

Photo by Anna Bartholomew, DOT&PF

# Birchwood Airport Master Plan Update

Project No. CFAPT00354/AIP 3-02-0034-008-2018

## Public Meeting #1

Prepared for Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

*Presented and facilitated by HDL Engineering Consultants &  
Agnew::Beck Consulting*

March 4, 2021

Same meeting, two opportunities to join: 5:00-6:30 pm or 6:45-8:15 pm



15 minutes

# Welcome & Introductions

# Land Acknowledgement

*Dena'inaq ełnen'aaq'  
gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu.* (Dena'ina)

Translation by J. Isaak and S. Shaginoff-Stuart

*I live and work on the  
land of the Dena'ina.* (English)

A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

<http://convention.myacpa.org/nashville2020/inclusion/land-acknowledgement/>

For more information:

<https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>

# About Our Team

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities is leading the process with assistance from a consulting team:



# About Our Presenters



Jessica Wuttke-Campoamor

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# How to Provide Input During the Meeting

The **meeting** will be **recorded and posted** to the project website.

Use the **“Q+A”** function to submit comments or questions at any time throughout the meeting.

Our team will review and respond to your input during and following the meeting.

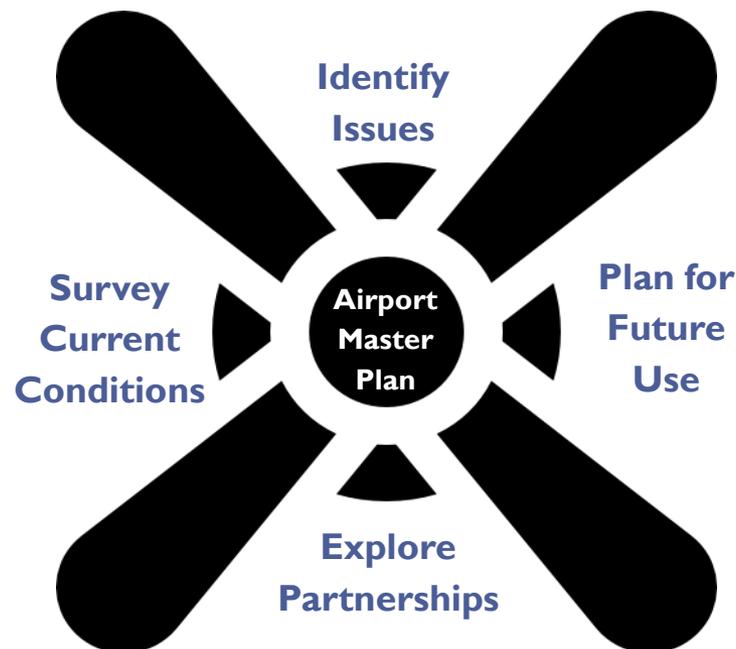
We will have **four interactive polls** throughout the meeting. Results will be posted on the project website.

During the meeting, the project team may **post helpful links or other information** that everyone can access.

All attendees will remain muted with videos off.

# Project Purpose

To determine how the airport can best serve the future interests and needs of the flying public, aviation community, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), and other stakeholders.



# Stakeholder Advisory Group

A Stakeholder Advisory Group is providing feedback on the planning process:

**NOTE:** This is not a voting or decision-making body.

DOT&PF

Alaska Railroad

Birchwood  
Airport  
Association

Birchwood Civil  
Air Patrol

Birchwood  
Community  
Council

Birchwood  
Recreation and  
Shooting Park

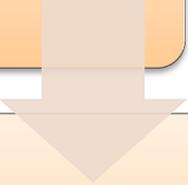
Eklutna, Inc.

Native Village of  
Eklutna

Talon Hangar  
Condominium  
Association, Inc.

