



Regional Waste Advisory Committee Advisory Report: Proposed FY2026-27 Budget and Fees

Overview

This summary reflects the Regional Waste Advisory Committee's discussion and input on Metro's proposed FY26–27 Waste Prevention and Environmental Services (WPES) budget and associated solid waste fees. In April 2026, the committee reviewed the existing programs and investments, the solid waste fee setting guidance and proposed FY2026-27 budget and fees.

Summary of Committee Engagement and Key Guidance

As part of the Regional Waste Advisory Committee's engagement on the proposed FY2026–27 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. **Cost Alignment and Financial Discipline:** There is general support for efforts to better align costs with revenue, including adjustments to reduce subsidies, implement cost recovery measures, and make operational efficiency improvements. Committee members acknowledged the need for difficult decisions to respond to current financial conditions.

2. **Support for System Facilities Plan Direction:** Members expressed support for the overall direction of the System Facilities Plan, including investments in infrastructure and long-term system planning to address access and system gaps.
3. **Continued Investment in Core Services:** There is strong support for maintaining essential services, including household hazardous waste collection, community education, waste prevention, planning and regulatory functions.
4. **Appreciation for Process and Engagement:** Committee members appreciated the opportunity for early engagement, discussion, and transparency in the budget development process, including the use of zero-based budgeting and third-party review.

Areas of Adjustment or Further Consideration

1. **Central Service Costs and Internal Efficiency -** Members expressed interest in better understanding internal cost management, including central service cost allocation, operational efficiency efforts, and how cost controls are applied prior to fee increases. There is a desire for greater visibility into how Metro is managing central agency costs and ensuring they are efficient and proportionate.
2. **Transparency in Fees, Costs, and Forecasting:** Members requested greater clarity on fee increases, cost drivers, tonnage forecasting assumptions, and internal efficiency efforts.
3. **Transition Strategy for Food Scraps Funding:** While recognizing the program's progress, members expressed interest in exploring transition strategies for the sunset of supplemental food scraps funding, including phased approaches to taper out funding.
4. **Capital Investment Timing and Phasing-** Members raised questions about the timing of major capital investments, suggesting consideration of phased implementation or interim solutions given current financial conditions.

Areas of Concern or Misalignment

1. **Long-Term Sustainability of the Funding Model:** A primary concern is the reliance on tonnage-based revenue while system goals aim to reduce waste. Members questioned whether the current model is sustainable and supported exploring of alternative funding approaches.
2. **Fee Setting, Cost Drivers and Affordability:** Members expressed concern about the magnitude and drivers of fee increases, including whether increases are primarily driven by declining tonnage, rising costs, or both. Questions were also raised about the timing of fee setting and overall regional cost increases.

3. **Ongoing Program Needs for Food Scraps Policy:** Members expressed concern about the sunset of supplemental food scraps funding, noting that while significant progress has been made, the work to maintain compliance and education is ongoing.
4. **Forecasting Accuracy and Financial Risk:** Concerns were raised about the variability and reliability of tonnage forecasts, and how forecasting assumptions impact fee setting, financial planning, and long-term decision-making.

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
Cost Alignment and Financial Discipline	<p>Credit card fee which saves 500k – there are other payment methods available (Community representative)</p> <p>Moving from contracting that was not competitive – to metro internal to have cost flexibility – sounds prudent (Community representative)</p> <p>Good to recover CC fee and put that on paying customers (Industry representative)</p> <p>Metro Paint Changes (Community representative)</p> <p>Metro South changes (Community representative)</p>
Support for System Facilities Plan Direction	<p>HHW in Corneilus and Cornelius depot planning (Community representative)</p> <p>DEQ supports the SFP (Local government representative)</p>
Continued Investment in Core Services	<p>Support for Services and community education, Planning and regulation and Community education and waste prevention education (Community representative)</p> <p>Supports Planning and regulation (Local government representative)</p> <p>Keeping the reuse impact fund (Reuse representative)</p> <p>Maintaining full-service household hazardous waste collection at Metro Central and South (Reuse representative)</p>

Appreciation for Process and Engagement	<p>Nice to have all these discussion and question opportunities early in the process (Industry representative)</p> <p>Appreciate zero based budget approach and us of the 3rd party audit/review (Industry representative)</p>
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Areas of Adjustment or Further Consideration

