

Chippewa Valley
REGIONAL AIRPORT

CY2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Vision

The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport will provide our users with a safe, efficient and welcoming operation while striving to meet the current and future needs of the community we serve, by ensuring the Chippewa Valley is connected to the world.

2024 Accomplishments

Commercial Airline Service

The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport, along with about 30% of U.S. airports offering airline service, benefits from the US Department of Transportation (US DOT) Essential Air Service (EAS) program. Through this program, the US DOT contracts airlines to provide service to these airports. The EAS contract with Sun Country Airlines was set to expire in November 2024, prompting the US DOT to issue a Request for Proposals for carriers interested in providing airline service to CVRA in May 2024. Two proposals were received by the US DOT: one from the current provider, Sun Country Airlines, and another from SkyWest Airlines, which had served the airport from 2010 to 2022 before departing due to a nationwide pilot shortage.

As part of the RFP process, the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport Commission was asked to provide a letter of support for one of the carrier proposals. The Airport Commission solicited public input and interview carriers during their very careful consideration of which proposal to support. The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport Commission carefully deliberated both proposals, solicited public input, interview both carriers, and ultimately supported the proposal by SkyWest Airlines as the best option to serve the most passengers with daily service to Chicago and connections beyond on United Airlines network of domestic and global flights. The US DOT officially selected SkyWest Airlines to provide service to CVRA and the United Express carrier started service on December 13, 2024.

While the EAS program prevents the US DOT from contracting with more than one airline at a time for each community, an airline can still choose to serve an airport outside of the EAS program. After the US DOT's final decision to contract with SkyWest Airlines, airport officials quickly began discussions with Sun Country Airlines about continuing seasonal service at CVRA. Given their commitment to the region, Sun Country Airlines agreed to maintain seasonal flights to Fort Myers, Florida, from January 31, 2025, through April 7, 2025. The future of these seasonal flights will depend on their success, and the airport has been actively promoting the service. If the public does not utilize the seasonal flights, it is unlikely they will continue.

Airline passenger numbers in 2024 were lower compared to the strong performance in 2023, which marked the first full year of scheduled service by Sun Country Airlines at CVRA. The decline in 2024 can be partially attributed to a reduction in the number of seasonal nonstop flights and uncertainty surrounding CVRA's airline service due to the transition between EAS providers. In total, 44,696 revenue airline passengers were recorded in 2024, down from 50,942 in 2023.

General Aviation

Demand for general aviation facilities continues to be strong at CVRA. Airport hangars were at 97% occupancy with 62 of 64 hangars rented for most of 2024. Additional demand continues to exist for larger aircraft storage with a waiting list in place for the heated 2,500-3,500 square foot hangars. Construction started in 2024 on a new 7,700 square foot hangar to relocate an existing tenant. This will open up a 3,600 square foot hangar for someone on the waiting list.

Tower operations reached the highest number since 2012 with 26,433 aircraft operations recorded in 2024 versus 23,088 aircraft operations in 2023. Aircraft operations include all aircraft takeoffs and landings during the tower hours of operation which are 5:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Additional aircraft operations occur outside the tower hours but as there is no mechanism to count that traffic, they do not get included in our official airport operations count.

Essential services for general and corporate aviation continue to be available including aircraft rental, fueling, aircraft maintenance, heated hangar rental and on demand business and medical charters. Total gallons of fuel delivered to the airport in 2024 was 840,710 which increased slightly over 2023 which was 802,515 gallons.

Two flight instruction and aircraft rental businesses operated at CVRA in 2024: Gibson Aviation and Link Aviation. Both businesses offer comprehensive flight training from introductory to commercial pilot levels and aircraft rental services. The presence of both schools has significantly increased interest in flight instruction at CVRA, offering aspiring pilots a variety of training options and aircraft to choose from.

Airport Partners

Four car rental brands, Avis, Budget, Enterprise and National, continued to be available at CVRA in 2024. Cars rented at the airport decreased slightly year over year with a total of 5,777 cars rented in 2024 versus 5,959 in 2023. Car rental concession revenue was also down compared to the prior two years so it will be interesting to see the impact of the return of daily scheduled airline service on car rental revenue.

Hangar 54 Grill, the full-service restaurant and bar that opened at the airport in 2016, continues to be an asset to the airport and the community. The restaurant's spacious aviation themed interior provides a comfortable dining experience with a view of the airport tarmac, allowing patrons to watch aircraft activity while enjoying their meals. Hangar 54 Grill has received positive reviews for its food quality, service, and inviting atmosphere.

Airport Capital Improvements

In 2024, several capital improvement projects were carried out at CVRA, including the start of construction on a new 7,700 square foot corporate hangar, with completion anticipated in Spring/Summer 2025. The second and final phase of the airport fence replacement was finished. A new airport fire truck was delivered, enabling the airport to phase out the use of PFAS-containing firefighting foam. Work also continued on the update of the airport's Master Plan. A project was put out to bid for the replacement of several hangar taxilanes, and the design phase for an airfield lighting replacement project began. Finally, construction on a new private hangar in the south hangar area was completed.

