

Competitive Research Overview

2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

METHODOLOGY	5
AEROSPACE	7
MINERALS & NATURAL RESOURCES	11
MARITIME INFRASTRUCTURE	15
ABOUT THE ALASKA BUSINESS INITIATIVE	19

METHODOLOGY

ABI commissioned FTI Consulting to conduct independent research benchmarking Alaska's core dynamic sectors against key domestic and global peer regions.

FTI combined empirical data analysis with extensive primary qualitative research, including dozens of hours of direct interviews with industry leaders and stakeholders across the state.

These dual quantitative and qualitative insights highlight investment opportunities and strengthen Alaska's global competitiveness.

ALASKA AEROSPACE

THE TRANSPACIFIC CROSSROADS:
GLOBAL CARGO DOMINANCE AND THE
NEW ORBITAL FRONTIER

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

Alaska's aerospace sector represents a powerful convergence of established global logistics dominance and next-generation commercial space capabilities. Strategically situated on the direct Great Circle routes between North America and Asia, Alaska leverages its geographic position to serve as a leading hub for international commerce. The state's aerospace ecosystem is anchored by world-class air cargo operations at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (ANC) and specialized space launch facilities that support commercial, defense, and scientific missions.

In addition to its leading air freight throughput, Alaska offers advantages for space launch operations. Its high-latitude northern location provides unhindered access to high-inclination, polar, and sun-synchronous orbits, while vast coastline and open ocean corridors offer safe over-water launch trajectories. Anchored by the Pacific Spaceport Complex on Kodiak Island and the Poker Flat Research Range, the world's only university-owned rocket launch facility, Alaska is positioned to capture a growing share of the rapidly expanding global satellite deployment and aerospace research markets.

BY THE NUMBERS: IMPACT ON AMERICA'S AND ALASKA'S ECONOMIES

America's Economy & Global Trade

- **\$149 Billion Global Market:** In 2024, approximately 127 million metric tons of air freight were moved worldwide, generating \$149 billion in total economic activity, making Alaska the world's third busiest freight hub.
- **Transpacific Growth:** Global air cargo traffic is forecast to grow 4% annually through 2043.
- **\$100 Billion Satellite Market:** The low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellite market is projected to more than double from \$25 billion in 2025 to between \$60 billion and \$100 billion by 2030, driving up to 70,000 new satellite launches.

Alaska's Economy & Workforce

- **Vital Employment Driver:** Broad air transportation businesses employ 5,500 Alaskans, accounting for more than 2% of total state employment, more than four times the share of any peer region.
- **\$2.5 Billion Output:** Air transportation generates over 2.7% of Alaska's total economic output (\$2.5 billion in 2022), with dedicated air freight contributing \$700 million.

- **Competitive Labor Costs:** Average annual labor costs in Alaska’s air freight sector sit at ~\$101,000 per employee, significantly lower than California (~\$111,000).
- **Industry-Leading Productivity:** Alaska air freight operators process an extraordinary 1,480 metric tons of cargo per employee, far outstripping competitors in California (106 metric tons) and Norway (476 metric tons).
- **Top-Tier University R&D:** Alaska-based universities (led by UA Fairbanks) leveraged nearly \$38 million in engineering R&D in 2024, deploying \$51 per capita, 36% higher than California (\$37 per capita).

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE & WHY ALASKA IS RIPE FOR INVESTMENT

Alaska consistently outperforms competing jurisdictions in operational efficiency, regulatory flexibility, tax policy, and launch capacity:

- **The Cabotage Advantage (Stevens Amendment):** Unique among U.S. states, Alaska enjoys federal cabotage exemptions. Foreign cargo carriers landing at ANC can transfer, combine, and offload cargo to continuing flights without breaking their international journey or transferring cargo to domestic carriers, a legal impossibility in California or Washington.
- **Geographic & Fuel Efficiency:** Flight routes from Asia to North America via Alaska require less fuel upon departure, allowing cargo aircraft to maximize revenue-generating payload capacity.
- **Carrier Concentration:** 13 of the world’s top 25 air cargo carriers operate out of ANC (including FedEx, UPS, Atlas Air, Cathay Pacific, Cargolux, and Singapore Airlines), representing a higher concentration than California, Washington, British Columbia, or Norway.
- **Streamlined Tax Structure:** Alaska imposes zero state sales tax and zero personal income tax. Its combined federal/state corporate income tax rate (28.43%) is substantially lower than British Columbia (40.00%) and competitive with California (27.98%).
- **Pro-Business Landing Fee Waivers:** The Alaska International Airport System (AIAS) waives landing fees for 12 months for new scheduled, non-stop cargo routes, providing direct operational incentives to air carriers.

