



# AirportConnections

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## Downtown Connections Getting Easier

On January 3, 2006, The Rapid is launching a new shuttle service between downtown Grand Rapids and Gerald R. Ford International Airport. The Air Porter Shuttle will operate daily from 7:00 am to 9:30 pm with stops at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, the Days Inn Downtown, the Marriott Courtyard Downtown, and GFIA. (Upon completion, the new JW Marriott will also be added to the route.) Air Porter shuttles will arrive every 30 minutes, operating in a continuous loop. This service will replace the current traditional ITP bus service that operates to



**AIR PORTER**  
AIRPORT TO DOWNTOWN SHUTTLE

the airport, as well as the individual hotel shuttles for these downtown locations. While the service is available to anyone traveling between downtown and the airport, conventioners are sure to be pleased with this convenient new service.

“The offering of this service is a very clear indication of the growing convention industry in West Michigan.”

-- Steve Wilson, President of the Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Each shuttle will be wheelchair accessible, have extra wide entry doors and premium seats, and will carry up to 15 passengers in heated and air conditioned comfort. Shuttle drivers will offer assistance with luggage and other boarding needs.

Tickets for the Air Porter service may be purchased with cash or credit cards on board the shuttles or at the airport kiosk located across from baggage claim at a cost of \$15 for one-way or \$25 for roundtrip. For more information you may visit their website at [www.grandrapidsairporter.com](http://www.grandrapidsairporter.com). →

## New Air Service At GRR? You Can Bet On It!



Beginning Sunday, October 30, travelers at GRR have a new destination to choose from: Northwest Airlines (NWA) introduces nonstop flights four days per week to Las Vegas (LAS). This new service is offered on the Airbus A319 aircraft, with 16 seats in first class and 108 seats in coach. Flights will depart from GRR on Sunday, Monday, Thursday and Friday at 9:00 pm, arriving at LAS at 10:05 pm (local time). The return flights will depart LAS at 11:10 pm (local time) and arrive at GRR at 5:55 am the next morning.

“We are very excited about starting another new city nonstop out of GRR. Las Vegas is the third most popular destination for travelers out of GRR and we believe that southwest Michigan will enjoy this new service. Gerald R. Ford International Airport continues to grow and we are very pleased to be a part of its growth,” said Dan Conner, Northwest Airlines Station Manager in Grand Rapids.

Service to McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas brings the number of nonstop destinations offered by Northwest Airlines at GRR to seven and the total nonstop destinations available from GRR to 16. →

## Comair Receives FAA's Diamond Award

For the 11th year in a row, Delta Connection carrier Comair has been awarded the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) most prestigious safety honor – the Diamond Award – for excellence in aviation maintenance training. To qualify for the FAA Diamond Award, at least 25 percent of a carrier's eligible maintenance technicians must pass specialized, ongoing training over the course of one year. Comair surpassed this qualification with more than 70 percent participation.



“Comair's ongoing commitment to aviation safety through education is evidenced by this recognition. The airline is challenging its aviation maintenance technicians to remain on the leading edge of aviation safety,” said Fred Walker, manager of FAA Southern Division. Founded in 1977, Comair has been the Delta Connection carrier operating at GFIA since 1986. Currently, it operates an all-jet fleet of Bombardier CRJ regional jets. →

CITY	DAILY DEPARTURES
Atlanta (ATL)	6
Chicago - O'Hare (ORD)	12
Cincinnati (CVG)	6
Cleveland (CLE)	5
Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW)	3
Detroit (DTW)	8
Houston (IAH)	2
Las Vegas (LAS)	1
Memphis (MEM)	1
Milwaukee (MKE)	7
Minneapolis (MSP)	5
New York - La Guardia (LGA)	2
New York - Newark (EWR)	2
Orlando (MCO)	1
Tampa (TPA)	1
Washington DC (DCA)	1

Departures total includes all carriers serving this destination.

