



Original Petition

Negotiations are ongoing as to how much taxpayer money will be contributed towards a new stadium. There is certainly a worthwhile debate to be had about whether or not any taxpayer money should be used. The reality of the situation, however, is that across the NFL, local taxpayers end up on average financing about 57% of the total cost when a new NFL stadium is built. This often happens because the owner will threaten to relocate the team to a different city if the current city doesn't help pay for a new stadium. This isn't always a mere threat. San Diego, Oakland, and St. Louis have all lost their NFL team to a different city in recent years.

While we as taxpayers may not like paying for it, this is unfortunately the cost of doing business with the NFL. Rather than get caught up in whether taxpayers should be paying for it, we should instead shift our focus to the specifics of the stadium itself, and how it serves the community at large that is funding it. With an estimated taxpayer contribution in the range of \$500 million to \$1 billion, it is absolutely imperative that taxpayers see additional benefits from this project besides just preventing the Bills from relocating.

Lack of Benefit in Orchard Park

I am unable to come up with a single tangible benefit to our community at large from a new stadium in Orchard Park. The only people benefitting from a stadium in Orchard Park are the Pegulas. They will be getting their brand-new stadium that assures the viability of their franchise for the foreseeable future mostly paid for by the public, and then they will be able to turn around and make far more money from higher ticket prices, personal seat licenses (estimated to generate about \$200-300 million dollars in upfront initial revenue for the Pegulas), a new naming rights deal, luxury suites, etc. than they do at the current stadium.

The current stadium sits on a desolate sea of parking lots on the corner of Southwestern Boulevard and Abbott Road, in an area that is essentially abandoned every day of the year except game days. In the 50 years it has been in Orchard Park, there has been no significant development in the area surrounding the stadium. This area is the lasting impression of Buffalo that we are leaving on those that come to the area from out-of-town for a game. With the location of the airport outside of the city, and its connection to Orchard Park via I-90 (which obviously does not go through the city), it is frighteningly easy to imagine how people could come and go without ever stepping foot in our beautiful city and seeing all that we have to offer.

Importance of Attracting People to the City

They say that when people move to Buffalo they cry twice. Once, one they find out they have to move here, and twice when they find out they have to leave. Buffalo is a pretty cool city. We've basically got something for everyone: historic architecture, beautiful parks, a thriving local music and arts scene, a booming craft beer industry, a waterfront that is finally heading in the right direction, a comparatively low cost of living to other cities, professional sports, good neighbors that you would want to raise your family living next to, and some of the best damn food in the country. When people come here and experience the City of Buffalo itself, they tend to be impressed, choose to come back, tell others about it, and maybe even move here for good.

People just don't have a ton of reasons to come here, especially to the city itself. Outside of higher education (location is also an issue here for the area's largest university, University at Buffalo, whose primary campus is isolated from the city on a large plot of land in Amherst) and Niagara Falls (if they don't end up going to the much more developed Canadian side), coming to see a Bills game is probably the single biggest reason for someone with no ties to Western New York to come here. The Bills are really our single biggest chance to show our city off, and the current stadium location is doing us no favors.

Imagine all of the money that could have been spent at locally owned restaurants, businesses, and hotels downtown with a stadium in the city, but is instead going to generic national chain restaurants and hotels in the suburbs. Many outsiders leave town thinking Southwestern Boulevard is the major thoroughfare in Buffalo. They don't even know Elmwood, Delaware, and Hertel Avenues exist. We are doing a little too good of a job at "Keeping Buffalo a Secret". When you also consider the additional sports and entertainment events besides NFL football that may be attracted to our new stadium, it makes even more sense to bring the people that are coming here for such events to Buffalo, not Orchard Park.

Even if things were different this time, and the Pegulas were able to build a new stadium complex in Orchard Park that somehow stimulated economic growth and residential and commercial development around the stadium-wouldn't we much rather have all those benefits happen in the City of Buffalo? The village and town of Orchard Park will continue to flourish as an affluent, wealthy suburb regardless of where the stadium is built. It makes far more sense to put the stadium, and all the economic and developmental potential that comes with it, in the city of Buffalo.

