

Metro | Meeting minutes

Meeting: Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)
Date: February 12, 2014
Place: Metro Regional Center, Room 370A/B

Members Present

Amy Pepper, City of Troutdale	Susan Millhauser, City of Lake Oswego
Scott Keller, City of Beaverton	Keith Ristau, Far West Fibers
Theresa Koppang, Washington County	Mike Leichner, Pride Disposal
Dan Blue, City of Gresham	Leslie Kochan,
Bruce Walker, City of Portland	Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality
Alando Simpson,	Matt Korot, Metro
City of Roses Disposal & Recycling	Paul Ehinger (alternate), Metro

Members Absent

Kathy Kaatz, City of Tualatin
Amy Roth, Association of Oregon Recyclers

1. CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

Chair Matt Korot called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.

2. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair Korot previewed the agenda for today's meeting and reviewed the revised schedule of SWAC topics for the rest of the year. The changes he noted were that the Regional Service Standards item had been removed, with the expectation it would come to SWAC in 2015, and that the first discussion of the Long-term Management of Discards project has been moved to June from May.

3. CONSIDERATION OF SWAC MINUTES FOR JAN. 8, 2014

No comments or corrections were made. Dan Blue moved to approve; Theresa Koppang seconded the motion, which was approved by the Committee members.

4. SOLID WASTE ROADMAP: METRO SOUTH TRANSFER STATION (MSS) ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Paul Ehinger introduced the agenda item. The Solid Waste Roadmap is made up of six interrelated projects; staff has been working on this project for two years. As the older of Metro's two transfer stations, Metro South Station (MSS) has the most room for improvement in order to fulfill today's and tomorrow's needs.

Chuck Geyer (Principle Solid Waste Planner, Metro Parks & Environmental Services) presented a history of the transfer station, with slides showing its various configurations and operations. Key assumptions were gleaned from the needs assessment and site assessment, and several options were developed.

Issues include traffic challenges on the site, with residential and commercial customers criss-crossing paths. Self-haul is a big part of MSS' business, making up 70% of customers, but only a small percentage of the total tonnage. Projections through 2019 show that demand for self-haul, wet waste, organics, and drop box customers are all likely to increase.

Alex Cousins, a consultant with HDR Engineering, presented results of the Customer Needs Assessment. Slides included information about stakeholder outreach (approximately 500 people were contacted through workshops and other means).

The majority of self-haul customers were found to have residential pick up, but prefer to use MSS for large items such as remodeling project debris and garage/house clean-outs. 85% of those surveyed were very satisfied with the experience, and frequent the facility 2-3 times per year. Information was similar from small business self-haul customers. Both stakeholder streams like the one-stop appeal, convenient location, and value, but would like improvements to traffic safety, additional services such as self-sorting, and the ability to recover certain items that have been brought in by others.

Needs were identified by waste type and operational issues, and an online poll was conducted to help prioritize the items. Results were ranked as follows:

1. Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)
2. Commercial Organics
3. Residential Organics
4. Self-haul
5. Sorting space for recyclables and wood
6. Commercial waste
7. Customer education
8. Queue times/traffic
9. Source-separated recyclables

Committee member Leslie Kochan pointed out that "reusables" was not mentioned, though it scored relatively high in the survey.

Mr. Geyer explained some options for the facility.

1. Add organics storage: Unfeasible at this time because it doesn't satisfy the needs identified.
2. Add processing line: Requires a building basically "on stilts" for trucks to drive under, but goes a long way towards fulfilling several needs.
3. Full build-out: Includes improved, controlled traffic patterns, adds processing line, provides commercial organics processing space and meets the needs for 2019.
4. Offsite self-haul: A separate facility at a different location for self-haul and hazardous waste customers. Metro has intentionally not scouted or searched for a location prior to finalizing how this option would fit into the larger system and fulfill specific needs.

Any further options developed will be presented to the project's stakeholders.

Mr. Ehinger concluded the presentation and asked for input from the Committee. Do the options address the needs? How might future policies and programs affect Metro South?

