Boeing, AirTran Airways Announce Order For Six Boeing 717 Airplanes

Boeing [NYSE:BA] and AirTran Airways today said the airline is expanding its fleet of 717 passenger airplanes with an order for six 717s valued at $225 million at list price.

Deliveries will begin next year. The transaction includes firm orders for two airplanes and exercise of existing options for the remainder. AirTran Airways operates 76 717s, giving it the world's largest 717 fleet and the youngest all-Boeing fleet in the United States.

"The 717 is the cornerstone of our operation," said Joe Leonard, AirTran Airways' chairman and chief executive officer. "In the five years of operating the aircraft, the 717 has delivered the efficiency, reliability and maintenance cost advantages we were counting on. I believe that the 717 has made AirTran Airways the most cost-efficient airline operating today."

AirTran Airways estimates a 24 percent increase in fuel efficiency since converting to a 717 fleet. The airline has also realized significant improvements in maintenance costs and cycle time, supporting timely turnarounds and an excellent on-time arrival rate.

For 2003, the airline's 717 fleet achieved a 99.62 percent dispatch reliability rate.

"AirTran Airways, the 717's launch customer, is achieving exceptional results with the airplane," said Jim Phillips, Boeing 717 vice president and general manager. "The airplane's performance speaks for itself. Its reliability, environmental advantages and fuel efficiency are unmatched in its class."

This order complements AirTran Airways' July 2003 order of up to 100 Boeing 737s as part of the airline's fleet and route expansion. The first 737-700 from that order will soon be delivered.

AirTran Airways configures its 717-200s in two classes with 117 seats. The airplane offers airlines the most modern and proven avionics technology and efficient and quiet Rolls Royce engines. Passenger-pleasing features include five-across seating in economy class, illuminated handrails and large overhead stowbins. The 717 offers the same per-person stowage capacity as the Boeing 747.

The 717 is assembled on a moving line at the Boeing plant in Long Beach, Calif.

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