Blocked Crossings

Blocked Crossings

FRA Regulatory Authority

on Blocked Crossings

- FRA has no regulations that specifically address the amount of time a train may block a crossing.
- FRA currently does not currently have a way to formally collect reports of blocked crossings from the public.

FRA Regulatory Authority

on Blocked Crossings (continued)

- Title 49 CFR section 234.209 prohibits trains, locomotives, or other rail equipment standing in the approach circuits from activating warning systems at grade crossings, unless the operations are part of normal train or switching movements.
- FRA currently collects data on reported blocked crossings through formal complaints received via correspondence and by information voluntarily submitted by several states.

State Laws on Blocked Crossings

- Although FRA does not have regulations that directly address blocked crossings, many states and Washington D.C. have enacted laws that set a maximum length of time that a stopped train may block a highway-rail grade crossing.

State Laws on Blocked Crossings

- State laws regarding the issue have been successfully challenged in court by the railroads on the grounds that those laws are pre-empted by the federal statute.
- As a result, some jurisdictions are reluctant to enforce those laws.

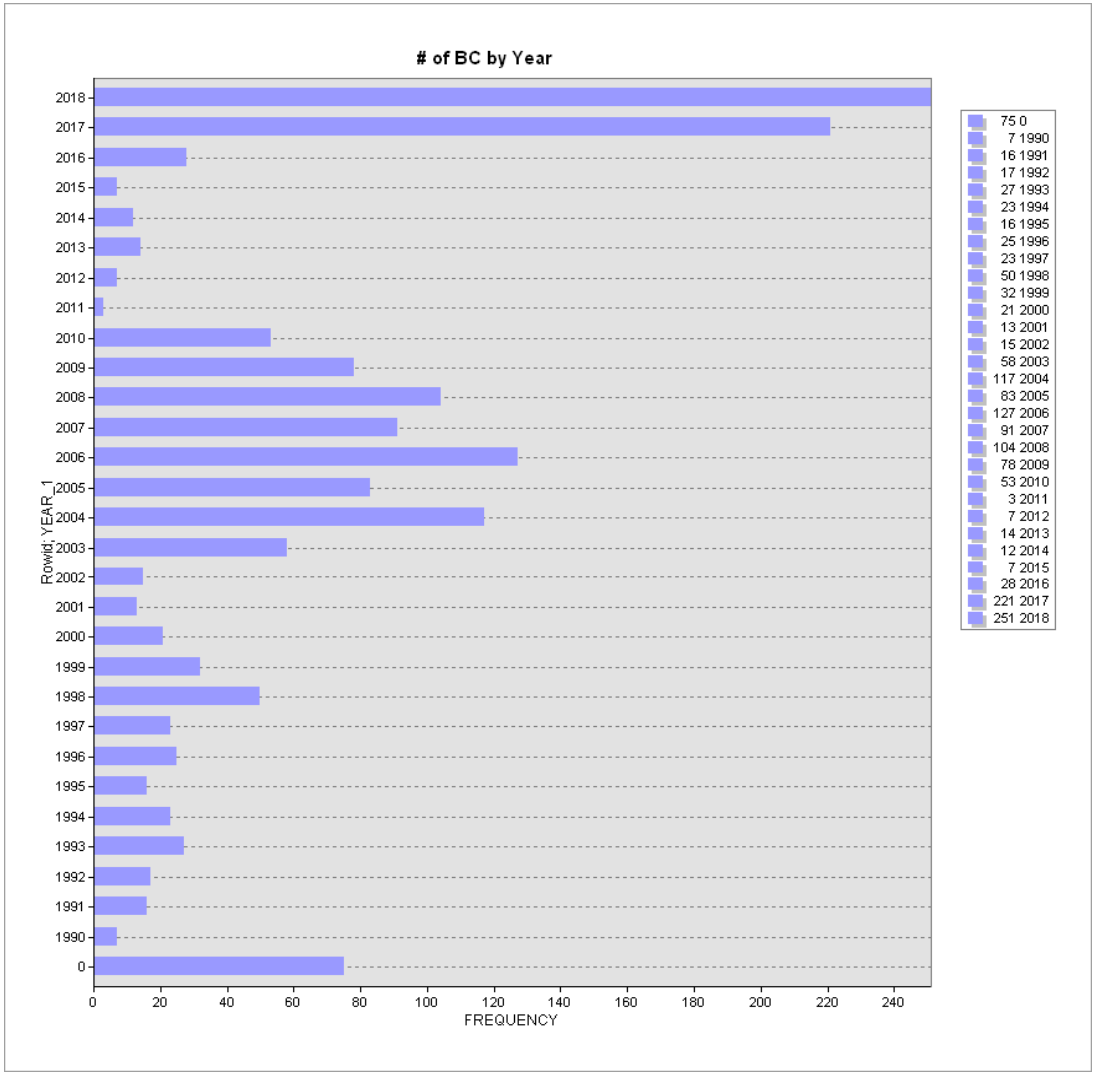
Voluntarily Reported Blocked Crossings

- FRA receives voluntarily submitted information in two ways.
  - Through formal complaint letters requiring FRA response
    - FRA received a total of 151 blocked crossing reports via formal correspondence since January 2017
    - Key data from letters extracted for GIS mapping
  - Voluntarily submitted monthly spreadsheets from 8 states
    - The following states are voluntarily providing monthly reports of blocked crossings since September 2017.
    - AZ, IL, MN, NY, OH, OR, TN, TX

Voluntarily Reported Blocked Crossings

- Total number of reports 2017-2019: (907)
- Total BGX Duration Reported: 89,710 minutes (1495 hours)
- State with highest frequency of reports:
  - Texas (497)
- State with the greatest blockage time:
  - Texas (40,335 minutes)
- City with highest frequency of reports:
  - Houston (95)
- Average blockage duration: 37.6 mins.

