



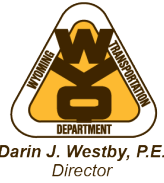
Mark Gordon
Governor

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 on Tuesday, December 19, 2023, in the I-80 Room of the WYDOT Training Building in Cheyenne. Chairman Bruce McCormack presided, calling the meeting to order at 8:30 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
Jerry Blann, Vice Chairman, District 2
Dean McClain, Commissioner, District 1
Bill DeVore, Commissioner, District 3

Sigsbee Duck, Commissioner, District At-large
Randy Harrop, Commissioner, District At-large
Darin Westby, WYDOT Director, Ex-Officio

Commissioner Steve Maier was absent.

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

Brandt Lyman, Commissioner, Wyoming
Transportation Commission

A.J. Schutzman, Planning & Programming
Manager

Brian Olsen, Aeronautics Administrator

Sheri Taylor, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)
Manager

Mariah Johnson, Air Service Development
Manager

MacKenzie Sewell, Assistant Attorney General

Phillip Hearn, Engineering & Construction
Manager

Kimberly Chapman, Commission Secretary

Susan Elliott and Caitlin Casner assisted with virtual meeting management.

IV. AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Commissioner DeVore, seconded by Vice Chairman Blann, and unanimously carried to approve minutes from the November 14, 2023, business meeting.

VI. UPDATES/DISCUSSIONS

A. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

Chairman McCormack presented the Chairman's Update.

Chairman McCormack welcomed Brandt Lyman, District 3 commissioner of the Wyoming Transportation Commission, to the meeting. Chairman McCormack invited Commissioner Lyman to the meeting because of his interest in Aeronautics.

Chairman McCormack attended the Transportation Commission's education session on November 15, which focused on the Aeronautics program. He complimented division staff on their presentation and engagement with the Transportation commissioners. The chairman felt that there was great discussion on air service development, general aviation, focus of departmental efforts, staff efficiencies and wages, program funding, and the relationship between the two commissions. He stated that it was a very positive experience.

B. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Director Westby presented the Director's Update.

2024 Legislative Session

The department is preparing for the next legislative session, which begins in February, and for the Joint Appropriations Committee budget hearing in January. Director Westby shared that as federal revenue and highway user fees primarily fund WYDOT, and the department does not request many General Fund appropriations, the budget hearing is less intense than it is for other state agencies.

Director Westby shared that the department is carefully reviewing the bills that are coming out of committees during the interim session. The director is focusing his efforts on educating legislators on the potential impact that certain bills could have on WYDOT's operations and providing more information when requested.

Mission-centered Messaging

In discussions with legislators and public officials, Director Westby actively promotes the mission and vision of the agency, and communicates how critical the mission is to the entire state. All of the major (revenue-generating) economic sectors in the state—industry, tourism, and agriculture—rely on a well-maintained transportation system. The director emphasized the significance of WYDOT's mission to the overall health of the state's economy. He invited the commissioners to join him in sharing the mission-centered message with legislators and public officials.

Governor's Budget

Governor Gordon presented his budget to the Joint Appropriations Committee earlier this month. WYDOT's budget was consistent with previous funding levels and Director Westby does not anticipate any reductions to the department's portion of the budget.

The Wyoming State Government Revenue Forecast Report by the Consensus Revenue Estimating Group (CREG) showed increased revenues for the state—more revenue was collected than previous projections forecasted—and over \$400 million was added to the state’s coffers. The governor has proposed placing three-quarters of the additional revenue into savings (the “rainy day” account) while leaving the remainder for the legislature to allocate to departments and programs. Director Westby will request that the department receive some of the unallocated funds to help alleviate some of WYDOT’s approximately \$400 million of annual unfunded needs.

Phase 3 of Employee Compensation Plan

The governor’s budget also includes a third round of pay raises for state employees. The legislature has approved pay raises of six to seven percent during the last two legislative sessions to bring state salaries up to market rate. Director Westby shared his optimism that the pay raises will be approved in the final budget.

Operations Update

Director Westby reported that the department is working on wrapping up several construction projects and pausing a few others as the construction season ends. Winter maintenance operations have begun, but the state has only experienced a few storms so far and none were severe. The department has about 40 more road maintainers than the previous winter, which should relieve some of the overwork and fatigue that employees experienced last year.

In response to a question from Commissioner McClain, Director Westby clarified that WYDOT does employ several part-time snowplow drivers—many of whom are retired road maintainers. In some parts of the state, the department has been successful in recruiting farmers and ranchers to work for WYDOT as temporary full-time or part-time snowplow drivers.

The director reported that during the first snowstorm of the season, four snowplows were hit. The department is working on strategies to decrease snowplow hits, including using different colors in the warning lights on the plows.