Theme	Comments
Transparency in Fees, Costs, and Forecasting	<p>Budget increase is dependent on tonnage allocation w/less tonnage is the goal. As tonnage is forecasted to continue to decrease through FY28 concerned with how many more FTE will continue to need to be cut and continuation of increased fees (Community representative)</p> <p>Concerns over how PDX tonnage decline is outpacing other areas and how that impacts the Metro budget and tonnage allocation of private transfer stations and especially non-PDX facilities (Industry representative)</p> <p>Concerns about increase in tipping fees. Could this be adjusted/subsidized for nonprofits/businesses focused on reuse or waste prevention (Community representative)</p>
Transition Strategy for Food Scraps Funding	<p>There are tough choices that Metro needs to make to balance the budget. Given the timing so close to the end of fiscal year. Are there any solutions for a model to taper support to local government food waste over the course of FY and slow velocity of planned investments in order to allow adjustment time for governments to have a softer landing (Community representative)</p> <p>Reduction in food waste/scrap support - could this be reduced instead of fully eliminated (Community representative)</p>
Capital Investment Timing and Phasing	<p>Cornelius site. Suggest delaying until tons rebound. Not the right time, supplement with interim solutions to fill that gap (Industry representative)</p> <p>Although I am excited to see the development of a community drop off depot in Washington county, I am concerned about timing due to current financial climate (Reuse representative)</p>
Internal Efficiency and Central Service Costs	<p>Central services/efficiency Would like more transparency/clarity around internal operational efficiency metrics across Metro (Community representative)</p>

	Revisit central overhead costs. Is WPES funds contributing a proportional amount to agency as other funds? (Local government representative)
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Areas of Concern or Misalignment

Theme	Comments
Long-Term Sustainability of the Funding Model	<p>When looking at setting rates and given Metro trying to achieve cost of service I believe the budget should be built in actual tons (Industry representative)</p> <p>How will Metro be adjusting their fee models in the future as we work towards lower wet waste tonnage in the system overall (Local government representative)</p> <p>The greatest concern I have is the exiting funding model – it is seemingly a horse and cart situation is upon us the goal is to reduce tonnage – it seems prudent to re-think funding models before forging ahead on new investments without re-imaging the model. We will continue to create our own funding issues if we are successful with our intended goals (Community representative)</p>
Fee Setting, Cost Drivers and Affordability	<p>Would like more discussion, information and transparency on Metro’s data/justification for the SWR and Regional System fee increases (10% and 5% respectively) (Local government representative)</p> <p>Concerns about increase in tipping fees. Could this be adjusted/subsidized for nonprofits/businesses focused on reuse or waste prevention (Community representative)</p> <p>Depackager-feel strongly this should not be RSF funded. How much additional diversion is anticipated for \$7M (Industry representative)</p> <p>Unclear if the Regional System and SWR fees are increasing purely due to tonnage decrease and Metro increased cost to run (Local government representative)</p>
Ongoing Program Needs for Food Scrap	<p>Food scraps compliance- 85 percent compliance implies a finality to compliance management that I have never seen reflected in the real world of recovery (Community member)</p> <p>Food scraps funding to local government – the job is never done (Local government representative)</p>

