

Chapter I

Introduction

A. Why a regional plan?

The residents, businesses and institutions in the Metro region currently produce thousands of tons of solid waste every day. The question about what to do with this waste, now and in the future, creates the need for a plan such as this one. Furthermore, the daily movement of solid waste in the Metro area results in issues extending beyond individual jurisdictional boundaries, creating a need for coordination and cooperation in the development of a Regional Solid Waste Management Plan.

This Regional Solid Waste Management Plan (RSWMP, or the Plan) is a document that:

- Serves as a regional framework for the coordination of solid waste practices.
- Provides the region with a program of solid waste system improvements.
- Establishes regional solid waste goals and objectives, including an overall waste reduction goal and a plan to monitor progress toward the goals.
- Satisfies state law requiring the development of a waste reduction plan for the metropolitan area (ORS 459).

This updated Plan provides the metropolitan area with policy and program direction for the next decade. Twenty-five cities, three counties, Metro, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), private waste haulers and private facility owners are all part of the solid waste system. The complex mix of public and private involvement in solid waste in our region makes cooperative planning essential. RSWMP provides a unified blueprint to ensure that the efforts of all parties are coordinated as key issues are addressed.

B. Plan context

The imperative to conserve resources for future generations -- reducing the amount and toxicity of waste generated and disposed -- drives much of the Plan's direction. Growing awareness and implementation of sustainability principles and practices provides the

impetus for advancing sustainable practices in operations throughout the region's solid waste system. Finally, the Plan update process was an opportune vehicle to examine potential improvements to the region's disposal system. It reflects Metro Council's decision, after extensive analysis and outreach, that the region's transfer system will remain a public/private hybrid.

C. Scope of the Plan

This Plan addresses municipal solid waste (MSW), including hazardous wastes from households and small businesses. It does not address hazardous wastes from large-quantity generators, biosolids (sewage sludge), nor special industrial wastes.

The region addressed by this Plan consists of the tri-county metropolitan region (Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties), including the cities, residents, businesses and operations therein. This Plan also includes programs and facilities that in some cases are located outside of the tri-county boundaries, that may impact activities inside of the tri-county area.

All of the programs, services and facilities related to solid waste management and disposal are addressed by this Plan, including waste reduction, transfer, disposal, and collection. Although Metro has no specific authority over collection activities, the other government participants (i.e., cities and, to a lesser extent, counties) do have such authority. Furthermore, collection services are a critically important part of the solid waste management system and cannot be ignored.

This Plan also incorporates the most recent Disaster Debris Plan (see Appendix B). Due to its unique needs and constraints, disaster debris was addressed through a supplemental planning effort. Disaster debris management will make use of the existing recycling and disposal systems in the Metro region as much as possible, hence the need to recognize it as part of RSWMP. A priority will be placed on using waste reduction methods (in particular, recycling and composting) for handling any disaster debris.

D. The planning process

The RSWMP Update Project officially began in October 2003 with assembly of the 13-member project team comprised of Metro staff. The consulting firms Green Solutions and Environmental Practices were hired a few months later to assist with the development of the updated Plan. Cogan Owens Cogan, LLC, was hired to assist with the project's public involvement activities.

Project staff conducted an assessment of the 1995-2005 RSWMP and identified research items to support the update of the Plan. Several work groups contributed to the goals and objectives in waste reduction program areas. Sustainability and its application to solid waste operations was addressed through a special committee. In addition, Metro led an effort to examine future ownership options for the regional transfer and disposal system.

The interim waste reduction plan

The RSWMP update was delayed until the questions about transfer station ownership options could be resolved. In the meantime, Metro Council approved an Interim Waste Reduction Plan (IWRP) to provide updated program direction for the region until the entire RSWMP document could be completed. Staff and stakeholder work on the IWRP concluded in April 2006. A 45-day

public comment period began at that time. The revised IWRP was presented to the Metro Council for its approval in August 2006. That document has now been incorporated into this Plan (see Chapter IV).

Disposal system planning study

To ensure that adequate public services will be provided through the regional transfer station system in the next 10 years, Metro conducted a Disposal System Planning (DSP) Study (see Appendix C for more details). The primary purpose of the DSP Study was to answer the question: What is the best way to deliver safe, environmentally sound and cost-effective waste transfer and disposal services to the public and private users in this region? Of particular interest was determining whether the system could be

improved by changing the current mix of public and private ownership of the region's transfer facilities.

Consultants CH2M Hill and EcoData were retained to conduct a detailed analysis of the region's solid waste disposal system and to assess how changing the ownership structure of system facilities would impact system function. The study consisted of five major elements, including: 1) documentation and consideration of stakeholder input; 2) analysis of the economics of the Metro solid waste system; 3) definition of system alternatives and identification of system objectives; 4) evaluation of the system alternatives for cost, risk, and meeting system objectives; and 5) legal analysis of system issues.

After a year-long analysis, Metro Council concluded that continued public ownership of Metro Central and Metro South transfer stations is in the region's best interests. The Plans' policies reflect that determination.

The appendices contain the executive summary of the transfer station ownership analysis. Also appended is a System Improvements Workplan, which details further areas to be examined in years ahead, including waste allocation, public and private pricing, self-haul services and facility entry standards (see Appendix D).

