



**AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, November 7, 2017**

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administrative Conference Room at the MET Transit on Tuesday, November 7, 2017. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Commission Members**

Dan Farmer, Vice Chair  
Peggie Gaghen  
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.

**MET TRANSIT TOUR**

The Aviation and Transit Commission meeting began with an introduction of the MET's administrative staff including Debra Hagel, Transit Planner; Lynne Arnold, Administrative Support III; Kathy Barr, Paratransit Coordinator; Rusty Logan and Dan Montoya, the MET Operations Supervisors. Each of the MET staff discussed what their duties are and then provided a quick tour of their respective areas, including the cash vault, the paratransit dispatch, the bus and van garages, and the maintenance bays.

**AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES HONOR AWARD**

Mr. Ploehn told the Commission that last Wednesday, November 1, 2017, the American Council of Engineering Companies of Montana presented the 2018 Engineering Excellence Awards for outstanding engineering projects completed during the past year. This year 11 projects were recognized for their engineering achievements, and in the Honor Award for Special Projects Category, the winner was the Billings Logan International Airport's Pond D Storm Drainage System project. The project was unique due to the two different boring methods that had to be completed to get the storm water from the south side of the main runway all the way down to Alkali Creek. Mr. Ploehn said the award would be brought to Billings later this week and he would have it available at the December meeting for the Commission to look at. Mr. Ploehn complimented Morrison-Maierle on their design and management of the project.

**AIRPORT AND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONS REPORTS**

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn updated the Commission on the status of the Terminal Expansion Architectural Firm selection. As previously reported, the Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) were due on October 18. The Airport received two RFQ responses to review, one from CTA Architects and Engineers and one from A&E Architects. Both are local firms with offices downtown. The selection committee agreed to interview both firms on November 29. It is anticipated that the selection will take place shortly thereafter.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn reported that last week he and Assistant Director Ketterling, along with the MET Supervisory staff, had a meeting with the regional rep for Complete Coach Works (CCW) based out of Riverside, California. This company provides a unique service providing complete refurbishment of transit coaches. Staff has been exploring alternative and cheaper ways to replenish the MET's fleet. CCW will completely strip down an older bus and rebuild it with mostly new components, and when complete, the old bus is basically new again. Mr. Ploehn

indicated that this program might have some merit for MET, as the price of two refurbished buses is about half the cost of a new bus, and can be completed and delivered in half the time. Mr. Ploehn told the Commission that he has visited with Acting City Administrator, Bruce McCandless, and has received his blessing to send staff to the factory to investigate further.

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn advised the Commission that staff was pursuing an exterior lighting upgrade utilizing LED fixtures for the MET, due to the dismal lighting that is currently in place. This would be about a \$15,000 project with a \$2,400 rebate, and a 2.5-year payback utilizing energy savings. The annual energy savings are approximately \$5,300.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn reported that the local Alaska Airlines Station Manager informed him that after the first of the year the Portland flight was going to become jet service utilizing the Embraer E-175 aircraft. This is the aircraft that Alaska had ordered 30 of, with 10 to be delivered this year. However, with Horizon and Alaska both suffering from the impacts of the pilot shortage, they decided to delay delivery for a year, subsequently, SkyWest accepted delivery of those aircraft. SkyWest is now contracting these planes back to Alaska and that is why Billings is seeing this aircraft change. Mr. Ploehn told the Commission that this is a nice aircraft, and the folks that travel to Portland regularly would be happy with this aircraft upgrade.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Commission that last week an editorial he wrote pertaining to the privatization of the Air Traffic Control (ATC) System was published in the *Billings Gazette*. He told the Commission that he felt compelled to address an earlier editorial that promoted the privatization of the ATC. He said that he mostly just wanted folks to understand that this is a very big issue that should be thoroughly reviewed before making that kind of drastic change. He indicated that the airline lobbying group, Airlines for America, recently responded to his editorial.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn mentioned that last month he and a small contingent from Billings visited with the Delta planners at their headquarters in Atlanta. The meeting was positive, but they noted that both Salt Lake and Minneapolis were a bit off this year. Mr. Ploehn explained to the Delta folks that this has been a tougher than normal year for the ranch and farm communities of eastern Montana and Northern Wyoming, with drought, wildfires, and low agriculture prices putting substantial pressure on their pocket books. They indicated that the air service in and out of Billings on Delta was not slated for any changes in the foreseeable future. At some point down the road, they are still considering adding service back to Seattle, but they will need more aircraft first to properly accommodate that service. Mr. Ploehn informed the Commission that next week he would be flying to Chicago to visit with United and then to Seattle to visit with Alaska/Horizon. He told the Commission that he would provide a summary on those trips at next month's meeting.

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

- ▶ Commissioner Spence asked about the Bus Roadeo, indicating that he saw that MET had some winners. Mr. Ploehn said that MET swept the paratransit competition taking 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. Ruth Godwin was the winner and subsequently will get to go to the national competition in Pittsburgh next Spring. In the fixed route competition, the highest placing MET driver was 3rd place.
- ▶ Commissioner Spence also asked if the increase in fuel prices was having an impact on the American Airlines revenue guarantee. Mr. Ploehn pointed out that it was impacting the profitability of American flying to Billings. He said the fuel adjustment added over \$3,000 to the August shortfall and over \$16,000 to the September shortfall.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

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