



**AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, January 3, 2017**

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, January 3, 2017. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Commission Members**

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

**City Staff and Guests**

Kevin Ploehn, Director of Aviation & Transit  
Shane Ketterling, Assistant Director of Aviation & Transit

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

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

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

Mr. Ploehn introduced Chuck Tooley who gave a brief history of himself and his previous service on boards and commissions, including having served on the Aviation and Transit Commission during the mid 1990s, and as Mayor for the City of Billings. New Commissioner Dave Hummel was not in attendance.

**ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The annual election of Officers was held and Commissioner Behling was re-elected as the Chair, and Commissioner Farmer was re-elected as Vice Chair.

**2016 REVIEW**

Mr. Ploehn provided the Commission with a PowerPoint presentation that reviewed the projects and accomplishments of the Aviation and Transit Department for the past year. The highlights of the presentation included all of the components of the Pond D project, the major Terminal Remodel being planned, the minor Terminal improvements that were completed, the improvements currently underway on the B Concourse, the enhancements to the Deli concession offerings, the construction of the new West End Large Hangar area, and the East End Taxiway paving project. On the MET side, the highlights included the introduction of six smaller buses into the fleet, the Bus Fare increase, and Bus Route changes that took place.

**AIR SERVICE UPDATE**

In order to familiarize the new Commissioners and provide a refresher on the realities of air service issues, Mr. Ploehn provided the Commission with a presentation on air service. The presentation discussed a number of topics related to air service and the challenges smaller communities face. Highlights included the small number of airlines available to expand service, pilot shortages that are impacting the industry, local fare comparisons, airport passenger leakage or lack thereof, potential non-stop destinations that might work for Billings, and a discussion on airline incentives and why they are necessary.

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

- ▶ Mr. Ketterling discussed the new requirements regarding the REAL ID law that were recently released. He pointed out that Montana Driver Licenses are not compliant with REAL ID law and beginning on January 22, 2018, the Montana Driver License will no longer be accepted as a means of identification for air travel. This will be a significant burden for Montanans who do not travel frequently and do not have a passport. Mr. Ploehn felt that this would probably result in a dip in passenger numbers for 2018 and beyond. Signs have been posted in the TSA screening area alerting passengers to this situation and information has been added to the Airport's Website.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling discussed the snow removal efforts that the Airport had accomplished during December, which was a very snowy month and included a record setting storm. He pointed out that there were two crews working 12-hour shifts around the clock to provide the needed coverage to make sure that the Airport did not close. Approximately 400 hours of overtime was amassed with crews working both Christmas and New Year's. Mr. Ploehn addressed some of the issues MET has been encountering. The biggest challenge has been keeping on time with the route schedules. Staff also had to do temporary route changes for the school tripper routes, as driving in the various subdivisions was resulting in buses getting stuck. There has also been some issues with the paratransit vans getting close enough to the curbs to deploy the lifts for wheelchairs. Staff also must spray down the lift mechanisms each night with lubricants to de-gunk them from all the road grime that happens with wet and snowy roads.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling updated the Commission on the new Service Animal Relief Area that staff has been constructing. This area was constructed to meet a Federal law that went into effect last year. All that was left to do to make it operational was to put up signage directing users to the area. It is located on the lower level below the concourse and can be directly reached by elevator.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling pointed out that Mr. Ploehn and he were on the planning committee for the 2017 State Aviation Conference to be held at the Red Lion Hotel and Convention Center. The event is scheduled for March 2-4, and will bring in excess of 400 folks to Billings for the event. He told the Commission that if anyone was interested in attending to let us know.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn provided a recap of the air service promotion trip to Seattle to meet with Alaska Air. The key points were that Alaska is doing quite well in Billings and they are looking at possibly adding additional flights to both Seattle and Portland sometime in the future, and the Dash 8 Q-400 that currently services Billings will be replaced with an Embraer E-175 regional jet. Alaska has 30 of these aircraft on order and will start receiving the new aircraft later this Spring. Mr. Ploehn also informed Alaska about the NAIA Division 1 Championship Tournament. They showed interest in this and asked for more details, which Mr. Ploehn provided at a later date.

## **ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION**

None offered.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

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