Nord aircraft re-engined for service with Allegheny

By JIM STREET

An aircraft to meet the growing needs of the commuter airline industry is nearing certification and first deliveries . almost simultaneously at a small production firm near Cleburne. .

. The Mohawk 298 is not a new airframe, as such, but a -re-engined" version of the old French Aerospatiale Nord 262.

It is being converted by Frakes Aviation under a contract to Mohawk Air Services Inc. for use in the extensive Allegheny commuter network.

It was built by the prestigious French firm that now has the French half of the Concorde supersonic transport project.

When the Nord 262 was first introduced into this country in 1964, it was billed as the replacement for the venerable Douglas DC3.

It carried the same number of passen-

Aviation

gers but in pressurized, air-conditioned comfort at substantially higher speeds and with greatly improved performance.

But this wasn't what was needed at the time, when what we now call the Regional Carriers or Local Service Carriers were providing the main service to smaller communities.

The commuters, as we know them, had not happened yet.

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THERE WERE SERVICES known as "third level carriers" that did some of this work but they were hardly more than more-or-less scheduled air taxi services.

And, just at that time, the local service carriers were not looking to DC3 replacements but ways to get more capacity onto the planes they were flying—or more accurately, getting new airplanes with more capacity.

The void this move into larger equipment created was that which gave birth to the commuter airline business.

The larger the equipment a carrier operates, the more people he has to have on board for each trip to reach a break-even load factor.

Small communities that could not provide this load factor, even with one trip per day, found themselves with their airline service suddenly cut off and it is this market that the fledgling commuter market is tapping with varying degrees of success.

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BECAUSE OF THE PROBLEMS of the marketplace when it came to this country 11 years ago, Nord 262 production lapsed into limbo after a run of about 100 aircraft.

Now, the commuter market is beginning to flourish, spurred on by such changes as the Allegheny experiment and with the increasing number of operators who are learning some "facts of life."

With smaller equipment that costs less to operate, a communter can provide more frequent service to a market and still break even.

Say a given market would generate 15 passengers per day. On a DC9, for example, the operator would have to serve that market at a loss with only one stop a day.

But with a Beech 99, which only has 15 seats, he could run full every day. And by providing service twice a day he attracts people who would not have flown before because the service is now more attractive to more people.

(Allegheny has a network of privately owned commuters who provide feeder service to its network from communities it cannot handle economically with its larger equipment. It is a kind of everybody wins arrangement.)

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THE MOHAWK 298 is envisioned as a plane to serve the "second generation" commuter, if one can reach a second generation in less than a decade of life. It is for the commuter who now needs an airplane built for commuter service and not a "stretch" version of a general aviation airplane.

There was nothing basically wrong with the French engines on the old Nord 262 but the new United Aircraft of Canada Pratt & Whitney PT6A-45 turboprop offers something new

With its bladed Hartzell propellors, the new engines turn at no less than 1,425 revelutions par minute and a maximum of 1,700 rpms. Normal propellor engines turn about 2,400 rpm.

It is the speed of the tip of the blade moving through the air that causes a lot of aircraft noise reaching the ground, thus the PT6A-45 is considerably quieter than present generation turboprop aircraft.

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FRAKES AIRCRAFT PRESIDENT J. Fred Frakes said he is hoping for certification by "mid-1975, but if we get it between now and October, then that ought to be good."

He said production aircraft are on the line now and when certification comes, delivery should not be far behind.

Besides the new engine, the aircraft will offer airline-like seating in full, standup interiors, onboard lavatories and all the comforts the passenger is used to on his trunk airliner.

Up front, it has full avionics including Category II instrument landing capabilities, meaning it can land at the lowest minimums any aircraft can at the new Dallas-Fort Worth Airport and most airports around the world.

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FUEL COSTS IN THE first six months of the year have set tha nation's airlines back $1.4 million per day, the Air Transport Association said this week.

This was the increase over the fuel costs for the same period a year ago when fuel prices were as high as anybody would like to have seen.

During the first half of 1975, the increase in jet fuel prices over the same period a year ago came to $225 million, ATA said.

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"DESTINATION MOON" IS THE title

title of the first of three films in the second annual Classic Science Fiction Film Series offered by the Fort Worth Museum o of Science and History.

It will be shown next Sunday, beginning at 3 p.m.

Admission is $1 for adults and 50 cents for children 12 and under. .. '

Two more movies, "From the Earth to the Moon" and "Countdown," will be shown on succeeding Sundays.

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AMERICAN AIRLINES HAS changed the name of its Flight Service College in Fort Worth to the American Airlines Learning Center.

All signs to the buildings on Texas 360 across from the old Southwest Airport will be changed to conform.