February 17, 2022

The Honorable Bob Gibbs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Gibbs:

This is in response to the letter dated January 11, 2022, from you and 15 other Members of Congress regarding oversight of U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) funds provided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). In your letter, you expressed concerns regarding the proper distribution of the Act’s funds and the importance of preventing fraud to ensure taxpayer dollars are used for their intended purpose.

Under the authority of the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, our role is to conduct oversight through audits and investigations that provide independent recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of DOT’s programs. Central to our mission is detecting and preventing fraud, waste, and abuse of Government funds. Planning to protect IIJA funds will begin with DOT’s efforts to build safeguards into IIJA programs. Currently, we are assessing how our work can best assist DOT once it has taken those steps. Therefore, we believe that the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) should also be an important first contact for you to obtain the specific details of DOT’s fraud prevention plans. Regardless of plans that DOT implements, we share your concerns that the significant influx in infrastructure funding through IIJA will require increased vigilance.

We raised similar concerns—and have work underway—related to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which provided DOT with $36 billion in 2020. From our prior experience in reviewing DOT’s administration of large grant programs, such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, we recognized that the volume of CARES Act funds and the speed with which the funds were disbursed created oversight challenges. To support the Department in meeting its mission while promoting effective stewardship of taxpayer dollars, we identified five key risk areas for DOT’s consideration:1
effectively managing airport grants, adapting oversight approaches and prudently using waivers; executing contracts effectively; tracking CARES Act funds closely while ensuring the availability and integrity of DOT’s financial systems; and increasing outreach and education to prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse.

1 Memorandum to the Secretary: Key Potential Risk Areas for the Department of Transportation in Overseeing CARES Act Requirements (June 17, 2020). OIG documents are available on our website at http://www.oig.dot.gov/.
We remain committed to supporting DOT in its efforts to prevent fraud and misuse of taxpayer funds. As we recently notified the Secretary of Transportation,\(^2\) we anticipate focusing our work on similar risk areas to help oversee DOT’s programs implementing IIJA funds.

We are also working with other Offices of Inspector General whose agencies received IIJA funding. We have formed an informal infrastructure working group as part of our work with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to address oversight issues that affect all Government agencies. This group aims to help agencies share information with each other and identify cross-cutting issues. The working group has already held two monthly meetings and plans to continue them into the foreseeable future. The U.S. Government Accountability Office will join the next meeting to discuss coordination as we all move forward.

If you have any questions or wish to speak to us further regarding this matter, please contact me at (202) 366-1959 or Nathan Richmond, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Government and Public Affairs, at (202) 366-8751.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Soskin
Inspector General

cc: The Secretary of Transportation
The Honorable James Comer
The Honorable Randy Weber
The Honorable Mary E. Miller
The Honorable Ted Budd
The Honorable Bill Huizenga
The Honorable W. Gregory Steube
The Honorable Mike Garcia
The Honorable Dan Bishop
The Honorable Jody Hice
The Honorable Andy Biggs
The Honorable Pat Fallon
The Honorable Claudia Tenney
The Honorable Virginia Foxx
The Honorable Andrew S. Clyde
The Honorable Jake LaTurner

\(^2\) Memorandum to the Secretary: *Supporting DOT’s Efforts To Meet IIJA Responsibilities* (February 17, 2022).