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Boeing and Alaska Airlines announced today an order for 10 737-900s and 10 options, launching the fourth model in the Next-Generation 737 family, the fastest-selling family of commercial jetliners in aviation history.

This new model joins the already successful Next-Generation 737-600/-700/-800 family.

Alaska also announced an order for two Boeing 737-400s and three Boeing 737-700s. The value of the agreement, including options, is more than \$1 billion.

The Boeing Company Board of Directors authorized the go-ahead for the Next-Generation 737-900 program based on Alaska's order, which is subject to the signing of a definitive agreement.

"We are honored to have Alaska Airlines as a launch customer for the 737-900, an airplane that extends the value of the 737 family," said Ron Woodard, president of Boeing Commercial Airplane Group. "Alaska Airlines is an exceptional airline, and we welcome them into the ranks of customers that have launched a Boeing airplane model."

The Next-Generation 737-900 will be the longest member of the newest 737 family, with a length of 138 feet 2 inches. It will carry up to 177 passengers in a two-class configuration. Alaska has configured its 737-900 to carry 174 passengers.

The 737-900 will have the same wing span of 112 feet 6 inches as other Next-Generation 737 models.

Changes from the current 737s to the Next-Generation family include a new larger wing, higher cruise speed, greater range and new engines with improvements in noise, fuel burn and thrust. The Next-Generation 737 models fly higher, farther and faster than current 737 models.

The 737 -- a short- to medium-range airplane -- is based on a key philosophy: delivering more value to airlines in the form of reliability, simplicity and reduced operating and maintenance costs. In addition, the new 737-600/-700/-800/-900 models will enjoy crew commonality with today's 737.

The 737-600/-700/-800/-900 models are powered by new CFM56-7 engines produced by CFMI, a joint venture of General Electric Co. of the U.S. and Snecma of France.

With the launch of the Next-Generation 737-900, the new 737 family members are offered in four sizes, ranging from 108 to 189 seats in mixed-class configuration.

The 737-600 is the smallest member of the family, carrying 108 to 132 passengers. The 737-700 is equivalent in size to the current 737-300, with 128 to 149 seats. The 737-800 is a stretched version of the current 737-400 and is capable of carrying 160 to 189 passengers.

The aircraft will be able to cruise up to a maximum altitude of 41,000 feet, compared to 37,000 feet for the earlier-model 737s and 39,000 feet for Airbus Industrie's A-320.

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