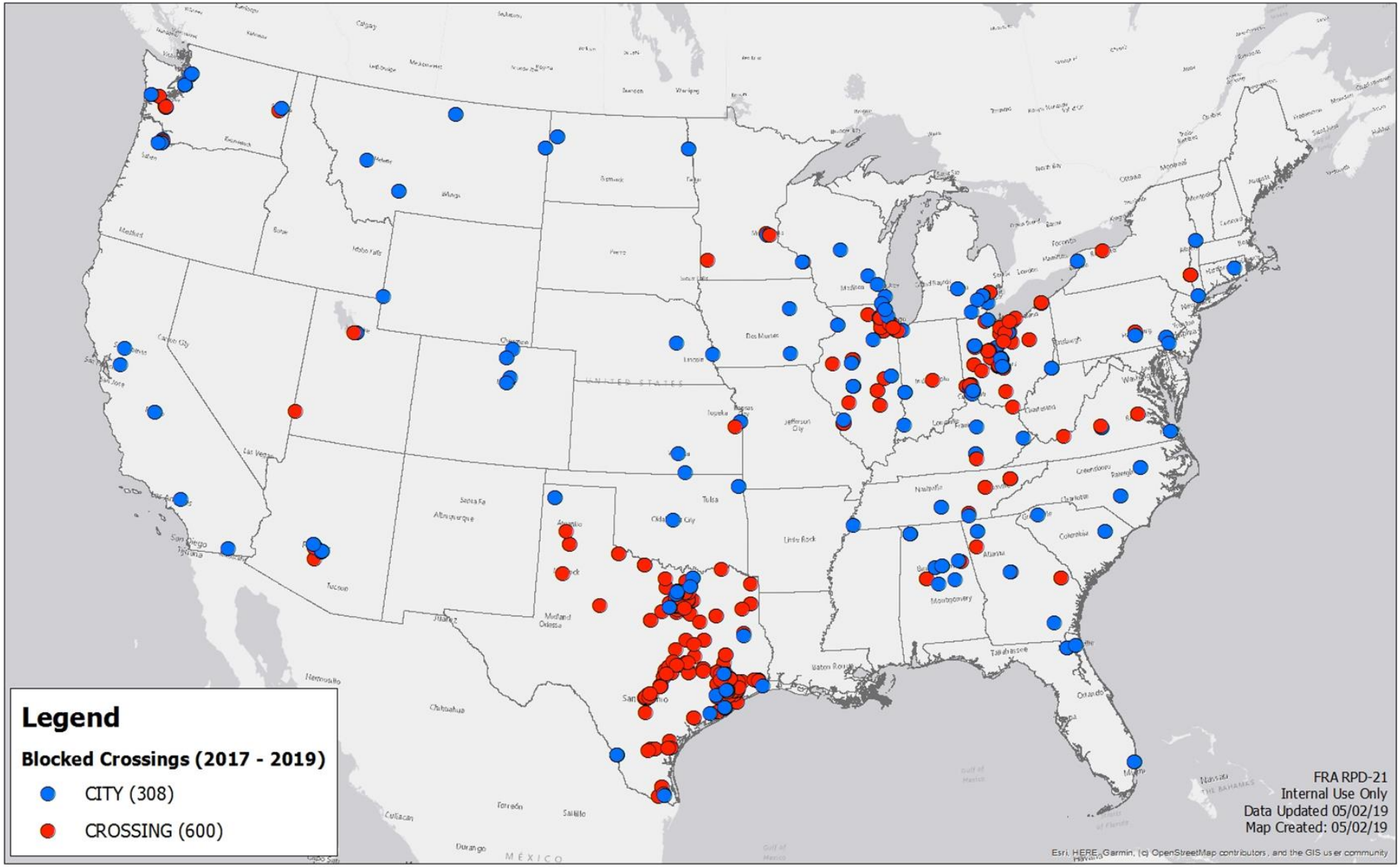
Voluntarily Reported Blocked Crossings



