



Metro

Shaping the regional garbage transfer system

Resource packet | May 19, 2026

Contents

Background.....	3
Metro’s role in the garbage and recycling system.....	3
A vision for the future.....	3
Fundamentals of the garbage and recycling system.....	3
Figure 1: Transfer station map.....	4
Figure 2: How the system works	5
Project overview	6
Shaping the regional garbage transfer system.....	6
Why this work matters now	6
Approach to the project	6
Appendix A: Regional System Facilities Plan - Chapter 5	9
Appendix B: Regional Waste Plan and Regional System Facilities Plan Values	16
Appendix C: Helpful Definitions	21

Background

Metro's role in the garbage and recycling system

Garbage and recycling services are essential to keep people healthy, conserve natural resources and keep our communities clean. Metro manages the garbage and recycling system in greater Portland with a focus on reducing waste and protecting people and the environment.

A vision for the future

In 2019, the Metro Council adopted the [2030 Regional Waste Plan](#), a visionary plan for managing the region's garbage and recycling system and reducing waste. The Regional Waste Plan sets direction to improve access to garbage and recycling services for people living across the region while keeping rates affordable. It also aims to

increase the reuse, repair and donation of materials, and to prepare for disaster debris response at a local level. Ultimately, the plan is about protecting human health, the environment and the region's shared quality of life.



In spring 2025, the Metro Council adopted the [Regional Systems Facilities Plan](#) to help accomplish the goals of the Regional Waste Plan. This plan identifies areas where services are lacking and sets a strategy for modernizing the region's reuse, recycling and garbage infrastructure. It also outlines policy actions to guide future service and infrastructure investments.

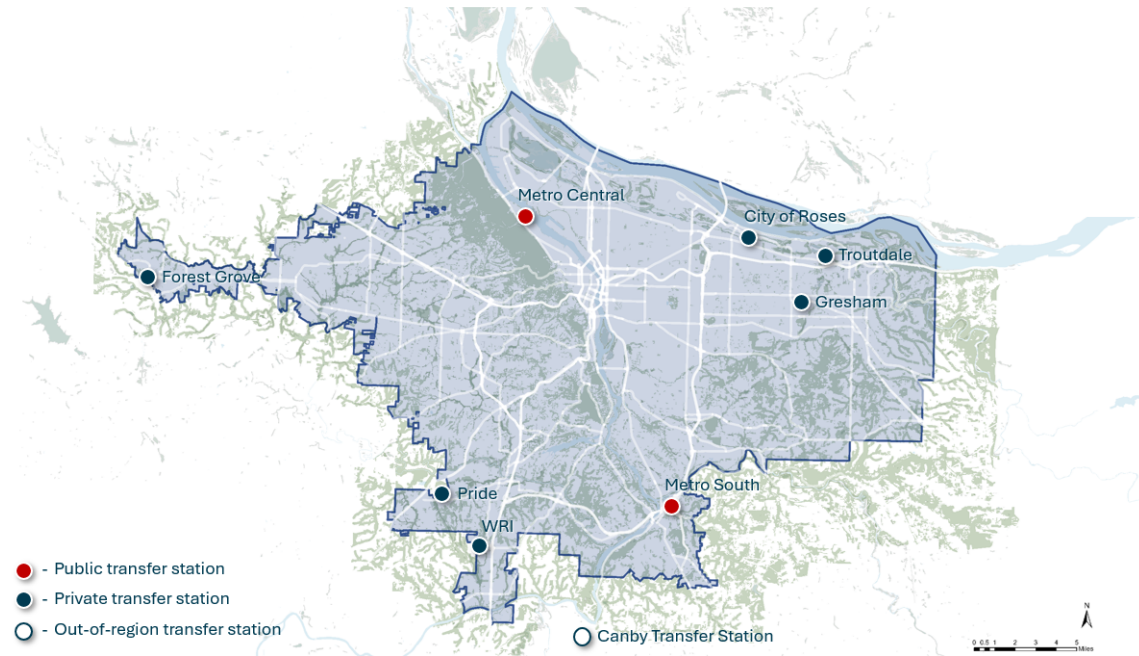
Fundamentals of the garbage and recycling system

The garbage and recycling system includes several types of facilities that receive and process waste, including transfer stations, material recovery facilities, compost sites and landfills. As the regional solid waste authority, Metro authorizes and regulates the facilities that accept waste from greater Portland to make sure that their operations and processes for preparing materials for disposal follow set rules and requirements.

