Southwest Airlines Boeing 737-700 Fleet Takes Wing with Sleek New Look

Aviation Partners Boeing to Provide 169 Blended Winglets Shipsets -- Boeing Offers Blended Winglets on In-Production 737-700s

Southwest Airlines, one of the world's most successful airlines, will add performance-enhancing Blended Winglets to its current and future fleet of Boeing [NYSE: BA] 737-700s.

The visually distinctive winglets improve performance by extending the airplane's range, saving fuel, lowering engine maintenance costs and reducing takeoff noise.

"Southwest, the industry's low-cost provider, is keen on finding innovative ways to keep our operating costs in check so we can continue to provide low fares to millions more Americans," said Laura Wright, Southwest's vice president of Finance. "This technology is one way we can gain efficiencies in our operation and save money while we grow."

Aviation Partners Boeing, a joint venture between Aviation Partners Inc. and Boeing, will provide 169 Blended Winglet shipsets to Southwest. It is the single largest sale for the venture since its creation. The first Blended Winglet installation for Southwest is expected to begin October 2003 with all 169 installations to be completed within two years. Southwest has options to acquire 373 additional Blended Winglets through 2012.

"Southwest's commitment provides further testament to the aggressive uptick in Blended Winglet sales worldwide," said Aviation Partners Boeing CEO Mike Marino. "This landmark order demonstrates to the airline world, in no uncertain terms, that Blended Winglet technology is not just for the long-haul carriers anymore."

Dallas-based Southwest Airlines currently operates 133 737-700s, and is scheduled to begin receiving in-production winglets in fall 2004 when it will have 373 firm orders, options and purchase rights remaining. Previously offered as a standard option on 737-800s and Boeing Business Jets (BBJ), and as a retrofit on 737-700s and 737-800s, advanced winglets now are available as standard options from Aviation Partners Boeing on 737-700s.

"Southwest Airlines' history of success is built on taking people directly where they want to go, when they want to go," said Carolyn Corvi, 737/757 vice president and general manager. "The aerodynamic benefits of winglets will allow Southwest to service its passengers with greater efficiency. By expanding this option to in-production 737-700s, Boeing can enhance the value of an already great airplane family."

Boeing continues to assess the applicability of winglets on 737-600s and 737-900s.

Unlike traditional winglets that attach at abrupt angles to the wing, Blended Winglets gently curve out and up from the wingtip, reducing aerodynamic drag and increasing performance. The 8-foot high winglets add about 5 feet (1.5 meters) to the airplane's total wingspan and allow the 737-700 to fly up to 115 nautical miles (213 kilometers) farther and reduce fuel burn. As a result, Southwest is expected to save an average of up to 92,000 gallons (348,258 liters) of jet fuel per airplane per year. Improved performance will permit payload increases out of high, hot and obstacle-limited airports, as well as shorten the time its takes to climb to cruising altitude.

Besides improving range and fuel savings, winglets offer excellent environmental benefits including reduced noise and emissions.

More than 28 carriers currently fly nearly 300 737s equipped with winglets.

Southwest Airlines (NYSE:LUV), the fourth largest domestic carrier in terms of customers boarded, serves 59 airports in 58 cities and 30 states. Based in Dallas, Southwest operates nearly 2,800 flights a day with an all-Boeing fleet of 378 737s that, with an average age of nine years, is one of the youngest pure jet fleets in the domestic airline industry.

Visit the 737 Web site to learn more about the popular single-aisle jetliner.

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