



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

September 6, 2007

Ms. Sharon Alexander
Associate General Counsel
Texas Department of Transportation
125 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

OR2007-11658

Dear Ms. Alexander:

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 #288316.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for copies of professional services agreements and contracts executed in 2006 and 2007 between the department and auditing and accounting firms. You state that the requested agreements are in the form of purchase orders, which are attached to each firm's response to the department's request for proposals. You state further that the department has made a good faith determination that the requestor is asking for these proposals. Although you take no position with respect to this information request, you claim that the submitted proposals may contain proprietary information subject to exception under the Act. You indicate that you notified Deloitte Financial Advisory Services ("Deloitte") and Dye Management Group ("Dye") of the department's receipt of this request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office as to why the requested information should not be released to the requestor. *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 reviewed the submitted information.

We note that an interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice under section 552.305(d) of the Government Code to

submit its reasons, if any, as to why requested information relating to it should be withheld from disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, neither Deloitte nor Dye has submitted to this office any reasons explaining why their proposals should not be released. Therefore, Deloitte and Dye have failed to provide us with any basis to conclude that either has a protected proprietary interest in any of the submitted information. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 661 at 5-6 (1999) (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual evidence that release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish prima facie case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3 (1990). Accordingly, the submitted proposals 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, 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,



Reg Hargrove
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RJH/eeg

Ref: ID# 288316

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Karen Shouse
Clayton, Biltmore, & Shouse, LLC
3411 Richmond Avenue Suite 325
Houston, Texas 77046
(w/o enclosures)

Deloitte Financial Advisory Services
400 West 15th St, Suite 1700
Austin, Texas 78701
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Robert C. Cooney
Vice President
Dye Management Group, Inc.
1412 Coolmore Drive
Raleigh, North Carolina 27614
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Peter Wallace
Principal
Deloitte Financial Advisory Services
1700 Market Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. William D. Dye
President
Dye Management Group, Inc.
500 108th Avenue NE, Suite 1700
Bellevue, Washington 98004
(w/o enclosures)