



GERALD R. FORD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT COMMUNITY REPORT 2024

An aerial photograph of an airport terminal at dusk. The terminal is illuminated with warm lights, and its glass facade reflects the twilight sky. In the foreground, the wing of a large airplane is visible, extending from the top right towards the center. The tarmac is dark, and various ground service vehicles are parked near the terminal. A control tower is visible in the background on the right side.

AN INSIDE LOOK AT OUR LATEST RECORD-BREAKING YEAR.

© Peter McCullough Photo + Drone





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Dear West Michigan Community,

What a year it has been for the Gerald R. Ford International Airport! As we reflect on 2024, we are proud to share the incredible milestones that have shaped our airport’s growth and strengthened its role as a gateway to opportunity, connectivity, and economic prosperity in West Michigan.

This past year, we achieved a historic milestone serving more than 4.17 million passengers, a record-breaking number that highlights the increasing demand for air travel in our region. With more nonstop destinations, expanded airline partnerships, and a growing presence in the aviation industry, we continue to enhance the travel experience for our passengers while reinforcing our commitment to innovation and accessibility.

Beyond record-setting numbers, the airport remains a key driver of economic growth. Our latest economic impact study underscores our influence on the region, contributing over \$7.7 billion annually, supporting more than 40,000 jobs, and fueling local businesses. With continued investments in infrastructure, such as the Terminal Enhancement Project, new hangar developments, and the expansion of our Snow Removal Equipment facility, we are positioning the Ford International Airport for continued success in the years to come.

We are also committed to making travel more inclusive and accessible for all. From the introduction of our sensory room and service animal relief area to AI-powered sign language technology, our goal is to ensure every passenger feels welcome and supported throughout their journey.

As we look ahead, we are excited about the opportunities on the horizon. With new routes, expanded amenities, and continued investments in technology and sustainability, we are building an airport that not only meets today’s needs but paves the way for future generations of travelers.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our team, the support of our airline and community partners, and the travelers who choose the Ford International Airport. We are grateful for your trust and look forward to continuing this journey together.

Thank you for making 2024 a year to remember. Together, we’ll continue to soar toward new opportunities!

Sincerely,



Tory Richardson
Tory Richardson
President & CEO
Gerald R. Ford International
Airport Authority



Dan Koorndyk
Dan Koorndyk
Airport Authority Chairman
Gerald R. Ford International Airport
Authority Board



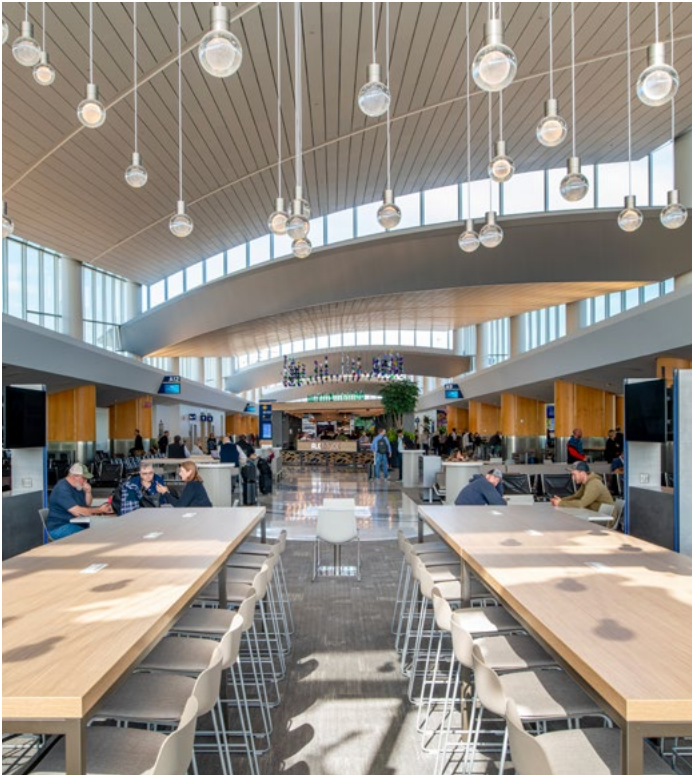
A LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Gerald R. Ford International Airport



BREAKING RECORDS

A LANDMARK YEAR FOR PASSENGER GROWTH



4,172,068
passengers in 2024

The most-traveled passenger year for Gerald R. Ford International Airport!

In 2024, the Ford International Airport set a new passenger record, serving 4,172,068 travelers—the first time in history the airport has surpassed the 4-million mark. This marks a nearly 10% increase over 2023, the previous record-breaking year.

