



POLITICS

Sean Duffy is confirmed by the Senate to lead the Transportation Department



1 of 3 | El exrepresentante republicano Sean Duffy da su testimonio ante la Comisión de Comercio, Ciencia y Transporte del Senado en el Capitolio en Washington, el miércoles 15 de enero de 2025, para su nominación a ser secretario de Transporte. (AP Foto/Susan Walsh)



BY [BERNARD CONDON](#)

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NEW YORK (AP) — Sean Duffy was confirmed Tuesday as transportation secretary, giving him a key role in helping President [Donald Trump](#) cut regulations and fix the nation's infrastructure.

The former Wisconsin congressman has promised safer Boeing planes, less regulation and help for U.S. companies developing self-driving cars -- while not giving any breaks to [Elon Musk](#), a key player

in that technology.

Duffy, a 53-year-old former reality TV star, was approved with bipartisan support on a 77-22 vote in the Senate.

He takes over the Department of Transportation at a crucial time at the agency, a massive employer of more than 55,000 that spends tens of billions of dollars annually, oversees the nation's highways, railroads and airspace and sets safety standards for trains, cars and trucks.

At his confirmation hearing earlier this month, Duffy vowed to "restore global confidence" in [Boeing](#), hire more air traffic controllers, cut DEI programs at DOT and create federal rules for self-driving cars instead of leaving that to patchwork of state regulations that critics said holds back U.S. development.

One of the biggest beneficiaries to a such a regulatory overhaul would be Musk. Stock his electric vehicle maker, Tesla, has soared since Trump was elected president on hopes that unified federal rules will be passed. Investors are also expecting the DOT's investigations into Tesla to be eased now that Musk is a key adviser to the president.

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But when pressed by senators in hearings, Duffy promised to hold firm.

"I will let NHTSA do its investigation," said Duffy, referring to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the agency in his department in charge of probes and crackdowns on car makers.

China came up several times at Duffy's confirmation hearing as a threat to U.S. development of self-driving technology overseen by DOT. A big Chinese electric vehicle maker there, BYD, is stealing market share from Tesla both in China and Europe.

"Without clear rules, or a patchwork of rules state by state, we put ourselves behind those countries that allow innovators to expand and grow," Duffy said at [his hearing](#) before Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation "We are in direct competition with China."

The agency has several open investigations into the safety of Tesla vehicles, some focusing on what the company calls Full Self-Driving, a misnomer because the vehicles require human intervention at any moment. In October, NHTSA launched a [probe](#) into Tesla's self-driving system covering 2.4 million vehicles after getting reports of crashes in low-visibility conditions, including one that killed a

pedestrian.

Musk, the world's richest man who has dubbed himself "first buddy" of Trump, gave an estimated \$250 million to Trump's presidential campaign.

Duffy's decisions at DOT will have a direct impact on profits not only at Tesla but Musk's rocket company, SpaceX, which has billions of dollars of contracts with federal agencies. DOT's Federal Aviation Administration has occasionally fined the company for violations, including [\\$633,000](#) last year for alleged safety violations during two Florida launches.



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