

SHOW REPORT
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Uncertainty over the future of Fairchild Dornier, the pace of the rebound in regional airline fortunes and the ever-present nemesis of scope clauses were evident for the 1,300 delegates attending this year's low-key US Regional Airline Association convention, which took place in Nashville, Tennessee, 12-15 May. The meeting attracted 173 exhibitors compared with 188 last year, following a drop in associate membership to 289 (from 345). Against this, however, airline membership has climbed to 57 (from 49 in 2001), a number of which were keen to view the Embraer 170 on its first US visit.

UPGRADES

Flight Dynamics HGS tests central to Q400 enhancement package

Bombardier schedules early summer to achieve 99% dispatch reliability targets for Horizon Air

Flight testing of Rockwell Collins Flight Dynamics' HGS4100 head-up-guidance system (HGS) is to be completed on a Horizon Air Bombardier Dash 8 Q400 this month, as part of a series of upgrades to improve dispatch reliability and address major "teething problems" in the turboprop's service introduction.

The Q400s, along with Horizon's CRJ700 regional jets, are already provisioned for HGS as part of Bombardier's type certificates, but must complete flight tests to achieve a Flight Dynamics' supplemental type certificate (STC), and be cleared for Category 3 Operations. The enhanced bad-weather landing and take-off capability is needed for Horizon to reach 99% dispatch reliability goals set by Bombardier for early this summer. Bombardier customer service vice-president Jeff Mihalic says: "Service entry has not been smooth, but we've pulled out the stops to improve it."

The package also includes adjustments to counter environmental conditioning system flow problems, and the addition of doublers in parts of the fuselage to address structural concerns indicated during fatigue tests at Bombardier, says Horizon Air maintenance and engineering vice-president Gene Hahn. Horizon, which has received all 15 Q400s on firm order, has completed modifications on the first aircraft, and is working on the second. The remainder will be completed by year-end, with each expected to take 21 days.

A similar modification package lasting 18 days has also been devised by Horizon and Bombardier for the CRJ700, around 16 of which will be delivered to the carrier by year-end. This will involve "structural modifications", and a revised engine indication and

crew alerting system (EICAS), says Hahn. The EICAS 5.0 upgrade involves updated software and improved sensors to cut down nuisance alerts, particularly on doors, flaps, slats and powerplants. "We still have not decided on a CRJ start date, but it will probably be in

the fall and run to the spring," says Hahn.

The upgrade's timing is linked to completion of the HGS4200 certification due for the end of August. The CRJ700 system STC is believed to be the first of its type to be sanctioned, by the European Joint Aviation Authorities before the US Federal Aviation Administration. The simulation-based element of the STC is already under way in Berlin for European CRJ700 operators Lufthansa Cityline and Brit Air. Flight testing, involving Horizon, is due to start in July with joint JAA/FAA approval expected shortly afterwards. HGS installation for European airlines will be concurrent with the EICAS 5.0 upgrade, clearing the way for CAT 3 operations by the end of the year.



HGS4100 Q400 testing is nearing completion

FREIGHTERS

Canadian pair work up ATR 42 cargo conversion

Quebec-based ExelTech and Comtek Advanced Structures of Ontario are developing an ATR 42 cargo conversion programme, which is due for US Federal Aviation Administration supplemental type certification (STC) in the third quarter.

The conversion, also to be certificated under Canadian airworthiness rules, will be undertaken at ExelTech's Montreal site, where regional aircraft heavy maintenance and overhaul is conducted. The partners, who plan to deliver

the first conversion delivery to an unidentified customer by year-end, say the upgrade will take 10 days.

The plan, which could extend to the ATR 72, will compete with the bulk freighter conversion offered on the ATR 42 and 72 by Alenia and its subsidiary Aeronavali. Both convert the cabin into a "class E" compartment, and add transverse 9g cargo nets. The Canadian conversion divides the cabin into five or more zones, providing cargo volume of around 56m³ (1,980ft³).

ATR is developing its own ATR 42 freighter conversion, and plans to complete the first aircraft "towards the end of 2002, although we don't have a firm customer", says president John Moore. ATR says the market focus appears to be on the larger ATR 72-200. The first converted version with a large cargo door is due for delivery to Swiss carrier Farnair after appearing at the Farnborough air show in July.

ATR forecasts a market for between 10 and 15 conversions per

year. Currently, 26 ATR aircraft – 21 42s and five 72s – are in cargo configuration. Baseline conversions cost between \$250,000 and \$500,000 without the large cargo door, costing an additional \$1.5 million.

Meanwhile, the first converted Saab 340 freighter is expected to roll out in June, says Saab Aircraft Leasing. "We have no launch customer yet, but we do have a lot of interest," says Saab. The \$250,000 conversion forms part of a projected \$2.5 million delivery price.