



**AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, December 5, 2017**

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, December 5, 2017. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Commission Members**

Ken Behling, Chair  
Peggie Gaghen  
Mark Astle  
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.

**TERMINAL EXPANSION ARCHITECT SELECTION**

Mr. Ploehn discussed the recent architectural selection process for the upcoming Terminal Building expansion. The selection committee interviewed both CTA Architects and Engineers, and A&E Architects. After listening to two very good presentations, the selection committee committed most of the next hour to discussing the merits of each proposal and firm. In the end, the selection committee chose A&E Architects as the successful architect for the Terminal Building expansion. Mr. Ploehn pointed out that the kickoff meeting for the project would be December 18, and would include the Morrison-Maierle engineering staff, the architectural staff of A&E, and the Airport staff. A big part of this meeting will be familiarizing the engineering and architectural folks with the existing Terminal Building and ramp space.

**AIRLINE MEETING UPDATE**

Mr. Ploehn briefed the Commission on the airline headquarter meetings he attended in November. The two airlines that he and other members from the Chamber's Air Service Development group met with were United in Chicago, and Alaska in Seattle. The good news from United was that Billings would get Chicago service again next year. There were some concerns that with the seasonal Chicago flight not doing as well as it could that it might go away. He then pointed out that Billings will see some seat reductions next Summer. United recently signed a contract with Air Wisconsin to fly for them as a contracted carrier. Subsequently, United now has a bunch of 50 seat CRJ-200 aircraft that they need to put somewhere. Since the stage length to Salt Lake City is not that long, United plans on putting those aircraft in Montana, including Billings, and will pull the dual class 76 seat aircraft. They also mentioned that in July there was a good chance that Billings will get an extra aircraft frequency, which would help offset the seat reduction. Mr. Ploehn pointed out that the additional frequency can sometimes be better for the community, especially in the Summer months.

A seasonal flight to San Francisco was still being discussed, but our lower numbers due to the past Summer's drought and wildfires has them rethinking that. So the group was tasked with digging up

additional information on businesses that fly to San Francisco. He also said that Houston was discussed and is a future possibility if the oil shale business in our region begins to pick up.

Mr. Ploehn then discussed the Alaska meeting in Seattle. Because of other issues, Alaska is not really changing much for the Montana markets. The biggest change is using the new E-175 jet aircraft for Portland service beginning January 3, 2018. They were also working on getting that aircraft on the Seattle route for this Summer, but there was no guarantees on that. They told us that the third August flight to Seattle had performed okay, but could have been much better and they were trying to decide whether to keep it or not. Mr. Ploehn told the Commission that he enlightened the Alaska staff on the bad drought and fire conditions that eastern Montana faced this past August, and told them that many of our customers come from that area and subsequently we had much lower August numbers than normal. The Alaska group noted this and hopefully will keep that flight in Billings next year. Mr. Ploehn told the Commission that he also told the Alaska group that when they changed their morning flight time from 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. it really messed up a lot of their frequent flyers who used their flight to get to Alaska, California, and Hawaii. They committed to review this again, but they admitted that the Sea-Tac Airport is very constrained in the mornings and it will be difficult to change.

Mr. Ploehn noted that next week the group would be flying to Dallas to talk to American Airlines.

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

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn mentioned to the Commission that he has met with NorthWestern Energy (NWE) regarding upgrading the parking lot lights. The lights were installed in the early 1990s under a pilot program for that style and light type. This was a lease agreement similar to a yard light contract. After the Airport installed new LED lights across the street in the car rental lot, it became apparent that it was time to do something to enhance the lighting in the main parking lots. Currently, NWE is looking at what options are available to us and that may entail a new pilot program with LED lights, a program where the Airport buys the lights and NWE installs them or the Airport buys the infrastructure and installs the LED lights. Each option will come with varying price tags and benefits that will need to be compared once determined. Mr. Ploehn speculated that it would be Spring before all the information was available to look at.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn updated the Commission on the status of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) warehouse project. He reminded the Commission that the BLM fire cache operation is using two of the old air base hangars to store a lot of fire cache supplies. One of the projects that the Airport would like to accomplish is the removal of the four old hangars and convert the space into an aircraft parking ramp with a heavy aircraft pad to handle large itinerant aircraft using the area, especially during fire fighting season. In order to accomplish the larger ramp expansion project, the Fire Cache supplies must first be moved out of the old hangars into a different location. That new location could be the warehouse facility that the Airport would like to build for the BLM. Last month, the lead leasing agent for the BLM toured the facilities to get a better understanding of the situation and agreed that a new facility was acceptable. Subsequently, once we have a final plan for approval, the Airport will work to ink a lease with the BLM and begin construction of the new facility.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn updated the Commission regarding the progress on the Restroom/Concession project on the B concourse. The final three women's restrooms have been framed, the Cape Air holdroom is in place, and they are using the new shorter route to the elevator/stairs. Additionally, Johnson Controls is in the process of moving the security and CCTV equipment in the old HVAC room so that it can be demolished to make room for the new deli area.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn then showed the Commission a layout from an annexation request that he just received today, but still needed to read. It includes a large area of land just north of the Airport.

Mr. Ploehn conveyed some concerns with this, but would study it more carefully and report back to the Commission at a later date.

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn showed the Commission a picture taken this afternoon of the new Boeing 787-10 that was doing flight testing at the Billings Airport.
- ▶ Finally, Mr. Ploehn relayed that the media had somehow found out that over the weekend, a Delta flight had diverted to Billings because the lavatory holding tanks were too full and had to be emptied. The plane, a 757-200, was going cross country from JFK to SEA and must not have had the tanks serviced in New York. Subsequently, the plane was on the ground for over three hours while the problem was resolved. He commented that two of the local media outlets contacted him on this.

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

- ▶ Commissioner Hummel inquired about Horizon Air's practice of ground loading and unloading their aircraft on the ramp instead of using the jet bridge. Mr. Ploehn responded that it was Alaska's corporate policy to ground load and unload so that the plane can be accessed from both the front and rear doors to speed up the time it takes to turn a flight around. He agreed that in the Winter this was a terrible policy, and last year the Alaska manager began using the loading bridge since it was so cold and snowy outside. Mr. Ploehn committed to discuss this again with the local manager.
- ▶ Commissioner Hummel mentioned that the other day the change machine on the concourse was out of commission. Mr. Ploehn said he would have that looked at.
- ▶ Commissioner Hummel also pointed out that the new bathrooms look great, but he was not impressed by the paper towel dispenser selection. He thought the folded pull out paper towel did not fit with the modern look of the restroom. Mr. Ploehn said he would follow up on that, as he was not sure how the selection of the towel dispensers was made.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

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