



Picking up the pace

Transportation team revamps freight services to speed delivery of airplane parts

By Kathleen Spicer

Not that long ago, it took anywhere from one to three days to deliver parts and materials from Boeing's Fabrication facility in Auburn, Wash., to its airplane assembly plants in nearby Renton and Everett.

Feedback from Boeing's internal business unit partners about the unreliable service was clear—improvements were needed.

Today, those delivery times have been slashed dramatically and are being accomplished in one to three hours.

"This is fantastic news for the business units we support," said Bob Sullivan, a manager in Licensed Transportation with Shared Services Group (SSG).

How was this possible? Like many improvements within Boeing, the Lean+ initiative was used by the SSG Licensed Transportation team in the Puget Sound region to examine the entire operation. The result was the creation of a direct-delivery freight service program that simplifies five processes into one and makes picking up and dropping off freight more efficient.

Previously, delivery runs involved five modes of transportation and a variety of vehicles that delivered to Renton and Everett hub locations, including special "hot truck" runs for high-priority items. Now, all freight is treated with the same priority and organized on standard semi-truck and trailer runs that deliver directly to local receiving areas. From there, the freight is quickly moved to support final assembly activities. Nonstandard deliveries, or what were known as "hot truck" requirements, continue to be met. But the increased speed of the new process has helped reduce work requests that require expedited transportation.

"Scheduled streamlined delivery times are quicker and more reliable for our customers," Sullivan said. "We've also improved our freight-tracking system to provide increased visibility into shipment dates, truck assignments and drop-off locations so we can provide better customer service."

Standard runs also save on costs in equipment maintenance and fuel and reduce in-plant traffic congestion because fewer vehicles are used in the process.

For Kevin Moeller, warehouse manager of Commercial Airplanes' Community Manufacturing Partnership in Algona, Wash., the new process means same-day parts delivery from Renton.

"We're thrilled with the timeliness and efficiency of the new system," he said. "It also reduces lost freight and improves quality because there are less product 'touches.'" This is the number of times a product or shipment is handled by a Boeing employee.

After a successful launch of the new delivery program from Auburn to Renton, where the single-aisle 737 is assembled, the team turned its attention to delivery runs from Auburn to the Everett twin-aisle manufacturing site.

"There have been a few setbacks, but we continue to take steps forward," Sullivan said. "We've included everyone in the process from Fabrication to the truck and forklift drivers to our Renton and Everett business partners in final assembly. Everyone got their questions answered upfront, which made a huge difference when we began to implement."

Jim Gunderson, a Licensed Transportation manager who oversaw the pilot project in Renton, said input from the business partners was invaluable, and streamlining the delivery process has reduced the number of times a part is touched by 65 percent.

"Without our partners' participation, we would have ended up with a solution that worked well for us, not them," Gunderson said.

Bob Schunzel, a Renton motorized equipment operator, was part of the original Lean+ workshop that outlined the team's tasks. "It's slick," he said. "The dedicated runs help make it more timely and efficient for our business partners; it's a different system than what we're used to, but it's working well."

The new system is a big deal in terms of how Licensed Transportation delivers freight to the region, said Mike Turek, director of Licensed Transportation for the Puget Sound region. "Most important, it's what our business partners want in terms of saving time, cutting costs, and eliminating cumbersome processes and excess handling of shipments. Partnering with them is the best way to help them meet their cost targets."

Next up is the Spares Distribution Center in Sea-Tac, Wash., and the North Boeing Field corridor in Seattle. ■

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PHOTO: Licensed Transportation truck driver Mike Singleton helps support the new direct-delivery freight service implemented by Shared Services Group Licensed Transportation. **ED TURNER/BOEING**