

Metro guide

Solid Waste Roadmap

Decision points

In 2015 and early 2016, the Metro Council will make decisions to determine how best to manage the region's garbage and food scraps in the years ahead.



SOLID WASTE ROADMAP

Making the most of what we don't want

When it comes to managing waste, our region has a track record of success. We continue to recycle more, reduce the amount of waste we generate per person, and manage garbage safely to protect people and the environment.

It's time to look ahead to make sure that we continue and improve upon this legacy.

The Solid Waste Roadmap is a long-term effort to examine and determine the best approaches for managing the region's garbage and other discarded materials.

THE PUBLIC BENEFITS OF A REGIONAL SOLID WASTE SYSTEM

Through its involvement in the regional solid waste system, Metro seeks to:

- Protect people's health
- Protect the environment
- Get good value for the public's money
- Keep our commitment to the highest and best use of materials
- Be adaptable and responsive in managing materials
- Ensure services are accessible to all types of customers



LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT OF GARBAGE

Over the long run, what should the region do with materials that aren't reused, recycled or composted?

Since 1990, Metro has sent the majority of our region's garbage – after recycling, recovery and composting efforts are made – to two landfills in Oregon owned by Waste Management, Inc. Metro's contract with Waste Management expires at the end of 2019. This provides our region with the opportunity to evaluate whether landfills or other options should be pursued beginning in 2020.

Garbage is a resource we literally throw away. It can provide energy that powers homes and businesses. What makes the most sense for our region in how we manage garbage? To make the most of this resource, the Metro Council directed its staff to consider five options for managing the region's garbage:

Landfills Continue to send garbage to landfills where methane is extracted from the decaying waste

Combustion Burn garbage to create heat and electricity and significantly reduce its volume

Gasification Heat garbage at very high temperatures to create gases that break down into simple compounds and can be used to produce electricity or valuable chemicals

Anaerobic digestion Use bacteria to break down biodegradable material and produce methane for electricity or fuels

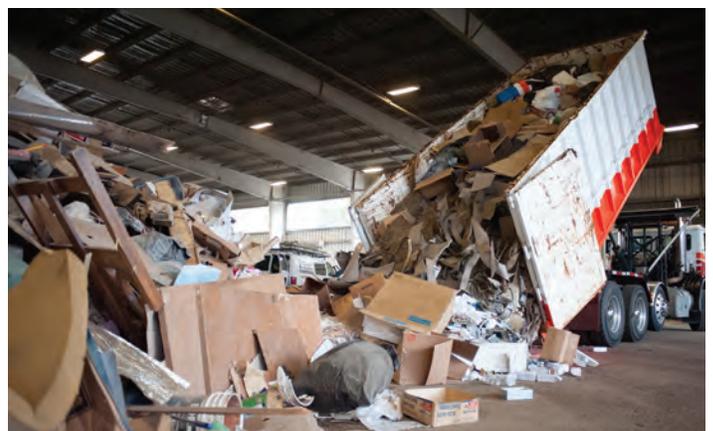
Refuse-derived fuels Develop new fuels from garbage for use in power plants or other industrial processes

Decision points In spring 2015, the Metro Council will receive more information on these approaches and narrow the focus to two or three options (or combinations of these) that can provide the best benefit for the public after 2019.

By the end of 2015, the Metro Council will settle on preferred approaches for managing the region's garbage in 2020 and beyond.

QUESTIONS THAT WILL BE CONSIDERED INCLUDE:

- Over the long run, what should the region do with materials that aren't reused, recycled or composted?
- How can we keep more food out of the waste stream, achieve greater environmental and economic benefit from food scraps, and make sure we have the right facilities available to handle them?
- How can Metro South Transfer Station in Oregon City become an even better facility to serve its customers?
- What model of the public-private system of waste transfer stations best provides for the public interest?





FOOD SCRAPS CAPACITY

How can we keep more food out of the waste stream, achieve greater environmental and economic benefit from food scraps, and make sure we have the right facilities available to handle them?

