



# Project Development Process

## DOT&PF Rural Airport System

Projects to upgrade and improve rural Alaska airports owned by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) go through a process approved by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to obtain federal [Airport Improvement Program \(AIP\)](#)<sup>1</sup> grant funding. AIP grants are available nationally to public-use airports included in the [National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems \(NPIAS\)](#)<sup>2</sup>. Because demand for AIP grant funds far exceeds the availability, FAA bases distribution of these limited funds on current national priorities and objectives. The statutory requirements and obligations associated with obtaining AIP grants are the responsibility of the airport owner or grant sponsor.

The DOT&PF rural airport system consists of 235 airports. The Division of Statewide Aviation (SWA) oversees policies, procedures, and programs to support the three DOT&PF regions in complying with FAA regulations and obtaining AIP grant funding to develop, construct, and improve those facilities. The following chart provides a high-level flow of how rural Alaska airport projects are identified, designed, prioritized for federal grant funding, bid, and constructed. Other airports utilize similar AIP-compliant processes appropriate to sponsors of a single airport.



Minto airport/Dave Wilson



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.faa.gov/airports/aip/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.faa.gov/airports/planning\\_capacity/npias/current/media/NPIAS-2021-2025-Narrative.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/airports/planning_capacity/npias/current/media/NPIAS-2021-2025-Narrative.pdf)

## Capital Improvement Plan

- Scored project is entered into DOT&PF spending plan; also known as Airport Capital Improvement Plan (ACIP).
- APEB scored projects are placed in spending plan queue and depending on score and anticipated federal funding available, the project is assigned a funding year.
- Low scoring projects may sit in the queue for years. High scoring projects do not supersede projects previously programmed in the current budget year or the following two years.
- Unless determined an emergency, large construction projects typically take at least 3 years before they are funded and generally longer.

## Design

- Environmental considerations are addressed through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.
- DOT&PF determines if Right of Way (ROW), easements, and all other property ownership meet funding and construction requirements.
- Aviation Design tracks and updates the project Scope, Schedule, and Estimate (SSE). Projects that exceed the lesser of 100% or \$5M above the original estimate must be re-evaluated by the APEB.
- Depending on staffing levels and scheduling, project design is completed by in-house staff or consulted out to an engineering firm.

## Funding

- Federal funding availability varies by federal fiscal year and is based on legislation.
- DOT&PF acquires Legislative Authority (LA), authorizing the acceptance of federal grant funds and providing the required state match.
- A project bid solicitation is developed and advertised.
- Bids are reviewed, scored, and a contractor is selected.
- Available grant funding and LA is based on the design cost estimate, if bids substantially exceed this estimate the project could be delayed, phased, or reduced in scope.

## Construction

- Selected contractor is awarded the project.
- Construction typically takes one to three seasons, depending on project scope and location.
- Once construction is complete, there is an inspection process and formal acceptance of the improvements by the state and FAA.
- After final inspection, the project and corresponding grant funding must be closed out and airport information is updated.
- Most federal funded construction projects obligate DOT&PF to operate and maintain the airport for 20 years from project completion.

Fairbanks International, Lake Hood, and Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airports are part of the Alaska International Airport System (AIAS). Unlike the rural airport system, AIAS is operated as a self-sustaining enterprise fund and not reliant on state general funds. Thus, any improvements to these airports run through a separate project selection process that includes public involvement in the Airport Master Plan and contractually required consultation with the air carriers operating at and paying fees to AIAS.

Another 36 airports in Alaska are owned and managed by local government entities rather than by DOT&PF. These airports are listed by the FAA as part of the National Airport System, are eligible for AIP funding, and must meet FAA guidance for projects, but have their own project priority process.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Q What is the most frequent cause of project delay?

**A** Right of Way (ROW) acquisition is a common factor in project delays. Often it is as simple as not having valid contact information for a listed property owner or it can be complicated by inaccurate property data, unanticipated environmental issues, or previously undocumented issues such as heritage sites.

### Q What factors are unique to project development in rural Alaska?

**A** Many areas of Alaska experience challenges transporting adequate gravel or other critical construction supplies to the project. Barge availability is seasonal and, in some locations, not available in years with low precipitation. The airport undergoing construction is often the only reliable transportation mode available to the community. Finding ways to improve the runway while allowing mail, supplies and medevacs to operate creates additional complexity in project development.



### Project Contacts

**Becca Douglas, CM, Project Manager**  
Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities  
907.269.0728 | rebecca.douglas@alaska.gov

**Becky Cronkhite, CM, RESPEC Project Manager**  
RESPEC Inc.  
907.206.6996 | Rebecca.Cronkhite@respec.com

**Annette Lapkowski, PE, Panther International Project Manager**  
Panther International, LLC  
727.556.0990 x1025 | alapkowski@pantherinternational.com

