Alaska DOT&PF – Aviation
Based Aircraft Registration Program

Issue: DOT&PF strives to operate the largest airport system in North America in a more self-sufficient and progressive way. In order to accomplish this task, airports' users, needs, and demands must be better understood and analyzed. Additionally, FAA requires airport sponsors to report their based aircraft. While there are about 9,500 aircraft in the Alaska aviation system, current systems do not provide where the aircraft are based.

Background: Two main reasons contribute to the creation of this program. First, DOT&PF needs to know the number and type of aircraft based in specific areas of the state. This information will be used to better plan for airport system development and capacity. While many individual airports have Airport Master Plans, which include based aircraft counts, those counts are a one-time snapshot and do not provide a way to understand how aircraft counts and fleet mixes change over time. Furthermore, there is no comprehensive inventory of where aircraft are based in Alaska so it is very difficult to understand airport needs, use, or demand. While DOT&PF has greatly improved the airports inventory, deficiency, and inspection processes, knowing based aircraft locations provide an important, but missing, piece of effective system planning.

Second, the FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) provides approximately $200 million annually to fund airport infrastructure development in Alaska, and an airport is only eligible to receive AIP funding if it is included in the FAA's National Plan of Integrated Airports System (NPIAS). One criterion used to determine eligibility for inclusion in the NPIAS is the based aircraft counts at an airport. FAA also uses the based aircraft count to help make AIP funding decisions nationally.

No easy or inexpensive way currently exists for DOT&PF to communicate with aircraft owners, even when they are tenants. The proposed aircraft registration program would facilitate better communication across the aviation system. During the registration process aircraft owners can choose to opt out of basic information being disseminated by the State such as public notices; but if an emergency occurs that warranted a statewide alert, the system would be the platform to inform all owners of the issue.

The registration program will also streamline the air carrier Certificate of Compliance program. Phase II of the aircraft registration program will be the creation of a digital air carrier Certificate of Compliance program and will reduce administrative staff time and allow carriers to pay on the website instead of in person or by phone. Commercial air carriers will be able to update account information utilizing the web portal, creating an efficiency in their busy schedules.

Proposed Process: With over 9,500 aircraft in Alaska, the Department plans to distribute the workload across the year with a rolling registration process. Each month a portion of owners will be required to register their aircraft based upon their aircraft's FAA registration date and FAA identification number.

Later this fall, DOT&PF will send an introductory letter explaining the need and reason for the aircraft registration. A second letter will notify the owner when their registration is due. In subsequent years, the Department plans to send email notices to aircraft owners to the extent possible to minimize administrative costs. Reminders will be sent in advance of the registration renewal date.

While the Department will encourage aircraft owners to register online, by mail or in person registration options will remain available. Owners will be required to notify the Department when they transfer title and to whom the aircraft was transferred, ensuring the new owner receives registration requirement notification.

DOT&PF prefers to have voluntary registration compliance and at this time does not believe there is a need to have an enforcement provision in the draft regulations.

Current Status: DOT&PF has draft regulations to require registration of based aircraft in Alaska. SWA has developed a web based application to support this new function (www.AKaircraftregistration.com), is currently drafting a notification letter, and finalizing the web portal.

FAA registration renewal is required every three years. Prompt reporting of a change in aircraft status, such as ownership, destruction, or mailing address changes to the FAA Aircraft Registration Branch (Registry) has long been required by registration regulations. Without these reports from the owners, the aircraft registration records are not updated and quickly become unreliable across Alaska's vast airport system.

Cost estimate: The aircraft registration program stand-up will be done with existing staff. We recognize there will be a need for on-going administrative functions to handle applications that are not processed online and are optimistic that, after the initial year, administrative assistance for the public will lessen.   This will include processing applications by mail, phone and in-person. Any questions from aircraft owners on process or need will be handled by staff.

While it is difficult to estimate the ongoing administrative costs, the current estimate for the first year is approximately $58,000.00. It is anticipated that the annual cost would be reduced over time as people become more familiar with the system and utilize the online system to renew their registration. The proposed registration fee is $5.00 recognizing that this rate will not cover the anticipated start up but could possibly be very close to subsequent operating years.