

**AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, February 4, 2020**

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, February 4, 2020. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Commission Members**

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

**City Staff and Guests**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

City Council Member Mike Yakawich offered that he thought this was a very good Commission and everyone was doing a great job.

**2019 WRAP UP**

Mr. Ploehn started by saying that 2019 was a very good year for the Aviation and Transit Department. He continued by referencing a media release that was sent out a couple of weeks ago that pointed to the record passenger and freight numbers, both of which exceeded the record 2018 numbers. Total passengers jumped from the 2018 amount of 904,873 to the 2019 number of 950,847. Likewise, the freight went from the 2018 number of 83,157,875 pounds to 101,007,931 pounds or a 21.5% increase. He noted that these kind of numbers all translated into additional dollars for the Airport through increased concession revenues and landing fees. To highlight that point he showed the Commission that parking revenues were up 4.2% over 2018, the restaurant revenues were up 6%, and the car rental revenues were up 6.2%. The only concession that did not reflect an increase was the gift shop, which was down 2%. Mr. Ploehn also noted that the total aircraft landing weights were up 9.6%, which is worth over \$84,000 for the Airport. For the MET, Mr. Logan reported the big news was that while the passenger numbers were down for the year by a total of 3,676, the weekday fixed route was up 3,911 or 2.75% over the past four consecutive months. Staff remains optimistic that these trends can be carried forward.

**CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE UPDATE AND PROGRESS REPORT**

Mr. Ploehn provided a presentation that reflected the progress of Phase 1 of the Terminal project. He started with a revised construction timeline that showed the Phase 1 project probably wrapping up in early June. It also showed that the Phase II project would probably get started in May of 2020, so there may be a little overlap of the two projects. He then proceeded to show pictures of all of the spaces being worked on and what the progress has been. Mr. Ploehn pointed out that the six footings for the new columns to hold up the new roof were filled with concrete today and he showed the Commission a short video of this. The concrete had to be pumped into the building with a concrete pump truck and it ended up being a bit messy. This was a big step to keep things moving forward.

## **AIRPORT AND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONS REPORTS**

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn discussed his recent visit to the Delta Air Lines headquarters located in Atlanta, Georgia. The visit with Delta was positive and resulted in a lot of good discussions. Mr. Ploehn relayed that Delta was not looking at any new non-stop destinations for Billings in the short term due to a shortage of available aircraft. Apparently, their order for new Airbus aircraft is now over six months behind schedule and this is impacting their scheduling. Additionally, they tend to feel that Billings would be better served by bolstering the service through their existing hubs in Salt Lake and Minneapolis. The goal for this Summer and going forward is to have three flights per day to Minneapolis. When the Salt Lake City Airport remodel is completed, Delta will have additional gates to use to enhance service and they felt that Billings would probably receive additional frequencies when the capacity at Salt Lake is available. They also indicated that they are putting less focus on growing the Seattle hub due to capacity issues with that airport. They still wanted to see how the service between Bozeman and Seattle performs to determine if that is something that would work for Billings in the future.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn also noted that the Small Community Air Service Development Program Grant that Billings received to entice the American Airline service from Dallas is being closed out, and that will open the door for Billings to apply for another grant in the future once the community agrees on the next location and comes up with the local match.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling provided a staffing update on the Aviation and Transit Department. He explained that Airport Accountant, Vicky Harrison, would be retiring on February 21, 2020, and we will be having cake and ice cream that afternoon to celebrate and wish her well in her new endeavors. Garrett Robson was recently hired as the new Airport Accountant. Garrett previously worked for the City of Billings Public Works Department during the past five years in various financial roles and most recently as the Fiscal Service Manager.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling identified that the March 3, 2020 Aviation and Transit Meeting would take place at the MET Transit facility. He plans to have the new Airport Accountant and the two new Transit Supervisors at that meeting so we can introduce them to the Commissioners.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling wanted to recognize that Transit Manager, Rusty Logan has been working long days since MET has been short two supervisors. Hopefully there is an end in sight, as the two new Transit Supervisors were recently hired and will begin working soon.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling explained that the two TSA X-ray screening machines in front of the ticket counters that are used to screen large luggage are currently being upgraded. The upgraded machines will be longer and have the capability to handle skis, golf bags, fishing poles, etc., and the quality of the X-ray image will be enhanced.
- ▶ Mr. Logan updated the Commission on the MET survey. He noted that 627 responses were received, of which 518 completed all of the survey questions. He said that staff would review the surveys and provide the Commission with an update on the results at the March Commission meeting.
- ▶ Mr. Logan announced that the MET's revised coordination plan was officially accepted by the Coordination Committee. Following the plans approval, the Coordination Committee identified that MET should use the available Federal 5310 funds to replace one of their paratransit vans.
- ▶ Mr. Logan also noted that the Automated Passenger Counter equipment install was proceeding smoothly and they should have the entire fleet outfitted with the passenger counters shortly. Once the counters have gone through a certification process, MET will start utilizing them.
- ▶ Mr. Logan provided that MET is advertising for new Paratransit software with a Request for Proposals (RFP). The current software company has been unresponsive to software issues and their annual maintenance fees are very expensive. This will give them the opportunity to see what else is available.
- ▶ Mr. Logan informed the Commission that he has been meeting with Alliance to discuss potentially expanding the contracted services that MET could provide for them. Additionally, he

is also meeting with the State of Montana to renegotiate the Disabled/Disadvantage (DD) contract ride services that MET currently provides.

- ▶ Mr. Logan followed up with that the new supervisors Mr. Ketterling mentioned earlier are John Bell and Josh Smith. He would have them give a bit of background on themselves at the next Commission meeting.
- ▶ Mr. Logan also told the Commission that one of the side benefits that came about from all of the technology upgrades being made to the bus fleet is that MET will now be able to provide a free Wi-Fi hotspot on each bus for the MET's passengers.

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

- ▶ Chair Gaghen noted that she is not being notified of the Chamber's Air Service meetings. Mr. Ploehn said he would see that the Chamber has her notification information.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

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