



**AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, April 4, 2017**

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, April 4, 2017. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Commission Members**

Dan Farmer, Vice Chair  
Peggie Gaghan  
Ron Spence  
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.

**SECURITY REMODEL FOR TRANSIT**

Mr. Ploehn started by explaining that last Summer one of the City Administrator's requests was to make City facilities as safe as possible. When staff looked at MET, one of the items that really popped out was that anyone could just walk into the main office. Currently, MET's main office area is where the public enters to purchase bus tickets and in a few instances just to wander around. Subsequently, staff set out to redesign the office/reception area so that the ticket sales are not in the office and only those people that need to be in the office are allowed in.

This has resulted in a reconfiguration of the vault/reception area; Mr. Ploehn showed the Commission a preliminary layout of the proposed changes. The new configuration allows the public to come to a teller window for the purchase of tickets, expands the workspace in the vault area, and puts cipher locks on the doors leading into the office and breakroom areas. This project is being advertised over the next couple of weeks. Additionally, Mr. Ploehn pointed out that another area of concern with MET is the easy street access to the bus barn area. As he pointed out the MET facilities on an aerial of the area, he noted that the large entrance was built for two buses to pass each other. Staff is still looking at options to secure this entrance area without causing a significant operational issue.

**RUNWAY 10R EXTENSION UPDATE**

Mr. Ploehn began a discussion on the construction project to shift Runway 10R/28L 1,000 feet to the west. He started with the reasons why this project was proposed and how it was then included in the 2010 Master Plan study. He noted that the runway shift also fixes an issue with vehicles and aircraft taxiing on Taxiway G under the approach of Runway 28L. He then pointed out that because the runway was moving, an environmental study had to be completed first, and that was finished up in 2015. In last year's grant, the design for this project was included so that the Airport could have a plan to go out to bid with in early 2017. Unfortunately, after knowing about this project for at least three years, at the last minute the FAA decided to question whether or not the intersection of Runways 10R/28L and 7/25 should be fixed. Mr. Ketterling then discussed the options staff looked at to address the FAA's concerns and why those options were extremely expensive and really are not that good. Staff is ready to advertise this project. The Airport is hopeful that the FAA will let the initial work proceed, then later, require a study of that Runway intersection to provide the FAA with additional options for a solution that may be resolved with a future project

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

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Commission that the MET is going to have six old buses declared surplus at the April 10, 2017 City Council meeting, so that staff can then advertise them for sale. These buses were recently replaced by the six smaller buses recently put into service over the past six months. Some of the other airports around the State have indicated that they would like an old MET bus to use for passenger transport when irregular operations take place.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn provided a recap of the airline meetings held last month in Phoenix. He met with American, Alaska, Frontier, and United. Discussions with American were positive, they showed that the advanced bookings are in line with expectations, with bookings being ahead of the hub average, and yields in line with their anticipated averages. Discussions were held regarding the guaranteed revenue amount. The Airport's consultant, Mead & Hunt thought the original amount was too high. After further review, American agreed to lower the revenue guarantee per flight segment.
- ▶ Alaska had nothing but good to say about the Billings' traffic and market. They are extremely focused on the Virgin America merger and growing the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas. Subsequently, all of their available aircraft are spoken for at this time. Once they get a few more new aircraft, they may be able to do some expanded flights out of Billings since both the Seattle and Portland flights are usually full.
- ▶ Frontier is starting to warm up to Billings. When staff first began talking to the lead planner, he did not think Frontier would ever look at Billings again, but he indicated that we are making a believer out of him. They are replacing aircraft and probably would not have an opportunity for Billings until 2019.
- ▶ United's existing service to Denver and Chicago were discussed. Mr. Ploehn discussed the Chicago start in July, and wondered why not in June? United said June is a tough month since schools do not get out in Montana until the second week of June, and they do not split the schedule for a month (i.e., start mid-month) so they start the first of July. They did add more time at the end of the Summer season and increased the size of the aircraft to an E-175, which holds 76 passengers. They indicated that this is a do or die year for the Chicago flight.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn advised the Commission that a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was recently put out for Engineering services. At the last Commission meeting, Commissioners Farmer and Hummel had volunteered to help review the RFQ and make a selection. When the date to receive the RFQs from interested parties came and went, only one RFQ was submitted, which was by Morrison Maierle, and so the City/Airport will enter into a new agreement with them at the April 10, 2017 City Council meeting.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn then discussed the Real ID legislation introduced at the State Legislature. He told the Commission that Senate Bill No. 366 provides the option for a Montana resident to choose to have either a driver license that is Real ID compliant or not compliant. There would be an additional charge for the Real ID license. He went on to point out that, roughly 40% of the State's population has a passport, but that percentage is more heavily weighted towards the urban centers. His concern was that beginning in January 2018, a lot of folks would not be prepared to meet the Real ID requirements and the Airport's enplanement numbers would take a dive. Mr. Ploehn also speculated that if the citizens of the Essential Air Service (EAS) communities were not Real ID compliant, they would not be able to use Cape Air to fly to Billings. If this situation became protracted and the EAS enplanement numbers stayed too low for too long, there could be some jeopardy that the EAS programs in those communities could be cancelled similar to what happened to Miles City and Lewistown. He pointed out that he has given the lobbyists for both the City and the Montana Airport Management Association some talking points for the hearing on the Bill.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling explained that COP Construction, the contractor who built our new storm water ponds last year, is on site and finalizing the work items that are remaining from the project.

COP needed to complete some dirt work in the middle of the airfield, grass seed the area, and resolve a few punch list issues.

- ▶ Mr. Ketterling informed Commission Members that a contractor is currently paving the water line trench in front of the Terminal and this should be completed by the end of the week.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling updated everyone on the status of American Airlines. He stated that everything is on schedule and they will begin daily service to Dallas, Texas on June 2, 2017. He explained that they would occupy the ticket counter between Allegiant and United Airlines, in addition to sharing Gate B-4 on the concourse. Envoy Air will be the company providing the ground handling for American, and Building Maintenance staff is working on remodeling office space for them by painting, replacing ceiling panels, and installing new carpet, in addition to many other items.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling stated that the FAA required Full-Scale Disaster Exercise that involves an active shooter scenario, will take place on Wednesday, May 17, 2017, between 10:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m., and offered an invitation for all Airport Commission Members to attend. He explained that the planning for this began approximately six months ago, all affected parties have been notified, and regular meetings are occurring. The exercise will take place in the baggage claim area and on the west end of the concourse. Airport employees will be posted in strategic locations to control the event and the time was chosen so that it would not affect arriving passengers.

#### **ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Spence requested an update on Uber. Mr. Ketterling explained that staff had chosen a location to park the drivers of Transportation Network Companies (TNC), for example, Uber and Lyft, while waiting for a request from a passenger. This remote staging parking lot is directly west of the Airport Operations Center and less than two minutes from picking up a customer in front of the Terminal Building. He also told Commissioners that staff is currently working on developing a TNC policy and agreement. Hopefully by giving these vehicles an area to wait for their fare, it will free up parking in front of the Terminal for others.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

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