

## **STAFF REPORT**

### **FUTURE METRO SOUTH – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SITE SEARCH PROJECT UPDATE**

---

Date: 11/9/21

Department: Waste Prevention and Environmental Services

Meeting Date: 11/18/21

Presenter(s): Estee Segal (WPES), Gloria Pinzon Marin (WPES/Communications), maybe: Jairaj Singh (Unite Oregon)

Length: 45 minutes

#### **ISSUE STATEMENT**

During the investigation of a possible site (the Jennifer St. Site) for purchase to build a new garbage and recycling facility in northern Clackamas County, staff worked in partnership with Unite Oregon and a Community Advisory Group (“CAG”) to develop a set of community criteria (aka “Community Lens”). After many meetings and discussions, the Community Lens tool that was developed with these partners represents a summary of the community values and priorities that should guide Metro staff in the search and assessment of any future site that will be seriously considered for purchase for a Future South facility.

Staff would like to review the learnings from project community engagement in 2021, the work of the CAG, and the resulting Community Lens with CORE. With input from CORE, staff would like to formally incorporate the community criteria (alongside a set of base and functional criteria) for use in assessing future sites that staff may consider recommending to Council for purchase for a Future South facility.

#### **COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT**

Metro Council will make the decision on whether to acquire (purchase) a site for a Future Metro South recycling and transfer center through a formal vote on a resolution. If approved, the resolution empowers the COO to move forward with the purchase of the property.

If/when staff identifies a potential property that aligns with project goals and where the owner is interested in selling, staff will hold the property for investigation (usually 9-15 months) through an option or purchase and sale agreement. During this “due diligence period” staff will assess how well the site meets the base, functional and community criteria and will summarize these findings for review and for Council to decide on whether to purchase or not. Council will base its decision on staff’s negotiated deal terms, a summary of site investigations, criteria alignment, risks, opportunities, and input and feedback from community engagement.

Staff may take site search project progress reports to Council from time to time, prior to entering into an option or purchase and sale agreement for a specific site. Resolutions for clarification and documentation of project direction from Council could be requested at these progress update meetings.

#### **QUESTION(S) for CORE**

1. Does the Community Lens tool (Attachment A) and the engagement outreach activities as summarized in the Public Involvement Summary Report (Attachment C) align with Metro’s Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity Diversity and Inclusion?

2. Does CORE recommend incorporating the Community Lens tool (community criteria) in the Council decision making process? Why or why not?
3. If/when staff identify a property for possible purchase, do CORE members want to be included in a review of the draft Community Lens?

## **STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

Which [Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#) goal(s) or department racial equity plan goals does this project advance and how?

The Future South site search has been designed and continues to be implemented to advance Goal A, B, C, D of the [Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#) in the following ways:

### **Goal A - Metro convenes and supports regional partners to advance racial equity.**

- Staff partnered with a community based organization (Unite Oregon) to plan, execute and build capacity to increase civic engagement with Clackamas County communities of color.
- Staff regularly met with and consulted with potentially impacted local jurisdictions (Oregon City, Clackamas County, Happy Valley) to share information about the project and site search, learn about the communities within their jurisdictions, and share ideas or opportunities to advance racial equity within Clackamas County.

### **Goal B - Metro meaningfully engages communities of color.**

- Project staff prioritized involvement and input from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color who live, work, or worship near the project siting area and who would be impacted or could benefit from the project development.
- Community Advisory Group members were selected from communities of diverse ethnic, racial, geographical and age groups and people who serve vulnerable populations within their volunteer or professional work.
- Consulted with CORE (2019) at the onset of the project for guidance on project activities that could advance Metro's SPAREDI plan and incorporated their feedback into the community outreach plan.

