Sponsored by: Councilmember Lojewski*
Councilmember Therrien
Councilmember Sprinkle
*indicates original sponsor
Date: November 9, 2026

RESOLUTION NO. 5244

A RESOLUTION ENCOURAGING THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION TO FULLY STAFF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL AT THE FAIRBANKS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

WHEREAS, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Fairbanks Tower/TRACON temporarily suspended Air Traffic Control (ATC) services at the Fairbanks International Airport (FAI) on October 19, 2026 between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. local time until October 31, 2027; and

WHEREAS, the Fairbanks International Airport is the largest airport in Interior Alaska and serves as a critical hub for all communities in Interior Alaska including the greater Fairbanks and North Pole areas and many Interior and northern Alaska rural bush communities, playing a vital role in supporting our regional economy, connecting residents and businesses to the rest of the world, as well as facilitating the movement of hundreds of thousands of visitors annually; and

WHEREAS, seven regularly scheduled commercial passenger flights operate during the affected hours, including three inbound flights—one from Anchorage and two from Seattle—and four outbound flights—three to Seattle and one to Anchorage, flights representing critical connections for residents, businesses, and visitors traveling to and from Interior Alaska who depend on reliable air transportation; and

WHEREAS, the loss of ATC coverage increases the risk of aviation incidents and degrades our airport's ability to respond to in-flight emergencies that could result in the preventable loss of life or injury of professional aircrews, passengers, and civilians on the ground; and

WHEREAS, the loss of ATC coverage also increases the likelihood of flight delays and canceled flights effecting the timely flow of traffic in and out of the Fairbanks International Airport.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FAIRBANKS as follows:

Section 1. The Fairbanks City Council strongly supports full staffing of ATC at the Fairbanks International Airport and requests the resumption of 24/7 ATC support for all commercial flights in and out of Fairbanks.

Section 2. The effective date of this resolution is six days after adoption.

Section 3. Once in effect, the City Clerk is instructed to send copies of this resolution to the Alaska International Airport System Director; the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities; the Governor of the State of Alaska; our Interior Alaska State Legislative representatives; the Chairs of the Alaska House and Senate Transportation Committees; Deputy Regional Administrator and Acting Regional Administrator for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for the Alaskan Region as well as the FAA Administrator; and our Congressional Delegation.

Mindy O'Neall, Mayor

YEAS: Ringstad, Therrien, Sprinkle, Lojewski, Cleworth
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Tidwell
APPROVED: November 9, 2026

ATTEST:

D. Danyielle Snider, MMC, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Thomas A. Chard II, City Attorney

Alaska Interior Delegation

In Juneau
Alaska State Capitol Rm 7
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: (907) 465-3719

In Fairbanks
1292 Sadler Way Ste 308
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone: (907) 451-2157

Kevin Hubbard
Alaskan Region Deputy Regional Administrator
FAA Alaskan Regional Office
222 West 7th Ave. #14
Anchorage, AK 99513

Dear Kevin,

On behalf of the Interior Delegation and the thousands of constituents we represent throughout Interior Alaska, we are writing to express our ongoing concerns regarding air traffic control staffing and the continuity of 24-hour service at Fairbanks International Airport.

The Interior Delegation is comprised of ten legislators representing communities across our region, from the Fairbanks North Star Borough to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, including military installations and rural communities throughout the Interior. The Fairbanks International Airport is a critical transportation hub for these communities, and reliable, around-the-clock air traffic control service is essential to the continued safe and efficient operation of the airport. In addition, Alaska's international airport system collectively serves the state during emergency situations such as flight diversions and medical transports from rural communities.

We are particularly concerned that as of October 18th the Fairbanks International Airport has shifted to a temporary reduction in operating hours due to staffing shortages. Each night from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am the Fairbanks International Airport will operate without air traffic control support. While we appreciate the FAA's communication with the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce and other community leaders, the indication that the airport is operating near full staffing does not align with what we have observed and heard from airport staff, aviation stakeholders, and constituents in the Interior.

The Fairbanks International Airport is the largest airport in Interior Alaska and serves as a critical hub for more than 20 Interior and Northern Alaska communities. Flights through Fairbanks provide access to cargo, mail, medical supplies, and other necessities, in addition to passenger services all over the state. The unpredictability of Alaska's winter conditions and limited daylight result in increased reliance on air traffic control services when ensuring safe landing and takeoff procedures. A lack of air traffic control support from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. is a huge concern to all stakeholders and constituents who rely on these flights. Any reduction in reliable service in Fairbanks will affect many other communities and regions in the State.

We recognize that the FAA, like many institutions, is facing significant workforce challenges. It is our goal as a Delegation to work collaboratively with the FAA to address the issues described and ensure that the Fairbanks International Airport has the staffing necessary to maintain safe and reliable service.

We respectfully request continued and transparent communication from the FAA regarding the air traffic control staffing concerns, to include updates on the current staffing situation, anticipated staffing needs, and any contingency plans that may affect overnight operations moving forward. Our offices are prepared to assist by any means necessary to support the airport and the communities that depend on it.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to working with the FAA to ensure that the needs of Alaskans are appropriately addressed.

