



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 31, 2017

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

OR2017-19995

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# 673893.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to four specified job postings. You state you 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. *Id.* Traditionally, this

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 those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.


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 questions 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 these questions in future interviews. Based on your representations and our review, we find one of the submitted questions 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. Therefore, the department may withhold the question and answers we have indicated under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. However, we find the remaining information only evaluates the applicant’s general workplace skill, subjective ability to respond to particular situations, and overall suitability for employment, and does not test any specific knowledge of the applicant. Accordingly, we determine the remaining information at issue does not consist of test items under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. Therefore, the department may not withhold the remaining information under section 552.122 of the Government Code and must release it.

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,



Emily Buchanan
Attorney
Open Records Division

EB/eb

Ref: ID# 673893

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)