




## MANUFACTURING

# Boeing's NMA outlook unclear as focus remains on 737 Max



By [Andrew McIntosh](#)   
Staff Writer, Puget Sound Business Journal  
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Trying to assess whether Boeing will go ahead with its New Mid-market Airplane has been an exercise in patience for potential customers.

After Boeing spent years developing it and has teased the public and airlines about it during air shows, the NMA still does not exist.

Boeing continues to study the business case for the NMA — unofficially called the 797 — but has said its primary focus is on getting the 737 Max certified to fly again.

Boeing CEO Dennis Muilenburg has repeatedly said there's a market for 4,000 to 5,000 of the aircraft. An early concept for the NMA reportedly features 200 to 225 seats and composite wings like those used on the 787 Dreamliner. It would have a target market price of \$65 million to \$80 million and enter into service in 2025.

"The NMA will help Boeing transform its aircraft production system and lays a foundation for a future 737 replacement jet," Leeham aerospace analyst Scott Hamilton said. "If they don't do it, they'll fall behind Airbus another 10 or 20 years."

Some carriers, [like United, have publicly called on Boeing to clarify its intentions.](#)

AirInsight analyst Ernie Arvai crunched airline operating data and discovered why: [The older 767s are getting significantly more expensive to operate.](#)

Arvai said if the NMA continues to be delayed, airlines will opt for Airbus A330s when 767s are retired.

"The Boeing 767-300 will become economically obsolete prior to the arrival of the NMA," he said.

AeroAnalysis's Dhierin Behcai said the NMA decision has been made more difficult for Boeing because of the 737 Max global grounding and a more demanding regulatory landscape that has emerged for certification of the 777X. He also said that getting the NMA into service by 2025 will be hard to achieve.

"I am not saying NMA won't be launched, but prospects have significantly dimmed if we consider multiple factors such as technology implementation, timeline, costs and possible changes to aircraft certification," Behcai said, adding that

Boeing may have telegraphed its decision: Two NMA program leaders shifted to new jobs in July.

[Mark Jenks](#), who led the NMA project, [took over the 737 Max program](#) at the company's Renton factory, and Will Shaffer, who built an NMA supply chain, became [president of Boeing Japan.](#)

The Market Realist, an investment website, recently suggested Boeing's NMA dithering was a winning strategy, just not for Boeing.

"Any further delay in Boeing's 797 decision will only make life easier for the Airbus A321XLR marketing team," it said.

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