

# ALASKA PILOT WEATHER REPORT IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

Making the system work for  
everyone

**To:** National Transportation Safety Board

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Safety & Operations Policy Group

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Federal Aviation  
Administration



**General Aviation**

# Why it Began

- In 2014, as a result of declining numbers and quality of Pilot Weather Reports (PIREPs), Alaska Flight Service assembled a committee
- The committee examined all aspects of PIREP solicitation, dissemination, and overall effectiveness
- Eventually, other Government Agencies and various User Groups were added and the scope expanded to include all aspects of PIREPs



# Alaska Flight Service PIREP Improvement Work Group Members

- National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA)
- Anchorage Air Route Traffic Control Center
- Alaska Terminal District
- Alaska AOPA
- Alaska Airmen's Association
- Alaska Aviation Weather Unit (NWS)
- Aviation Weather Center (NWS)
- Aviation Weather Cameras (FAA)
- Alaska Air Carriers Association
- Flight Standards Division (FAA)
- Alaska Department of Transportation
- Alaska Aviation Safety Foundation
- University of Alaska
- U. S. Air Force
- U. S. Army



# Performance and Technical Issues

- Why a 35% reduction in numbers of PIREPs from 2010-2013?
- Reduction in quality
- Training needed on both sides of the mike
- Lack of specifically targeted PIREPs for forecasters



# First Step

- Create a pilot questionnaire
- Purpose was to identify pilot's basic attitudes and knowledge of PIREPs

## Results from questionnaire

- 57% of respondents reported they had made a go/no-go decision based strictly on PIREPs
- 50% believed we could improve our solicitation techniques
- 90% of pilots reported they would frequently give a PIREP in flight, when asked
- 70% felt pilot-reported airport surface conditions were important
- 72% of respondents indicated they gave at least one PIREP on a routine flight (#'s of PIREP's in the system do not support this response)

# Barriers to Submission: Reasons Pilots did not Report

- Accurate Weather Forecasts (28%)
- Not sure of format (10%)
- No one asked for one (17%)
- Assumed others had given them (9%)
- Did not want to overload the frequency (18%)
- Too busy (18%)



# Steps Taken

## Internal

- Develop training and Best Practices for Flight Service Station (FSS) Specialists
- Track number of PIREPS and compare to previous year
- Developed PIREP Cheat Sheets with new logo and format

