



Airport Website Redefines First Class

In the Travel Industry Association of America's most recent edition of *Travelers' Use of the Internet*, it estimates that 96 million Americans use the Internet when planning and taking a trip. And, of those travelers who use any travel media (newspapers, television, online newsletters, etc.), the Internet is considered the most useful of all options. The types of websites frequently visited are online travel agency websites (e.g., Expedia, Orbitz, Priceline, Travelocity), search engine websites (e.g., Google, Yahoo!), and company-owned websites (e.g., flygrandrapids.org).

In 1997 the airport's website first "went live" to provide travelers with information about the airlines and amenities at GFIA as well as a terminal map and driving map of the surrounding area. In 2001 the website was updated with more information about concessions, tenant operations, and facts, figures, and history about the airport. For the first time, Real-Time Flight Information was also available to travelers from anywhere with an Internet connection.



Now, the recently completed update and redesign is intended to offer a more streamlined look, feel, and function while maintaining the site's high-quality content. "Once they're on the site, people want access to information without a lot of searching. The new site gives the user quick access through logical links to all of the information that is available," says Dick Vander Molen, Aeronautics Board member.

With improved navigation and interactivity, as well as a more visually appealing experience for the user, the renovated site is sure to please with ease. Links to airport tenants, area businesses, and travel organizations remain to provide site visitors with easy access to Grand Rapids on the Internet.

So, whether you're looking for driving directions to the passenger terminal building, a list of car rental companies on site, or want to know if your loved ones' plane will be arriving on time, you can rely on flygrandrapids.org to provide you with all the details.

2006 Airport Profile Now Available



The 2006 Airport Profile is hot off the press. The Profile is an annual publication of the Kent County Department of Aeronautics that recaps last year's activities and shares information about the coming year's projects and goals.

This year's Profile, titled "Flight Log," will bring you up to speed on what's airport and give you a sense of how we are working to continually improve our West Michigan. The opening pages of this book are our journal, chronicling for the year 2005. We invite you to use the blank pages in the back of the book to begin a journal of your own "flight plan" for 2006 and beyond.

The business pages of the Airport Profile are available on the website at flygrandrapids.org. If you would like to receive a printed copy of the full Profile, please contact the Department of Aeronautics offices at 616.233.6000.

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GFIA Tenant Profile: The Snowy Owls

Possibly the most unique and interesting tenants at GFIA don't have a lease, pay no rent, and generate no revenue. They do, however, provide a service to the airport community – beauty, entertainment, and... rodent removal? In fact, these two ambitious tenants remove up to two dozen rodents each day from the airfield.

So who are these inimitable tenants? They are a pair of Snowy Owls. Residents of the northern tundra, these predatory birds migrate into the northern United States in search of food during the winter months. They prefer open country such as tundra, dunes, marshes, fields, and airports. Why airports, you may wonder. Snowy Owls prefer habitats that resemble the treeless tundra of their breeding range, and they need a steady supply of food. The landscape of the airport (flat and treeless) meets their needs and, because of the perimeter fencing, the owls have very little competition from land predators for their food.

On their winter range, Snowy Owls feed mainly on small rodents such as voles and field mice. However, they are opportunistic hunters and will feed on mammals ranging in size from shrews to jackrabbits and on birds ranging from sparrows to ducks and pheasants. The owls spend much of their time perched on fence posts, trees, buildings, utility poles, or other sites where the view is unrestricted. They constantly scan the area around their perches, ready to chase another owl from the territory or to launch a silent attack on a mouse or other prey.

Where do they go for protection from the elements? These stoic owls rarely seek shelter, even from roaring winds. Their plumage protects them so effectively that adults can endure temperatures as low as 40 degrees below zero.

At GFIA the Snowy Owls can frequently be seen perched on airfield lights and signs, parking lot lights, or on one of the buildings. Because they are diurnal and hunt during the daylight hours, these majestic birds are seen almost daily throughout the winter by the airfield staff. Surprisingly, there have been very few incidents where the owls have been struck by aircraft at GFIA. When this happens, the folks at Blanford Nature Center have responded, caring for the injured owl as it recuperates.

At nearly two feet tall, the Snowy Owl is the most massive of the North American Owls, weighing 4-5 lbs. each, with a wingspan of 54-66 inches. The Snowy Owl is usually monogamous and pairs for life. With a life span of 10 years in the wild, GFIA has probably hosted five or six different pair over the airport's history, and the staff looks forward to their return each winter.