### **Goal C- Metro's culture supports staff's ability to advance regional equity.**

- Metro staff have resources available to them to participate in diversity, equity and inclusion work and learn about how other modern recycling and facility investments in the country have advanced racial equity through their planning, siting and development process. Some trainings and activities included:
  - Reviewing case studies about how community engagement was incorporated into planning and development process of other modern transfer stations throughout the Pacific North West.
  - Ongoing counsel and advice by Metro's Tribal Policy Liaison, Katie McDonald, helped inform due diligence investigations on topics including how to incorporate a site's cultural history and urban indigenous and Tribal engagement.
  - Participated in multiple Metro hosted and external equity trainings such as: incorporating equity in sustainable development, how to engage with Tribal governments, bystander intervention training, equitable community engagement practices, and Trauma Informed Care.
- In the future phases of the project, there are opportunities to discuss equitable hiring and contracting practices at a new facility to benefit local communities of color, communities

living with a disability or people living with low incomes in regards to work-force development, service contracting and facility service provision.

**Goal D - Metro creates safe and welcoming services, programs and destinations**

- Metro staff began building relationships within communities of color in Clackamas County, including immigrants and refugees, to understand the needs of culturally specific communities and the impacts of current garbage and recycling programs and services.
- Metro staff sought to learn about and understand the level of knowledge and needs of traditionally excluded communities in Clackamas County in regards to how they interact with the garbage and recycling system.
- Through conversations, Metro staff learned about the types of services and language needs among communities of color and other system users. Common languages identified in Clackamas County include but are not limited to Spanish, English, Russian, Vietnamese, and Burmese.
- Some of these findings included a high interest in language translation and education opportunities about environmental health and a desire to see Metro implementing Environmental Justice principles. Community members were interested in reducing negative environmental impacts related to the garbage and recycling system, while preventing harm to low income and communities of color by the siting or operations of a new transfer and recycling center.

**What did/will community and stakeholder engagement look like? How did/will you engage with Black, Indigenous and communities of color, immigrant communities and/or members of the disability community?**

This update to CORE takes place after two years of work informing the public about the need for investment in the Metro region’s garbage and recycling transfer and recycling system and looking for an adequate site(s) to move some of all of the existing services offered at the existing Metro South transfer station. Once a site is identified, community feedback will also help inform the potential expanded services desired and needed that could be offered in a modern recycling and transfer station, as well as identifying potential impacts to the local community.

Metro staff and Unite Oregon used email, word of mouth, a project website in multiple languages, targeted social media, phone calls, and language specific focus groups and presentations to involve immigrants, refugees and other communities of color in the project.

In all conversations, staff made an effort to:

- demystify the garbage and recycling system including the decision-making processes related to the proposed regional investment in a new facility and new services;
- be clear about how community input would be used within the decision-making process; and
- follow up with responses to questions that staff did not happen to have the answer for at the time.

**What are the anticipated racial equity benefits (positive) and impacts (negative) of this project/program?**

- Workforce development opportunities including opportunity for construction related contracting and new jobs once the facility is built.
- Improved/expanded garbage and recycling services including better accessibility, and information in multiple languages.

- Opportunity for involvement by urban indigenous people, honoring of their ancestors who depended on the surrounding land and its resources before being displaced by settlers, and increase understanding of treaty rights in the area.
- Increased opportunities and programming to support waste reduction community education for the local communities and future generations.
- Potential increased car traffic near the site identified due to high self-haul customer use.
- Impact to customers could include either an increase or a decrease in travel time (driving accessibility) to the new site in comparison to the existing Oregon City transfer station.
- People who were meaningfully engaged throughout the process will be connected to other opportunities for leadership development and education relate to Metro’s work in the garbage and recycling system.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The Metro South Transfer Station (MSTS) in Oregon City has served the public’s garbage, recycling and transfer needs for almost 40 years, but has increasingly outgrown its operational capacity to accommodate peak customer volumes and new services. Public self-haul customers continue to increase due to population growth and there are limited private options for disposing of garbage and recycling. There is no space at MSTS to accommodate the services called for in the 2030 Regional Waste Plan, such as providing increased recycling of materials, separating materials for reuse/repair, and collecting commercial food waste to support the Metro food scraps policy adopted in 2018.

For these reasons, WPES has been working to find a new site to move some or all of the services that are currently offered at MSTS, to a new site where a modern, efficient and sustainable facility can be built. A consultant-led study completed in 2016 (“Metro South Station Assessment”, HDR), recommended that Metro either complete a major renovation of the current site or find a separate location of at-least 7 acres to build a new facility for self-haul customers only, while modestly upgrading the current MSTS to serve commercial customers only. A project manager was hired in late 2018 to focus on this project and manage a full-fledged site search and acquisition process, following the recommendations in the HDR assessment.

