



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 24, 2016

Ms. Halfreda Anderson-Nelson
Public Information Officer
Dallas Area Rapid Transit
P.O. Box 660163
Dallas, Texas 75266-0163

OR2016-04442

Dear Ms. Anderson-Nelson:

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# 599309 (DART ORR# W000375-113015).

Dallas Area Rapid Transit ("DART") received a request for all information pertaining to a specified incident.¹ You state DART does not possess some of the requested information.² You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

¹We note DART sought and received clarification of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222 (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); *see also* *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding that when a governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification or narrowing of an unclear or over-broad request for public information, the ten-day period to request an attorney general ruling is measured from the date the request is clarified or narrowed).

²The Act does not require a governmental body to release information that did not exist when it received a request, create responsive information, or obtain information that is not held by the governmental body or on its behalf. *See* *Economic Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed); Open Records Decision Nos. 605 at 2 (1992), 555 at 1 (1990), 452 at 3 (1986), 362 at 2 (1983).

Initially, we note some of the submitted information is subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. Section 552.022(a) provides, in relevant part:

(a) [T]he following categories of information are public information and not excepted from required disclosure unless made confidential under this chapter or other law:

(1) a completed report, audit, evaluation, or investigation made of, for, or by a governmental body, except as provided by Section 552.108[.]

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(1). The submitted information includes a completed report subject to section 552.022(a)(1). DART must release this information, which we have marked, pursuant to section 552.022(a)(1) unless it is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code or made confidential under the Act or other law. *See id.* You seek to withhold the information subject to section 552.022(a)(1) under section 552.103 of the Government Code. However, section 552.103 is discretionary in nature and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See Dallas Area Rapid Transit v. Dallas Morning News*, 4 S.W.3d 469, 475-76 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1999, no pet.) (governmental body may waive Gov't Code § 552.103); *see also* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 663 at 5 (1999) (waiver of discretionary exceptions). Therefore, DART may not withhold any portion of the information subject to section 552.022(a)(1), which we have marked, under section 552.103 of the Government Code. However, we will consider the applicability of section 552.103 of the Government Code for the information not subject to section 552.022(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides, in relevant part:

(a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). A governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show section 552.103(a) applies in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation was pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the governmental body received the request for information, and (2) the requested information is related to that litigation. *See Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, orig. proceeding); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990). A governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under section 552.103(a). *See* ORD 551 at 4.

You inform us, and have provided documentation demonstrating, a lawsuit against DART styled *State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company v. Dallas Area Rapid Transit*, Docket No. JS15-30688A, was filed in the Justice Court for Precinct 3 in Dallas County prior to DART's receipt of the instant request for information. Based on your representation and our review, we find litigation to which DART is a party was pending on the date DART received the request. You state, and we agree, the remaining information is related to the litigation. Therefore, DART may withhold the submitted information not subject to section 552.022(a)(1) under section 552.103(a) of the Government Code.³

Generally, however, the purpose of section 552.103 is to enable a governmental body to protect its position in litigation by forcing parties seeking information relating to that litigation to obtain it through discovery procedures. *See id.* at 4-5. Thus, if the opposing party has seen or had access to information relating to the active litigation through discovery or otherwise, there is no interest in withholding such information from public disclosure under section 552.103. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). We also note the applicability of section 552.103 ends once the related litigation concludes. *See* Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).

In summary, DART may withhold the submitted information not subject to section 552.022(a)(1) of the Government Code pursuant to section 552.103(a) of the Government Code. DART must release the remaining information.

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/>

³As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

[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,



Matthew Taylor
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MT/dls

Ref: ID# 599309

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)