Transportation Commission Bid Awards and WYDOT Grant Awards

Director Westby reported that the department bid out over \$37 million in projects over the last month. The Transportation Commission will review and award bids at their meeting on Thursday, December 21.

Over the last four months, the department was awarded over \$64 million in discretionary grants through the Federal Highway Administration. WYDOT received \$13 million design grant for the I-80 and I-25 interchange redesign project.

The department also received \$24.4 million grant for a \$37.4 million wildlife crossing project on US Highway 189 between Kemmerer and I-80. The project scope encompasses the construction of wildlife underpasses and overpasses, and several miles of wildlife fencing.

Finally, WYDOT received a \$26.6 million grant for a \$33.3 million tuck parking lot project on I-80 near Evanston. The new parking lot will have approximately 365 parking spaces to accommodate semi-trucks and other highway traffic during road closures. The parking lot will

mitigate some of the [parking] congestion that occurs in Evanston when the highway is closed. It will also provide long-haul truckers an alternative space to park during mandated rest periods.

Following a question from Commissioner Harrop, Director Westby said the new truck parking lot will be located slightly east of Evanston and there are not services directly adjacent to the lot like at Fort Steele or Quealy Dome. The department is working with a local transportation company in Evanston to provide a shuttle service to truckers during road closures.

Blow Over Program

Director Westby reported on WYDOT's efforts to improve blow over risk messaging. Using research provided by the University of Wyoming, WYDOT's Geographic Information Systems and Intelligent Transportation Systems program developed an algorithm to determine a vehicle's blow over risk. The algorithm uses several criteria—wind speed, location, vehicle weight and type, and more—to calculate the probability of a blow over incident. The algorithm helps the department make better determinations about closures to vehicles of certain weights.

The department is working with the legislature to draft a bill that would increase the fines for operators who ignore weight-based wind closures and experience a blow over incident.

Leadership Focus

In addition to the mission and funding, Director Westby will also focus on employee retention. Executive staff was recently provided with a draft data analysis from the Employee Satisfaction Survey. The leadership team will discuss the results and deliberate on strategies and measures to implement to improve employee satisfaction.

Director Westby hopes that recruitment and funding efforts will alleviate stress and improve employee morale.

C. ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE

Administrator Olsen presented the Administrator's Update.

Federal Updates

Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Appropriations

On November 17, 2023, the U.S. House and Senate passed a continuing resolution (CR) to extend federal funding into early 2024. The CR is two-tiered—some federal agencies are funded through January 19, 2024, and others through February 2, 2024. The U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) are funded, at current levels, to January 19.

The CR did not extend any FAA programs or excise taxes into 2024. Unless Congress takes further action, the collection of the excise taxes will stop and funding for FAA programs will be unavailable.

FAA Reauthorization

Administrator Olsen reported that there has been no movement on reauthorization. The Senate has not reached agreement on the pilot training rules. The House has passed a CR for reauthorization to allow the FAA to continue operations through March 8, 2024. The Senate was

expected to pass a similar extension but reauthorization has become entangled with political wrangling over aid to Ukraine.

State Updates

Reno Air Races

Administrator Olsen reported that the selection committee to find a new host city for the National Championship Air Races is supposed to release a short list of two to three candidate cities this month. Casper is among six cities vying to become the new host city. The host city should be selected in early 2024.

In response to a question from Transportation Commissioner Lyman, Administrator Olsen shared more about the timeline of the selection process. The selection committee visited Casper in November and during the visit, airport management was able to show the committee all of the capabilities of the airfield and the amenities available to visitors in Casper. Administrator Olsen was unaware if the selection committee would make the short list public, and if or when they would notify the competing airports. The new host city should be announced in January 2024. The new host city will hold its first air races in 2025.

Swatting Incident

Administrator Olsen reported that multiple Wyoming airports and schools received email bomb threats on Wednesday, December 13, 2023. While it was an unfortunate event, it did give the division a chance to review response procedures. The division will work with the airports and the Wyoming Office of Homeland Security to improve the response process for incidents and emergencies.

Following a question from Chairman McCormack, Administrator Olsen shared that airports in Rock Springs, Cody, Cheyenne, Casper, Riverton, Gillette, Jackson, Saratoga, and Kemmerer were involved in the incident. He speculated that those airports were targeted because they had easily-accessible email addresses listed on websites.

Transportation Research Board (TRB) Conference Panel Participation

Administrator Olsen reported that he and Ms. Johnson were invited to participate in a panel on small community air service at the TRB conference in Washington DC in January. Wyoming is recognized as a leader in this area because of the Capacity Purchase Agreement (CPA). Panel discussions will revolve around the challenges of retaining air service in small/rural communities, the challenges to participation in the Essential Air Service (EAS) program, and potential reforms to the EAS.

