Sixty-one people attended the workshop, including representatives from 20 cities, the Solid Waste Advisory Committee, the Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Advisory Committee, Sound Cities Association, 3 collection companies operating in King County, and staff from the King County Council, Auditor, Executive Office, Department of Natural Resources and Parks, and Solid Waste Division (SWD).

Presentations, reference documents, and more information about the Transfer Plan Review project are available at http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/about/plan-review.asp. Web links to presentations and reference documents from Workshop 2 are provided in this meeting summary.

Welcome, Introductions, and Recap

SWD Director Pat McLaughlin provided an overview of the workshop format and plan for the day. Participants were provided with index cards to record their thoughts and questions, either to share with the group at the end of each session or to turn in at the end of the day.

Presentation – Waste to Energy & Waste Conversion/Transfer Station Relationship

SWD Planning and Communications Manager Thea Severn presented information about the relationship of alternative disposal technologies to the transfer system.

Questions

Q: What is the nexus between waste-to-energy and the timing of the transfer plan?
A: It's true that we need to make transfer station decisions now, but aren't ready to make disposal decisions. But, for example, space at Bow Lake has been set aside, that might be used for Household Hazardous Waste, or for another use that could be determined later.

Comments

- There are two points to remember about waste conversion. 1) Existing facilities will require an added step of separation and preparation. 2) Most companies in this industry that are located in Oregon started out in Washington and moved for economic reasons. We had better look into what those reasons were.
- I hope we are not to be a beta test. We should only use tried and true methods with an open procurement method.
- Response: That is a consideration. The draft Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan has sample selection criteria that would need to be fleshed out. The Sustainable Business Study will be the next step from "interested observer" to looking at how we might apply some of these technologies.
- Compaction at transfer stations destroys the potential for recovery of recyclable materials.

Presentation – Storage Capacity

SWD Planning and Communications Manager Thea Severn presented the reasoning behind the criterion for 3 days' storage capacity at transfer stations, and described how new transfer stations would meet that goal.

Questions

Q: Do you have records of the frequency of shut-downs at the old stations?
A: No, we do not keep a record of that. At Factoria, closures have occurred due to snow, and have lasted for days. At Algona and Houghton, closures have occurred due to traffic. Those closures are fairly short, a matter of hours or less. Usually we call to alert the host city and call the hauler to suggest rerouting collection trucks.

Q: How can capital costs be negligible?
A: New transfer stations are designed with enough space for about three commercial vehicles to unload simultaneously. During normal operations, the space is fully utilized. In the event of an emergency, traffic might be limited to one commercial vehicle at a time, and the rest of that space would be reserved for storing waste. There is no capital cost to providing storage space because there is no additional infrastructure. There are certainly operational costs in the event of an emergency, as we would be operating differently within the space.

Q: Closing a single transfer station diverts waste to other stations, but how does it work when the problem is system-wide?
A: We haven't experienced a system-wide disaster, but we currently don't have storage capacity, so debris would stay out in the county. FEMA recommends 3 days' storage capacity, and it is considered the standard for a modern system to be designed to allow for repurposing space for storage when needed. This issue is one of mitigating risk rather than managing routine events.

Q: What about when the transfer system is open, but disposal is closed?
A: We have a local disposal option now in Cedar Hills, but when disposal is remote, that becomes a real possibility. Snohomish County has dealt with repeated rail disruptions that required them to store waste for several days.

Comments

- Every added ton of garbage on the tipping floor increases combustion risk. There is an additional cost of fire safety equipment.

Presentation – Transfer Station Cost Drivers

SWD Managing Engineer Neil Fujii presented the elements of transfer station design that drive costs. The PowerPoint was used to illustrate concepts, while a series of supporting handouts provided more information.

Questions

Q: The handout has an item, "Flexibility to sort waste to remove recyclables" as one of the benefits of a self-haul tipping floor in the transfer building. Who would be doing that?
A: A combination of methods could be used to separate materials once they are on the tipping floor, but the idea was for SWD staff to have the ability to recover some of the 50 percent of garbage that has value for recycling.

