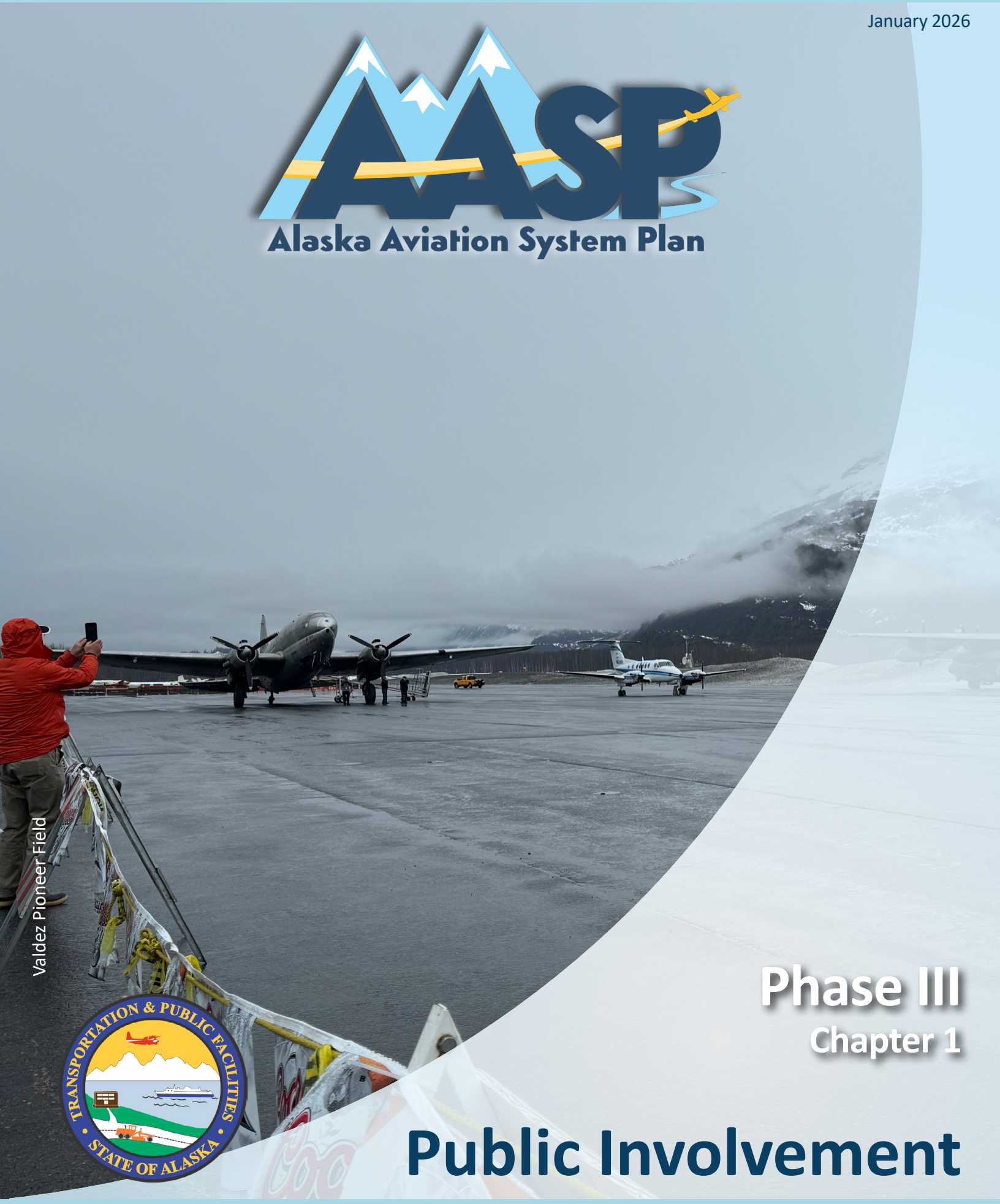
January 2026

Alaska Aviation System Plan



Valdez Pioneer Field

Phase III
Chapter 1

Public Involvement

Commonly Used Acronyms

AASP	**Alaska Aviation System Plan**
AIP	**Airport Improvement Program**
APEB	**Aviation Project Evaluation Board**
CIMP	**Capital Improvement and Maintenance Program**
DOT&PF	**Department of Transportation and Public Facilities**
FAA	**Federal Aviation Administration**
M&O	**maintenance and operations**
NPIAS	**National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems**
PCR	**Pavement Classification Rating**
PFAS	**per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances**

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I. Introduction

The Alaska Aviation System Plan (AASP) is the long-term strategic planning process used by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) to manage the largest single aviation system in North America. The AASP tracks information about all Alaska airports included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) as well as all other DOT&PF-owned and most non-DOT&PF public-use airports; monitors and evaluates issues, trends, and challenges; and develops tools and materials to keep planners, policymakers, and the public informed. The AASP is implemented in accordance with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5070-7, The Airport System Planning Process.

