



What We Heard

*Yukon's Flight Path:
Aviation System Investment Strategy for 2020-2030*

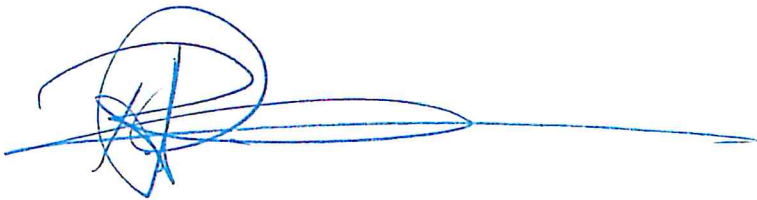


Message from the Minister

Yukon's *Flight Path: Aviation System Investment Strategy for 2020-2030* is a plan to guide future investments in the aviation system. The strategy will be completed by taking a critical look at infrastructure, services, and processes and proposing investments that will maintain safety, meet national aviation regulations, and enhance users' experiences. The strategy will build on years of technical data, research, and stakeholder feedback to show where Yukon aviation is now and where it can go over the next decade.

This report outlines what we heard during our engagement period and what issues matter most to those who were engaged. Between November 2019 and February 2020, we heard from over 200 members of the aviation community, several First Nation and municipal governments, and many members of the public about how Yukon's aviation system is used, how it's meeting expectations, and what opportunities users see for the future. All feedback received has been incorporated into this report and will be invaluable to the creation of the strategy, anticipated for completion Fall 2020.

As Minister of Highways and Public Works, I would like to thank everyone who participated in this engagement; the insight you shared will help guide decision-making moving forward and showcases our shared goal of working together to support the wellbeing of all Yukoners.



Richard Mostyn
Minister of Highways and Public Works



Project information

Yukon's airports and aerodromes are vital to life in the North. Aviation connects us to one another and the larger world outside. Our aviation system brings friends and family together, supports Yukon businesses, enables the delivery of vital emergency services, and connects Yukon communities.

Activity

All locations may support tourism, mining, policing services, and medevac as needed.



Port of Entry

Has a Canada Border Services Agency border-clearance process



Medical Evacuation (Medevac)

Air ambulance service providing timely, efficient movement and en route medical care



Wildland Fire Management

Wildfire suppression using specially designed firefighting aircraft



Schedule Air Service

Publicly-available passenger air transport service with a published schedule, charged per seat.



Certified Airport

Meets specific criteria, regulations, and standards from Transport Canada with ongoing inspections.



Registered Aerodrome

Operates in compliance with Canada Aviation Regulations with periodic inspections.

