

Testimony of John E. Putnam
Nominee to be General Counsel, Department of Transportation
Before the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
December 16, 2021

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, and Members of the Committee, I am humbled and honored to appear before you today as the nominee for General Counsel of the United States Department of Transportation.

I'd like to begin by thanking the President and Secretary Buttigieg for the faith that they have placed in me. This opportunity to serve is the privilege of a lifetime. I would also like to thank my wife Kristin, and my wonderful children, parents, family, and friends who are watching remotely.

Since January 20th, 2021, I have served as Deputy General Counsel for the Department. During those last eleven months, I have worked with and overseen the efforts of the approximately 500 dedicated and skilled Department attorneys and staff, addressing numerous transportation legal issues to improve safety, advance equity, strengthen our economy, address climate change, protect consumers, and foster innovation.

Near-term, the most significant challenge -- and opportunity -- we face in the General Counsel's Office is the implementation of the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the once-in-a-generation law enacted through historic efforts by Congress last month. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will repair and rebuild our nation's roads, bridges and other infrastructure while focusing on economic opportunity, climate change mitigation, resilience, equity, and safety for all users. It makes the largest investments in public transit and rail passenger service in our history and improves transportation options for millions of Americans. It will also strengthen supply chains and enhance resilience by making necessary investments in our ports, airports, rail, and highways. The Law will help reduce carbon emissions, promote safety, and prepare our economy for new and innovative technologies. The investments will create many good paying jobs across the country for years to come.

However, historic legislation like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law must be matched with effective implementation that ensures that its potential is achieved in a transparent, compliant and accountable manner. The Office of General Counsel has a critical role to play in helping the Department implement this landmark legislation.

My experience with transportation law prepared me well for this role. Prior to joining the Administration, I worked most of my career as a transportation, environmental, and energy attorney in Denver, Colorado, and Washington, DC. I have represented State departments of transportation, local governments, and private entities nationwide on a range of airport, highway, transit, energy and other issues.

Most recently, I served as the Director of Environmental Programs for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. In my role as Director, I coordinated closely with other State departments, local governments, residents, and businesses on Colorado's roadmap for

transportation projects, rural prosperity, greenhouse gas reduction, electric-vehicle deployment, environmental justice, and other programs.

If I have the honor of being confirmed by this Committee and the Senate, I vow to work with you to strengthen the Department, maintain safety as its guiding priority, and achieve better results for the American people. I further commit to continue leading an Office of the General Counsel that is responsive to Congressional oversight, the needs of your constituents, and the deep transportation expertise shared by you and your staff. I view these guiding principles as vital to the achievement of our shared success.

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, and Members of the Committee, thank you again for your consideration and for the opportunity to appear before you. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.