

Meeting: Regional Waste Advisory Committee (RWAC) Meeting
Date: Thursday February 16, 2023
Time: 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.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 implementation of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan.*

Members in Attendance:

Pam Peck, Metro
Sharetta Butcher, North by Northeast Community Health Center (NxNE)
Lindsay Marshall, City of Tualatin
Christa McDermott, Community Environmental Services, PSU
Audrey O'Brien, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Eben Polk, Clackamas County
Thao Tu, Vietnamese Community of Oregon
Beth Vargas Duncan, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association (ORRA)
Ryan Largura, City of Troutdale
Andrew Bartlett, City of Hillsboro

1. CALL TO ORDER & MEETING OVERVIEW

Pam Peck (Metro) brought the virtual meeting to order at 8:31 am and previewed the agenda.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no comments from the public.

4. Large Household Item Reuse Market Study

Pam Peck introduced Carl Grimm from Metro.

Key points of the presentation included:

The presentation reviewed the Large Household Item Reuse Market Study. The goal of this study is to identify markets for reuse or large household items. Reuse has a greater potential to protect our environment than recycling and can benefit our economy. This work will also support the Garbage and Recycling System Facility Plan, and the Bulky Waste Policy Project. Interviews have been conducted with ten reuse organizations. Findings from the study have confirmed barriers including transporting large items, cost of transportation, lack of information, confusion around options and proximity to donation sites. Gaps experienced by reuse organizations include facilities, funding, collection and delivery services, marketing, access to the waste stream and integration of reuse into the regional system. Recommendations for governments include promote reuse, engage the community, increase investment in reuse operations, explore establishment of hubs.

Member Discussion Included:

Ms. O'Brien, DEQ, asked if the study looked at how people try and sell items on craigslist etc.? She stated it can be difficult to even give away items for free. Repairing appliances is also extremely difficult and time intensive. Mr. Grimm responded that this is outside the scope of this work and

that local governments don't have much control of person-to-person exchange of items. There is data to show that repair or items is being underutilized and could help stop a significant amount of material from entering the waste stream.

Mr. Polk, City of Portland, asked how the study defined "large"? Mr. Grimm responded that this included furniture and appliances, large items from homes, anything larger than 36 inches in any direction. Mr. Polk asked if this study included repair businesses. Mr. Grimm replied that that was correct.

Ryan Largura, City of Troutdale, asked how Metro planning on guiding the workforce development, and if the policy ramifications were regional or statewide. Mr. Grimm responded that he would get back to Mr. Largura with detailed recommendations regarding workforce. The policies regarding producer responsibility legislation would be at the state level. Several organizations identified hauling franchises as a barrier to potential partnerships with third party haulers to move large items.

Christa McDermott, Portland State University, acknowledged the reuse ecosystem is very complex, but would like to encourage reuse policies related to construction materials. It would be ideal if we could pass policies regarding the durability and repairability of items.

Andrew Bartlett, City of Hillsboro, asked if the study found any other regions that have reuse integrated into their systems? Mr. Grimm replied that the study did not look outside of the region.

Beth Vargas Duncan, ORRA, shared that, when franchise haulers are presented as barriers, would like to share that garbage haulers legally collect solid waste. Reuse items are solid waste because they cannot be reused, or there is no market for an item. When does an item become solid waste? The processes for reuse can become very complicated. Her question is what the options are to integrate reuse companies to contract with private haulers. Ms. Peck replied that she acknowledges the complexity of reuse and that Metro intends to perform a waste characterization study to understand these opportunities.

Sharetta Butcher, NxNE, shared that her experience on the board for Community Warehouse knows that there is a huge cost to picking up and delivering items.

Ms. McDermott, wanted to raise that textiles and fabrics make up a large portion of landfill waste and while individually aren't large, but aggregately textiles become bulky.

5. Community-Based Collection Events

Pam Peck introduced Jennifer Payne from Metro.

