

Montana Aeronautics Board
Montana Department of Transportation; Auditorium
2701 Prospect Avenue, Helena, MT
Wednesday, January 17, 2024

Aeronautics Board-In Person

Bill Lepper, Board Chair
Wade Cebulski, Vice-Chair
Pam Chamberlain
Tim Robertson
Greg Smith
Tom Schoenleben

Department of Transportation

Mack Long, MDT Director
Tim Conway, MDT Aeronautics
Karen Hallenbeck, MDT Aeronautics
Stephen Torske, MDT Aeronautics
John Haffey, MDT Legal
Chris Nygren, MDT Legal

Aeronautics Board - Virtual

Robb Bergeson
Grayson Sperry
Matthew Prinkki

Guests

Craig Canfield, KLJ
Nathan Schroht, KLJ
Justin Zindell, KLJ
Jim Greil, DOWL
Andrea Friedrich, DOWL
Travis Eickman, Morrison-Maierle
Nick Enblom, Morrison-Maierle
Cory Kesler, Morrison-Maierle
Lance Bowser, RPA
Mary E Bell, RPA
Mat Wilder, RPA
Will Senecal, RPA
Mark DeRudder, Stateline Contractors (virtual)

Rick Newman, St. Ignatius Airport Manager
Lucas Locke, Valley County Airport Manager
Rick Ryan, Bert Mooney Airport
Jared Wingo, FAA ADO
Michael Grover, FAA ADO
Chelsea Rayfield, Legislative Audit Division
Kenneth Weddings, Legislative Audit Division
Jeff Wadekamper, Helena Airport Manager
Dwight Thompson, Townsend Airport Manager
Chase Stoner, Hill County Airport
Kevin Myhre, Century Company, Inc.

Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance / Overview of the Rules / Approval of Minutes

- Chairperson Lepper called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m., opening with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Quick Word from Director Long

Director Mack Long introduced himself and thanked the Board, airport consultants, and team members at MDT for all of their work to keep improving Montana.

Bill Lepper stated that he would accept a motion to approve the made a motion to approve the December 14, 2023 minutes as presented. Tom Schoenleben motioned, Wade Cebulski seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Fort Peck Airport Lighting update from Karen Hallenbeck

- The Aeronautics Board met on December 14, 2023 regarding the Fort Peck airport lighting purchased with grant money that was never installed. They voted to have Aeronautics mail a letter to Valley County requesting the lighting to be returned to Aeronautics and entered into our resale program.

Airport Audit Update from Karen Hallenbeck

- The internal audit division began an audit for Roundup Airport FY 22 grant for runway rehabilitation that is currently in process, and one for Fairfield FY 22 Grant is awaiting project completion to begin the audit.

Applicant Presentations of Loan/Grant Applications

- **Airports who applied for weather camera grants** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of 14 airports who applied for a 50% grant for weather cameras. MDT Aeronautics began a program that will cover the other 50% of the equipment costs and installation. Those that could move forward without the grant are: **Anaconda, Big Sandy, Chester, Ennis, Fort Benton, Jordan, Plains, Red Lodge, Shelby, Twin Bridges**. The airports that cannot move forward without grant assistance are: **Conrad, Dillon, Geraldine, White Sulphur Springs**.
- **Anaconda Airport** – Mat Wilder with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Is there an FBO (Fixed-Based Operator) on the field? There is not an FBO right now, if one were to come in, they would work with them on a lease for the fuel farm. Is the fuel farm FAA funded? Yes, it is funded with NPE's (Non-Primary Entitlements).
- **Big Sandy Airport** - Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Bridger Airport** – Mark DeRudder with Stateline Contractors provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Broadus Airport** – Nathan Schroht with KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Butte Airport** – Cory Kesler from Morrision-Maierle provided a presentation on behalf of the airport with Rick Ryan from the Butte Airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Is it a non-federal project? They could use AIP (Airport Improvement Program) funding, but they have other projects that have higher priorities in the next five years. There is no discretionary funding available for Butte in the next five years, so they are using BIL (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) and PE (Primary Entitlements) funds on higher priority projects. Would it not go forward without 100% funding? They would only be able to complete as much as they receive a grant for.
- **Chester Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Havre Airport** – Jim Greil with DOWL provided a presentation on behalf of the airport with Chase Stoner who is a member of the airport board. Jim stated that they are withdrawing their request for a grant for the Master Plan but still requesting a grant to rehabilitate a hangar.

