

AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES
Tuesday, August 4, 2020

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, August 4, 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
Mark Evangeline, Facilities Superintendent

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

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

TOUR OF TERMINAL PROJECT

The Commission started with a tour of the concrete ramp demolition taking place north of the existing Concourse A. This demolition of the ramp area is being done to make way for the footings and foundation for the new concourse. This provided the Commission with a firsthand look at the future size of the Phase 2 project. Mr. Ploehn pointed out that the scaffolding being erected next to the Terminal was being put in place as a frame to hold a plastic exterior for a construction zone barrier so that during the demolition of the north side of the old Concourse A, the debris would be contained and not allowed to blow onto the airfield. He also noted that all the holes that are punched into the old cinder block foundation wall are for the abatement of the vermiculite insulation that was put into the cinder block voids. He also discussed how close the work area would be to the Gate B1 parking position and that if everyone plays nice, everything should work out all right. The construction tour detoured to show the Commission the Antonov AN-124 cargo plane that was parked on Taxiway J. Mr. Ketterling provided the Commission with some background details on why the AN-124 was in Billings and the "circus" that typically happens when this aircraft arrives. The construction tour continued with the Commission going into the new stair tower that was built on the west end and is being used by Cape Air for their passenger ground loading operations. The Commission was then showed the new temporary gift shop area followed by the new temporary holdroom in the basement of the B Concourse. Finally, since some of the Commission had not previously been in the Airport generator room, the group stopped there and Mr. Evangeline explained how the system could provide all the electrical needs for the Terminal should the power go out. That ended the tour.

AIRPORT PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS

Mr. Ploehn explained that the Airport thought it might be a good idea if some educational materials were put out for the public to help them understand how things have changed at the Airport, the airlines, and the TSA because of the COVID-19 pandemic. KTVQ put together some informational clips and a couple segments of "On the Job with Rob" all to air on KTVQ and the CW. He explained

that the TSA does not want to touch anything if they do not need to, so they have changed their procedures to allow the passenger to scan their own ID and airline ticket, and to require the removal of any food from carry-on luggage in order to avoid additional luggage screening. He also explained that the videos had to be reedited to include a disclaimer that they were made before the required mask order was put in place. The Commission watched the three short clips and the On the Job with Rob videos. Mr. Ploehn pointed out that the public is seeing the video clips because he has had a few calls regarding the one video clip that said masks are optional.

AIRPORT AND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONS REPORTS

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn gave the Commission a review of the Airport's passenger numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that in April the Airport only had 2,334 enplanements, which was down 93%. That improved to 7,535 enplanements in May (down 81%) and 13,675 enplanements in June (down 70%). He noted that it appeared that July and possibly August would be closer to being down 50%. Mr. Ploehn told the Commission that he has been watching Bozeman, Missoula, and Glacier/Kalispell airport numbers and they are all close to being off by 50% in July, while the national trend is less than 30% of normal. He speculated that because Montana initially had very few COVID-19 cases and there are two large national parks to visit, a lot of folks decided to come to Montana this Summer, subsequently bumping the passenger numbers up roughly 20 to 25% higher than the national averages. Mr. Ploehn shared that he had an interview with KTVQ this afternoon where he was asked when he thought passenger traffic would get back to normal. He thought that if a vaccination is proven effective and if passenger numbers can get back to 70 or 80% of 2019 enplanements that would be the new normal. Since the nation is in a recession, passenger numbers are usually off by 10 to 15%, but this coupled with the virus could easily reduce passenger numbers by 20% or more for an extended time.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Commission that at the last meeting he had described the financing process that was taking place to line up funds for the Terminal expansion. He happily announced that the successful financer would be First Interstate Bank here in Billings. He told the Commission that this financing was set up with a construction draw component that allowed the Airport to draw funds as needed. He was happy with the arrangement and just happy that the Airport did not have to go into the bond market, especially during this pandemic. He also announced that former Commission Chair, Steve Tostenrud was the bank representative who worked with the financing team to secure the financing.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling announced that a lot has taken place over the past two months since the Commission last met and briefed Commissioners on the following:

Week of June 22:

- Contractor finished saw cutting, widening, and joint sealing the new west concrete ramp, and then it was opened for aircraft parking use.
- City Council approved the Terminal Remodel Construction Gross Maximum Price (GMP) of \$43,686,759 with Sletten Construction. The GMP was for all construction Phases.
- A preconstruction meeting was held with the prime and subcontractors who will work on Phase II – V of the Terminal project.