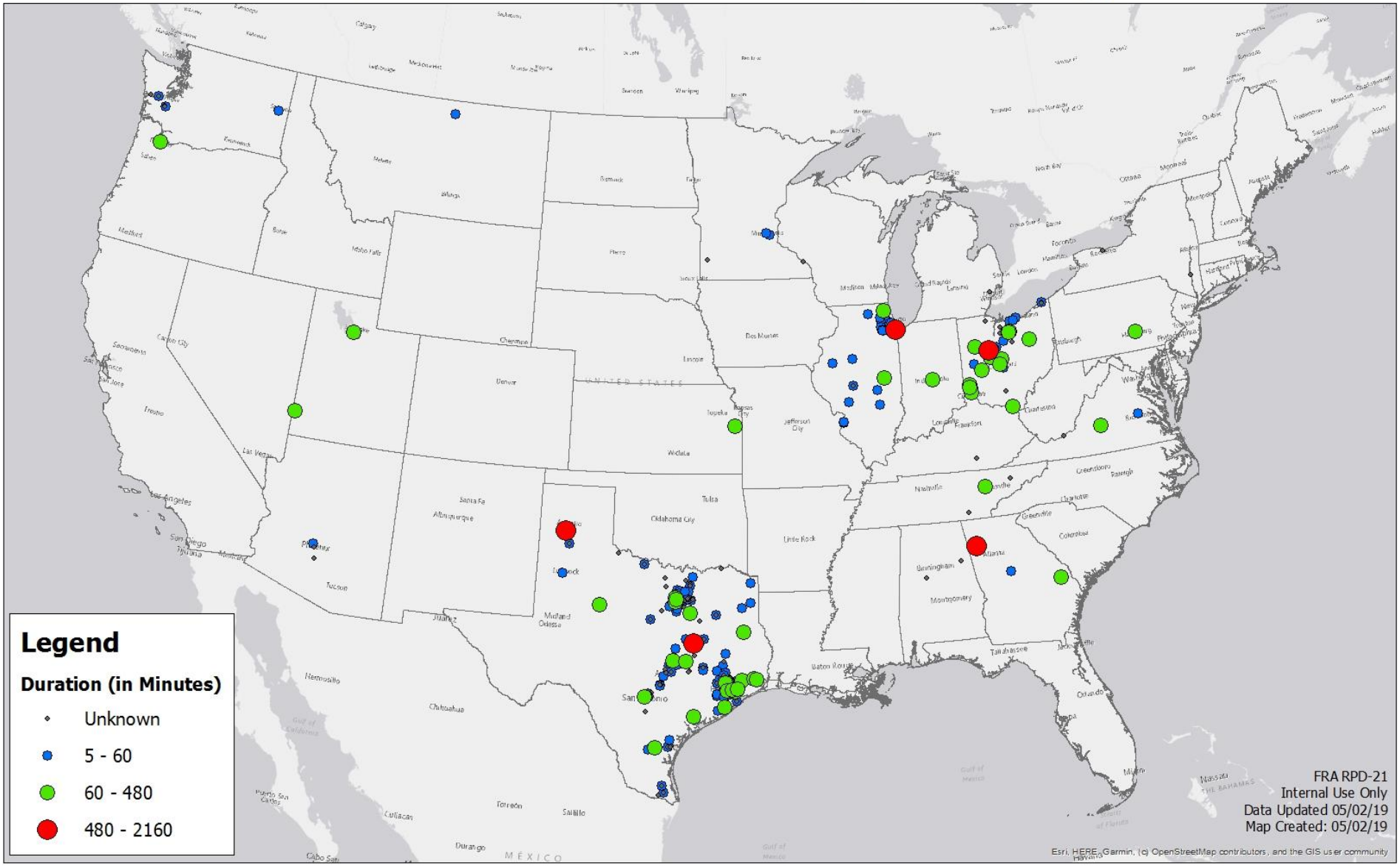
FRA Mapping of Voluntarily Reported Blocked Crossings

