

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wasilla Airport Master Plan provides a 20-year roadmap to transform Wasilla Airport from a constrained general aviation facility into a safer, more efficient, and more financially sustainable asset that supports the City's long-term economic and transportation goals. The plan responds to documented facility deficiencies, strong local demand for additional aircraft storage, and the City's interest in attracting larger general aviation and commercial operators while preserving the airport's role as a community gateway.

Airport Role, Existing Conditions, and Key Needs

Wasilla Airport currently operates with a paved primary runway, Runway 04/22, measuring approximately 3,700 feet by 75 feet, and a 1,690-foot by 60-foot gravel runway (Runway 04S/22S) used primarily by Short Takeoff and Landing, tundra-tire, and ski-equipped aircraft. The airport is classified as a non-primary general aviation facility and already supports a high volume of training and recreational traffic, as well as growing demand for based aircraft, business aviation, and aviation-related commercial activity. Wasilla Airport is located in the most populous of the three cities in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, which has been the fastest-growing region in the state for the past 40 years.

Technical analyses and user outreach identified several core needs:

Safety & Compliance

- Extend and widen the primary runway to meet B-II design standards (6,000 ft x 100 ft).
- Acquire land in the Runway 04 Runway Protection Zone and remove obstructions in approach/departure paths.
- Improve taxiway alignments to reduce hotspots and enhance operational safety.

Capacity & Operational Efficiency

- Expanded general aviation and large-aircraft apron areas are needed to accommodate future demand.
- More transient parking, based aircraft tie-downs, and dedicated commercial aircraft parking.
- Separation of smaller general aviation aircraft from larger commercial/charter/turboprop users.

Economic & Land Use

- Significant additional leasable land is needed for both hangars and commercial development.
- Opportunities for commercial parcels (hotel, retail, aviation businesses) require strategic land acquisition and utility/road extensions.

These needs form the basis for the alternatives analysis and selected development program.

Development Alternatives Considered

Three primary development alternatives were evaluated over the 20-year planning horizon:

- Alternative 1 – No Build.

- Maintains Runway 04/22 at 3,700 by 75 feet and Runway 04S/22S at 1,690 by 60 feet. Does not meet B-II design requirements.
- Does not add new aprons, tie-down, or lease areas, failing to meet current or forecast demand for tie-downs and lease lots and does not support the City's economic development objectives.
- Alternative 2 – Expand Primary Runway 04/22, Aprons, and Lease Lots.
 - Extends and widens Runway 04/22 to 6,000 by 100 feet, while maintaining the gravel runway.
 - Increases general aviation apron areas and provides approximately 130 new small tie-downs (netting 105 after reconfiguration) and four large-aircraft tie-downs.
 - Includes land acquisition to southwest of the airport within the ultimate Runway 04 Runway Protection Zone and approach areas to enable obstruction removal and compatible land use control. Includes land acquisition to southeast to accommodate future airport growth.
 - Realigns Aviation Avenue to provide access to the proposed lease areas and improve vehicle circulation in and around the airport. Will require a new stop sign at the intersection where it terminates at Beacon Street.
 - Provides sufficient lease lot acreage to meet projected demand for the 20-year period but does not fully maximize leasable land or commercial opportunities.
- Alternative 3 – Expand Primary Runway 04/22, Aprons, Lease Lots, and Commercial Lots (Preferred Alternative).
 - Extends and widens Runway 04/22 to 6,000 by 100 feet, similar to Alternative 2, and retains Runway 04S/22S.
 - Increases general aviation apron and provides 111 new small tie-downs (netting 86 after reconfiguration) and four large-aircraft tie-downs.
 - In addition to land acquisition described in Alternative 2, acquires land northeast of the airport (currently occupied by the Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry) for the realignment of Aviation Avenue.
 - Realigns Aviation Avenue through the newly acquired museum property. The realigned road would terminate at a three-way stop at the existing intersection between West Museum Drive and Beacon Street, eliminating the need for a new stop sign.
 - Provides sufficient lease lot acreage to meet projected demand, while also maximizing separation of GA and commercial uses.

Alternative 1 was determined inadequate to accommodate growth. Alternatives 2 and 3 both address key safety and capacity needs, but Alternative 3 provides the greatest benefit in terms of lease revenue potential, operational safety, and long-term economic development.