There are nine transfer stations in the system, which include seven private facilities and two public. Metro owns the two public transfer stations, which are Metro Central in Northwest Portland and Metro South in Oregon City.

[Figure 1](#) below shows a map of the transfer stations.

Figure 1: Transfer station map



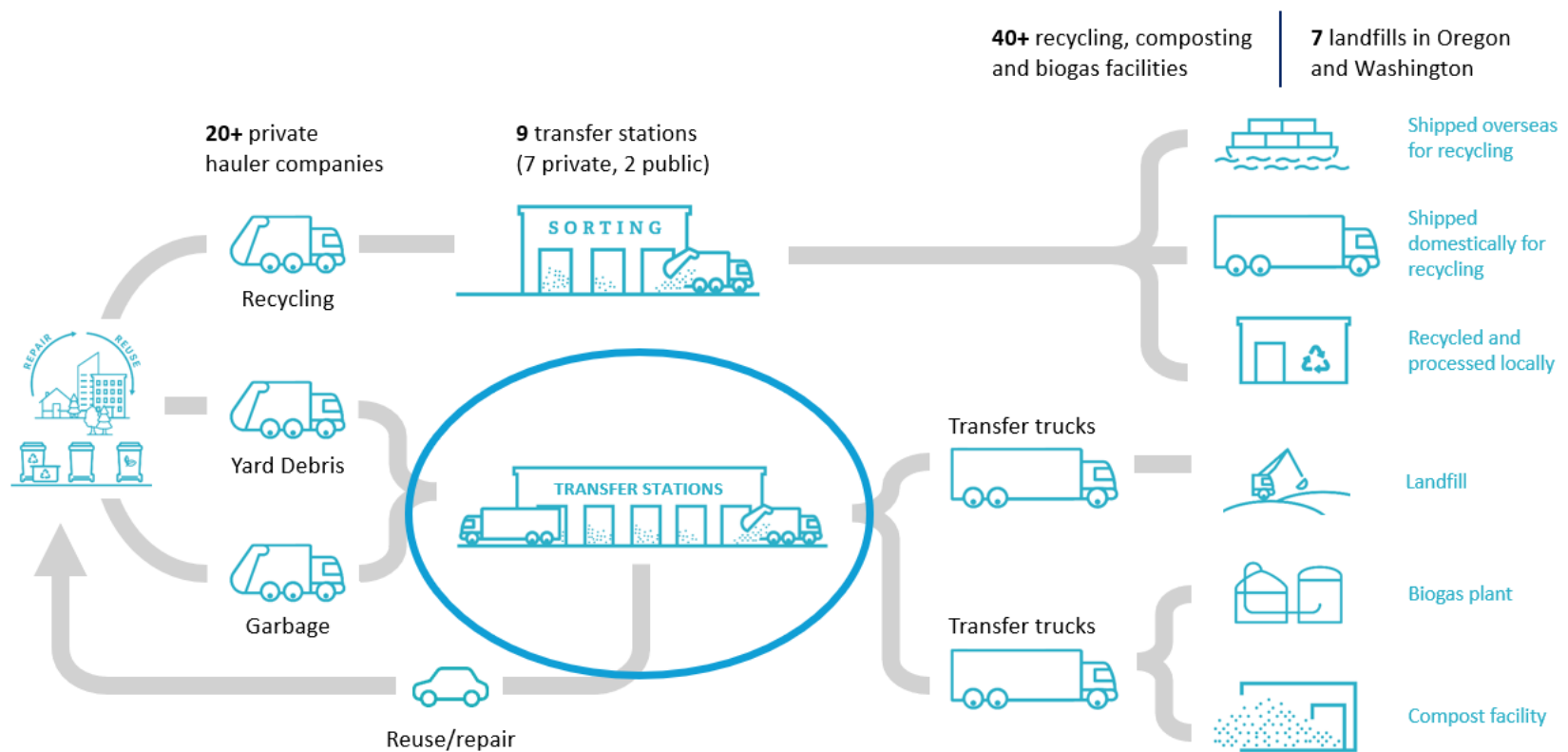
Transfer stations accept garbage, yard debris and food scraps, which they consolidate for transfer to landfills and composting facilities. [Figure 2](#) illustrates how the garbage and recycling system works.

