



AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES
Tuesday, February 7, 2017

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, February 7, 2017. Those in attendance included:

Aviation and Transit Commission Members

Ken Behling, Chair
Dan Farmer, Vice Chair
Peggie Gaghen
Ron Spence
Chuck Tooley
David Hummel, Jr.

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 MEMBER

New Commissioner Dave Hummel, Jr. introduced himself. He indicated that he was a retired civil engineer. He has previously been on a number of boards for the City. He said he travels quite frequently and has been to 153 countries, and thought he could bring a unique perspective to the Commission.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANIES AT BIL

Mr. Ketterling began discussing that just a few years ago if a person wanted a taxi it was usually a 40 minute wait or longer. In fact, the Airport use to get quite a few complaints on the subject. Then about two years ago, a third taxi company started up and began providing better service for those seeking a ride, mainly by being at the Airport when flights arrived. This of course irritated the other two taxi companies that had been serving the Airport for many years. Then last Fall, Uber began serving the Billings area, and all of a sudden, there were Uber drivers sitting curbside trolling for customers. With each additional new service, various levels of conflict were developing between the parties, so much so that the Airport Police has had to intervene on a number of occasions. While the additional service has been a boon to the traveling public, the Airport has been seeking solutions to mitigate the curbside crowding by the transportation companies now seeking to serve the Airport passenger. Subsequently, the Airport is starting to work with all parties to develop alternative parking for those transportation network companies looking for a fare. The best location identified so far is the freight area just west of the Terminal. Mr. Ketterling said that the Airport would like to get an agreement with Uber and the taxis, and was hoping to use something similar to Bozeman's agreement, but Uber rejected the Bozeman agreement, so we are looking at other options for an agreement. He also indicated that we would proceed with signing for this lot when the weather warmed up some, and would continue to pursue an operating agreement with Uber and the taxis.

AMERICAN AIRLINES SERVICE

Mr. Ploehn began by discussing the recent good news that American Airlines would begin service between Billings and Dallas on June 2, 2017. The flight would be on a dual class, 76 seat Embraer E-175 aircraft. The three-hour flight is scheduled to arrive at 12:40 p.m. and depart at 1:15 p.m. Mr. Ploehn informed the Commission that the first American representatives will arrive this Friday to tour potential ticket and ground handling contractors around the Airport so that they can bid for the contract. He added that next Tuesday, February 14, the Facilities and Property representative would come to the Airport to actually look at the available space. Once that decision is finalized, the Airport can start drafting a lease for the space. Additionally, he pointed out that staff was waiting on American to forward a draft of the Revenue Guarantee contract for review. This contract would lay out the parameters for how the Revenue Guarantee would be used and when it would require payments to American Airlines. As a sidepiece to that contract, is a separate contract that the Airport will need to work out with those companies that pledged money for the guarantee so that the Airport is not left holding the bag. Mr. Ploehn also pointed out that part of the Grant application reflected an in-kind donation of landing fees for one year, which will require a policy to be put in place for this and future air service efforts. He also commented that the Billing Chamber and Visit Billings have pursued a number of promotional projects in Dallas, such as advertising in the Dallas Maverick programs, an ad in the Dallas area *USA Today*, advertising on Terminal B at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, and plans to go to Dallas and do some coffee bar and sports bar takeovers/promotions.

AIRPORT AND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONS REPORTS

- ▶ Mr. Ketterling told the Commission that after the Fort Lauderdale Airport shooting last month, the Airport received some inquiries and press coverage regarding the rules for firearms in the Terminal Building. Firearms carried as concealed weapons have never been allowed in the Terminal Building per the Airport's Rules and Regulations. Subsequently, staff was going to place signage at all of the entrances that indicate this so that there is little confusion going forward.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling informed the Commission that the Airport's water main into the Terminal sprung a leak and the lower mechanical room was seeing water flowing up along the foundation and in the crawl space. After having Public Utilities come up and do some testing, it was determined that the leak was occurring some place under the Terminal floor, which posed a significant problem since a repair could not be made with a backhoe. Mr. Ketterling showed the Commission pictures that showed how the Airport staff came up with a way to temporarily provide an alternative water feed by connecting fire hoses to the water lines for the fire sprinkler system. This way the main supply can be shut off until repairs can be made. Repair solutions were still being considered.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling discussed that in mid-January, one of the freight haulers, Alpine Air, had a nose gear that would not fully extend and had declared an emergency. He then played a video of the plane landing so that they could see the incident. Not only did the front landing gear collapse, so did the right main gear under the wing. Fortunately, the plane slid safely down the runway until it stopped. Airport staff eventually picked up the aircraft with straps using one of the Airport's front end loaders so that Alpine's mechanics could lock the gear in the down position and remove the aircraft from the runway.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling reminded the Commission that the State Aviation Conference was scheduled for March 2-4 at the Red Lion Hotel Convention Center. He passed out information on the Conference and asked the Commission to take a look at it, and if there was an interest in attending to let him or Mr. Ploehn know, so they could arrange for them to attend.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling then informed the Commission that because of the prolonged Winter conditions, the Airport has had a higher than normal number of incidents of slip and falls from the snow and ice. He assured them that staff was doing everything they could to mitigate this, including

spraying deicer fluid down the parking lot lanes so folks had some place to walk without slipping until they could get to the sidewalk.

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn then discussed that he had the opportunity at a special Saturday Council Planning Session (January 21) to discuss the financial issues that MET currently has and will continue to face. He said that MET will be able to tell its story at a Work Session this Fall, and to discuss a plan of action possibly including asking for a Mill Levy increase. This will be an important opportunity for MET Transit.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Commission that the recently advertised Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Transit Advertising Concession drew some interest, with 12 RFP packets being requested. At a pre-proposal conference call, three parties participated, but when it came down to submitted proposals only one was received, from the current concessionaire Blair Unlimited, Inc. Their proposal was acceptable and the new contract with Blair Unlimited is scheduled to be approved by the City Council on February 27.

ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION

- ▶ Commissioner Hummel asked if the Airport's Wi-Fi was a service that had to be paid for? Mr. Ploehn responded that it is and that it is being administered by a company named Boingo. Commissioner Hummel pointed out that in all of his travels, he rarely has been in an airport that requires paying for Wi-Fi and was inquiring why the Billings Airport might still be doing this. Mr. Ploehn responded that the Airport was in a contract with Boingo to supply the Wi-Fi service and that contract had about two years to go. He did indicate that they have been talking to Boingo to come up with a way to take the service to a free status and that some possibilities were being looked at. Mr. Ploehn did point out that if they were to just go free under this contract that it would cost the Airport around \$15,000 per year.
- ▶ Commissioner Hummel requested that all the information for the Commission be forwarded to him by e-mail instead of regular mail. That way he can access it wherever he is. Others thought that e-mailing the information would be fine as well.
- ▶ Commissioner Tooley inquired as to what role the Commissioners played? Mr. Ploehn answered that the Commission plays a valuable role for the Department as a sounding board, and as ambassadors for the Airport and MET Transit. He indicated that with the financial situation that MET is facing, that in the near future the Commission may have a large part in promoting alternative funding options for MET.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

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