# SAG Roles and Responsibilities

Provide feedback on the planning process



Help engage their networks and community connections in the process



Provide input on plan findings and recommendations

# Poll #1 – How did you hear about this meeting? (select all that apply)

- Email
- Facebook
- Newspaper public notice
- Project website
- Poster at airport
- Reader board at airport
- Through a local organization (e.g., via Birchwood Airport Association, Community Council)
- Word of mouth
- Other

## **Poll #2 – What is your relationship to the airport? (select all that apply)**

- Pilot
- Operator
- Tenant
- Onsite business owner
- Nearby business owner
- Birchwood resident
- Adjacent landowner
- Federal or state agency representative
- Other

# **Poll #3 – What is your overall level of satisfaction with the Birchwood Airport?**

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied
- I don't know/no opinion

# Project Area Overview



# Project Schedule

## Summer 2020

**Reconnaissance**

Current Conditions, Uses, Issues and Needs

## Fall 2020-2021

**Assessment**

Airport Facilities, Airspace, Finances, Partnerships, Projected Use

## Early 2022

**Draft Plan Development, Release + Review**

Preliminary Airport Master Plan Update, Layout, Aeronautical Survey

## Summer 2022

**Plan Refinement + Finalization**

FINAL Airport Master Plan Update, Layout, Aeronautical Survey

Community involvement occurs throughout, including interviews, stakeholder working group meetings, and three public meetings:

- **winter 2021**
- **summer 2021**
- **fall 2021**

# Meeting Purpose



- Review the project and purpose.
- Share what we've learned so far.
- Answer frequently asked questions.
- Get your input on changes and needs for the airport and surrounding area.

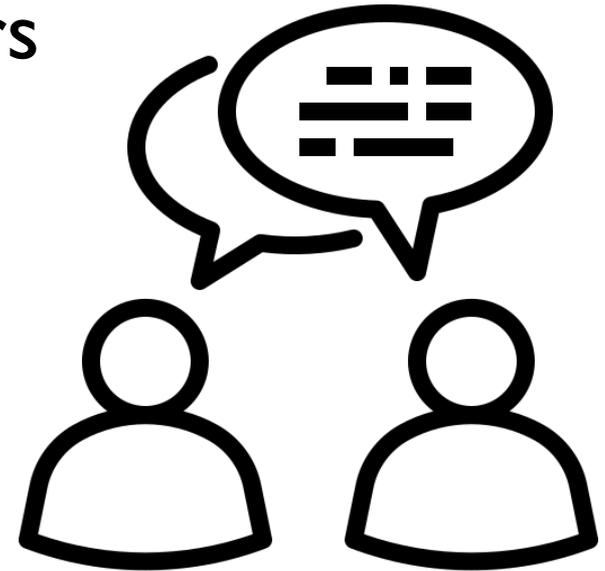
40 minutes

**What have we learned so far?**

# Interview Highlights: What we Heard

Conducted **36 interviews** with:

- Pilots and other airport users
- Hangar owners
- Nearby business owners
- Business trade groups
- Flight associations
- Adjacent landowners



