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## AirTran Airways Chooses West Michigan

“Airlines don’t choose airports, airlines choose communities.” This short, but very accurate statement was made by Jim Dunlap, Huntington Bank West Michigan president during a January 28 press conference at which AirTran Airways was unveiled as a new carrier in West Michigan.



Conversations with AirTran have been ongoing for many years. Airport officials have met with AirTran representatives at the airline’s headquarters and at various industry events. When Dunlap, former Orlando Convention and Visitors Bureau president, arrived in Grand Rapids in 2001, he became a board member for The Right Place, Inc., a Grand Rapids economic development agency. Birgit Klohs, The Right Place president, began talking with AirTran officials in 2002.

In 2008, Grand Rapids businessman Dick DeVos began working on the Regional Air Alliance of West Michigan, an organization of business leaders dedicated to improving local air service by

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## Allegiant Air Soaring In Grand Rapids

We’ve all heard it said many times, “A lot can happen in a year,” and a truer statement is not likely to be found when talking about Allegiant Air’s operations at GFIA.

Allegiant Air began serving airport patrons on February 3, 2009, with nonstop service to Orlando, FL, via the Orlando-Sanford International Airport. (Travelers should note that service to Orlando now operates at Orlando International Airport.) The very next day, they launched nonstop service to Tampa Bay, FL, via the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport. A mere three months later Allegiant Air began providing nonstop service to Las Vegas, a service expansion credited in large part to the West Michigan region’s overwhelming support of the airline. October brought another exciting



addition to the Allegiant Air line-up as nonstop service to Phoenix began via the Phoenix-Mesa

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## Frontier Airlines Announces New Service To The Mile-High City

Thursday, February 4, brought more exciting news to West Michigan flyers when Frontier Airlines announced that Grand Rapids was one of seven new cities added to its summer 2010 schedule from Denver International Airport. This new daily nonstop service will begin May 14, flying on 99-seat Embraer E190 jets. (*Airport Connections* readers may remember that Embraer brought the E190 to GFIA in January 2005 to test the effects of Type IV de-icing fluid on the take-off performance as part of the aircraft’s FAA certification process.)

Flights will depart GRR at 9:40 am – arriving DEN at 10:25 am, and will depart DEN at 6:55 pm – arriving GRR at 11:25 pm (all times local). This new service not only offers travelers a new alternative to connect to Denver; once there, you can connect to the nearly 60 other cities that Frontier serves from its hub.



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## Downtown Motorists May Need Alternate Flight Plan

Airport travelers who will be coming from or heading to downtown Grand Rapids may need to consult a road map before setting out on their journey. That's because "The Fix On I-196" has begun.

This project will consist of the reconstruction of the existing concrete pavement for both traffic directions, the addition of concrete median barrier and additional traffic lanes between the interchanges of Ottawa Avenue/Ionia Avenue, College Avenue, and Fuller Avenue. Along with the roadway work, the Coit Avenue bridge over I-196 and the two bridges that carry I-196 over Lafayette Avenue will be completely replaced. Other planned improvements include lighting upgrades, drainage upgrades, freeway signing and pavement marking upgrades.

During the Stage I work, traffic will be maintained by means of a modified full closure of the freeway allowing only local access within the closure at Fuller Avenue and College Avenue on westbound I-196 and Ottawa Avenue and College Avenue on eastbound I-196. Through traffic will be detoured by means of M-6, I-96, and US-131. Local traffic will need to use surface streets to bypass the freeway construction area. Stage I is expected to begin mid-April and last 4-5 months.

For complete information on "The Fix On I-196" you may check out the website at [www.michigan.gov/I-196](http://www.michigan.gov/I-196).



### airtran

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assuring low-cost carriers like AirTran Airways, Inc. local business will support the service. Years previously, the Aeronautics Board had approved an air service incentive program as a tool to be used to help attract new airlines or new service from incumbent carriers.

Jump forward to the bitter cold afternoon of January 28. Nearly 50 local business leaders, elected officials, and media personnel gather in the Alticor hangar for an announcement. Jim Dunlap makes his opening remarks; "Ride of the Valkyris" by Richard Wagner begins to play as the hangar door begins to open. As the door slides to the right, an AirTran Airways 717 is revealed on the ramp, sunlight shining brightly as Kevin Healy, AirTran vice president, descends the stairs from the aircraft and joins Dunlap and airport executive director Jim Koslosky on the stage.

In his remarks, Healy addressed the question of why it took so long for AirTran to come to Grand Rapids. "We needed to be sure that the fit and timing were right for both Grand Rapids and AirTran. We feel that it's the right time and we are really looking forward to serving West Michigan." Officials had been made aware that AirTran would launch with service to Baltimore/Washington International and Orlando International. However, during his remarks Healy commented, "As I got a taste of the weather here in West Michigan, as the door to the airplane opened, I realized that Orlando may not be enough Florida; this is a community that could use more access to the sunshine state so I made the decision that not only will we fly to Orlando, we're going to add service to Tampa and Ft. Myers as well."