Transfer stations accept garbage from several types of customers including commercial customers and self-haul customers. Commercial customers are the garbage haulers that collect garbage from households and businesses and then transport it to transfer stations. Self-haul customers are individuals and small businesses that bring their own garbage to a transfer station for disposal rather than having it collected by a garbage hauler. All nine transfer stations accept garbage from commercial customers. Self-haul garbage is accepted at one private transfer station and the two public transfer stations.

Metro determines how the garbage that garbage haulers collect from greater Portland households and businesses is allocated among the nine transfer stations. Metro’s approach to this process has changed over the years in response to direction from the Metro Council to establish a more predictable, fair and transparent process for allocating garbage to private transfer stations.

When discussing the garbage allocation process, the term “garbage” will almost always refer to the garbage that garbage haulers collect and transport to the transfer stations. This garbage is sometimes called “wet waste,” “commercial wet waste” and “commercial garbage.” The word “commercial” is used to designate that it is collected by garbage haulers – not that it is garbage generated by businesses.

Figure 2: How the system works



Project overview

Shaping the regional garbage transfer system

During development of the Regional System Facilities Plan, the Metro Council identified the need for policy actions to assess the garbage allocation process and explore options for regulating private facilities to best serve the public interest.

To shape these policies, Metro is beginning work to evaluate:

- The impact of changes to how garbage tonnage is allocated to public and private transfer stations
- The effects of reducing or removing the garbage tonnage currently allocated to Metro's public transfer stations, allowing more waste to be taken to private facilities
- Options for updating how Metro regulates private facilities to better serve the public

For more details, refer to chapter 5 of the Regional System Facilities Plan in [Appendix A](#).

Why this work matters now

Metro has operated public transfer stations since the early 1980s. In that time, greater Portland's needs have changed. The population has grown into areas that once had few or no garbage and recycling services. At the same time, climate change has made it more urgent to develop programs and facilities that prevent waste and reduce harmful carbon pollution.

The Regional System Facilities Plan represents Metro's commitment to keep pace with these changes. It ensures our facilities and services reflect today's priorities – to keep people healthy, conserve natural resources, and maintain an excellent, accessible, and resilient garbage and recycling system that serves everyone in the region.

Approach to the project

This project will be carried out in four major phases, summarized below.

During phase one, the Regional Waste Advisory Committee will advise on performance goals for the regional garbage transfer system. These goals will guide scenario development and establish criteria for measuring success. The Metro Council will review and approve the final goals.

Phases two and three will focus on developing and analyzing potential scenarios for improving the garbage transfer system, informed by input from both the committee and the Metro Council.

In phase four, the committee will provide recommendations to the Metro Council on potential changes to how garbage is allocated among transfer stations and how Metro regulates private transfer stations.



When identifying the performance goals in phase one, it is important to keep in mind the values and outcomes that ground this work. The values that were developed for the Regional Waste Plan and reinforced through the Regional System Facilities Plan will continue to serve as the foundation for why we do this work and are available for reference in [Appendix B](#). The outcomes, listed on the following page, are what Metro's Waste Prevention and Environmental Services department aims to achieve through every aspect of its work. The transfer system performance goals ensure the system helps to achieve these outcomes.

Metro Waste Prevention and Environmental Services outcomes:

- **Waste prevention and healthy environment**
Reducing waste at its source and managing materials to their highest and best use
- **Excellent, accessible and resilient garbage and recycling system**
Ensuring high-quality, affordable and accessible services for all communities
- **Shared prosperity**
Creating economic opportunities within the waste and recycling sector that support inclusion and community well-being

Appendix A: Regional System Facilities Plan - Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of the Regional System Facilities Plan explains the policy actions to assess how garbage is allocated within the transfer system and how Metro should regulate private transfer stations. Select excerpts of this chapter are included on the next pages for reference.

