

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 1, 2024

1:02 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Kevin McCabe, Chair
Representative Sarah Vance, Vice Chair
Representative Tom McKay
Representative Craig Johnson
Representative Jesse Sumner
Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Genevieve Mina

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S): INFRASTRUCTURE COMPETITIVE GRANTS

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 288

"An Act renaming Fairbanks International Airport as Don Young Fairbanks International Airport; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 288

SHORT TITLE: DON YOUNG FAIRBANKS INT'L AIRPORT

SPONSOR(S): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

01/24/24	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/24	(H)	TRA, FIN
02/01/24	(H)	TRA AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

KATHERINE KEITH, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "Infrastructure Competitive Grants."

ADAM MOSER, Program Development Chief
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "Infrastructure Competitive Grants."

ANDY MILLS, Legislative Liaison
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 288 on behalf of the sponsor, House Rules by request of the governor.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:02:07 PM](#)

CHAIR KEVIN MCCABE called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Representatives McKay, C. Johnson, Vance, Sumner, Mina, and McCabe were present at the call to order. Representative Stutes arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION(S): INFRASTRUCTURE COMPETITIVE GRANTS

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CHAIR MCCABE announced that the first order of business would be the Infrastructure Competitive Grants presentation.

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KATHERINE KEITH, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "Infrastructure Competitive Grants" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She provided a summary of discretionary grants and referred to additional documents that were also included in the committee packet. She referred to a quick-response code ["QR code"] included on slide 2, titled "Accelerating Alaska's Transportation Infrastructure through Proactive Funding," that provided access to a document covering public comments. She added that the document was "fascinating" and that the public had much to say about projects in the communities and their needs. She further provided information

that would be in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP).

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MS. KEITH expounded on the points on slide 2, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Quantified Project Outlook above Four-Year Revenue Forecast

- \$507M in 11 illustrative projects
- \$90.3M in 4 projects using advance construction authority
- \$748M in 40 community-driven projects

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MS. KEITH proceeded to slide 3, titled "Bridging the Gap with Discretionary Grants," which showed in greater detail what grants the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) had been pursuing and had been successful in receiving. She said if this success continues, it could offset and meet some needs that have been pushed down. She noted that 20 successful grants were awarded and further highlighted partnerships. She briefly touched on slide 4, titled "Return on Investment" and that the return on investment on state funds was 21:1.

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REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked whether federal funds could be used for the match dollars.

MS. KEITH replied that DOT&PF submitted its package to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and is waiting for approval.

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MS. KEITH continue on slide 5, titled "Project Delivery Center of Excellence," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Modernizing Project Management

- **People** - Are we structured the right way? Do we have the right resources? Who needs to be on the team?

- **Processes** - Are we using the best method for the project in hand? Are there new and agile ways to approach management and delivery?
- **Tools** - Are we maximizing our current tools? What else do we need? What are our gaps?

MS. KEITH summarized a chart shown on slide 6, titled "Building on Success," featuring federal funding from grants. She stressed that the grants require a match, and the department pursues what it feels would be successful.

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REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked what type of grants DOT&PF was pursuing from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

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ADAM MOSER, Program Development Chief, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, addressed Representative Vance and answered that the department applied to NOAA for fish passage grants, which he noted would be covered later in the presentation.

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REPRESENTATIVE SUMNER asked whether DOT&PF reached out to the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough about the fish passage grants, as the borough had success with them.

MR. MOSER replied that the regional office had been working with Mat-Su on some of its grants and projects.

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CHAIR MCCABE noted his disappointment with the zero awarded Federal Rail Administration (FRA) grants and inquired who would apply for those types of grants.

MS. KEITH responded that the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) had success submitting grants to FRA.

CHAIR MCCABE asked for an example of the \$57.1 grants [as shown on slide 6 under FRA] that DOT&PF submitted.

MS. KEITH answered that would be covered during following slides. She proceeded to discuss types of grants and awards. She further noted DOT&PF's regular communication with ARCC and that it places more emphasis on its grant programs.

CHAIR MCCABE asked specifically which grants have been applied for with the FRA. He noted safety concerns at railroad crossings.

