

AIR TRANSPORT

Airlink sees E175-E2 only as distant option as Embraer keeps program on hold



Ricardo Meier
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South African carrier links any future interest in the jet

to the retirement of its E175/E175 fleet and the



The E175-E2 (Embraer)

South African regional carrier **Airlink** has identified the **Embraer E175-E2** as a potential long-term replacement for its smallest regional jets, but any move in that

direction remains speculative and dependent on factors largely outside the airline's control.

In an interview with *AirInsight*, Airlink CEO de Villiers Engelbrecht said the E175-E2 could eventually become relevant as the airline prepares to phase out its Embraer ERJ135 and ERJ140 fleet, whose Rolls-Royce engines are expected to lose manufacturer support around 2030–31. Airlink currently operates 27 aircraft of the ERJ135/140 family.

The E175-E2 is part of Embraer's second-generation E-Jet family, alongside the E190-E2 and E195-E2, but its development has effectively been frozen. The aircraft was originally designed to meet U.S. scope clause requirements, which limit regional aircraft operated on behalf of major airlines to a maximum of 76 seats and a maximum take-off weight of 86,000 lb (39 tonnes).

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The E2s from Airlink are configured with 136 seats

Those clauses never changed, and the E175-E2 exceeds both limits, with seating for up to 88 passengers and a significantly higher maximum weight. As a result, Embraer halted the program after building a single prototype, which has since been dismantled, and has repeatedly stated it will not resume development without clear regulatory or market shifts in the United States.

Engelbrecht acknowledged that, from an operational standpoint, the E175-E2 would be a suitable successor to the ERJ135/140, offering higher efficiency and capacity. However, he stressed that this discussion remains long-term and hypothetical, particularly given Embraer's position on the program.

South African's carrier Airlink also uses the ERJ 140

For now, Airlink's priority is the introduction of its E195-E2 fleet. **The airline became the launch customer for the type in Africa**, with the first aircraft entering service in December 2025 following a multi-phase certification process. Three E195-E2s are already in operation, with seven more scheduled for delivery in 2026 and a further three in 2027, completing the current E2 order.

Only after the full integration of the ten E195-E2s and an assessment of their network performance will Airlink revisit decisions about smaller replacement aircraft, Engelbrecht said, adding that any consideration of the E175-E2 would come well after that point.

Airlink

E175-E2

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