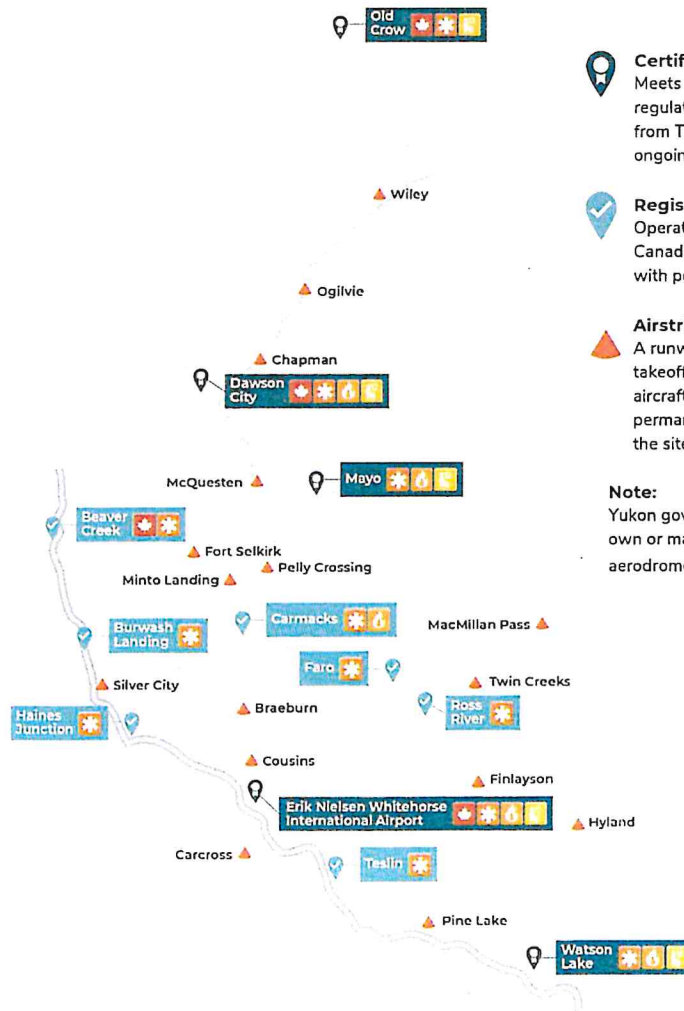


Airstrip

A runway maintained for takeoff and landing of aircraft with no other permanent infrastructure at the site.

Note:

Yukon government does not own or manage any water aerodromes.



Engagement overview

Who

To inform Yukon's Flight Path, we did extensive engagement to gather input from all Yukoners including passengers, First Nation and municipal governments, and various organizations. In addition, those with more direct connections to Yukon's aviation system (e.g. pilots, aviation-based businesses) were specifically engaged to provide their insight and expertise; in total, **over 200 members of the aviation community provided input to this project.**



Members of the aviation community

Those relying directly on Yukon's aviation system:

- pilots,
- private businesses relying on aviation (e.g. mining, fly-in tourism),
- private sector aviation businesses (e.g. airline or helicopter companies, aircraft maintenance), or
- public services that rely directly on aviation (e.g. medevac, wildland fire management, policing services).

How

We used newspaper, social media, and radio ads; an infographic; and community posters to let the public know about the project and how they could provide input. We also used telephone calls and e-mails to reach out to First Nation and municipal governments, members of the aviation community, community and industry associations, and regulators to further encourage participation. Feedback was collected through in-person meetings, telephone interviews, stakeholder interview guides, public events held in 9 Yukon communities, and an online survey through EngageYukon that ran from November 20 to February 17 and collected **500+ responses.**

What

During the engagement process for Yukon's Flight Path, we asked respondents (e.g. members of the aviation community, passengers, governments, and other stakeholders) to provide input on four topic areas:



Priorities



Expectations
and areas of
improvement



Opportunities and
challenges



Financial
sustainability

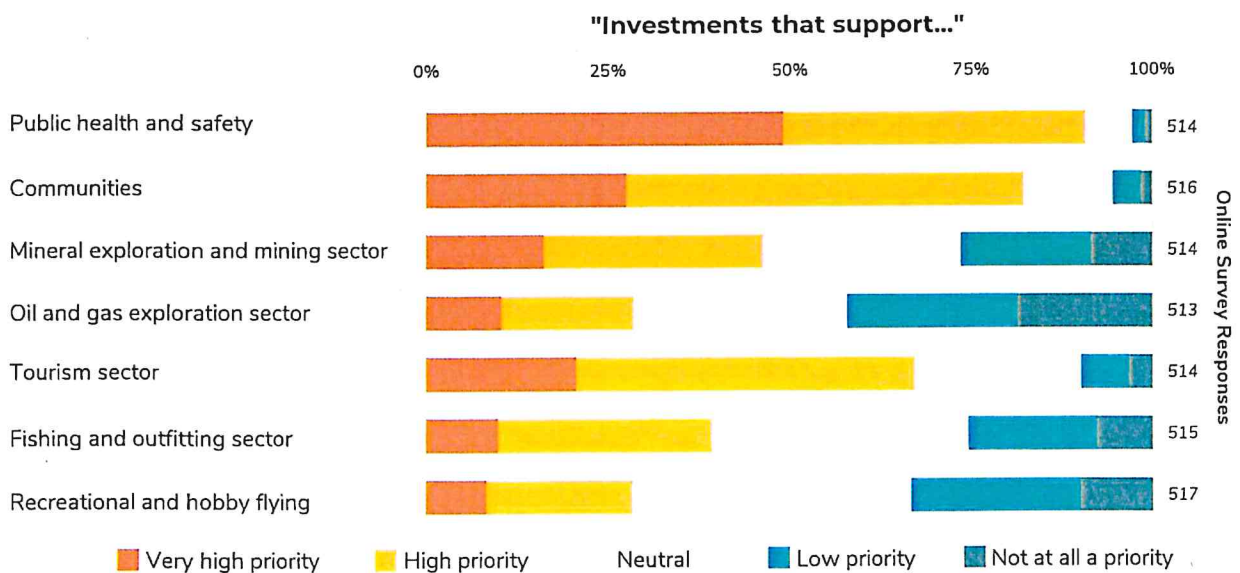




Priorities

We asked, "how should the Yukon government prioritize aviation infrastructure and services investments?"; what we heard was:

- **Yukon's aviation system is valued for its many roles.** Respondents said that the aviation system provides important emergency services (e.g. medevac services, emergency preparedness, wildfire management, RCMP), supports many different economic opportunities, and allows relatively easy movement of people and cargo.
- Respondents believed that the **most important decision-making factor should be health, safety, and security** of all users and Yukoners.
- When asked specifically which investments should be prioritized, the top 3 investments identified in the survey were those that support:
 - **public health and safety** (e.g. medevac, wildland fire management, policing),
 - **communities** (e.g. access and cargo deliveries to isolated or remote communities), and
 - the **tourism sector**.





Expectations and areas for improvement

Expectations

We asked how Yukon's aviation system was meeting the expectations of respondents; what we heard was:

- Respondents expect:
 - all airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips are safe for users and nearby residents.
 - all airports/ aerodromes/ and airstrips will remain open and available for public use.
 - Yukon's aviation system will continue to be used to protect Yukoners' health and safety.
 - the future of Yukon's aviation system will not unfairly increase their cost of living.
- Expectations are different for each airport/ aerodrome/ airstrip.
- While levels of satisfaction varied by airport/ aerodrome/ airstrip, respondents said Yukon's aviation system was generally meeting their expectations.



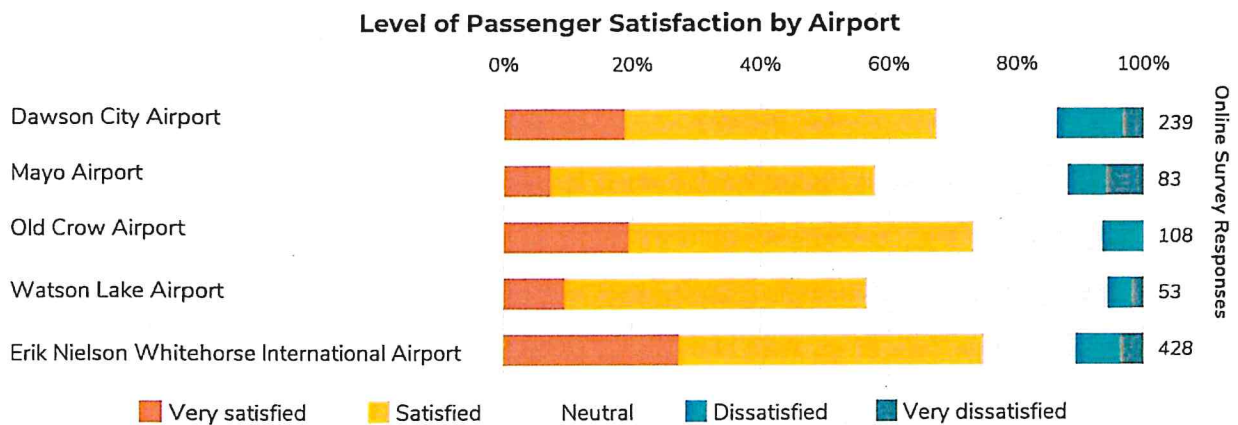
All Yukoners have a right to access to services that rely on airports - they are part of the safety of our territory and increased access will also make tourism options more viable and allow residents to live a better life in Yukon - there has to be equal access...





Passengers experience Yukon's aviation system in a much different way than members of the aviation community. While passengers fly into many of Yukon's 28 airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips; Yukon's certified airports are of primary focus.

As shown below, online survey responses showed **passenger satisfaction at Yukon's airports ranged from 58% to 75%** with the highest level of passenger satisfaction being at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport.



