



## Solid Waste Roadmap

### Food Scraps Project Q&A: Elected Officials

#### Public benefits of a regional solid waste system

Through its management of the regional solid waste system, Metro seeks to:

- Protect people's health
- Protect the environment
- Get good value for the public's money
- Keep our commitment to the highest and best use of materials
- Be adaptable and responsive in managing materials
- Ensure services are available to all types of customers

*About 40 percent of the food in the U.S. is wasted. That waste comes at all stages of the food system: at the farm, in transportation, at wholesalers and retailers, and at home. Despite our region's waste prevention and donation efforts, we still send to landfills the equivalent of 5,000 long-haul trucks full of nothing but food every year.*

#### Why food scraps?

- Food is the largest component of what the region throws out as garbage. It is 18 percent of our overall disposed waste. Businesses are responsible for over half of that total.
- It's not only the quantity of food scraps that is driving the region's interest in recovering them. Food scraps are a primary contributor to the production of methane in landfills. Methane has a greenhouse gas impact at least 24 times that of CO<sub>2</sub>.
- The goal of collecting food scraps is to capture the environmental and economic benefits of turning that material into useful products, creating energy, supporting local agriculture and residential gardening while reducing the negative environmental impacts associated with disposal. Putting food scraps in the garbage is a missed opportunity to capture these benefits and make the most of our waste.
- This isn't just a local priority. The state of Oregon recently established a goal to recover 25 percent of our wasted food by 2020. In addition, the state recently amended recycling laws to encourage local governments to increase the recovery of food scraps.

#### Why focus on businesses?

- Businesses in the region throw away approximately 100,000 tons of food per year, which represents 55 percent of the total food that is disposed in the Metro region.
- The overall greenhouse gas emissions benefit of recovering just half of that food waste rather than landfilling it is equivalent to removing 3,000 cars from the road or saving over 1.6 million gallons of gasoline.
- A relatively small number of businesses can make a big difference. The majority of commercial food scraps in the region are produced by about 2,700 businesses. Food scraps from businesses can also be more easily kept free of contaminants like plastics.

#### Why mandatory food scraps collection?

- Our voluntary program for collecting food scraps from businesses has resulted in slow growth and has not enabled the region to secure a stable, local processing facility. In order to create a sustainable business, processing facilities need a large and reliable supply of food scraps.

**Shouldn't businesses donate food instead to feed the hungry?**

- Yes, wherever possible. Good food that has been stored properly and is fit for consumption should be donated, and that is always the preference. Local governments can help businesses set up donation programs at the same time as food scrap recycling. Metro's proposed collection requirement is focused on food scraps that are not edible and cannot be donated such as trimmings, bones, shells, coffee grounds, food prep waste and plate scrapings.

**How will this affect businesses?**

- Businesses in the region are already required to have systems to recycle paper and plastic, metal and glass containers. This requirement would add food scraps to the list for businesses that process, cook or sell food.
- Local governments provide technical assistance to hundreds of businesses a year to help set up waste reduction and recycling programs. We will continue and enhance that assistance for food businesses.

**How many businesses will be affected?**

- It is envisioned that if the mandatory food scraps collection program is adopted by the Metro Council, it will be phased in over a period of 4-5 years and likely affect about 2,700 businesses in the food industry within the Metro boundary.
- The first group of businesses is about 850 of the region's largest food producers such as grocery stores, large restaurants and cafeterias. Another 750 businesses will be brought in after a period of time, and then the last group of about 1,000. The actual number of businesses, dates and time frame between each group is still being refined in consideration of business needs and operations and our capacity to help each group get set up appropriately. It will take a few years.

**How many businesses currently participate?**

- About 1,250 businesses of all types and sizes are currently recovering food scraps. This number includes businesses that may not be required to participate in the proposed required program due to their size or the fact that they are not food-oriented businesses (such as offices).

**What are the challenges for a business?**

- Many of the businesses that would be included in this requirement are operating on tight margins and are already affected by other regulations. Metro and local governments in the region will provide businesses with on-site assistance to help with training, provide containers and facilitate appropriate collection schedules to keep transition costs down.

**What will it cost?**

- As with any new program, there will be associated costs. Metro Council directed staff to look at the financial implications and evaluate ways to minimize cost burden. This is a challenging process that will take some time to complete and costs may change as the system matures and stabilizes.
- Costs will also be determined by market conditions and city and county rate setting processes. It will be influenced by many factors, some of which include the number of participants, the distance to transfer stations, and processing fees.
- Metro will examine its role in controlling costs such as what is charged when food scraps are delivered to transfer stations, where the food scraps are delivered and the fees charged by the processing facility.

**What do businesses think?**

- In September 2016, a series of interviews and surveys were conducted with businesses in the region outside of Portland. Interviews included businesses currently participating in food scraps collection, businesses that previously participated but stopped, and those that were offered the service but declined it.
  - Nearly 45 percent of businesses were in favor of a mandatory collection program that had all businesses participating; 15 percent had no strong concerns and would comply if required; 30 percent had some concerns about how it would work but were not opposed; and 10 percent were opposed.
  - On-site assistance, containers and training materials provided by county and city staff were highly valued by participants.
  - Cost neutrality, space constraints, labor and concerns about cleanliness were biggest concerns for non-participants.
  - Most commonly, businesses said they wanted to reduce the garbage sent to the landfill and do something good for the environment. Saving money was not a priority, but keeping costs close to neutral was important.
- Metro staff is talking with food industry businesses, trade groups and local government partners to inform our planning process and design a system to best meet the needs of businesses and local governments. Our goal is to reduce the barriers and address the concerns of affected businesses while ensuring we can keep as much of this valuable material out of landfills and put to better use.

**What kinds of products will get made from the food scraps collected and how will they be used?**

- Depending on the technology chosen to manage our food scraps, products could include electricity, vehicle fuel, natural gas, liquid fertilizer, solid fertilizer and compost. Most of these products are of value to many industries including agriculture, construction, vehicle fleets and utilities. In addition, the natural fertilizers and composts help to retain our rich soil health, prevent erosion, increase crop yields and productivity which helps to support our important agricultural markets.

**What about residential food scraps collection?**

- The focus for Metro right now is on recovering those concentrated amounts of food scraps coming from businesses. This does not detract from the importance of keeping all food scraps out of the landfill. A few local cities in the region either currently offer or are considering adding food scraps to yard debris collection programs. Residential food scraps and yard debris are typically composted at different facilities than the food scraps coming from businesses. Metro supports this effort.

**Do other communities have mandatory programs like the one being proposed?**

- Yes. Six states and 13 municipalities have some sort of mandatory food scraps collection program or a ban on the disposal of food in the landfill. We have learned a lot from studying these other programs. Aside from the environmental benefits, many programs have also seen other positive trends such as increased donations of good food to food banks.

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