

Meeting: Regional Waste Advisory Committee (RWAC) Meeting
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2025
Time: 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Place: Zoom meeting
Purpose: *The purpose of the Regional Waste Advisory Committee is to provide input on certain policies, programs, and projects that implement actions in the 2030 Regional Waste Plan, as well as to provide input on certain legislative and administrative actions that the Metro Council or Chief Operating Officer will consider related to the implementation of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan.*

Members in Attendance:

Chair Mary Nolan, Metro
Vice-Chair Christine Lewis, Metro
Marta McGuire, Metro
Audrey O'Brien, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Beth Vargas Duncan, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association (ORRA)
Bill Kent, City of Roses – Material Recovery Facility
Chieko Yoshihara, Communities of Color
Daisha Tate, Communities of Color
Donnie Oliviera, City of Portland – Local Government
Fiona Conneely, Environment & Health Advocate
Commissioner Pam Treece, Washington County – Local Government
Kristin Leichner, Pride Disposal – Transfer Station
Mayor Lacey Beaty, City of Beaverton – Local Government
Laura Tokarski, System User
Teresa Gaddy, Communities of Color

1. CALL TO ORDER & MEETING OVERVIEW**2. Regional Garbage and Recycling System Facilities Plan**

Chair Nolan introduced Marta McGuire and Estee Segal from Metro.

Key points of the presentation included:

Staff reviewed the development of the Regional Garbage and Recycling System Facilities Plan. The plan sets a 20-year vision and blueprint for investments to improve the reuse, recycling and garbage system in the region. The plan has gone through multiple phases of development, creating values and outcomes, identifying gaps in the system, partner engagement, scenario development; culminating in the current draft plan. The plan is addressing gaps and values by proposing:

- Building community depots throughout the region that would accept reusable items, source separated recyclables, household hazardous waste and self-haul garbage.
- Support the reuse sector by creating reuse warehouse space, a reuse mall and long-term funding for reuse organizations.
- Expand the transfer and processing capacity for organics for both the public and private sectors.
- Consider reducing Metro's role in the process and transfer of waste from commercial haulers to best serve the public interest.
- Examine the wet waste tonnage allocation program and Metro's tonnage reserve.
- Evaluate Metro's regulation of private facilities.

The committee was asked provide feedback based on the following two questions:

1. Do you have feedback on the sequence of the projects proposed in Phase 1?
2. Do you have feedback or additional comments for Metro Council as they deliberate the adoption of the plan?

Member Discussion:

Do you have feedback on the sequence of the projects proposed in Phase 1?

Bill Kent, City of Roses, asked how flow control would be determined in the plan and if Metro would be weaning off organics at Metro's facilities? Ms. McGuire replied that the goal would be to have Metro Central continue to collect commercial organics and self-haul would be sent to a depot, but this would not happen until closer to the year 2030.

Commissioner Pam Treece, Washington County, expressed appreciation for prioritizing the development of the Cornelius site to serve Washington County. Would like to see a gradual approach when implementing the reuse mall.

Audrey O'Brien, DEQ, shared that most new facilities will need some kind of DEQ permit, existing facilities will need operational plan changes and perhaps permit modifications. It is important to understand land use changes to complete this process. DEQ is happy to work early with partners to talk through these changes.

Mayor Beaty, City of Beaverton, echoed Commissioner Treece's comment. Added that the reuse mall is interesting. Shared concerns that Cornelius is very far from Tigard and Beaverton and is not easily accessible for many in Washington County. Would like to have drop off locations for community members before developing a larger Cornelius site.

Kristin Leichner, Pride Disposal, advocates to push up organics recovery in the sequence to prioritize environmental benefits of organics recovery. She also has concerns about the reuse mall and would deprioritize it from the rest of the reuse initiatives. If wet waste tonnage allocations for private facilities will change, would like to see that happen sooner.

Chieko Yoshihara, Communities of Color, supported the sequence of the plan. Based on reading the public comments the drop off depots in Cornelius and east Multnomah County were priorities as well as reuse and organics.

Vice-Chair Lewis, Metro Council, lifted up that if the opportunity arises to purchase a property in Clackamas County to move commercial wet waste too, this should be prioritized because of the challenges in finding a useable site in the area.

Fiona Conneely, Environmental and Health Advocate, shared that the phasing is solid, echoes Ms. Leichner's comments about prioritizing organics because of the environmental impact and shared views that an in-depth analysis of benefits from a reuse mall should be conducted prior to implementation.

Daisha Tate, Communities of Color, expressed concern about the logistics of phasing out residential from Metro Central before depots are in place because of the potential service gap. Marta clarified that this would not happen until a new North Portland depot is in place.