Chapter 5 outlines three key actions:

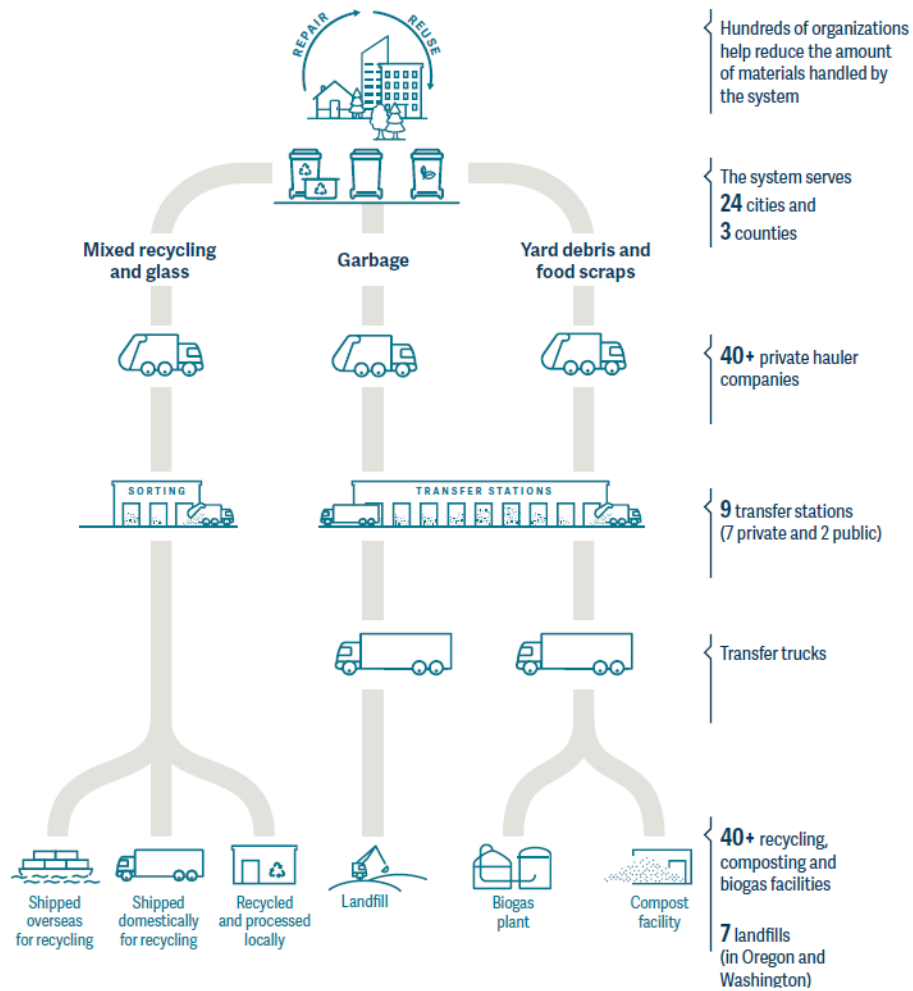
Examine the wet waste tonnage allocation process	Assess the Metro tonnage reserve	Evaluate private facility regulation
<p>Evaluate options for modifying or eliminating the current wet waste tonnage allocation program. This assessment will consider the implications for the waste management system, including how changes might impact access for independent haulers, costs for customers and level of service.</p>	<p>Explore options for reducing or removing the amount of regional wet waste tonnage that Metro reserves for the publicly owned transfer stations. This assessment will consider the implications for the waste management system, access to services for customers and how costs might need to change or be restructured at publicly owned facilities.</p>	<p>Explore options to maintain, modify or add regulations for private facilities to better serve the public interest.</p>

SUPPORTING POLICY ACTIONS

Context

Metro oversees the regional garbage and recycling system, which includes a mix of privately and publicly owned solid waste transfer stations. Since the early 1980s, Metro has operated two public transfer stations and authorized several private facilities to serve the region. Today, there are seven private and two public stations for handling wet waste and other materials within Metro's jurisdiction. Some of the private transfer stations are owned by national waste companies that also own and operate landfills and others are locally owned and unaffiliated with landfills. In addition, some private transfer stations perform material recovery onsite, while others do not. As the solid waste authority, Metro controls how wet waste is allocated in the region between public and private transfer stations.

The Metro region generates about 2.6 million tons of waste annually, with 56 percent going to landfills and 44 percent recovered for recycling, composting or generating energy. Wet waste makes up 27 percent of the total, while dry waste accounts for 21 percent. Dry waste includes processing residues, construction debris and nonrecoverable materials. Source-separated recyclables make up 40 percent, and special waste such as remediation waste from an environmental cleanup, constitutes 12 percent. Wet waste is a significant revenue source for some private transfer stations.