- To study the problem and determine the safety risks FRA uses GIS mapping for analysis of voluntarily reported blocked crossings

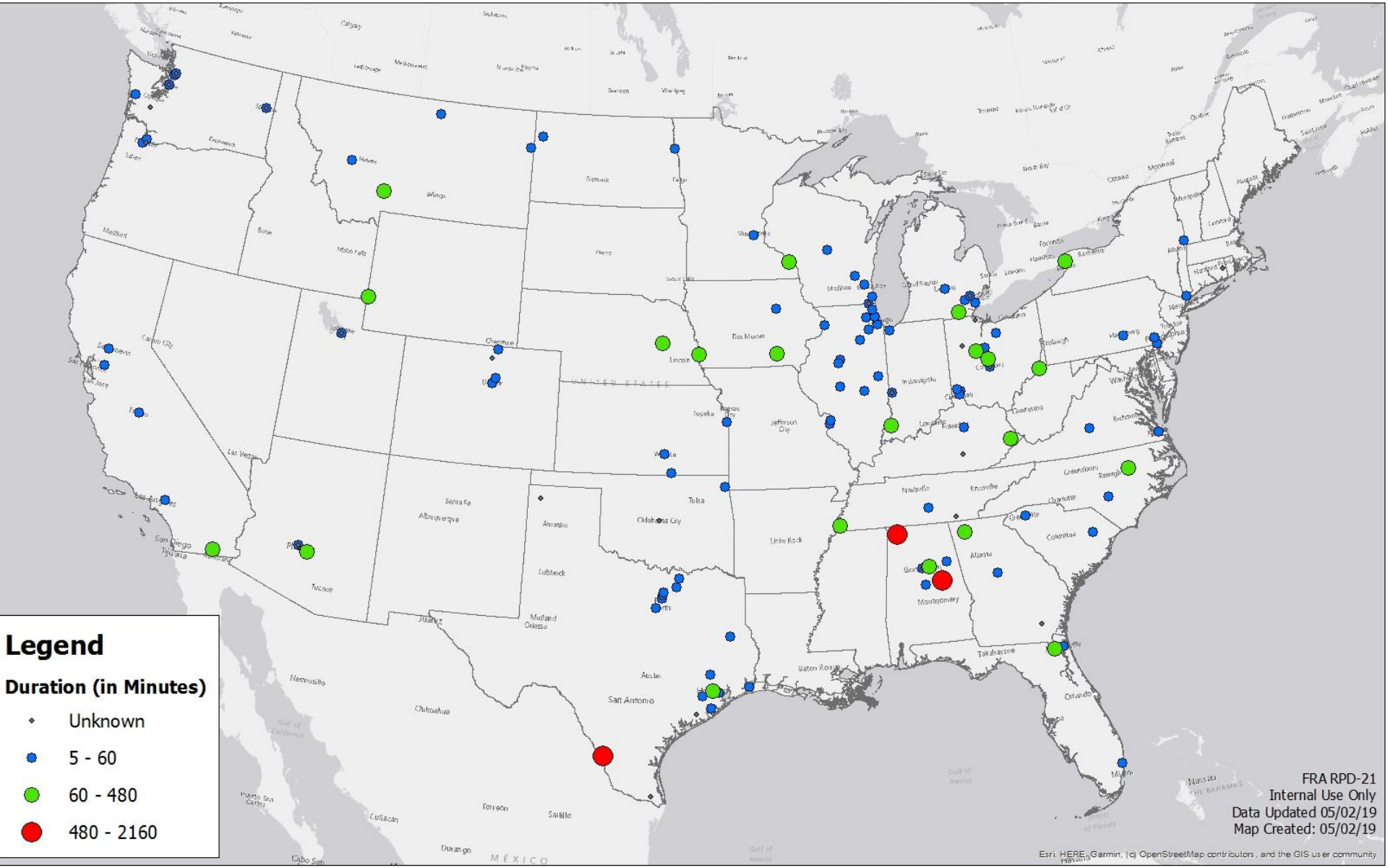
Blocked Crossings (2017 - 2019)



