

Upper Tanana Airport Planning Study

By Megan Flory, Community & Sustainability Planner, RESPEC

Regionally significant airports support their surrounding communities by providing access to a broader range of aviation services than smaller local airports. Facilities at regional airports accommodate larger and/or specialized aircraft, depending on the needs of the region. DOT&PF Northern Region recently released the Upper Tanana Airport Planning Study (UTAPS), which evaluated the needs and benefits of identifying a regional airport in the Copper Basin/Upper Tanana Region. Once the needs of a regional airport were defined, four airports—Tok Junction, Tanacross, Northway, and Gulkana—were evaluated to determine which would be best suited for designation as ‘regionally significant.’ Evaluation criteria were based on information gathered through stakeholder interviews, airport visits, inventories, and inspections.

Based on the evaluation, Tok Junction Airport was determined to be best suited to serve as a regionally significant airport for the Upper Tanana Region. It is the closest airport to the population center of Tok, home to most of the amenities needed by airport employees and users, and is near the DNR Forestry firefighting headquarters. This study provides a long-term, multi-phase Recommended Plan



UTAPS project area map.

to upgrade the components of Tok Junction Airport that do not yet meet the requirements for a regional airport. This includes expanding the existing runway to accommodate the Beechcraft King Air, which is currently used for medevac operations and is anticipated to be the airport’s critical aircraft after facilities are upgraded. It is important to note that the identification of a regional airport does not impact DOT&PF support for other state-owned airports in the area. For a table detailing key considerations in the UTAPS project, see page three.

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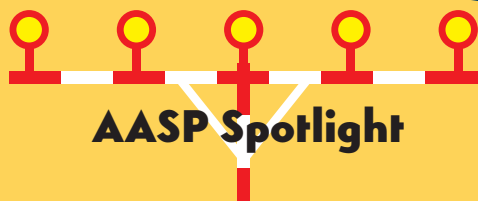


A Beechcraft King Air, the expected critical aircraft for Tok Junction Airport.

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AASP Spotlight

Pat Dryer, DOT&PF Avalanche Program

By Megan Flory, Community & Sustainability Planner, RESPEC

Alaska DOT&PF recently won the 2023 *Most Innovative State Program* award from the National Association of State Aviation Officials for its Avalanche Program, which includes partnerships with the FAA and the Alaska Railroad. The program is exploring two applications of unmanned aerial systems (UAS): using docking stations to allow for autonomous, remote data collection and using drones to deliver explosives during avalanche mitigation activities to minimize human risk. Pat Dryer of DOT&PF Southcoast Region has been leading the docking station research in Juneau.

The Alaska Avalanche Program covers more area than any other state's program and has unique environmental challenges, including arctic conditions, coastal rime ice, and no alternative routes during road closures. Flying manned missions to monitor snow conditions and determine whether closures and mitigation measures are needed can be difficult and sometimes impossible. Dryer believes that implementing UAS in Alaska will allow DOT&PF to operate safely in these harsh conditions. Remote docking stations present the opportunity for developing preplanned flight paths and collecting data

more quickly and safely than with traditional methods.

UAS also allow for safer delivery of explosives during avalanche mitigation efforts. Until 2018, DOT&PF Southcoast Region was using a 105mm howitzer positioned on Sandy Beach to intentionally trigger avalanches that would otherwise threaten to close Thane Road. Firing artillery or delivering ordnance with a helicopter presents risks to operators and requires Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) areas. Unmanned delivery of explosives removes the need for staff to handle armed explosives, reduces accident risk, and allows for smaller TFR areas. DOT&PF has been working closely with the FAA, Alaska Railroad, and the US Forest Service on this first-in-the-nation effort to test the use of UAS to deliver avalanche explosives. These tests occur away from populated areas to ensure safe conditions. The use of weapons on a drone requires special authorization from FAA under Section 363, but Tim Glassett, the Statewide Avalanche and Artillery Program Manager, says that the close working relationship between the FAA and Alaska DOT&PF has allowed for a smooth approvals process.

According to Christopher Goins, Alaska DOT&PF Southcoast Region Director, "Pat's work is encouraging a blossoming culture of innovation that is reaching beyond the Avalanche Program, and has affected the way we respond to emergencies, how we support local communities, and how we design and construct our projects." Pat Dryer and the Avalanche Program are improving how Alaska—and the nation—keep our roads and state employees safe – thank you Pat for all your efforts and keep up the great work!



Pat Dryer at work.



Avalanche clean-up near Valdez.



FAA NEWS & UPDATES

AC 150/5300-13B, Airport Design Comment Period Open

This AC contains the FAA standards and recommendations for the geometric layout and engineering design of runways, taxiways, aprons, and other facilities at civil airports. This revision fully incorporates all previous changes to [AC 150/5300-13B](#)¹ as well as new standards and technical requirements. The comment period for FAA Change 1 to this AC is open until November 29, 2023. See the redlined version [here](#)².