SUPPORTING POLICY ACTIONS

In addition to the investment priorities that are described in this plan, there are two policy-related areas that were identified for additional analysis and discussion upon adoption of the plan:

- Wet waste tonnage flow
- Private facility regulation

These policy and regulatory areas are complex and interconnected, affecting how the plan will be phased and implemented over time. Further exploration is needed into how changes in these two policy areas will be coordinated as part of the plan's implementation.



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

WET WASTE TONNAGE FLOW

Metro's approach to allocating wet waste in the region has evolved significantly over the years. Initially, Metro allocated uniform wet waste tonnage amounts for most of the private transfer stations in the region. Dry waste was previously included in these allocations until 2002, when Metro removed limits on dry waste to promote recovery and processing across multiple facilities.

Over time, privately owned transfer stations sought larger wet waste tonnage allocations to enhance operational efficiency. Metro adjusted these allocations based on annual forecasts of population and economic growth, but there was no formal approach for these adjustments, and this led to inconsistencies.

Current approach

In response, Metro Council directed the development of a more consistent and predictable process for allocating wet waste tonnage. This led to the adoption of the "Transfer System Configuration Policy" in July 2016 (Resolution No. 16-4716). The configuration policy established that Metro would reserve a minimum of 40 percent of the region's wet waste tonnage for the two publicly owned stations, Metro Central and Metro South, to maintain sufficient flow for public benefit and establish a predictable and transparent framework for allocating tonnage to private stations to support the hybrid system.

The main strategies of the transfer system configuration policy are:

1. Allocate tonnage on a percentage basis to ensure flow to the public stations.
2. Limit the amount of wet waste that any one private company may transfer.
3. Ensure transparency of rates.

In 2018, Metro Council established a framework (Ordinance No. 18-1426) for a fair and transparent allocation of wet waste tonnage to private stations. In 2020, council directed staff to integrate 2030 Regional Waste Plan goals into this methodology. The current tonnage allocation program uses a combination of equal shares and goal-based shares, focusing on living wages and benefits, workforce diversity, environmental impact reduction, community investment and affordable and consistent rates.

As part of the Regional System Facilities Plan development, Metro Council identified the need to evaluate the current approach to allocating wet waste to ensure the system is optimizing waste reduction, maximizing public benefit and improving system efficiency.



WET WASTE TONNAGE FLOW

Policy Actions

To support implementation of the Regional System Facilities Plan, two key actions have been identified related to the wet waste tonnage flow policy area:

- 1. Examine the wet waste tonnage allocation program:** Evaluate options for modifying or eliminating the current wet waste tonnage allocation program. This assessment will consider the implications for the waste management system, including how changes might impact access for independent haulers, costs for customers and level of service.
- 2. Assess the Metro tonnage reserve:** Explore options for reducing or removing the amount of regional wet waste tonnage that Metro reserves for the publicly owned transfer stations. This assessment will consider the implications for the waste management system, access to services for customers and how costs might need to change or be restructured at publicly owned facilities.