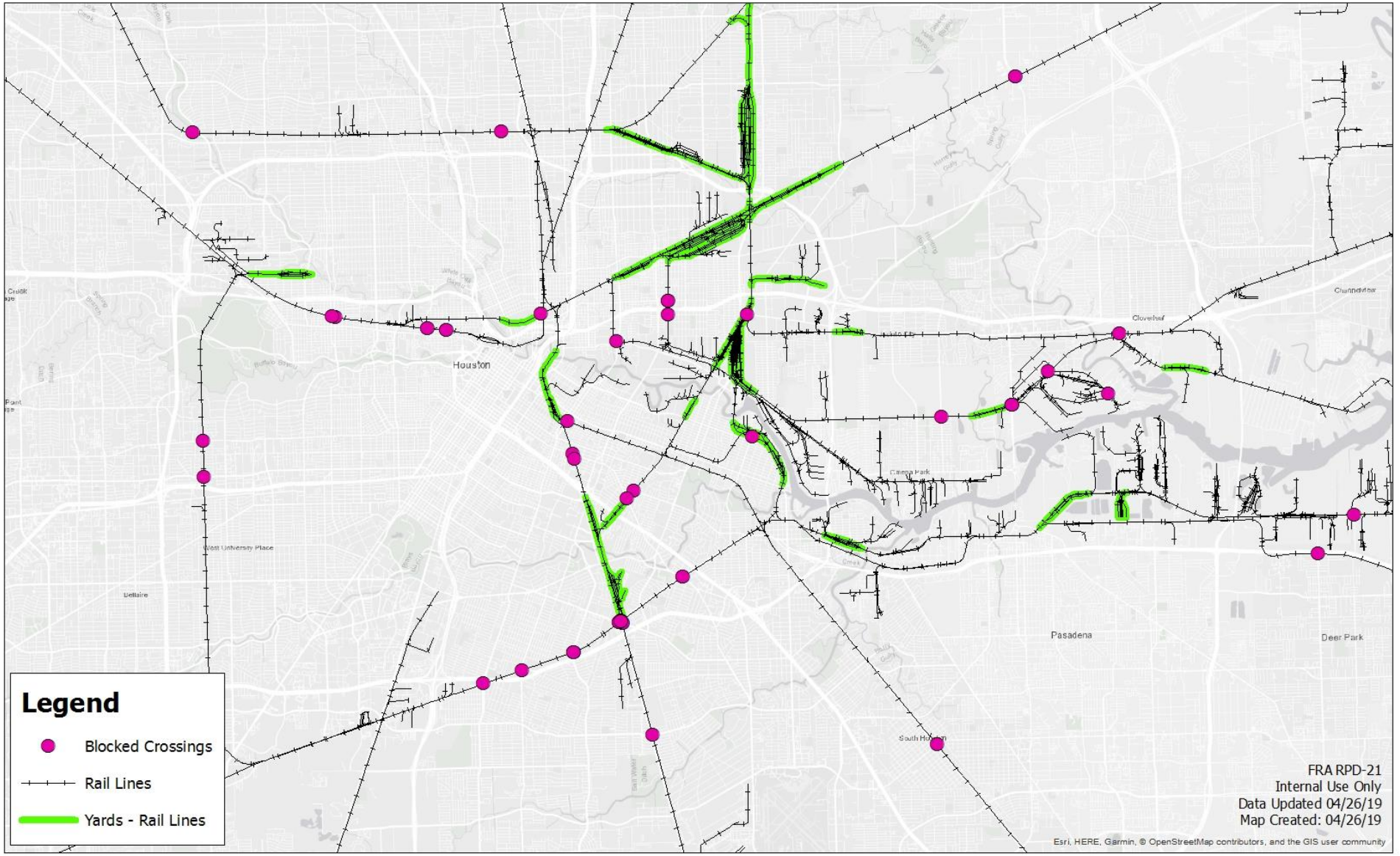
Blocked Crossings Duration (by Crossing)



