



Regional Waste Advisory Committee

Advisory Report: Proposed FY2025-26 Budget and Fees

Overview

This summary reflects the Regional Waste Advisory Committee's discussion and input on Metro's proposed FY25–26 Waste Prevention and Environmental Services (WPES) budget and associated solid waste fees. Between February and April 2025, the committee reviewed the existing programs and investments, the solid waste fee setting guidance and proposed FY2025-26 budget and fees.

Summary of Committee Engagement and Key Guidance

As part of the Regional Waste Advisory Committee's engagement on the proposed FY2025–26 Waste Prevention and Environmental Services budget and fees, committee members participated in a structured input exercise using the red-yellow-green feedback framework. Members were asked to assess the proposal by identifying areas of strong alignment (green), areas requiring clarification or potential adjustment (yellow), and areas of concern or potential misalignment (red). Each member was asked to select their top two priorities in each color category to focus the discussion on the most critical issues, while also having the opportunity to submit additional comments beyond their initial selections. This approach was designed to focus dialogue, elevate key themes, and collect meaningful input to inform Metro Council's final budget and fee decisions.

The input collected through this process was collected, logged and organized into major themes based on the committee's input. The following section summarizes the key areas of support, questions, and concerns identified across all red, yellow, and green comments. These themes represent a range of perspectives offered by committee members and highlight both areas of alignment with the proposed budget and fees, as well as areas where additional clarification, adjustments, or further consideration may be needed. The following major themes emerged:

Strong Alignment with Regional Outcomes

1. **Provision of Essential Services:** Continued investment in household hazardous waste collection services, dumped garbage cleanup, and community education is widely supported.
2. **System Facilities Plan Phasing and Investments:** Agreement that the phased approach to implementing community depots and other infrastructure investments reflect thoughtful planning and is aligned with equity and service goals.

3. **Reuse and Waste Prevention Investments:** Strong support for the Reuse Impact Fund and partnerships that support waste prevention, reuse infrastructure, and living wage jobs.
4. **Fee Stability and Investment Model:** Support for future consideration of a fee model that balances affordability with long-term investment.

Areas of Adjustment or Further Consideration

1. **Staffing for System Facilities Plan:** Questions about the scale and timing of the proposed 3 FTE; some suggested exploring 2 FTE or phased additions.
2. **Cost Management Opportunities:** Interest in exploring scaled-back or phased service delivery, especially for programs like MetroPaint and household hazardous waste.
3. **Fee Structure Clarity:** Request for more transparent communication about how fee increases are calculated, methods used, alternatives and how they compare regionally.

Areas of Concern or Misalignment

1. **Equity & Transparency:** Concern about geographic and financial equity, particularly regarding equitable access to services and how fees are distributed.
2. **Solid Waste Fee Increase:** Concern about the 11% increase and potential impacts on small haulers, nonprofits, and illegal dumping.
3. **Tonnage Assumptions:** Questions about how tonnage declines will affect long-term revenue and whether capital investments align with those trends.
4. **Level of Reuse Investment:** Concern on potential decreased investment in reuse with sunseting of Innovation and Investment grant program.

Key Themes and Detailed Commentary

Additional details and representative comments are provided below to further illustrate the key themes and highlight specific committee perspectives.

Strong Alignment with Regional Outcomes

Theme	Comments
Provision of essential services	Cleanup and direct government grants are great on-the-ground (Community representative)
	Support for Household Hazardous Waste maintenance (Community representative)
	Support for Garbage and Recycling Operations investments (Local government representative)

