



City of Houston-  
Joint TTI, QoL, RNA Council  
Committee Meeting

January 27<sup>th</sup>-10:00a

# Gulf Coast Rail District

A political subdivision of the State of Texas created under authority granted by the State of Texas Section 171 of the Transportation Code. The District held its first meeting in August of 2007.

## GCRD Mission

- Improve safety and security at roadway/railroad crossings to include grade separations and increase mobility, access and quality of life.
- Promote multimodal mobility leading to commuter rail, bus rapid transit and advanced technologies to improve regional passenger transport.

## GCRD Vision

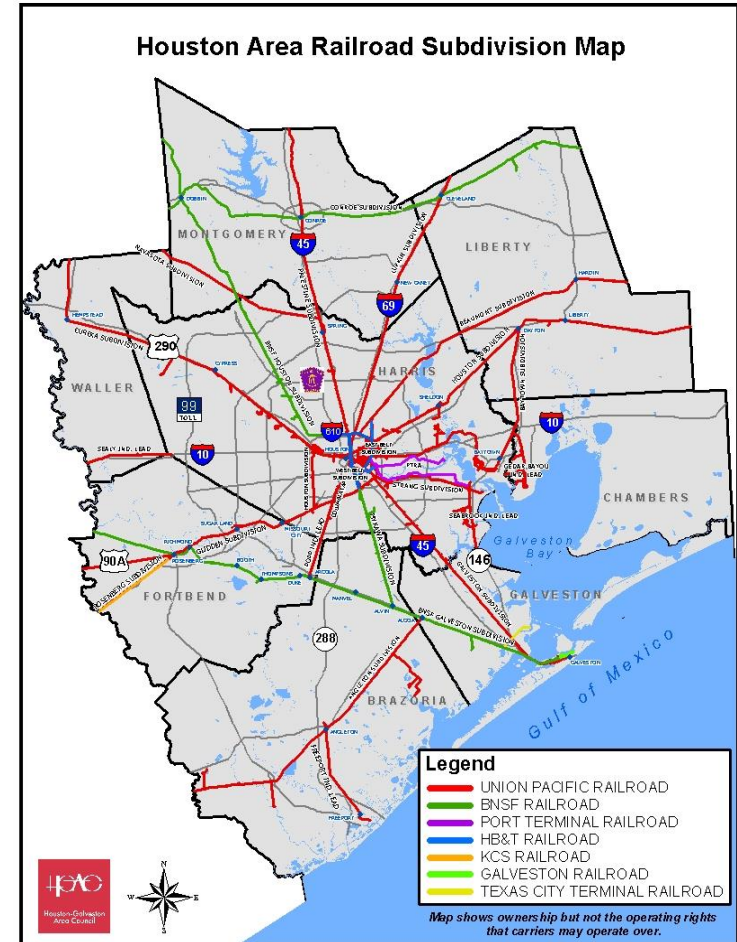
- Grade separations –promote safety and multimodal mobility.
- Initiate commuter passenger service in Harris, Fort Bend and Waller counties.
- Long term, enhance freight rail operations and capacity in a few of existing corridors.
- Expand commuter passenger service to other counties adjacent to Harris County.

## GCRD Initiatives

- S.B. 1990-87th Legislative Session
- West Belt Corridor-Commerce/Navigation underpass
- US 290 Corridor
- Westpark Corridor
- US 90A
- Fort Bend Bypass

# Houston Region Rail Network

- 2,200 trains per week
- Approx. 1,200 at-grade crossings
  - More than 700 crossings within the City of Houston (at-grade, private, and grade separated)
- Class I railroads own nearly 80 percent of the rail network in Texas, totaling over 8,300 miles of track
- Very limited right-of-way for roadway expansion.
- The average commuter rail car takes up to 125 vehicles off the road.



