



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

October 12, 2010

Ms. Jennifer C. Cohen  
Assistant General Counsel  
Texas Department of Public Safety  
5805 North Lamar Boulevard, Box 4087  
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2010-15472

Dear Ms. Cohen:

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# 397620 (ORA# 10-1768).

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for the 9-1-1 call recordings and dispatch transcripts for all 9-1-1 calls received in connection with a specified automobile accident. You claim that portions of the submitted information are exempted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note you have marked portions of the submitted information as not responsive to the request. This ruling does not address the public availability of non-responsive information, and the department is not required to release non-responsive information in response to this request.

Next, we must address the department's obligations under the Act. Section 552.301 of the Government Code describes the obligations placed on a governmental body that receives a written request for information it wishes to withhold. Pursuant to section 552.301(e) of the Government Code, a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) general written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld, (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence

showing the date the governmental body received the written request, and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(A). You state the department received the request for information on August 4, 2010. Accordingly, the department's fifteen business-day deadline under section 552.301(e) was August 25, 2010. However, you did not submit the information responsive to the request until August 26, 2010. *See id.* § 552.308 (describing rules for calculating submission dates of documents sent via first class United States mail, common or contract carrier, or interagency mail). Consequently, we find the department failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301 of the Government Code.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the information is public and must be released. Information that is presumed public must be released unless a governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information to overcome this presumption. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Normally, a compelling reason to withhold information exists where some other source of law makes the information confidential or where third-party interests are at stake. *See* Open Records Decision No. 150 at 2 (1977). Although you raise section 552.108 of the Government Code, this section is a discretionary exception that protects a governmental body's interests and may be waived. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions), 177 (1977) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 subject to waiver). As such, it does not constitute a compelling reason to withhold information. Accordingly, in failing to comply with section 552.301, the department has waived its claim under section 552.108. However, the interests of a governmental body, other than the one that failed to comply with section 552.301, can provide a compelling reason to withhold information from disclosure. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 586 (1991), 469 (1987). You have submitted a letter from the Office of the District Attorney for the 81st Judicial District (the "district attorney") asserting a law enforcement interest in the submitted information. Therefore, we will consider whether the department may withhold the responsive information under section 552.108 of the Government Code on behalf of the district attorney.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body that claims an exception to disclosure under section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why this exception is applicable to the information at issue. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). The district attorney states the responsive information pertains to a pending criminal investigation. Based on this

representation and our review, we conclude that release of the information at issue would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 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). Therefore, the department may withhold the responsive information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

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

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Christina Alvarado  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CA/tp

Ref: ID# 397620

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)