



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 25, 2022

Ms. Shawnta A. Adams
Assistant City Attorney
Arlington Police Department
Mail Stop 04-0200
P.O. Box 1065
Arlington, Texas 76004-1065

OR2022-21799

Dear Ms. Adams:

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# 962265 (Police Dept. Ref. No. R133946).

The Arlington Police Department (the "department") received a request for information related to a specified incident. You state you have released some information to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information, a portion of which consists of a representative sample.¹

Initially, we note the submitted information contains a court-filed document. Section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code provides for required public disclosure of "information that is also contained in a public court record[,]" unless the information is expressly made confidential under the Act or other law. Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17). You seek to withhold the court-filed documents, which we have marked, under section 552.108 of the Government Code. However, this section is a discretionary exception to disclosure that protect a governmental body's interests and do not make information confidential under the Act. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary

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.

exceptions generally), 664 at 5 (1999) (waiver of discretionary exceptions), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.108 subject to waiver). Therefore, you may not withhold the court-filed document, which we have marked, under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We also note common-law privacy is not applicable to information contained in public court records. *See Star-Telegram v. Walker*, 834 S.W.2d 54 (Tex. 1992). However, we will address your arguments for the information not subject to section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code.

Next, we note the remaining information includes a CR-3 accident report. Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.”² 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 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, the requestor is not a person listed under section 550.065(c). Thus, the submitted accident report is confidential under section 550.065(b), and the department must withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government Code. However, section 550.065(c-1) requires the department 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. Although you assert section 552.108 to withhold the information at issue, we note 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 department may not withhold the information under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Thus, the department 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)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or

² The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the remaining information pertains to a pending criminal investigation or prosecution. We note, however, the information at issue includes a DIC-24 Statutory Warning and a DIC-25 Notice of Suspension. The DIC-24 Statutory Warning and DIC-25 Notice of Suspension have previously been provided to the arrestee. Because this information has previously been released to the arrestee, we find you have not shown release of this information will interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). Nevertheless, upon review, we conclude the release of the remaining information at issue would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the remaining information.

However, we note 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*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Thus, with the exception of the DIC-24 Statutory Warning, the DIC-25 Notice of Suspension and basic information, the department may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). Under the doctrine of the common-law privacy, an individual has a right to be free from the publicizing of private affairs in which the public has no legitimate concern. *Id.* at 682. The Third Court of Appeals has concluded public citizens’ dates of birth are protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *See Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at *3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.). Thus, the department must withhold the public citizen’s date of birth in the DIC-24 Statutory Warning and the DIC-25 Notice of Suspension under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s license, driver’s license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.130. Accordingly, the department must withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department 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 pursuant to section

550.065(c-1) of the Transportation Code. With the exception of the DIC-24 Statutory Warning, the DIC-25 Notice of Suspension, and basic information, the department may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the public citizen's date of birth in the DIC-24 Statutory Warning and the DIC-25 Notice of Suspension under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 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 <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,

Tim Neal
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

TN/be

Ref: ID# 962265

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)