The AASP was first completed in 1986 and updated in 1996; beginning in 2008, DOT&PF adopted a continuous system planning model. Under this model, the AASP is updated in phases (5–6 year periods), allowing it to be more responsive to the dynamic nature of the aviation system. The goals of the AASP are to:

- Identify airport improvements needed
- Set priorities for funding
- Propose aviation policy
- Document the existing system with photos, maps, and data
- Continuously support the system through special studies, updates, and reviews as the system evolves

Engaging the public and key stakeholders is important to ensure the users of the aviation system have a voice in guiding its priorities. With this in mind, the Phase III AASP Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was finalized in January 2021. The purpose of the PIP was to establish a framework that would improve the accessibility and relevancy of the AASP to the public and promote greater awareness of the plan and its resources. The PIP included a list of outreach techniques intended to accommodate a range of audiences, engagement preferences, and public safety considerations in recognition of the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter describes how those techniques were implemented and provides recommendations for improving public involvement in Phase IV.

II. Public Involvement Techniques

The AASP team adjusted public involvement techniques as needed to maximize the effective use of available resources; therefore, some of the techniques suggested in the PIP were not implemented and some new techniques were developed. The following sections describe the outreach techniques used throughout Phase III.

Advisory Committees and Work Groups

Several advisory committees and work groups were convened during Phase III to inform discrete tasks of the AASP. These groups generally included subject matter experts and DOT&PF staff and held meetings as often as needed to support the AASP. Phase III advisory committees and work groups included:

- Adopt-an-Airport work group to complete Phase II effort
- Capital Improvement and Maintenance Program (CIMP) technical advisory committee
- System Condition and Needs technical advisory committee
- Aviation System Videos work group
- Western Alaska Airport Resiliency Study work group

The AASP team also attended meetings of the Aviation Advisory Board (AAB) and Aviation Project Evaluation Board (APEB) and held meetings with groups of DOT&PF staff as needed.

Interviews

Targeted interviews were conducted for several tasks within Phase III. At the start of Phase III, DOT&PF planners were interviewed about the APEB process to inform the Prior Phase Evaluation (Chapter 2). The feedback from these interviews helped shape the work of Phase III.

The Western Alaska Airport Resiliency Study included multiple individual and group interviews, including with DOT&PF planners, geotechnical engineers, and maintenance and operations staff. The study team also conducted a series of site visits with DOT&PF and FAA staff for a more specific discussion of the study.

In-Person Events

The AASP team attended several in-person events each year, though the events were more limited in 2020–2022 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to print copies of the newsletters and fact sheets, the team developed stickers and business cards for distribution at events and a branded tablecloth and table runner for exhibitor booths. These branded materials make the AASP memorable, supporting efforts to spread awareness of the plan and website.

Figure 1. AASP team at the 2024 Valdez Fly-in; business card and sticker designs.

AASP Newsletter

The first quarterly newsletter was published in Spring 2021. Newsletters generally contained an update from the project manager, a spotlight article on a staff member, FAA news and updates, information about the AASP website, and one or more articles on interesting aviation topics. Each newsletter was distributed to a public and internal mailing list, posted to the website, and professionally printed for distribution at in-person events. Appendix A indicates which Airport Improvement Program grant funded each newsletter and fact sheet.

Figure 2. Selected pages from newsletters.

Photo Contest

Photo submission contests were held in 2021, 2023, and 2024 to increase engagement with the AASP and encourage people to visit the website. While participation was low for each contest; we did receive some great photography. The 2023 contest was won by Melissa Osborne for the photo pictured right, *New Seal Coat on Runway 4L/22R, Nenana, Alaska, 7/23/23.*

Website

The public-facing AASP website serves as a "one-stop shop" for information about airports, system plan documents, contact information, useful links, and more. The website was substantially updated throughout Phase III to provide more access to airport information through the Reports tab. New documents, such as chapter reports, fact sheets, newsletters, and white papers, were posted to the website throughout Phase III as they were finalized; public Phase I and Phase II documents are also available.

