AMPAIRE RECEIVES ORDER FOR UP TO SIX ECO CARAVAN UPGRADES FROM AZUL CONECTA

News / Airlines, Manufacturer

Ampaire signed a LOI for Conecta Grand Caravans upgrade to Ampaire Eco Caravans. The core of the Eco Caravan is the AMP-H570 hybrid-electric powertrain and battery pack. The regional airline is a subsidiary of Azul, Brazil's largest airline by passenger volume, departures and cities served. The Azul Conecta order follows the first flight of the Eco Caravan in November 2022 and the announcement days later of a $9 million award from the U.S. Department of Energy to help Ampaire advance systems so that they are ready for FAA certification and series production.

Conecta's regional network benefits from Eco Caravan

Azul Conecta serves 84 destinations within Brazil with a fleet of 27 Caravans. The Eco Caravan will meet the regional carrier's objectives of reducing operating costs by 25 percent or more, while advancing the carrier's sustainability objectives and seamlessly integrating into its current operations.

Ampaire CEO Kevin Noertker, commented: "We are thrilled to work with the visionary team at Azul

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Conecta. They are among a group of established air carriers ready to embrace a hybrid-electric solution, providing leadership for an entire industry."

Flavio Costa, Azul Conecta´s CEO, said: "After evaluating a range of technologies, including fully-electric and hydrogen fuel cells, we concluded that Ampaire moves us toward our ESG goals much sooner.Azul Conecta has innovation as a mission and sees the upgrade to the Eco Caravan as a major innovation that accelerates our path to sustainability, maintaining a safety standard in our operations, which is our first and non-negotiable value."

Azul ordered upgrade kits for its Caravan fleet because it sees the hybrid-electric solution as the fastest way to deploy sustainable technologies, benefiting passengers and the environment. Azul Conecta will work in consultation with Ampaire to develop charging infrastructure across Conecta's bases and at other airports, said Costa. The airline will also provide services to other Eco Caravan operators throughout South America.

Net zero emissions with SAF

The AMP-H570 integrates a combustion engine with an electric drivetrain. The Eco Caravan reduces fuel consumption and emissions by up to 70 percent. Emissions are near zero when using sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). Cost of operation is reduced 25 percent or more depending on route structure. Cost per available seat mile is near that of driving, helping airlines manage cost and benefiting passengers.

The hybrid-electric aircraft preserves the range/payload capability of the Cessna Grand Caravan, carrying upwards of nine passengers or more than 2,500 pounds of cargo. Maximum range is over 1,100 miles, exceeding that of the Grand Caravan. The Eco Caravan's excellent range and load hauling capability is in marked contrast to proposed all-electric, hydrogen-electric and even other hybrid-electric aircraft. While Azul Conecta will develop charging stations, the Eco Caravan can operate independently of charging infrastructure where necessary, providing all of the flexibility of today's aircraft.

The first in a new generation of sustainable electric aircraft

The Eco Caravan's propulsion technology is scalable to larger regional aircraft and ultimately to single-aisle airliners. Ampaire plans to rapidly roll out more powerful propulsion systems for larger aircraft. "The Eco Caravan is the first step to larger hybrid-electric propulsion systems and ultimately zero-emission systems as energy storage technology advances," said Noertker.

First to market

Ampaire is working with the FAA to certify the Eco Caravan in 2024 under a supplemental type certificate (STC). The Ampaire approach differs from others in that it does not require a full aircraft certification, which can be time consuming and very expensive. Ampaire will work with Azul Conecta's assistance to achieve additional certification from Brazil's ANAC.

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