

Robert Liberty

METRO COUNCIL DISTRICT 6 NEWS



METRO

PEOPLE PLACES
OPEN SPACES

Robert Liberty
represents
District 6, which
includes portions of
Northeast, Southeast
and **Southwest**
Portland.



Garbage In, Garbage Out

“Garbage in, garbage out” is a cautionary axiom that describes what happens when incorrect assumptions are used as the basis for developing an analytic model.

But it also describes one of Metro’s roles in managing the “solid waste stream” in our region. (Why and how some things become “garbage” to be disposed of, is a bigger topic for another day.)

The garbage in our region begins in a can in our house, or a bin at our business. It is picked up by a hauling company and taken to one of Metro’s two (privately managed) transfer stations, or one of the handful of privately owned transfer stations in the region. From there the garbage is taken to a small number of private landfills for its ultimate disposal; the landfill receiving most of the waste from our region is Columbia Ridge, 150 miles up the Columbia River Gorge.

In addition to owning the two transfer stations, Metro plays other roles in waste disposal in the region: Metro has been given oversight responsibility by the legislature for regional recycling efforts (see related article) and for waste disposal (but not collection). Metro sets rates for the disposal of waste at its facilities and charges additional fees on all waste from the region, even if that garbage never passes through a Metro transfer station, in order to fund various regionally beneficial waste and recycling related programs. Metro also operates its own paint recovery facility.

So when it comes to garbage, Metro is a generator, recycler, operator, regulator and tax collector.

A year ago, the Council decided to rethink our assumptions about one of the roles Metro should play in this disposal system: Should we continue to be the owner of transfer stations as well as being a regulator, or should we sell our transfer station facilities and allow the private sector to control the transfer stations?

A thoughtful analysis by CH2MHill shows that Metro’s sale of the transfer stations would have little or no impact on customer costs, but would hamper our ability to accomplish other goals, including serving lower income customers who haul their own waste, promoting competition among service providers, collecting household hazardous waste and promoting recycling.

The study also provided the kind of facts and analysis needed for our broader Regional Solid Waste Management Plan.

And that means we will not have “garbage out” at the end of that bigger project.

— Robert Liberty

Together our efforts won't go to waste

Metro area residents do a remarkable job of recycling. Our recovery rate of 59 percent is one of the highest in the country. The Metro Council's goal of 64 percent by 2009 is attainable, but to help, Metro has recently launched a new public education campaign to remind residents about proper recycling guidelines.

Every day in our region, an estimated 20 tons of recyclables have to be sent to the landfill because they are contaminated, especially with glass and plastic bags.

Glass can be placed at the curb, but it must be kept separate from other materials. When glass gets mixed in with other materials such as paper, it breaks, and causes problems for the recycling facilities that sort the material. Labor costs go up, equipment breaks down, and tons of otherwise recyclable materials—now contaminated with broken glass—have to be sent to the landfill.

Starting this summer, all area residents are asked to not put glass recycling in their regular recycling bins, but instead put it in a separate rigid container (a bucket, box, crate, etc.) and place it beside their regular curbside bins.

Plastic bags are recyclable at grocery stores and recycling depots around the area, but they should not be put in the curbside recycling bins. They tangle up recycling equipment and cause it to break down, resulting in costly equipment repairs and delays. Plastic bottles are still welcome in curbside bins—just no bags. By separating recyclables properly, residents' efforts will not go to waste.

For more information on recycling and any of Metro's waste-reduction programs, go to www.RecycleAtHome.org or call Metro Recycling Information at (503) 234-3000.

Eastside Streetcar extension advances for further study

On July 20, after public testimony, discussion and deliberations, the Metro Council approved a Locally Preferred Alternative for the Eastside Transit Alternatives Analysis. The alternative would extend the Portland Streetcar from NW 10th Avenue and Lovejoy Street in the

Pearl District, across the Broadway Bridge and south along the Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd./Grand Avenue couplet. The first construction phase would go to NE Oregon Street, at the Oregon Convention Center. The preference is to ultimately create a loop back across the Willamette River to the Westside near RiverPlace.

The Council was careful to add a workplan consideration requiring that the costs of the proposed Eastside Streetcar not inhibit or endanger the Portland to Milwaukie Light Rail project. Other considerations related to coordinating with ongoing planning efforts, user benefit measures, capital costs, funding sources, operating revenue sources, traffic and streetcar operations, alignment refinement, and emergency shared light rail and streetcar operations.

The Lloyd District and Central Eastside expressed strong support for the selected alternative, with others from the general public favoring it as well. Community members look forward to a new transit option and the bike and pedestrian improvements that are expected to accompany it.

The Metro Council approval follows a unanimous recommendation by the community-based Project Advisory Committee and unanimous approval from the other project partners: Portland Streetcar Board of Directors, TriMet, Multnomah County and the Portland City Council. In addition, the City of Portland Planning Commission and Portland Development Commission offered support for the project.

The next steps in this process include an environmental review and development of a funding strategy. For more information, send e-mail to trans@metro.dst.or.us or call (503) 797-1756.

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About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy and good transportation choices for people and businesses in our region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges that cross those lines and affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to protecting open space, caring for parks, planning for the best use of land, managing garbage disposal and increasing recycling. Metro oversees world-class facilities such as the Oregon Zoo, which contributes to conservation and education, and the Oregon Convention Center, which benefits the region's economy.

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