

## When The Dust Settles...

Record passengers numbers and a growing region over the last several years have prompted the Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA) to expand its parking facilities.

Construction on the GFIA parking deck roof is underway with a projected finish date of November 2015. In previous years, the airport has been forced to close the fourth level of the parking deck in the winter months because of the snow. A fourth level roof will open up 1,113 additional covered parking spaces.

“We are accommodating our growing passenger volume, and are excited for this project,” said GFIA Executive Director Brian Ryks.

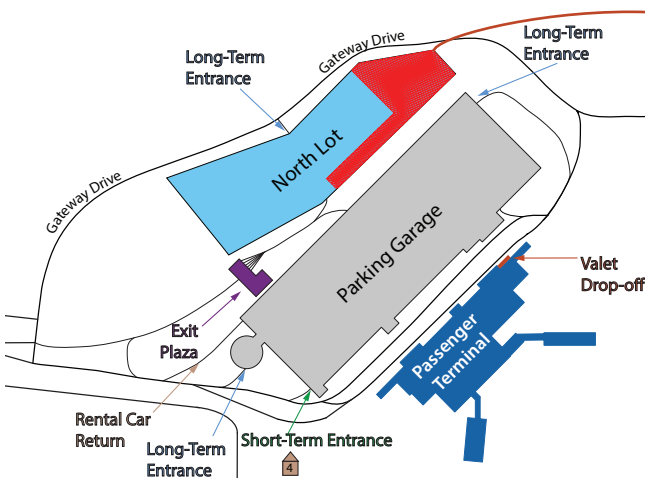
“A roof on the fourth level of the garage will give our passengers additional close-in space for parking years round, and we all know how wonderful it is to have convenient parking during Michigan winters,” said Ryks.

When construction of the roof is complete, the garage will be able to accommodate 4,140 total covered parking spaces year-round.

During construction the contractor will be using a portion of the North Lot adjacent to the garage for staging equipment and materials. *Because parking spaces are limited, passengers are urged to arrive at the airport at least 90-120 minutes before their scheduled departure.*



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The northeast section of the North Lot (shown here) is currently closed to the public. This area is being used to stage the equipment and supplies needed for the roof construction.

This area will remain closed through the end of the construction activities, scheduled for completion in November 2015.

## Area Road Construction May Impact Travels

Beginning April 13, 36th Street between Patterson Avenue and Kraft Avenue will be under construction.

Weather permitting, the work will conclude in 12 weeks. While the Kent County Road Commission will maintain two lanes open (one each way), this industrial area will be highly congested with vehicle and truck traffic and delays should be expected.

We strongly encourage airport customers to use 28th Street or M-6 (to Broadmoor) to Patterson Avenue to access the airport.



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# Passenger Appreciation Days...Our Way of Saying "Thank You"

At GFIA, the spring break travel period is the busiest of the year. So, in order to say "thank you" to our valued customers, the first three days of this busy travel week is perfect timing. We began by transforming the Grand Hall into an oasis of fun with tropical decorations and beach tunes to set a festive mood for travelers as they arrived at the airport. Then, we stocked our hospitality station with complimentary refreshments for folks to sit and enjoy, or to grab and go as travelers headed to their gates.

This year's event was held April 2, 3, & 4. Patrons could pick up giveaways like pens, activity books and crayons, lip balm and sunscreen, beach balls, luggage tags, tote bags, and much, much more. We held a drawing for a \$150 travel voucher (one name drawn each day) compliments of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board, and this year's winners were Emma Israels of Grand Rapids, Natasha Offerman of Kentwood, and Jim VanStee of Jenison.

The ever-popular paper airplane-flying contest saw participants of all ages flying their aircraft in hopes of landing in the drawing for a \$100 mall gift certificate (one drawing held each day). We even had some previous competitors who came prepared with their own folding instructions in an attempt to create the most aerodynamic craft. This year's winners were Barbie Sines of Muskegon, Luke Forrest of Norton Shores, and Ethan of Rockford.

The Airport Board of Directors would like to thank our partners AeroMed, Allegiant Air, Amway Aviation, Metro Cab, and United Airlines for their generous donations of give-away items. We also want to offer a huge thank you to food and beverage concessionaire HMS Host for their coordination of refreshments.

Most of all, we offer our sincere thanks to all of our passengers who include Gerald R. Ford International Airport in their travel plans throughout the year. We know you have choices for your air travel arrangements, and we thank you for choosing to fly to and from the Ford International Airport!



## Employee Spotlight

Dinorah Menendez, head cook for our food & beverage concessionaire HMS Host, was sworn in as a citizen of the United States earlier this year! She came here from the Dominican Republic and has also lived in Spain.

Dinorah proudly participated in the ceremony on March 18, taking the Oath of Allegiance to the United States at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum.



## Rising Numbers, Breaking Records

Exactly how to do you follow a banner year? 2014 saw a new passenger record set as we served 2,335,105 passengers, breaking the previous record set in 2011. At GFIA, we continue to celebrate as we see increased passenger volume and more records being broken!

