



AVIATION AND TRANSIT BOARD MINUTES **Tuesday, March 1, 2022**

The Aviation and Transit Board met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, March 1, 2022. Those in attendance included:

Aviation and Transit Board Members

Dan Farmer, Chair
Ron Spence, Vice Chair
Ken Behling
Mark Astle
Chuck Tooley

City Staff and Guests

Kevin Ploehn, Director of Aviation & Transit
Rusty Logan, Transit Manager

The Board began with a tour of the new Concourse Expansion.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

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

AIRPORT AND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONS REPORTS

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn advised the Board that due to the additional infrastructure money the Airport will be receiving, the AIP grant funded projects are being accelerated. Board Member Spence asked about a parking garage and Mr. Ploehn stated that it is a project that staff was considering, but it would not qualify for the infrastructure funds administered by the FAA.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Board that the Airport received only one response for the Request for Proposals for a Wi-Fi network provider and that it was rather expensive. The sole proposal was \$225,000 for the equipment, plus \$6,000 per month for service, which would be \$585,000 for a five-year plan. Therefore, staff is looking at some other options. Mr. Ploehn mentioned that the Department is looking into hiring an IT person to help maintain all of the technology based systems that MET and the Airport have, such as the new access control security system, Wi-Fi, FIDS, building system controls, CCTV system, gas system, public announcement systems, and all the new technology that MET has introduced over the past few year. He noted that just about every system is operated with software and sometimes with new proprietary computer systems, hence the need for someone that can handle all of this.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn discussed the Ukraine war and the impacts it is having on aviation. Planes are rerouting and not flying over that area and it is affecting international travel. Another big impact is the price of AV gas, which has increased significantly this year. Between COVID, pilot shortage, and all the other issues airlines have, and now with the price of fuel, airlines are still struggling.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn advised the Board that the passenger numbers for February were 27,000, typically we are around 31,000. Nationally it is starting to pick up a little bit. TSA is currently screening around two million per day, last year during COVID it was around 1.5 million.
- ▶ Mr. Logan advised the Board that they had hired Sarah Graham back, which is very good news. They still have one driver vacancy, but have been managing quite well.
- ▶ Mr. Logan stated that operations during the snowstorm went very well, the buses handled the snow quite well, no accidents, and MET was able to maintain timely service.
- ▶ Mr. Logan advised that the training lot project would be out for bid in the near future.

- ▶ Mr. Logan informed the Board that ridership remains up around 4% monthly on fixed route, with current trends showing overall growth at 7.5% for weekdays. Paratransit is up 52% compared to the previous January, showing yearly growth of nearly 66%.
- ▶ Mr. Logan stated that the update to the five-year Transit Development Plan was in progress and the Transit survey is now live and can be taken by visiting www.mettransit.com/survey. Information is posted on MET's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages, and MET has already had over 1,800 reaches so far. The survey remains open until the end of March. MET will have a presence at the Jobs Jamboree at the end of the month. Mr. Logan showed a presentation on a peer analysis that was conducted on cities of similar size and service levels. MET is currently running about average in cost effectiveness, cost efficiency, service effectiveness, and passenger revenue effectiveness.
- ▶ Mr. Logan informed the Board that there would be a route analysis meeting next week, and the consultant will be on hand and will start the first steering committee meeting to help guide MET in this process. This committee is comprised of staff from MET Transit, Adult Resource Alliance, Healthy by Design Coalition, School District 2, Planning Department Transportation Planner, and Alternate Modes Planner.
- ▶ Mr. Logan stated that training is planned for the new scheduling software, which will provide significant improvement over current scheduling practices and automates the process using artificial intelligence. The software will immensely improve scheduling for drivers, will save on man hours, and develop multiple scenarios for new transit service. Staff is very impressed and excited to see what all it can do.

ITEMS FROM THE BOARD

There were no items from the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

cc: Aviation and Transit Board
Chrono

Via E-mail: City Administrator
Mayor
City Clerk