



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 12, 2006

Ms. Irina Visan
Nichols, Jackson, Dillard, Hager & Smith, L.L.P.
1800 Lincoln Plaza
500 North Akard
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2006-00400

Dear Ms. Visan:

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# 240189.

The City of Rowlett (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information relating to a traffic study. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.¹

Initially, we note that the submitted information is subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code, which enumerates categories of information that are not excepted from required disclosure unless they "are expressly confidential under other law." Gov't Code § 552.022. This section provides in pertinent part:

- (a) Without limiting the amount or kind of information that is public information under this chapter, the following categories of information are

¹We 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.

public information and not excepted from required disclosure under this chapter unless they are expressly confidential under other law:

- (1) a completed report, audit, evaluation, or investigation made of, for, or by a governmental body, excepted as provided by Section 552.108[.]

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(1). The submitted traffic study constitutes a completed report made of, for, or by the city. Therefore, the city may only withhold this information if it is confidential under "other law" or excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Although you argue that this report is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code, that section is a discretionary exception and, as such, is not "other law" for purposes of section 552.022. *See Dallas Area Rapid Transit v. Dallas Morning News*, 4 S.W.3d 469, 475-76 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1999, no pet.) (governmental body may waive section 552.103); Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (discretionary exceptions generally), 542 at 4 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.103 subject to waiver). Accordingly, the submitted information may not be withheld under section 552.103. As you raise no other exceptions to disclosure, the submitted information must be released.

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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 Office of the Attorney General 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. 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,



Brian J. Rogers
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

BJR/krl

Ref: ID# 240189

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Harold Chenault
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(w/o enclosures)