Division and Department Updates

Pilot Recruitment

Administrator Olsen reported that he is interviewing candidates for the Chief Pilot position, which he hopes to have filled by the end of the year. He will then focus on filling an additional pilot position.

The division recently hired a new pilot and he started with Flight Operations on December 18. He will attend training to become type-rated on our aircraft in early January and should be ready to fly for the state in mid-January. Administrator Olsen shared that the wage increases have been very beneficial in recruiting quality applicants for the pilot positions. He thanked the director and the Human Resources Division for their help in obtaining the salary adjustments.

Division Activities

Administrator Olsen announced that the division will hold its holiday luncheon on Wednesday, December 20. He invited the commissioners to attend.

Administrator Olsen thanked the staff for all of their work to support Wyoming airports and prepare for commission meetings. He also thanked the commissioners for their service to the state.

D. AIR SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

Ms. Johnson presented the Air Service Development Program Update.

General Matters

November Traffic

Ms. Johnson reported that all Wyoming airports experienced strong load factors in November due to high demand for holiday travel. She highlighted the totals for Cheyenne and the Casper to Salt Lake City route as both made significant improvements over the previous month(s). Cheyenne had a 78 percent load factor for the month and the Casper/Salt Lake City route finished at 59 percent.

Future Bookings

Ms. Johnson reported that month-to-date load factors are down slightly from November due to business travel declining before the holidays. Record travel numbers are expected nationwide for the holiday season.

Advance bookings for January and February are somewhat lower than previous months, but it is typical for that time of the year.

Industry Updates

Ms. Johnson reported that Alaska Airlines announced plans to acquire Hawaiian Airlines for \$1.9 billion. The Department of Justice (DOJ) will most likely will review this deal even though the two airlines' combined U.S. market share of seven percent is far below any of the four major U.S. airlines. The DOJ's concern is that the merger would give Alaska Airlines control of 30 percent of the Hawaii to U.S. mainland market.

The anti-trust hearing considering the DOJ's bid to block JetBlue Airlines acquisition of Spirit Airlines recently concluded. The federal judge was contemplating letting the deal go forward as long as JetBlue divested other assets, but a final ruling should be given in early 2024.

Southwest Airlines Chief Operating Officer Bob Jordan promised that the airline will not have a repeat of last year's major holiday travel disruption. As a result of last year's operational

debacle, Southwest has implemented new processes and technologies that will aid in weather prediction and event mitigation.

Early data shows that a new all-time record was set on the Monday after Thanksgiving for the number of passengers passing through Transportation Security Administration checkpoints in the U.S. Over 2.9 million passengers were screened on that day.

Wyoming's peak travel generally occurs during the summer when the national parks are open. This year's peak occurred on Saturday, July 22, with 3,485 passengers screened. The 2023 peak is still below the peak day from the last three years, which occurred on Saturday, July 31, 2021.

Standard Reports

Air Service Enhancement Program (ASEP) Budget Forecast Report

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

CPA Budget Forecast Report

Ms. Johnson reported that the CPA Budget Forecast Report was updated to include the most recent amounts for each airport.

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.

Ms. Johnson provided an update on the commission's request for data on additional routes. She was able to obtain data for the Casper to Denver route. However, the Jackson Hole Airport collects data by airline, not by route, so including information by route into the report would be incredibly difficult. Ms. Johnson included an "overall load factor" for the Jackson airport in the report.

Commissioner DeVore thanked Ms. Johnson for the additional data that she was able to provide in the report as he feels it gives a relative sense of the health of air service for the entire state. Vice Chairman Blann shared that some of Jackson's data might be protected because of minimum revenue guarantee agreements, but still found the new information beneficial.

E. ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM UPDATE

Mr. Hearn presented the Engineering and Construction Program Update.

General Matters

Program Focus

Mr. Hearn reported that he and his team have spent the last few months working with the Planning and Programming Program to complete the Wyoming Aviation Capital Improvement Plan (WACIP). The team has also been focused on completing and closing out construction projects for the winter.

The team has now switched focus to next year's projects—reviewing designs and ensuring that the project specifications produced are in line with project scopes.

Standard Reports

Change Orders Report

Mr. Hearn reported no new change orders.

Statewide Line Items Report

Mr. Hearn reported two new line items for NAVAID projects.

Bid Summary Report

Mr. Hearn reported one new bid result. The bids for the project were slightly under the engineer's estimate.

F. PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING PROGRAM REPORT

Mr. Schutzman presented the Planning and Programming Program Update.

General Matters

Staffing

Mr. Schutzman reported that the senior planner and temporary planner positions have been offered to candidates and accepted. The senior planner will start work on January 2, 2024, and the planner will start on January 16, 2024.

