



For Immediate Release

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Ford Airport Announces Leadership Changes

Grand Rapids, Michigan, November 30, 2018 – The Gerald R. Ford International Airport will undertake a national search for a new leader as current CEO and President Jim Gill transitions to a consulting role.

The GFIA Airport Authority Board, which oversees operations of Michigan’s second busiest airport, accepted Gill’s resignation on Nov. 30. Gill transitions immediately to a consulting role, which will allow him to pursue opportunities in the private sector that have been presented to him.

The Airport Authority Board also appointed Brian Picardat to serve as interim CEO while the airport undertakes a national search for a permanent replacement. Picardat, who currently serves as vice president and chief financial officer, is a 30-year veteran with the airport leadership team.

“Under the leadership of Jim Gill, Ford Airport has enjoyed double-digit growth in both passengers and non-airline revenue,” said Board Chairman Dan Koorndyk. “He has overseen the successful completion of the first phase of our Gateway Transformation project, which is designed to enhance the customer experience.

“Jim is respected throughout the aeronautics industry. He brought tremendous airport operational knowledge to West Michigan, allowing us to undertake significant enhancements to Ford Airport. We are gratified he will continue to work with our team in a consulting role.”

During his tenure with the airport, which is now the second fastest-growing commercial airport in the country, Gill was responsible for:

- Completing the first of two phases of a \$45 million Gateway Transformation project for the airport, which included a consolidated passenger security checkpoint, a new post-security marketplace with a new restaurant and Starbucks, refreshed pre-security business center, new lounge areas on both concourses and other amenities, and planning, designing and securing financing for the second phase, which is currently under construction
- Reaching a nearly 16 percent increase in passenger traffic in 2018, which will result in the airport welcoming its 3 millionth customer in December
- Strengthening the relationship between the airport and its carriers, the TSA and FAA, as well as other partners
- Increasing nonstop routes, including direct flights to Washington, D.C., Phoenix and Miami – with additional routes in the works
- Growing non-airline revenue, including parking and concessions, by more than 25 percent
- Enhancing technology, including the launch of a mobile app for travelers that features flight departure and arrival information, parking availability, security wait times and more

- Adding 716 parking spaces in long-term parking in the east lot, which is due to open in January 2019, to accommodate increased passenger growth
- Leading efforts for the commercial development of the airport property to expand travel, retail and restaurant amenities
- Securing the Airports Council International-North America annual convention in 2020, which is expected to bring in airline executives and industry leaders, as well as concessionaires, suppliers and consultants from around the country and the globe to Grand Rapids

“I have appreciated the opportunity to play a key role in this exciting growth chapter in the history of the Ford Airport,” Gill said. “Working together, we have achieved many good things, positioning the airport for continued expansion and growth.

“I am pleased this consulting arrangement will allow me to continue supporting Dan, the board and our team at the airport while allowing me to pursue opportunities in the public sector that have been presented to me.”

The Airport Authority Board will begin the process to select a national search firm to aid in the identification of CEO candidates. The board expects the search process will be completed in 2019.

Under the direction of the Board, Picardat will lead the day-to-day operations of the Ford Airport with the support of a five-person leadership team. He brings deep financial and operational knowledge to his interim role guiding the 110 Airport Authority employees.

Picardat currently oversees accounting and finance, purchasing, parking and ground transportation. He also serves as treasurer for the Authority.

About GFIA

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is the second busiest airport in Michigan. The Airport served over 2.8 million passengers in 2017 and more than 7,000 travelers pass through GFIA each day. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport offers nonstop service to 27 major market destinations with more than 120 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 or follow the airport on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @FlyGRFord.

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