



January 25, 2022

Re: Deadhorse Airport Improvements
NFAPT00549 / TBA
Request for Scoping Comments

Dear Agency or Public Stakeholder,

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), proposes to construct airport improvements at the Deadhorse Airport (FAA Airport Code: SCC), in Deadhorse, Alaska. The Deadhorse Airport Improvements Project (State Project No. NFAPT00549) is federally funded through FAA's Airport Improvement Program (AIP).

The Deadhorse Airport is located on the north coastal plain of Alaska at the northern end of the Dalton Highway, approximately 5 miles south of Prudhoe Bay and approximately 380 air miles north of Fairbanks. Proposed airport improvements are located approximately at 70.20° North Latitude and 148.46° West Longitude (Sections 24, 25, 26, and 36, Township 10 N, Range 14 E; and Sections 19, 30, and 31, Township 10 N, Range 15 E; Umiat Meridian; United States Geological Survey Quadrangle Beechey Point A-3 NE). Project location, vicinity, and the airport property boundary are provided on Figures 1 and 2.

DOT&PF is seeking your review of, and comments on, the proposed project to support preparation of an environmental document in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA). Your and others' responses will provide necessary data and input that will help us develop a final proposed project design that avoids or minimizes potential adverse environmental and human impacts.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to remedy Deadhorse Airport deficiencies, address safety concerns, improve drainage, and help bring the airport into compliance with current FAA design standards and criteria identified in the Alaska Statewide Transportation Plan (ASTP) and Alaska Aviation System Plan (AASP).

The Deadhorse Airport, with a single, paved runway designated as Runway (RW) 6-24, serves as a key regional aviation hub in arctic Alaska which is owned and operated by the DOT&PF. The Deadhorse Airport provides daily freight and passenger service between Deadhorse and Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Utkiaqvik; commercial fixed-wing and helicopter flight services; support for oilfield and Trans-Alaska Pipeline System logistics and

operations; and various regional air services that provide daily critical travel, shipping, and medevac air links to surrounding villages that are not connected to the road system.

The Deadhorse Airport has a history of wildlife conflicts with aircraft operations, including recorded strikes with mammals and birds. Recorded ground and air strikes with wildlife species considered potentially catastrophic to aircraft include caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) and numerous avian species of varying sizes that travel through and/or use the area in and around the airport. Caribou and other large mammals are of particular concern, and have caused aborted aircraft takeoffs and landings, near misses, and other disruptions of airfield and airspace operations. Measures to exclude large mammals from accessing active airport surfaces are needed to reduce this hazard.

Large flocks of birds cause similar concerns, as most wildlife strikes reported at Deadhorse Airport involve birds, with waterfowl making up 91% of all recorded on-airport hazing efforts from 2017 to 2019. As habitat management is one of the most effective long-term measures for reducing wildlife hazards on or near airports, measures to reduce open water habitat in the airport infield areas are needed.

Drainage structures (culverts) at Deadhorse Airport and along Deadhorse Way have either failed or are of insufficient capacity. Culverts on the airport property are subjected to substantial ice jacking that causes them to no longer function and their adjacent pavement areas to become deficient. Drainage and associated improvements are needed to improve drainage and comply with FAA design standard criteria in these areas.

Proposed Action

To address existing airport deficiencies and safety concerns as described in the project purpose and need, DOT&PF has considered several project alternatives and determined the Proposed Action would result in the fewest potential environmental and human impacts of alternatives evaluated. The Proposed Action would include the following elements (Figures 3 - 4):

- 1) Construct drainage improvements at Deadhorse Airport and along Deadhorse Drive and replace existing airport pavement and taxiway lighting as necessary for culvert replacement.
- 2) Relocate known utilities affected by drainage improvements constructed along Deadhorse Drive.
- 3) Re-grade and/or place fill in select infield locations to aid in drainage and wildlife control.
- 4) Construct an airport perimeter wildlife fence and associated gates for access control, a fence maintenance service road, and fence security features to exclude large mammals from accessing active airport surfaces.

Gravel material for the project would be extracted from a commercially available and permitted local material source and hauled to the project on existing roads. The contractor would be responsible for complying with existing permits, and acquiring any additional permits and clearances for material site use and access. The anticipated material stockpile and staging area is shown on Figure 5.

DOT&PF has conducted a preliminary review of known potential environmental and human impacts of the proposed action (Appendix A). To provide an opportunity for you to interact directly with DOT&PF staff on the

project and bring other concerns or information to the process, we will be hosting an interactive public informational meeting via streamed videoconference. At this meeting we will present the preliminary proposed action alternative and take comments, questions, and other input you may have about project scope, details, or anticipated schedule. When final meeting arrangements have been made, you will be contacted as to its date and time, as well as on various methods for accessing the meeting via videoconferencing or telephone.

We are working to complete environmental documentation for the proposed project by mid-fall 2022, and anticipate construction to commence in late 2023 and take 2-3 years to complete. To maintain schedule, we are respectfully requesting your written comments by no later than February 28th. Please e-mail comments to: william.sexton@alaska.gov.

Thank you for your attention to this request, if you have any questions regarding the proposed project, you may contact me at (907) 451-5479.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Hutchinson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Hutchinson, P.E.
Engineering Manager

Enclosures:

- Figure 1 – Location & Vicinity Map
- Figure 2 – Airport Property Boundary
- Figure 3 – Proposed Perimeter Fence and Fence Service Access Road
- Figure 4 – Proposed Culvert Replacements/Infield Drainage Area Fill Placement
- Figure 5 – Existing Material Source (Mine Site 3)
- Appendix A - Project Area Preliminary Environmental Resource Review