

## It's a Broken Record (Again)!

2016 has certainly been a year for the record books! For nine of the twelve months, GFIA set new monthly passenger records. In July, we served the largest number of passengers ever (238,237) in a single month.

So, it's only appropriate that we close out the year by setting an annual passenger record as well - and that's exactly what we did! GFIA served 2,653,630 passengers in 2016, which is more than a 4% increase over our previous record set in 2015.

We couldn't have done it without our business partners, and certainly not without you, the West Michigan community who make us part of your travel plans. **Thank you!**

## A New Year; A New Leader

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority Board is pleased to introduce James "Jim" Gill as its new President & CEO. Gill comes to Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA) from Allegheny County Airport Authority in Pittsburgh.

"We are thrilled to welcome Jim to West Michigan, and we know he will thrive as the next CEO of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport," said GFIA Board Chairman Roger Morgan. "Jim has a track record of strong leadership, community partnerships, and he is well known and well respected among his peers in the aviation industry. Jim will continue to spark our growth as we invest in customer service, technology and construction projects, and serve as a catalyst for West Michigan's economic progress."

Gill is an industry veteran with more than two decades of senior airport management experience. With deep roots in the Pittsburgh area, he has served



**new year**  
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## A Peek Behind the Construction Wall

In a city that holds the title *Beer City, USA*, it seems appropriate that the Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA) include a restaurant featuring beer from Grand Rapids' largest brewery, along with other new restaurant and retail space.

Global restaurateur HMSHost, in partnership with the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, have signed an agreement that will put new restaurants front and center as a part of the airport's Gateway Transformation Project. In addition, Hudson Group, the largest travel retailer in North America with over 950 stores in 83 airports, will be opening a marketplace with Michigan-themed retail offerings post-security.

Prospect Hill Brewhouse will be located post-security in the newly expanded area of the airport. The restaurant will feature a selection of beverages including Founders beer, and a menu of handcrafted deli sandwiches like the Buffalo-style roasted chicken, bacon, tomato and bleu cheese served on a French roll; a cheesesteak featuring provolone cheese and roasted peppers; and a pulled pork sandwich with colby jack cheese and Dirty Bastard BBQ sauce on a toasted ciabatta.

"Our passengers were craving more options for food and beverage post-security, and this partnership with HMSHost will accomplish just that," said Gerald R. Ford International Airport Senior VP & COO Phil Johnson. "We are excited to have a local flair in our restaurant scene, and what better way to live up to our title of *Beer City, USA* than by adding



## Gateway Transformation

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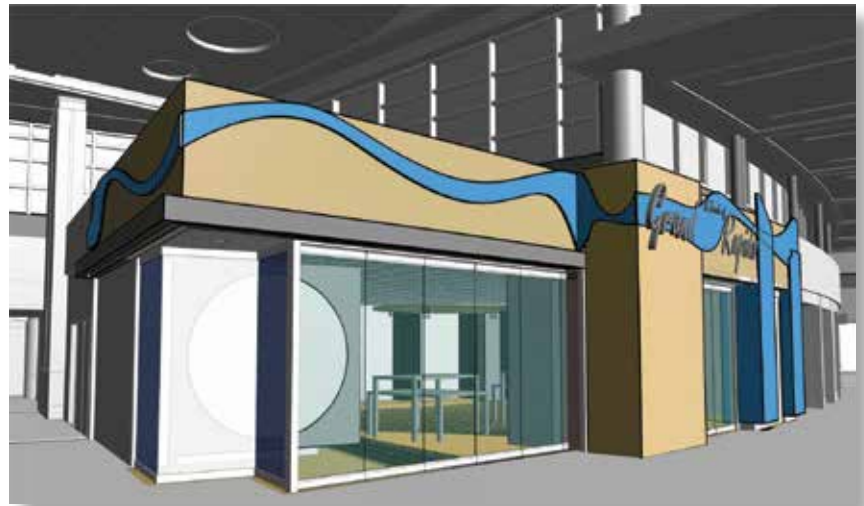
the Prospect Hill Brewhouse right here in the airport?”

In addition to the new Brewhouse, HMSHost will add a new post-security Starbucks, a restaurant called The Local @ GRR on Concourse A, as well as another casual dining restaurant on Concourse B and a refresh of the pre-security Starbucks. A new Burger Federation restaurant along with a Firehouse Subs is also in the works at GFIA.

“We are thrilled to have the opportunity to continue partnering with Gerald R. Ford International Airport. It is very exciting for HMSHost to be able to contribute to the many great enhancements happening at the airport,” said HMSHost Vice President of Business Development Bryan Loden. “The restaurants we will be opening will deliver an authentic taste of Michigan and will offer the variety and quality that travelers demand.”

Prospect Hill Brewhouse is set to open in summer 2017, with the other HMSHost offerings opening soon after.

Retail space in the new Gateway Transformation Project includes a Touch of Grand Rapids store featuring West Michigan themed products and is a partnership with the Grand Rapids Art Museum. Additionally, our Grand Rapids Magazine Travel Stores will be located on each concourse, and a Hudson News retail store will be located pre-security in the Grand Hall.



