Boeing Studies 777 Derivatives To Match Market Preferences

Boeing is focusing on longer-range versions of the 777 to provide airlines and passengers with more frequent, non-stop flights between more cities.

At a product development briefing at the Paris Air Show, John Roundhill, Boeing Commercial Airplanes Group vice president - Product Strategy and Development, said, "Airlines have told us they want to provide more frequent flights with smaller numbers of passengers, rather than fly greater numbers of people into hub airports."

This supports the 1999 Boeing Current Market Outlook report, which shows market fragmentation expanding across the Pacific and between Asia and Europe. The 1998 Japan-U.S. bilateral agreement marked a significant milestone in opening the trans-Pacific market to new air service, Roundhill said. This allows airlines to respond to the demands of passengers for more non-stop flights to more destinations, as happened across the North Atlantic in the past decade.

"The 777-200ER (extended range) is the longest-range airplane in service today, connecting new city-pairs and increasing frequencies in existing long-range markets," Roundhill said. "Airlines have asked us to consider two new longer-range models, and we are in discussions with them on a 777-200X and 777-300X.

"The 777-200X will fly unprecedented distances - more than 10,000 statute miles - and will open non-stop service to distant city-pairs. The 777-300X will replace aging tri-jets and 747s for routes covering Europe to the United States, Europe to Asia and the United States to Japan. No other commercial airplane in the world - either in service or on anyone's drawing board - will fly as far as the 777."

Roundhill also said that requirements continue to exist for 747-400s on some dense routes where more passenger capacity is required. He outlined a longer-range version of the 747-400 currently under study that will increase revenue payload on existing routes or add increased range for new routes. For market requirements for airplanes larger than the 747-400, Boeing is studying an increased-capacity, 747-400 stretch airplane, with a modified wing.

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