This growth is driven by seven commercial airline partners offering nonstop service to more than 30 destinations, a dedicated cargo airline, and committed stakeholders who support the airport's ongoing efforts. In 2024, the airport handled more than 80,000 aircraft operations and processed over 65 million pounds of cargo, further solidifying its role as a vital transportation hub.

DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN WEST MICHIGAN

A newly released economic impact study highlights the airport's significant contribution to the regional economy. Each year, the airport generates more than \$7.7 billion in economic activity, supports over 40,000 jobs, and contributes \$1.3 billion in catalytic household income. Additionally, it has a \$10.3 billion fiscal impact, representing the tax revenues and public-sector financial benefits generated for local and regional governments through the airport's activity.

Visitors traveling through the airport spend an estimated \$637 million annually, with an average daily spend of \$161 per person. These travelers typically stay in the West Michigan region for 4.43 days, further boosting local businesses.

Construction projects associated with the airport have also played a major role in economic expansion, supporting an average of 328 construction jobs each year over the past five years.

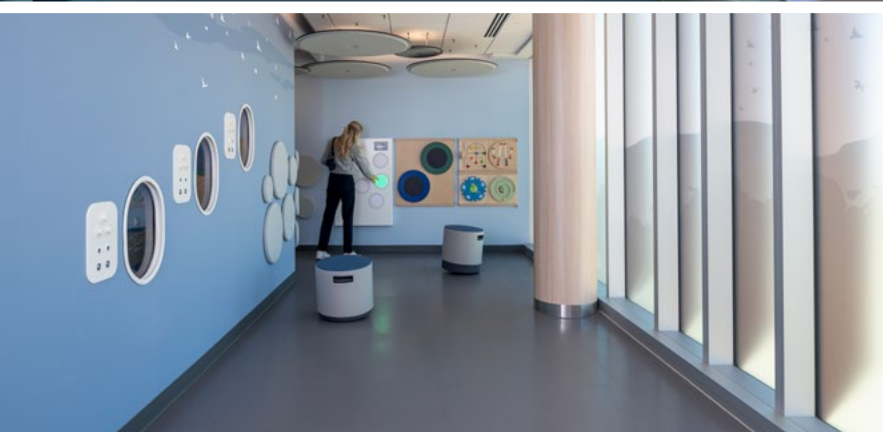
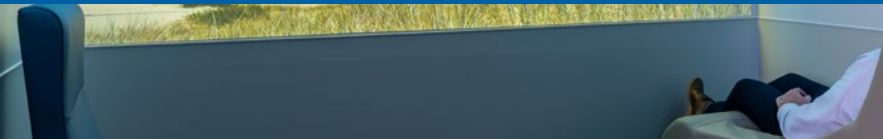
Looking ahead, Ford International Airport is on track to achieve a more than \$10 billion economic impact by 2030, reinforcing its role as a key driver of West Michigan's continued growth.

Learn more about the airport's economic impact at FlyFord.org/economic-impact-study.



ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY

THOUGHTFUL AND ACCESSIBLE AMENITIES FOR ALL TRAVELERS



The airport remains committed to creating an inclusive travel experience for all guests. In 2024, several new accessibility-focused amenities were introduced to further elevate the passenger journey.

One of the key additions is a post-security service animal relief area in Concourse A near Gate A1, providing a dedicated space for service animals. This new space further elevates the guest experience, ensuring all passengers, including their animal companions, feel welcomed and cared for during their journey through the airport.

Also in Concourse A, a state-of-the-art sensory room was unveiled to support travelers with sensory sensitivities. Developed in partnership with **Disability Advocates of Kent County**, the sensory room offers a calm, controlled setting to provide comfort and familiarity for passengers. The space is divided into four distinct zones:

TRANSITION ZONE

Helps passengers adjust between sensory experiences.

ACTIVE ZONE

Engages multiple senses through interactive activities.

RESPITE ZONE

Provides a quiet space for sensory separation and recalibration.

AIRPLANE SIMULATION ZONE

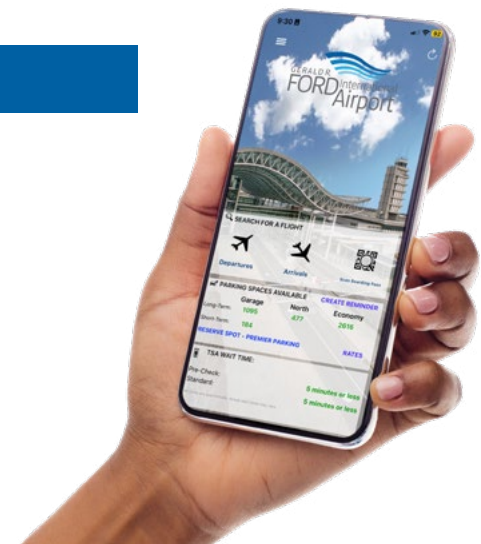
Prepares individuals for new sensory situations to reduce anxiety.

