

Props get vote of confidence

THE DEATH of the regional turboprop has been much exaggerated, suggest aircraft manufacturers and lessors, pointing to the continuing need for short-haul transport and emerging opportunities in the freighter and charter markets.

For flights of less than 370-555km (200-300nm), the turboprop appears to have the advantage in operating economics, particularly with the recent rise in fuel costs. A recent study by Saab, for example, comparing the Saab 340 with a 30-seat jet over a 370km sector claims a 27% lower available seat kilometre cost.

Carriers switching to an all-jet fleet "face the choice of dropping short-haul flying or contracting services out to someone else", says Saab Aircraft Leasing president Michael Magnusson. Where 340s are being phased out by American Eagle and Business Express (BEX), they are finding a new lease of life with other operators as 19-seat turboprop replacements.

Magnusson points to the recent placement of 10 ex-BEX 340Bs with US Airways Express operator Chautauqua Airlines and the sale of nine Eagle aircraft, plus nine

options to American Trans Air's feeder carrier Chicago Express. Colgan Air has acquired another three 340s, all of which are replacing 19-seat Raytheon Beech 1900 and BAE Systems Jetstream 31s.

BAE Systems' Mike Canzion claims its J31/32s in turn are finding homes with smaller charter operators. It has placed five additional J32EPs with Tennessee-based Corporate Airlines and seven J31s with Guildford Transportation of New Hampshire. Fairchild similarly has sold nine former Hainan Airlines Metro 23s to Canadian charter operator Alta Flights.

As the residual value of turboprops falls, the aircraft are becoming attractive freighter propositions. "This has only just started. We see not an insignificant freighter cargo market, but we have to wait until aircraft reach a certain value," says John Buckley, ATR vice-president for sales.

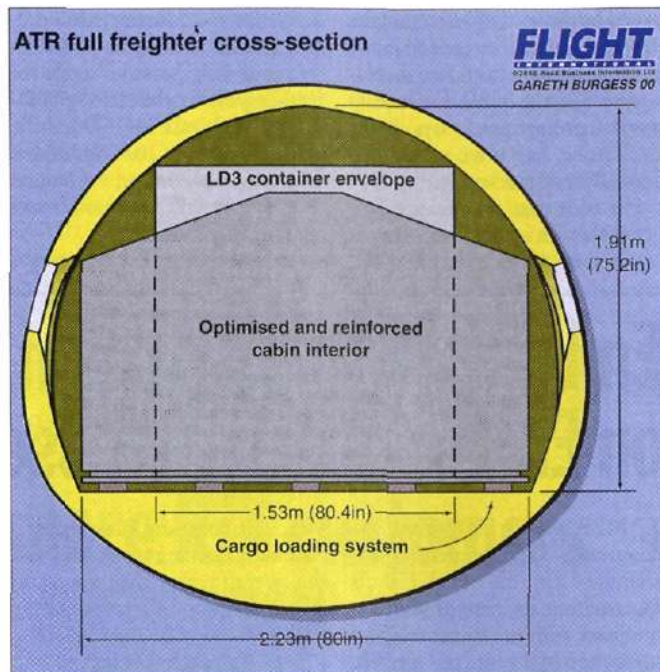
ATR has recently issued a request for proposals to vendors to convert ATR 42s and 72s into freighters by fitting the aircraft with a 2.9 x 17.8m (116 x 70in) side cargo door in the forward fuselage.

The ATR 42 is able to accom-

modate up to five LD3 containers and the ATR 72 up to seven (see graphic).

Embraer has also sold its first 10 service bulletin kits to International Airline Support Group (IASG) to modify the EMB-120 Brasilia to a freighter or quick change configura-

tion. Its Atlanta-based subsidiary North South Airways will take the first of six freighters in September. With large numbers of ex-Comair aircraft coming on to the market IASG sees a potential for 22-24 conversions over the next two years. □



NEWS IN BRIEF

■ SKYWAYS ORDER

Skyways Airlines has ordered a second batch of five Fairchild 328JETS for delivery in 2001 and five larger 428JETS to be delivered in 2003 in a deal worth \$165 million. The carrier has options on another three 32-seat jets.

■ MANX MAINTENANCE

Manx/British Regional Airlines has become the first Jetstream 41 operator to sign for BAE Systems Material and Component Repair and Overhaul programme. The agreement provides Manx's 13 J41 turboprops with a fixed rate per flight hour maintenance plan.

Regionals gear up for TAWS

US REGIONAL airlines are gearing up to meet the mandate that all turbine-powered aircraft with six or more seats must be equipped with the terrain awareness and warning system (TAWS) within five years.

The US Federal Aviation Administration issued its final rule in late March. This requires all new aircraft delivered after 29 March, 2002 to be equipped with TAWS, and gives operators until 29 March, 2005 to retrofit in-service aircraft. "It makes sense to specify TAWS now," a Honeywell official advised at the RAA convention.

Honeywell has already booked orders for almost 11,000 Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning Systems (EGPWS) from airlines and other operators. The second

company to the market, Universal Avionics, is targeting regionals with its TAWS.

Bombardier began delivering CRJ200 regional jets fitted with EGPWS in April and a service bulletin (SB) allowing retrofits will be available in June, says Honeywell. Bombardier will deliver Dash 8s with EGPWS from this month, but does not plan an SB.

EGPWS has been available on new Embraer RJ-135/145s since 1998. An SB is set for the fourth quarter. Honeywell says SBs are expected soon for BAE Systems 146/RJs; in June for the Saab 340; July for the Fokker 70/100; September for the Fokker 50/100; and November for the Fokker F27/F28. EGPWS is being certified on the ATR 42/72. □

Fairchild picks FSI for 428JET/728JET

FAIRCHILD AEROSPACE has selected FlightSafety International (FSI) to provide training on the Fairchild 428JET and 728JET.

FSI will build and operate two Level D flight simulators at locations to be selected later.

Training for the manufacturer's Dornier 328 turboprop and 328JET is already provided by Schreiner Aviation Training at simulator centres in the USA and Europe.

FSI provides training on the Bombardier CRJ100/200 and Embraer RJ-135/145 regional jets at several locations.

The company plans to have 16 simulators for each type in service by 2002. □