

October 19, 2020

Dear Big Ten Conference officials,

On behalf of the Offices of the undersigned Mayors of Big Ten college communities, please see the message below:

During these unprecedented times, we must come together to share ideas, come up with creative solutions and make sure our communities stay safe and healthy. We are at a pivotal moment in history, and protecting our community members should be, and is, our top priority. We are proud to have vibrant college sports programs in our communities. These programs help increase tourism and development, drive business revenues up and foster a sense of community far beyond the universities in which they are associated.

We would all like to express our gratitude towards our individual universities who have worked in tandem with us to address the unique, and complicated issues facing our cities. Their commitment to working with our communities has been essential in slowing the spread.

With that being said, the COVID-19 crisis continues to present challenges in our communities. While we are all excited for football games to begin, we must accept that this activity poses potential new obstacles as we attempt to slow the spread of this virus.

We know the history of football games within our cities. They generate a lot of activity, social gatherings and the consumption of alcohol. These activities within our communities have also been associated with an increased spread of COVID-19. We, as cities, continue to respond to issues as they arise, respective of the individual rules put in place within our regions. To help us slow the spread and be prepared for increased activity, we humbly request a few practical measures that the Big Ten Conference can take to ensure we have the tools we need to combat the spread of COVID-19:

While you implement data-driven decisions based on test positivity and population positivity rates to hold games, practices and develop the meeting schedule, we request that these decisions are also made with defined metrics for overall community population positivity rates and test positivity. County and city health officials from Big Ten communities met on Thursday, Oct. 15 to further discuss metrics used in each community, and to finalize guidelines for play, based on positivity rates of the community, not just the team. We support our public health officials in their efforts and urge you to consider their request. Please include the communities where you will be holding games in your conversations and assign a metric to this that is similar to what has already been laid out for your teams. We ask that you work with local and county health officials in these communities to define a population positivity rate, where hosting a football game that would bring increased activity into the community is no longer safe to do. We do not expect this metric to be in line with the current standard for the team; however, similar standards being applied to the communities this will affect is necessary to keep people safe.

We also request that the Big Ten Conference release game times and schedules as early as possible and make it a priority to host less or no games that take place in the evening or late afternoon, as these start times are associated with increased activity.

We appreciate your consideration of these measures and hope to see action on them soon.

Sincerely,

Aaron Stephens, Mayor of East Lansing, MI
Andy Schor, Mayor of Lansing, MI
Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor of Madison, WI
Patrick L. Wojahn, Mayor of College Park, MD
Ronald Filippelli, Mayor of State College, PA
Christopher Taylor, Mayor of Ann Arbor, MI
Steve Hagerty, Mayor of Evanston, IL
John Dennis, Mayor of West Lafayette, IN
Jacob Frey, Mayor of Minneapolis, MN
John Hamilton, Mayor of Bloomington, IN
Andrew Ginther, Mayor of Columbus, OH
Bruce Teague, Mayor of Iowa City, IA