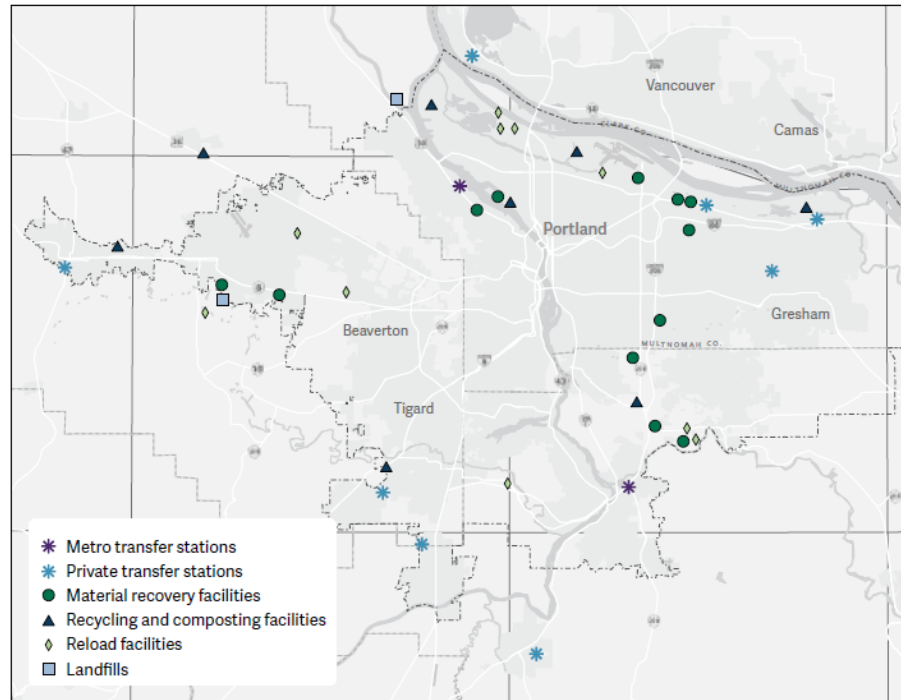


1
2
3
4
5
6
7

PRIVATE FACILITY REGULATION

As the regional solid waste authority, Metro has the responsibility to ensure that all garbage and recyclable materials generated in the greater Portland area are managed in a way that protects public health and safety and safeguards the environment. Metro’s responsibility and authority to manage the region’s garbage and recycling system is derived from the Oregon constitution, Metro Code and Administrative Rules, Metro charter and Oregon Revised Statutes (chapter 268 and chapter 459).

The regional garbage and recycling system, as designated by Metro Council, currently includes 9 transfer stations, 31 solid waste facilities (recycling, composting, reloading), 10 landfills and other disposal sites. Metro also issues non-system licenses to authorize the transport of specific waste types to specific destinations outside of Metro’s designated solid waste system. In addition, more than 40 private hauling companies operate in the region and the collection of waste is overseen by local governments.



PRIVATE FACILITY REGULATION

Metro ensures effective waste management by overseeing the regional system, enforcing requirements and providing programs, services and facilities. Metro manages the garbage and recycling system in partnership with cities and counties to implement the 2030 Regional Waste Plan. Metro code Title V governs the requirements for garbage and recycling, or “solid waste,” generated in the region. Metro uses a variety of methods to make sure that individuals and businesses understand and comply with the region’s garbage and recycling requirements. Metro does this through education, technical assistance or enforcement, as necessary. Metro does not currently exercise all its solid waste regulatory authority such as regulating rates in the region.

As part of this Regional System Facilities Plan development, Metro Council identified an interest in evaluating options for private facility regulation. This will include exploring options to maintain, modify or add regulations to private facilities and evaluating the wet waste tonnage allocation process and approach. Examples include requiring private facilities to offer additional services, implementing price controls and removing tonnage allocations.

Policy Actions

To support implementation of the Regional System Facilities Plan, one key private facility regulation action has been identified:

Evaluate private facility regulation: Explore options to maintain, modify or add regulations for private facilities to better serve the public interest. The implementation of this action will be coupled with the policy actions described in the previous wet waste tonnage flow section.



1
2
3
4
5
6
7

Appendix B: Regional Waste Plan and Regional System Facilities Plan Values

Equity-centered values, principles and a vision serve as the foundation for the Regional Waste Plan. These values were reinforced and expanded upon during development of the Regional System Facilities Plan. Excerpts from each plan are included in the following pages so that the committee may reference the values.

For additional reference, the outcomes that Metro's Waste Prevention and Environmental Services department aims to achieve through every aspect of its work include:

- **Waste prevention and healthy environment**
Reducing waste at its source and managing materials to their highest and best use
- **Excellent, accessible and resilient garbage and recycling system**
Ensuring high-quality, affordable and accessible services for all communities
- **Shared prosperity**
Creating economic opportunities within the waste and recycling sector that support inclusion and community well-being

Values

The values serve as a basis for the plan's goals and actions and will guide implementation.



PROTECT AND RESTORE THE ENVIRONMENT AND PROMOTE HEALTH FOR ALL

- Ensure that current and future generations enjoy clean air, water and land.
- Lead efforts to reduce impacts of climate change and minimize release of toxins in the environment.



CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES

- Reduce the amount of energy, water and raw materials needed to make products.
- Manage materials to their highest and best use (reduce, reuse, recycle).



ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

- Facilitate life-long environmental learning for youth and adults.
- Increase knowledge of natural systems, and the human impacts on them, in order to foster civic responsibility and community empowerment.



