



To: Surface Transportation Board

From: Eastwood Civic Association

Date: October 21, 2025

Re: Finance Docket 36873, Proposed Procedural Schedule Public Comment

I write to you as President of the Eastwood Civic Association, which represents over 2900 homes in Greater Eastwood subdivisions in the East End of Houston, to express our community's strong opposition to the Union Pacific (UP) and Norfolk Southern (NS) merger that will bring significant additional freight traffic through the Houston complex. This proposed consolidation follows the recently completed Canadian Pacific-Kansas City Southern merger, which has already added pressure to our regional rail network. As you consider this \$85 billion merger proposal, we would like to highlight the current reality in our community, specific concerns we have regarding the anticipated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) findings, and critical mitigation considerations should this project be approved.

Our Community's Ongoing Reality

Our community is surrounded by multiple main lines and heavily trafficked lines, including the Houston East Belt Subdivision, the Houston West Belt Subdivision, and the Galveston Subdivision. We are effectively trapped in a "Rail Triangle" because these lines intersect to isolate our community, with only 1 grade-separated crossing on non-interstate roadways. This severely hampers our community's ability to navigate around blocked crossings, particularly affecting students trying to get to school, pedestrians, cyclists, and users of mobility devices.

While our community has coexisted with rail operations for decades, freight traffic has increased to unbearable levels since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. What was once manageable rail activity has become relentless mobility challenges and a degradation in quality of life as trains park on these lines daily for extended periods, blocking city streets as they idle. The frequency and duration of blockages have dramatically worsened, transforming from occasional inconvenience to daily crisis. To document the severity and frequency of these blockages, our community has systematically tracked train movements through key at-grade crossings.

Our data show that in 2024, Eastwood & Rusk at the Galveston Subdivision (crossing ID 859522Y) experienced an average of 148 trains per month, with an average of 41 trains



coming to a complete stop and blocking the crossing for more than 10 minutes (27% of all trains). Of those that stop, the average length of stoppage is 48 minutes.

Monthly Summary: Train Throughput & Blockages															
Crossing: Eastwood & Rusk (859522Y - GALVESTON SUB)															
Month	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024	Jun 2024	Jul 2024	Aug 2024	Sep 2024	Oct 2024	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Total 2024	Average	
2024	# of Trains	206	177	199	181	136	99	100	122	166	148	197	44	1775	148
	# of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	59	58	68	53	32	23	39	39	42	34	37	8	492	41
	% of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	29%	33%	34%	29%	24%	23%	39%	32%	25%	23%	19%	18%	28%	27%
	Total Duration of Blockages (hrs)	30.28	56.52	41.85	36.57	22.92	23.03	62.95	30.05	45.77	22.97	23.72	3.63	400.25	33.35
	% of month w/ a Blockage	4%	8%	6%	5%	4%	6%	15%	5%	6%	3%	3%	2%	6%	6%
	Longest Single Blockage (Hours)	2.43	8.75	4.03	3.07	3.00	3.58	16.47	3.05	24.30	5.68	6.03	1.55	24.30	6.83
	Avg. Length of Blockage (Minutes)	30.80	58.47	36.93	41.40	42.97	60.09	96.85	46.23	65.38	40.53	38.46	27.25	585.34	48.78
	# of days in month	31	29	31	30	25	16	17	25	30	31	30	8	303	25
						*6 days missing	*14 days missing	*14 days missing	*6 days missing				*23 days missing		

As of 2025, year-to-date, the data show staggering numbers: an average of 206 trains per month, with 25% of the trains stopping for 10 minutes or more. We are seeing a significant increase in the number of trains, with no corresponding decrease in the % of trains stopping for more than 10 minutes.

As a volunteer organization, we lack the capacity to monitor blockages at every intersection. However, we can definitively state that when a train blocks one intersection, it simultaneously blocks multiple crossings across approximately a mile of track in our neighborhood. According to previous studies, train lengths through the Houston complex range between 9,000 and 9,300 feet. This means that single trains can simultaneously block 14 of our 15 at-grade crossings.

The reality in our neighborhood is that our streets function as parking lots for rail operators. After years of unaddressed concerns, our community has lost faith that documenting chronic blockages will yield meaningful change. We are deeply troubled by the mobility impacts these blockages create, compounded by inadequate grade-separated infrastructure, as well as the degradation of our quality of life through increased noise and air pollution.

Concerns About the Environmental Impact Study Methodology

We share this information to highlight critical gaps in how environmental impacts are typically measured for rail mergers. Standard methodologies calculate blocked crossing time as a function of average train length and speed, but they fail to account for trains that stop completely for extended periods. Given that our data shows 27% of trains stop completely for an average of 48 minutes, this methodological gap results in significant undercounting of grade crossing delay impacts.

We strongly urge the Surface Transportation Board to require a methodology that adequately measures the impact of additional volumes, considering the current operational reality within the Houston Complex that produces substantial numbers of idling and stopped trains in residential neighborhoods. These methodological



improvements would likely increase environmental impacts in sections covering grade crossing delays, noise, air quality, environmental justice, and cumulative impacts.

Additionally, we note that when applicants describe their planned routing through Houston, they typically highlight primary pathways but fail to account for the complexity of the Houston rail network. Union Pacific, as the controlling entity for train movements through this complex, may utilize various alternative routes as needed for operational purposes. Evaluating only a single pathway is insufficient to capture the full scope of impacts within an already strained system. We urge a comprehensive review of all potential routes through the Houston Complex and their associated impacts.

We are concerned about the development of traffic volume projections and whether they accurately reflect the reality of increased freight movement, particularly given the dramatic surge in freight traffic since the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent impacts of the Canadian Pacific-Kansas City Southern merger. The proposed merger could lead to nearly 10% traffic growth by 2030, according to industry analysts (<https://www.trains.com/pro/freight/class-i/the-union-pacific-norfolk-southern-merger-could-boost-traffic-by-nearly-10/>). This represents yet another significant increase in rail traffic through communities like ours, which are already severely impacted by existing operations and recent traffic increases from other rail consolidations.

We strongly request that the STB complete a supplementary EIS specifically for the Houston Complex and update the methodology to properly account for the high rate of stopped trains and extended blockages that characterize current operations.

Required Mitigation Measures

Should this merger receive approval, Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern must be required to fund significant mitigation efforts in the Houston Complex. Regarding our neighborhood specifically, the following conditions are essential to mitigate impacts:

Infrastructure Improvements

1. **Quiet Zone Implementation:** Union Pacific must fund and construct long-awaited Quiet Zones in the east end, including East End 2 (Sampson to Cullen on West Belt), East End 3 (Sampson to Hughes on Galveston Sub), and East End 1- Part 2 (Hughes to Navigation on East Belt), including all necessary FRA and railroad approvals.
2. **Grade Separation Funding:** Union Pacific must provide letters of support, commit to, fund, or partially fund project costs to support the City of Houston's applications to the FRA's Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant for projects identified in the Harris County Precinct 2 East End RAILS Study and with community support.



Operational Restrictions

4. **Train Length Limitations:** As a condition of trackage use through the Houston Complex, no trains longer than the minimum length accommodated in Englewood Yard should be permitted to enter Houston, thereby eliminating the need to break trains within the complex and reducing blockage frequency and duration.

Planning and Studies

5. **East Belt Grade Crossing Study:** Union Pacific must fund a local entity, such as the Gulf Coast Rail District, to complete a comprehensive study of the East Belt with the goal of eliminating at-grade crossings and associated blockages along the East Belt between I-45 and Tower 87. This study must include a review of the area where the East Belt and Galveston Sub intersect to identify solutions for excessive blockages at these line intersections.
6. **Comprehensive Rail Safety Study:** Union Pacific must fund a local entity, such as the Gulf Coast Rail District, to conduct a comprehensive study of the railroad and road infrastructure in the East End, from East Downtown to Manchester, south of Interstate 10, and north of Interstate 45. This study must include a review of pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicular circulation to achieve Vision Zero, creating short-, medium-, and long-term solutions for optimal safety around trains.
7. **Accessible Reporting:** Union Pacific must provide quarterly reports on stopped trains and blocked crossings to the Federal Railroad Administration, which will be posted on its website and shared with shareholders. Documentation must be presented at each shareholder meeting. Other industries, such as airlines, are required to report their on-time performance data. We request similar transparency from Union Pacific, particularly regarding operations in the Houston Complex.

These seven projects represent the necessary mitigation efforts our volunteer organization has identified for our segment of the Houston Complex. We recognize that other affected communities, such as Fifth Ward and South Union, may have additional legitimate requests. We strongly urge regulators to convene all local stakeholders to develop a comprehensive mitigation plan for the entire Houston Complex. Our community is ready to collaborate on developing a comprehensive approach with any local or federal entity.

Conclusion and Recommendations



The Eastwood Civic Association implores the Surface Transportation Board to:

1. **Reject the current proposal** and require Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern to seek an alternative routing that avoids further burdening the already overwhelmed Houston Complex
2. **Mandate comprehensive stakeholder engagement** to develop adequate mitigation plans and binding agreements before any approval
3. **Require enhanced environmental analysis** specifically for the Houston Complex, using updated methodologies that account for stopped trains and extended blockages
4. **Condition any approval** on the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined above

Beyond this specific merger, we urgently request that federal regulators conduct a comprehensive investigation of rail operations throughout the Houston Complex. The current state of operations is unacceptable, severely impacting residential communities, and has worsened dramatically since COVID-19 began, followed by additional pressure from the recent Canadian Pacific-Kansas City Southern merger. The cumulative effect of increased freight volumes and sequential rail consolidations is creating an untenable situation for Houston-area communities, yet no entity is being held accountable for these compounding impacts.

The companies plan to file their application on or before January 29, 2026, which provides time for the STB to require the enhanced analysis and community engagement we are requesting. We respectfully submit that approval of this merger without addressing the fundamental operational problems in the Houston Complex would constitute a failure of the Board's responsibility to protect affected communities.

We look forward to participating in the formal comment process and urge the Board to prioritize community impacts in its review of this unprecedented rail consolidation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lindsay Williams".

Lindsay Williams

President

Eastwood Civic Association

EASTWOOD

CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Exhibits:

- Exhibit A: Map of community and rail crossings
- Exhibit B: Complete train blockage data documentation
- Exhibit C: East End RAILS study

Xing #s

Galveston Line

- Samson St, 859516 V
- York St, 859517 C
- Milby St, 859518 J
- St. Joseph St, 859519 R
- Oakhurst St, 859521 S
- Eastwood St, 859522 Y
- Lockwood St, 859523 F
- Dumble St, 859524 M
- Altic St, 859527 H
- Hughes St, 859529 W
- S 66th St, 859530 R
- S Cesar Chavez Blvd, 859533 L
- Forest Hill Blvd, 859538 V

East Belt

- Telephone Rd, 288051 H
- Lawndale Ave, 288050 B
- Jefferson St, 288048 A
- Leeland St, 288046 L
- Polk St, 288039 B
- Harrisburg Blvd, 288034 S & 440828 R
- Canal St, 288024 L
- Navigation Blvd, 288011 K & 920030 G
- Hughes St, 288035 Y (East Belt Sub)

West Belt

- Cullen Blvd, 288221 A
- Leeland St, 288224 V
- Milby St, 288226 J
- McKinney St, 288227 R
- York St, 288228 X
- Sampson St, 288229 E

Data from: <https://fragis.fra.dot.gov/GISFRASafety/>

Monthly Summary: Train Throughput & Blockages

Crossing: Eastwood & Rusk (859522Y - GALVESTON SUB)

2021	Month	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021	Jul 2021	Aug 2021	Sept 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Total 2021	Average
	# of Trains	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	148	152	300
# of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59	63	122	61
% of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40%	41%	41%	41%
Total Duration of Blockages (hrs)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	87.82	51.50	139.32	69.66
% of month w/ a Blockage	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12%	7%	10%	10%
Longest Single Blockage (Hours)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.63	3.80	8.63	6.22
Avg. Length of Blockage (Minutes)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	87.82	48.28	136.10	68.05
# of days in month												30	31	61	31

Monthly Summary: Train Throughput & Blockages

Crossing: Eastwood & Rusk (859522Y - GALVESTON SUB)

2022	Month	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Jul 2022	Aug 2022	Sept 2022	Oct 2022	Nov 2022	Dec 2022	Total 2022	Average
	# of Trains	160	166	188	161	168	157	141	166	165	135	101	114	114	1822
# of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	41	48	63	60	62	58	54	69	57	26	27	39	39	604	50
% of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	26%	29%	34%	37%	37%	37%	38%	42%	35%	19%	27%	34%	34%	33%	33%
Total Duration of Blockages (hrs)	35.23	45.23	72.85	45.32	48.83	87.43	75.97	73.95	62.25	18.03	28.57	29.10	29.10	622.77	51.90
% of month w/ a Blockage	5%	7%	10%	6%	7%	12%	10%	10%	9%	3%	5%	5%	5%	7%	7%
Longest Single Blockage (Hours)	2.63	4.38	4.70	5.70	3.68	6.50	6.02	6.80	4.10	2.25	5.50	3.28	3.28	6.80	4.63
Avg. Length of Blockage (Minutes)	49.16	71.54	68.30	45.32	58.45	90.45	84.41	74.42	65.53	33.81	63.48	44.77	44.77	749.64	62.47
# of days in month	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	29	22	24	24	348	29

*2 days missing *8 days missing *7 days missing

Monthly Summary: Train Throughput & Blockages

Crossing: Eastwood & Rusk (859522Y - GALVESTON SUB)

2023	Month	Jan 2023	Feb 2023	Mar 2023	Apr 2023	May 2023	Jun 2023	Jul 2023	Aug 2023	Sept 2023	Oct 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Total 2023	Average
	# of Trains	131	121	148	153	N/A	165	180	189	180	190	184	N/A	N/A	1641
# of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	39	51	55	59	N/A	67	69	55	39	61	58	N/A	N/A	553	55
% of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	30%	42%	37%	39%	N/A	41%	38%	29%	22%	32%	32%	N/A	N/A	34%	34%
Total Duration of Blockages (hrs)	29.45	40.97	39.22	34.50	N/A	39.43	44.97	33.68	28.02	53.97	37.92	N/A	N/A	382.12	38.21
% of month w/ a Blockage	4%	6%	5%	5%	N/A	5%	6%	5%	4%	7%	5%	N/A	N/A	5%	5%
Longest Single Blockage (Hours)	6.63	11.65	3.32	3.45	N/A	5.35	3.72	3.22	5.43	7.78	4.37	N/A	N/A	11.65	5.49
Avg. Length of Blockage (Minutes)	45.31	48.20	42.78	35.08	N/A	34.79	39.10	36.75	43.10	53.08	39.22	N/A	N/A	417.42	41.74
# of days in month	31	28	31	30		30	31	31	30	31	29			302	30

* no data this month

*no data this month

Monthly Summary: Train Throughput & Blockages

Crossing: Eastwood & Rusk (859522Y - GALVESTON SUB)

2024

Month	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024	Jun 2024	Jul 2024	Aug 2024	Sep 2024	Oct 2024	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Total 2024	Average
# of Trains	206	177	199	181	136	99	100	122	166	148	197	44	1775	148
# of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	59	58	68	53	32	23	39	39	42	34	37	8	492	41
% of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	29%	33%	34%	29%	24%	23%	39%	32%	25%	23%	19%	18%	28%	27%
Total Duration of Blockages (hrs)	30.28	56.52	41.85	36.57	22.92	23.03	62.95	30.05	45.77	22.97	23.72	3.63	400.25	33.35
% of month w/ a Blockage	4%	8%	6%	5%	4%	6%	15%	5%	6%	3%	3%	2%	6%	6%
Longest Single Blockage (Hours)	2.43	8.75	4.03	3.07	3.00	3.58	16.47	3.05	24.30	5.68	6.03	1.55	24.30	6.83
Avg. Length of Blockage (Minutes)	30.80	58.47	36.93	41.40	42.97	60.09	96.85	46.23	65.38	40.53	38.46	27.25	585.34	48.78
# of days in month	31	29	31	30	25 *6 days missing	16 *14 days missing	17 *14 days missing	25 *6 days missing	30	31	30	8 *23 days missing	303	25

Monthly Summary: Train Throughput & Blockages

Crossing: Eastwood & Rusk (859522Y - GALVESTON SUB)

2025

Month	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	May 2025	Jun 2025	Jul 2025	Aug 2025	Sep 2025	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Total 2025	Average
# of Trains	126	209	238	230	249	257	251	136	213	83			1992	199
# of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	19	55	82	59	59	88	55	34	49	22			522	52
% of Trains w/ Blockage >10 Minutes	15%	26%	34%	26%	24%	34%	22%	25%	23%	27%			26%	26%
Total Duration of Blockages (hrs)	10.80	17.10	44.55	30.78	30.40	36.77	28.73	16.15	24.47	7.80			247.55	24.75
% of month w/ a Blockage	2%	3%	6%	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%			4%	4%
Longest Single Blockage (Hours)	3.63	1.75	2.87	3.62	3.20	2.25	4.73	2.22	2.32	0.85			4.73	2.74
Avg. Length of Blockage (Minutes)	34.11	29.96	32.60	30.78	29.90	25.07	31.35	26.92	29.96	21.27			291.91	29.19
# of days in month	24 * 7 days missing	28	31	30	31	30	31	16 *15 days missing	30	12			263	26



FY 2023-2024 RAILROAD CROSSING ELIMINATION PROGRAM

PROJECT NARRATIVE

HOUSTON EAST END TRIANGLE R.A.I.L.S. STUDY: RESILIENT ACCESS AND IMPROVED LOGISTICS FOR SAFETY

September 23, 2024





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I. Cover Page

Project Title	Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: <i>Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety</i>	
Applicant Name	Harris County	
FUNDING		
Amount of RCE Program Funding Requested under this NOFO	\$2,000,000	
Amount of Proposed Non-Federal Match	\$500,000	
Does some or all of the proposed Non-Federal Match for the total project cost consist of Preliminary Engineering costs incurred before project selection (but after November 15, 2021)?	No	
Other Sources of Federal funding, if applicable	NA	
Source(s) of Proposed Non-Federal Match	Local Match provided by Local Governments	
If applicable, are set-aside funds requested? Is the project eligible for a funding set-aside in Section B.1?	Yes, set-aside funds are requested. The planning project is eligible for a funding set-aside in Section B.1.	
If "Yes," amount of set-aside funds requested:	\$2,000,000	
Total Project Cost	\$2,500,000	
PREVIOUS FEDERAL GRANTS		
Was a Federal Grant Application Previously Submitted for this Project?	No	
LOCATION		
City(ies), County(ies), State(s) Where the Project is Located	Houston, Harris County, Texas	
Is the Project Located in a Rural Area or on Tribal Lands?	No	
If the Project is located in a Rural Area or Tribal Land, is the Project Located in a county with 20 or fewer residents per square mile, according to the most recent decennial census?	No	
Congressional District(s) Where the Project is Located	29 th Congressional District (U.S. Representative Sylvia Garcia)	
APPLICATION TRACKS/PROJECT LIFECYCLE STAGES		
Application Track(s) proposed to be funded by this NOFO?	Track 1: Project Planning	
Lifecycle Stage(s) proposed to be funded by this NOFO?	Project Planning	
Current Lifecycle Stage and Anticipated completion of current Lifecycle Stage?	The project is currently not in any lifecycle stages. The anticipated completion	



HOUSTON EAST END
TRIANGLE R.A.I.L.S. PLAN

of Lifecycle Stage 1 is upon RCE project closeout if awarded.

RAIL LINE INFORMATION

Is the Project located on real property owned by someone other than the applicant?	Yes
Host Railroad/Infrastructure Owner(s) of Project Assets;	Union Pacific
Other impacted Railroad(s)	BNSF, KCS, and HB&T
Tenant Railroad(s), if applicable	NA
If applicable, is a 49 U.S.C. 22905-compliant Railroad Agreement executed or pending?	No

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Is the project currently programmed in ANY medium- or long-range planning document: <i>For example, State rail plan, or interregional intercity passenger rail systems planning study, State Freight Plan, TIP, STIP, MPO Long Range Transportation Plan, State Long Range Transportation Plan, etc.?</i>	This project will be in support of the following state and regional plans: <i>a. Texas Rail Plan Update (2019)</i> <i>b. Houston-Beaumont Region Freight Study: 2024 Update (April 2024 DRAFT)</i> If awarded, the project will be added to the STIP and TIP.
Is the project located on a potential corridor selected for the Corridor Identification and Development Program?	No



II. Project Summary

In Houston’s East End, a 1.3 square mile collection of primarily residential communities is constrained on three sides by active rail lines (and on a fourth side by the IH-45 freeway). Access into and out of the community is provided by eighteen railroad crossings, including an existing underpass on the west side and two underpasses as part of the IH-45 interchange. The remainder is at-grade, and the active rail lines frequently block all mobility for many minutes to several hours.

This planning project will define a long-term strategy for solving the numerous rail issues for the community in a comprehensive, holistic fashion that will combine an analysis of data, coordination with railroads, emergency services, and other critical stakeholders, and extensive community engagement to define short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations. The intention is that this planning effort will lead directly to future efforts for detailed project development and, ultimately, construction of railroad crossing improvements, including grade separation. Anticipated benefits include: improved safety at highway-rail grade crossings; proposed grade separation/s, eliminations, and highway-rail grade crossings; improved mobility of people and goods; reduced emissions and community benefits, such as noise reduction; improved access to emergency services; improved access to communities; and economic benefits.

III. Grant Funds, Sources, and Uses of Project Funds

Non-Federal Match	\$ 500,000	20%
Federal Funds Requested (RCEP)	\$ 2,000,000	80%
Other Federal Funds	\$ None	0%
Total Project Cost	\$ 2,500,000	100%

Harris County is seeking \$2,000,000 in RCEP grant funding for the Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S Study. Non-Federal funds totaling \$500,000 will be provided by Harris County and the City of Houston. Federal funds will be provided through RCEP only.

Table 1. Project Funding

Task No.	Task name project component	Cost	Percentage of total cost	Source of funds and citation, as applicable
1	Project Administration	\$250,000.00	10%	80% Fed./20% Local Match
2	Purpose and Need Development: Assessments and Community Engagement	\$500,000.00	20%	80% Fed./20% Local Match
3	Project Planning and Consideration of Alternatives	\$750,000.00	30%	80% Fed./20% Local Match
4	Recommendations and Conceptual Engineering	\$1,000,000.00	40%	80% Fed./20% Local Match
	Total Project Cost	\$2,500,000.00	100%	80% Fed./20% Local Match
Federal Funding Requested in this Application				\$2,000,000.00
Total Non-Federal Match				\$500,000.00
Non-Federal Funding (State)		Cash:		\$0.00
		In-Kind:		\$0.00



Non-Federal Funding (Private)	Cash:	\$0.00
	In-Kind:	\$0.00
Non-Federal Funding (Local)	Cash:	\$500,000.00
	In-Kind:	\$0.00
Other Committed Federal Funding		NA
Amount (if any) of funding request eligible for set-aside funds as described in section B(1)		\$2,000,000.00
Portion of Total Project Costs Spent in Rural Area, if applicable		NA
Does some or all the proposed Non-Federal Match for the total project cost consist of Preliminary Engineering costs incurred before project selection?		No

Funding Commitment Letter/s: See Appendix A

IV. Applicant Eligibility Criteria

Harris County was established as a county in 1836 through the Texas legislature. The Texas Constitution (Article. 11, Section. 1) states that the Counties of Texas are recognized as legal subdivisions of the State. Therefore, by the authority of Texas, Harris County is a legal and political division of a state and is eligible as a grant applicant.

According to the Texas Administrative Code, Rule §821.4: Political Subdivision, Harris County qualifies as "a political subdivision of a state" based on the following criteria: it is a governmental unit with the authority to tax real and personal property, operates within defined geographic and jurisdictional boundaries, has locally elected or appointed governing officials, and provides general services and benefits to the public (40 Tex. Admin. Code §821.4, 1998).

Additionally, the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) defines a "political subdivision" as an entity created by state statute with delegated governmental functions and exclusive control over allocated funds (Political Subdivision, 2024). Harris County is recognized as a "political subdivision" by the Texas Constitution and Texas Statutes (source: [Texas Statutes](#)). Under Article V, Section 18 of the Texas Constitution, Harris County, as a political subdivision, is authorized to manage county affairs as permitted by law. Therefore, Harris County is eligible to receive federal funding as approved by the Commissioners Court.

