Blended Winglets Certified For Boeing Business Jet

The Boeing Company (NYSE: BA) confirmed today that the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) granted Supplemental Type Certificate approval late yesterday for Aviation Partners Boeing's "blended winglets," currently offered on the Boeing Business Jet (BBJ). This means that Boeing will offer blended winglets - upward-swept extensions to airplane wings - as standard equipment on the BBJ.

"Achieving this certification for the BBJ with blended winglets benefits our customers by providing the airplane with better performance and a distinctive appearance," said Borge Boeskov, BBJ president.

The blended winglets - made of composite material - are more than eight feet high, and sweep up from the BBJ's wingtips. Besides giving the BBJ a distinctive appearance, the winglets create more efficient flight characteristics in cruise, as well as during takeoff and climbout. This translates into approximately 300 nautical miles of additional range with the same fuel and payload. Under certain conditions, BBJ customers may also be able to take advantage of the improved takeoff performance provided by the winglets by loading up to 4,000 pounds more payload.

The winglet proof-of-concept flight-test program began in June 1998, with prototype winglets mounted on a production 737-800. Based on those positive results, Boeing outfitted a production BBJ with a set of winglets, and accomplished its first flight in February 1999. Boeing premiered the blended winglet-equipped BBJ at this summer's Farnborough air show in the U.K., and will have this airplane on static display at the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) annual convention next month in New Orleans.

"This is the first time our blended winglet technology has ever been certified on a large jetliner," said Joe Clark, CEO of Aviation Partners Inc., and Aviation Partners Boeing. Aviation Partners Inc., a Seattle-based company, developed the blended winglet technology and formed a joint venture with Boeing called Aviation Partners Boeing to design and certify the BBJ installation. Aviation Partners Boeing also is developing this technology for application in the commercial airline retrofit market for the 737-700 and -800. Certification of that program is expected early next year. Next month Aviation Partners Boeing plans to evaluate blended winglets in flight on several other Boeing airplane models, including the 737-300 and the 747-200 and -300.

The BBJ is a special, high-performance derivative of the Next-Generation 737-700. Designed for corporate and VIP applications, the BBJ combines the size of the 737-700 fuselage (110 feet 4 inches, 33.6 meters) with the strengthened wings and landing gear from the larger and heavier 737-800. This combination, and the addition of auxiliary fuel in the belly of the aircraft, provides owners with a business jet platform having maximum range capability of 7,130 statute miles (6,200 nautical miles, 11,482 kilometers) while requiring less than 6,000 feet (1,829 meters) of runway. Cruising at .82 Mach - equivalent to a ground speed of 550 miles per hour - the BBJ can serve such routes as Los Angeles to London or Paris; New York to Buenos Aires, Argentina; or London to Johannesburg, South Africa. The same CFM56-7 engines used on the Next-Generation 737 commercial airplanes provide power.

The BBJ 2, announced in October 1999, is based on the 737-800. It is 129 feet 6 inches (39.5 meters) long overall, has 1,004 square feet of floor space (93.27 square meters), and has 25 percent interior space and 100 percent more luggage space than the BBJ. The first of these airplanes delivers in the first quarter of 2001.

The BBJ's market success has surpassed expectations. Initially estimated to sell at a rate of six to eight airplanes per year, actual sales have been about three times that amount. The airplane provides unsurpassed levels of space, comfort and utility and is backed by a product support program that has been tailored to business aviation needs.

"The Boeing Business Jet turns business travel from being 'another trip' to a work experience in a different office location," Boeskov said. "The BBJ lets global leaders take their office, conference room, communication infrastructure and proper sleeping facilities wherever they do business. Traditional business aviation has been about point-to-point transportation, but the BBJ is about point-to-point comfort and productivity. With nearly three times the room of other airplanes in this range category, the Boeing Business Jet provides flexibility beyond that of any competitor."

As of last year's NBAA meeting, Boeing Business Jets had announced orders for 56 of the airplanes. Boeing intends to announce additional orders at this year's NBAA meeting next month. BBJ's are delivered "green" (i.e. without interior or paint). They are then sent to Decrane Aircraft Systems Integration Group in Delaware for the installation of auxiliary fuel tanks. The customer can choose to install up to nine additional fuel tanks to match payload and range mission requirements. Next, the BBJ is ferried to a "completion center" of the customer's choosing for interior completion. Currently there are seven BBJ completion centers worldwide - two in Europe and five in the U.S.

Cumulative green deliveries as of August 2000 stand at 45. Of these, 15 are fully completed and in-service. These 15 BBJs have generated nearly 4,000 flight hours to date. The first Boeing Business Jet rolled out of the Boeing Renton, Wash., factory on July 26, 1998, and received certification from the FAA and Europe's Joint Aviation Authorities on Oct. 29, 1998.

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For further information:
Brian Ames
(206) 766-2905