Additionally, the airport partnered with Signapse, a former participant of the FLITE program, which brings emerging air travel technology solutions to market. Signapse introduced AI-powered sign language boards, making Ford International Airport one of the first in the U.S. to pilot this cutting-edge technology. These screens display real-time messages in American Sign Language (ASL) along with captions, ensuring that travelers who are deaf or hard of hearing receive crucial flight updates, including gate changes and delays. Our collaboration with partners at Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services helped shape this initiative to best serve the community's needs.

DO YOU HAVE THE APP?

Stay up-to-date with arrivals, departures, parking availability and TSA wait times.

Search Gerald R. Ford Airport in the App Store or on Google Play



These newly added features complement the airport's existing accessibility-focused amenities, which include:

- Companion care restroom with an adult changing table that is height adjustable.
- T-coil page looping system, which transmits announcements directly to hearing aids and cochlear implants equipped with a telecoil (T-coil).
- Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program for travelers with non-visible disabilities.
- Universal design elements, ensuring a zero-barrier travel experience.
- TSA Cares in partnership with TSA.
- Wheelchair assistance for all.

By continuously improving accessibility, the Ford International Airport reaffirms its commitment to making travel welcoming, inclusive, and stress-free for all passengers.



EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WEST MICHIGAN TRAVELERS

New Routes and Airline Partnerships

This year, **Southwest Airlines** introduced two new nonstop routes to **Nashville International Airport (BNA)** and **Las Vegas' Harry Reid International Airport (LAS)**. **Allegiant Air** also expanded its offerings with a new nonstop flight to **Palm Beach International Airport (PBI)**.

Additionally, the airport was excited to welcome new airline partner, **Sun Country Airlines**, which launched seasonal service to **Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport (MSP)**, providing travelers with more convenient options.

With these additions, the airport continues to strengthen its role as a key hub, offering more choices and greater connectivity for West Michigan travelers.

NEW AMENITIES FOR GUESTS

Enhancing Passenger Comfort and Convenience

The newly expanded Concourse A now offers more dining options. In addition to the existing amenities, we celebrated the opening of **Freddy's** and **Uccello's**, which offer breakfast, lunch, and dinner options. Concourse B also continues to expand its dining options with the addition of **Firehouse Subs** and **Bell's Tap and Table** in 2024. Both concourses feature local businesses and locally made goods, reflecting and supporting our community's diverse tastes.

To further streamline the security experience, the airport introduced **CLEAR Mobile**, a dedicated expedited screening lane that provides a faster, more predictable journey through security. Liquid disposal units have also been installed near the checkpoint, allowing travelers to empty liquids before screening while preserving their containers for reuse and refill after security.



For those seeking convenient parking, the airport has introduced the Premier Parking Lot, offering a guaranteed covered parking spot on the ground level of the garage with a private entrance and exit. Available by reservation only, this \$36-per-day option ensures a short walking distance to the terminal and can be booked at [FlyFord.org/parking-services](https://flyford.org/parking-services).



FLY NONSTOP TO 35+ MAJOR CITIES

Atlanta (ATL) Delta | Frontier
Austin (AUS) Allegiant
Baltimore - Washington (BWI) Southwest
Boston (BOS) Allegiant
Charlotte (CLT) American
Chicago - Midway (MDW) Southwest
Chicago - O'Hare (ORD) American | United
Dallas / Fort Worth (DFW) American
Denver (DEN) Frontier | Southwest | United
Destin / Fort Walton (VPS) Allegiant
Detroit (DTW) Delta
Fort Lauderdale (FLL) Allegiant
Fort Myers (RSW) Frontier | Southwest
Houston (IAH) United
Jacksonville (JAX) Allegiant
LaGuardia (LGA) American | Delta
Lakeland (LAL) Avelo
Las Vegas (LAS) Allegiant | Southwest
Los Angeles (LAX) Allegiant
Miami (MIA) American