Forecasting Accuracy and Financial Risk	<p>One RWAC member said tonnage was going down is not felt by everyone. We need to explore that more, is it worth prioritizing sites there (Reuse representative)</p> <p>Forecasting methodology- while I understand some variance is expected between forecast and actuals, the severity of this and consistent year over year trend is one of the biggest economic driver in fee setting process (Community representative)</p>
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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 FY2026–27 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>Metro Paint Changes</p> <p>HHW in Corneilus and Cornelius depot planning</p> <p>Credit card fee which saves 500k – there are other payment methods available</p> <p>Metro South changes</p> <p>Moving to contracting that was not competitive – to metro internal to have cost flexibility – sounds prudent</p> <p>Services and community education</p> <p>Planning and regulation</p> <p>Community education and waste prevention education</p>
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<p>Opportunities for Adjustment or Clarification</p>	<p>Metro South operations hours change. Uncertainty of accessibility in the region</p> <p>Central services/efficiency Would like more transparency/clarity around internal operational efficiency metrics across Metro FTE cuts. For internal cut decisions, would like more clarity around where/why these were made-how positional were prioritized</p> <p>Budget increase is dependent on tonnage allocation w/less tonnage is the goal. As tonnage is forecasted to continue to decrease through FY28 concerned with how many more FTE will continue to need to be cut and continuation of increased fees</p> <p>Reduction in food waste/scrap support - could this be reduced instead of fully eliminated</p> <p>More discussion is needed on the garbage and recycling operating hours for transfer stations (curious if there is any data on how many community members access the transfer stations during the hours being cut/how much that would affect the public)</p> <p>Concerns about increase in tipping fees. Could this be adjusted/subsidized for nonprofits/businesses focused on reuse or waste prevention</p> <p>Very interested in discussing how to adjust revenue models moving forward</p> <p>There are tough choices that Metro needs to make to balance the budget. Given the timing so close to the end of fiscal year. Are there any solutions for a model to taper support to local government food waste over the course of FY and slow velocity of planned investments in order to allow adjustment time for governments to have a softer landing</p>
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Areas of Concern and Misalignment	<p>The greatest concern I have is the exiting funding model – it is seemingly a horse and cart situation is upon us the goal is to reduce tonnage – it seems prudent to re-think funding models before ahead on new investments 2/0 re-imagining the model. We will continue to create our own funding issues if we are successful with our intended goals</p> <p>Regional system fee decrease in service and education budget Food scraps compliance- 85 percent compliance implies a finality to compliance management that I have never seen reflected in the real world of recovery</p> <p>Forecasting methodology- while I understand some variance is expected between forecast and actuals, the severity of this and consistent year over year trend is one of the biggest economic driver in fee setting process</p>
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Additional community input:

- While I personally tend to favor public (versus privately run) public services, always curious about operational cost comparison for Metro versus private transfer stations, especially in light of decreasing regional tonnage and economies of scale for waste management.
- Regional system fee covers Metro’s core values to decrease waste and enhance environment, but this fee is increased by only 5% and proposed reduction at \$7.9M (\$3.4M after subtracting \$4.5M of Metro Paint). I am concerned how much is cut from services and education other than food scrap funding to local gov.
- Reason to support Cornelius site is that now is the best timing to invest due to declining tonnage forecast (tighter budget in the near future) and the nature of correcting inequality/service gap.

Local governments representatives

Supports Regional Priorities and System Outcomes	<p>DEQ supports the SFP</p> <p>Looking for wet and dry waste fees separately – blended fees penalize customers/results in anti- competitive low pricing of dry waste</p> <p>Planning and regulation</p>
Opportunities for Adjustment or Clarification	<p>Revisit central overhead costs. Is WPES funds contributing a proportional amount to agency as other funds?</p>

	<p>DEQ is concerned how will implementation of RWP be carried out. Any changes to Regional Waste Plan needed?</p> <p>DEQ concerned about compliance of Regional Waste Plan. DEQ has considered Metro IGAs with local governments to be may Metro compels compliance of local governments with RWP through funding provided</p> <p>Shared services</p> <p>Garbage and Recycling ops</p>
<p>Areas of Concern and Misalignment</p>	<p>Food scraps funding to local government – the job is never done Proposed RSF allocation to local jurisdictions is 4 cents on the dollar (approx). This is a decrease of nearly 45% since 2009</p> <p>Would like more discussion, information and transparency on Metro’s data/justification for the SWR and Regional System fee increases (10% and 5% respectively)</p> <p>Unclear if the Regional System and SWR fees are increasing purely due to tonnage decrease and Metro increased cost to run</p> <p>How will Metro be adjusting their fee models in the future as we work towards lower wet waste tonnage in the system overall</p> <p>This isn’t the highest fee increased we have faced we need transparency because all increases ultimately hit the customer Regional cost increases</p>

Additional local government input:

- There are important, specific reasons to highlight when considering why cities and counties believed continued regional revenue sharing for food scraps is appropriate. First, this is a permanent Metro mandate. The obligation and need to support businesses are ongoing, and we encourage a transition to a lower maintenance level. For years, cities and counties have been flagging this issue, and we do not agree that there was a shared plan to ‘sunset’ this funding. We were surprised by the proposal to eliminate funding, which would result in an unfunded mandate. Second, food waste is the most climate impactful material for us to address in our waste shed, and given our shared climate goals, we believe this is a missed opportunity. Third, if Metro Council wishes to continue forward with a landfill disposal ban, this will only magnify the importance for us to be able to provide excellent and nimble technical

assistance. While it is accurate that we are eligible to receive funding under the Recycling Modernization Act, those resources are distinct, with their own obligations and expectations specific to recycling contamination. Those funds do not justify eliminating regional revenues to support businesses with food waste. At a minimum, we would request Metro staff not frame those resources as an offset to food scraps funding.