V. Project Eligibility Criteria

The proposed project will be strongly aligned with the eligibility requirements of the NOFO. It is a Track 1 Planning project, which, according to the NOFO, is strongly encouraged by FRA to be completed as the first Lifecycle Stage in project development and implementation. The proposed scope will lead directly to future Track 2 - Project Development and Track 3 - Final Design (FD)/Construction grant applications for one or multiple railroad grade crossings. This will be a significant planning project effort because it seeks to establish a long-term, cohesive strategy for dealing simultaneously with numerous rail crossings that impact a particular Houston community. This planning project will identify short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations that are described by paragraphs (i) through (v) of section C.3.A of the NOFO, including grade separations, street closures, technological solutions to assist in navigation, and other railroad-related improvements to improve safety and operations in a way that would benefit the mobility



of people and goods. The proposed project outlines a planning project for a series of interconnected projects to enhance the mobility of people and goods.

VI. Detailed Project Description

Project Overview

Houston, the fourth largest and one of the most diverse cities in the United States of America, disproportionately bears the burden of the nation's freight train traffic. Houston is the hub of one of the nation's busiest railroad complexes, with an extensive network of rail corridors and railroad tracks crisscrossing residential neighborhoods in all directions. Road crossings are frequently blocked by trains, leading to prolonged grade-crossing blockages impacting residents, businesses, emergency services, students, and more.

The City of Houston has grown up around and with these rail lines. There has always been friction, but in recent years, friction has grown due to significant increases in freight rail volumes and train lengths. Today, large swaths of Houston's neighborhoods, particularly those east of downtown, are impacted by trains that move across local streets and frequently stop for long periods of time.

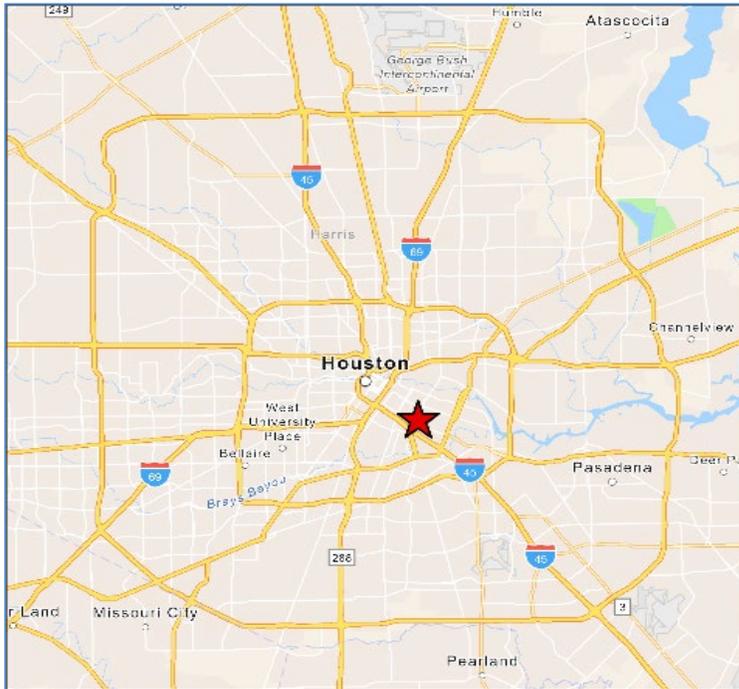


Figure 1. Location of project within Houston, TX

One of the residential areas most impacted (and the community proposed here for study) will be referred to in this application as the "East End Triangle." This area is directly southeast of downtown, as shown in the map at the left. It is approximately 880 acres in size and is surrounded on three sides by active rail lines and an interstate highway on a short fourth side. The rail lines are the Galveston Subdivision on the north, West Belt on the west, and East Belt on the east. The community has a single, aging grade separation that crosses the West Belt, which frequently floods during storms. There are no grade separations for the Galveston Subdivision or East Belt.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) reporting on blocked crossings reflects the impact of the trains on mobility in the area. The FRA identifies several railroad crossings on the East End Triangle as the nation's most heavily impacted by railroad stoppages. Stopped trains pose safety, mobility, and quality of life challenges that range from inconvenient to life-threatening. These challenges take the form of delayed emergency response times for fire, police, and emergency medical responders; an increase in risky and dangerous driving behavior; dangerous motivation for pedestrians, cyclists, and children and students to climb over or crawl under stalled trains; an incentive for drivers to speed through residential streets for unexpected detours; and a lack of mobility options for those left stranded who do not have the means to drive to an alternative route.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) reporting on blocked crossings



This project will comprehensively assess the train impacts on mobility and quality of life for the neighborhoods in the East End Triangle. It will, 1) Comprehensively study railroad impacts on access and quality of life, focusing on road and neighborhood interactions with train activities at 14 at-grade crossings, 2) Provide extensive community engagement to understand the needs, desires, and constraints of the community and make sure they support project concepts prior to implementation, and 3) Assess the quality of needs of existing Polk St. underpass. The table below summarizes the type of implementation projects that will be considered, how they are proposed to be prioritized, and additional factors for consideration.



Figure 2. The "East End Triangle" and surrounding rail crossing

Table 2. Alternative Improvements for future Implementation Project

Alternatives to Consider Include but not limited to:	Alternatives must be prioritized at minimum by these factors:	Factors to consider in alternatives:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road overpasses at rail crossings Road underpasses at rail crossings Railroad in trench under roads Railroad on viaduct over roads Train detection & data collection Wayfinding & detours, especially tied to train detection Street closures, especially if there is benefit to the community beyond safety at the crossing. Railroad improvements to reduce bottlenecks that impact the area if benefit to community can be quantified. 	<p>Benefit to East End Triangle community, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delays to drivers, walkers, and bicyclists (should be decreased) Noise from train (should not be increased) Flooding (should not be increased) Safety at rail crossings Acceptability to neighborhood stakeholders, including county commissioner, district councilmember, and civic associations. Benefit to regional travel and safety. Emergency evacuation Safety or regional travelers Benefit to emergency response (HPD/HFD) Storm resilience Impact on transit Acceptability to railroad Ability to address as many issues/crossing simultaneously as possible. Long-term ability of solution to accommodate future needs of roadway, including added capacity options. 	<p>Collectively, the solutions should ensure that the community has full access across all three rail lines in case of street flooding. This can be addressed in several ways, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overpasses Trains tracks over/under road. Underpasses + maintain at-grade crossing with no grade separation

The study aims to develop a strategic plan with short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations to improve public safety and multi-modal mobility. These solutions are expected to provide much-needed relief to the community and enhance the efficiency of railroad operations in the area.



HOUSTON EAST END TRIANGLE R.A.I.L.S. PLAN

The train congestion in the East End and related media coverage have garnered attention nationwide, spurring a visit from Federal Railroad Administrator Amit Bose, who toured the Houston complex multiple times and agreed that there is a need to prioritize solutions in neighborhoods like this one. The planning funds this grant would provide would be a critical first step to bringing much-needed relief to this historic, ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, and historically underinvested community burdened by negative impacts from train activities.

Understanding the Community

The East End Triangle is a collection of neighborhoods surrounded by three active railroad corridors in Houston, Texas. It is in an area east of downtown Houston known as the East End. East End's population includes many ethnic groups, including Hispanic, Asian, White, and African American. Hispanic residents make up more than half of the 100,512 residents of the East End, and the area includes several of Houston's oldest Hispanic neighborhoods, such as Greater Eastwood, Magnolia Park, and Second Ward. Train operations impact all neighborhoods in the East End, but the communities within the East End Triangle experience the greatest impacts.

The maps to the right show additional demographic information for the communities in and around the East End Triangle. Many households within and around the study area do not have access to a private automobile and are more likely to live under the poverty threshold. According to Houston-Galveston Area Council's Activity-Connectivity Explorer (Source <https://datalab.h-gac.com/ace/>), within the project area, 3,328 residents have limited English proficiency, there are 2,731 disabled residents, 1,017 elderly residents, and 786 single female households with children.

Understanding the Railroad Impact on the Community

The area within the East End Triangle is bounded by three rail lines: the Galveston Subdivision, the Houston East Belt, and the Houston West Belt. Union Pacific Railroad has indicated that Houston is the busiest major city rail complex in the nation, and many of those trains must move through the East End. Several major rail yards in and around the East End facilitate and serve rail service to the ports of Houston and Galveston. Many of these rail yards were constructed over 100 years ago when freight traffic was less frequent and utilized shorter trains. The rail network was more fluid then, and trains could pass relatively unimpeded through the Houston complex. Residents might periodically encounter a train, but a train was unlikely to slow or come to a stop.

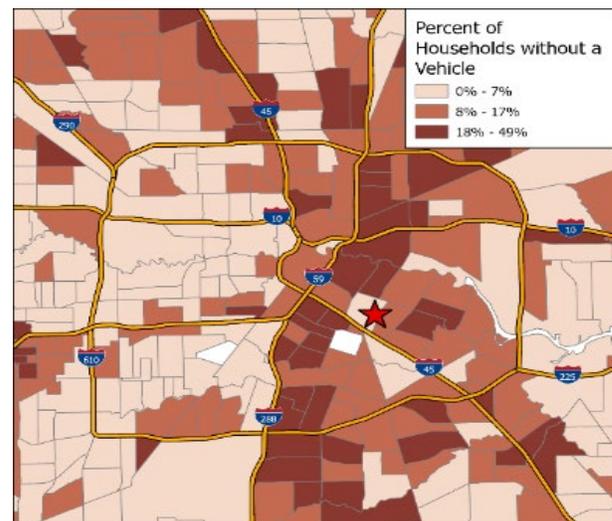
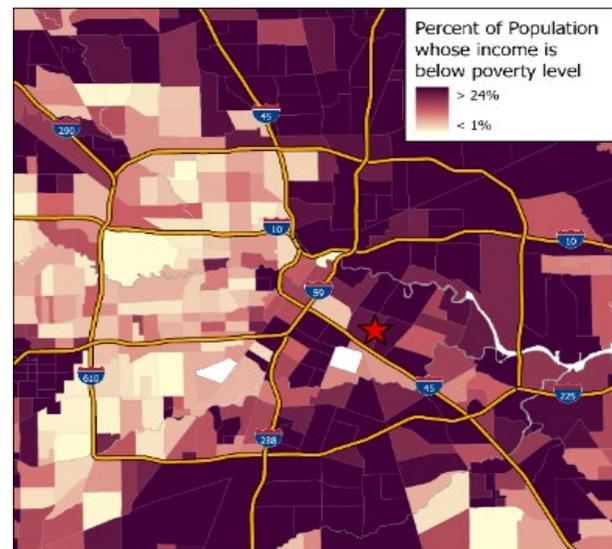


Figure 3. Demographics of East End Community. (a) Top: Poverty Level, (b) Bottom: Households without vehicles

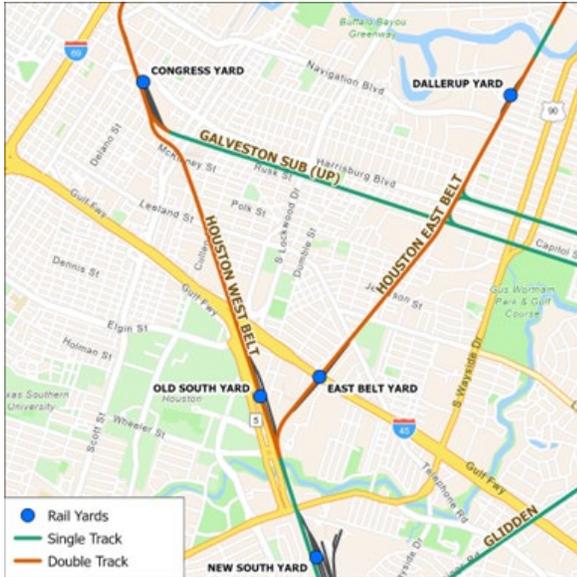


Figure 4. Three Rail Lines Surrounding East End Triangle and nearby Rail Yards

Growth in rail activity and the ports of Houston and Galveston over the decades has led to changes in rail business practices, resulting in significantly more trains per day and significantly longer trains. Rail yards frequently cannot process trains as fast as they arrive, and trains that cannot enter a rail yard must wait for their turn – sometimes for several hours. Because of the density of development and roads in the area, those trains also block streets – sometimes several simultaneously.

As mentioned previously, the Federal Railroad Administration is aware of the challenges in the East End Triangle. For the 12 months preceding September 16, 2024, **the top eight and nine of the top 10 railroad crossings in the United States, as ranked by FRA reports for blocked crossings, were all within the East End Triangle.**

The table below shows the top ten reports to FRA for those 12 months, and as shown, only one of the top ten locations was not within the Triangle. This project seeks to remove all East End Triangle crossings from this list permanently.

Table 3. FRA Top Ten Railroad Crossings with Blocked Crossings

East End Triangle?	Crossing ID	Street	City	# of FRA reports 9/16/23-9/16/24
Y	859522Y	Eastwood	Houston	842
Y	288224V	Leeland	Houston	382
Y	288221A	Cullen	Houston	373
Y	288226J	Milby	Houston	368
Y	859524M	Dumble	Houston	355
Y	859523F	Lockwood	Houston	332
Y	288227R	McKinney	Houston	257
Y	859521S	Oakhurst	Houston	235
N	467337V	Colonial	Norfolk	217
Y	859518J	Milby	Houston	197

Proposed Performance Measures

The NOFO requests performance measures, referring to the example found in section F(3); however, the required response is for performance measures for implementation rather than a planning project. Appendix X provides performance measures for the project implementation phase. Planning project-related performance measures can be found in **Appendix E**.



VII. Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Information and Education Programs

In the planning process, information and education programs available to the public will be researched to examine what programs are available to the community. Where gaps are present, steps can be taken to improve areas of need.

VIII. Project Location Geospatial Data

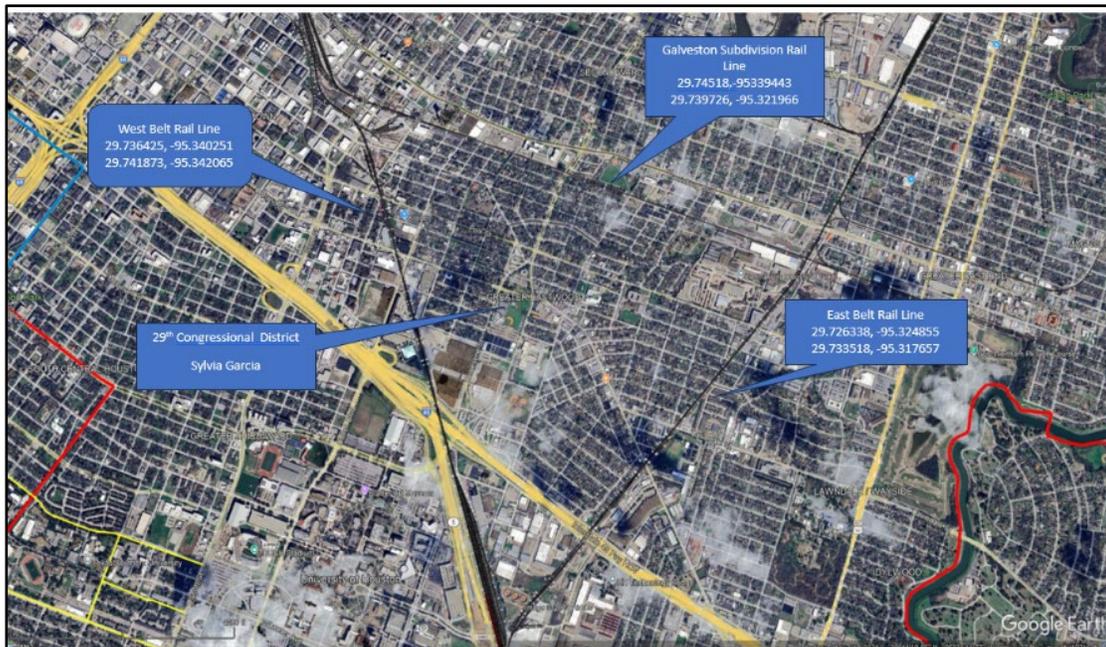


Figure 5. Location with Geospatial Data – Refer to Appendix B for larger scale.

Table 4. Geospatial Coordinates

Location	From	To
West Belt Rail Line	(including) crossing 288221A. (Cullen St. at-grade crossing) Lat: 29.736425, Long: -95.340251	(including) crossing 288226J. (Milby St. at-grade crossing) Lat: 29.741873, Long: -95.342065
Galveston Subdivision Rail Line	(including) crossing 859518J. (Milby St. at-grade crossing) Lat: 29.74518 Long: -95.339443	(including) crossing 859527H. (Altic St. at-grade crossing) Lat: 29.739726 Long: -95.321966
East Belt Rail Line	(including) crossing 288051H. (Telephone Rd. at-grade crossing) Lat: 29.726338 Long: -95.324855	(including) crossing 288039B. (Polk St. at-grade crossing) Lat: 29.733518 Long: -95.317657



The project plan locations recommended improvements are not limited to the Project Location, as enhancements outside these boundaries may also be necessary to benefit the crossings within the project area. All recommendations will be designed to demonstrate clear benefits to the crossings within the project boundaries.

A map of the project rail corridors (delineated by orange segment) and the Congressional District, Texas U.S. House District 29, below and in Appendix B:

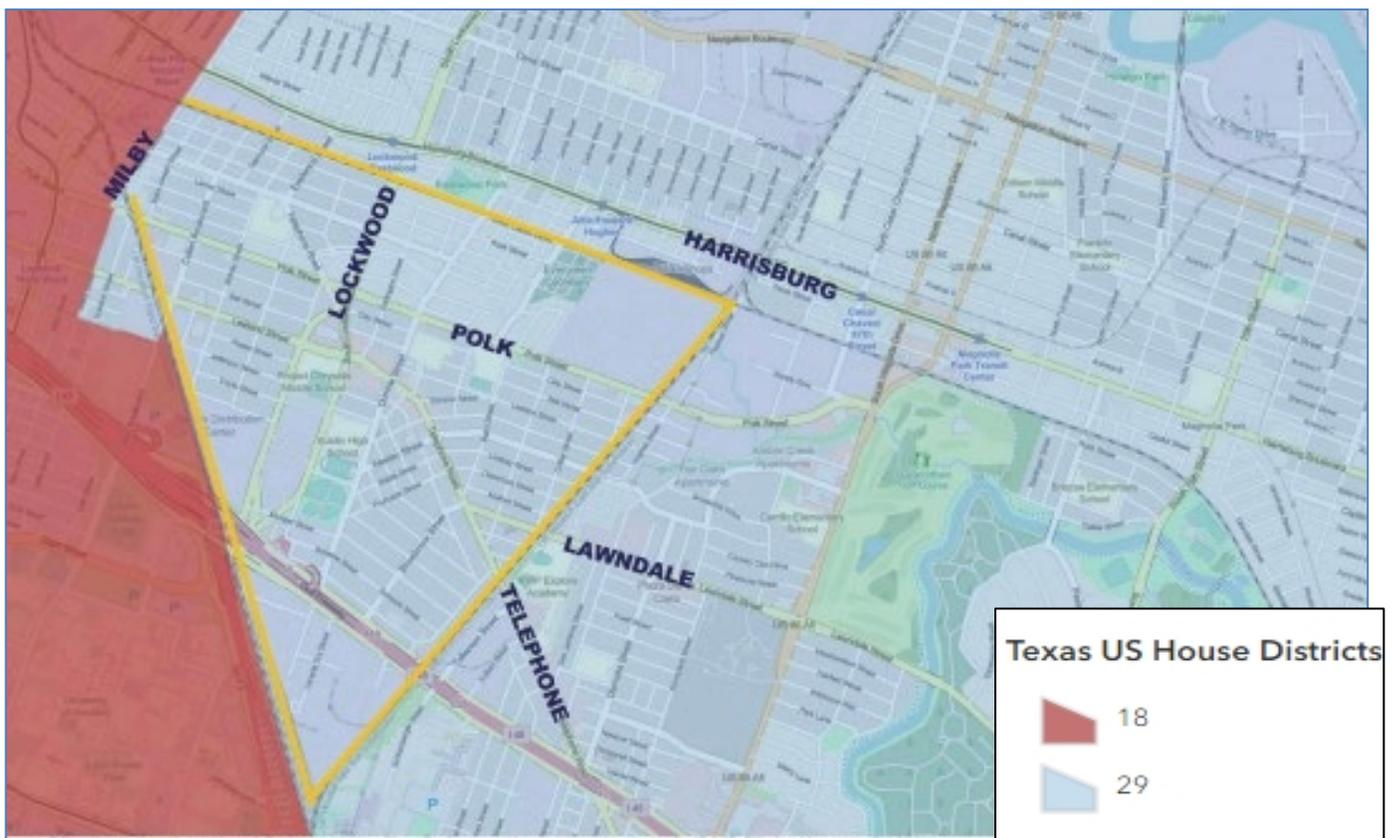


Figure 6. Location Map with Congressional District



IX. Grade Crossing Information

The grade crossings are detailed below. Daily Train Counts are included in **Table 6**.

Table 5. Grade Crossing Information

US DOT grade crossing inventory #	Roadway	Expected Project Outcomes	Railroad operator(s)	Railroad owner	Latitude coordinates	Longitude coordinates
288221A	Cullen Boulevard	Planning Study	UP, BNSF, KCS	UP	29.736425	-95.340251
288224V	Leeland Street	Planning Study	UP, BNSF, KCS	UP	29.737696	-95.340676
288038U	Polk Street Underpass	Planning Study	UP, BNSF, KCS	UP	29.74078	-95.341672
288226J	Milby Street	Planning Study	UP, BNSF, KCS	UP	29.741873	-95.342065
859518J	Milby Street	Planning Study	UP	UP	29.74518	-95.339443
859521S	Oakhurst Street	Planning Study	UP	UP	29.743905	-95.335247
859522Y	Eastwood Street	Planning Study	UP	UP	29.743227	-95.333096
859523F	Lockwood Drive	Planning Study	UP	UP	29.742139	-95.329635
859524M	Dumble Street	Planning Study	UP	UP	29.740845	-95.325525
859527H	Altic Street	Planning Study	UP	UP	29.739726	-95.321966
288039B	Polk Street	Planning Study	UP, BNSF, KCS	UP	29.733518	-95.317657
288046L	Leeland Street	Planning Study	UP, BNSF, KCS	UP	29.731778	-95.319384
288048A	Jefferson Street	Planning Study	UP, BNSF, KCS	UP	29.730622	-95.320561
288050B	Lawndale Street	Planning Study	UP, BNSF, KCS	UP	29.72823	-95.322956
288051H	Telephone Road	Planning Study	UP, BNSF, KCS	UP	29.726338	-95.324855

X. Safety Benefit Data

A primary goal of this planning study will be to increase multiple safety metrics related to rail operations in the study area. Safety is multi-faceted and may include: 1) Vehicle/train collisions, Pedestrian and cyclist collisions with trains, 2) Secondary impacts related to the inability of emergency services, including fire and police, to reach their destination in a timely fashion, 3) Pedestrians crossing



under/over stalled trains, resulting in a high risk of injury, and 4) Mental and emotional impacts of train noises on residential communities.

The table below shows the 5-year crash history for the at-grade crossings in the study area and each crossing's "accident prediction value," as provided by the FRA Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Accident Prediction System.

Table 6. 5-year Crash History for At-Grade Crossings

PRED ACC RANK	AVG PRED ACC	GX ID	RR	CITY, STATE (COUNTY)	STREET	Yearly Accident Count					DATE CHG	W D	TOT TRN	TOT TRK	TTBL SPD	HWY PVD	HWY LNS	AADT
						23	22	21	20	19								
1	0.419514	288050B	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	LAWNDALE STREET	1	0	0	1	2		GT	29	2	20	Yes	4	6231
2	0.110062	288051H	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	TELEPHONE ROAD	0	0	0	0	1		GT	29	2	20	Yes	4	11883
3	0.004998	288039B	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	POLK STREET	0	0	0	0	0		GT	29	2	20	Yes	2	7534
4	0.004764	859523F	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	LOCKWOOD STREET	0	0	0	0	0		GT	20	1	20	Yes	4	9362
5	0.004476	288221A	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	Cullen Boulevard	0	0	0	0	0		GT	20	4	20	Yes	4	7451
6	0.004055	288226J	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	Milby Street	0	0	0	0	0		GT	20	6	20	Yes	2	5197
7	0.003932	859518J	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	MILBY STREET	0	0	0	0	0		GT	10	3	35	Yes	2	3184
8	0.003701	859527H	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	ALTIC STREET	0	0	0	0	0		GT	20	1	35	Yes	2	1045
9	0.003609	288224V	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	Leeland Street	0	0	0	0	0		GT	20	2	20	Yes	4	3405
10	0.003538	859524M	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	DUMBLE STREET	0	0	0	0	0		GT	20	1	20	Yes	2	3166
11	0.00318	288048A	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	JEFFERSON STREET	0	0	0	0	0		GT	29	2	20	Yes	2	1459
12	0.003077	859522Y	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	EASTWOOD STREET	0	0	0	0	0		GT	8	1	35	Yes	2	1826
13	0.002079	859521S	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	OAKHURST STREET	0	0	0	0	0		GT	14	1	35	Yes	2	200
14	0.001537	288046L	UP	HOUSTON, TX (HARRIS)	LEELAND STREET	0	0	0	0	0		GT	9	2	20	Yes	2	445
TTL:	0.040894					1	0	0	1	3								

Source: <https://safetvdata.fra.dot.gov/axaps-app/#/>

Only two crossings reported crashes in the past five years: four at crossing 288050B (Lawndale Street) and one at crossing 288051H (Telephone Road). However, any crash involving a railroad can be catastrophic, and in addition to the documented crashes, there have likely been many more near-misses. The project team has witnessed and received many more reports from the community about pedestrians crossing stalled trains by climbing over the train or crawling underneath it.