Although the online survey gathered passenger feedback, 95% of responses were Yukon residents; as such, it does not represent the opinions of all visitors.



Members of the aviation community are users of Yukon's aviation system and have detailed understanding of airports/ aerodrome/ airstrip operations and requirements.

As shown on the next page, online survey responses showed that **the level of satisfaction members of the aviation community have with Yukon's airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips ranged from 31% to 73%** with the highest level of positive responses being at the Dawson City Airport.



Members of the Aviation Community's Level of Satisfaction by Airports/ Aerodromes/ Airstrips



Areas for improvement



When asked about what **passengers** would like to see improved at airports, we heard:

- Enhanced **passenger amenities**, specifically food services. They felt that providing food services at Yukon's airports was a good way to encourage passengers to arrive early for flights and was especially important due to how often flights are delayed. Access to food services was particularly important past security.
- Other desired passenger amenities included WIFI, televisions, play areas, shopping opportunities, or other means of **entertainment**.
- Larger **lounge areas** with more comfortable seating as existing lounge areas were described as uncomfortable, poorly designed, or not well maintained.
- Enhanced **general aesthetics** and design of terminals such as airline check-in areas and washrooms. They also think that airports should showcase local culture and be more welcoming gateways to Yukon.

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Food service inside security at Whitehorse would be appreciated. And the signage at Whitehorse airport is really confusing and too small to read while driving. Passenger waiting area at Dawson is too small and needs way more chairs. Old Crow airport is amazing for travelers. Please put the priority on keeping our airports safe and convenient.

”

“

It mostly serves its purpose but needs some tweaks. Cosmetics would go a long way. The tourism offer in Yukon is still hazy and the airport should be a major component of a new integrated tourism strategy rather than standalone, aside from ensuring food service and basic amenities.

[ENWIA]

”

Passengers shared the same themes for all airports but agreed that improvements should be focused at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport.





When asked to review airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips that they use, **members of the aviation community** provided **more than 600 specific comments** about what they would like to see improved. Key recommendations were:

- **Enhanced maintenance** including snow clearing, grading, tree-clearing, and runway repairs.
- Better **navigation, communication, and weather aids**.
- Access to more **aircraft services** such as fuel, plug-ins, aircraft parking, and tie-downs.
- Access to terminal buildings and construction of new **facilities** such as float plane bases, picnic areas, campgrounds, or outhouses.
- A focus on **land development and leasing** opportunities and changes to the existing application and approval process.
- **Enhanced passenger amenities**, specifically at ENWIA.
- **Shared technology for airlines** such as shared check-in desks and baggage drop areas, self-serve kiosks, common use terminal equipment, and flight information screens.
- More transparent and cooperative **communication** between members of the aviation community and the Yukon government.
- Improved **governance and policies** within the Yukon government to better support aviation users and businesses.

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Aviation infrastructure seems to be suffering from deferred maintenance--things are just always being patched up.

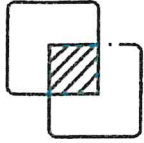
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*There is no capability of landing medivacs at night or in bad weather because of lack of infrastructure.
[Ross River Aerodrome]*

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Opportunities and challenges

Yukon's Flight Path will guide the aviation system over the next decade, so we asked, "What are some opportunities or challenges you see for the system over the next 10 years?" The most common themes were:

Safety and reliability

- Yukoners understand that ensuring the safety of all users and community members is the most important challenge; and that it must be the top consideration for all decisions over the next 10 years.
- Reliability was mentioned often. Yukoners rely on the aviation system for access, safety, security, business, and many other things but delays and cancellations happen often due to poor weather. Although flights are delayed to protect user safety, they are frustrating and can negatively impact entire communities.
- To increase safety and reliability, members of the aviation community would like to see more navigation, communication, and weather aids introduced across Yukon.
- Reliable access to fuel is critical and is a challenge for pilots which impacts all aviation users.
- Limited access to plug-ins and terminals is a safety concern for pilots and is especially important during bad weather conditions or cold snaps.
- Residents living near airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips were concerned about dust, noise, and their communities' ability to respond to potential fires, fuel spills, or accidents.



