



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

December 22, 2011

Mr. Charles H. Weir
Assistant City Attorney
City of San Antonio
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

OR2011-18889

Dear Mr. Weir:

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# 445635 (COSA File No. W004506).

The City of San Antonio (the "city") received a request for information related to a traffic accident. You claim that 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 submitted information.

We note the submitted information includes copies of a crash report 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), accident reports are privileged and confidential.¹ *See id.* § 550.065(b). Section 550.065(c)(4) provides for 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 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 failed to provide the city with the specified items of information. Thus, the department must withhold the submitted accident report form under

¹Section 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. The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code.

We also note section 552.022 of the Government Code is applicable to some of the submitted documents. Section 552.022(a)(17) provides for required public disclosure of “information that is also contained in a public court record,” unless the information is expressly confidential under other law. Gov’t Code § 552.022(a)(17). The court documents we have marked are subject to section 552.022(a)(17). Although you seek to withhold these documents under section 552.108 of the Government Code, that section is a discretionary exception to disclosure that protects a governmental body’s interests and may be waived. *See id.* § 552.007; Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to Gov’t Code § 552.108 subject to waiver). As such, section 552.108 is not other law that makes information expressly confidential for the purposes of section 552.022(a)(17). Therefore, the marked court documents may not be withheld under section 552.108. However, because information subject to section 552.022(a)(17) may be withheld under section 552.130 of the Government Code, we will consider the applicability of this exception to the court-filed documents.

Next, we address your claim under section 552.108 of the Government Code for the remaining information at issue. Section 552.108 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).

We note the information at issue includes statutory warning and notice of suspension forms, which we have marked. Because copies of those documents are provided to the person who is the subject of the warning and the notice, we find release of the statutory warning and notice of suspension forms will not interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). Therefore, the statutory warning and notice of suspension forms may not be withheld under section 552.108.

You state release of the remaining information would interfere with the investigation and prosecution of an open criminal case. Based on your representation, we conclude release of the remaining information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *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 that are present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

We also 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 offense and arrest information even if the information

does not literally appear on the front page of an offense or arrest report. *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Except for basic information and the statutory warning and notice of suspension forms, the city may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1).

Finally, section 552.130 of the Government Code provides that information relating to a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130(a). The city must withhold the driver's license numbers we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

Accordingly, the city must withhold the crash report pursuant under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code. Except for the court documents, the statutory warning and notice of suspension forms, and the basic offense and arrest information, the city may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. Basic offense and arrest information must be released under section 552.108(c) of the Government Code. In releasing the court documents and the statutory warning and notice of suspension forms, the city must withhold the driver's license numbers we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

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,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/dls

Ref: ID# 445635

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)