

## The Gateway Transformation

As construction progress has continued throughout the year, airport patrons have seen more and more changes in the terminal building. In June, passengers began using the consolidated checkpoint for passenger security screening for both concourses. Around the same time, the new pre-security retail store, “Destination West Michigan,” opened in its new location as well as a new post-security retail store, “Touch of Grand Rapids,” opened in the new marketplace.



GFIAA Vice Chair Dan Koorndyk, Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital VP of Medical Affairs Dr. Matthew Denenberg, and GFIAA President & CEO Jim Gill cut the ribbon to officially open the pre-security Kids’ Port play area.

Early July brought the much anticipated opening of the new post-security Starbucks coffee shop. On July 26, GFIA and officials from Spectrum Health Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital held a ribbon cutting event to officially re-open the pre-security kid’s play area.

Still to come in Phase One, there will be a second play area in the post-

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## Frontier Airlines Returning to GFIA

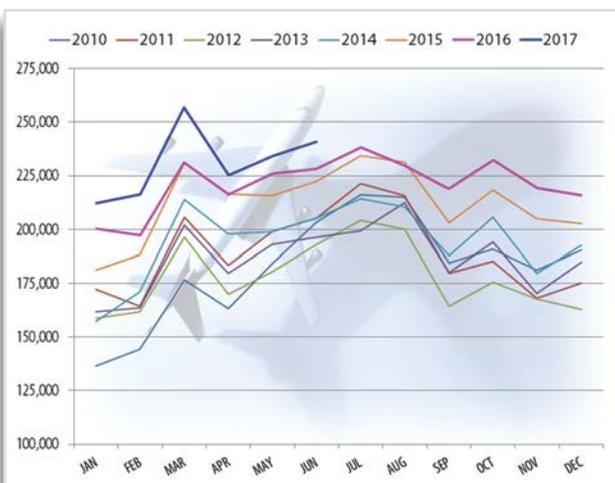
Frontier Airlines is returning to GFIA with four weekly nonstop flights to Orlando International Airport (MCO) beginning December 13, 2017. They will begin offering service to Denver International in April 2018.

Orlando is the number one market for nonstop service out of Grand Rapids with an average of almost 200 passengers per day each way; Denver is the number three market with an average of nearly 150 passengers each way.

“We are thrilled to welcome Frontier back into the Grand Rapids market,” said GFIA President & CEO Jim Gill. “Having another low cost

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## 2017 Is Truly One for the Record Books



June 2017 was a very busy month; it was the busiest June on record at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA) as we served more than 240,000 passengers - a 5.59 percent increase over June 2016. It also capped off the second quarter as the busiest second quarter in airport history by over 30,000 passengers, and the busiest overall quarter ever serving more than 700,452 passengers since the beginning of the year. Each month of 2017 has resulted in record-breaking passenger numbers, and the airport has seen ten straight months of record growth.

“We are halfway through 2017 and already seeing incredible record-breaking statistics,” said GFIA President & CEO Jim Gill. “This is a testament to our region, and our growing community along with our airline partnerships. Not only does this June go down in airport history, but 2017

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## More Room to Spread Your Wings

In 1995, the Airport Viewing Park opened at its current location at the end of Kraft Avenue just north of 52nd Street. Located just 600 feet from the main runway, it is the closest viewing area to any commercial runway in the U.S.; and over the past two decades more and more families, aviation enthusiasts, and photographers have flocked to the Viewing Park to enjoy a picnic, watch some airplanes and maybe even capture a few memories in photos.

With an average of more than 300 vehicles per day, it became fairly obvious that our 50-space parking lot and small picnic area needed an upgrade. So, in October 2016 we broke ground on this \$1.12 million renovation that includes a new pavilion, permanent restrooms, new seating areas, expanded parking spaces, new picnic facilities and more. Just seven months later GFIA, in partnership with the Cascade Community Foundation (CCF), celebrated the grand re-opening of the Airport Viewing Park with a ribbon cutting and press conference.

The Airport contributed \$675,000 to the project, with the balance funded through the Cascade Community Foundation's Capital Campaign. "Pat Combs and I have been delighted and grateful for the community support that was essential to the success of the Cascade Community Foundation's campaign," said campaign co-chair Sheila VanZile. "The project couldn't have happened without the significant support of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport and their amazing team."

