

STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE

1998

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Legislative
Resolve No.
85



Relating to continued operation of the McKinley Park airstrip for general aviation and access to Denali National Park and Preserve.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS Denali National Park and Preserve is the top visitor destination in Alaska and a critical site for the Alaska visitor and tourism industry; and

WHEREAS access to Denali National Park and Preserve is extremely restricted due to the limited existing transportation infrastructure; and

WHEREAS visiting Denali National Park and Preserve is a high priority for many Alaskans and for many visitors who fly to Alaska in their personal aircraft; and

WHEREAS the McKinley Park airstrip, located at the entrance to Denali National Park and Preserve, provides direct access to the park, to the surface transportation system in the park, and to the Alaska Railroad; and

WHEREAS the McKinley Park airstrip serves as a public airport facility as well as a multimodal transportation transfer point; and

WHEREAS the automated weather observation system at the McKinley Park airstrip supplies invaluable weather information to pilots traveling through Windy Pass; and

WHEREAS the McKinley Park airstrip provides an emergency landing area in otherwise forbidding terrain in the event that a pilot experiences bad weather conditions or mechanical problems with the aircraft; and

WHEREAS the closest alternative public airport, the Healy River Airport, has limited space available for transient aircraft, has limited transient service facilities, is located 10 miles from the entrance to Denali National Park and Preserve, and often experiences severe winds that pose a hazard to aircraft; and

WHEREAS the Denali landing strip is eight miles from the entrance to Denali National Park and Preserve, is operated as only a private airstrip, and is not open to the public; and

WHEREAS the possibility of the closure of the McKinley Park airstrip was not adequately discussed as part of the proposed alternative in the Entrance Area and Road Corridor Development Concept Plan (Frontcountry Plan) during public hearings in 1996 and thus has not received the benefit of proper public scrutiny and review; and

WHEREAS the planning section of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has determined that the closure of the McKinley Park airstrip is not recommended at this time;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that the National Park Service reconsider its decision to close the McKinley Park airstrip and permit continued operation of the airstrip in order to provide convenient access to Denali National Park and Preserve for Alaskans and visitors to Alaska and to fulfill a very important function for general aviation.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior; Robert G. Stanton, Director, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.