Food is the single largest recoverable portion of our region's waste. Although our region is making progress to keep food scraps out of the garbage and put them to better uses such as compost and energy production, about 18 percent of what our region currently sends to landfills is still food. That's about 170,000 tons per year, enough to fill 5,000 long-haul trucks. Moreover, food scraps are one of the largest contributors to the generation of landfill methane, a very potent greenhouse gas.

The Food Scraps Capacity Project is examining existing and potentially new facilities in the Northwest that could receive and process food scraps to keep more food out of landfills and put it to use for homes, businesses, farms and gardens.

Decision points Before the end of 2015, the Metro Council may consider new policies, incentives, and other approaches to capture greater economic and environmental value from food scraps.

TRANSFER SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

What model of the public-private system of waste transfer stations best serves the public interest?

In managing the region's solid waste system, Metro owns two full-service solid waste transfer stations: Metro South Station in Oregon City and Metro Central Station in Northwest Portland. Metro also licenses and regulates dozens of specialized waste facilities owned by private companies, including four waste transfer stations within the region. Public and private facilities receive mixed waste collected from homes and businesses, recover some materials, and consolidate the remaining garbage into large containers for delivery to landfills. Some of these private facilities also accept separated food scraps and yard debris. Metro's two transfer stations also accept hazardous waste from households and businesses to manage and dispose of safely.

Decision points While considering the best ways to manage garbage and food scraps for the long term, Metro is also evaluating how the structure of the public-private transfer station system can best serve the public interest in the future. By the end of 2015, the Metro Council will make decisions to help waste facilities prepare to meet the region's changing waste needs for the next 10 to 20 years.

FUTURE OF METRO SOUTH STATION

How can Metro South Transfer Station in Oregon City become an even better facility to serve its customers?

Metro South Station, Metro's solid waste transfer station in Oregon City, is a popular facility that receives many types of materials from a variety of sources. Garbage trucks bring trash collected at homes and businesses to Metro South where a portion is pulled out for recycling and the rest is consolidated with other waste materials and trucked to a landfill. Hauling companies also dump yard debris and food scraps which are transferred to specialized composting facilities. In addition, households and businesses bring their "self-haul" materials – garbage, construction debris, recyclable items and others – for recovery, reuse and disposal. Metro South is one of only two permanent locations in the region that accepts miscellaneous household hazardous waste, including paint, solvents, cleaners, pesticides, fertilizers and many other chemicals.

Since opening as a simple "garbage dump" in 1983, Metro South has evolved to provide all the various services it offers today. But the facility is constrained with limited room to grow, and with no other full-service waste facilities nearby, it is increasingly challenging to continue to provide the full set of services that Metro South's customers need.

After extensive outreach and engineering studies, the Metro Council directed its staff to study two possible new configurations for the Metro South site:

1. A redesign of the existing site, changing the traffic patterns and expanding the available capacity for garbage, food waste and yard debris processing.
2. Development of a new facility elsewhere to serve only small, "self-haul" customers and to receive hazardous waste from households and small businesses, with a relatively minor reconfiguration of the current Metro South site to focus only on bigger commercial vehicles.

Decision points The Metro Council will likely make a final decision about improvements to Metro South in late 2015 or early 2016.

TIMELINE FOR DECISIONS

Decisions on various parts of the Solid Waste Roadmap will likely be made by the Metro Council throughout 2015 and into 2016:

Summer 2015 Decisions to narrow the different options (landfills and other technologies) for managing garbage long-term

Summer Decisions that provide further guidance on policies and approaches for managing food scraps

Summer Decisions on which long-term option (or combination of options) will best manage the region's garbage after 2019

Fall Determination of requirements necessary for private transfer station operations to serve the public's interests for the next five years, in preparation for potential changes to waste handling in 2020

Fall or Winter 2016 Decisions on how to improve Metro South Station



LET'S TALK TRASH

Let's Talk Trash is a series of events to raise awareness and engage you in discussions and ideas about how our region can do a better job reducing waste and making the most of the garbage, food scraps and other leftover items. Your participation is important as the Metro Council makes decisions that affect how we manage this waste for the long-term.



More information on the Solid Waste Roadmap can be found at oregonmetro.gov/solidwasteroadmap

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