"The re-opening of our Airport Viewing Park is our commitment to the community to preserve the memories that so many people in West Michigan have made, and to embark on new memories for generations to come," said GFIA President & CEO Jim Gill. "We are thankful for the partnership with the Cascade Community Foundation, and we appreciate the vision and hard work that went into these renovations."

Mathison & Mathison Architects designed the new Viewing Park, and contractor Owen Ames Kimball was the construction team.

We hope you take the opportunity to stop by the Airport Viewing Park for a little 'bird watching' in the future. We guarantee you'll have a front row seat to watch the aviation activity at your hometown airport.



Pictured above GFIAA Board chairman Roger Morgan, CCF representative Sheila VanZile, donor David Bottrall, and GFIAA President & CEO Jim Gill officially cut the ribbon to celebrate the re-opening of the Airport Viewing Park.

### frontier

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carrier option to stimulate competition and offer even more nonstop service is a welcome addition for our air service portfolio and our growing community."

With the addition of Frontier Airlines to our line-up, West Michigan travelers can now choose from six airlines (including Allegiant, American, Delta, Southwest, and United) offering daily nonstop flights to 24 major cities across the U.S. and one-stop travels around the world.

For more information or to book your travels on Frontier, visit [www.flyfrontier.com](http://www.flyfrontier.com).



## Saying Farewell

On June 9, 2017, GFIA Senior Vice President & COO Phil Johnson departed the Authority offices one final time. After spending more than 22 years overseeing the day-to-day operations of the airport, he was retiring. Johnson also played a key role in assisting the airport in air its air service development efforts with the addition of Southwest Airlines in 2013, and Allegiant Air in 2009, among others.

"Phil has been a valuable asset to our airport for more than two decades and we are thankful for his service," said GFIAA President & CEO Jim Gill. "He leaves behind a legacy of always working diligently to make our Airport the best it could be. We wish him all the best."

**farewell**

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### records

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now holds the title for busiest first half ever beating out 2016 by over 86,000 passengers."

Through June 2017, GFIA has served 1,385,730 total passengers – up 6.6 percent from 2016.

"The first phase of our Gateway Transformation Project will be complete at the end of summer, and we're excited to see what the combination of this redesign along with the growing business in West Michigan does for our numbers," said Gill. "We hope our continued growth prompts more nonstop service, and more options for those travelers who keep supporting us to achieve these record-breaking stats."

GFIA monthly passenger statistics are available on our website at [www.FlyFord.org/history.php](http://www.FlyFord.org/history.php).

# Honoring Our Nation's Heroes

Honor Flights are becoming a GFIA tradition, and we are proud to welcome veterans when they walk through our doors. On May 23, 60 veterans and their guests along with a host of volunteers and medics set off for an all-expenses paid trip from Grand Rapids to Washington, D.C. as a part of the Mid-Michigan Honor Flight. Honor Flights were created to thank veterans—most notably WWII, Korean, and Vietnam Veterans—for their service and give them a day in our nation's capital to see some of the historical military sites.



and WWII Memorials. GFIA was honored to send the veterans off in the morning, and welcome them home in the evening to a crowd of hundreds at the airport. Many of the veterans shook hands with the parade line, and fought back tears. One Vietnam Veteran told the crowd, "I didn't get this kind of reception when I came home from 'Nam, but to have it now is incredibly special. It's never too late to thank a vet."

Thank you to the Mid-Michigan Honor Flight for organizing these trips for our veterans, and thank you to all who serve our great nation!

While in D.C., the veterans are hosted to special visits at places like the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, the Changing of the Guard, and the Korean, Vietnam,



## farewell

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Johnson is an Accredited Airport Executive with the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE). He also holds professional affiliations with the Great Lakes Chapter of AAAE (GL-AAAE) and the Michigan Association of Airport Executives (MAAE).

Prior to beginning his airport management career in 1989, Johnson held a number of aviation related positions. Among these were Systems Engineer for Hughes Aircraft Company—designing air defense and air traffic control systems; Air Traffic Control Specialist for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)—controlling air traffic at Oakland Air Route Traffic Control Center; and Manager, Aircraft Ground Services for National Air Enterprises—managing aircraft line service functions at a Fixed Base Operator (FBO).