Jim Koslosky wrapped up the event by saying, "Thank you AirTran for bringing West Michigan networked low-fare and business class service. We look forward to working with you and to filling your airplanes. To the community...remember, fly Gerald R. Ford International; we are close, convenient, and connected."

Nonstop service to Baltimore/Washington (BWI) and Orlando International (MCO) begins on May 4. Nonstop service to Tampa International (TPA) and Ft. Myers (RSW) begins on June 12.

For information on introductory fares or to purchase tickets visit [www.airtran.com](http://www.airtran.com) or call (800) 247-8726.



**As the hangar doors opened, area business leaders, elected officials and the media offered a standing ovation and warm greeting to AirTran Airways on a bitter cold January afternoon.**



## GFIA's Top Questions Answered!



Each week, the Department of Aeronautics office receives dozens of phone calls and emails from airport passengers and patrons looking for some very basic information, and many are asking the same questions. So, we thought we'd share a few of the most common questions, and their answers, with our readers.

### **What time does the airport open?**

*The airport passenger terminal building never closes. However, each airline or other tenant sets its own hours of operation. You can find hours of operation for many of our tenants on the airport website.*

### **Does the airport have a currency exchange?**

*There is no currency exchange at the airport, but the Fifth Third Bank on the corner of Patterson Ave. and 44th St. provides this service.*

### **I need to ship a pet to/from another destination. How can I do this?**

*While federal and state governments impose restrictions on transporting live animals, each airline establishes its own policy for the handling of the animals they transport. Therefore, it is best to contact the specific airline to ensure the smooth transport of your pet.*

### **Where can I park if I'm just picking someone up?**

*If you are picking someone up and the person is not ready and waiting on the curb, we suggest parking in the cell phone lot, located south of Oostema Blvd., one block east of the airport entrance. You may wait in your vehicle for your passenger to call and then proceed to the curb front for pick-up. If this arrangement does not meet your needs, you may park in short-term parking on Level 1 of the parking garage.*

### **Is there a lost and found office at GFIA?**

*The airport's lost and found is located in the police office in the Grand Hall of the passenger terminal building. Throughout the day you may stop in or speak with one of the police officers. Otherwise, you may call (616) 233-6015 for additional assistance.*

### **Where can I smoke at the airport?**

*In accordance with City of Grand Rapids ordinance, all areas within the terminal building are designated as smoke-free. Smoking is permitted outside in designated areas only.*

For more questions and answers about Gerald R. Ford International Airport, check out the FAQ page or the Facts page on the airport website at [www.flygrandrapids.org](http://www.flygrandrapids.org).

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## Mission Accomplished

It is the mission of the Kent County Department of Aeronautics *to provide safe, efficient, environmentally sensitive, and economically self-sustaining air transportation facilities responsive to regional needs.* It is cause for celebration when one individual project can fulfill each of those goals, and that's just what is happening with the installation of new passenger loading bridges. Let's look at how the mission is being achieved.

**Safe:** The previous loading bridges ranged in age from 19 to 32 years, were owned and maintained by the individual airlines, and their condition and level of repair varied greatly. Additionally, there were several gates that did not have a loading bridge at all, thus requiring passengers to ground-load at those locations. The new loading bridges, which will be owned and maintained by the Kent County Department of Aeronautics (KCDA), will provide a covered, climate-controlled, stair- and ramp-free walkway for passengers entering and exiting the aircraft at GFIA.

**Efficient:** Airport-owned bridges gain efficiency by having on-site maintenance personnel available. When an airline-owned bridge malfunctioned, they had to wait for maintenance personnel to arrive and assess the problem, and then possibly wait longer while parts were ordered and delivered. With the new bridges being of the same manufacturer and model, a spare parts inventory will be maintained to significantly reduce any delays for repair work.

**Environmentally Sensitive:** The new bridges offer Pre-Conditioned Air (PCA) units and electric Ground Power (GP) units that will reduce emissions from Auxiliary Power Units (APU) currently being used by aircraft. The addition of PCA and GP units will allow APUs to be turned off while the aircraft are parked at the gates. The PCA units supply heated and cooled air to aircraft parked at the loading bridges, while the GP units provide electricity to parked aircraft for internal lighting and to ensure continuous power for navigational instruments. This project will realize a total emissions savings of 94 tons of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and 15.2 tons of volatile organic compounds (VOC) over the 20-year life of the project.

**Economically Self-Sustaining:** Each climate-controlled bridge costs \$400,000 to \$500,000. The cost of the bridges is covered by passenger facility charges, while the PCA and GP units cost is covered through a federal Voluntary Airport Low Emissions (VALE) program grant. The airport will recapture the cost of maintenance through standard terminal rental rates.

