

## West Coast Fattens Thin Traffic Routes With Navajos



*"Use of the light-twins isn't an experiment any more . . . it's part of our regular service."*

Robert L. Twiss

*Regional carrier expects to improve service to smaller communities and cut expenses by \$50,000 a year by use of 8-place Piper twins*

**T**HE DAYS OF the venerable Douglas DC-3 are numbered in the service of West Coast Airlines, the Seattle-based local service carrier that serves 38 communities in the Northwest.

The reliable DC-3s might have been around for another two years if West Coast hadn't decided to experiment with light, twin-engine aircraft to serve some of the line's thin traffic points in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

E. N. Altman, WCA's VP-community and industrial relations, pointed out the other day that West Coast had been considering assignment of light twins to such low-traffic points for some time before it actually began service last summer.

The moving force to test the idea stemmed from the airline strike, when West Coast's fleet of F-27

turboprops and DC-3s was kept busy around the clock in an attempt to cope with the strike-caused demand for seats.

The light twins were the carrier's only hope of serving adequately a half-dozen points that otherwise well might have received only limited service during the costly strike.

West Coast promptly leased three Piper Aztec twins and assigned them to routes such as Roseburg-Eugene, Ore., Sun Valley-Hailey-Twin Falls, Ida., and Baker-Ontario, Ore., to Pasco, in eastern Washington.

The Roseburg and Sun Valley terminals received the first Aztec service, and passenger response indicated that light twins not only would be useful for the duration of the strike, but could serve effectively until such communities developed sufficient traffic to warrant conventional carrier transports and adequate airports.

"Then, during the strike, a runway modification project was undertaken at Sun Valley airport, ruling out DC-3 service entirely," Altman explained.

"So we had to use smaller aircraft

if we wanted to continue service to Sun Valley, an important year-round resort area, and, of course, we did want to continue.

"At Roseburg, because of terrain and runway position, all DC-3 landings had to be made from the same direction, which often led to overflights," said Altman. "And we had airport problems with our F-27s at Baker and Ontario.

"So physical limitations of these airports were a major problem to us. Most of the fields could be served only with DC-3s, and that meant a continuing scheduling problem."

Altman said West Coast was delighted with passenger response to light-twins during the strike. Passenger acceptance of that type of transport proved no barrier to continuing the operation.

"Economics, of course, was an important factor, and the use of light twins meant we could provide point-to-point service between certain cities that we couldn't with DC-3s because of scheduling difficulties," he said.

"West Coast's experience indicated that selected points would be

more efficiently served with light-twin aircraft than with DC-3s," Altman continued. "Therefore, West Coast attempted to continue an operation similar to that flown during the strike."

The Federal Aviation Administration stepped in, however, objecting to the wet-lease feature of the light twin operation. Subsequently, an agreement was reached on a dry-lease arrangement that FAA decided would be in the public interest.

West Coast found that the Aztecs, while suitable in most respects for the new service, didn't have the passenger capacity to accommodate the increasing travel demands.

The carrier promptly began shopping for light-twins with more passenger capacity, and, after studying several models, settled on the eight-place Piper Navajo.

West Coast ordered one Navajo and then followed quickly with an order for three more. The first was scheduled for delivery early this spring, the second and third in June and the fourth in late July.

"These four planes cost more than \$500,000, a sizable sum and indica-

## Union with the Pacific.

hundreds of miles shorter than any route now available.

and hours faster.

Eastern has three round trip jets every day between Seattle and Portland, including one

round trip direct flight to Huntsville, Orlando and Melbourne.

On June 13, 1967, a big airline got bigger.

To enable you to serve your customers better than ever before.



**EASTERN**

We want everyone to fly.



tive of our serious commitment to make the light-twin service a permanent part of the West Coast program," Altman said. "These four planes will take care of our requirements as far ahead as we can see, but we also hold options for four more Navajos in the event we require them."