Federally funded projects generally have 90% of the federal funds coming from the Federal Aviation Administration Airport Improvement Program (AIP) through the Airport and Airway Trust Fund (AATF). The AATF provides funding for the federal commitment to the nation's aviation system through several aviation-related excise taxes. State projects are also funded at least partially by aviation user fees. Local project commitments are funded with existing airport funds. **No new tax levy dollars are requested for airport projects.**

Alignment with Strategic Plan

Robust Infrastructure	Vibrant Communities	Quality and Meaningful Relationships
Understand airport stakeholder facility needs and look for opportunities to partner to accommodate those needs to grow the usage of the airport.	Partner on educational opportunities to inform travelers on available transportation options at the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport.	Build relationships with state and federal officials that will help educate them on the impacts of new regulatory standards on airports.
Continue to aggressively pursue state and federal aid for airport development projects to minimize the local expenses of maintaining and improving airport facilities.	Continue to pursue opportunities to expand airline service options for travelers in the region.	Pursue opportunities to collaborate with other County departments, City of Eau Claire and other Airports to provide efficient and cost-effective services to our stakeholders.

2025 Future Opportunities/Challenges

The return of daily scheduled airline service to Chippewa Valley Regional Airport in 2024 has been a significant development for our region. Sun Country Airlines, a low-cost carrier, has also been very well-received, as evidenced by the strong number of travelers in 2023 and 2024. The seasonal nonstop flights to Fort Myers, Florida, which began on January 31, 2025, are a promising start to a potential long-term partnership between Sun Country Airlines and CVRA.

To ensure the continuation of this service and to explore new opportunities, it is essential to demonstrate sustained demand. Our marketing and public relations efforts are focused on maximizing the number of travelers utilizing our facilities and inform the community about the advantages of flying locally, such as low-cost parking and shorter security lines.

We are also closely monitoring changes in legislation and funding for airport-related programs at both the state and federal levels. Engaging with our legislators is a priority to understand the impact of program changes on our region. If funding from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law remains available in 2025 and 2026, we plan to pursue projects that will reduce airport expenses and/or increase revenue through improved infrastructure and equipment.

Additionally, we continue to focus on opportunities to grow corporate and general aviation utilization at the airport. Despite recent investments in hangar facilities, there is still a waiting list for hangar space. Expanding this area is important for the long-term success of the airport, alongside the growth in airline-related business.

By pursuing these initiatives, we aim to enhance the services and facilities at CVRA, benefiting both travelers and the broader community.

Commercial Airline Service

The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport provides support for commercial air service operations. The commercial air service program includes everything having to do with facilitating, serving, and maintaining commercial air service, including Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting, FAA Airport Certification, TSA Airport Security Program, air service marketing and public relations, facilities and maintenance for the airfield, terminal building, air traffic control tower, parking lot and entrance road.

OUTPUTS	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
Number of passenger enplanements/deplanements	20,247	39,167	34,594	50,942	44,696
Number of community presentations	38	41	51	61	57
OUTCOMES	<u>Benchmark</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
80% of commercial passengers will report being satisfied or extremely satisfied with the airport controlled metrics on a customer satisfaction survey.	80%	82%	88%	90%	87%
Maintain percentage change in passenger enplanements at a level equal to or greater than the percentage change in the state average.	TBD%	79%	-12%	51%	-13%
Commercial air service will be promoted in the community 50 times during the year.	50 or more	41	51	61	57

General Aviation

The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport provides the infrastructure necessary to facilitate general/corporate aviation operations. Examples: facilities and maintenance for the airfield, hangars, FBO facilities, air traffic control tower, parking lot and entrance road.

OUTPUTS	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
Number of hangars rented for airport:	61 of 61	63 of 63	60 of 63	61 of 63	62 of 64
Aircraft Operations:	17,602	19,848	18,999	23,088	26,433
Gallons of Fuel:	1,003,139	1,163,738	1,070,834	802,515	840,710
OUTCOMES	<u>Benchmark</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
85% of airport owned hangars will be rented.	85%	100%	95%	97%	97%
Maintain percentage change of aircraft operations at a level equal to or greater than the change in the state average.	2.5%	13%	-4%	22%	14%
80% of general aviation users will report being satisfied or extremely satisfied with the overall airport experience on a customer satisfaction survey.	80%	87%	100%	100%	100%

Airport Partners

The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport provides the infrastructure necessary to facilitate airport partner businesses including car rentals, restaurant, and other miscellaneous non-aviation space rentals, including facilities and maintenance for the terminal building, parking lot and entrance road.

OUTPUTS	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
Percentage of terminal space rented that is available to airport partners	100%	92%	92%	97%	100%
Car rental concession fee revenue	\$85,372	\$153,033	\$181,400	\$190,013	\$176,221
OUTCOMES	<u>Benchmark</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
70% of total space available for rental to airport partners will be rented during the year.	70%	92%	92%	97%	100%
The current year concession fee earned from car rentals will be greater than or equal to the prior year.	\$190,013	\$153,033	\$181,400	\$190,013	\$176,221