

AVIATION AND TRANSIT BOARD MINUTES

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

The Aviation and Transit Board met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Wednesday, April 2, 2025 at 4:00 pm. Those in attendance included:

Aviation and Transit Board Members

Steve Tostenrud
Barbara Schneeman
Denis Pitman
Ron Spence
James Mariska
Megan Bostrom

City Staff

Shane Ketterling, Assistant Director of Aviation
Rusty Logan, Assistant Director of Transit

Guests

Shane provided a tour to the Board Members of the Air Traffic Control Tower.

CALL TO ORDER

Steve called the meeting to order at 4:38 pm.

Barbara moved to approve the March 5, 2025 minutes, Denis seconded, board approved, except Megan as she was not present for the meeting in March.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

COURTESIES

None

Informational Items

- **Transit Funding Sustainability/Governance Study**

Rusty informed the board an RFP is being published next week for a Transit Funding Sustainability/Governance Study. Rusty went into detail what information the study will provide. The study will have complete analysis of gathered data, develop different scenarios to achieve, as well as goal making, priority setting, and performance measures.

- **Transit Washington DC Visit**

In March, Rusty and Jordan Hess (Mountainline of Missoula) CEO met with staff from the Offices of Montana Representatives and Senators in Washington DC, as part of the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) Legislative Fly-In. He was able to meet with each of the Montana offices for approximately 30 minutes each. Rusty represented himself as the Assistant Transit Director for Billings and as the President of the Montana Transit Association (MTA). He discussed the transit needs in Montana, and the importance of transit not just in Billings but also in the Montana rural communities. Transit is an essential service for small communities and allows constituents with limited transportation options to continue to live in their hometowns. He explained the significant progress that MET Transit has made in Billings, with growth and utilization of the system by leveraging the funding provided in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Rusty asked for continued support and authorization of Transit Formula funds that operations across Montana rely on. He also asked for continued support of amounts authorized and approved with the BIL to continue to add significant value to local matching funds. He asked for relieve of regulatory burden regarding items that flow down from large urbans and complicate small agency and rural operations that have requirements such as FMCSA and DBE.

Rusty talked about the burden of some of the Buy America requirements to procuring vehicles as well as reviews to be completed at the agency level as opposed to at the Federal level will be, especially with minivans and smaller options.

Rusty felt that the meeting went well and the staff was engaged and generally supported the asks being made. The staff members requested some follow up regarding more specifics. Rusty plans to follow up with an email to the staff thanking them for their time and an invite to have local staff deliver messages to the MTA members at the annual spring conference held in Billings on May 14-16, 2025.

- **Transit Administrative/Operational Report**

Rusty was thrilled to announce that MET is moved in to their building and the construction is "almost" done. Some things that need to be finished are in the lobby, conference room, and the entryway with ADA openers.

The electric charger switchgear is installed for the EV Buses, and the transformer installation will begin this month.

Unfortunately, the MET security camera project is currently on hold. Two bids were received and they were considerably different in price as well as execution, the proposals are currently in an in-depth review of both proposals.

Rusty reported that the bus wash project is still on track and will be out for bid later this month or early next month.

Rusty reported that advertising and marking is continuing to increase, Jena secured an additional advertiser, pushing the FY end total over \$268,000 in revenue for the program.

Rusty, Jeff, and Garrett presented the initial Aviation and Transit presentation with City Admin they will be meeting with the City Council Finance committee soon. Rusty mentioned that both budgets are in the black and doing well; however, transit is dealing with the HB 231 and the potential reduction in mills.

MET currently has two fulltime vacancies; an ongoing vacant for a month to realize savings as operations had evened out; and an Operator planning to retire in May 2025.

Rusty reported that the Ridership for March broke 50,000 total rides, again like in October 2024. The fixed route was at 47,271 rides and the Paratransit was at 3,563. The fixed route showed an increase of 36.5% and the Paratransit showed a decrease of 9.7% compared to last year. The total annual increase over the previous fiscal year is 41%.

- **Airport Administrative/Operational Report**

Shane announced to the Board that he is retiring July 2025. Shane handed each of the board members one of the options for the Ticket Counter remodel and expansion project. He believes that the construction will start in January 2026. This will reallocate the area for more ticket counter space for the Airlines and for the potential of adding more Airlines in the future. Once the TSA baggage screening machines are moved out to the lobby and into the back, a new In-Line Baggage Belt System will be installed behind the ticket counters to help things flow well and it will create efficiency for the Airlines and TSA. Morrison-Maierle will orchestrate the whole process between structural, mechanical, plumbing, and other needs.

Shane did inform the board that he will be the Airport Representative for the 2026 Airshow.

The Overlook Drive Pavement project received five bids, with the lowest bid coming in at \$230,000 from Wharton Asphalt. They are anticipating this project to be done June 2025.

Shane informed the board that the Terminal Loop will be paved next summer.

- **Jeff will present on the airport authority transition process at the April 7th City Council work session.**

Shane informed the board that Jeff will be giving a presentation to the City Council at their April 7th Work Session about the transition process of the Airport possibly becoming an authority. Some of the board members stated they would be attending the meeting. Barbara suggested having Jeff show the presentation to the board at the next month's board meeting as well as the possibility of having a Work Session with the board members to discuss the pros and cons to this transition.

Items from the Board

Steve asked Shane about the lots being leased out on the west end taxi lane, Shane stated that Beacon Air Group has leased them all out. Aerotronics will be constructing a new hangar, where the old Edwards Jet Center building was.

Denis would like to discuss with Jeff at the next meeting more about the Human Remains issue. Denis stated that the Airlines can ship them into Billings, but cannot ship them out of Billings.

Next month's meeting will be held at MET.

Steve adjourned the meeting at 5:55 pm

jm

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