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**Gary / Chicago International Airport Authority Issues Resolution  
Supporting New Lake County Convention Center**

*Resolution Supports Placing New Convention Center at the Hard Rock Casino Site in Gary, Indiana*

(Gary, IN – May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025) – Earlier today at their monthly board meeting the [Gary / Chicago International Airport \(GCIA\)](#) Authority issued a unanimous resolution supporting the placement of the proposed Lake County Convention Center at the Hard Rock Casino site in Gary, Indiana. The proposed convention center includes a 145,000 square foot facility as well as an estimated 300 hotel keys, and would be funded via gaming revenues, state of Indiana matching funds and a \$30 million commitment from Hard Rock over a 20-year period. If approved, the convention center would provide approximately \$16 million annually in regional economic impact, while generating over 1,300 well-paying construction jobs during the site build-out and generating nearly \$3.5 million annually in new tax revenues.

“The Airport Authority has consistently focused on improving the regional economy, and the past decade of strong airport growth and development has served as a strong catalyst for further regional economic growth,” said **GCIA Chairman Pete Visclosky**. “The proposed Convention Center directly complements the efforts of GCIA, as it will provide further demand for air travel and a destination location for convention visitors and tourists alike.”

GCIA has seen extensive growth since 2015, starting with the expansion of the airport’s main runway to nearly 9,000 feet, making it the second longest runway in the region after O’Hare International Airport. This expansion has allowed the airport to service larger, heavier aircraft. [GCIA opened its U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\) facility in 2018](#), allowing air travelers from any international destination to frequent the airport without needing to clear customs elsewhere.

In 2020, [GCIA began cargo service operations via UPS](#), and in [late 2024 GCIA announced an additional extension to their long-term lease agreement](#) with the cargo services giant. GCIA now ranks 3rd in the State of Indiana for its freight volume and has recently begun [the initial phase of a long-term expansion of their cargo service offerings](#).

In 2022, [GCIA received formal Federal Aviation Administration \(FAA\) approvals for its Master Plan](#), a long-term planning document that will guide the next several decades of airport aviation and growth. In late 2023, [GCIA announced its acquisition of the Griffith-Merrillville Airport](#), making GCIA one of only three aviation "systems" in the State of Indiana.

2024 saw multiple milestones reached, including [unveiling its new website](#) and breaking ground on a new [\\$12 million, 47,000 square foot aviation hangar](#). The year also saw the airport awarded a [\\$1.7 million Federal Aviation Administration \(FAA\) grant](#) to design and engineer a new, state-of-the-art airport traffic control tower.

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**Resolution by the Gary / Chicago International Airport Authority to Support the Lake County Convention Center at the Hard Rock Casino in Northern Indiana**

**WHEREAS**, the Gary / Chicago International Airport Authority (GCI AA) is the governing body of the Gary / Chicago International Airport (GCI A), a key economic engine for the entire Northwest Indiana region and a substantial actor in the Chicago Metropolitan Area aviation network, and

**WHEREAS**, the GCI AA understands the immense value the proposed Lake County Convention Center at the Hard Rock Casino would provide Northwest Indiana, including the provision of substantial economic and social benefits complementary to the airport's overall mission, and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed convention center is situated at a strategic location, with existing infrastructure providing easy access via three (3) major interstates (I-65, I-80 and I-90), rail and transit lines as well as international ports, allowing ease of access for any mode of transportation and following a similar access model that has made GCI A an obvious partner to join the Chicago aviation landscape, and

**WHEREAS**, the GCI AA has overseen over a decade of robust growth of the airport, including tens of millions of private investments and hundreds of millions of public and capital investments, resulting in substantial growth in aviation operations and tenant amenities to GCI A, and

**WHEREAS**, the past decade has seen the extension of the airport's main runway to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> longest in the Chicago region, the adoption of its Master Plan to guide several decades of growth, and the creation of its premier U.S. Customs Facility permitting air travelers to access Northwest Indiana without needing to clear customs elsewhere, and

**WHEREAS**, the GCI AA remains focused on being a catalyst for regional economic growth, with its ongoing capital projects serving as a direct contributor and its strategic location serves a critical role in the Chicagoland aviation system connecting local economic development to the world, and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed convention center directly aligns with GCI A's focus, as it will result in increased event and convention traffic that will result in greater demand for air travel, creating an enhanced destination location for tourists and convention visitors alike, and

**WHEREAS**, the Hard Rock Casino alignment with the proposed Lake County Convention Center would further the availability of hotel keys, hospitality locations and other economic drivers, further supporting the tax base of Northwest Indiana, and

**BE IT RESOLVED**, the GCI AA strongly supports the proposed Lake County Convention Center at the Hard Rock Casino as it would strongly complement the local economy of Northwest Indiana, providing substantial economic and social benefits that are complementary to the airport's overall mission.