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Reardon pushes competitiveness at governor's aerospace summit

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon said Wednesday during the Governor's Aerospace Summit in Spokane that Washington state must do everything within reason to land the second production line of the Boeing 787.

"The second line is the canary in the coal mine for this state's commercial aerospace industry," Reardon told the summit audience. "We can't sit back and watch it slip away to another state."

Reardon has said since January that more effort is needed statewide to remain competitive for the second production line of the 787 as well as future planes constructed by the Boeing Company, including the next-generation 737.

The Boeing Company has said it is considering Everett, where the current 787 line is operated, as well as Charleston, S.C., for a second line. A decision is expected before the end of the year.

"We make the best airplanes in Snohomish County and Washington state, and we have the best trained workers in the nation," Reardon said. "But we need to keep creating a competitive atmosphere for Boeing to want to stay here."

A recent report hinges Washington's chances of landing the second 787 line on its workforce. Reardon recently said this is only a baseline and more training opportunities are needed.

In July, Snohomish County joined the Aerospace Futures Alliance and a consortium of community colleges and educational facilities to create a new, statewide aerospace institute offering training, research and development in Snohomish and Spokane counties.

In August, Reardon hosted a regional aerospace summit attended by more than 300 participants. For the first time, Boeing management, labor leaders, suppliers, government and local constituents came together to discuss how to win that second line and to keep Boeing from leaving Washington state altogether.

"During that summit, we provided our state legislators and others a global perspective of the future of aerospace," Reardon said. "We also left with a better understanding of what aerospace businesses need to compete, and began developing strategies to strengthen the state's existing aerospace industry and businesses."