

Meeting: Regional Waste Advisory Committee (RWAC) Meeting
Date: Thursday October 20, 2022
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:

Marta McGuire, Metro
Sharetta Butcher, North by Northeast Community Health Center (NxNE)
Alondra Flores Aviña, Trash for Peace
Bunsereyrithy Kong, Oregon Cambodian Buddhist Society
Lindsay Marshall, City of Tualatin
Shannon Martin, City of Gresham
Christa McDermott, Community Environmental Services, PSU
Audrey O'Brien, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Eben Polk, Clackamas County
Arianne Sperry, City of Portland
Thao Tu, Vietnamese Community of Oregon
Beth Vargas Duncan, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association (ORRA)

1. CALL TO ORDER & MEETING OVERVIEW

Marta McGuire (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. Recycling Modernization Act

Marta McGuire introduced David Allaway from the Department of Environmental Quality, Jill Hrycyk and Rosalynn Greene from Metro.

Key points of the presentation included:

The presentation provided an overview of the Recycling Modernization Act (RMA), the evaluation framework that is informing the state-wide collection list, and the draft list of collection items. Issues driving the RMA recycling rules are inconsistent and confusing acceptance lists across the nation and the state. There is a lack of transparency on where items go, how they are managed and who is impacted. The bill is aimed at increasing responsible recycling, access to recycling, upgrading the facilities that sort recycling and creating environmental benefits while reducing social and environmental harms. The Act includes extended producer responsibility and will result in one uniform list of recyclable items for the state.

Member Discussion Included:

Eben Polk, Clackamas County, asked for clarification on the possible changes in the Metro region. These are changes in local recycling are due to statewide changes? Mr. Allaway clarified that the presentation did not include the entire list, but just items that would deviate from the current Metro standard.

Beth Vargas Duncan, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association (ORRA), asked if only packaging would be included on the lists. Mr. Allaway responded that he had not heard that comment before. The lists could include a variety of non-packaging items such as a variety of printed paper items.

Rosalynn Greene, Metro, shared that one of the primary goals of the RMA is introducing the concept of responsible end markets. Because of the existing markets and technology we have to acknowledge that this list will change over time to support the premise of the bill.

Christa McDermott, Community Environmental Services at PSU, asked if not allowing clamshells to be recycled will put pressure on producers not to use them. Will this be confusing for residents who think that the modernization of recycling will allow all packaging to be recycled. Mr. Allaway replied that at this point we can only answer in speculation. It is likely that as some materials are added to the recyclable list, it will discourage the use of certain materials and switch to alternative materials. We are dealing with national producers and Oregon's market share is small. As other states adopt similar programs this will have more influence. In addition, by not listing materials producers also will push to have those materials be recyclable and be added to the list.

Mr. Polk asked to clarify that materials are evaluated by the criteria presented. Mr. Allaway confirmed that this is accurate and that the profile of materials will be published as part of the rule making committee meeting next week.

Mr. Polk asked what is the schedule at which the list will be changed in the next 10 years? Is it annual? Mr. Allaway responded that there are three different ways that the acceptance lists can change. First local governments can choose to collect any materials they want to outside of the co-mingle bin. Second, the Act itself provides for an onramp to the uniform statewide collection list, where producer responsibility organizations can propose changing the statewide lists through program plans. This triggers a review process that includes an open public comment period, a formal consult with the Oregon Recycling System Advisory Council and a review by the DEQ. The list can also be changed by administrative rule.

Ms. Vargas Duncan asked if materials are not found practicable to be recycled, could items still be collected by a local government? Mr. Allaway responded that the state cannot prohibit a local government from collecting an item. The prohibition in the RMA is that if a material is collected for recycling it must be recycled, and if the material is not on the uniform statewide collection list it cannot go in the co-mingle bin, outside of those two stipulations local governments can still collect whatever they wish.

Audrey O'Brien, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), suggested that local governments are pressured to help address the request from citizens to recycle as much as possible. That could lead to a local government keeping a material on the list that doesn't meet RMA criteria. Does that mean those items aren't being recycled?

Ms. McDermott added that there should be less education for consumers because she wants to see less of a burden on consumers. We require consumers to become experts on these topics, but consumers need simple instructions. Would love Metro to raise how consumers will see this information to DEQ. David Allaway responded that we do not have truth in labeling in Oregon at

this time, but California recently passed a law on chasing arrow labels that should impact Oregon because we purchase the same goods.