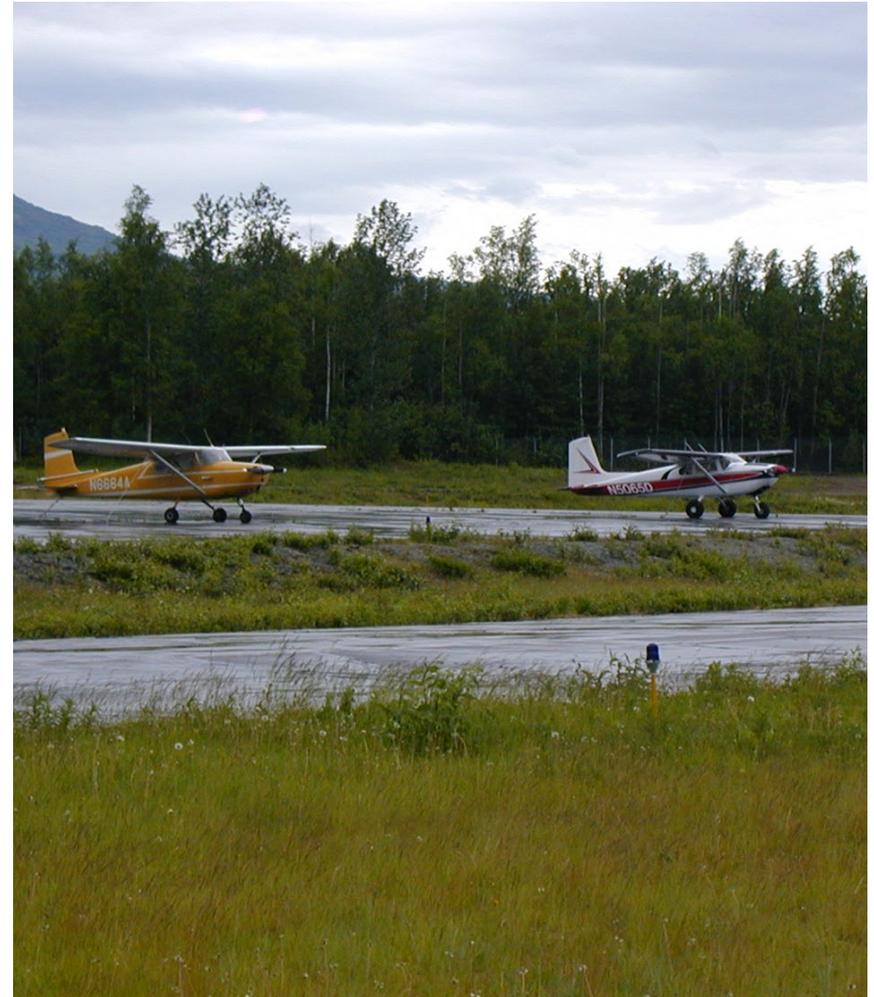
# Interviews: Vision for the Airport

## Stakeholders generally like the way the airport is today.

- Most stakeholders believe the **conditions will not change much** in the next 20 years to warrant significant changes to the airport.
- **Stakeholders**, especially pilots, **desire minimal change** to the existing airport.
- The **biggest concerns** are the airport moving to controlled airspace and any **changes that would negatively impact the current culture and familiarity of the existing airport.**

# Poll #4 – Looking ahead, 20 years from now, what does your ideal Birchwood Airport look like?

- Same as today
- Same as today with minor improvements
- Major improvements/changes
- I don't know/no opinion



# Interviews: What Stakeholders Value

## Stakeholders want to preserve most aspects of the airport.

- Stakeholders have a **strong connection** to the airport.
- Airport users most appreciate the **easy access** to the airport and **uncontrolled airspace**.
- Users enjoy the **community feel**, and **accessibility to new, younger pilots**.
- Users appreciate the **low fees** and fear raising fees could price pilots out.

# Interviews: What Stakeholders Value

*“We are **extremely lucky to have a public use airport in our community**, with a good runway. The **airport adds a lot to the community**, and many of the flight schools in Anchorage use Birchwood for training.”*

*“I live close by – easy choice for me. There are a couple mechanics there that I like working with. It’s a **non-towered airport with very few snow days that close me out**. (They) do a good job of keeping surfaces clear.”*

*“I like that it is **uncontrolled** and there are **enough services on the field that I can get my needs taken care of**.”*

# Interviews: Areas of Improvement

## Little to No On-Site Management

- When there is an operations/management issue, there is no **DOT&PF presence onsite**. It is unclear who the manager is and how to reach them.

## Locked Gate

- The idea of **adding a locked gate has mixed support**. Some believe there needs to be more security to stop fuel theft, others think it would be an annoyance.

## Keeping up with Growth

- Many pilots asked for more **tie-downs, electric outlets near the tie-downs and hangar space**.
- Some pilots want **more designated parking** while others said they can park at their tie-down.
- Pilots asked for a **new taxiway** between E and G.