However, since the HDR study was completed in 2016, the 2030 Regional Waste Plan was adopted in 2019, and staff visited newly built solid waste facilities in Washington State, the direction of the site search was amended. In October 2019, a project update and discussion was held with Metro Council who directed staff to *search for and acquire a new site large enough to accommodate a full-service transfer station including all services currently housed at MSTS and additional services envisioned in the 2030 Regional Waste Plan.*

In fall 2019, staff presented an introduction of this project and the site search to CORE. At this meeting, CORE members asked what it meant to have “community support” for a transfer station site and how staff might measure this. CORE asked staff to focus on defining “community support” and develop measurement mechanisms to gauge support/opposition to the project. CORE members also expressed interest in understanding the various phases of community engagement planned for the project, how acquiring a site would be paid for, the ecological impact of a new facility on its neighborhood, and how the Native American community would be engaged in the project.

Staff integrated this input and direction from CORE into planning for the project. Staff formed a partnership with Unite Oregon to identify potentially vulnerable and traditionally excluded communities and prioritize their participation in the community engagement process. This included forming a diverse CAG, designing an accessible community survey, outreach to First Nation Tribal governments, and ongoing engagement with community partners.

In early 2020, the project team established, and a WPES Facility Siting Steering Team approved, a set of base and functional criteria to identify possible sites for a new facility within a 5-mile siting area. Priority was given to larger sites that would be able to accommodate a full-service transfer station, but sites of 7 acres or more were included in the site search. Community criteria (“Community Lens”) were developed with the CAG and represent community values and priorities to be considered during the site search and for assessing any site that staff is seriously considering for purchase. The Community Lens and the community survey are specific tools staff developed and implemented (and plan to replicate in the future) to gauge the level of community support or opposition for the project at a specific site, as requested by CORE.

In spring 2020, staff identified and ranked 166 possible sites within the siting area, though none of the possible sites were listed for-sale. Through outreach to site owners, staff identified a 26-acre, former rock quarry (the “Jennifer St. Site”) in the Clackamas Industrial District, which ranked #6 (using base & functional criteria) out of 166 possible sites, and entered into a purchase and sale agreement with the owner to assess it for its capacity to accommodate a new transfer station facility. Staff managed a wide-range of site investigations and community engagement from November 2020 – August 2021, but at the end of the due diligence period, Metro leadership determined that the site was risky and expensive to prepare for the intended project use, and directed staff to terminate the agreement with the seller.

Though this site did not meet Metro’s objectives for the project, the need for a new facility remains and grows each day. Customers continue to increase and operations staff that work at the facility express great concern about the growing demand for services, safety of customers with dangerous on-site cross-traffic, and aging infrastructure. At the same time, the reality is that large, industrial/commercial zoned land is extremely scarce in this area and siting such a facility is extremely complex and takes time. For these reasons, staff is recommending to management to continue the search for a new site to leverage the momentum of the search and relationships that have been developed over the last 2 years. Extensive outreach and engagement efforts have yielded a strong understanding of the project need with jurisdictional partners (staff and elected officials), as well as the broader community. People know about the project and are starting to contact Metro with site leads and possibilities, based on our work to-date. Management is expected to provide feedback and direction on this proposed approach in late November.

Due to ongoing urgency to address capacity issues at the existing Metro South Transfer Station, staff is also working to identify and prioritize options and develop implementation plans for solutions to reduce pressures from overcrowding at MSTs. Solutions will focus on identifying short (less than 3 years to plan and implement), mid (3-5 years) and long (>5 years) term improvements at MSTs and elsewhere in the system to improve safety for all users, while the search for a site for a new facility continues.

**ATTACHMENTS**

<b>A – Community Lens Template</b>	Required – staff will review at meeting
<i>Staff <u>will not</u> review recommended or optional materials listed below at the meeting but can answer questions about them from the committee</i>	
<b>B – PowerPoint - Public Involvement Summary</b>	<i>Recommended reading</i>
<b>C – Public Involvement Summary Full Report</b>	<i>Optional</i>