



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 31, 2015

Ms. Halfreda Anderson-Nelson  
Public Information Officer  
Senior Assistant General Counsel  
Dallas Area Rapid Transit  
P.O. Box 660163  
Dallas, Texas 75266-0163

OR2015-18183

Dear Ms. Anderson-Nelson:

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# 577753 (ORR No. 11643).

Dallas Area Rapid Transit ("DART") received a request for information relating to request for proposals number P-1018492.<sup>1</sup> DART claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. Additionally, DART states release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Daimler, North America; Gillig; and North American Bus Industries ("NABI"). Accordingly, DART states, and provides documentation showing, it notified the third parties of the request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act

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<sup>1</sup>We note DART received clarification of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222 (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); *see also* *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding that when a governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification or narrowing of an unclear or over-broad request for public information, the ten-day period to request an attorney general ruling is measured from the date the request is clarified or narrowed).

in certain circumstances). We have considered the exception DART claims and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides, in relevant part, 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). The governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show 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 for information 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, orig. proceeding); *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 governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a).

For purposes of section 552.103, "litigation" includes contested cases conducted in a quasi-judicial forum. Open Records Decision Nos. 588 at 2 (1991), 474 at 6 (1987) (disciplinary action before Texas State Board of Pharmacy), 368 at 2 (1983) (administrative hearing before Commissioner of Insurance), 301 at 1-2 (1982). Likewise, "contested cases" conducted under the Texas Administrative Procedure Act, chapter 2001 of the Government Code, constitute "litigation" for purposes of section 552.103. *See, e.g.*, ORD 588 at 7 (State Board of Insurance proceeding), 301 at 2 (hearing before Public Utilities Commission). Factors this office considers in determining whether an administrative proceeding is conducted in a quasi-judicial forum include whether the administrative proceeding provides for discovery, evidence to be heard, factual questions to be resolved, the making of a record, and whether the proceeding is an adjudicative forum of first jurisdiction with appellate review of the resulting decision without a re-adjudication of fact questions. *See* ORD 588 at 3-4.

DART contends the submitted information relates to a complaint filed by NABI pursuant to DART's Procurement Regulations. DART asserts litigation was pending with NABI when it received the request for information through DART's administrative process. DART informs us the administrative process is overseen by an administrative law judge and allows for discovery, the opportunity to present witnesses, and the opportunity to offer evidence. Further, we understand the administrative process requires a transcript of testimony and argument at hearings be created unless the administrative law judge orders otherwise. We further understand the decision of the administrative law judge is final, subject only to a motion for reconsideration. Based on DART's argument and our review, we find DART has demonstrated its administrative process is conducted in a quasi-judicial forum and therefore constitutes litigation for purposes of section 552.103 of the Government Code. Thus, we agree litigation was pending when DART received the instant request. We also find DART has established the submitted information is related to the pending litigation for purposes of section 552.103(a). Therefore, DART may withhold the submitted information under section 552.103(a).

However, once the information has been obtained by all parties to the pending litigation, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. Open Records Decision No. 349 at 2 (1982). We also note the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends when the litigation has concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 at 2 (1982); Open Records Decision Nos. 350 at 3 (1982), 349 at 2.

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.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,



David L. Wheelus  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

DLW/bhf

Ref: ID# 577753

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

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