



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

November 5, 2010

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

OR2010-16818

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# 399457.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for the letters of interest and consultant selection score sheets used to tabulate and rank the letters of interest for a specified contract. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.<sup>1</sup>

Section 552.104 of the Government Code excepts from required public disclosure "information which, if released, would give advantage to competitors or bidders." Gov't Code § 552.104(a). The purpose of section 552.104 is to protect the purchasing interests of a governmental body in competitive bidding situations where the governmental body wishes to withhold information in order to obtain more favorable offers. *See* Open Records Decision No. 592 (1991). Section 552.104 protects information from disclosure if the governmental body demonstrates potential harm to its interests in a particular competitive situation. *See* Open Records Decision No. 463 (1987). Generally, section 552.104 does not except bids from disclosure after bidding is completed and the contract has been executed. *See* Open Records Decision No. 541 (1990).

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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 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.

You inform this office that the submitted information “represents details of the qualifications and plans for a competitor on [the specified] contract.” You state the submitted information pertains to “a specific competitive procurement” for which the contract has not been awarded. You state that the release of the submitted information would give competitors advance knowledge of the capabilities and plans of their competitors and undermine the contract negotiation process, ultimately resulting in less competition. Based on your representations and our review of the submitted information, we find you have demonstrated that release of the information at issue would cause specific harm to the department’s interests in particular competitive bidding situations. Therefore, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.104 of the Government Code until such time as the contract has been executed and is in effect. *See* Open Records Decision No. 170 at 2 (1977) (release of bids while negotiation of proposed contract is in progress would necessarily result in an advantage to certain bidders at the expense of others and could be detrimental to the public interest in the contract under negotiation).

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,



Sarah Casterline  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

SEC/eeg

Ref: ID# 399457

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)