MS. KEITH offered to provide the committee with a list of grants that DOT&PF has applied for.

CHAIR MCCABE drew attention to Maritime Administration (MARAD) grants as listed on slide 6 and mentioned that Port MacKenzie was a marine highway terminus. He expressed interest in whether DOT&PF applied for anything surrounding this.

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REPRESENTATIVE STUTUES asked whether all of the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) grants applied for were 50 percent matching grants.

MS. KEITH said the only portion that is 50 percent match is the operating grant. She returned to the PowerPoint, proceeding to slide 7, titled "Maritime Administration (MARAD)," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) Grants
- Small Shipyard Grants
- United States Marine Highway Program

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MS. KEITH moved to slide 8, titled "Port Improvement Development Projects (PIDP)." The slide showed what DOT&PF had been supporting and advocating for as far as awards. She advanced to slide 9, titled "USDOT Secretary's Office," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Multimodal Project Discretionary Grants: Mega, INFRA, and Rural

- RAISE: Rebuilding America's Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity
- Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)
- SMART: Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation Grants Program
- National Culvert Removal Replacement and Restoration

MS. KEITH briefly covered slide 10, titled "RAIS and MPDG: Major Infrastructure," which featured community-driven awards.

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REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked about communities in other states that have received similar funding and what made Alaska less attractive to the federal government.

MS. KEITH replied that the department had done data analysis with an emphasis on benefit cost analysis, and she said Alaska had a "low population group" that made it less competitive.

MR. MOSER added that there have been some very large projects - such as bridge projects - and those are the ones being sought to be funded.

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REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked whether community awards have been applied for by the state or by the communities.

MS. KEITH said it was ultimately the local government that does the application.

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REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether one of the purposes to assist communities was to help facilitate grants and get collaboration going forward.

MS. KEITH strongly agreed. She noted a few projects that were underway.

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MR. MOSER continued on slide 11, titled "Statewide Community Connectivity Action Plan," which showed an example of a

successful project DOT&PF had in collaboration with the Alaska Municipal League.

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REPRESENTATIVE MINA voiced her excitement for the plan and to see progress with statewide collaboration. She asked about the timeline for the completion of "the report."

MR. MOSER said there are many months between announcements of awards and signing grant agreements with the awarding agency. He continued with an example of another grant award received shown on slide 12, titled "National Culvert Removal Replacement and Restoration Grant Program." He expounded on what could be done with the money granted.

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MS. KEITH continued on slide 13, titled "Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Program." The slide featured the Alaska Rural Remote Operations Workplan (ARROW) grant. She said it encompassed drone technology to help DOT&PF in various areas. She advanced to slide 14, titled "Federal Highways Administration (FHWA)," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Accelerated Innovation Deployment Demonstration Funding
- ATTAIN: Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation
- Bridge Improvement Program: Large, Small, and Planning
- Charging and Fueling Infrastructure
- PROTECT: Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation Program
- Reconnecting Communities; Neighborhood Access and Equity
- Thriving Communities Regional Pilot Program
- Wildlife Crossings

MS. KEITH briefly covered slide 15, titled "Reconnecting Communities and SS4A." She noted there were several communities that submitted planning grants for safe streets.

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MR. MOSER continued on slide 16, titled "Bridge Improvement Program." He said the program offered numerous types of awards and was funded at "fifty-fifty." He added that there were planning grants also included under the bridge program, and he provided brief examples of successes.

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MS. KEITH moved to slide 17, titled "Federal Transit Administration (FTA)," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Advanced Digital Construction Management Systems
- Innovative Coordinated Access & Mobility
- Electric or Low Emitting Ferry Pilot Program
- Areas of Persistent Poverty Program
- Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning
- Ferry Service for Rural Communities

MS. KEITH advanced to slide 18, titled "Ferry Grants." The slide featured awarded projects and a small chart showing funding opportunities.

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REPRESENTATIVE STUTES referred to slide 16 and the particular area shown [Russian and Sargent Rivers]. She noted the flooding of homes each year and that time was of the essence, and she asked what the time frame may be for the bridge improvement program.