Beth Vargas Duncan, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association, expressed thanks for the opportunity to comment on the plan. Appreciated the opportunity to look at reusing existing facilities for depots. Agrees with comments about the reuse mall, wet waste and flow control.

Laura Tokarski, User of System, in general thinks the phasing is great and aligns with the Recycling Modernization Act. Agrees that the reuse mall should be evaluated before committing to a large investment, and thinks that partnerships could be started, for example, at the Lloyd Center or with universities to test a model. Agrees that organics should be phased in earlier as well.

Donnie Oliviera, City of Portland, agrees with comments on the reuse mall and to contemplate existing resources and partnerships. Would like to prioritize organics processing and think about how all infrastructure supports this. City of Portland would also like to talk about the RID site and make sure it supports changes in the area. Supports prioritizing west and east side drop off sites over the RID site.

Teresa Gaddy, Communities of Color, expressed her appreciation for the expanded committee membership because it increases the context for conversations. Echoes that the reuse mall is not her highest priority. Agrees with Mayor Beaty's point that depots throughout Washington county should be prioritized over a larger site at Cornelius to accommodate the higher density areas in Washington County.

Do you have feedback or additional comments for Metro Council as they deliberate the adoption of the plan?

Ms. Vargas Duncan encouraged the committee to consider that everyone is at a different point in terms of revenue than when much of this plan was made. She thinks that cost-benefits should be considered before making decisions about costs and commitments for capital investments, and that without knowing Metro's new fees there are many unknowns to consider.

Ms. Tate would like to see costs equal for residential users across the region before any other changes are made.

Ms. Conneely said that access gaps remain for items that are not collected at the curb and people who don't have access to vehicles. The emphasis on organics is good, but food rescue should be considered before treating food as waste. When looking at wet waste tonnage, it would be good to clearly identify what services Metro is providing that the private sector is not, which would guide what Metro should do in the future.

Vice Chair Lewis shared that she has championed the reuse mall but would like to suggest that people think of a smaller mall and envisions a model with multiple uses and vendors. Also suggested that Metro has a retail space (corner building on Grand Ave.) at the Metro Regional Center that could be used. She is supportive of creative use of existing facilities.

Ms. Yoshihara wants to make sure that communities affected by changes from the plan are taken care of. They will be affected by changes in noise or smell. She wants to make sure there is focus on education in the plan. The current consumer patterns do not support a waste reduction focus. She shared that her community loved the idea of a reuse mall.

Ms. Leichner shared that she appreciated and could be supportive of Vice-Chair Lewis' suggestion of having multiple smaller reuse retail locations instead of a large mall that she was envisioning. She looks at this plan by costs. She shared that the most efficient way to collect trash is through haulers and curbside services. While she is supportive of self-haul and sees its purpose, she has concerns that if self-haul is prioritized in Metro's fee model and subsidized through household garbage bills, it will become cheaper for people to haul

their own garbage which will put more vehicles on the road hauling waste in an inefficient manner.

Ms. O'Brien congratulated Metro on getting to this point. The Systems Facilities Plan is listed in the 2030 Regional Waste Plan as a major effort to comply with state legislation that requires a regional waste plan, a waste reduction plan and opportunity to recycle requirements.

Commissioner Treece would like more emphasis put on education for upstream waste and continuing education as the waste stream changes. She advocated that we continue to leverage private partnerships in all communities to provide best services.

Mayor Beaty shared that Beaverton has many thrift stores that appear busy and questions the need for another reuse space. She would like Metro to consider how Metro participates in the waste system. Local cities receive complaints about garbage rates, not Metro. Beaverton barely passed last year's rates. She said that people in her community have shared with her that they would cancel their garbage service if they could and haul it themselves. She would like strong consideration to be given to investments while communities deal with rate hikes in all areas. She does not feel communities understand Metro in this system and would like more educational resources to support conversations with communities as prices rise.

Mr. Kent thinks that innovation should be prioritized. For example, organics is always discussed in terms of compost, and not talked about for feeding people, feeding livestock or packaging opportunities. Need to consider if compost is always the best and highest use. We need to think about the triple bottom line for organics, look at setting ambitious goals that impact our community in positive ways.

Mr. Oliviera wants the committee and Metro to think about the future of density in the region and how to be most efficient in using our land and space. He anticipates that in the future less people will be dependent on cars and that curbside collection is the most equitable and efficient way to provide services. While he supports community depots, if we take the long view, he doesn't see people using their vehicles will be the best way to move resources. Encourages the facility plan to incorporate the "first touch" into the plan and not just the cost burden of users. He wants to think about how we can improve the existing haulers services and not get ahead of the Recycling Modernization Act before capital is invested in facilities.

