



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 27, 2015

Ms. ML Calcote  
Assistant General Counsel  
Texas Department of Public Safety  
P.O. Box 4087  
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2015-10311

Dear Ms. Calcote:

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# 572255 (ORR# 15-2231).

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified accident. You state the department has released some of the requested information. You claim 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.

The submitted information is subject to chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. Section 550.065 provides information that "relates to a motor vehicle accident reported under [chapter 550]" is privileged and for the confidential use of the Texas Department of Transportation or a local governmental agency of Texas that has use for the information for accident prevention purposes. Transp. Code § 550.065(a)-(b). Chapter 550 requires the creation of a written report when the accident resulted in injury to or the death of a person or damage to the property of any person to the apparent extent of \$1,000 or more. *Id.* §§ 550.061 (operator's accident report), .062 (officer's accident report). A governmental entity may release information related to a reported accident only in accordance with subsections (c) and (e). *Id.* § 550.065(c), (e). Section 550.065(c)(4) provides a governmental entity shall release such information to a person who provides two of the following three

pieces of information: (1) the date of the accident, (2) the name of any person involved in the accident, and (3) the specific address or the highway or street where the accident occurred. *Id.* § 550.065(c)(4).

In *City of San Antonio v. Abbott*, the court of appeals considered the applicability of section 550.065 to certain information related to an accident. 432 S.W.3d 429 (Tex. App.—Austin 2014, pet. denied). The information at issue consisted of call-for-service and dispatch logs, and the requestor did not provide the requisite information pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4) to obtain the logs. The city argued the plain meaning of the phrase, “information that . . . relates to a motor vehicle accident” in section 550.065 includes *any* information pertaining to an accident reported under chapter 550, and thus, encompasses the information in its logs. Thus, the city contended the logs are confidential because the information relates to motor vehicle accidents reported under chapter 550. The court of appeals agreed with the city’s interpretation of section 550.065. The court held the phrase “relates to” is “very broad” and the Legislature’s use of the phrase “has the effect of broadening the scope of [s]ection 550.065 to render more than the actual accident reports confidential.” *Id.* at 432. Because the court found the language in section 550.065 to be unambiguous and to encompass more than the actual accident report required to be filed under chapter 550, it concluded the city’s call-for-service and dispatch logs are confidential under section 550.065 of the Transportation Code. Relying on the court’s interpretation of the broad scope of section 550.065, we construe the converse to be true when the requestor does provide the requisite information pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4). Thus based on the court’s rationale, when a person provides two of the required pieces of information to a governmental entity, it must release any information that relates to a motor vehicle accident required to be reported under chapter 550. Such a release is not limited to the accident report itself. *Id.* at 433.

Here, the requested information relates to a motor vehicle accident required to be reported under chapter 550 because it resulted in injury to or the death of a person or damage to the property of a person to the apparent extent of \$1,000 or more. In this instance, the requestor has provided the department with the requisite information pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4). Thus, this requestor has a statutory right of access under section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code. Although the department asserts sections 552.108 and 552.147 of the Government Code to withhold the information, we note a statutory right of access generally prevails over the exceptions to public disclosure under the Act. *See, e.g.,* Open Records Decision Nos. 613 at 4 (1993) (exceptions in Act cannot impinge on statutory right of access to information), 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome general exception to disclosure under the Act). Because sections 552.108 and 552.147 are general exceptions under the Act, the requestor’s statutory access under section 550.065(c)(4) prevails and the department may not withhold the information under section 552.108 or section 552.147 of the Government Code.

You also argue portions of the submitted information are subject to sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code. 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 chapter 411 of the Government Code, which makes confidential criminal history record information (“CHRI”) generated by the National Crime Information Center or by the Texas Crime Information Center. *See* Gov’t Code § 411.083(a). 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 laws with respect to the CHRI it generates. *See id.* Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI that the 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 in conjunction with chapter 411, subchapter F of the Government Code. Additionally, because the laws that govern the dissemination of information obtained from NCIC and TCIC are based on both law enforcement and privacy interests, the CHRI of a deceased individual that is obtained from a criminal justice agency may be disseminated only as permitted by subchapter F of chapter 411 of the Government Code. *See* ORD 565 at 10-12. Upon review, we find the Federal Bureau of Investigation number (the “FBI number”) you have marked consists of CHRI that is confidential pursuant to section 411.083 of the Government Code.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s license, driver’s license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. *See id.* § 552.130. Upon review, we find portions of the remaining information consist of motor vehicle record information. As previously stated, a specific statutory right of access prevails over general exceptions to disclosure under the Act. However, because section 552.130 has its own access provisions, we conclude section 552.130 is not a general exception under the Act. Accordingly, the motor vehicle record information within the submitted information is confidential under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

Because some of the submitted information is specifically protected from public disclosure by section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code and section 552.130 of the Government Code, we find there is a conflict

between these provisions and the access afforded to the requestor under section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code.

Where general and specific statutes are in irreconcilable conflict, the specific provision typically prevails as an exception to the general provision, unless the general provision was enacted later and there is clear evidence the legislature intended the general provision to prevail. *See* Gov't Code § 311.026(b); *see also* *City of Lake Dallas v. Lake Cities Mun. Util. Auth.*, 555 S.W.2d 163, 168 (Tex. Civ. App. — Fort Worth 1977, writ ref'd n.r.e.). Section 550.065(c)(4) provides a requestor with a right of access to all information relating to a motor vehicle accident reported under chapter 550 when the requestor provides the requisite information. Transp. Code § 550.065(c)(4); *see* *City of San Antonio*, 432 S.W.3d at 432-433. However, section 411.083 of the Government Code specifically protects CHRI. Thus, we find the confidentiality provided by section 411.083 of the Government Code prevails over the requestor's statutory access under section 550.065(c) of the Government Code. Accordingly, the department must withhold the FBI number you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code.

Next, we address the conflict between the access provided under section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code and the confidentiality provided under section 552.130 of the Government Code. Section 550.065 governs the release of all information relating to a motor vehicle accident reported under chapter 550, while section 552.130 generally excepts motor vehicle record information maintained in any context. Thus, we conclude the access provided under section 550.065(c)(4) is more specific than the general confidentiality provided under section 552.130. *Cf.* Transp. Code § 550.065(e)-(f). Accordingly, the department may not withhold any of the submitted information under section 552.130.

In summary, the department must release the submitted information to this requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code; however, in releasing the information, the department must withhold the FBI number you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup>

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.

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<sup>1</sup>Because the requestor has a right of access to some of the submitted information, if the department receives another request for this information from a different requestor, the department must again seek a ruling from this office.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl\\_ruling\\_info.shtml](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml), 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claire Morris Sloan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Claire V. Morris Sloan  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CVMS/som

Ref: ID# 572255

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)