

Introduced by: Council Member Swope  
Date: March 14, 2023  
Action: Passed  
Vote: 7-0

# CITY OF BETHEL, ALASKA

## Resolution #23-05

**A RESOLUTION BY THE BETHEL CITY COUNCIL REQUESTING THAT THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE PROGRAM, COMPLETE A SERVICE NEEDS ASSESSMENT TO DETERMINE IF THE YUKON KUSKOKWIM DELTA REGION HAS ADEQUATE PASSENGER FLIGHT SERVICES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF TRAVELERS TO AND FROM THE REGION**

**WHEREAS**, the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 gave air carriers almost total freedom to determine in what markets to provide domestic services;

**WHEREAS**, the Essential Air Service program (EAS), funded by the United States Department of Transportation, was created to ensure that smaller communities served by air carriers receive a minimum level of service;

**WHEREAS**, approximately 60 communities in Alaska currently receive services from EAS subsidies;

**WHEREAS**, Bethel qualifies for the EAS, allowing air carriers to provide federally-subsidized flight services to Bethel but none are currently receiving the subsidy;

**WHEREAS**, the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Region, spanning 59,000square miles, consists of 56 communities with approximately 25,000 residents;

**WHEREAS**, because the 56 communities are not connected by the road system, YK Delta residents use a system of airports, rivers, ports, barge landings, and trails for transportation within the region;

**WHEREAS**, Bethel is the largest hub community in the region with the only airport large enough to accommodate large passenger flights to Anchorage, the closest service hub on the road system which is 400 miles away, requiring residents and visitors to the region to funnel through Bethel to access passenger flight services;

**WHEREAS**, currently, only one commercial carrier provides passenger services between Bethel and Anchorage;



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**WHEREAS**, in 2002, there were 1,324 departures from the Bethel Airport, by the only commercial passenger carrier with service to Anchorage; in 2021 (the last full year of data available), that number dropped to 677 departures from the Bethel Airport; an average difference of 24 flights per week to 13 flights per week;

**WHEREAS**, this reduction has left the 25,000 residents and many visitors and essential personnel without adequate air services to and from the region;

**WHEREAS**, in 1980, the United States Department of Transportation performed an EAS determination study for Alaska, which it has not been updated;

**WHEREAS**, the 1980 study, through Vici Aeronautics Board Order No. 80-1-167, determined that Bethel should have 16 large aircraft flights per week during peak season and 14 large aircraft (60 seats) flights per week during the off-season (peak season and off-seasons are not defined);

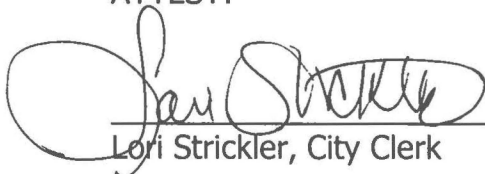
**WHEREAS**, in 1980, Bethel's population was 3,576; today it is approximately 6,300 (a 55% increase); in 1980 the Bethel Census Area's population was 10,999, and today it is approximately 18,600 (a 51% increase);

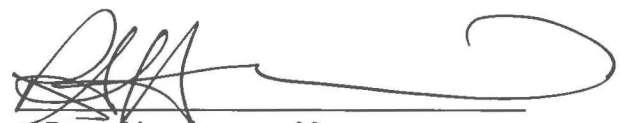
**WHEREAS**, given the population growth in the region of over 50% since the last EAS determination, it is time for a new determination for Bethel and the YK Delta to see if the region's needs are being met by the current service level;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BETHEL** that the Bethel City Council requests the United States Department of Transportation, Essential Air Service program complete a service needs assessment to determine if Bethel and the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Region have adequate passenger flight services to meet the needs of travelers to and from the Region.

**ENACTED THIS 14<sup>th</sup> DAY OF MARCH 2023 BY A VOTE OF 7 IN FAVOR AND 0 OPPOSED.**

ATTEST:

  
Lori Strickler, City Clerk

  
Rose Henderson, Mayor

