

Bob Jackson, General Counsel of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

GCC Profile

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By Jen Woods

After 21 years of hard work and dedication to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Bob Jackson was recently promoted to General Counsel.

Jackson started his career with TxDOT in 1984 as a legislative analyst. Fresh out of college, Jackson worked in the Management Information, Policy, and Research Section, where he was responsible for analyzing, monitoring, and coordinating legislation implementation. Public service was always a major interest for Jackson, who earned a master's degree in public affairs from the University of Texas at Austin.



But Jackson wanted to further his education in pursuit of his lifelong dream. "Ever since I was a little kid I wanted to be a lawyer," he said. Jackson's passion for law was apparent, and his coworkers were supportive of his ambitions. "The then general counsel encouraged me to become a lawyer," Jackson said.

Advice to Young Lawyers

knowledge because they handle a wide array of legal issues on any given day," said Bob Jackson, General Counsel of the Texas Department of Transportation. "Everything changes and changes quickly" in corporate legal departments, he added.

Jackson established a solid relationship with TxDOT, and three years later, TxDOT financed his education at the University of Houston Law Center. Jackson continued to work part-time in the TxDOT Houston District while he attended law school.

After earning his Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) degree, Jackson returned to Austin and accepted a position as the new Deputy General Counsel for TxDOT. Then, on September 15, 2006, he was promoted to General Counsel.

The Office of General Counsel provides legal advice to the Texas Transportation Commission, as well as TxDOT administration, districts, divisions, and offices. The office also helps nonresidents involved in motor vehicle accidents on public roads.

Jackson always knew he wanted to work for a corporate legal department, rather than for a private law firm. "To me, in-house counsel is so much more interesting than outside counsel," he said. "Every day offers new professional challenges when you work in-house." Another appealing aspect of the job, Jackson said, is that corporate counsels work toward the common goal of the company, making them feel like they're "part of a team."

As General Counsel, Jackson oversees the work of the office administration and supervises outside counsel. Jackson is frequently involved with legislation, contracts, employment, and intellectual property law. He also testifies regularly

at legislative hearings. My primary focus has always been legislature, he said.

Jackson has continued to work on policy issues throughout his career. For instance, he drafted the Texas Transportation Code during the 78th Legislature in 2003. Jackson said he considers the bill to be the "most comprehensive and revolutionary transportation bill in the whole state." In 2005, during the 79th Legislature, Jackson rewrote the bill as it related to toll road finance and construction.

In addition, Jackson drafted and coordinated TxDOT's administrative rules, which comply with the Administrative Procedure Act and enforce department policy and procedure outside the department.

Jackson said he loves "drafting new legislation" and "creating new ideas to draft a new bill." However, even though drafting bills is his favorite part of the job, it can be very challenging "implementing these new ideas to improve transportation," he said.

Jackson's achievements were recognized at the 2005 Transportation Short Course, an annual meeting where TxDOT and the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) collaborate to develop ways to improve transportation. Jackson was awarded the Raymond E. Stotzer award, which honors non-engineers for outstanding leadership, dedication, and service to TxDOT.

On the Net

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

www.dot.state.tx.us

University of Houston Law Center

www.law.uh.edu

State Bar of Texas

www.texasbar.com