Comments from Committee Members:

Alando Simpson asked where in the region most self-haul customers travel from to get to Metro South. It's possible that a new facility may not be as convenient to them. Mr. Ehinger replied that the most recent surveys show customers coming from all over the region, which was surprising, with clusters reaching into north and northeast Portland, even Vancouver, Washington and Washington County, though the majority are from Clackamas County. A large number continue to choose MSS over Metro Central Station (MCS) regardless of distance. With trips just two or three times a year, people often see it as a habit not worth the effort to break.

Bruce Walker stressed that expansion of commercial and residential organics programs is very important to the City of Portland. (Ms. Kochan later commented that commercial organics are also particularly important to the DEQ.)

How many facilities in the region accept self-haul, Amy Pepper inquired. Paul Ehinger explained that many local facilities prefer not to take self-haul customers for various reasons, including traffic problems on-site and low profitability. Willamette Resources (WRI) takes limited self-haul, Troutdale takes none, Forest Grove takes some (but primarily local); others simply try to discourage self-haul. Overall, the options are very limited for the region's citizens to haul their own dry waste to local facilities.

Ms. Kochan asked about stormwater concerns/impacts of Options 2 and 3 (organics). Mr. Ehinger replied that a modernized facility would include improvements to current problems, and ensured that construction would not encroach on the wetlands.

Keith Ristau noted that Option 3 included no major disruption of service. Would Option 4 promise the same? Mr. Geyer said yes.

Chair Korot asked Mr. Cousins to explain why the internal survey group prioritized HHW as #1. Mr. Cousins replied that it's because so few options are available for safe disposal of such products. Only MSS, MCS and Metro Roundups provide this type of service in the region. Susan Millhauser observed that one reason the HHW facilities have increased their customers may be because roundups have been reduced. Mr. Ehinger replied that the majority of roundups eliminated were outside Metro's boundaries.

Dan Blue agreed with Mr. Walker that organics expansion is important. Separating self-haul into a stand-alone facility sounds like a very good idea, and this is an excellent opportunity to make it happen. Ms. Kochan agreed, and suggested that a reuse area would be an excellent addition to such a facility.

Theresa Koppang supported the idea of a separate self-haul facility, adding that it would be a gigantic undertaking. Mr. Simpson suggested that developing more than one self-haul facility would better serve and be more convenient for a larger number of people. Mr. Ehinger agreed, saying that a few small facilities might also be easier to site. Mr. Blue also agreed, saying that if they are built and labeled as recycling or eco-recovery centers, they would be much more acceptable to the public.

Next steps: A stakeholder workshop will be held February 26th at Metro. At that time, cost estimates for each option will be presented. Following that, the options will be presented at a Council Work Session, so that Council can give their input, help narrow the options, and direct staff to gather more information as needed.

5. CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS TO SWAC AGENDA ITEMS

Comments from audience members:

The percentage of people who use self-haul is extremely small, one waste industry representative maintained. If self-haul continues to be provided, it should be at a cost which includes staff time at facilities, wear and tear on roads, fuel consumption, etc. Everyone has options at the curb, or they can pay to rent a drop box. Self-haul is cost inefficient and should be a low-priority.

Education should be at the top of the priority list, and commercial waste should be much higher on the list, for reasons of cost-effective rates as well as safety. (Mr. Geyer had mentioned in his presentation that a large reason for commercial waste placing 6th on the priority list is that safety is already a top priority throughout the industry.)

Regarding reuse/gleaning from self-haul loads, one attendee said he'd had experience with a reuse "shop" where people could glean items. He found that the shop was mostly frequented by thrift-shop owners. Better to let a non-profit such as St. Vincent DePaul have the benefit of collecting reusable items. (Mr. Walker responded that Metro has been proactively including three reuse agencies throughout this project.)

The idea of a recovery facility for self-haul, rather than as a convenience for dumping garbage, is appealing, as is the idea of several facilities rather than one mega-facility.

6. PREVIEW OF THE NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA AND FINAL COMMENTS

Chair Korot previewed the March 12 meeting, which will focus on changes to the solid waste community enhancement program. Materials will be sent to members prior to the meeting.

7. ADJOURN

Chair Korot adjourned the meeting.