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# Horizon Air switching from propellers to jets for comfort, competition

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Perhaps to the relief of regional air passengers who don't like narrow planes powered by noisy propellers, [Horizon Air](#) is planning a shift back to jets.

The company, a sister airline to larger [Alaska Airlines](#), plans to order 30 regional jets in the first quarter of 2016, according to executives speaking during the fourth-quarter conference call Jan. 21.

Horizon's intent is to offer a better passenger experience, while also keeping operational costs down.

The new 76-passenger jets will replace some of the Bombardier Q400 Dash 8 turboprops that Horizon now exclusively operates, although it's unclear how many of the 52 Dash 8s, a twin-engine propeller-driven aircraft that carries 76 passengers, also will be retained.

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Alaska Air Group Chief Financial Officer [Brandon Pedersen](#) said during the call that regional jets offer some advantages in the market.

“One is they have increased reach versus the Q400,” he said. Also, “(the jet) delivers a better passenger experience, especially on those longer-length missions, than the Q400. Our competition, frankly, is using those in many of our markets, and I think we want to make sure that we are staying on par or better with the customer experience side.”

Pedersen’s at least partly referring to competitor [Delta Air Lines](#). In late 2015, Delta started operating 110-passenger [Boeing 717s](#), out of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. If Horizon brings in newer jets to compete against Delta’s older regional jets that Boeing no longer builds, it would fuel the battle for market share between Alaska Air Group and Delta.

While none of the Alaska executives named a particular model of jet they’ll order, the mention of 76 seats suggests an order of Brazilian-built Embraer 175s, said Air Insight partner Addison Schonland, [in a recent post](#). Alaska Airlines already is familiar with the jets through its partnership with SkyWest Airlines, which operates Embraer 175s on some routes for Alaska.

“Airlines appreciate its efficiency,” Schonland wrote of the Embraer 175. “But passengers love the cabin – big windows and a layout that feels much larger than the typical regional jet.”

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