Q: What are the policies governing the definition of "offsite access street modifications" in slide 33?
A: For example, if a water line has insufficient flow, it may be necessary to connect further back on the line where the diameter is larger. In this case we may also need to improve the roadway that overlays the pipe. The specific distance offsite that improvements may be made is a matter of discussion and permitting with the host city, as recognized in the new interlocal agreements.

Q: Where does public involvement fit in with value engineering?
A: We bring schematic designs to the first public meetings. Around the 30 percent design period we convene a value engineering team to get new ideas. For example, the roof overhangs for Factoria were reduced to save money with no impact to function. Then, we go to the city for permitting when the design is around 90 percent complete, and typically have another public meeting at that time. We also go through the SEPA process, which includes public involvement.

Q: Would it be cheaper for household hazardous waste (HHW) to be combined with the main facility, rather than stand as a separate building?
A: Physically, separation is preferable because HHW requires different construction methods. For example, explosion-proof wiring, additional fire suppression measures, and secondary containment requirements all lead to a high per square-foot cost of construction that you don't want to spend on the building as a whole. Operationally, HHW must be handled differently from other wastes, which requires specially trained staff.

Q: Why is LEED a requirement?
A: King County Code requires LEED certification at the Gold level in cases where it can be accomplished for no more than two percent of the total construction cost. Historically, we have been able to fulfill that requirement. We perform life cycle analysis to ensure that the green features incorporated into our projects are cost effective.

Comments

- We are trying to understand the site in relation with the overall system. If we start cherry-picking services at different sites, that fragmentation won't help us down the road. We need a consistent system.
- We need to see system costs, not just capital costs.

Presentation – "What if" Alternatives Introduction and Review

SWD Planning and Communications Manager Thea Severn with Recycling and Environmental Services Manager Jeff Gaisford presented nine alternatives for the future of the transfer system. Each was discussed in turn. During this time, discussion was limited to clarifying the each alternative.

Base (Transfer Plan)

Q: Didn't you already pick a site for the South County Recycling and Transfer Station (RTS)?
A: Three potential sites have been identified for environmental review.

Alternative A

Q: Wouldn't some of the customers from closed stations go to Shoreline instead of Factoria?
A: Some would shift to Shoreline, and some self-haulers might also go to Snohomish County. However, based on roadways and traffic patterns, the majority would go to Factoria. This is shown on the drive time maps.

Q: Can you clarify the "No" for Alternative A on Level of Service criterion 17?
A: Building on the Eastgate property is not compatible with current zoning or with Bellevue's new I-90 corridor plan.

Alternative A*

There were no questions.

Alternative B

Q: One of the risks relates to "longer operating hours;" longer than what?
A: Longer than the hours assumed under the Base Plan. The Base Plan assumed a Northeast facility would close at around 6 p.m., this alternative assumes closure at 11 p.m.

Q: Has a traffic analysis been done for this alternative?
A: No, if we move forward with an alternative there will be environmental review, which includes traffic analysis.

Alternative C

Q: The reason for limiting self-haul is to manage traffic at Bow Lake?
A: Yes, for Bow Lake to manage the increased level of commercial service, self-haul would have to be limited.

Comments

- Bow Lake is a huge station in both tonnage and transactions. We have to recognize access issues, and the plan would have to look for solutions to some huge challenges down the road.

Alternative D

There were no questions.

Alternatives C and D****

During the presentation, Thea Severn noted that these slides should have included risks of redirecting customers to Bow Lake.

Q: Would both of these alternatives have self-haulers from Algona redirected to Bow Lake?
A: Yes, during limited hours.

Q: What would happen with the space currently used by commercial haulers at Algona?

A: There are two chutes at Algona. One of these is currently used by commercial haulers and the other by self-haulers. In these scenarios, the commercial haulers' chute would be repurposed for yard waste. There is no space at Algona to add any other recycling service.

Q: Will there be an analysis of the pros and cons of retaining Algona?
A: That is part of what we are doing today.

Comments

- We have looked at a lot of data today, and some of it is confusing. Yet there is still a lot of information that needs to be presented before we can make a decision.

Alternative D***

There were no questions.

General Questions

Q: How do you factor in not meeting the 70 percent recycling goal?
A: To meet the goal, we need to improvements among self-haulers and in organics recycling. The draft 2013 Comprehensive Plan lays out programs to make these and other improvements, but we won't get there without those two specifically.

