

■ A 17-place turbine-powered twin airplane that can break even on operations costs, including depreciations with slightly over two passengers and make money on three, will be ready for delivery to the scheduled airline and scheduled air-taxi market next spring, Beech Aircraft Corporation has announced.

Beechcraft 99 Airliner, the largest plane Beech has ever built, received a fitting introduction at a luncheon press conference in Washington, D.C., attended by general aviation figures, commuter airline and scheduled air-taxi operators, Government officials and the press. Coincidental with the announcement of the new prop-jet, was the revelation that an airline marketing department had been set up within the Beech organization. The new department will provide support to the scheduled airlines and scheduled air-taxi owners who use the new Beechcraft 99 in their operations. Allen K. Pepin, head of the new department, also will handle U.S. sales of the 99; Bob Oestreicher will be in charge of export sales.

Wyman L. Henry, Beech Aircraft vice president - marketing, presiding at the luncheon conference which drew a capacity audience, revealed that the Beechcraft 99 prototype had been undergoing extensive flight tests since July 1966.

Certification is expected early next year, and quantity production in April or May of 1968. At the time of the conference, May 3, Beech had in hand 24 cash deposit orders for the new plane and letters of intention to buy for 27 more. Production rate at the beginning is expected to be six to eight 99 Airliners per month. Henry explained that the 99 is an all-new plane which has been under development for about two years. Its price will range from \$350,000 to \$400,000, depending on operational equipment desired by the individual airline operator.

Beech's marketing effort will stress a number of new features of the 99 Airliner, but top billing probably will be given to its low-cost operation and its short landing and takeoff characteristics.

Henry said:

"The 99's combination of performance, ease of maintenance and reliability make it ideal for both passenger and cargo use throughout the world . . . The Beechcraft 99, with a 24% greater capacity in ton-miles than the venerable Douglas DC-3, can operate at a profit at third-level airline load factors below the Government's passenger frequency directive."

Reverse-thrust capability of the twin Pratt & Whitney PT6A-20 engines enable the 10,200-pound (gross) airliner to land on 1,810 feet of runway. It can

make a normal takeoff (30% flaps) in 2,025 feet. Its normal accelerated stop distance is placed at 3,200 feet.

The Beechcraft 99 is 44.5 feet in length and has a wing span of 45.9 feet and height of 14.5 feet to the tip of the stabilizer.

The new airplane is rated at 10,200 pounds gross, with a useful load of about two tons. Beech officials said that it would carry 16 passengers, pilot and 480 pounds of baggage 375 miles with a 45-minute reserve at a block speed of 250 m.p.h.

Announcement of the starting of deliveries of the Beech 99 next spring was hailed with enthusiasm by those attending the Washington briefing. Sen. A. S. Mike Monroney, chairman of the Senate Aviation Subcommittee, described the Beechcraft 99 as the "missing link" between the DC-3 and the small jets. He said he had been "crying in the wilderness for years" for the building of a plane which would replace the DC-3. A plane such as the 99 perhaps would eliminate the need for subsidies in giving smaller cities airline service, he said.

Robert V. Reynolds, FAA assistant administrator for general aviation affairs, described the plane as an important contribution to an emerging industry: scheduled air-taxi service and commuter airlines.

J. B. Hartranft, Jr., AOPA president, saw in the new Beechcraft airliner a solution for the cities and towns that need airline service but would be unable to expand the length of their airport runways in order to accommodate the small jets, such as the DC-9. He cited Nantucket, Mass., as an example where such a situation existed. Joseph T. Geuting, Jr., manager of the Utility Airplane Council of the Aerospace Industries Association, and Paul G. Delman, president of Commuter Airlines, of Sioux City, Ia., also hailed the advent of the new airliner. □

BEECH ENTERS AIRLINE FIELD

New 17-place turboprop Beechcraft 99 Airliner expected to go into service next spring on commuter scheduled airlines and scheduled air-taxi operations. It can make money with three passengers, Beech officials say

Beech's new 17-place 99 Airliner, which will be ready for delivery next spring.