January traffic was up 14% over the previous year, February was up 12%, and March was up 8%, but the good news doesn't end there. In March 2015, we served 231,138 passengers, making it our busiest month ever—breaking the previous record by 4.2% set in July 2011. Additionally, we beat a long-standing record for the busiest first quarter ever—a record previously set in 2005—by 9.6% as we served 600,336 passengers in the first three months of 2015.

"Our record breaking numbers are a direct reflection of airline investments in West Michigan, the renewed commitment of area business and leisure travelers to use the Ford International Airport as their primary airport, along with our hard-working staff to ensure the best customer service experience possible" said GFIA Executive Director Brian Ryks. "We're excited to see airlines invest and expand opportunities in our market, and we're confident that even more growth will follow in the coming months and years."

"Our airline partners see opportunity in West Michigan and continue to invest in new routes and additional capacity," said Ryks. "We are thankful for the support of our airlines, and our area travelers."

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*~Brian Ryks,  
GFIA Executive Director*



## LaughFest Brings Famous Comedians to GRR!

LaughFest wrapped up its fifth year of smiles, and the Gerald R. Ford International Airport was a proud sponsor – and the festival’s official travel headquarters! LaughFest, a 10–day event to benefit Gilda’s Club, is the nation’s first-ever community-wide festival of laughter bringing in famous comedians from around the world.

This year’s festival was held from March 5-15, and showcased comedians like George Lopez, Wanda Sykes, Patton Oswalt, Billy Gardell, Jim Breuer and more! Many of these comedians were spotted traveling in and out of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport during the festival.

Cristela Alonzo, star of the show “Cristela” on ABC, arrived at GFIA on March 7th in preparation for her show. Alonzo told the Grand Rapids Press her favorite part about Grand Rapids was the airport.

“I love the airport – the Gerald Ford airport,” Alonzo said. “It’s a smaller airport, so it’s never busy, and it’s well taken care of,” she said. “It’s beautiful. It’s such a nice play to fly.”

Upon arrival in Grand Rapids, Alonzo tweeted a photo of herself at GFIA underneath the airport LaughFest banner.



ABC’s Cristela Alonzo arrives at GFIA for LaughFest

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“We are in our busy season and we strongly urge passengers to give themselves adequate time to park, check in, and get through security,” Ryks said. “The airport is easy to navigate but with the rapid passenger growth, we want to make sure passengers are planning ahead.”

The \$15 million project will be managed by The Christman Company, and steel for the project is being provided by Grand Rapids firm, Builders Iron. Architectural firm Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber is the design engineer.

Thank you to all of our airport patrons for your patience and patronage as we continue to improve your customer experience!

### Project Fun Facts

- 8 acres of rubber membrane roofing
- 75 new jobs created
- 1,000 additional covered parking spaces
- 2.4 million pounds of structural steel and metal roof decking



**Kent County Department of Aeronautics**  
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*Getting there is better here.*

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## Presenting...

Is your group looking for a speaker for an upcoming meeting? Would your organization like to learn more about your local airport? GFIA staff would welcome the opportunity to come to an upcoming meeting. We can provide an overview of the airport, updates ongoing airport development projects and the state of the aviation industry. Presentations can be timed to fit nicely into a breakfast or lunchtime meeting.

For more information, or to request a speaker for your next meeting, please call the Marketing and Communications department at (616) 233-6031 or visit the website at [www.FlyFord.org](http://www.FlyFord.org) for more information located under About Us, Newsroom.

## Employee Information Corner

GFIA maintains an approved Stormwater Management Program Plan (SWMPP) to manage activities and minimize potential water quality impacts from “municipal” activities at the airport. In this case, “municipal” refers to the non-industrial activities conducted to maintain the facility including things like landscaping, construction oversight, erosion control, prevention of illicit discharges, good housekeeping practices, and public engagement/education. Developed in accordance with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) guidance, GFIA’s SWMPP describes the actions used to ensure the quality of GFIA’s stormwater discharges. The plan is currently being revised as part of a permit renewal process. The backbone of the plan are the best management practices (BMPs) the airport uses to address the “six minimum measures” for minimizing and preventing stormwater pollution associated with municipal activities.

The measures include: public education and outreach program, public involvement and participation, illicit discharge elimination program, construction stormwater runoff control, post-construction stormwater management, and pollution prevention and good housekeeping practices.

Any situations or issues related to storm water that are observed should be reported to Airport Communications at 233-6055, which is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Situations that would warrant a call to Communications could include the improper disposal of wastes, improper (illicit) discharges to the storm sewer system, or any other activity that appears to have the potential to negatively affect the quality of stormwater discharges at the Airport.

**Airport Connections** is the quarterly newsletter of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. We encourage our readers to contact us with comments, suggestions, and submissions. If you wish to be added to the mailing list for *Airport Connections*, please contact the Kent County Department of Aeronautics:

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