Female Snowy Owl perched on a taxiway light near the airfield.



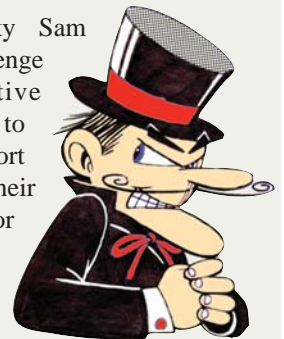
Male Snowy Owl "hiding" on a blanket of snow on the airfield.

Sam Turns 10: Still Can't Win

On Friday, January 27, forty-eight contenders vied for the top spot in the 10th annual Sneaky Sam Security Challenge championship. In the end, only two contestants remained standing. This year's grand-prize winner, Bryan Carlson of United Airlines, took on second-place finisher, Jeff Tweedie of Comair, and took home a \$400 travel gift certificate, while Tweedie received a \$100 certificate for his valiant efforts.

GFIA also celebrated Sam's 10th anniversary this year. In his opening remarks, GFIA Police Chief Dave Stricklen stated, "Before Sneaky Sam, the airport did not have a formal mechanism to test compliance with federal security guidelines to challenge people without proper identification while in the security identification display area. In the 10 years that we have had this program, we consistently score 95-100%. Last year we were at 100%.

The Sneaky Sam Security Challenge uses positive reinforcement to encourage airport staff to keep their eyes open for security. Chief Stricklen explains how it works: "We take someone who most employees won't recognize and send him or her out into the restricted areas without a badge to act as Sneaky Sam. Employees are required to ask anyone without a visible badge for proper ID. If a badge is not produced, the employee escorts the person out of the restricted area or calls airport law enforcement. As soon as law enforcement is summoned, whoever catches Sneaky Sam gets a \$20 cash reward on the spot." All \$20 winners also earn a chance to win one of the annual grand prizes.



Chief Stricklen thanked Sgt. Susan Tompkins for coordinating this year's program and thanked all airport employees for their efforts in maintaining a secure airfield.

Airport Presentations

Is your group or organization looking for a speaker for an upcoming meeting? Would you like to learn more about the airport?

The GFIA Marketing and Communications Department would be happy to come to your next meeting and provide an overview of the history and operations of the airport, as well as updates on airport development projects.

For more information or to request a speaker, please call the Marketing and Communications Department at 616.233.6053.





Passenger Appreciation Soars!

What do The Beach Boys, palm trees, cookies, and airplanes have in common? At GFIA, this combination means the kick-off of the spring break travel season. Travelers using the airport on March 30, 31, and April 1 were treated to the fourth annual Passenger Appreciation Days celebration.

“Passenger Appreciation Days is such a great way for us to say ‘Thank You’ to the flying public.”

*Jim Koslosky,
Aeronautics Director*

travel time for GFIA, it only makes sense to host this celebration when the most travelers will be passing through.”

In the passenger terminal building Grand Hall, surrounded by some cool tunes and warm-weather decorations, Kent County Department of Aeronautics (KCDA) staff welcomed travelers and greeters and provided them with give-aways, activity books, crayons, and refreshments. KCDA would like to thank airport tenants Enterprise Rent-a-Car, Aero Med, and FedEx for their generous donation of some of this year’s give-aways, and food and beverage concessionaire HMS Host for its coordination of refreshments.

In addition, everyone had an opportunity to enter a drawing each day for travel vouchers worth \$150; and, for the budding pilots, there was a paper airplane flying contest.



Nine-year-old Abby Garrison of Spring Lake takes a turn at flying her paper airplane while her family watches from the sidelines.



With contests, drawings, food, and fun, Passenger Appreciation Days has something for everyone.

“Passenger Appreciation Days is such a great way for us to say ‘Thank You’ to the flying public and to give something back to them for their years of support,” says Jim Koslosky, Aeronautics Director, “and since spring break is the busiest

All participants who landed their paper airplane in the suitcase had their name entered into a daily drawing for a \$100 gift certificate to Woodland Mall. This year more than 500 individuals built their own paper airplane and sent it on a test flight down the Grand Hall.

“We travel over spring break every year. For the past couple of years, we’ve planned to arrive 30 minutes earlier than we needed to, just so we can enjoy the fun,” says one mom of four. “The kids love the music and decorations, and we can all get into the warm-weather spirit before boarding the plane.”

