



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

December 30, 2008

Ms. Rebecca Brewer  
Abernathy, Roeder, Boyd, & Joplin, P.C.  
P.O. Box 1210  
McKinney, Texas 75070-1210

OR2009-01298

Dear Ms. Brewer:

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# 333753.

The Prosper Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for seven categories of information relating to a specific traffic accident. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information. We have also received and considered comments from the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).

Initially, we note that the submitted documents include a CRB-3 accident report form completed pursuant to chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. *See* Transp. Code § 550.064. Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes, including section 550.065 of the Transportation Code. Section 550.065(b) states that except as provided by subsection (c), accident reports are privileged and confidential. *See* Transp. Code § 550.065(b). Section 550.065(c)(4) provides for the release of the accident report to a person who provides two or more of the following three pieces of information: (1) date of the accident; (2) specific location of the accident; and (3) name of any person involved in 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. *See id.* The requestor has provided the department with two of the three pieces of information pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code; thus, the department must release the accident report under this section.

Section 552.103 of the Governmental Code provides as follows:

(a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). A governmental body that claims an exception to disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show that the section 552.103(a) exception is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the governmental body received the request, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, no pet.); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990). The district must satisfy both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under section 552.103(a). *See* ORD 551 at 4.

The question of whether litigation is reasonably anticipated must be determined on a case-by-case basis. *See* Open Records Decision No. 452 at 4 (1986). To establish that litigation is reasonably anticipated, a governmental body must provide this office with "concrete evidence showing that the claim that litigation may ensue is more than mere conjecture." *Id.* Concrete evidence to support a claim that litigation is reasonably anticipated may include, for example, the governmental body's receipt of a letter containing a specific threat to sue the governmental body from an attorney for a potential opposing

party.<sup>1</sup> Open Records Decision No. 555 (1990); *see* Open Records Decision No. 518 at 5 (1989) (litigation must be “realistically contemplated”). On the other hand, this office has determined that if an individual publicly threatens to bring suit against a governmental body, but does not actually take objective steps toward filing suit, litigation is not reasonably anticipated. *See* Open Records Decision No. 331 (1982). Further, the fact that a potential opposing party has hired an attorney who makes a request for information does not establish that litigation is reasonably anticipated. Open Records Decision No. 361 (1983).

In this instance, you generally assert that litigation is pending because the department has been “repeatedly contacted” by the requestor regarding “a civil litigation proceeding.” However, you have failed to submit any additional arguments showing that any party has taken objective steps towards actually filing litigation. As stated above, the mere possibility of litigation without objective steps toward filing suit, is not sufficient to show that litigation is reasonably anticipated. *See* ORD 361. Thus, we conclude that you have failed to demonstrate that the department reasonably anticipated litigation when it received the request for information. Accordingly, the remaining information may not be withheld under section 552.103 of the Government Code.

We note, however, that the remaining documents contain information subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code.<sup>2</sup> Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s or driver’s license or permit or a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.130(a)(1)-(2). The department must withhold the Texas-issued motor vehicle registration information we have marked in the remaining documents under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department must withhold the marked Texas-issued motor vehicle registration information under section 552.130 of the Government Code. As you raise no further arguments against disclosure, the remaining information must be released.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Among other examples, this office has concluded that litigation was reasonably anticipated where the opposing party took the following objective steps toward litigation: (1) filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *see* Open Records Decision No. 336 (1982); (2) hired an attorney who made a demand for disputed payments and threatened to sue if the payments were not made promptly, *see* Open Records Decision No. 346 (1982); and (3) threatened to sue on several occasions and hired an attorney, *see* Open Records Decision No. 288 (1981).

<sup>2</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

<sup>3</sup>We note that the information being released includes information which would ordinarily be withheld under section 552.130 of the Government Code. However, because this information pertains to the requestor’s client, it may not be withheld in this instance. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.023(a) (person or person’s authorized representative has special right of access to records that contain information relating to the person that are

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Sincerely,



Christina Alvarado  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CA/cc

Ref: ID# 333753

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

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protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person's privacy interests). If the department receives another request for this particular information from a different requestor, then the department should again seek a decision from this office.