

**AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, March 3, 2020**

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administrative Conference Room at the MET Transit on Tuesday, March 3, 2020. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Commission Members**

Peggie Gaghen, Chair  
Dan Farmer, Vice Chair  
Ken Behling  
Ron Spence  
Mark Astle  
Chuck Tooley  
David Hummel, Jr.

**City Staff and Guests**

Kevin Ploehn, Director of Aviation & Transit  
Shane Ketterling, Assistant Director of Aviation & Transit  
Rusty Logan, Transit Manager  
Lindsay Gran, Transit Operations Supervisor  
John Bell III, Transit Operations Supervisor  
Josh Smith, Transit Operations Supervisor  
Garett Robson, Airport Accountant  
Chris Borgmann, SkyWest First Officer  
Lynne Arnold, Administrative Support III

**COURTESIES**

Chair Gaghen noted that there were a lot of new faces and had everyone introduce themselves. After all the Commission Members, Mr. Ploehn, Mr. Ketterling, and Mr. Logan introduced themselves, the Aviation and Transit's newest members introduced themselves. Lindsay Gran, Transit Operations Supervisor, announced that she has been a supervisor since last May, but has worked at the MET for the past six years. Her focus is currently on the Paratransit operations. John Bell, Transit Operations Supervisor, noted that he has been with MET for the past four weeks and has worked as a dispatcher/manager for FedEx and other national trucking companies. He will supervise the driver operations and oversee the facilities. Josh Smith, Transit Operations Supervisor, also a recent hire, comes from the retail automotive parts industry, which he worked in for twenty years. He will have oversight of vehicle maintenance and parts inventory, as well as driver operations. Garett Robson introduced himself as the new Aviation and Transit Accountant and was happy to be a part of this team. He was previously at Public Works and has been a Billings resident for the past 21 years. Lynne Arnold, MET's Administrative Support III, who has been with MET for over 10 years was also reintroduced to the Commission. Finally, Chris Borgmann said he is here as a member of the public.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

A public comment period was offered. Chris Borgmann, a SkyWest First Officer, said he recently moved to the Billings area and had an interest in possibly being on the Commission in the future, but has only been in Billings for six months. He then asked if in the design of the new construction project, if any consideration has been given to a separate entry point for Known Crewmembers (KCM). He noted that some airports have this and referenced St. Louis as an example. Mr. Ploehn responded that the new screening area is being designed to the TSA's specifications, but he had also noted that a possible modification might be needed if employee screening was to become the norm. Mr. Ploehn said that they would look at this request and thanked Mr. Borgmann for attending and offering his comments.

## **MET SURVEY RESULTS**

Transit Manager, Rusty Logan provided an overview of the recent Public Transit Community Survey results. Overall, the survey received 627 total responses, with 446 coming from individuals living within the City limits. These numbers provide a level of confidence beyond 95% with a 5% margin of error. Results from the survey overall showed a desire for increased convenience of the system with more regular service. Results also displayed previously unrealized needs within the senior and disability populations, and would help to guide planning and programming into the future. Some of the surprises and highlights of the survey included:

- A total of 322 respondents indicated they utilize Transit either "all the time" or "sometimes," while 325 total respondents indicated they do not currently use Transit; this means approximately 50% of survey respondents do not use the system, but showed interest in the future of the Transit system.
- Eighty-nine percent of respondents who live in the City limits indicated they would be somewhat supportive or very supportive of a mill levy increase to support Transit.
- Forty-two percent of respondents indicated the downtown area as their primary destination for work, school, or other activities.
- When asked why a respondent does not use Transit, 38% indicated service is not offered **when** they need it, 37% indicated service does not go **where** they need it to, and over 45% indicated they just prefer the freedom of their own vehicle.
- When adjusting data for the group of respondents who are employed and do not currently use Transit, 84% of respondents indicated they would potentially use it to travel to work if it fit their schedule.
- If MET were able to gain the ridership of the group of respondents who are employed but not using Transit, the potential growth would account for an additional 73,950 rides per year based on two rides given per weekday.

## **TERMINAL CONSTRUCTION UPDATE**

Mr. Ploehn provided the Commission and guests with some background on the Terminal Construction project and a timeline of the various phases for the project. He noted that the contractor was working on Phase 1 of the project, which includes putting in place a new stair tower at the existing A2 Gate, a temporary holdroom in the basement of the B Concourse that would be used for ground loading operations, and installation of six steel columns that would hold the new roof and skylights over the new screening area. The floor in the new screening area had to also be raised and new window openings were being installed in the north wall of the pre-security restaurant so that restaurant patrons will be able to observe the screening lines. He then presented some photos of the work progress for the Commission so they could see what had been completed since they last toured the construction sites. Mr. Ploehn noted that this week the contractor is cutting holes into the roofs and floors so that next week the 60-foot steel support columns can be anchored to the new concrete footing and pilasters that were recently poured in the basement. These 60-foot columns will be dropped in with a crane that will be set up on the north side of the Terminal. The crane will be on the ramp for approximately two weeks while the steel structure for the new roof is put together. Mr. Ploehn continued by informing the Commission that the new HVAC unit had been installed for the basement temporary holdroom. That will allow the contractor to complete that space. He also noted that the stair tower on the west side of old Concourse A has been totally removed and the contractor was now working on a slab pour for the new structure. Mr. Ploehn noted that the plans for Phases 2-5 were submitted to the Building Department for review, so that they would be ready for approval by the time the contractor wanted to start the larger project this Summer. Mr. Ploehn indicated that the schedule shows Phase 1 wrapping up in June, the same month Phase 2 would be starting.

