



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Transportation and
Public Facilities

DIVISION of PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT and STATEWIDE PLANNING
Anchorage Field Office

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July 24, 2024

Eklutna, Inc.
Kyle Smith
Director of Land Assets
16515 Centerfield Drive, Suite 201
Eagle River, AK 99577

Dear Mr. Smith.

Thank you for your comment letter dated May 30, 2024 regarding the Birchwood Airport Draft Master Plan.

I wanted to reassure you that Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) has not yet begun pursuing a formal avigation easement, land acquisition, or capital improvement project funding related to recommendations in the draft Birchwood Airport Master Plan. However, if an avigation easement, land acquisitions, and/or capital improvement project are pursued in the future, DOT&PF will work with Eklutna, Inc., through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process at that time.

The Birchwood Airport Master Plan project team was made aware that Eklutna, Inc., is working with the DOT&PF Statewide Aviation Leasing Section regarding potential lease and permit options for development adjacent to the airport. However, the project team is not involved with the review and approval of lease and permit applications. We encourage you to continue working with the Statewide Aviation Leasing Section regarding those efforts.

Regarding the specific topics referenced in your letter:

Trails

Thank you for alerting the project team of Eklutna Inc.'s intention to work with the Chugach Mountain Bike Riders to ensure an appropriate alignment of the trail.

Eklutna, Inc. Land Ownership

The recommended alternative in the master plan would not impact the Fire Creek Conservation Easement. Also, the recommended lease area expansion is contingent on land acquisition from Eklutna, Inc., which is currently not supported by Eklutna, Inc.

Avigation Easement

A statement regarding the age of the 9 acre avigation easement from Eklutna, Inc., and that it was obtained without fee, will be added to the airport master plan.

Hazardous Waste Review

The primary goal of an airport master plan is to describe the short, medium, and long-term development plans to meet future aviation demand, while maintaining environmentally safe standards, within the public interest.

Under Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5070-6B, for Airport Master Plans, the development of a master plan generally does not necessarily require a formal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The Birchwood Airport Master Plan was categorically excluded from the NEPA process on February 18, 2018 and February 3, 2022.

Cultural resource surveys and environmental assessment surveys, are typically conducted after funding is programmed for a capital improvement project and/or land acquisition. An in-depth NEPA evaluation will occur during the design phase for a capital improvement project. If a capital improvement project is funded for the Birchwood Airport that may impact Eklutna, Inc.'s lands, surveys will occur at that time.

Capital Improvement Plan

A discussion about potential development partnerships is beyond the scope of the airport master planning process. The planning project team encourages Eklutna, Inc., to continue discussions with the Statewide Aviation Leasing Section regarding a potential development partnerships.

Third-Party Development

A copy of the *Public Private Partnership Summary* was provided to Eklutna, Inc., on May 30, 2024. The document will also be added as an appendix to the final plan.

Alternative Preference

DOT&PF understands that Eklutna, Inc., is in favor of alternative two, if it minimizes new airport infrastructure on Eklutna property and the avigation easement footprint. Eklutna, Inc. may also support the no build alternative in the future.

A discussion about private development and a boundary crossing permit is beyond the scope of the current airport master planning process. The planning project team encourages Eklutna, Inc., to continue discussions with the Statewide Aviation Leasing Section regarding any potential private development.

If you have any additional questions about the Birchwood Airport Master Plan, please feel free to contact me via email at: philana.miles@alaska.gov or via telephone at: (907)269-0519.

Sincerely,

/s/ *Philana Miles*

Philana Miles

Transportation Planner I