



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

October 6, 2004

Ms. Sharon Alexander  
Associate General Counsel  
Texas Department of Transportation  
125 E. 11<sup>th</sup> Street  
Austin, Texas 78701-2483

OR2004-8485

Dear Ms. Alexander:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 210540.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for the requestor's "KSA ratings and Interview Question ratings" for a specified job position. You indicate that some information will be released but claim that portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.<sup>1</sup>

Initially, we note that you did not submit the requestor's "KSA ratings" for our review. Further, you have not indicated that such information does not exist or that you wish to withhold any such information from disclosure. Therefore, to the extent information responsive to this aspect of the request exists, we assume that you have released it to the requestor. If you have not released any such information, you must release it to the requestor at this time. *See Gov't Code §§ 552.301(a), .302; see also Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000) (if governmental body concludes that no exceptions apply to requested information, it must release information as soon as possible).*

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<sup>1</sup> We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988).* This ruling does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

You assert that portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code. Section 552.122(b) excepts from disclosure test items developed by a licensing agency or governmental body. In Open Records Decision No. 626 (1994), this office determined that the term "test item" in section 552.122 includes any standard means by which an individual's or group's knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated, but does not encompass evaluations of an employee's overall job performance or suitability. Whether information falls within the section 552.122 exception must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6 (1994). This office has generally found section 552.122 to apply in cases where release of "test items" might compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *Id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976). Additionally, when answers to test questions might reveal the questions themselves, the answers may be withheld under section 552.122(b). *See* Open Records Decision No. 626 at 8 (1994).

After reviewing the submitted information, we agree that interview questions 2, 3, 5, 9, and 10 test an individual's knowledge in a particular area. Accordingly, the department may withhold questions 2, 3, 5, 9, and 10, their preferred answers, and the requestor's answers pursuant to section 552.122(b). We find, however, that questions 7, 12, and 15A do not test an individual's or group's knowledge or ability in a particular area. Therefore, the department may not withhold any information pertaining to these questions under section 552.122(b). As the department claims no other exceptions to disclosure, the remaining submitted information must be released to the requestor.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records

will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Amy D. Peterson  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

ADP/krl

Ref: ID# 210540

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. James Strong  
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(w/o enclosures)