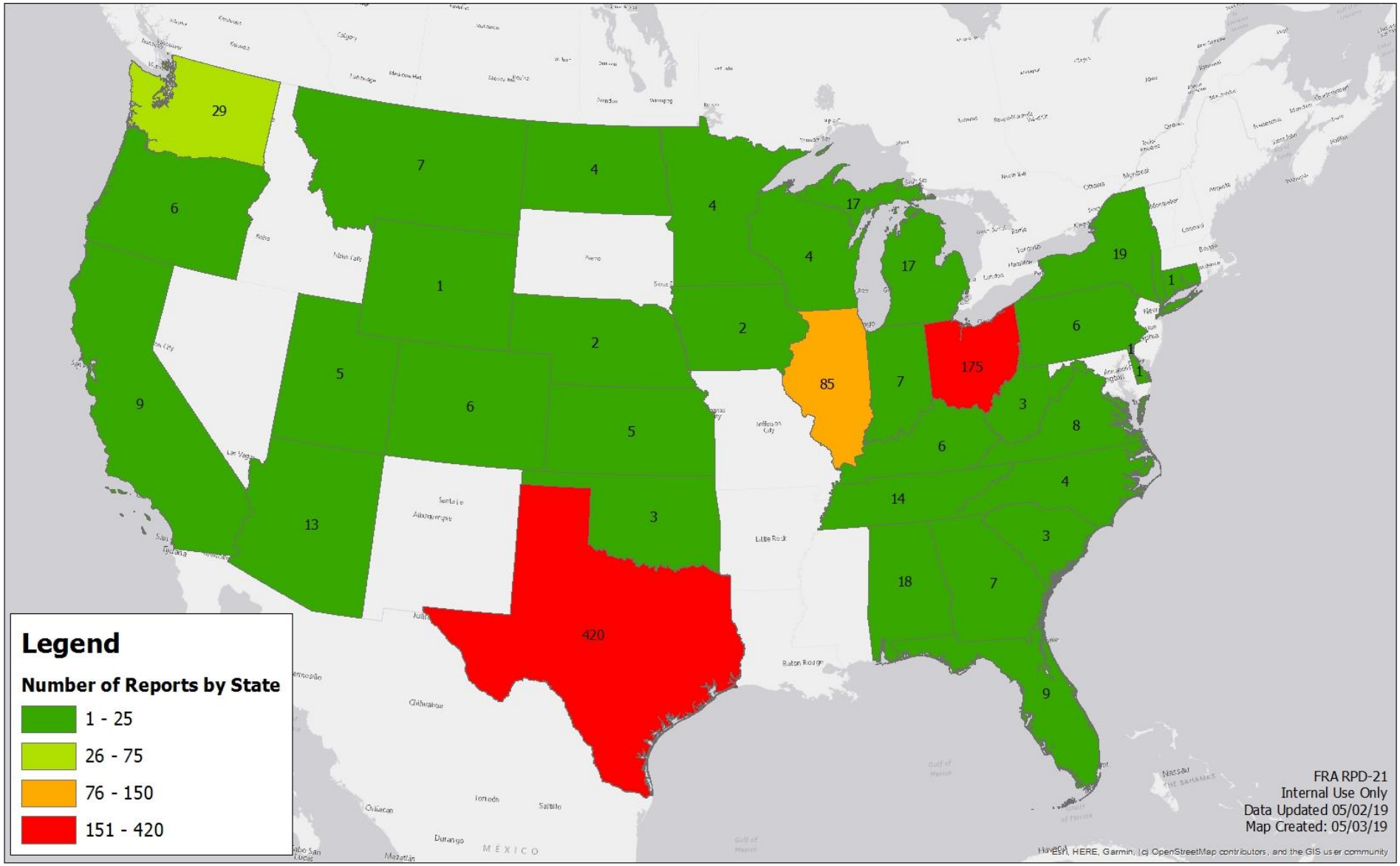
Blocked Crossings Duration (by City)