Minneapolis / St. Paul (MSP) Delta | Sun Country
Myrtle Beach (MYR) Allegiant
Nashville (BNA) Allegiant | Southwest
Newark (EWR) United | Allegiant
Orlando - Sanford (SFB) Allegiant
Orlando (MCO) Delta | Frontier | Southwest
Philadelphia (PHL) American
Phoenix - Sky Harbor International (PHX) American
Phoenix - Mesa (AZA) Allegiant
Portland (PDX) Allegiant
Punta Gorda (PGD) Allegiant
Raleigh-Durham (RDU) Avelo
Sarasota / Bradenton (SRQ) Allegiant
Savannah / Hilton Head (SAV) Allegiant
St. Petersburg / Clearwater International (PIE) Allegiant
Tampa International (TPA) Frontier | Southwest
Washington D.C. (DCA) American
West Palm Beach (PBI) Allegiant



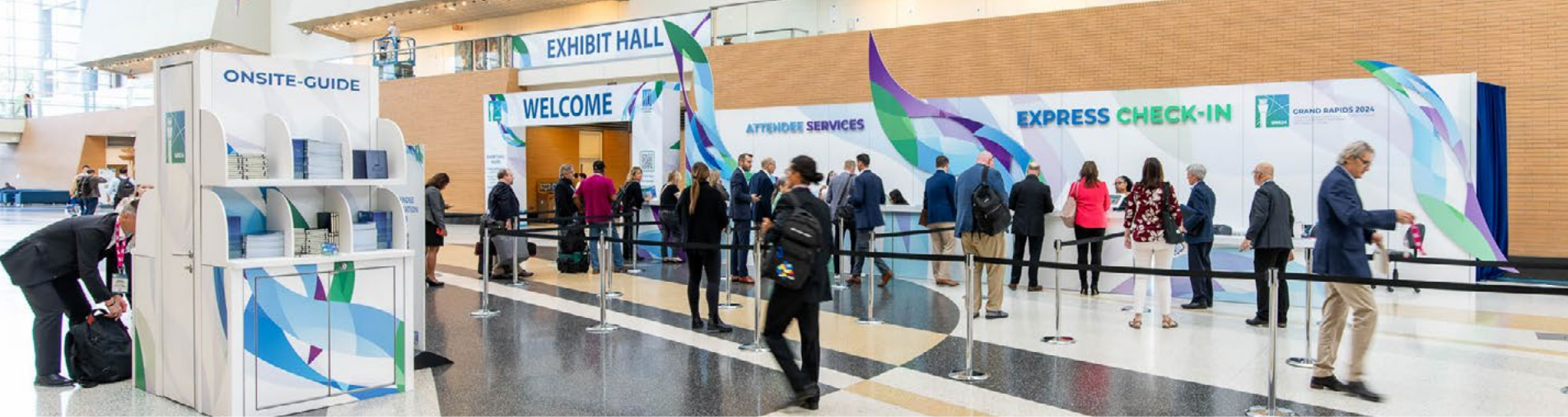
BRINGING THE AVIATION INDUSTRY TO GRAND RAPIDS, MI

ACI-NA Annual Conference and Exhibition

In September 2024, Ford International Airport proudly hosted the **Airports Council International – North America (ACI-NA)** Annual Conference & Exhibition, one of the largest and most influential gatherings in the airport industry. The event brought together more than 1,900 industry leaders, vendors, and stakeholders from across North America to discuss the future of aviation, focusing on infrastructure, sustainability, technology, workforce development, and innovation.

Held in downtown Grand Rapids, the conference provided a platform for networking, collaboration, and knowledge exchange, featuring keynote addresses from nationally recognized thought leaders and a sold-out exhibition floor with over 170 exhibitors showcasing the latest advancements in aviation technology and services.

As Ford International Airport undergoes more than \$600 million in critical infrastructure improvement projects, hosting this premier event was an opportunity to showcase our commitment to innovation, operational excellence, and the future of air travel. The conference reinforced our airport's role as a leader in the industry and a key player in shaping what's next for North American airports.



Courtesy Bryan Esler Photo



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PROGRAM ANNUAL WINNER

Officer Chad Kooyer

At Ford International Airport, providing exceptional service and demonstrating compassion for all is at the heart of our values. Through the Airport Wide Employee Recognition Program, we celebrate employees who go above and beyond in their service to others. This year's annual employee spotlight recognizes Officer Chad Kooyer for his outstanding display of kindness and service.

Officer Kooyer's actions and dedication to providing outstanding service reflect the airport's core values of Service, Our People, Achievement through Accountability, and Respect (SOAR). His acts of kindness demonstrate the ongoing commitment of our team to make a difference in the lives of others.