"I have so many wonderful memories in my 22 years at the Ford Airport, and I feel blessed to call Grand Rapids home," said Johnson. "It was a pleasure working with all of my coworkers over the years, and I look forward to seeing the continued growth and development within the Airport Authority."



## Make-A-Wish Honors

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport was selected as the 2017 Community Partner Honoree because of its game-changing impact on the Make-A-Wish® Michigan mission, and the Airport's commitment to creating special experiences for wish kids and families as they leave for their wish journeys.

Make-A-Wish® Michigan has sent hundreds of kids and their families through the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, and 75-percent of wishes involve travel.

"The Gerald R. Ford International Airport has been a wonderful partner for many years," said Karen Davis, president

**wish**

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# Preparation Yields Success At Tri-Annual Drill

Thursday, May 18, 2017 was a beautiful day; the sun was shining, there were a few clouds in the sky, and it was predicted to be a warm spring day in Grand Rapids — the kind of day that conjures up thoughts of quietly reading a book and sipping a latte outdoors. But then...

*Shortly after 9:00 am, an arriving ERJ 170 with 60 souls on board- 56 passengers and 4 crew members - collided with a vehicle on runway 8L/26R upon landing. There was one individual in the vehicle. The aircraft burst into flames with some survivors trapped on board; others were thrown clear of the wreckage, strewn about the airfield nearby. The Federal Aviation Administration Air Traffic Control Tower immediately contacted Airport Communications who called an Alert 3 and emergency services were put into action.*

Thankfully, that disastrous collision didn't really happen and, while the flames were real, they were part of a simulator that was on-site specifically for the purposes of the airport's tri-annual disaster drill; and those "victims" were actually students from the West Michigan Aviation Academy who volunteered to be the crash victims. Although the scenario was fake, the response teams were very real. In



addition to GFIA operations, airport police, and airport rescue firefighters, other first responders included the Kent County Emergency Management Team, Cascade Township Fire Department, Kent County Sheriff's Department, Kentwood Fire Department, Michigan State Police, Life EMS, Kent County EMS, Kent County Dispatch Authority, and the Medical Reserve Corps.



GFIA staff and the airport's mutual aid partners review the Airport Emergency Plan annually, completing a tabletop exercise as they review the elements of the Plan. However, the full-scale drill that is conducted every three years enables us to test the command, communications and resource management functions in a stress environment with real time deployment of resources.

"The purpose of this exercise is to not only comply with the highest FAA standards in safety and security, but to also identify our strengths and weaknesses when it comes to responding and preparing for an emergency," said GFIA President & CEO Jim Gill. "This exercise not only further trains our airport personnel in their roles and responsibilities, but it gives us a chance to collaborate with other local agencies. Coordination, consistency, and communication are essential in real-time situations when working with our mutual aid partners."



One of the most important parts of the training exercise is the debrief meeting that occurs several days after the event. It is then that we have the opportunity to review the implementation of the plan, to see how and where we can make improvements, and to review what additional resources we may need.

And, for the record — air travel is still by far the safest mode of travel. GFIA has never experienced a major aircraft incident in its 54-year history.

# Celebrating 30 Years and So Much More

On Wednesday, June 21, patients and families joined Aero Med employees and Spectrum Health leaders to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Aero Med. Since 1987, Aero Med has transported nearly 20,000 patients and logged over 19,000 flight hours. Thousands of lives have been impacted by the Aero Med team that provides care and transportation for critically ill and injured patients in the region.

A celebration like this is important because it gives former patients and their families an opportunity to meet the team who provided emergency care and transport; it is equally important to the Aero Med team members who provide the care.



Two Sikorsky helicopters – like the one pictured above left – operate out of the Aero Med hangar at GFIA. The King Air is based in Traverse City and used for longer distance transports.



After receiving a hug from a young boy who was once a patient, pilot David Anderson tears up and smiles. “Its very rewarding. I love to fly. It’s the best job in the world.”

Currently at GFIA, the primary helicopter is a Sikorsky S76C++ with an S76B serving as a backup. The pilots fly approximately 750 trips each year.

