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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 18, 2017

Mr. Andrew Devine
Senior Associate Attorney
Dallas County Hospital District
d/b/a Parkland Health & Hospital System
5201 Harry Hines Boulevard
Dallas, Texas 75235

OR2017-08222

Dear Mr. Devine:

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# 655119 (DCHD#17-05, 17-11, and 17-12).

The Dallas County Hospital District d/b/a Parkland Health & Hospital System (the "district") received three requests for winning bid pricing for a specified event number.¹ Although you take no position as to whether the responsive information is excepted under the Act, you state release of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of Auto-San, LLC ("Auto-San"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified Auto-San of the requests for information and of its right to submit arguments to this office as to why the information at issue 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 on behalf of Auto-San. 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

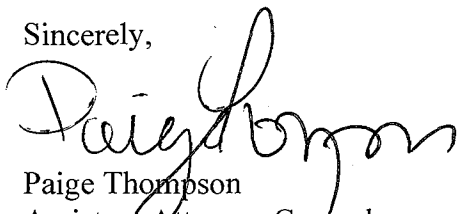
¹We note the district sought and received clarification of some of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222(b) (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request).

advantage.” *Id.* at 841. Auto-San states it has competitors. Auto-San argues release of its information at issue would provide its competitors with an unfair advantage. We note Auto-San was the winning bidder for the information at issue, and Auto-San seeks to withhold its pricing information. For many years, this office concluded the terms of a contract and especially the pricing of a winning bidder are public and generally not excepted from disclosure. Gov’t Code § 552.022(a)(3) (contract involving receipt or expenditure of public funds expressly made public); Open Records Decision Nos. 541 at 8 (1990) (public has interest in knowing terms of contract with state agency), 514 (1988) (public has interest in knowing prices charged by government contractors), 494 (1988) (requiring balancing of public interest in disclosure with competitive injury to company). *See generally* Freedom of Information Act Guide & Privacy Act Overview, 219 (2000) (federal cases applying analogous Freedom of Information Act reasoning that disclosure of prices charged government is a cost of doing business with government). However, now, pursuant to *Boeing*, section 552.104 is not limited only to ongoing competitive situations, and a third party need only show release of its competitively sensitive information would give an advantage to a competitor even after a contract is executed. *Boeing*, 466 S.W.3d at 831, 839. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Auto-San has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to competitors or bidders. Thus, we conclude the district may withhold the information we marked under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code. The district must release the remaining submitted responsive 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,



Paige Thompson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PT/tdw

Ref: ID# 655119

Enc. Submitted documents

c: 3 Requestors
(w/o enclosures)

1 Third Party
(w/o enclosures)