



AVIATION AND TRANSIT BOARD MINUTES
Tuesday, September 6, 2022

The Aviation and Transit Board met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, September 6, 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

The Board began with a tour of Airport Construction Projects.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

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

MET TRANSIT ELECTRIC BUS AWARD

Mr. Logan provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Low-No Grant for electric buses. Mr. Logan advised that Transit's fleet is currently in a very good state. MET has been very successful in securing competitive grants and using the COVID funding to replace 17 diesel buses, and there remains enough funding to replace four more diesel buses. Therefore, with only four more buses to replace, MET could integrate the electric buses in without having to rely completely on them in case they do not perform as well as expected. Mr. Logan then explained the Simulator Training and Maintenance and Safety Training package that would be purchased along with the electric buses. The timeline for implementation of the buses is approximately two years.

AIRPORT AND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONS REPORTS

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn gave a presentation on the statistics for the Airport, sharing that enplanement numbers are down 17%-18% for the Summer. Some of the headlines for this month are American Airlines' pilots are seeking a 20% pay increase, United Airlines is hiring hundreds of new employees as airlines struggle with delays and cancellations, air travel is back for tourist travel, but not for business travelers. Mr. Ploehn advised that around the middle of August there was a 20% increase in airfares; however, more than 8.76 million passengers still traveled during the Labor Day weekend.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn shared a spreadsheet on the Terminal Expansion Construction Funding Sources that has been utilized since the start of the project. By the end of the project, the Airport will have received approximately \$60 million in funds from Federal Grants, Passenger Facility Charges, Financing, and Local funds. The Local funds are part of the annual rates and charges.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn shared information on a study that was conducted by our Air Service Consultant on what is going on with Bozeman and why people are traveling there to fly out. The study was completed using approximately 13,000 airline tickets and revealed some interesting changes; 1% of Billings based passengers were traveling to Great Falls to get on a flight, 1% to Missoula, and 9% to Bozeman. Of the 9% that travelled to Bozeman to get on a flight, 28% flew on Delta, 26% on United, 17% on Alaska, and only 13% were on Southwest. He felt this indicated that there is

a pricing issue due to the restricted number of airline seats allocated to the Billings market. Meanwhile, there is additional seat capacity on flights out of Bozeman whereas the lack of seats at Billings is pushing load factor into the 90% range and substantially increasing the price to the local ticket. Subsequently, Billings could really use more seats.

► Mr. Ketterling briefed the Board on the following:

- The new parking booths are in and SP+ staff said the new tinted windows are great at helping to keep the booths cooler.
- Staff has talked with Sun Country (Minneapolis) and Billings is on a list with a number of other cities for possible Minneapolis direct seasonal service, but it would not be until next Summer and would be a two or three times per week service.
- Chubb had completed the annual liability risk inspection, which went well.
- FAA annual inspection took place and there was one minor correction, which was with the fuel farm inspection reporting that the Airport's firefighters perform.
- The Airport has three open positions available. Advertising and Marketing Coordinator, ARFF/AFM Worker, and a Custodial position.
- There are regular meetings on the Air Show and the Montana Aviation Conference, which staff will cover more in depth at a future meeting.

► Mr. Logan briefed the Board on the following:

- The Unified Planning Work Program was approved by the Policy Coordinating Committee on August 30.
- The final Transit Development Plan public meeting went well. Around 20 members of the public attended. Final recommendations were well received and now will move through the official approval process. The public praised MET's service, which was good to hear.
- Transit's driver training lot construction project began late last month. The lot should be completely paved by the end of the month and remaining items finalized in October.
- MET hired four new people leaving two operator vacancies remaining.
- Ridership in August improved significantly over last year, generating over 4,500 more rides.
- Paratransit performed 19% better than last August.
- Fixed route saw a 13% improvement. Overall, MET ridership has gained 10% over the previous fiscal year.
- KTVQ did a story on individuals who work with LIFTT (Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow) and those living with disabilities and using the bus system. They came on sight and shot for around four hours filming the individuals getting on and off the bus.

ITEMS FROM THE BOARD

- Board member Hummel asked about the status on recruiting Mr. Ploehn's replacement. Mr. Ploehn stated that the consulting group would have a representative here to tour all of the facilities and visit both Divisions and the City Administration. Basically, he was doing some information gathering, and will have the job listing on the streets by the end of the month.
- Board member Hummel complimented Mr. Ploehn on the nice presentation he recently provided the Rotary Club.

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