

Office of the Attorney General
State of Texas
Informal Letter Ruling No. OR2017-28130
December 12, 2017

Ms. Ana Vieira Ayala
Assistant General Counsel & Public Information Coordinator
Office of General Counsel
The University of Texas System
210 West 7th Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2901

Dear Ms. Ayala:

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# 687677 (OGC # 177326).

The University of Texas System (the "system") received a request for information pertaining to purchases made by the system for a named third party's products during a specified time period and any terms of a contract agreement between the system and the third party. Although the system takes no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, the system states release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Rapid7, LLC ("Rapid7"). Accordingly, the system states, and provides documentation showing, it notified Rapid7 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 received comments from Rapid7. We have reviewed the submitted information and the submitted arguments.

[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\(a\)](#). In considering whether a private third party may assert this exception, the supreme court reasoned because [section 552.305\(a\) of the Government Code](#) includes [section 552.104](#) as an example of an exception that involves a third party's property interest, a private third party may invoke this exception. *Boeing Co. v. Paxton*, 466 S.W.3d 831 (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.* at 841. Rapid7 states it has competitors. Further, Rapid7 states release of its information at issue would provide a competitive advantage to its competitors. For many years, this office concluded the terms of a contract and especially the pricing of a winning bidder are public and generally not excepted from disclosure. [Gov't Code § 552.022\(a\)\(3\)](#) (contract involving receipt or expenditure of public funds expressly made public); Open Records Decision Nos. 541 at 8 (1990) (public has interest in knowing terms of contract with state agency), 514 (1988) (public has interest in knowing prices charged by government contractors), 494 (1988) (requiring balancing of public interest in disclosure with competitive injury to company). See generally Freedom of Information Act Guide & Privacy Act Overview, 219 (2000) (federal cases applying analogous Freedom of Information Act reasoning that disclosure of prices charged government is a cost of doing business with government). However, now, pursuant to *Boeing*, [section 552.104](#) is not limited to only ongoing competitive situations, and a third party need only show release of its competitively sensitive information would give an advantage to a competitor even after a contract is executed. *Boeing*, 466 S.W.3d 831, 839. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Rapid7 has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we

conclude the system may withhold the information we have marked under [section 552.104\(a\) of the Government Code](#).

[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.”¹ [Gov’t Code § 552.136\(b\)](#); see *id.* [§ 552.136\(a\)](#) (defining “access device”). Upon review, the system must withhold the information we have marked under [section 552.136 of the Government Code](#).

In summary, the system may withhold the information we have marked under [section 552.104\(a\) of the Government Code](#). The system must withhold the information we have marked under [section 552.136 of the Government Code](#). The system 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,

Sidney M. Pounds
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

Footnotes

¹ The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).