

Volair Technologies and Gerald R. Ford International Airport Partner to Advance AI for Safer, Smarter Airport Operations

Grand Rapids, MI – November 24 2025 — Volair Technologies Inc. (VTI Aerospace) today announced the deployment of its FlightShepherd cognitive assistant at Gerald R. Ford International Airport as part of the Ford Launchpad for Innovative Technologies and Entrepreneurship (FLITE) program. The project explores how real-time artificial intelligence and natural language processing (NLP) can enhance airport safety, efficiency, and situational awareness for air traffic controllers, airport operators, and airline staff.

VTI Aerospace is a leading developer of AI-enabled software solutions for pilot assistance and autonomous flight. Its flagship product, FlightShepherd, acts as an AI copilot, designed to make flying safer and more scalable by assisting pilots with communications, decision-making, and situational awareness.

Through this project, VTI Aerospace is expanding FlightShepherd's core technologies beyond the cockpit to serve the broader airport ecosystem. The company is installing an ATC data collection and cloud streaming system at KGRR and deploying a live dashboard that integrates real-time ATC transcriptions with ADS-B aircraft tracking data. This effort not only demonstrates the potential for AI-powered coordination between aircraft and ground operations but also advances the broader goal of improving safety and operational efficiency across airports nationwide.

"Access to the live airport environment at Gerald R. Ford International is an incredible opportunity for us," said Eric Muir, Founder and CEO of VTI Aerospace. "We've been developing AI copilots focused on pilots and cockpit operations, but this project allows us to expand that vision to the airport as a whole. By connecting our system to real ATC and ground operations data, we're taking an important step toward a more intelligent, coordinated airspace where humans and AI work together seamlessly."

"We're excited to support VTI Aerospace on their second initiative through FLITE," said Justine Johnson, Michigan's Chief Mobility Officer. "The project demonstrates Michigan's growing leadership in deploying next-gen air mobility solutions to improve efficiency and safety across the private and public sectors. Their last project has already become a foundational technology in commercial and defense aviation applications, and we look forward to seeing FlightShepherd continue that trajectory."

"Eric and I go back to our days together at the University of Michigan, and it's been great to see our paths cross again in advancing aerospace innovation here in the state," said Ben Marchionna, Director of Air Mobility Initiatives for OFME. "This collaboration shows how Michigan is not just developing breakthrough technology, but also testing and validating it locally — closing the loop from research to real-world impact."

"The potential of this system to enhance awareness, record keeping, and overall operational safety is really exciting," said Jill Haarman, Operations Dispatch Supervisor at Gerald R. Ford International Airport. "We are always looking for tools that improve communication between controllers, operations, and ground staff. This project gives us a chance to explore what that future could look like."

The pilot project is sponsored by the Michigan Office of Future Mobility and Electrification (OFME), Southwest Airlines® and the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority under the FLITE innovation program, which connects aviation startups with real-world airport environments to accelerate technology adoption.

VTI Aerospace plans to demonstrate the live system in December 2025, gathering feedback from flight personnel, operators, and controllers to inform future safety and efficiency features for airports across Michigan and beyond.