Design Nearly Complete For Boeing Longer-Range 747-400 Family

Boeing engineers have completed 90 percent of the design work for both the passenger and freighter versions of the new Longer-Range 747-400 family of airplanes - two weeks ahead of schedule.

The first of these airplanes begins major assembly in February 2002, rolls out of the Everett, Wash., factory in June and, after a four-month flight test program, will be delivered in October to launch customer Qantas Airways. The delivery will be one month ahead of the original schedule.

"This major design milestone confirms that we're on track - and well on our way to making these airplanes available to our customers and to the flying public," said Jeff Peace, 747 vice president and general manager. "It's one more significant step in the continuing evolution of the 747, providing our customers the features and capabilities that add value to their fleets."

The Longer-Range 747-400 airplanes are the same size as today's 747-400s, but they allow airlines and cargo carriers to fly longer routes, or carry more cargo or passengers on existing routes. To support this enhanced capability, the Longer-Range freighter and passenger versions have increased their gross takeoff weight by 35,000 pounds (15,870 kilograms) to 910,000 pounds (412,770 kilograms). Both airplanes offer an unbeatable combination of payload, range and speed; the 747-400 is the world's fastest subsonic jetliner.

An auxiliary tank in the airplane's lower lobe provides fuel for the airplane's additional range capability; an optional second tank is available. Using both auxiliary tanks and fuel in the horizontal stabilizer (on the passenger version), the Longer-Range 747-400 will be able to carry up to 63,765 gallons (241,370 liters) of fuel. To support the gross weight increase, the airplane has strengthened parts of its wing, fuselage, and landing gear, which includes new tires and wheels.

Passenger version: Blending the latest in passenger amenities found in the Boeing 777 with exceptional performance to support long-range, non-stop, high-demand routes, the passenger version of the Longer-Range 747-400 can fly an additional 435 nautical miles (805 kilometers). Or, it can carry an additional 15,000 pounds (6,800 kilograms) of payload, either in the form of extra cargo or a full load of 416 passengers. Inside, it looks a lot like a 777 interior and feels even more spacious because of the 747's unique, 20-foot-wide cross section.

Freighter: The first Longer-Range 747-400 Freighter, also with an increased takeoff weight of 910,000 pounds (412,770 kilograms), will be delivered in October 2002 to International Lease Finance Corp., and operated by Air France. The takeoff weight increase allows this airplane to fly an additional 525 nautical miles (972 kilometers), or carry an additional 21,000 pounds (9,525 kilograms) of payload on long-range flights at maximum takeoff weight. With the additional takeoff weight capability, the Longer-Range 747-400 Freighter will be able to carry 134 tons (122,525 kilograms) of cargo. Both versions of the 747-400 Freighter (875,000- and 910,000-pound takeoff weight) will continue to enjoy the industry's lowest operating cost per ton-mile. That's why half of all the world's air cargo is carried on 747s.

"The addition of these airplanes to our 747 family demonstrates Boeing's commitment to enhancing the 747-400's capabilities and maintaining the 747 as the long-range, high-capacity airplane of choice well into the 21st century," Peace said. "These are just the latest improvements to the 747, but certainly not the last. We continue to talk to customers about the next set of improvements - and the ones after that."

Among the features, options and capabilities under study are airplane noise reductions to meet the latest environmental rules, flight deck enhancements for improved operational efficiency and redesigned interior architecture for passengers as they enter the airplane.

"We will be ready to make these improvements to the 747-400 when the market demands them," Peace said. "This approach has kept the 747 the market leader for the latter part of the 20th century, and will serve our customers well into the 21st century."

Boeing also is developing two new longer-range 777s, the 777-300ER (extended range) and the 777-200LR (longer-range). The first of the two 777s, the 777-300ER, begin production in mid-2002. These longer-range 777s complement the 747-400, and together, the two airplane programs form the backbone of the Boeing long-range airplane strategy.

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