

Linear Air to Operate Eclipse Jets and More Caravans

10-Jul-2007

By Karen Di Piazza for CharterX

Air charter operator Linear Air, based at Laurence G. Hanscom Field (BED), located in Bedford, Mass., runs a point-to-point air-taxi business using a fleet of eight-passenger executive-configured Cessna Caravans. Today, [Linear](#) Air president and CEO William Herp, told CharterX, "By the end of 2008, we're optimistic that we'll operate a fleet of 15 Eclipse 500 very light jets." "Next week, we're taking delivery of our first VLJ. Eclipse Aviation Corp. is currently installing a 'mechanical attitude indicator,' as its third attitude heading reference system (AHRS) isn't certified yet, which is required for FAR Part 135 operations."

Herp says he believes that other operators of Eclipse jets have also had mechanical attitude indicators installed. Linear holds positions for 30 Eclipse jets. Herp said he suggested to Eclipse about six months ago that perhaps installing a temporary AHRS was a good idea.

"At that time, Eclipse believed its third AHRS would be installed and certified long before now," he said. "I don't view this as a problem at all."

He says after Linear takes delivery of its first Eclipse 500, the local Federal Aviation Administration's Flight Standards District Office will check out the jet before it can legally fly passengers.

"The local FSDO will make sure we're compliant," he said. "We'll have to conduct 25 hours of proving-flight missions--a common practice regardless of what type of aircraft you're operating," he said. "We expect to have our first Eclipse flying passengers by mid-August."

In March, the FAA approved Linear's in-house flight training program. Herp said on July 6, two company pilots completed Eclipse's required flight training, including its chief pilot.

"Both pilots are now type rated in the Eclipse 500; our type-rated pilots will train our copilots under our FAA-approved training program," he said. "Copilots are not required to have a type rating in the Eclipse."

As [CharterX reported in February](#), Linear raised \$3.5 million to expand its fleet utilizing Eclipse jets. The company will use the jets to service its existing clientele in regional and metropolitan areas.

"The twin-engine Eclipse jet features state-of-the-art engineering and systems designed for unprecedented safety and reliability," Herp said. "With operating costs that put personal air travel within the grasp of average business travelers, this is a tantalizing notion to say the least. We're going to usher in a new era of personal air transportation at business airline prices." He added that a two-pilot crew would operate each jet and seat up to four passengers.

Aviation insiders reported to CharterX that Eclipse is going to make a major announcement--perhaps this month-- that it intends to produce a single-engine jet. Eclipse refused to comment. Herp said "unofficially" he's heard the same thing within the industry, but has no personal knowledge that Eclipse is going to announce such a project. However, during a press conference last year, Eclipse CEO Vern Raburn hinted that the company was involved with another aircraft design.

Meanwhile, Herp said Linear added its sixth Caravan to its charter fleet last month, which adds service in the Washington, D.C. area--a bonus for the company's 500-city network.

"Next year, we plan to expand service to California by adding up to four Caravans to start," he said. "Northern and Southern California bases will each have aircraft. We're really growing and it's very exciting."