



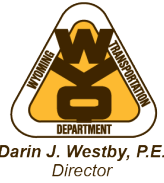
Mark Gordon
Governor

WYOMING *Aeronautics Commission*

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

5300 Bishop Boulevard
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009-3340

Bruce McCormack, Chairman
(307) 777-4015



Darin J. Westby, P.E.
Director

MEETING MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) Aeronautics Commission was held in the I-80 Room of the WYDOT-U Training Building in Cheyenne on Wednesday, December 11, 2024. Chairman Bruce McCormack presided, calling the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman McCormack led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

The following commission members were present, constituting a quorum.

Bruce McCormack, Chairman, District 4

Steve Maier, Commissioner, District 5

Jerry Blann, Vice Chairman, District 2

Sigsbee Duck, Commissioner, District At-large

Dean McClain, Commissioner, District 1

Randy Harrop, Commissioner, District At-large

Bill DeVore, Commissioner, District 3

Darin Westby, WYDOT Director, Ex-Officio

The following WYDOT staff and guests were present and participated in the business meeting.

Brian Olsen, Aeronautics Administrator

Mike Kahler, Senior Assistant Attorney General

Mariah Johnson, Air Service Development Manager

MacKenzie Sewell, Assistant Attorney General

Phillip Hearn, Engineering and Construction Manager

Kimberly Chapman, Commission Secretary

AJ Schutzman, Aviation Planning Manager

Susan Elliott and Caitlin Casner assisted with virtual meeting management.

IV. AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

There were no substantive changes to the agenda.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Vice Chairman Blann, seconded by Commissioner Duck and unanimously carried to approve the November 19, 2024, business meeting minutes.

VI. UPDATES/DISCUSSIONS

A. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

Chairman McCormack presented the Chairman's Update.

The chairman expressed gratitude to Administrator Olsen and the staff for the informative education session and tours, with particular emphasis on the tour of the Denver Air Route Traffic Control Center in Longmont. He felt that the tour underscored the complexities of managing the United States' airspace.

B. ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE

Administrator Olsen presented the Administrator's Update.

Federal Updates

Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Appropriations

According to Administrator Olsen, the government is currently funded through December 20, and is expected to be funded through March 2025. Olsen believes that the 2025 appropriations will be finalized at that time.

Outcomes of 2024 Election

According to Administrator Olsen, the chief executives of several U.S. airlines are hopeful the new administration will rescind recent regulations, especially those pertaining to consumer protections. However, Olsen expressed skepticism that many regulations will be rolled back, as they enjoy broad public support amid a growing demand for enhanced consumer protections in the airline industry. During a recent congressional hearing on airline fees, the CEOs of multiple carriers faced criticism over consumer-related matters.

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Administrator

Administrator Olsen stated that there has been no announcement regarding the successor to outgoing FAA Administrator Michael Whitaker, who is resigning on January 20, 2025. Whitaker is recognized for effectively managing safety concerns related to Boeing and addressing staffing issues with air traffic controllers.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Update

Administrator Olsen reminded the commission that IIJA had effectively doubled the formula funding for the aviation industry over the past several years. On November 19, the FAA released the fiscal year (FY) 2025 allocations. Following the FAA Reauthorization, the funding for commercial service airports increased, raising the minimum annual allocation from \$1 million to \$1.3 million. This increase will benefit seven of Wyoming's commercial service airports—Jackson and Casper were already funded at higher levels.

Additionally, grants for non-hub and non-primary airports will now require a lower federal match of 95 percent to 90 percent, easing the financial burden on local entities. This adjustment is particularly advantageous for general aviation airports that often struggle to meet match requirements.

There is also an ongoing effort to allocate approximately \$900 million from FY 2022, with the FAA aiming to reduce this amount to around \$100 million. A new program will reallocate unspent funds and the first \$100 million is designated for the FAA Contract Tower Program, which may

not significantly benefit Wyoming. However, the remaining funds will be directed towards priorities such as reducing airport emissions and noise impact, as well as enhancing community benefits. The division will be ready to work with the airports to apply for any remaining funds.

State, Division, & Airport Updates

National Association of State Aviation Officials' (NASAO) 2025 Legislative Agenda

Administrator Olsen reported that NASAO is nearing completion of its 2025 Legislative Agenda, set for release by February 2025. While the agenda aligns with those of previous years, it advocates for Congress' appropriations to meet the funding levels established in the Reauthorization.