Key points of the presentation included:

Metro holds large-scale hazardous waste collection events and is planning to hold six this year. There is a connection between these events and bulky waste events. In the past year, Metro tried to support these efforts through funding. These funds came from the state funding and our regional refresh fund. Metro attended 32 additional events for vaccines, dumpster days, and healthy homes. Metro has been working on improved fliers, many in translated editions to share information about events. Metro is committed to holding small-size events for communities that phase barriers to service, focusing on equity focus areas. These areas are census-tracked areas that have higher than regional average numbers of people of color, low income, and limited English proficiency.

Member Discussion Included:

Ms. Vargas Duncan shared that haulers have been working on collecting batteries. There has been an overwhelmingly positive response and collection in the first eight months. More jurisdictions are starting to participate. Mr. Bartlett shared that there is still a gap for this service for multi-family.

6. Bulky Waste Policy Project Phase One Finding

Pam Peck introduced Sara Kirby from Metro and Heather Robinson from Washington County.

Key points of the presentation included:

This project is directed by the Regional Waste Plan, specifically by Goal 10, Action 10.5, which states Metro will provide regularly occurring bulky waste collection service, with particular emphasis on multifamily communities and lower-income households. The study is looking at how bulky waste collection can be more convenient and accessible to all people in the region. This project has five phases. Phase one, the current phase, is to assess the current landscape of bulky waste collection events, phase two is to refine collection modes and scenarios, phase three is to pilot collection service models, phase four is to draft service standards, and phase five is to implement the new service standard by July 1, 2025.

The current baseline is on-call services that include an hourly cost of \$70-90 an hour, plus the cost of disposal for single-household families. There are exceptions where tenants can access services from their haulers. This service also varies widely across the nation. Discussions were held with community groups and collection companies regarding their experiences with disposing and collecting bulky items. An electronic survey was sent to local governments asking them about services, rates and costs related to bulky waste.

Three barriers and four opportunities were identified from these findings. The barriers are lack of appropriate transportation for moving large items, lack of access to services, and variability of service throughout the region. Opportunities include leading service equity, providing consistent standards addressing barriers to retaining flexibility, leveraging the new extended producer responsibility legislation that will help lower cost of disposing of some large items such as mattresses.

Member Discussion Included:

Ms. Duncan added that there are a number of pilot projects addressing collecting bulky waste. Suggested that it might be nice to hear directly from a hauler on this topic. Franchise haulers are always happy to speak with local governments and communities about what services are desired and how to provide services at a reasonable cost. Please involve haulers in these conversations. Ms. Kirby thanked Beth for her comments and recognized that there are parallel pilots going on regarding this work. A discussion is planned with the haulers in April, and she will reach out to Ms. Vargas Duncan about this conversation.

Mr. Polk asked for more information on the process for developing the pilots. Ms. Kirby responded that Phase two will be looking at three collection scenarios. This is to look at cost of services and gather more opinions of that scenario then would choose the best scenario to pilot. Metro will be partnering with local governments to implement a collection model pilot. This is not to replace or remove existing services but to gather data to help improve services.

Ms. Vargas Duncan added that there is a landfill ban on TVs, which requires an additional truck to pick up TVs for disposal.

Ms. McDermott thanked Sara and Heather for the succinct summary and pointed out how much “gunk” is in the system and asked what we can do to keep people from putting items at the dumpster or curb that shouldn’t be there. We should call on RMA to focus on items that can’t be recycled or repaired, and producers should subsidize the system for removal costs. We should also find ways to look at the informal workforce such as waste pickers. Concerned that we are missing an opportunity and inequitable to force everything into large companies.

Mr. Polk asked when RWAC would be seeing this information again, or how to track the work in between RWAC. Ms. Kirby suggested that if the group wants to hear more, the project team is happy to accommodate meeting more frequently with the group.

Final Remarks

Ms. Peck put forth the January meeting minutes for approval. Mr. Bartlett moved to approve the January minutes; Ms. Butcher seconded. December minutes approved. Ms. Peck gave a few final remarks to the committee.

MEETING ADJOURNED at 10:30 a.m.