



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 9, 2016

Mr. Rick Guerrero
Houston-Galveston Area Council
P.O. Box 22777
Houston, Texas 77227-2777

OR2016-27296

Dear Mr. Guerrero:

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# 637017.

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (the "council") received a request for nine categories of information pertaining to the proposed high speed rail project. You state you will release some information. Although you take no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, you state release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of L.E.K Consulting ("L.E.K."). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified L.E.K of the request for information and of its right 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 L.E.K. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.104(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder." Gov't Code § 552.104(a). A private third party may invoke this exception. *Boeing Co. v. Paxton*, 466 S.W.3d 831 (Tex. 2015). The "test under section 552.104 is whether knowing another bidder's [or competitor's information] would be an advantage, not whether it would be a decisive advantage." *Id.* at 841. L.E.K. states it has competitors. In addition, L.E.K. states release

of the submitted information would give an advantage to its competitors. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find L.E.K. has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the council may withhold the submitted information under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.¹

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,



Paige Lay
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PL/som

Ref: ID# 637017

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Third Party
(w/o enclosures)

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining argument against disclosure of the submitted information.