

Proposed Budget - Department Overview

FY 2026-27



Waste Prevention and Environmental Services, February 2026

Summary of Department Budget for FY27 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 and equitable 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, which serves as the region’s waste reduction plan implemented in partnership with cities and counties, and the Regional System Facilities Plan, which guides long-term investments in system infrastructure. We deliver programs and services in the core areas outlined below.

Regional garbage and recycling operations	Planning and regulation	Services and community investments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro South Transfer Station • Metro Central Transfer Station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation of private facilities • Garbage and recycling service improvements • Planning for new facilities and services • Closure of St. John’s landfill • Disaster debris planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Hazardous Waste collection • Youth leadership and waste prevention education programs • Grant and sponsorship programs • Neighborhood collection events • Cleaning up dumped garbage

Accomplishments over the fiscal year

• Maintained and strengthened regional assets

WPES delivered essential garbage and recycling services amid increasing climate disruptions while completing critical capital improvements. Major accomplishments included stabilizing the new point-of-sale system, completing the Metro South office building, and addressing high-priority safety and infrastructure needs at Metro South and Metro Central.

• Advanced system planning and regulatory improvements

The department advanced long-term system resilience by launching the first phase of System Facilities Plan projects, including pre-design for the Washington County community depot. Metro also updated Regional Service Standards to improve bulky waste collection and strengthened partnerships with local governments to support waste reduction, service reliability, and disaster preparedness.

• Expanded community investment and reuse outcomes

WPES expanded reuse, waste reduction, and education efforts while strategically realigning programs. Metro launched the Reuse Impact Grant Program, awarding \$1 million to 16 organizations to strengthen regional reuse infrastructure, successfully completed the MetroPaint program sunset, and redeployed

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staff to expand RID cleanup capacity. Youth and adult education programs continued to engage thousands of community members across the region.

Funding Sources

Waste Prevention and Environmental Services is funded through solid waste fees, which consists of two primary sources: solid waste fees and regional system fees. The solid waste fee supports the operations of Metro’s two public transfer stations, Metro Central and Metro South. The regional system fee funds key regional services including grants, household hazardous waste collection, waste reduction disaster resilience planning, education programs, and garbage cleanup on public lands.

Proposed Budget

FY 2026-27 Appropriation: \$151.8M

FTE Supporting the FY 2026-27 Service Level: 183.3 FTE

Ongoing Department Growth and Reductions included in FY26 Proposed Budget

Declining regional tonnage

The regional economy continues to influence waste generation across the system. Ongoing uncertainty, including volatility in the tourism and hospitality sectors, financial constraints facing state and local governments, and slower construction activity, has contributed to reduced volumes of material moving through the region. Because WPES is funded through per-ton fees, lower tonnage translates directly into reduced revenue to support programs and services.

Over the past year, WPES has continued to see a decline in tonnage at both the regional level and at Metro’s transfer stations, while operating costs have continued to rise. These trends, outlined in the solid waste forecast, are expected to continue over the next several years. As tonnage declines, the system must recover fixed operating costs across fewer tons, which places upward pressure on the solid waste fees. Without adjustments, this dynamic could result in large-scale fee increases as waste tonnage declines.

Alignment of program and services

The FY27 Waste Prevention and Environmental Services prioritizes essential system services, while incorporating targeted adjustments in response to declining waste tonnage, rising system costs, and ongoing modernization needs. The budget does not include significant program growth; instead, it reflects deliberate realignment and selective reductions to ensure financial sustainability and alignment with Council priorities.

Three integrated strategies guide the department’s approach:

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Level of Service Alignments: Aligning programs and staffing with core mission and priority outcomes, using program evaluation and zero-based budgeting to reduce, scale, and restructure services where appropriate while protecting public health, environmental protection, and system oversight.

Capital Improvement Strategy: Fund smaller capital projects and improvements from current revenues while using bonded financing for large, long-term capital investments. This includes maintaining reserves to support existing and planned investments.

Fee Development: Balance predictability, affordability, and full cost recovery in fee-setting, consistent with Council direction, with proposed adjustments informed by engagement with the Regional Waste Advisory Committee.

Highlighted Significant Changes from FY26 Budget

The FY 2026-27 proposed budget includes a combination of operational adjustments, program changes, and staffing reductions in some areas to support long-term financial stability and system resilience. These adjustments were identified in part through a zero-based budgeting review in which WPES evaluated all programs, service models, and staffing levels to ensure alignment with current system demands and financial realities. Key changes are highlighted below.

Transfer Station Operational Adjustments

- Operating hours for public customers at Metro South Transfer Station will be shortened beginning July 1, 2026. This change aligns with customer demand patterns and maintains essential public and commercial access while reducing operating expenses.
- WPES will implement credit card processing cost recovery to align payment practices with common industry standards. This change improves cost transparency, ensures users pay the costs associated with their payment choices, and reduces upward pressure on systemwide fees.

Program and service alignment

- The planned closeout of MetroPaint concluded in January 2026, marking a 30-year legacy that kept millions of gallons of paint from ending up in landfills, helped to conserve natural resources while beautifying communities across the region. Although the program has ended, paint recycling continues across Oregon—thanks to the foundation MetroPaint helped establish with product stewardship laws—with Metro facilities and nearly 200 statewide drop-off sites still serving the region.
- New delivery models and adjusted service levels were identified for lawn and garden toxics reductions and small-scale household hazardous waste collection. This approach provides greater flexibility in how services are delivered while sustaining investment in priority programs such as free large-scale household hazardous waste collection events and education programming.

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- The supplemental local government funding for food scraps requirement is not included in the proposed budget. Given current budget pressures and WPES strategic priorities, this supplemental funding will conclude as originally planned while WPES continues to support broader system efforts to reduce food waste and expand organics recovery through other strategies.

Organizational Structure Updates

- WPES streamlined its organizational structure to improve coordination and align with program needs. These changes align staffing with current service demands and improve internal efficiency to support long-term financial sustainability.

Any Other Overall Impacts that Require Council Direction and Attention

The FY27 Proposed Budget for Waste Prevention and Environmental Services continues to balance essential service delivery with rising costs and targeted system investments. Building on prior year decisions, the following areas warrant Council consideration as projects advance and implementation decisions come forward:

System Investments- The budget advances targeted investments to modernize the garbage and recycling system and address identified service gaps. Council direction will be needed at key milestones to confirm scope, timing, and funding approaches.

Program Realignment and Resource Reallocation- As part of ongoing implementation, WPES will continue to evaluate existing programs and realign resources toward core system functions and priority outcomes. Council guidance will help inform decisions as programs transition or conclude.

Financial and Fee Considerations- Managing inflationary pressures and fixed operating costs while maintaining essential services remains a central focus. Council consideration of fee impacts will continue to be critical as investments move from planning to delivery.