



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 1, 2017

Ms. Michele Freeland
Legal Assistant
Office of General Counsel
Texas Department of Public Safety
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2017-09184

Dear Ms. Freeland:

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# 655657 (ORR# 17-0993).

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for contract award information and bid tabulation results for two specified requests for proposals. The department claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. Additionally, the department states release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Davidson Oil; Foret Global Oil Equipment, Inc.; Gold Star Petroleum, Inc.; Sun Coast Resources, Inc.; Truman Arnold Companies; and Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. ("ESRI"). Accordingly, the department states, and provides documentation showing, it notified the third parties of the request for information and of the 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 ESRI. We have reviewed the submitted information and the submitted arguments.

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). 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." *Boeing Co. v. Paxton*, 466 S.W.3d 831 (Tex. 2015). The department represents the information at

issue pertains to a competitive bidding situation. In addition, the department states release of the information will harm its purchasing interests and weaken its bargaining position as it deliberates options and negotiates best value, now and in the future. The department argues knowledge of the information could enable competing vendors to artificially inflate prices and prevent the department from getting the best value for its contracts. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find the department has established the release of the information would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the department 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,



Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/som

Ref: ID# 655657

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

6 Third Parties
(w/o enclosures)

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