System Facilities Plan phasing and investments	<p>Appreciate slow, calculated approach to starting System Facilities work (Industry representative)</p> <p>Cornelius depot will improve geographic accessibility/reuse options for residents (Community representative)</p> <p>Support for new infrastructure investments (e.g. organics processing at Central) (Community representative)</p>
Reuse and Waste Prevention Investments	<p>Reuse Impact Fund is a good investment (Community representative)</p> <p>Very supportive of the reuse impact fund, wish it were bigger (Reuse organization representative)</p>
Fee Stability and Investment Model	<p>The proposed Fee Stability and Investment Model is a thoughtful approach to managing long-term investments while balancing affordability for ratepayers. (Local government representative)</p> <p>I am encouraged by the upcoming discussion of the “fee stability and investment model” and look forward to learning more (Community representative)</p>

Areas of Adjustment or Further Consideration

Theme	Comments
Staffing for System Facilities Plan	<p>Ability to reduce 3.0 FTE to 2.0 for the System Facilities Plan implementation team? What impact would that have? (Community representative)</p> <p>In reviewing the proposed budgets addition of three new FTE to implement the systems facility plan, has Metro analyzed the current capability of their staff to conduct this work? Is there a possibility of ramping-up additional FTE overtime on an as-needed basis? (Local government representative)</p> <p>How can the implementation of the new facilities be accelerated? (Local government representative)</p> <p>No need for added 3 FTE to support System Facilities Plan work, use current staff who helped get the plan in development to where we are now (Industry representative, listed as concern/misalignment)</p>
Cost Management Opportunities	<p>Perhaps a longer-term consideration...potential – perhaps as part of the System Facilities implementation plan – to look at how to reduce MetroPaint costs? And with the new depots, the HHW costs as well? (Community representative)</p>

	<p>Consider maintaining status quo services with current costs as much as possible (Industry representative)</p> <p>What options does Metro have to expand funding sources? Aside from the current fees WPES collects, has Metro considered other regulatory fees for the private entities that operate in the region to cover the cost of those</p>
Fee Structure Clarity	<p>Lack of metro oversight over fees at private transfer stations (Local government representative)</p> <p>Transparency needed re: where investments in pay equity eventually land (are fees scaling with waste worker wages)? (Community representative)</p> <p>How do these fee increases affect private transfer stations and material recovery facility operations? (Reuse representative)</p>

Areas of Concern or Misalignment

Theme	Comments
Equity & Transparency	<p>More transparency/detail needed into planning and partnership costs and activities (Community representative)</p> <p>Further analysis of geographic fee disparities needed and how Metro fits into this (Community representative)</p> <p>As the region moves toward new funding models, there is an urgent need for transparent planning and deeper local government engagement to ensure communities are not caught off guard by sudden shifts in financial responsibility. (Local government representative)</p>
Solid Waste Fee Increase	<p>Concerned that the increased solid waste fee may increase illegal dumping (Community representative)</p> <p>Concerned that Metro staff costs in fee increase more than personnel costs in Recology contract (Industry representative)</p> <p>Has Metro considered operational changes to reduce operating costs instead of a significant fee increase that directly impacts our system users? This could potentially be done with alternative processes and schedules, or contract labor to allow for flexibility. (Local government representative)</p>
Tonnage Assumptions	<p>Tonnage forecast v. actual tons as an impact on Metro budget and private facilities. Metro is capable of generating “surplus” with minimum tonnage of 40%, private facilities have caps (Industry representative)</p> <p>Need to consider the impact of decreasing tonnage – higher fees will lead to more illegal dumping – as you note, consumers have a limited ability to</p>

	manager their own waste generation (Reuse representative, listed as concern)
Level of Reuse Investment	<p>Loss of the I&I program means a net reduction of \$1M of investment in reuse annually (Reuse representative)</p> <p>Concern of reduction in I&I and impact on reuse (Community member)</p>

Detailed Comments by Seat

The following section provides a detailed record of the feedback submitted by committee members, organized by the type of seat they hold. Committee members were asked to select their two top priorities for each area of input including where they see strong alignment with regional priorities, and areas of concern and misalignment. They were also given an opportunity to provide additional feedback. These comments reflect individual perspectives on the proposed FY2025–26 Waste Prevention and Environmental Services budget and fees, including areas of strong alignment, opportunities for adjustment or clarification, and concerns or areas of potential misalignment. This detailed record is intended to supplement the high-level thematic summary and offer additional insight into the range of perspectives shared during the committee’s engagement process.

