



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 12, 2015

Ms. Delietrice Henry
Open Records Assistant
City of Plano
P.O. Box 860358
Plano, Texas 75086-0358

OR2015-11618

Dear Ms. Henry:

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# 567078 (ORR# RHYW032015).

The Plano Police Department (the "department") received a request for twelve categories of information pertaining to a specified automobile accident. You indicate the department has no information responsive to portions of the request.¹ You state the department has released some of the requested information. 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.

Initially, we note some of the submitted information is not responsive to the instant request for information because it does not pertain to the specified accident. This ruling does not address the public availability of any information that is not responsive to the request and the department is not required to release such information in response to this request.

¹The Act does not require a governmental body that receives a request for information to create information that did not exist when the request was received. *See Econ. 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), 563 at 8 (1990), 555 at 1-2 (1990), 452 at 3 (1986), 362 at 2 (1983).

Next, we note the submitted information is subject to chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. Section 550.065 provides information that “relates to a motor vehicle accident reported under [chapter 550]” is privileged and for the confidential use of the Texas Department of Transportation or a local governmental agency of Texas that has use for the information for accident prevention purposes. Transp. Code § 550.065(a)-(b). Chapter 550 requires the creation of a written report when the accident resulted in injury to or the death of a person or damage to the property of any person to the apparent extent of \$1,000 or more. *Id.* §§ 550.061 (operator’s accident report), .062 (officer’s accident report). A governmental entity may release information related to a reported accident only in accordance with subsections (c) and (e). *Id.* § 550.065(c), (e). Section 550.065(c)(4) provides a governmental entity shall release such information to a person who provides two of the following three pieces of information: (1) the date of the accident, (2) the name of any person involved in the accident, and (3) the specific address or the highway or street where the accident occurred. *Id.* § 550.065(c)(4).

In *City of San Antonio v. Abbott*, the court of appeals considered the applicability of section 550.065 to certain information related to an accident. 432 S.W.3d 429 (Tex. App.—Austin 2014, pet. denied). The information at issue consisted of call-for-service and dispatch logs, and the requestor did not provide the requisite information pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4) to obtain the logs. The city argued the plain meaning of the phrase, “information that . . . relates to a motor vehicle accident” in section 550.065 includes *any* information pertaining to an accident reported under chapter 550, and thus, encompasses the information in its logs. Thus, the city contended the logs are confidential because the information relates to motor vehicle accidents reported under chapter 550. The court of appeals agreed with the city’s interpretation of section 550.065. The court held the phrase “relates to” is “very broad” and the Legislature’s use of the phrase “has the effect of broadening the scope of [s]ection 550.065 to render more than the actual accident reports confidential.” *Id.* at 432. Because the court found the language in section 550.065 to be unambiguous and encompass more than the actual accident report required to be filed under chapter 550, it concluded the city’s call-for-service and dispatch logs are confidential under section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code. Relying on the court’s interpretation of the broad scope of section 550.065, we construe the converse to be true when the requestor does provide the requisite information pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4). Thus based on the court’s rationale, when a person provides two of the required pieces of information to a governmental entity, it must release any information that relates to a motor vehicle accident required to be reported under chapter 550. Such a release is not limited to the accident report itself. *Id.* at 433.

The responsive information relates to a motor vehicle accident required to be reported under chapter 550 because it resulted in injury to or the death of a person or damage to the property of a person to the apparent extent of \$1,000 or more, and the requestor has provided the department with the requisite information. Although the department asserts section 552.108 to withhold the responsive information, information expressly made public by statute may

not be withheld from the public under the general exceptions to public disclosure under the Act. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 613 at 4 (1993) (exceptions in Act cannot impinge on statutory right of access to information), 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome general exception to disclosure under the Act). Because section 552.108 is a general exception under the Act, the requestor's statutory access under section 550.065(c)(4) prevails and the department may not withhold the responsive information under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Thus, the department must release the responsive information to this requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c) of the Transportation 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claire Morris Sloan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/som

Ref: ID# 567078

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)