



AIRBUS FREEZES BELUGA XL DESIGN

News / Manufacturer



Airbus's Beluga XL program has passed its latest maturity gate milestone, marking the end of the "concept phase" or design freeze "at aircraft level," [Airbus](#) announced on Wednesday.

The company said the maturity gate review demonstrated that the Beluga XL program has shown enough robustness and maturity to move to the next phase of development, the detailed design phase.

"We are proud of how much we have accomplished in less than a year after the launch of the program, with the new and innovative way of working with our suppliers," said Airbus Beluga XL head Bertrand George. "By working together as a fully integrated team in a single location, we have maximized our efficiency. This milestone paves the way for a successful final assembly start in 2017."

Launched in November 2014, the Beluga XL addresses transport capacity needs for the A350 XWB "ramp-up" and other aircraft production rate increases. Based on the A330-200 Freighter, the Beluga XL program incorporates many existing components and equipment.

Airbus estimates the fleet of five Beluga XL aircraft will provide it with 30 percent more transport capacity than its current fleet of five A300-600ST Belugas can carry. Operated by Airbus subsidiary airline Airbus Transport International (ATI), the fleet carries complete sections of Airbus

aircraft, built at various sites in Europe, to final assembly lines in Toulouse, France; Hamburg, Germany; and Seville, Spain.

Plans call for the first of five Beluga XLs to enter service in 2019.

Airbus has chosen Rolls-Royce Trent 700s to power the new Belugas along with the company's TotalCare engine support package in a contract valued at some \$700 million. Now one of the engine choices for the A330, the Trent 700 powers some 60 percent of new orders for the widebody over the last three years, according to Rolls-Royce. It also accounts for 90 percent of the engine choices for A330 freighters in service or on order.

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