



WINTER 2025

# NEWSLETTER

[www.AlaskaASP.com](http://www.AlaskaASP.com)

## AASP Project Manager Update: Farewell, Becky Cronkhite!

Greetings and happy holidays! With the change of seasons, we have also had some staff changes on the AASP project. Our consultant AASP Project Manager, Becky Cronkhite, retired from her position with RESPEC at the end of November. Edgar Tinajero, a professional engineer with over 10 years of Alaska-based aviation design experience, has taken over the RESPEC PM role.

For the past several years, Becky has been instrumental in bringing the AASP to life. Prior to her consulting days, Becky held positions at DOT&PF including as an Equipment Operator on the Dalton Highway and Fairbanks International Airport and as the Statewide Aviation System Planner. As the Statewide Aviation System Planner, she kicked off Phase I of the AASP and oversaw the development of the Alaska International Aviation System (AIAS) Planning Study and Forecast. She also worked at Kenai Municipal Airport as the Airport Manager.

Becky has been with RESPEC since 2015, when she was hired to assist with planning projects and establish the firm's Soldotna office. Becky has worked closely with DOT&PF Statewide Aviation on the AASP Phase III and other aviation projects including the Northwest Alaska Transportation Plan (NWATP) and the Denali Area Airports Planning Study (DAAPS). Becky's diverse work experience, hands-on understanding of the airport system, strong project management ability, and leadership skills have helped to make these projects a success in addressing critical aviation needs across the state. According to B2Gnow's Annette Lapkowski and Katie Langworthy who have worked with Becky on the AASP for the last four years, "she is supportive, encouraging, knowledgeable, and honest. Her aviation planning mission has always been to achieve the best for Alaska's communities, residents, and visitors." Becca Douglas, Statewide Aviation Planning Chief, said, "it was a true privilege to collaborate with Becky the past few years. Seeing our initiatives come full circle, from her work launching Phase I of the AASP in my current role to our collaborative efforts now, it really highlights her passion for aviation and makes the plan's progress even more meaningful. We will miss her!" We all wish Becky a joyous and very well-deserved retirement and want to thank her for her innumerable contributions to Alaska aviation throughout her career.

In other AASP news, DOT&PF Aviation Planners and Maintenance & Operations staff convened recently to review the Capital Improvement & Maintenance Program (CIMP) application after its trial run this summer. The AASP team is hard at work updating the application and improving the user interface based on their



Annette Lapkowski (B2Gnow), Becca Douglas (DOT&PF), Becky Cronkhite (RESPEC) and Katie Langworthy (B2Gnow) staff the AASP table at the 2024 Kenai Air Fair.

feedback. The AASP team has continued to update the [Documents](#)<sup>1</sup> page with a new White Paper on the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) and a new Fact Sheet on the Pavement Classification Rating (PCR) update.

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## AASP Spotlight

### Elzbeth Robson, Northern Region Aviation Planner

By Natalie Lyon, AASP Public Involvement Lead, RESPEC

Though Elzbeth Robson is new to the Northern Region Aviation Planner role, she brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and positive energy to the position. Having grown up on a homestead along Chena Hot Springs Road, Elzbeth is a born and raised Alaskan

who has a deep understanding of the rural lifestyle and a familiarity with Interior and northern Alaskan communities.

Prior to her new role, Elzbeth worked for five years with Statewide Aviation as an Airport Leasing Specialist. Before that, she charted a successful career in the private sector, including running her

own construction company, managing businesses in various industries, serving as a paralegal, and teaching piano and guitar. She is an accomplished singer-songwriter who also led a Middle Eastern Ensemble in Fairbanks. After five years with the State, Elzbeth has learned how to adapt and apply her private sector skills to the task of serving Alaska's aviation community.

To all her roles, Elzbeth brings a creative eye and a constant drive for improving the processes and systems within her purview. Her time in Leasing taught her how to build stronger relationships with airport tenants by always starting the conversation with

the questions "What can I do for you?" and more importantly, "What can the State do for you?" She is excited to apply and expand these skillsets as a planner, building relationships with Alaskan communities who depend on aviation as a lifeline. Currently, Elzbeth is getting up to speed on the planning role, being looped into ongoing projects including the Denali Area Airports Planning Study (DAAPS) and the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan (IATP), and learning the terms, processes, and acronyms specific to the job. She assists with both aviation and highway projects

and appreciates all the training, support, and encouragement that Northern Region Planning has provided so far.

