

From: [Susan A](#)
To: [Senate Transportation Committee](#); [Senate State Affairs](#)
Subject: PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 152
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PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 152
An Act renaming Ruby Airport as Harold Esmailka Airport
April 2025

To the Chair and Members of the Committee:

I submit this testimony to respectfully oppose SB 152—a bill that seeks to rename the state-owned Ruby Airport to the Harold Esmailka Airport. While I recognize and honor the contributions of Harold Esmailka, I raise concern not on the merit of the individual but on the fiscal irresponsibility of the bill’s implementation.

SB 152 has been introduced without a fiscal note, which is a critical oversight. Renaming a state-owned airport is not a symbolic act without consequence—it triggers a series of logistical and financial obligations that should not be ignored, especially during a time when the state is calling for spending cuts and budget restraint.

Key fiscal impacts likely to result from this renaming include:

Physical Infrastructure Costs:

Updating all signage at the airport itself and along surrounding roadways.

Replacement of directional signs maintained by the Department of Transportation.

These changes have historically cost between \$10,000–\$50,000 depending on the scope, remoteness, and number of signs involved.

Digital Infrastructure and Coordination:

Updates to mapping systems (including FAA databases, GPS, air traffic control systems, airline databases, flight planning apps, and emergency services systems).

Coordination with federal agencies and private mapping companies such as Google, Apple, Garmin, and others takes time and effort.

These updates, when previously undertaken for airport name changes, have cost the state up to \$100,000+ depending on the complexity of integration and third-party systems involved.

Administrative and Communication Costs:

Internal DOT&PF administrative work and coordination.

Public notification efforts.

Travel-related signage and marketing material changes, including tourism guides and local

branding.

This act, while seemingly symbolic, commits the state to costs that have not been publicly acknowledged or justified. In recent years, Alaska has made tough decisions regarding funding cuts to education, rural health services, and infrastructure maintenance. We cannot in good conscience move forward with non-essential expenditures that have not been fully costed out.

Recommendations:

This bill should be tabled until a proper fiscal note is attached and made available for public and legislative review.

The legislature should require comparative data from other airport renaming efforts in Alaska to provide a clear fiscal precedent.

Any future renaming proposals must follow a cost-benefit evaluation framework and prioritize transparency in budget implications.

Additional Note:

As a related concern on infrastructure spending and material use, it must also be noted that lumber is not a structurally reliable primary material for long-term bridge construction, especially in Alaska's extreme weather conditions.

Wood is vulnerable to moisture infiltration, rot, fungal decay, and insect damage, particularly when not treated or maintained with costly preservatives (U.S. Forest Service, 2005).

In freeze-thaw cycles common in Alaska, wood can crack and degrade more rapidly than steel or concrete, reducing the safety and life span of the structure (FHWA, 2016).

Moreover, timber bridges require more frequent inspections and higher long-term maintenance costs compared to concrete or steel alternatives (National Cooperative Highway Research Program, 2010).

Given these engineering and economic concerns, any infrastructure upgrades or repairs, particularly in rural or remote communities, must be based on materials that maximize durability and minimize future maintenance costs.

Please don't create more problems. Fix them.

Susan Allmeroth
Two Rivers
Myself
References

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