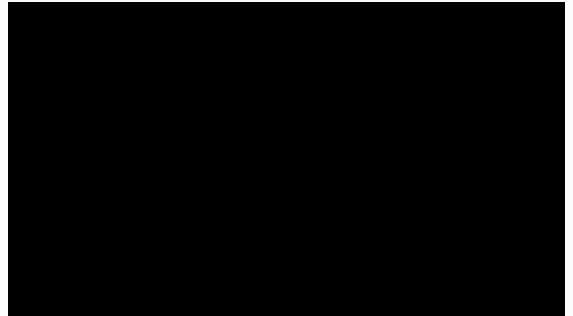


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# Airbus A220 Moves Closer To Alabama Production As It Wins Sales in Paris



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JetBlueA220 JETBLUE

The Airbus A220 may no longer be the world's hottest airplane – it was supplanted this week when Airbus launched its A321XLR — but the small mainline jet nonetheless had a good week.

It drew sales in Paris as the first manufacturing components were delivered to the Mobile, Ala. facility that will become the second assembly plant,

joining Montreal. Also, Delta announced new A220 routes.

At the Paris Air Show, the star was clearly the new Airbus A321XLR a long-range single aisle aircraft, which drew 48 orders, 79 new commitments and 99 conversions from the A321 to the XLR. But Airbus also collected orders for 35 A220s and a letter of intent for 50 more.

The A220 is a lightweight aircraft built for the 100-150 seat market. Airbus bought 50.1% of the program in 2017, becoming a partner to Bombardier and the Quebec government. Airbus said it would add assembly at Mobile plant, which was already building A320s.

Airbus said Thursday the first large aircraft components – the aft fuselage and the cockpit — for the A220 had arrived by truck at its Mobile, Ala. manufacturing plant.

In Paris, “Airbus had a rock and roll show,” said Addison Schonland, a partner in the aviation consulting firm Air Insight. “The A220 and the 321XLR were tops of the pops.”

“Furthermore, Airbus was constantly in negotiation with people, the same people who were chasing Embraer for the E2,” Schonland said. At the show, Dutch carrier KLM agreed to buy as many as 35 E195-E2 aircraft, a small jet competitor to the A220.

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Airbus said "new business" at the air show included orders for 20 A220-300s from lessor Nordic Aviation Capital; newly firmied orders for 10 A220-300s from existing customer JetBlue, which now has orders for 60 aircraft; and an order for five more A220s from Delta, which currently has 50 A220-300s on order. Delta operates 16 A220-100s and has orders for about 25 more.

Also, lessor Air Lease Corp. signed a letter of intent to order 50 A220-300s.

Phil Seymour, CEO of British aviation consultant IBA Group, said the most significant A220 order may have been the one from NAC.

"NAC is known as a regional jet and turboprop lessor," Seymour said. "The 220 is hardly a regional jet, but the order shows that NAC believes this aircraft will be an important player in the regional space."

Airbus noted, in a prepared statement, that NAC serves more than 76 airline customers in 51 countries. "The agreement represents the first major order for the A220 from a leading regional lessor, confirming the versatility of the aircraft to support mainline and regional network expansion.

Meanwhile, Delta said on June 17 that it is expanding use of its A220 the summer.

Delta first flew the A220 in February. The aircraft's debut in the West came in Salt Lake City in April. Delta added San Jose in May; this week it began Seattle-San Jose service.

This summer, Delta A220 use will grow to 74 daily flights from 10 airports, also including Boston, Dallas, Detroit, Newark, Houston, New York LaGuardia and Minneapolis.

Delta said it expects to take delivery of 45 A220-100s and 50 A220-300s during the next four years, with the first -300 variant expected in 2020.

Seymour noted that as production starts up in Mobile, "Airbus wants to show the Canadian government that it can do a good job with the old Bombardier product."

The arrival Thursday of new components in Mobile means that "A220 production in Mobile will shortly become a reality," Paul Gaskell, president of Airbus U.S. A220, Inc, said in a prepared statement.

The arrivals took place four years to the day after the company's first A220 components arrived in Mobile, Gaskell said. Over the next few weeks, Airbus expects arrivals of the wings, vertical and horizontal tail planes, tail cones and landing gear. Production is expected to begin in the next few months, with first delivery scheduled for 2020.

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I began covering airlines during the Eastern strike. I was a reporter for six newspapers -- Miami Herald, Charlotte Observer, Sacramento Bee, Fresno Bee, Toledo Blade an... **Read More**

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