

Airport Needs Assessment

Overview of Needs Analysis

GVMC staff reviewed the Airport Access Study and the Gerald R. Ford International Airport's (GFIA's) Master Plan and summarized comments from GVMC's transportation issues public survey that related to the Airport to determine future needs for air travel. Members of the Airport Access Study Technical Advisory Committee are listed to the right.

Process for Determining and Addressing Needs

Airport Access Study

Prior to the development of the FY2022 Unified Planning Work Program, GVMC staff asked our members for recommendations on future planning projects. After conducting an evaluation process, two studies were selected as regionally beneficial and necessary for our growing region. One of these studies was an Airport Access Study, which investigated ways to improve access to the airport as well as the surrounding local road and freeway systems. After going through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, GVMC contracted with AECOM to conduct an Airport Access Study. The study area was an approximately one-mile area around the airport that was used to evaluate potential access paths and surrounding land use and development.

To assist in management of the project and consideration of enhancement options, GVMC assembled a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that included representatives from adjacent municipalities, transportation agencies, and business and tourism industries (see list above right). As key stakeholders, the team participated in the project process and advised on key decisions. Each TAC meeting provided a project status update and information on public engagement. The TAC met four times through the process:

TAC Meeting #1 (February 2022): Existing Conditions, Conceptual Alternatives, Phase 1 Engagement Plan

TAC Meeting #2 (June 2022): Purpose and Need, Evaluation Criteria and Process, Phase 2 Engagement Plan

TAC Meeting #3 (October 2022): Practical Alternatives Analysis, Preliminary Recommended Alternatives

TAC Meeting #4 (December 2022): Recommended Alternatives, Phase 3 Engagement Plan

The Study involved three phases of public engagement to educate the public and gather input during and after the development of the alternatives. Engagement activities included two in-person public open houses, a virtual public meeting, and an online story map with a survey for each phase. A detailed summary of engagement results was compiled for each phase and can be found on GVMC's [website](#).

The study process determined six preferred projects, which are listed under "Identified Needs/Deficiencies" on the following page.

For further details about this study and the process of arriving at these preferred projects, please refer to the [Airport Access Study Final Report](#).

Airport Master Plan

The GFIA's Master Plan provides the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority (GFIAA) with a strategy to develop the Airport. A comprehensive Airport Master Plan was prepared in 2004 with an update initiated in June 2016 and concluded in 2019 with Federal Aviation Authority approval. The GFIAA contracted with the firm RS&H to lead this effort.

Airport Access Study Technical Advisory Committee Representation:

Cascade Charter Township

City of Kentwood

Experience Grand Rapids

Gerald R. Ford International Airport

Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce

Kent County

Kent County Road Commission

Michigan Department of Transportation
(Grand Region)

The Rapid

The Right Place

The intent of the update was to provide guidance to enable the Authority to strategically position the Airport for the future by maximizing operational efficiency and business effectiveness, as well as maximizing property availability for aeronautical and non-aeronautical development through efficient planning. The document itself establishes an everyday working tool for users to identify proposed Airport projects, costs, and implementation. During public workshops held while preparing the update, there was only support for the projects identified and no objections. While long-term development is considered in master planning efforts, the typical planning horizon for master plan updates is 20 years.

The Federal Aviation Administration provides guidance for Airport Master Plan development in FAA Advisory Circular 150 / 5070-6B, Airport Master Plans. Although not required, the Advisory Circular strongly recommends airports prepare a Master Plan. Funding for the update is provided primarily by the Federal Aviation Administration through an Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant. In addition, funding is also provided by the Michigan Department of Transportation, Office of Aeronautics, and the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority. In accordance with FAA requirements, the Update process included a public and stakeholder involvement program.

Public facing transportation projects identified as part of this update process are included under "Identified Needs/Deficiencies" on the following page.











Transportation Issues Public Survey

During the late summer and early fall of 2022, GVMC staff conducted a public survey that received 1,109 responses. This survey asked the public for feedback on the transportation system, including what was working well and what could be improved. Out of all the areas of the transportation system, satisfaction with travel through the Grand Rapids airport ranked highest, receiving a weighted score of 3.83 out of 5.

Several survey respondents also submitted comments about airport and air travel improvements they'd like to see. Many of these comments supported the Airport Access Study proposed improvements and the work of the Airport Master Plan. Additional comments are listed separately under "Identified Needs/Deficiencies" on the following page.

Identified Needs/Deficiencies

The table below shows identified needs and deficiencies, as well as the source:

Project Description	Source		
	Airport Access Study	GRFIA Master Plan	Transportation Issues Survey Public Comment
1-96/36 th Street Access Direct Access - long-term project			
Thornapple River Drive Secondary Freight Access - near-term project			
Patterson Avenue/44 th Street Safety Enhancements - near-term project			
M-37 Patterson Avenue/60 th Street Intersection Enhancements - near-term project			
Downtown Express Bus/Shuttle - near-term project			
Pedestrian/Bike Connectivity Enhancements - near-term/long-term project			

Creating better and more frequent public transportation options to and from the airport and throughout the surrounding areas, including street cars, light rail or a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line (or connecting to a BRT line already in existence) – especially from the downtown area to the airport, and improving access to shared ride services or taxis			
Developing an additional access route to the airport located along Patterson Avenue north of Oostema Boulevard			
Building truck parking positions in other adjacent locations at the FedEx facility			
Additional airport terminal parking, specifically close-in covered parking			
Airport ground transportation and terminal curb improvements			
Air cargo facility expansion			
Expansion into a 3 rd concourse with associated access and infrastructure			
Construction of a Federal Inspection Station for the screening of arriving international passengers			
Upgrading utilities to allow for a compressed natural gas filling station and electrical charging stations should the industry shift toward alternative fuels			
Adding more direct flights, including daily air service between GRR and LAX, and more reliable connections			
Making continual improvements and investments in the airport, including a new air traffic tower			

Costs to Address the Recommendations

Total cost to complete the projects in the Airport Access Study is expected to range from approximately \$163 - \$166 million dollars, not including the pedestrian/bike connectivity enhancements. Currently, none of these projects are funded. The current airport capital improvement plan (federal, state, and local funds) includes \$543 M of capital investments for 2024 - 2028. The cost of addressing the needs identified by the public is unknown at this time.