



KEN PAXTON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 2, 2018

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

OR2018-02382

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# 694006.

The Texas Department of Transportation ("TxDOT") received a request for "550" forms for five specified projects. TxDOT does not take a position as to whether the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under the Act. However, TxDOT states, and provides documentation showing, it notified the following third parties of TxDOT's receipt of the request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office as to why the requested information should not be released: Aguirre Roden Inc.; AIM Engineering, Inc.; CT Brannon Corporation; Enprotec / Hibbs & Todd Inc.; EST, Inc.; Garver LLC; KSA Engineers, Inc.; LOCHNER; O'Malley Strand Associates; Parkhill Smith & Cooper, Inc. ("PSC"); Pierce Goodwin Alexander & Linville; RS&H; Schaumburg & Polk Inc.; and Urban Engineers dba Urban Services. *See Gov't Code § 552.305(d); see also Open Records Decision No. 542 at 3 (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 PSC objecting to the release of some of the information at issue. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note PSC seeks to withhold information that TxDOT did not submit for our review. This ruling does not address information beyond what TxDOT has submitted to us for review. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(D) (governmental body requesting decision from attorney general must submit copy of specific information requested). Accordingly, this ruling is limited to the information TxDOT submitted as responsive to the request for information. *See id.*

An interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice under section 552.305(d) to submit its reasons, if any, as to why requested information relating to it should be withheld from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, none of the remaining third parties has submitted to this office any reasons explaining why the requested information should not be released. Accordingly, we have no basis for concluding the submitted information constitutes proprietary information of these third parties, and TxDOT may not withhold any portion of it on that basis. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 661 at 5-6 (1999) (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual evidence, not conclusory or generalized allegations, release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3.

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, 841 (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.* PSC states it has competitors and argues release of its information would cause it substantial competitive harm. Upon review, we find PSC has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude TxDOT may withhold PSC's information under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> TxDOT 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.

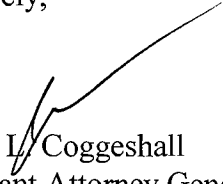
This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl\\_ruling\\_info.shtml](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for

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<sup>1</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address the other arguments to withhold this information.

providing public information under the Act may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



James L. Coggeshall  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JLC/tdw

Ref: ID# 694006

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

17 Third Parties  
(w/o enclosures)