Honda Picks NC For Service Center For First Jet

GREENSBORO, N.C. (AP) — Honda Aircraft Co. said Monday it will increase the number of jobs near its North Carolina headquarters to more than 1,000 in five years to produce small business jets and build a $20 million maintenance and repair center.

Honda's existing Greensboro jet factory employs about 600 and the Japanese company has said previously it expects to add up to 300 more as it reaches full production. North Carolina officials promised a $1 million grant if Honda adds 419 jobs over the next five years.

The company also said initial delivery of the two-engine HondaJets will be delayed until 2013. The $4.5 million aircraft was originally scheduled for delivery in 2010, then postponed to late 2012.

Honda Aircraft president and chief executive officer Michimasa Fujino said that some technical glitches in the engine certification still need to be worked out.

Honda Aircraft has declined to specify how many orders have been placed for the company's first foray into aviation other than to say the number is well over 100.

The Greensboro maintenance and repair center will perform extensive repair or overhaul work not available through HondaJet dealers in North America and Europe.

The expansion will provide sufficient space to handle parts storage and distribution for the next two years or more, Fujino said. A decision on where to base a production line for components such as windows and doors also can be postponed for a couple of years, he said.

Some components, like wings, are already made at the Greensboro plant, Fujino said.

The two-engine HondaJet weighs less than 10,000 pounds and generally seats five to seven passengers.

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