



CITIZENS FOR
RESPONSIBILITY &
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

June 24, 2026

Michael Bell, FOIA Contact
U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of the Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE, W94-122
Washington, DC 20590
ost.foia@dot.gov

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear FOIA Officer:

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (“CREW”) submits this request for records pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and Department of Transportation (“DOT”) regulations.

Specifically, from July 1, 2025 to the date this request is processed, CREW requests:

1. All communications to or from any DOT official within the Office of the Secretary and any White House office (e.g., who.eop.gov, eop.gov, whitehouse.gov, or doge.eop.gov domains) concerning or mentioning:
 - a. “The Great American Road Trip” reality show production; or
 - b. “The Great American Roadtrip, Inc” nonprofit organization
2. All communications to or from any DOT official within the Office of the Secretary and any representative, officer, staff, employees, contractors, or agent of The Great American Road Trip, Inc.
3. All communications to or from any DOT official within the Office of the Secretary and any of The Great American Road Trip’s corporate sponsors concerning or related to the road trip, the associated nonprofit, the reality series, or any sponsorship, funding travel, or logistics arrangements. These corporate sponsors include but are not limited to:
 - a. The Boeing Company (Boeing);
 - b. Toyota Motor North America, Inc. (Toyota);
 - c. Shell USA, Inc. (Shell);
 - d. Electronic Payments Coalition (EPC);
 - e. CRH plc (formerly Cement Roadstone Holdings);
 - f. Google LLC (a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc.);
 - g. Royal Caribbean Group (Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.);
 - h. Chase Travel Group (JPMorgan Chase & Co.);

- i. American Bus Association;
 - j. Comcast NBCUniversal (Comcast Corporation);
 - k. Enterprise Mobility (formerly Enterprise Holdings, parent of Enterprise Rent-A-Car);
 - l. United Airlines, Inc. (United Airlines Holdings, Inc.);
 - m. U.S. Travel Association;
 - n. Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau (PHLCVB);
 - o. Yellowstone Vacations;
 - p. Grand Canyon;
 - q. Brand USA (the Corporation for Travel Promotion); and
 - r. Lyft, Inc.
4. All records generated by or submitted to DOT ethics officials, the Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO), the Office of General Counsel, and budget officials in connection with Secretary Duffy's participation in the road trip, the reality series, and any associated travel, including any approval memoranda, ethics opinions, legal guidance, waivers, recusal determinations, or travel authorizations.

The above request excludes agency records consisting solely of news articles, press clippings, and other publicly-available material, so long as the records include no accompanying discussion by agency officials.

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. We seek records of any kind, including paper records, electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, data, and graphical material. Our request includes without limitation all correspondence, letters, emails, text messages, facsimiles, telephone messages, voice mail messages, and transcripts, notes, or minutes of any meetings, telephone conversations, or discussions. Our request also includes any attachments to emails and other records, and anyone who was cc'ed or bcc'ed on any emails.

If it is your position any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, CREW requests that you provide it with an index of those documents as required under *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973). If some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(b). If it is your position that a document contains non-exempt segments, but that those non-exempt segments are so dispersed throughout the document as to make segregation impossible, please state what portion of the document is non-exempt, and how the material is dispersed throughout the document. See *Mead Data Central v. U.S. Dep't of the Air Force*, 566 F.2d 242, 261 (D.C. Cir. 1977).

Please be advised that CREW intends to pursue all legal remedies to enforce its rights under FOIA. Accordingly, because litigation is reasonably foreseeable, the agency should institute an agencywide preservation hold on all documents potentially responsive to this request.

Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A) and agency regulations, CREW requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. The subject of this request concerns the operations of the federal government, and the disclosures likely will contribute to a better understanding of relevant government procedures by CREW and the general public in a significant way. *See id.* § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). Moreover, the request primarily and fundamentally is for non-commercial purposes. *See, e.g., McClellan Ecological v. Carlucci*, 835 F.2d 1282, 1285 (9th Cir. 1987).

The records CREW seeks will contribute to CREW's and the public's understanding of whether Secretary Duffy abused his position and sought undue benefits at taxpayers' expense. Given that taxpayer funds may have been used to pay for the trip, there is a strong public interest in the disclosure of the requested records. These disclosures may also shed light on whether Secretary Duffy's official time is being used for public purposes, whether he accepted or solicited gifts from companies with business before the DOT, whether this constituted an appropriate use of government travel, and whether private products were being promoted by the Secretary.

On May 8, 2026, Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy stated in an interview that he and his family participated in a reality show production called "The Great American Road Trip" during which they toured the country to celebrate America's 250th anniversary while Secretary Duffy squeezed in time to do "some work" in his taxpayer funded job.¹ Although a DOT spokesperson claimed that "production costs were paid for by The Great American Road Trip, Inc. – not taxpayers" and that the secretary and his family "d[id] not receive any *financial* compensation" for their participation, the venture was sponsored by numerous private companies regulated by the department or impacted by DOT business.² Here, at least three of the companies named as sponsors—United Airlines, Toyota and Boeing—were previously fined or audited by the agency, with a Toyota car prominently featured in the

¹ See Rachel Treisman, *Transportation Secretary Duffy Filmed a Reality Show, Funded by Firms He Regulates*, NPR (May 12, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/05/12/nx-s1-5818190/sean-duffy-road-trip-reality-show-sponsors>; see *Sean and Rachel Campos-Duffy Launch 'The Great American Road Trip'*, Fox News (May 8, 2026), <https://www.foxnews.com/video/6394970597112>.

