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## Ford Airport Sets Record for Seventh Straight Year, Surprises GRRand Passengers



*(Above): Delta Air Lines passenger Keith O'Brien (left), and Southwest passenger Karen Burluson, were surprised as the "GRRand Passengers" as the Ford Airport celebrated its record-setting 2019.*

**Grand Rapids, Mich.** – The Gerald R. Ford International (GFIA) Airport has set a new all-time passenger record for 2019, marking the seventh consecutive year that the Airport has seen record-setting growth.

In 2019, 3,587,767 passengers flew in and out of GFIA, an increase of 9.88-percent from 2018. December growth helped cap the record-setting year with an increase of 12.85-percent year-over-year. December 2018 saw 275,681 total passengers, but 2019 surpassed that with 311,111 enplaned and deplaned passengers. The Ford Airport has seen growth in 77 of the last 84 months, and 27 straight.

“Our record-setting growth is a testament to the support of our community, and the growth of our region,” said GFIA President & CEO Tory Richardson. “We have grown tremendously over the last seven years because we continue to add nonstop routes, state-of-the-art amenities and technology, and our guest first focus. We appreciate our loyal West Michigan passengers and visitors for choosing the Ford Airport in their travels. You are not only supporting local jobs and our local economy, but the more you fly with us, the more we will grow.”



GFIA celebrated the milestone by surprising two lucky passengers on Tuesday afternoon.

Karen Burleson from Caledonia, a Southwest Airlines passenger, and Keith O'Brien from Comstock Park, a Delta Air Lines passenger, were chosen as the "GRRand Passengers" as they deplaned their flights. The two were each met with a balloon bouquet, cupcakes, cheering employees and guests, along with an array of prizes. Each received two \$350 travel vouchers – good for travel from the Ford Airport any time in 2020. Additionally, they received three free days of parking, a Hudson News & Gifts travel package valued at more than \$350, gift cards and goodies from Starbucks and HMS Host, and more.

"I did not expect this today," said a surprised Burleson. "I love this airport and my daughter just moved to Texas so I'm looking forward to going to see her with my voucher."

The growth over the last few years started in 2013 with a passenger record of 2,237,979. In 2018, the Ford Airport surprised its 3 millionth passenger. GFIA has served over 80 million passengers since January 1, 1964, and March 2019 was the single busiest month in Airport history with 341,534 total passengers.

Continued upward trends has meant changes in the facility and ongoing construction projects for the Ford Airport. [Phase one of the Gateway Transformation Project concluded in September 2017](#), and phase two is slated to complete in Summer 2020. The project's main feature includes upgrading airline ticket counters, baggage claim space, and eliminating TSA screening machines in the front-facing areas of the lobby. Construction also includes new terrazzo flooring, lighting fixtures, new restrooms, new food & beverage space, and much more.

Spring 2020 will also see the beginning of [Project Elevate](#) – a three-development expansion that commences with a \$90 million extension and reconstruction of Concourse A to accommodate projected passenger growth over the next 20 years.

"It is crucial that our facilities keep up with our growing passenger demand," said Richardson. "We are committed to not only offering more options for nonstop flights and competition when searching for travel, but our amenities, technology, customer service and infrastructure all need to keep pace with that advancement. We are excited to see what the future brings, and we appreciate the partnerships with all of our airlines and tenants."

GFIA monthly passenger statistics are available on our website: <https://www.grr.org/history.php>

For more information or interviews, please contact Tara Hernandez.

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## About GFIA

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA) is the second busiest airport in Michigan. The Airport served over 3.58 million passengers in 2019 and over 9,000 travelers pass through GFIA each day. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport offers nonstop service to 34 major market destinations with more than 140 daily nonstop flights. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is



managed and operated by the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority. GFIA generates over \$3.1 billion in annual economic output throughout West Michigan and employs over 2,000 people. For more information on GFIA visit: [www.flyford.org](http://www.flyford.org) or follow the airport on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter: @FlyGRFord