

RECYCLING SYSTEM UPDATE

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Department: Property and
Environmental Services

Presenter(s): Pam Peck and Matt Korot

Meeting Date: Dec. 3, 2019

Length: 45 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

At the Sept. 3, 2019 work session, the Metro Council and Property and Environmental Services staff discussed past, current and forthcoming regional and statewide work to make the region's recycling system stronger and more resilient in the future. This planning is a response to the unprecedented challenges to the region's (and world's) recycling system resulting from the constriction of Asian markets for recyclables since late 2017.

During the Sept. 3 discussion, staff asked Council how it would like to engage in the future policy, investment and programmatic work that will be critical to making improvements to the system. Councilors indicated they were interested in all facets of the work, but would like to see it move more quickly than outlined in the timetable for the statewide work. They directed staff to return to Council within three months with options for Metro actions that could all be initiated in the next two years. Council also directed staff to return in 6-9 months with a framework for a public-private partnership to advance the region's recycling efforts.

In addition, at the Sept. 3 meeting and in follow-up discussions, Councilors asked staff to include options for actions that would supplement the work related to the "curbside" recycling system by including items such as mattresses and single-use plastics.

ACTION REQUESTED

Direction on which actions staff should prioritize and confirmation of the associated timelines.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

The policy outcomes resulted from implementing the selected actions tie to the following goals in the 2030 Regional Waste Plan, which serves as the greater Portland area's blueprint for investing in our garbage and recycling system, reducing the environmental and health impacts of products that end up in this system, and advancing progress towards Metro's racial equity objectives:

Goal 7: Reduce product environmental impacts and waste through policies that support prevention practices and better purchasing choices.

Goal 10: Provide regionally consistent services for garbage, recyclables and other priority materials that meet the needs of all users.

Goal 15: Improve the systems for recovering recyclables, food scraps and yard debris to make them resilient to changing markets and evolving community needs.

POLICY QUESTION(S)

Which of the identified actions should staff begin to develop and implement?

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

Policy actions are described and illustrated in the attachments:

- Attachment A: Recycling system actions visually represented
- Attachment B: Mattresses action visually represented
- Attachment C: Timeline for potential Council actions
- Attachment D: Detailed information on each action

In summary, the actions are:

Area I: Food Service Items

Action 1: Council adopts statement of intent to address single-use items and adopts an ordinance to implement a “by request by the customer” requirement for the provision of single-use stirrers, utensils and individually packaged condiments for dine-in, drive-through, take-out or delivery.

Action 2: (a) Council adopts a resolution declaring that two years hence food service businesses must only use take-out packaging that is recyclable in local programs; Council subsequently enacts the associated requirement.

Combined with

(b) Metro provides funding and technical assistance to aid businesses’ transition to reusable and recyclable products in advance of the requirement going into effect.

Area II: Systemic Changes: Extended Producer Responsibility and Performance Standards for Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs)

Option 3: Council adopts a resolution stating that Metro will enact regional producer responsibility requirements for all paper and plastic packaging if the Oregon Legislature does not do so in its 2021 session. Council adopts the ordinance for regional producer responsibility program if the Legislature does not act.

Option 4: (a) Metro invests in MRFs’ capital equipment improvements through the Investment and Innovation Grant program; and (b) Council adopts performance standards for MRFs, including sorting outcomes and end-market certifications for environmental and social sustainability.

Area III: Mattresses and Currently Hard-to-Recycle Plastics

Option 5: Council adopts a resolution stating that Metro will enact regional producer responsibility requirements and a disposal ban on mattresses if the Oregon Legislature does not do so in its 2020 session. Council adopts the producer responsibility and ban ordinance if the Legislature does not act.

Option 6: As a bridge to implementation of a producer responsibility program, Metro establishes a robust depot and mobile collection system for hard-to-recycle materials such as Styrofoam (packaging and food containers) and other plastic containers.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The options presented and the outcomes they will achieve are grounded in Metro's regional responsibilities and authorities, and in the strategic policy framework provided by the 2030 Regional Waste Plan. Waste prevention and recycling efforts have been part of the fabric of this region since at least the 1970's and survey data throughout the decades demonstrates not only the continuing popularity of these efforts among the public, but also the shared values that underline these programs: conservation of natural resources, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and not wasting items.

BACKGROUND

At the Sept. 3, 2019 work session, staff presented the timeline for the statewide recycling system improvement process' development of recommendations and a parallel timeline for the Metro Council to provide input into that process. Council directed staff to develop options for an independent work program and associated timeline for implementation of those options, with all Council actions to occur within a two-year time period. Those options are described above and the attachments. They cover (1) the "curbside" recycling system (for materials collected at residents and businesses); and (2) special materials of interest to Council for reducing their use or recycling them.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Recycling system actions visually represented
- Attachment B: Mattresses action visually represented
- Attachment C: Timeline for potential Council actions
- Attachment D (three pages): Detailed information on each action

- Is legislation required for Council action? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- What other materials are you presenting today? PowerPoint presentation