Boeing 717-200 Nearing Certification and First Deliveries

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The new Boeing 717 is meeting its certification goals on schedule, which will permit the 100-seat airplane to receive its go-ahead for deliveries beginning in September, according to Jim Phillips, the program's vice president.

Speaking at the Paris Air Show today, Phillips said the 717 will be the first airplane to receive a single certification ticket from Europe's Joint Airworthiness Authorities (JAA) and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The single ticket from both agencies is called "Concurrent, Cooperative Certification."

"We believe the two regulatory agencies have found this process very successful," Phillips said, "and we're proud that the 717 is the airplane that is playing this historic role."

"Certification is planned for the 717 early in September, and we will deliver our first airplane to launch customer AirTran Airways right after that," Phillips said. AirTran plans to put the 717 into service in October.

Phillips said the 717 is designed specifically for the short-haul, high-frequency regional market, which is typical of many routes in Europe and the United States.

"The 717's structural design and reliable systems give it the best advantage in this operating environment. We expect to see the airplane making six to ten flights a day once it's in service," he said.

Phillips emphasized that the 717 will demonstrate the best economics for airlines, including low acquisition, trip and maintenance costs.

"We've already validated fuel savings significantly better than our projections, and with simple, low-risk systems, the 717 should offer outstanding dispatch reliability." he said.

Phillips also said that Boeing continues to stand behind the 717 as the best solution for the 100-seat market.

"We are the only 100-seater in production, and the 717 will prove itself in revenue service in just a few months," he said.

To support the airplane in service, Boeing is offering a program that provides "turnkey" maintenance support at reduced costs to airlines acquiring the 717.

"Through third-party maintenance facilities, airlines will have access to spare parts and training so they can perform the necessary overhauls and maintenance checks," Phillips said. He also pointed out the 717 has exceeded expectations during its flight test and certification program.

"The airplane is demonstrating lower fuel burn, it's lower in weight, and it has a better stopping distance than expected," he said. "Despite all of the new 717 systems, I don't see any obstacles to certification by early in September. "We have an aggressive program to complete the requirements."

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