Boeing 717 Meets Tough Airport Noise Rules

The Boeing [NYSE: BA] 717-200 has received a solid "thumbs-up" from John Wayne Airport in Orange County for noise tests performed there by Midwest Airlines, which begins regular passenger service today from the airport.

John Wayne Airport (SNA) is one of the busiest and most noise sensitive airports in the United States. The airport, centered in Orange County, is surrounded by residential and business areas.

In August, Midwest Airlines pilots, flying a new Boeing 717, conducted a series of five takeoffs over a four-hour period at various airplane weights. The flights were monitored by seven noise recording devices around the airport and in nearby neighborhoods. On each departure, the 717 performed well below the noise levels allowable for Class A departure operations.

"The Class A rating means that pilots flying Midwest 717s out of John Wayne won't need to use a special engine cutback procedure to reduce airport and community noise when taking off," said Jim Phillips, vice president of the 717 program in Long Beach, Calif.

The 717 is sufficiently below Class A limits to allow Midwest to use its standard departure procedure at John Wayne. Boeing and Midwest pilots practiced this procedure in a flight simulator and then tested it during airport qualification.

Initial Midwest 717 service will connect Orange County with Kansas City, Mo. The qualification testing was done at airplane weights that represent a typical Midwest operation between these two cities.

Two advanced Rolls-Royce engines power the fuel efficient Boeing 717 and provide the lowest noise and emissions of any new airplane in its class.

The 717 is a full 20 decibels quieter than Chapter 3 requirements set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which means that the Boeing jet is already quieter than Chapter 4 standards that go into effect in 2006.

One measure of airplane noise is the noise footprint at takeoff, which shows the area subjected to a particular level of sound. The 717's noise footprint is up to 12 times smaller than DC-9s and other airplanes it will replace.

The 717 also produces fewer emissions than other short-haul airplanes. Of particular interest to airports and surrounding communities is the fact that the 717 is more than 50 percent cleaner than 2004 ICAO standards require for hydrocarbons. The result is less smoke, carbon monoxide and fuel odor in the air for people who work and live near airports such as John Wayne.

First delivered to airlines four years ago, the 717 has continued to record high fleet dispatch reliability and low maintenance costs. The 717 has the most customer orders and deliveries of any other new airplane in its class.

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