Q: What percentage of tonnage is self-haul?
A: It's about 200,000 tons per year, which is roughly equivalent to the single-family tonnage. It is significant.

Q: Have you looked at greenhouse gas impacts of facilities?
A: We have not, but we may do so as we narrow our options.

Q: Are there any financial benefits of closing facilities? What about remediation costs?
A: Closure costs are about $15,000 per site. We don't own many of the properties so in most cases we would not see any benefits from their sale. Renton is owned by Roads, Algona and Houghton are owned by the general fund.

Q: But Eastgate is owned [by the solid waste division]?
A: Yes. There are no plans for Eastgate right now. It is currently being leased, and used as a parking lot. We are holding on to the site until the Factoria project is complete, or we know what will happen to it.

Facilitated Feedback

SWD Director Pat McLaughlin facilitated a discussion about the alternatives presented before the break. Pat apologized for presenting so much data and asking for immediate feedback, but recognized that with only one more workshop and a deadline of October 9, it was important to get as much input as possible quickly. He reminded everyone that SWD staff are available to answer questions and receive feedback between workshops. Pat said it would be ideal if we could eliminate some alternatives today to simplify the analysis, but we don't expect to make a selection today.

Base

Q: This big spreadsheet is very useful. Would it be possible to add capital and operating costs so all the factors are visible in one place?
A: We will present more cost information next month.

Q: It is all well and good for SWD to make a decision up front about some of these alternatives, but I think the reality of the risks as you proceed may show that some alternatives are not viable. Is SWD planning for the possibility of risks being realized?
A: Siting is difficult, and it is true that even the Base Alternative has risks. There is no risk-free option; some of the risks may be challenges to overcome, while others may be insurmountable.

Q: And the risk of the Base Alternative is excess capacity?
A: We talked about capacity at the last workshop, and the key consideration is that if you only measure capacity by compaction ability, you're not seeing the whole picture. You also have to look at things like traffic. As discussed last month, by building space for two compactors, but beginning operations with only one, we believe that we can balance capacity with other issues.

Comments

- This was a huge amount of information, and thank you for preparing it. But unless we are superhuman, we cannot possible digest it all now. I am concerned that it is too soon to be asking for feedback when we have not had time to reflect on this new information. Please recognize that what you hear today is going to reflect our attitudes when we arrived today. I hope that we will use this time as an opportunity to ask questions, and recognize that our ideas may change as we review the data.
- We are trying to compress decades of planning that have pointed to the Base Alternative into three months. There are some very important risks in the alternatives that direct traffic to Houghton, double the size of facilities, etc. Why would host cities allow these options to happen? These aren't risks, they are insurmountable obstacles. In terms of eliminating self-haul, I used to favor that. Over the years, I changed my mind. I think the benefits outweigh the costs. Self-haul brings communities together, puts the responsibility for waste back in people's hands, and reduces illegal dumping. I favor the Base Alternative. All other alternatives have unacceptable risks.
- I echo concerns about capacity in the Base Alternative.
- We have years invested in planning the Base Alternative, and I want to continue to look at the long-term. The disposal method will change in about 15 years, and we can't precisely anticipate our needs beyond that. The Base Alternative is the best starting point for preparing for an uncertain future. All of the other alternatives diminish capacity and generate unintended consequences.
- The issue with the Base Alternative is not purely one of capacity. There is also cost to the ratepayer. The reason we are here is to find out if there is a cheaper alternative that will still meet our needs.
- I would like to hear more from the biggest customers, the waste companies.
- Federal Way likes the Base Alternative. It has already undergone rigorous review and provides the most equity for customers throughout the county.

Show of hands favoring the Base Alternative: 11

Alternative A

Q: Has there been conversation with Snohomish and Pierce Counties about the potential for some King County self-haul moving there?
A: There has not, and we don't want to lose that revenue because it would impact rates. Pierce County has a stated goal of preserving their landfill space as long as possible, so they don't want any outside waste.

