

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 8, 2026

The Honorable Mitch Behm
Acting Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, 7th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Acting Inspector General Behm:

We write to request that the Office of Inspector General (OIG) open an investigation into potential misconduct and violations of federal laws, rules, and regulations associated with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Sean Duffy's participation in "The Great American Road Trip" reality show.

In addition to the potential violations outlined in the attached May 11, 2026, complaint from Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW),¹ we respectfully request that you review new information that was raised during a U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee hearing on May 19, 2026. Specifically, during testimony before the Committee, Secretary Duffy suggested that "The Great American Road Trip" was an official activity. Secretary Duffy stated: "This was officially part of America 250 and you all sanctioned America 250. ... This is an official partner of America 250. Also this body told me that I'm supposed to promote tourism and travel, and that's what it does as well."² The Secretary later reiterated: "If I'm going to celebrate America 250. You gave me the ability to partner with America 250 and I did. You told me, this body said to celebrate tourism and travel and that's what I'm doing."³

Further, in a frequently asked questions document about the show, DOT states twice that "celebrating America's 250th Anniversary is part of Secretary Duffy's official duties, and The Great American Road Trip is one aspect in support of those responsibilities."⁴ Even the White House's website dedicated to America's 250th Anniversary touts that DOT "is aiding in coordination of The Great American Road Trip, a year long, multi modal journey featuring

¹ <https://www.citizensforethics.org/legal-action/legal-complaints/crew-files-complaint-against-transportation-secretary-sean-duffy/>

² <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/a-review-of-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2027-budget-request-for-the-department-of-transportation>

³ <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/a-review-of-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2027-budget-request-for-the-department-of-transportation>

⁴ Would-be sponsor balked at paying for Sean Duffy's tour across America, Chris Marquette and Sam Ogozalek, Politico, May 16, 2026

designated Freedom 250 destinations.”⁵ As CREW’s President and CEO recently said, “The reason why people have questions is because [Duffy] has mixed his work with this quasi-personal, quasi-official travel.”⁶

Secretary Duffy’s insistence that his participation in the “The Great American Road Trip” was part of his official duties raises serious questions about use of funds and potential misconduct. A non-profit called the Great American Road Trip, Inc. organized and paid for “gas, lodging, car rentals, and other production costs” associated with the show.⁷ The Great American Road Trip, Inc. lists “sponsors powering America’s road trip” on its website, including Boeing, Toyota, Shell, Electronic Payments Coalition, CRH, Google, Royal Caribbean Group, Travel, American Bus Association, Comcast NBCUniversal, Enterprise, United Airlines, U.S. Travel Association, Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau, Yellowstone Vacations, Grand Canyon, and Brand USA.⁸

We are concerned with this potential mix between personal and professional activities. If the road trip was personal, then it appears a Cabinet official spent several days over multiple months taking and filming a road trip that should have been paid for by the Secretary, but instead the Secretary accepted gas, lodging, and other travel expenses from a non-profit funded by the very companies the Secretary regulates. If it was official—as Secretary Duffy suggested before the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee—then a number of DOT-regulated companies financed an official activity of the United States government through a non-profit pass-through.

We understand that the DOT and the Great American Road Trip Inc. entered into a memorandum of agreement that states that the non-profit will receive “no compensation for the Gift, its use by DOT or any DOT-authorized third party, nor any favorable consideration for any future federal assistance, action, contract, or other financial award.”⁹ However, the companies and organizations that provided sponsorship funding to the non-profit of up to \$1 million or in-kind contributions¹⁰ were not subject to the same terms. Many of the companies listed as sponsors are actively doing business with DOT or are directly regulated by DOT. As one company that declined the sponsorship opportunity put it, “you’re paying for access.”¹¹ Furthermore, the agreement between DOT and the non-profit was signed in December 2025,¹² months after the filming for the series began in September 2025. It is important to know: what specific business did any of these sponsors have before DOT during this period? Who, if anyone, screened the sponsor list for potential conflicts?

⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/freedom250/>

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDUU3AqxSMY>

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/13/us/road-trip-duffy.html>

⁸ <https://greatamericanroadtrip.org/#sponsors>

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/05/13/us/GART-memorandum.html>

¹⁰ <https://static.politico.com/74/6e/5da7a151437990e88ab19a646fb5/gart-pitch-deck-v3-6updated.pdf>

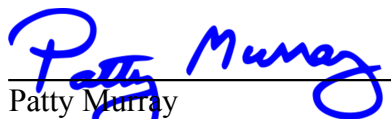
¹¹ Would-be sponsor balked at paying for Sean Duffy’s tour across America, Chris Marquette and Sam Ogozalek, Politico, May 16, 2026


¹² <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/05/13/us/GART-memorandum.html>


We support celebrating America's 250th Anniversary, and encourage all Americans to explore our national parks, historical landmarks, and museums across the country this year and every year. Our concern lies with the sponsorship of the Secretary's road trip and the serious questions it raises.

We respectfully request that you promptly investigate this matter and complete the investigation by September 30, 2026.

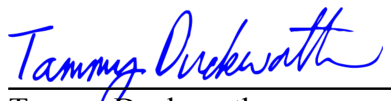
Sincerely,


Patty Murray
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator


Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator


Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator


Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator

Attachments: Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington Complaint Letter