Priority Rating Model (PRM) Task Force

Mr. Schutzman is actively seeking volunteers to serve on the PRM task forces. An email was sent out to airport sponsors, airport managers and staff, and consulting firms to solicit volunteers. Applications are due on January 5, 2024, and the rosters of potential task force members will be presented to the commission for approval at the January 23 business meeting.

Following a question from Commissioner DeVore, Mr. Schutzman shared that the meetings will be held in person, in Casper, and will include a virtual option for task force members.

Annual WACIP Update Process

Mr. Schutzman reported that drafts of the FY 2025 WACIP Budget and FY 2026-30 WACIP Plan are completed and will be presented for commission approval later in the meeting. He noted that an additional year was added to the WACIP plan to better align it with the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). This will ensure that all Aeronautics projects are included in the STIP, which is a six-year plan.

Once the drafts are approved by the commission, the budget and plan will be sent to the airports and airport sponsors for a 30-day comment period. Airports may submit comments, which will be included in the final versions presented to the commission for approval in March.

Standard Reports

Administrative Approvals Report

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

Recovered State Funds Report

Mr. Schutzman reported one recovery this period for \$72,604 of state funds. The total recovered for FY2024 is \$72,604.

Following a question from Chairman McCormack, Mr. Schutzman and Mr. Hearn informed the commission that the state funds were recovered from the Cheyenne Regional Airport project because of their decision to not include the parking lot in the seal coat project.

G. UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS PROGRAM UPDATE

Ms. Taylor presented the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Program Update.

General Matters

TRB UAS Flight Proficiency Certification Pilot Program Committee

Ms. Taylor reported that she still plans to serve on the committee, but the consultant contracting process is taking longer than initially estimated, delaying the start of the committee's work. Meetings should commence in early 2024. The committee's objective is to create a training template for states to use to help UAS pilots attain a Part 107 license.

FAA UAS Fact Sheet Update 2023

Ms. Taylor reported that the FAA has released a fact sheet to provide guidance to state and local governments on regulating and rule-making for UAS operations. The sheet clarifies what is the purview of the federal government and what states and local governments may regulate. Ms. Taylor shared that this will be a useful tool for Wyoming lawmakers as governments pursue new regulations and laws around UAS.

VII. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. FY 2024 WACIP BUDGET MODIFICATIONS

Mr. Schutzman reported 26 modifications this period for a reduction of \$390,450 in state funds and \$3,547,637 in federal funds allocated towards projects. The remaining state reserve is currently \$1,980,808. Mr. Schutzman noted that the report is longer this month due to the timing of the WACIP update cycle as airport sponsors move projects around in their plans.

Action: It was recommended by Mr. Schutzman, moved by Commission Harrop, seconded by Vice Chairman Blann, and unanimously carried to approve the FY 2024 WACIP budget modifications as presented.

B. PROPOSED FY 2025 WACIP BUDGET

Mr. Schutzman presented the FY2025 WACIP Budget as a "Proposed Budget." It will remain in proposed status until commission final consideration for approval in March. The proposed budget has a reserve of \$1,015,034, which is higher than usual because of the potential matches

for remaining Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Acts (IIJA) fund awards. Some projects will be moved between budgets to ensure a healthy reserve is maintained.

Action: It was recommended by Mr. Schutzman, moved by Commission Duck, seconded by Commissioner McClain, and unanimously carried to approve the FY 2025 WACIP Draft Budget as presented.

C. PROPOSED FY 2026-30 WACIP DRAFT PLAN

Mr. Schutzman reported that the remaining years of the WACIP were revised to incorporate the highest priority requested projects and to match federal funds. The reserve target varies from year to year due to the airports utilization of IIJA funds for projects.

Action: It was recommended by Mr. Schutzman, moved by Commission DeVore, seconded by Vice Chairman Blann, and unanimously carried to approve the FY 2026-30 WACIP Draft Plan as presented.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was conducted or discussed.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no need for an executive session.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS

Commission Activities

Ms. Chapman announced that the commission's next business meeting will be held January 23, 2024, via videoconference.

Ms. Chapman reported that Kevin Marquadt, the Pine Bluffs Municipal Airport manager, emailed to thank the commission for their visit to the airport the previous day.

Commissioner Announcements

Transportation Commissioner Lyman thanked the Aeronautics Commission for inviting him to attend the meeting and including him in all activities. He shared that he has been very interested in the Aeronautics program since his appointment to the Transportation Commission and that he appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the division and the commission at the meeting.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Vice Chairman Blann to adjourn and passed unanimously. Chairman McCormack adjourned the meeting at 10:06 a.m. on December 19, 2023.

Immediately following adjournment, the commission and division staff toured the Wyoming State Capitol.