



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: David Goldenberg
David.Goldenberg@resoluteconsulting.com
312-768-4743

Gary/Chicago International Airport welcomes regional leaders for economic development program

GARY (November 20, 2015) – On Thursday, the Gary/Chicago International Airport welcomed nearly 50 of Northwest Indiana’s emerging leaders for a day-long economic development conference. The session, A Thriving Community of Opportunity, was one in a series presented by the South Shore Leadership Center (SSLC) as part of its Leadership Northwest Indiana (LNI) program.

Airport chairman Stephen Mays and executive director Dan Vicari welcomed the LNI39 Class of 2015-16 and kicked off the session which included presentations on “Growth in Northwest Indiana” and “Competing in a Global Marketplace” among others, an interactive economic development panel, and a tour of the airport, including its recently expanded 8,900 foot runway.

“We were delighted to host the LNI Class of 2016,” said airport chairman Stephen Mays. “As a growing economic driver for the region, the Gary/Chicago International Airport was an ideal location for this dynamic and engaging session on economic development.”

In June 2015, the airport completed a 10-year, \$174 million Runway Expansion Project. According to a return on investment analysis by the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA), the expanded runway will contribute significantly to the regional economy. Based on similar projects around the country, expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport will create more than 2,000 new jobs in Northwest Indiana by 2025, mostly in transportation, warehousing and manufacturing. These jobs will generate an estimated \$169 million in disposable income annually and have an overall yearly economic impact of more than half a billion dollars.

In addition to hosting the session, Vicari and Mays highlighted some of Gary’s strategies for economic development at the airport, from its public-private partnership with AFCO/AvPORTS to last year’s \$29 million bond sale.

“In partnership with the City of Gary, we’ve worked to find innovative ways to leverage the airport as an asset for the region,” said airport executive director Dan Vicari. “The \$29 million bond sale, which financed the final stages of the runway expansion, was recently named the “Midwest Deal of Year” by *Bond Buyer* magazine.”

The Leadership Northwest Indiana program has more than 30 years of leadership development experience and a diverse network of more than 1,100 members.

“Our structured program engages leaders throughout Northwest Indiana to gain valuable perspectives through interaction with business and community leaders,” said Michelle Searer, vice president of the South Shore Leadership Center. “We were thrilled to expose this year’s class to the Gary/Chicago International Airport to better understand the economic asset in our region.”

###