British Airways, having delayed 747 fleet replacement orders pending privatisation, has decided in principle to replace its 16 ageing 747-100s with -400s. The airline is negotiating the specification with Boeing as part of a European airline group including Air France, Lufthansa, and Swissair, reports J. M. Ramsden from Seattle.

This group is strongly urging Boeing to move its Efis philosophy more towards the Airbus "synoptic" presentation of systems information. The 747-400 two-pilot cockpit will probably optimise the Boeing 757/767 Eicas and the Airbus A300/310 Ecams, with a compromise between the former's limited "need to know" systems information and the latter's "nice to know" approach to over-elaborate displays.

Boeing is proposing that synthetic displays should be supplementary rather than mandatory, so that they are not a minimum equipment list (MEL) item for dispatch. Boeing recognises that, on long flights, pilots need more troubleshooting knowledge of systems failures on which to base crew action.

BA's in-service target date is early 1989, when its oldest 747-100 will have flown about 20 years and 70,000hr. The airline is taking delivery of two new 747-200 Combis and one straight -200 passenger aircraft next year.

Lord King is determined that the uncertainties about privatisation, now deferred sine die, shall no longer affect crucial fleet purchasing decisions.

The airline prefers the 747-400 engine to be the RB.211-524D4D, which will have sufficient thrust, at 56,000lb. But under the Rolls-Royce agreement with GE this engine's thrust may not be developed further. British Airways considers that Rolls-Royce will have to work hard to convince it that the 524 is the right long-term choice for the 747, which will continue to be developed into the 21st century.

BA's next requirement, after the 747-400, will be for a widebody twin to replace the TriStar fleet, which is due for retirement from about 1992. Extended-range capability would be desirable. The airplane recently demonstrated 757ER capability by delivering the last of its original order for 24 from Seattle to Heathrow non-stop (4,200 n.m.) in a record 9hr 7min.

BA has no immediate plans for transatlantic 757 operations. Systems modifications and crew-training would take about 18 months to qualify the aircraft for the sort of limited 1987 transatlantic charter programme for which Monarch is modifying its 757s. Meanwhile, the first "factory" ER-qualified 757 has been delivered—to Royal Brunei.

Brunei's 757s (the first is depicted opposite) will have their fourth generator and relightable APU certificated by the autumn.

Boeing is offering BA and other airlines an extended-range version of the 767-300 capable of carrying up to 20 seats more weight increased from 380,000lb to 400,000lb.

737-400 launch this month?

SEATTLE

The Boeing family's latest counter to the Airbus A320, the 737-400, is likely to be launched before the end of June. A substantial order from an interested but unidentified airline is all Boeing needs to launch this stretched version of the -300. It will have seating for 159 passengers all-tourist or a maximum of 176 at 30in pitch—nearly 30 passengers more than the 737-300.

The 737-400 is a 114in stretch of the -300, 48in aft and 66in forward of the wing. Zero-fuel and landing weights go up, and the outer wings are strengthened. The CFM56-3B2 engine will have the same thrust as the -300's but with a 2 per cent improvement in fuel burn (applicable also to future -300s). An all-CRT flightdeck will be standard.

Boeing claims a full passenger range "brake release London" to all European destinations plus Tel Aviv and Moscow.

A tail bumper will be standard, as on the 757, to cater for possible tail-scrapping of the long fuselage on rotation and flare (the 757 has experienced 25 tail-scrapes in 3½ years of operation, and operators have recently again tightened procedures and training techniques).

The first 737-400 could fly in March 1988, with certification in September of that year, given a go-ahead before the end of this month. More than 25 per cent of drawings have been completed.

Boeing offers 747ASB

SEATTLE

Boeing is offering an Advanced Short Body (ASB) of about the same 300-seat capacity as the 747SP. Range will be nearly 8,000 n.m., 1,000 miles more than that of the SP.

The 747ASB is Boeing's response to the Airbus A340 long-range project and to the McDonnell Douglas MD-11. The company claims that the ASB will have 1,000 miles more range than the A340 and will carry up to 20 seats more than any MD-11 out to 8,000 n.m. and "get there 30min earlier".

For very long flight times Boeing is proposing two new 747ASB "pointiest areas": two bunks behind the flightdeck, and a cabin-crew "attic" in the roof of the main aft fuselage, probably comprising three double bunks and four chairs. These can be offered as a kit. The modifications include new structural floor beams. Headroom is less than 5ft, and the area will have artificial light only. There will be minimum effect on existing passenger, galley, or lavatory space.

The Federal Aviation Administration has come down firmly against closing off overwing exits on 747s. In a letter to Dean Thornton, president of Boeing, FAA Administrator Donald Engen says that the 72ft distance between exits is unacceptable. The FAA is working on a notice of proposed rulemaking limiting the maximum distance between two exits to 60ft, and the maximum distance between any passenger seat and an exit to 30ft.

---

Long-range 747s can now have a two-bunk crew-rest area on the flightdeck plus an upstairs bedsitter for ten cabin crew in the aft cabin, as sketched by Flight artist John Marsden from Boeing's provisional mockup.