



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

July 5, 2011

Mr. Jeffrey T. Ulmann  
Knight & Partners  
223 West Anderson Lane, Suite A-105  
Austin, Texas 78752

OR2011-09404

Dear Mr. Ulmann:

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# 427059.

The City of Jonestown (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information relating to a fatal traffic accident. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the information you submitted.

We note the submitted information includes copies of a crash report that was completed pursuant to chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. *See* Transp. Code § 550.064 (officer's accident report). Section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code states that except as provided by subsection (c) or (e), accident reports are privileged and confidential.<sup>1</sup> *See id.* § 550.065(b). Section 550.065(c)(4) provides for the release of an accident report to a person who provides two of the following three items of information: (1) the date of the accident; (2) the name of any person involved in the accident; and (3) the specific location of the accident. *See id.* § 550.065(c)(4). Under this provision, the Texas Department of

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<sup>1</sup>Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses information other statutes make confidential.

Transportation or another governmental entity is required to release a copy of an accident report to a person who provides the agency with two or more of the items of information specified by the statute. *Id.* In this instance, the requestor has not provided the city with two of the three specified items of information. Therefore, the city must withhold the submitted crash report from this requestor pursuant to section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code.

Next, we address your claim under section 552.108 of the Government Code for the rest of the submitted information. Section 552.108(a)(1) 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 must reasonably explain how and why section 552.108 is applicable to the information at issue. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state release of the remaining information would interfere with a pending criminal investigation. Based on your representations and our review of the information at issue, we conclude section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable in this instance. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

We note section 552.108 does not except from disclosure “basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.” Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic front-page information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88. The city must release basic information, including a detailed description of the offense, even if the information does not actually appear on the front page of an offense or arrest report. The city may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

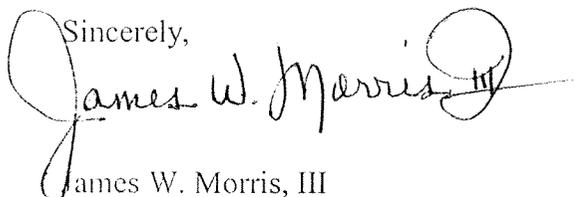
In summary, the city (1) must withhold the crash report pursuant to section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code and (2) may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code, except for the basic information that must be released under section 552.108(c).

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James W. Morris, III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a distinct "III" at the end.

James W. Morris, III  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JWM/em

Ref: ID# 427059

Enc: Submitted information

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)