



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 17, 2017

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

OR2017-08021

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# 653591 (ORR# W001399).

Dallas Area Rapid Transit ("DART") received a request for information related to a specified accident.¹ You state DART has released some of the requested information. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses information made confidential by other statutes. In addition, a federal regulation enacted pursuant to statutory authority can provide statutory confidentiality for purposes of section 552.101 of the Act. *See* Open Records

¹You state 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 overbroad request for information, the ten-day period to request an attorney general ruling is measured from the date the request is clarified or narrowed).

Decision No. 599 at 4 (1992). You raise section 552.101 in conjunction with section 40.321 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, which relates to the confidentiality of workplace drug and alcohol testing information of employers participating in the United States Department of Transportation) drug or alcohol testing process. *See* 49 C.F.R. pt. 40 (procedures for transportation workplace drug and alcohol testing programs). Section 322 of title 49 of the United States Code authorizes the Secretary of Transportation (the “secretary”) to prescribe regulations necessary to carry out the duties and powers of the secretary. *See* 49 U.S.C. § 322. Section 40.321 relates to the confidentiality of workplace drug and alcohol testing and provides:

Except as otherwise provided in this subpart, as a service agent or employer participating in the [United States Department of Transportation] drug or alcohol testing process, you are prohibited from releasing individual test results or medical information about an employee to third parties without the employee’s specific written consent.

(a) A “third party” is any person or organization to whom other subparts of this regulation do not explicitly authorize or require the transmission of information in the course of the drug or alcohol testing process.

(b) “Specific written consent” means a statement signed by the employee that he or she agrees to the release of a particular piece of information to a particular, explicitly identified, person or organization at a particular time. “Blanket releases,” in which an employee agrees to a release of a category of information (e.g., all test results) or to release information to a category of parties (e.g., other employers who are members of a C/TPA, companies to which the employee may apply for employment), are prohibited under this part.

49 C.F.R § 40.321. You state some of the submitted information constitutes drug and alcohol test results of a DART employee. You further state the information is maintained by DART pursuant to section 40.321 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations. You do not indicate any written consent has been given with respect to disclosure of the information in question. *See id.* § 40.321(b). Based upon your representations and our review, we conclude DART must withhold the information at issue, which we have marked, under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 322 of title 49 of the United States Code and section 40.321 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information other statutes make confidential. DART is a regional transportation authority governed by chapter 452 of the Transportation Code. *See* Transp. Code ch. 452; *see also id.* § 452.001(1) (defining

“authority” for purposes of chapter 452 of the Transportation Code). Section 452.061 of the Transportation Code provides in relevant part:

(e) Personal identifying information collected by an authority is confidential and not subject to disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, including a person’s:

- (1) name, address, e-mail address, and phone number;
- (2) account number, password, payment transaction activity, toll or charge record, or credit, debit, or other payment card number; and
- (3) other personal financial information.

Id. § 452.061(e). You assert the remaining information contains personal identifying information made confidential by section 452.061(e). We note subsection 452.061(e) is contained in section 452.061, which is titled “Fares and Other Charges.” Additionally, subsections (a) through (d) of section 452.061 discuss an authority’s responsibilities in imposing fares and other charges and the state’s power to regulate taxes imposed by an authority or other compensation authorized by this section. *See id.* § 452.061(a)–(d). Accordingly, we conclude section 452.061(e) is only applicable to personal identifying information collected by DART for purposes relating to the collection of fares and other charges. *Cf. Paxton v. Tex. Dep’t of State Health Servs.*, 500 S.W.3d 702, 706 (Tex. App—Austin 2016, no pet.) (holding although isolated reading of section 531.1021(g) of Government Code suggests it applies to any Office of Inspector General (“OIG”) investigation, confidentiality of OIG investigations provided by section 531.1021(g) must be read in context of OIG’s enabling provisions and thus, extended only to OIG investigations concerning fraud, waste, and abuse in the provision and delivery of health and human services in the state). Upon review, we find DART did not collect the personal identifying information for purposes relating to the collection of fares and other charges. Consequently, the personal identifying information at issue is not confidential under section 452.061(e) of the Transportation Code, and may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code on that basis.

In summary, DART must withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 322 of title 49 of the United States Code and section 40.321 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations. 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/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,



Ian Lancaster
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

IML/som

Ref: ID# 653591

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)