



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 13, 2017

Ms. Ana Vieira Ayala
Assistant General Counsel & Public Information Coordinator
Office of General Counsel
The University of Texas System
210 West 7th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

OR2017-25871

Dear Ms. Ayala:

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# 684007 (OGC# 177106).

The University of Texas at Austin (the "university") received a request for a specified contract. Although the university takes no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under the Act, you state release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of IMG College, L.L.C. ("IMG"); and Uber Technologies, Inc. ("Uber"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified these third parties of the request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305 (permitting interested third party to submit to attorney general reasons why requested information should not be released); Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (determining statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in certain circumstances).

We have received comments from IMG and Uber. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, IMG contends the submitted information is not subject to the Act. The Act is applicable only to “public information.” See Gov’t Code §§ 552.002, .021. Section 552.002(a) defines “public information” as the following:

[I]nformation that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business:

- (1) by a governmental body;
- (2) for a governmental body and the governmental body:
 - (A) owns the information;
 - (B) has a right of access to the information; or
 - (C) spends or contributes public money for the purpose of writing, producing, collecting, assembling, or maintaining the information; or
- (3) by an individual officer or employee of a governmental body in the officer’s or employee’s official capacity and the information pertains to official business of the governmental body.

Id. § 552.002(a). Thus, virtually all the information in a governmental body’s physical possession constitutes public information and is subject to the Act. See *id.* § 552.002(a)(1); see Open Records Decision Nos. 549 at 4 (1990), 514 at 1-2 (1988). But see Open Records Decision No. 635 at 4 (1995) (Gov’t Code § 552.002 not applicable to personal information unrelated to official business and created or maintained by state employee involving *de minimis* use of state resources). Information is maintained in connection with the transaction of official business if the information is created by, transmitted to, received by, or maintained by a person or entity performing official business or a government function on behalf of a governmental body and the information pertains to official business of the governmental body. Gov’t Code § 552.002(a-1). IMG informs us the submitted information consists of an agreement between Uber and IMG and is not associated with the official business of the university. We note, however, the request is for a contract that is subject to the university’s approval. Additionally, we note the university maintains a copy of the contract. Accordingly, we find the submitted contract consists of information that is maintained by the university for the transaction of official business. Thus, the submitted information is subject

to the Act and must be released, unless the information falls within an exception to public disclosure under the Act.

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 advantage.” *Id.* at 841. Uber states it has competitors. In addition, Uber states disclosure of the information would enable Uber’s competitors to reverse engineer an accurate picture of Uber’s operating costs and profit margins, thus enabling competitors to undercut Uber’s position in the marketplace. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Uber has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the university 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,



D. Michelle Case
Attorney
Open Records Division

DMC/som

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining third party arguments against disclosure of this information.

Ref: ID# 684007

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

2 Third Parties
(w/o enclosures)