- **Questions from the board:** Was there ever federal funding for the hangar. They are not aware of any.
- **Choteau Airport** – Jim Greil and Anna Fredrick with DOWL provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Are they interested in a loan? No, they cannot accept a loan at this time.
- **Circle Airport** – Nathan Schroht from KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** How were the costs split up between design and construction? It is in the application. Would \$60,000 (total project cost) suffice for the design portion? Yes, it would go a long way towards it.
- **Colstrip Airport** – Nathan Schroht from KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** How will it be funded? NPE's and BIL. Why are some airports not federally funded for AWOS maintenance? Because ASOS (funded at commercial service airports) is NOAA supported and maintained, but AWOS is maintained privately and the sponsor is responsible for those costs. Is there an immense amount of engineering costs to install AWOS systems? Anytime a project involves an FAA grant, there is grant management, FCC license steps, bidding process, site visits, closeouts, more requirements that come with it to add to the engineering costs.
- **Conrad Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Deer Lodge Airport** – Travis Eickman with Morrison-Maierle provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** There were FAA funding questions, are these projects funded? The EA (Environmental Assessment) is in its final stages, the FAA got through 4F in section 106, which is the historical elements, and is working on final edits and public comment. This has been before the public on and off for the last 10 years with no public opposition. They can still move forward with some of the elements without the EA without risk. Has there ever been a conversation about combining Anaconda and Deer Lodge into one airport since they are only 15 miles apart? They are located in different counties and they both do get a lot of traffic, but they do not accommodate the same traffic, so he cannot fully answer the question.
- **Dillon Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** For clarification, they received money for this last year but could not do the apron last year and had to give the money back, so they would like that money reallocated to the runway rehabilitation project? Yes, because they do not have the ability to fund the apron. So, they are basically asking for a retro grant? That is correct.
- **Ekalaka Airport** – Craig Canfield from KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Have there been any preliminary studies to see if an IAP can be put in there with the nearby terrain. Craig thinks the terrain just East of the airport will have an impact on minimums, but IAP's can be implemented there.
- **Ennis Airport**– Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **St Ignatius Airport** – Rick Newman, the airport manager, provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.

- **Questions from the board:** Will the project cost \$200,000 total and are the sponsor funds not included in this request? Yes, if the project costs more then they will collect funds from their hangar owners and return any funds back that belong to Aeronautics. Is there any engineering cost? No, he discussed it with an engineer, and this is what they came up with for GA traffic, saving on the engineering cost because it is not an FAA funded airport. What is the 1' base? There is a good rock base there, so they didn't need much of a base for the hangars and access road and will not with this project.
- **Fairfield Airport** – Jim Greil with DOWL provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Is this just the runway? Yes, it does not include the taxiway but if there is any overage, they will do what they can. Is the airport primarily for spray pilots use? Yes, it is but there is a lot of local traffic and there are some hangars there with local aircraft. They have some SEAT (single-engine air tankers) there and several flight students receiving instruction from the airport.
- **Forsyth Airport** – Nathan Schroht from KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Fort Benton Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Geraldine Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Glasgow Airport** – Jim Greil with DOWL provided a presentation on behalf of the airport along with Lucas Locke, the airport manager.
 - **Questions from the board:** Has the project not started from last year with the grant. They completed engineering last year, and construction next year. This was partly funded last year, now that all the bids are in hand, they have the total cost and are asking for the additional sponsor share. The FAA stated that the CIP only listed \$400k for this project, but Jim stated that his CIP has the total project cost and that there shouldn't be a funding issue.
- **Glendive Airport** – Craig Canfield from KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Great Falls Airport** – Travis Eickman with Morrison-Maierle provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Is this project covered with FAA funding? The FAA will check to make sure. Travis thinks it will be covered with NPE's, but he was asked to present for them at the last minute for Steve Brown.
- **Hamilton Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** It looks like the amount is for design only, how is it that much for design only? It includes survey, Geotech, and design, as well as project grant administration. So, construction will be a separate application? Yes, they would envision a construction application next year.
- **Harlowton Airport** - Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Is this FAA funding for the land acquisition project? It would be funded with NPE or BIL. Is the bathroom FAA funded? Yes, by BIL.
- **Helena Airport** - Nick Enblom with Morrison-Maierle provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Will the taxiway basically be for hangar access? Yes.

