



**AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, June 6, 2017**

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, June 6, 2017. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Commission Members**

Ken Behling, Chair  
Dan Farmer, Vice Chair  
Ron Spence  
Mark Astle  
Chuck Tooley  
David Hummel, Jr.

**City Staff and Guests**

Kevin Ploehn, Director of Aviation & Transit

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

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

**FY 18 AVIATION AND TRANSIT BUDGET**

Mr. Ploehn provided the Commission with the budget presentation previously presented to the Billings City Council. The presentation started with a slide that showed the Airport's local economic impact at \$409 million. This number was calculated by a consultant to look at all of the airports in the State of Montana. Mr. Ploehn felt this was probably a conservative number. The Airport anticipated that for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 the total revenues of \$18,080,776 would be exceeded by the total expenses of \$19,012,359 for a deficit of \$931,583. He explained that this is the result of a pretty substantial Capital program for FY 2018. Mr. Ploehn pointed out that the projected Airport Operating Revenues for FY 2018 were \$166,158 higher than the FY 2017 and the Operating Expenses were only \$36,478 higher than FY 2017. For the MET Transit budget, Mr. Ploehn identified that some of the challenges facing MET going forward included having the funding to replace the aging bus fleet, expanding service as the City grows, and adding the technologies such as Auto Pay, E-tickets, and bus locators. Many of these technologies are starting to become expected, especially among the millennial aged population. Mr. Ploehn also informed the Commission that the projected FY 2018 budget for MET actually reflected more Operating Revenues than Operating Expenses by \$43,219. Unfortunately, that was still not enough to keep the overall budget from dipping into the cash reserves once Capital items were added. Overall MET expects to use \$208,347 of cash reserves to balance its budget.

**FUTURE MET MILL LEVY REQUEST**

Next Mr. Ploehn discussed the potential for a future Mill Levy ballot dedicated to MET Transit. He explained that the only way that MET was ever going to replace the majority of the buses, and add new technologies to those buses, was if an additional revenue source could be identified. This has led to having some conversations with the City Council regarding the possibility of seeking a Mill Levy increase dedicated to MET. Currently, MET has 10 mills dedicated to its operation. Mr. Ploehn provided some charts that discussed what 8 and 10 mills could provide in new revenue and how it

might be spent. Mr. Ploehn informed everyone that a City Council Work Session has been scheduled for October 2, 2017 to further discuss this with the City Council. If they should agree to let MET seek the Mill Levy increase, the public vote on this could be in November 2018.

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

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn recapped for the Commission all of the activities surrounding the inaugural American Airlines flight from Dallas, Texas to Billings. The first flight was totally full coming into Billings and that plane received a water arch salute provided by the Airport's fire trucks. The activities experienced by the passengers arriving in Billings included a reception line at the airline gate led by Mayor Hanel, Lt. Governor Cooney, the Chamber CEO, and Chamber President, and a number of well wishers from the Airport and Chamber's staff. This was accompanied by a gift bag that was handed to them. At the concourse exit, Jeff Ewalt, from ZooMontana, was present with an owl and Chas Llewellynn was dressed as Yellowstone Kelly. At the bottom of the stairs leading into the baggage claim were some reception tables with cookies, coffee, and water, and in the background, a band was playing. Mr. Ploehn felt the event was very successful.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn reminded the Commissioners that this week the Airport's annual FAA Certification Inspection would take place. Staff has been busy in preparation for this inspection and everyone was hopeful that the Airport could duplicate the error free inspection that Billings received last year.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn said that he has been in contact with the Western Heritage Center regarding hosting the Yellowstone Kelly displays that were produced for the new Yellowstone Kelly Interpretive area. These displays would be set up in the baggage claim area.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn reminded the Commission that on June 26 and 27, the FAA Civil Rights group would be in Billings for a compliance review of the Airport's implementation of a number of Federal programs, including Title VI, ADA, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program for construction, and the Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) Program. He pointed out that this is the first compliance review for the Airport that he has seen during his 23 years at the Airport. Subsequently, he was fairly confident that the Federal reviewers would find something for the Airport to address and correct. He promised to provide an update on how this went at the August meeting.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn reported that on June 4, the MET held their annual Bus Rodeo at the Airport on the cargo ramps. This is a competitive testing of the driver's skills for handling and maneuvering the buses and paratransit vans through a driving course. This year's winners were Todd Berg for the buses and Cary Pope for the paratransit vans. The top three finishers in each category will advance to the State Bus Rodeo in Great Falls in September. If any of our drivers should win the State event, they would then qualify for the national competition.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Commission that this year's construction project to shift Runway 10R/28L 1,000 feet to the west was ready to go and was anticipated to start the week of June 19. The Airport was still waiting for the FAA to provide the grant agreement for this project. He was not overly concerned about this yet, since the first construction payment would not be processed for over a month. He anticipated the grant would be here prior to the first payment.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn provided the Commission with the background information concerning the State of Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) efforts to regulate the Transit bus benches and shelters in the State right-of-ways (ROW). Additionally, the MDT also wants to regulate the advertising placed on those bus benches and shelters. Early discussions with the MDT staff indicate that there will probably be a permitting process to follow. Mr. Ploehn was hopeful that the permitting fees were reasonable so as not to significantly impact this important revenue stream for MET.

## **ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION**

Commission Chair Behling brought up that he and Commissioner Gaghen attended the active shooter drill held in the Airport's baggage claim area on May 17, and found it to be very interesting. Mr. Ploehn commented that the best thing about these drills is finding out what did not work very well. In this drill, it turned out to be the inability for the Airport Police and the Billings Police Department to communicate effectively. Changes to the Airport Police radios will be made that should solve that problem.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

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