*Also mentioned, but not within DOT&PF purview – **improve restroom facility***

# Interviews: Areas of Improvement



*“We have talked about the need to put in another taxiway between runway and taxiway halfway between E and G. There is a lot more traffic at the south end now that it is more built out. That would help not only us but all tenants to the south.”*

# Areas for Improvement

## Airspace & Approaches

- Approach airspace is limited by JBER  
Special Use  
Restricted Area
- RW 02L/20R  
published instrument  
approach desired

JBER = Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson  
RW = Runway

# Areas for Improvement

## Runways, RSAs, & RPZs

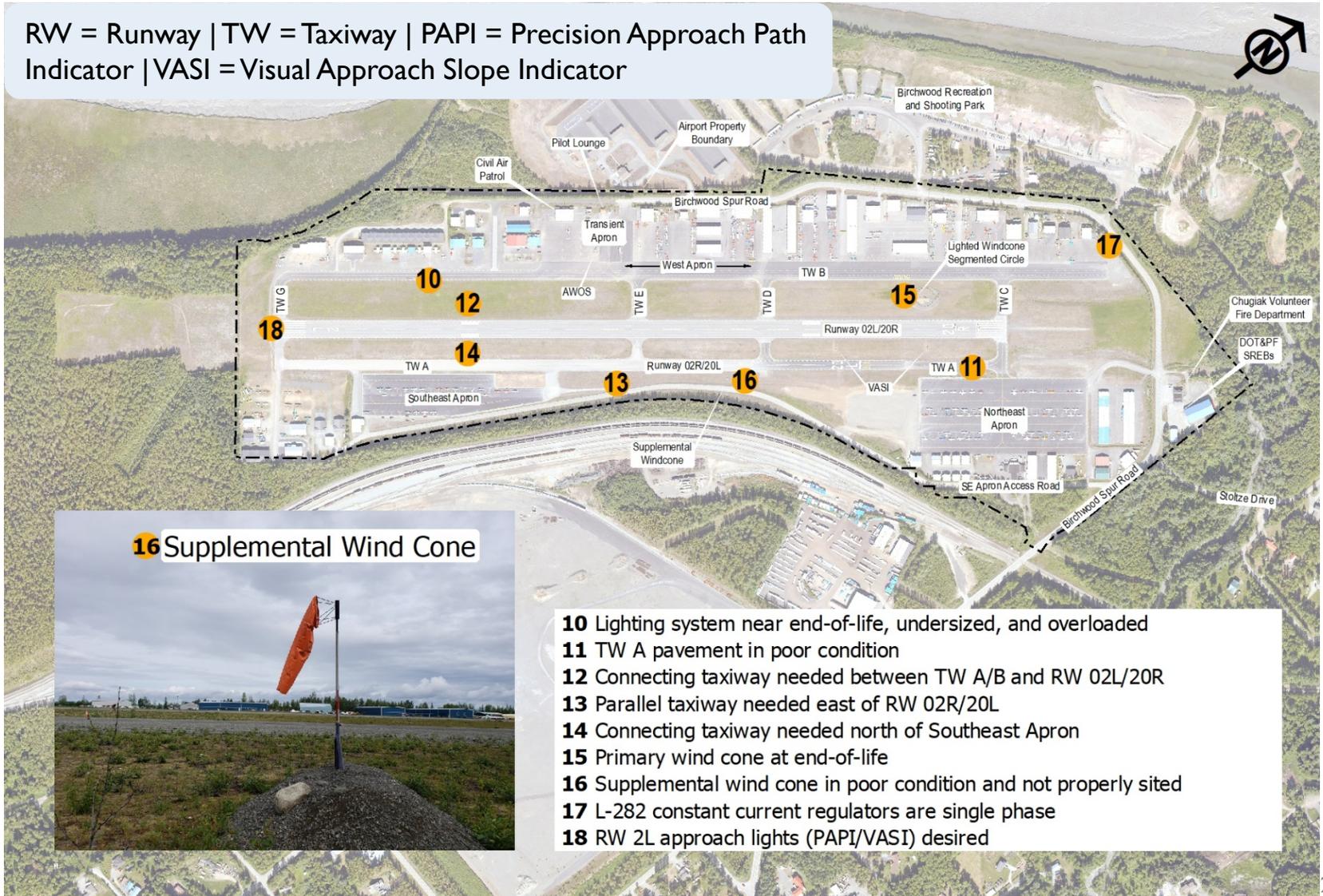
RSA = Runway Safety Area | RW = Runway  
 TW = Taxiway | FAA = Federal Aviation Administration



