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Operations up at Gary/Chicago International Airport after year of growth *Airport Authority celebrates milestones and plans for the future*

GARY, Ind. (December 14, 2015) – As 2015 draws to a close, Gary/Chicago International Airport operations are up 13.2 percent and rising from the previous year. The Airport Authority Board on Monday heard financial and operational updates for the airport in the final month of a year marked by transformational milestones at the airport.

At the end of November, the airport reported 23,785 total operations, up from 22,029 operations at the close of 2014. The number of total operations for 2015 will increase even more when December figures are accounted for. Additionally, the number of airport tenants has increased from 93 to 107 since the end of 2014, as reported in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) National Based Aircraft Inventory Program. In 2015, the airport added Chicago Helicopter Experience as well as attracting and expanding new and private tenants.

“This has been a year of significant growth at the airport,” said airport chairman Stephen Mays. “With major milestones – such as the Runway Expansion Project – behind us, we will channel this positive momentum to drive growth at the airport in 2016 and plan for long-term development.”

Earlier this month, the Airport Authority released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a Master Plan Update at the airport. The Authority is seeking qualified firms to provide engineering and planning services to create a plan to guide development at the airport over the next 20+ years. The airport’s last Master Plan was completed in 2001 and an update will compliment and help inform elements of the visioning document prepared under the airport’s public-private partnership (P3) with AvPORTS.

“This is an exciting time at the airport and we are looking ahead to 2016,” said airport executive director Dan Vicari. “The Updated Master Plan will help us take advantage of the momentum built this year and help generate ideas and successes for the future.”

The airport released its 64-page Vision in March 2015. The result of a collaborative effort under the P3 and the review of numerous studies on economic development in Gary, the Vision included plans to pursue a customs facility and return commercial service to the airport by 2017.

Last month, Vicari, assistant airport manager Hank Mook, and financial manager Bill Outlar attended the National Business Aviation Association’s (NBAA) Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition in Las Vegas, Nevada. The convention is a premier industry event, bringing together more than 20,000 aviation stakeholders from around the world, including corporate flight departments, fixed-base operators, and aircraft operators.

“We have made it a top priority to tell our story and market the airport to potential partners. Our team is aggressively speaking and meeting with corporate flight departments, which were met with positive reception and interest to bring business to the airport,” added Chairman Mays.

The Board also heard a report on a December 7 kick-off meeting between airport representatives and U.S. Customs and Border Patrol to review plans the airport submitted for a customs facility. Follow-up conversations are expected in the coming months.

The Airport Authority Board on Monday also approved several contracts for services at the airport, including one with the U.S. Department of Agriculture for wildlife management services on airport grounds.

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