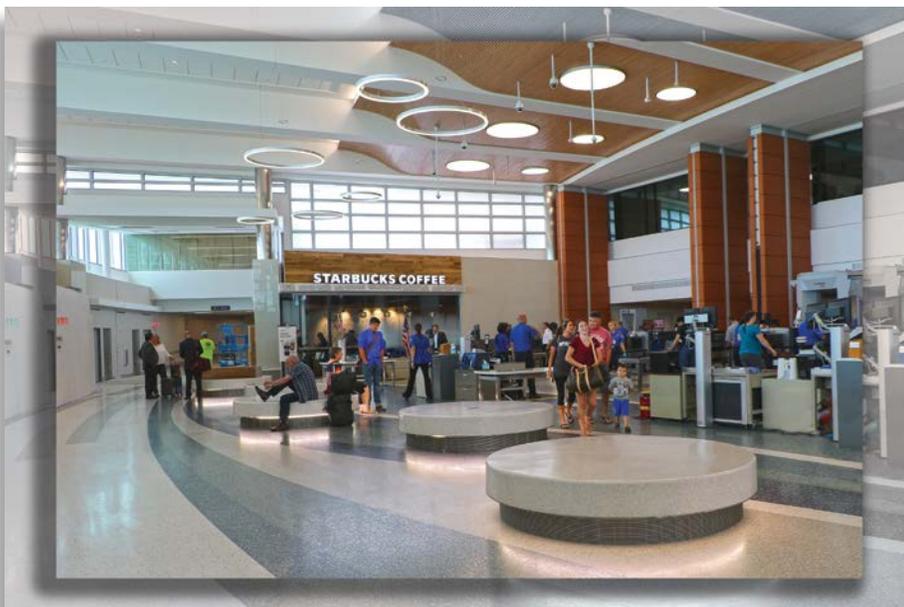
If you want to learn more about Aero Med’s history and services, visit [www.spectrumhealth.com/aeromed](http://www.spectrumhealth.com/aeromed).

## gateway

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security area, nursing mothers rooms both pre- and post-security, a Firehouse Subs shop on Concourse A, a Founders Restaurant and Pub in the marketplace, a new business center at the beginning of Concourse B, and the highly anticipated renovated observation area located on the mezzanine level of the passenger terminal facility.

Completion of these projects is expected over the course of the next two to six months.



Passengers use the new consolidated passenger security screening checkpoint, the post-security Starbucks is now open, while work on the Prospect Hill Brewhouse and other new amenities continues.

## wish

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& CEO of Make-A-Wish® Michigan. This year’s Wish Ball theme was Let Your Dreams Take Flight, which is exactly what special friends like the Gerald R. Ford International Airport allow our wish children to do.”



Adeline, a Make-a-Wish recipient, presented a handcrafted award plate to GFIAA Marketing Director Tara Hernandez.



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## News In Brief

- » The next three meetings of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority Board are currently scheduled to occur on August 30, September 27, and October 25. Board meetings begin at 8:30 AM and are held in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. All meetings are open to the public.
- » We are hosting our Runway 5K on Saturday, October 7. The airport has selected Make-A-Wish Michigan as its charity of choice to donate the proceeds. Keep an eye out on social media for more information coming soon! (@FlyGRFord and Facebook.com/GeraldRFordInternationalAirport).

## Master Plan Update

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport Master Plan Update work continues as the pre-planning and investigation phases of this comprehensive study are now in their final stages. Forecasts for passenger enplanements and operations have been developed and submitted to the FAA for review and approval. Utilizing these forecasts, the consultants have completed facility requirements analyses for runway capacity, as well as airside, terminal, landside, general aviation, and support facility developments.

Data produced from this analysis has shown the need for expanded airside, terminal area, and landside development for the short, intermediate, and long term planning horizons. Anticipate future expansions of the terminal build, parking facilities, roadway circulation, and tenant facilities. Also identified was the need for airfield geometry changes as a result of changes in FAA standards. Airfield geometry standards assist in the determination of pavement intersection locations on the airfield to minimize the potential for a runway incursion.

The Master Plan Advisory Committee will be meeting again in August and September and are planning to host a Public Presentation near the end of September. To be advised of these or other dates and for other information on the Master Plan Update, visit our website at [www.FlyFord.org/environment-zoning.php](http://www.FlyFord.org/environment-zoning.php)

**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 Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority office:

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