Alaska Airlines to Retrofit 737-400 Aircraft to Provide Better Passenger and Cargo Service to the State of Alaska

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Alaska Airlines today reaffirmed its commitment to serving the cargo and passenger needs of the state of Alaska today by inking a $15 million contract to retrofit five of its 737-400 aircraft to carry cargo and passengers.

"We've been looking for a replacement for our 737-200s for some time now," said George Bagley, Alaska's executive vice president of operations. "Retrofitting our existing, newer 737-400s makes sense from a cost standpoint and will actually increase our freight and passenger capacity in Alaska."

Four of the carrier's 737-400s will be converted to a fixed 70 passenger/four pallet configuration. One aircraft will be retrofitted to full cargo configuration. Once completed, the retrofitted aircraft will replace the airline's retiring 737-200 fleet -- long the workhorse of the carrier's unique passenger and cargo operations to rural communities in Alaska. In addition, the airline is currently weighing several options to replace the capacity of the five 737-400s that will be converted.

The conversions of the 737-400s will result in an upgrade of service, as the converted aircraft will carry more passengers and cargo. Bagley noted that the 737-400s are half the age of the carrier's 737-200s, thus less costly to maintain. Additionally the -400s consume about 30 percent less fuel and already are equipped with Alaska's state-of-the-art RNP flight guidance technology, which allows pilots to precisely guide aircraft during periods of low visibility.

The retrofitting work, to begin in April 2005 for completion in early 2007, will be coordinated by InterContinental Aircraft Services (ICAS) of Taiwan for a team including Flight Structures Inc., Marysville, Washington, a unit of B/E Aerospace, Inc., and the Boeing Company. Flight Structures will do the engineering work. Boeing will provide post-conversion engineering support.

Alaska Airlines and sister carrier Horizon Air serve more than 80 cities in Alaska, the Lower 48, Canada and Mexico. For more news and information, visit the Alaska Airlines Newsroom on the Internet at http://newsroom.alaskaair.com/.

SOURCE: Alaska Airlines

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