



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**

GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Department of
Transportation and Public
Facilities**

Northern Region
Design and Engineering Services

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November 22, 2017

Re: Noatak Airport Relocation
Project Number: Z614780000
Subject: Request for Scoping Comments

Dear Agency Contact,

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), proposes to relocate the Noatak Airport to provide the Village of Noatak with a safe, reliable, and cost effective facility. This facility would provide the community with adequate access, support the community's long-term development goals, and conform to current FAA safety regulations.

The existing Noatak Airport and adjacent community are located on the west bank of the Noatak River, 55 miles northwest of Kotzebue (Figure 1). The proposed airport relocation would be located approximately 1.5 miles west of the existing airport. A new 2-mile long airport access road would be constructed from the Village of Noatak to the new airport location (Figure 2).

DOT&PF is requesting updated scoping comments to support preparation of an environmental document for the proposed project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA). Public involvement and agency consultation were conducted between 2006 and 2007 and several comments were received. Due to the time lapse since the last scoping effort, DOT&PF is re-initiating formal scoping to gather any additional or updated comments you may have on the proposed project. Your responses will help provide us with the necessary input to develop and design a proposed final project that avoids and minimizes as many potential adverse environmental and human impacts as possible.

Purpose and Need

Noatak, a community of approximately 546 people is the only settlement on the 400-mile long Noatak River, just west of the 6-million acre Noatak National Preserve and east of the Cape Krusenstern National Monument. There are no roads connecting the community to outside urban

areas and barge service on the river was suspended in 1992 due to inadequate channel depth of the Noatak River near the community. While small boats, all-terrain vehicles, and snow machines are used for inter-village and subsistence travel, Noatak relies solely on air transportation for major commerce, supplies, fuel, access, and medical evacuation needs. Use of the existing airport, however, is threatened by bank erosion along the Noatak River. Recent studies show that the river, coupled with other erosive processes, is actively eroding the bank and will likely wash out the apron and impact the runway at some point in the near future. In addition, the existing aircraft parking apron, runway protection zone (RPZ), approach slope, and runway safety area (RSA) are deficient in meeting the safety needs of the aircraft currently using the airport.

Proposed Action

Multiple airport location and access road alternatives have been considered since project inception. Currently, DOT&PF is considering one build alternative for the new airport location (Figure 2), although additional alternatives may be identified during scoping. The Proposed Action includes the following elements (Figures 2-3):

- **Airport:** A new airport including a new runway, taxiway, apron, and Snow Removal Equipment Building (SREB) would be constructed approximately 1.5 miles west of the existing airport location. The new runway would be 4,000 ft. long, 75 ft. wide, with a 4,600 ft. long, 150 ft. wide RSA. New medium intensity runway lights and apron site lighting would also be installed. The SREB would be constructed on the apron.
- **Access Road:** A new airport access road (approximately 2.2 miles long and 20 ft. wide) would be constructed from one of two possible locations originating from the Village of Noatak to the new airport location (Figure 2).
- **Bridge:** A single-span bridge over Kuchoruk Creek would be constructed at the new airport access road crossing.
- **Electric Line:** An overhead electric line for airport lighting and the SREB would be constructed from the Village of Noatak to the new airport location along the new airport access road alignment. Poles would be spaced up to 250 ft. apart.
- **Material Sites and Haul Routes:** Two potential local material sources would be used to construct the proposed project. A material source on the Noatak River approximately two miles downstream from the village, and an inland material site approximately 0.75 miles northwest of the new runway may be developed to provide necessary material for the project. Material extraction, hauling, and contractor equipment access to the new airport site is anticipated to occur when the ground is frozen. Potential material haul routes are shown on Figure 2. An additional overland haul route from the Red Dog Port site may also be used in winter to transport needed equipment and materials.
- **Land Acquisition and Disposal:** Land would be acquired for construction of the proposed project and the existing airport property would be disposed of in accordance with FAA grant assurances. Land would be purchased or right-of-way obtained for the new airport, access road, and material site.

Independent, preliminary research and review of project area resources has been conducted and is summarized in the attached Appendix A.

We respectfully request your written comments no later than December 22, 2017. Please mail them to: DOT&PF Attn: Melissa Jensen 2301 Peger Road Fairbanks, AK, 99709; or you may e-mail comments to: melissa.jensen@alaska.gov.

Thank you for your attention to this request, if you have any questions regarding the proposed project, you may contact Melissa at (907) 451-5377.

Sincerely,



Christopher Johnston, P.E.
Engineering Manager

Enclosures: Figure 1 – Location & Vicinity Map
Figure 2 – Proposed Action
Figure 3 – Proposed Action Site Plan
Appendix A – Preliminary Review of Project Study Area Resources

cc: James Rypkema, ADEC, Anchorage
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Paul Napaqtuq Anderson, NANA Regional Corporation Lands Manager
Sergeant Rodney Johnson, Alaska State Troopers, Kotzebue
Tim Gilbert, Maniilaq Association, Kotzebue
Vernon Adams Sr., Native Village of Noatak
Noah Naylor, NAB Planning Director
Andrew Crocitto, FAA Air Traffic Organization
Robert Beans, Alaska Village Electric Cooperative Board Chairman
Annmarie O'Brien, Northwest Arctic Borough School District Superintendent
Jane Dale, Alaska Air Carriers Association Executive Director