Boeing ATM, Air Traffic Alliance, Australian Partners Sign Flight Demonstration Agreement

Tailored Landings Improve Arrival Efficiency; Save Fuel; Cut Noise, Emissions

Boeing [NYSE: BA], the Air Traffic Alliance, Airservices Australia and Qantas Airways have agreed to conduct flights to demonstrate a concept to vastly improve aircraft arrival efficiency.

The agreement, signed today at the Air Traffic Control Maastricht conference, calls for air traffic control to send the approaching aircraft electronic arrival clearance instructions -- eliminating the need for the usual multiple voice communications. Electronically linked data then guide the aircraft on a steady descent along the most efficient path.

The aircraft, on scheduled Qantas flights, will operate under these instructions from beginning of descent, about 140 miles from the airport, until landing 28 to 30 minutes later.

Ideally, this concept will allow engines to remain just above idle, compared to the common "stepped" approach using alternating power increases and decreases.

"Tailored arrivals will provide for vastly more efficient aircraft arrivals while saving fuel, reducing emissions, minimizing noise and increasing safety," said John Hayhurst, president, Boeing Air Traffic Management. "This highly specialized international team brings the wide breadth of knowledge and experience essential for improving the air transport system worldwide."

The arrivals also have the potential to reduce flight-crew and air-traffic-control workload.

"These demonstration flights will provide the technical data to support broader research into four-dimensional operations, the fourth dimension being time. That will add the advantage of more accurately defining optimal flight paths between different points," said Lionnel Wonneberger, AT Alliance president. "The effort will also allow us to deliver and quantify benefits using existing air and ground equipment."

The demonstration will involve approximately 100 flights using Qantas Boeing 747-400s and Airbus A330s at Sydney and Melbourne international airports. The flights are expected to begin in March and continue for approximately six months.

Qantas flight crews and Airservices Australia's air traffic controllers will constantly evaluate each flight during arrival, switching immediately to routine operations if needed.

After assessing results, the participants will decide whether to continue in-service operations, conduct additional flights or both.

Australia was chosen to demonstrate the concept, as Airservices Australia's air traffic control system is the only system currently capable of supporting such a trial in domestic airspace.

Boeing, which developed the concept, is the project coordinator in partnership with the AT Alliance. Airservices Australia will provide ground equipment and operations experience, and Qantas will provide the pilot training and aircraft, which will use existing equipment for the demonstration.

Boeing established its Air Traffic Management unit in November 2000 to dramatically improve air traffic systems throughout the world. Its aims are to make flying even safer and more secure, significantly reduce delays, congestion and environmental impact, keep aviation affordable and accessible for commercial, military, business and general aviation users, and enable seamless global aviation operations.

The Air Traffic Alliance is a grouping of EADS, Airbus, and Thales, combining leading industry forces to accelerate the evolution of ATM systems though the integration of air, ground, and space expertise. The Alliance is working to bring mutual benefits to passengers, airspace users, air traffic service providers and airports, while improving safety and security in a more efficient air transport system.

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