As a 'big-picture' problem-solver who enjoys research and fact-finding missions, Elzbeth's favorite part of her new role is the opportunity to fly across the state and engage with community

members on the ground to build

a greater understanding of local aviation needs and gather potential solutions. In her free time, Elzbeth enjoys adventuring in all seasons in her RV with her husband and their Boston terrier, Marley. An avid ATV and snowmachine rider, Elzbeth has explored the valleys and mountain peaks along the Denali Highway, Cantwell, the White Mountains, and Murphy Dome, just to name a few, and is grateful to have seen places she once only dreamed of. Elzbeth, we hope that the job takes you to even more places on your bucket list, as you help to Keep Alaska Moving through Service and Infrastructure!

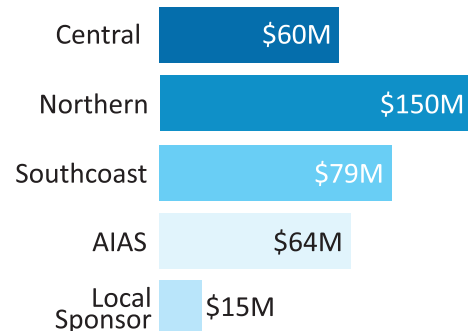


Elzbeth at the Deadhorse General Store on a trip up the Dalton Highway with the Leasing crew.

## FFY24 Airport Federal Funding Summary

During federal fiscal year 2024 (FFY24), Alaskan airports (including DOT&PF and local sponsors) received 91 federal grants through the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). The AIP grants comprised a total investment of about \$323M in Alaska's airport system. These awards range per individual grant from \$34,950 at Kenai Municipal Airport up to \$43,878,517 at Deadhorse. The distribution of AIP funds across DOT&PF regions, local sponsors, and the Alaska International Airport System (AIAS) is on the bar chart. AIP grants in FFY24 included units of work that ranged from acquiring snow removal equipment, security, emergency, and firefighting trucks (15 grants) to building improvements (12 grants), and runway, taxiway, and apron rehabilitations, reconstructions, and expansions (28 grants). Grants in 2024 also supported the installation of navigational aids (NAVAIDs) and lighting (19 grants) and updating airport master plans and studies (5 grants).\*

### FFY24 Grant Totals



\* Some grants address multiple units of work at an airport.

FFY24 Airport Federal Funding  
Summary map on page 3





**A** Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) represents the next frontier in aviation, integrating cutting-edge technologies such as unmanned aerial systems (UAS, commonly known as drones), electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft, and autonomous flight systems. These advancements aim to revolutionize cargo delivery, disaster response, infrastructure inspection, and even passenger transport.


The Alaska DOT&PF is actively working on several initiatives to prepare for and support AAM. These efforts include exploring digital twin technology to create virtual replicas of the state's airspace for simulating and optimizing flight routes, as well as enhancing weather monitoring capabilities through the use of weather cameras and AWOS (automated weather observation systems), and innovative meteorological UAS; ground infrastructure such as vertiports, UAS charging stations, and communication networks; and safety programs such as the Don Young Alaska Aviation Safety Initiative.

To learn more about specific AAM projects happening in the state, check out the new [AAM tab](#)<sup>2</sup> on the AASP website, which will be updated as new advancements occur.

We continue to work to expand our Geographic Information Systems (GIS) offerings. The Statewide Aviation GIS team is working to add mapping enhancements and leverage existing dashboards to geographically represent key aviation data spatially within the AASP website.




By Annette Lapkowski, PE, B2Gnow/BlackCat Project Manager



Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities  
**ALASKA AVIATION DATABASE**

*a component of the*  
Alaska Aviation System Plan



Home
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Projects
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Environmental