Aviation in Alaska Video Series

A series of five videos were developed to showcase the complexity and critical importance of Alaska's rural airport system. The roughly 4–6 minute-long videos cover topics including medevac operations, aircraft rescue and firefighting, rural airport contractors, and managing a Part 139 airport, as well as an introduction the Alaska aviation system. Each video has an accompanying fact sheet suitable for hard copy distribution. The videos and fact sheets are posted on their own tab of the website.

Public Airport Comment Map

A Survey123-based comment map was added to the website to serve as a public forum for information about Alaska's airports. Users can select an airport from the map, which includes all DOT&PF-owned and most other public-use airports, to view comments or click the "Add Airport Comment" button to fill out a comment form. An instructional video was developed to help website users navigate the tool.

Fact Sheets

Phase III of the AASP produced 14 fact sheets to educate the public, consultants, and DOT&PF staff about aviation planning and design concepts. They are posted to the website and printed for distribution at in-person events.

What is the Alaska Aviation System Plan?

The AASP is a long-term, strategic planning process that includes data collection, special studies, public involvement, and more. Alaska uses a continuous planning model so the plan never goes out of date.

Capital Improvement and Maintenance Program (CIMP)

Capital Improvement and Maintenance Program (CIMP) inspections result in letter ratings (A–F) for different aspects of each airport; these ratings are then used to identify deficiencies in the system that must be addressed.

Aviation Project Evaluation Board (APEB)

The APEB prioritizes airfield and airport building improvement projects for Airport Improvement Program funding. Projects are nominated by the DOT&PF planners through coordination with air carriers, communities, and multiple functional groups and then reviewed by the six-member APEB.

Project Development Process

This fact sheet outlines how DOT&PF's rural Alaska airport projects move from need identification through design, prioritization, and construction using FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grants—which are limited and awarded based on national priorities and eligibility requirements. It also highlights the DOT&PF Division of Statewide Aviation's role in overseeing the process across 235 state-owned airports and common challenges faced in rural project delivery.

Airport Classifications and Performance Measures

Airport classifications categorize the roles of airports within an aviation system. For the AASP, these categories are evaluated approximately every five years to ensure they are still accurate and useful. Performance measures are used to assess the aviation system in relation to high-level goals and objectives. AASP performance measures are separated into airport categories (design, safety, and planning) and community categories (quality of life and economic development).

Rural Airport Lighting

Airport lighting is necessary for regular and emergency airport operations and is especially critical in communities that experience little to no daylight in the winter months. There are numerous challenges in maintaining lighting systems in the Rural Airport System, including aging infrastructure, maintenance training requirements, weather and climate change, and a lack of reliable power sources.

The Critical Role Airports Play in Alaska Wildland Firefighting

Wildland firefighting is more dependent on aviation infrastructure in Alaska than in the Lower 48 because of the vastness of the state compared to the limited road network. The Bureau of Land Management Alaska Fire Service, State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Fire Protection, and U.S. Forest Service utilize the widespread aviation network to quickly and effectively respond to fires throughout the state.

5010 Airport Master Record Program

The 5010 Airport Master Record program is how the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) maintains updated records for public-use airports. Alaska's smaller airports are inspected on a three-year rotation by a trained contractor or airport staff. The primary inspection categories are General Information, Services and Facilities, Based Aircraft and Operations, and Runway Information.

Aircraft Classification Rating—Pavement Classification Rating

The Aircraft Classification Rating—Pavement Classification Rating (ACR-PCR) is the FAA pavement strength rating system that compares an aircraft's load effect (ACR) to an airport pavement's load-carrying capacity (PCR) to determine whether the pavement can safely support that aircraft. The combined rating indicates which aircraft can operate unrestricted at an airport.

Essential Air Service

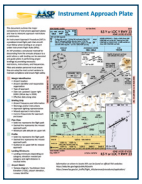
The Essential Air Service (EAS) program subsidizes scheduled service to small, rural communities that would otherwise not be viable markets for commercial air carriers. There are several Alaska-specific rules and exceptions to ensure the state's remote communities are adequately served; approximately 65 communities in Alaska receive EAS-subsidized air service.

Airport Resiliency in Alaska

Environmental factors and design and construction choices impact the longevity of airports. Flooding, permafrost thaw, and undersized culverts can all lead to physical issues that create safety threats on a runway. Phase III of the AASP included a Western Alaska Airport Resiliency Study to explore these challenges.

