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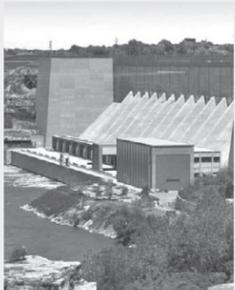
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# Wants commitment to transparency on Buffalo Bills stadium negotiations

Dear Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz,

With discussions taking place between you and the Buffalo Bills regarding the construction of a new stadium funded in whole or part with tax dollars, we are calling for a commitment to transparency by you, New York state officials and the Bills.

Any public investment in a facility designed to accommodate a private enterprise must have the public's benefit as its primary objective. Before any agreement is finalized, the public should be given time to review and comment on any stadium deal that will require the use of county and state tax dollars. Pegula Sports and Entertainment as the owner of the Buffalo Bills has stated that they are seeking a public/private partnership to build a new stadium.

The financial assistance sought by the Buffalo Bills is based on a study completed by CAA Icon, which evaluated the costs involved to construct a new stadium. As a first step toward transparency and toward establishing a partnership, the CAA Icon study should be made available to the public.

In 2013, when a lease agreement was entered into between Erie County and the Buffalo Bills, which involved the expenditure of taxpayer funds, the public was not provided an opportunity to be heard by the Erie County Legislature or the New York State Legislature prior to both bodies approving the lease agreement. The closed-door approach, which occurred in 2013, should not be repeated again. We are calling upon all elected officials representing the County of Erie and New York state to advocate

for stadium negotiations that are done in a transparent way and to utilize a process which provides the public information and the opportunity to be heard before any agreement is approved by the Erie County Legislature, the New York State Legislature or any public authority that may have a role in the process.

In June of this year, the Jacksonville Jaguars announced their plans for a new stadium and, as part of that effort, they have scheduled 14 public meetings to provide information and to answer questions regarding their proposal. In 2002, San Diego formed the Citizens Task Force on Chargers Issues to evaluate the Chargers request for a new football stadium. The task force held over 50 public meetings as part of their work. In 1998, the San Diego Padres requested a new stadium, which they stated was

necessary to address their financial concerns. A citizens committee was formed to evaluate the request, and the Padres agreed to open their books as part of a review process. Several public hearings were held and a spirited citywide debate occurred.

If Pegula Sports and Entertainment are interested in a public/private partnership, then their stadium study should be released to the public. Elected representatives at the local and state level must demand transparency and provide the public opportunities to be heard, before any votes occur on a stadium agreement that involves the commitment of tax dollars.

Paul W. Wolf, Esq.  
President

New York Coalition for Open Government

## AAA offers travel tips for COVID-19 delta variant

COVID-19 delta variant raises new considerations for today's travelers

Submitted by AAA of Western and Central New York

Americans returned to travel in droves this summer, with recent AAA Travel bookings up at least 11% over 2019 levels, and even more people excitedly planning trips for 2022 and beyond.

As summer comes to a close, travel volumes around Labor Day are expected to remain high. Though, with a resurgence of COVID-19 cases attributed to the delta variant, some travelers are wondering if they should take that last summer trip – or continue with their future travel plans. AAA reminds travelers it's important to remain informed and be flexible as policies and guidelines continue to evolve.

"Whether and how to travel is a very personal decision. By and large, people who were planning to travel are still taking their trips, while being mindful to take precautions to protect themselves and others," said Paula Twidale, senior vice president, AAA Travel. "The hottest summer travel destinations by far have been Mexico, Hawaii and popular cities throughout the U.S., as well as cruises to Alaska, Greece and the Caribbean."

### Travel and COVID-19 Delta Variant

AAA Travel experts are continually providing information and tips for traveling safely, to help people make the decision that is right for them. It's important to take into consideration the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, which advises that fully vaccinated people can travel domestically with little risk. For unvaccinated people, they advise delaying travel. Additionally, some destinations and travel providers may require proof of vaccination before traveling.

"Travelers should consult the expertise of a knowledgeable travel agent who can help guide you through this decision-making process, including exploring travel insurance options to protect your vacation investment," Twidale added. "Travel suppliers are also going the extra mile to help keep guests safe, in some cases requiring vaccines, but also adding wellness guides on tour vacations, cruise lines operating at reduced capacities, adding enhanced cleaning protocols throughout the travel landscape, and more."

Travel insurance options vary greatly,

but could potentially cover expenses related to the need to cancel or postpone your trip, flight delays or cancellations, and any extra hotel or transportation expenses incurred. While travel insurance policies have historically not covered epidemics or pandemics, some providers have started to introduce plans that cover some losses due to COVID-19 or other epidemic diseases, due to shifting consumer expectations. Travelers should refer to a knowledgeable AAA travel agent or their travel insurance provider for details.