Improving the reliability of flights to the higher use airports such as Dawson City is important to the local economy.



As an operator of helicopters, we need very little. Namely, FUEL and ELECTRICITY, especially for overnight parking during the winter.



Land development and leasing

- Land development and leasing was identified as a priority by members of the aviation community; they felt the Yukon government's land development and leasing process was holding them back with some saying they have been trying to get leases for over 10 years.
- Members of the aviation community said being able to develop and lease land would allow them to grow their businesses and better serve their clients.
- Municipal and First Nation governments also identified land development and leasing to create economic opportunities, grow Yukon's economy, provide better services to Yukoners, and boost local skills and employment.

Supporting local communities

- During the community meetings, many governments and residents of communities with airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips said they want the Yukon government and aviation users to work more closely with their community. They view their local airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips as an important asset and have ideas about how to improve connections with the community.
- Opportunities mentioned by governments and residents included: partnerships with local contractors to do maintenance, showcasing local businesses in the terminal (e.g. accommodations, entertainment and tours, restaurants, shops), and having reliable transportation between the airport/ aerodrome/ airstrip and the community.
- Respondents want to see the Yukon government consider ways to support local businesses, such as hiring local contractors to complete maintenance or reducing leasing fees for aviation users based in Yukon.



For communities where community members aren't reliant on aviation, I think we should seek to find ways to encourage community members to utilize local airports more, as an alternative to driving. I want to see airports become long-term community benefits and not just pop up or be revitalized when large industry is present in the area.



Collaboration with the aviation community

- Throughout the engagement process, we heard that many relationships between the Yukon government and members of the aviation community are strained.
- Many members of the aviation community feel their role in protecting Yukoners' safety is not recognized and their contributions to Yukon's economy are not valued.
- Many members of the aviation community expressed frustration about how the aviation system is managed and how investment decisions are made; they feel their opinions are not considered and their expertise in the industry is overlooked.
- Despite the frustration or challenges they encounter; members of the aviation community are committed to Yukon's aviation system and would like to work with the Yukon government to improve the system.

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General aviation is begging for a hub, and there are dollars and resources (management) opportunities in these organizations (COPA).

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Financial sustainability

Yukon's aviation system is expensive to maintain and is currently subsidized by the Yukon government. Although the Yukon government is not considering modifications at this time, the economic sustainability of Yukon's aviation system is an important consideration over the course of the 10-year investment strategy.

To gain insight into how Yukoners feel about the aviation system's financial sustainability, we asked if the Yukon government should consider modifications.

This topic was a very important discussion area for many of those engaged. As shown on the following page, many online survey respondents were openminded about the Yukon government considering some modifications; however, we heard clearly through comments from those engaged that the following themes must also be considered.

Importance of the system and cost of living

- All of Yukon's airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips are important to respondents so many were concerned that reducing maintenance by modifying the level of service would create unsafe conditions or lead to some airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips being closed.
- There was also fear that any increase in aviation fees would be passed down to Yukoners, their everyday cost of living would increase, and they would no longer be able to afford flights making travel very difficult.

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Living in the north makes air travel a necessity. With the cost of living already high here passing more fees/taxes on the operators and consumers would make living in Whitehorse even more expensive and challenging. If companies can't afford to operate here then that will impact many other sectors of the economy.

