



**WEST MICHIGAN**  
REGIONAL AIRPORT

ANNUAL REPORT

**2021**

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AARON  
THELENWOOD



## *Letter from the Director*

Friends of the airport,

We accomplished a lot in 2021 at West Michigan Regional Airport! From completion of the runway and lighting rehab project to expanding business development opportunities, thank you for helping us make 2021 a success!

West Michigan Regional Airport (WMRA) has undergone several key changes this past year, including adding a full-time director role, transitioning our fixed based operator (FBO) services to FlightLevel Aviation, onboarding additional part-time staff, and expanding direct engagement with all of our on-field partners. We also completed our \$4.4 million runway and lighting project, improving the experience and safety of our guests and users.

We are particularly excited to support and invest staff time in educational outreach and community engagement. 2021 saw the launch of on-field partner FlightPath and their Flight Night Program, as well as their collaboration with STEM Flights, a national aviation education organization. These partnerships serve to set us apart from other regional airports while also attracting the next generation of pilots and aviation/aerospace professionals to West Michigan.

Looking forward, we're continuing to expand our business development engagement efforts, highlighting opportunities for organizations to relocate and grow at West Michigan Regional Airport. We will also receive additional federal infrastructure funds allocated to WMRA from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in 2022 which we plan to invest in critical infrastructure to support these efforts.

We will continue to build partnerships, explore new opportunities, and promote the airport to support growth and sustainable aviation activity in West Michigan. 2021 proved to be a year of change, challenges and opportunities to innovate. We look forward to an equally optimistic 2022!

Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,

Aaron Thelenwood  
Airport Authority Director



# West Michigan Regional Airport Has A New Fixed Based Operator: FlightLevel

The Airport Authority approved the transfer of their existing FBO and Airport Manager Agreement contract to FlightLevel Aviation in July. An FBO is a private business contracted with an airport to manage operations, fuel service, aircraft maintenance, flight instruction and more.

*"After careful evaluation, we were pleased to welcome FlightLevel Aviation to WMRA in July. FlightLevel Aviation has been a dedicated partner in the transition and has shown investment in furthering the airport's goals of business and community development."*

- Aaron Thelenwood, WMRA Director

FlightLevel Aviation assumed the existing 20-year, non-exclusive contract with WMRA. The company also provides FBO services to many other airports throughout the Northeastern United States.

"We are committed to providing a world-class experience to our visitors and tenants. From charter opportunities to the warm cookies in the terminal, guests know West Michigan Regional Airport for excellence," said board chair, Russ Sylte. "We're grateful that FlightLevel has committed to providing that same level of service to our visitors."

## FLIGHTLEVEL'S AIRPORT SERVICES INCLUDE:

- CHARTER SERVICES
- RUNWAY MANAGEMENT
- RAMP SERVICES
- FLIGHT TRAINING
- AIRFIELD MAINTENANCE
- T-HANGAR MAINTENANCE
- AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE
- AVIATION FUEL & OIL DISPENSING SERVICES



## FBO REPORT DATA

AVERAGE MONTHLY SALES



AVERAGE MONTHLY GALLONS DELIVERED

49,777

YEARLY TOTAL FLIGHTS

Transplant Flights

3

Wings of Mercy Flights

25

Freight Flights

35

TOTAL FREIGHT WEIGHT

50,630





## Runway & Lighting Rehabilitation Project

The West Michigan Regional Airport's \$4.4 million runway and lighting rehabilitation project was completed in May 2021. The project was funded primarily through the Airport Improvement Program with 90% of funds coming from the FAA, 5% from MDOT-Aeronautics and 5% local share. We're grateful for the FAA and MDOT's continued commitment to and investment in WMRA.

This critical project improved the runway and replaced fixtures to reduce the airport's energy consumption, creating a better experience for users.

### FACILITY UPGRADES INCLUDED:

- REMOVING AND RESURFACING THE 6,002-FOOT RUNWAY
- UPGRADING LIGHTS ALONG THE RUNWAY WITH LED LIGHTING
- UPGRADING RUNWAY END IDENTIFIER LIGHTS (REIL)
- REPLACING WAYFINDING AND TAXIWAY GUIDANCE SIGNS

Rieth-Riley Construction, the contractor on the project, completed the project with only two and a half weeks of closure. The project received the **2021 Quality in Construction (QIC) Award** from the National Asphalt Pavement Association and an **Award of Excellence** from the Asphalt Paving Association of Michigan (APAM).

