



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 7, 2011

Mr. John B. Dahill
General Counsel
North Texas Tollway Authority
5900 West Plano Parkway, Suite 100
Plano, Texas 75093

OR2011-04831

Dear Mr. Dahill:

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# 414004.

The North Texas Tollway Authority (the "authority") received a request for information related to a employee cost-comparison study, including work performed by auditors or consultants. You state the authority has provided information concerning the studies done by auditors or consultants. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.111 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "an interagency or intraagency memorandum or letter that would not be available by law to a party in litigation with the agency." Gov't Code § 552.111. Section 552.111 encompasses the deliberative process privilege. *See* Open Records Decision No. 615 at 2 (1993). The purpose of section 552.111 is to protect advice, opinion, and recommendation in the decisional process and to encourage open and frank discussion in the deliberative process. *See Austin v. City of San Antonio*, 630 S.W.2d 391, 394 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 1982, no writ); Open Records Decision No. 538 at 1–2 (1990).

In Open Records Decision No. 615, this office re-examined the statutory predecessor to section 552.111 in light of the decision in *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ). We determined that section 552.111 excepts from disclosure only those internal communications that consist of advice, recommendations, opinions, and other material reflecting the policymaking processes of the governmental body. *See* ORD 615 at 5. A governmental body's policymaking functions do not encompass routine internal administrative or personnel matters, and

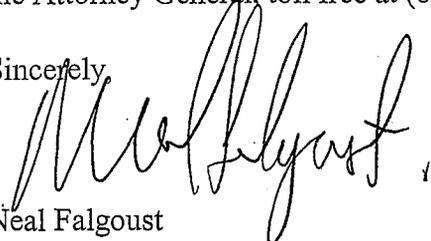
disclosure of information about such matters will not inhibit free discussion of policy issues among agency personnel. *Id.*; see also *City of Garland v. The Dallas Morning News*, 22 S.W.3d 351 (Tex. 2000) (section 552.111 not applicable to personnel-related communications that did not involve policymaking). A governmental body's policymaking functions do include administrative and personnel matters of broad scope that affect the governmental body's policy mission. See Open Records Decision No. 631 at 3 (1995). Further, section 552.111 does not protect facts and written observations of facts and events that are severable from advice, opinions, and recommendations. See ORD 615 at 5. But if factual information is so inextricably intertwined with material involving advice, opinion, or recommendation as to make severance of the factual data impractical, the factual information also may be withheld under section 552.111. See Open Records Decision No. 313 at 3 (1982).

You state the authority is authorized by Texas law to acquire, construct, maintain, repair and operate turnpike projects in the North Texas Region. In connection with this authorization, the authority compares the costs of employees and the costs of consultants in fulfilling its policy function. However, upon review, we find the submitted information consists of factual data related to employee and consultant salaries, and the authority has failed to demonstrate how any of the submitted information constitutes advice, opinion or recommendations related to its policymaking function. Thus, we conclude the authority may not withhold the submitted information under section 552.111 of the Government Code. As you claim no other exceptions to disclosure, the submitted information must be released.

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,



Neal Falgoust
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NF/dls

Ref: ID# 414004

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)