



## Billings, Montana's Logan International latest airport to “get in the loop”

*When the loops have been installed, Billings will become the twentieth US airport to feature hearing loop technology.*

At Montana's busiest airport, some hard of hearing passengers are no doubt having trouble hearing the announcements of gate changes, boarding calls and other sometimes vital information emanating from the airport's public address system. On May 18th the Billings Gazette reports that, thanks to a multi-million dollar federal airport improvement grant, that problem will be addressed with hearing loops as part of a major renovation of the terminal. When the loops have been installed, Billings will become the twentieth US airport to feature hearing loop technology (see list attached).

A total of over \$1.5 billion will be awarded to airports in grants from the FAA over the course of this year. Funds have already been approved for 441 airports in 46 states. Over half of those airports provide commercial passenger service. Unfortunately it's not noted on the FAA website if hearing loops will be funded in any of those facilities including the information relating to Billings but the Billings Gazette reported on May 18 that, “The federal funding has helped free up operational expenses for the airport, allowing administrators to use those dollars elsewhere. The airport has planned a number of projects to improve facilities and visitor experience for this coming fiscal year.” The report went on to specify that the improvements will include “hearing loop” technology. Shane Ketterling, an airport administration official, reported that departure gates would be the first hearing loops to be installed but that the who upgrade of the terminal is still in the planning stages with completion expected to take place in 2024.

### Airports and Hearing Loops

Thanks in part to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and also the airport improvement grants from the FAA, there is a substantial number of airports that currently have plans for or ongoing expansions or renovations of their terminals. These would be ideal targets for local looping advocates to reach out to the local airport administration to advocate for loops.

Below is the list of such airports whose plans have been publicized in the media. Those in bold face currently have some hearing loop technology installed someplace in their terminal. Also attached is a fact sheet re airports that could be used as a tool to request such a meeting.

Billings, MT  
Burlington, VT  
Charlotte, NC  
Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX  
Denver, CO  
Ft. Myers, FL  
Fresno, CA  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Houston, TX (Bush)  
Kalispell, MT  
Kansas City, MO  
Liberty, TX  
Los Angeles (LAX)  
Miami, FL  
Nashville, TN  
New Haven, CT  
NYC (JFK)  
NYC (LaGuardia)  
Orlando, FL  
Rockford, IL  
St. Louis, MO  
Salt Lake City, UT  
San Antonio, TX  
San Diego, CA  
Sarasota, FL  
South Bend, IN  
Texarcana, TX  
Wilmington, NC

The complete list of the initial 2022 FAA Airport Improvement Programs (AIP) grants is available at:  
<https://explore.dot.gov/t/FAA/views/AirportImprovementProgramAIP/AIP?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y>

# Looped theatres becoming more common

*...it's not unreasonable to believe the actual figure would be closer to 500.*

In Chekhov's Uncle Vanya Mikhail Astrov says, "Maintenant je suis d'avis que l'état normal de l'homme est d'être un original." For many with hearing loss, even if fluent in French, you would have to have a hearing loop to know he was saying, "Now I am of the opinion that the normal state of man is to be an original." To ensure that theatergoers are able to hear and to understand what's said on stage, more and more theaters are joining the list of those that offer hearing loop access to patrons.

The Barnstormers Theater in Tamworth, NH is one of the latest additions to the list. Established in 1931 by actor Francis Cleveland, the youngest child of President Grover Cleveland, in the family's summer hometown. The theater, though looped back in 2013, just recently came to the attention of Jerry Bergman, a New York City looping advocate who has been compiling a list of such venues.

The Barnstormer is a repurposed retail store but, like many other theaters on the list, such as the local historic old movie house, the Andria Theater, in Alexandria, MN. Theater advocates in Alexandria had been fundraising for over three years to finance the looping of the Andrea when a grant from the local Sertoma Club put them over the top. In January of this year the loop was installed and the theater's news release trumpeted, "This is a game changer for the hearing impaired in the area who have avoided attending plays due to not being able to hear the actors well."

