



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 9, 2007

Mr. Michael W. Dixon
For the City of Bellmead
Haley Olson, P.C.
510 North Valley Mills Drive, Suite 600
Waco, Texas 76710

OR2007-05528

Dear Mr. Dixon:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 278690.

The Bellmead Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified traffic fatality. You state that the department will release some of the requested information, but claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that the submitted information includes CRB-3 reports completed pursuant to chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. *See* Transp. Code § 550.064 (officer's accident report). Section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code states that, except as provided by subsection (c), accident reports are privileged and confidential. Section 550.065(c)(4) provides for release of accident reports to a person who provides two of the following three pieces of information: (1) date of the accident; (2) name of any person involved in the accident; and (3) specific location of the accident. *Id.* §550.065(c)(4). Under this provision, a governmental entity is required to release a copy of an accident report to a person who provides the governmental entity with two or more pieces of information specified by the statute. *Id.* In this instance, the requestor has provided the department with two of the three requisite pieces of information. Therefore, the submitted CRB-3 reports must be released in their entirety to the requestor.

Next, we note that the submitted information includes a court filed document. Section 552.022 of the Government Code provides in part:

(a) Without limiting the amount or kind of information that is public information under this chapter, the following categories of information are public information and not excepted from required disclosure under this chapter unless they are expressly confidential under other law:

...

(17) information that is also contained in the public court record[.]

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17). Section 552.022(a)(17) makes this court filed document expressly public. Therefore, the department may withhold this document only to the extent it is made confidential under other law. Although the department raises section 552.108 for this document, this exception is discretionary and thus, does not make information confidential. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 subject to waiver). Accordingly, the submitted court filed document, which we have marked, must be released to the requestor.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. . . if: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime.” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), (b)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state that the remaining submitted information pertains to an ongoing criminal investigation. Based upon this representation, and our review, we conclude that release of the remaining submitted information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases).

However, section 552.108 does not except basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). We believe such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-87. Thus, the department must release the types of information that are considered to be front page information, even if this information is not actually located on the front page. *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information made public by *Houston Chronicle*). The remaining information may be withheld pursuant to

section 552.108(a)(1). We note that you have the discretion to release all or part of the remaining information that is not otherwise confidential by law. Gov't Code § 552.007.

In summary, the submitted CRB-3 reports must be released to the requestor pursuant to section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code. The marked court filed document must be released pursuant to section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code. Except for basic information, which must be released, the remaining submitted information may be withheld under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.¹

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Paige Savoie
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PS/sdk

Ref: ID# 278690

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Elizabeth Anzadua
309 Lopez Street
Bellmead, Texas 76705
(w/o enclosures)



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 9, 2007

Ms. Sharon Alexander
Associate General Counsel
Texas Department of Transportation
125 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2483

OR2007-05520

Re: Request for right of way plans and/or schematics for SH 358, US 77, and IH 37
within Nueces County

Dear Ms. Alexander:

The Office of the Attorney General has received your request for a ruling and assigned your request ID# 282314.

After reviewing your arguments and the submitted information, we have determined that your request does not present a novel or complex issue. Thus, we are addressing your claims in a memorandum opinion. You claim that the submitted information may be withheld from the requestor pursuant to section 552.105 of the Government Code. We have considered your arguments and the submitted information and have determined that in accordance with section 552.105, you may withhold the submitted information.

For more information on the cited exception, as well as information on the rights and obligations of governmental bodies and requestors, please refer to open government information contained on the Office of the Attorney General website at www.oag.state.tx.us. You may also contact our Open Government Hotline at 1-877-OPENTEX.

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Steve Sampson
Barron & Adler, L.L.P.
100 West Houston Street, Suite 1250
San Antonio, Texas 78205
(w/o enclosures)