Sincerely,
Interior Delegation
Alaska State Legislature

Representative Dibert – HD 31

Representative Stapp – HD 32

Representative Prax – HD 33

Representative Tomaszewski – HD 34

Representative Carrick– HD 35

Representative Schwanke – HD 36

Senator Kawasaki – SD P

Senator Myers – SD Q

Senator Cronk – SD

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October 27, 2026

Mr. Kevin Hubbard
Alaska Region Deputy Regional Administrator
FAA Alaska Regional Office
222 West 7th Avenue #14
Anchorage, Alaska 99513

Dear Mr. Hubbard:

On behalf of Explore Fairbanks and the Interior Alaska visitor industry, we are writing to express our strong concerns regarding the Federal Aviation Administration's decision to suspend overnight air traffic control services at Fairbanks International Airport between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

As the primary air transportation gateway to Interior Alaska, Fairbanks International Airport plays a vital role in supporting our regional economy, connecting residents and businesses to the rest of the world, and facilitating the movement of hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Reliable commercial air service is particularly critical to our visitor industry, which has worked diligently over many years to develop Fairbanks as a premier year-round destination.

Of particular concern is the fact that seven regularly scheduled commercial passenger flights operate during the affected hours, including three inbound flights—one from Anchorage and two from Seattle—and four outbound flights—three to Seattle and one to Anchorage. These flights represent critical connections for visitors traveling to and from Interior Alaska, as well as residents, businesses, and others who depend on reliable air transportation. Any operational disruptions or delays resulting from the absence of local air traffic control services could have consequences extending well beyond the airport itself.

The timing of this decision is especially troubling as Fairbanks enters its winter tourism season. Our region has established itself as one of the world's premier destinations for viewing the aurora borealis, attracting visitors from across the United States and around the globe. For many of these travelers, overnight flights are an essential component of their itineraries, often involving connections through major domestic and international gateways. Flight delays, missed connections, or uncertainty regarding air service reliability can have cascading impacts on hotels, tour operators, transportation providers, restaurants, and numerous other businesses that collectively support our regional visitor economy.

We also recognize that Fairbanks International Airport serves functions extending well beyond commercial passenger travel, including cargo transportation, medical flights, general aviation, and its role as an alternate airport for Anchorage. The unique geographic circumstances of Alaska, combined

with the challenging weather conditions experienced during our winter months, underscore the importance of maintaining the highest possible level of operational support and reliability.

We appreciate that aircraft operations can continue during the overnight hours under established FAA procedures, and we recognize the challenges associated with recruiting and retaining qualified air traffic controllers. Nevertheless, the reduction of services at an airport of Fairbanks' significance raises concerns about operational efficiency, reliability, and the potential long-term implications for our region's air transportation network.

We stand ready to work collaboratively with the FAA and other stakeholders toward a timely resolution and sincerely hope that restoring full overnight air traffic control operations at Fairbanks International Airport will receive the urgent attention it deserves.

Sincerely,

Scott McCrea, President and CEO

Kory Eberhardt, Chair, Board of Directors

Cc:
The Honorable Senator Lisa Murkowski
The Honorable Senator Dan Sullivan
The Honorable Representative Nick Begich
Alaska Interior Delegation
Ryan Anderson, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Angie Spear, Director, Alaska International Airport System (AIAS)
Jillian Simpson, President and CEO, Alaska Travel Industry Association
Lisa Putnam, Interim President and CEO, Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce

Mindy O'Neall, Mayor

13 October 2027

The Honorable Bryan Bedford
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

RE: Urgent Concern Regarding Planned Overnight Tower Closure at Fairbanks International Airport

Dear Administrator Bedford,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the Federal Aviation Administration's decision to cease air traffic control tower operations at Fairbanks International Airport between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

The decision to cease air traffic control tower operations raises significant public safety concerns for our community and the broader Interior Alaska region. Fairbanks International Airport serves as a critical transportation hub for passenger travel, cargo operations, emergency medical transportation, military activity, and essential services that sustain our remote communities. Maintaining continuous tower operations is a matter of public safety and operational reliability. Faculty staffing at Fairbanks International Airport has reduced from 15 Certified Professional Controllers (CPCs) to 13. Certified staffing is anticipated to drop to just 10 controllers, supported by only a single frontline supervisor. This is an unsustainable baseline, and unacceptable for our community.

Our region experiences extreme weather conditions, prolonged darkness during the winter months, reduced visibility, icing, and rapidly changing environmental factors that require heightened situational awareness and coordination. During overnight hours, when weather conditions can be particularly challenging and emergency response options more limited, the presence of trained air traffic controllers is essential to ensuring the safe movement of aircraft operating in and around our community. As an international airport, many of our flights are scheduled during these overnight hours.

The proposed closure also poses concerns to Alaska's transportation grid and our national security architecture. Fairbanks plays a vital role in supporting military operations, serving closely with Eielson Air Force Base and Fort Wainwright. Emergency flights, medical evacuations, search and rescue operations, cargo carriers, military missions, and general aviation users who may require immediate access to controlled airspace during overnight hours are all at risk to severe vulnerabilities. Any reduction in aviation safety increases operational risk and could have serious consequences for the residents of Fairbanks and surrounding communities who depend on reliable air service year-round.

As Mayor, my foremost responsibility is the safety and well-being of our residents. For that reason, I strongly urge the FAA to prioritize targeted recruitment and retention incentives and maintain 24-hour tower operations at Fairbanks International Airport.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Mindy O'Neall
Mayor

Phone: (907) 459-6793

800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, AK, 99701