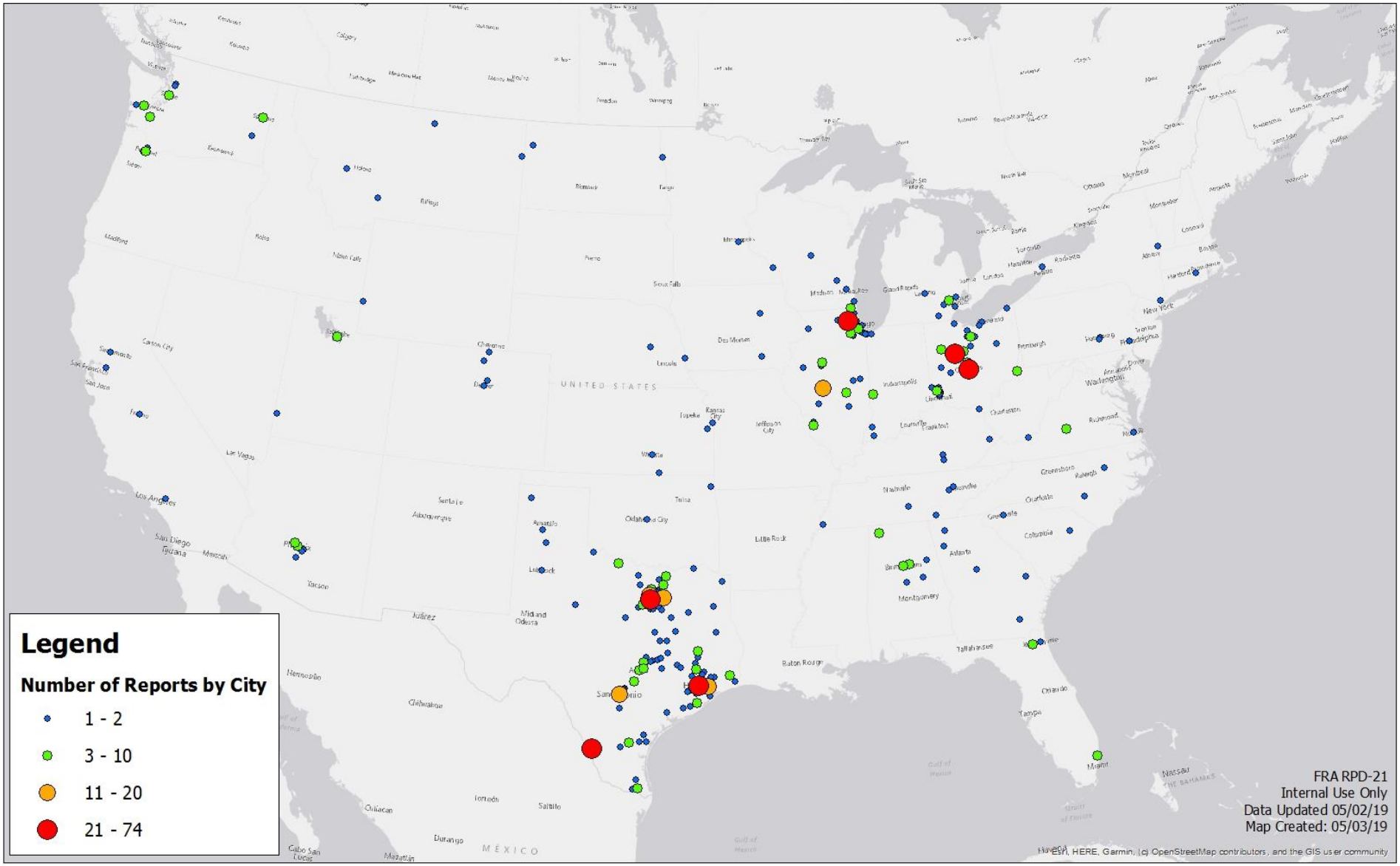
Blocked Crossings in Houston, TX



Number of Reports by State (2017 - 2019)



Number of Reports by City (2017 - 2019)



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