*LEDs use approximately 75% less energy than older incandescent bulbs and last 25% longer. The upgraded lights will aid us in improving our facility's energy efficiency while maintaining a safe, well-lit runway for pilots.*





# THE NEXT GENERATION OF AVIATION



From young children watching planes take off and land, to students taking their first solo flight, WMRA is uniquely positioned to support investment in the future of aviation. We strive to create opportunities for all students to explore the many career pathways available within aviation.

We developed two key partnerships with organizations specifically focused on this goal in 2021: Flight Path & STEM Flights.

Flight Path is a nonprofit youth aviation education program operating at WMRA. Their Flight Night program offers free educational opportunities for middle and high school students to explore careers in aviation. Flight Path connects students with aircraft mechanics, flight instructors, corporate pilots and other aviation specialists. So far, over 200 students have experienced flight simulations through Flight Nights, with several “graduating” from the program to pursue their own pilot certifications.



WMRA also partnered with national aviation education nonprofit STEM Flights. STEM Flights engages students in STEM education through the exciting field of aviation.

The STEM Flights program coordinates a national network of volunteer pilots who mentor students interested in aviation. Leading into 2022, they plan to become a more active partner at West Michigan Regional Airport. Flight Path & STEM Flights work in tandem to provide a comprehensive array of aviation experiences for students at WMRA. STEM Flights is always looking to engage new volunteer pilots in their program.

To learn more about Flight Path and their Flight Nights, visit [miflightpath.org](https://miflightpath.org)  
To learn more about STEM Flights, visit [stemflights.org](https://stemflights.org)

***“Our goal is to introduce kids to aviation and all aspects of it. Whether it be flying or being an aircraft mechanic or being in flight scheduling or any other number of things that involve aviation.”***

- Jeff Vos, Flight Path President



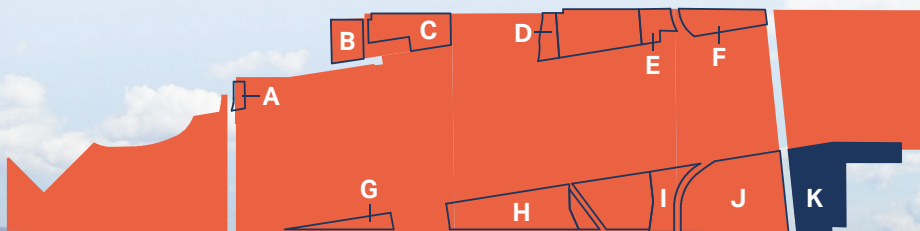


## Land Parcels Available for Lease in Aerospace and Aviation

WMRA continuously strives to support and grow our local economy. In 2021 we had the opportunity to support community growth through our own property investments. 2021 saw the launch of direct business engagement strategies designed to attract new aerospace and aviation companies to our region. The Airport Authority owns several parcels adjacent to the airfield that are ideal for future aviation and aerospace-related development. Available parcels range from 4 to 23 acres and are well suited for hangar development, aerospace manufacturing facilities, eVTOL and electric aircraft systems, and other emergent technologies. Other primary target industries include: aerospace engineering, manufacturing, maintenance and repair, hospitality, freight and cargo, drone manufacturing and more.

“In order to best serve our growing community, the Airport Authority has prioritized developing the land around the airport,” said Thelenwood. “West Michigan has a strong aerospace industry, and a long established history of cutting edge manufacturing. These on-field properties offer a unique opportunity for businesses to develop in the heart of a key industrial corridor while having immediate access to on-field amenities and services.”

Learn more about the available parcels and qualifying uses at [westmichiganregionalairport.com/development/](https://westmichiganregionalairport.com/development/)



## Parcel K Available for Industrial Sale

As part of our growth and development strategy, West Michigan Regional Airport has opened up a parcel for sale which can be used for general industrial development. Parcel K, located southeast of the airport, is separated from the airfield by Lincoln Avenue and a CSX rail line. Completing a three-year process with the FAA and the City of Holland, we're excited to announce that the 18.8 acres are available for sale. Revenues from the sale will be reinvested to support WMRA's long-term airport development projects.

