



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

GREG ABBOTT

June 23, 2011

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

OR2011-08943

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# 421566.

The Texas Department of Public Transportation (the "department") received a request for the interview questions and answers pertaining to specified job positions over specified time periods. You state you have released some of the requested information. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.122 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

Section 552.122 of the Government Code excepts from 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. ORD 626 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

¹We 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.

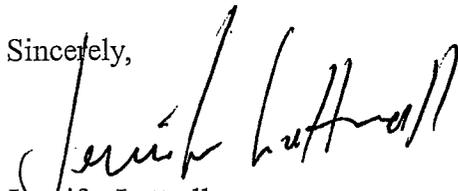
compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *Id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976). Section 552.122 also protects the answers to test questions when the answers might reveal the questions themselves. *See* Attorney General Opinion JM-640 at 3 (1987); ORD 626 at 8.

You seek to withhold the submitted interview questions, as well as the preferred and actual answers to those questions, under section 552.122 of the Government Code. You state these questions evaluate an individual's knowledge or ability in particular areas. You inform us the department anticipates using these questions in future interviews and argue that release of this information would compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. Having considered your arguments and reviewed the information at issue, we conclude the interview questions, as well as the preferred and actual answers to these questions, we have marked qualify as test items for the purposes of section 552.122(b). Accordingly, we conclude the department may withhold the marked questions and answers under section 552.122 of the Government Code. We find, however, the remaining interview questions evaluate an applicant's general workplace skills and overall suitability for employment, and do not test any specific knowledge of an applicant. Accordingly, we determine the remaining questions, and their preferred and actual answers, are not test items under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code and therefore may not be withheld on this basis. As you raise no further arguments against disclosure of the remaining information, it 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,



Jennifer Luttrall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JL/dls

Ref: ID# 421566

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)