



Metro

SINGLE-FAMILY BULKY ITEM COLLECTION PROGRAM INTERVIEW SUMMARY

June 2024

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview	1
Summary Highlights	1
About the Jurisdictions.....	2
Terms used in this memo.....	3
Key Data Points and Considerations.....	4
Service Model Considerations.....	7
Interview Methods.....	9
Appendix A	10
Acknowledgements.....	11

OVERVIEW

Between November 2023 and January 2024, Metro staff interviewed 16 jurisdictions across the western United States, including two in greater Portland, currently offering single-family customers curbside bulky waste collection and collected generation, participation, and available cost data. The goal for these conversations was to learn more about components of existing bulky waste collection programs serving single-family households and understand generation, participation, and cost of the service. This document provides a summary of key findings from those interviews and suggested best practices for providing bulky waste collection in the single-family sector. Results are aggregated and summarized.

The Metro-area garbage and recycling collection system, shared authority, and collection franchises, differs from other garbage and recycling collection systems in the United States. The most common system among interviewees outside the Metro region is a contract environment where solid waste collection services are put out to bid and a total price for all services are set. Given the different approaches employed by various jurisdictions, it is challenging to make direct cost comparisons to services in the Metro region. However, Metro staff did gain compelling insights and lessons learned from interviews, along with data on generation and participation as well as limited cost information.

Connection to the Bulky Waste Policy Project and Multifamily Bulky Waste Collection Study

The Bulky Waste Policy Project, a collaborative Metro and local government project, is looking at barriers and opportunities for bulky waste collection service to all Portland region residents with a focus on multifamily homes. Because improving access to the traditionally underserved multifamily sector is the primary focus of the Multifamily Bulky Waste Collection Study, these interviews were conducted as a complementary effort to support local government policy and planning work related to bulky waste collection in the single-family sector.

SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

The jurisdictions interviewed all provide services differently, both in collection service model and frequency of service. The key data points Metro staff expected to be important factors were often not the main takeaways from the interviews. The conversations resulted in numerous compelling insights about implementing bulky waste collection programs.

- **Most single-family customers who participate in a bulky waste collection service participate only once or twice per year.** Even when collection is offered more than twice a year, participation drops after the first and second occurrence. This is consistent in both customer-scheduled and set-date pick-up programs.
- **Costs for bulky waste collection programs are not easily quantified. 75% of jurisdictions interviewed operate in a contract environment where collection companies provide garbage and recycling service for single-family customers, and**

bulky waste collection costs are “embedded in the rate,” and not a main consideration for providing the service. In general, when cost information was shared, the cost of a program increases as the amount of material and number of collections available per year increases.

- **All programs interviewed include bulky waste collection without a separate fee, and customer-scheduled collection is the most common form of service offered.** The jurisdictions interviewed reported customer-scheduled collection allows for greater customer responsiveness, equipment flexibility and material recovery.
- **Overwhelmingly, jurisdictions reported that customers like the service when they are aware of it.** Increased outreach to customers about programs remains a goal for many of the jurisdictions interviewed.

ABOUT THE JURISDICTIONS

14 of the 16 jurisdictions interviewed for this work are outside of Oregon. They include cities in Washington, Idaho, California, Utah, and Arizona. Two of the jurisdictions are within the Metro region. The garbage collection services in all the jurisdictions interviewed are covered by garbage collection rates paid by customers, like those in the Metro region. This is a key difference from other parts of the United States where waste collection is often paid for by property taxes.

15 of the 16 jurisdictions offer the service as part of regular curbside garbage and recycling service with costs for the service included in regular garbage rates without a separate fee for bulky waste collection. The remaining jurisdiction provides collection of some special items as part of its regular service (such as Styrofoam) but charges an additional fixed cost per individual bulky item. A full list of the jurisdictions interviewed can be found at the end of this document.

The frequency of service, collection model, and collection operator varied between the 15 interviewed jurisdictions providing bulky item collection at least once per year in garbage and recycling rates:

Frequency of service

- Seven of the jurisdictions interviewed provide once per year collection
- Two offer twice per year collection
- Three offer collection based on an annual item count
- Three jurisdictions offer collection more than four times per year

Collection model

- Three jurisdictions use a set-day pickup model (e.g. annual collection on the first Saturday in June, or quarterly collections on city-scheduled set-days)

- 12 jurisdictions use a customer-scheduled collection model (customer typically contacts collector or city to schedule their once or twice per year collection of a particular item or items)

Collection operator

- Four are run by municipal collectors (government-operated collection services)
- 11 are operated by contracted collectors (a private company or companies provided collection service, contracted by jurisdiction)

TERMS USED IN THIS MEMO

Bulky waste, also called bulky items, large household items or large junk, is a variable waste stream collected in a variety of formats. Between the various jurisdictions interviewed about their programs, collection formats and language used to describe the programs varied. Below are terms used in this memo and their meaning for the purpose of this memo.

