

Boeing Unveils the Future at Paris Air Show

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The Boeing Company today unveiled a large, detailed model of its newest commercial airplane, the sonic cruiser, at the Paris Air Show. The unveiling, by Boeing Commercial Airplanes President and Chief Executive Officer Alan Mulally, concluded a program that also featured noted futurist and author John Naisbitt.

"This airplane is advanced technology's latest and best answer to the question 'how do people want to fly?' This is the airplane our customers have asked us to concentrate on," Mulally said. "They share our view that this new airplane will change the way the world flies as dramatically as did the introduction of the jet age."

The sonic cruiser is expected to fly at speeds of up to Mach .98 (98 percent of the speed of sound) or faster over extended ranges. The faster speeds will reduce flight times by approximately 20 percent, shortening air travel trips by about one-hour for every 3,000 miles flown. The airplane's long-range potential of 9,000 nautical miles (16,670 kilometers) or higher means passengers will be able to fly directly to their destinations, avoiding congested hubs and the delay and inconvenience of intermediate stops.

The model, a 1/40-scale replica 6 feet in length, reveals a sleek, innovative design that includes a large wing placed farther back on the fuselage than today's jetliner designs, and a pair of canards -- small, wing-like extensions -- near the nose of the airplane. Two engines are placed at the rear of the airplane.

Naisbitt, the author of the best-selling Megatrends and, most recently, High Tech/ High Touch, introduced Mulally with remarks about how key trends are reshaping the world, including air travel and travelers' expectations and habits. Naisbitt commented on the trends of instant and direct connectivity, a world "menu" of cultural choices available as part of daily life, and an "experience economy" in which people increasingly transcend temporal, spatial and financial limits to do the things that interest them, enabled by new technologies and new ways of thinking.

"We are moving into the Internet world, and that world is about bringing people together," Naisbitt said. He described technological breakthroughs like the sonic cruiser as enablers of connectivity, an assessment with which Mulally agreed.

"Air travel is about bringing people together," Mulally said. "That's what it comes down to. And the sonic cruiser will help us take air travel and bringing people together to a new level."

The Paris Air Show, historically a prime showcase for Boeing and other aerospace manufacturers, continues through June 24.

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