Four loading bridges were installed in 2009; four more are scheduled to be installed by Spring Break 2010, with the remaining six bridges being installed on a two-per-year schedule through 2013.





## allegiant

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Gateway Airport. Additionally, in November, Allegiant Air launched nonstop service to a third Florida destination – Fort Lauderdale – via the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.

But the news doesn't stop there! As Allegiant Air's business in West Michigan continues to soar, they are deepening their roots. On February 2, 2010, Allegiant Air made two additional announcements to West Michigan. Regional support continues to be strong, resulting in the carrier adding another new nonstop destination: Myrtle Beach, SC service begins on April 30, bringing the total number of nonstop destinations from GFIA to 23 for all carriers. Also, due to their rapid and significant growth, Allegiant Air is establishing a base of operations in Grand Rapids. What does this mean for GFIA? Beginning April 27, Allegiant will base two aircraft in Grand Rapids. This will bring up to 60 jobs to the area as they base pilots, flight attendants, and airplane mechanics here to support these aircraft. It also creates opportunities for earlier flights as travelers will no longer have to wait for the aircraft to arrive from another airport.

Additionally, Allegiant Air wanted to strengthen their position as a West Michigan community partner. In doing so, they are creating a scholarship fund that will provide three students with a \$1,000 scholarship applied toward their continuing education. Details about the scholarship program and eligibility will be forthcoming; however, the company is committed to providing \$3,000 in scholarship funds annually while providing air service to the community.



"We are very pleased that the West Michigan community support of Allegiant Air at Gerald R. Ford International continues to be strong," said Jim Koslosky, executive director at the airport. "It is this support that has fueled Allegiant's service growth to now include six nonstop destinations and the creation of a base of operations in Grand Rapids. The new jobs created by this expansion are further evidence that West Michigan is vibrant, successful and growing."

For information on introductory fares or to make reservations, visit the airline's website at [www.allegiantair.com](http://www.allegiantair.com), call the Reservations and Information Center at (702) 505-8888, or visit the Allegiant Air ticket counter.

## Presenting...

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

The GFIA Marketing and Communications division would welcome the opportunity to come to your next meeting and provide an overview of the airport, as well as updates on ongoing airport development projects and the state of the aviation industry. Presentations can be timed to fit nicely into a breakfast or lunchtime meeting.



For more information, or to request a speaker for your next meeting, please call the Marketing and Communications division at (616) 233-6053 or visit the website at [flygrandrapids.org](http://flygrandrapids.org) for more information located under About Us, Newsroom.

## Toys For Tots Drive Wrap-Up

The GFIA Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighters once again collected donations for Toys for Tots during the recent holiday season. The collection, which ran from mid-November through mid-December, resulted in an overflowing box filled with games, dolls, puzzles, and other toys. One generous family donated two 21" bikes and helmets! While the majority of donations came from people who work at the airport, members of the public are always welcome to drop off their donations as well.

The Grand Rapids Santa Claus Girls coordinate the distribution of Toys for Tots donations to qualified families of Kent County. Thanks to all of our donors for your continued generosity.



## Year In Review: More Than Just Numbers

With 2009 now solidly behind us, let's take a moment to review the numbers and look at them in context.

Passenger traffic got off to a slow start in 2009. At the end of the first half of the year, traffic was down nearly 10% at GFIA over the same period in 2008. However, the second half of the year showed a significant rebound in passengers, with a 6.5% average increase per month, and two months growing nearly 10% over 2008! Aviation analysts have indicated that there was a 6.75% decline in passenger traffic across the U.S. By comparison, passenger activity at GFIA declined just 2.1% for the year.



On the east side of the airfield, air cargo operations continued at a brisk pace with more than 75 million pounds of cargo processed. While this represents a 19.6% decrease from 2008, one of the carriers suspended scheduled air cargo operations in mid-January. Moreover, 102.5 tons of cargo per day is still a lot of heavy lifting!

So, all in all, while 2009 was a year overshadowed by a soft economy and a nationwide decline in passenger activity, West Michigan travelers continue to fly via GRR.



John Van Laar



Ted Vonk



Dean Agee



Dick Vander Molen



Floyd Wilson, Jr.



Joe Tomaselli

## Aeronautics Board Unchanged For 2010

At its January 5 meeting, the Kent County Board of Commissioners reappointed citizen member Joe Tomaselli to the Aeronautics Board for a three-year term ending 12/31/12. At its January 14 meeting, the Kent County Board of Commissioners reappointed Commissioner Dick VanderMolen for a three-year term ending 12/31/12.