# GCRD Board Membership



- Board Composition
  - 14 Appointed Directors
  - 3 Ex Officio Directors-METRO, Galveston Transit District and Texas Transportation Commission
  
- Funding
  - No Taxing Authority
  - Federal Grants
  - State Rail Relocation & Improvement Fund
  - Fees
  - Other sources of funding



# RAILROAD OPERATIONS AND SAFETY

## PRESENTATION TO JOINT TTI, QOL, RNA COUNCIL COMMITTEES

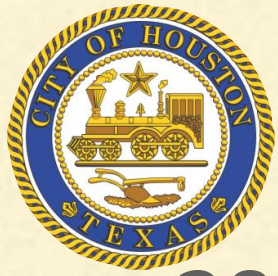
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Jack C. Hanagriff

City of Houston

Mayor's Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security

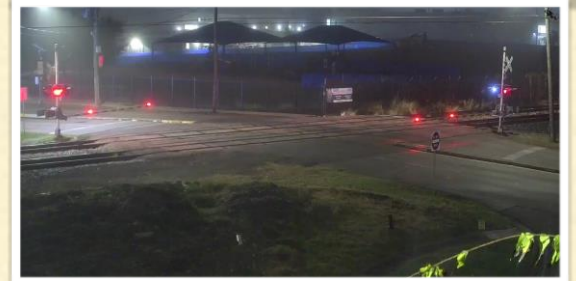
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2005



2022





# REGULATED INDUSTRY

- Federal Railroad Administration
- State Law
- Company Policy and Rules
- No regulation
- The Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act of 1995



**Conclusion: local government has limited oversight in railroad affairs**



# BLOCKED CROSSING

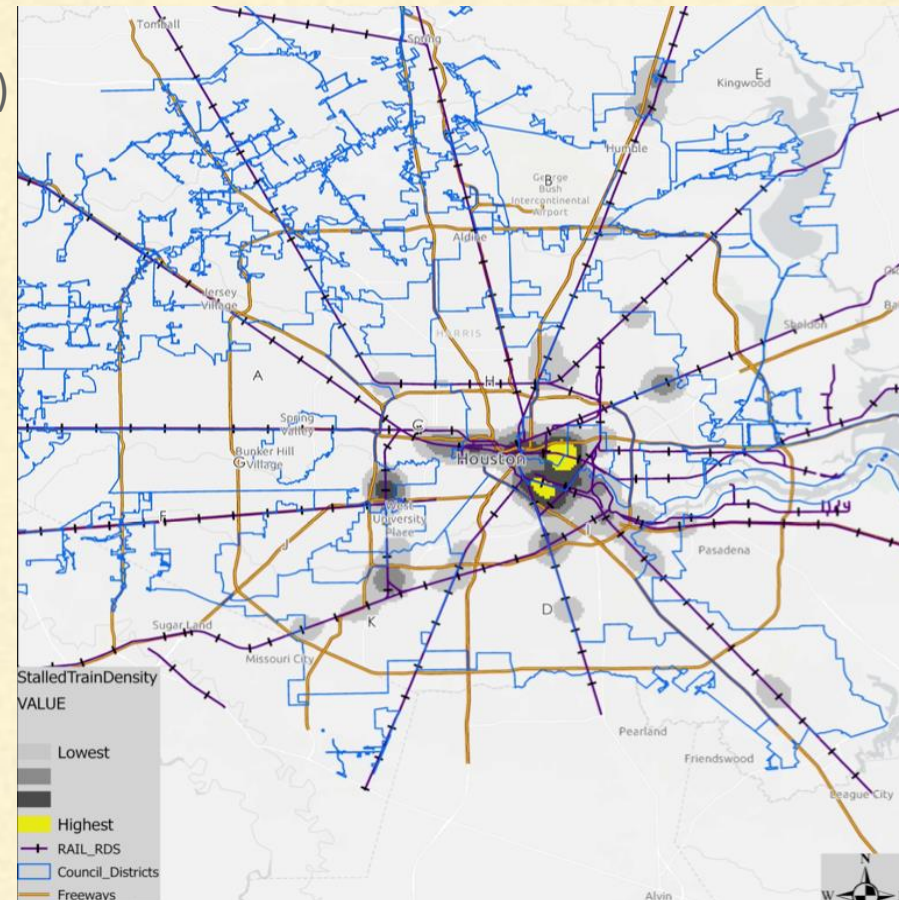
- By most definitions, a blocked crossing is an event in that a train is completely stopped without movement for a designated period of time.
- Federal Regulations- currently, under the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) there is no coverage or regulation regarding a blocked crossing.
- Texas Law -currently the State of Texas does not have a statute related to blocked crossing in that a train creates this event when stopped for more than 10 minutes.
- 2001: Pre-empted by 5th Circuit Court of Appeals - ruled that federal laws preempt state anti-blocking statutes; as of today, other states blocked crossing laws are being challenged.
- 2005: State Attorney General Opinion not to prosecute due to Federal Preemption.
- Law Removed from State Regulations.
- Houston City Ordinance is following State Attorney's Opinion that Federal Law preempts state and city ordinance.





