

# A clear path *forward.*



2020 Community Report  
& Flight Plan



Each spring, we share a report with our community. This year, looking back at the shared challenges we faced as an organization, an industry and a community, we realized our true focus: looking ahead.

## 2020 Community Report & Flight Plan

A Letter From Our Leadership

### 2020 Community Report

Fly Safe. Fly Ford.

PPE Shipments

UV Innovation

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Community Safety

### 2021 Flight Plan

Continued Health and Safety

Grand Rapids Connects

Investment in the Guest Experience

## To our friends, neighbors and fellow travelers:

The COVID-19 pandemic redirected our intended flight plan for the Gerald R. Ford International Airport in 2020 – yet our team, airline partners, tenants and guests rose to ease the turbulence with traditional West Michigan ingenuity, determination and even a little humor.

While the decline in travel across our industry put our growth plans on standby, we were able to celebrate a number of wins throughout the past year. As a significant economic catalyst for the region, the Ford Airport played a key role in connecting West Michigan to the world. Our team ensured critical PPE shipments made it to frontline workers. We enabled families to gather together with their loved ones – no matter where they lived. We even were able to take the first steps in bringing international travel to West Michigan.

And we were beyond proud to send the first domestic shipment of the Pfizer vaccine from our runways to Memphis – and then beyond – to save lives and to end the pandemic.

We put protocols in place so guests knew they could Fly Safe. Fly Ford. We completed the second phase of our Gateway Transformation as we transform our guest experience. We welcomed public art with the dedication of a statue and plaza in honor of West Michigan's favorite son, President Gerald R. Ford. And we honored whimsy when we unveiled "Chickens Don't Fly Much" by Reb Roberts, a talented Grand Rapids outsider artist.

The following pages will both remind us of where we have been and help chart a course for adventures yet to come. As our thoughts turn to spring, we are filled with hope over the promise of our collective recovery. We're dreaming of all the places we want to visit in the coming months – and beyond – and already hard at work to improve your travel experience. Thank you so very much for your support during 2020 – we can't wait to serve you in the coming months!



*Tory Richardson*

Tory Richardson, A.A.E.  
President and CEO  
Gerald R. Ford International Airport



*Dan Koorndyk*

Dan Koorndyk  
Chair  
Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority Board

# 2020

## Community Report

## Fly Safe. Fly Ford.

As the Michigan economy began to re-emerge from COVID-19, the Ford Airport introduced our new *Fly Safe. Fly Ford.* campaign in spring 2020 to educate travelers on new precautions for their health and to restore confidence in air travel.

Working closely with our six airline partners, we enhanced our safety and sanitation procedures from the parking garage to the jet bridge. Ford Airport required facial coverings, installed custom plexiglass at high-traffic areas and increased signage to promote physical distancing. We increased our reliance on continuous cleaning protocols, placed hand sanitizer stations throughout the concourse, and offered PPE to guests in concession areas and through vending machines.

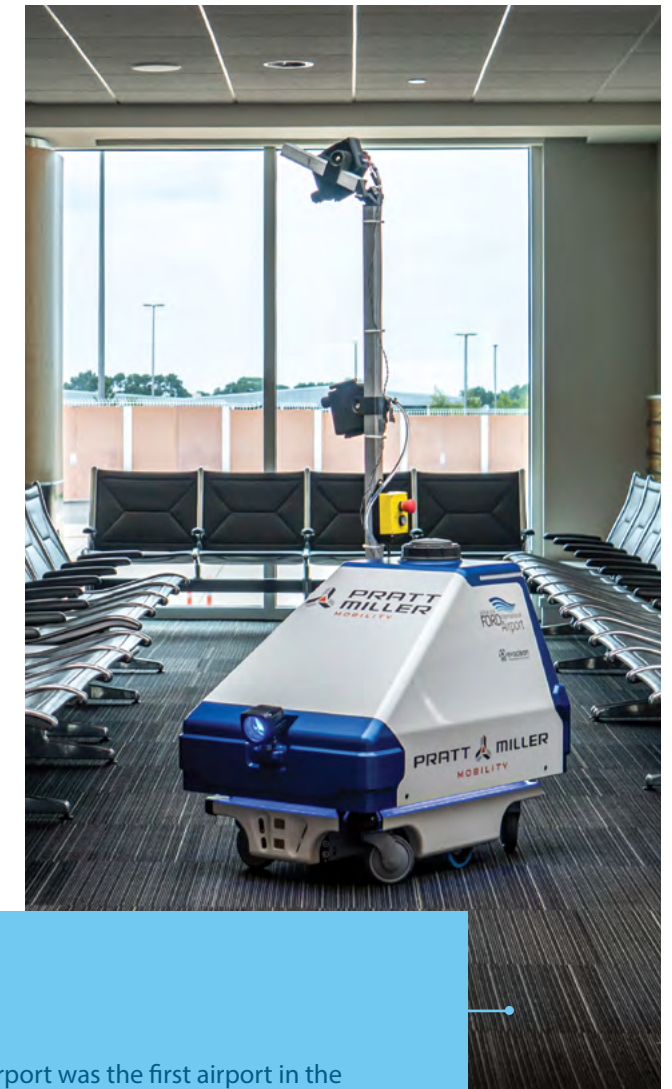
We made considerable investments, including installing energy-efficient HVAC systems to improve indoor air quality and comfort. We trained our teams to ensure they had the tools they needed to stay safe – and to help keep our guests safe.