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# GFIA Tenant Profile: Standard Parking

What do people enjoy most about flying? Well, parking might not typically be at the top of the list, but at Gerald R. Ford International, we've tried to make it a customer service amenity that allows you to experience first-class before you fly. And an important partner in that effort is Standard Parking.

In existence since 1929, Standard Parking began providing parking services at GFIA in September 2000 when they introduced Valet Parking. For a fee of \$14/day you may drop off your vehicle at the terminal curbside, receive assistance with your bags, complete minimal paperwork, and leave the parking to us. When your return flight lands and the flight attendant gives the OK to resume cellular phone use, simply call ahead to the Valet attendant and your vehicle will be ready for you at the curbside when you get there – warm and snow-free in winter, or aired out and cool in summer. And, while this service is used primarily by the business traveler, it's a great convenience for the leisure traveler as well. Valet parking is open from 4:30 am until the last flight arrives each night.

Standard also operates our remote Express Shuttle lot. This parking option offers another level of service while remaining cost-effective for the traveler at only \$6 per day or \$36 per week. When you pull into the lot, a shuttle driver is dispatched to meet you at your vehicle, where he or she will help you with your luggage and give you a written reminder of the exact location of your vehicle. You will then be dropped off at the terminal curbside. When you return, the shuttle driver will pick you up curbside and take you back directly to your car. The driver will assist you with your luggage and will ensure your vehicle starts. If you have difficulties (e.g. a flat tire or dead battery), assistance is available at no charge to you. As with all of our parking lots at GFIA, Express Shuttle parking is open 24/7.



A passenger hands off his keys to the Valet prior to checking in for his flight.



The blue shuttles operate from the Express Shuttle lot.

So how is the parking business at GFIA? "Parking is one of the most highly complimented services at the airport, and Standard Parking is a valuable partner in providing this amenity," said Aeronautics Director Jim Koslosky. "We are fortunate to have so many convenient parking options for our patrons to choose from." Dan Villalobos, Facility Manager for Standard Parking, adds, "We are pleased to have a key role in this essential customer service at GFIA. Our services continue to expand and our base of repeat customers is growing."

So next time you travel through GFIA, remember that you have numerous parking options to choose from. Whether you prefer short-term, long-term, remote, or valet parking, we would love to start and end your next trip in first-class style. →

## Local Charities Get a Lift From GFIA Tenants

On August 19, the American Cancer Society roped in West Michigan's fundraising community at its third annual Cattle Baron's Ball, which raised more than \$250,000 and hosted over 600 guests at the Alticor, Inc. corporate hangar. Live music, gaming, live and silent auctions and a mechanical bull ride provided attendees with plenty of action. At the heart of the Ball was the opportunity to pay tribute to those who have battled cancer.

to fly in small airplanes piloted by both wheelchair and non-wheelchair aviators.



Volunteer pilot Ron Shamblin (left) with Sarah, Abigail (seated) and their dad after their plane ride.

Thirteen pilots provided plane rides to nearly 180 participants and family members throughout the day. This year's event was coordinated by Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. Each participating child receives a t-shirt and aviator-wings pin to commemorate the occasion. Pilots donate their time and fuel.

In addition, an Aero Med response helicopter and a Fire/Rescue vehicle from GFIA's Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting unit. In all, the event raised a little over \$30,000 to help those individuals needing transportation for medical treatment at distant facilities. →



Peter Elzinga taxis in aboard the Stearman at the CareAffaire for Wings of Mercy.



Guests at the Cattle Baron's Ball pose here with "the Duke".

On September 10, Challenge Air held its eighth annual Fly Day event, hosted by Northern Air. Challenge Air's Fly Day events join communities and families to inspire physically, mentally or emotionally challenged and seriously ill children and young adults by providing the opportunity

On September 17, Wings of Mercy held its second annual CareAffaire at Northern Air. This year's event included a pancake breakfast, product sales, and aircraft rides ranging from \$25-\$300 per person on small Cessna and Piper airplanes, corporate jets, and a Stearman, open cockpit biplane.

## Giving From the Heart

Twice each year, GFIA partners with Michigan Community Blood Centers (MCBC) to host a blood drive at the airport. The most recent drive was held September 30, 2005.