² Margaret Hartmann, *Sean Duffy Filmed Reality Show Over Past Seven Months*, *Intelligencer* (May 8, 2026), <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/sean-duffy-filmed-7-month-road-trip-worked-occasionally.html> (emphasis added).

promotional video.³ The department also tracks and reports crime against U.S. nationals on cruise lines including Royal Caribbean, which is also named as a sponsor.⁴

While Secretary Duffy did not explain whether the trip and the reality series were conducted in his official capacity or his personal capacity, there are several indicators that it was the former and not the latter.⁵ Additionally, although DOT has claimed that taxpayer funds were not used to pay for the trip, Secretary Duffy has used government resources to promote the project.⁶ Accepting travel from companies with business before DOT potentially implicates even more significant corruption and misconduct concerns.⁷

CREW is a non-profit corporation, organized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. CREW is committed to protecting the public's right to be aware of the activities of government officials, to ensuring the integrity of those officials, and to highlighting and working to reduce the influence of money on politics. CREW uses a combination of research, litigation, and advocacy to advance its mission. CREW intends to analyze the information responsive to this request and to share its analysis with the public through reports, press releases, or other means. In addition, CREW will disseminate any documents it acquires from this request to the public through its website,

³ See US Dep't of Transp. and The Great American Road Trip, *Who Are We? The Great American Road Trip*, YouTube (May 8, 2026), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPNmTYUj9DY>; see *Toyota Motor Corp will Pay \$32.425 Million in Civil Penalties as the Result of Two Department of Transportation Investigations*, US Dep't of Transp. (Aug. 1, 2019), <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/toyota-motor-corp-will-pay-32425-million-civil-penalties-result-two-department>; see *U.S. Secretary of Transportation Asks Inspector General to Ensure Audit of Boeing 737-MAX 8 Certification is Part of Review*, US Dep't of Transp. (Mar. 19, 2019), <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/dot1419>; see *DOT Fines United Airlines for Providing Inaccurate Information About Baggage Liability*, US Dep't of Transp. (Aug. 1, 2019), <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/dot-fines-united-airlines-providing-inaccurate-information-about-baggage-liability>.

⁴ Jim Walker, *Cruise Ship Crime Report – Q4 2025: Royal Caribbean Leads All Cruise Lines*, Jim Walker's Cruise Line News (Jan. 21, 2026), <https://www.cruiselawnews.com/2026/01/articles/crime/cruise-ship-crime-report-q4-2025-royal-caribbean-leads-all-cruise-lines/>.

⁵ See Secretary Sean Duffy (@SecDuffy), X (May 8, 2026, at 6:37 pm), <https://x.com/SecDuffy/status/2052880512596013312> (Secretary Duffy using his official account to share his Fox & Friends interview about The Great American Roadtrip); see US Dep't of Transp. and The Great American Road Trip, *supra* note 3 (showing that (1) a promotional video for the trip is featured on DOT's official YouTube channel, (2) the DOT logo appears in the corner of the video, and (3) the video features visits by Secretary Duffy with President Trump in the Oval Office, members of the military in uniform, government officials in uniform, and Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum in his official capacity).

⁶ See *id.*

⁷ Will Lennon, *After Months of War with Iran, People Across the US Say They're Feeling the Strain of High Gas Prices*, ABC News (May 8, 2026), <https://abcnews.com/Politics/after-months-war-iran-people-us-feeling-strain/story?id=132760039>; see also Jeffrey Cook & Jon Haworth, *Frontier Airlines Jet Strikes Person on Runway at Denver International Airport: Officials*, ABC News (May 10, 2026), <https://abcnews.com/amp/US/frontier-airlines-jet-reports-striking-individual-walking-runway/story?id=132805804>.

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www.citizensforethics.org. The release of information obtained through this request is not in CREW's financial interest.

CREW further requests that it not be charged search or review fees for this request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II) because CREW qualifies as a member of the news media. See *Nat'l Sec. Archive v. U.S. Dep't of Defense*, 880 F.2d 1381, 1386 (D.C. Cir. 1989) (holding non-profit a "representative of the news media" and broadly interpreting the term to include "any person or organization which regularly publishes or disseminates information to the public").

CREW routinely disseminates information obtained through FOIA to the public in several ways. For example, CREW's website receives over 150,000 page views every month. The website includes blogposts that report on and analyze newsworthy developments regarding government ethics, corruption, and money in politics, as well as numerous reports CREW has published to educate the public about these issues. These reports frequently rely on government records obtained through FOIA. CREW also posts the documents it obtains through FOIA on its website.

Under these circumstances, CREW satisfies fully the criteria for a fee waiver.

Conclusion

If you have any questions about this request or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records, please email me at [REDACTED] and foia@citizensforethics.org or call me at (202) 408-5565. Also, if CREW's request for a fee waiver is denied, please contact our office immediately upon making such a determination.

Where possible, please produce records in electronic format. Please send the requested records to [REDACTED] and foia@citizensforethics.org or by mail to Kayvan Farchadi, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Sincerely,

/s/ Kayvan Farchadi
Senior Counsel