Subsequently, the Aeronautics Board re-elected citizen member John Van Laar as Board chair and county commissioner Ted Vonk as vice chair. The Board also appointed Ken Kranz of FedEx to the airport's Zoning Board of Appeals for a three-year term ending in 2012. Other returning members of the Aeronautics Board are Commissioner Dean Agee and citizen member Floyd Wilson, Jr.

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"We are very pleased that Frontier Airlines has identified Grand Rapids as a strong air travel market that would benefit from Frontier service to Denver and beyond," stated John Van Laar, Aeronautics Board chair.

For information on introductory fares, or to purchase tickets, contact Frontier Airlines at (800) 432-1359 or visit their website at [www.frontierairlines.com](http://www.frontierairlines.com).



### Airport Property

Every day, thousands of business people and travelers – your customers – pass through GFIA, providing an excellent source of exposure and potential opportunity for your business. The airport currently has developed and undeveloped property sites, most with utilities and infrastructure in place and ready to build. Airport properties range in use from aviation-related development to non-aviation related commercial use development. For more information contact Joel Burgess, properties administrator, at [JBurgess@grr.org](mailto:JBurgess@grr.org).

## And Then There Was One



Effective January 1, 2010, the merger of Delta Air Lines and Northwest Airlines was finalized by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This final nod by the FAA means that they are now operating as a single airline under the name Delta Air Lines.

For passengers at GFIA, this means that the name and logo for Northwest Airlines will fade away, a process that has already begun. Signage and flight information display screens will use only Delta Air Lines. Tickets and boarding passes will be issued by Delta Air Lines at any ticketing window or kiosk at their ticket counter. Flight numbers and announcements will be made under the name Delta Air Lines. Also, eventually, all Northwest aircraft will be painted with the Delta Air Lines name and logo.

So, what does the future hold? "Gerald R. Ford International Airport has had a long and prosperous relationship with both Northwest and Delta Air Lines, and we anticipate this will continue as they move forward as a single airline operator," states Bruce Schedlbauer, airport marketing and public relations manager.

## News In Brief

- » The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recognized the Department of Aeronautics for its annual financial report by awarding it a 16th 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.
- » Jim Koslosky, executive director for GFIA, was recently elected chair of the Grand Valley Metro Council's Transportation Policy Committee.
- » The next three meetings of the Kent County Aeronautics Board will take place February 24, March 31, and April 28, 2010, at 8:30 am. All meetings are held in the International Room in the passenger terminal building and are open to the public.
- » GFIA will be partnering with Michigan Community Blood Centers to host a community blood drive on Friday, May 21, 2010, in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. You may pre-register for a time on the airport website at [www.flygrandrapids.org/BloodDrive.php](http://www.flygrandrapids.org/BloodDrive.php) or by contacting Donna Thomas, office administrator, at (616) 233-6046. Walk-ins are also welcome.

**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](http://www.flygrandrapids.org).

**Kent County Aeronautics Board** | John Van Laar, chair; Ted Vonk\*, vice chair; Dean Agee\*; Joe Tomaselli; Dick Vander Molen\*; Floyd Wilson, Jr.

\* *County Commissioner*

**Executive Director** | James Koslosky, A.A.E.

**Editor** | Bruce Schedlbauer, APR, Marketing and Communications Manager

**Associate Editor** | Susan Sherman, Community Relations Coordinator, [ssherman@grr.org](mailto:ssherman@grr.org)

## Airport Employee Information Corner

Winter weather at GFIA requires deicing of aircraft and pavement surfaces. Deicing operations are subject to numerous requirements, including those described in the airport's Deicing Management and Monitoring Plan (DMMP). The DMMP is part of the airport's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and is available on the website at [www.flygrandrapids.org/Enviro.php](http://www.flygrandrapids.org/Enviro.php)

Most noticeable to airport patrons and tenants are the Mobile Collection Units (MCUs), which are vacuum-assisted tankers designed for collecting spent deicing fluid applied to aircraft. GFIA owns three MCUs that are operated by the GFIA Field Maintenance Department. Deicing fluid that reaches the pavement surface is collected and transferred to storage tanks, and hauled off-site for recycling. On average, over 225,000 gallons of runoff are collected and sent off-site for recycling every winter.

Tenants are reminded that nitrogen-based deicing products (e.g. urea) are not allowed for use anywhere at the airport. Any tenant needing information on allowable deicing products should contact Roy Hawkins, planning engineer, at (616) 233-6022 or via email at [RHawkins@grr.org](mailto:RHawkins@grr.org).

It is important to remember that anything entering the airport storm sewer system has the potential to reach local surface waters. The participation of airport employees and tenants is critical to successful compliance with the airport's storm water permit. Any observed situations or issues that appear to have the potential to impact the quality of storm water should be reported to the Airport Communications Center at (616) 233-6055.



## Kent County Department of Aeronautics

Gerald R. Ford International Airport

5500 44th Street SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49512-4055

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