



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 9, 2014

Ms. Sharon Alexander
Associate General Counsel
Texas Department of Transportation
125 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2483

OR2014-05850

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# 523717.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for applications for applicants interviewed for a specified job number, as well as interview questions, answers, and scores for the job number. You indicate you will release some information to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under 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." Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6. The term "test item" does not

¹We assume that the "representative sample" of records 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.

encompass evaluations of an employee's overall job performance or suitability. *See id.* at 8. 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.* at 6. Traditionally, this office has applied section 552.122 where release of test items might 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); Open Records Decision No. 626 at 8.

You state question number 5 and the first part of question number 8 involve standards for evaluating an individual's stated knowledge and abilities and do not focus on qualifications or experiences unique to a particular applicant. You further state the department anticipates reusing these questions in the future and contend that advance knowledge of the questions and preferred answers would compromise future interviews. Having considered your arguments and reviewed the submitted information, we find the interview questions at issue qualify as test items under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. We also find the release of the candidates' answers to these questions would tend to reveal the questions themselves. Accordingly, the department may withhold question number 5, the first part of question number 8, and the answers to these questions pursuant to section 552.122(b) 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.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,



Kristi L. Wilkins
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KLW/tch

Ref: ID# 523717

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)