## Arrivals and Departures on the Airport Authority Board

After serving on the Airport Authority Board for the past 12 years, and as the vice chair for the past six, former Kent County Commissioner Dick VanderMolen has retired.

During his tenure, VanderMolen has been part of many major projects including the building of a parking ramp, installation of the hearing loop system, creation of the stormwater treatment system, the addition of two gates and remodeling of Concourse B, and the current Gateway Transformation Project. He helped us celebrate our 50th anniversary, and was an integral part of the planning for the arrival of the West Michigan Aviation Academy, and two new airlines (Allegiant and Southwest)!



Returning to the Airport Authority Board after a ten year absence, Kent County Commissioner Dan Koorndyk replaces VanderMolen on the GFIAA Board. During Dan’s previous term with us (2003—2006) the airport completed its 2004 Master Plan Update, opened the ever-popular cell phone waiting lot, began the architectural design of the parking garage, and experienced the first-ever year serving more than 2-million passengers.

Dan also served as Chairman of the Kent County Board of Commissioners from 2013 — 2015.



## A Capitol Idea!

Beginning April 4, American Airlines will begin offering nonstop service from the Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GRR) to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA). The service will feature 12 weekly round trips and commences just in time for Spring Break. Tickets are already available for purchase.

“Nonstop service to Reagan National Airport has been a target market of ours, and we are happy to have this route added for both our leisure and business travelers headed to the Washington, D.C. area,” said Gerald R. Ford International Airport Marketing & Communications Director, Tara Hernandez. “We are confident that our West Michigan community will support this service as we continue to expand our route map with American Airlines.”

American Airlines has served Gerald R. Ford International Airport passengers for over 25 years, and also has nonstop service to Chicago–O’Hare, Dallas/Fort Worth, Charlotte, and Philadelphia.

The addition of DCA brings to 24 the total number of nonstop destinations offered by our airline partners from GRR. Our airline partners are American, Delta, United, Southwest, and Allegiant.

The nonstop destinations include:

- » Atlanta
- » Baltimore
- » Charlotte
- » Chicago–O’Hare
- » Chicago Midway
- » Dallas/Fort Worth
- » Denver
- » Detroit
- » Fort Lauderdale
- » Fort Myers
- » Houston
- » Las Vegas
- » Minneapolis/St. Paul
- » New York–LaGuardia
- » New York–Newark
- » Orlando International
- » Orlando–Sanford
- » Philadelphia
- » Phoenix–Mesa
- » Punta Gorda
- » St. Petersburg–Clearwater
- » Tampa International
- » Washington DC–Dulles
- » Washington DC–Reagan National

At Gerald R. Ford International Airport, we pride ourselves on being West Michigan’s Gateway to the World. In addition to these 24 locations, you can make one-stop connections to nearly anywhere in the world.

Remember, no matter where life takes you, getting there is better here.

## Airport Marketing Earns Excellence Award

Airports Council International North America (ACI-NA) announced the recipients of the 2016 Excellence in Airport Marketing, Communications, and Customer Service Awards on November 3, 2016 at its annual conference in Salt Lake City.

With more than 320 entries in 19 categories, this year’s awards recognized the quality of work, abundance of talent, and creativity within the marketing, communications, and customer service field of the airport industry.

GFIA won first place in the Digital Advertising category for 2016.



### new year

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13 years of that time at the Allegheny County Airport Authority, whose two airports serve more than eight million passengers per year. There he has been CFO since 2007, and added the COO position to his duties in 2015. He has also previously served as Interim Executive Director. Gill also spent six years at Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority as Deputy Airport Director & CFO.

Gill is an Accredited Airport Executive with the American Association of Airport Executives and an International Airport Professional through Airports Council International, one of a very select group of airport professionals to hold both credentials.

“I am delighted to be joining the talented team at GFIA and I look forward to moving forward together,” said Gill. “An airport is so often the first and last impression that travelers have of the community and region, and so one must be committed to delivering outstanding operational performance while exceeding customer service expectations. I know we will continue to have an outstanding record of success in West Michigan, and I am excited to help lead the airport into a new, expansive era while working closely with the Authority Board, airport management, staff, and our community and business partners.”

GFIA Board Member and head of the search committee Floyd Wilson, Jr. said, “Jim has significant business and economic development experience. That is a perfect fit for the direction the board has envisioned for the new Authority.”

An airport is so often the first and last impression that travelers have of the community and region. I know we will continue to have an outstanding record of success in West Michigan.

*~Jim Gill  
GFIAA President & CEO*

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*Getting there is better here.*

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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 February 22, March 29, and April 26. Current Board meetings begin at 8:30 a.m. Meetings are held in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. All meetings are open to the public.
- » The Gerald R. Ford International Airport's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report has once again been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. This Certificate is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government unit and its management. This is the 23<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year that the Airport has received this honor.

## Holiday Music Festival Celebrates Season of Giving



The South Christian Madrigals were one of 15 area choral groups that performed during our music festival this year. Many thanks to all our donors who helped us donate 80 lbs. of food to Mel Trotter Ministries as well. That was one delivery Santa was happy to make!

**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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**Airport Board** | Roger Morgan\*, chair; Steve Heacock; Birgit Klohs; Dan Koorndyk\*; David Slikkers, Ted Vonk\*; Floyd Wilson, Jr.

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