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South African airline wants plane that Embraer 'froze'

An Airlink executive stated that the E175-E2 jet, whose project is currently paused, would be an attractive alternative to replace its smaller aircraft.



Put Ricardo Meier | January 17, 2026

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Embraer E175-E2 (Embraer)

A promotional banner for a January sale. On the left, a person in a blue winter jacket and hat is walking a dog on a leash in a parking lot. On the right, a yellow banner reads 'JANUARY SALE' in black capital letters. Below it, 'Save 20%' is written in large, bold black font. At the bottom, smaller text reads 'Ends 1/31/26. Discount applies to Pay Later base rate only. Taxes, fees'.

South African airline **Airlink** surprised many by considering the Embraer E175-E2 as a possible long-term fleet renewal option. The model is the third member of

In an interview with [AirInsight](#), the CEO of Airlink, owned by Villiers Engelbrecht, stated that the E175-E2 could become relevant in the future, as the company prepares to retire its Embraer ERJ 135 and ERJ 140 aircraft. Airlink still operates 27 aircraft from these families, whose Rolls-Royce engines are expected to lose support around 2030 or 2031.

The E175-E2 is part of the second generation of the E-Jet family, which also includes the E190-E2 and E195-E2 models. However, the **development of the E175-E2 has been frozen for years**. The aircraft was designed to meet the scope clauses of the regional market in the United States, which limit the use of jets to a maximum of 76 seats and a maximum takeoff weight of approximately 39 tons.

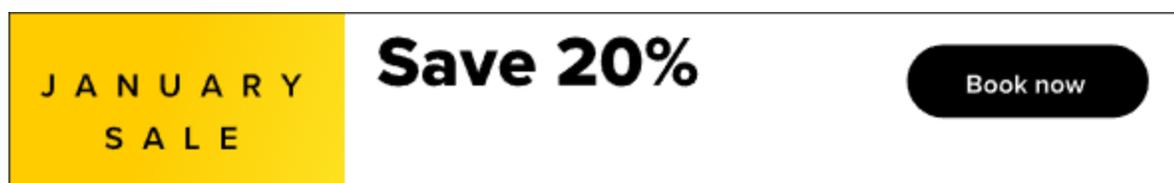


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Airlink's E2s are configured with 136 seats (Embraer).

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These rules have not been changed, and the E175-E2 exceeds both limits, being able to carry up to 88 passengers and operating with a significantly higher weight. Given this, Embraer halted the program after building a single prototype, which was subsequently dismantled, and has reiterated that it does not intend to resume development without clear changes in the regulatory or market environment in the United States.

Engelbrecht acknowledged that, from an operational standpoint, the E175-E2 would be a suitable solution to replace the ERJ135 and ERJ140, offering greater efficiency and capacity. However, he stressed that this discussion is hypothetical and long-term, especially given Embraer's current position on the program.

ERJ 140 from Airlink, South Africa (Alan Wilson).



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In the short term, [Airlink's priority is the introduction of the E195-E2](#) . The company became the launch customer for the model in Africa, with the first aircraft entering service in December 2025, following a multi-stage certification process. Three E195-E2s are already in operation, with another seven units scheduled for delivery in 2026 and three more in 2027, completing the current order.

According to the executive, only after the full incorporation of the ten E195-E2s into the network and the evaluation of their operational performance will Airlink resume discussions about replacing smaller aircraft, including, eventually, the E175-E2.

[# Airlink](#)[# E175-E2](#)[# Embraer](#)[# ERJ 135](#)[# ERJ 140](#)

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