Bulky waste – A solid waste industry term for items generally considered too large to fit into a standard garbage can or roll cart. Accepted materials vary widely and can include furniture, mattresses, appliances, tires, large electronics, dimensional lumber and occasionally green waste and construction and demolition debris.

Collection event – non-curbside collection of large items; large items must be hauled by residents of a jurisdiction or eligible household to a secondary location.

Customer-scheduled or on-call or on-schedule pickup – A curbside pickup initiated and scheduled by the eligible household; because this pickup is initiated by the eligible household it can occur zero, one or more times per year.

Eligible household – customer that can access bulky waste collection through their regular garbage and recycling service provider as part of their regular garbage and recycling service.

Generation – the average number of pounds of bulky waste set out for collection averaged across all eligible households in service area (to be used as a planning value).

Illegal dumping – unauthorized dumping of large items or other materials by generators that are not intended to be served by a specific program or service.

Municipal collector or contracted collector – Whether garbage and recycling is collected by a municipally owned and operated service or by a private company or companies contracted by a jurisdiction to provide collection service.

Participation – the percent of eligible households setting out materials for collection.

Set-day or annual day pickup – A collection day set by the jurisdiction for all eligible households to set out bulky waste for collection curbside; occurs one or more times per year.

Single-family – customers residing in individual residential dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes, or four-plexes.

KEY DATA POINTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

These results come from data reported by the interviewed jurisdictions. The data is intended to support cities and counties in the Metro region as they consider updates to existing programs and policies related to bulky waste collection. Results are aggregated and summarized. The average generation includes data from 9 of 16 programs, average participation includes data from 13 of 16 jurisdictions and cost range data includes five of 16 programs and represents different service models.

Key Data Points		
Average annual generation (per eligible household in customer base)	Average annual participation	Approximate range of costs per month (per eligible household in customer base)
71 pounds	19%	\$1.00-\$3.00

Participation

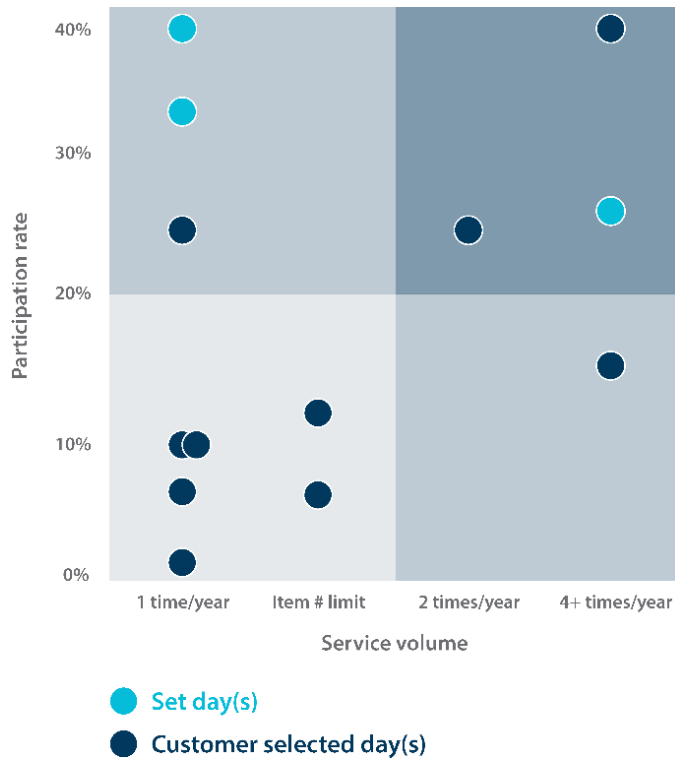
Program participation for existing programs can be useful data when evaluating different service delivery models.

- **Most single-family customers who participate in a bulky waste collection service participate only once or twice per year.** Even when collection is offered more than twice a year, participation drops after the first and second occurrence. Jurisdictions reported the drop in both customer-scheduled and set-date pick-up programs.
- Across all jurisdictions interviewed, participation in programs does not exceed 40% of eligible households annually.
- There is an association between participation rates and longevity of a program; the programs with the highest participation rates are all at least ten years old. The newer programs, those established in the most recent three years, have the lowest participation rates. Newer programs should likely expect participation to start lower and increase overtime as eligible households learn about the program.
- Not all jurisdictions track participation or utilization of the program by household.

