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Gary/Chicago International Airport Breaks Ground on New \$18.3 Million Air Traffic Control Tower

*Ceremony Marks Culmination of Multi-Year Effort to Replace 54-Year-Old Facility and Support
Future Aviation Growth in the Chicago Region*

(GARY, IN – September 18, 2026) - Earlier this morning, the [Gary/Chicago International Airport](#) celebrated the official groundbreaking of its new [\\$18.3 million Air Traffic Control Tower \(ATCT\)](#). This milestone marks the culmination of a multi-year planning, engineering and funding effort and the beginning of construction on a project to replace the airport's 54-year-old control tower while providing modern infrastructure to support future aviation growth throughout Northwest Indiana and the greater Chicago region. The new tower will be approximately 50 feet taller than the current structure and feature modern technology designed to improve visibility, communications, operational efficiency and safety for air traffic controllers and aircraft operators. Construction is expected to create approximately 120 skilled-trade jobs and require roughly 24,000 construction hours, with completion anticipated by late 2027.

The [new tower is the result of a coordinated effort](#) between GCI A, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the U.S. Department of Transportation and regional, state and federal officials. Earlier this year, [GCI A received a \\$10 million award through the Federal Contract Tower \(FCT\) program](#), followed by an additional \$8.3 million in Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant funds in August. The Airport received its [FAA siting approval and design and engineering funding in 2024](#). All told, the project represents a substantial investment in one of the region's premier transportation assets.

"Today's groundbreaking ceremony represents the culmination of years of planning, collaboration and investment in the future of the Gary/Chicago International Airport," **said Dan Vicari, Executive Director of GCI A**. "The new air traffic control tower will provide the modern infrastructure needed to support future aviation growth, enhance safety and operational efficiency and ensure GCI A remains a key economic engine for Northwest Indiana and the Chicago region for decades to come."

The existing Air Traffic Control Tower was constructed in 1972 and no longer reflects the operational needs of a modern aviation facility. Planning for its replacement began in 2022 and advanced through FAA siting approval and design funding milestones in 2024 before receiving full federal construction funding earlier this year.

"This is the result of years of planning, persistence and partnership among airport leadership, our federal and state partners, and the many stakeholders who share our vision for the future of Gary/Chicago International Airport," **said Dr. Vanessa McCloud, Commissioner of the Gary/Chicago**

International Airport Authority. "As stewards of this important public asset, the Airport Authority has remained committed to making strategic investments that strengthen safety, support economic development, and position the airport to meet the evolving needs of the aviation industry. The new Air Traffic Control Tower is one of the most significant infrastructure investments in the airport's recent history and an important step in fulfilling that mission."

"The Gary/Chicago International Airport is a vital economic engine for our city and the entire Northwest Indiana region, and I want to sincerely thank the FAA, Congressman Frank Mrvan, our state partners, and the Airport Authority for their incredible collaboration in making this milestone a reality." **said City of Gary Mayor Eddie Melton.** "This \$18.3 million investment in a state-of-the-art Air Traffic Control Tower not only brings 120 skilled-trade jobs to our community during construction, but it ensures that GCIA is positioned to capture future aviation and cargo growth. Together, we are building a stronger, more connected Gary."

"Congratulations to all the leaders with the Gary/Chicago International Airport on securing another critical federal investment, as this new Air Traffic Control Tower is an investment in the future of Gary, our airport, and all Northwest Indiana," **said Congressman Frank J. Mrvan (IN-1).** "I look forward to continuing our partnership with GCIA to bring more transformative federal investments and new economic opportunities to our region."

"Today's groundbreaking symbolizes the beginning of the replacement of the current outdated Air Traffic Control Tower here at the Gary/Chicago International Airport," **said Michael Buening, Chief Airport Engineer of the Indiana Department of Transportation.** "The proposed new taller control tower will provide a state-of-the-art facility and equipment to improve the safety, efficiency and operations of all air traffic and airfield activities here at the airport."

A Decade of Growth and Investment

The project represents another significant milestone in GCIA's continued growth and infrastructure modernization efforts, which have transformed the airport through over a decade of strategic infrastructure investment and expansion.

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](#), who signed a long-term lease agreement. Cargo service operations have quickly scaled, and GCIA now ranks third in Indiana by air cargo volume, with further growth anticipated in coming years.

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.

In 2024, the airport reached several additional milestones, including [unveiling its new website](#),

breaking ground on a new [\\$12 million, 47,000 square foot aviation hangar](#) as well as breaking ground on [the airport's air cargo campus expansion that was completed in the summer of 2026.](#)

In 2025, the airport continued advancing its long-term infrastructure strategy, with the [announcement of the acquisition of a 4.7-acre parcel of land](#) that will ultimately be utilized to support additional cargo services expansion, as well the award of a [\\$15 million contract to construct the airport's new cargo and general aviation ramp.](#)

In 2026, the airport [completed construction on its 55-acre Air Cargo Campus](#) that significantly upgrades GCIA's air cargo infrastructure and provides accommodations for up to eight (8) wide-body cargo aircraft operating simultaneously, further enhancing the airport's ability to serve the growing freight and logistics market.

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