- 1 Pavement markings worn and faded
- 2 Perimeter fence located within RW 02L RSA
- 3 RW 02L/20R lights near end-of-life, undersized, and overloaded
- 4 Gravel runway in fair condition
- 5 TW A in-line with runway
- 6 Runway location and width do not meet FAA standard
- 7 RW 02L RSA length does not meet FAA standard
- 8 Part of RW 02L/20R RSA located outside airport property

# Areas for Improvement Taxiways & Visual Aids

RW = Runway | TW = Taxiway | PAPI = Precision Approach Path Indicator | VASI = Visual Approach Slope Indicator



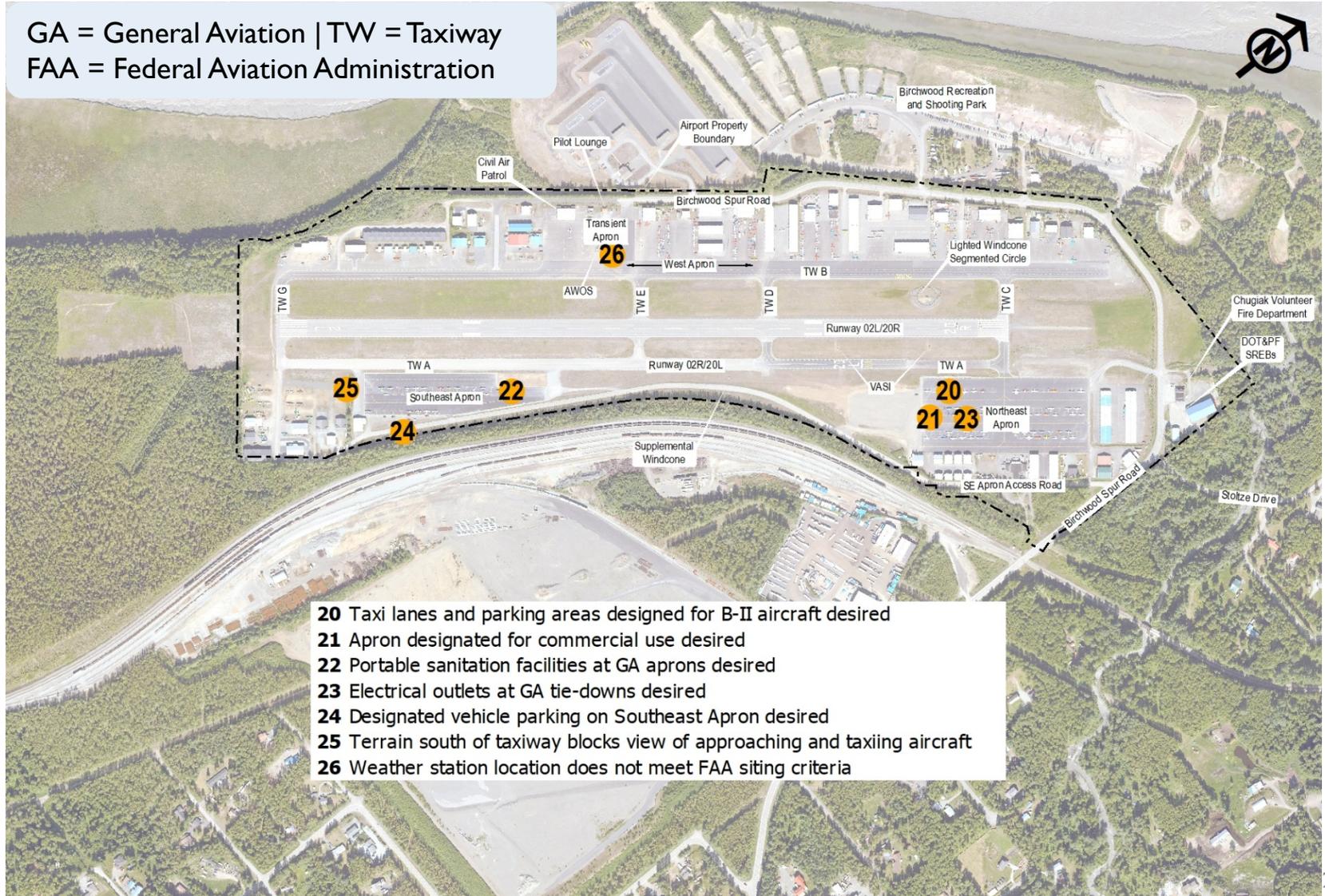