XI. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

A. Evaluation Criteria

i. Project Readiness

Project Readiness is a key component of the project lifecycle process and ultimately will determine the project's overall success. The Metropolitan Planning Organization's HART committee and other agencies have identified the East End Triangle Railroads as the reason for rail bottlenecks and delays within the Houston complex, as needing grade separation improvements, safety improvements, and possible rail options to alleviate congestion. Though the proposed project area is not fully incorporated into



subsequent plans, many East End Community organizations have recognized a need for rail improvements at the proposed project locations.

- (A) *The application demonstrates strong project readiness, evidenced by the status of required NEPA actions and environmental permitting readiness (if applicable).*

The proposed project is in the Project Planning lifecycle Stage and a NEPA process is not underway. However, as part of the project planning process, an environmental resource inventory and the analysis of potential environmental concerns will be completed (as referenced in the FRA Guidance: FRA Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects (railroads.fra.dot.gov)). The proposed planning project will examine: (1) natural and built environmental conditions; (2) environmental resources and environmentally sensitive areas, including environmental justice communities; (3) potential environmental effects, including the identification of resources of concern on both the natural and human environment; and (4) potential minimization or avoidance measures.

- (B) *The status and timeline of agreements, such as an agreement required under 49 U.S.C. 22905(c)(1), necessary for the legal, financial, and technical capacity to complete the project, as proposed, are sufficiently developed.*

The Harris County Engineering Department and other Harris County Administrative Departments employ experts in grant agreements and grant management to handle all related needs. These staff members possess the necessary legal, financial, and technical expertise to support the successful completion of the proposed project.

Since this is a planning project, Buy America requirements are not applicable. However, the Harris County Engineering Department has a dedicated grant management team to address any Buy America documentation when needed. Harris County is also collaborating with the Railroad owner, Union Pacific Railroad, to secure a letter of support for the proposed planning project and would like to involve them in the planning process. This collaborative approach will facilitate a more effective and efficient completion of agreements should the project proceed to implementation.

- (C) *The application identifies the appropriate Lifecycle Stage(s) for the proposed project, demonstrates that the project has completed or will complete any preceding Lifecycle Stage(s), and the project is able to complete all requirements of the identified Lifecycle Stage(s).*

The Harris County Engineering Department, in collaboration with Precinct 2 and the City of Houston, is well-equipped to manage the project through all stages of its lifecycle. Currently, the project is in Lifecycle Stage 1: Project Planning. Once selected, it will fulfill all necessary deliverables to progress to Stage 2: Project Development.

The planning project will adhere to the FRA Guidance on the Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects (railroads.fra.dot.gov) for the steps and objectives of Stage 1: Project Planning. This phase will encompass 1) defining the purpose and need, 2) conducting planning activities, 3) performing conceptual engineering, 4) evaluating alternatives, and 5) engaging stakeholders.

- (D) *Project partner coordination and commitments, including letters of support, agreements,*



and funding, are secured or able to be secured without undue delay.

Coordination with the City of Houston and other community partners is already underway. The City of Houston is in partnership with Harris County and is supplying a portion of the local match for this proposed project. Letters of support and commitment are included in **Appendix A.**

ii. Technical Merit

The Harris County Engineering Department, with its extensive 30-year experience, has been a reliable provider of engineering, architecture, project management, real property acquisition/assessment, and construction management services to County residents. HCED has broad expertise and decades of experience in civil, electrical, environmental, hydrology, mechanical, structural, and traffic projects.

HCED oversees the study and design of 368 diverse capital infrastructure, community planning, and facility assessment projects with a cumulative budget of over \$2 billion. This includes a wide array of projects such as roads, bridges, drainage systems, traffic safety measures, and sidewalk and bicycle facilities. Over the past five years, HCED has successfully completed 133 study and design projects with a total budget of \$138.9 million. These projects encompassed the study and design of various capital infrastructure elements, traffic studies, structural assessment studies, and facility master plans. This impressive portfolio of \$2.21 billion worth of study and design projects in the past five years is a testament to HCED's versatility and expertise in developing and delivering planning projects.

Tasks and Subtasks outlined in SOW, project budget, and estimated project schedule are appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes of the proposed project.

As the number one outcome of this proposed planning project is to examine and identify a group of related rail projects that will collectively improve the mobility of people and goods, the tasks and subtasks are as follows:

Task 1- Purpose, Need, and Community Engagement: The proposed planning project will complete an analysis to determine the needs and opportunities of the project through a thorough needs assessment that produces a well-developed purpose and needs statement.

Subtask 1.0: Define the problem and the needs by working with the community, stakeholders, and other community agencies and organizations.

Subtask 1.1: Define processes for community engagement to develop innovative public engagement strategies and tools that will provide feedback for the proposed project.

Subtask 1.2: Examine and document the existing conditions in the proposed project area.

Task 2-Project Planning and Consideration of Alternatives: The proposed planning project will analyze case studies and collected data to make recommendations for conceptual designs and consider project alternatives.

Subtask 2.0: Examine and document previous plans to determine the impacts that other projects may have or have had on the project locations as they relate to the current issues.

Subtask 2.1: Engage community stakeholders to collect information and data to understand the issues created by railroad track traffic, explore funding support for future efforts, and understand the impacts on emergency operations and school daily activities in the proposed project area.



Subtask 2.2: Examine and access previous proposals and plans to understand current grade crossing efforts and strategies.

Subtask 2.3: Perform a case study of known best practices and successful projects of other similar communities.

Task 3- Recommendations and Conceptual Engineering: Provide recommendations that include quantitative benefits for the community and railroad that can be used for the next lifecycle stage of the proposed project.

Subtask 3.0: Develop a prioritization framework for recommendations.

Subtask 3.1: Identify and develop the short-, medium-, and long-term solutions for each project location.

Subtask 3.2: Completion of conceptual engineering and other designs that include preliminary engineering cost estimates.

Technical Qualifications of Key Personnel

HCED conducts planning, engineering design and construction, infrastructure planning, permitting, GIS, environmental review, traffic studies and operations, and multi-modal transportation-related projects throughout the county. Each service has a dedicated, corresponding division undertaking project planning and delivery. Together, these teams have hundreds of years of experience, allowing Harris County to undertake several capital improvement projects. HCED has over 700 staff members, and county staff will be vital in delivering this project for over 18 months. The County's Planning and Communication teams coordinate public outreach efforts for projects throughout the county. The HCED leadership team has the functional capacity to carry out the proposed project and is committed to overseeing its management, schedule, and budget. HCED has the existing relationships and capacity to collaborate with other entities such as TxDOT, Union Pacific Railroad, Houston-Galveston Area Council, Harris County Flood Control District, and the City of Houston to implement the project.

Dr. Milton Rahman, P.E., PMP, CFM, ENV SP, Executive Director, County Engineer Dr. Milton Rahman was appointed as executive director of Harris County Engineering Department by the Harris County Commissioners Court on January 25, 2022. Over his decades of public service, Dr. Rahman has served as director of public works at the City of Stafford and spent almost a decade serving in the City of San Antonio Public Works Department. Dr. Rahman Since 2019, Dr. Rahman has served Harris County in Precinct 2, most recently as Deputy Chief of Staff, where he led more than 350 staff members and oversaw the operations of several departments, including Engineering & Planning, Healthcare and Social Services, Support Services and Transportation, Capital Improvements and Parks and Recreation, to name a few.

Dr. Patrick Mandapaka, PhD, AICP, Director of Transportation & Planning

Patrick is the Director of Community Resilience and Transportation Planning at the Harris County Engineering Department. Patrick leads the Planning, Traffic Engineering, and Traffic Operations divisions at Harris County. Patrick has over 20 years of urban planning and policy experience. Prior to the current position, Patrick worked as the Assistant Director for the Transportation Department at Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Houston-Galveston area for six years, leading transportation plans, programs, and projects within the eight-county region.



State or Equivalent Plans Identifying Project

While the proposed document is not currently identified in a freight investment plan component of a state freight plan or a state freight plan, portions of the project are included in the following plans within the region: 1) Gulf Coast Rail District Freight Rail Improvement Plan and the 2) Houston-Beaumont Region Freight Study, 2012 and update 2024. However, once the proposed plan is completed, measures will be taken to amend the proposed project into a larger state plan.

Innovative Technologies

Several HCED engineers and project managers are credentialed by the Institute of Sustainable Infrastructure as Envision Sustainability Professionals. Envision is an innovative engineering approach to improve resilience and sustainability in infrastructure projects in the same way LEED guides the architectural design of buildings. HCED engineers and project managers will apply Envision principles within the proposed planning project. These principles may include strategies and recommendations to improve the quality of life for residents by addressing the historic lack of investment in the area, enhancing public health and safety, improving access and wayfinding, and enhancing equity and social justice. HCED recommendations will include these principles to the proposed project to advance improvements in the performance and resiliency of physical infrastructure “by helping owners, planners, engineers, communities, contractors, and other infrastructure stakeholders to implement more cost-effective, resource-efficient and adaptable long-term infrastructure investments,” as described in the [Envision Sustainable Infrastructure Framework](#).

The project will use financial support from impacted rail carriers.

Due to this project being a study, there is no financial support from the rail carriers yet. This project does have support from Union Pacific, and a support letter is in **Appendix A**. The hope is that after this study is completed (if funded), it can be used to get rail carriers to buy in to gain financial support for further stages of this project’s execution.

The project will improve the mobility of multiple modes of transportation, including ingress and egress from freight facilities or users of non-vehicular modes of transportation such as pedestrians, bicycles, and public transportation.

The planning project will examine the City of Houston Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Rail Safety project to identify what improvements will be made for multimodal transportation in the project area. These multimodal improvements include using non-vehicle modes of transportation such as pedestrian, cycling, and public transportation. The proposed planning project will consider pedestrian and bicyclist safety when crossing the project grade crossings and recommend strategies to improve safety for all modes of transportation users in the project area. Considerations such as dedicated pathways by constructing separate walkways and bike lanes to reduce conflicts with vehicles, using buffers to protect pedestrians and cyclists from vehicles, installation of clear signage to guide non-motorists, ensuring lighting along pathways during nighttime, making sure that all crossings have pedestrian signals and crosswalks, and the implementation of controlled access points for non-vehicle modes of transportation to manage entrance and exit efficiently,

This project will also look at several strategies for improving the ingress and egress from freight facilities, such as 1) routes and schedules by examining the most efficient paths for trucks and for scheduling deliveries during peak hours to avoid any congestion, 2) making infrastructure improvements to upgrade access roads and intersections and improve signage and markings to guide trucks and vehicles more efficiently, 3) adjust traffic signal timings to prioritize freight movement at peak hours and coordinate



signals across the East End Triangle to ensure the smooth flow of traffic, 4) work with the community to address concerns and with stakeholders to ensure that freight needs are balanced with community needs, 5) create policies that support infrastructure investments and efficient freight movement.

iii. Project Benefits

Improves Safety at Highway-Rail or Pathway-Rail Grade Crossings

This project will examine various data related to the following safety issues so that recommendations for improvement can be provided, 1) angle of the at-grade road crossings that may limit the visibility of trains to see oncoming vehicles, 2) data collected on the crash related issues: crossings without warnings, number of crashes, time of crashes, crash conditions, driver visibility and behavior, 3) data about roadway safety deficiencies, and pedestrian issues. With the collected data, recommendations to implement strategies to improve safety at Highway-Rail and Pathway Grade Crossings can be in the communities where safety is an issue for residents. The data will help customize each crossing to the needs that have been assessed with the data which will be very beneficial for the community.

Proposes to grade separate, eliminate, or close one or more Highway-Rail or Pathway-Rail Grade Crossings

The requested project planning funding will help address the safety challenges mentioned above by bringing the project closer to implementing railway measures. Building grade separations and closing streets will improve the safety of busy highway-rail crossings by eliminating conflicts between trains and vehicles that cross paths daily. The study will also recommend improvements to enhance the safety of active transportation. As part of this study, Harris County will evaluate alternatives based on the volume of trains and vehicles per day as shown through the collection of data.

Improves mobility of both people and goods

The current at-grade crossings identified in the proposed project collectively cause daily traffic interruptions. The project crossings are frequently blocked, resulting in long delays and the need for detours. The delays significantly impact access to and reliability of public transportation services. The 80-MLK/Lockwood local bus runs north/south along Lockwood, and the bus suffers frequent, significant delays at the Galveston Subdivision crossing. When the bus is directed to detour around a stopped train, the detour is long, and many bus stops are missed entirely.

The Metro Green Light Rail also runs parallel to the Galveston Subdivision one block north, with a station at the intersection of Lockwood at Harrisburg. Eastwood residents who use the light rail for transportation must cross the track on foot. The fact that a train can entirely block access to and from the station significantly reduces the attractiveness of the light rail line, which otherwise provides fast service in a dedicated lane free of traffic congestion.

Reduces emissions, protects the environment, and provides community benefit (including noise reduction)

Grade separations and closures will benefit emissions by reducing congestion, delays at crossings, and detours around blocked crossings. Along with the environmental advantages, the new configuration will also enhance community benefits by reducing noise (such as removing crossing bells) and improving emergency response times, as discussed in the following section.



Improves access to emergency services

Stopped trains can create serious challenges for emergency response when Fire, EMS, and Police responders cannot reach residents in the event of an emergency. Houston’s former Fire Chief Sam Pena told the Houston Landing in 2023,

“Operationally, it’s a big concern for us... it can cost lives, you know. And we know it extends our response times when we have to find an alternate route... when they’re stopped for an indefinite amount of time, that is a concern for us because it essentially isolates certain areas of our city and prevents us from being able to service those communities.” His department cited, on average, 96 instances per month where crews were either delayed or had to reroute because of blocked crossings, adding up to 10 minutes to emergency response times. At least three streets leading through the East End Triangle are designated as critical crossings used for mutual aid by adjacent fire districts, all of which may be impeded by a blocked train.

<https://houstonlanding.org/stopped-trains-block-houston-traffic-union-pacific/>

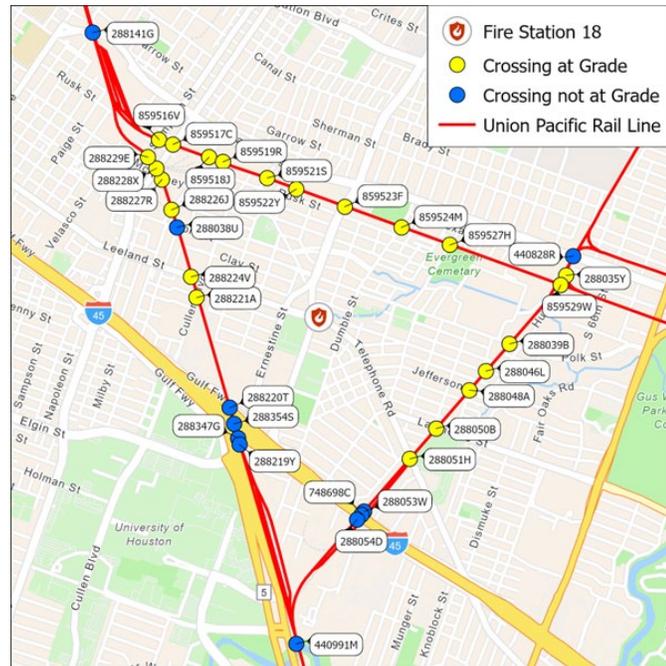


Figure 7. Fire Station 18 – located in the heart of the East End Triangle. See Appendix B.

Improves access to communities

Grade separation of recommended at-grade crossings will improve community access for residents and employees in East End Houston by helping remove a functional barrier to opportunity, which economically disadvantaged community members disproportionately bear.

The East End Triangle is an area that surrounds a highly residential zone, with all three sides of the triangle backing up to homes. The triangle forms a boundary surrounding approximately 12,000 residents, ten schools, one fire station, four health clinics, two community centers, a public transit center station, and five community parks. Trains frequently park on portions of two or more sides of this triangle simultaneously, sometimes several times a day, creating a physical barrier of unpredictable duration that blocks entry and exit to more than a dozen cross streets and major roadways. According to the City of Houston Smart Crossing Projects, there are an average of 88.5 first responder interactions with the at-grade crossings in the East End Triangle. Of those, 6.4 responders are delayed by train activities at those crossings.



For the past three years, the Eastwood Civic Association has logged train activity on the Galveston Subdivision rail line, which can block all north-south vehicle traffic along a critical safety corridor. It is not uncommon for trains on this line to stay parked for an average of 45 minutes or more, forcing drivers, first responders, cyclists, and pedestrians to deal with a barrier approximately two miles wide. In several instances, trains were parked for 8 hours or longer. The practical impact of these train barriers results in a compounding list of dangerous safety, mobility, and environmental conditions that encourage risky behavior by drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.

School Access and Education Disrupted

Several schools are within the East End Triangle: Lantrip Elementary, Eastwood High School, Stephen F. Austin High School, Yolanda Black Navarro Middle School, Chrysalis Academy, and several KIPP Academy schools. The schools draw students from outside the Triangle, and these students must cross railroad tracks and contend with the frequent multi-hour train stops.

To the right is Lantrip Elementary's boundaries in map form. As indicated, the school boundaries extend beyond the Galveston Subdivision and the West Belt. Most, if not all, of those students are ineligible for bus service because they are within

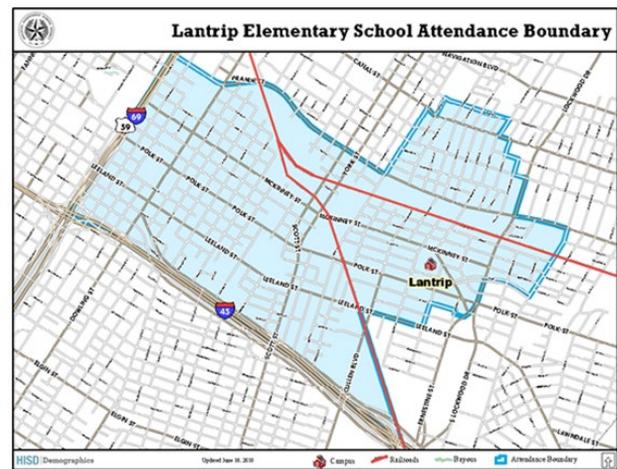


Figure 8. Lantrip Elementary School Boundary - See Appendix B



Figure 9. School bus waiting on Stopped Train. East End, Houston

the two-mile limit set by the school district. Therefore, many students walk and bike to school. More generally, this neighborhood is excellent for walking and biking. The historic grid roadways result in many quiet streets, many of which also have sidewalks. There are also high-comfort bike lanes throughout the area, such as those on Leeland, Cullen, Polk, and Lawndale.

Students can be trapped on the other side from school when there is a stopped train. Many choose to crawl under or over stopped trains. Teachers often report how students are late for class, miss

critical statewide testing, and may arrive at school harried and upset. Some schools apply disciplinary actions for students who are late because of the stopped trains.

Community Resources Impacted

Clinics: El Centro de Corazon, located at Polk and Telephone Road, is a clinic accessible to those living in poverty or otherwise unable to afford healthcare. Residents often do not have access to personal cars and get blocked by the trains going to and from the clinic.

Grocery stores: The East End Triangle area only has **two** grocery stores serving over 10,000 residents. These grocery stores also serve neighborhoods outside the Triangle.

Center for Pursuit: The Center for Pursuit, an organization that assists adult special residents with life skills, is located on Harrisburg Boulevard on the north side of the Galveston Subdivision. Residents and



patients frequently arrive via ambulance and dedicated transit services, which can get stopped by trains on the Galveston Sub. Many of these residents require oxygen, so a delay can be a risk to their lives.

Access to Parks

The Houston Parks Department indicates five parks within the East End Triangle. A sixth, Eastwood Park, is located just outside the Triangle, north of the Galveston Sub on Dumble Street. This park was named after the Eastwood neighborhood located within the Triangle; however, train delays on the Galveston Sub essentially sever access to the park. Would-be visitors to the park must contend both with the challenges of crossing the track as well as the anxiety of the possibility of being stranded on the opposite side of the track from home.

A major park renovation, budgeted at approximately \$20 million, is planned for Eastwood Park in the coming years, increasing the desirability for safely accessing the park even more.

Provides economic benefit

TxDOT recently completed a study that estimates the financial impact on the City of Houston because of the stopped trains. In addition, the volume of freight trains is expected to increase substantially in the next twenty years.

“The Houston region freight study identifies existing and projected truck and freight rail transportation operations, bottlenecks, and constraints with the goal of establishing a slate of potential infrastructure improvements geared toward providing solutions that may resolve the problems associated with rising congestion levels and the expected growth of commodity movements in Houston.

Over the next twenty years, given growth rates for both vehicle and train traffic, the total public cost of delay at the roadway-rail crossings in the eight-county Houston region is estimated to be more than \$2.6 billion. The cost of lost time is estimated at \$2.3 billion; the cost of collisions is estimated at \$146 million; and the combined cost of emissions and wasted fuel is \$191 million. The estimated public benefit of the grade separations and crossing closures identified in this report is more than \$828 million.

Houston’s freight movement is forecasted to nearly double in volume by 2025, causing concerns of how this will impact regional mobility, and where future infrastructure investments should be made.”

-TxDOT; Houston region freight rail study; Executive summary, page 2
(https://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/rail/freight/houston_study.pdf)

Contracting incentives are used to employ local labor to the extent permissible under federal law.

Harris County is committed to utilizing local labor to the greatest extent possible. They will consider how specific incentives may encourage local contractors to bid on future procurements.

B. Selection Criteria

Administrative Priorities

The safety improvement planning project is expected to meet the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) strategic goals of Safety, Climate Change and Sustainability, Equity and Justice⁴⁰, Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation, as detailed below. These project goals also address the Administration Priorities described by the Federal Railroad Administration in Section E of the NOFO for the RCE Program.



Safety

Proven grade-safety countermeasures can help increase traffic safety and roadway level of service while minimizing vehicular-train incident risk. Safety strategies implemented at feasible grade crossing sites within the project area will improve roadway safety by reducing vehicle freight and vehicle-vehicle conflicts. According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *Highway Safety Manual*, converting an at-grade to a grade-separated interchange reduces injury crashes by 57 percent. The RCE program funding and matching local dollars will help advance road safety (in line with Harris County's Vision Zero goal of eliminating death and serious injury crashes by 2030) and eliminate potential future loss of life and property.

