



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 2, 2008

Ms. Patricia Fleming
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2008-07449

Dear Ms. Fleming:

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# 311431.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for the responses to the department's request for information concerning electronic personnel monitoring technologies. You claim that some of the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.136. Although you take no position on the public availability of the remaining information, you believe that the information may implicate the interests of G4S Justice Services, Inc.; iSecuretrac; Omnilink Systems, Inc. ("Omnilink"); RemoteMDX, Inc.; Rocky Mountain Offender Management Systems, LLC; Satellite Tracking of People, LLC; and Sentinel Offender Services, LLC ("Sentinel"). You notified the interested parties of this request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office as why the submitted information should not be released.¹ We received correspondence from Omnilink and Sentinel. We have considered all of the submitted arguments and have reviewed the information you submitted.

We note that an interested third party is allowed ten business days from the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice under section 552.305 to submit its reasons, if any, as to why information relating to that party should not be released. *See* Gov't Code

¹*See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.305 permitted governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception to disclosure under certain circumstances).

§ 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this decision, only Omnilink and Sentinel have submitted arguments to this office. Therefore, because none of the other parties has demonstrated that any of the submitted information is proprietary for the purposes of the Act, the department may not withhold any of the information on the basis of any interest that any of the other parties may claim. *See* Gov't Code § 552.110(a)-(b); Open Records Decision Nos. 552 at 5 (1990), 661 at 5-6 (1999).

Both Omnilink and Sentinel raise sections 552.101 and 552.110 of the Government Code.² Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses information that is considered to be confidential under other constitutional, statutory, or decisional law. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 600 at 4 (1992) (constitutional privacy), 478 at 2 (1987) (statutory confidentiality), 611 at 1 (1992) (common-law privacy). In this instance, neither Omnilink nor Sentinel have directed our attention to any law under which any of the submitted information is considered to be confidential for the purposes of section 552.101. Therefore, the department may not withhold any of the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code.

Section 552.110 protects the proprietary interests of private parties with respect to two types of information: (1) "[a] trade secret obtained from a person and privileged or confidential by statute or judicial decision," and (2) "commercial 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(a)-(b).

The Texas Supreme Court has adopted the definition of a "trade secret" from section 757 of the Restatement of Torts, which holds a "trade secret" to be

any formula, pattern, device or compilation of information which is used in one's business, and which gives him an opportunity to obtain an advantage over competitors who do not know or use it. It may be a formula for a chemical compound, a process of manufacturing, treating or preserving materials, a pattern for a machine or other device, or a list of customers. It differs from other secret information in a business . . . in that it is not simply information as to a single or ephemeral event in the conduct of the business A trade secret is a process or device for continuous use in the operation of the business [It may] relate to the sale of goods or to other operations in the business, such as a code for determining discounts, rebates

²We note that Sentinel's arguments appear to encompass information that the department has not submitted to this office. This decision is applicable only to the information that the department submitted in requesting this decision. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(D) (governmental body must submit specific information at issue or representative samples if information is voluminous).

or other concessions in a price list or catalogue, or a list of specialized customers, or a method of bookkeeping or other office management.

RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b (1939); *see also Hyde Corp. v. Huffines*, 314 S.W.2d 763, 776 (Tex. 1958). If a governmental body takes no position on the application of the "trade secrets" aspect of section 552.110 to the information at issue, this office will accept a private person's claim for exception as valid under section 552.110(a) if the person establishes a *prima facie* case for the exception and no one submits an argument that rebuts the claim as a matter of law.³ *See* ORD 552 at 5. However, we cannot conclude that section 552.110(a) is applicable unless it has been shown that the information meets the definition of a trade secret, and the necessary factors have been demonstrated to establish a trade secret claim. *See* Open Records Decision No. 402 (1983).

Section 552.110(b) 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. *See* ORD 661 at 5-6 (business enterprise must show by specific factual evidence that release of information would cause it substantial competitive harm).

Both Omnilink and Sentinel appear to claim both aspects of section 552.110. Under section 552.110(b), Sentinel argues that information is protected if its release would impair the government's ability to obtain necessary information in the future. In advancing this argument, Sentinel appears to rely on the test pertaining to the applicability of the section 552(b)(4) exemption under the federal Freedom of Information Act to third-party information held by a federal agency, as announced in *National Parks & Conservation Association v. Morton*, 498 F.2d 765 (D.C. Cir. 1974). *See also Critical Mass Energy*

³The Restatement of Torts lists the following six factors as indicia of whether information constitutes a trade secret:

- (1) the extent to which the information is known outside of [the company];
- (2) the extent to which it is known by employees and other involved in [the company's] business;
- (3) the extent of measures taken by [the company] to guard the secrecy of the information;
- (4) the value of the information to [the company] and [its] competitors;
- (5) the amount of effort or money expended by [the company] in developing the information;
- (6) the ease or difficulty with which the information could be properly acquired or duplicated by others.

RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b (1939); *see also* Open Records Decision Nos. 319 at 2 (1982), 306 at 2 (1982), 255 at 2 (1980).

Project v. Nuclear Regulatory Comm'n, 975 F.2d 871 (D.C. Cir. 1992) (commercial information exempt from disclosure if it is voluntarily submitted to government and is of a kind that provider would not customarily make available to public). Although this office once applied the *National Parks* test under the statutory predecessor to section 552.110, that standard was overturned by the Third Court of Appeals when it held that *National Parks* was not a judicial decision within the meaning of former section 552.110. See *Birnbaum v. Alliance of Am. Insurers*, 994 S.W.2d 766 (Tex. App.—Austin 1999, pet. denied). Section 552.110(b) now expressly states the standard to be applied and requires a specific factual demonstration that the release of the information in question would cause the business enterprise that submitted the information substantial competitive harm. See ORD 661 at 5-6 (discussing enactment of Gov't Code § 552.110(b) by Seventy-sixth Legislature). The ability of a governmental body to continue to obtain information from private parties is not a relevant consideration under section 552.110(b). *Id.* Therefore, we will consider only Sentinel's interests in withholding its information.

Having considered all of Omnilink's and Sentinel's arguments, we have marked customer information in Omnilink's documents that the department must withhold under section 552.110(b). We note that although Omnilink's documents also contain the names of other customers, those customers also are identified on Omnilink's Internet website. We are unable to conclude that customer information published on Omnilink's website is a trade secret of the company or that the release of such information under the Act would cause Omnilink substantial competitive harm. We find that neither Omnilink nor Sentinel has demonstrated that any of the remaining information at issue qualifies as a trade secret under section 552.110(a). We also find that neither Omnilink nor Sentinel has made the specific factual or evidentiary showing required by section 552.110(b) that release of any of the remaining information at issue would cause either company substantial competitive harm. We therefore conclude that the department may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.110. See Open Records Decision Nos. 509 at 5 (1988) (because costs, bid specifications, and circumstances would change for future contracts, assertion that release of bid proposal might give competitor unfair advantage on future contracts was entirely too speculative), 319 at 3 (1982) (statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.110 generally not applicable to information relating to organization and personnel, market studies, professional references, qualifications and experience, and pricing).

The department raises section 552.136 of the Government Code, which states that "[n]otwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential." Gov't Code § 552.136(b); see *id.* § 552.136(a) (defining "access device"). We have marked insurance policy numbers that the department must withhold under section 552.136.

We note that some of the remaining information appears to be protected by copyright. A governmental body must allow inspection of copyrighted information unless an exception

to disclosure applies to the information. *See* Attorney General Opinion JM-672 (1987). An officer for public information also must comply with copyright law, however, and is not required to furnish copies of copyrighted information. *Id.* A member of the public who wishes to make copies of copyrighted information must do so unassisted by the governmental body. In making copies, the member of the public assumes the duty of compliance with the copyright law and the risk of a copyright infringement suit. *See* Open Records Decision No. 550 at 8-9 (1990).

In summary, the department must withhold the information that we have marked under sections 552.110 and 552.136 of the Government Code. The rest of the submitted information must be released. Any information that is protected by copyright must be released in accordance with copyright law.

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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, 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).

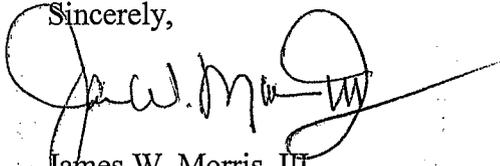
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records 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 challenge 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,



James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/ma

Ref: ID# 311431

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Mollyrose Graves
BI Incorporated
6400 Lookout Road
Boulder, Colorado 80301
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Keith Badham
G4S Justice Services, Inc.
2000 RiverEdge Parkway Suite GL-100
Atlanta, Georgia 30328
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Peter Michel
iSecuretrac
5078 South 11th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68137
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Wain Kellum
Omnilink Systems, Inc.
6120 Windward Parkway
Alpharetta, Georgia 30005
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Jim Dalton
RemoteMDX, Inc.
150 West Civic Center Drive Suite 400
Sandy, Utah 84070
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Dan Beck
Rocky Mountain Offender Management System, LLC
8787 Turnpike Drive Suite 200
Westminster, Colorado 80031
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Steve Logan
Satellite Tracking of People, LLC
1212 North Post Oak Road Suite 100
Houston, Texas 77055
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Alan Velasquez
Sentinel Offender Services, LLC
220 Technology Drive Suite 200
Irvine, California 92618
(w/o enclosures)