Previous Total	593 pints
Given at 9/30/05 blood drive	22 pints
Total donated at airport drives	615 pints





## Tips for Holiday Travel

As you read this, we are coming into two of the busiest travel holidays of the year: Thanksgiving and Christmas. If you are among the many who will be traveling by air this holiday season, we have some tips for you that might just make your trip a bit easier.

### As You Pack:

- » Know what's in your bag. It may seem like a silly thing, but take a good look through your bag prior to packing to ensure no prohibited items were left or stored in the bag.
- » Then, do not pack prohibited items (visit [www.tsa.dot.gov](http://www.tsa.dot.gov) for a complete listing). And remember, lighters are now on the TSA's list of prohibited items and will be confiscated at the checkpoint. Remember: Lighters are now a prohibited item in both checked and carry-on bags.
- » Pack toiletries and other personal items in large, clear, re-sealable bags to avoid handling of them in case your bag must be hand-screened.
- » Don't over-pack. If your suitcase or bag has to be searched, it is much easier for your belongings to be replaced neatly in the bag if there is some room.
- » If you choose to lock your luggage, use a TSA approved lock so that screeners can gain access to your bag if needed without damaging your locks or calling you back to the checkpoint.
- » Do not pack wrapped presents. Wrapped gifts in checked or carry-on bags may need to be opened for inspection. You should either ship wrapped gifts ahead of time or wait until you arrive at your destination to wrap them. Be cautious about the presents you travel with. Many toys that look like weapons will prompt a secondary screening.
- » Do not pack film or cameras in your checked luggage. Screening equipment for checked bags can damage undeveloped film and cameras. Place these items in your carry-on bag.

**holiday travel tips**  
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## Airport FBO Has Reason to Celebrate

Northern Air, Inc., with its sister companies Northern Jet Management and The Company Jet, is GFIA's largest fixed based operator (FBO). Since 1946, Northern Air has focused on providing a variety of aviation services including aircraft operation and maintenance for most types of private corporate aircraft, fueling and de-icing services, interior and exterior aircraft detailing, flight lessons, corporate aircraft management, fractional jet ownership, and on-demand executive charter services. They also offer new and quality pre-owned aircraft for purchase.



2005 marks a decade of solid growth for these organizations as an FBO and aircraft management company. Together, these sister companies employ 136 staff as service personnel, aircraft maintenance technicians, schedulers, and pilots (up from 55 just ten years ago). In the past ten years the organization has invested approximately \$2 million in capital improvements with new hangars, upgraded business offices, and building exterior renovations. →

## Airport Parking Project Enters Design Phase

On August 31, 2005, the Kent County Aeronautics Board voted to move forward with the detailed design phase for the planned parking ramp and accompanying capital improvements. The Tennessee-based firm of Gresham Smith and Partners was selected to complete this detailed design phase. The concept of the ramp was first introduced in the airport's 1992 Master Plan Update, and reinforced in a 1999 Landside Transportation Master Plan Study and again in the most recent Airport Master Plan Update completed in 2004. Based on conservative growth estimates, GFIA will need to add 4,200 parking spaces by 2023.

However, this capital improvement project is about more than the addition of parking spaces. There are several additional supporting structures and improvements that will complete and enhance the value of the 4,800-space parking ramp, maximize the investments already made in terminal renovations, increase safety, and serve as conveniences for the traveling public.

The additional features under consideration include a vehicle security plaza, a terminal roadway canopy, escalator/elevator lobbies, and pedestrian sky bridges. Roadway and utility modifications will also be completed during this project.

