

WASTE PREVENTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES: REGIONAL WASTE PLAN OUTCOMES AND COUNCIL PRIORITIES DISCUSSION

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Department: Waste Prevention and Environmental Services

Meeting Date: September 12, 2023

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Length: 40 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

During the creation of the FY23-24 budget, Council directed the Waste Prevention and Environmental Services department to provide ongoing technical education about fees and regional waste priorities to inform future Council direction on the annual WPES budget and regional waste fees.

In response, the department refined its Council engagement strategy to include additional touchpoints to review technical information to support key decisions and seek additional guidance on Council priorities. These engagements will also provide additional context to support Council decisions on the System Facilities Plan that will provide direction on future infrastructure investments. Staff will present a two-part series to:

- Review of outcomes and goals for the regional waste system (9/12)
- Regional waste system, current levels of investment and direction on Council priorities (9/14)

Beyond September, staff seeks to increase ongoing communications with Council about budget and fee considerations for the FY24-25 budget cycle. Both the September work sessions and future Council engagements will reinforce the connections between regional waste goals, existing policies and programs, and future priorities for investment. These engagements will include data and other information Councilors specifically requested during past budget cycles.

ACTION REQUESTED

No Council action is requested at this time. These informational sessions will support Council actions in adopting the budget, adopting a Systems Facilities Plan, and other policy actions.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

This Council and previous Councils have reiterated their support for an equitable and accessible garbage and recycling system that protects the environment through a series of policies. Current Council priorities are reflected in existing policy guidance, presenting strong opportunities to more aggressively advance goals. Those priorities include:

- Reduce garbage through waste reduction and recycling
- Improve service quality and access
- Keep services affordable
- Minimize impacts on people and the environment
- Improve economic opportunities and provide good jobs

2030 Regional Waste Plan (2019)

The 2030 Regional Waste Plan includes the region’s statutorily required waste reduction plan. The plan is the region's blueprint for improving our garbage and recycling system, reducing the impacts of waste, and advancing Metro's racial equity goals that is implemented collaboratively with local governments and partners in local communities.

The plan is comprised of goals and actions to achieve three sets of desired outcomes: shared prosperity, healthy environment, and an excellent and accessible garbage and recycling system outlined below.

Figure 1. Regional Waste Plan Outcomes



In the September 12th and 14th work sessions, staff will share progress to date towards these outcomes and introduce program and policy priorities for council consideration.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Key Policies and Planning Efforts Underway

There are two key initiatives for advancing progress towards all the regional outcomes, the state Recycling Modernization Act and the Garbage and Recycling Systems Facilities Plan.

Oregon Recycling Modernization Act (2022)

The new statewide law will update Oregon’s outdated system and restore public trust by ensuring that materials are recycled and create environmental benefits. This system-wide update will make recycling easier for the public to use, expand access to recycling services, upgrade the facilities that sort recyclables, and create environmental benefits while reducing social and environmental harms, such as plastic pollution. It will do this by increasing access to recycling and in 2025, there will be one statewide list of what can be recycled. Producers and manufacturers of packaged items, paper products and food service ware will pay for many of these necessary improvements and help ensure recycling is successful in Oregon. The new law became effective Jan. 1, 2022, and recycling program changes will start in July 2025.

Systems Facilities Plan (2023)

Systems Facilities Plan is designed to provide options for Council to decide the future infrastructure investments needed in our region to modernize reuse, recycling, and garbage system. Four draft scenarios for Council consideration are designed to address existing service gaps and help ensure

we continue to meet waste reduction goals and ensure equitable and affordable services for everyone.

While the Regional Waste Plan provides the policy guidance, the System Facilities Plan currently under development will provide a long-range infrastructure plan and key investments needed to fulfill the Regional Waste Plan goals including improving access to reuse, recycling and garbage services.

Key Projects Related to Budget and Fee Setting

Waste System and Fee Reforms Budget Note (2023)

Council directed the Chief Operating Office to work with WPES to clarify regional waste outcomes to guide reforms of waste system and solid waste fees for the FY24-25 annual budget. To support this direction, staff will work with the Council President to announce the formation of a special task force to convene in 2023 and the first months of 2024 to evaluate the structure of fees and provide recommendations to Council to inform FY24-25 fee setting.