FAA Denver Airports District Office (ADO) Visit

Administrator Olsen and Glenn Januska, Casper/Natrona County International Airport director, recently visited the FAA ADO in Denver to discuss funding opportunities for the Casper tower. There is a chance that Mr. Januska could receive funds for the project through the Airport Terminals Program (ATP).

Division's Holiday Potluck

Administrator Olsen invited the commissioners to attend the division's holiday potluck, scheduled for Monday, December 16.

Commissioner Questions and Discussion

In response to a question from Commissioner DeVore, Administrator Olsen acknowledged that while Casper is seeking ATP funding to replace its aging 70-year-old air traffic control tower, the program is highly competitive. Though the FAA strives to allocate the limited funds judiciously, there is a scarcity of financial resources available for tower replacements.

Administrator Olsen stated that the design for the Casper project is approximately 60 percent complete, with most funding sourced from local contributions and some from state legislative allocations for infrastructure projects. The FAA is particularly interested in ensuring that there is a comprehensive funding plan in place before allocating any money, and requires assurance that the community can cover any shortfall. The Casper airport's efforts to demonstrate this funding strategy have been commendable. The remaining challenge is to identify additional financial resources to support the project.

In response to a question from Commissioner McClain, Administrator Olsen outlined the various types of air traffic control towers. While Casper's tower is sponsor-owned, it is staffed by federal personnel. Conversely, Jackson's tower represents a federal contract model, wherein the FAA outsources tower operations to a third-party provider.

Administrator Olsen also shared that a virtual tower could be an option for Casper in the future. While a few prototype virtual towers exist in the U.S., the FAA has not yet certified them. A virtual tower utilizes 360-degree cameras to monitor an airport's runways and taxiways, with the

camera feed transmitted to a control room for monitoring by air traffic controllers. This virtual tower approach can significantly reduce infrastructure costs for airports.

Vice Chairman Blann recommended that the commission send a letter acknowledging John Bauer's years of service following his departure from the Denver ADO. Administrator Olsen agreed this would be appropriate and promised to work with Ms. Chapman to draft the letter.

C. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Director Westby presented the Director's Update.

Wyoming Legislature Leadership

Director Westby provided an overview of the new legislative committee assignments, highlighting key members and their roles. Bo Biteman was elected Senate President, Tara Nethercott is the Senate Majority Floor Leader, Tim Salazar is the Senate Vice President, Mike Gierau is the Minority Floor Leader, and Chris Rothfuss in the Minority Whip.

Chip Nieman was elected Speaker of the House, Scott Heiner is the House Majority Floor Leader, Jeremy Haroldson is House Speaker Pro Tempore, Ocean Andrew is the House Majority Whip, Mike Yin is House Minority Floor Leader, Karlee Provenza is House Minority Whip, and Trey Sherwood is House Minority Caucus Chairman.

Joint Transportation, Highways, and Military Affairs Committee (JTC)

Director Westby discussed the composition and new leadership of the JTC. Stephen Pappas, who has served as the Transportation Liaison for the last several years, was appointed as Senate chairman of the JTC. The Senate committee members are Jim Anderson, Evie Brennan, Ed Cooper, and John Kolb. Landon Brown will remain the House chairman of the JTC. The House committee members are Dalton Banks, Rob Geringer, Lloyd Larsen, Darin McCann, Bob Nicholas, Ivan Posey, Reuben Tarver, and Cody Wylie.

Joint Appropriations Committee

Director Westby discussed the composition and new leadership of the Senate and House Appropriations committees. Tim Salazar was appointed as the Senate Appropriations committee chairman, while Ogden Driskill, Mike Gierau, Dan Larsen, and Darin Smith make up the rest of the Senate committee. John Bear was appointed as the House Appropriations committee chairman, with Bill Allemand, Abby Angelos, Jeremy Haroldson, Ken Pendergraft, Trey Sherwood, and Scott Smith serving as the remaining House committee members.

The director remains focused on educating the legislators serving on these committees about WYDOT's mission, operations, and overall impact.

2025 General Session Bills

The director stated that the agency is tracking over 70 transportation-related bills for the upcoming General Session. He highlighted two significant funding bills. The first proposes reallocating the state sales tax on vehicle purchases from the general fund to the highway fund, which is expected to generate \$67-68 million annually. This change is justified as vehicle purchases directly link to

road usage, making it logical for the tax revenue to support road maintenance and development. However, this shift also reduces the financial flexibility of the governor and legislature in distributing funds.