“The Ford Airport is large enough to get travelers where they need to go, but small enough to make it easy – as well as safe and clean. With less physical space to maintain and a clear focus on the guest experience, we are able to better control our cleaning procedures, train our team in best practices and offer a safe travel experience. Travelers can avoid the crowds, hassle, stress and uncertainty of travel when they Fly Safe. Fly Ford.”

— Board Chair  
Dan Koorndyk

## PPE SHIPMENTS

Throughout the pandemic, Ford Airport remained open. On April 10, 2020, we provided an important conduit for cargo, ensuring critical PPE, such as N95 masks, gloves and face shields made it to hospitals, nursing homes, senior living facilities and other health care facilities in the region so their teams could stay healthy and safe when fighting COVID-19.



## UV INNOVATION

As part of our *Fly Safe. Fly Ford.* campaign, Ford Airport was the first airport in the country to test a new autonomous robot that disinfects using ultraviolet technology.

We also tested a comprehensive suite of tools that utilize UV technology, which works on a molecular level to destroy the microbiology of the virus. The suite included a shoe disinfectant mat for guests, a pod that can be used to clean wheelchairs and luggage trolleys, and a chamber for personal items such as phones, keys and tablets.

## GROUNDBREAKING DEVELOPMENTS

### *Federal Inspection Station*

In September 2020, we broke ground on Phase I of a new federal inspection station, which will ultimately allow Ford Airport to support nonstop international commercial passenger flights.

Phase I of the construction project includes a new baggage claim area, restrooms and operations infrastructure that will be used for domestic flights until the full FIS project is complete. We expect to hold a ribbon-cutting in 2021 to officially open the new facility, which is located at the east end of the terminal.

The FIS is part of Project Elevate and one of three new developments to accommodate projected passenger growth over the next 20 years. In addition to the FIS, the Airport plans to expand Concourse A and relocate the current air traffic control tower to the airfield's east side.

With support from Michigan legislators and The Right Place, Project Elevate secured \$10 million in funding: a \$5 million grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and \$5 million from the Federal Aviation Administration. The funds were used on terminal improvements needed for the FIS, which is expected to cost \$30 million.



### *Gateway Phase II*

We cheered in fall 2020 as the second phase of the Gateway Transformation Project wrapped up. Launched in 2018, the \$18 million project was designed to improve the guest experience by transforming the “front of the house.”

The second phase relocated TSA screening equipment from the airline queuing areas and upgraded the space around the baggage claim carousels. The addition of new terrazzo flooring, new LED lighting fixtures, upgraded signage and other amenities also enhanced the travel experience.

This was the second of two phases of the multi-year Gateway Transformation Project. The first phase wrapped up in September 2017 and featured many guest amenities including consolidated security checkpoint screening, new restaurant and retail spaces, business centers, nursing rooms and more.





## SHOWING OUR DEDICATION

In October, a small group of civic and community leaders gathered to unveil a statue of the Airport's namesake, President Gerald R. Ford. On that lovely fall morning, we also dedicated a new Presidential Gateway Plaza that now provides a warm welcome to travelers from all over the world.

The statue was a gift to the Airport from the family of the late Ambassador Peter and Joan Secchia as part of their Community Legends Project, which recognizes influential figures throughout the history of Grand Rapids in an effort to inspire others with their stories.

President Ford's bronze statue is seated on a curved bench, one arm lifted warmly as for an embrace, encouraging travelers to stop and take a selfie with the 38th president of the United States. The President – West Michigan's President – overlooks a globe etched into the concrete at his feet, with the American and Michigan flags rising as a tribute to his love for and commitment to his country and home state.

**“This statue holds a special place in our family members’ hearts. Not only was President Ford an adept and insightful leader in a tumultuous time, he was Grand Rapids’ favorite son and someone my parents are honored to have called a friend. We could not be prouder to call him our own and to dedicate this memorial as part of the Community Legends Project.”**

—Charlie Secchia, Community Legends Committee Chair

## VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

The first cargo plane carrying Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for domestic use departed from the Ford Airport at 11 a.m. on Sunday, December 13, 2020, carrying the first of tens of thousands of shipments that will deliver the life-saving vaccine to locations around the nation and then the world.

The mood was jubilant on the airfield as crews began loading the FedEx Airbus A300 in preparation for the one hour and 30-minute flight to Memphis, Tennessee. Transportation plays a key role in distributing the vaccine, bringing crews from FedEx and Ford Airport out to applaud and capture the historic moment with photos.

Ford Airport is the closest commercial airport to Pfizer's Kalamazoo manufacturing operation with the infrastructure needed to support the transportation process. The Airport has a 10,000-foot runway, dedicated cargo facility, appropriate ground support and the capacity needed to stage and transport billions of doses of the vaccine.