Fluorine-Free Foam (F3) Transition for Aircraft Firefighting

Many organizations worldwide mandate the use of firefighting foam that contains PFAS, known as Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF), because of its effectiveness in fighting aircraft fires.

However, due to the documented health and environmental effects of PFAS, Congress directed the FAA to prepare a transition [plan](#)³ to ensure an orderly move to fluorine free foam (F3) for aircraft firefighting. In January 2023, DoD published an F3 military specification (MILSPEC), and foam manufacturers can now submit MILSPEC F3 agents for qualification by DoD. Once DoD certifies that a foam meets the new specification, it will be added to the Qualified Product List. FAA considers foams on the Qualified Product List as acceptable to use to satisfy the regulatory requirements of Part 139. See the FAA CertAlert [here](#)⁴.

FAA Fly Safe Resources

Did you know that the FAA has a blog? Sure, they do, it's 2023! Unsurprisingly, one of the big topics on the FAA [blog](#)⁵ is safety. Through their Fly Safe: General Aviation Safety Enhancement Topics, the FAA produces [fact sheets](#)⁶ and [videos](#)⁷ on common safety issues faced

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AirTime

Q Are there any new reports on the website?

A The team recently posted several new reports on the public side of the website, including **Runway Details and Approach Attributes** (*Reports > Airport Assets*) and **Airport Contacts** (*Reports > Contacts*). Each report contains filters for geographic areas and additional filters to help limit search results. The Airport Contacts report lists department contact information for various airport personnel, including airport manager and superintendents, planners, safety and security officers, and leasing specialists. The Runway Details report provides runway length, width, and surface type by airport while Approach Attributes notes attributes needed for an approach into an airport, including weather stations and cameras, runway length, lighting, Airport Layout Plan approval, survey type, and Federal Aviation Regulations Part 77 approach category. Reports can be run for only DOT&PF owned and operated airports, or for additional public airports across the state.

FAA continued from page 2

by general aviation pilots. Be sure to check out these resources (when you're on the ground, of course) and as always, fly safe!

¹https://www.faa.gov/airports/resources/draft_advisory_circulars/

²https://www.faa.gov/documentLibrary/media/Advisory_Circular/draft-150-5300-13B-Airport-Design-chg1-ind-red.pdf

³https://www.faa.gov/sites/aa.gov/files/FAA_Aircraft_F3_Transition_Plan_2023.pdf

⁴<https://www.faa.gov/sites/aa.gov/files/part-139-cert-alert-23-01-F3.pdf>

⁵<https://medium.com/faa/flysafely/home>

⁶<https://www.faa.gov/newsroom/safety-briefing/faa-safety-briefing-fact-sheets>

⁷https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PL5vHkqHi51DQdF_PXKQT7uJUPd4UzlxNS

⁸<https://www.alaskaasp.com/documents/phase-i-documents.aspx>

⁹<https://www.alaskaasp.com/>

¹⁰<https://dot.alaska.gov/anc/>

¹¹<https://dot.alaska.gov/anc/business/generalAviation/>

¹²<https://dot.alaska.gov/faiiap/>



By Annette Lapkowski, PE, B2Gnow/BlackCat Project Manager

Coach Class

New Internal Reports Overview Tab

Since the team continues to add more internal website reports, an **Overview tab** now highlights each report along with a description. Additional details will be added here as more are developed, so users can stay current and quickly ascertain if there is a report that fits their needs (*Reports > Overview*).

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
ALASKA AVIATION DATABASE a component of the Alaska Aviation System Plan

Home Facilities CIMP Communities Reports Projects Resource

Dashboard > Reports

Overview

Reports: Overview

Report Tab in the Left Menu

Subtab Title	Report Name	Description
ACIP (Airport Capital Improvement Program)	ACIP	1) ACIP: This report includes airport project information for the DOT&PF's airport capital improvement program, funded by FAA through the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) and the AIP Program.
ACIP Project Details	ACIP Project Details	2) ACIP Project Details: This report includes airport project information as well as project delivery dates, scopes and estimates.
AIP Grants	AIP Grants	This report provides FAA AIP funded grant information, including FAA work codes, project descriptions, grant agreement and closeout dates, and funding breakdowns. Grant information is available from 1982 to now.
Airport Assets	Pavement Condition Index	1) This report generates Pavement Condition Index (PCI) values grouped by facility, runway, taxiway, and apron. See separate tabs in Excel for each component.