The chart below shows both the variability in how often programs are offered (service volume) and the wide range in participation by eligible customers across program model (set-day or customer-scheduled days). Participation rates vary by collection model, age of program, and frequency of collection.

One program offering set-day collection four times per year is actively evaluating their program as participation rates for the third and fourth collection per year are very low.

Percent of eligible single-family customers who participated in bulky waste collection programs in 2022 by frequency of service



Cost

Costs for existing programs in the jurisdictions interviewed ranged from approximately \$1.00-\$3.00 per single-family household per month (approximately \$9 - \$40 per household per year). **Within this range, the offerings of each program vary widely in the amount of material included in a collection and the number of collections per year.**

- 75% (12 of 16) of the programs interviewed have contracts with collection companies to provide garbage and recycling services for single-family customers. As a result, bulky item collection service costs are offered as one of many services included in their

contracts, resulting in the cost of the service being “embedded in the rate” for these jurisdictions.

- As a result, only five of the 15 jurisdictions with bulky waste collection included in existing garbage rates could share cost data for bulky item curbside collection.

The table below shows the amount of material, number of collections, and estimated costs of existing programs per eligible households in a service area. In general, the cost of a program increases as the amount of material and number of collections available per year increases.

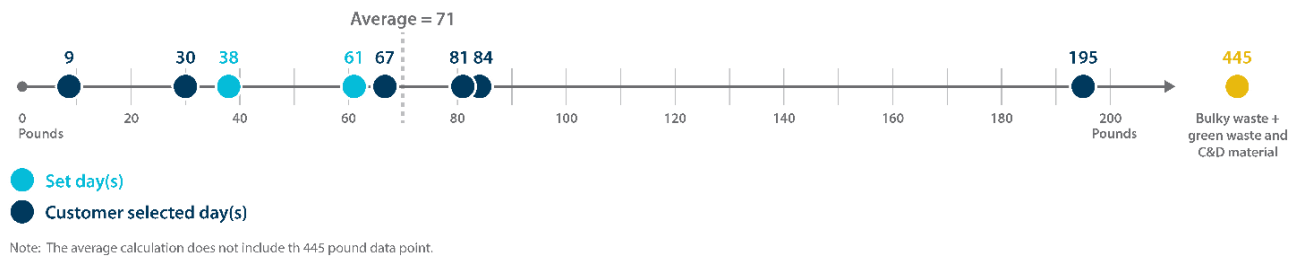
Costs of existing programs per eligible household in a service area				
Jurisdiction	Amount and type of material accepted per pick up	Type of collection model	Collection(s) per year	Cost (embedded in rates)
Jurisdiction 1	Equivalent of 1 large item	Set-day	1	\$0.76 per month; \$9.15 per year
Jurisdiction 2	2 large items	Customer-scheduled	1	\$1.50 per month; \$18 per year
Jurisdiction 3	12 large items	Customer-scheduled	unlimited	\$2.25 per month; \$27.00 per year
Jurisdiction 4	3 large items and 15 small items	Customer-scheduled	2	\$2.70 per month; \$32.40 per year
Jurisdiction 5	Equivalent to 20 cubic yards of material including yard debris and construction and demolition material.	Set-day	4	\$3.33 per month; \$39.96 per year

Generation

The average annual generation per single family household is 71 pounds. In estimating generation, Metro staff considered the amount of material that might be generated from an entire eligible customer base per year to serve as a planning value. This estimate can help inform how much bulky waste to anticipate from a service area.

- Several jurisdictions recalled concern that implementing a new curbside collection service would result in an immediate increase in requests from customers or that the amount of material set out for collection would be unmanageable. However, this did not occur for any jurisdictions when programs were implemented.

Annual generation by program – per eligible customer/household



- The highest estimate in this range (445 lbs) includes yard debris and construction and demolition debris which is an outlier for material covered by other bulky waste collection programs.
- Overall generation of material is relatively stable from year to year. Jurisdictions did not report major changes in tonnages between years.

SERVICE MODEL CONSIDERATIONS

Models of providing service

Customer-scheduled collection is the most common form of service offered and allows for greater customer responsiveness, equipment flexibility and material recovery.

- All jurisdictions reported customer-scheduled pickups happen within one to two weeks of when the customer schedules the appointment.
- For the three jurisdictions offering set-day collection, dates are advertised well in advance and typically happen during the same time frame each year.

One jurisdiction reported customer-scheduled collection is logistically easier for collectors to plan for, allowing for smaller crews and flexibility in their fleet to meet the prescheduled demand and predetermined materials set out.

Jurisdictions which have switched program models from set-day collection to customer-scheduled collection report a decrease in illegal dumping and an increase in waste diversion.