Community representatives

Supports Regional Priorities and System Outcomes	<p>Reuse Impact Fund is a good investment, especially taking into account the Reuse/Waste Prevention goals</p> <p>Good to prioritize higher/more livable wages and moving away from contract labor, when appropriate. Partnerships are important, but with good wages and benefits</p> <p>Reuse Impact Fund is a sensible means of investing in on-the-ground experts of this work</p> <p>Cornelius depot will improve geographic accessibility/reuse options for residents</p> <p>Environmental Stewardship: 1) Household Hazardous Waste maintenance, new infrastructure investments (e.g. organics processing at Central), 2) Cleanup and direct government grants are great on-the-ground means of furthering this priority</p> <p>Services and community education – everyday people don’t attend these meetings/forums, even if they are open to the public. Meeting the people where they’re at (their communities) is the best way to provide resources and communication</p>
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	<p>I am encouraged by the upcoming discussion of the “fee stability and investment model” and look forward to learning more</p> <p>Focus on education and information. I took Master Recycler program and thought it was very useful. I learned how to reduce waste and be resourceful without buying anything. Feel that with current uncertainty with economy and lack of wage increases we should educate people about how to reduce waste, reuse and repurpose things.</p>
Opportunities for Adjustment or Clarification	<p>Perhaps a longer-term consideration...potential – perhaps as part of the SFP implementation plan – to look at how to reduce MetroPaint costs? And with the new depots, the HHW costs as well?</p> <p>Ability to reduce 3.0 FTE to 2.0 for the SFP implementation team? What impact would that have?</p> <p>How are we providing opportunities for transfer stations/private stakeholders to meaningfully participate in the emerging reuse economy?</p> <p>Solid Waste Fee increase – compared to other transfer stations in the region – will this worsen geographic disparities?</p> <p>Transparency needed re: where investments in pay equity eventually land (are fees scaling with waste worker wages)?</p> <p>Solid waste fee increases – I understand for the most part, but don’t like it. For the everyday people, non-committee members or people part of the garbage world, an explanation in “laymen’s” terms of why?</p> <p>Would be interested in how Extended Producer Responsibility could potentially offset some of these costs in the future</p> <p>Seconded Jackie’s comment that the loss of I&I fund may be loss of investment in reuse</p> <p>By decreasing in any area, doesn’t that only delay cost and create potentially bigger price increases in the future?</p> <p>Important to continue thinking about a future with less trash... could transfer stations also make money off recyclables, reuse etc...?</p>
Areas of Concern and Misalignment	<p>More transparency/detail needed into planning and partnership costs and activities, esp. Policy & compliance</p> <p>Further analysis of geographic fee disparities needed and how Metro fits into this</p>

	<p>I am concerned about how the 11% proposed solid waste fee increase may affect small haulers and nonprofits. Could some Extended Producer Responsibility offset this?</p> <p>Concerned that the increased solid waste fee may increase illegal dumping</p> <p>Regional fee increase – I feel like with the current politics, we are just as unstable and unsure as we were during COVID. Need to consider what is “right now” - is it truly the time to move forward with certain projects</p>
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Additional community input:

- I just would like to emphasize the importance of reuse. During this uncertain time, what is certain is that climate change is happening and recycling has limitations. We need a paradigm shift towards a reuse society. I believe that extended producer responsibility should eventually cover the price of environmental impact and end-of-life management (plastic would be 1000 times more expensive that way! Paint could be sold with disposal fee which could fund PaintCare). When the fee increases, it is a great chance to educate public. They may not even know what options are available (cart size, on-call, low-income assistance, etc.). I didn't know about on-call service until 2 years ago myself. Thank you for your hard work!