Climate Change and Sustainability

At grade level crossings have the potential to lead to cascading system-wide traffic congestion, which in turn has a community-level impact in terms of congestion, enhanced traffic noise, increased vehicle fuel consumption, vehicular emissions from idling engines (Particulate Matter, Nitrogen Dioxide, etc.), and the potential creation of non-attainment zones, as described under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

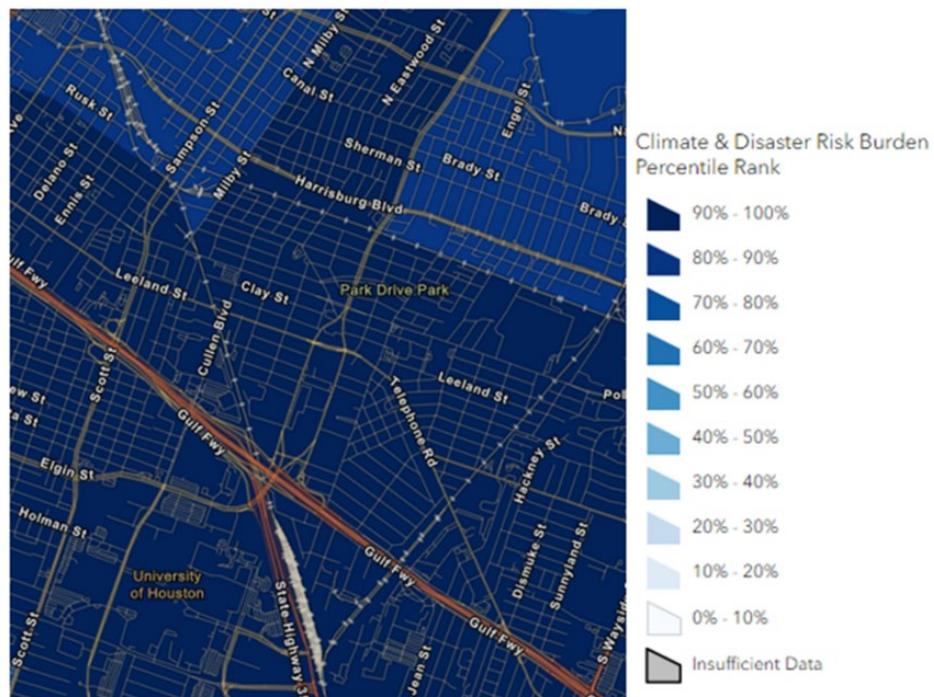


Figure 10. Climate & Disaster Risk Burden to East End. See Appendix B.

Operation and transportation of people and goods leads to the emission of well-mixed Carbon Dioxide, hydrofluorocarbons, and Nitrous Oxide, all threatening public health for current and future generations. These emissions are well-known greenhouse gases and have climate warming potential. Grade improvements will allow vehicles to move freely and reduce fuel consumption and subsequent release of greenhouse gases. Air quality studies conducted nationally estimate that the idling of personal vehicles wastes 3 billion gallons of fuel and releases 30 million tons of Carbon Dioxide annually in the United States. For this project, the existing land use of the adjacent area is residential with schools and businesses, which will benefit from reduced traffic congestion, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improved air quality, low fugitive dust, and ambient noise levels.



Equity and Justice40

In the planning process of a rail and roadway project, there is a substantial opportunity to integrate disadvantaged communities, especially those that may have been disconnected due to the railroad infrastructure. Engaging affected citizens in the process will help identify the community needs and offer solutions such as enhanced safety or access requirements, meaningfully benefiting communities. This project is committed to a project-specific outreach process that will explicitly engage the public in concert with the potential rail users or beneficiaries. This approach will be more collaborative and seek to share the benefits, ensuring that the community's needs are at the forefront of the project's planning.

As per a report by the United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, at-grade railroad crossings create far-reaching economic effects such as increased medical costs, property damage, congestion, reduced connectivity, and lack of productivity. Trains often delay and obstruct key intersections, leading to potential delays in response time for EMS, fire, and police vehicles. The above issues with connectivity and delay will be addressed through this project, and additional access routes to adjacent properties and streets will be provided.

Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation

Harris County aims to establish a framework for generating sustainable economic benefits within the community. This will be achieved by implementing targeted employment and training initiatives to support individuals affected by systemic marginalization. Harris County seeks to adopt a comprehensive approach to equity and inclusion by fostering economic opportunities. This approach includes the development of strategic pathways for employment and growth for disadvantaged and targeted workers, veterans, individuals from under-represented groups, and disadvantaged businesses within the jurisdiction of Harris County, including apprenticeship programs with community partners.

Project Location: Environmental Burden Percentile Ranked, National Results



Project Location: Health Vulnerability Percentile Ranked, National Results

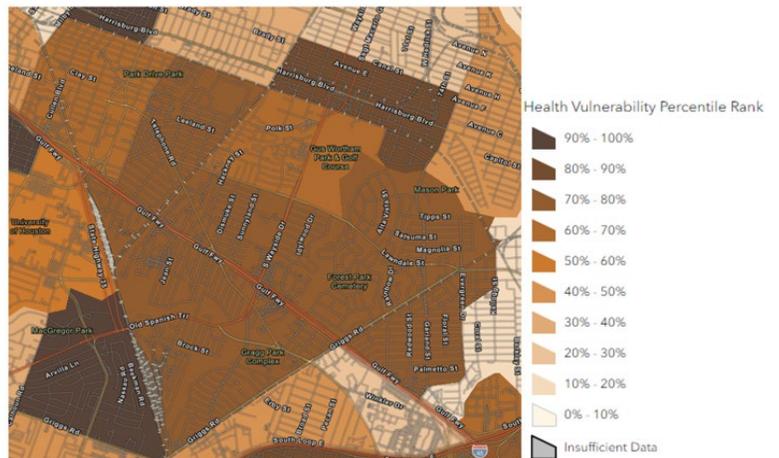


Figure 11. Equity and Justice40 - Top - Environmental Burden Bottom - Health Vulnerability



In 2019, the Harris County Commissioners Court approved the creation of the Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity (DEEO). Throughout 2020, DEEO staff met with over 100 stakeholders to identify priorities, opportunities, and challenges. By 2021, a new executive director was appointed, and the department began to build out – hiring a leadership team, beginning a listening tour, and starting new programs. The Program Planning & Innovation Division (PP&I) works to realize DEEO’s mission to eliminate disparities and advance inclusivity, accessibility, and shared prosperity for all residents and businesses in Harris County. The division provides program planning focusing on innovation, community insights, program evaluation and analytics, and policy advising to advance equity and economic opportunity in Harris County. Existing programs include:

Hire Up Harris - A workforce development initiative dedicated to supporting residents of Harris County by connecting them to training opportunities for high-quality jobs that pay a living wage, provide benefits and have the potential for further economic advancement. Harris County aims to invest in skills training and wrap-around support services that can lift target populations of underemployed, unemployed, dislocated workers, and opportunity youth, people of color, women, and those without college degrees - from poverty and economic insecurity. Further, Harris County aims to build capacity among organizations that provide workforce training by establishing a Learning Group cohort to facilitate the sharing and uptake of best practices that will result in transformational outcomes. This program began in the spring of 2023 and will allow up to 700 Harris County residents to enroll in training.

Apprenticeship Advantage - The Apprenticeship initiative through Harris County is a targeted investment to increase apprenticeship opportunities within the county. Expanding occupational training programs and apprentice slots will establish new apprenticeship opportunities and further engage the current apprenticeship systems for apprentice support and success. Harris County is working with vendors to create and expand opportunities for the US Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) in traditional and high-growth emerging industries within the county, such as construction, public transportation, technology, and live entertainment industries. The initiative specifically targets increasing access to apprenticeship opportunities for groups traditionally underrepresented in apprenticeship, including but not limited to underemployed, unemployed, dislocated workers, opportunity youth, people of color, women, and those without college degrees. The program began in 2023 and will allow up to 966 Harris County residents to enroll in apprenticeships.

XII. Project Implementation and Management

Harris County has overseen the design and construction of several planning projects over the past few years. HCED’s professional planners will oversee the project management to ensure all project tasks are completed according to the schedule and budget. Harris County Purchasing Department may procure primary and sub-consultants to carry out tasks in the proposed RCE planning project for the East End Triangle. A project management plan is in place for managing the proposed project, including managing and mitigating project risks. Harris County has identified the following potential project risks and associated mitigation measures:



Table 7. Risk Mitigation

Potential Risk	Mitigation Measures
Stakeholder Consensus	Regular Public Outreach and Communication
Utility and Environmental Conflicts	Potential utility and environmental issues may be identified during the Planning Study. Additional time will be built into the project schedule to accommodate unexpected challenges.
Right-of-Way	On-going outreach to all stakeholders will build positive support for the project, limiting concerns with right-of-way issues.
Railroad Agreements	Harris County and the City must engage with Union Pacific during study reviews and meetings. Regular communication will expedite the execution of necessary railroad agreements.

HCED staff will coordinate with UP and the City of Houston throughout the project lifecycle. HCED Grants Management and Harris County Department staff will submit the following to maintain conformance with federal requirements:

- Progress reports on a quarterly basis (FRA Quarterly Progress Report)
- Federal financial reports on a quarterly basis (Federal Financial Report – SF-425)
- Final report on or before the end of the period of performance (Final Performance Report)



Commissioner Adrian Garcia

Harris County Precinct 2

1001 Preston, Suite 924 • Houston, TX 77002 • Tel: 713.755.6220 • Fax: 713.755.8810

May 20, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Letter of Commitment and Support for Precinct 2 for Harris County's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program (CRISI) Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Harris County's Precinct 2 is writing to inform you of Harris County's application for the US Department of Transportation's FY24 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Discretionary Grant Program, submitted by the Harris County Engineering Department. The proposed project will follow Track 1: Systems Planning and Project Planning, the study aims to explore ways to enhance pedestrian safety at the Market Street railroad crossings allowing for pedestrians to travel safely from North to South on Market Street.

With this letter, Precinct 2 expresses its strong support and commitment to the project by pledging to contribute 20% of the local match, as outlined below:

Market Street Railroad Crossing Planning Project (Track 1)

- Federal Funding Request: \$1,000,000
- Local Match: \$250,000
- Total: \$1,250,000

Harris County Precinct 2's local match commitment of \$250,000 underscores our dedication to the CRISI program and the proposed project. Precinct 2 fully supports this grant application, recognizing its potential to significantly improve pedestrian transportation safety around railways. Thank you for considering our grant application.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Senior Planning Manager Jorge Bustamante, P.E., at (713) 456-9452 or Jorge.Bustamante@pct2.hctx.net.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Adrian Garcia
Harris County Precinct 2



CITY OF HOUSTON

John Whitmire

Mayor

P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

Telephone – Dial 311
www.houstontx.gov

May 28, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The City of Houston is pleased to support Harris County's application entitled "**Zindler Road & Market Street Planning Project (Track 1)**" for the 2024 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Discretionary Grant Program. The proposed Market Street Railroad Crossing Study, under Track 1: Systems Planning and Project Planning Study, aims to enhance pedestrian safety at the Zindler Road and Market Street railroad crossings.

The City of Houston recognizes the significance of this grant application to improve multimodal transportation, enhance transportation safety, and facilitate efficient goods movement within our region. We appreciate the value of studying safer connections for nearby schools, multifamily home dwellers, and freight that routinely traverses Market Street in this industrialized area of East Houston.

I appreciate your favorable consideration of Harris County's application and its potential impact on our regional transportation goals.

Sincerely,

John Whitmire
Mayor



MARIO CASTILLO
Houston City Council Member, District H

May 28, 2024

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program
Support Letter**

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for the grant application to the Federal Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program. This funding is essential for commissioning a study on the feasibility of constructing a bridge over the railroad track at Market Street in the Denver Harbor community. This project is crucial for enhancing public safety.

At present, when trains halt at Market Street, students and other pedestrians are frequently compelled to crawl under the stationary trains, creating extremely hazardous conditions. The potential for accidents and injuries in these circumstances is alarmingly high. A bridge at this location would offer a secure, dedicated pathway, eradicating these perils and ensuring the safety of our residents, students, and visitors.

The necessity for this project is a matter of collective urgency and support within our community. We are deeply committed to proactive safety measures and responsible urban development, and this bridge is a crucial stride in that direction.

Please support this application, as it represents an important initial investment in our community's safety and future prosperity.

I appreciate your consideration.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mario Castillo".

Mario Castillo, Council Member
Houston City Council District H





McReynolds Middle School

Houston Independent School District

5910 Market Street • Houston, Texas • 77020

Tel: 281-368-2120 • houstonisd.org/mcreynolds

Ms. Chastity Caesar, Principal M.Ed

May 16, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Chastity Caesar, and I am the Principal at McReynolds Middle School. I am writing to express my full endorsement for the construction of a bridge over the railroad track in our community for safety purposes. As a concerned Harris County resident, parent of a student, advocate for the public safety of my students and community, and lifelong member of this community, I believe that implementing such infrastructure is paramount to ensuring the well-being of our students, residents, and visitors.

The necessity for a bridge over the railroad track arises from the increasing risks associated with pedestrian and vehicular traffic intersecting with the railway. With the current layout, there is a heightened potential for accidents involving pedestrians, and pedestrians being exposed to danger while crossing the tracks.

By constructing a bridge, we can effectively mitigate these risks and enhance safety for everyone in our community. A bridge would provide a dedicated and secure pathway over the railway, eliminating the need for pedestrians to intersect with oncoming trains. Moreover, the construction of a bridge aligns with the commitment to proactive safety measures and responsible urban planning/development. It demonstrates our dedication to fostering a community that prioritizes the well-being of its residents and takes decisive action to address potential hazards.

In conclusion, I urge you to support the construction of a bridge over the railroad track as a vital measure to enhance safety and promote progress in our community. By investing in this infrastructure project, we are investing in the safety and prosperity of our students and residents both now and in the future.

Thank you for considering this important matter. I look forward to your favorable response and to seeing our community thrive with the implementation of this crucial initiative.

Sincerely,

Ms. Chastity Caesar
Principal
McReynolds Middle School

Monday, September 23, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

As a long-time resident of Eastwood and a former officer of the Eastwood Civic Association, I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: *Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety* grant proposal submitted by Harris County in partnership with the City of Houston. This proposal addresses the ongoing challenges posed by rail-to-highway conflicts that affect our community's safety and mobility.

As a resident and community leader, I have witnessed firsthand the disruptions caused by frequent train stoppages. These delays not only hinder residents' daily commutes but also present significant safety hazards, particularly for children and families. As a community, we need solutions that will enhance our ability to navigate our streets safely and efficiently, and the R.A.I.L.S. Study offers a promising approach to achieving that goal.

The planning activities proposed in this grant will incorporate robust community engagement, allowing residents to voice their concerns and contribute to identifying solutions. This level of involvement is crucial, as it ensures that our community's needs and perspectives are at the forefront of the planning process. By working together, we can develop strategies that effectively address the mobility issues we face and improve the overall quality of life in Eastwood.

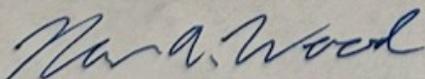
Moreover, eliminating rail-related disruptions will support local businesses and encourage further development in our neighborhood. As Eastwood continues to grow and evolve, we must invest in infrastructure that can sustain this growth while enhancing safety and accessibility for all residents.

I strongly urge your consideration of this grant proposal. It represents a significant opportunity to improve our community's infrastructure, ensuring safer, more connected streets for everyone in Eastwood. Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Nathan Wood

Long-Time Resident and Former Officer of the Eastwood Civic Association





September 20, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: The Houston Area Rail Transformation (THE HART) Support of Harris County and City of Houston's 2024 Railroad Crossing Elimination Planning Grant Application for the Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: Resilient Access and Improved Logistics for Safety Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

THE HART is pleased to provide this letter of support as part of the **Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: Resilient Access and Improved Logistics for Safety Project**.

THE HART, a committee of the Gulf Coast Rail District is the Greater Houston region's collaborative and programmatic approach to leverage private and public funding opportunities for railroad projects in the region. A reliable rail network is critical to the economic development of the region and the nation. The 2021 Houston-Beaumont Region Freight Study issued by TXDOT provided the initial working lists of projects for consideration. This study is an update to a previous 2007 study prepared for the Houston-Beaumont region. The study addressed deficiencies within the Houston region's freight network and developed ways to accommodate and prioritize the anticipated growth of future freight movements. It also identified improvements that may provide relief to residents and the traveling public adversely affected by delays, interruptions, and noise attributed to the movement of freight within the region. As a result of these freight challenges and federal funding opportunities, the greater Houston region rallied together to form THE HART.

As you are aware, unlike other transportation modes, rail does not have a dedicated federal funding source allocated to the states. Texas has the largest rail network of any state, and the Houston region has the second largest freight rail network in the country. THE HART is focused on working with project sponsors to submit competitive applications.

The Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. study will assess 14 at-grade crossings within the East End Triangle and evaluate the condition of an existing, aging underpass that may require updates. The study aims to develop a strategic plan with short, medium, and long-term recommendations to improve public safety and multi-modal mobility. These solutions will not only provide much-needed relief to the community but also enhance the efficiency of railroad operations in the area.

September 20, 2024

Page 2

Our Houston-region partners have heard the call and have pooled their resources to develop this project and shepherd this application effort. Thank you for your consideration. THE HART supports this collaborative project as it is aligned with its mission and vision improve safety and security at roadway/railway crossings.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Bruce Mann
1BE81CD953F94C1...
Bruce Mann
Chair
THE HART

DocuSigned by:
Carol Abel Lewis
CC1F73CAAB2448D...
Carol Abel Lewis, Ph.D.
Chair
Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors



Monday, September 23, 2024
The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

As a long-time resident of Eastwood and a retired teacher, I am writing to express my strong support for the Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: *Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety* grant proposal submitted by Harris County in partnership with the City of Houston. This proposal addresses the ongoing challenges caused by frequent railroad stoppages in our community, an issue I have witnessed firsthand, both as an educator and as a neighbor.

From my home, I have a surveillance camera that faces the railroad tracks, and I often see children on their way to school forced to navigate these train stoppages. What I have seen is deeply troubling—children crawling between stopped rail cars to avoid being late for school. These dangerous and desperate actions are an unfortunate reality for many young students in our neighborhood. It's a situation that no community should tolerate, and it is a serious safety hazard that requires immediate attention.

As a retired teacher, I understand the importance of ensuring children arrive safely and on time at school. However, in the East End, the constant delays caused by stopped trains create barriers that disproportionately affect young people and their families. The R.A.I.L.S. Study offers a much-needed solution by planning to eliminate these rail-to-highway conflicts, improving safety and accessibility for everyone in our neighborhood, especially the children who rely on these routes to get to school.

This grant proposal is essential to the future of our community. It will make our streets safer, prevent tragic accidents, and give residents peace of mind knowing that their children can walk to school without putting their lives at risk. I urge you to support this proposal and help us address the serious safety and mobility issues we face daily in the East End.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Paulette Kukuk
Retired Teacher and Resident of Eastwood

SYLVIA R. GARCIA
29TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4329

September 18, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing to express my support for your consideration of the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant proposal submitted by Harris County in partnership with the City of Houston. We request funds to undertake planning activities along three corridors within Houston's East End that suffers from routine stoppages and other mobility challenges as a result of rail to highway conflicts.

Planning activities will include a robust community engagement strategy, as well as identifying a preferred alternative and conceptual designs that address critical mobility and accessibility challenges faced by our residents, visitors, and businesses in this evolving post-industrial East Downtown locale. After nearly a century of industrial activity, development in East Downtown is shifting to a mix of eclectic, local small businesses, and residential and mixed-use development, all encapsulated between rail lines hauling cargo with ever-increasing volume and frequency.

I have held Town Hall meetings in my district and have heard directly from my constituents on the negative impact that railroads continue to have in my area. Support of this grant would greatly enhance a safe and well connected system in District 29.

This grant proposal will ensure both Harris County and the City of Houston move toward in addressing safety, access, and noise impacts associated with freight rail will support East Downtown's transition into a destination, with a greater quality of life.

We are hopeful that your selection of our proposal will be the catalyst for East Downtown. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,


Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



September 23, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The City of Houston is pleased to provide this letter of funding capacity as part of the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Program FY 2023-2024 planning grant application submitted by Harris County for the *Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety*.

Planning activities will include a robust community engagement strategy, as well as identifying a preferred alternative and conceptual designs that address critical mobility and accessibility challenges faced by our residents, visitors, and businesses in this evolving post-industrial East Downtown locale. After nearly a century of industrial activity, development in East Downtown is shifting to a mix of eclectic, local small businesses, and residential and mixed-use development, all encapsulated between rail lines hauling cargo with ever-increasing volume and frequency. A successful award will position both Houston and Harris County to submit a future implementation grant that builds on the previous planning efforts.

Houston Public Works has the capacity from available local funding to provide the \$250,000 local share as shown in the application. If the application is successful, the City of Houston will negotiate an interlocal agreement with Harris County for City Council approval to formalize the funding commitment.

As an identified funding partner, Houston Public Works commits to complying with the federal aid requirements that will be outlined in the grant agreement for this project.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

BE463EF0DF454EB...

Randy Macchi
Chief Operating Officer
Houston Public Works

SUPER NEIGHBORHOOD 64 & 88

GREATER EASTWOOD, LAWNSDALE, & WAYSIDE

September 23, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Super Neighborhoods 64 & 88, representing over 30,000 residents in Houston's East End, I am writing to express our enthusiastic support for the Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: *Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety* grant proposal submitted by Harris County in partnership with the City of Houston. We urge your consideration of this essential proposal, which seeks funding to address the ongoing mobility, safety, and accessibility challenges caused by rail-to-highway conflicts in our community.

The planning activities envisioned for this proposal will involve extensive community engagement and the development of preferred alternatives and conceptual designs that reflect the needs of East End residents, visitors, and businesses. Our neighborhoods have long been impacted by routine rail stoppages that disrupt daily life and pose significant public safety concerns. With ever-increasing cargo traffic, resilient and forward-thinking infrastructure is critical. The study area encompasses key corridors that, if addressed, will significantly improve traffic flow, reduce emergency response delays, and create a safer, more connected East End.

As Super Neighborhood Councils, our mission is to advocate for the well-being of our diverse community and to collaborate with local government and stakeholders to improve livability. This grant proposal aligns directly with our goals, as it will help alleviate some of the most pressing issues faced by our residents—traffic congestion, safety risks, and accessibility barriers. Moreover, the study will support East End's transformation into a vibrant, mixed-use area, promoting economic growth and improving the quality of life for our residents.

The proximity to downtown makes this area an ideal location for development, and improving our transportation infrastructure is critical to realizing that potential. By addressing rail-related conflicts, this proposal will help the East End maintain its historical and cultural richness while allowing for smart, sustainable growth.

We believe this grant proposal will significantly contribute to creating safer and more connected neighborhoods, and we strongly urge your support. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Lindsay Williams
President
Super Neighborhoods 64 & 88



Monday, September 23, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

As a mother and long-time resident of Eastwood, I am writing to express my strong support for the Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: *Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety* grant proposal submitted by Harris County in partnership with the City of Houston. The frequent and lengthy train stoppages in our area disrupt daily life and create serious safety concerns for families like mine.

I often ride bikes with my son and family around the neighborhood, and we frequently encounter trains stopped at crossings for extended periods. These delays are frustrating and, at times, dangerous, especially when we have to navigate small streets or crowded areas to avoid the trains. In addition, I have witnessed Metro buses being rerouted onto narrow residential streets to bypass trains, which puts additional pressure on our community's infrastructure and increases the risk of accidents in areas not designed for large vehicles.

As a mother, ensuring my child's safety is my top priority, but the constant rail stoppages create unnecessary risks for families and residents in Eastwood. The R.A.I.L.S. Study will provide critical planning to eliminate these rail-to-highway conflicts, improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers, and ensure that buses and emergency vehicles can access our neighborhood without being delayed or forced onto inappropriate roads.

The East End is a vibrant, growing community, but it is being held back by outdated infrastructure that needs to be addressed. This grant proposal will help make our streets safer and more accessible for everyone, allowing families to enjoy their neighborhoods without worrying about getting stuck behind a train or encountering unexpected dangers on small streets.

I strongly urge your consideration of this important grant proposal. Thank you for your time and attention to our community's needs.

Sincerely,



Amy Erickson
Mother and Long-Time Resident of Eastwood

Monday, September 23, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

As a resident of Houston's East End, I am writing to express my strong support for the Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: *Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety* grant proposal submitted by Harris County in partnership with the City of Houston. The proposal addresses a critical issue that deeply affects my daily life and the lives of many of my neighbors—frequent railroad stoppages that cause significant delays, disrupt traffic, and create safety concerns.

Living in the East End, I regularly suffer from the consequences of rail stoppages, which can occur multiple times a day. These stoppages often leave me, and many other residents, stuck in traffic for extended periods of time, blocking access to critical services and impacting our ability to move around our own neighborhood. Whether it's trying to get to work, picking up my children, or even waiting for emergency vehicles to pass through, the impact of these disruptions is constant and frustrating.

This grant proposal presents a vital opportunity to address these challenges. By developing comprehensive plans that include community input, the R.A.I.L.S. Study will identify solutions that improve mobility and safety in our neighborhood, reduce the delays we experience, and ensure that emergency services have timely access to our streets. The East End is a wonderful place to live, and while it is rich in history and culture, we need modern infrastructure to support our growing community and make daily life more manageable for residents like me.

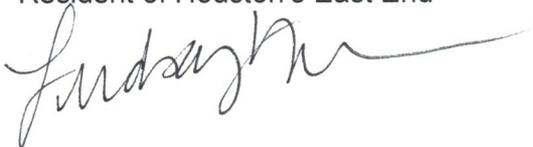
I wholeheartedly support the R.A.I.L.S. Study and believe it will have a lasting positive impact on our neighborhood. Addressing the rail-to-highway conflicts will make our streets safer and more accessible, and it will significantly improve the quality of life for those of us who live here.

