

## Boeing wrestles with stretched 787 range

David Kaminski-Morrow, London (26Jan06, 16:57 GMT, 406 words)

Boeing states that a decision on building a higher-capacity version of the 787 twin-jet might be made earlier than the airframer expected, as the company battles to extract greater range from the proposed stretch.

While the company says it has always planned to stretch the aircraft, into a version dubbed the 787-10, this was originally intended to occur at a later point in the aircraft's evolution, to create a family of aircraft with comparable range capability.

But Boeing vice-president of marketing Randy Baseler, speaking at a briefing in London today, admitted that the company is already being "pushed" into stretching the type – although the airframer says that a new engine is required to achieve the desired range.

Powerplant suppliers for the 787, however, have informed Boeing that no more thrust can be generated from the present engine design.

"What would dictate [the development of the 787-10] would be having a bigger engine, because you need the range to go with it," he says.

"We're not offering it at the moment and we're not out marketing it. But we are talking about it."

Baseler says that discussions have focused on whether a range significantly less than the 8,000nm (14,800km) for the baseline 787 would be enough.

"If you stretch the 787-9 then the range falls off. Is that going to be an aircraft we can offer?" he says. "Most [airlines] have said that they would like to have more range – although some have said that [the shorter range] works for them."

Baseler concedes that by developing the 787-10, Boeing risks cannibalising its market for the 777-200. He says: "There's no question that you start eating into the [777] market. But at the end of the day you have to decide when will be the right time to do something – or you'll have the [competition] do it to you."

He is reluctant to give a possible date for a stretch decision but says that the manufacturer could reach a conclusion as early as this year.

Boeing general manager for the 787 programme Mike Bair recently said that Middle East carrier Emirates has "not been shy" about expressing its desire for a version of the aircraft larger than the 787-9.

He added that Boeing was "likely" to develop the 787-10, although the type would probably not see entry into service before around 2012, and added that the airframer might be prepared to launch the stretch with a single order.