Boeing News Release: Boeing and Aviation Partners, Inc., Announce New Joint Venture

The Boeing Company and Aviation Partners, Inc., of Seattle, Wash., announced today they are forming Aviation Partners Boeing, a new joint venture that offers blended winglet technology for in-service Boeing commercial airplanes.

Blended winglets are upward-swept tip extensions to airplane wings.

The new joint venture will design, develop, certify, fabricate, market, sell and install winglets on in-service Boeing airplanes, pending technical and economic evaluations of each model. Boeing will provide technical data and marketing support, while Aviation Partners, Inc., will provide existing winglet technology, winglets design and program management.

The winglets technology has the potential to reduce aerodynamic drag, increase cruise performance, improve fuel burn, extend range and allow heavier payloads for winglet-equipped airplanes. Additionally, winglets could open airport routes previously unavailable to operators because of high altitudes or hot climate conditions. Winglet performance improvements depend on a number of factors, including the airplane model and configuration as well as the operator's routes and payload.

Aviation Partners Boeing will be located in Seattle and managed by Joe Clark, currently chief executive officer and co-owner of Aviation Partners, Inc. Montana industrialist Dennis Washington also is a CO-owner of Aviation Partners, Inc.

Financial details for the joint venture arrangement have not been made public.

"This is an important new business opportunity for Boeing," said Tom Schick, Boeing Commercial Airplanes Group executive vice president - Customer Services.

"With thousands of airplanes as potential candidates for winglets we see this as a great retrofit option for our customers and a source for profitable growth for both the airlines and Boeing," said Joe Gullion, president - Boeing Airplane Services.

"We're excited to be a part of this venture and to extend our winglets technology to the in-service Boeing jetliner market," said Clark. "We look forward to teaming with Boeing to make this joint venture the success we know it can be."

Aviation Partners, Inc., established in 1991, has installed blended winglets on Gulfstream II business jets. The company worked on a development program with Boeing to install winglets on the Boeing Business Jet (BBJ). In BBJ tests conducted over the past year, blended winglets have generated fuel savings and have improved low-speed operating characteristics, initial cruise altitude and cruise performance. Early test results have shown a drag improvement for this model in the range of five to seven percent.

Boeing and Aviation Partners, Inc., see an excellent potential for retrofitting the approximately 10,500 commercial Boeing airplanes in service today. Boeing has not yet reached a decision to offer winglet technology for new production commercial airplanes. Such a decision ultimately will depend on the level of customer interest and the value of winglets to the customer.

Blended winglets are made of composite materials and aluminum and vary in size, based on the size of the wing to which they are applied. For example, a BBJ winglet is expected to be about eight feet high (2.4 m) and add approximately five feet (1.52 m) to the airplane's wingspan. Aviation Partners Boeing expects it will take between five and 10 days to install a set of winglets. Airline customers who participate in the retrofit program most likely will have the installation performed during a routine, major maintenance check when the airplane is already scheduled to be out of service.

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