I respectfully ask for your consideration of this grant proposal, and I hope you will recognize the urgency of this issue for the residents of Houston's East End. Thank you for your time and thoughtful attention to our community's needs.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Williams

Resident of Houston's East End

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lindsay Williams", written in a cursive style.



MARIO CASTILLO
Houston City Council Member, District H

September 20th, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I strongly support Harris County and the City of Houston's Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant proposal: Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study. This critical project seeks funding to address the longstanding rail-to-highway conflicts that impede mobility and compromise safety in Houston's East End.

The East End, particularly District H, is disproportionately impacted by at-grade railroad crossings where trains frequently stop, bringing daily life to a halt for residents. These delays disrupt commutes and local business operations and pose significant risks by obstructing emergency vehicles when timely response is crucial. Despite efforts to alleviate these issues, progress has been slow and inconsistent, leaving our community frustrated and vulnerable. A 2023 analysis by Houston Landing found that Houston's East End received more complaints about stopped trains than any neighborhood in the nation, highlighting the urgency of this issue.

This grant will allow Harris County and the City of Houston to embark on comprehensive planning activities, including community engagement, to identify solutions that will finally address these critical safety and mobility challenges. As East Downtown transitions from its industrial roots into a vibrant, mixed-use community, solving the problems caused by rail congestion is essential for fostering a better quality of life and ensuring that residents and visitors can safely navigate the area.

Your support for this proposal will catalyze a safer, more connected future for Houston's East End. By addressing the longstanding impacts of freight rail on our community, we can create a neighborhood that is not only a destination for businesses and families but also a model for urban livability. The potential benefits of this proposal to the East End community are immense, from improved safety to enhanced mobility and a better quality of life.

I appreciate your time and thoughtful consideration of this important matter. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mario Castillo".

Mario Castillo
Houston City Council
District H





September 20, 2024

CHAMBER FOUNDERS

Anheuser-Busch
Cadeco Industries, Inc.
Comcast
Giant Texas Distillery
HEB – Gulfgate Center
LyondellBasell
Port Houston
Primeway Federal Credit Union
Silver Eagle Distributors
Sims Metal
Valero - Houston Refinery
Watco

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Chevron
Cooper/Ports America
INVISTA
Regions Bank
Shook, Hardy & Bacon LLP
Texas Capital Bank
The University of Texas -
MD Anderson Cancer Center
Truist
United Airlines
Wulfe & Co. - Gulfgate Center

CHAMBER BUILDERS

All Points Warehouse, Inc
Bank of America
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Calpine
CEMEX
Comerica Bank
Excargo Services
Felix H. Morales Funeral Home
Frost Bank
Funeraria Del Angel - Crespo
G&A Partners
Gulf Winds International
Houston Distributing Co.
Houston Pilots Association
METRO
Nan and Company Properties, LLC
Patron Partners, LLC
PKF of Texas
RockPoint Marketplace
Sesco Cement Corp
Space City Credit Union
Targa Resources
Tellepsen
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Frances Castaneda Dyess, President
Houston East End Chamber

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the Houston East End Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to express my support for your consideration of the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant proposal entitled Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety submitted by Harris County in partnership with the City of Houston. We request funds to undertake planning activities along three corridors within Houston’s East End that suffers from routine stoppages and other mobility challenges.

Planning activities will include a robust community engagement strategy, as well as identifying a preferred alternative and conceptual designs that address critical mobility and accessibility challenges faced by our residents, visitors, and businesses in this evolving post-industrial East Downtown locale. After nearly a century of industrial activity, development in East Downtown is shifting to a mix of eclectic, local small businesses, and residential and mixed-use development, all encapsulated between rail lines hauling cargo with ever-increasing volume and frequency. The proximity of downtown makes it an ideal commuting distance for employees and entertainment destinations – an attractive prospect for those wishing to build a family in East Downtown.

The Houston East End Chamber was founded in 1991 and our Mission is to connect businesses to promote economic expansion and investment in the East End. This proposal is in line with our mission and support it fully.

This grant proposal will ensure both Harris County and the City of Houston move toward achieving the goal of safer and more connected communities. Addressing safety, access, and noise impacts associated with freight rail will support East Downtown’s transition into a destination, with a greater quality of life.

We are hopeful that your selection of our proposal will be the catalyst for East Downtown. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Frances Castañeda Dyess, President



September 18, 2024

Stephen Quezada
Ogletree, Deakins, Nash,
Smoak & Stewart, P.C.
Chair

Elliot Barner
Radcliffe Bobbitt
Adams Polley, PLLC
Vice Chair

Blanca Blanco
Wellby Financial
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Wulfe Management Services,
Inc.
Assistant Secretary

Joe Meppelink
METALAB
Assistant Treasurer

Lani Baker
Pelec Central City
Industrial Park, LLC

Chude Chike-Obi
Resident

Anna Deans
Midway

Erik Ibarra
Ordrs
Resident

Roy Lira
MODEC International, Inc.
Resident

Victoria Macalino
Quiddity
Resident

Marjorie Peña
BakerRipley

Jose Valdez
Frost Bank

Veronica C. Gorczynski
President

3211 Harrisburg Blvd.
Houston, TX 77003
713.928.9916

www.eastenddistrict.com

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

We are writing to express support for your consideration of the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant proposal submitted by Harris County in partnership with the City of Houston. We request funds to undertake planning activities along three corridors within Houston's East End that suffer from routine stoppages and other mobility challenges as a result of rail to highway conflicts.

Planning activities will include a robust community engagement strategy, as well as identifying a preferred alternative and conceptual designs that address critical mobility and accessibility challenges faced by our residents, visitors, and businesses in this evolving post-industrial East End Houston. After nearly a century of industrial activity, development in East Houston is shifting to a mix of eclectic, local small businesses, and residential and mixed-use development, all encapsulated between rail lines hauling cargo with ever-increasing volume and frequency.

This grant proposal will ensure both Harris County and the City of Houston move toward in addressing safety, access, and noise impacts associated with freight rail will support East End's transition into a destination, with a greater quality of life.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Veronica Chapa Gorczynski
President

Monday, September 23, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing to express my strong support for Harris County, Texas Precinct 2, and the City of Houston's efforts to secure funding for the Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety.

Residents of East Houston know that train congestion in this area is more than just an inconvenience—it poses significant safety risks. As a resident of the "East End Triangle," located across from an elementary school, I have witnessed children crawling under parked train cars far too often. Emergency vehicles, such as firetrucks and ambulances, struggle to navigate city streets blocked by freight trains waiting to enter the railyards. Special needs transport vehicles frequently wait outside my window for hours, trying to assist residents just a tenth of a mile from the Center for Pursuit, a specialized clinic. After Hurricane Beryl, emergency repair crews found themselves stranded during a heat wave, unable to reach areas in need of repair due to blocked crossings.

While drivers understand the need to wait for moving trains, the unpredictable nature of train traffic in Houston's East End leads to dangerous decisions. Motorists often speed through residential streets, school zones, and crosswalks when detoured by stopped trains.

Train traffic can block mobility at all hours, particularly during morning and evening rush hours and school drop-off/pick-up times. Visitors frequently find themselves trapped inside the triangle or unable to enter. This rapidly growing area poses challenges for new businesses, making it difficult for customers to navigate the dense network of rail lines.

We understand that trains are essential to our community and support their presence, but we hope for a more efficient and quieter transit. Data from the Federal Railroad Administration's blocked crossing portal indicates that the challenges in this Triangle are among the most severe in the country.

Several recent factors have worsened the situation:

- Trains have become longer, causing congestion in railyards and disrupting the flow of the Houston rail complex.
- Staffing complexities have led to increased train delays.
- Trains are now building outside their yards, blocking city streets even when intersections are clear.
- Houston's growing population is increasing interactions with rail lines by car, bicycle, and on foot.
- Vehicle traffic has risen significantly with population growth, yet no new grade separations have been constructed in decades.
- Rail traffic to and from the ports of Houston and Galveston has surged and is projected to increase further.
- New rail operators, such as CPKC, have gained trackage rights, resulting in more daily trains passing through the Triangle.

The proposed grant application aims to explore a range of solutions, from affordable quality-of-life improvements, such as wayfinding signs and technologies, to long-term projects like multi-modal underpasses that provide safe routes around trains.

Houston is a world-class city brimming with potential. We must plan now for smart solutions that alleviate congestion, enabling both the city and its rail partners to thrive safely. These improvements represent a wise investment in infrastructure that will yield benefits in safety, fluid movement, vibrant commerce, and a brighter future.

The East End is a deserving candidate for federal rail investments, and I hope your agency recognizes the merits of this application. Residents in our community would be sincerely grateful for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Clay Dippel
Resident of Eastwood | 4405 McKinney St. Houston, Texas 77023



CITY OF HOUSTON

Office of Council Member Joaquin Martinez, District I

September 20, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety.

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Houston City Council District I, I am writing to express my support for your consideration of the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant proposal for the Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study submitted by Harris County in partnership with the City of Houston. We request funds to undertake planning activities along three corridors within Houston's East End that suffers from routine stoppages and other mobility challenges as a result of rail to highway conflicts.

Planning activities will include a robust community engagement strategy, as well as identifying a preferred alternative and conceptual designs that address critical mobility and accessibility challenges faced by our residents, visitors, and businesses in this evolving post-industrial East Downtown locale. After nearly a century of industrial activity, development in East Downtown is shifting to a mix of eclectic, local small businesses, and residential and mixed-use development, all encapsulated between rail lines hauling cargo with ever-increasing volume and frequency. The proximity of downtown makes it an ideal commuting distance for employees and entertainment destinations – an attractive prospect for those wishing to build a family in East Downtown.

As council member for District I, my mission is to support safe, equitable, and diverse communities through infrastructure improvements and strong collaborative partnerships. This project aligns with our commitment to addressing the unique transportation and safety challenges in Houston's East End, where residents and businesses are heavily impacted by freight rail activity. By advocating for investments that enhance mobility and reduce barriers, we aim to improve the quality of life for our diverse and growing population.

This grant proposal will ensure both Harris County and the City of Houston move toward achieving the goal of safer and more connected communities. Addressing safety, access, and noise impacts associated with freight rail will support East Downtown's transition into a destination, with a greater quality of life.

We are hopeful that your selection of our proposal will be the catalyst for East Downtown. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joaquin Martinez".

Joaquin Martinez
Houston City Council Member
District I



BNSF Public Projects - Grants Letter of Support Request Form

Thank you for your interest in seeking a Letter of Support from BNSF Railway to accompany your agency's application for grant funding to plan, design, or construct a public project of importance to your community.

Recent federal funding represents an influx of funding opportunities for transportation infrastructure projects across the U.S. **New federal funding provides unprecedented opportunities for BNSF to partner with agencies and communities that are advancing public projects to improve safety and infrastructure at points that intersect and interface with the BNSF network.**

BNSF's vision and values embrace supporting and collaborating with the communities where we live, work, and operate to foster safer and more accessible environments. We recognize the value in supporting transformative projects through public-private partnerships that create lasting transportation and community benefits.

We appreciate the opportunity to understand more about your project and look forward to learning more about how we can work together to maximize available funding opportunities. Please complete this form to provide key information and/or documents for our team to review. You will have the opportunity to submit additional files upon completing and submitting your form.

Note: The purpose of this form is to provide BNSF with general information about a public agency project and to support coordination between public agencies and BNSF, and not for any other purpose. Specific projects are subject to analysis and additional information may be required by BNSF. Nothing identified in this form can be taken as BNSF authority to construct a project or as a position of support.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please provide the following information.

Name	Patrick Mandapaka
Company	Harris County Department of Engineering
Email	patrick.mandapaka@harriscountytexas.gov
Phone Number	(713) 274-4041
I am the	Lead project applicant

GRANT PROGRAM INFORMATION

Please provide the following grant program information.

What grant program(s) are you pursuing?	Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE)
--	-------------------------------------

What year(s) do you wish to submit a grant application?

2024

Have you previously submitted a federal grant application for this project?

No

Have you previously submitted a state and/or local grant application for this project?

No

PROJECT INFORMATION

Please provide the following information on your project.

Project Name

Houston East End Triangle R.A.I.L.S. Study: Resilient Access & Improved Logistics for Safety

Project description and scope

PLANNING PROJECT

Project Summary:

In Houston's East End, a 1.3 square mile collection of mostly residential communities is constrained on three sides by active rail lines (and on a fourth side by the IH-45 freeway). Access into and out of the community is provided by eighteen railroad crossings, including an existing underpass on the west side and two underpasses as part of the IH-45 interchange. The remainder are at-grade, and the active rail lines frequently block all mobility for many minutes to several hours on a frequent basis.

This planning project will define a long-term strategy for solving the numerous rail issues for the community in a comprehensive, holistic fashion that will combine an analysis of data, coordination with railroads, emergency services, and other critical stakeholders, and extensive community engagement to define short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations. The intention is that this planning effort will lead directly to future efforts for detailed project development and ultimately construction of railroad crossing improvements including grade separation.

Location:

The project will study all street-railroad crossings on three rail line corridors, with the boundaries of each corridor defined below:

West Belt Rail Line

- o From (including) crossing 288221A
 - ☒ (Cullen St. at-grade crossing)
 - ☒ Lat: 29.736425
 - ☒ Long: -95.340251
- o To (including) crossing 288226J
 - ☒ (Milby St. at-grade crossing)
 - ☒ Lat: 29.741873
 - ☒ Long: -95.342065

Galveston Subdivision Rail Line

- o From (including) crossing 859518J
 - ☒ (Milby St. at-grade crossing)
 - ☒ Lat: 29.74518
 - ☒ Long: -95.339443
- o To (including) crossing 859527H
 - ☒ (Altic St. at-grade crossing)
 - ☒ Lat: 29.739726
 - ☒ Long: -95.321966

East Belt Rail Line

- o From (including) crossing 288051H
 - ☒ (Telephone Rd. at-grade crossing)
 - ☒ Lat: 29.726338
 - ☒ Long: -95.324855
- o To (including) crossing 288039B
 - ☒ (Polk St. at-grade crossing)
 - ☒ Lat: 29.733518
 - ☒ Long: -95.317657

The locations of recommended improvements are not envisioned to be constrained to the Project Location, because there may be improvements needed outside these boundaries to benefit the crossings within the project boundaries. All recommendations will show benefit to the crossings within the project boundaries.

Scope:

I. Define Project Success

The project will begin by setting very clear expectations for the strategies, tools, and processes that will be used throughout. It will:

- Define an oversight process for the project for project success.
- Define framework and strategy for making recommendations at the rail crossings in the study area.
- Define a decision-making process. By the end of the project, all stakeholders should feel confident to move forward with project recommendations.

II. Define Process for Community Engagement

Community support will be critical for identification, prioritization, and eventual implementation of recommended improvements.

The project will define a public engagement strategy, so that anybody impacted by the rail crossings who want to be involved in the decision-making process can be involved. The engagement strategy will include, at minimum:

- 3 in-person public meetings.
- Opportunities for community to:
 - o Voice community values to be considered in recommendations
 - o Review toolbox of options for recommendations to provide feedback
- Provide update presentations at Eastwood Civic Association and Superneighborhood 64&88, as requested.

Critical stakeholders

The following stakeholder have been identified as key partners and should be included in all coordination and engagement efforts:

- Union Pacific and other railroads
- Harris County Engineering Department
- Harris County Precinct 2
- Houston Public Works
- Gulf Coast Rail Division
- Houston Fire Department
- Houston Police Department
- TxDOT Rail Division
- Metro
- Schools, including Houston Independent School District

III. Document Existing Conditions

The project will inventory existing conditions, compiling existing data where available and collecting new data where needed. Existing conditions to be assessed include but are not limited to:

- Train operations, including:
 - o Numbers of trains, frequency, length

- o Rail yard plans and activity
- Crashes related to at-grade crossings
- Traffic counts and projections

IV. Case Studies and Best Practice Summary

The East End Triangle is not the first or only residential neighborhood in the United State to overcome friction with railroad operations. There are likely numerous examples of similar communities who have dealt with these issues in numerous ways. The project will identify similar communities in the United State and investigate their strategies and solutions.

- Identify similar communities with similar challenges
- What are the types of improvements they have implemented?
- How have these improvements worked? Based on what metrics?
- How has the community responded?

V. Assess previous proposals and plans for grade crossings

Several previous and ongoing projects have looked at rail safety and operations in the study area. They are at various levels of design, and they have had various levels of community engagement. The project all previous design work to determine if it is still valid, can/should be modified or updated, or otherwise leveraged to bolster the success of this project. It will also review engagement feedback, and incorporate it into strategy for public engagement and solution identification

- Metro University BRT – Lockwood Drive at Galveston Subdivision Grade Separation
- Gulf Coast Rail District (GCRD)
 - o Leeland Street at West Belt Grade Separation
 - o Cullen Street at West Belt Grade Separation
- TxDOT: Houston-Beaumont Rail Study Phase 2
 - o Telephone Road at East Belt
 - o Lawndale Street at East Belt
 - o Jefferson Street at East Belt
 - o Polk Street at East Belt
 - o Cullen Street at West Belt
 - o Leeland Street at West Belt
- Safe Street for All – Rail Safety Grant (2024)
 - o What improvements are identified? Where will they go?
 - o Can further improvements in study area leverage SS4A recommendations?

VI. Assessment of Polk Street Underpass

The project will provide a engineering assessment of the existing Polk Street underpass to identify any deficiencies and propose solutions. The assessment will include:

- Drainage systems
- Railroad bridge condition
- Track conditions
- Roadway conditions
- Sidewalk conditions
- Lighting conditions

VII. Document impacts of other projects

Identify other, regional plans and projects that may impact access into and out of the area, thereby impacting the relative importance of certain crossings and types of treatments considered. Other projects include but are not limited to:

- North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)
 - o Determine impacts of temporary construction changes.
 - o Determine impacts of permanent changes.

VIII. Recommendations and Deliverables

A. Provide a prioritization framework for recommendations

Include quantitative benefits to community and railroad, as well as soft metrics such as community support. The prioritization framework should be developed in coordination with major stakeholders.

B. Identify recommendations for each crossing

The project will prepare recommendations for each of the 14 at-grade crossings in the study area and the 1 existing underpass on Polk Street.

Recommendation will include but are not limited to:

- Road overpasses at rail crossings
- Road underpasses at rail crossings
- Railroad in trench under roads
- Railroad on viaduct over roads
- Train detection & data collection
- Wayfinding & detours, especially tied to train detection
- Street closures, especially if there is benefit to the community beyond safety at the crossing
- Railroad improvements to reduce bottlenecks that impact the area, if benefit to community can be quantified

Recommendations will be prioritized by, at minimum, the following metrics:

- Benefit to East End Triangle community, including:
 - o Delays to drivers, walkers, and bicyclists (should be decreased)
 - o Noise from train (should be decreased, or at least not increased)
 - o Flooding (should not be increased)
 - o Safety at rail crossings
 - o Acceptability to neighborhood stakeholders, including county commissioner, district councilmember, and civic associations.
- Benefit to regional travel and safety
 - o Delays for regional travels passing through the East End Triangle
 - o Safety for regional travelers
 - o Emergency evacuation for people in or passing through the East End Triangle
- Benefit to emergency response (HPD/HFD)
- Benefit/acceptability to railroad
- Project cost
- Storm resilience
- Impact on transit
- Ability to address as many issues/crossings simultaneously as possible
- Long-term ability of solution to accommodate future needs of roadway, including added capacity options

All data needed to quantify these metrics will be collected and assessed.

Factors to consider in alternatives:

- Collectively, the solutions should ensure that the community has full access across all three rail lines in case of street flooding. This can be addressed in several ways, including but not limited to:
 - o Overpasses
 - o Underpasses with at-grade crossing
 - o At-grade crossing, with no grade separation
 - o Railroad in trench under roads
 - o Railroad on viaduct over roads

C. Preliminary Engineering Cost Estimates

Preliminary high-level engineering cost estimates will be provided for all recommendations. These cost estimates will be sufficiently defined to serve as a basis for future grant applications and local Capital Improvement Plan programming.

D. Prepare implementation timeline and funding strategy

The project will define a feasible timeline for funding recommendations. It is expected that there will be short term (2-5 years), medium term (5-10 years), and long term (10+ years) recommendations. Some crossings may have recommendations that can be implemented quickly and others that will take more time.

A funding strategy will be prepared. It will evaluate all feasible sources of funding for recommendations, including local, state, and federal options. The funding plan will be coordinated with major regional stakeholders to ensure the timeline for delivery of project recommendations are aligned with timelines for 5 delivery of other critical regional rail projects.

The following activities have been completed to date.

None of the Above

What state is your project in?

Texas

Project County or Parish / Project Counties or Parishes

Harris County

Project City or Cities

Houston

Project Area Asset/Corridor Owner UPR

Other Project Area Asset/Corridor Owners

City of Houston Right of Way

Is this project included in any state, regional, and/or local public agency planning documents?

No

What are the anticipated public benefits of your project?

The project, as a whole, is not directly included in state, regional, or local public agency planning documents; however, it supports those studies referenced in the Scope of Work.

Anticipated public benefits upon implementation of the study recommendations resulting from this planning project include:

1. Improved safety at highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossings.
2. Proposed grade separation/s.
3. Improved mobility of both people and goods.
4. Reduced emissions, infrastructure resiliency, and community benefits such as improved health and noise reduction.
5. Improved access to/for emergency services.
6. Improved access to communities.
7. Economic benefit - better access to local small businesses

What are the anticipated private benefits of your project?

Anticipated private benefits- esp. for Railroad Owners and Operators - upon implementation of the study recommendations resulting from this planning project include:

1. Increased operational efficiency through reduced delays and improved scheduling.
2. Enhanced safety - less risk of collisions and hazmat incidents.
3. Lower maintenance costs through decreased wear on infrastructure where grade separation/s or eliminations are recommended. Grade separations also tend to be more durable over time, leading to fewer repairs and lower long-term costs.
4. Potential increased capacity - without the need to slow down or stop for at-grade crossings, rail operators can move freight more quickly and efficiently. Additionally, eliminating bottlenecks at busy grade crossings can increase overall capacity of the rail network which may allow for more frequent train services.
5. Improved public relations. Grade crossings in urban areas - such as Houston - often lead to significant community complaints due to blocked roadways, noise, and safety concerns.
6. Environmental benefits. By reducing idling vehicles waiting at crossings (sometimes for several hours), grade crossing improvements like grade separations help decrease emissions and noise pollution which can be highlighted by railroad operators as a contribution to environmental sustainability -ESG scores.
7. In areas like the East End Triangle where Quiet Zones are sought, grade separations can help railroads comply with noise reduction regulations more easily by removing the need for train horns at crossings.

Does your project include highway-rail or pedestrian-rail at-grade crossings with the BNSF network?

Yes

Please provide the name of the crossing.

Cullen Blvd, Leeland St, Polk Street Underpass, Milby St, Polk St, Jefferson St, Lawndale St, Telephone Rd

Please provide the DOT number of the crossing.

288221A,288224V,288038U,288226J,288039B,288046L,288048A, 288050B, 288051H

Link to the FRA Crossing Inventory Lookup:

<https://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/officeofsafety/publicsite/crossing/crossing.aspx>

PROJECT COST AND FUNDING INFORMATION

Please provide the following cost and funding information on your project.

What is the total estimated construction cost of your project?

2,500,000

What is the total grant funding amount you are requesting for your project?

\$2,000,000

What is the total anticipated amount of local match funds?

\$500,000

What is the total anticipated percentage of local match?

20%

Please provide Benefit-Cost ratio information, if available.

Note - Total Project Cost is for Planning.

A Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) will be performed as part of the planning project activities. At this lifecycle stage, a BCA has not been prepared.

OTHER INFORMATION

Have you been working with a BNSF representative?

No

Other information and comments.

The project is being submitted as a joint application from Harris County and the City of Houston. There has been media attention on the East End blockages and local government is working with state and federal agencies to address community concerns.

