Newest Boeing 767 Reaches Design Milestone

The largest Boeing 767, the 767-400 ER (extended range), achieved firm design configuration, Boeing Commercial Airplane Group confirmed today.

To accomplish this milestone, Boeing and its airline customers reached agreement about the basic design of the aircraft, which is based on its predecessor, the 767-300ER. Now, engineers can begin releasing design information to Boeing factories and suppliers. This initiates fabrication of parts, tools and assemblies for the new derivative airplane. First delivery of the 767-400ER is scheduled for mid-2000 to Delta Air Lines, which is based in Atlanta, Ga.

"We reached firm configuration for much of the airplane design in early September," said John Quinlivan, 767-400ER program manager. "Since then, we've been studying two significant items -- a newly designed interior and an upgraded flight deck. These enhancements, which we'll incorporate into the 767-400ER, were proposed by airline customers, and will make this airplane even more appealing," he added.

The 767-400ER flight deck incorporates six flat-panel displays, with a layout similar to that used on the 777. These digital displays will be programmable to display information as it appears in the existing flight deck, allowing for a same pilot-type rating with the current 767 fleet. This programmable feature is very similar to what was provided on the Next-Generation 737s.

The new 767-400ER flight-deck displays will give airlines greater ability to fly mixed fleets. The flexibility will allow flight crews to readily qualify for a wider range of assignments. A crew trained on the 767-400ER could, with additional training that focuses on differences, fly the Next-Generation 737, 747-400 and 777. The 767 and 757 already share so many features that pilots can, with minimal additional training, fly both aircraft. The new flight deck also will include provisions for advanced technologies required for future navigation systems.

The 767-400ER interior architecture, with newly sculpted side walls, ceilings and overhead stow bins, creates a feeling of spaciousness similar to the 777. The bins provide more stowage volume than existing 767s.

According to Quinlivan, though, the airplane will retain features of the 767 interior that have earned passenger ratings as one of the most preferred airplanes in every class of service. For example, independent research has shown the seven-abreast seating concept is popular because 87 percent of the seats are next to the window or on the aisles.

The 767-400ER is sized between the 767-300 and 777-200. It will add 21 feet to the 767-300 airframe, and will offer about 15 percent more seats -- 245 in a three-class configuration and 304 in a two-class configuration. The added seats will reduce operating costs relative to the 767-300ER, which already offers airlines the lowest operating costs in its class. The new derivative will fly all U.S. domestic routes, and it will serve international markets such as Los Angeles-London, New York-Santiago, Chile, and Seattle-Osaka, Japan.

"We have 28 months to get from firm configuration to delivery of the first airplane," said Quinlivan. "There's much to be done, but these are very exciting times for the program."