Marta McGuire asked that everyone share what criteria of the regional waste plan values is most important to individuals.

Arianne Sperry, City of Portland responded that providing excellent service is key to provide stability that people can rely on and not become experts in the system.

Sharetta Butcher, North by Northeast Community Health Center (NxNE), responded that fostering economic well-being for all communities is important. She hopes that there can be a universal language for everyone that can simplify the entire process.

Mr. Polk responded that protecting and restoring the environment and promoting health for everyone, and service and equity are his most important values.

Alondra Flores Aviña, Trash for Peace, responded that protecting and restoring the environment and health for all is her top value.

Bunsereyrihy Kong, Oregon Cambodian Buddhist Society, responded that his top value was around environmental issues.

Thao Tu, Vietnamese Community of Oregon, asked for a clear list around what items can and cannot be recycled.

Ms. Vargas Duncan responded that consumers need to know what to recycle when and where, but that also leadership needs to take action to make decisions easy for consumers.

Ms. O'Brien shared that there is tension around this issue and is wondering if Metro can try and help stay focused on working together on solutions.

David Allaway responded to Ms. Sperry, emphasizing the important of simplicity in this process. The current list is not simple to communicate, but to understand the impacts of simplicity, consider extremes for example in plastics. We could communicate that you can only recycle bottles, or, we can put all packaging in recycle bin. Both have their own challenges. Where is the sweet spot between the earnest desire to keep things simple, and the other criteria we must consider in this process.

5. Garbage and Recycling System Facilities Plan

Marta McGuire introduced Estee Segal from Metro.

Key points of the presentation included:

The presentation reviewed feedback previously given on The Garbage and Recycling System Facilities Plan values and outcomes and provided a progress update since last meeting in May. The project is currently in phase II, assessing how the current system is working and not working and identifying gaps in the system. There are three roundtables that are taking in information on all needs in the system in the region. The questions being asked are, what new and improved facilities are needed in the region and how can Metro improve its existing facilities. High level responses from the reuse roundtable were shared. A draft of the report of all roundtable responses will be created and a draft will be shared with RWAC in December.

Member Discussion Included:

Ms. Sperry asked to what extent will this plan address transporting bulky waste. Ms. Segal responded that Metro hears that this is a need and a gap, and while this plan might not 100% address this issue, it is being incorporated into the plan. This also relates to a different collection study Metro is conducting. Ms. McGuire also added that the questions being asked in regard to the system facilities plan have been broad, so people often respond first with missing services and that is why we see it as a common response.

Mr. Polk asked what the role of technical analysis is to support this project. Ms. Segal mentioned that the consultants are working on this. Tasks include looking at the region through a special analysis regarding drive times, and demographics in relation to existing facilities. This will be mostly be done in phase three.

Ms. Sperry asked if all facilities being planned for owned by Metro? Or are other facilities being evaluated as well? Ms. Segal responded that the plan is including all facilities, not only Metro-owned facilities, and who is burdened most by the system. The project will be seeking Council's guidance on Metro's role filling the identified gaps and clarify Metro's role in the entire system.

Ms. Sperry also asked the time frame for this plan. Ms. Segal responded that it is currently 20 years, but that could change and will most likely be updated in the Regional Waste Plan update.

Ms. McDermott asked if there is a difference between the facilities that are vertically integrated vs smaller or publicly held and how that effects the facilities plan. Ms. Segal responded that there is a difference between MRFs and haulers. The project has yet to have that conversation with private industry yet, so is waiting to learn more.

Mr. Polk asked how the plan will help solve issues such as inadequate transfer stations at Metro South, or needing a new transfer station on the west side. Ms. Segal responded that this is a major part of the plan, and the project will seek guidance from Council who is waiting for the regional study to then provide feedback on the level of investment for these large projects.

6. Final Remarks

Ms. McGuire reminded the committee that there was a written update on the Cleanup Funding. Ms. McGuire put forth the September meeting minutes for approval. Ms. Vargas Duncan motioned to approve the September minutes; Ms. Flores-Avina seconded. September minutes approved. Ms. McGuire gave a few final remarks to the committee.

MEETING AJOURNED at 10:30 a.m.