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

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Commission that last week he and Business Manager, Marita Herold, met with a potential candidate for the restaurant concession. The concessionaire noted that the new proposed concession space in the new Terminal expansion was very well laid out and should work well. He noted that the concessionaire asked a number of questions about how the new contract would be structured, as well as a number of operational questions. The concessionaire said he was excited to participate in the future Request for Proposals for this concession opportunity.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling explained that due to the recent high winds some of the airlines were experiencing delays. Specifically, an American Airlines' flight had to divert to Bozeman and wait for the winds to subside before they were able to continue on and land in Billings. Additionally, Allegiant had to load passengers at Gate B4 and then relocate to the cargo ramp in order to face away from the wind so that they could open the cargo doors to load bags onto the aircraft.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling identified that Sletten Construction will begin advertising Phases 2-5 of the Terminal Concourse Expansion project. He reminded Commissioners of the upcoming concourse construction work that will begin in early June. This is when the Concourse A will be closed to all airlines, except for Cape Air, which will begin to operate out of Gate A3. All other airlines will operate from the B Concourse. In preparation for this move, he has asked the airline managers to provide him with their Summer flight schedules as soon as possible so gate schedules can be determined. Mr. Ketterling also showed the group a proposed aircraft parking plan for the B Concourse that includes three remote parking locations west of Concourse B, where Cape Air is currently located.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling explained that the Airport is currently dealing with the outfall of the virus and Airport Facilities Maintenance staff will continue thoroughly cleaning the Airport as they typically do. Custodians will also begin to focus on passenger boarding areas, chairs, handrails, etc., and hand sanitizer stations have been added throughout the Terminal for everyone to use.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling informed Commissioners that on Thursday afternoon we would be interviewing for two new ARFF/AFM Workers and hope to have these positions filled by the end of March.
- ▶ Mr. Logan provided updates on various Transit projects including:
  - Completion of the lot security gate install with photos.
  - Updates on the paratransit software RFP, indicating received proposals were undergoing evaluation, but a number of promising products had been reviewed.
  - Updates on the newly published Paratransit Eligibility App, indicating MET was seeing increased rates of application. Feedback from organizations throughout the community indicated the new application had helped to simplify and improve the eligibility process.
  - Completed installation of the automated passenger counter systems in the fixed-route vehicles, which will remove the manual counting process currently handled by the bus drivers, and instead use electronic camera eyes to count the passenger boardings and departures. The system is now awaiting FTA approval of manual counts vs. electronic counts before being fully implemented.
  - The automated passenger systems also allowed MET Transit to offer on-board Wi-Fi to passengers; this enhancement was announced via a local media release and received positive feedback from the community overall.
- ▶ Mr. Logan indicated MET continued to see ridership growth in the month of February for both the fixed-route system and the paratransit system.
- ▶ Mr. Logan noted that he held meetings with both the Adult Resource Alliance and the State of Montana Developmental Disability Bureau with the intent of modifying and updating services as well as agreements to provide services with both agencies for the coming fiscal year. Overall, the meetings generated positive conversation and feedback regarding proposed service enhancements, as well as changes to funding requests and structure.

- ▶ Mr. Logan told the Commission he had also met with Montana State University-Billings (MSU-B) administrative staff to discuss the potential for expanding the current agreement for the semester long, fixed-route passes. This agreement is currently between MET Transit and the Associated Students of MSU-B, but University administration is interested in expanding the agreement directly with the MSU-B.
- ▶ Mr. Logan also discussed his recent attendance of the Transit Bus Summit in Horseshoe Bay, Texas. He indicated it was a very focused conference setting and was impressed with how well the organization managed the time transit agencies spent at the conference. It provided direct discussions with other transit agencies regarding commonly encountered issues as well as opportunity to attend focused vendor sessions for products MET had expressed interest in. As a result of a number of these presentations, MET opted to add a number of safety enhancements to the bus build specifications for its upcoming bus order, including 360-degree camera systems for the vehicles.

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

- ▶ Chair Gaghen discussed the rebranding/name change project that the Airport is looking at. She noted that her daughter, who lives in Europe and travels a lot, thought that removal of International from the name would not be beneficial and probably detrimental.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

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