



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

October 6, 2004

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

OR2004-8499

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# 210295.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for interview questions and answers for Job Vacancy Notice 005850. You claim that the information at issue is excepted from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.<sup>1</sup>

Section 552.122(b) of the Government Code 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). Traditionally, this office has applied section 552.122 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,

---

<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 open records letter 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.

the answers may be withheld under section 552.122(b). *See* Open Records Decision No. 626 at 8 (1994).

You contend that the submitted interview questions, preferred answers, and actual answers provided by candidates are excepted from disclosure under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. After reviewing the information, we find that interview questions 4, 5, 6, 12, and 13 test an individual's knowledge in a particular area and thus constitute "test items" as contemplated by section 552.122(b). Furthermore, we find the answers to these questions tend to reveal the questions themselves. Accordingly, pursuant to section 552.122(b), the department may withhold the types of interview questions represented by questions 4, 5, 6, 12, and 13, along with the preferred answers to such questions and the interviewees' actual answers. We find, however, that questions 2, 7, 9, and 10 are general questions evaluating an applicant's general workplace skills and overall suitability for employment, and do not test any specific knowledge of an applicant. Accordingly, we determine questions 2, 7, 9, and 10 are not test items for purposes of section 552.122 of the Government Code. The department may not withhold that the types of questions represented by questions 2, 7, 9, and 10 or the preferred or actual answers to such questions pursuant to section 552.122 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department may withhold the types of interview questions represented by questions 4, 5, 6, 12, and 13, the preferred answers to such questions, and interviewees' actual answers pursuant to section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. The remainder of the requested 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 thirty calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within ten 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 ten 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 ten 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); *Tex. 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 ten calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



David R. Saldivar  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

DRS/seg

Ref: ID# 210295

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. George S. Fan  
4907 Theall Road  
Houston, Texas 77066  
(w/o enclosures)