July 1, 2020:

TSA and the Department of Homeland Security simulated a BIL Airport Drone Disruption tabletop exercise in which Airport staff, Air Traffic Control, and many other mutual aid agencies participated.

Week of July 13:

Cape Air was relocated from the east side of the Terminal over to the new west ramp and stairwell. Delta and United Airlines were moved from the A Concourse to the B Concourse where they will operate for approximately the next two years. Alaska and American Airlines have been set up to park on the remote ramp where they will ground load passengers.

July 17:

The Air Traffic Control Tower held the annual Runway Safety Action Team (RSAT) Meeting via a Zoom teleconference call with all Airport tenants.

Week of July 20:

- An Antonov AN-124 cargo hauler was parked at the Airport for the week with plans to load up a Billings Flying Service (BFS) Chinook helicopter to transport to Indonesia for wildfire operations. Unfortunately, the agreement between BFS and Indonesia fell through and the AN-124 left empty. The AN-124 returned on August 3 and completed the mission.
- The Airport's computerized Airfield Lighting Control System was upgraded.

Week of July 27:

- Morrison-Maierle is finalizing the engineering report on Runway 7/25. In approximately five years, staff anticipates a full reconstruction of this runway, which includes pavement removal/replacement, lengthening the runway, relocating the thresholds, installing LED lights and signs, and relocating navigational aids. The Airport will work with the FAA so that the majority of the work will be paid for with Federal grant funds.
- The Commemorative Air Force brought in a B-25J Bomber, which was on display at the Edwards Jet Center west ramp. This Flying Legends of Victory Tour "Maid in the Shade" event included tours and aircraft rides for a fee.

Other Miscellaneous Items:

- Due to COVID-19, the State Aviation Conference scheduled to take place in Billings, Montana in February of 2021 has been canceled.
- Airport Operations declared two, old 1997 Oshkosh Snowplows as surplus and publicly advertised them for sale with a minimum bid of \$10,000 each. The successful recipients of the two snowplows were the Havre and Lewistown, Montana Airports.
- ▶ Finally, Mr. Ketterling finished by informing the Commission that the City Administrator's office has been conducting presentations for all City Departments on the public safety mill levy.
- ▶ Transit Manager, Rusty Logan, indicated MET has been busy with the approval process for the Federally required Unified Planning and Work Program document created in conjunction with the Municipal Planning Organization. The document outlines the intended planning projects and eligible activities MET Transit plans to undertake in the coming Federal fiscal year utilizing 5303 planning grant funds. Mr. Logan indicated MET had received an increase of approximately \$30,000 in Federal funds from previous years and would be undertaking a number of expanded projects. Specific items Mr. Logan highlighted included:
 - Development and implementation of the Transit Agency Safety Plan.
 - Development of a Transit Strategic Plan for future improvements.
 - Development of a Master Marketing Plan.
 - Fixed-route overhaul and assessment of expansion opportunities.
 - Continued development of community partnerships.
- ▶ Mr. Logan announced MET Transit would be undergoing another personnel change with the retirement of Lynne Arnold, MET's Administrative Support position. Lynne has been the primary support person responsible for various administrative aspects for MET Transit including grant input and management, National Transit Database reports, budget assistance, and other essential functions.
- ▶ Mr. Logan indicated MET has continued to adjust the driver's blocks of work in order to ensure adequate coverage with current vacancies. Due to decreased demand in paratransit service throughout the COVID-19 situation, MET has benefited from increased flexibility in its workforce to ensure coverage while also avoiding the need to discuss employee hour reduction or workforce reduction.
- ▶ Mr. Logan stated ridership for the fiscal year had surpassed what was expected with the decreased levels observed due to COVID-19. Overall, MET still provided 405,160 rides for the

year, down from 473,332; this constituted only slightly more than a 15% decrease in overall rides, showing significantly less losses than other areas of the country.

ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Farmer asked if the buses ordered were still on schedule. Mr. Logan replied that the pandemic had delayed production about a month or so, and the delivery of the first buses would probably be in April 2021.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

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