

Airbus denies building the bigger A322 with new wings

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Airbus sought to dampen speculation about an upgrade to its best-selling A321neo single-aisle model, saying “there is no such thing” as a proposal to build what some media have dubbed an A322 with more seats and newer wings, reported www.reuters.com.

Industry sources have said Airbus has kept in reserve studies based on carbon wings and updated engines if needed to counter any new plane that rival Boeing might launch in the top end of the medium-haul market, where Airbus has a strong lead.

Airbus executives on Monday said they were happy with the current wings and engines on the existing portfolio.

However, other reports seem to indicated that Airbus is actually in the process of developing the A322 with a new composite wing. The new wing is made from composite material. It is first seen as an upgrade to the existing, mostly metal A320 family wing, which was already upgraded many times. A “radical” A320 makeover is expected to cost over 4 billion euros (\$4.9 billion), way less than the calculations giving \$15 billion to \$20 billion for an all-new design for Boeing.

Airbus has already composite wings on the A350, but this will be an enhanced, new design with highly automated manufacturing suitable for inexpensive high-volume production.

In May 2021, Airbus announced that for improved aerodynamic performance the wing will be longer and thinner with **folding wingtips** to access existing airport gates. The assembly of the first demonstrator was to start in the coming weeks, as the project should be completed by 2023 before an eventual product launch. Due to the increased length and increased lift, the new wings could also be used on an Airbus A322, an A321 lengthened by 4 passenger seat-rows, being studied by Airbus.

They confirmed that Airbus is examining a possible freighter version of its A350 wide-body jet, but said the company would only launch such a development when the conditions were right.

Traditionally dominated by Boeing, the freighter business is underserved by Airbus, Chief Commercial Officer Christian Scherer said.

A stretched version of the smaller 110-130-seat A220 is technically possible but not before the Canadian-designed jetliner programme reaches “cruising altitude,” he added. Demand for the jet is strong including

interest from China, he said.

Airbus is seeing some pricing pressure in the jet market in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis but is putting emphasis on protecting value rather than chasing prices, Scherer added.

It has fewer than five “white tails” that have been built but left stranded without a buyer, while most aircraft parked outside its factories are being stored on behalf of customers, he said.



Airbus also hit back at concerns raised by Boeing over the design of its newest narrow-body jet, the A321XLR. In a recent European regulatory filing, Boeing said a novel type of fuel tank could pose fire risks.

Scherer called the comment “slightly provocative and outdated”. Boeing had no immediate comment.