Why The Current Proposal from PSE Calls for a New Stadium in Orchard Park

It's cheaper, quicker, and easier. The most common excuse that has been given so far as to why the stadium is not going in the city is cost, specifically infrastructure related costs to improve public transportation and make changes to the surrounding infrastructure of the South Park Site to efficiently get people in and out of the stadium on game days. Orchard Park is cheaper because the infrastructure is already in place (although I think said infrastructure is not all that efficient in its own right, and there is no light rail access to the stadium in Orchard Park, which would help with traffic and give fans an alternative to having to choose between drinking and driving). It's estimated that building in the city would add an extra year on to the total project time in comparison to Orchard Park, and there are valid concerns about the displacement of

residents that live on or in close proximity to the South Park Site that need to be addressed. From the Pegulas perspective, the NFL is pressuring them to build a new stadium, and Orchard Park is the quickest, easiest, and most cost effective from their perspective.

Infrastructure changes should NOT be seen as a barrier, in fact they are the strongest reason the stadium SHOULD be built in the city, this is because:

(1) Most of these changes need to happen (and may happen) regardless of the stadium location.

In order for Buffalo and Erie County to continue to grow (as they did in 2020 for the first time in 70 years), we need to massively improve our existing public transportation system through the NFTA. As of 2019 Buffalo's poverty rate was 28.8% (3rd highest in the US), the childhood poverty rate 43.4% (2nd highest in the US), and roughly 16% of Buffalo Public Schools students had experienced homelessness. Many of those that are living in poverty do not have a car and are dependent on the NFTA to provide transportation to work, educational opportunities, grocery stores, and healthcare appointments. This is an issue that affects the patients I see as a physician working in the city of Buffalo every single day. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard patients say they were unable to make their appointment, go for an important test or procedure, or see a specialist because they did not have transportation.

The NFTA's existing Metro Bus system and Metro Rail combine to only physically reach 42% of jobs in Erie County. 4 of the 5 largest employment centers in Erie County are located outside of the City of Buffalo. How can we expect people to go back to work after the pandemic when over half of the job options are not accessible due to transportation issues? Even if a potential job is reachable by public transportation, it often requires multiple different buses, which can add an hour or more to commute time. Dependence on public transportation is much higher in many areas of the City of Buffalo including the East Side, Downtown, and West Side, but the existing public transportation offering is not doing a good enough job providing efficient access to jobs, education and healthcare in these communities. For example, the average black worker in Buffalo (many of whom live on the East Side) spends 174 more hours (greater than an entire month of full time work) per year in transit to and from work compared to whites that drive. This time travel penalty is especially prohibitive for people with families and childcare issues.

Without efficient and practical physical access to quality jobs, educational opportunities, and healthcare, the citizens of Buffalo and Erie County will continue to suffer from higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and poor health outcomes.

One might argue that we can improve public transportation without moving the Bills stadium to the city. This is theoretically true, but practically speaking, I suspect it may be difficult to get an isolated upgrade of public transportation to the degree that we need funded and passed. These infrastructure improvements have been needed for a long time and seem to be a low priority for many state and local government officials. Coupling it with the Bills stadium is a unique opportunity to force the issue at hand.

(2) The \$1 Trillion Federal Infrastructure Bill

In total, the bill promises \$110 billion towards roads, bridges, and major projects, \$66 billion towards passenger and freight rail, and \$39.2 billion towards public transit. Of the total \$1 trillion, New York State is projected to receive the third highest amount of funding at a total of \$26.92 billion. Because of the bill, the cost to *local* taxpayers could end up being similar between a new stadium in Orchard Park and a new stadium in the City. It is incredibly myopic for those involved in the negotiations to not consider this once in a lifetime bill when making a major city planning decision like this. Our politicians should not rush to come to an agreement with the Pegulas that doesn't serve the needs of our community. They need to consider the long-term future of the City of Buffalo and Erie County.