- **Uncongested Space Launch Infrastructure:** Unlike California’s Vandenberg Space Force Base, which faces growing launch pad queues and airspace congestion, Alaska’s Pacific Spaceport Complex and Poker Flat offer immediate, uncongested capacity for small-lift commercial satellite deployment and military testing.

CONCLUSION & INVESTMENT OUTLOOK

Supported by structural policy exemptions, world-class airport infrastructure, and an advantageous geographic location, Alaska’s aerospace sector stands as one of the most compelling investment destinations in North America. Unprecedented growth in transpacific e-commerce and a multi-billion-dollar surge in LEO satellite constellations ensure sustained long-term demand for Alaskan facilities.

Major infrastructure investments are accelerating this momentum, including FedEx’s \$42 million sorting facility expansion and Alaska Cargo and Cold Storage’s 700,000+ square-foot runway-adjacent cold storage facility at ANC. Furthermore, proposals for a 150-million-gallon sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) production facility near Anchorage highlight Alaska’s potential to supply emerging green aviation markets using abundant local feedstocks like fish oil and forest biomass. Coupled with expanding federal defense investments via the Golden Dome Initiative and missile testing programs, Alaska offers investors a proven, high-growth platform.

MINERALS & NATURAL RESOURCES

UNLOCKING AMERICA'S PREMIER
RESOURCE ENGINE

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

Alaska's vast natural resource wealth forms the cornerstone of the state's economy and plays an essential role in securing U.S. energy independence and critical mineral supply chain resilience. Encompassing more than 570,000 square miles of territory, Alaska holds extraordinary geological deposits spanning conventional oil and natural gas, precious metals, and strategic energy minerals. Together, the oil, gas, and mining sectors generate over \$16 billion in annual economic output, accounting for nearly 17% of Alaska's total GDP.

The state's resource profile includes six of the 100 largest oil fields in the United States on the North Slope, immense undeveloped natural gas reserves, and 57 of the 60 federally designated critical minerals required for advanced technologies, defense applications, and energy infrastructure. With world-class active operations, major incoming energy developments, and top-tier global mineral potential, Alaska offers a stable, secure, and highly productive destination for resource capital.

BY THE NUMBERS: IMPACT ON AMERICA'S AND ALASKA'S ECONOMIES

America's Economy & Supply Chain Security

- **U.S. Leader in Commodity Production:**
 - 1st in Zinc: Produces 80% of total U.S. zinc output (5% of world supply).
 - 1st in Silver: Produces 43% of total U.S. silver output.
 - 2nd in Gold & Lead: Produces 15% of U.S. gold and 41.9% of U.S. lead.
 - 4th in Proven Oil Reserves: Holds 3.4 billion barrels of proven oil reserves.
 - 3rd in Natural Gas Reserves: Ranks 3rd nationally in total natural gas reserves.
- **\$16.2 Billion Economic Output:** Natural resource extraction generated \$16.2 billion in economic output in 2022. Oil and gas account for 13% of total state economic output, while non-oil mining accounts for 4%.
- **Unmatched Labor Productivity:** Alaska's mining sector is by far the most productive among all peer regions, generating over \$1.1 million in output per employee in 2022.
- **High-Wage Employment:** The mining industry employs over 3,600 workers at an average annual compensation of nearly \$127,000. The oil and gas sector employs approximately 6,000 workers at an average compensation of \$119,000 per year.

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE & WHY ALASKA IS RIPE FOR INVESTMENT

Alaska offers distinct competitive advantages over domestic and international peer regions, including Alberta, British Columbia, North Dakota, and Norway:

- **#1 Globally in Mineral Potential:** Ranked #1 worldwide for overall mineral potential and #3 globally for mineral investment attractiveness.
- **World-Class Critical Mineral Endowment:** Alaska holds 57 of the 60 U.S.-designated critical minerals. Key assets include Graphite Creek (the largest known high-grade graphite deposit in the U.S.), Bokan Mountain (heavy rare earths), Ambler Mining District (copper, cobalt, zinc), and Estelle (antimony, gold).
- **Rebounding Oil Production with Existing Infrastructure:** Unlike basins constrained by takeaway logistics, Alaska's Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) currently operates at under 25% capacity, allowing new North Slope oil developments to ramp up production without requiring new trunk pipeline construction. Three major developments (Nuna, Pikka Phase 1, and Willow) represent over \$12.5 billion in private capital investment and will add 280,000 barrels per day by 2029.
- **Strategic LNG Export Proximity:** Alaska's Pacific coast provides a significantly shorter shipping route to major East Asian LNG import terminals than U.S. Gulf Coast facilities, eliminating Panama Canal transit delays and minimizing tanker "boil-off" losses.
- **Superior Labor Output:** Alaska's mining output per employee (\$1.1 million) vastly exceeds British Columbia (\$588,000), Alberta (\$547,000), North Dakota (\$484,000), and Norway (\$416,000).
- **Investor-Friendly Fiscal Terms:** Alaska offers tax offsets including Per-Barrel Oil Production Tax Credits (\$0-\$8/barrel), Gross Value Reductions (GVR) for new oil developments, a 3.5-year Alaska Mining License Tax exemption for new mines, and a \$20 million Exploration Incentive Credit.

CONCLUSION & INVESTMENT OUTLOOK

With unmatched geological assets, an established production base, and powerful national security tailwinds favoring domestic resource production, Alaska's minerals and natural resources sector is positioned for sustained expansion.

Key growth catalysts are already moving forward. In oil and gas, \$12.5-\$14.6 billion in new North Slope field investments will reverse historical decline trends. Simultaneously, the proposed \$44 billion Alaska LNG project, featuring an 807-mile pipeline capable of delivering 3.3 Bcf/day, stands to unlock massive stranded gas reserves, providing reliable energy to local industries and exporting up to 20 million metric tons of LNG annually to Asian allies. In mining, major infrastructure access projects like the Ambler Access Road and West Susitna Access, backed by federal Defense Production Act (DPA) grants and AIDEA financing, are unlocking tier-one critical mineral districts. Alaska offers capital investors an unbeatable combination of scale, security, and long-term return potential.

MARITIME INFRASTRUCTURE

ANCHORING AMERICA'S TRADE CORRIDORS

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

Alaska's maritime infrastructure serves as the backbone of the state's economy, linking Alaska's resource wealth, domestic supply chains, and international commerce. Handling more than 30.7 million metric tons of cargo annually, Alaska's ports, marine terminals, and intermodal transport networks enable the export of crude oil, refined petroleum, seafood, and minerals while delivering roughly half of all consumer goods, fuel, and industrial equipment used statewide.

As the navigability of Arctic trade routes improves, Alaska's coastal position provides an exclusive, strategic foothold for the United States in the Arctic. Key deep-water assets, ranging from the Port of Valdez (the nation's northernmost ice-free crude oil terminal) and the Don Young Port of Alaska in Anchorage to expanding Arctic gateways like the Port of Nome, position Alaska as a vital hub for commercial maritime logistics, national defense, and global trade expansion.

BY THE NUMBERS: IMPACT ON AMERICA'S AND ALASKA'S ECONOMIES

America's Economy & Arctic Maritime Expansion

- **3x Growth in Arctic Vessel Traffic:** According to the U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System (CMTS), vessel traffic in U.S. Arctic waters is projected to more than triple by 2030, driven primarily by natural resource development, LNG transport, and fleet expansion.
- **\$12+ Billion Federal Arctic Funding:** The One Big Beautiful Big Act authorized over \$12 billion in funding for maritime and Arctic infrastructure, including \$4.4 billion for USCG coastal facilities and \$8.6 billion for Polar and Arctic Security Cutters.

Alaska's Economy & Workforce

- **30.7 Million Metric Tons Processed:** Alaskan ports moved 30,767,562 metric tons of cargo in 2023.
- **Port of Valdez:** The state's highest-volume port by weight, processing more than 23 million metric tons (primarily North Slope crude oil via TAPS).
- **Port of Alaska (Anchorage):** The state's primary import gateway, handling 3.7 million metric tons—accounting for roughly 50% of all goods entering Alaska.