“**This was a big day for West Michigan and a historic milestone for the world that marks the beginning of the end to the global pandemic.**  
**The Ford Airport is honored to play a key role in ensuring the vaccine gets into the hands of healthcare professionals around the country.**”

—Tory Richardson, President & CEO



## COVID-19 TESTING SITE

As Americans evaluated holiday travel options in December 2020, we removed some of the worry from the equation by partnering with a health care provider to host a COVID-19 testing site, making Ford Airport one of the first in the nation to do so.

The drive-up, no-appointment-needed site staffed by TACKL Health offered both rapid antigen tests, which provide results in 15 minutes, and molecular PCR tests, which now provides results in under 30 minutes. The onsite COVID-19 testing proved particularly helpful for business travelers visiting international destinations where the PCR molecular test is required before entry.

As a bonus, the test site was open daily for 16 hours – no doctor's referral nor COVID-19 symptoms needed for those who wanted to be tested. Double bonus: The site is open to all in the community, not just those traveling through the Ford Airport.

Since December, TACKL Health has administered more than 4,500 tests and, in March, expanded services to offer rapid PCR tests, making us one of the first airports in the nation to do so.

# 2021



## Flight Plan

### BUSINESS IS HEALTHY

As we move deeper into 2021, Ford Airport continues to see a steady increase in confidence. More business and leisure travelers are booking flights. Our airline partners are adding new nonstop destinations, including direct flights to Boston, Destin and Portland. Our restaurants and retailers have reopened to again serve guests, flight crews, tenants and our team.

While our passenger numbers have not fully rebounded, they are trending in the right direction. Last April, we and other airports around the country saw steep declines in passenger traffic. Ford Airport posted a 96% decline in April 2020. Throughout the following months, traffic rebuilt steadily, allowing us to rebound faster than many of our peers around the country. We closed the year at about 50% of passenger traffic, on track with our expectations and a full 10 percentage points above the industry average.

We credit a lot of that to the confidence we were able to build through *Fly Safe. Fly Ford.* In spring 2021 – just in time for spring break travel – we unveiled the second iteration of our education campaign. Drawing on the creative energy of Grand Rapids-based Extra Credit Projects, we launched a multi-media integrated campaign that brought refined messaging, fresh creative design, and a continued cohesive voice.

The campaign features a continued focus on cleaning and safety, while expanding to promote new and returning routes, encourage travel and lay the groundwork for a transition to more general awareness as COVID-19 impact lessens in the coming months. We're moving beyond Grand Rapids to target travelers from Traverse City and Cadillac to Ludington and Holland over to Ionia and down to Benton Harbor as we showcase the simplicity and ease of using Ford Airport.

## GRAND RAPIDS CONNECTS

With the lofty goal of tripling our economic impact in West Michigan, we unveiled our new real estate master plan during the first quarter of 2021. More than \$500,000 was invested in the most ambitious and robust study of the Airport's real estate assets to date as we look to attract new development and investments that will shape the region's economy for the next two decades.

The Airport has more than 900 acres of property open for development, with some of the largest tracts of land with access to utilities along the I-96 corridor in West Michigan. Nearly 80 acres have been designated as a free trade zone.

In an effort to create a world-class business hub, we have partnered with the The Right Place, MEDC and industry partner McFarland Johnson to transform information and due diligence provided by local real estate brokers into solid action plans. We are looking at options that could attract:

- Industry clusters, such as biomedical, medical devices, aerospace or automotive that would benefit from co-locating near an anchor in order to shorten transportation times, strengthen relationships and take advantage of West Michigan's location to major U.S. population centers.
- Major facilities for growing companies looking to establish or expand operations that would benefit from having a corporate hangar.
- Inland port connected to Muskegon's deep-water that can house an intermodal facility to transfer freight.

**“In collaboration with our economic development partners, we want to continue to grow and change the face of this region. We believe there are opportunities for supply chains to co-locate close to the Airport as larger hubs are seeing a change in the way they do business. We have the talent pipeline, an exceptional quality of life and moderate cost of living that combine to make West Michigan an attractive destination.”**

—Birgit Klohs, Board Member

## INVESTMENT IN THE GUEST EXPERIENCE

With the establishment of a Guest Experience Committee in July, Ford Airport is laser-focused on providing an exceptional guest experience.

Representatives from the Airport Authority, airlines and tenants meet monthly to identify, prioritize and then tackle projects designed to enhance their travel experience.

During 2020, the committee launched 24 projects, completing many, with another 30 on deck for the year ahead. The committee looks to guests for their ideas and feedback to shape the improvement agenda. The monthly meetings include a review of guest comments on the Airport's social media platforms as well as survey results from guests who log onto the Wi-Fi during their time in the terminal.

Some of these improvements are small, such as the selection of music in the terminal and increasing the volume of announcements made for baggage service. Others have broader implications, including the selection of a new janitorial service and the refurbishment of all jet bridges.

With an eye toward continuous improvement, the Guest Experience Committee is working to ensure all guests have a five-star experience when they travel through Ford Airport.



# Have a great flight.



View the report online at  
[FlyFord.org/Report](https://FlyFord.org/Report)