Rate Transparency (2023)

During the last fee setting process, cities and counties also elevated the need to ensure that rates charged at private stations are reasonable, regionally consistent, and well understood. Local governments began expressing concern in 2010 as rates at private facilities began to exceed rates at public stations. Metro does not currently regulate rates at privately owned facilities but could exercise the authority to do so if Metro Council finds it to be in the public interest. Staff are developing a proposal for Council consideration to respond to local government concerns that follow-up on implementation of the Transfer Station Configuration Policy adopted by Metro Council in 2016 to ensure rate transparency.

POLICY QUESTIONS

- Of your top priorities for the region's waste system, which are best reflected in the existing policy guidance and goals?
- Are any of your top priorities missing from the existing policy guidance and goals?
- What technical information will you need in the upcoming budget cycle to make informed decisions about facilities, fees, or the budget for the remainder of the fiscal year?

BACKGROUND

Metro has broad authority for planning, managing, and overseeing the regional waste system. The Regional Waste Plan provides policy guidance and outlines responsibilities for cities, counties and Metro to collaboratively manage the system. Additional history on the Regional Waste Plan and Metro's responsibilities are outlined below.

Regional authority

In 1987, the Metro Council designated solid waste as an area and activity appropriate for a functional plan (Metro Ordinance 87-740). With this action, it recognized the complexity of managing a regional waste system that serves two dozen cities, portions of three counties, over a million residents, thousands of businesses and many solid waste service providers. A regional plan provides a unified blueprint to coordinate all parties and to bring the parts of the system together into a well-functioning whole.

Additionally, under Oregon state law (ORS 459.055), any jurisdiction sending more than 75,000 tons of solid waste per year to a permitted disposal site is required to prepare a waste reduction program for review and approval by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. The statutorily required waste reduction program for the Metro region consists of the 2030 Regional

Waste Plan actions and the requirements for local governments outlined in Metro Code Chapter 51 and the corresponding administrative rules.

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. As a part of this responsibility, the department administers the Regional Waste Plan that helps fulfill state planning requirements.

Previous waste plans

Metro has adopted three solid waste system plans to date. The plan is updated about every 10-12 years to meet the needs of our changing region and align with state and federal guidance.

Metro has adopted three regional solid waste management plans since the Metro Council's 1987 designation of solid waste as an area appropriate for a functional plan. The plans were adopted in 1988, 1995 and 2008.

2030 Regional Waste Plan

Differing from previous waste plans, the 2030 Regional Waste Plan includes a new approach to managing waste. First, prior plans used the traditional solid waste hierarchy—reduce, reuse, recycle as the primary approach to manage waste. The 2030 Plan recognizes the hierarchy as one part of a broader strategy for reducing the impacts of products. The plan was designed to fundamentally address two systems including:

- the **materials management system**, which is about reducing the environmental impacts of the items we consume throughout their entire life – from extraction of raw materials, through manufacturing, using them as consumers, and discarding them; and
- the **garbage and recycling system**, which is about managing the materials at their end of their life through our collection, transfer, recycling, composting and disposal systems.

Second, the plan leads with equity. The 2030 Regional Waste Plan was the first Metro functional plan to formally incorporate an equity lens into plan development, centering the voices and needs of communities that have not historically been included in decision making. To ensure inclusive process from the start, a seven-member Equity Work Group was selected because of their expertise and experience working with communities of color and historically marginalized communities. The work group participated in each phase of the process, working alongside staff in drafting elements of the plan. Additionally, Metro and eight community-based organizations also organized discussions to learn how residents envision the future of the garbage and recycling system and helped shape the goals and actions in this plan.

Regional Waste Plan Progress Reports

The 2030 Regional Waste Plan includes a robust measurement framework to evaluate progress toward the plan's vision and goals. Progress reports are published annually to track plan performance and allow Metro and local governments to demonstrate the positive impacts the plan's activities are having on the region, highlight opportunities for improvement and evaluate which programs and projects are helping the region achieve its desired outcomes. The most recent report was published in 2022. It is a streamlined version that highlights overall progress on actions and indicators as well as positive impacts and opportunities for improvement within each goal area. For each goal, the report provides a progress update on actions and shares success stories. It then presents results for the indicators selected for this progress report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Regional Waste Plan Executive Summary

Attachment 2: Regional Waste Plan Progress Report