FOSTER ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

- Promote inclusive prosperity and living well for all residents of the region.
- Increase access to economic opportunities for all communities.



ENSURE OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE, ADAPTABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

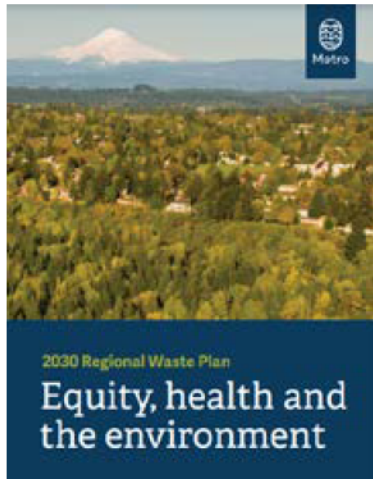
- Maintain a regional system that is safe and responsive to changing conditions to ensure long-term viability.
- Prepare for recovery after natural disasters.



PROVIDE EXCELLENT SERVICE AND EQUITABLE SYSTEM ACCESS

- Ensure that high-quality and good-value programs, services and facilities are equitably accessible to all.

VALUES AND OUTCOMES



What guides this plan?




The 2030 Regional Waste Plan is a far-reaching blueprint for how our region manages the impacts of the products we buy, use and throw away.

The values and principles of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan were foundational to the development of values for this Regional System Facilities Plan. The Regional System Facilities Plan also includes Metro's commitment to seek tribal government consultation.

The values and outcomes were further shaped with input from community and industry partners, a community advisory group and Metro Council.

Together, the values and outcomes guided the engagement and outreach approach and the evaluation of service gaps and investment options. They steered the development of the investment strategy that is included in this plan. They will be used to measure the overall success of the plan during the next 20 years.

While all the values and outcomes will be important to the implementation of this plan for the next 20 years, three of them provided focus areas for the plan development and identification of investment priorities:

-  **Resource conservation:** reducing waste through infrastructure improvements
-  **Excellent service:** equitable system access, improved quality and access to services through new infrastructure
-  **Operational resilience:** keeping services affordable

Investments to reduce waste

This plan outlines the infrastructure investments necessary to help the region reuse, repair and recycle more materials to reduce the negative health and environmental impacts of waste and support the transition to a more circular economy. New facilities will help the region recover more waste through recycling, composting or energy recovery, instead of sending it to the landfill.

Reusing and repairing materials has even greater benefits by avoiding the negative impacts from landfilling and reducing the need to manufacture new products, which requires the use of valuable raw materials, resources and energy to mine/extract those materials, make new products and transport them.



- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7



Healthy people and environment

- Minimize the negative health and environmental impacts of facilities by incorporating innovative sustainability practices as outlined in Metro’s green building policy.
- Develop good neighbor agreements between communities and facilities.



Resource conservation (waste reduction)

- Identify the items the plan needs to target for reuse, repair, recycling or composting –and the infrastructure needed to manage them.
- Increase access to donate and buy used items.
- Provide workspace, reclaimed materials and other types of support to regional reuse and repair initiatives.



Environmental literacy

- Provide learning opportunities at facilities through tours, displays, exhibits and viewing rooms.
- Develop programming with organizations focused on waste prevention and environmental justice.



Economic well-being

- Provide jobs with living wages, benefits and safe work environments.
- Recruit and retain workers who are underrepresented in the garbage and recycling industry.
- Create opportunities within the garbage, recycling, reuse and repair sectors for people with barriers to employment.



Excellent service and equitable system access

- Develop a network of facilities to provide equitable system access.
- Establish direction for Metro transfer stations and Metro solid waste facilities.
- Keep facility-based services affordable for low-income customers.
- Make public facilities accessible for people with disabilities and people who rely on transit.
- Develop multilingual and culturally relevant communication tools for facilities.



Learn more about the [Values and Outcomes](#)



Community Advisory Group: Tour of Metro South household hazardous waste facility (March 2023).



Operational resilience, adaptability and sustainability

- Develop funding options that advance waste reduction and affordability goals.
- Design efficient facilities to serve people quickly and recover useful materials.
- Identify facility investment needs for natural hazard resilience.
- Shape garbage and recycling systems with key elements from regional transportation and land use planning efforts.