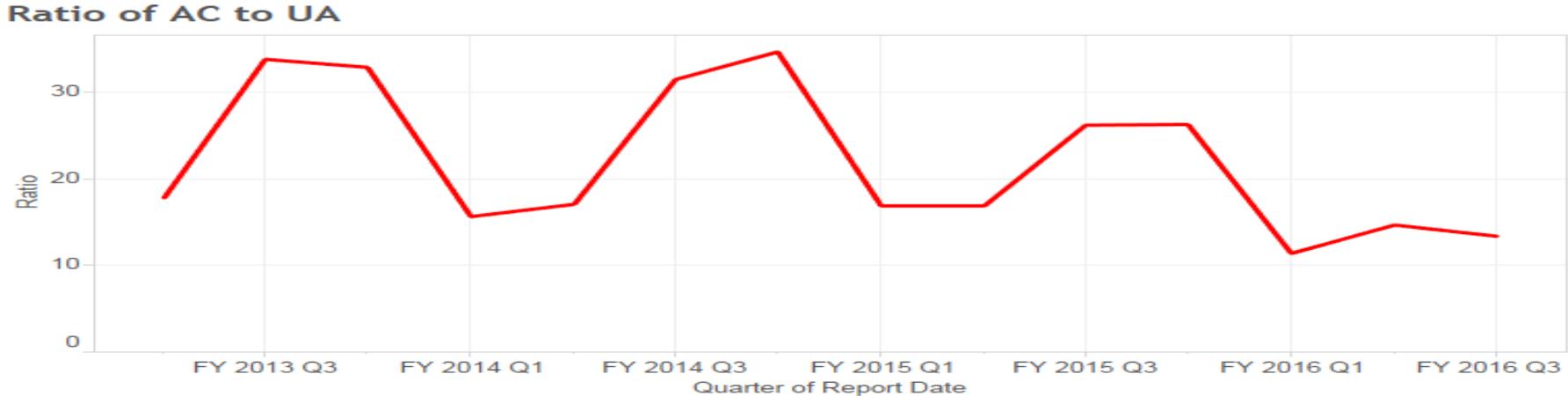
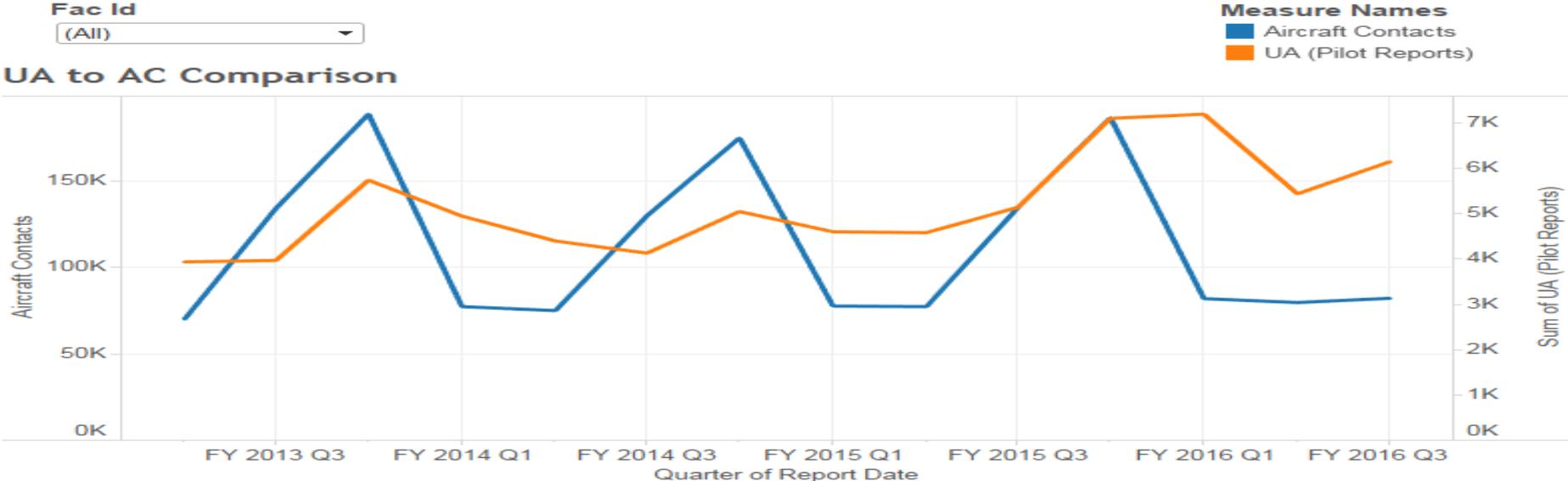
## External

- Outreach to user groups and pilots at safety events
  - Briefings to Military, Civil Air Patrol and Flight Instructors
- Interview with local news channel
- Blogs by AOPA Alaska
- Articles in Alaska Airmen magazine

