



**AVIATION AND TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, November 5, 2019**

The Aviation and Transit Commission met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, November 5, 2019. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Commission Members**

Peggie Gaghen, Chair  
Dan Farmer, Vice Chair  
Ken Behling  
Ron Spence  
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.

**CONSTRUCTION UPDATE**

- ▶ Mr. Ketterling updated Commissioners on the Commercial Concrete Ramp Replacement project that is currently underway. Unfortunately, the weather has not been cooperating and due to the stringent specifications that the FAA has in place for pavement projects, the moisture and cold temperatures will prevent completion of the project this Fall. Staff anticipates that Knife River will be requesting a Winter shutdown by the end of November and look at completing the project in the Spring of 2020 when the weather improves. As usual, the Airport has been notified by all of the airlines and cargo carriers that they have added flights during the holidays; therefore, staff has requested that the contractor complete a few more concrete pours on the west side of the Terminal so that area can be utilized as part of the remote aircraft parking area located below the Air Traffic Control Tower.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling also provided a status report on the Terminal Remodel work that is underway. The contractor has installed a temporary construction wall at the west end of Concourse A where the new commuter stairwell will be built. Due to the inaccessibility of the stairwell, the contractor is also building a new emergency exit corridor through an existing HVAC room for passengers to utilize, if needed. A temporary construction wall has also been installed along the concourse to block off the old deli area across from the United Airlines holdroom. This wall will separate passengers from contractors working in the center of the building where a concrete ramp has to be removed, six support columns for the new roof will be installed, and a concrete floor will be added to support the new TSA queuing line. Additionally, Sletten Construction is remodeling the space below the B Concourse in order to create an additional holdroom for airlines that will be ground loading smaller aircraft. Airport staff continues to meet regularly with the architect, engineers, and contractors to coordinate weekly construction meetings, complete the interior design layout of the new space, and finalize Phases 2–5 of the project.

## **NORTHWESTERN ENERGY REBATE CHECKS**

Mr. Ploehn discussed how over the past year the Airport and MET have been undertaking a number of energy saving projects by replacing the lighting in the Department's facilities with LED lighting and benefiting from energy rebates that NorthWestern Energy was providing for these improvements. From October 2018 through September 2019, the Aviation and Transit Department has received just over \$40,000 in energy rebates for implementing the upgrades. The future energy savings that the Department will benefit from, plus the rebates, results in an average payback of the upfront investment of approximately 2.5 years. Mr. Ploehn noted that a couple weeks ago, two more rebates were received for a large lighting replacement project at the MET bus barn and the Airport's Operations Center equipment bays. MET replaced 52 fixtures and the Airport replaced 65 fixtures. MET's rebate was \$8,680 and the Airport's rebate was \$9,100. This raised the total rebates since October 2018 to \$58,067. Additionally, the balance of the investment costs will now be covered through the Universal Systems Benefits (USB) program. Since the City of Billings is considered a large energy customer by NorthWestern Energy, the City generates a USB credit each year of approximately \$30,000. These USB credits can also be used to help pay for energy efficient projects. This year those credits will be used to offset the balance of some of the City's larger lighting projects, of which the MET's and Airport's projects will be included. This effectively results in the 52 fixture replacement at MET and the 65 fixture replacement at the Airport Operations Center being completed for free. The remaining credits to be received by MET and the Airport to make the project basically free are \$7,013 for MET and \$8,310 for the Airport. He continued by telling the Commission that at an upcoming Council meeting, Debby Singer, NorthWestern Energy's Key Account Specialist that works with the City, will provide the City Council with an oversized check for the total credits the City has received over the past 14 months. The check will reflect the total City credit the City received of \$108,870.

