



February 17, 1999

Mr. John Steiner
Division Chief
City of Austin
Law Department
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, Texas 78767-1088

OR99-0474

Dear Mr. Steiner:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 122149.

The City of Austin Police Department (the "department") received a request for information concerning a motor vehicle accident that occurred on November 14, 1998 at 3085 MoPac Expressway and Capital of Texas Highway. You have released the dispatch report, accident report, press release, and the front page offense report information to the requestor. See generally *Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.3d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.--Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976); Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976). However, you assert that the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and have reviewed the documents submitted.

Section 552.108, the "law enforcement exception," provides in relevant part as follows:

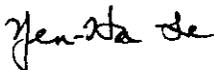
(a) [i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from the requirements of 552.021 if: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation or prosecution of crime; [or] (2) it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. . . .

Generally, a governmental body claiming an exception under section 552.108 must reasonably explain, if the information does not supply the explanation on its face, how and

why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.108(a)(1), (b)(1), .301(b)(1); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state that the requested information relates to a pending criminal investigation. Accordingly, we find that release of the requested information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.3d 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). Although section 552.108(a)(1) authorizes you to withhold the remaining requested information from disclosure, you may choose to release all or part of the information at issue that is not otherwise confidential by law. *See* Gov't Code § 552.007.

We are resolving this matter with an informal letter ruling rather than with a published open records decision. This ruling is limited to the particular records at issue under the facts presented to us in this request and should not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records. If you have questions about this ruling, please contact our office.

Sincerely,



Yen-Ha Le
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

YHL/nc

Ref: ID# 122149

Enclosures: Submitted documents

cc: Ms. Kathleen Jennings
Fox 7 News
119 East 10th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
(w/o enclosures)