



Billings Logan International Airport
Aviation and Transit Department
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Travel With Us

AVIATION AND TRANSIT BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, August 2, 2022

The Aviation and Transit Board met in the Administrative Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, August 2, 2022. Those in attendance included:

Aviation and Transit Board Members

Dan Farmer, Chair
Ron Spence, Vice Chair
Ken Behling
Mark Astle
Chuck Tooley
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.

TRANSIT PLANNING FINAL UPDATE

Rusty Logan provided the Board with a presentation regarding the final outcomes of the Transit Planning effort that has been taking place since last year. The presentation included:

- An in-depth overview of routing changes, displaying each existing route compared to proposed route changes. This overview also included discussion of route frequency including displaying significantly expanded half-hour service.
- A discussion regarding the infill of current operator breaks in the fixed-route schedule; the proposal recommends filling operator break time using extra board drivers to ensure the bus continues to operate even while an operator is on break. Filling in the gaps in the schedule will result in two additional hours of service. Extra board drivers would also periodically drive a route to the Airport to correspond with flight schedules.
- An overview of anticipated additional expenses stemming from implementation of all recommendations. It is expected that Federal funding levels will increase sufficiently to cover these expenses by FY 26.
- Discussion of additional concepts including service to Lockwood and potential funding mechanisms to cover expansion beyond City limits.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Shane Ketterling provided an update on the numerous construction projects taking place at the Airport. He showed the Board a slide show of pictures and discussed the following:

- Grand opening of the new A Concourse and Great Room in June.
- Three new Analogic X-ray machines have been installed in the new TSA Screening area.
- The queuing space for the new TSA Checkpoint is currently under construction.
- Old Concourse B was closed and is being prepared to be demolished, which includes relocating jet bridges, removal of vermiculite from block walls, and disconnecting all utilities.

- Hample Construction is currently working on the West Taxilane Utility Project moving dirt, installing water lines, new hydrants, and storm drainpipe. NorthWestern Energy is also removing old overhead power lines/poles and installing new underground electrical feeds.
- Montana-Dakota Utility crews are boring underground to install a larger, 4" gas line all along the front of the Airport and down Highway 3 beyond Zimmerman Trail. This project will ultimately provide for better service and future capacity as growth continues.
- Two old parking lot exit booths will be removed and two new booths will be installed.

AIRPORT AND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONS REPORTS

- ▶ Kevin Ploehn provided the Board with an update on how passenger traffic has been so far this Summer. He noted that through May of this year, the Airport was up over 20,000 enplaned passengers compared to last year; however, this year's June was down over 7,500 enplaned passengers and he expected July to be similar or possibly a bit worse. He noted that a major contributor was the fact that the airlines have cut the number of seats the Airport normally gets in the Summer. June's seat total was down by 17,692 and it appears that July was down over 16,000 seats. This was one of the reasons that airline ticket prices jumped so high, not enough seats for the Summer demand. He noted that there was some indication that beginning in September, the pricing may come down some. The decrease in fuel prices will help that, along with the decrease in demand compared to the Summer months. He also noted that the total freight being moved through the Airport has also decreased some, currently down about 11% for the year but running close to the 2019 numbers. He then provided a comparison of where Billings was in terms of freight aircraft landed weights, which is used to determine AIP grant funding for freight operations. He noted that just a few years ago, the Airport was 69th in the nation and now we are 58th. This has helped increase the AIP funding by roughly \$125,000.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn then provided some examples of news articles that covered a number of different examples of why air service is currently lacking in the U.S. He noted the number of delays and canceled flights has slowed down some, but the airlines lack of adequate staff is still causing operational problems across the country, especially on the eastern side of the continent. He pointed out that all the issues that the domestic airlines are having seems to be duplicated around the world, especially in Europe.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn updated the Board on the status of the NorthWestern Energy property purchase. He said that the FAA has issued a consent to release letter, clearing the way for the City to sell the parcel to NorthWestern Energy. He anticipated that the Buy/Sell would be signed either this week or next and the closing date would be set in the near future. The \$223,000 that will be received for the property would be applied as grant funds toward the Terminal project.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling informed the Board that the repaving project on Rimtop Drive had been completed.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling explained that the Airport's annual Runway Safety Action Team (RSAT) meeting took place on June 14 and fortunately, no new action items were identified.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling identified that the new bar in the Great Room was opened on June 22 after equipment was installed and the Department of Revenue inspected and approved the space.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling explained that a ribbon cutting for the new electric vehicle charging stations in the Express Parking lot took place on June 30, 2022.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling provided an update on the Yellowstone International Airshow that will take place August 11 – 13, 2023. He was happy to report that CIS Airshow Consulting from Ogden, Utah (Kevin Ireland, owner/consultant) was hired to manage all aspects of the Airshow.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling informed the Board that the Montana Aviation Conference would take place at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center March 2 – 4, 2023. Kevin and Shane are on the Conference Planning Committee and the first meeting took place on July 13, 2022.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling announced that the Airport's annual FAA Certification Inspection is scheduled to take place on August 31 and September 1 with a final report from the inspector on September 2.

- ▶ Mr. Logan informed the Board of MET's transition to a new AVL vendor for real-time bus tracking and metrics. He stated that DoubleMap, Inc. had been bought out by TransLoc, Inc. and MET was in the process of transitioning to a new app and interface. The change will require passengers to download a new smartphone application.
- ▶ Mr. Logan discussed the upcoming process for approval of the Unified Planning and Work Program, which are the programmed activities to be undertaken using MET's annual planning funds apportionment from the 5303 program. Mr. Logan indicated that MET planning funds had increased over \$77,000 for FFY 23, expanding MET's ability to focus on further planning activities. These activities will include:
 - Support of the Transit Development Plan implementation.
 - Development of a Bus Stop Master Plan.
 - Fare comparison and analysis.
 - Analysis of possible interlocal agreements, partnership, or other funding models for expanded service.
 - Area Emergency Action Plan integration.
 - Ongoing grant review for capital planning, etc.
- ▶ Mr. Logan discussed MET's involvement with the Municipal Planning Organization's (MPO) Long Term Transportation Plan Update. He stated that MET has directly recommended the five-year plan update include specific analysis and discussion revolving around Intelligent Transportation Systems, including transit supportive systems, to assist in developing more efficient and effective surface transportation in the Billings area. Mr. Logan expects the plan will have a much more robust focus on transit moving forward due to increased interest and cooperation with the MPO.
- ▶ Mr. Logan updated the Board regarding ongoing MET items and projects including:
 - MET currently has four operator vacancies, but continues to interview candidates.
 - Training Lot construction is tentatively to begin the week of August 15.
 - Ridership on fixed-route increased 10% year over year from the previous July when adjusted for service days, while paratransit ridership increased 8%.
 - MET Transit successfully negotiated the sale of four retired Gillig Phantom buses to Winter Park, Colorado and was in the process of arranging to scrap an additional four. MET also intends to place two vehicles into a contingency fleet for emergency use, leaving five vehicles still available for sale or disposal.

ITEMS FROM THE BOARD

There were no items from the Board.

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