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Airbus CEO: The A220 Is Still Gaining Altitude

The manufacturer isn't ready to launch an A220-500 stretch just yet.

BY TOM BOON

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Photo: Sylvain Ramadier - Airbus



Airbus' CEO revealed that the A220 program is still gaining altitude, and the goal remains for the program to break even in the middle of the decade. While he acknowledged that the European manufacturer was still eyeing an A220-500 stretch, Guillaume Faury could not add any clarity on when Airbus may officially launch the aircraft.

The Airbus A220 is rapidly growing in popularity, with over 700 orders for the narrowbody jet now sitting on the manufacturer's order books. Airlines and the manufacturer have expressed interest in an A220-500, and while it's almost certainly coming at this point, when is anybody's guess.



Airlines such as Air France have expressed interest in a stretched Airbus A220. Photo: Air France

What's the latest on the A220-500?

Last Summer, Airbus' CCO Christian Scherer revealed that Airbus wouldn't launch a stretched A220 [until the existing variants reach their "cruising altitude"](#). When asked for clarity as to when this may be, Faury was unable to give specifics, telling Simple Flying,

I like to hear questions on the stretch to the A220 because the -500 will be a very

good version of the A220. We are not at the 'cruising altitude'. We are gaining altitude. We have the target to be breakeven [on the A220 program] by the middle of the decade.

Faury added,

"We are in the phase of the program to continue to ramp up production and deliver performance with the existing -100 and -300... Any answer [on when to expect the A220-500] from my side would be premature."



2025 is an A220 focus point

Right now, the middle of the decade is where Airbus' main focal point when it comes to the Airbus A220 program. Faury was clear that this is when the planemaker expects the program to break even.

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By 2025, Airbus hopes to be building 14 narrowbody jets each month. The planemaker expects that ten of these will be made at the A220's home in Mirabel, Canada. The remaining four would be built at [Airbus' US plant in Mobile, Alabama](#).



An A320neo and 737 MAX competitor

The Airbus A220-500 would challenge the A320neo family. While airBaltic's A220-300s currently seat 145 passengers, it has been suggested that the A220-500 could have an exit limit of 200 passengers. An aircraft's exit limit is [how many passengers it is certified to carry based on evacuation tests](#).



A stretched Airbus A220-500 could seat as many passengers as an A320neo or Boeing 737 MAX. Photo: Olivier Cote - Airbus

Carrying close to 200 passengers would mean that the -500 would take a similar number of passengers to the Boeing 737 MAX and the Airbus A320neo. According to data compiled by [Air Insight](#), this would make the A220 a much more attractive aircraft for airlines than the A320neo.

Using fuel use per hour data from US airlines, Air Insight's data shows that the A320neo consistently uses around 810 gallons per hour. This is far lower for both Airbus A220 models. In the US, the A220-100 has consistently used approximately 655 gallons of fuel per hour over the past three years, while the larger -300 has used around 670 gallons per hour over the past two years.



When do you think Airbus will launch the A220-500? Let us know what you think and why in the comments!



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M

Mully 870 Points • 13 hours ago



At 14/month they're going to want to seriously ramp up production before trying a -500.

I'd have thought that 220 operators will stay with the 220 and 320 will stay with the 320 just for type commonality.

Reply

Jack Abbott 620 Points • 13 hours ago



The A220 is that rare plane that delivers tremendous economics and flight capabilities at the same time. The development of the A220-500 could be a delicate one, since Airbus may not want to show its cards (in terms of aircraft capability) to Boeing. The strategy in winning this medium-sized narrow...**See more**



Reply  3 

M mpm1world • 18 hours ago ...

I believe "the writing is on the wall". An A225 with 180 seats , similar in size to the 320 neo and the 738Max, would be welcome by many airlines, if Airbus could find a positive way to substitute the new design (225) for the old one (320) without losing \$\$ in the process... I think that's the real...**See more**

Reply  

Heenan73 13.1K Points • 15 hours ago ...

It's about timing. A fresh A220-500 will have significant efficiency advantages compared to the A320.

Airbus aren't just waiting for the current A220s to reach zenith, they are also waiting for the A320 to start sagging, which it eventually will.

Reply  2 

Raymond Chuang 3.9K Points • 19 hours ago ...

I believe that the A220-300 will effectively replace the A319 for many customers. I wonder has Airbus though about redesigning the A220's cockpit to be more compatible with flight crews used to A320neo cockpits?

Reply   6

J JB • 1 minute ago ...

I recently went from flying the A320 to the A220. Very easy transition. I also hear airbus is considering making some small changes for commonality. But the cost of changing either plane enough so they would be considered common type would not be worth it. Cheaper to train pilots on the new type.

Reply  

Jack Abbott 620 Points • 14 hours ago ...

The CSeries/A220 cockpit was in much part designed by pilots. This is the ultimate cockpit that pilots always wanted: clean, natural and intuitive, things are where they should be (radio control panel in the glareshield, etc.), fast mouse-driven interface on navigation screens and FMS, and everyth...**See more**

Reply  3 

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GP GS in PDX • 22 hours ago ...

Not likely that Airbus would put out a -500 variant that encroaches on the current seating ranges of the A320Neo and A321Neo. Those two are likely to continue in production for the next 15-20 years, given their very excellent sales and market capture. I see Airbus positioning the -500 variant just ...**See more**

Reply   4

David_C 5.6K Points • 18 hours ago ...

If they don't do it, then Boeing will get a leg up on them with the new narrow body in development. (Yes, they have a 737 replacement in concept phase now)

Reply  5  2

D Douggo • 22 hours ago ...

The A220 is a great design, but the comfort level is ultimately decided by the seat configuration. So we can't blame the plane when jammed in on the A220-500.

Reply   6

David_C 5.6K Points • 18 hours ago ...

it will have the same seat pitch and seat breadth, just more rows. So the



superior comfort that the A220 provides will remain.

Reply  6  1

J john 930 Points • 22 hours ago ...

Glad to hear the 500 is on the radar.

Reply  5  1

B BernardP • 22 hours ago ...

The A220-500 was already flying in Bombardier's computer before the Airbus takeover.

It will be a 4 or 5 row stretch. It should top out at around 165/170 passengers in reasonable configurations.

Reply  7 

David_C 5.6K Points • 18 hours ago ...

Agreed, its been flying virtually for years. So has the 900.

Reply  4 

↩ 1 reply

L Lastmate • 1 day ago ...

I'm thinking if the 500 could carry 150 in a mixed class layout it would definitely appeal to major US carriers

Reply  7  1

M Mike • 1 day ago ...

The fuel burn comparison is really quite weak . It is all about weight. The A220 is a smaller and lighter aircraft so comparing it to the heavier, larger A320neo does not make any sense.

Reply   9

David_C 5.6K Points • 18 hours ago ...

Cost per passenger mile is about 21% less than the 737 MAX and 20% less than the A320. That is a better metric and its what airlines care about.

Reply  9  1

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