Airport Layout Plan

An approved Airport Layout Plan (ALP) is required to receive federal funding. ALPs depict existing and proposed airport facilities and are typically updated more frequently than master plans, ensuring compliance with federal requirements and supporting effective project development.



How to Read an Instrument Approach Plate

Instrument approach plates are charts used by pilots during instrument flight rules (IFR) operations. The charts provides written and graphical information about the airport and approach, including lighting, approach and missed approach paths, and landing minimums.

Understanding Part 77 Protected Airspace

Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 77 defines standards for five imaginary surfaces within an airport's airspace that must be protected to ensure safe operations; it also defines the framework for identifying, evaluating, and documenting obstructions within the airspace. Potential new obstructions are evaluated by the FAA Obstruction Evaluation Group to determine whether they pose a hazard.

Wind Roses and Airport Planning

Wind roses are created as part of a wind study or using historic data and are used in airport planning and design to determine appropriate runway orientation. Wind roses are included on Airport Layout Plans and include information about windspeed, frequency, runway orientation, runway wind coverage, and total wind coverage.

Surveys

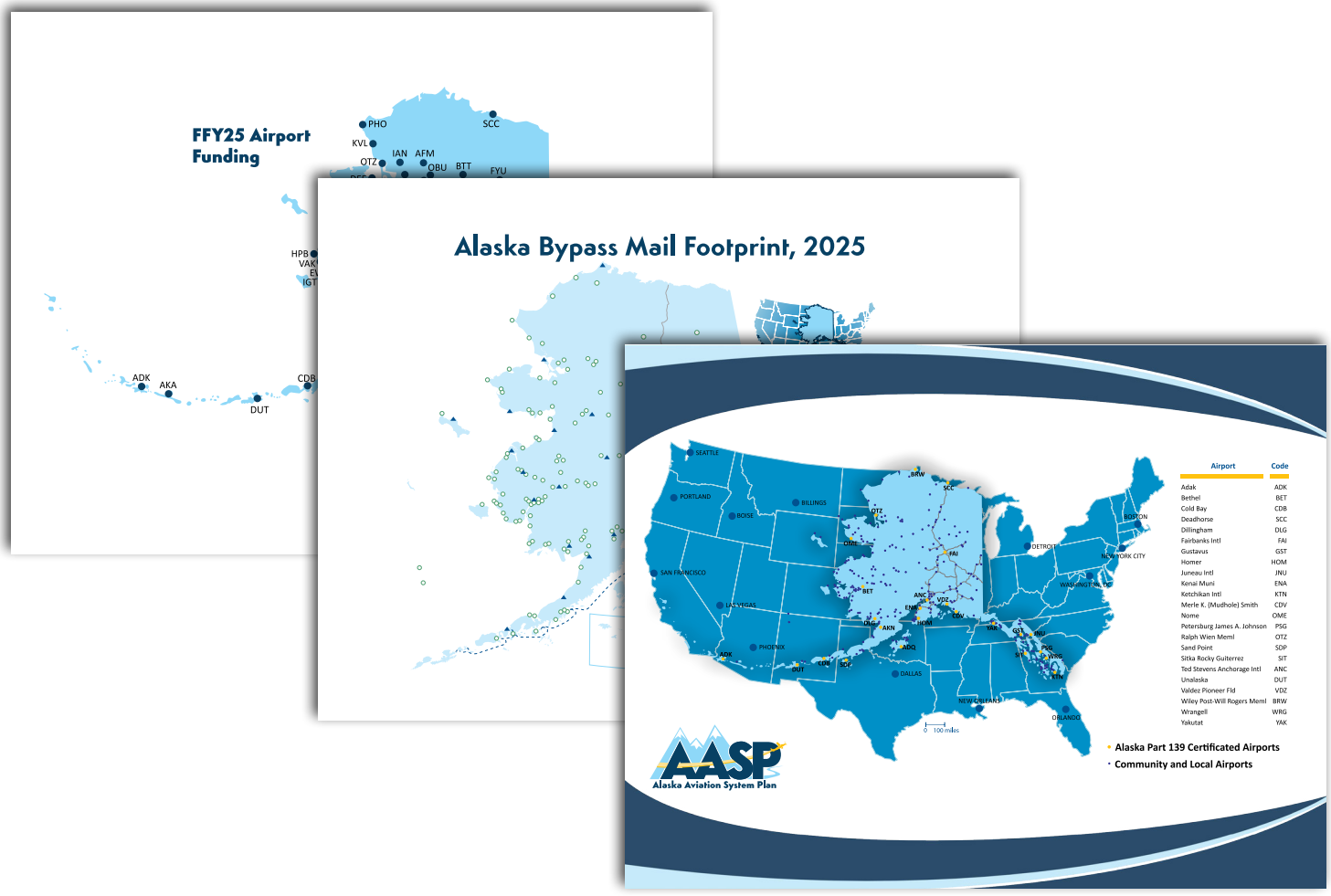
Several surveys were conducted during Phase III of the AASP to gather information from targeted groups for various tasks. Phase III began with a set of surveys to gather feedback about work completed during Phase II and input for the focus of Phase III. Three surveys were developed based on audience: 1) DOT&PF Staff, 2) FAA & Consultants, and 3) Pilots, Users, and Local Airport Sponsors. A similar survey was conducted at the end of Phase III to prepare for Phase IV; this survey was designed so respondents would take one of two versions based on whether they self-identified as 1) DOT&PF Staff or Consultant or 2) Local Sponsor Airport, FAA, Industry, or Public.