Ms. Tokarski has concerns about equitable access. She shared that there is not general assistance for garbage services like other utilities. She thinks there are ways to provide transportation in an equitable manner by subsidizing transport services through EPR programs, bounty programs or funds from supportive housing. Being able to aid people in getting bulky or hazardous items to the right place does aid in housing stability. She does not want to miss the opportunity to partner with local farmers when talking about organics. As organics collection is increased, the decrease in wet waste tonnage will be impacted and we need to consider how to pay for services when waste decreases over time.

Ms. Leichner shared that there has been a push on the westside to provide reduced rate programs for low-income customers. Ms. Vargas Duncan also shared that the Portland Haulers Association is working on creating low-income programs for the City of Portland.

Mr. Oliviera wanted to flag that any investment that is made creates the necessity to keep feeding that investment. We should consider if taxpayer funds are being used to the highest and best use when building sites. Encouraged thought and innovation beyond simply adding another bin to sort materials in the current system.

Ms. McGuire summarized the responses from the committee's answers to the questions to ask for confirmation if anything was missed.

Key themes from answers to the first question below. *Question: Do you have feedback on the sequence of the projects proposed in Phase 1?*

- General support for the phasing of plan, with the exception of the reuse mall which should be further evaluated with additional cost benefit analysis and a potential pilot for the model.
- Prioritizing existing gaps for depots including the Cornelius site, with the need to identify closer drop locations in Beaverton, Tigard and Hillsboro.
- Organics processing should be prioritized given the impacts on climate issues.
- Policy work related to the wet waste tonnage allocation need to be prioritized to inform future investments.

Key themes from answers to question the second below. *Question: Do you have feedback or additional comments for Metro Council as they deliberate the adoption of the plan?*

- Focus on cost equity and affordability to ensure costs are reflective of economic landscape and are focused on impacted individuals.
- Address gaps in access for individuals without cars to reach facilities, especially to dispose of materials like household hazardous waste.
- Consider the impacts of having a system that focuses on self-haul versus having a collection system.
- Explore opportunities with farmers for organics.
- Focus on education related to waste prevention and increasing long term education around prevention and reuse issues.
- Focus on strategic planning to ensure that the plan aligns with state requirements when siting additional facilities.
- Work to leverage public private partnerships where existing infrastructure exists that can help address gaps and needs.
- There is a need for Metro to support local governments in discussing fees with residents and ensure funding structures and investments are aligned with service needs and long-term sustainability.

Members shared additional thoughts in response to Marta's summary.

Ms. Vargas Duncan shared that if cities do not pass rates for haulers, those costs impact haulers bottom line which could impact services. It hurts everyone to not have efficient and cost-effective services.

Ms. Tokarski added that the benefit of depots is the ability to collect items that haulers don't collect, such as hazardous waste or bulky items that cannot be left at the curb. She thinks that a way to help those with transportation challenges would be for haulers to have consistent days to collect these items to provide consistency.

Mr. Kent shared that he travelled to Denmark and learned that teaching waste reduction at an earlier age is most effective so thinks that education investments should be focused on younger children to foster change.

3. Budget Development

Chair Nolan introduced Marta McGuire and Cary Stacey from Metro.

Key points of the presentation included:

Staff presented on the Budget Development. The presentation reviewed Metro's budget process, key areas of progress and investments in target areas for Waste Prevention and Environmental Services 2024-2025 budget.

Member Discussion:

Mr. Kent would like to understand how the budget comes about and how reduced waste will impact on the budget. Is the current budget development the best way to create this budget?

Mayor Beaty shared that she does not know one city that isn't heading towards reductions this budget cycle. She would like to better understand Metro's structure and staffing that exists now.

Ms. Leichner asked if Metro is compensated for Paint Care. Ms. McGuire replied that Metro operates as a contractor for Paint Care and is compensated for its services. Patrick Dennis added that revenue from Paint Care offsets the direct costs of MetroPaint and is part of the regional system fee calculation.

Mr. Oliviera asked if Metro knew when the new fees will be set. Mr. Dennis replied that fees will tentatively be adopted mid-March. Mr. Oliviera shared that getting the final fees impacts the City of Portland's operating budget and this timeline is very tight. He also shared that the regional system fee revenue has increased by 45% over the last decade and feels that local jurisdictions have not seen proportional increases in investments and would like to talk about more appropriate distribution of regional system fee funds.

Commissioner Treece asked if Metro is anticipating growth in next year's budget. Ms. McGuire replied that we cannot share specifics ahead of Metro's COO publishing the budget. We will have this information at the next meeting.

Ms. Conneely requested historical trends for budget and fees.

Commissioner Treece expressed that local jurisdictions share a burden educating the public on this budget and fee process.

Ms. Vargas Duncan also shared that it is challenging to share information on Metro's budget and fees and would encourage more public participation to help more people understand these topics.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no public comments.

Final Remarks

MEETING ADJOURNED at 3:50 p.m.