

Waste Prevention and Environmental Services, February 2025

## **Summary of Department Budget for FY26 Proposed Budget**

#### Overview

The Waste Prevention and Environmental Services department is responsible for ensuring that all solid waste generated in the region is managed in a manner that protects public health and safeguards the environment. We lead efforts to reduce waste, promote recycling and reuse, manage hazardous materials safely, and ensure that garbage and recycling services are accessible to all. Through innovative policies, partnerships, and education, we help communities reduce their environmental impact and build a more resilient future. The department's work is guided by the 2030 Regional Waste Plan that serves as the region's waste reduction plan. We deliver programs and services in the core areas outlined below.

#### **Core Service Areas**

#### Services and community Regional garbage and Planning and partnerships investments recycling operations · Household hazardous waste collection • Metro South Transfer Station Regulation of private facilities • Youth leadership and waste prevention • Metro Central Transfer Station Garbage and recycling service education programs improvements • St. John's landfill • Grant and sponsorship programs Grants to local governments · Neighborhood collection events Planning for new facilities and · Cleaning up dumped garbage services · Paint recycling · Disaster debris planning

# Accomplishments over the fiscal year

#### Regional garbage and recycling operations

Regional Garbage and Recycling Operations continued to provide essential garbage and recycling services despite increasing climate-related challenges, including wildfires, storms, and extreme heat. Metro prioritized safety and operational efficiency, ensuring high service levels across its transfer stations. Handling thousands of transactions weekly, Metro's facilities remain a critical hub for waste management, delivering seamless and reliable service to haulers and residents while upholding the region's commitment to sustainability and public health.

#### Planning and partnerships

Planning and Partnerships program made significant progress in strengthening waste management infrastructure and policies to enhance long-term sustainability and resilience. The department completed the System Facilities Plan, marking a key milestone in shaping future infrastructure improvements. Efforts to advance the Recycling Modernization Act continued, ensuring that regulatory updates support a more efficient and accessible recycling system. Metro also completed the bulky waste policy project to improve access to large-item disposal, with new service standards set for completion this year. To support local governments in managing climate-related challenges, the Disaster Reserve



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Grant Program launched a second round of funding for debris management following severe winter storms. Additionally, Metro continued to strengthen partnerships with local governments, collaborating on waste reduction policies, service improvements, and disaster resilience planning to ensure a more effective and equitable system for all communities.

#### **Services and Community Investment**

Within in Services and Community Investment, the department continued to expand waste reduction and public education initiatives while supporting community stewardship. To strengthen reuse efforts, Metro distributed \$750,000 in one-time emergency funding to nonprofit reuse organizations and completed a Reuse Impact Fund program design for Council consideration. Household Hazardous Waste services remained a critical focus, with over 4.2 million pounds of hazardous waste collected through two permanent facilities. At the same time, community collection events doubled, increasing access to safe disposal options. Metro's youth and adult education efforts continued to make an impact, engaging thousands of students and community members. Additionally, Metro's community stewardship program strengthened partnerships with Insight Alliance and Rapid Response, providing job training opportunities while tackling the cleanup of dumped garbage. Through these efforts, Metro maintained its three-day response time, ensuring swift action to address cleanup of dumped garbage.

# **Funding Sources**

Waste Prevention and Environmental Services is funded through two primary sources: the Solid Waste Fee and Regional System Fee. The Solid Waste Fee supports the operations of Metro's two public transfer stations, Metro Central and Metro South. This fee is assessed per ton of solid waste received at Metro's two public transfer stations. The Regional System Fee funds key regional services including waste reduction programs, household hazardous waste collection, grants to local governments and garbage cleanup on public lands. This fee is applied to all solid waste disposed of in the region.

# **Proposed Budget**

## **Department Summary**

Expenditures	\$	125.9			
Interfund Transfers	\$	22.0	Personnel Services	\$	35.9
Contingency	\$	18.0	Materials & Services	\$	81.4
Unappropriated Balance	\$	11.3	Capital Outlay	\$	8.6
Total Appropriation	\$	177.4	Total Expenditures	\$	125.9
in	ions of \$	in	in millions of \$		

**Total FTE**: 205.3

## **Appropriation categories:**

Expenditures represent the largest portion of the FY26 budget – this includes the personnel services for 205.3 FTE, the materials & services to manage all program areas, and an expected \$8.6M in capital outlay.