If you recognize exceptional service from an airport employee, we encourage you to nominate them for the employee recognition program at FlyFord.org/employee-recognition-program.

AWARDS

Airport Carbon Accreditation, Level 1 and 2 – Airports Council International

Peggy G. Hereford Award for Overall Excellence in Airport Marketing, Communications and Customer Experience – Airports Council International North America

Best Small and Emerging Airport Innovation – Airports Council International World and Amadeus

MERS Impact Award – Municipal Employees' Retirement System

2024 Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Awards – Airports Council International World

- Best Airport of 2 to 5 Million Passengers in North America
- Airport with the Most Dedicated Staff in North America
- Easiest Airport Journey in North America
- Most Enjoyable Airport in North America
- Cleanest Airport in North America

2024 Commercial Airport Project of the Year, Airfield – The Great Lakes Chapter of the American Association of Airport Executives

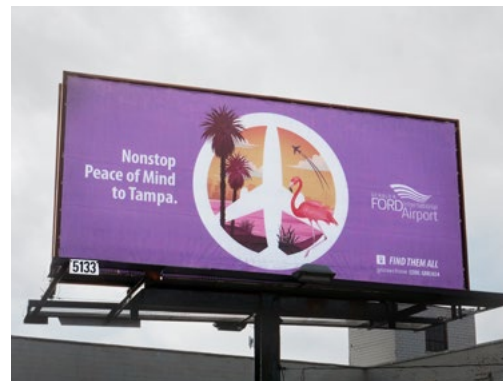
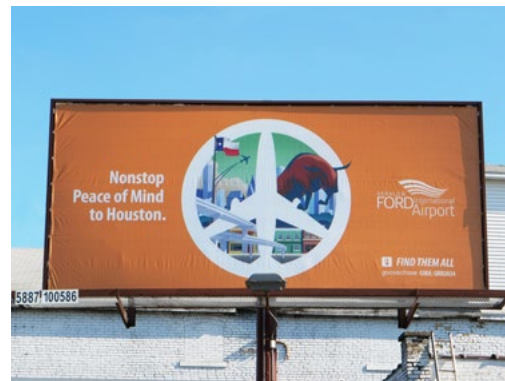


ELEVATING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The Ford International Airport remains committed to engaging with the West Michigan community through innovative initiatives and meaningful partnerships. This year, we participated in and hosted a variety of events aimed at fostering connections, supporting local organizations, and inspiring future generations.

The GRreat Billboard Hunt

In collaboration with **Extra Credit Projects**, the airport launched The GRreat Billboard Hunt, a creative campaign promoting our 30+ nonstop destinations. Over four weeks, community members searched for billboards featuring the airport's nonstop destinations throughout the region, competing for prizes. The grand prize included a \$300 flight voucher, concessions gift basket, apparel, limited-edition airport socks, and more.

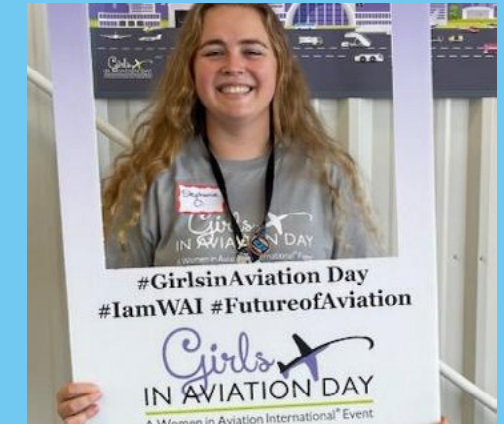


PAWS With a Cause Airport Tour

To support the development of future service animals, our airport welcomed a local **PAWS With a Cause** chapter for a guided tour. This experience helped young service dogs acclimate to airport environments, including passenger traffic, airport sounds, and security screenings, preparing them to better assist their future handlers.

Roger That!

As part of our commitment to education and workforce development, the airport participated in the Roger That! event at the **Grand Rapids Public Museum**. This annual program highlights careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) through interactive activities. Airport team members connected with students and families to promote careers in aviation.



Girls in Aviation Day

In partnership with **Women in Aviation International** and **AvFlight Grand Rapids**, the airport supported the annual Girls in Aviation Day, an event designed to introduce young women and girls to career opportunities in aviation. Attendees participated in aviation-themed crafts, a scavenger hunt, static displays, and more to provide a hands-on experience with the industry.