The second bill addresses the severance tax, which has a constitutional mandate to contribute to the Permanent Wyoming Mineral Trust Fund. Currently, a portion of this tax is also allocated to the Common School Permanent Land Fund. The proposed legislation seeks to redirect these funds, totaling around \$110 million, to the highway fund instead. This change comes at a time when severance tax revenues are declining, similar to trends observed in gas tax revenues, though there is hope that a new administration may reverse this trajectory.

Additionally, there is continuing interest on conducting an efficiency study of WYDOT. The agency is open to an audit, recognizing its potential to highlight the necessity for increased funding and to clarify operational needs. However, there is a desire to ensure the study is purposeful and not merely a bureaucratic exercise. Director Westby reported that a trigger amendment has been included in the bill, stipulating the efficiency study will only proceed if the two funding bills are successfully passed.

In response to a question from Chairman McCormack, the director confirmed that the bill currently allocates up to \$750,000 to conduct the efficiency study.

Director Westby explained the agency's legislative tracking process and the importance of having a comprehensive understanding of all bills impacting the agency. He assured the commission that they would be granted access to WYDOT's legislative tracking sheet. The director reminded the commissioners to follow the Attorney General's memo on lobbying.

Teton Pass Reconstruction

Despite delays in the delivery of lightweight fill materials and inclement weather, Director Westby has reported that the project remains on track. The crew is scheduled to cease operations on December 20, 2024, and will resume work as soon as possible in the spring of 2025. According to the director's estimate, the project is expected to reach completion during the summer of 2025. It is currently 60 percent complete.

The director announced that construction on the Snake River bridge project will continue uninterrupted throughout the winter. The crews will erect the bridge structures and position them by spring, enabling the subsequent surfacing work to commence.

Commendation for Natural Disaster Response

Commissioner Maier commended the agency's efforts during the Elk Fire in the fall of 2024. He praised the crews for quickly replacing and repairing damaged guardrails and signage. The director highlighted several key achievements and recognitions WYDOT received for its recent efforts. Notably, the agency was recognized as an outstanding public-private partner by the Wyoming Business Alliance for their work throughout the year and in response to recent natural disasters statewide.

Additionally, the agency received recognition for their response to the mudslide at Teton Pass, underscoring their commitment to maintaining road safety and accessibility. Director Westby commended the agency's proactive measures, emphasizing the positive impact on local residents and the economy.

The director expressed gratitude to Governor Gordon and Sara DiRienzo, the governor's senior transportation policy advisor, for their assistance in obtaining an emergency declaration. This declaration enabled the state to access emergency relief funds from the Federal Highway Administration.

D. AIR SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

Ms. Johnson presented the Air Service Development Program Update.

General Matters

November Traffic

Ms. Johnson reported that November load factors were strong, staying consistent with previous months. Cheyenne, Gillette, and Sheridan reported load factors over 80 percent. The Casper to Denver route, Riverton, and Rock Springs had load factors over 70 percent.

Future Bookings

According to Ms. Johnson, robust holiday demand has resulted in strong December load factors. Furthermore, she expects all markets to conclude the year with high load factors. Booking numbers are down into January and the spring, which is a typical seasonal trend.

Industry Updates

Ms. Johnson reported that Spirit Airlines filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy restructuring on November 18, following the collapse of acquisition talks with Frontier Airlines. The airline recently held its first creditors meeting as it develops its restructuring plan, and a continuation is scheduled for December 17. In response to its financial challenges, Spirit has announced a 20% reduction in its planned capacity for the first quarter of 2025.

Ultra-low-cost carriers are increasingly aligning their service offerings with those of traditional network airlines, reflecting a broader industry trend. This includes the introduction of premium seating options, enhanced seat selection, and the bundling of checked baggage into pricing structures. Airlines such as Spirit, Allegiant, Frontier, and Southwest are implementing these changes to attract a wider customer base.

On May 12, 2025, Alaska Airlines will launch its inaugural trans-oceanic international flights from its Seattle hub, relocating Hawaiian Airlines' recently acquired Tokyo route from Honolulu to Seattle. Additionally, the airline plans to commence a new route to Seoul in October 2025.

Standard Reports

Air Service Enhancement Program (ASEP) Budget Forecast Report

Ms. Johnson reported that there were no changes to the ASEP Budget Forecast Report.

Capacity Purchase Agreement (CPA) Budget Forecast Report

Ms. Johnson reported that there were no changes to the CPA Budget Forecast Report.