Winners of this year’s drawings for the travel vouchers were: Mike Cnossen of Middleville, Will Marsh of East Grand Rapids, and Shirley DeBruin of Wyoming. Winners of the mall gift certificates were Chris Nagle of Grand Rapids, Natalie Piaskowski of Grand Rapids, and Isabel Grace of Muskegon.

Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all the travelers who include Gerald R. Ford International Airport in their travel plans throughout the year.

No Holding Pattern For Airport Construction



Passengers whose airlines use Concourse B at GFIA may notice some unusual sounds

during their upcoming travels. In addition to aircraft engines, they may detect the din of saws, hammers, and other sundry tools. Why all the clatter? Beginning in mid-May, the airport is adding a new hold room - Gate B6, and three new restroom facilities.

The B6 gate area will be built on the north side of the concourse. The accompanying ramp area will accommodate turbo-prop or regional jet aircraft. This 50-seat capacity room will replicate the existing hold rooms in style and layout. Also on the north side, a new men’s restroom and new family-assist restroom will be built. A women’s restroom will be constructed on the south side between hold rooms B3 and B4. Underneath the gate area, a new mechanical room and open space that will be available for storage or office space for airlines will also be constructed. Temporary walls will be erected around the construction areas to limit the intrusion into travelers’ plans.

Outside on the ramp, new jet blast deflectors will be built on the north and west sides to protect vehicles from jet blast as the aircraft turn around.

This \$1.7 million project should be completed in early 2007 and will complete the expansion on Concourse B as defined in the Master Plan Update.

Airport Connections Is Just A Click Away

Don’t forget that you can subscribe to this quarterly publication two ways: the hard copy you are holding or via email.

If you would like to subscribe to *Airport Connections*, please contact us at 616.233.6000 or flygrandrapids.org.



Airport Police Update Communications Technology

In recent months, the GFIA Police vehicles have been outfitted with new computer equipment that improves the officers' access to vital information. This information is maintained in a system called LEIN.

LEIN (Law Enforcement Information Network) is a statewide computerized information database that was established in Michigan in 1967. The goal of LEIN is to provide accurate and timely documented criminal justice information to officers as they perform their duties.

Prior to the installation of these computers, officers could obtain information from LEIN only via relay through the airport dispatch center. Officers can now access this database directly from their patrol vehicles, reducing the time required when responding to an incident on the airport. This reduction in time means that passengers who may be involved in a situation can be served faster, with less interruption in their travel plans.

This technology also allows airport police officers to receive broadcast messages distributed by other law enforcement agencies. Examples include suspicious or stolen vehicle notices or missing persons reports. Having this information "at their fingertips" allows airport police officers to work in tandem with other area law enforcement agencies to provide a safer community for all.

Funding for the new equipment was made possible by a \$2.7 million Homeland Security grant received by Kent County in 2004 that is being used to implement the County of Kent Emergency Communications Interoperability Plan.

Through the same grant, the GFIA Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting unit received new computer equipment in their incident command vehicle that provides access to a mobile digital communication system that links them with area mutual aid providers.

Bird Watchers Can Now Eavesdrop Too

For many area residents and workers, the airport viewing area, situated on Kraft Avenue just south of the airport, is the ideal place to watch aircraft take off and land at Gerald R. Ford International. Located just 500 ft. from the primary runway, you can see, hear, and feel nearly all of the more than 300 daily takeoffs and landings. You also have a great view of airfield activity on the ground. Now, you can listen in and hear the pilots, control tower, and airfield operations staff as they successfully coordinate this well-choreographed aeronautical performance.



A new low-power, specific area radio station is broadcast only to the viewing area and was designed to add a whole new dimension to your viewing experience. While you are taking in the sights, just tune your radio to 1650 AM to enhance your bird-watching experience. You can hear the pilots as they request permission to take off and land, listen to the Air Traffic Controllers as they vector in a series of aircraft, and hear airport operations staff as they report on airfield and runway conditions. If you're lucky, you might even be watching when the military aircraft are in the area practicing their maneuvers.



A father and son enjoy watching airfield operations together from the GFIA viewing area.

While binoculars are optional, the avid "bird-watcher" will have them close at hand for a better look at these non-feathered flying beauties. On any given day you might see the Aero Med helicopter, FedEx Airbus, Boeing 737s, Embraer ERJ-170s, Dornier 328s, Gulf Stream G5s, or many other commercial passenger, cargo, corporate, or general aviation aircraft that travel through GFIA.