**16** Supplemental Wind Cone



- 10** Lighting system near end-of-life, undersized, and overloaded
- 11** TW A pavement in poor condition
- 12** Connecting taxiway needed between TW A/B and RW 02L/20R
- 13** Parallel taxiway needed east of RW 02R/20L
- 14** Connecting taxiway needed north of Southeast Apron
- 15** Primary wind cone at end-of-life
- 16** Supplemental wind cone in poor condition and not properly sited
- 17** L-282 constant current regulators are single phase
- 18** RW 2L approach lights (PAPI/VASI) desired

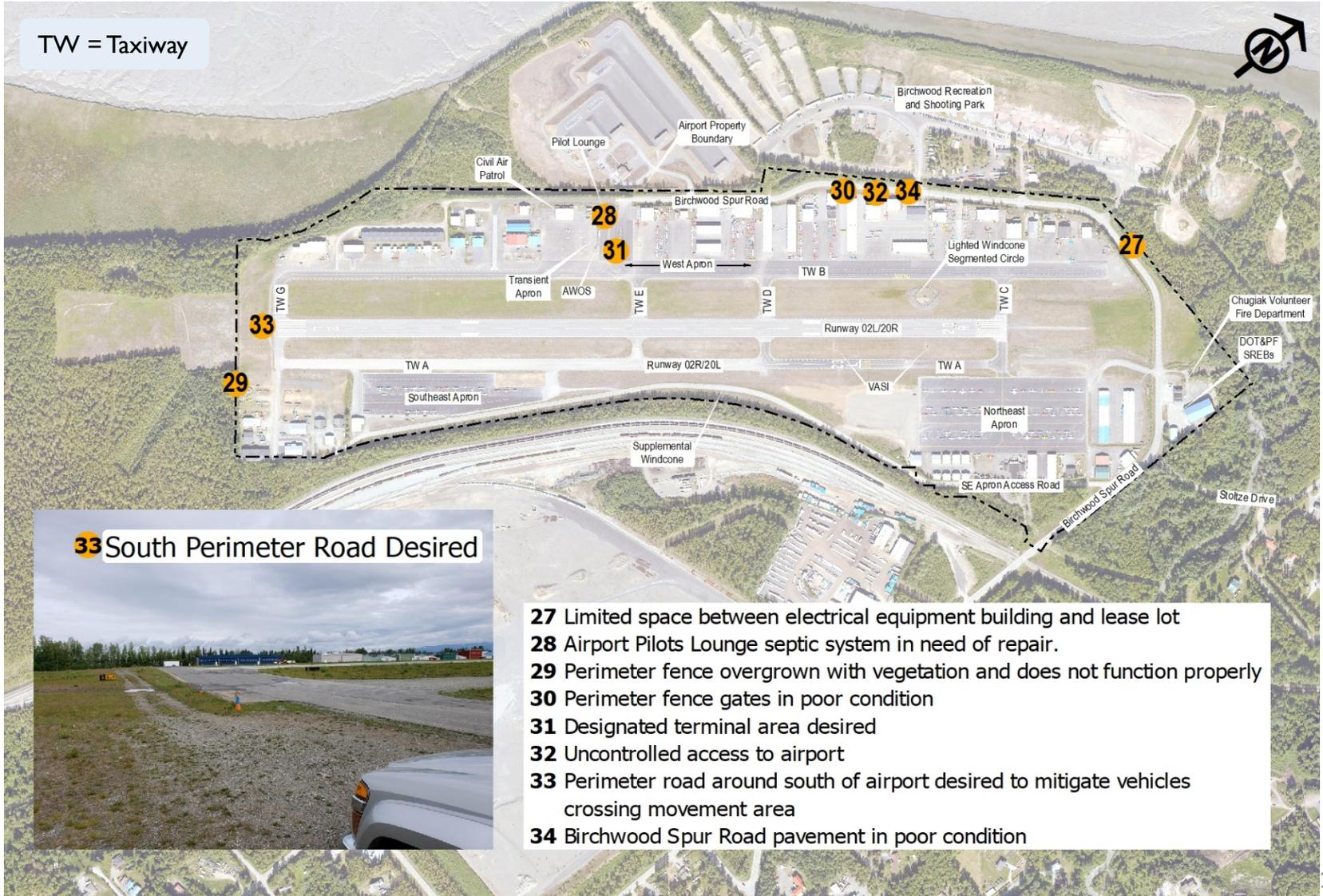
# Areas for Improvement Aprons & Weather Equipment

