10C. RAILROAD CROSSING GRADE SEPARATION INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND

The eight-county metropolitan planning area faces significant safety and efficiency challenges with approximately 1,200 at-grade public crossings clustered around key freight corridors, ports, and historic urban neighborhoods. These crossings not only pose safety risks but also cause frustrating delays for everyday travelers. Past initiatives, such as the Houston-Beaumont Freight Rail Study, have highlighted the urgent need for infrastructure improvements, specifically recommending grade separation solutions that can significantly enhance safety and streamline movement. Now, with the enactment of State Bill (SB) 1555 by the Texas Legislature, we have a groundbreaking opportunity to decisively resolve longstanding conflicts between rail infrastructure and the other modes within our transportation system. Many stakeholders are preparing to pursue funding through the statewide opportunity, but we recognize that not all crossing locations will secure such funding. Therefore, the Houston-Galveston Area Council's Transportation Department is launching a strategic program to aid in the development of solutions at crossings by conducting planning level feasibility studies. This initiative will pave the way for transformative improvements that ensure safer, faster, and more reliable transportation for our region.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Railroad Grade Crossing Separation Initiative will establish a structured approach for assessing necessary improvements at rail crossings throughout the metropolitan planning area. The pilot program will operate under H-GAC's freight program and will resemble the Subregional Studies program. The pilot will run for a two-year period, where 10 crossing locations will be selected from thirty-eight locations that were previously submitted to our Regional Crossing Catalog as priorities in 2023 for feasibility studies. Staff will provide a status update regarding the pilot portion of the program.

ACTION REQUESTED

Information only.