The viewing area was first established by the Aeronautics Board in 1965. Over the 40 years since that time, many enhancements have been made to increase your viewing pleasure. The paved parking area has spaces for 59 vehicles and can accommodate bus parking. With picnic tables, litter barrels, a restroom facility, and the park-like atmosphere, the entire family is sure to enjoy the experience. The viewing area is open daily from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., and it's free, so bring a picnic basket and prepare to relax and be entertained.

Looking To Relocate Your Business?

Is your business looking for property with convenient access to the airport? Gerald R. Ford International Airport currently has buildings and properties available for lease.

For more information about available properties, land use restrictions, or the airport's minimum standards, contact:

Joel Burgess, Properties Administrator
Kent County Department of Aeronautics
5500 44th Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49512-4055
phone: 616.233.6000
email: JBurgess@grr.org

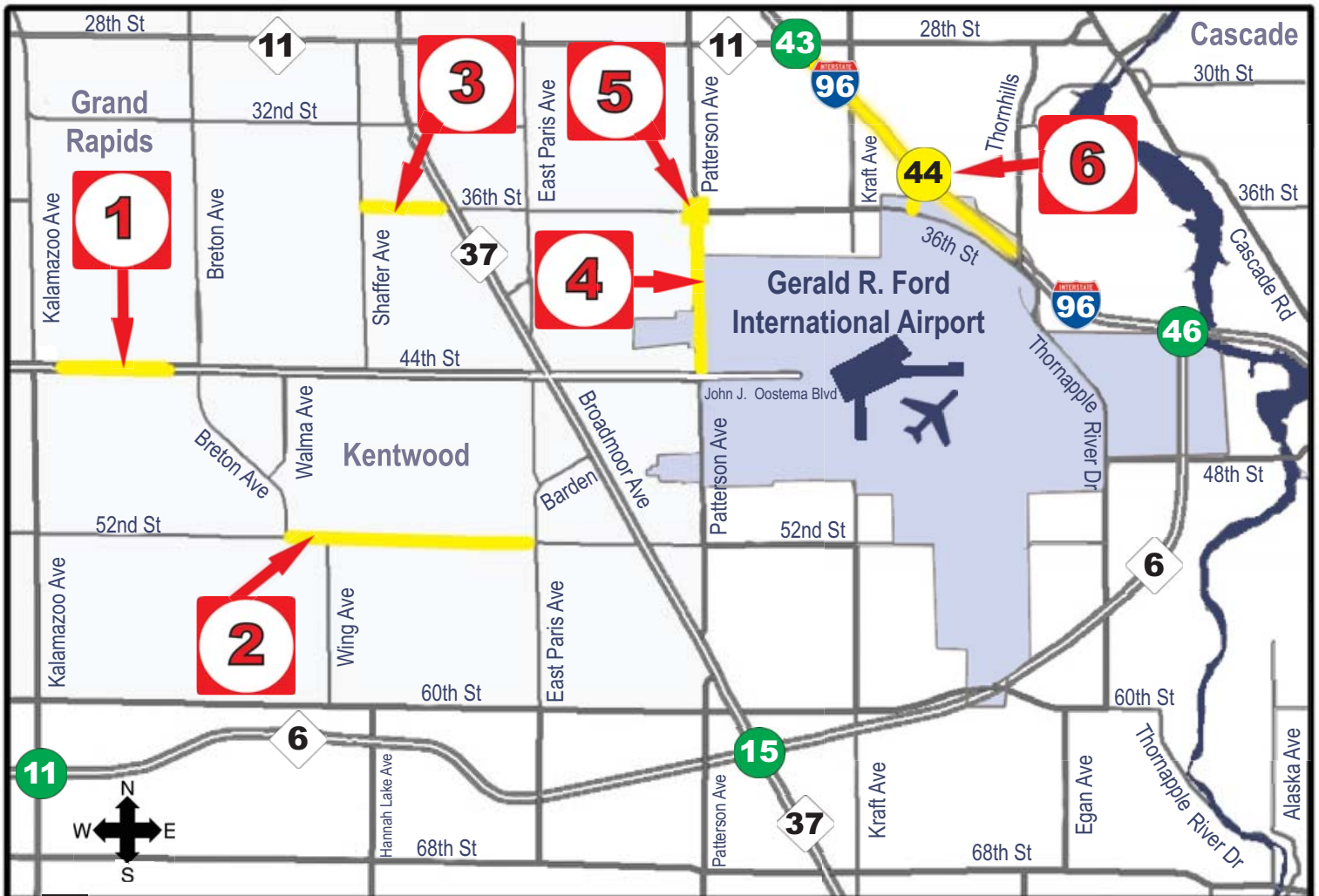


Diversions

Area Road Construction May Affect How You Get To The Airport This Summer

Some say that there are two seasons in Michigan: winter and road construction. So as we leave the cold, snowy days behind us, we must prepare for the sight of orange barrels and flaggers on the roadways. To assist you in planning your next trip, we are providing the following summary of roadway construction projects that may affect you.

