

# Air Serbia Expands Partnership with Marathon Airlines

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Air Serbia (JU) is set to deepen its collaboration with Greece's Marathon Airlines (O8) by exploring the potential wet-leasing of up to six Embraer regional jets during the Summer 2024 season. The move, seen as a growing partnership towards a capacity purchase agreement, aims to enhance Air Serbia's operational flexibility and meet the demand for increased frequencies on existing routes.

Jiri Marek, CEO of Air Serbia, highlighted the unique nature of this collaboration, emphasizing that it goes beyond a typical wet lease arrangement. Currently, Air Serbia is already wet-leasing an E175, an E190, and two E195s from Marathon Airlines, acting as an interim solution until the delivery of additional E195s by the end of the year. With the potential addition of five to six more E-Jets for the Summer 2024 season, Air Serbia aims to bridge the capacity gap between its ATR72-600s and A319-100s.

The Embraer jets have proven instrumental in replacing ATR turboprops on select routes, offering a more suitable capacity and paving the way for the eventual retirement of A319s in the future. Air Serbia's short- and medium-haul fleet currently comprises seven ATR72-600s, ten A319s, and three A320-200s.

Expressing contentment with the Embraer E1s and the existing A320ceo Family, Marek emphasized that the airline is not planning an immediate transition to the A320neo Family. The decision aligns with Air Serbia's strategy to capitalize on the current market dynamics, targeting secondary, mid-aged, mature aircraft until reaching a fleet size of 35 to 40 aircraft. At that juncture, the airline may consider establishing long-term fleet plans and potentially placing new orders.

In terms of its widebody fleet, Air Serbia has deferred plans to add the third A330-200 until 2024 due to supply chain challenges. The airline is actively seeking a new option and anticipates the third widebody's delivery by the second quarter of 2024. The expanded A330 fleet will be deployed on new routes to China (Shanghai Pudong and Guangzhou) and will contribute to increased frequencies on the New York JFK route.

With a fleet soon exceeding 30 aircraft, Air Serbia is also exploring options to invest in its own Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) center, signaling a commitment to enhance its operational capabilities and maintain a robust position in the dynamic aviation landscape. As Air Serbia continues to evolve, passengers can anticipate improved services and enhanced connectivity across the airline's expanding network.

