

Agency: Department of Transportation/Public Facilities**Project Title:****Willow Airport Parking Lot****State Funding Requested: \$ 100,000**
One-Time Need**House District: 15 - H****Brief Project Description:**

Construction of parking facilities on Willow Airport property to accommodate the Iditarod Race Restart and other community events.

Funding Plan:**Total Cost of Project: \$100,000**Funding Secured

Amount FY

Other Pending Requests

Amount FY

Anticipated Future Need

Amount FY

There is no other funding needed

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

Currently, Willow Airport is closed to accommodate the parking needs of the Iditarod Race Restart and other community events. These closures will cause Willow Airport to lose its FAA status thereby jeopardizing the availability of federal funds for maintenance and upgrades. Construction of expanded parking facilities will allow the airport to continue operation during these events, including annual Iditarod Race Restart festivities, provide adequate parking for attendees, and ensure the availability of continued federal funding.

Project Timeline:

Summer 2008.

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

DOT/PF

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Contact Name: Ron Stroman, Chief, Statewide Aviation Leasing

Phone Number: 269-0730

Address: 4111 Aviation Ave., Anchorage AK 99519-6900

Email: ron.stroman@alask.gov

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? Yes No

Karen Sawyer

From: Jody Simpson
Sent: Thursday, February 07, 2008 9:29 AM
To: Karen Sawyer; Deborah Grundmann
Cc: Rep. Mark Neuman; Stroman, Ronald A (DOT)
Subject: Capital Request - Parking Lot - Willow Airport
Attachments: CH ltr - DOT ITC willow 1-28-08 jes.doc

Karen and Deb,

This message is to confirm a need for a \$50,000 capital appropriation to DOT for the construction of a parking lot on Willow Airport property to accommodate the Iditarod Race Restart and other community events in the next couple of years.

The Iditarod Trail Committee has announced that the official restart will now take place in Willow, not Wasilla. They are just beginning to look for a permanent home in Willow; however, for this year -- and probably another year or two, they will likely continue to use airport property.

This change in venue does not come without complications. According to Ron Stroman at DOT, the activity has prompted the FAA to state that Willow Airport will be removed from the National Plan Integrated Airport System. Only airports under NPIAS can receive federal funding, so Willow will be removed from any consideration to receive federal funding. (Please see the attached letter and email thread below for background.)

The construction of a parking lot on 8.5 acres on the south end of the airport will help alleviate much of the concern over accommodating the race fans who view the restart every year. The funding would be for clearing, grubbing, leveling, and filling the acreage. An additional amount of \$40,000 over the \$50K, if added, would create an overflow parking lot.

Senator Huggins has told both the DOT and the ITC that he will support this capital request. The appropriation should go to DOT and I would suggest, if possible, it include legislative intent to require DOT and the ITC work together to develop a race plan that does not include the airport by a certain date (Perhaps one or two years?).

Perhaps Senator Huggins might consider a total phased appropriation of \$100K to \$120K to do both parking lots and to help underwrite some of the costs of developing a facility plan....just a suggestion....??

Ron Stroman can be reached at 907.334.2695.

Jody Simpson

Staff to Senator Charlie Huggins
 Alaska State Capitol, Room 119
 Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
 Phone: (907)465-2661 / Fax: (907)465-3265
 Jody_Simpson@legis.state.ak.us

From: Stroman, Ronald A (DOT) [mailto:ron.stroman@alaska.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2008 5:14 PM
To: Jody Simpson
Subject: RE: Iditarod Restart

Hi Jody.

I wanted to give you a brief overview of a meeting I held today with FAA, Airports Division. I informed FAA that the State will, for the last time, host the 2008 Iditarod Sled Dog Race on the Willow Airport. I presented a traffic plan/safety plan, NOTAM that I will publish, copy of the permit and to what efforts the department will take to make sure this last time comes off safely and efficiently. I explained that we will once again have the Alaska Defense Force to control parking and pedestrian traffic, State Troopers to support traffic flow and ITC volunteers to assist pedestrian movement across the Parks Highway. While FAA presented several arguments that what we are doing is not only contrary to the grant assurances but violates State Statute and federal law I told them that I appreciate their position but we are proceeding. I further said that I am not seeking approval or

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concurrency but would welcome any advice they may have to improve safety or efficiency.

I told them we will not close the land based strip but would in all likelihood, close the lake to aircraft operations. Of course FAA was not happy with this and again, informed me of the State's commitment under the grant program. I was also informed that not only can we not allow this use of the airport but we cannot close the lake for air operations. While I expressed our mutual concern with the AIP grant for the airport with allowing this function one last time, I emphasized 'one last time' many times but I'm not sure I have credibility any longer because I've said this to the FAA a few times already in years gone by, but we are going ahead with the event.

After what you can imagine was lively conversation, Jim Lomen, Deputy Division Manager, Airports Division, stated that Willow Airport will be removed from the National Plan Integrated Airport System; which means that only airports under NPIAS can receive federal funding so Willow will be removed from any consideration to receive federal funding. I argued that what they propose is rather extreme considering a one day event that has been planned rather carefully to keep safety as the main focus, and we're giving them assurances today that it won't happen again. We discussed several other finite points in their effort to convince me otherwise but I said the event is too close now and there is no time to find any other place that fits the need. I left with most of my skin still on. But that will be short lived once I tell the general public of the plan.