Additional surveys included a 2021 CIMP survey sent to DOT&PF staff and other inspectors and a 2025 survey to air carriers about their current and future fleet mixes.

Maps

Several maps were created or updated to visually display information about the aviation system. The maps were posted to the website, used in presentations, and printed for distribution at in-person events:

- AIP Grant Locations by Year (FFY23, FFY24, and FFY25)
- Alaska Airport System
- Alaska/Europe Overlay
- Alaska/United States Overlay
- Essential Air Service
- Bypass Mail Routes
- Part 139 Certified Airports



Outreach Summary by Year

	2021–2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Newsletters	AASP Photo Contest (Spring 2021) From Sitka to Skagway: Runway Lighting Recycle (Summer 2021) CIMP Inspection Status (Fall 2021) By the Numbers, Part 1 (Winter 2022) By the Numbers, Part 2 (Spring 2022) DOT&PF PFAS Update (Summer 2022) Airports Support Firefighting on the Last Frontier (Fall 2022)	Alaskan Aviatrixes: Pioneers throughout History & Today (Winter 2023) Technology and Innovation Improve Aviation Safety in Alaska (Spring 2023) Seaplane Operations in the Last Frontier (Summer 2023) Upper Tanana Airport Planning Study (Fall 2023)	FFY23 Grants Summary (Winter 2024) AWOS Expansion Pilot Project (Spring 2024) Alaska Air Carrier Compliance Website Update (Summer 2024) AASP Website Map Search (Fall 2024)	Santa Tracking (Winter 2025) Winter Alaska Airports Resiliency Study Update (Spring 2025) Will it or Won't it? Preparing for a Possible Mount Spurr Eruption (Summer 2025) Navigating New Frontiers: National Aviation Convention Held in Anchorage (Fall 2025)	DOT&PF West Coast Alaska Storm Response (Winter 2026)
Fact Sheets	What is a System Plan? CIMP Inspection Program APEB Project Prioritization Process Project Development Process Airport Classifications and Performance Measures	Rural Airport Lighting The Critical Role Airports Play in Alaska Wildland Firefighting Essential Air Service in Alaska	5010 Airport Master Record Program Rural Airport Lighting (update)	Essential Air Service in Alaska (update) Airport Resiliency in Alaska Airport Layout Plan Understanding Part 77 Protected Airspace Wind Roses and Airport Planning	
Events	DOT&PF M&O Conference Great Alaskan Aviation Gathering (2021 and 2022)	Alaska Air Carriers Conference Valdez Fly-In Fairbanks Aviation Day Kenai Fly-In	Alaska Air Carriers Association Convention Great Aviation Gathering Valdez Fly-In Fairbanks Aviation Day Kenai Fly-In	Alaska Air Carriers Association Convention Valdez Fly-In Fairbanks Aviation Day Kenai Fly-In Palmer Fly-In	Alaska Air Carriers Association Convention
Other	Phase II review / Phase III priority setting surveys CIMP survey Tribal outreach mailers Photo contest	Photo contest Public comment map		Air carrier survey Phase III review / Phase IV priority setting surveys	

III. Observations and Recommendations

Phase III included many successful public outreach and education tools and activities. The lessons learned during Phase III should inform the development of the Phase IV PIP.

Advisory Committees and Work Groups

Phase III advisory committees and work groups provided useful information and direction. Future phases should continue using advisory committees and work groups to support specific, clearly defined tasks. Meeting agendas should be sent in advance and meeting time limits should be observed to respect the volunteers' time.