National Night Out

The Ford International Airport's police, aircraft rescue and firefighting, and field maintenance teams took part in **National Night Out**, an annual event designed to strengthen relationships between first responders and the community. Families enjoyed interactive exhibits, demonstrations, and family-friendly activities, reinforcing the importance of safety and public service.

Celebrating All Walks of Life Pow Wow

The Ford International Airport's Human Resources team participated in the Celebration of Life, an event held by **Grand Valley State University** that honors local Native American tribes and their cultural traditions. Airport team members shared insights on career opportunities in aviation, connecting with attendees to discuss potential career paths and industry opportunities.



CHECK OUT OUR STOREFRONT

Represent Gerald R. Ford International Airport in style with latest and greatest in airport swag.

[FlyFord.myshopify.com](https://flyford.myshopify.com)



EXPANDING FOR THE FUTURE: CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Terminal Enhancement Project

In spring 2024, the airport broke ground on phase one of the Terminal Enhancement Project (TEP), a \$135 million major expansion designed to improve capacity and efficiency, enhance the passenger experience, and support the airport's rapid growth. This project will add 175,000 square feet to the terminal's west end, incorporating state-of-the-art baggage handling technology and expanded ticketing areas. Notably, Ford International Airport will become the first small-hub airport in the U.S. to implement an Individual Carrier System (ICS) for baggage screening beginning at bag drop, further streamlining operations.

Construction is expected to be completed by 2027, with work taking place near the terminal entrance. The project is being funded through a combination of federal and state grants, municipal bonds, and user fees—without the use of local taxpayer dollars.

TEP is a key initiative under the airport's \$600 million ELEVATE capital expansion program, which also includes a federal inspection station for international flights, Michigan's first consolidated rental car facility (CONRAC), additional parking capacity, a relocated air traffic control tower, and recently completed expanded Concourse A. These infrastructure investments are crucial in maintaining the airport's role as the primary transportation hub for West Michigan.





Snow Removal Equipment Building

In spring 2024, the airport broke ground on an \$8.5 million expansion of its Snow Removal Equipment (SRE) building, adding 60,000 square feet to improve operational efficiency during winter weather. This expansion consolidated and protected the airport's specialized snow removal fleet, which includes more than 45 vehicles, some measuring up to 78 feet long and plows up to 24 feet wide, making them twice the size of standard road snowplows.

Funded in part by the **FAA** through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this project ensured faster, more efficient runway clearing, minimizing weather-related disruptions. The airport's nationally recognized snow removal team will now have state-of-the-art facilities to continue delivering industry-leading winter operations. This project was completed in fall 2024.



Expanding Aviation Services with New Hangar Developments

The airport welcomed three new hangar developments from partners at **Otter Air**, **Apogee Air**, and **ProStar Aviation**. Otter Air constructed a premier hangar to reflect its high-end charter brand. Apogee Air expanded its operations with a new facility, offering full-service aircraft management and a Cirrus training center. ProStar Aviation completed a 37,000-square-foot hangar and office facility, serving as a dedicated Pilatus Aircraft sales and service center.

These developments support the airport's continued growth as a regional hub for private, corporate, and charter aviation.

Economy Lot Expansion

The expansion of our economy lot increased the available capacity for our low-cost parking option. This project added over 2,500 spaces, bringing the total to 4,869 spaces. More than 25,000 tons of asphalt were placed, 57 new overhead LED parking lights were installed to create a well-lit environment, and five new bus shelters were added to provide guests with a comfortable place to wait for the shuttle bus, which runs every 7 to 10 minutes to the terminal building.

FLITE PROGRAM FUELS INNOVATION IN AVIATION INDUSTRY

FLITE PROGRAM

25
COMPANIES

RECOGNIZED AT SXSW



\$950,000
IN TOTAL GRANTS

The Ford Launchpad for Innovative Technologies and Entrepreneurship (FLITE) program launched two more rounds for a total of six rounds since its inception.

Round 5 distributed over \$200,000 in grant funding to participants, including **Cybernet Systems Corporation**, **Prospect Airport Services**, and **Snowbotix**. Round 6, which began in fall 2024, awarded more than \$220,000 across seven companies, including **Airtrak Robotics**, **Antrum**, **Enspried Solutions**, **Flox**, **Hangar Safe**, **IonDynamics Energy**, and **Tiami Networks**.

To date, FLITE has supported over 25 companies, distributing more than \$950,000 in total grants. The program also secured a \$100,000 commitment from **Southwest Airlines**, further solidifying its role in advancing cutting-edge aviation mobility technologies.

This year, FLITE’s success was recognized on a national stage at **South by Southwest (SXSW)** in Austin, Texas, where program leaders shared insights on shaping the airport of the future through this innovative initiative.

