



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 1, 2012

Ms. Molly Cost
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Public Safety
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2012-06300

Dear Ms. Cost:

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# 456512 (PIR # 12-1083, 12-1085).

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received two requests for information pertaining to a specified accident. You indicate a copy of the CR-3 accident report form has been or will be released to the requestors. *See* Transp. Code § 550.065(c)(4), (d) (officer's accident report must be released to person who provides two of following three pieces of information: date of accident; name of any person involved in accident; specific location of accident). You claim the submitted 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.

As you acknowledge, the department failed to meet the deadlines prescribed by section 552.301 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b), (e). Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption the information is public. Information that is presumed public must be released unless a governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information to overcome this presumption.

See id. § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, orig. proceeding); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, orig. proceeding); *see* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). The presumption information is public under section 552.302 can generally be overcome by demonstrating that the information is confidential by law or third-party interests are at stake. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 630 at 3 (1994), 325 at 2 (1982). Section 552.108 of the Government Code is a discretionary exception to disclosure that protects a governmental body's interests and may be waived. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions), 177 (1977) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 subject to waiver). However, the need of another governmental body to withhold information under section 552.108 can provide a compelling reason under section 552.302. Open Records Decision No. 586 at 2-3 (1991) (claim of another governmental body under statutory predecessor to section 552.108 can provide compelling reason for non-disclosure). Because you inform us the Erath County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office") objects to the release of the requested information, we will consider your claim regarding section 552.108 of the Government Code.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code 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). The district attorney's office states the release of the submitted information would interfere with the investigation and future prosecution of criminal case at issue. Based on this representation and our review, we find the release of the submitted 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). Therefore, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) on behalf of the district attorney's office.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ana Carolina Vieira', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ana Carolina Vieira
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

ACV/ag

Ref: ID# 456512

Enc. Submitted documents

c: 2 Requestors
(w/o enclosures)