### Mask Guidance

The CDC recently updated its guidance on mask wearing, advising people in areas with high COVID-19 transmission to wear masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status. You will be required to wear a mask on planes, buses, trains and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States, and in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations. Additionally, some states and cities have updated their mask and other travel requirements.

"Masks should be at the top of your packing list, since guidelines and requirements will vary from place to place," Twidale said. "Also bring along disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer and a thermometer to help protect and monitor your health. For road trips, also consider packing water and extra snacks to reduce the need to stop along your trip."

### Modes of Travel – What to Expect

Road trips can offer more flexibility than some other modes of travel, but it's still important to plan ahead for travel by car. Understand the impact COVID-19 has on cities and states you are traveling through and if there are any restrictions in place. To be informed, check out AAA's COVID-19 Travel Restrictions Map and TripTik.AAA.com.

For those traveling by air, the CDC advises that most viruses and other germs do not spread easily on flights because of how air circulates and is filtered on airplanes, in addition to universal use of masks throughout the air travel experience. AAA recommends travelers consider enrolling in TSA PreCheck, to help expedite your time through potentially crowded airports this summer.

Recent AAA Travel hotel bookings have increased almost 50% over 2019 levels, and these travelers are being met with a different hotel experience. In fact, the pandemic has had a vast impact on consumers' expectations for cleanliness during their stay. As a result, AAA has enhanced its Diamond inspections. Hotels that meet AAA's standards for cleanliness, condition and new surface cleanliness testing are now recognized as inspected clean and then assigned a Diamond designation.

Travelers will be able to find inspected clean hotels on AAA.com/Diamonds to help plan their trips later this fall. In the meantime, look for AAA's Best of Housekeeping badge – awarded to the top 25% of Diamond-designated hotels for cleanliness – for extra peace of mind. Also, prior to any hotel stay, call ahead to ensure your hotel is open and ask what precautions they are taking to protect guests.

### International Travel

With the success of the vaccine rollout and more countries opening to American travelers, AAA Travel agents have noted a significant increase in inquiries and bookings for international travel, especially for 2022 – with Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Greece and European river cruises topping the list of international travel destinations.

"For those planning to travel internationally, AAA advises booking early and working with a travel agent. Demand and pricing are on the rise for 2022 and inventory is likely to be limited in top destinations and itineraries," Twidale said.

As borders begin to reopen and countries start to loosen their travel restrictions, the CDC notes international travel poses additional risks. If you are fully vaccinated, you should continue to follow the CDC's recommendations for traveling safely and get tested three to five days after traveling internationally. You do not need to get tested before leaving the U.S. unless your destination requires it, and you do not need to self-quarantine after arriving in the U.S.

All air passengers coming to the U.S., including U.S. citizens and fully vaccinated people, are required to have a negative COVID-19 test result no more than three days before travel or documentation of recovery from COVID-19 in the past three

months before they board a flight to the U.S.

The U.S. State Department is also warning Americans of delays in processing passport applications. It may take up to 18 weeks to get your new passport, and 12 weeks for "expedited" service. As a result, it's recommended you submit your passport application at least six months before planned travel.

### Traveling with Children

Families with children who are not yet eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine face additional questions about whether to travel, especially as many anticipate the start of the school year in the coming weeks. If you are traveling with children who cannot get vaccinated at this time, the CDC recommends following recommendations for unvaccinated people and choosing safer travel options, such as a road trip with few stops or a direct flight, and taking steps to avoid crowds and close contact with unvaccinated people who are not from your household. If you do fly, everyone over the age of 2 will be required to wear masks on the plane and in airports.

Ultimately, the decision to travel is a personal one that must be made by each individual and family. AAA Travel advisers are available to help members with the information they need to plan a trip, when they're ready to do so. For more information, visit AAA.com/Travel.

### About AAA

AAA provides more than 62 million members with automotive, travel, insurance and financial services through its federation of 30 motor clubs and more than 1,000 branch offices across North America. Since 1902, the not-for-profit, fully tax-paying AAA has been a leader and advocate for safe mobility. Drivers can request roadside assistance, identify nearby gas prices, locate discounts, book a hotel or map a route via the AAA Mobile app. To join, visit AAA.com.

As upstate New York's largest member services organization, AAA Western and Central New York provides more than 887,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding in 1900, AAA has been a leading advocate for the safety and security of all travelers.

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