ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 6, 2009

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

OR2009-09244

Dear Ms. Alexander:

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# 348133.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for interview questions, preferred answers, the requestor's answers, and other information pertaining to a particular job posting. You state you are releasing some of the requested information. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.[1]

Section 552.122 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "a test item developed by a . . . governmental body[.]" Gov't Code § 552.122(b). In Open Records Decision No. 626 (1994), this office determined that the term "test item" in section 552.122 includes "any standard means by which an individual's or group's knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated," but does not encompass evaluations of an employee's overall job performance or suitability. *Id.* at 6. The question of whether specific information falls

[1]We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

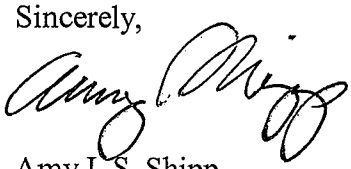
within the scope of section 552.122(b) must be determined on a case-by-case basis. *Id.* Traditionally, this office has applied section 552.122 where release of "test items" might compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *Id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976). Section 552.122 also protects the answers to test questions when the answers might reveal the questions themselves. *See* Attorney General Opinion JM-640 at 3 (1987); Open Records Decision No. 626 at 8 (1994).

You contend that the submitted interview questions and responses are excepted from disclosure under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. You argue that the release of these test items might undermine the selection process and compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. Having considered your arguments and reviewed the submitted information, we find that interview questions 4, 5, and 6 qualify as test items under section 552.122(b). We also find that release of the preferred answers to these questions would tend to reveal the questions themselves. Therefore, the department may withhold these questions, along with the preferred answers, pursuant to section 552.122(b). However, we find that questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9 are general questions evaluating an applicant's individual abilities, personal opinions, and subjective ability to respond to particular situations, and do not test any specific knowledge of an applicant. Accordingly, questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9, as well as the preferred answers to those questions, are not excepted from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code, and must be released.

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, 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,



Amy L.S. Shipp
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

ALS/rl

Ref: ID# 348133

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)