

**AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, October 1, 2019**

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, October 1, 2019. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Commission Members**

Peggie Gaghen, Chair  
Dan Farmer, Vice Chair  
Ken Behling  
Ron Spence  
Mark Astle

**City Staff and Guests**

Kevin Ploehn, Director of Aviation & Transit  
Shane Ketterling, Assistant Director of Aviation & Transit  
Rusty Logan, Transit Manager

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

A public comment period was offered. No public comments were received.

**MONTANA AIRLINE RENDEZVOUS AIR SERVICE MEETING**

Mr. Ploehn described for the Commission what the purpose of the meeting was and how it got started. One thing that has frustrated the Montana airport managers was how few of the airline planners have actually been in Montana to witness what there is to offer. The Missoula Airport hosted the first event last year and this year the Bozeman/Belgrade Airport hosted the event at Big Sky. The event consists of a number of outdoor events and evening events to allow the airline representatives to experience the Montana outdoors, and to provide an opportunity for the airline and airport staffs to network and get to know each other. On the final day, there is an opportunity for the airlines and airports to discuss air service issues in a structured environment. During those short meetings, the airport's staff is able to learn a bit about what the airlines are considering for Billings as well as for some of the other Montana communities. The meeting was well attended by the airlines and Montana airports. Mr. Ploehn said that there would be a discussion at the next Montana Airport Managers Association meeting in late October regarding where the next Montana Airline Rendezvous would be held, which could mean Billings.

**FAA FISCAL YEAR 19 AIP GRANT SUMMARY**

Mr. Ploehn went through this year's FAA AIP grants and what they were for. He announced that last week at the very last minute the Airport received two grants, one on Monday for \$442,526 and then another on Friday for \$2,000,000 both for the Terminal Construction. This amounted to 73% of the Phase 1 construction contract of \$3,359,848. He also pointed out that for the year, the Airport received four grants for a total \$6,558,431, which is more than double the amount for a typical year.

**AIRPORT AND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONS REPORTS**

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn thanked those Commissioners that showed up for the groundbreaking event. He thought it was a great PR event that received good media coverage.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn advised the Commission that the Airport staff has been working with SP Plus, the parking concessionaire, to put in place revenue control equipment in the north overflow lot. This would remedy the issue of giving away free parking when the main lots fill up. SP Plus

would cover the \$135,000 to put this equipment in place, including upgrading the credit card privacy software. In return, the City will amend the existing Concession Agreement by adding three additional years and increasing the percentage of revenue that the Airport receives from 81.5% to 83.57%, or roughly \$60,000 more per year to the Airport. This will be on the Council Agenda for October 15.

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn noted that Airport staff has started the process of working with bond council and the City's financial consultant to put in place the information needed for the required Bond Ordinance and Resolutions. Much of the early work is information gathering to determine how the bonds should be structured for this deal. This process should go on for the next few months. He was hopeful of having all of the legal work completed by the end of the year so that the Airport had the flexibility to do a bond issue early next year depending on interest rates.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Commission that the Airport has been working with Bryan Knicely of the Yellowstone Art Museum to place a video reflecting the ranch and farming life of some local area ranchers and farmers. The production is called "Rough and Tumble" and it will play in the baggage claim area utilizing closed caption with an option to download an app to listen to it. Since we are approaching the time of year when our rural neighbors travel to see national rodeos it should be very timely.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn noted that next week staff and the architects would be meeting to figure out the finishes for the new Concourse Expansion. This should be an interesting meeting as the discussion bounces back and forth between cool/functional and durable/cleanable.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn also noted that during October 24-25 there would be approximately 200 cross country runners competing in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference (GNAC) Cross Country Championship. This is basically a qualifying race for the GNAC to see who will be going to compete in the National Championship.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling updated Commissioners on the Commercial Concrete Ramp Replacement project that is currently underway. He explained that on the east side of the Terminal, the contractor has poured all of the concrete on the north phase and it is currently open and available for use by aircraft. This is good news for Allegiant and Frontier since they had to relocate their larger aircraft over to B-3 due to the limited space available at B-4. The contractor has begun removing concrete on the south phase, which unfortunately impacts Cape Air by reducing parking space available for their aircraft. On the west side of the Terminal, the contractor has removed all of the concrete, paved the base course with asphalt, and is currently setting forms to begin pouring concrete.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling informed Commissioners that the live ARFF Training Burns were conducted Thursday night, September 26, 2019. All went well and a photographer from the *Billings Gazette* was on hand to take some really good pictures, which were posted online for viewers to see. Additionally, other agencies participated in the training and a fire fighting class from the MSU-B College of Technology was on hand and learned a lot about our Department.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling thanked those Commissioners who showed up for the "State of the Airport" Informational Breakfast meeting that took place at the Airport Operations Center on September 10, 2019.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling informed Commissioners that we recently closed the old Deli on the A Concourse across from United and opened the new Deli on B Concourse. He reminded everyone that this was scheduled to occur as part of the Terminal Remodel and we anticipate sales will increase due to the new location.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling explained that we recently installed new monitors in the baggage claim area. We are showing passengers the fly thru video of the Terminal Remodel and a new KOA advertisement on four monitors over the baggage belts, and one monitor with a split screen set up for local area attractions, weather, and current event information.
- ▶ Mr. Logan provided operational updates stating that September 2019 ridership was showing a slight increase over September 2018 numbers, discussed maintenance issues on buses, including

