# POSITION DESCRIPTION

**General Counsel, Department of transportation**

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| **OVERVIEW** |
| Senate Committee | Commerce, Science and Transportation  |
| Agency Mission | To ensure a fast, safe, efficient, accessible and convenient transportation system that meets our vital national interests and enhances the quality of life of the American people, today and into the future. |
| Position Overview | The General Counsel serves as the chief legal officer of the department, with final authority on questions of law. The General Counsel is the legal advisor to the Secretary and is responsible for the supervision, coordination and review of the legal work of the almost 500 lawyers throughout the Department of Transportation (DOT). The General Counsel is responsible for the Office of Aviation Consumer Protection and Enforcement, and also coordinates the department's legislative efforts, regulatory program and involvement in legal proceedings before other agencies, as well as various operational and international legal matters. |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the Department of Transportation  |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | In fiscal 2015, DOT had $75,425 million in outlays and 53,822 total employment. As one of the top four policy officials in the department, the General Counsel is responsible for the supervision, hiring, coordination and review of the legal work of more than 500 lawyers throughout the department and its 10 operating divisions. The immediate Office of the General Counsel (OGC) includes approximately 90 lawyers, analysts and administrative professionals. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Has responsibility for all legal services performed within and involving the department and is the final authority on legal services performed within the department and on all matters arising within or referred to the department
* Coordinates the department’s entire regulatory program—no proposed rulemakings from any DOT agency can be submitted to the secretary for approval without prior signoff of the general counsel
* Manages and directs the chief counsels of the 10 operating administrations and oversees the offices of the chief counsels who support the operating administration’s leadership
* Provides professional supervision, including coordination and review, over the legal aspects of legislative matters arising in or referred to the department, including the drafting of legislation and assistance with its enactment
* Has responsibility for the Office of Aviation Consumer Protection and Enforcement
* Coordinates the department’s involvement in all litigation matters as well as in legal proceedings before other agencies
* Provides legal support for various operational and international legal matters, including international aviation agreements
* Works with the Civil Division of the Department of Justice on litigation involving the department
* Has responsibility for safeguarding the integrity of the decision-making process within DOT and its 10 operation agencies, and promoting compliance with all applicable laws
* Provides staff advice and assistance to the secretary in his or her exercise of authority relative to the assignment of geographic areas to time zones
* Serves on the Credit Council for various DOT federal loan programs
* Testifies on occasion before Congress about DOT policies, programs and actions
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration]  |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * High degree of demonstrated competence as a legal practitioner
* Strong background in administrative law and/or infrastructure financing, or as a litigator familiar with transportation industries
* Senior legal counsel/general counsel or related experience with large organization(s) with complex national and international interests
* Track record of implementing institutional reform and fiscal discipline
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| Competencies | * Effective relationships and respect within the highway, air, automotive, pipeline and other elements of the transportation industry in the United States
* Capability to build bridges across departments and to collaborate
* Relationships with Congress or ability to forge
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |
| Molly J. Moran, Acting, 2016-2017: Principal Deputy Associate Attorney General; Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division; Counselor and Deputy Chief of Staff to Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.; Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Policy |
| Kathryn B. Thomson, 2014-2016: Acting General Counsel and Chief Counsel to the Federal Aviation Administration; Principal Advisor to the Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood on energy, climate and environmental matters; Private practice in Washington, D.C. advising on civil and criminal litigation, compliance, regulatory advocacy with a focus on energy generation and hazardous materials transportation issues |
| Robert Rivkin, 2009-2013: Vice President and Deputy General Counsel of Aon Corporation; General Counsel of the Chicago Transit Authority; partner at the Chicago law firm now known as Schiff Hardin, L.L.P. |
| David James (DJ) Gribbin IV, 2007-2008: Division Director, Macquarie Holdings, Inc.; Chief Counsel, Federal Highway Administration; Director, Public Sector Business Development, Koch Industries; Director, Government Affairs, Koch Industries |

# Endnotes

This position description was created with the help of Russell Reynolds Associates, a global executive search firm.

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)