(3) The infrastructure changes would benefit taxpayers in Buffalo and Erie County 365 days per year, not just on game days.

For every \$1 communities invest in public transportation, approximately \$4 to \$5 is generated in economic returns. Public transportation investment leads to private investment as well. It is estimated that for every \$1 billion of continuous public transportation spending, 50,000 jobs (mostly private sector) are created. Consider the implications of having several NFTA Metro Rail lines running from a transportation hub near the stadium out to the surrounding suburbs. Taxpayers in the suburbs would benefit from having increased easy access to downtown. A metro rail from a suburban train station would allow people in the suburbs to not have to worry about finding parking or driving under the influence when they head into the city for a night out. Increased foot traffic to the city would benefit downtown business owners and the local economy, and conversely this would also give those that live in the city better access to go spend their money at local businesses in some of the outlying suburban villages like East Aurora, Hamburg, and Williamsville.

The economic potential of a more connected, accessible, and equitable Buffalo cannot be understated. The issues with Buffalo's public transportation system and generalized disconnected infrastructure can be traced back to racially motivated city planning decisions in the mid 20th century. It is estimated that Buffalo's annual GDP could be increased by \$4.3 billion (more than double the combined annual budget of Erie and Niagara Counties) if it were able to eliminate its racial disparities and divides. A rising tide lifts all boats.

For a more detailed explanation of why building the stadium in the City of Buffalo could be the catalyst for social progress and economic growth in WNY for generations to come, check out the presentation below:

[Video: Examining The Social and Economic Benefits of Bills in Buffalo](#)

[Slides: Examining The Social and Economic Benefits of Bills in Buffalo](#)

Where Would a Stadium Be Built in the City?

Several locations have been discussed and researched by the Pegulas, The State, and the public. The "South Park Site" is considered to be the leading candidate for a stadium in the city. The purpose of this petition is not to demand a particular site. The most important thing is putting it in a location in the city that provides a natural ability to massively upscale public transportation and infrastructure, and reap all of the economic and social benefits that have previously been discussed. Situated within walking distance from the [DL&W Station](#) project that will extend the NFTA Metro Rail inside of the DL&W terminal, the "South Park Site" is uniquely situated to serve as the center piece of (and catalyst for) a massive expansion of our city's public transportation system. It is easily accessible by personal vehicle by multiple exits off the I-190, and already has comparable surfacing parking in the surrounding perimeter to what is offered un Orchard Park.

For more detailed information on the "South Park Site", please check out the links below.

- [Video: Ben Siegel South Park Site Presentation](#)
- [Ben Siegel: WGRZ Interview on Bills in Buffalo proposal for South Park Site](#)
- [Buffalo News: Rocco Termini and Ben Siegel's South Park Site Proposal](#)
- [Buffalo Rising: Imagining the South Park Site by Ryan Miller](#)
- [Buffalo Common Council Champions South Park Site](#)

What about tailgating?

I know there is a significant amount of people whose perception of a negative effect on tailgating prevents them from even considering a stadium in the city. There are a couple of points to consider here.

(1) This stadium is not being financed exclusively by Bills season ticket holders. All of us are paying for it. Erie County is home to nearly 1 million people. How many people that live in Erie County actually attend a Bills game in a given season (let alone tailgate)? Whatever that number is, it's a very small minority of the total population of people that will be paying for the stadium. It is not right for an issue like this to get in the way of a project that could potentially benefit all of Erie County in a multitude of ways, including those that don't care about football but are still on the hook for financing the project.

(2) It is true that no city stadium will ever perfectly replicate the current tailgating environment in Orchard Park, but the idea that tailgating will cease to exist in an urban setting is completely [ridiculous](#). The South Park Site is uniquely situated in an area that is not congested or surrounded by tight city blocks. It would still provide ample opportunity for tailgating for those that love to do so. It would provide a unique opportunity in the warmer months for Buffalo to finally get in on the peak tailgating experience, "[Sailgating](#)".