# POLICE AND FIRE RESPONSE

- HPD Calls for Service (Stalled or Stopped Train)
  - 2021 - 243 calls for a stopped train
- HFD Experienced Delays - Emergency Reroute
  - 2019 - 905 incidents
  - 2020 - 974 incidents
  - 2021 - 1,396 incidents



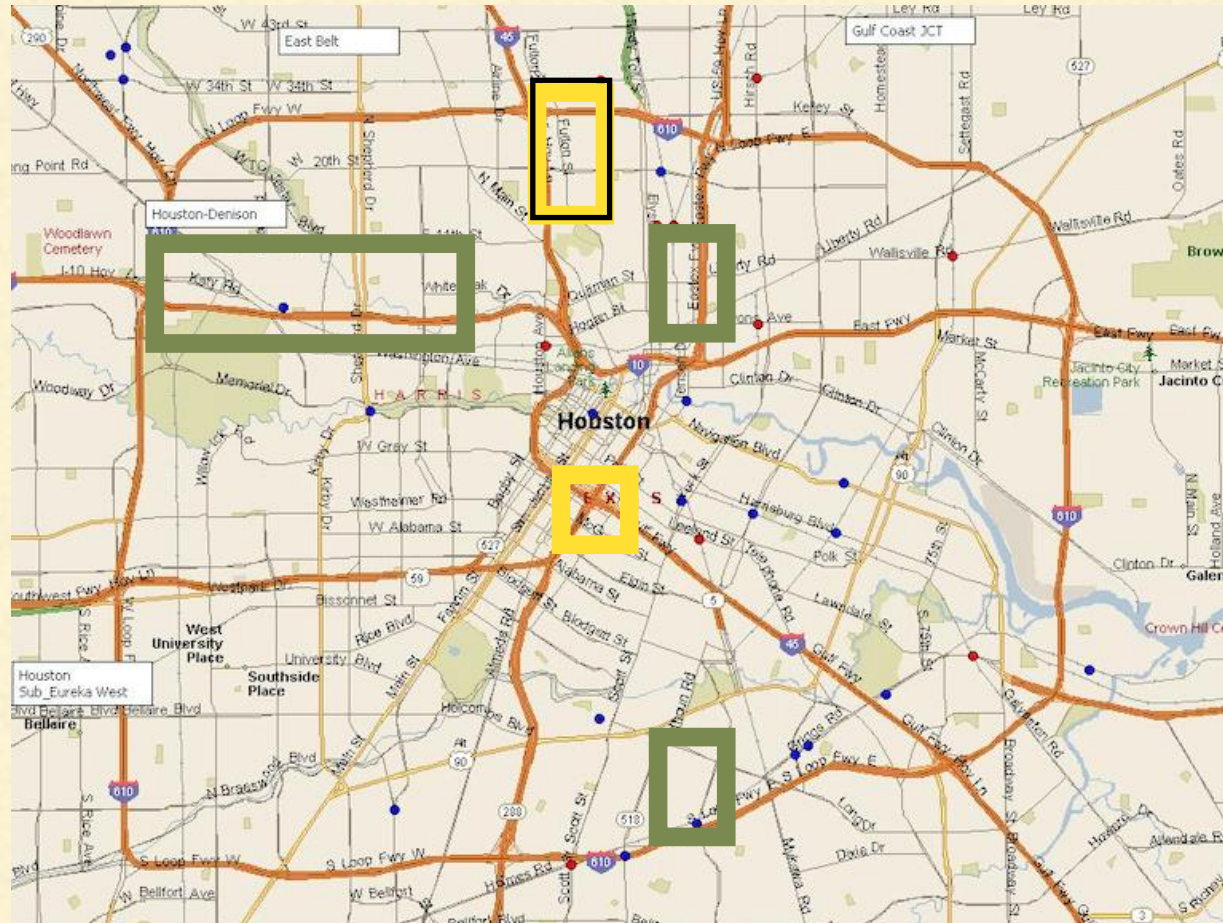


# COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

- Rail Taskforce - (Refine)
- School Proximity
- Essential City Services
- Emergency Routing
- Nuisance Abatement

