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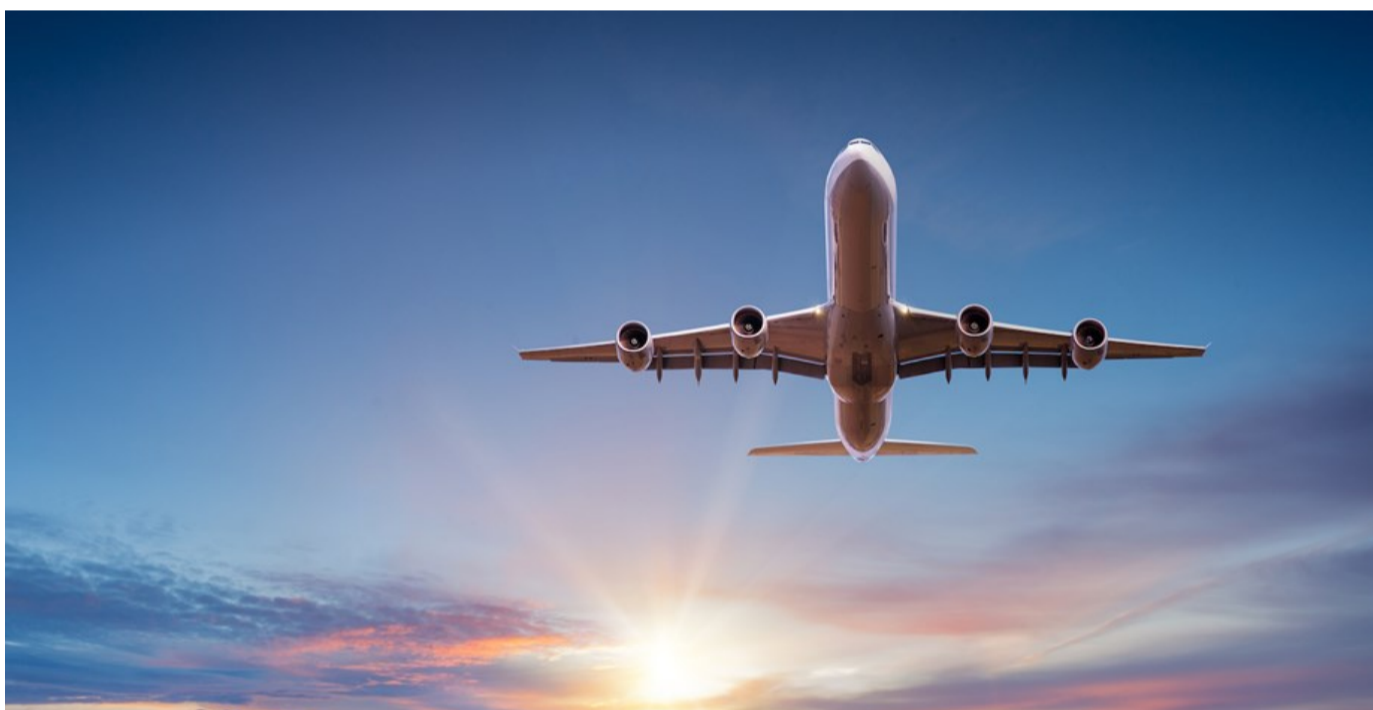
# Industry Leaders Push Biden to Set Timeline for Reopening International Travel

Twenty-six industry organizations have issued a letter asking the White House to draft a data-driven plan by May 1 for lifting international travel restrictions.



by [Elise Schoening](#)

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In a [joint letter](#) issued yesterday, the travel and aviation industries urged the Biden administration to develop a roadmap for lifting inbound international travel restrictions. The letter, which was signed by 26 industry associations, encouraged the White House to set a May 1 deadline for drafting a risk-based, data-driven plan for reopening travel.

"Travel and tourism is the industry hardest hit by the economic fallout of Covid, and the damage is so severe that a broader economic recovery will stall if we can't get travel off the ground," said [Roger Dow](#), president and CEO of the [U.S. Travel Association](#), which was among the organizations that signed the letter. "Fortunately, enough progress has been made on the health front that a rebound for domestic leisure travel looks possible this year, but that alone won't get the job done. A full travel recovery will depend on reopening international markets, and we must also contend with the challenge of reviving business travel."

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Other co-signers include the [American Hotel and Lodging Association](#), [American Society of Travel Advisors](#), [Association of Flight Attendants-CWA](#), [Bizly](#), [Global Business Travel Association](#), [Southwest Airlines Pilot Association](#) and the [United States Tour Operators Association](#).

According to the letter, overseas travel to the U.S. fell 81 percent in 2020. Meanwhile, travel from Mexico and Canada declined by 62 percent and 77 percent, respectively. In total, the U.S. economy is estimated to have lost \$146 billion as a result of plummeting international visitations.

In addition, recent research reveals that [5.6 million travel-supported jobs were eliminated in 2020](#). If inbound international travel bans are not lifted and demand does not recover, the U.S. Travel Association predicts that 1.1 million American jobs will not be restored and \$262 billion in export spending will be lost by the end of 2021.

However, if travel from top inbound markets is able to resume by July 4 and reach an average of 40 percent of 2019 levels for the remainder of the year, the U.S. Travel Association estimates that this would accelerate the industry's economic recovery by adding \$30 billion in spending and bringing back 225,000 U.S. jobs.

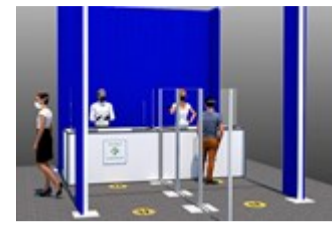
The associations suggest that the roadmap for reopening international travel include the following provisions:

- Maintain the inbound international testing mandate and other key mitigation measures, which would eliminate the need for mandatory quarantines upon arrival;
- Make vaccinated individuals exempt from international testing requirements, although vaccination status should not be a prerequisite to travel;
- Update the CDC guidelines to state that vaccinated individuals can travel safely;
- Develop uniform federal principles for Covid-19 health credentials, including how to validate test results and vaccination history while protecting personal data;
- Begin bilateral negotiations to ease travel restrictions through public health corridors;
- Develop clear benchmarks and a transparent framework for determining when all inbound international travel restrictions can be lifted; and
- Once entry restrictions are lifted, consistently review on a monthly basis whether the inbound international testing mandate and other safety precautions are still needed.

The letter notes that the co-signed industry associations do not support removing or easing public health protections, such as universal mask mandates, inbound international testing and physical distancing. But with infection and hospitalization rates declining, coupled with increased vaccinations, industry leaders say it is time to set goals for reopening international travel. The associations also pointed to the numerous health and safety measures that airports, [airlines](#), [hotels](#) and other industry sectors have implemented to keep travelers safe and mitigate Covid-19 transmission.



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A May 1 deadline for the reopening plan was suggested, as this is when President Biden has pushed to make all U.S. adults eligible for vaccination. According to the CDC, 13.3 percent of Americans have already been fully vaccinated and 24.5 percent have received at least one dose. An estimated 2.5 million people are being vaccinated each day.

"Taken together, these factors paint a clear picture," says the letter. "The risk of Covid-19 transmission while flying is low. Vaccination rates and immunity are increasing rapidly throughout the U.S. The burden of the virus on our nation's public health system is decreasing. Airlines, airports and travel businesses have the right protections and strategies in place to mitigate risk. We are ready to welcome back travelers and keep them safe. And the time to plan for and chart a defined roadmap to reopen international travel is now."

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