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MR. MOSER said he could provide a specific timeframe as to when the planning could be done.

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MS. KEITH added that needs were being addressed beyond the planning study to take care of some of the immediate flooding. She proceeded to slide 19, titled "Transit Grants," which featured an \$800,000 planning grant. She said staffing is low for this program and DOT&PF is working on a solution.

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REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked for a timeline for the study.

MR. MOSER replied that the grant agreement had not yet been finalized and once the project team is together, he would communicate with the committee.

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MS. KEITH moved to slide 20, titled "Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)." The slide featured various programs and grants, and she noted that there were fewer opportunities available through the FAA for rural airports unlike on the highway side. She added that DOT&PF's statewide aviation team was focused on the airport terminal program.

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REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked for clarification on what the new jet fuel was.

MS. KEITH answered that sustainable jet fuel is currently being used in combination with regular jet fuel. She added that renewable diesel is bought as soon as it is produced and there are additional options as well for alternative fuel. She said DOT&PF also looked to any possibility to help industry partners as they come into the state and to be ready for any potential regulations as they come.

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REPRESENTATIVE STUTES commented that she was confused about the fuel combination.

MS. KEITH gave a brief explanation but stated that she was not an expert in the chemical process and would share the studies at a later date.

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REPRESENTATIVE MINA expressed interest in future conversations surrounding alternative fuels and was curious if particular grants relate to work being done to look at aviation gasoline ("avgas") alternatives. She added that her district is near Merrill Field.

MS. KEITH said more discussions need to take place with other industries and more resources are needed so the department can

"figure out where that is." She advanced to slide 22, titled "Grant Competitiveness," which showed a chart with compiled project data and ranks of outputs. She noted there are plenty of projects already in process and the federal agencies are looking at projects that are "shovel ready."

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MR. MOSER stressed that readiness is a huge part of the grants the department sought. The merit criteria differed by grant and must be shown by hard data and benefit cost analysis, he said.

[2:02:14 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCABE asked how much money is being spent on road corridors.

MS. KEITH replied that the department needed to look at a wide variety of factors when putting together a benefit cost analysis. She drew attention to the QR code on slide 23 that she explained would provide access to the list of grants submitted by DOT&PF, amongst additional information.

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REPRESENTATIVE MINA commented about the functionality of the department website.

MS. KEITH said that she would look into the website and ensure that it is operational.

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REPRESENTATIVE SUMNER referred to equity scoring for projects and whether it had been mentioned.

MS. KEITH responded that there are requirements for most projects to reach Justice40 communities. She added that DOT&PF must provide a map to what area the projects are in, such as if the community is disadvantaged, and it would then get a certain number of points.

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The committee took a brief at-ease at 2:08 p.m.

^#hb288

HB 288-DON YOUNG FAIRBANKS INT'L AIRPORT

[2:08:39 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCABE announced that the final order of business would be HB 288, "An Act renaming Fairbanks International Airport as Don Young Fairbanks International Airport; and providing for an effective date."

[2:09:13 PM](#)

ANDY MILLS, Legislative Liaison, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, introduced HB 288 on behalf of the sponsor, House Rules by request of the governor. He noted several other infrastructures have been named after the late congressman, Don Young, and this legislation seeks to recognize him due to his contributions to transportation infrastructure and to Congress. He confirmed he heard from many that supported the proposed bill. He noted that the airport naming would be from a state perspective over federal or local.

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REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked why Fairbanks was chosen and not the capital city of Juneau.

MR. MILLS clarified that Juneau is a municipal airport and from a state perspective, Fairbanks is a hub for the northern part of Alaska.

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CHAIR MCCABE commented that some residents may not want to change the airport designation, "FAI," and he further added that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) may not want to change the identifier. He questioned the fiscal note and how \$600,000 was determined.

MR. MILLS confirmed that the FAI designation would not change. He noted that cost analysis does not include statues or decorative signs.

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REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked about the timeline for changing all the items listed in the fiscal note.

MR. MILLS offered his understanding that it would be less than a year before shifting over to the new signage and new name.

2:19:24 PM

CHAIR MCCABE announced that HB 288 was held over.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.