Percent of Grant Projects by City Report

Ms. Johnson reported no changes to the Percent of Grant Projects by City Report.

Monthly Load Factors Report

Ms. Johnson reported that the Monthly Load Factors Report was updated to include the most recent load factor data available for each airport.

E. ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM UPDATE

Mr. Hearn presented the Engineering and Construction Program Update.

General Matters

Engineering & Construction Focus

Mr. Hearn provided an overview of the engineering program's focus areas, including project reviews and programming for the upcoming construction season.

Standard Reports

Change Orders Report

Mr. Hearn reported one new change order.

Statewide Line Items Report

Mr. Hearn reported five new line items.

Bid Summary Report

Mr. Hearn reported one new bid result. He clarified that the bid numbers from GH Phipps were incorrect due to a glitch in BlackCat. The total bid should have read \$478,719 instead of \$4,787,190. In response to a question from Commissioner McClain, Mr. Hearn stated that the project is a general remodel of the tower at Cheyenne Regional Airport and will be funded entirely by federal funds.

F. PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING PROGRAM REPORT

Mr. Schutzman presented the Planning and Programming Program Update.

General Matters

Wyoming Aviation Capital Improvement Program (WACIP) Update

Mr. Schutzman reported that he and Mr. Hearn have coordinated with the FAA to finalize allocations and prepare a comprehensive plan through FY 2031. The next 2025 WACIP Budget Modifications Report will reflect notable changes, as federal funding delays have been addressed

and adjustments will be made to align percentage allocations with the updated Priority Rating Model and commission policies.

In response to Chairman McCormack's inquiry about the BlackCat Aviation Data Management System, Mr. Schutzman expressed that the division remains satisfied with the program. He further noted that the software's benefits outweigh any challenges encountered, especially as it allows for state/user customization. According to Administrator Olsen, the program is highly valuable to both airports and the FAA, prompting widespread adoption by several states. Utah is leveraging Wyoming's customizations, and updating their own policies and procedures accordingly. Mr. Schutzman added that the division has monthly meetings with BlackCat technicians to review changes, updates, and problems with the system.

Standard Reports

Administrative Approvals Report

Mr. Schutzman reported that there were no administrative approvals for this period.

Recovered State Funds Report

Mr. Schutzman reported that there were seven recoveries during this period, totaling \$22,445.20 of state funds. The total recovered for FY2025 is now \$118,288.35.

VII. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. FY 2025 WACIP BUDGET MODIFICATIONS

Mr. Schutzman reported six modifications this period for a reduction of \$28,097 in state funds allocated and an increase of \$862,304 in federal funds allocated towards projects.

Mr. Schutzman reviewed the modifications, beginning with Cody's commercial apron project. The scope of the project was increased to incorporate inline foam testing.

The second and third lines refer to the Buffalo project, which has been restructured to combine different project phases. This restructuring allows for the inclusion of taxiway scope within the apron projects, thereby achieving greater economies of scale.

The apron expansion project in Powell was modified due a reduction in available funding. The Powell SRE and main apron project received increased funding, which has been adjusted to align with the current entitlement funding available.

The sixth line addressed changes to the Rawlins project. The project's funding source shifted from IJA grants to entitlement funding, and the VOR demolition was removed due to insufficient funds to complete that specific scope item.

The remaining state reserve is \$2,093,840.

Action: It was recommended by Mr. Schutzman, moved by Commissioner Maier, seconded by Commissioner Harrop, and unanimously carried to approve the FY 2025 WACIP budget modifications as presented.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. AERONAUTICS PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Mr. Schutzman announced that a new airport directory will be published soon. In a manner similar to the previous edition, the division organized a contest to choose a cover photo for the upcoming directory. Division staff selected the top three photos from 45 submissions as the best entries in the photo contest and presented them for the commission's consideration. Following a poll among the commissioners to determine the winning entry, the photograph submitted by Denise Hawkins was selected.

Action: It was moved by Vice Chairman Blann, seconded by Commissioner McClain, and unanimously carried to select Denise Hawkins as the winner of the 2024 Aeronautics Photography Contest and to use her winning submission on the cover of the 2024 Wyoming Airport Facility Directory.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no need for an executive session.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS

Commission Activities

Ms. Chapman announced that the next meeting will be held January 21, 2025, via videoconference.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Commissioner Duck to adjourn and passed unanimously. Chairman McCormack adjourned the meeting at 10:44 a.m. on December 11, 2024.