2005 & 2010  
Positive Change

- Education
- Engineering
- Enforcement
- Operation Changes





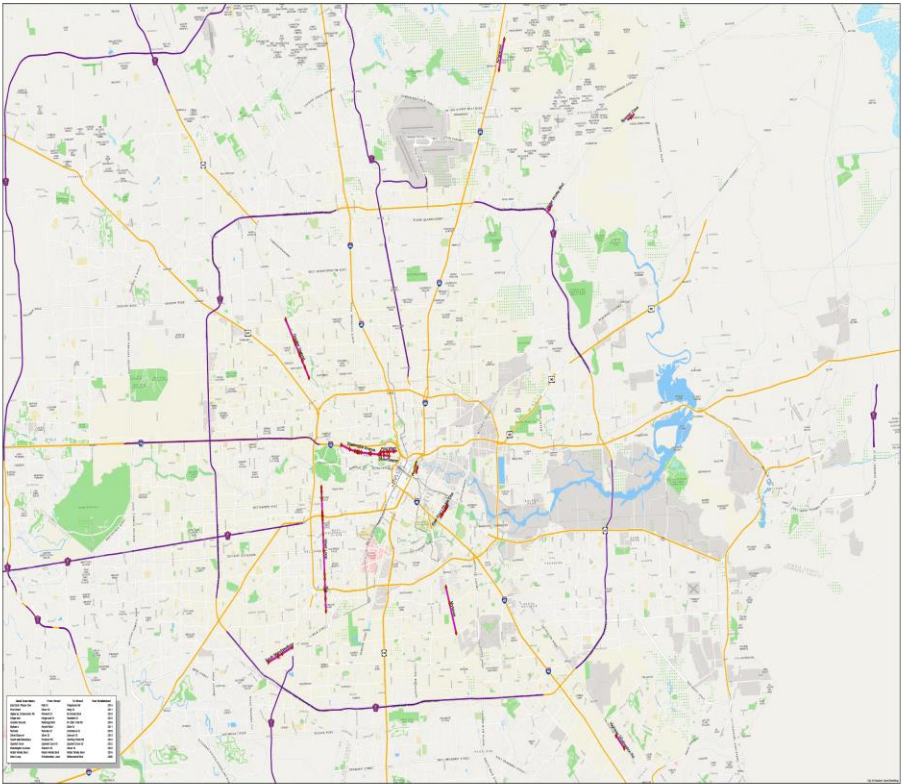
# QUIET ZONES



## DEFINITION:

*A quiet zone is a section of a rail line at least one-half mile in length that contains one or more consecutive public highway-rail grade crossings at which locomotive horns are not routinely sounded when trains are approaching the crossings.*

- The prohibited use of train horns at quiet zones only applies to trains when approaching and entering crossings and does not include train horn use within passenger stations or rail yards.
- Train horns may be sounded in emergency situations or to comply with other railroad or FRA rules even within a quiet zone. Quiet zone regulations also do not eliminate the use of locomotive bells at crossings.
- Realistically it's a “reduced train horn area.”
- There is no Federal funding for QZs. Municipalities work to fund and partner with others to establish QZs.



**Traffic Operations**  
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# DATA COLLECTION

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- Police calls for service
- HFD delay tracking
- Repository of all railroad impacts from all sources (city departments, management districts, railroad sources)
- Technology to monitor the area



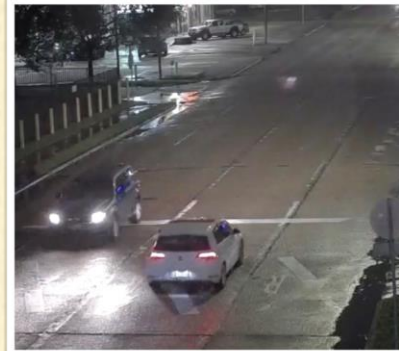
# RAILROAD CROSSING MONITOR PILOT

Public and private effort using in-kind resources to collect data on activity at a railroad crossings.

## Locations

- ❖ 5200 Lawndale
- ❖ 7200 Lawndale
- ❖ 700 S. Lockwood
- ❖ 1300 N. Durham
- ❖ 4230 N. Braeswood

Transportation related behavior (train, vehicle, pedestrian) at the crossing





THANKS FOR YOUR TIME