- Four interviewed jurisdictions have switched from set-day collection or neighborhood collection days to customer-scheduled pickup programs in recent years. Staff from these jurisdictions described set-day collection or neighborhood collection days previously

encouraging illegal dumping from commercial sources because materials set out for these types of collection may have accumulated ahead of the advertised collection day and were not necessarily associated with specific properties. This allowed those outside the intended customer base to take advantage of the service by adding materials to visible existing piles. By switching to customer-scheduled pickups, customers communicated directly with collectors, receiving specific instructions and timeline for placement of materials. Items set out for collection are also directly related to individual customers and are likely to be smaller amounts of material than for a set-day collection.

- Staff from one jurisdiction which switched models noted that customer-scheduled collection allowed for higher diversion because collectors were able to plan for certain materials such as e-cycles or mattresses which need to be handled specifically for recovery.

Collection Operations

A standardized material list is important.

- The material stream definition, or list of allowable items, varies between jurisdictions – some have lengthy definitions, while some are set up for customers to call customer service agents when scheduling collection to confirm item(s) eligibility. All programs collect bulky items such as mattresses and large furniture. Most accept large appliances and those that do not have separate large appliance collection programs as another component of garbage service.

Additional storage space and planning may be required at reload facilities or transfer stations to accommodate storing increased amounts of collected materials that require recycling or special end markets such as mattresses, electronics, tires, and appliances.

- Three jurisdictions noted that implementing a bulky item collection program increased the need for storage space at transfer stations and/or reload facilities, given the varied nature of markets for the materials collected. Materials such as mattresses (in California), freon-containing and metal appliances, electronic waste, and other recyclable goods will likely need to be diverted from the landfill and may need to be stored until transferred.

Two jurisdictions highlighted that non-compaction trucks are necessary for preserving the integrity of materials such as mattresses, e-waste, appliances, and other items collected for recycling.

- Box trucks and flatbed trucks are popular route vehicles because they allow for a service format that is flexible to accommodate the types and amount of material to be collected. Some programs use separate trucks to collect different material types, and some use the same truck to collect everything and then sort back at facility.

- Six of the jurisdictions always assign two drivers per collection route to accommodate a variety of materials on one route. Others determine staffing based on what materials are scheduled per route.

Resident/Customer Outreach

Overwhelmingly, jurisdictions reported that customers like the service when they are aware of it. Increased outreach to customers about programs remains a goal for many of the jurisdictions interviewed.

- Promoting a program, whether it be new or longstanding, requires additional resources both to make customers aware of the service and to provide customer service to schedule the collection or answer questions.
- Providing multiple intake methods for customers to schedule pickups (e.g. email, phone, webform) makes scheduling easier for customers and allows collectors to gather more detailed information about specific bulky waste collection requests. The more information that is known by a collector prior to item pickup, the more accurately they can plan for routing.
- Aligning pickups with a customer's regular garbage day can allow for customer-facing consistency of service.

INTERVIEW METHODS

Metro staff reached out to staff at jurisdictions listing single-family bulky item collection as part of garbage and recycling services on city websites. Metro staff shared questions ahead of interviews and conducted interview calls and email exchanges between November and January 2024. Metro staff confirmed notes and program-specifics with all jurisdictions interviewed in January 2024.

APPENDIX A

Jurisdictions interviewed			
Jurisdiction	Single-Family customers	Collector	Service Model
Phoenix, AZ	418,000	Municipal	Set-day
San Jose, CA	215,000	Contract	Customer-scheduled
Seattle, WA	154,305	Contract	Customer-scheduled (for additional set fee per item)
Long Beach, CA	117,000	Municipal	Customer-scheduled
San Francisco, CA	110,000	Contract	Customer-scheduled
Oakland, CA	103,460	Contract	Customer-scheduled
Boise, ID	78,000	Contract	Customer-scheduled
Oceanside, CA	50,000	Contract	Customer-scheduled
Tacoma, WA	50,000	Municipal	Customer-scheduled
Vancouver, WA	48,000	Contract	Customer-scheduled
Salt Lake City, UT	40,000	Municipal	Customer-scheduled
Kirkland, WA	24,000	Contract	Customer-scheduled
Federal Way, WA	19,000	Contract	Customer-scheduled
Issaquah, WA	9,500	Contract	Customer-scheduled
Milwaukee, OR	6,252	Contract	Set-day
Troutdale, OR	4,325	Contract	Set-day

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Federal Way, WA

Issaquah, WA

Kirkland, WA

Long Beach, CA

Milwaukee, OR

Oakland, CA

Oceanside, CA

Phoenix, AZ

Salt Lake City, UT

San Francisco, CA

San Jose, CA

Seattle, WA

Tacoma, WA

Troutdale, OR

Vancouver, WA