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# Aircraft Maker ATR Displays New Turboprop in Charlotte -- Is Cape Air a Buyer?

By [Ted Reed](#)    | 05/10/16 - 09:50 AM EDT

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Arguably it isn't the best time to introduce a new regional aircraft, especially a propeller-driven plane designed to travel only about 300 miles, given the pilot shortage that plagues the airline industry, the widespread effort to abandon smaller aircraft and the uncertainty about the price of oil.



ATR-72-600 turboprop

Still ATR, the Toulouse, France-based French/Italian aircraft manufacturer, is making its pitch at the Regional Airline Association annual convention in Charlotte, trying to convince regional carriers that the new ATR 72-600 is just what they need.

The airplane has no U.S. customers, so a sale would make a big splash, although probably not to the magnitude of **Delta's** (DAL - [Get Report](#)) purchase last month of 75 **Bombardier** CS100 aircraft.

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The ATR 72-600's first North American tour began May 2 with stops in Toronto; Chicago; White Plains, N.Y.; Hyannis, Mass.; and Washington before the Charlotte stop on Monday. Stops in Dallas, Seattle and Cincinnati are planned.

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John Moore, ATR's head of global sales, acknowledged that regional airlines face a pilot shortage, but said the ATR 72-600 was built to serve a very specific purpose, flying short distances to small markets at a low altitude of about 24,000 feet.

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Turboprops flying in the U.S. today, particularly the Dash-8, have an average age of 20 years and will soon have to be replaced. And the most common U.S. turboprop, Bombardier's Q-400, is a heavier, more powerful but less fuel-efficient aircraft.

"We're here to show the product, to introduce U.S. airlines to the {aircraft}, and also to get their feedback," Moore said. "The airlines are facing a pilot shortage, but the need to replace these older aircraft is coming. We are demonstrating that we have the right product with the right economics."

Moore resisted a comparison with the C-Series sale to Delta, which was viewed as a deal that for Bombardier was worth making at practically any price, in order to gain Delta's seal of approval for the aircraft. While commercial jets typically sell for roughly half of their catalog price before adjustments for inflation, *Reuters* reported that **Canadair** knocked two-thirds off the \$71.8 million list price in order to enable the Delta transaction. Bombardier said it will book a \$500 million "onerous contract" charge next quarter, an indication that it sold jets below cost to Delta and two other carriers.

"We're not in a position where we have to lose money, but the U.S. market is important," Moore said. He noted that about 600 ATR 72-600s have been sold since 2010, and the backlog is around 350 orders. Major customers include Lion Air and Azul. The list price is around \$26 million. ATR spokesman David Vargas said more than 400 U.S. routes, many to small cities, have been cancelled in recent years, when perhaps they could be revived with an airplane with low operating costs.

Addison Scotland, a partner in aviation Web site *Air Insight*, said the aircraft costs less to operate than the Q400, but noted the Q400 has a more powerful engine and can fly faster. He said the Hyannis, Mass., stop is an indication that Cape Air, based in nearby

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Barnstable, is a potential customer. "I think it's the right airplane for them," he said.

**Cape Air** spokeswoman Trish Lorino, who attended the RAA Convention, said the ATR contingent brought the aircraft to Hyannis last week. "It was very exciting," she said. "They created a lot of buzz on Cape Cod." Lorino called the aircraft "fantastic - great." But it is too soon to say whether Cape Air, which already operates two ATRs in Micronesia, where it operates as United Express, will purchase the new aircraft.

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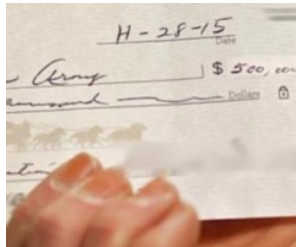
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