- We also want to highlight why elected leaders and staff at cities and counties continue to express concern about disposal fees. We appreciate the additional touchpoints and process at the Regional Waste Advisory Committee (RWAC). However, we are requesting a discussion on process to ensure that cities and counties have an opportunity to understand these increases and whether they are adding value based on shared priorities. Affordability may be a stated priority, but we are not addressing that priority with sufficient attention. For example, the increased overhead costs over the last 5-7 years is unexplained, and local jurisdictions would benefit from additional analysis. In addition, the proposed disposal is 92% above the 2020 level and well above economy-wide inflation. We remain interested in exploring options to control organics and disposal fees which to date has not happened. More generally, we would welcome a shift in approach that makes partnership more meaningful and allows for city and county perspectives to more directly inform our regional priorities at the front end of the process.
- Budget and staff reductions at Metro South should not lead to any loss of service at the facility.
- Monies must be available to move forward with wet waste collection and reduction of this material going in the landfill. It is short sided. Technical assistance is needed to continue the outreach to residential and commercial customers in order to change “hearts and minds”. We must move forward not backward.

Industry representatives

<p>Supports Regional Priorities and System Outcomes</p>	<p>Change to commercial organics to more adequately cover the costs w/o subsidy</p> <p>Good to recover CC fee and put that on paying customers</p> <p>Appreciate some of the hard decisions around operational efficiencies that may have creates some staffing costs</p> <p>Nice to have all these discussion and question opportunities early in the process</p>
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	<p>Appreciate zero based budget approach and us of the 3rd party audit/review</p> <p>In support that rates should increase of support lowering tonnage</p>
<p>Opportunities for Adjustment or Clarification</p>	<p>I'm not really understanding why FTE change at Metro South transfer station for second half of FY 2026 27 is not reflected in budget now. Staff made this change/decision indicating savings. We should see that now</p> <p>Cornelius site – Suggest delaying until tons rebound. Not the right time, supplement with interim solutions to fill that gap</p> <p>Sill concerned over success of food scraps with end of local government funding. Would like to see some level of funding continue. RMA funding cannot be used for food scraps.</p> <p>Concerned about Metro staff saying LGs determine what happens with RMA. PRIO funds. Pretty specific in state how re: plastic pollution and packaging</p> <p>Costs associated with depackaging is being allocated in RSF. Understanding Metro collects majority of the tons but it is still a facility cost and should be treated as such</p> <p>Better understanding of FTE year over year in comparison to tonnage fluctuations. Are costs and fees in correlational with those changes</p>
<p>Areas of Concern and Misalignment</p>	<p>Concerns over how PDX tonnage decline is outpacing other areas and how that impacts the Metro budget and tonnage allocation of private transfer stations and especially non-PDX facilities</p> <p>Timing of metro setting SW tip fee- LG need it set earlier</p> <p>Depackager-feel strongly this should not be RSF funded. How much additional diversion is anticipated for \$7M</p> <p>When looking @ setting rates and given Metro trying to achieve cost of service I believe the budget should be built in actual tons Does budgeting model align with overall goals of reducing waste?</p> <p>Revenue/RS should be funded by landfill tons</p> <p>Not sure if now is the time with economic conditions to make capital expenditures like compactors and depacker at Metro central. Also concerned about costs for Cornelius site</p>

Additional industry input:

- It is still unclear to me how forecast vs. Actuals play into the budget. Look back and looking forward.
- When we talk about tons going up/down, we should really be measuring tons per person. That is a better indication of waste reduction than total tons in region. Measure consumption per person in region.

Reuse representative

Supports Regional Priorities and System Outcomes	Keeping the reuse impact fund Maintaining full-service household hazardous waste collection at Metro Central and South
Opportunities for Adjustment or Clarification	As many have brought up if revenue is based on tonnage but tonnage will probably continue to decline. Idea: find annual fee to support reuse? Encouraging .. to separate tons Although I am excited to see the development of a community drop off depot in Washington county, I am concerned about timing due to current financial climate
Areas of Concern and Misalignment	One RWAC member said tonnage was going down is not felt by everyone. We need to explore that more , is it worth prioritizing sites there