- **Jordan Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Laurel Airport** – Justin Zindell from KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Will the FAA fund an AWOS III, but not an AWOS II? When it was installed at Laurel, the FAA would fund an AWOS II, and they will not pay to add a component to an existing AWOS and the useful life of the AWOS II is 15 years and it was installed about 10 years ago. The FAA also said that even though it may be aged out by years, it is still a usable project.
- **Lewistown Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport. He stated that they would withdraw the Access Road project but are still requesting a grant for the parking lot.
 - **Questions from the board:** If MDT will participate in the access road, is there any chance to get them to participate in the parking lot? It would be a push to have them fund the access road, so no it is not likely to have them fund the parking lot.
- **Libby Airport** – Withdrawn on January 8, 2024, per Nick Enblom with Morrison – Maierle.
- **Philipsburg Airport** – Nathan Schroht from KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Is Philipsburg in the NPIAS? It should be but it was not until 2021, then they did a master plan update, but they now have enough based aircraft and they do receive NPE's. Would it be acceptable to FAA specs even if not FAA funded? Yes. Does Philipsburg have a wildlife fence? No, there is just a livestock fence, but the master plan has a wildlife fence planned in the future which would involve some easement acquisition.
- **Plains Airport** - Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Plentywood Airport** – Nathan Schroht from KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Are the hangar owners contributing to this project? They do not know for sure, other than lease payments. Is the county going to do the project just with materials? They will have a contractor come in and do it.
- **Polson Airport** – Withdrawn on January 11, 2024, by Rick Newman.
- **Red Lodge Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Shelby Airport** - Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Sidney Airport** – Craig Canfield from KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Stanford Airport** – Mat Wilder with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.
- **Superior Airport** – Nathan Schroht from KLJ provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Is it FAA funded? Yes, with NPE's and BIL. How many aircraft would fit in the hangar? There would be 3. They have a plan on the CIP to build another in the next 2-3 years, as they are looking at demolishing one and building another one. They have a waiting list of 7 people, but this is what they can build with the funds they have for now. Do you know what the hangar lease rates are? \$150-\$175/month.
- **Thompson Falls Airport** - Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.

- **Questions from the board:** Do Plains and Thompson Falls combine their income and expenses? Yes, they typically split them relatively evenly, but that is an average between both airports.
- **Three Forks Airport** – Travis Eickman from Morrision-Maierle provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Question about annual income and expenses? That comes directly from the county, and they have a small staff that operates on a small budget. But aren't they receiving more through leases? They have 53 hangar doors; the budget includes what they generate. Do they receive any funds from the county? No, Bozeman Airport is allotted 2 mils but they do not take it and that is directed to the airport.
- **Townsend Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport with Dwight Thompson, the Townsend Airport Manager.
 - **Questions from the board:** Are these projects FAA funded? They met with the FAA in December, and they have a significant portion of funding in place, but not all of it. They discussed bidding it this year constructed it in 2025. The FAA is supportive of the projects, and they will be completed at some point. How much local money is there for these projects? They have a substantial amount of BIL and NPE's saved for this project. If they received the FAA funds, do they need the \$600k from Aero to fund the project? They are committed but would need grant assistance to move forward with the projects. The FAA stated that their focus is preservation of existing pavements. They are focused on rehabilitation of runway, taxiway, and apron and they would plan to fund the expansions with BIL. It would depend on the bids on how much they would be able to fund. They will do everything they can to reach the taxilane additive alternate because it is important. Townsend has done a really good job managing NPE's by loaning them out and they could reach \$2.5 million in just NPE's, which takes a lot of planning at \$150,000/year.
- **Troy Airport** – Nick Enblom from Morrision-Maierle provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Is there support from the USFS monetarily? He does not know as he has not been part of that discussion. Why is the county interested in taking on a third airport that is owned by the USFS when they have struggled with the other two airports? They have more interest in the community to use the airport and want to maintain the airport. Are they able to receive funding because they are owned by the Forest Service? They will check into it further.
- **Turner Airport** – Cory Kessler from Morrision-Maierle provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the Board:** Are they doing the apron and the taxiway, also? Yes. Why does the application only say the runway? They plan to lump it all into one project.
- **Twin Bridges Airport** - Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - **Questions from the board:** Is it eligible for FAA funding? It will be reached with BIL funding.
- **White Sulphur Springs Airport** – Lance Bowser with RPA provided a presentation on behalf of the airport.
 - There were no questions from the Board.

Public Comment

- Kevin Mhyre with Century Companies commented about when the funding is available for airport projects. He said to allow airports to bid and construct the next season in order to get a contractor to look at them and bid on them. When he started eight years ago, airports would bid in February or March and could build that summer, but in today's market projects are usually bid in March and they are already full for the season and have to plan for the next one. They need more flexibility with the current market. They bid Sidney Airport last summer for this summer. He would recommend for the best pricing and most bidders on airport jobs to bid them with the flexibility to do them the next season.
- Lance Bowser commented about Gardiner Airport who received grant assistance from Montana Aeronautics. The total project was \$835,000 and Montana Aeronautics granted \$580,000. At that time, they had no other players from any of the main users. With that significant grant awarded by Aeronautics, they then received \$113,000 from the Gardiner area tax district. The project was timed right after the floods and there was a real need for the airport as they were bringing in drinking water to the community via helicopters because they had no roads to the community. Yellowstone Forever kicked in \$115,000 that was able to get the project funded. There was a thank you letter published in the Montana Pilot's Association newsletter in November or December. They wanted to express their gratitude because the other grants would not have happened without this Board. Even though the airport is NPIAS, they don't have the ability to reach FAA eligibility, so this project would not have happened without this Board, so thank you.

Guidelines and Reminders for Second Day

Chairperson Lepper thanked everyone for their presentations.

Bill Lepper stated that he would accept a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pam Chamberlin motioned, Wade Cebulski seconded, which passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 4:48 pm