Shares may result in losses on investors' investments at the time of disposition of Shares.

Regulatory Risk. Future and current regulations by a U.S. or foreign government or quasi-governmental agency could have an adverse effect on an investment in the Fund.

Blockchain Technology Risk. Certain of the Fund's investments may be subject to the risks associated with investing in blockchain technology. The risks associated with blockchain technology may not fully emerge until the technology is widely used. Blockchain systems could be vulnerable to fraud, particularly if a significant minority of participants colluded to defraud the rest. Because blockchain technology systems may operate across many national boundaries and regulatory jurisdictions, it is possible that blockchain technology may be subject to widespread and inconsistent regulation.

Nondiversification Risk. The Fund is nondiversified and will hold a single issue. As a result, a decline in the market value of a particular issue held by the Fund may affect the Fund's value more than if it invested in a larger number of issuers.

Recency Risk. The Fund is recently organized, giving prospective investors a limited track record on which to base their investment decision. If the Fund is not profitable, the Fund may terminate and liquidate at a time that is disadvantageous to Shareholders.

Bitwise Investment Advisers, LLC serves as the sponsor of the Fund. Foreside Fund Services, LLC serves as the Marketing Agent for NRR, and is not affiliated with Bitwise Investment Advisers, LLC, Bitwise, or any of its affiliates.

