



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 13, 2009

Ms. Jennifer C. Cohen
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Public Safety
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2009-14383

Dear Ms. Cohen:

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# 362582 (ORA 09-1785).

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for information related to an automobile accident. You state that some responsive information has been released to the requestor. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code generally excepts from disclosure information held by a law enforcement agency that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime, if release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See* Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body that claims information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why section 552.108 is applicable to the information. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d706 (Tex. 1977); Open Records Decision No. 434 at 2-3 (1986). You inform us the submitted information relates to an ongoing criminal investigation. Based on this representation and our review of the submitted information, we conclude the release of the information you have marked 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). Thus, the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

We note that a portion of the remaining information is subject to section 552.101 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.101 excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses criminal history record information ("CHRI") generated by the National Crime Information Center or by the Texas Crime Information Center. Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI that states obtain from the federal government or other states. Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990). The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual law with respect to CHRI it generates. *Id.* Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI that the Texas Department of Public Safety ("DPS") maintains, except that DPS may disseminate this information as provided in chapter 411, subchapter F of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 411.083. Sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI; however, a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *Id.* § 411.089(b)(1). Other entities specified in chapter 411 of the Government Code are entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS or another criminal justice agency; however, those entities may not release CHRI except as provided by chapter 411. *See generally id.* §§ 411.090-.127. Thus, any CHRI obtained from DPS or any other criminal justice agency must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with Government Code chapter 411, subchapter F. *See id.* § 411.082(2)(B) (term CHRI does not include driving record information). Upon review, we find that the information we have marked consists of CHRI, and therefore, the department must withhold the marked information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with chapter 411 of the Government Code and federal law.²

Next, you assert that a portion of the remaining information is confidential under section 552.130 of the Government Code. Section 552.130 excepts from disclosure information that relates to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title, or registration issued by a Texas agency is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(1), (2). Accordingly, the information you have marked must be withheld under section 552.130.

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception like section 552.101 on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

²As our ruling on this issue is dispositive, we do not address your remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

In summary, the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108 of the Government Code. The department must withhold the CHRI we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with chapter 411 of the Government Code and federal law, and the information you have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The remaining information 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, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



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

ALS/rl

Ref: ID# 362582

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)