



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 19, 2016

Ms. Angela Hough  
Assistant General Counsel  
North Texas Tollway Authority  
P. O. Box 260729  
Plano, Texas 75026

OR2016-16253

Dear Ms. Hough:

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# 622286 (NTTA File No. 2016-01540).

The North Texas Tollway Authority (the "authority") received a request for a specified contract. Although you take no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, you state release of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of Compass Group USA, Inc. d/b/a Canteen Vending ("Compass"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified Compass of the request for information and of its 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 in certain circumstances). We have received comments from Compass. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note Compass argues against the disclosure of information the authority did not submit to this office for review. This ruling does not address information beyond what the authority has submitted to us for review. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(D) (governmental body requesting decision from Attorney General must submit copy of specific information

requested). Accordingly, this ruling is limited to the information the authority submitted as responsive to the request for information. *See id.*

Section 552.104(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder.” Gov’t Code § 552.104(a). In considering whether a private third party may assert this exception, the supreme court reasoned because section 552.305(a) of the Government Code includes section 552.104 as an example of an exception that involves a third party’s property interest, a private third party may invoke this exception. *Boeing Co. v. Paxton*, 466 S.W.3d 831 (Tex. 2015). The “test under section 552.104 is whether knowing another bidder’s [or competitor’s information] would be an advantage, not whether it would be a decisive advantage.” *Id.* at 841. Compass states it has competitors. In addition, Compass states release of the information at issue will allow its competitors to undercut the company in future bids. For many years, this office concluded the terms of a contract and especially the pricing of a winning bidder are public and generally not excepted from disclosure. Gov’t Code § 552.022(a)(3) (contract involving receipt or expenditure of public funds expressly made public); Open Records Decision Nos. 541 at 8 (1990) (public has interest in knowing terms of contract with state agency), 514 (1988) (public has interest in knowing prices charged by government contractors), 494 (1988) (requiring balancing of public interest in disclosure with competitive injury to company). *See generally* Freedom of Information Act Guide & Privacy Act Overview, 219 (2000) (federal cases applying analogous Freedom of Information Act reasoning that disclosure of prices charged government is a cost of doing business with government). However, now, pursuant to *Boeing*, section 552.104 is not limited to only ongoing competitive situations, and a third party need only show release of its competitively sensitive information would give an advantage to a competitor even after a contract is executed. *Boeing*, 466 S.W.3d at 831, 839. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Compass has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the authority may withhold the submitted information under section 552.104(a) 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.

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

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<sup>1</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address the other arguments to withhold this information.

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, appearing to read "B. Berger", written over the typed name.

Brian E. Berger  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

BB/eb

Ref: ID# 622286

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

1 Third Party  
(w/o enclosures)