



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 30, 2013

Ms. Leticia D. McGowan
School Attorney
Dallas Independent School District
3700 Ross Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75204

OR2013-13130

Dear Ms. McGowan:

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# 495190 (DISD ORR#12117).

The Dallas Independent School District (the "district") received a request for copies of all bid responses, excluding the bid submitted by the winning vendor, to RFP LH-203818. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.110 of the Government Code. Additionally, you state release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of AT&T Corporation ("AT&T"); FiberLight, L.L.C. ("FiberLight"); Time Warner Entertainment-Advance/Newhouse Partnership d/b/a Time Warner Cable ("TWC"); Windstream NTI, Inc. ("Windstream"); and Zayo Bandwidth, L.L.C. ("Zayo"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified AT&T, FiberLight, TWC, Windstream, and Zayo of the request for information and of the right of each to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released. *See Gov't Code § 552.305(d); see also Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act in certain circumstances).* We have received comments from TWC. We have reviewed the submitted information and the submitted arguments.

We note an interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice under section 552.305(d) to submit its reasons, if any, as to why information relating to that party should be withheld from public disclosure. *See id.*

§ 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, we have not received comments from AT&T, FiberLight, Windstream, or Zayo explaining why their information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude AT&T, FiberLight, Windstream, or Zayo has a protected proprietary interest in any of the submitted information. *See id.* § 552.110; Open Records Decision Nos. 661 at 5-6 (1999) (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual evidence, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3. Accordingly, the district may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest AT&T, FiberLight, Windstream, or Zayo may have in it.

You and TWC state the information at issue is excepted from disclosure under section 552.110 of the Government Code. We note section 552.110 protects the interests of private parties that provide information to governmental bodies, not the interests of governmental bodies themselves. *See generally* Open Records Decision No. 592 (1991). Accordingly, we do not consider your arguments under section 552.110. However, we will address TWC's arguments. Section 552.110 protects (1) trade secrets, and (2) commercial or financial information the disclosure of which would cause substantial competitive harm to the person from whom the information was obtained. *See Gov't Code* § 552.110(a)-(b). Section 552.110(a) protects trade secrets obtained from a person and privileged or confidential by statute or judicial decision. *Id.* § 552.110(a). The Texas Supreme Court has adopted the definition of trade secret from section 757 of the Restatement of Torts, which holds a trade secret to be:

any formula, pattern, device or compilation of information which is used in one's business, and which gives him an opportunity to obtain an advantage over competitors who do not know or use it. It may be a formula for a chemical compound, a process of manufacturing, treating or preserving materials, a pattern for a machine or other device, or a list of customers. It differs from other secret information in a business . . . in that it is not simply information as to single or ephemeral events in the conduct of the business A trade secret is a process or device for continuous use in the operation of the business. . . . [It may] relate to the sale of goods or to other operations in the business, such as a code for determining discounts, rebates or other concessions in a price list or catalogue, or a list of specialized customers, or a method of bookkeeping or other office management.

RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b (1939); *see also Hyde Corp. v. Huffines*, 314 S.W.2d 776 (Tex. 1958). In determining whether particular information constitutes a trade secret, this office considers the Restatement's definition of trade secret as well as the

Restatement's list of six trade secret factors.¹ This office must accept a claim that information subject to the Act is excepted as a trade secret if a *prima facie* case for the exception is made and no argument is submitted that rebuts the claim as a matter of law. *See* ORD 552 at 5. However, we cannot conclude that section 552.110(a) is applicable unless it has been shown that the information meets the definition of a trade secret and the necessary factors have been demonstrated to establish a trade secret claim. Open Records Decision No. 402 (1983).

Upon review, we find that TWC has established a *prima facie* case that its customer information, which we have marked, constitutes a trade secret. Therefore, the district must withhold the information we have marked pursuant to section 552.110(a) of the Government Code. However, we find TWC has failed to demonstrate how any portion of its remaining information meets the definition of a trade secret, nor has it demonstrated the necessary factors to establish a trade secret claim for its remaining information. *See* ORD 402 (section 552.110(a) does not apply unless information meets definition of trade secret and necessary factors have been demonstrated to establish trade secret claim). We note pricing information pertaining to a particular contract is generally not a trade secret because it is "simply information as to single or ephemeral events in the conduct of the business," rather than "a process or device for continuous use in the operation of the business." RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b; *see Huffines*, 314 S.W.2d at 776; ORD 319 at 3, 306 at 3. Therefore, the district may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code.

We note some of the submitted information is subject to section 552.136 of the Government Code.² Section 552.136 of the Government Code states, "[n]otwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that

¹The Restatement of Torts lists the following six factors as indicia of whether information constitutes a trade secret:

- (1) the extent to which the information is known outside of [the company];
- (2) the extent to which it is known by employees and other involved in [the company's] business;
- (3) the extent of measures taken by [the company] to guard the secrecy of the information;
- (4) the value of the information to [the company] and [its] competitors;
- (5) the amount of effort or money expended by [the company] in developing the information;
- (6) the ease or difficulty with which the information could be properly acquired or duplicated by others.

RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b; *see* Open Records Decision Nos. 319 at 2 (1982), 306 at 2 (1982), 255 at 2 (1980).

²The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential.” Gov’t Code § 552.136(b); *see also id.* § 552.136(a) (defining “access device”). This office has determined an insurance policy number is an access device number for the purposes of section 552.136. Accordingly, the district must withhold the insurance policy numbers we have marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

We also note some of the information at issue may be protected by copyright. A custodian of public records must comply with the copyright law and is not required to furnish copies of records that are copyrighted. Open Records Decision No. 180 at 3 (1977). A governmental body must allow inspection of copyrighted materials unless an exception applies to the information. *Id.*; *see* Open Records Decision No. 109 (1975). If a member of the public wishes to make copies of copyrighted materials, the person must do so unassisted by the governmental body. In making copies, the member of the public assumes the duty of compliance with the copyright law and the risk of a copyright infringement suit.

In summary, the district must withhold the information we have marked under sections 552.110(a) and 552.136 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released; however, any information subject to copyright may only be released in accordance with copyright law.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey W. Giles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWG/dls

Ref: ID# 495190

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Time Warner Entertainment-Advance/Newhouse Partnership
d/b/a Time Warner Cable
c/o Mr. Boyd J. Hawkins
Holland & Hart, L.L.P.
P.O. Box 2527
Boise, Idaho 83701-2527
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. John Deering
Zayo Bandwith, L.L.C.
400 Centennial Parkway, Suite 200
Louisville, Colorado 80027
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Ken Lavtzenheiser
FiberLight, L.L.C.
11700 Great Oaks Way, Suite 100
Alpharetta, Georgia 30022
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. John Prettyman
Account Manager 3 STL
AT&T Corporation
208 South Akard Street, Sixth Floor
Dallas, Texas 75202
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Randy Wright
K-12 Account Executive
Windstream NTI, Inc.
961 East Commerce Street
Fairfield, Texas 75840
(w/o enclosures)