Report Description

Report Title

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UTAPS Key Considerations

Tok Junction Airport DOT&PF-owned

- ✗ Off-site expansion needed
- ✓ 1 mile driving distance to Tok
- ✗ Needs 2,500-foot runway expansion, possible crosswind runway, and new apron
- ✓ Infrastructure and maintenance capabilities are already in place

Tanacross Airport BLM-owned

- ✓ Off-site expansion likely not needed
- ✓ 11 miles driving distance to Tok
- ✗ Poor pavement condition
- ✗ Multiple contaminated sites
- ✗ Not included in NPIAS

Northway Airport DOT&PF-owned

- ✓ Off-site expansion likely not needed
- ✗ 55 miles driving distance to Tok
- ✓ Existing Customs and Border Patrol facilities
- ✗ Multiple contaminated sites
- ✗ No airport terminal, fuel, or aircraft maintenance services

Gulkana Airport DOT&PF-owned

- ✓ Off-site expansion likely not needed
 - ✗ 133 miles driving distance to Tok
 - ✓ Has most of the required facilities
 - ✗ Multiple contaminated sites
- Recommended for further study, but outside the study area*

AASP PROJECT UPDATE

By Becky Cronkhite, RESPEC Project Manager

The project team continues to work with stakeholders to identify informational needs and tools to help the public better understand and utilize our airport system. One exciting task launching this fall involves creating video content to tell the story of airports in Alaska. Videos produced in Phase I of the AASP will serve as a foundation for this task and are still available on the documents page of the [AASP website](#)⁸. The task will provide a deeper dive into the many aspects of rural airport maintenance and operations (M&O) as well as the many diverse stakeholders who depend on the airport system.

We are also excited to announce that our newest website feature, the AASP Public Airport Comment Map, is now available on the [AASP Homepage](#)⁹. The purpose of this



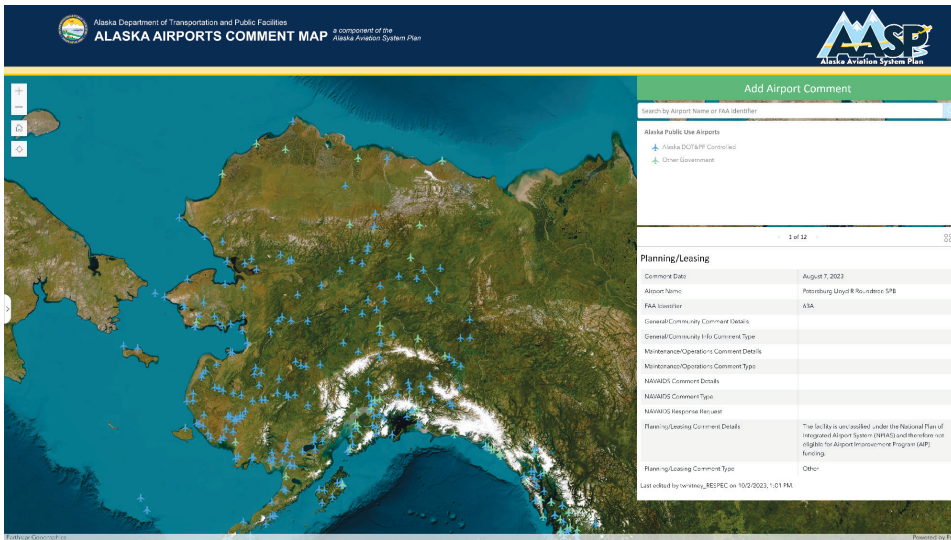
open forum, GIS-based map is to provide a centralized portal for the public to share important airport information that does not meet the criteria of the FAA NOTAM system. Map users can post comments with up to three photos attached. However, this is not an official reporting tool and is not monitored by FAA or consistently monitored by individual airports at this time.

We thank the air carriers, Alaska aviation consulting firms, and individual pilots who participated in reviewing the map and suggesting improvements. We are in the process of programming new features and incorporating suggestions into the map. Improvements currently underway include:

- Adding International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) airport codes into the search options

- Expanding the GIS dataset to add additional remote airstrips across the state
- Programming automated notifications of new comments on state owned airports
- Outreach to local sponsors to include them in monitoring comments for their airports
- Developing web-based video tutorials on navigating the map and adding comments

Users will notice that the Alaska International Airport System (AIAS) airports are not available for comment. These airports, [Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport](#)¹⁰, [Lake Hood](#)¹¹, and [Fairbanks International Airport](#)¹² have their own robust websites and public involvement programs. The comment map portal is intended to assist with gathering public feedback for the rural airports and landing areas.



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In The Works ...

The AASP team is constantly working to implement new reports based on needs and requests from users around the state. Next up are two more public report updates: to the Airport Capital Improvement Program (ACIP) report and to the Airport Needs Directory. The updated Needs Directory contains airport-specific information, is not fiscally constrained, and is intended to provide a holistic overview of the airport system.

The AASP project is managed by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Division of Statewide Aviation. Additional assistance is provided by the Aviation Advisory Board, private aviation organizations, local airport sponsors, air carriers, aviation-related businesses, and pilots.

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