GA = General Aviation | TW = Taxiway  
FAA = Federal Aviation Administration



- 20** Taxi lanes and parking areas designed for B-II aircraft desired
- 21** Apron designated for commercial use desired
- 22** Portable sanitation facilities at GA aprons desired
- 23** Electrical outlets at GA tie-downs desired
- 24** Designated vehicle parking on Southeast Apron desired
- 25** Terrain south of taxiway blocks view of approaching and taxiing aircraft
- 26** Weather station location does not meet FAA siting criteria

# Areas for Improvement Facilities & Access



# Areas for Improvement

## Safety, Airport Maintenance, & Airport Management

- Simultaneous operations occur occasionally on runways
- Snow removal operations create snow piles and berms on lease lots and tie-downs
- On-site airport manager desired
- Increased non-airport traffic and theft reported in recent years

# Areas for Improvement

## Land Use & Planning

GA = General Aviation

- Separation of GA and commercial operations with designated aprons desired
- Better enforcement of vehicle and aircraft moving violations desired
- Concerns about management and maintenance with possible public-private partnership
- Additional lease and tie-down space desired

# Recap of Big Themes: Areas for Improvement

- No lease lots or hangar space available and nowhere on airport property to expand
- Anxiety about the public-private partnership
- Need for an onsite airport manager
- Gravel ski strip important
  - Recognize that configuration needs to be improved for additional safety and eligibility for FAA funding
- RSA issues prior to 02L and beyond 20R
- Unauthorized vehicle and pedestrian access presents safety hazards

# Results from Initial Forecasts

- The Aviation Activity Forecast for operations is **based on observed and recorded aviation activity.**
- Aviation activity data was **recorded using a General Audio Recording Device (G.A.R.D.)\*** between July 21 and August 16, 2020, and September 2 and October 2, 2020.
- **No changes to current use have been identified or forecasted.**

*\*The G.A.R.D. records radio transmissions and operations through radar surveillance based on active aircraft transponders and cross-references transponders with the FAA's Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) registry to identify the make and model of the aircraft.*

10 minutes

**How will the Airport Master Plan address the financial sustainability of the airport?**

# Financial Plan

The financial plan will address **projected growth, funding needs and sources**, and any **proposed changes to lease rates or user fees**

Birchwood's **operating costs** will be **benchmarked against two other airports** in the region to compare costs for similar levels of service

The plan will provide a **cash flow forecast** and **analysis of variables** that may **impact sustainability**

# Potential Public/Private Partnership



Today the airport is operated and managed by the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF).



Third party private management is being considered as part of this Master Plan Update.



**IMPORTANT:** This part of the AMP Update process has not happened. This is a future task in the planning process.

# Our Scope of Work for this FUTURE TASK: Potential Public/Private Partnership Exploration

1

Build from the **Financial Plan** component of the AMP which will:

- Address projected growth, funding needs and sources, and any proposed changes to lease rates or user fees.
- Identify gaps in revenue and provide a foundation for how to fill those gaps (a financial model or proforma).

2

Determine **possible management options** for a **possible public-private partnership** (“3P”) between DOT&PF and any other 3<sup>rd</sup> party interest.