Here are some of the typical stage lengths for West Coast's light aircraft operations:

□ Roseburg to Eugene, 54 mi. This service enables passengers to

make a direct connection with a WCA DC-9 Series 10 twinjet at Eugene for flights to San Francisco. Roseburg-San Francisco travel time has been cut in half through use of the light twins.

□ Ontario to Baker to Pasco, 90 mi.

The first Navajo was assigned to the Boise-Baker-Ontario-Pasco run, with Boise added because of the community of interest of this important Idaho city to the three other communities.

Passenger acceptance of the light twins?

"It's remarkable," Altman said. "Take Roseburg traffic. It was up 350% in March this year over March 1966. The Roseburg city manager was in Seattle the other day. He stopped by our new headquarters here to thank us for this type of service."

Indicative of the interest of other local service lines in the West Coast light-twin operation, the executive VP of another carrier spent a day with Altman and other WCA executives not long ago to see how such an operation might apply to some of the thin-traffic routes his firm now serves with larger equipment.

Altman thinks the Navajo operation, in addition to enabling West Coast to serve certain communities more efficiently, will trim the carrier's losses in serving those communities. He estimated that use of the light-twins in such cities might reduce WCA expenses by \$50,000 or more a year.

"And the biggest benefit of all is the improved service we are offering these communities," Altman reported.

About the only passenger objection so far has come from some women travelers who disliked boarding the Aztec over the wing. The Navajo will take care of that minor complaint, as it features airstair boarding.

Altman said that West Coast planned to extend the new type of service to Salt Lake City, noting that about 60% of the visitors to Sun Valley use the Salt Lake gateway.

"This is the only way we can get a cut at this important Sun Valley traffic," he added.

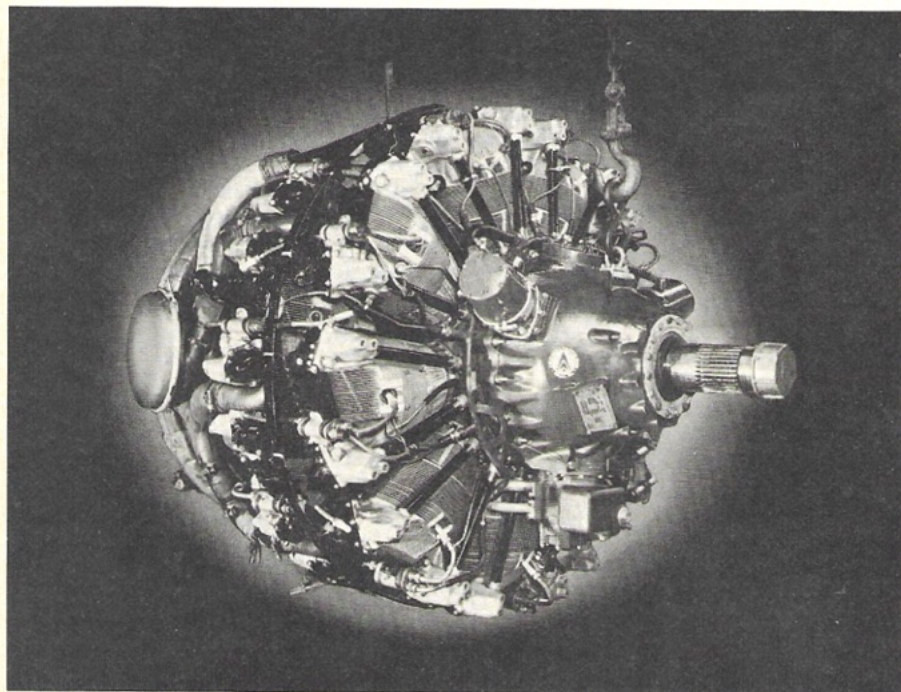
West Coast assigns regular pilots from its seniority list to the Aztec and Navajo flights. Each pilot, already a qualified captain, spends a week in ground school training and goes through check flights with both West Coast and FAA check pilots. Each copilot who is being advanced to captain spends two weeks in ground school and then completes the flight checks.

