

Talkeetna Airport Improvements and Pavement Rehabilitation  
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities  
August 4, 2016

Q: Why are you doing this construction?

A: Talkeetna Airport is one of the busiest non-primary airports in South Central Alaska during the summer. It serves as a base for mountain rescue operations, tours of Denali National Park, mineral and oil surveys, and is used by both military and local pilots. In recent years, activity at the airport has grown significantly, resulting in congestion, inefficiencies, as well as operational and safety hazards. Requests for General Aviation parking and transient aircraft parking regularly exceed capacity. The project will enhance safety and capacity, and improve the efficiency of airport operations.

Q: What safety issues are at the Talkeetna Airport?

A: The FAA identified several corrective actions, including tree obstructions in the primary and approach area, and obstructions on runway 18 preventing straight-in weather minimums. Our Grant Assurances with FAA require the state of Alaska to remove obstacles that could interfere with a safe arrival or departure of aircraft.

Q: Why didn't you keep a buffer around the airport property?

A: The department did keep a 25' vegetative buffer on the airport property in this project. The contractor staked out the 25' to clearly mark the area when it was in close proximity to adjacent houses. Some people have mistaken the stakes and flags for the actual property line.

Q: What will the construction entail?

A: The project will construct several new facilities as well as rehabilitate the existing paved surfaces. Work will include:

- The existing runway/ taxiways will be resurfaced and directional signs added;
- The runway designations will be updated from 18/36 to 1/19;
- Taxiway C (from the Commercial Apron to the runway) will be converted to an exit taxiway only in conformance with new FAA guidance;
- A Transient Apron (255' X 590') with connecting taxiways will be constructed;
- Taxilanes (150' X 625') with connecting taxiway will be constructed;
- Trees will be cleared for airspace and made available to the public.
- A pedestrian pathway will be constructed on the airport side of Second Avenue
- New fencing will be installed along with directional signs.
- The airport access road will be rerouted and extended to the new apron facilities.
- The public portion of the existing commercial apron will be repaved.
- A General Aviation apron with connecting taxiway will be constructed

Q: How long has the state been developing this project?

A: 18 years.

Q: How many public meetings were held on this project?

A: The department has hosted seven public meetings in Talkeetna on this project (four during the environmental phase and three after). We have also sent letters, met with leaseholders, air taxi operators, contacted local media, hosted a booth at the Mat-Su Transportation Fair and posted project information on social media.

Q: Would you consider changing the design now to accommodate a meandering path instead of a straight path? What about narrowing the path to save more trees?

A: The department minimized the impact of the path (with the straight design) by keeping it as close to the road as possible. Because the state right of way is fairly narrow (20' between road and occupied lease lots), in order to create a meandering path, DOT&PF would have to acquire more land, raising project costs and disrupting airport businesses. The path, as designed, has no impact to the 100 year flood level. A change to the path would violate the project's environmental clearances.

A meandering path (versus the straight path) will increase maintenance costs. Additionally, the department expects that the tree root systems will eventually damage the asphalt, decreasing the lifespan of the pavement.

It is important to note that the path is 8' wide, with 1' shoulders for a total of 10' total width.

Q: Can you top the trees near the runway, instead of chopping them down?

A: Tree topping frequently results in the death of the tree. Dead trees pose another type of hazard at the airport and would have to be removed to prevent them from falling on people or structures. Trees that survive topping will continue to grow, creating another penetration to airspace, and more corrective actions (ongoing maintenance) for the safety of the pilots and their passengers. Last, trees, topped or otherwise, attract nesting birds, which can compromise aircraft safety.

Q: I noticed that the environmental document was completed in 2007, isn't that outdated?

A: The environmental assessment was originally completed in 2007 and then re-evaluated and updated in 2011, and most recently updated in 2014.

Q: I thought the trees were a sound good buffer between the airport and surrounding area, why did you remove them?

A: Trees are not considered good sound barriers (for example, FHWA does not consider planting trees to be an acceptable noise abatement measure). This is because it takes hundreds and hundreds of feet of high, wide and dense forest to reduce sound, and that is not the condition that we find on the Talkeetna Airport.

Q: I thought the trees were a good visual barrier between the airport and surrounding area, why did you remove them?

A: People who attended the public meetings brought up this concern, which was why the department decided to keep a vegetative buffer on airport property. This 25' buffer was marked with stakes as a clear reference for the contractor, which some people have mistaken for the property line.

Q: I've heard that some of the airport fencing is going to be chain link?

A: There are two types of fencing included in design, pipe rail fence and chain link fence. Pipe rail is incorporated in the project where installations are located in the flood plain.

The chain link fence area is located in a remote area of the airport and away from the Apron.

The security fencing will help to prevent airport incursions and protect planes parking in the

Transient Apron from vandalism. In addition, the parallel taxiway will likely be used as a

temporary runway, associated with future runway maintenance, as it is for this project.

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