



Aviation — Alaska’s Lifeline

April 2012



Alaska has over 400 public use airports

If we didn't have the airport we wouldn't have anything. The airport is a fact of life for living out here in the villages. The airport is our roads, highway, ocean; our lifeline."

-Rural Alaska Resident

Airports provide the only year-round lifeline to rural Alaska.

Aviation provides a vital link to everyday goods and services in rural Alaska. Alaska’s vast size, harsh terrain, extreme climate and large percentage of federally protected land make airports not just the logical mode of transportation but often the only mode of transportation serving the rural population. In terms of investment in rural access, there is simply no near term possibility of achieving a fully connective road system due to both land ownership constraints and extreme cost.

The population of rural Alaska is primarily Native Alaskan. The remote, starkly beautiful land that we refer to as “rural Alaska” is simply “home” to the people who have inhabited the state for



New airport for the isolated and remote community of Akiachak

thousands of years. While subsistence living (the customary and traditional use of wild and natural resources) still plays a major role in the lives of Alaska’s rural residents; many basic, everyday needs must be met by delivery of goods and services.

Aviation provides that vital link for access to necessities

such as food, mail, healthcare, education, and travel. There is no road network connecting villages to each other or to the highway system enjoyed by the continental United States. The isolated villages dotting Alaska’s landscape are all connected to each other and to the rest of the world by their airports.

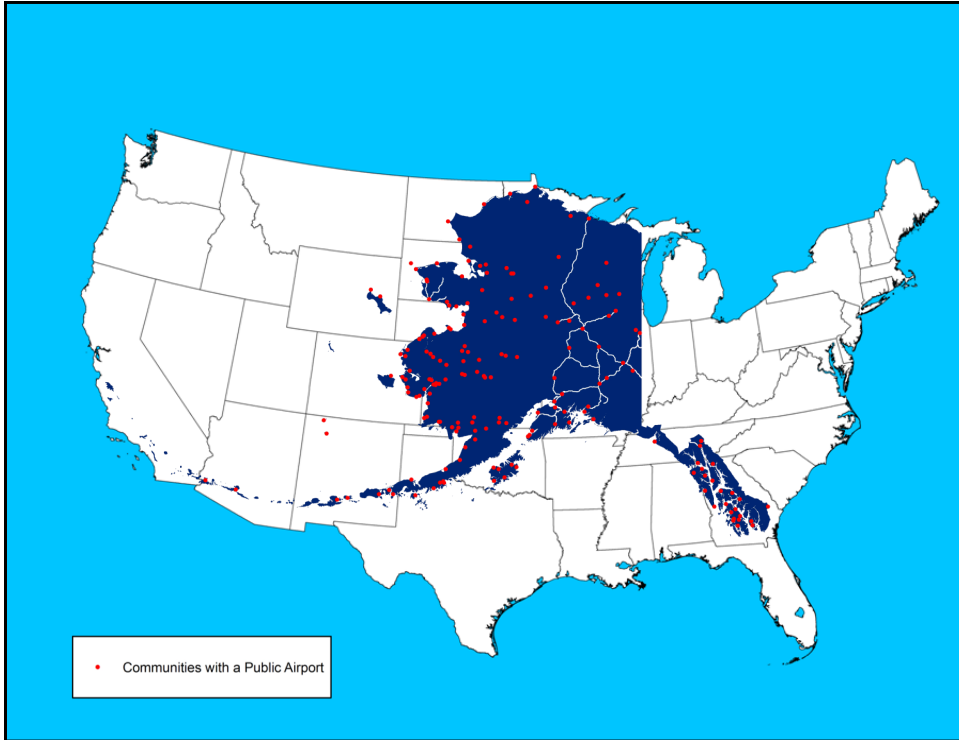


For residents of Alaska, this is their taxi cab, school bus, mass transit, freight hauler and ambulance.

The significance of aviation in Alaska — by numbers.

- There are over 400 public airports in Alaska
- 82% of communities in Alaska are not connected by road
- Aviation provides 47,000 jobs in Alaska
- Aviation contributes \$3.5 billion to the state’s economy
- Alaska residents, on average, fly more than eight times as often as residents of other states

The State of Alaska — Size and Scale



State of Alaska

- 663,267 square miles in area
- 1 mile of road per 40 square miles of land
- 82% of communities are not connected to a road or highway system
- 2/3 of land is federally owned

Continental United States

- 3,119,885 square miles in area
- 1 mile of road per 1 square mile of land
- Most communities connected by road or highway system
- 1/4 of land federally owned

“Rural America is so different from this. In rural America, you have roads. You have access to services. You can get in your car and you can drive to a store, even if it takes a few hours. There’s simply not that option here.” - Akiachak Airport Project Engineer Julie Jones

Aviation — Alaskans’ means of travel and commerce

The means of travel and commerce appreciated by most Americans are not available to many Alaskans. Alaska’s road and rail systems do not reach many of the communities in the state, and these systems are often prohibitively difficult and expensive to build.

Roads are not an option many people in Alaska can choose. Because of this, aviation is the primary means of providing goods and services such as:

- **Medical and dental services**—transporting people from small, remote villages to medical treatment centers; emergency medevac transport; delivery of oxygen, immunizations, and medicine; transport of expectant mothers to deliver babies in regional hospitals; transport of doctors, dentists, and other health professionals to remote villages
- **Groceries, mail, and household goods**—fresh fruit and vegetables; milk and clean water; letters; packages from retailers nationwide; diapers and formula; all the basic goods that are not provided by Alaska’s rich natural resources
- **Education support**—delivery of supplies and school meals; transport of teachers to remote communities; student travel for academic and athletic events
- **Public safety**—search and rescue; criminal transport; Alaska State Trooper & emergency/disaster response
- **Mineral and resource exploration**—minimal impact on untouched land; access to very remote, mineral-rich locations
- **Personal travel**—visiting family and friends; recreation



Aviation, the only year-round transportation system for America’s most remote residents.

Continued investment in aviation is critical to keeping rural Alaskans connected and preserving their lifeline.

View the ‘Lifeline’ video at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDGw09luApE>

For more information, contact:
Jessica J. Della Croce
Phone: 907-269-0728
E-mail: jessica.dellacroce@alaska.gov
www.dot.alaska.gov