(3) How many people tailgate because that is the only option for passing time before a Bills game in Orchard Park? Maybe a lot of people would be just as happy spending time getting drinks at a local brewery or distillery, having brunch at a local restaurant, or laying down a wager

at the casino prior to walking over to the stadium for the game- but they just don't have that option now.

I encourage people to consider the bigger picture of what a stadium in the city could do for Buffalo and Erie County; and the taxpaying citizens of Erie County. To let an issue like this get in the way of sustainable, equitable progress for our region and *all* of the taxpayers funding the project is asinine.

Reasons To Sign This Petition

I know a stadium in the city is a highly complex, divisive, and highly politicized issue that everyone has a slightly different opinion on. There are additional variables that still need to be worked out regarding building in the city. First and foremost, we need to ensure that the needs and wishes of those living on a potential site and/or in the surrounding neighborhoods are being considered. This will take time to do the right way, and that is the only way that it should be done. In keeping with the spirit of this project of providing benefits to the taxpayers that are funding it, anyone that would have to be relocated to make this project happen needs to benefit in a way that improves their life both immediately and long-term.

Many people also have additional valid concerns about wanting a roof on the stadium, increasing the seating capacity, the presence of an adjacent convention center, and whether the stadium could host a Super Bowl. If those are potential concerns of yours, I encourage you to sign this petition because all of those variables are far more likely to come to fruition if the stadium goes in the City of Buffalo as the centerpiece of a larger city planning project focused on stimulating residential and commercial development, improving public transportation, and promoting the long-term growth of Buffalo and Erie County both economically and socially.

I encourage everyone to think critically about what is at stake here for the long-term future of Buffalo and Western New York at large. We are at a watershed moment. The zeitgeist is ripe with progress, change, and growth. Longstanding city planning errors are on the verge of being corrected, and the city and its surrounding areas are growing for the first time in 70 years. Let's not look back in 30 years and wonder what could have been like we do now with UB's North Campus. A Bills stadium built in the city, along with the associated investment in public transportation and infrastructure improvements that would come with it, has the power to transform our city back to its former turn of the 20th century glory and promote social progress and economic growth for all Western New Yorkers. Look past the fact that taxpayer money is being used- because like it or not-that is the reality of doing business with the NFL. Instead, focus on demanding that our elected officials fight to use our money to create a stadium and city planning project that best serves the needs of the community at large that is paying for it both now and for generations to come. Clearly, there is only one option that does that, and that option is Bills in Buffalo. If you are in agreement, please *sign and share* this petition so that our collective voice can be heard.

Ways to Get Involved:

- Do NOT donate to Change.org. The donations on here go to trying to get the petition featured on the Change.org home page, which is not realistic or helpful. This is a local issue, not national.
- If you want to donate, please consider donating to our [GoFundMe](#) page. All of the donations will go towards marketing, outside consultant travel, lawn signs, hiring of experts, and paid studies. All Committee Members are working for free and will NEVER receive compensation of any kind. Every cent counts so please help out!
- Another way to get involved is by purchasing one of these awesome [lawn signs](#) to help spread the word. Special thanks to [Rory Allen](#) of [ZoomCopy](#) for making these happen!
- Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for updates
- SHARE the petition with as many people possible, in as many ways possible. There is nothing more powerful than the will of the people. The more signatures we have, the more likely it is Mark Poloncarz and Kathy Hochul fight to make this happen
- Stay tuned for more...

Additional Resources:

- [MUST SEE: Travis Carlson: New Bills Stadium in Downtown Buffalo or Orchard Park](#)
- [Rocco Termini Weighs In: Adding up the costs of Bills stadium options](#)
- [Building in the City Could be the Key to Unlocking Buffalo's Full Potential](#)