



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 20, 2019

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

OR2019-13385

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# 766248 (PIR# 19-1015).

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received two requests from the same requestor for a list of vendors and their response to solicitation 405-18-R126446. Although you take no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, you state release of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of STACS DNA Inc. ("STACS").¹ Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified STACS of the request for information and of its 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 reviewed the submitted information.

We note 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 information relating to that party should be withheld from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, we have not received comments from

¹We note the department did not comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting this decision. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b). Nonetheless, because third-party interests can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness, we will consider its applicability to the submitted information. *See id.* §§ 552.007, .302, .352.

STACS explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude STACS has a protected proprietary interest in the submitted information. *See id.* § 552.110; 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, that release of requested information would cause party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3. Accordingly, the department may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest STACS may have in the information.

Section 552.136 of the Government Code provides, “[n]otwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential.”² Gov’t Code § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining “access device”). This office has determined bank account and routing numbers and insurance policy numbers are access device numbers for purposes of section 552.136. Accordingly, the department must withhold the bank account numbers, routing numbers, and insurance policy numbers we marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The department 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, 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,



Lecelle Clarke
Attorney
Open Records Division

LC/gw

²The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

Ref: ID# 766248

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

c: Third Party
(w/o enclosures)