Community restoration

- Evaluate potential facility benefits and burdens using a climate justice lens.
- Incorporate the needs of marginalized communities in the planning process.



Community partnerships

- Create a community advisory group that works with staff to develop the plan.
- Involve community-based organizations in decision-making about facility projects.
- Partner with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities and immigrant-led organizations to support reuse and repair projects at new facilities.



Community investment

- Develop Community Benefits Agreements to ensure benefits are equitably shared and address community needs.
- Provide community gathering spaces such as parks and meeting rooms at public facilities that serve residential customers.



Tribal consultation

- Seek to consult with tribal governments to advance shared priorities such as cultural and historic resource protection, environmental protection and resource conservation.
- Establish partnerships with Tribes through government-to-government engagement.



Scenarios workshop with community members at Adelante Mujeres in Forest Grove (January 2024).

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

Appendix C: Helpful Definitions

2030 Regional Waste Plan	Adopted by the Metro Council in 2019, this policy document sets long-term direction for all programs, services and facilities related to the regional garbage and recycling system. The plan outlines goals and related actions to protect public health and the environment, reduce carbon pollution, conserve natural resources and share the system’s economic benefits equitably. It aims to improve not only the way we manage materials at the end of their life but also to reduce harmful impacts by intervening earlier. Metro created the plan in partnership with cities, counties, communities and businesses.
Collection service customers	The households and businesses whose garbage is collected by garbage haulers and taken to transfer stations. Also referred to as “rate payers.”
Commercial customers	The customers that use private transfer stations. This includes the garbage haulers that collect garbage from households and businesses and then transport it to transfer stations as well as the large companies that haul their own waste to transfer stations. Households and small businesses are not considered commercial customers.
Commercial garbage	The garbage that is collected from greater Portland households and businesses and then transported to transfer stations. Also referred to as “commercial wet waste,” “garbage” and “wet waste.”
Commercial haulers	See “garbage haulers.”
Commercial wet waste	The garbage that is collected from greater Portland households and businesses and then transported to transfer stations. Also referred to as “commercial garbage,” “garbage” and “wet waste.”
Garbage	For the purpose of this project, “garbage” will typically always refer to the garbage that is collected from greater Portland households and businesses

	and then transported to transfer stations. Also referred to as “commercial garbage,” “commercial wet waste” and “wet waste.”
Garbage allocation	The percentage of greater Portland’s garbage that each transfer station is permitted to receive. Also referred to as “tonnage allocation” and “wet waste allocation.”
Garbage and recycling system	The programs, services and facilities that enable people and businesses to get rid of their discarded items safely – and with the highest environmental benefit – when they no longer have use for them. Metro manages the garbage and recycling system for greater Portland. Cities and counties manage garbage and recycling collection services. The system also includes organizations and businesses that provide donation, reuse and repair services to reduce the amount of materials sent to landfills.
Garbage haulers	Private companies that collect garbage from households and businesses and then transport it to transfer stations. Also referred to as “commercial haulers,” “haulers” and “route haulers.”
Haulers	See “garbage haulers.”
Rate payers	See “collection service customers.”
Regional System Facilities Plan	A 20-year plan that outlines investments and policies for accomplishing the goals of the Regional Waste Plan. The plan identifies areas where services are lacking and sets a strategy for modernizing the region’s reuse, recycling and garbage infrastructure. It also outlines policy actions to guide future service and infrastructure investments.
Route haulers	See “garbage haulers.”
Self-haul customers	Individuals and small businesses that bring their own waste to a transfer station for disposal rather than having it collected by a garbage hauler.

Self-haul garbage	The waste that individuals and businesses bring to a transfer station for disposal. As opposed to the waste that garbage haulers collect and transport.
Tonnage	The amount of garbage sent to transfer stations, measured in tons.
Tonnage allocation	See “garbage allocation.”
Transfer station	A facility that accepts garbage, yard debris and food scraps, which it then consolidates for transfer to landfills and composting facilities.
Wet waste	Also referred to as “putrescible waste,” this is waste that contains organic material and can quickly break down, causing a foul-smelling odor and attracting vermin that can carry and spread disease, like rodents and flies. For the purpose of this project, “wet waste” is referred to as “garbage.” The terms “commercial garbage” and “commercial wet waste” may also be used.
Wet waste allocation	See “garbage allocation.”