Parcel K provides quick access to the freeway, railway and major cities. We recommend the land for general manufacturers, R&D space and other business-related uses that support the region's broader economic development objectives. WMRA is ideally located amongst some of Michigan's most significant industries, including automotive, agriculture, furniture and aerospace. Parcel K provides non-aerospace tenants the chance to expand into this opportunity-rich market.

To learn more about Parcel K, visit [westmichiganregionalairport.com/development/](https://westmichiganregionalairport.com/development/)





# THE AVIATION COMMUNITY

***"Aviation is a community, not just a business. The energy that came out of West Michigan Regional was exceptional, something that we weren't finding in other places."***

- Bill Sandmann, Nexus, On-Site Business

## 6 DREAMS FULFILLED — DREAM FLIGHTS

In early August, West Michigan Regional Airport hosted Dream Flights, a nonprofit organization focused on providing veterans with exciting flights in restored WWII Boeing Stearman biplanes. The organization has provided Dream Flights for over 4,500 veterans in the last ten years!

During their stop at West Michigan Regional Airport this summer, Dream Flights flew six local WWII veterans as part of Operation September Freedom, which honored the 80th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. The veterans arrived by bus from Holland and Covenant Living in Grand Rapids. Our community showed its stripes this day, with 200+ volunteers and supporters lining Geurink Boulevard with American flags, welcoming the veterans. Local firefighters showed support by hoisting a massive American flag held between two ladder trucks. Holland's Operation September Freedom also featured a flyover of four T-34 Mentor planes by Hooligan's Flight Team.

Volunteer pilots, many of them veterans themselves, took each Dream Flyer on a personal 20-minute flight. Each flight in the restored, open-cockpit biplane provided the veterans with the unique experience of soaring 1,000 feet above the ground. For some veterans the experience was a nostalgic one, while for others, flying was a life-long dream come true. These aircraft were the very same models that many of the veterans trained in before serving in the war.

Learn more about Dream Flights and how you can support them on their website, [dreamflights.org](https://dreamflights.org)







## 19,941 GIFTS DELIVERED — OPERATION GOOD CHEER

Each holiday season, West Michigan Regional Airport welcomes flights from Child and Family Services of Michigan (CSFM) for their annual event, Operation Good Cheer. This program provides presents for children and teens in foster care, as well as adults with disabilities, across the state. Since 1971, over 100,000 Michiganders have received gifts through Operation Good Cheer.

Donation sites collect, wrap and load the gifts for transport, then volunteer truck drivers bring the presents to local airports to be flown to their new homes. As one of the most centrally-located airports in Michigan, the WMRA team is always excited to host Operation Good Cheer to help CSFM make the holiday season brighter for Michigan families in need.

The 2021 holiday season included 256 aircraft, many of which came from the Michigan Wing of Civil Air Patrol (CAP)—an official nonprofit auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force. Through the hard work of 175 pilots, the Civil Air Patrol, and many volunteers, the 50th anniversary of CSFM's Operation Good Cheer delivered 19,941 gifts to 6,647 recipients across the state.

Thank you Operation Good Cheer for using West Michigan Regional Airport!

Learn more about Operation Good Cheer and how you can support them on their website, [cfsm.org/operation-good-cheer](https://cfsm.org/operation-good-cheer)



## 140 PETS SAVED — BISSELL PET RESCUE

In June, we were excited to welcome the BISSELL Pet Foundation to WMRA. After a rather loud flight to our airport, volunteers from many regional pet foundations and organizations were able to relocate over 140 cats and dogs by transporting them to their new homes in West Michigan likely saving their lives in the process.

Due to hurricanes in the Southern United States, hundreds of pets lose their homes every storm season. The local animal shelters suffer from overcrowding and can't adequately care for this influx of strays. Organizations across the country help transport pets to shelters that have the capacity to properly care for them, but rescuing by van or other ground transportation can take up to 24 hours.

On June 23rd, our partners rescued pets from overcrowded shelters throughout Louisiana after Hurricane Claudette. These 140 pets made the quick flight north to West Michigan Regional Airport where volunteers delivered them safely to 12 local shelters and foster families.

Learn more about the Bissell Pet Foundation at [bissellpetfoundation.org](https://bissellpetfoundation.org)







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