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

- ▶ Mr. Ketterling informed Commissioners that staff recently met with all of the Airport tenants after the October 8, 2019 Safety, Security and Operations meeting to discuss the upcoming 2019/2020 Winter in order to review the Airport's Snow and Ice Control Plan with everyone.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling announced that our insurance carrier recently conducted the annual Airport Liability Risk Engineering inspection of the whole Airport facility on October 11 and 12. This typically involves a Risk Engineer meeting with Airport staff and Division Supervisors to discuss plans and procedures the Airport has in place to safely operate the facility. Overall, the inspector approved of everything and expressed his appreciation to Airport staff for implementing most of his prior recommendations. He did not identify any new issues.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling explained that the Airport is currently in the process of hiring one new custodian to cover the evening shift in the Building Maintenance Division. Additionally, MET is also hiring one new mechanic for Transit, and it appears that the successful candidate currently works on diesel buses for First Student. Mr. Ploehn explained that our Airport Accountant, Vicky Harrison, would be retiring in February of 2020. This position is crucial to the Department; therefore, advertising for the position will begin soon in hopes of hiring someone to begin by the first of the year so that Vicky has time to train him or her.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling also identified that Zack Terakedis recently removed his Rodeo Exhibit from above the baggage claim stairs, and that staff recently updated the Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) Program and will be submitting it to the FAA Civil Rights office.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling explained that Yellowstone Electric is nearing completion of replacing cameras on the Closed Circuit Television Video (CCTV) System at the Car Wash Facility to enhance the clarity of the images being recorded. He explained that with the old cameras, the recording would reflect someone, but it was impossible to identify that person. Subsequently, it was next to impossible to identify who was causing damage, theft, or other issues.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn notified the Commission that the agreement with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to allow the City to utilize a fiber optics conduit that the State is going to install in the ground during the 27th Street project would be on the upcoming City Council agenda. When the project is complete, the Airport will work with the City's Information

Technology Department to pull a fiber to the top of 27th Street near the roundabout. The Airport will then need to design a route into the Terminal Building. This will significantly enhance the City's network connectivity for the Airport's staff.

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn noted that the Amendment with SP+, the Airport's parking concessionaire, was approved and SP+ will now move forward with installing the infrastructure to convert the south overflow lot into a paid parking lot. The new equipment will be a credit card lot with a communication link to the main pay booth, in the event of customer issues. Mr. Ploehn felt this would provide enough paid parking to accommodate the Airport's parking needs until a parking structure can be built in the future.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn addressed the recent newspaper article regarding the Billings Airport being dropped to the number 3 busiest airport in the State. The main item he wanted to note was that while the article was premature, since the Billings Airport will in all likelihood still be the second busiest airport at the end of the year, Missoula and the Bitterroot Valley area are growing extremely fast. He noted that in a discussion with the Missoula Airport's Financial Manager, she volunteered that her husband's water drilling business was booked solid through the end of the year, reflecting on how much new construction is taking place in the area.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn discussed the upcoming UPS Christmas freight hauling season, better known as Peak. For this year's Peak, UPS will bring in up to seven large wide body aircraft each day and increase the support aircraft that fly to the other Montana and Wyoming cities from 19 to 25. This will result in some very busy days on the cargo ramp.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn also updated the Commission on the MSU-B bus ticket program. He noted that since the program started in late September through the end of October, 747 rides had been given. The MSU-B Student Senate is pleased with the program and is anticipating on continuing it next semester.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Commission that a second bus had its engine fail, so staff is in the process of getting two new engines installed for those two buses. The cost for these repairs is estimated to be \$58,000 for the two buses.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn updated the Commission on the new bus order, which after the two engine failures is becoming increasingly important. The State has accepted the changes MET was seeking for a smaller power plant and matching transmission. These changes will reduce the cost of the new buses by \$37,000 each. Mr. Ploehn thought that the initial order for buses would be for eight buses by the end of the year.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn announced that MET has awarded a contract for the installation of a security gate at the MetroPlex. He reminded the Commission that the entrance in for the buses remains open, even after hours. Since this allows vehicles to access the area behind the bus bays, we believe that area may serve as a location at night and weekends for activities that probably should not be taking place at a City facility. The new gate will lock up the facility in the off hours.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn finished up by telling the Commission that the ridership for the past two months has been up over the previous year. While the numbers are still down for the year, it hopefully reflects a new trend.

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

There were no items from the Commission.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

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