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Switch Facility: KOTLIK

General

Runways/Helipads

PCI/Surface Condition

Buildings/Equipment

Services/Navcom

Statistics

CIMP Inspection

Needs

Documents/Links

Facility Photos

Kotlik

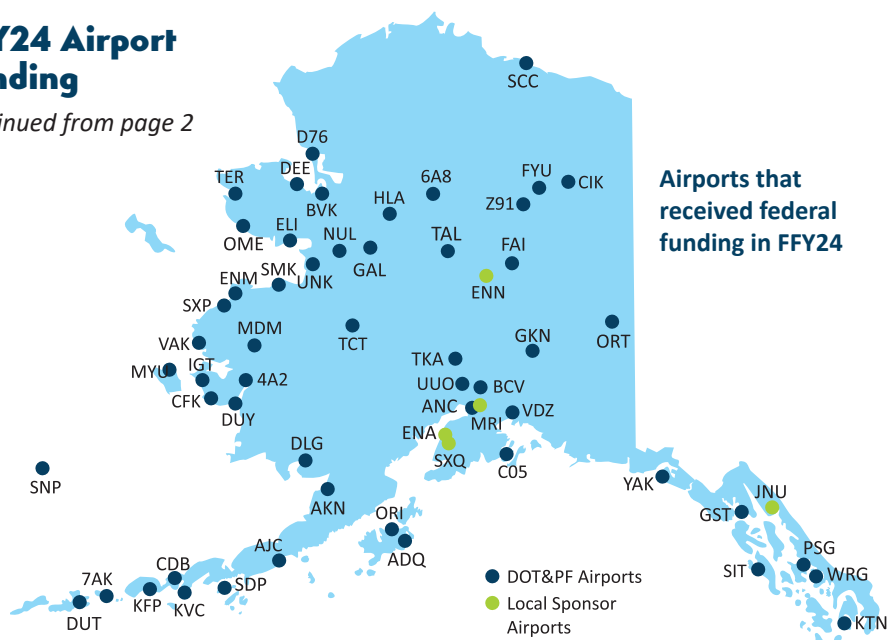
Community Overview: Kotlik

Native Community Name:	Qerrullik	ANCSCA Regional Corporation:	Calista Corporation
Place Name Translation:	Pair of Trousers	Native Regional Health Care:	Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation
Indigenous Language:	Central Yup'ik	ANCSCA Regional Non-Profit:	Association of Village Council Presidents
English Pronunciation:	KAWT lick	School District:	Lower Yukon School District
Harbor Dock:	Yes	Healthcare Facility:	Kotlik Public Health Nursing - Bethel Itinerant Nursing
State Ferry:	No		(907) 543-2110
Cargo Barge:	Yes		Kotlik Clinic - Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation
Road Connection:	No		(907) 899-4511
Coastal:	Yes	Library:	

The 'Communities' tab was internal but was recently moved under the 'Facilities' tab and can now be accessed by public AASP users. More data has been added to the 'Communities' tab to help the aviation team and public explore community information related to aviation assets (Facilities tab > Select your community of interest from the list > Communities left sidebar). These statistics are sourced directly from Alaska's

Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED). Community data such as population, demographics, school enrollment, spoken languages, and local infrastructure are helpful to provide a clearer and more holistic picture of a community and its needs to guide the system planning process. Direct links to the data sources used can be found at the bottom of the webpage.

*continued from page 2*



<sup>1</sup><https://www.alaskaasp.com/Documents.aspx>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.alaskaasp.com/AAM.aspx>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/1718698/santa-tracking-all-began-as-a-newspaper-ad-error/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.noradsanta.org/en/>



## Santa Tracking All Began as a Newspaper Ad Error

By Katie Lange Department of Defense, (Excerpted from [National Guard News](#) <sup>3</sup>).

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids across the U.S. have grown accustomed to keeping track of the big guy's journey through the North American Aerospace Defense Command Santa Tracker. They can track his flight path online, watch video of his progress through apps or just make a good old-fashioned phone call to find out where he is. But the whole thing wasn't cooked up by some NORAD genius. It turns out it only got started because of a misprint in a newspaper advertisement.

### How the tradition began

Sixty-three years ago on Dec. 24, 1955, the folks at what was then the Continental Air Defense Command Operations Center in Colorado were working a typical night shift when Air Force Col. Harry Shoup got an unusual phone call. "This call wasn't from the president or a general. It was from a young child in Colorado Springs who was following

the directions from a local department store advertisement printed in the local newspaper," said NORAD spokesman Preston Schlachter. "The youngster wanted to know the whereabouts of Santa Claus."

Apparently, the newspaper ad was from Santa telling children to call him directly at the number on the page – except the number was wrong. It rang into the CADCO instead. Shoup answered the first call that came in. He could have been a scrooge about it, but he wasn't. "He talked to the parents and assured the child that Continental Air Defense Command would keep Santa safe during his Yuletide journey," Schlachter said. Throughout the night, Shoup had his operator report Santa's location to every child that called in. Thus began the tradition, which rolled over to NORAD when it was formed in 1958, and it's been getting more popular and more technologically savvy ever since.

### A team effort

Tracking Santa is a big task that begins in November, when [NORADSanta.org](#)<sup>4</sup> starts getting inquiries from families. About 70 government and nongovernment contributors help set up the site, apps and phone lines, while more than 1,500 uniformed personnel, Department of Defense civilians and their families volunteer time on Christmas Eve to answer the

children's questions on Santa's whereabouts. Schlachter said more than 200 countries and territories visit the website. In 2017, it got 18 million pageviews, and the Facebook page had 1.75 million followers. The NORAD Tracks Santa program also received 126,103 calls and answered 2,030 emails, and OnStar received 7,477 requests to locate Santa. "I think it's an important tradition. We're happy to be part of that family experience," Schlachter said. Have fun tracking him and be sure to leave some carrots for the reindeer with Santa's milk and cookies!



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