

9. RAILROAD CROSSING GRADE SEPARATION INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND

The HGAC region 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 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, H-GAC is launching a strategic pilot 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. This is not a prioritization of regional railroad crossings nor will this process select the project to be submitted for the forthcoming Statewide Grant Program.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Railroad Crossing Grade Separation Initiative will establish a structured approach ensuring that projects can continue through the development pipeline by conducting planning-level feasibility studies that will assess necessary improvements at rail crossings throughout the H-GAC region. 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 up to 10 crossing locations and/or a small corridor will be selected from thirty-eight locations that were previously submitted to our Regional Crossing Catalog as priorities in 2023.

ACTION REQUESTED

Information only.