3

Compare management options and prepare a detailed **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats** and **feasibility analysis of a privately managed airport**. This analysis will:

- Consider financial and other information about each management option as it relates to the AMP Vision and Goals.

# Interviews: Potential Public/Private Ownership

- Airport users are frustrated with a **lack of communication from DOT&PF.**
- Users are interested in more attentive management but **concerned third party or private sector manager may increase fees.**

*“Currently, we do not have anyone we can go to if we want to see change at this airport. If something goes wrong, **we feel like we get the run around** from DOT&PF. There is no process or allowance.”*

“Cost is a huge issue – **don’t price us out of flying.** We want this to be a place where young people can come in and fly. If you make it cost a fortune, they won’t come in. Almost every place where DOT&PF handed over management to other entity, it results in higher/expensive fees – Palmer, Wasilla. Prices doubled in a year or two. People can’t afford that.”



15 minutes

# Frequently Asked Questions About the Project

# Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) #1

The last Birchwood Master Plan Update was completed in 2005.

**How has the previous plan been used and what recommendations have been implemented?**



# FAQ Answer #1, Part 1

The **2005 Birchwood AMP** was used to identify and submit projects to the **Aviation Project Evaluation Board (APEB)**, where *Birchwood projects compete against proposed projects at other Alaska airports.*

- Through the APEB, DOT&PF evaluates and scores state-owned projects across the state.
- Emphasis is placed on airports that do not have road access.
- DOT&PF is obligated to provide access to all Alaska communities.
- Communities with no road access/that are reliant on year-round airport are more likely to receive a portion of the limited funding.

# FAQ Answer #1, Part 2

Then what is the benefit of an Airport Master Plan?

- Documentation of a needed improvement in an AMP is necessary to improve a project's APEB score.
- It does not guarantee funding, but it is substantially harder to get funding when the project is not documented in an AMP.
- ***Public support matters*** and the ***AMP is one method to document that support.***
- Newer documents are more in alignment with current community needs.

## Frequently Asked Question #2

# Why is DOT&PF exploring 3<sup>rd</sup> party management of the Birchwood Airport?

### *FAQ Answer #2:*

*DOT&PF is exploring options for airport*

*management* – the study may find the best way to provide service to users and meet DOT&PF's needs is to continue as is.

# Frequently Asked Question #3



**Where does Birchwood Airport  
revenue go?**

# FAQ Answer #3

- All revenue generated at DOT&PF owned airports is put into a **general aviation fund**.
- The general aviation fund **supports aviation projects across the state**.
- Federal Register Volume 64, No. 30 issued “Policy and Procedures Concerning the Use of Airport Revenue”  
*Section V – Permitted Uses of Airport Revenue, A.1. identifies airport revenue may be used for “The capital or operating costs of the airport, the local airport system, or other local facilities owned or operated by the airport owner or operator and directly and substantially related to the air transportation of passengers or property.”*
- Alaska Code 17 AAC 45

# Other Questions We Have Received – To Be Considered as Project Moves Forward



How are operations and maintenance currently funded?

How do operations costs compare with other Alaska airports?

Has a public/private partnership model been successfully applied at a comparable Alaska airport?

What are the intended future uses of adjacent landowners?

# Questions

- What other questions do you have?
- Please add them to the Q+A.

*You can also submit comments & questions on the website:*

[www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/birchwoodamp/](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/birchwoodamp/)

• **Tell us what you think.**  
Submit your comments in the box below or contact the DOT&PF Project Manager. See "Contact Us" below.

\* Name: REQUIRED

Email Address: OPTIONAL

Organization: OPTIONAL

\* Comments: REQUIRED

Submit

10 minutes

## Next Steps and Wrap Up

# Birchwood AMP: Our Timeline

## Summer 2020

**Reconnaissance**

Current Conditions, Uses, Issues and Needs

## Fall 2020-2021

**Assessment**

Airport Facilities, Airspace, Finances, Partnerships, Projected Use

## Early 2022

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- **summer 2021**
- **fall 2021**

# Learn More & Contact Us

<http://www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/birchwoodamp/>

→ Submit your comments and questions!

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