- 1** 44th St. will be resurfaced from Bowen Ave. to Applewood Dr. Expect nighttime closures and detours, but the road will be open both directions during the day. The project is scheduled to begin mid-May and be completed by July 1.
- 2** 52nd St. will be rebuilt and a center turn lane added from Breton Ave. to East Paris Ave. Although the road will remain open, travelers will experience traffic shifts during construction. The project is scheduled to begin around June 1 and take three weeks to complete.
- 3** 36th St. will be rebuilt from Shaffer Ave. to Broadmoor Ave./M-37. The road will be closed. The project is scheduled to begin around June 1 and be completed by November 1.
- 4** Patterson Ave. will be resurfaced between 36th St. and 44th St. Expect lane closures in both directions. This project will be coordinated with the 36th St./Patterson Ave. Intersection project. The project is scheduled to begin around June 1 and take three weeks to complete.
- 5** 36th St. east of Patterson Ave. will be widened to accommodate dual left turn lanes from westbound 36th St. to southbound Patterson Ave. Travelers will experience restricted turning movements during construction, as well as a two-week closure and detour of 36th St. The project is scheduled to begin around June 1 and take two months to complete.
- 6** Construction of the new interchange on I-96 at 36th St. and the reconstruction of I-96 are continuing. Westbound travelers will be shifted to the eastbound lanes using crossovers. Two lanes of traffic will be maintained both directions during this stage. On- and off-ramps for eastbound travelers are completed. The project is expected to be completed by October 1.



News In Brief

- » Kent County Department of Aeronautics welcomes Dan Villalobos as the new Parking and Ground Transportation Supervisor. Dan comes to the department from Standard Parking, where he managed the Express Shuttle Lot and Valet Parking services at GFIA for the past four years.
- » Joe Dancz was recently promoted to Captain with GFIA's Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting (ARFF) unit. Joe has been a firefighter with the ARFF unit for 16 years.
- » The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recognized the Department of Aeronautics for its annual financial report by awarding it a 12th consecutive Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. This award is presented to those government agencies whose financial reporting meets the high standards established by the GFOA.
- » The Michigan Concrete Paving Association recognized the Kent County Department of Aeronautics General Aviation Ramp Reconstruction project by awarding it a Michigan Award of Excellence in the Airports category.
- » The 2005 Airport Profile received a Gold Award in the Third Annual Service Industry Advertising Awards (SIAA) in the Annual Report category. SIAA is the only advertising awards program to specifically recognize the achievements of the service industry.
- » On Friday, May 19, GFIA is partnering with the Michigan Community Blood Centers to host a community blood drive in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. Blood drive staff will be available from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Walk-ins are welcome, or contact Donna Thomas, Office Administrator, at 616.233.6046 to reserve a time.
- » The third annual Grand Rapids Wings of Mercy *CareAffaire* and pancake breakfast is scheduled to be held on Saturday, June 10, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The event will be held in the Northern Jet Management hangar. For more information, visit the Wings of Mercy website at www.wingsofmercy.org or call 888.786.3729.
- » The next three meetings of the Aeronautics Board will be June 28, July 26, and August 30. Meetings are held at 8:30 a.m. in the International Room in the passenger terminal building.
- » The GFIA Airfield Maintenance division will be hosting its fourth annual Airfield Maintenance Workshop and open house on Thursday, August 10. For more information on this event or to register to attend, please contact Eric Vander Stel, Airfield Maintenance Supervisor, at 616.233.6080 or via email at EVanderstel@grr.org.

Remember! Next time you fly through GFIA, take advantage of our Wi-Fi service. Just set your SSID to flyGRR. There is no cost to you and no proprietary software to load.

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 Kent County Department of Aeronautics:

Phone: 616.233.6000

Fax: 616.233.6025

Web: www.flygrandrapids.org.

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