

**AVIATION AND TRANSIT BOARD MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, April 6, 2021**

The Aviation and Transit Board met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, April 6, 2021. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Board Members**

Dan Farmer, Chair  
Ken Behling  
Mark Astle  
Steve Tostenrud  
David Hummel, Jr.  
Chuck Tooley

**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  
Heather Mosser, Morrison-Maierle  
Colt Castlebury, Sletten Construction

The Board began with a Terminal Construction progress tour.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

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

**TERMINAL EXPANSION FINISHES REVIEW**

Mr. Ploehn discussed the mockup display boards that the architect had put together with all of the different finishes that will be used within the Terminal Building. Mr. Ploehn also talked about the use of panels that would be designed for displaying informational themes/events. Mr. Colt Castleberry, project manager for the contractor, mentioned that they were expecting to have the Great Room area open for the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays.

**AIRPORT AND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONS REPORTS**

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn advised the Board on the news regarding COVID Care Relief for airlines, airports, and many others. The Airport received a second recovery grant, this time from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRSSA), for \$3.5 million on top of the \$12.7 million from the CARES Act, and it looks like the Airport could get another \$7 million or more from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Most of the funds will need to go toward personnel, safety measures battling COVID, and maintenance costs. The \$3.5 million CRSSA funds will also be partially used toward debt service.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn stated that some of the other projects that COVID relief funds can be used for in the next budget year include paving the parking lot, painting the water tower, which came in at \$500,000, and water, sewer, and road construction in the Business Park.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Board of a Webinar series that he attended with the airlines and Mead & Hunt, our air service consultant. The airlines are seeing great advanced bookings and subsequently are a little nervous as they are seeing more demand for service than they actually can do. The airlines are starting to bring all the aircraft they can back into service.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn mentioned an article he had read that was titled Coronavirus Revenge. It stated that anybody that did not get to do anything for a year now is going to do it this Summer and it appears that it is going to be crazy. The conference consultant did a forward look at what the seats are going to be into July; seats are basically the amount of service being provided. Weekly seat counts into Billings in July are at 14,600. July of 2019, which was a record year,

was only 13,000. He then stated that there are a couple of hiccups in all of this. One being, when people get to their destination, there are not going to be enough cars to rent. The car rental companies need to order their fleet six to eight months in advance and some did not see this coming, or if they did have an order with the car manufactures, it was canceled. Subsequently, the car rental rates could be very high. The other issue is the availability of hotel rooms. Billings has a lot of hotels and should not be impacted; however, some other cities without enough rooms will have some challenges.

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn advised the Board that the land Billings Flying Service purchased west of the Airport is being annexed and zoned as commercial industrial. Erin Heringer, is the land development person for the Blain's and they will be meeting next week to discuss synergy with the Airport.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn mentioned that Alpine has signed the Hangar Lease that will now go to Council for approval.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn spoke about the Board having Member names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses on the City and Airport's Websites. He recommended that one generic e-mail address be established to contact the Board, and Airport staff would forward to each Board Member if any are received.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn mentioned that there is a committee in town that is pushing for an airshow in 2023.
- ▶ Board Member Tostenrud asked about numbers going through screening and Mr. Ploehn said that they are continuing to rise.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling advised the Board that he has been working with the airlines on accommodating all of the flights and parking of aircraft for the Summer schedule.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling updated the Board on the following construction projects:
  - Commercial Ramp Construction Schedule III was awarded to Knife River.
  - Passenger Boarding Bridge Contract has been signed and given the go ahead.
  - Cape Air's new Tecnam P2012 Traveller is in our market and their first revenue flight is scheduled for tomorrow and the Airport will do a water cannon salute.
  - The Airport will be advertising for two Airport Police Officer positions. The Airport has been running short one officer due to COVID and the low number of passengers, and one officer is looking at leaving; therefore, the Airport does not want to be down two positions during the Summer with passenger traffic coming back.
  - Staff is working on Request for Proposals (RFPs) for the Food and Beverage Concession (pre and post security) and the Gift Shop Concession. Hoping to have new Concessionaires on board by the beginning of Summer so they can work simultaneously with the contractor to possibly ready the retail space using their design, what equipment they need, and develop the space for the type of operation they run.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn mentioned that the Airport is also working on a Car Rental RFP.
- ▶ Chair Farmer asked about manufacturing delays and building prices. Mr. Ketterling stated that the Airport locked in most of the prices up front, so many of the price increases do not affect us. Mr. Ploehn stated that MET is having the same problem with the buses. COVID impacted the manufacturing process, not only could they not build the buses, they could not get the parts, which were manufactured somewhere else and also shut down.
- ▶ Mr. Logan provided an update on the Transit fleet stating that they are maintaining and currently have multiple spares available as parts are becoming more readily available again. El Dorado is gearing up for production of the new buses and staff has had multiple communications with them verifying specs, paint schemes, technology, etc.
- ▶ Mr. Logan informed the Board that they have six vacant operator positions, and made three offers today, which were accepted. Multiple interviews are scheduled for the coming days.
- ▶ Mr. Logan stated that ridership is recovering; both fixed route and paratransit are seeing increased demand.

- ▶ Mr. Logan advised the Board that safety assurance reviews for operators are starting in accordance with the Public Transit Agency Safety Plan. Operators are randomly selected for one of the following:
  - Video Review
  - Ride Along
  - Direct Observation on RouteReview of up to 50% of staff is done quarterly, with follow up with reviewed employee within 48 hours of review.
- ▶ Mr. Logan stated that the Downtown Transfer Center landscaping update had been completed as well as the METroplex stump grinding and tree removal in preparation for the ADA curb cut for new sidewalk accessibility from the street to the MET front office sidewalk.
- ▶ Mr. Logan informed the Board that through the American Rescue Plan, MET Transit would be awarded \$1,346,725 in additional Section 5307 funds.

### **ITEMS FROM THE BOARD**

- ▶ Board Member Tooley asked what the estimated completion date for the entire Airport project would be. Mr. Ploehn stated that it would probably be September - October of 2023.
- ▶ Board Member Tooley then asked how this group could plan an airshow with all of this construction. Mr. Ploehn stated that the committee is pretty confident they can get the Blue Angels in 2023 and that anything after that, not so much. Mr. Ploehn then talked about hiring an air boss that handles all of the planning for an airshow. These airshow experts are experienced at handling all of the logistics of an airshow and this is an option the Airport may have to consider.
- ▶ Board Member Hummel asked if there were any plans in the project for an airline type club. Mr. Ploehn stated that these airline or private clubs do not really work at an airport the size of Billings, just because there is not a lot of layover traffic to utilize it. At a hub airport where there are people waiting hours between flights, they work quite well. He noted that the current design of the Great Room area was to take on that private club feel with improvements like the fireplace, comfortable seating, coffee bar, and liquor bar all in the open area. Additionally, for folks that bring in family from out of town and get here early, the old TSA screening space will be remodeled to provide a comfortable sitting area on the pre-screening side.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

MDB

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