



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## GARY/CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT CELEBRATES RUNWAY 12/30 EXPANSION

### *Marks Opening with Commemorative Ceremony*

GARY (July 10, 2015) – The Gary/Chicago International Airport celebrated the official opening of its newly extended main runway today with a commemorative ceremony at the airport. The decade-long Runway 12/30 Expansion was completed on June 25.

More than 300 guests and local, state, and federal officials attended the day's events which included remarks by U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly, Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson, Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) Commissioner Ginger Evans, Airport Chairman Stephen Mays, Airport Executive Director Dan Vicari, Regional Development Authority (RDA) Director Bill Hanna, and Associate Administrator of Airports for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Eduardo Angeles.

“Since taking office in January 2012, the Runway Expansion Project has been one of the priorities of my administration,” said Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson. “It has been a long journey to get where we are today, working with multiple regulatory agencies and adhering to federal and state mandates at every step. Today we can celebrate because the Gary/International Airport’s future has never looked brighter. We thank and commend all the team members involved in this process.”

New CDA Commissioner Ginger Evans applauded the expansion on behalf of Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the City of Chicago.

“The Chicago Department of Aviation is proud to be a partner of this airport,” said Commissioner Evans. “This runway expansion is an incredible accomplishment that will have a long lasting, positive impact on the entire region.”

The short program took place outside the B. Coleman Aviation hangar and was followed by a chartered bus tour of the airport and a celebratory luncheon.

In 1999, the Federal Aviation Administration mandated Runway Safety Areas. As part of compliance with FAA requirements, the main runway at Gary/Chicago International Airport would be extended by 1,900 feet.

The project was met with many obstacles along the way, including significant environmental mitigation of the land surrounding the runway. One of the most complex projects included the relocation of two 345,000 volt power lines and the relocation of a major substation.

Now, at a length of 8,900 feet, the runway is an asset for the airport to attract a wider variety of aircraft and serve more markets.

“The shorter runway really limited the airport’s potential,” said Airport Executive Director Dan Vicari. “Now that the expansion is complete, it opens up a lot of new doors, especially in terms of pursuing commercial service. The airport will be able to serve larger aircraft and more markets.”

U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly stressed the economic impact of the expanded runway on Northwest Indiana.

“This is a great day for Gary/Chicago International Airport and the City of Gary,” said Senator Donnelly. “I am pleased I could play a role in helping the Gary/Chicago Airport expansion project to completion because this project is important for improving infrastructure, growing Gary’s economy, and boosting the economy of Northwest Indiana.”

He continued, “The journey to reach today was not easy, as we had to overcome many challenges along the way. We worked to bring all the parties together over the past 18-plus months to break through the hurdles and issues that stood in the way of this project moving forward. This was a team effort, and I would like to thank all those who were great partners in helping this project reach the finish line: Mayor Freeman-Wilson; other officials from the City of Gary; the Gary airport authority; Congressman Pete Visclosky; federal agencies including Department of Transportation and its Surface Transportation Board, the FAA, and the EPA; state agencies including INDOT and IDEM; and the railroad companies: CN, CSX, and NS, for their cooperation and commitment to this project.”

According to a return on investment analysis conducted by the RDA, the expanded airport will contribute significantly to the regional economy. Based on similar projects elsewhere 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.

“This expansion is already changing the game in Gary and Northwest Indiana,” said Bill Hanna, RDA President and CEO. “A public-private partnership has been formed to drive investment in and around the facility, a second fixed-based operator has come in, nearby companies are expanding and there’s an 85-acre business park in the works. This is just the tip of a development iceberg that will bring thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in investment to Gary and the region.”

In January 2014, the City of Gary and the Gary/Chicago International Airport Authority entered into a historic public-private partnership (P3) with AFCO/AvPorts for the management and development of the Airport and surrounding land.

Months later, a pivotal milestone in the Runway Expansion Project took place with the removal and relocation of several miles of railroad tracks to make way for the new section of runway. The critical stage of the project was celebrated at the airport’s Cutover Ceremony in October 2014, and the next month the airport earned a BBB+ bond rating, securing the \$30 million need to complete the runway expansion.

“The success of the runway expansion was critical to the airport’s future growth,” said Airport Chairman Stephen Mays. “With the runway now complete, we can move forward and begin to pursue future development at the airport.”

According to the airport’s 64-page Vision, the future includes plans to reestablish commercial service by 2017, pursue an international customs facility, and invest in infrastructure surrounding the airport including roads, sewer systems, and a passenger rail station.

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