Interviews

Targeted interviews provide more nuanced perspectives than surveys, though they are more time-intensive. Phase III interviews provided useful information and direction; future phases should utilize interviews as appropriate. Whenever possible, interview questions should be sent to the interviewee in advance to allow the interviewee to prepare.

In-Person Events

Interactions with the public at in-person events indicated that the presence of AASP staff is useful for educating the and engaging public. AASP branding makes booths easily recognizable and encourages people to stop and ask questions. The AASP team should continute attending in-person events in future phases.

Because events are not always attended by the same individuals, future phases may benefit from a customizable "quick guide" to ensure consistency and minimize confusion for new staff. The guide could include a checklist of standard items to bring (e.g., printed materials, email sign-up sheets, personal business cards), key information summarized into one to two sentences (e.g., what the AASP is, how it helps pilots/air carriers/the public), and answers to frequently asked questions beyond the AASP (e.g., where to find information about becoming a pilot). The guide could also have a form for staff to fill out before (name of event, date, goal of attendance), during (number of interactions with different user groups [pilots, industry, general public, etc.], questions asked, topics discussed), and after (lessons learned) events. Defining a goal for each event would be especially useful, as it would help guide staff's interactions with the public.

Staff should bring a map or list of aviation construction projects for, at minimum, the current year. Planned projects for future years would also be beneficial. A poster-sized map of active and planned projects that also shows other DOT&PF airports would help staff engage the public in conversations about airport needs.

Staff may consider attending non-aviation events to reach audiences not already engaged with aviation topics.

AASP Newsletter

The quarterly newsletter allows the AASP team to consistently engage with system plan users, document and publicize accomplishments, celebrate staff, and explore interesting, niche aspects of the aviation system such as the history of Alaskan aviatrixes and the origins of airport names. Future phases should continue publishing a quarterly newsletter.

Photo Contest

Participation in the photo contest was very low. Future phases should either significantly expand the publicity for the contest (e.g., through the DOT&PF social media) or discard the contest.

Website

The website is the primary way the public interacts with the system plan and hosts a great deal of useful information for public and internal users. Future phases should continue updating and improving the website; bringing a laptop or tablet to in-person events would allow staff to gather feedback and show people how to use features and tools of the website.

The Phase III evaluation/Phase IV priorities survey asked several questions about the website. Relevant results are available in Appendix B.

Aviation in Alaska Video Series

The videos produced during Phase III are useful tools for education and outreach. Future phases should collect feedback about the Phase III videos and document ideas for future videos, whether through informal conversations or formal surveys.

Fact Sheets

Fact sheets are useful primers for DOT&PF and consultant staff, decision-makers, and the public. Existing fact sheets should be updated as needed and the AASP team should track frequently asked questions to identify topics for new fact sheets.

Maps

Maps are helpful tools to convey the vastness of the aviation system and the number of airports managed by DOT&PF and other sponsors, as well as other spatial information like the distribution of grant funding. Maps should be updated as needed and the AASP team should explore opportunities to display more information visually.

Surveys

Surveys can provide useful information and should be used as needed in future phases. Survey audiences should be as specific as possible and new requests should be sent infrequently to maximize response rates. Questions should be straightforward and clear to help respondent understanding and, when possible, multiple choice to help staff analysis.

Additionally, in person surveys or polls can be conducted at events. This can be done using a tablet for online surveys or more hands-on methods like marble or sticker voting.

Methods of Communication

Regular but not overly frequent email updates continue to be an effective method of communication. The AASP team should continue to expand the mailing list by bringing sign-up sheets to events. Additionally, future phases may benefit from greater use of social media to reach a wider audience.

IV. Conclusion

Public involvement is a critical component of the AASP. Outreach and education occur through a broad range of media and the AASP team should continue to innovate and adapt to keep the public, industry members, and decision makers well-informed.

Alaska Aviation System Plan

Prepared for:

With a grant from:

The preparation of this document was supported in part with financial assistance through the Airport Improvement Program from the Federal Aviation Administration AIP Grant Numbers 3-02-0000-024-2018 and 3-02-0000-033-2024 as provided under Title 49 USC § 47104. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of the FAA. Acceptance of this report by the FAA does not in any way constitute a commitment on the part of the United States to participate in any development depicted therein, nor does it indicate that the proposed development is environmentally acceptable in accordance with appropriate public laws.

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