Preferred Development Concept

Alternative 3 is the preferred alternative. It balances airfield, landside, and commercial improvements to meet forecast demand, improve safety, and enhance the airport's financial position. This alternative enables the airport to better balance its operating expenses and revenues closer to break-even and to be sustainable through more revenue generating options. Key elements of the preferred alternative include:

Airfield Improvements

- Primary Runway 04/22 Extension and Widening
 - Near-term extension to 5,100 feet with further extension to 6,000 feet in the ultimate configuration to serve B-II aircraft and improve performance margins.
 - Upgrade to 100-foot width with appropriate shoulders in the ultimate configuration, aligning with B-II/B-III design standards and user preferences.
 - Associated improvements include new pavement, drainage, lighting, runway end identifier lights, and precision approach path indicators.
- Runway 04S/22S Improvements
 - Shift centerline 15 feet north to accommodate widening of Runway 04/22. Resurface with crushed aggregate surface course.
 - Add a dedicated ski taxiway and designated ski apron area on Apron C to support winter ski-equipped aircraft without requiring them to operate on plowed taxiways.
- Taxiway System Enhancements, Including Taxiway K
 - Extend Taxiway B to provide a full-length parallel taxiway to Runway 04/22.
 - Construct Taxiway K, a new approximately 1,300–1,600-foot by 50-foot parallel taxiway southeast of Runway 04/22, with an interlink Taxiway H at the Runway 22 threshold.
 - Taxiway K is specifically designed to separate small general aviation from larger aircraft, provide access to a new large-aircraft apron, and open up commercial lease lots that can support larger aircraft operations.
 - Construct Taxiways J and L to serve new commercial lease areas northeast of the airfield.
 - Extend Taxiway C and M to provide airside access to new northwest private hangar lease lots.
 - Construct Taxiway R to provide airside access to new southern commercial lease lots.

Apron, Parking, and Lease Lot Enhancements

- General Aviation Aprons and Tie-Downs
 - Construction of multiple new general aviation aprons providing 111 new small tie-downs and 8 new transient tie-down spaces, resulting in a 56% increase in small general aviation tie-downs and an 89% increase in transient parking compared to existing conditions.
- Large Aircraft Apron

- A new commercial/large aircraft apron adjacent to Taxiway K with four new large aircraft tie-downs, increasing large aircraft parking capacity by approximately 67%.
- Lease Lot Development
 - Approximately 30.9 acres of new private hangar lease area and 45.3 acres of commercial lease lots with airside access.
 - An additional ~89 acres of landside commercial lease area suitable for manufacturing, retail, hotel, and restaurant uses.
 - Overall, the accessible leasable area on the airport increases by approximately 457%, significantly expanding the airport's long-term revenue potential.

Landside, Access, and Support Facilities

- Aviation Business Center
 - A City-owned Aviation Business Center of approximately 13,300 square feet with an attached hangar bay and a 71,000-square-foot public parking lot (about 160 spaces). The facility will consolidate the Airport Manager's office, passenger waiting, pilot briefing spaces, classroom space, concessions, terminal and baggage functions, and short-term hangar rental.
- Fuel Service Center
 - Dedicated lease lot for a fuel facility with above-ground storage and dispensing, improving fuel availability and generating lease revenue.
- Fire and Rescue Facility & Helipad
 - Lease area for a Fire and Rescue Facility to be owned and operated by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, reducing emergency response times and allowing aviation-specific equipment to be based on-airport.
 - A new helipad adjacent to the fire facility to support medevac, helicopter training, and transient helicopter operations while separating them from fixed-wing traffic.
- Hotel and Commercial Development
 - A future hotel site on newly acquired, rezoned land near Aviation Avenue and Clapp Street, plus additional commercial parcels suitable for rental car facilities and other supportive land uses.
- Ground Access and Security
 - Realignment and renaming of Aviation Avenue/Airport Way to route through-traffic around the airport's perimeter and create safer, more intuitive intersections with existing city streets.
 - New vehicle access roads to commercial lease lots and a network of vehicle gates and taxiway barrier gates to improve security and reduce the potential for runway/taxiway incursions.
- Runway Protection Zone Land Acquisition and Obstruction Management

- Acquisition of approximately 71.4 acres of land within and adjacent to the Runway 04 runway protection zone and associated aviation easements to support obstruction removal and full land-use control within the runway protection zones.

Benefits and Outcomes

When implemented, the preferred alternative will:

- Improve safety and compliance by lengthening and widening the primary runway, enhancing taxiway geometry, acquiring runway protection zone properties, and adding security and access controls.
- Increase capacity and flexibility through expanded general aviation and large-aircraft apron space, additional tie-downs, and separation of general aviation and larger aircraft via Taxiway K and dedicated commercial aprons.
- Support economic development by increasing accessible leasable area by over 450%, enabling significant growth in hangars, aviation businesses, and non-aviation commercial uses such as a hotel and retail/industrial space.
- Enhance community connectivity through improved roadway alignment, better-defined airport access, and future options for intermodal connections with the railroad.
- Strengthen financial sustainability by pairing Airport Improvement Program grants with strategic lease-rate adjustments, third-party development, and targeted bonding to cover the sponsor share of capital costs.
- Meet community and regional aviation needs and support long-term demand and financial sustainability within Alaska's fastest-growing region.

Overall, the master plan positions Wasilla Airport to safely accommodate forecast aviation activity, support larger aircraft and commercial operations, and serve as a catalyst for broader economic development in the City of Wasilla and the Matanuska-Susitna region, while clearly distinguishing which elements will rely on federal assistance and which will require non-federal funding solutions.