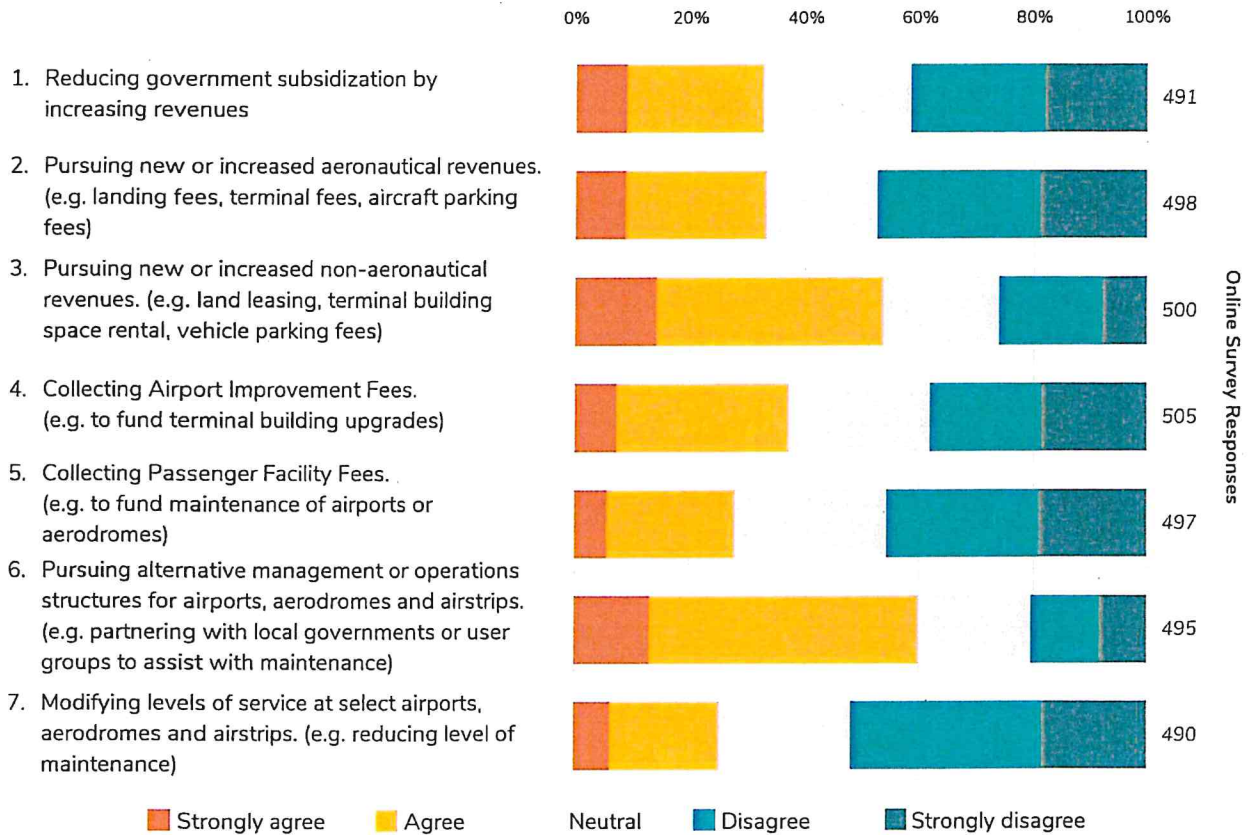
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My concern is in relation to increasing costs to people living in the Yukon as it can feel quite isolated and can be quite costly to leave the territory already.”



Q: To increase the economic sustainability of providing an aviation system that meets certification and safety standards in the future, Government of Yukon should consider...



- To further expand the aviation network and its role in supporting safety and the economy, many respondents would like to see old mining strips reopened.
- We also heard that while all airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips are important and must safely accommodate emergency uses, it was agreed that the level of other services provided should vary based on site-specific needs.

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Every single strip is of high priority for safety reasons of pilots and passengers no matter if they are flying privately, with cargo, or passengers.

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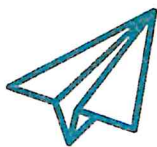


Accountability

- Although some members of the aviation community and public would support the Yukon government exploring alternative revenue sources; there is concern that it would not result in better infrastructure or services.
- Many respondents want to see the Yukon government increase governance, management, and operations efficiency; and explore existing revenue generation methods (e.g. land development, leasing, advertising in terminals) before introducing new fees.

Partnerships

- Respondents were supportive of potential partnerships with private contractors, First Nation or municipal governments to assist with maintenance of airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips. Maintenance services could include snow plowing, tree clearing, cleaning, or providing food and drink services in terminals.
- Although partnerships for maintenance was generally supported, most respondents did not want to see the Yukon government release ownership of airports/ aerodromes/ airstrips.



What's next?

The feedback received in the survey, community open houses, and meetings with stakeholders and governments will be used to help identify strategic investments and inform the decision-making process.

Yukon's *Flight Path: Aviation System Investment Strategy for 2020-2030* will be completed in Fall 2020, with work on reviewing specific investments opportunities coming soon after.

