



**Billings Logan International Airport**  
Aviation and Transit Department  
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Billings, MT 59105  
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## **AVIATION AND TRANSIT BOARD MINUTES**

**Tuesday, April 5, 2022**

The Aviation and Transit Board met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, April 5, 2022. Those in attendance included:

### **Aviation and Transit Board Members**

Dan Farmer, Chair  
Ron Spence, Vice Chair  
Ken Behling  
Mark Astle  
David Hummel, Jr.  
Steve Tostenrud

### **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.

### **MET ADVERTISING PROGRAM**

Mr. Logan gave a PowerPoint presentation on the MET Advertising Program, explaining that all advertising would now be completed in house. Mr. Logan explained that historically MET has offered advertising opportunities to the community with its on vehicle advertising as well as on street advertising displayed on bus benches via a concession agreement, stating that the current agreement expired on March 31. Revenues generated from that agreement were a 60/40 split, with 40% going to MET. Mr. Logan shared that increased revenues was one reason for the decision to move advertising in house. Due to increases in Federal funding, MET Transit has realized an increased need for additional local match dollars to ensure the agency can adequately provide required local funding to take advantage of the additional Federal funds. On March 28, Council approved the purchase of the concessionaire's bench inventory to ensure a seamless transition of advertising service.

### **AIR SERVICE UPDATE FROM MEAD & HUNT CONFERENCE**

Mr. Ploehn advised the Board that he recently attended the Air Service Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, stating that he and Allison Corbyn with Big Sky Economic Development met with nine airlines. The overall message from all of the airlines was the pilot shortages. Mr. Ploehn stated that the Summer months are looking like the Airport will be down around 16,000 seats a month. Flights right now are full and ticket prices are rising. Mr. Ploehn stated that fuel prices, pilot shortages, and car rental shortages are all issues facing the industry. Mr. Ploehn shared that the five airlines that serve Billings would like to bring in more service when things improve. There was very little discussion on new service destinations; however, Delta stated that they would really like to try a weekend Atlanta service, but things need to get better first, so that is a few years out. Mr. Ploehn stated that they talked with potential airlines JetBlue, Southwest, Avelo, and Sun Country. Sun Country was the only airline that showed any interest in coming to Billings, especially when Mr. Ploehn told them we were not getting enough service out of Minneapolis, which is where they would fly from. It would be Summer service, probably three times per week, possibly next Summer. Southwest was very noncommittal and wanted to concentrate on the 14 new locations started up last year, including Bozeman. Avelo is a very new, small airline and is based out of Burbank. Avelo and Jet Blue were not really interested in the Billings market at this time.

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

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn briefed the Board on the Terminal Construction progress. Work continues on the bar and gift shop areas. Temporary food service is being planned so that it is available. Overall, things are looking good.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling advised the Board on the following projects:
  - Currently advertising the West Taxilane Extension project.
  - Hample Construction recently was awarded the West Taxilane Utilities project and they are getting things prepped for the new large hangars going in later this Summer.
  - The proposals for the Five-Year Engineering Agreement are due April 14.
  - Two bids were received for painting the Water Tower, one for \$250,000, and one for \$790,000. The engineer's estimate was \$500,000, so Morrison-Maierle is going through the low bidder's proposal to make sure they did not miss anything. Mr. Ketterling stated that the Airport is changing from the orange and white checkerboard to all white with the Airport's new logo on both the north and south sides.
  - The facemask mandate is set to expire on April 18, and staff is waiting to hear if this date changes.
  - Budget presentation to the City Administrator is being worked on. One of the main things in the budget is the Airport is requesting a new Technology position for the Department.
  - One Police Officer is retiring and we already have a replacement.
  - Mr. Ploehn attended the State Aviation Conference in Missoula and toured the Missoula Airport's new Terminal construction. Missoula is facing many of the same issues Billings has with construction delays.
- ▶ Mr. Logan briefed the Board on the following:
  - Ridership is still growing, but slowing, and the fixed route has recovered.
  - MET is fully staffed.
  - MET is requesting a new Road Supervisor position in the budget.
- ▶ Mr. Logan advised the Board that the Transportation Development Plan is still a work in progress and they are looking at initial route cuts right now. The Consultants are focusing on a hybrid grid as a potential increase to productivity. The Transit survey ended on March 25, and MET received a total of 520 responses. MET had a short survey available for the business community at both the Jeff Speck event and the Chamber breakfast.
- ▶ Mr. Logan updated the Board on the Training Lot project. MET has to submit an environmental analysis to the FTA as it is a construction project. The project has been delayed due to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. There are trees that need to be removed for this project and Mr. Logan learned that the tree removal has to be completed outside of nesting and breeding season. Mr. Logan got much of the information needed on the nesting and breeding seasons for various birds from the Montana Natural Heritage Program. FTA did give their approval as long as a specialist comes out and investigates the trees for any potential nests.

## **ITEMS FROM THE BOARD**

Board Member Spence asked about Airport staffing and if the Airport would be hiring more custodians. Mr. Ketterling stated that we are currently fully staffed and that there would be conversations on adding more in the next budget cycle once the new Concourse A is open and the demand is recognized.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

cc: Aviation and Transit Board  
Chrono  
Via E-mail: City Administrator  
                  Mayor  
                  City Clerk