

Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety

Between 1990 and June 2003, there were 1,183 crashes involving a railroad train and a motor vehicle in the eight-county region (Harris, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Montgomery, Waller), an average of about 95 a year. Relative to the State, the region has a relatively severe problem. According to the Federal Railroad Administration, from 2000 to 2002, there were 247 highway/rail crashes in the region.¹ These involved 13 fatalities and 74 injuries. The 247 crashes accounted for 23.2% of the State's total highway/rail crashes. However, between 1990-92, the region had 252 crashes but accounted for only 15.8% of the State's total highway/rail crashes.² Thus, over the decade, the number of railroad highway-grade crossing crashes essentially did not change, but did account for a higher share of the State total.

Part of this proportional increase can be explained by the region's increasing share of population. In 2000, for example, the region had 22.3% of the State's population. But, the fact that total highway/rail crashes in Texas decreased over the 10-year period from 1594 to 1073, whereas the region essentially showed no change in this types of crashes, suggests that safety measures have not been sufficiently taken to reduce the number of highway/rail crashes.

H-GAC has identified eight locations where there were eight or more highway/rail crashes between 1990 and June 2003:

1. Knapp Road and a BNSF (Burlington Northern Santa Fe) line in Brazoria County (13 crashes)
2. Almeda Genoa Road and a BNSF line in Harris County (13 crashes)
3. Market Street and a UP (Union Pacific) line in Harris County (12 crashes)
4. Antoine Drive and a BNSF line in Harris County (10 crashes)
5. FM 1960 and a BNSF line in Harris County (9 crashes)
6. Lawndale Road and a Union Pacific line in Harris County (9 crashes)
7. Hillcroft and a UP line in Harris County (8 crashes)
8. Park Terrace/Shady Park Drive and a UP line in Harris County (8 crashes)

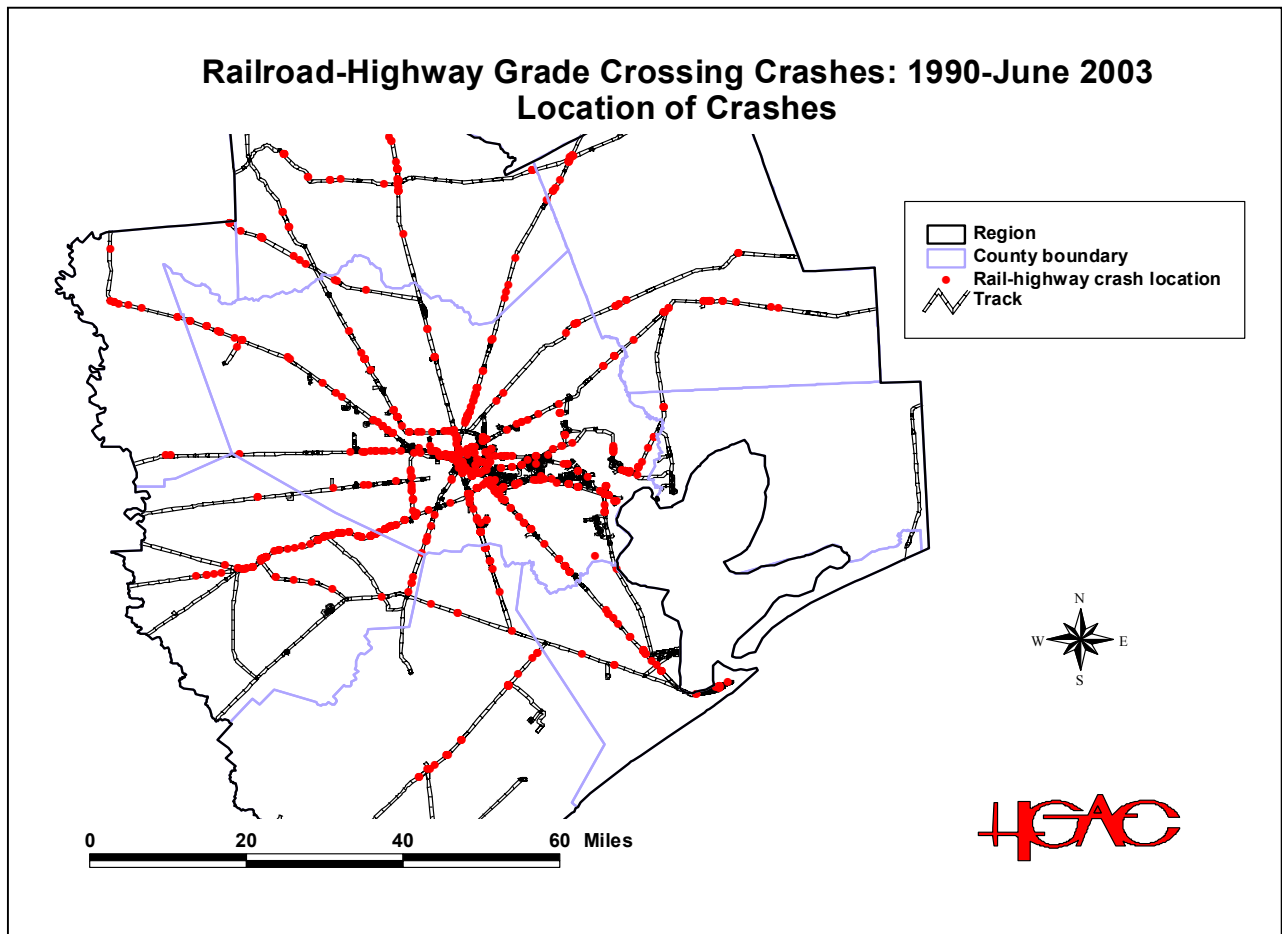
There are 22 more locations where there were 5-7 crashes between 1990 and June 2003. Since these data cover a 12 year period, we do not know whether improvements have been subsequently made at these locations. Any information on improvements about these locations will be appreciated.

¹ There was no information for Chambers County.

² Federal Railroad Administration database, 2003; <http://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/officeofsafety>

In addition, there are small areas (hot spots) where there are many crashes involving trains and motor vehicles, including the East End of Houston, the Pasadena-La Porte area, and the US 90A corridor.

In short, rail-highway grade crossing safety is an important problem. To channel resources efficiently, H-GAC has placed a priority on improving safety at these locations. Consequently, all eight locations are recommended for inclusion in the RTP as potential projects.



Railroad-Highway Grade Crossing Crashes: 1990-June 2003 Frequent Crash Locations

