

Ranking Member Tammy Duckworth (IL-08)
Subcommittee on Transportation and Public Assets
Hearing on “Oversight of Federal Vehicles”
February 26, 2016

Today’s hearing is a chance to continue our Subcommittee’s oversight of Federal fleet management to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used properly and efficiently.

In Fiscal Year 2014, the Federal fleet totaled just over 633,000 vehicles, nearly one-third of which were used by the United States Postal Service. Agencies spent more than \$4 billion to buy and operate these vehicles, including more than \$1 billion used to lease more than 186,000 vehicles from the General Services Administration (GSA).

This is a significant expenditure that is vulnerable to waste, fraud and abuse. While the vast majority of civil servants serve our country honorably and are always mindful of the need to use taxpayer dollars responsibly – the unfortunate reality is that with more than half a million vehicles being used across the Federal Government, it is almost certain that bad apples will seek to take advantage of the system.

The size of the Federal fleet has declined in recent years, and the Administration has taken important steps to improve fleet management. In 2015, the President issued an Executive Order that set aggressive goals for reducing Federal fleet emissions over the next decade, and required each agency with more than 20 vehicles to focus on, quote, “eliminating unnecessary or non-essential vehicles from the agency’s fleet inventory.”

However, much work remains to be done. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), current fleet management policies may fragment responsibility, and in the process, weaken accountability and oversight. For example, although GSA supplies agencies with the vast majority of leased vehicles and maintains the database that houses leased fleet information, GSA is *not* responsible for monitoring agencies’ vehicle utilization policies.

GSA has developed and issued standards for optimizing fleet utilization but agencies do not have to follow these recommendations or comply with their own internal guidelines. As GAO noted in its most recent review of five large agency fleets, when justifying adding a vehicle to the agency’s fleet, agencies appear to be either disregarding GSA’s recommended standards or not following their own. Specifically, GAO found, “Four of the five agencies in our review could not readily provide justifications for vehicles that had not met utilization criteria defined in agency policy.”

This finding appears to be at odds with the Administration’s efforts to get agencies to regularly review the sizes of their fleets and eliminate any vehicle that is not meeting an essential agency need.

I look forward to examining today what specific steps we can take to enhance the President’s efforts to ensure the Federal fleet is as cost-effective and fuel efficient as possible. In

particular, since GSA has gone to the trouble of developing best practice standards for assessing fleet utilization needs, one wonders whether Congress should mandate the adoption of a single, uniform standard, at least as the default option.

Before closing, I also want to note that today's hearing is an excellent opportunity to address fleet management problems within Amtrak highlighted by Amtrak's Inspector General (IG). According to the IG, deficiencies in cost-control systems and ineffective oversight have allowed waste, fraud and abuse to infect Amtrak's fleet program.

One of the most alarming incidents of fuel card fraud identified by the IG was when an individual, who was not employed by Amtrak, obtained an Amtrak fuel card and proceeded to spend more than \$57,000 on it. Every dollar Amtrak wastes through poor management of its vehicle fleet is a dollar that cannot go to meet urgent maintenance needs of the system, or to support long overdue infrastructure improvements.

Moving forward, I am pleased that Amtrak has announced an aggressive effort to review its vehicle management practices and the size and composition of its fleet. I urge Amtrak to complete these reviews quickly and, more importantly, take decisive steps to ensure that employees understand fraud will not be tolerated.