



SPIRT - SAINT PAUL ISLAND RESPONSE TEAM

NEWS RELEASE

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SUBJECT: Saint Paul Island Air Transportation

Over the past few years Saint Paul Island, Alaska, has faced numerous challenges with air transportation from the normal Alaska weather that prevents planes for landing, to air navigation aid outages, to two airlines going bankrupt and one airline calling it quits. In addition, Saint Paul Island has experienced problems with the various aviation navigational aids (glide slope, instrument landing system, automated weather observing system, while FAA weather cameras have not been fully operational for extended periods of time leading to cancelations of passenger and other flights to the community.

Woolpert, a specialized aviation consulting firm, was contracted to access the current state of aviation access and navigational aids for Saint Paul Island. Woolpert research was successful in identifying the issues related to the ASOS outages, noted they were not confined to the ASOS, and that there were additional significant impacts to the Glide Slope equipment, the Non-Directional Beacon and the Localizer. Woolpert researched the history of outages extensively over the past five years. A full copy of the Woolpert report is available upon request.

Jacob Merculief, Saint Paul Island's Mayor noted that "in the face of this adversity and the closure of the Bering Sea snow crab fishery; the community of Saint Paul Island has kept its head high and faced these challenges head on." The community leadership organized in late 2024 to lobby for protecting funding for essential air service, upgrades to the aviation navigational aids, and improved air service. The community's leadership spent much of 2025 meeting with Federal and State officials to bring attention to our aviation challenges. This work has been long and taxing on the leadership and the community; however, there is light at the end of this tunnel. The community and its leadership have shown overwhelming support for Sterling (Aleutian) Airways to provide regular scheduled passenger air service to the community using the Saab 2000. "We look forward to the US Department of Transportation approving an essential air service award to Sterling in the coming weeks" added Merculief while noting that restoring regular passenger service to the community is essential to the health, well-being, and economic security for the community.

The community would also like to extend its gratitude and thanks to Security Aviation and their team for providing the support with the scheduled charters and their support to continue to provide service over the summer months until Sterling (Aleutian) Airways is ready to fly the route with the Saab 2000. "Without Security Aviation stepping in to provide such support, the challenges we faced would have been much more difficult" stated City Manager Phillip Zavadil. "Our leaders and community believe that we have built a long-term relationship with Security Aviation resulting from this crisis and hope to continue this

positive relationship well into the future” added Zavadil. The community is also hopeful it can build a lasting and meaningful relationship with Sterling Airways going forward as it seeks to diversify Saint Paul’s economy and face challenges over the next 10 years.

If you would like to write a more in-depth story on Saint Paul Island’s aviation challenges over this past decade please contact Phillip Zavadil, City Manager for the City of Saint Paul, Alaska at the contact information above.

Below is a brief history of the community’s air service over the past decade:

- October 26, 2017, Penair withdrew its notice of termination of EAS and will continue to provide service to Saint Paul Island subsidy free until December 1, 2017.
- December 2018 Penair continued to provide service to Saint Paul Island through year.
- March 3, 2019, Corvus Airlines d/b/a Ravn Alaska replaced Penair.
- July 8, 2019 USDOT issued hold to Ravn Alaska for September 30, 2019.
- October 2, 2019, USDOT selected Corvus Airlines d/b/a Ravn Alaska (Ravn) to provide EAS to Saint Paul Island for a two-year term from October 1, 2019, through September 30, 2021.
- April 5, 2020, Ravn Alaska ceased all operation to Saint Paul Island.
- August 7, 2020, FLOAT Alaska acquired Ravn Group.
- December 1, 2020, Ravn resumed service to the Saint Paul Island again
- September 30, 2021, Ravn selected by USDOT to provide EAS for 2 years from October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2023.
- September 7, 2023, Ravn selected by USDOT to provide EAS for 2 years from October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2025.
- April 16, 2025, the US Department of Transportation issued order 2025-4-8 requesting proposals from air carriers interested in providing EAS to Saint Paul Island.
- May 14, 2025, Ravn Alaska filed a 140-day notice to terminate subsidize essential air service to Saint Paul Island.
- June 23, 2025, Kenai Aviation submitted a proposal to provide subsidized passenger service to Saint Paul Island.
- July 21, 2025, the City of Saint Paul, Aleut Community of St. Paul, Central Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association, and Tanadgusix Corporation (“community entities”) on behalf of the community submitted a comment letter supporting Kenai Aviation’s proposal but expressing concerns about the proposal including the proposed use of the King Air airframe, which is not responsive to community need.
- August 1, 2025, the community entities worked with Security Aviation to provide scheduled charter service, until an airline was selected to provide service.
- August 19, 2025, the US Department of Transportation issued a new order 2025-8-11 requesting proposals for replacement EAS on an expedited basis for Saint Paul Island and Unalakleet.
- September 10, 2025, the US Department of Transportation forwarded EAS proposals from Kenai Aviation, Security Aviation, and Sterling Airways to Saint Paul Island.
- The week of September 15, 2025, numerous Saint Paul Island entities supported Sterling Airways proposal.

The Saint Paul Island Response Team (SPIRT) was established to coordinate the efforts of Saint Paul Island’s key entities to plan and respond collectively to incidents, emergencies and policies that impact the community and its way of life.