



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 2, 2013

Mr. Michael B. Gary
Legal Counsel
Harris County Appraisal District
P.O. Box 920975
Houston, Texas 77292-0975

OR2013-07268

Dear Mr. Gary:

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# 488164 (HCAD internal reference no. 13-1590).

The Harris County Appraisal District (the "district") received a request for vehicle information pertaining to a specified account number. The district claims the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exception.

We must address the district's procedural obligations under section 552.301 of the Government Code, which prescribes the procedures that a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body must submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld, (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence showing the date the governmental body received the written request, and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. Gov't Code § 552.301(e). The district received the request for information on March 4, 2013. Thus, the district's fifteen-business-day deadline under section 552.301(e) was March 18, 2013. However, as of the date of this letter, the district has not submitted written comments regarding the stated

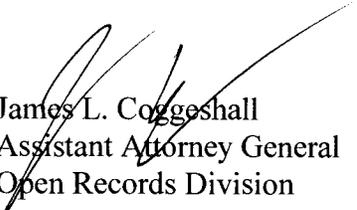
exceptions or a copy or representative samples of the requested information. Therefore, the district failed to comply with the procedural requirements mandated by section 552.301(e).

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Although section 552.101 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason for nondisclosure of information under section 552.302, we have no basis for concluding the requested information is excepted from release on this ground because the district failed to submit any portion of it to us for our review. Therefore, we have no choice but to order the district to release the responsive information in accordance with section 552.302 of the Government Code. If the district believes the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, the district must challenge this ruling in court pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code.

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,



James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/tch

Ref: ID# 488164

c: Requestor