THIS RUSSIAN JET MIGHT JUST GIVE BOEING AND AIRBUS A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY

News / Manufacturer

When it comes to commercial airplane production, two companies essentially have the industry on lock: American-made Boeing and European-produced Airbus. Boeing's 737, 777 and 787 models — as well as Airbus' A320, A330 and A350 models — dominate airports across the world. Now, a Russian company is seeking to squeeze one of its planes right into the middle of the market.

Russian Rosavia hopes to uproot the foregone notion of these two companies' dominance with an unusually shaped wide-body aircraft called the Frigate Ecojet, designed to fly within the range of a narrow-bodied jet. Because of its oblong width, the Ecojet is able to carry between 276 and 358 passengers per flight, depending on cabin configuration. Rosavia is hoping that the magic number of passengers per flight is somewhere in the middle of those numbers.

By comparison, narrow-body Boeing and Airbus vehicles are built to carry less than 200 passengers on medium-haul routes. Their wide-body jets (747 and A380 excluded) are designed to carry between 240 and 325 passengers, but only on the longest flights currently possible. Rosavia is betting that there is an existing demand in the market for a wide-body jet with the

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capacity to hold hundreds of passengers, that doesn’t need to fly halfway around the world to be financially viable.

The eco in Ecojet isn’t a signifier for any sort of particularly green technology. Rather, it is short for economical. The hybrid plane combines the capacity of a wide-body jet with the range and operational savings of a narrow-body.

The oval fuselage my look strange to us today in comparison to the more cylindrical jets we are accustomed to seeing, but Rosavia hopes to change that opinion soon enough.

Photo: Rosavia

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After completing aerodynamic and structural testing in Germany, Rosavia is scouting locations for an assembly line. The company hopes to begin producing the plane by 2018. Each Ecojet will cost

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an estimated $120 Million, allowing Rosavia to break even on its investment after the 115th plane is sold. In order to get that far, it will first need to raise $3 Billion in investment.

So will the Frigate Ecojet ever make it off the ground? Is the growing demand for air travel enough to warrant a new contender in the market? Will airlines break with loyalty and tradition to support a newcomer that might require reformatting across much of their existing infrastructure? Only time will tell.

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