East End Triangle in the Media

- <https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/energy-environment/2023/02/13/443551/rail-merger-could-bring-more-tar-sands-to-southeast-texas-and-train-traffic-to-houston-neighborhoods/>
- This one made it to the guardian - <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/feb/13/canadian-pacific-kansas-city-southern-merger-tar-sands-texas>
- <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/transportation/article/east-end-trains-federal-legislation-17803663.php>

- <https://cw39.com/news/local/ohio-train-disaster-highlights-concerns-of-houstonians-who-live-near-railroads/>
- <https://www.fox26houston.com/news/its-getting-worse-east-end-residents-concerned-over-rail-blockings-speak-to-federal-administrators>
- <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/outlook/article/east-palestine-ohio-train-derailment-environment-17801377.php>
- <https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/shows/houston-matters/2023/02/23/444030/railroad-merger-update-feb-23-2023/>
- Houston Landing article: <https://www.houstonlanding.org/stopped-trains-block-houston-traffic-union-pacific/>
- <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/transportation/article/Stopped-trains-take-toll-on-East-End-traffic-16189043.php>
- <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/transportation/article/Cameras-data-on-blocked-train-crossings-shows-17168866.php>
- <https://www.khou.com/article/news/local/train-track-traffic-project-east-end-houston/285-de641738-f19a-4470-abe8-a752d128f0cf>

Thank you in advance for any support you can provide for the project!

FILE UPLOAD

Please upload any other supporting project documentation that may be of help for BNSF.



