ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 31, 2007

Ms. YuShan Chang
Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston - Legal Department
P. O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

OR2007-14259

Dear Ms. Chang:

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# 293692.

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for aggregate retail fuel sales by volume for the George Bush Intercontinental Airport from 2004 to the present. Although you take no position on the proprietary nature of the information, you state, and provide documentation showing, that you have notified Landmark Aviation Services ("Landmark") and Trajen Flight Support, L.P. d/b/a Atlantic Aviation Services ("Atlantic") of the request and of their opportunity to submit comments to this office as to why the requested information should not be released to the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (determining that statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain the applicability of exception to disclose under Act in certain circumstances). A representative of Atlantic has submitted arguments. We have reviewed the arguments and the submitted information.

An interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of a governmental body's notice under section 552.305(d) of the Government Code to submit its reasons, if any, as to why requested information relating to that party should be withheld from disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, Landmark has not submitted comments to this office explaining why any portion of the submitted information relating to them should not be released to the requestor. Thus, we have no basis to conclude that the release of any portion of the submitted information relating to Landmark would implicate their proprietary interests. *See id.* § 552.110; Open Records Decision Nos. 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 661 at 5-6 (1999) (stating that business enterprise that claims exception for commercial or financial information under section 552.110(b) must show by specific factual evidence that release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive

harm). Accordingly, we conclude that the city may not withhold any portion of the submitted information pertaining to Landmark on the basis of any proprietary interests that this company may have in the information.

We address Atlantic's argument under section 552.110 of the Government Code for the submitted information. Section 552.110(b) of the Government Code protects "[c]ommercial or financial information for which it is demonstrated based on specific factual evidence that disclosure would cause substantial competitive harm to the person from whom the information was obtained[.]" Gov't Code § 552.110(b). This exception to disclosure requires a specific factual or evidentiary showing, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that substantial competitive injury would likely result from release of the information at issue. *Id.* § 552.110(b); *see also National Parks & Conservation Ass'n v. Morton,* 498 F.2d 765 (D.C. Cir. 1974); Open Records Decision No. 661 (1999).

After reviewing the submitted information and Atlantic's arguments, we conclude that Atlantic has failed to demonstrate that any portion of the information at issue constitutes commercial or financial information, the release of which would cause the company substantial competitive harm. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 661 (for information to be withheld under commercial or financial information prong of section 552.110, business must show by specific factual evidence that substantial competitive injury would result from release of particular information at issue). Accordingly, we determine that no portion of the information related to Atlantic is excepted from public disclosure under section 552.110(b) of the Government Code. As no further arguments against disclosure are raised, the submitted information must be released to the requestor.

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).

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,

Jordan Johnson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JJ/jb

Ref: ID# 293692

Enc. Submitted documents

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