I appreciate the Senator sponsoring an effort to seek funding to alleviate most of the problem. However, and this is surprising, the FAA has said little (other than we can't close the lake for aircraft operations) about having the actual race start, with mushers, dogs, trucks, fencing, 10,000 people, etc, on the lake. So, while the FAA hasn't said anything I'm sure that one day we will have to face this dilemma too. But not right now. I very much support the Iditarod Committee doing a long range plan for their race, one that eventually doesn't involve the airport.

Thanks for all that you have done and I'm sorry that I will call on you in the future for continued support. And thank the Senator for me too.

Ron

From: Jody Simpson [mailto:Jody_Simpson@legis.state.ak.us]

Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2008 3:08 PM

To: Stroman, Ronald A (DOT)

Subject: Iditarod Restart

Importance: High

Ron,

Sorry I missed your call this morning. I just left a message on your voicemail. Here is the letter Senator Huggins sent to Comm. von Scheben last week. We copied Stan Hooley on the letter. Perhaps you already have a copy.

At this time, I don't know whether DOT will be asking for the \$50K in a budget line item or whether this will be a capital request. Pleased be advised that we aim to send our capital list to SFIN around February 18.

Please note the references in the final para to the need for the ITC to develop a long-range comprehensive plan that addresses access, safety, and facility needs and to "appropriate" transportation improvements that are mutually determined. When I queried the existence of such a plan, Stan said he would need to get his BOD to see the need for such a doc and confirmed that there is no in-house expertise on the Board to work one up and no funding at this time. Therefore, I inserted a reference to it in the letter as "encouragement." I can imagine a scenario where the ITC requests a lot of funding from DOT w/o much advance communication and strategic planning....

Call me if you wish.

Jody Simpson

Staff to Senator Charlie Huggins
Alaska State Capitol, Room 119
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
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Jody_Simpson@legis.state.ak.us



2/7/2008

January 28, 2008

Leo von Scheben, Commissioner
State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Post Office Box 112500 / Mail Stop 2500
Juneau, Alaska 99811-2500

RE: Willow Airport / Iditarod Restart

Dear Commissioner von Scheben:

As a follow-up to our conversation last week on the Iditarod restart in Willow, today I spoke with Stan Hooley, Executive Director for the Iditarod Trail Committee. As you are aware, the ITC has announced that race restarts will now take place in Willow. This announcement means that both short- and long-term solutions to the parking problem must be developed to accommodate the tens of thousands of Alaskans and visitors who gather annually to see the mushers off to Nome.

I received a copy of Mr. Hooley's January 23 letter to you requesting the use of Willow Airport property for the restart this year. I understand the Federal Aviation Administration's issues with the use of airport property for non-aviation-related activities, but with the race just a little more than two months away, I was relieved to hear from you last week that DOT will work with the FAA and the ITC to accommodate the race this one last and final time.

In the near-term, I understand that your department and the ITC will be working together on a funding request for the construction of a parking lot that will accommodate patrons during future restarts and other community events. To that end, your department has offered the ITC an 8.5- acre area at the south end of the airport as an interim measure until they can relocate to a more permanent location within Willow.

In the longer term, I strongly encouraged Mr. Hooley to approach his board of directors as soon as possible to fund the development of a comprehensive plan that addresses access, safety, and facility needs. With that plan in hand, DOT and the ITC can work together to determine any appropriate transportation infrastructure improvements that may become necessary along the Parks Highway and in the Willow community in the coming years.

Sincerely,

Charlie Huggins
Senator

Cc: Stan Hooley, Iditarod Trail Committee
Representative Mark Neuman

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC FACILITIES

STATEWIDE AVIATION LEASING
DIVISION OF STATEWIDE AVIATION

SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR

4111 AVIATION AVENUE
P.O. BOX 196900
ANCHORAGE, AK 99519-6900
(907) 269-0730 (907-269-0489)
(TTY 269-0473)

February 6, 2008

RE: Willow Airport
Iditarod Restart 2008

Dear Tenant:

This letter is to inform you that the State of Alaska, Department of Transportation will host the 2008 Iditarod restart from the Willow Airport on March 2, 2008. Vehicle parking will be in the same locations as last years' event. I've enclosed a copy of the traffic plan for your information. The actual restart will take place on Willow Lake.

While the department worked with the Iditarod Committee to relocate the vehicle parking to an area away from the runway, the Iditarod Committee was unable to put together the resources to clear the area in time for this years' event. The Committee has given assurances that resources will be available this summer and that a parking area away from the runway will be developed for next years use.

The runway will be open for aircraft operations and a NOTAM will be filed regarding vehicle and pedestrian traffic around the runway. The Alaska Defense Force will be activated to provide personnel to oversee parking and pedestrian crossing of the Parks Highway. It is anticipated that we will close the Lake for aircraft operations during the hours it takes for the mushers to leave the lake.

We believe this will be the last year vehicle parking will be in the aircraft operations area. We understand Senator Huggins is supporting the Iditarod's relocation efforts by sponsoring a request for funding to be used to clear the 8+ acres at the south end of the airport to support vehicle parking.

Thank you for your understanding and patience on this matter. If you have any questions please call me at (907) 334-2695 or email me at ron.stroman@alaska.gov.

Sincerely,



Ron Stroman
Chief, Statewide Aviation Leasing

CC: Leo Von Scheben, P.E., L.S., M.B.A., Commissioner
Senator Charles Huggins
Christine Klein, Deputy Commissioner of Aviation
Kurt Devon, Mat-Su Area Maintenance Superintendent
Ken Hammonds, Willow Airport Manager

