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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 5, 2019

Ms. Anastasia Broadfoot
Attorney
Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
P.O. Box 13127
Austin, Texas 78711-3127

OR2019-31149

Dear Ms. Broadfoot:

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# 795603 (TABC Request R001576-081619).

The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (the "commission") received a request for records pertaining to an incident at a specified location. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information, a portion of which consists of a representative sample.¹

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information subject to chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. Section 550.065 applies only to a written report of an accident required under section 550.061, 550.062, or 601.004. Transp. Code § 550.065(a)(1). Chapter 550 requires the creation of a written report when the accident resulted in injury to or the death of a person or damage to the property of any person to the apparent extent of \$1,000 or more. *Id.* §§ 550.061 (operator's accident report), .062 (officer's accident report). An accident report is privileged and for the confidential use of the Texas Department of Transportation or a local governmental agency of Texas that has use for the information for

¹ We 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 that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

accident prevention purposes. *Id.* § 550.065(b). However, a governmental entity shall release an accident report in accordance with subsections (c) and (c-1). *Id.* § 550.065(c), (c-1). Section 550.065(c) provides a governmental entity shall release an accident report to a person or entity listed under this subsection. *Id.* § 550.065(c).

In this instance, we have no indication the requestor is a person listed under section 550.065(c). Thus, the submitted CR-3 accident report is confidential under section 550.065(b), and the commission must withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government Code.² However, section 550.065(c-1) requires the commission to create a redacted accident report that may be requested by any person. *Id.* § 550.065(c-1). The redacted accident report may not include the information listed in subsection (f)(2). *Id.* Therefore, the requestor has a right of access to the redacted accident report. We note, although you assert section 552.108 to withhold the information, a statutory right of access prevails over the Act's general exceptions to public disclosure. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 613 at 4 (1993) (exceptions in Act cannot impinge on statutory right of access to information), 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome general exception to disclosure under the Act). Because section 552.108 is a general exception under the Act, the requestor's statutory access under section 550.065(c-1) prevails and the commission may not withhold this information under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Therefore, the commission must release the redacted CR-3 accident report to the requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c-1) of the Transportation Code.

Section 552.108(a)(2) excepts from disclosure information concerning an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. *See* Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(2). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate the requested information relates to a criminal investigation that concluded in a final result other than a conviction or deferred adjudication. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A) (governmental body must provide comments explaining why exceptions raised should apply to information requested). By its terms, section 552.108 applies only to a law enforcement agency or a prosecutor. We note the commission's Enforcement Division is a law enforcement agency. *See* Alco. Bev. Code §§ 5.14 (commission may commission inspectors with police powers to enforce Alcoholic Beverage Code), .36 (commission shall investigate violations of Alcoholic Beverage Code and other laws relating to alcoholic beverages), .361 (commission shall develop risk-based approach to enforcement). You state the submitted information pertains to a closed criminal investigation conducted by the commission's Enforcement Division. Further, you state this concluded criminal case did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. Based on these representations and our review, we agree section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code is applicable to the remaining information.

However, we note, and you acknowledge, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). *See also* Open Records

² As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your arguments against disclosure of this information.

Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Thus, with the exception of the basic information, which you state you are releasing, the commission may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.³

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 5.48 of the Alcoholic Beverage Code, which provides as follows:

(a) "Private records," as used in this section, means all records of a permittee, licensee, or other person other than the name, proposed location, and type of permit or license sought in an application for an original or renewal permit or license, or in a periodic report relating to the importation, distribution, or sale of alcoholic beverages required by TABC to be regularly filed by a permittee or licensee.

(b) The private records of a permittee, licensee, or other person that are required or obtained by TABC or its agents, in connection with an investigation or otherwise, are privileged unless introduced in evidence in a hearing before TABC or before a court in this state or the United States.

Alco. Bev. Code § 5.48. This office has construed the term "privileged" in this statute to mean "confidential" for purposes of the Act. Attorney General Opinion JM-1235 at 2 (1990); Open Records Decision Nos. 186 (1978), 62 (1974). Thus, section 5.48 makes confidential any records required or obtained by the commission, with the exception of "the name, proposed location, and type of permit or license sought in an application for an original or renewal permit or license" and "a periodic report relating to the importation, distribution, or sale of alcoholic beverages required by the commission to be regularly filed by a permittee or licensee." Alco. Bev. Code § 5.48(a).

We understand you to claim the information subject to section 550.065(c-1) of the Transportation Code consists of private records that a permittee provided to the commission during the course of an investigation. However, we find you have not established any of this information consists of "private records" of a permittee, licensee, or other person required or obtained by the commission for purposes of section 5.48. Therefore, the information subject to section 550.065(c-1) of the Transportation Code is not confidential under section 5.48, and the commission may not withhold it under section 552.101 on that ground.

In summary, the commission must withhold the submitted CR-3 accident report under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code, but must release the redacted CR-3 accident report to the requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c-1) of the Transportation Code. With the exception of the basic information, which you state you will release, the commission may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.

³ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this 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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Ashley Crutchfield
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

AC/rm

Ref: ID# 795603.

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)