



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

December 20, 2010

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

OR2010-19139

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# 409309.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified job number. You state the department is releasing some of the requested information with redactions pursuant to Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009).¹ You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.²

¹We note this office issued Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009), a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold ten categories of information without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.

²We assume that the "representative sample" of information 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.

Section 552.122 of the Government Code exempts from public disclosure "a test item developed by a . . . governmental body[.]" Gov't Code § 552.122(b). 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. *Id.* at 6. The question of whether specific information falls within the scope of section 552.122(b) must be determined on a case-by-case basis. *Id.* 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). Section 552.122 also protects the answers to test questions when the answers might reveal the questions themselves. *See* Attorney General Opinion JM-640 at 3 (1987); Open Records Decision No. 626 at 8 (1994).

You contend that the interview questions and responses at issue are excepted from disclosure under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. You argue that the release of these test items might undermine the selection process and compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. Based on these representations and our review, we find that the submitted interview questions qualify as test items under section 552.122(b). We also find that release of the preferred and individual answers to these questions would tend to reveal the questions themselves. Therefore, the department may withhold the questions at issue, along with the preferred and individual answers, pursuant to section 552.122(b).

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, 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,


Laura Ream Lemus
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LRL/vb

Ref: ID# 409309

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)