CHAMPIONING AVIATION GROWTH WITH LEGISLATIVE LEADERS

The Ford International Airport continues to foster strong relationships with local, state, and federal leaders to support the future of aviation in West Michigan.

This year, the airport hosted **Congresswoman Hillary Scholten** for a press conference unveiling the new design for the Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT). This milestone represents a critical step in relocating the current air traffic control tower at the airport to further enhance safety, efficiency, and future growth.

Additionally, **State Senator Mark Huizenga** led a State Legislators Tour Day at the airport, providing lawmakers with an in-depth look at ongoing projects and the airport’s role in regional economic development. The tour reinforced the importance of strategic investments in aviation infrastructure and strengthened partnerships with state leaders.

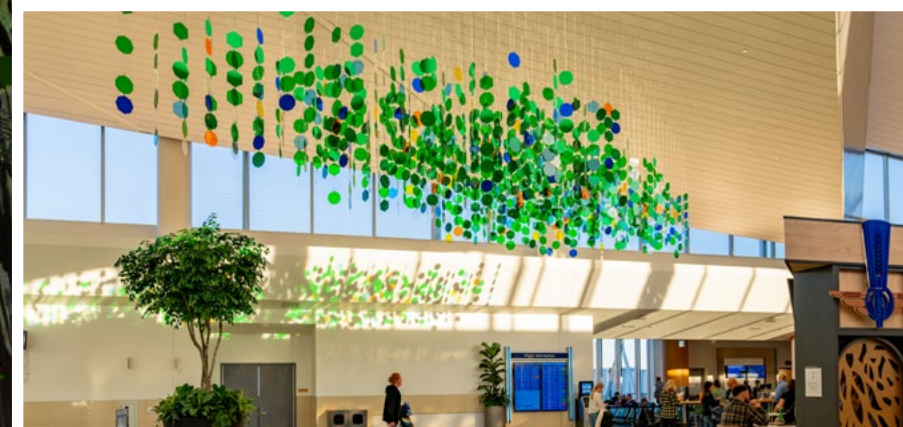
Through these engagements, the airport remains committed to collaboration, innovation, and long-term growth for the region.



