

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Birchwood Airport Master Plan (AMP) Update:

Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) Meeting #4 – NOTES

March 22, 2024; 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Invited Participants (see Guiding Slide 3 for full listing of SAG entities)



SAG Members

- Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association: Rob Stapleton
- Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF): Philana Miles (DOT&PF Project Manager), Mark Eisenman (Anchorage Area Planner), Tim Hanley (Airport Manager)
- Alaska Railroad Corporation: Brian Lindemood (absent)
- Birchwood Airport Association: Abe Harman (absent)
- Birchwood Community Council: Val Jokela
- Birchwood Recreation and Shooting Park: Jim Stoneking
- Civil Air Patrol: Wally Parks
- Eklutna, Inc.: Kyle Smith
- Native Village of Eklutna Carrie Brophil, Marc Lamoreaux
- Talon Hangar Association: Dennis Serie

Project Consultants

- HDL Engineering Consultants: Mark Swenson (Consultant Project Manager), Heather Campfield
- Agnew::Beck Consulting: Shelly Wade (Public Involvement, Land Use and 3P Lead)

Objectives

Share and get SAG input on:

- The Public Review Draft, especially:
 - Section 5.0 – Alternatives & Preferred Alternative
 - Section 7.0 – Implementation Plan
- Plans for the March 30th Public Meeting
- Next Steps

Project Recap, Schedule, and Project Public & Partner Engagement (See Guiding Slides 5 – 10 for additional detail)

- Mark Swenson explained contracting issues with the state last year caused delays, making it difficult to keep momentum and communication going with stakeholders and the public. This led to a lack of clear messaging about project status updates while work was ongoing behind the scenes.
- Encouraged the group to visit the project website (<https://dot.alaska.gov/creg/birchwoodamp/>) to view materials and provide feedback.

Alternatives (See Guiding Slides 11 - 18)

- Mark Swenson explained that the alternatives have not changed much from the alternatives that were on the website and displayed at the public workshop / charette in November 2022
- The team took feedback from the charrette and expanded and made minor adjustments, but the alternatives have remained largely the same as the last time the steering committee reviewed them in December 2022.

Key Points on preferred alternative and implementation plans, including concerns about potential impacts to cultural resources and recreational areas:

- Concerns were raised by Marc Lamoreaux about potential impacts to known cultural resources from proposed aviation easement expansions and tree clearing. He noted more time is needed for Tribal consultation on impacts.
- Jim Stoneking expressed concern that the proposed aviation easement acquisition to the northwest could impact Birchwood Recreation and Shooting Park's sporting clays walkthrough area.
- Clarification was requested on tree clearing timelines, as the long-term timeline of 11-20 years for proposed easement projects was concerning from a cultural resource perspective.
- It was suggested that more details be provided on potential traffic pattern changes for each alternative to better understand noise impacts on nearby residents.

Key points on traffic patterns and how alternative may impact nearby residents:

- Val Jokela submitted a comment on behalf of Birchwood Community Council, noting it would be helpful to spell out traffic patterns for each alternative to understand potential noise impacts on residents. Mark Swenson noted there is a table in the master plan that evaluates traffic patterns but agreed it could be strengthened if not clearly explained.
- Val commented that from the perspective of residents, the documentation in the plan did not clearly explain how the alternatives might impact noise levels. More clarification was requested.
- In Alternative 4, it was noted that traffic would drive over the road, which does not seem ideal from a neighborhood perspective. This alternative was therefore not viewed as favorable.

Implementation Planning (See Guiding Slides 19 – 26 for additional detail)

Key points on the details around near, mid, and long-term airport projects to improve safety, address demand, and allow for future expansion:

- Near-term projects focused on safety improvements like removing parallel taxiways, widening the gravel runway, and acquiring RPZ land.
- Mid-term projects involved paving additional apron areas and parking lots, as well as a glider staging area.
- Long-term projects aimed to allow for future expansion through land acquisition, building new lease lots and infrastructure off-airport, and addressing aviation easements.
- Safety was a primary driver in projects to remove the fence line and address inline taxiways. Demand for new tie-downs and leases was also a consideration.
- Cost estimates were provided for each project timeframe, totaling over \$14 million for the near-term and \$4 million for the mid-term improvements.

Timeline (See Guiding Slides 27 – 28 for additional detail)

Key points on finalizing the timeline:

- Marc Lamoreaux expressed that the timeline proposed, with finalizing the plan in April/May, was not appropriate given that information about impacts to known cultural sites on the proposed aviation easement expansions had just been brought to light. He noted that multiple agencies and Tribal consultation would be needed regarding these sites, and more time was needed for review beyond the proposed timeline.
- Marc Lamoreaux requested the timeline be expanded rather than set in stone at this point, to allow for proper consideration of cultural resource impacts.

Next Steps

- The public meeting is scheduled for March 30th from 10am-1pm at the Birchwood Civil Air Patrol facility to get additional public input on the draft plan.
- A project flyer is being developed to promote the meeting and will be posted at the airport. Advisory group members were also asked to share the information.
- At the meeting, a short presentation is planned to provide an overview of the project and key takeaways, rather than a lengthy group discussion.
- Maps and project materials will be available for small group discussions to look at in more depth and provide feedback.
- Input from the meeting will help inform any potential revisions to address in the final plan based on public comments received by the April 8th deadline.
- Advisory group members were encouraged to attend to both share information and hear directly from other community members on their perspectives.