

Piedmont fleet goes 'First Class' for 1987

Piedmont will offer first class service on every aircraft in our fleet by early summer. The conversion will enable us to continue to compete effectively with other major carriers.

"Piedmont intends to offer the most attractive service and amenities to our frequent flyers and business travelers," Bill Howard, president and chief executive officer, said.

"Piedmont will offer not just first class, but the best first class service in the industry. The first class cabin will enable Piedmont to upgrade our passengers from coach to first, an important marketing advantage in today's competitive environment."

The decision to convert the fleet to a dual configuration was made in August after a five-member task force—headed by Ted Phillips, director-schedule planning—spent several months analyzing the benefits and costs.

"Virtually every department worked closely with us in gathering information for the study," Phillips said. "It was certainly a team effort. We had to determine if first class would generate a profit as well as evaluate what it would mean competitively if we did not install first class in our fleet."

"Other carriers are creating hubs, such as those at Raleigh/Durham and at Dulles, which are in direct competition with our services. We concluded that to continue to attract the full fare

passenger, we should offer first class. In addition, we determined that the revenue we would receive from first class would pay for the expenses incurred in providing the service."

The aircraft modification program, which will begin in mid-January, will be spread over our maintenance facilities at GSO, INT, and UCA with the bulk of the work done at GSO-MM where 21 employees will be added to help with the project. By the time the modification project is completed, these new employees will be needed to help with maintenance on our growing fleet. Sixty-two of the modifications will coincide with the scheduled maintenance plan and the remaining aircraft will be rotated through GSO-MM.

"The F28s and 737-300s can be modified virtually overnight," George Mason, staff vice president-maintenance planning and administration, said. "It will take four shifts to accomplish the modification on the 727-200s and 737-200s. We will have a 737-200 dedicated to the project from January 15 to March 31 and a 727-200, from April 1 to April 30."

All of the aircraft, except for the F28s, will be equipped with ovens, and the F28s will have upgraded meal service for longer flights.

Phillips added: "Because our F28 flight segments are relatively short, we will be limited as to what we can offer in first class. But we will

be able to offer our F28 passengers larger seats, cabin seclusion, free beverages, more attention and service, and, on longer flights, meal service."

Training of station agents, flight attendants, and reservations agents will be accomplished in two phases. Beginning in December, these employees will begin taking part in a training course which will explain the transition procedures. A second phase, which will be more comprehensive, is planned for the spring.

"We will not try to implement the new first class program until the entire fleet has been converted," Phillips explained. "Rather, we'll use this transition period to introduce frequent flyers and full fare customers to our new service by selectively upgrading them at the gate at no extra charge."

"We plan to offer first class service in every facet of our operation, including reservations, check-in, inflight, and at the final destination," Howard said. "Although we plan to provide first class service second to none in the industry, let me emphasize that we are also committed to retaining our current level of coach service."

"We are undertaking an ambitious project, but one we believe will allow us to continue to prosper."

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\$90 million CLT growth plan announced

Piedmont and the Charlotte Airport Authority unveiled November 10 plans for a large, multi-million dollar operations and maintenance facility which will support our new B-767 maintenance program as well as house a stock distribution center and a crew training building with a state-of-the-art 737-300/400 simulator. In addition, the planned expansion of Char-

lotte's terminal building announced by Piedmont last June has been revised to give us bigger and better facilities. Add to these projects the current renovation of Charlotte's old terminal building for cargo and catering, and the total cost tops \$90 million, funded primarily by the City of Charlotte through revenue bonds.

By late 1988, when all three projects are com-

pleted, more than 4,000 Piedmont employees will call Charlotte home and, the airport, which now ranks among the top 10 hubs nationally in terms of passengers boarded, will be one of the top five hubs in the country.

Piedmont sets 31 gates In new terminal design

Piedmont's major expansion program at Charlotte, announced last June, has developed into an even more ambitious project which will give us a total of 31 gates—four more than originally planned—on the airport's two primary concourses.

"When Eastern announced on July 31 that the airline would sharply curtail flights to Charlotte on October 1, Piedmont immediately agreed to assume the leasehold obligations that Eastern is abandoning at the airport," Leonard Martin, senior vice president-passenger services, explained.

"We then looked at ways we might better design our facilities to incorporate Eastern's concourse. The results, I believe, will give us one of the best designed

major hubs in the country.

"In fact, the new design couldn't be better. If we had been building the Charlotte complex from ground zero, this is as close as we could come to an ideal arrangement in terms of operations and passenger movement," Martin said.

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B-767 maintenance facility, Stores, training site due

Construction of a new \$40 million operations and maintenance facility—designed to support our major hub operation and the new 767-200s which will begin arriving next year—will begin March 1 at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, with completion set for late 1988. The facility will house a large maintenance hangar, a parts distribution center

and a base for crew training.

In addition, maintenance will soon be provided at gates on each of our concourses. By 1990, our growth in maintenance alone will create 540 jobs at Charlotte with more opportunities opening as Piedmont's needs grow. All of these jobs at Charlotte are new jobs expanding our work force rather than major relocations of existing maintenance personnel.

Our large maintenance facilities at INT and GSO will continue to operate with the focus more on scheduled maintenance.

"Charlotte's new operations and maintenance facility is an outgrowth of two system demands," Gordon Bethune, senior vice president-operations, said.

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