a complete power plant replacement for one of the fixed route buses, and indicated MET is still experiencing difficulty in filling vacant Transit Operator positions due to lack of applicants.

- ▶ Mr. Logan updated the Commission on the status of the student semester pass program developed by MET in partnership with the Associated Students of Montana University Billings (ASMSUB). Overall, ASMSUB had purchased 70 semester passes due to increased demand; this number is 30 more than the organization had originally anticipated. This generated \$4,410 in pass sales revenue for MET Transit for the months of September through December, as the pass covers the University's Fall semester. ASMSUB distributed the majority of the passes by mid-September and MET Transit provided 329 rides to users of the pass by September 30.
- ▶ Mr. Logan provided information and updates on various MET projects. Current projects included the Roof Phase II project that should be completed soon, security camera estimates for the METropolex came back at approximately \$26,000, and discussed that MET is having a powered security gate installed soon to provide a more secure facility with an anticipated cost of approximately \$23,000. Further, Mr. Logan indicated MET is working with a vendor to demo a new destination sign system that includes automated stop annunciation, as well as a vehicle interior infotainment system capable of both system messaging and advertising. A demo system is being provided to MET at no charge and will be installed in the bus typically utilized for the METLink route, which travels to the Airport.
- ▶ Mr. Logan informed the Commission that MET had received the Federal Transit Association Fiscal Year 2019 Triennial Review Final Report draft, which indicated no additional findings. Finding areas previously discussed included Title VI updates, public participation components, EEO, financial management policies, and procurement policies. MET was able to successfully negotiate corrective action due dates to November 22, 2019 for Title VI and public participation updates, and January 31, 2020 for EEO, and financial and procurement policies.
- ▶ Mr. Logan discussed a recent visit to MET facilities by Federal Transit Administration Region 8 Administrator, Cindy Terwilliger, in September. Ms. Terwilliger indicated she was very impressed with the MET facilities and the high level at which the facilities are maintained. She also discussed with Mr. Logan how the upcoming census may affect the Bozeman area's likely designation as a Municipal Planning Organization urbanized area and how that may affect operational funding in the future. Finally, she indicated she was excited to hear MET Transit is looking at ways to significantly improve its fixed route bus system and offered suggestions on additional sources of funding for the MET to pursue.
- ▶ Mr. Logan discussed with the Commission the most recent Human Services Transportation Coordination Committee meeting. During this meeting, Mr. Logan had recommended to the group a proposed structure change, requesting the Committee also form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which would be the group primarily responsible for selecting projects to fund with available 5310 monies. The Coordination Committee would continue as is, but would only make recommendations on projects, while the shareholders directly affected by the projects would be members of the TAC. The proposed change was well received by the Committee and Mr. Logan indicated he was in the process of reaching out to potential TAC members.
- ▶ Mr. Logan informed the Commission that MET Transit is currently developing a community wide survey regarding Transit use and to solicit recommendations from the community regarding Transit improvements. This survey will be advertised in various mediums including in MET Transit's radio spots, online, with MET partners, and potentially utilizing television advertising. MET hopes to gain a better understanding of the community's needs and desires when it comes to Transit service and use.

#### **ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION**

- ▶ Commissioner Spence discussed the recent Travel Bloggers Conference held here in Billings where over 500 travel bloggers came to Montana to report on how the event was and how

traveling in Montana is. He felt the conference was very good and should yield benefits for the tourism industry.

- ▶ Chair Gaghen noted that she had read that besides a shortage of pilots, aircraft mechanics are also in short supply. Mr. Ploehn confirmed that the shortage of aircraft mechanics is just as dire as or more so than pilots.
- ▶ Chair Gaghen also commented that she attended the live ARFF Training Burns with some young folks interested in becoming fire fighters and a young photographer for the *Billings Gazette*. She thought the whole event was quite interesting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

cc: Aviation and Transit Commission  
Chrono  
City Administrator  
Mayor  
City Clerk