E. Public involvement

Public involvement activities

Metro staff prepared a multi-phase public involvement plan for the RSWMP. In the first phase, between February and April 2004, seven two-hour meetings were held with approximately 40 stakeholders to identify and narrow a list of regional issues. The purpose of the meetings was to give a cross-section of stakeholders (from the regional solid waste community and the general public) the opportunity to express particular interests and perceptions of the regional solid waste system, and help identify key planning issues to address in the updated RSWMP. The results of the meetings were presented in a report titled "Summary Report of Stakeholder Meetings, Phase One, April 2004."

Four key planning issues were identified for further discussion (below). The first three planning issues were a part of the broader public involvement process targeting the public at large (service users). The fourth evolved into the Disposal System Planning project, a



review of the future public role in the region's transfer and disposal system. These issues were:

- Garbage and Recycling Services. Is the public satisfied with current service levels? Will these services be adequate in the future?
- The Regional Waste Reduction Goal. The next waste reduction goal in state law is 64% in target year 2009. As of 2004, a 57% waste reduction rate has been achieved. How much more can we recover?
- Sustainability and the Solid Waste System. Regional solid waste system operations (e.g., transport and facilities) create environmental impacts through fuel, water and energy usage. Should we adopt sustainability principles that can guide solid waste practices? Should we go further and adopt zero-waste strategies?
- Disposal System Planning. The regional solid waste system consists of public and private service providers with government regulating collection and private facilities. What are the overall goals for the disposal system over the next 10 years? What services are needed, and who should provide the services?



“Let’s Talk Trash”

The key planning issues led to Metro’s second phase of public involvement activities, which took place between August and December 2004. During this phase, Metro hosted and facilitated “Let’s Talk Trash” discussions with the public, made numerous presentations at neighborhood meetings, an area high school, and gathered input from the Metro Council and the Metro Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC).

Project staff developed a discussion guide and questionnaire to help people understand the issues, examine alternative approaches, and discuss the implications and tradeoffs.

Overall, 88 people attended Metro’s hosted or facilitated discussions and 151 people submitted comments using the online or printed questionnaire. During this period, Metro also recorded more than 1,300 visits to Metro’s “Let’s Talk Trash” web pages.

The results of the initial “Let’s Talk Trash” activities were presented in a report to SWAC and Metro Council in December 2004. Key findings included:

- Garbage and Recycling Service. The current garbage and recycling system is adequate, but many participants felt that recycling rates could be increased and services should be expanded.
- Regional Waste Reduction Goal. Participants roundly agreed that businesses could do more to recycle; however, many felt the approach should first emphasize more education and incentives over regulation.
- Sustainability and the Solid Waste System. Many participants felt that home and business sustainability practices should be improved, and government agencies should lead by example.

The general conclusion of the public feedback was that the current system is good, but improvements in services and recycling are desired, with resource conservation as the guiding principle.

This phase of public involvement is documented in the report “Summary Report of Public Outreach, Phase Two December 2004.”

“Let’s Talk Trash” II: The interim waste reduction plan

A 45-day public comment period, “Let’s Talk Trash II,” began when staff and stakeholder work on the Interim Waste Reduction Plan (IWRP) concluded in April 2006. More than 400 individuals responded to an online survey about the IWRP and/or sent in written comments. In addition, respondents were asked to provide written comments describing if and how they would change the proposed strategies. Following are the major themes that emerged from the written comments:

- The focus should be on waste prevention.
- Access to recycling services should be improved.
- Awareness, education and outreach should be emphasized.
- Responsibility for the recycling of hazardous and difficult-to-recycle products should be shared by manufacturers, distributors and consumers.

Cogan Owens Cogan, Metro’s public involvement consultant on the project, produced a report, “Waste Reduction Survey Results,” which summarizes the major themes from comments received. Metro staff prepared a summary responding to the major themes identified and detailing revisions to be made to the IWRP based on public input. This phase of public involvement is documented in the report, “Interim Waste Reduction Plan Public Involvement Report, June 2006.”

Final plan public involvement

In the summer of 2007 Metro conducted a final public comment period on the updated RSWMP. The Plan incorporated the Interim Waste Reduction Plan, which received extensive public comment before being approved by the DEQ and the Metro Council in 2006.

Opportunities to comment on the complete RSWMP were publicized through emails to an interested parties list, through advertisements placed in The Oregonian and in all newspapers within the Community Newspaper network. In addition, the public comment opportunity was noticed on Metro’s website and in several Metro Councilor newsletters.

Prior to the Plan’s release for the official public comment period, members of the Metro Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) were invited to provide final comments on the Plan.

During this final phase of public and stakeholder

involvement, a total of 22 people (public and SWAC) commented on the Plan. Many comments supported a variety of changes to the Portland collection system rather than dealing specifically with RSWMP contents. Comments specific to the Plan did not present any majority views for changes.

Comments from the public and SWAC included:

- a desire to have more materials added to curbside recycling, especially plastics
- concerns about excessive and non-recyclable packaging
- support for changes to the curbside collection system
- suggestions that the Plan include other numerical goals beyond the 2009 waste reduction goal of 64%.
- questions about enforcement of the Plan
- suggestions that the sustainability focus of the Plan be strengthened
- support for the Plan’s direction and focus on sustainability
- recognition of the Plan’s importance in meeting state goals and statutes

Metro staff reviewed all comments and provided responses to those that had the most direct connection to the Plan. The staff responsiveness report and a link to the final draft of RSWMP were posted on Metro’s website.

This phase of public involvement is summarized in the “Regional Solid Waste Management Plan Update: Final Phase of Public Involvement, September 2007.”

All reports documenting public involvement activities are available by contacting Metro.