The Calumet Theater in Calumet, MI is also on the list. This elegant 700 seat theater, like the contemporary Grand Opera House in Oshkosh, WI, began life as a municipal opera house way back in 1900. Installed in 2012, the theater's hearing loop allows patrons with a hearing aid to directly connect to the theater's audio using their telecoil (T-coil) equipped hearing aids or a receiver and earbuds.

The system was made possible by the Portage Health Audiology Department, which raised funds for the installation, then worked with the theater and Hearing Loop Systems to install the loop and test it with hearing aids. "This technology is on almost every hearing aid we fit for our patients," said Melissa Collard, audiologist at Portage Health to the local paper. "This looping system is something that will completely change the experience people will have, and it's something we're hoping will be added to other area public places."

With Jerry's list now well past 325 theaters and new ones being found regularly, it's not unreasonable to believe the actual figure would be closer to 500. That list can be viewed and/or downloaded at;

<https://hearingloop.org/uploads/loopedlivevenue.pdf> .

## Oticon exec writes piece promoting

# telecoils/loops for HIA

Better Hearing, the publication of the Hearing Industries Association (HIA), recently ran a piece endorsing hearing loops and addressing their benefits as a valuable companion to Bluetooth®. The piece was written by Dr. Douglas L. Beck AuD, the Vice President of Academic Sciences, Oticon Inc. and Adjunct Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders, State University of NY at Buffalo, NY.

In the piece, Dr. Beck pointed out that, “the vast majority of professionally dispensed hearing aids have T-coil options, as do all cochlear implants. Indeed, the newest version of T-coils, when combined with environmental Hearing Loop Systems, uniquely allows the hearing aid wearer with a T-coil to participate in large groups, using their personal hearing aid, programmed specifically for them, by simply turning on the T-coil.”

He pointed out that Bluetooth is basically a one to one system, saying, “Bluetooth is wonderful for transmitting a single sound source (such as a smartphone, television, tablet, computer, streaming music etc.) to a set of Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids (one listener). However, Bluetooth cannot (yet!) be used in large rooms or public spaces unless one were to pair each individual hearing aid to the Bluetooth transmitter.” The complete article can be read at:

<https://betterhearing.org/newsroom/blogs/hearing-aids-t-coils-and-hearing-loops-in-2022/>.

Dr. Beck is a long time proponent of telecoils. An earlier article of his on telecoils that ran in Hearing Journal some time ago (based on a piece provided by Oticon to audiology graduate students) is very complete, comprehensive look at all aspects of telecoil technology. That piece can be found at:

<https://www.audiologyonline.com/articles/t-coils-beyond-the-telephone-968>.

## One person can make a difference

Hillary Clinton wrote that sometimes “It Takes a Village” to get something done but where hearing loops are concerned, it may only take one person. Prof. Carol Lomicky in Kearney, NE almost single-handedly got several theaters and other facilities in that central Nebraska community to install hearing loops and almost directly south of her, Dr. Richard Meidinger in Lawrence, KS has done likewise. After his initial success as a looping advocate there, Dr. Meidinger wrote, “I had my business card changed from Richard Meidinger MD, Diagnostic Radiologist to Richard Meidinger MD, Hearing Advocate. I like my new specialty!” Around the country there are many individuals who have been that one person in their community.

In Springfield, OR, that one person was looping advocate Ginevra Ralph who inspired Tracy Hogan and her husband Tom to install counter loops in their grocery store. Tracy has a recent bilateral hearing loss and was relatively new to wearing hearing aids when she learned from Ginevra about hearing loops. With that knowledge and having experienced a hearing loop, she could see that their store offered difficulties to hard of hearing customers when checking out. Hearing loops at the checkout counters would overcome such ambient noises as background music, scanning, talking, etc. and improve communication between customers and the cashier. Kathy felt that hearing loops should be installed at the checkout counters of her store where these

noises can get in the way of 1 to 1 communication with the cashier and every register in the store now has a hearing loop and signage to let hearing aid wearers know a loop is available for their use.

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Submissions are welcome from any of the private individuals, hearing care providers or looping advocates, installers, distributors and manufacturers receiving this newsletter.

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