Boeing deploys additional 717s to Qantas, Volotea

- Australia's QantasLink to receive five aircraft on multi-year lease; Volotea to add five in 2013

SEATTLE, June 25, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Boeing's (NYSE: BA) workhorse 717 continues to figure prominently in the success of established and new operators as the manufacturer's leasing unit, Boeing Capital Corp., announced additional deployments of the modern and fuel-efficient twinjets.

Australia's largest regional airline, QantasLink, will receive an additional five leased 717s to add to its existing fleet of 13 of the twinjets that operate across Australia. Those deliveries will begin in late 2013 after the aircraft are refitted with upgraded interiors to include a full business class experience and new in-flight entertainment systems. The Qantas Group has operated the 717s since 2002.

QantasLink Executive Manager John Gissing said the refurbished aircraft will improve its customer offering and increase the overall level of customer comfort and satisfaction.

"The new 717s, with the reconfigured cabin including business class and in-flight entertainment, are perfectly suited to our Sydney-Canberra, Brisbane-Canberra and Melbourne-Canberra routes," said Gissing. "We're delighted that we can offer this premium product to our customers and we're looking forward to introducing them into the market later this year."

In Europe, startup carrier, Volotea, will increase its 717 fleet in 2013 to a total 15 as it continues to develop its business model of offering point-to-point service to passengers between medium and small-sized European cities. Volotea began operation in spring 2012 with a network built around the 717 that is supported by a comprehensive Boeing solution for operations and training.

Volotea recently surpassed the million passenger mark enabled by its operation from 52 European airports, currently serving 97 city pairs.

"The Boeing 717 is an important element to Volotea strategy," said Carlos Munoz, Volotea's founder and CEO. "In terms of size, it is the right aircraft for the medium- and small-sized cities we serve; operationally, it offers top reliability for our frequent, quick turnaround operations. Most importantly, our customers have grown to value the levels of comfort the 717 provides."

According to Boeing Capital's managing director for asset management, Thomas Hansen, 2013 will be a landmark year for the 717, the single-largest model holding in its fleet.

"Our deployments scheduled for this year will result in all of our 717s doing what they do best, and that is helping customers to make money thanks to the airplane's great operating reliability and their 'big-airplane' style passenger experience," said Hansen.

Hansen added that 2013 will also mark the beginning of a major redeployment of its 717 currently operated by the former AirTran Airways, now part of Southwest Airlines, to Delta Airlines under a sub-lease agreement announced in 2012.

There are more than 150 Boeing 717s in service today since the first airplane was delivered in 1999. The twinjet's technology and fleet performance have earned it the distinction of being the world's best jetliner serving the 100-passenger airline market.

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