



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 21, 2019

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

OR2019-16969

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# 771603.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for twelve categories of information and communications pertaining to a specified project and a specified property. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.105 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.<sup>1</sup>

Section 552.105 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information relating to "appraisals or purchase price of real or personal property for a public purpose prior to the formal award of contracts for the property." Gov't Code § 552.105(2). Section 552.105 is designed to protect a governmental body's planning and negotiating position with respect to particular transactions. Open Records Decision Nos. 564 at 2 (1990), 357 (1982), 310 (1982). Information that is excepted from disclosure under section 552.105 that pertains to such negotiations may be excepted from disclosure so long as the transaction relating to that information is not complete. *See* ORD 310. But the protection offered by section 552.105

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<sup>1</sup>We assume that 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 that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

is not limited solely to transactions not yet finalized. This office has concluded that information about specific parcels of land obtained in advance of other parcels to be acquired for the same project could be withheld where release of the information would harm the governmental body's negotiating position with respect to the remaining parcels. *See* ORD 564 at 2. A governmental body may withhold information "which, if released, would impair or tend to impair [its] 'planning and negotiating position in regard to particular transactions.'" ORD 357 at 3 (quoting Open Records Decision No. 222 (1979)). The question of whether specific information, if publicly released, would impair a governmental body's planning and negotiating position with regard to particular transactions is a question of fact. Accordingly, this office will accept a governmental body's good-faith determination in this regard, unless the contrary is clearly shown as a matter of law. *See* ORD 564.

You state the department has made a good-faith determination the submitted information relates to the location of property it intends to purchase and information that would affect the prices of parcels that have yet to be purchased. You explain the department still needs to purchase the property at issue, and release of the information at issue would harm the department's negotiating position with respect to the acquisition of this property. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.105 of the Government Code.<sup>2</sup>

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

Sincerely,



Erin Groff  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

EMG/mo

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<sup>2</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

Ref: ID# 771603

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)