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Ford International Airport Announces Fourth Round of FLITE

More than \$100,000 in Grant Funds Awarded to Companies Transforming the Aviation Landscape

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., September 27, 2023 –The Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority, together with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Seamless Ventures, Southwest Airlines® and the West Michigan Aviation Academy, has announced the fourth cohort of companies that will receive more than \$100,000 in grant funding through the Ford Launchpad for Innovative Technologies and Entrepreneurship, or FLITE.

One of the first airport-based initiatives in the nation, FLITE provides funding to encourage the design, development and pilot testing of new products and services in a live airport environment. The five companies that will receive grant funding through this next round include:

- Dataspeed Inc.: Autonomous research and development for vehicle integrations
- DD DANNAR: A mobile power station with a multi-functional, zero-emissions, configurable platform for maintenance and emergency response needs
- Numina: Computer vision system that applies a privacy-by-design framework
- Signapse: AI technology that automatically translates written text to sign language via video
- Volair Technologies Inc.: Flight perception technologies to support aviation operations and expand aerial mobility options

"FLITE continues to be a leading platform for new technologies in the aviation industry, and we're excited to introduce the fourth cohort of companies testing their innovative solutions," said Tory Richardson, president and CEO of the Ford International Airport Authority. "This program is a collaborative effort with our partners to further enhance the guest experience and pursue advancements in the aviation industry."

As Michigan's lead advocate for business development, job awareness, and community development with a focus on growing the local economy, the MEDC provided grant funding to FLITE through the Office of Future Mobility and Electrification, or OFME.

Dataspeed Inc., will engage in comprehensive research and exploration to develop an intuitive and highly efficient user interface specifically tailored for an automated airport service vehicle.

DD DANNAR, is testing a mobile power station that can be configured for various maintenance tasks and serve as a mobile energy storage asset, capable of distributing power in a variety of ways.

Numina uses computer vision systems to detect movement in streets, curbs, places and open public space—without collecting personally identifiable information. Numina will deploy sensors at key curb

locations around the Gerald R. Ford International Airport to generate automated and continuous multimodal traffic insights to increase cost savings and improve the guest experience.

Signapse utilizes AI technology that automatically translates written text into a sign language video. This technology will be used at the Ford International Airport to deliver real-time departure and disruption messages in American Sign Language for deaf and hard of hearing passengers.

"Having the support of a program like FLITE is invaluable to a start-up like ours," said Leia Clancy, head of business development at Signapse. "The program enables us to develop a flagship case study for our AI technology, giving us an opportunity to grow our business in Michigan and beyond."

Volair Technologies Inc. deploys on-aircraft sensor pods to collect in-flight imagery, positional and traffic data through routine flight school operation. This project will provide flight data for advancing aviation safety-enhancing perception systems.

To date, the Ford International Airport Authority has provided support to 19 companies through FLITE, awarding over \$500,000 in grant funds across four rounds. The six core focus areas for new technology advancements through FLITE include:

- Automation & Analytics: Improving operational efficiency and optimization of workforce and other resources through automation and analysis of data
- Electrification & Sustainability: Switching fossil fuel vehicles and infrastructure to electrics and other decarbonization projects
- Safety & Security: Strengthening passenger and worker safety and security throughout the airport campus
- Door-to-Door & Terminal Guest Experience: Improving the efficiency of getting to and from the airport and improving the pre-boarding experience
- Advancing Aviation: Exploring the enabling infrastructure and implications of emerging commercial aviation use cases

Applications for round five of FLITE are being accepted now through October 31, 2023 at michiganbusiness.org/mobility-funding.

About the Gerald R. Ford International Airport

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is the second busiest airport in Michigan, serving business and leisure travelers with nonstop and connecting flights on six airlines. The Ford International Airport is managed and operated by the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority. For more information, visit www.flyford.org or follow the airport on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram @FlyGRFord.

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