Boeing Rolls Out First 717-200 Passenger Jet

Boeing Company introduced its newest twinjet, the 717-200, during a lively rollout ceremony today before a crowd of several thousand employees and guests at the company's Douglas Products Division in Long Beach.

"This is a proud moment for Boeing," said Harry Stonecipher, president and chief operating officer. "The 717 is one of the world's newest airplanes, and it truly represents our theme today of 'Bringing People Together'." Stonecipher told the crowd that people from aerospace companies and 16 international supplier-partners have come together to introduce the 21st-century airplane. "And starting next year," he added, "people from many regions will come together as they travel aboard the new Boeing 717 for the first time."

Launched in October 1995 as the MD-95, the airplane was re-designated the Boeing 717 after the August 1997 merger of Boeing and McDonnell Douglas. The 717 was launched with 50 firm orders and 50 options from AirTran Airlines.

"As the launch customer, the value of the 717-200 will enable us to thrive in the 21st century," said D. Joseph Corr, president and chief executive officer of AirTran. "In a decade when airfares have been rising, the 717-200 gives AirTran what it needs to continue providing affordable fares."

Last month, Bavaria International Aircraft Leasing Company of Munich, Germany, became the first European customer for the plane with firm orders for five 717-200s.

The 717-200 is designed to meet airlines' needs for a cost-effective, 100-passenger transport to serve high-frequency or low-traffic short-to-medium-range routes in the growing regional market. It will meet replacement and expansion needs in the 100-seat category, potentially numbering thousands of airplanes.

Two advanced BMW/Rolls-Royce BR715 high-bypass ratio engines power the 717. The engine is rated at 18,500 to 21,000 pounds of takeoff thrust, with lower fuel consumption, and significantly lower noise and emission levels than the power plants on comparable airplanes.

The two-crew flight deck incorporates the industry's most modern and proven avionics technology. It is configured around six liquid crystal display units and advanced Honeywell VIA 2000 computer systems, similar to those in other new Boeing jetliners.

The 717's spacious, all-new passenger cabin, features five-across coach-class seating, illuminated handrails and large overhead stowage bins.

Five airplanes are in final assembly at the Douglas Products Division in Long Beach. First flight of the 717 is expected in September. Deliveries to customers are scheduled to begin in the summer of 1999, following the flight-test and certification program.

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