Local governments representatives

Supports Regional Priorities and System Outcomes	<p>Support proposed regional garbage and recycling operations</p> <p>The partnerships are important in order for the service improvements to be implemented by local governments</p> <p>DEQ supports the research and planned programs identified as the analysis supports implementation of the RWP. DEQ doesn't usually comment on specific fee values.</p> <p>Services and Community Education – 1) The ability to provide educational programming and service offerings flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of our community benefits all local governments in the Metro region. Direct funding to programs and services which meet the current needs of the community is important. And 2) Working together in partnership to align priorities strengthens the reach of key messages, such as, upstream habit changes, end of life material consideration and how to recycle right.</p> <p>Garbage and Recycling Operations- Aside from the 2030 Regional Waste Plan, how does Metro rank their operational priorities? What</p>
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	<p>assessment is conducted to determine the nice to have programming verses the need to have elements which meet local governments and our community's needs.</p> <p>The proposed Fee Stability and Investment Model is a thoughtful approach to managing long-term investments while balancing affordability for ratepayers.</p> <p>The long-term goal to reduce reliance on a per-ton fee structure through implementation of the Recycling Modernization Act reflects a strategic shift toward more sustainable funding.</p>
Opportunities for Adjustment or Clarification	<p>How can the implementation of the new facilities be accelerated?</p> <p>If the proposed increase is adopted the RSF will have increased by 80% since 2020 (more than 3x general inflation).</p> <p>Lack of metro oversight over fees at private transfer stations</p> <p>What options does Metro have to expand funding sources? Aside from the current fees WPES collects, has Metro considered other regulatory fees for the private entities that operate in the region to cover the cost of those services?</p> <p>New Investments- In reviewing the proposed budgets addition of three new FTE to implement the systems facility plan, has Metro analyzed the current capability of their staff to conduct this work? Is there a possibility of ramping-up additional FTE overtime on an as-needed basis?</p> <p>Has Metro's assessment of maintaining a Disaster Debris Grant fund with a balance of \$500K changed now that a framework has been developed through the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO) which affirms it is local government's role to manage disaster debris clean-up activities?</p> <p>While we support the concept of community depots, the current siting plan continues to leave Beaverton and other Westside communities with limited access. Future investments should prioritize true geographic equity—not just regional coverage.</p> <p>As the region moves toward new funding models, there is an urgent need for transparent planning and deeper local government engagement to ensure communities are not caught off guard by sudden shifts in financial responsibility.</p>
Areas of Concern and Misalignment	<p>Regional System Fee – What is the long-term strategy by Metro to address future reduction of tonnage given anticipated changes in how wet waste is managed? Does the pay-as-you-throw methodology have unintended consequences which feed the need to increase funding for programs like RID patrol to clean-up illegally dumped materials or</p>

	<p>local governments to assume greater costs by expanding reduced rate program offerings?</p> <p>Solid Waste Fee - Has Metro considered operational changes to reduce operating costs instead of a significant fee increase that directly impacts our system users? This could potentially be done with alternative processes and schedules, or contract labor to allow for flexibility.</p> <p>The placement of new community depots fails to meet the stated goal of ensuring all residents are within a 20-minute commute to a facility. Beaverton residents still face a 30–45 minute drive to the nearest location, and prior feedback from city staff has not been addressed.</p> <p>The magnitude of the proposed fee increases—5.97% for the Regional System Fee and 11.01% for the Solid Waste Fee—feels out of step with current economic conditions and may unintentionally incentivize illegal dumping in underserved areas.</p>
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Additional local government input:

- The transition away from a per-ton funding model under the Recycling Modernization Act is a significant shift, yet there has been minimal discussion on how that transition will occur or how cities like Beaverton will be supported during the change. This is especially concerning given that tonnage-based fees continue to serve as the backbone of the current budget proposal.
- Beaverton continues to experience inequitable access to regional solid waste infrastructure. The proposed depot location in Cornelius, while beneficial to parts of Washington County, offers no meaningful improvement for many Beaverton residents. Despite direct engagement from Beaverton’s city council and staff, concerns about accessibility and service equity remain unresolved. Without action, our residents will bear a disproportionate burden—paying more while still traveling farther than most to access basic services.
- While it is technically accurate that local governments set their own garbage and recycling collection rates, Metro’s system fees are mandatory and form the foundation of every jurisdiction’s fee structure. Any local adjustments come on top of Metro’s charges, limiting true local flexibility. Metro should play a more active role in helping partners and residents understand what these fees support. Currently, Metro’s FTE staffing model appears outsized compared to other jurisdictions, and greater focus is needed to ensure staff are supporting local partners and system users—not solely expanding administrative overhead.
- Additionally, the \$81.4 million allocated to Materials and Services warrants much closer scrutiny. As the largest line item in the budget—outpacing personnel, capital

outlay, and contingency spending—this allocation lacks adequate transparency. Combined with the 26.5 FTE dedicated to community-facing services, the size of this line item raises critical questions: What specific programs or contracts are driving these costs? How much is directed to direct services versus administrative support? Without greater detail, it is difficult to assess whether these investments are advancing regional goals effectively or whether they could be restructured to ensure more equitable service delivery across the region, particularly for underserved areas like Beaverton.

- More context needs to be added to the descriptions of "Fee Structure Clarity" and "Solid Waste Fee Increase." Consistent with the report as written, we are requesting more transparency with respect to calculation methods and alternatives. However, the report neglects to mention the broader context of these increases, notably the fact that if adopted, the proposed fee increases will be greater than 3x general inflation. Just as the report contemplates whether "Metro considered operational changes to reduce operating costs" we are asking if the report can contemplate whether "Metro can provide support for the necessity of fee increases that are three times general inflation." This support is critical given that localities are in the midst of layoffs and significant budget deficits. "Inflation" is seemingly not mentioned in this report.
- Can Metro explain why contractor and FTE costs differ so significantly? More transparency as to and substantiation of these differences would be appreciated and go to a general interest in "Fee Structure Clarity."

Industry representatives

Supports Regional Priorities and System Outcomes	<p>Appreciate slow, calculated approach to starting System Facilities Plan work (should do while keeping cost constant – as are now) as much as possible</p> <p>Good focus on need not want to have</p> <p>Keeping Regional System fee and solid waste fees separate, even in reserves</p>
Opportunities for Adjustment or Clarification	<p>Consider maintaining status quo services with current costs as much as possible</p> <p>Like to see options in service levels to reduce solid waste fee rate, i.e. reduced hours reduces cost (fee increase) by X amount</p> <p>System facilities plan has Metro moving away from commercial wet waste. Need to look at lowering 40% tons through budget process, how does that impact need for capital improvements and overall Metro solid waste fees</p>

	Hard to assess –or give feedback- if all programs are properly staffed. Example: call center staffing – what is the expectation of holding times, do they have other tasks during down time?
Areas of Concern and Misalignment	<p>Concerned that Metro staff costs in solid waste fee increase more than personnel costs in Recology contract</p> <p>No need for added 3 FTE to support System Facilities Plan work, use current staff who helped get SFP in development to where we are now</p> <p>Tonnage forecast v. actual tons as an impact on Metro budget and private facilities. Metro is capable of generating “surplus” with minimum tonnage of 40%, private facilities have caps</p>

Reuse representative

Supports Regional Priorities and System Outcomes	Very supportive of the reuse impact fund (wish it were bigger)
Opportunities for Adjustment or Clarification	<p>How do these fee increases affect private transfer station and Material Recovery Facility operations?</p> <p>Need to consider the impact of decreasing tonnage – higher fees will lead to more illegal dumping – as you note, consumers have a limited ability to manager their own waste generation</p>
Areas of Concern and Misalignment	Loss of the I&I program means a net reduction of \$1M of investment in reuse annually