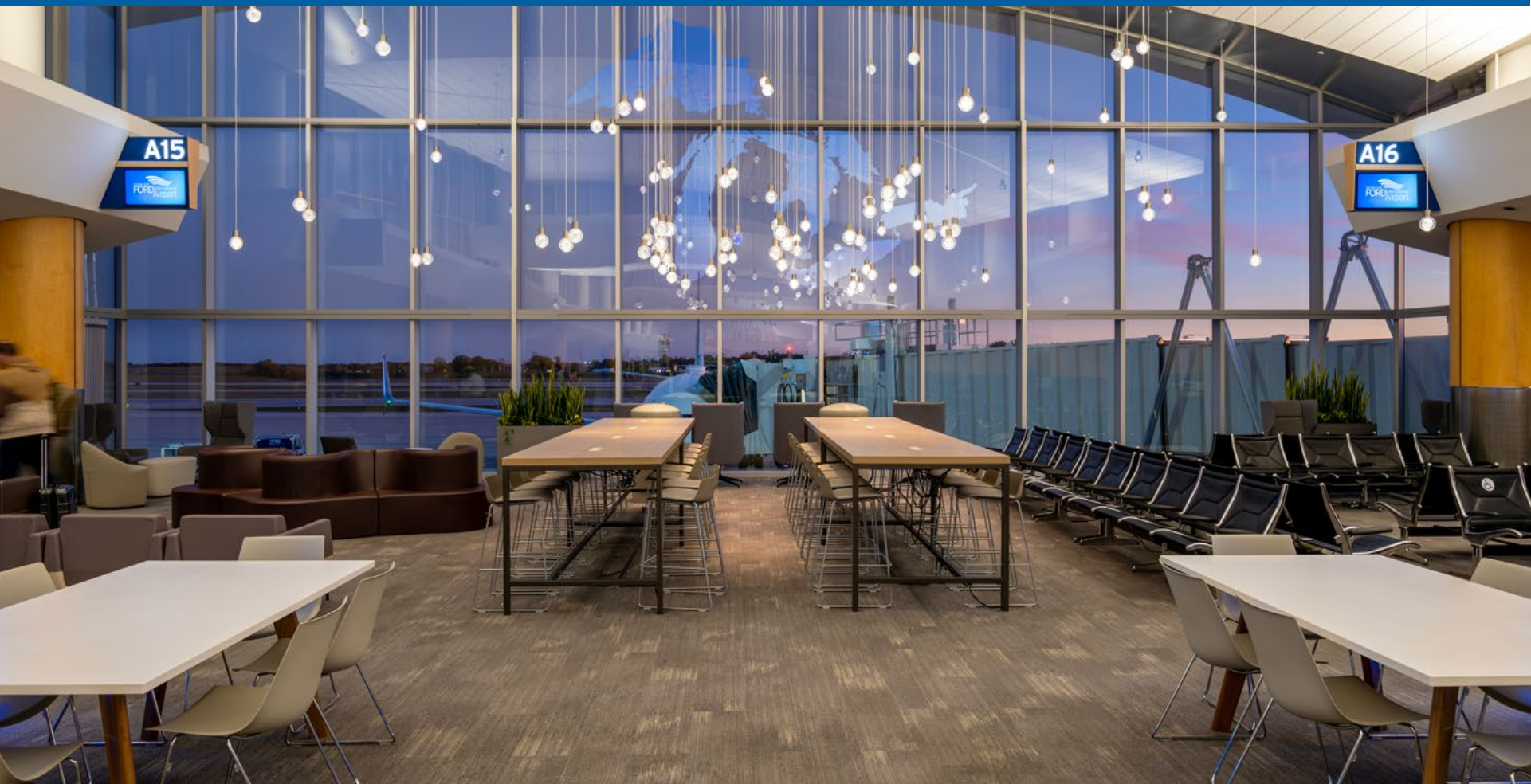
PUBLIC ART PROGRAM ENHANCES AIRPORT EXPERIENCE

As part of the Concourse A expansion, the airport partnered with local artists to create vibrant and engaging art installations for passengers. The concourse now features five murals by **AK Bueno**, **Maddison Chaffer**, **Jimmy Cobb**, **Devin Dumond**, and **Jill Eggers**, along with a suspended aerial installation by **Jeffrey Augustine Songco**. Additionally, four terrazzo art pieces were installed, created by **George Eberhardt III**, **Kim Nguyen**, **Maureen Nollette**, and **Michael Pflighaar**. The new sensory room also showcases an image by local photographer **Bryan Esler**, enhancing the calming space for travelers with sensory sensitivities. An illustrated piece by **Amy Nagi** is displayed at the Thornapple Essentials concession, depicting a variety of plants from West Michigan through all seasons.

The airport also commissioned artist **Dania Grevengoed** to create 12 murals along the roadway leading to and from the terminal. Located on the concrete beams in the median between John J. Oostema Blvd. and 44th St., her installation, *Growth (but they've been here the whole time)*, features magnified botanical line drawings of native West Michigan plants. The artwork highlights the beauty and ecological importance of the region's natural landscape, creating a welcoming and meaningful experience for travelers.



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025



The Ford International Airport is excited to continue enhancing the passenger experience, strengthening community engagement, and expanding its campus to meet the needs of West Michigan's growing population. Several key developments are on the horizon for 2025.

A new club lounge will debut on Concourse A, offering a full-service restaurant and bar, along with a second-story view of the airfield. Operated by **Airport Dimensions**, the lounge will welcome travelers through credit card and airline loyalty programs, as well as day pass options.

Allegiant Air will introduce two new nonstop destinations, with service to **Myrtle Beach International Airport (MYR)** beginning May 22, 2025 and **Jacksonville International Airport (JAX)** starting May 23, 2025. Tickets are available at **AllegiantAir.com**.

The airport will also welcome **Avelo Airlines** as its newest airline partner, becoming the eighth commercial airline to serve Ford International Airport. Avelo will launch nonstop flights to **Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU)** in May 2025 and **Lakeland Linder International Airport (LAL)** in June 2025, further expanding travel options for West Michigan passengers. Tickets are now on sale at **AveloAir.com**.

With these exciting developments, the airport remains committed to delivering a world-class travel experience and fostering continued growth in the region.

Upcoming Community Events

- Food Trucks at the Viewing Park start June 11th and occur every Wednesday from June to August from 10am-4pm
- Girls in Aviation Day: September 20
- Fire Prevention Day at the Airport Viewing Park: October 11
- Operation Handshake: November 26
- Holiday Music Festival: December 1– 5
- Operation Handshake: December 23

To stay up to date on everything airport related sign up for our newsletter at [FlyFord.org](https://flyford.org).



COMMUNITY REPORT WEB EXPERIENCE



GERALD R. FORD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT COMMUNITY REPORT 2024