

Bombardier enters the frame to replace Horizon Air's F28s

RAMON LOPEZ/TORONTO

HORIZON AIR has revealed that it is evaluating the Bombardier Canadair Regional Jet (CRJ) family, as well as the de Havilland Dash 8-400, as possible long-term replacements for its fleet of Fokker F28s.

The airline is already a major customer for the 37-seat Dash 8-100/200, with 23 in service and a further 70 on order and option. It has also just firmed up an order for ten of 15 conditional Dash 8-200s worth \$120 million, for delivery in 1999 and 2000.

When the airline retires the last of 14 Fairchild Metro IIIs early in 1998, its fleet will comprise just the Dash 8 turboprops along with its 14 69-seat F28s.

George Bagley, president and chief executive, says that Horizon Air has the right to convert its Dash



Bombardier is poised to benefit when the sun sets below Horizon's F28s

8-200 commitments to the larger, 50-seat Dash 8-300 and 70-seat Dash 8-400, as well as the 50-seat CRJ-200 and 70-seat CRJ-700, "...but we currently don't see a need for the 50-seat and 70-seat turboprop aircraft".

Bagley says that the CRJ is "certainly a possible replacement for the F28 and other markets we might consider suitable in the

future", although no specific retirement date has been set for the ageing and noisy jet-powered aircraft. The Dash 8-400 is also a potential candidate, says Bagley, but the F28 replacement "...is more likely to be a jet aircraft".

Bagley says that he is inclined to stick with Bombardier, although other 50- to 70-seat regional jets might be considered. □

New freighter carrier eyes Mahalo licences

A FREIGHT airline start-up has put in an offer to buy the operating licences of failed Hawaiian regional airline Mahalo Air.

English Worldwide Aviation (EWA), which has been set up by Gemini Air Cargo's former senior vice-president sales and marketing, Michael English, has submitted an offer for the Hawaiian regional airline's operating certificates following its filing for bankruptcy earlier this year. EWA plans to operate two Boeing 747 freighters, and is in the process of securing initial contracts for the aircraft.

Funding is being arranged by Butler Investment Finance of Brisbane, Australia; while London-based consultancy Butler Aircraft Services is advising the company on its start up. EWA's application was made to the court overseeing Mahalo Air's Chapter 11 listing, and the judge instructed that the offer should be examined and the airline's counsel should try to meet the terms of the offer. □

AB Airlines will acquire up to 13 737s for network expansion

AB AIRLINES WILL introduce the first of up to 13 Boeing 737s in April 1998, as it expands its operations from its London Stansted and Gatwick bases.

The UK airline, which introduced services from Gatwick to Berlin Schönefeld in early December, will add three seven-year-old 737-300s in April 1998, on five-year leases from Ansett Worldwide Aviation Services. These will supplement, and eventually replace, the three leased BAC One-Eleven Series 500s.

For the longer term, the carrier has placed deposits with Boeing for six Next Generation 737-700s with deliveries of two aircraft a year between 2000 and 2002. AB has taken options on a further four, which could be firmed up as -700s, -800s or -900s. "We would like to have introduced the -700 from 1998, but the aircraft were not available," says Brian Beal, AB Airlines' chairman, adding that the

airline also evaluated the Airbus A319, but that this aircraft is also hampered by availability. "We could get the 737-300s in 1998, and did not want to have to switch to the Airbus in 2000," says Beal.

Beal says that the airline plans to retain the leased 737-300s when the new aircraft arrive and, if expansion goes as planned, the three-year lease-extension options will be exercised. "We must decide whether to take up the [Next Generation 737] options by mid-1998 for deliveries after 2003," he says.

AB is planning to raise £12.5 million (\$21 million) in capital through a listing on the London Alternative Investment Market in March. "We eventually plan a full listing," says Beal, who adds that the airline is evaluating five new routes from London, for launch when the new equipment arrives. "We will boost frequencies to Berlin, and may also take advantage of our Fifth Freedom rights for services beyond the city," he says. □

MARKETPLACE

++ **Lotus Air** of Egypt has signed a firm contract for a new Airbus A320 and has taken an option on one more. The new charter carrier will begin operating in January 1998 with the first of two A320s leased from International Lease Finance (ILFC), linking Egyptian resorts with European cities. ++ **Continental Airlines** has added two ex-Condor McDonnell Douglas DC-10-30s on lease from Aviation Investors International. ++ **Colombian airline ACES** has taken delivery of its first of four International Aero Engines V2500-A5-powered A320s, becoming the first Airbus customer in Colombia. ++ **EVA Air** of Taiwan has ordered a further two Boeing MD-11 freighters for delivery in 1999, which will increase the airline's MD-11 fleet to 12. Two more freighters are due for delivery by the end of the year and a further two in 1998. ++ **Malaysia Airlines** chairman Tajudin Ramli has ordered a new 737 Boeing Business Jet (BBJ) for personal and Government VIP use. Boeing has signed purchase memoranda with Malaysian customers for the BBJ, but it is unclear whether all the aircraft will now be ordered in the face of major financial crisis.

++ **Air Venezuela** has signed a memorandum of understanding with IPTN to order four N250-100s, and take options on a further four aircraft. The airline is looking for a replacement for its eight Conair 580s and, as an interim measure, may sub-lease Merpati Nusantara Airlines' four BAe ATPs. ++ **Britannia Airways** will add two General Electric CF6-80C2-powered 767-300ERs in early 1999 on lease from ILFC. ++ **La Ronge Aviation**, which operates in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, has purchased two BAe Jetstream 31s from BAe Asset Management - Turboprops, while Northwest Territories-based Northwest Air has bought its second Jetstream 31. ++ **Qatar Airways** is acquiring a new A320 from Airbus Industrie. ++ **LAN Chile** has ordered two General Electric CF6-80C2-powered Boeing 767-300ERs for delivery in 1999.