



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 16, 2017

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

OR2017-05437

Dear Ms. Parker:

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# 654870.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified job position and applicants. You state the department will release some information. 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(b) of the Government Code excepts from public 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 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," but does not encompass evaluations of an employee's overall job performance or suitability. *Id.* at 6. The question of whether specific information falls within the scope of section 552.122(b) must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

¹We assume 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.

Id. 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); ORD 626 at 8.

You seek to withhold the submitted question and applicant answers under section 552.122 of the Government Code. You state the information at issue relates to the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position and does not focus on qualifications or experiences unique to a particular applicant. You also state the department anticipates using this question in future interviews. Based on your representations and our review, we agree the submitted question is a “test item” under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. Furthermore, we find release of the applicants’ answers to this question would reveal the question itself. Accordingly, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.122.

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,



Erin Groff
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

EMG/som

Ref: ID# 654870

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)