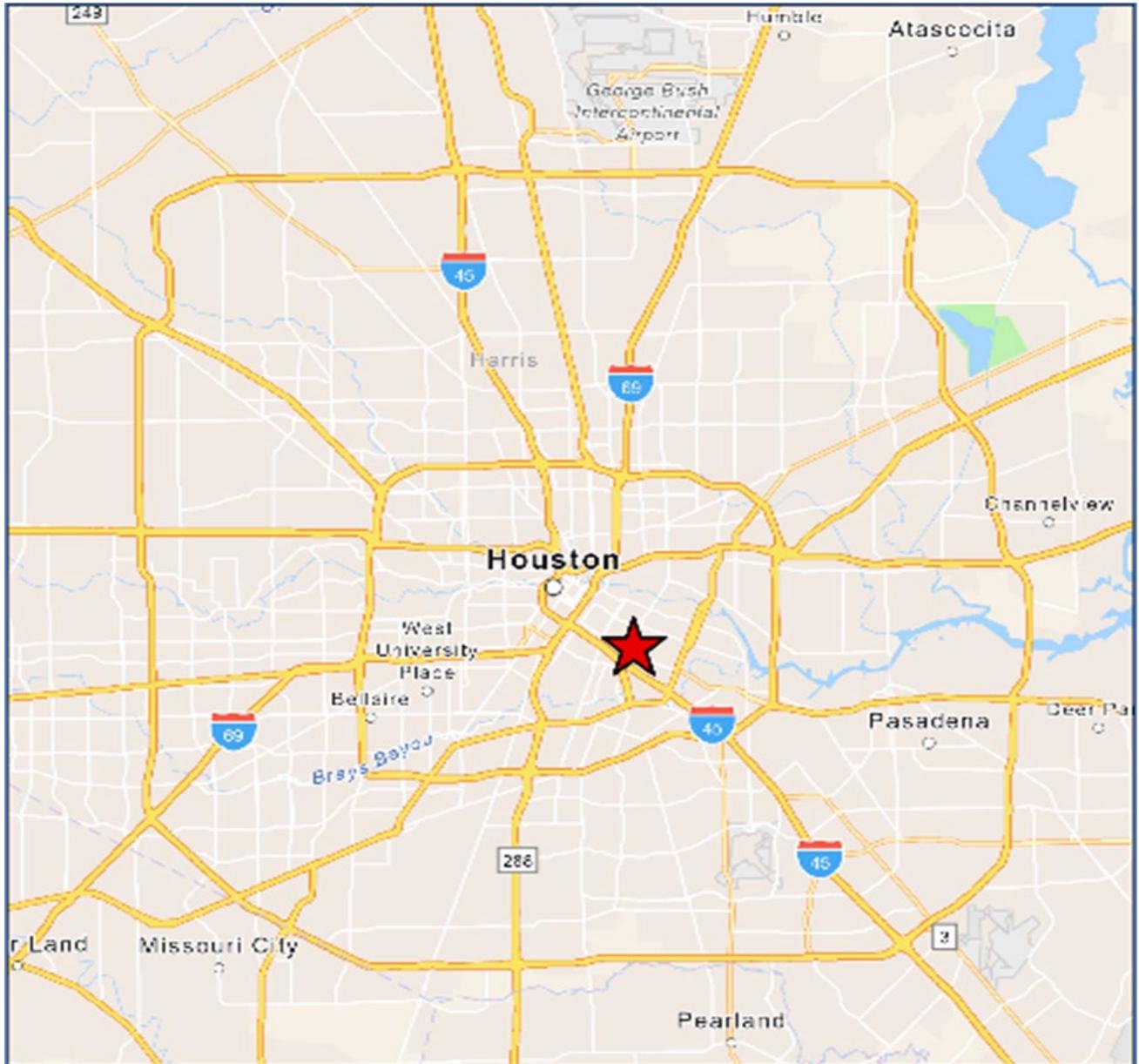
FY 2023-2024 RAILROAD CROSSING ELIMINATION PROGRAM

APPENDIX B

Maps



Project Location: Map of the Houston Area



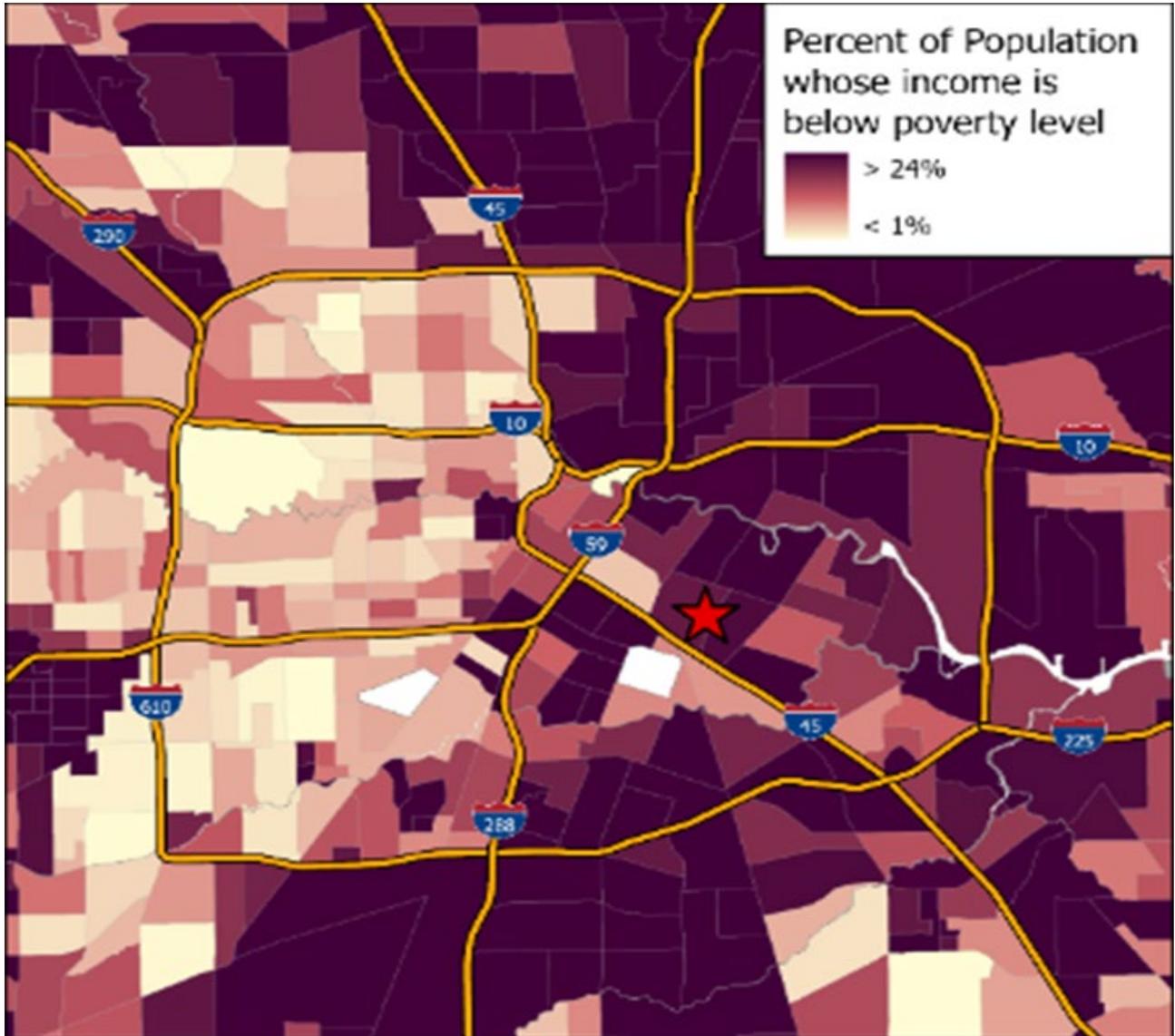


Project Location: Map of Houston's East End Triangle with Project Sites



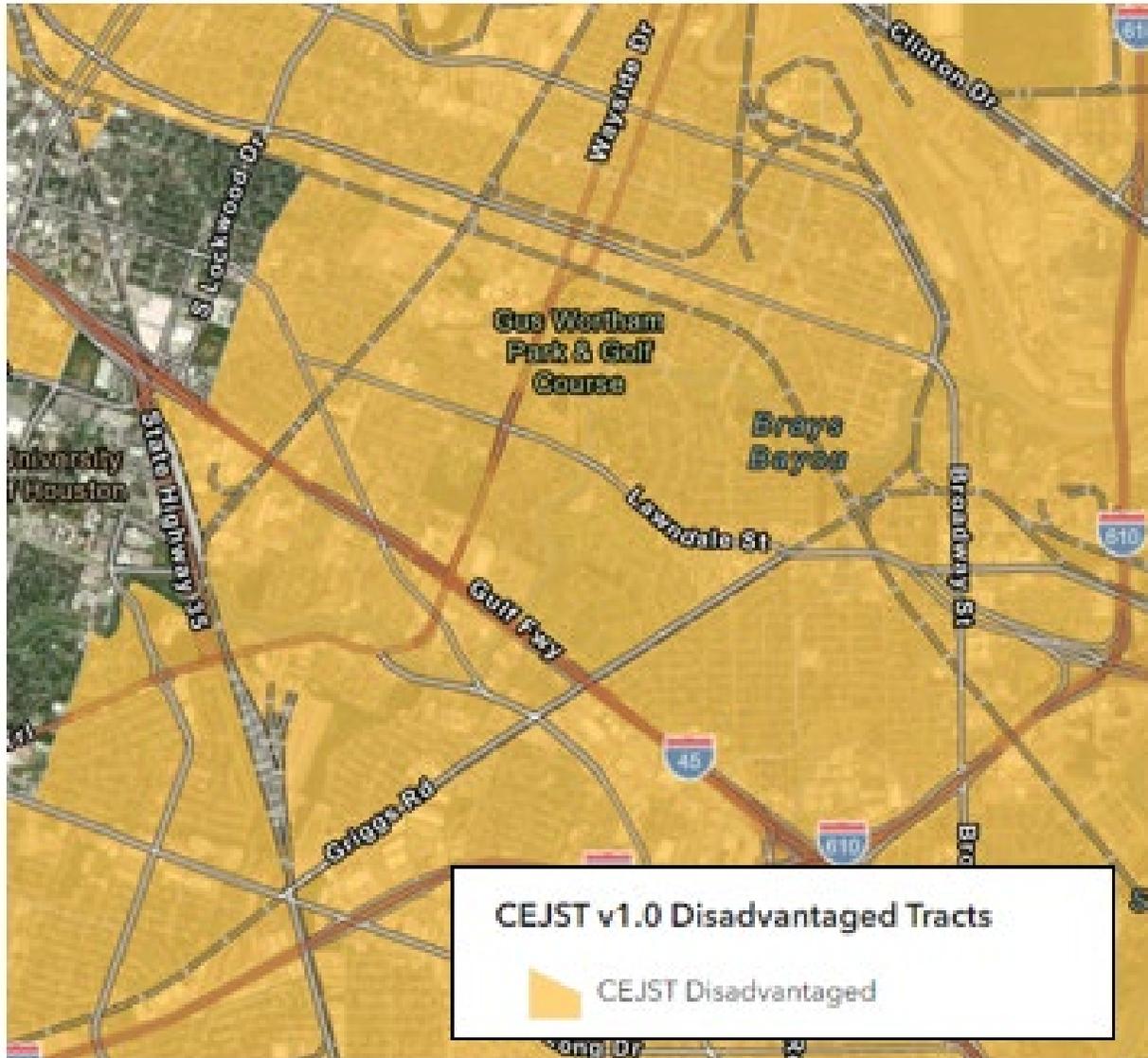


Project Location: Justice 40, Percent Below Poverty



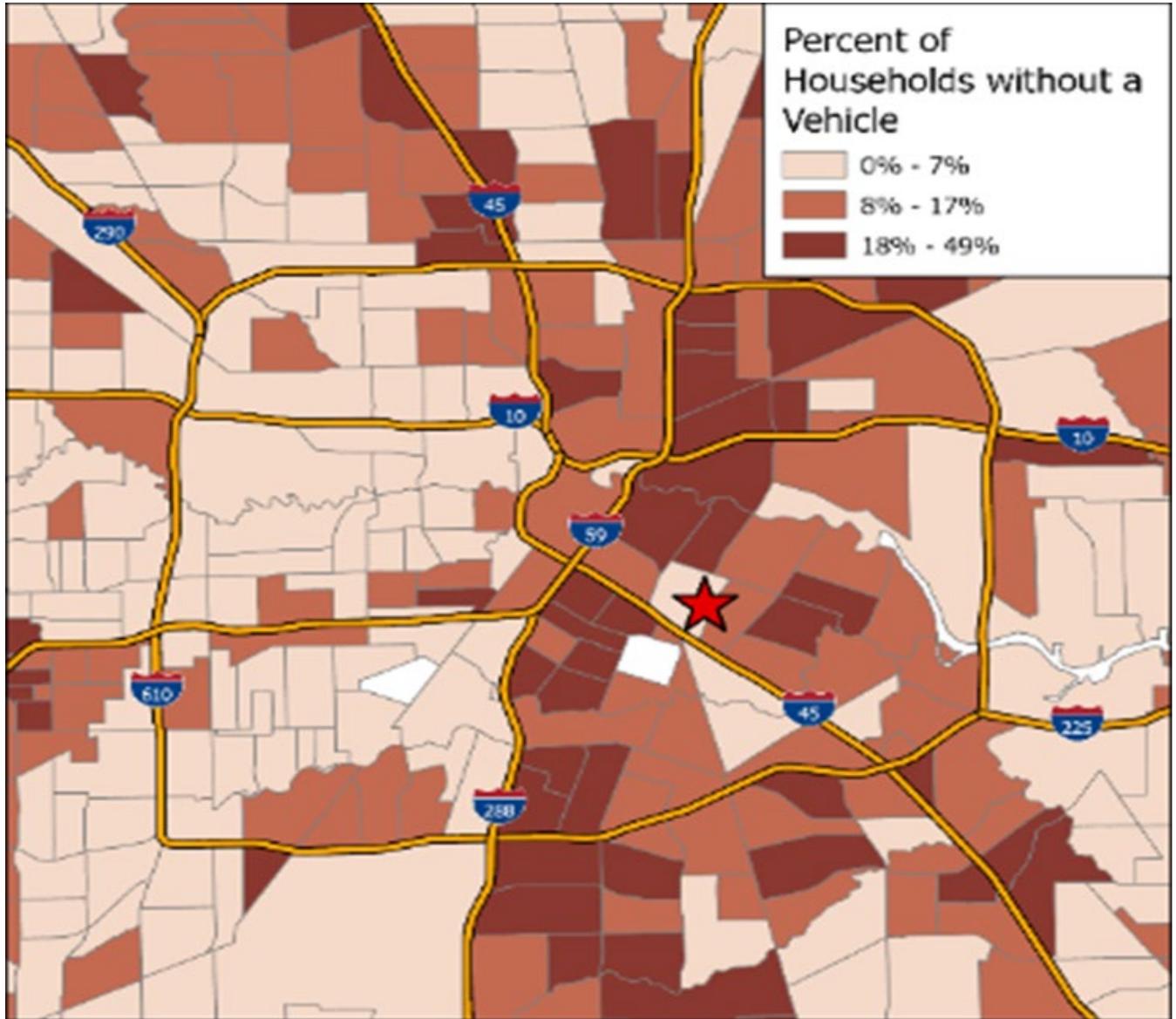


Project Location: CJEST Disadvantaged Tracts, National Results ETC Explorer



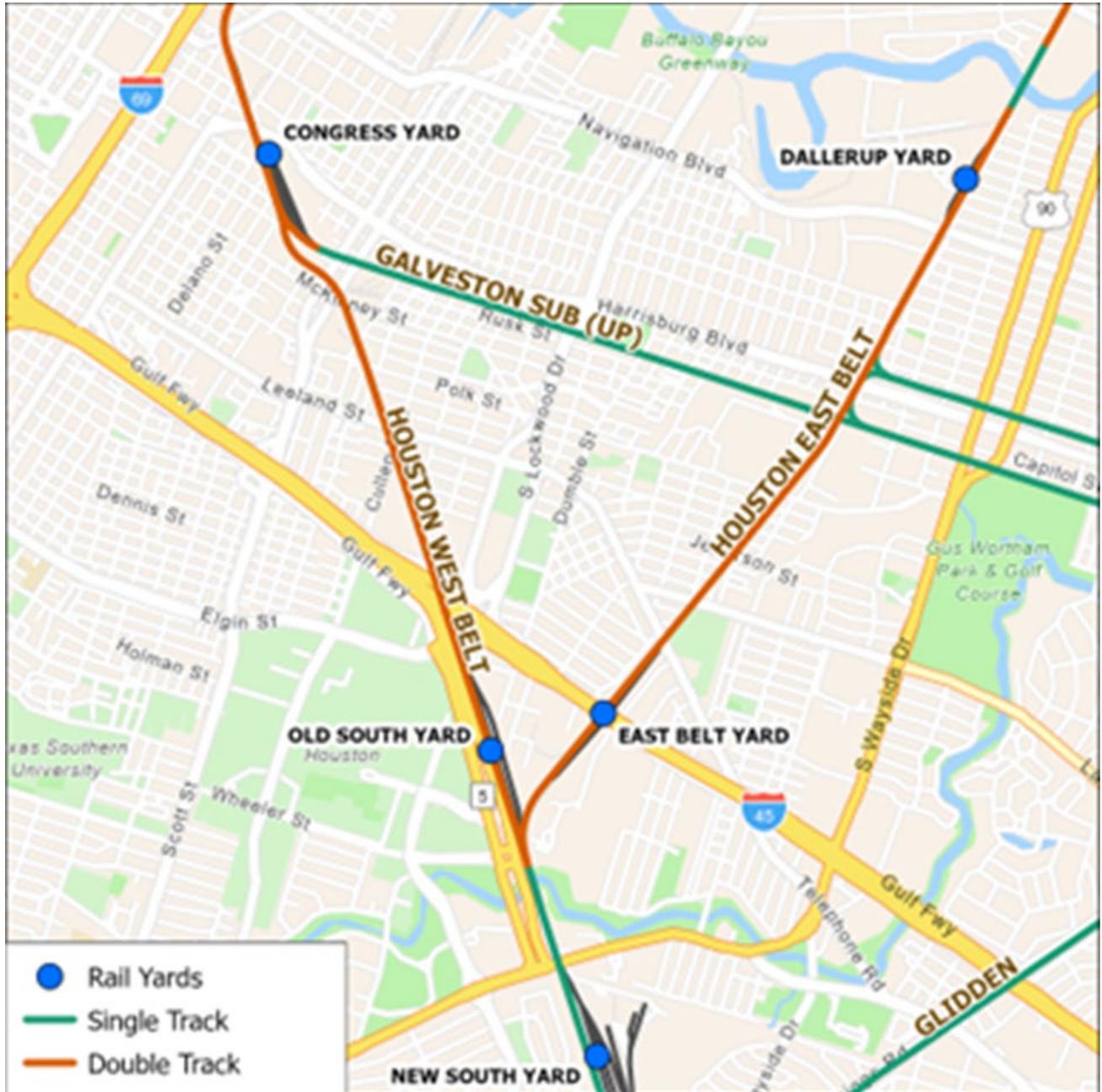


Project Location: Justice 40, Households without a Vehicle



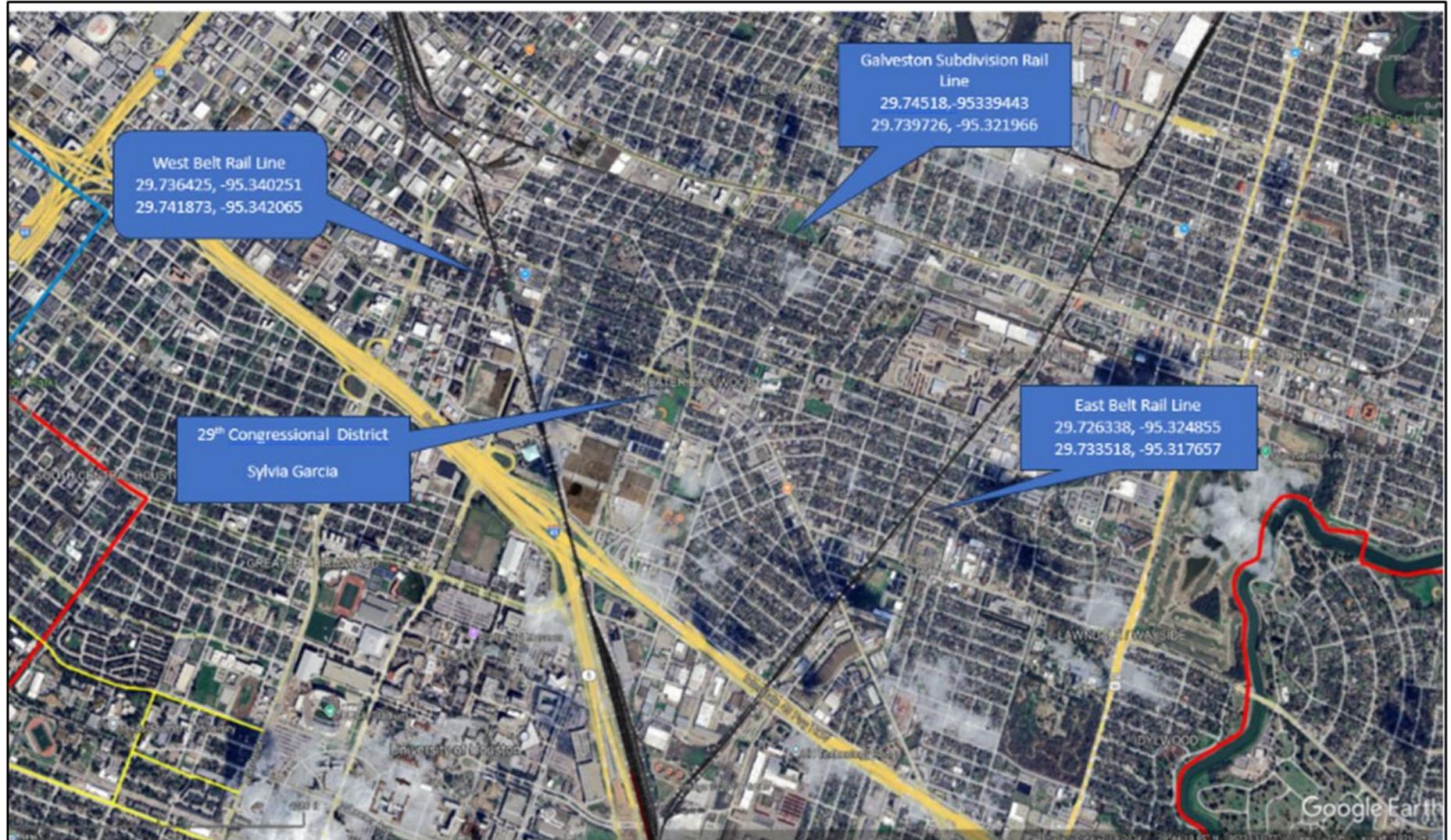


Project Location: Rail Yards and Rail Lines



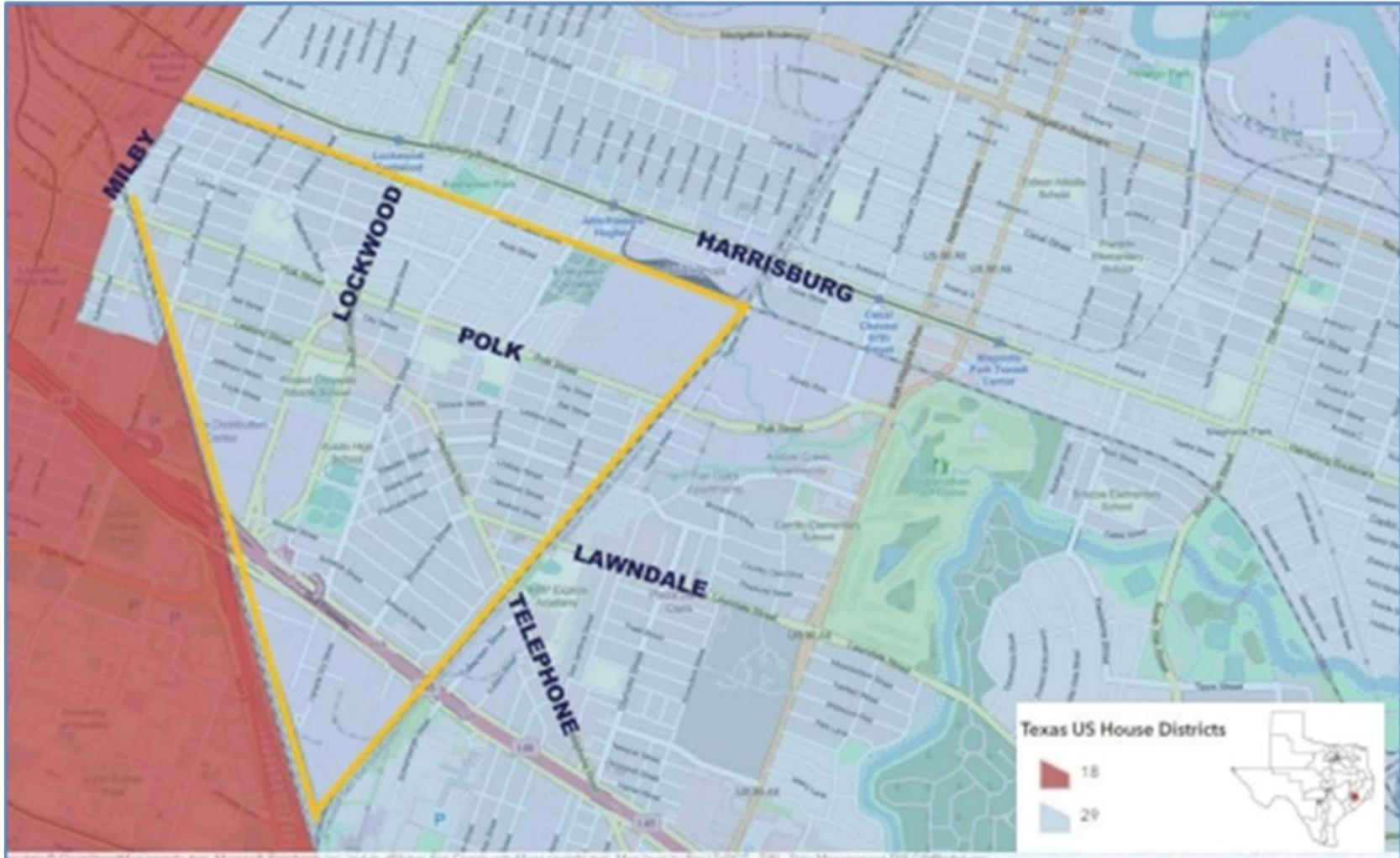


Project Location: Geospatial with Congressional District



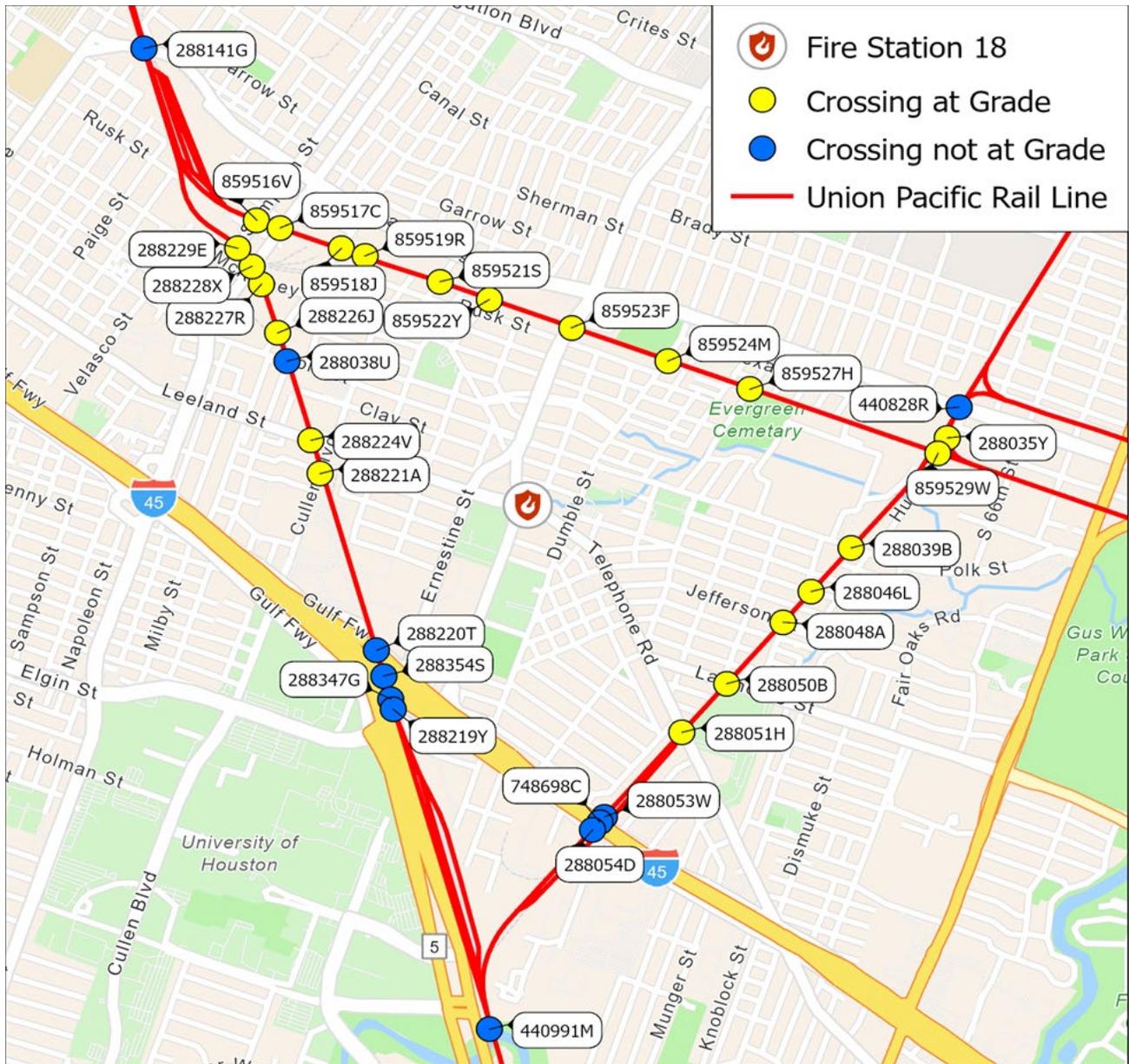


Project Location: Texas US House District



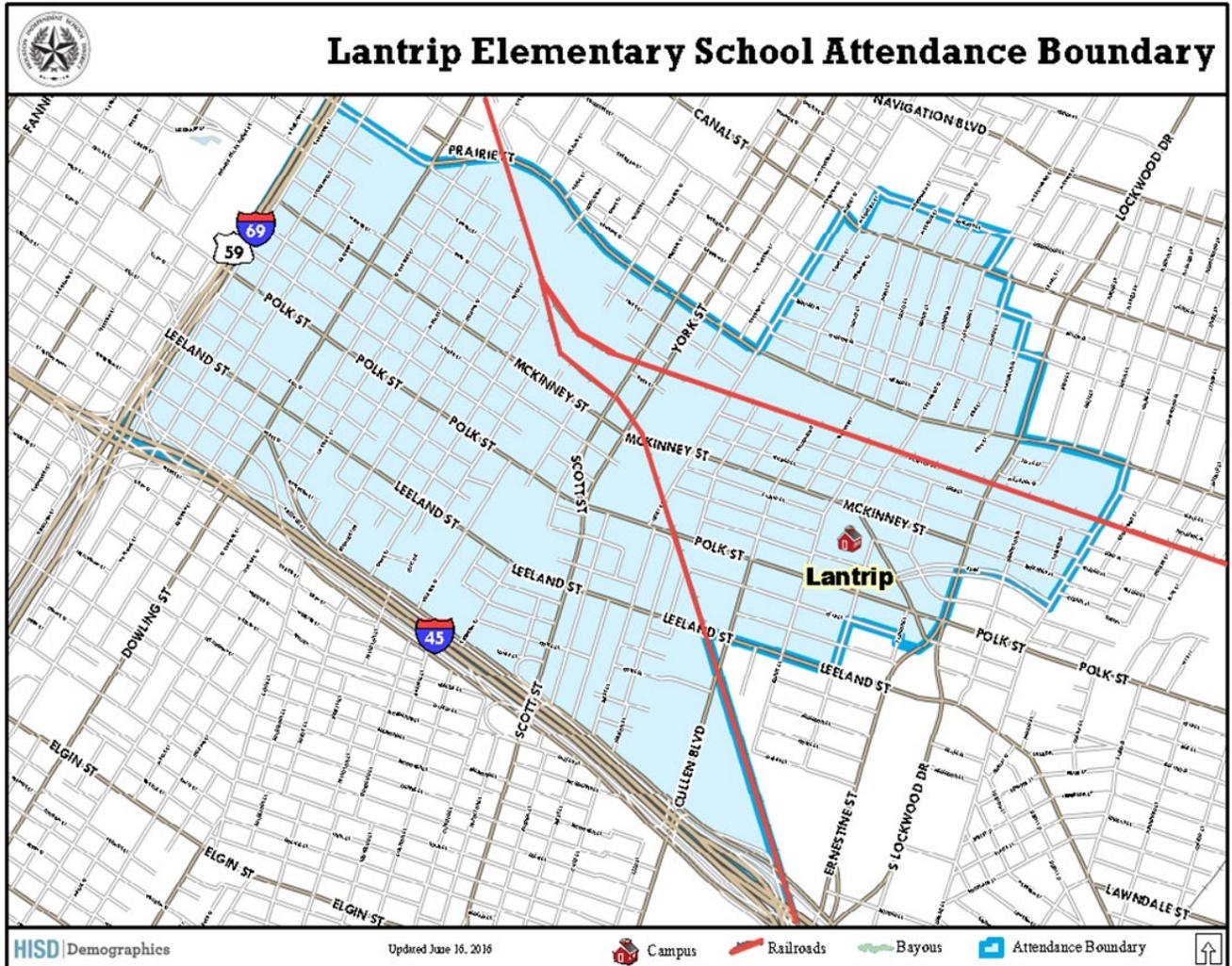


Project Location: Crossings Information and Emergency Services



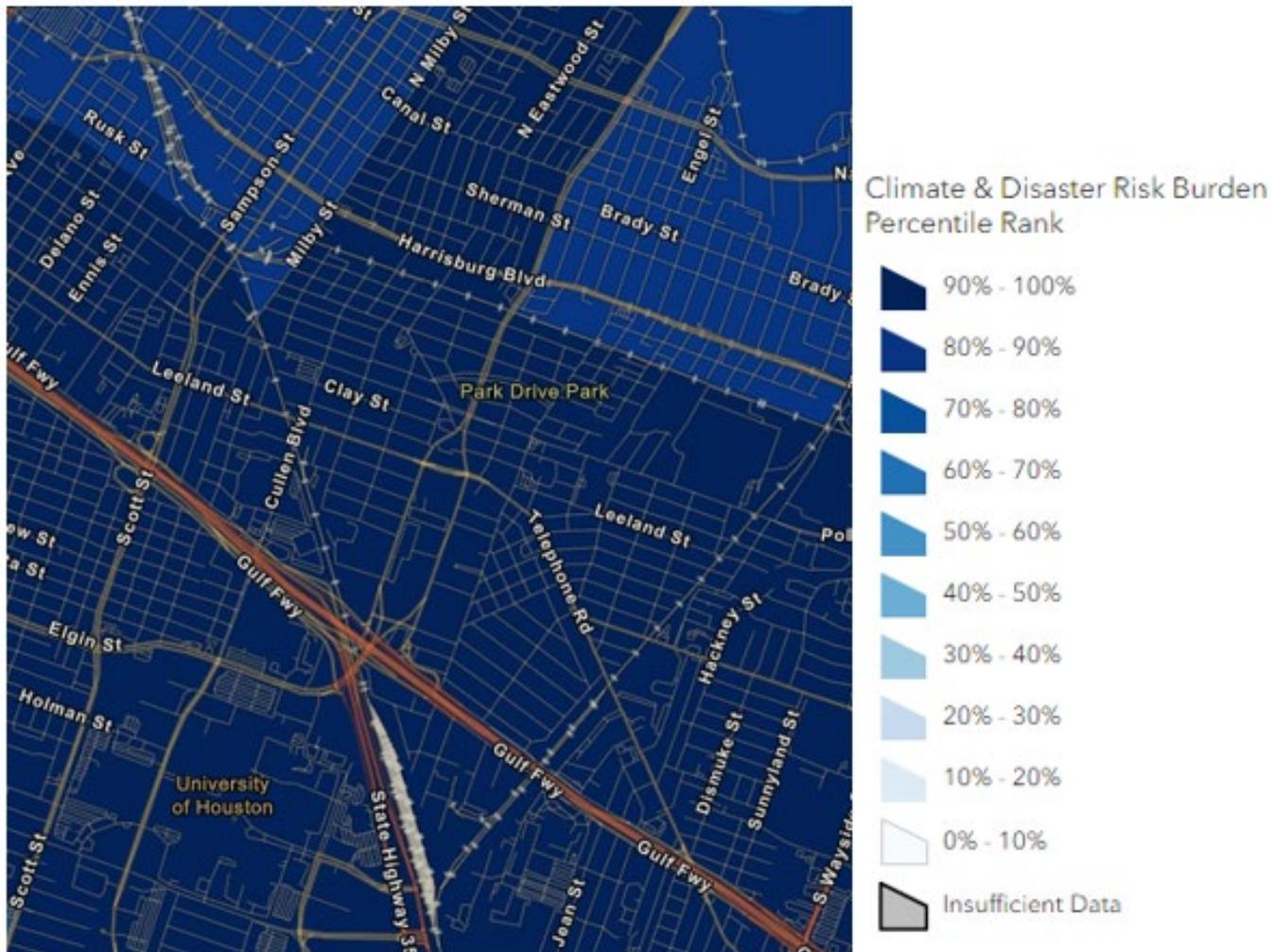


Project Location: Elementary School Boundary



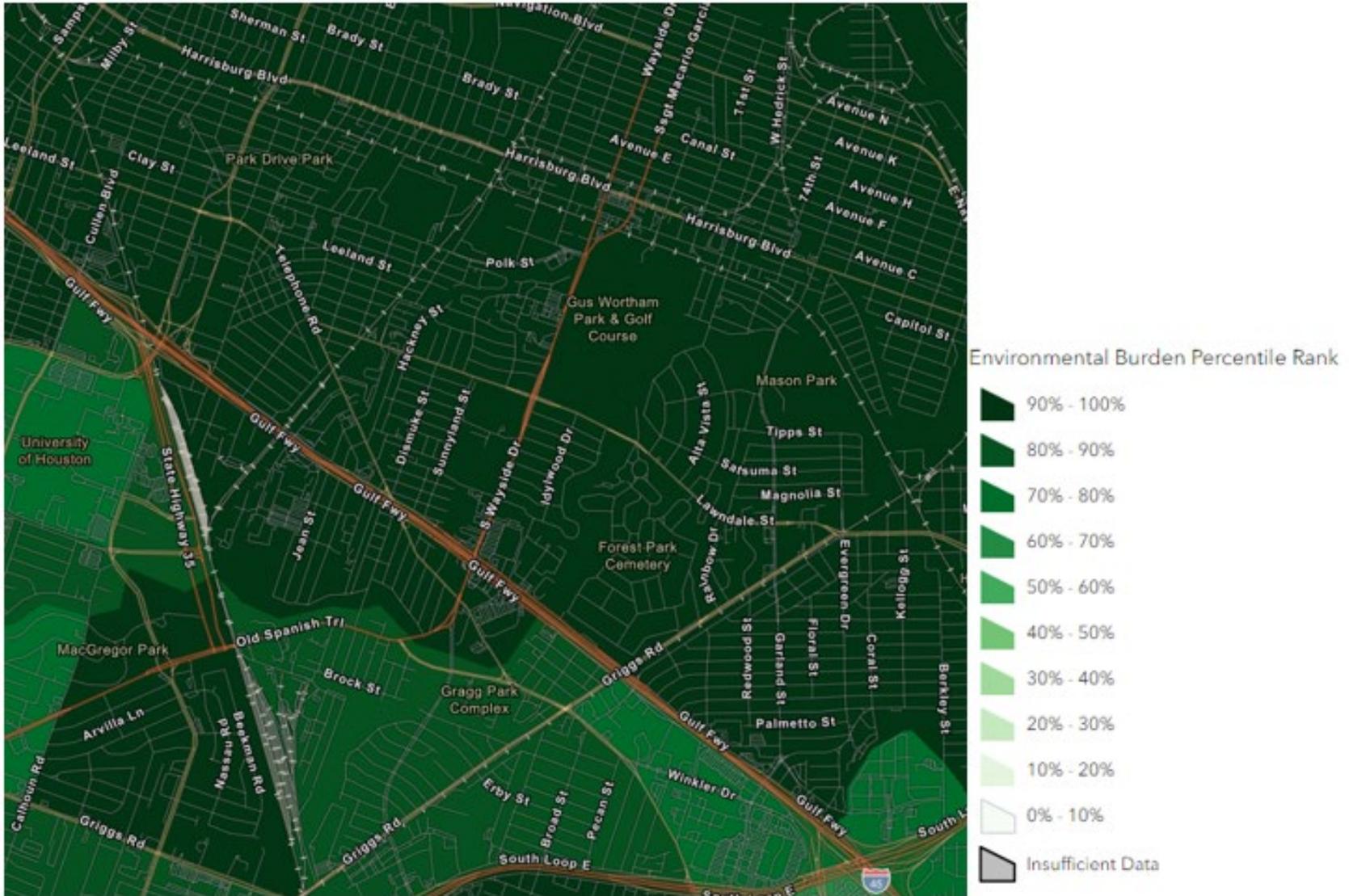


Project Location: Climate & Disaster Risk Burden Percentile Rank, National Results ETC Explorer



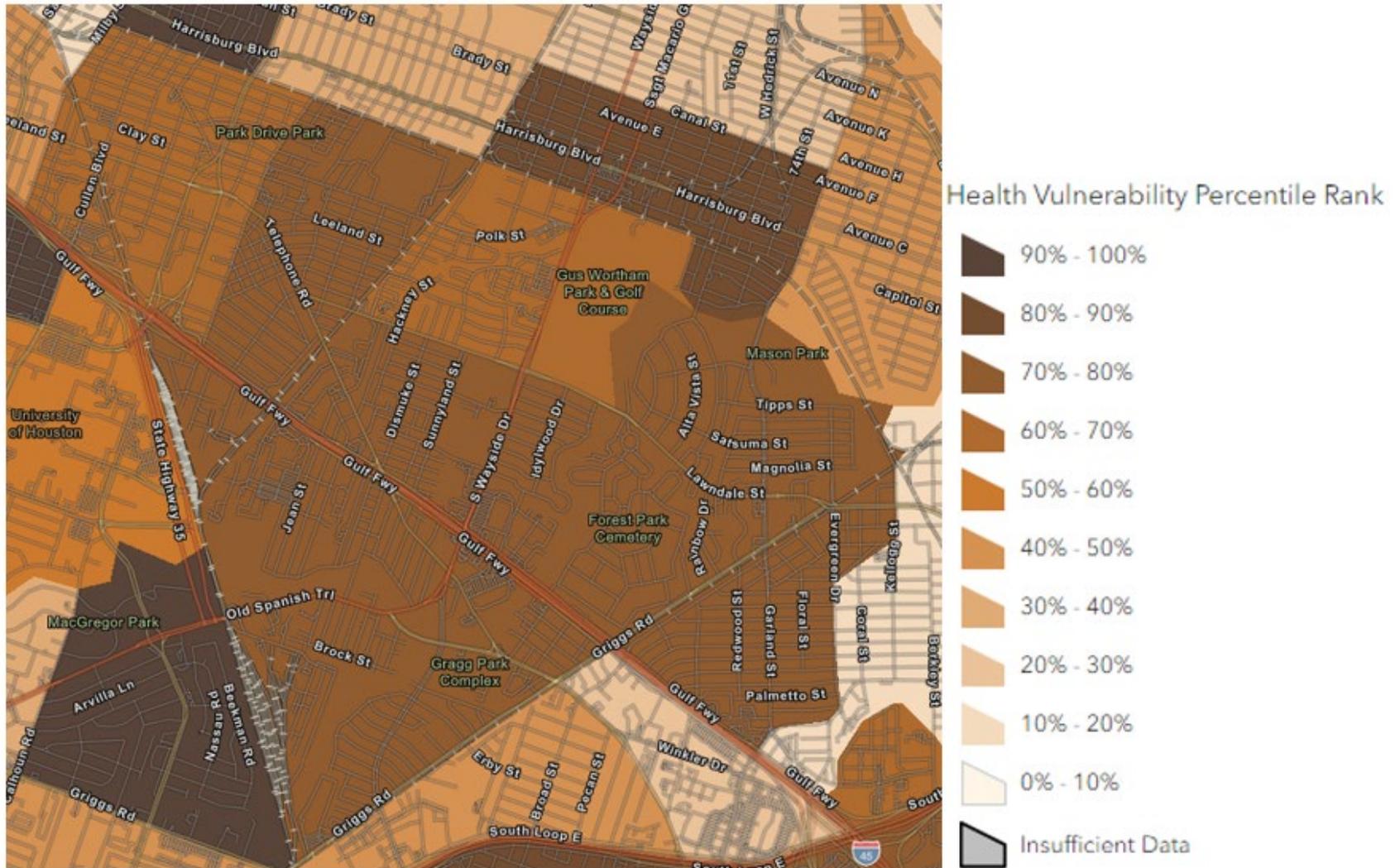


Project Location: Environmental Burden Percentile Ranked, National Results ETC Explorer



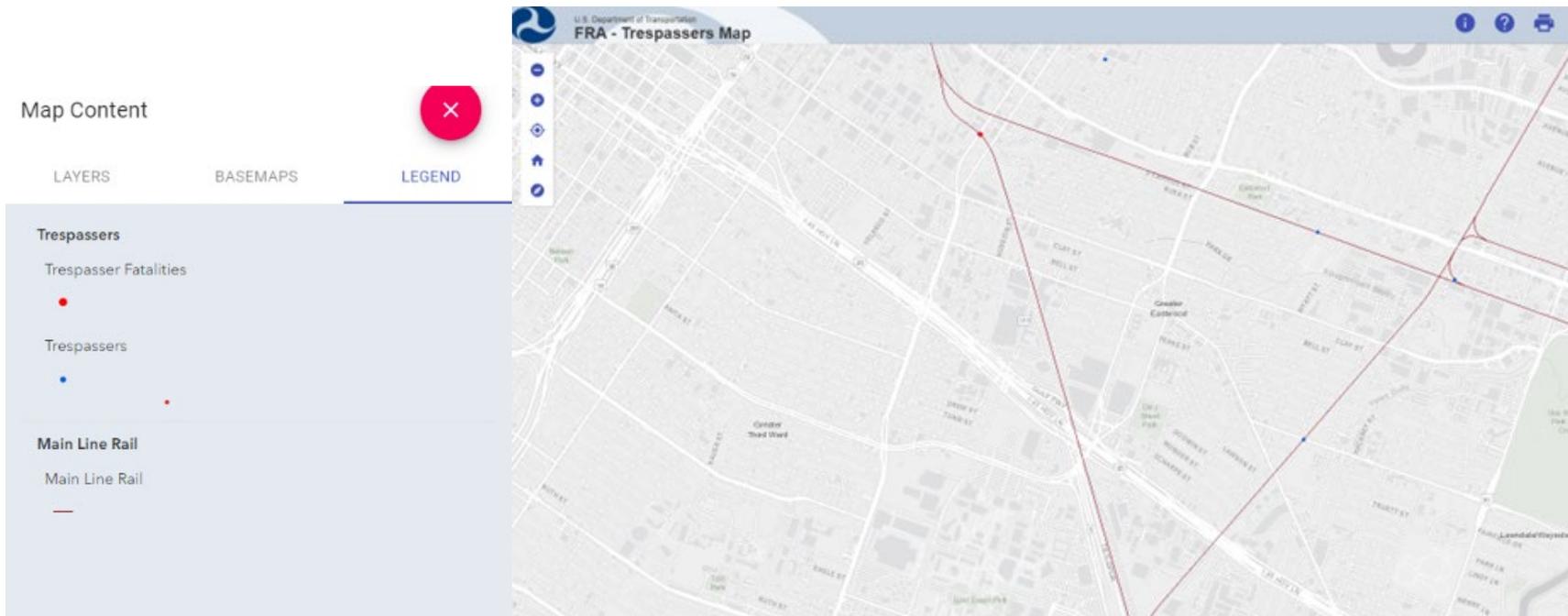


Project Location: Health Vulnerability Percentile Ranked, National Results ETC Explorer





Project Location: FRA Trespassers and Trespassing Fatalities





FY 2023-2024 RAILROAD CROSSING ELIMINATION PROGRAM

APPENDIX C

Scope of Work



Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program

Project Planning Statement of Work-Harris County

Task 1: Project Administration and Management- HCED will conduct the administrative and management of the RCE grant planning project using HCED project management staff to oversee the qualified consultant.