- **High Employment Concentration:** Maritime industries employ nearly 1,900 workers in Alaska, representing 0.7% of total state employment, nearly 9 times higher than California (0.08%).
- **Industry-Leading Compensation:** Alaska’s maritime workers earn an average annual salary exceeding \$90,000, outstripping competitors in California (\$87,000), British Columbia (\$83,000), Norway (\$81,500), and Finland (\$50,500).
- **Unprecedented Federal Capital Allocation:** Alaska received \$152,614 per capita in federal Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) grant awards, surpassing California (\$2,389 per capita).

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE & WHY ALASKA IS RIPE FOR INVESTMENT

Alaska possesses structural geographic, policy, and infrastructure advantages that distinguish its maritime sector from competing global regions:

- **Monopoly on U.S. Arctic Access:** Alaska is the only U.S. state with Arctic coastline and shipping access. Receding sea ice is turning Alaskan ports into strategic waypoints for transpolar commercial shipping, resource extraction support, and national defense.
- **Major Modernization Program Underway:** The \$1.9 billion Port of Alaska Modernization Program (PAMP) is actively replacing aging infrastructure with modern, seismically resilient terminals engineered to withstand 1,000-year earthquake events while optimizing petroleum and container throughput.
- **Integrated Industrial Multimodal Networks:** Major Alaskan ports offer direct ship-to-rail and ship-to-truck transfer connections via the Alaska Railroad and Alaska Highway System, streamlining bulk cargo movement to interior industrial hubs.
- **World-Class Polar Maritime Training:** Alaska’s workforce is backed by the Alaska Maritime Education Consortium (AMEC) and the Alaska Maritime Training Center (AMTC)—which houses one of the nation’s only specialized training facilities for maritime polar navigation and ice operations.
- **Strong Pro-Development Regulatory Environment:** Federal directives, including FAST-41 expedited permitting designations and Maritime Prosperity Zone initiatives, provide a highly favorable environment for major maritime infrastructure investments.

CONCLUSION & INVESTMENT OUTLOOK

Driven by surging Arctic shipping demand, major resource export projects, and comprehensive modernization funding, Alaska’s maritime infrastructure sector offers exceptional growth and investment potential for long-term capital deployment.

Transformative projects are currently reshaping the state’s maritime capacity. The \$400 million USACE deep-draft expansion at the Port of Nome will establish America’s first deep-water Arctic port. At the same time, expansion projects such as the \$25 million Seward Freight Dock expansion, Skagway Ore Dock redevelopment, and Port MacKenzie rail extension are dramatically boosting bulk mineral and break-bulk cargo handling efficiency. With the proposed Nikiski LNG export terminal set to drive new tanker fleet activity, Alaska’s maritime facilities represent an indispensable, high-return gateway for global commerce.

THE ALASKA BUSINESS INITIATIVE

WHERE OPPORTUNITY MEETS INNOVATION
ON THE FRONTIER OF THE FUTURE

WHO WE ARE

The Alaska Business Initiative (ABI) is a State of Alaska project designed to attract, inform, and support new business investment leads. It's the first point of contact for companies and investors considering Alaska.

WHAT WE DO

ABI works as a sales funnel for Alaska, finding potential investors and guiding them toward a decision to expand in the state. It represents the state at conferences, trade missions, and meetings where investment decisions are made, runs digital outreach to targeted prospects, and works with the press and trusted expert voices to make the case for Alaska.

ABI also conducts research on Alaska industries and opportunities, maintains a central repository of information to guide procurement and investment decisions, and highlights companies already succeeding here. It builds relationships across the state, connecting prospective investors with the local partners, communities, and officials who can help them go from initial interest to the start of operations.

SHOWCASING ALASKA

Leading Alaska's first-ever delegation to SelectUSA, the U.S. Department of Commerce's premier foreign direct investment summit, ABI gave Alaska industries a direct seat at the table with global investors, federal trade officials, and international market leaders.

SELECTUSA BY THE NUMBERS

138 C-suite meetings – with founders, CEOs, presidents, and managing directors holding sole signature authority to execute deals without administrative delay

107 government and diplomatic entities – engaged directly, alongside 34 economic development organizations and chambers and 12 top university research institutions

70 Arctic-nation touchpoints – across 13 Arctic Council member and observer nations, led by Canada, South Korea, India, Germany, and the UK

46 countries reached – spanning a combined network of 327 international organizations

35 U.S. states engaged – extending Alaska's interstate economic corridor and trade networks

START THE CONVERSATION

Companies exploring Alaska's industries, business landscape, and incentives can reach the ABI team at *akbusinessinitiative.org* to learn more.

The Frontier of the Future Awaits.