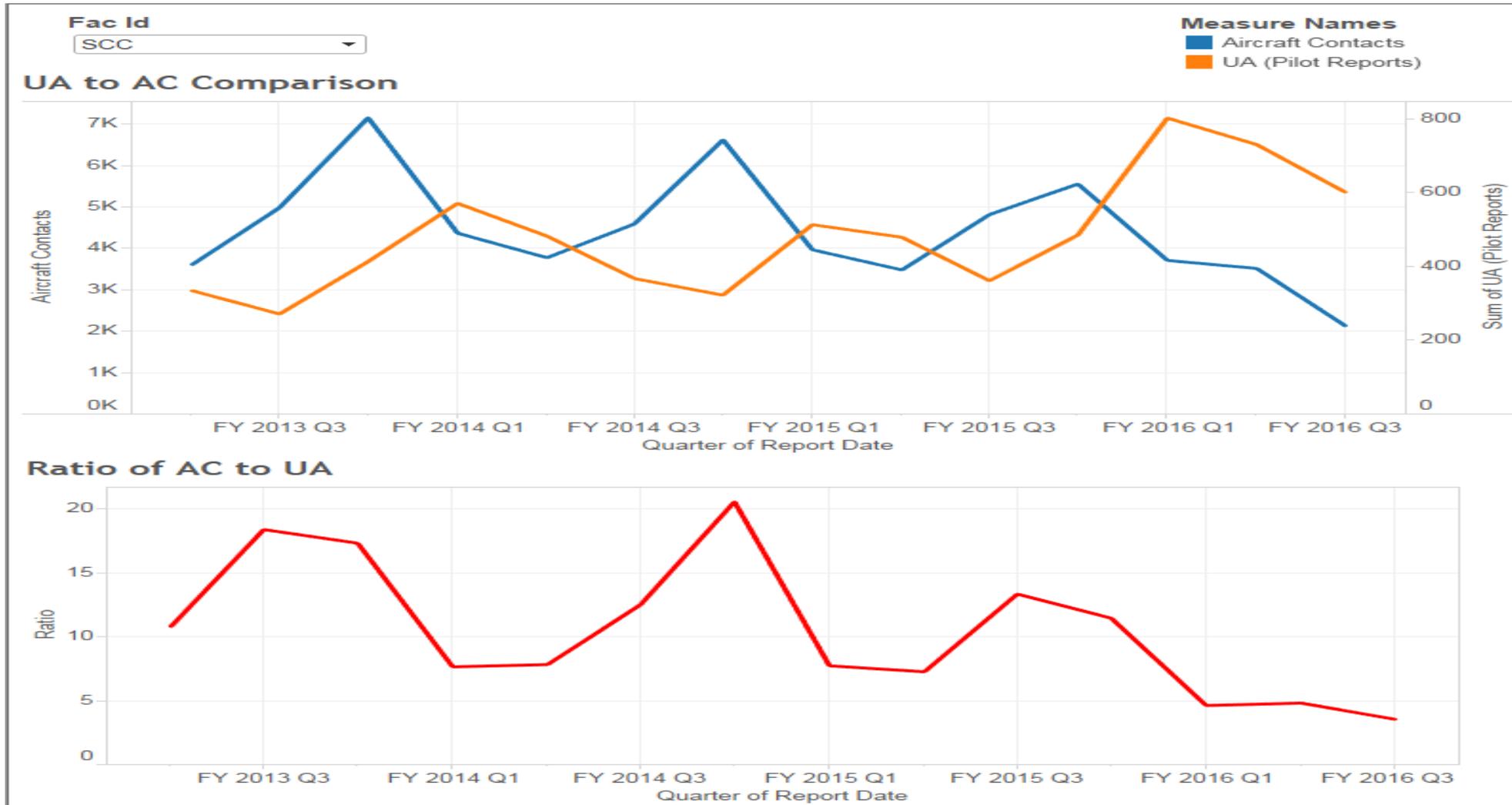
## Result

- Increase in PIREPs filed by 17% to 40% per month

# Alaska FSS Aircraft Contacts vs PIREPS



# Deadhorse FSS Aircraft Contacts vs PIREPS



# Next Steps

- Continue to increase the number of PIREPs
- Work with Alaska Aviation Weather Unit to identify targeted areas for PIREPs
- Target Designated Pilot Examiners and Flight Instructors to improve student training
- Identify technical anomalies
- Identify metrics in order to measure progress
- Recognize that a cultural change is a long process



