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George Ford has spent decades covering business news across Eastern Iowa. Ford is a native of Lexington, Ky., but has [...]

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Delta will use 70-seat jet for Cedar Rapids/Atlanta flight

New planes larger than most regional aircraft, also have first-class sections

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Delta Air Lines in March will upgrade one of its three daily nonstop flights between Cedar Rapids and Atlanta to a 70-seat regional jet from the current 50-seat aircraft.

Heather Wilson, marketing director for The Eastern Iowa Airport, said Atlanta-based Delta is upgrading service to the dual class 70-seat regional jets as they become available. The first flight into Cedar Rapids each morning from Atlanta and the last flight out each night to Atlanta will be flown with the 70-seat Bombardier CRJ900.

“There is anticipation that two of the flights will be serviced by 70-seat aircraft by next summer,” Wilson said. “Delta is looking at the longer-haul flights for the 70-seat aircraft. They’re moving away from the 50-seat regional jets.”




Delta in December ordered up to 70 regional jets from Bombardier as part of a major shift in the planes it uses for hauling regional passengers to hub airports like Atlanta and Minneapolis.

Delta placed a firm order for 40 of the CRJ900 planes, with options for 30 more. The deal would be worth \$3.29 billion at list prices if Delta exercises the options, although discounts on such a large order are common.

The CRJ900 aircraft are smaller than Delta's mainline planes, but larger than other regional jets. The new planes also have first-class sections, allowing Delta to sell more seats at higher prices.

The 50-seat CRJ-200 regional jets have become unprofitable at higher fuel prices. None of the airline's 50-seat planes have first-class sections.

When it announced the Bombardier order in December, Delta said it believes passengers prefer larger planes, especially on longer flights. In June 2012, Delta pilots approved a new union contract that allows the airline to fly the large regional jets in exchange for phasing out more 50-seaters.

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