The detailed design is expected to be completed for the Aeronautics Board's approval and authorization to bid by the end of 2006. The \$120 million capital improvement project will be paid for through a carefully structured financing plan, which combines airport revenue, bond financing, and fees from rental car users. →

**Below: An initial architectural rendering showing the parking ramp with additional features. The end result of the detailed design phase may appear different than shown.**



## NEWS IN BRIEF

- » The next two meetings of the Kent County Aeronautics Board will take place Wednesday, November 30 and Wednesday, December 28, 2005, at 8:30 am. All meetings are held in the International Room in the passenger terminal building and are open to the public.
- » Brian Picardat, A.A.E., Finance and Administration Director at GFIA, has been appointed chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee of the American Association of Airport Executives. Brian has also been elected treasurer of the Michigan Association of Airport Executives.
- » GFIA will be partnering with Michigan Community Blood Centers to host a community blood drive on Friday, May 19, 2006, in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. Walk-ins are welcome, or contact Donna Thomas, Office Administrator, at 616.233.6046 to reserve a time.
- » GFIA's Airfield Maintenance Unit was highlighted in a recent issue of *The Tool Carrier*, a nationally distributed trade publication, for an article on New Holland's Bidirectional tractors. Airfield Maintenance uses the tractor for both mowing and snow removal.
- » ***Airport Connections* is now available electronically. If you'd like to sign up to receive this quarterly newsletter by email, please go to [www.flygrandrapids.org](http://www.flygrandrapids.org) and click on the e-subscription link to sign up!**

### holiday travel tips

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- » Know your airline's limits. Most carriers limit passengers to two checked items weighing less than 50 lbs. each. Bags in excess of 50 lbs, or additional checked bags, will incur additional costs. Also, most airlines limit passengers to one carry-on bag and one personal item (e.g. a purse, backpack, or laptop computer). Be sure to check with your airline for size restrictions on these items as well.

### The Day of Travel:

- » Be sure to arrive at the airport early. We recommend arriving no less than 90 minutes before your scheduled departure time. You must be at the gate no less than 30 minutes prior to departure. Plan extra time for parking and shuttle transportation.
- » Bring your boarding pass, ticket or ticket confirmation and a government-issued photo ID. Keep this handy until you board the airplane as you will be required to show them at different locations. (Children under 18 are not required to provide photo ID.)
- » Leave prohibited items such as pocket knives, scissors with pointed tips, and lighters at home or in the car.
- » Avoid wearing clothing, jewelry or accessories that might set off the alarm on the metal detector.
- » Place keys, change, phones, and other metallic items in your carry-on until you pass through security.
- » Be prepared to remove your coat and shoes prior to proceeding through the metal detector.

Following these simple tips could help make your air travel experience more pleasurable and keep you in the holiday spirit. →

## Katrina Pets Arrive

In the early morning hours of Thursday, September 22, the ramp at Northern Air became a hub of activity. It was just before 3:00 am when an AmeriStar Jet Charter 737 landed with 145 passengers on board, all needing assistance to exit the plane. You see, these very special passengers were pets rescued in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina.

Veronica Minard, Animal Care and Placement Coordinator for the Humane Society of Kent County (HSKC), accompanied the 89 dogs and 56 cats from Baton Rouge to GFIA. She reports that the pets were gathered at a shelter in Louisiana where they were examined for overall health status. They were then crated for safe air travel and transported to the Baton Rouge airport. Once loaded, the 737 headed to Grand Rapids. With just a few hours notice, Northern Air brought in extra staff to assist with the unloading of this precious cargo. According to Chris Reed, Director of Operations for Northern Air, "Everything went very well. It was very unique to see a 737 full of animals, and we're pleased to have been able to assist in this important operation." Veronica reports, "All of the animals are doing very well."

So, how did the Humane Society from Kent County end up taking in all these pets from the hurricane down south? "A donor to the HSKC, who wishes to remain anonymous, gave \$30,000 to cover the cost of the rescue mission and flight," said Veronica. The animals are now residing at the Humane Society of Kent County, 3077 Wilson Ave. NW, and are eligible for adoption. For more information on these or other animals available for adoption, you are invited to stop by for a visit or go to their website at [www.hskc.org](http://www.hskc.org). →

*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 call the Kent County Department of Aeronautics at 616.233.6000. For additional information, be sure to visit us on the web at [www.flygrandrapids.org](http://www.flygrandrapids.org).

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