# Visual PIREPs

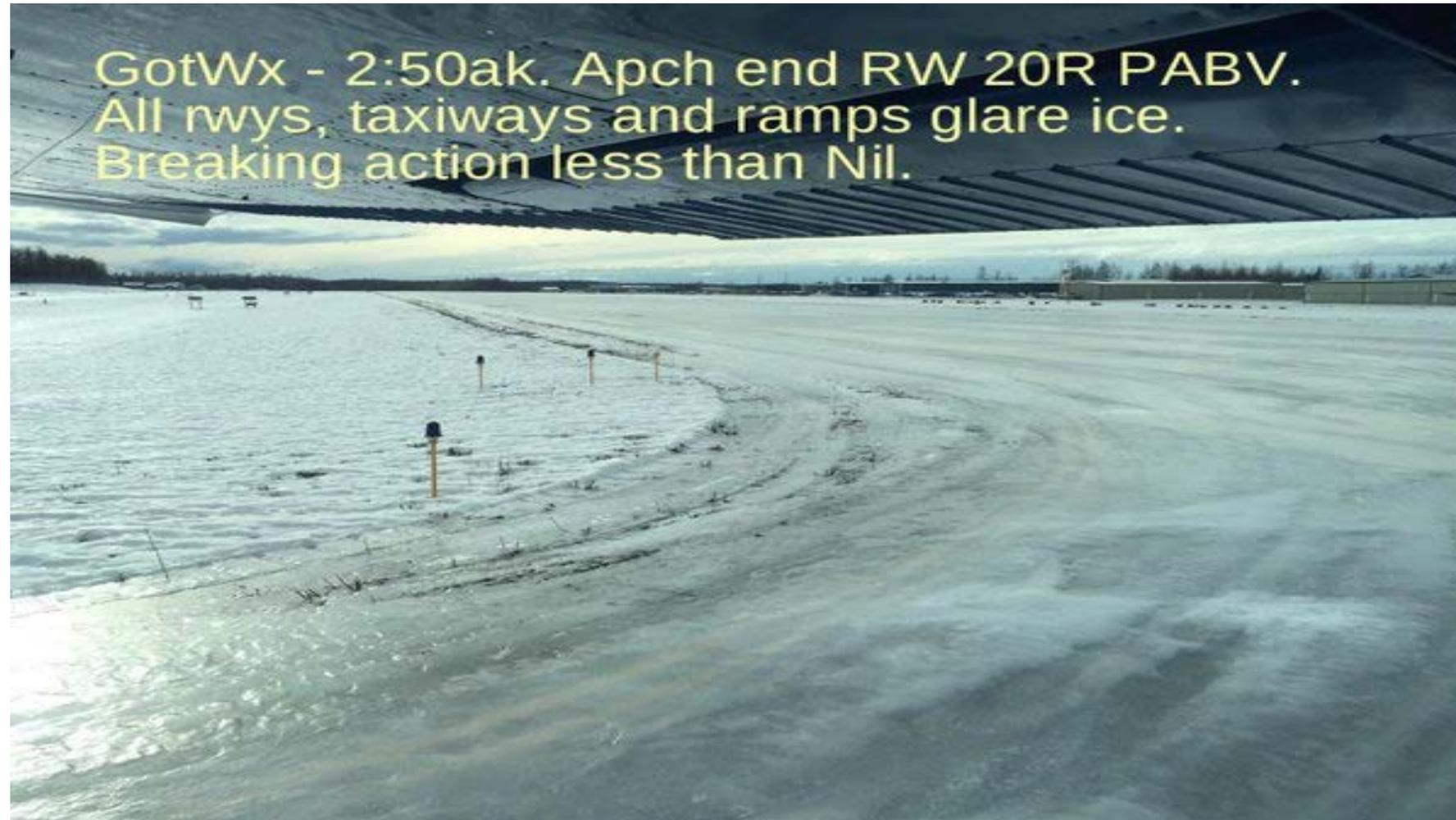
- A Visual Pilot Report (VREPs) or electronic photo is taken either airborne or on the ground
- Similar concept to the Alaska Weather Camera Program
- Useful in reporting weather, forest fires, emergency response locations, volcanos, airport surface conditions, etc.
- The Future – the work group will continue testing the concept and leverage existing infrastructure for easy access



# VREP Example Showing (off) Airport Landing Conditions



# VREP Showing Airport Landing Conditions



**ALASKA**

**GOT PIREPS?**

**Want to share?**

**Flight Service Stations**