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Interfund Transfers accounts for the WPES transfer of \$21.6M for Metro's central services support and \$410k for capital asset management support.

Contingency is split between \$7.5M within the capital sub-funds, allowing WPES to react to changing capital project and schedules, if needed, and \$9.9M in the rate stabilization fund to mitigate operational interruptions. The Disaster Debris sub-fund has \$727k budgeted to ensure timely response in case of a regional disaster event requiring access to more appropriation. The Community Enhancement Fund has \$714k budgeted to provide flexibility in grant programming opportunities.

Unappropriated Balance is needed for the St Johns Landfill closure and pollution remediation reserves.

## Ongoing Department Growth and Reductions included in FY26 Proposed Budget

As a regional utility, Waste Prevention and Environmental Services is responsible for ensuring that garbage and recycling services remain safe, reliable, and accessible for all communities. Like other essential services, the cost of operations continues to rise due to inflation, increasing labor costs, and the need for ongoing infrastructure investments. These costs directly impact transfer station operations, hazardous waste collection, cleanup of dumped garbage, and waste reduction programs—all of which are necessary to keep the region's waste system functioning efficiently.

The department works to balance rising operational costs and the need for increased investment in facilities and services with the potential impacts of fee adjustments. Maintaining a resilient and effective waste management system while reducing landfill waste remains a priority. Each budget cycle, options for cost reductions are carefully evaluated, recognizing the financial challenges faced by residents and businesses in the region.

Over the last three years, the department has focused on maintaining levels of services, evaluating opportunities for increased efficiencies and cost reductions. This has included no major program expansions, reallocating resources where possible and seeking outside grants. Looking ahead, new investments are needed to modernize the garbage and recycling system and address existing gaps in areas that lack essential services as outlined in the Regional System Facilities Plan. While these investments will require additional resources, the department is actively evaluating existing programs to identify opportunities for shifting resources or discontinuation to align with evolving priorities. This included the sunsetting of the Investment and Innovation Program. The department remains committed to evaluating its overall organizational structure, with a focus on optimizing workflows, streamlining processes, assessing resource utilization, and improving service delivery.

## **Highlighted Significant Changes from FY25 Budget**

Major changes from the prior fiscal year include proposed budget modifications to support the implementation of the Regional System Facilities Plan focused on addressing areas that lack essential services and investments to increase waste reduction. Key investments include:

 Community Drop-Off Depots and Reuse Warehouse- Dedicated staffing and resources, including a proposed 3.0 FTE and one existing staff position, will establish the System Facilities Planning and Implementation Team. This team will leverage the structured approach used in the



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Oregon Zoo bond implementation to ensure effective project delivery and accountability. This team will lead initial planning for Phase 1 of the Regional System Facilities Plan, focusing on the planning and design of the Cornelius Depot, evaluating the feasibility of the Southeast Portland Depot, conducting further scoping for the East Multnomah County Depot, and developing a programming concept for the Reuse Warehouse.

- **Reuse Impact Fund** New funding is proposed to launch the Reuse Impact Fund, a reuse-focused grant program, utilizing existing staff to manage the program.
- **Commercial Food Waste Investments** Existing staff will continue work on the planning and implementation of the Metro Central organics hub, as well as the exploration of public-private partnerships to expand food waste processing options.
- Supporting Policy Actions Existing staff will lead the evaluation of policy actions related to wet
  waste tonnage and private facility regulations, ensuring these efforts are carried out within
  current resources.

#### Any Other Overall Impacts that Require Council Direction and Attention

The FY26 Proposed Budget for Waste Prevention and Environmental Services reflects a balance between maintaining essential services and making targeted investments in system modernization. Key items requiring Council direction and attention include:

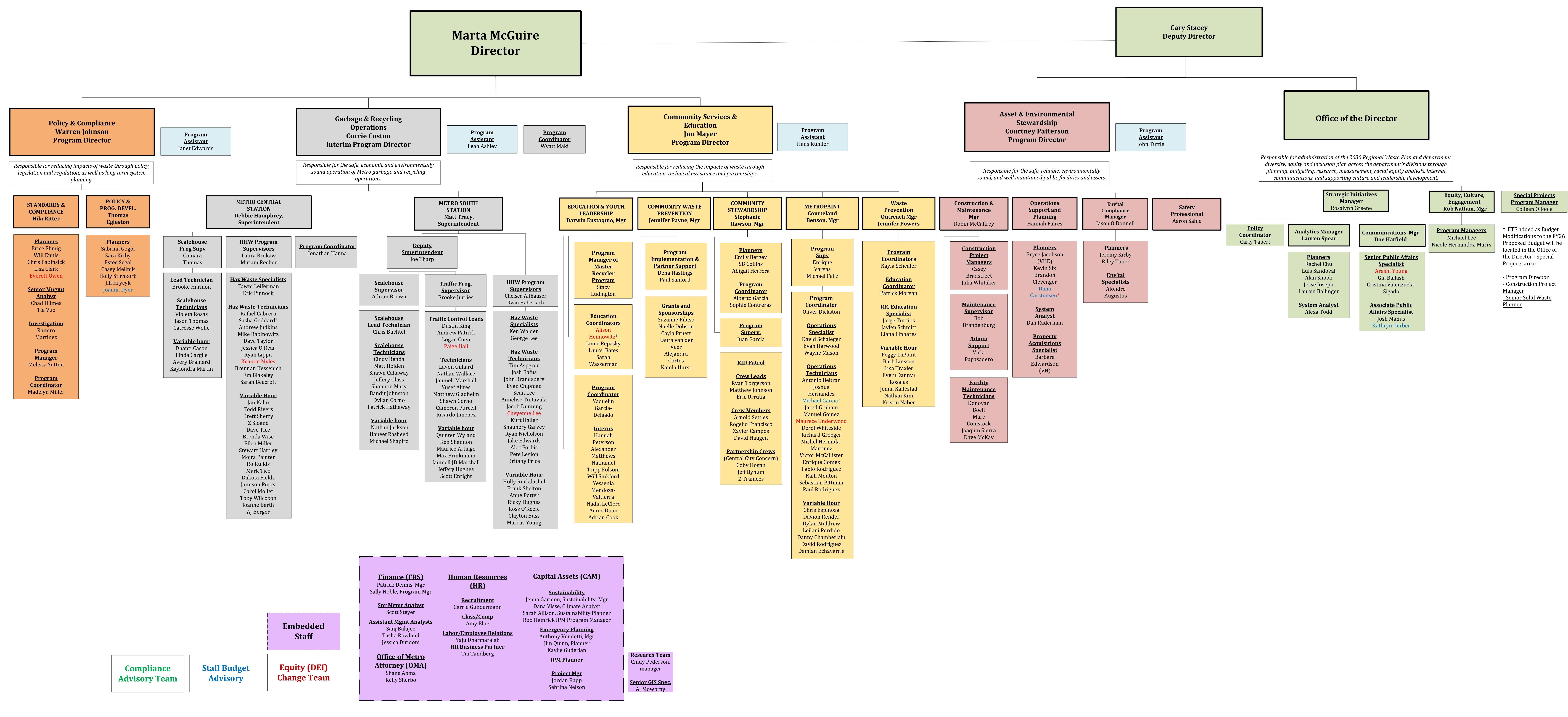
- System Investments The budget includes proposed modifications to modernize the garbage and recycling system and address critical service gaps. If Council chooses to not approve the modifications, but Council still wishes to move forward with these investments, resources will need to be reallocated within the existing budget, which may require adjustments and shifting of resources from other program areas.
- Fee setting- Metro's solid waste fee-setting criteria promote waste reduction and prioritize investments that provide regional benefits, with an emphasis on geographic access. Staff proposes adopting a Fee Stability and Investment Model for the Regional System Fee, which sets a threshold for fee increases and emphasizes planned adjustments that balance affordability with long-term system investments. While full implementation of this model may not be possible this year, this approach establishes a framework for greater stability moving forward. We seek Council direction on gathering feedback from the Regional Waste Advisory Committee model, with findings brought back for Council consideration for future fee-setting.

This guidance will help ensure that Metro continues to provide high-quality services while making strategic and fiscally responsible investments in the waste management system.

#### Attachments:

#### Department org chart

# Waste Prevention & Environmental Services (WPES)



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