Subtask-1.0: Grant Planning Project administration: A consultant will be hired to manage and administer the grant planning project with HCED project management staff overseeing the consultant and planning project tasks.

Subtask-1.1: RCE Grant management: HCED grant management staff will manage the grant project agreements, project compliance, reporting, and other grant related administrative tasks.

Subtask-1.2: Grant Project Management Plan: HCED project management staff will work with the consultant to create a grant project management plan to be followed during the grant planning project implementation.

Task 1 Deliverables:

1. Annual Project Management Plan (PMP)
2. Quarterly Progress Reports
3. Annual Required Federal Documentation

Task 2- Purpose, Need, and Community Engagement: The proposed planning project will complete an analysis to determine the needs and opportunities of the project through a thorough needs assessment that will produce a well-developed purpose and needs statement.

Subtask 2.0: Define the problem and the needs by working with community, stakeholders, and other community agencies and organizations.

- Activity: Coordinate with stakeholders and community leaders to develop stakeholder meetings.
- Activity: Work with stakeholders to create and coordinate outreach to the larger public through community engagement processes to collect feedback.

Subtask 2.1: Define processes for community engagement to develop public innovative engagement strategies and tools that will provide feedback for the proposed project.

- Activity: Provide innovative public engagement strategies.
- Activity: Provide a minimum of 3 meetings for the public.
- Activity: Provide various opportunities and modes for public interaction/engagement and feedback collection methods.

Subtask 2.2: Examine and analyze the existing conditions in the proposed project area.

- Activity: Examine and analyze train operations.



- Activity: Examine and analyze dangers and safety as it relates to rail activity.

Task 2 Deliverables:

1. Quarterly Progress Report to include meeting materials for community meetings, stakeholder meetings, and community events.
2. Community Engagement Plan
3. Analysis Report of Community Comments and Feedback

Task 3-Project Planning and Consideration of Alternatives: The proposed planning project will perform case studies with collected data to make recommendations for conceptual designs and for the consideration of project alternatives.

Subtask 3.1: Examine and analyze previous plans to determine the impacts that other projects may have or have had on the project locations as they relate to the current issues.

- Activity: Examine and analyze regional plans, previous proposals, and other related documentation.
- Activity: Examine and analyze the North Houston Highway Improvement Project to take place in Houston, Harris County

Subtask 3.2: Engage community stakeholders to collect information and data to understand the issues created by railroad track traffic, explore funding support for future efforts, and understand the impacts to emergency operations and to school daily activities in the proposed project area.

- Activity: Examine and analyze impacts to emergency operations
- Activity: Examine and analyze impacts to project area schools

Subtask 3.3: Examine and analyze previous proposals and plans to understand current grade crossing efforts and strategies.

- Activity: Examine and analyze University BRT-Lockwood
- Activity: Examine and analyze Gulf Coast Rail District plans for Cullen/Lockwood.
- Activity: Examine and analyze TxDOT, Houston-Beaumont Study Phase II
- Activity: Examine and analyze City of Houston's Safe Streets for All Rail Safety Grant

Subtask 3.4: Perform a case study of known best practices and successful projects of other similar communities.

Task 3 Deliverable:

1. Report of Methods, Tools, and Data Results

Task 4- Recommendations and Conceptual Engineering: Provide recommendations that include quantitative benefits for the community and railroad that can be used for the next lifecycle stage for the proposed project.

Subtask 4.0: Develop a prioritization framework for recommendations.



Subtask 4.1: Identify and develop the short, medium, and long-term solutions for each project location.

Subtask 4.2: Completion of conceptual engineering and other designs that include preliminary engineering cost estimates.

Task 4 Deliverables:

1. Technical Memo Recommendations and Considerations for Alternatives.
2. Completed Conceptual Engineering components.

Task 5- Completion of Final Plan and Project Closeout

Subtask 5.0: Final review of all planning chapters and comments by HCED and partners and completion of the plan with consultants.

Subtask 5.1: Final billing and submission of all project materials to FRA for Project closeout in accordance with CFR 200.

Task 5 Deliverables:

1. Funding Plan for all recommendations
2. Timeline for implementation of all recommendations
3. Finalized Rail Plan for the East End Rail Triangle that includes, project development and final design and construction recommendations.

Performance Measures:

Outcome	Description	Measurement	Reporting	Deliverable(s)
<p><i>Successful Administration of Grant Project</i></p> <p><i>Completed Plan with Recommendations for Lifecycle Stage 2</i></p>	<p><i>Administration of RCE Grant Planning Project that produces recommendations and conceptual engineering to allow entering into Lifecycle Stage 2 for Project</i></p>	<p><i>Project on Time, Budget, and in Scope</i></p>	<p><i>Quarterly</i></p> <p><i>Annually</i></p>	<p><i>Progress Reports</i></p> <p><i>Project Management Plan</i></p>
<p><i>Well-developed Purpose and Needs Statement</i></p>	<p><i>Feedback collected from the community to develop needs</i></p>	<p><i>Number of community meetings</i></p>	<p><i>Quarterly</i></p>	<p><i>Progress Report</i></p>



HOUSTON EAST END
TRIANGLE R.A.I.L.S. PLAN

	<i>and purpose statement</i>	<i>Number of stakeholder Meetings</i> <i>Number of community events</i>		<i>Community Comments and Feedback</i>
<i>Data results used to complete meta-analysis from past studies and plans to complete recommendations and explore consideration for alternatives.</i>	<i>Analysis of various case studies, collected data, previous studies and plans to determine recommendations and consideration of Alternatives for planning project and for Lifecycle Stage 2 progress.</i>	<i>Completed Analysis Data Report</i>	<i>Annual</i>	<i>Report of Methods, Tools, and Results</i>
<i>Completed Plan for the East End Railroad Triangle to be used to make rail improvements and improve the quality of life for East End Residents.</i>	<i>Recommendations and Conceptual Engineering that will show quantitative benefits for the community and railroad, that can also progress the plan to the next Lifecycle stage.</i>	<i>Final Plan for the East End Railroad Triangle with Recommendations and Conceptual Engineering designs.</i>	<i>Annual</i>	<i>Final Plan that will be submitted for entry into the MPO TIP and the STIP.</i>



FY 2023-2024 RAILROAD CROSSING ELIMINATION PROGRAM

APPENDIX D

Articles 4-7



Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program

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- Activity: Examine and analyze train operations.
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Subtask 3.4: Perform a case study of known best practices and successful projects of other similar communities.

Task 3 Deliverable:

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<p><i>Well-developed Purpose and Needs Statement</i></p>	<p><i>Feedback collected from the community to develop needs</i></p>	<p><i>Number of community meetings</i></p>	<p><i>Quarterly</i></p>	<p><i>Progress Report</i></p>



HOUSTON EAST END
TRIANGLE R.A.I.L.S. PLAN

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<i>Data results used to complete meta-analysis from past studies and plans to complete recommendations and explore consideration for alternatives.</i>	<i>Analysis of various case studies, collected data, previous studies and plans to determine recommendations and consideration of Alternatives for planning project and for Lifecycle Stage 2 progress.</i>	<i>Completed Analysis Data Report</i>	<i>Annual</i>	<i>Report of Methods, Tools, and Results</i>
<i>Completed Plan for the East End Railroad Triangle to be used to make rail improvements and improve the quality of life for East End Residents.</i>	<i>Recommendations and Conceptual Engineering that will show quantitative benefits for the community and railroad, that can also progress the plan to the next Lifecycle stage.</i>	<i>Final Plan for the East End Railroad Triangle with Recommendations and Conceptual Engineering designs.</i>	<i>Annual</i>	<i>Final Plan that will be submitted for entry into the MPO TIP and the STIP.</i>

NOT INTENDED FOR EXECUTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION

ARTICLE 5: AWARD DATES AND ESTIMATED PROJECT SCHEDULE

5.1 Award Dates

Budget Period End Date: [This is the same as the date in Section 5 on the Agreement cover sheet]

Period of Performance End Date: [This is the same as the end date in Section 4 of the Agreement cover sheet]

5.2 Estimated Project Schedule

Milestones associated with this Agreement are identified in Table 5-A: Estimated Project Schedule. The Recipient will complete these milestones to FRA’s satisfaction by the Schedule Date, subject to Article 5 of Attachment 1 of this Agreement. The Recipient will notify FRA in writing when it believes it has achieved the milestone.

Note: The Estimated Project Schedule should identify significant milestones in Project advancement, such as completion of tasks. It should not include incremental steps toward meeting those milestones, which should instead be included in the detailed schedule provided as part of the PMP. Section 5.3 of Attachment 1 of this Agreement provides that the Recipient will request an amendment to update the Estimated Project Schedule if the Recipient’s estimate for a milestone changes to a date that is more than six months after the date listed.

Instructions: Illustrative milestones are identified in the below table. Provide additional or alternative milestones as appropriate for the Project.

Table 5-A: Estimated Project Schedule

Milestone	Schedule Date
Project Management Plan	February 28 th 2026
Community Engagement Plan	April 31 st 2026
Data Analysis Report for Meta-analysis	December 30 th 2026
Technical Memo-recommendations and alternative considerations & Conceptual Engineering	August 31 st 2027
Final Plan & Deliverables; closeout	September 31 st 2027

NOT INTENDED FOR EXECUTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION

ARTICLE 6: AWARD AND PROJECT FINANCIAL INFORMATION

6.1 Award Amount

Agreement Federal Funds: **\$2,000,000**

*Instructions: If the award is a phased funding agreement, also include: **Not Applicable***

Contingent Commitment: **NA**

6.2 Federal Obligation Information

Federal Obligation Type: **Single**

6.3 Federal Authorization and Funding Source.

Authorizing Statute: **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs (IIJA), Sec. 22104, Public Law 117-58 (November 15,2021).**

Appropriation: **Funded by the 2023 and 2024 advance appropriations in Title VIII of Division J of the IIJA.**

6.4 Funding Availability

Program funding that is obligated under this Agreement remains available until **Expended.**

6.5 Approved Project Budget

The estimated total Project cost under this Agreement is **\$2,500,000**

FRA will contribute a maximum of 80% percent of the total Project cost, not to exceed the Agreement Federal Funds in Section 6.1 of this Attachment 2. FRA will fund the Project at the lesser amount of the Agreement Federal Funds or the FRA maximum contribution percentage of total Project costs.

The Recipient will contribute **\$500,000** in Agreement Non-Federal Funds. Recipient's Agreement Non-Federal Funds are comprised of cash contributions.

The Recipient will complete the Project to FRA's satisfaction within the Approved Project Budget, subject to Article 5 of Attachment 1 of this Agreement.

Instructions: Complete Tables 6-A and 6-B to identify the Approved Project Budget by Task and by Source. Remove any rows or columns that are not applicable or note in the table that those rows/columns are not applicable. Both tables may need to be modified or expanded for more complex projects, or, for example, to identify more than one source of non-Federal funds.

NOT INTENDED FOR EXECUTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION

Table 6-A: Approved Project Budget by Task

Task #	Task Title	Agreement Federal Funds	Agreement Non-Federal Funds	[Other Federal Funds]	[Other Non-Federal Funds]	Total
1	Project Administration and Management	\$ 200,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 0	\$0	\$ 250,000
2	Purpose and Need Development	\$ 400,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 500,000
3	Project Planning and Consideration of Engineering	\$ 600,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 750,000
4	Recommendations and Conceptual Engineering	\$ 800,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$1,000,000
Total		\$ 2,000,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	Total Project Cost: \$ 2,500,000

Table 6-B: Approved Project Budget by Source

Funding Source	Total Amount	Percentage of Total Project Cost
Federal Share	\$2,000,000	80%
Agreement Federal Funds		
Agreement Non-Federal Funds	\$500,000	20%
Harris County (Local)	\$300,000	
City of Houston (Local)	\$200,000	
[Other Non-Federal Funds]	\$0	0%

6.6 Pre-Award Costs

Instructions: If the Recipient has not incurred advance or pre-award costs, include the following:

NOT INTENDED FOR EXECUTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION

None. Consistent with 2 C.F.R. part 200, costs incurred before the date of this Agreement are not allowable costs under this award. FRA will neither reimburse those costs under this award nor consider them as a non-Federal cost-sharing contribution to this award.

*Instructions: If the Recipient has incurred advance or pre-award costs for the Project consistent with 2 C.F.R. part 200, include and complete the following: **Not Applicable***

On [insert date], FRA provided pre-award authority for cost incurrence for the following costs for the Project in response to Recipient’s request:

Task #	Task Name	Agreement Federal Funds	Agreement Non-Federal Funds	Total Cost
1	NA	\$NA	\$NA	\$NA
Total		\$	\$	\$

The above pre-award costs were necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work and were incurred directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of this Agreement.

6.7 Phased Funding Agreement

Instructions: If this Agreement is not a phased funding agreement, include the following:

Not Applicable.

*Instructions: If this Agreement is a phased funding agreement, include the following: **Not Applicable***

This Agreement is a phased funding agreement under 49 U.S.C. § 24911(g)(2). The maximum amount of Federal financial assistance ((49 U.S.C. § 24911(g)(2)(B)(ii)) for the Project will not exceed the maximum Federal share (80 percent) of the total costs of the Project (49 U.S.C. § 24911(f)(2)).

The total amount of funds that may be obligated under this Agreement is \$[NA], which is the sum of the Agreement Federal Funds and the Contingent Commitment identified in Section 6.1 of this Attachment 2.

This Agreement obligates the Agreement Federal Funds, which is the same as the total amount of funds described in Table 6-C: Obligation by Fiscal Year. Through this Agreement, FRA agrees to obligate the Contingent Commitment pursuant to the terms in Section 6.7. FRA scheduled and allocated the Contingent Commitment as described in Table 6-D: Contingent Commitment by Fiscal Year.

This Agreement does not obligate Federal funds, other than the Agreement Federal Funds identified in Section 6.1 of this Attachment 2. The Contingent Commitment is not an obligation of the Government.

Under this phased funding agreement, the Recipient may incur costs for eligible activities as is reasonably necessary to advance the Project prior to obligation of the Contingent Commitment, without

NOT INTENDED FOR EXECUTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION

prejudice to future reimbursement of the costs, to the extent that such costs are incurred in accordance with all applicable Federal requirements and this Agreement.

To request that FRA obligate the scheduled portion of the Contingent Commitment as described in Table 6-D, the Recipient will request an amendment to this Agreement as provided in Article 15 of Attachment 1 of this Agreement. The Recipient will not request such an amendment more than once every 12 months. Such amounts are subject to the terms and conditions of this Agreement upon obligation.

Unless otherwise determined by the Administrator, FRA’s obligation of all or portions of the Contingent Commitment is subject to the availability of Federal funds, program authority, and FRA’s determination of satisfactory performance by the Recipient under this Agreement. In assessing performance, FRA will consider whether:

- (a) the Recipient is in compliance with the terms and conditions of this Agreement;
- (b) the Recipient confirms that all statements and representations made in the Federal System for Awards Management, in the Application, and in this Agreement are true and correct as of the request to obligate contingently committed funds; and
- (c) FRA has not terminated this Agreement under Article 10 of Attachment 1 of this Agreement nor provided notice of intent to terminate under Article 9 of Attachment 1 of this Agreement.

Instructions: Table 6-C identifies the amounts obligated by fiscal year and the total amounts obligated under this Agreement. Table 6-D identifies the anticipated allocation of contingent commitment by amount and fiscal year of anticipated appropriation. As funds are obligated and this Agreement is amended, the amount and fiscal year should be removed from Table 6-D and added to Table 6-C.

Table 6-C: Obligation by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year of Funding Source	Amount
2024	[\$2,500,000]
Total	[\$2,500,000]

Table 6-D: Contingent Commitment by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year of Appropriation	Amount
2022	\$0
2023	[NA]
2024	[NA]
2025	[NA]

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2026	[NA]
Total	[NA]

Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 24911(g)(2)(C), if the Recipient does not carry out the Project for reasons within control of the Recipient, the Recipient will repay all Federal grant funds awarded for the Project from all Federal funding sources, for all Project activities, facilities, and equipment, plus reasonable interest and penalty charges allowable by law or established in this Agreement. For the avoidance of doubt, this clause does not restrict or otherwise limit FRA's ability to act under Article 9 or 10 of Attachment 1 of this Agreement.

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ARTICLE 7: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT INFORMATION

Table 7-A: Performance Measurement Table identifies the performance measures that this Project is expected to achieve. These performance measures will enable FRA to assess the Recipient’s progress in achieving grant program goals and objectives. The Recipient will report on these performance measures in accordance with the frequency and duration specified in Table 7-A.

Upon Project completion, the Recipient will submit reports comparing the actual Project performance of the new and or improved asset(s) against the pre-Project (baseline) performance and expected post-Project performance as described in Table 7-A. The Recipient will submit the performance measures report to the Project Manager in accordance with Table 7-A.

Table 7-A: Performance Measurement Table

Goal	Objective	Performance Measure	Description of Measure	Measurement	Reporting
Goal 1	To Administer a Successful Grant Planning Project	Quarterly percentage of project completion.	Examination of the Project schedule, budget, and scope to make sure project will be completed in time and in full. Percentage of project completion each quarter.	Pre-Project (Baseline) Performance as of: NONE, Planning	Frequency: Quarterly Progress Reports
				Expected Post-Project Performance: Final Plan to be used for lifecycle state 2.	Duration: 24 months
Goal 2	To create a well-developed purpose and needs statement with stakeholder and community engagement	Number of stakeholder meetings Number of community meetings and events	Report the number of meetings held in the community and with stakeholders to include, sign-in sheets, presentation materials, feedback results, and handouts.	Pre-Project (Baseline) Performance as of: NONE, planning	Frequency: At least 3 times
				Expected Post-Project Performance: Final Plan to be used for lifecycle state 2.	Duration: 6- 12 months
Goal 3	To complete project planning activities and to consider alternatives for rail crossing issues based on a meta-analysis of past documentation and data.	Completed report of Methods, Tools, and Data results.	A completed report of all collected data that was analyzed to contribute to strategies and recommendations for the completed plan.	Pre-Project (Baseline) Performance as of: 2024, current issues	Frequency: Annual
				Expected Post-Project Performance: Final Plan to be used for lifecycle state 2.	Duration: 12 months

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Goal	Objective	Performance Measure	Description of Measure	Measurement	Reporting
Goal 4	To compile recommendations in plan along with the conceptual engineering for the determined recommendations.	Completed technical memo for review.	The completion of a prioritization framework for recommendations, short-medium-and long-term solutions, and completion of conceptual engineering results.	Pre-Project (Baseline) Performance as of: NONE, planning	Frequency: Annual
				Expected Post-Project Performance: Final Plan to be used for lifecycle state 2.	Duration: 8 months
Goal	Objective	Performance Measure	Description of Measure	Measurement	Reporting
Goal 5	To compile and finalize the plan and submit to FRA.	Completed Plan.	Completed Plan for submission to FRA and for final closeout of project. Plan will be used to move to next lifecycle stage 2 and to amend into regional and state plan.	Pre-Project (Baseline) Performance as of: NONE, planning	Frequency: Annual
				Expected Post-Project Performance: Final Plan to be used for lifecycle state 2.	Duration: 4 months

Instruction: For construction projects, and other projects where FRA deems it appropriate, include the following:

The Recipient will prepare a Project Outcomes Report pursuant to Section 8.3 of Attachment 1 of this Agreement.



FY 2023-2024 RAILROAD CROSSING ELIMINATION PROGRAM

APPENDIX E

Performance Measure



**Future Implementation Performance Measures for the Last Stage of the FRA
Guidance Lifecycle Operations:**

Rail measures	Unit measure	Temporal	Primary administration goal	Secondary administration goal	Description
<i>Reduced safety incidents for Pedestrians and Motorist through the implementation of various safety improvements</i>	<i>Number of Pedestrian Trespassing Number of Pedestrian Injuries & fatalities Number of Vehicle accidents (both injuries & Fatalities)</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Equity and Barriers to Opportunity</i>	<i>The number of pedestrian and motorist incidents at the grade crossings addressed by the project. Comparison of actual versus baseline and expected post-project number of incidents.</i>
<i>Reduce Average Daily Minutes of Delay</i>	<i>Number of Delays at the project crossings Length of time of crossing delays</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Economic Strength</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Average amount of time trains blocks the grade crossings addressed by the project. Comparison of actual performance versus baseline and expected post-project performance.</i>
<i>Improved emergency vehicle response times due to reduced</i>	<i>Time/Trip numbers and emergency staff observations</i>	<i>Per trip/ observation</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Equity and Barriers to Opportunity</i>	<i>Measures how improvements impact emergency service vehicle</i>



HOUSTON EAST END
TRIANGLE R.A.I.L.S. PLAN

<i>blocked crossings</i>					<i>response operations. Comparison of actual performance versus baseline and expected post-performance.</i>
<i>Improve the flow of traffic and reduce congestion (reduce bottlenecks)</i> <i>Improve the flow of traffic and reduce barriers to necessary commercial and retail resources</i>	<i>Average daily minutes of delay experienced by vehicles</i>	<i>Minutes/Day</i>	<i>Economic Strength</i>	<i>Equity and Barriers to Opportunity</i>	<i>Traffic analysis can be performed to determine the average daily minutes of delay experienced by vehicles compared to baseline and expected post-project performance.</i>
<i>Reduce noise in underserved neighborhoods-noise pollution</i>	<i>Noise impacts and levels</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Climate and pollution</i>	<i>Equity and Barriers to Opportunity</i>	<i>Climate and noise pollution analysis to determine the level of noise made by train/rail traffic compared to baseline and expected post-project performance</i>



Confirmation

Thank you for submitting your grant application package via Grants.gov. Your application is currently being processed by the Grants.gov system. Once your submission has been processed, Grants.gov will send email messages to advise you of the progress of your application through the system. Over the next 24 to 48 hours, you should receive two emails. The first will confirm receipt of your application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system prior to transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected due to errors.

Please do not hit the back button on your browser.

If your application is successfully validated and subsequently retrieved by the grantor agency from the Grants.gov system, you will receive an additional email. This email may be delivered several days or weeks from the date of submission, depending on when the grantor agency retrieves it.

You may also monitor the processing status of your submission within the Grants.gov system by clicking on the "Track My Application" link listed at the end of this form.

Note: Once the grantor agency has retrieved your application from Grants.gov, you will need to contact them directly for any subsequent status updates. Grants.gov does not participate in making any award decisions.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: If you do not receive a receipt confirmation and either a validation confirmation or a rejection email message within 48 hours, please contact us. The Grants.gov Contact Center can be reached by email at support@grants.gov, or by telephone at 1-800-518-4726. Always include your Grants.gov tracking number in all correspondence. The tracking numbers issued by Grants.gov look like GRANTXXXXXXXXX.

If you have questions please contact the Grants.gov Contact Center: support@grants.gov
1-800-518-4726 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on federal holidays.

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Grants.gov Tracking Number:	GRANT14258375
UEI:	JFMKAENLGN81
Submitter's Name:	Lina Hidalgo
CFDA Number:	20.327
CFDA Description:	Railroad Crossing Elimination
Funding Opportunity Number:	FR-RCE-24-001
Funding Opportunity Description:	FY23-24 Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program
Agency Name:	DOT - Federal Railroad Administration
Application Name of this Submission:	Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant
Date/Time of Receipt:	Sep 23, 2024 11:24:20 PM EDT

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