Shelby Tuttle, VP-operations for WCA, noted that five line and two check pilots were assigned to the Aztec operation. Similar numbers are expected for the Navajo operation.

Altman said the Civil Aeronautics Board has expressed keen interest in the operation.

"The Board has sanctioned it and also has sanctioned a class rate for

*"There are two times in a man's life when he should not speculate: when he can't afford it, and when he can."* SAMUEL L. CLEMENS (MARK TWAIN)



R 3350 TURBO-COMPOUND

# FOR ENGINE OVERHAUL

*depend on us*



**AMERICAN AIRMOTIVE**  
CORPORATION

P. O. BOX 187, MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, MIAMI, FLORIDA 33148 • TELEPHONE 887-0231, AREA CODE 305

it," he explained. "This is a first for the Board.

"The basic difference in concept in West Coast Airlines' approach to light-twin aircraft use is that we fly them as part of our system over routes to cities we are certificated to serve," he said.

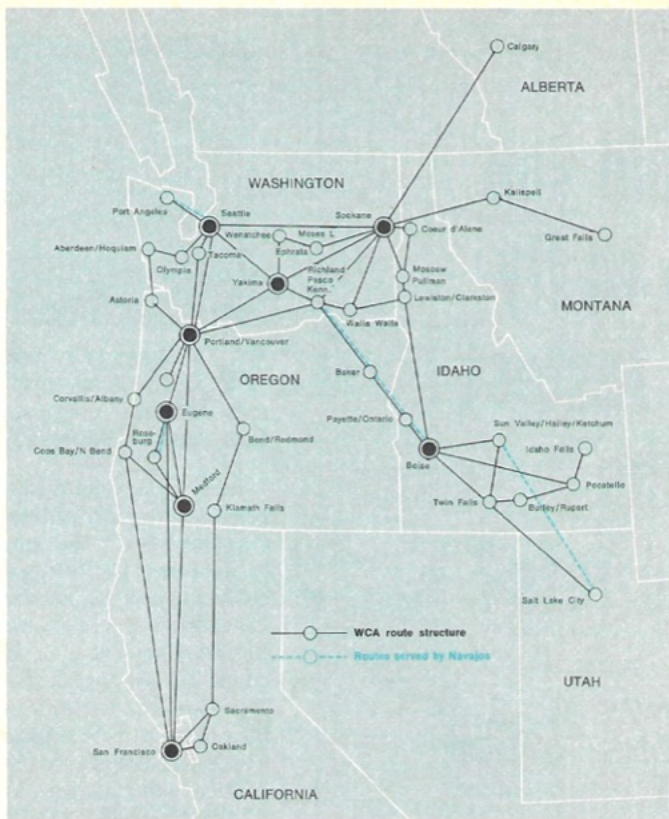
"This is in contrast to common usage being made in other parts of the industry, where air taxi operators have contracted with airlines to provide air taxi service from a certificated carrier city to a noncertificated city as an extension of the scheduled carriers' service."

About those West Coast DC-3s. . .

Use of the Navajos means West Coast probably can eliminate scheduled DC-3 service throughout its route network by the end of this year. Better utilization of the carrier's nine-plane F-27 fleet, and its DC-9s can be achieved, too, which means better service can be provided to communities that can support the larger aircraft with more passengers.

"Use of the light-twins isn't an experiment with West Coast Airlines any more," Altman said.

"It's part of our regular service, and an important part at that." ■



Dotted line on WCA's route map indicates routes to be served by Navajos: Seattle-Port Angeles; Sun Valley-Salt Lake City; Boise-Ontario-Baker-Pasco, and Eugene-Roseburg.

Clamps....

call the man from **UMPCO**

Manufacturers AN-MS-NAS Support Clamps, Clips, Brackets for  
Aircraft and Missile applications.  
Fabricators of Spec-Controlled designs.

Engineering catalogues available upon request

**UMPCO, Inc.**

331 N. Vineland Avenue, CITY OF INDUSTRY, California, ZIP 91746, Telephone 213 — 330-2204