Comments

- My gut reaction is that expansion onto Eastgate is unrealistic.
- We like Alternative A for a number of reasons. One is that it keeps faith with the MOU regarding Houghton closure.
- We need to do a fatal flaw analysis on each of these Alternatives.
- Environmental impact has been a siting criterion for decades. I think that the distribution of impacts should also be a criterion. An alternative that has one facility, like Factoria, taking all of the traffic impacts for the entire north end of the county would not meet such a criterion.
- We talk about siting as a risk. But no city can prohibit essential facilities. With objective criteria and a little backbone (even if a lawsuit is necessary), it should be possible to site a new facility. That is a different sort of risk than trying to build on a specific site like Eastgate which is incompatible with the required zoning.

Show of hands favoring Alternative A: 2

Alternative A*

Q: Also, self-haul is subsidized. Once Bellevue leaves the system, we don't want to pay that subsidy.
A: That self-haul is subsidized is an opinion. The opinion of SWD is that self-haul is fully funded by rates.

Comments

- Kirkland's position for well over a decade has been that Houghton should close. A stand-alone self-haul facility is very expensive. Kirkland is surrounded by two cities that don't require collection. Our main concern with Houghton is the traffic. Our own self-haul traffic is low, and we don't want traffic from Bellevue and Redmond.
- Ninety-six percent of Redmond chooses to use collection service. Alternative A* has no additional land costs [in the north county] or expansion at Factoria into Eastgate. That is a positive for this alternative.
- Bellevue has a 97 to 98 percent curbside collection subscription rate. Self-haul data shows that most often the customers are not residents but large entities like Boeing and the Lake Washington School District. Even though most residential self-haul is the occasional garage clean-out, I guarantee that city council chambers will be filled with angry customers if you take away self-haul service.
- Although transfer stations are essential public facilities, there is still an extensive conditional use requirement in our city.
- Added traffic is a potentially fatal flaw in a residential area like Houghton.

Show of hands favoring Alternative A*: 0

Alternative B

Comments

- I don't think this alternative does a good job of distributing impacts, which has been a SWD value. There has been a lot of money and work sunk into Factoria already, and we shouldn't lose that to send all the impacts to the Northeast. This is potentially a fatal flaw.
- This is the only alternative besides the Base that meets all of the Level of Service criteria. Although there are sunk costs at Factoria, with the planning assumption that Bellevue pulling out of the system it makes sense to remove Factoria.
- Alternatives A and B are about the same for Kirkland. We should retain the ability to build Factoria if Bellevue stays in the system.

Show of hands favoring Alternative B: 1

Alternative C

- I am not in favor of Alternatives C or D. We will see self-haulers going to Pierce County and an increase in illegal dumping. The impacts to Bow Lake are tremendous. Bow Lake and Algona are the busiest facilities in the system and closing one of them doesn't make sense. Variable self-haul hours are also cumbersome and confusing.
- The South County is a growing residential and industrial area. It is not feasible to reduce service there. I think the simplest design with consistent hours and services will ultimately result in cost savings.

Show of hands expressing concern about the prospect of a system without the South County Recycling and Transfer Station, even if Algona was to be retained in some capacity: 13

Show of hands favoring Alternative C: 0

Alternative C**

Comments

- I'm concerned about the impacts to recycling opportunities in an area where we need to be making improvements.

Show of hands favoring Alternative C**: 0

Alternative D

Q: At the previous session a question was brought up about reducing transfer demand by encouraging regional direct. Has that been included anywhere in this analysis?
A: That would require environmental review, and triggers significant concerns about traffic near Cedar Hills. We are not interested in allowing self-haul at Cedar Hills because of the liability risks.

Comments

- The lack of capacity in the South County will not make the haulers very happy.
- Eastgate development is a fatal flaw.
- It is election season, and opinions about development along I-90 could change.

- There is a lot of history around that site, and it is unlikely to change.
- The old regional direct rate lost the County a lot of income.

Show of hands, how many share concern about Eastgate? 8

Show of hands favoring Alternative D: 0

Alternative D**

Comments

- There is no space at Algona for recycling, compaction, or emergency storage. All of these things are goals, so why even consider it?
- Any alternative without a South County facility or with limits on self-haul at Bow Lake is problematic.

Show of hands favoring Alternative D**: 0

Alternative D*

Q: This alternative includes Factoria as designed?
A: Yes.

Comments

- Kirkland would not support this alternative for the reasons stated before relating to Houghton as a self-haul facility.
- This alternative doesn't require any additional land purchase. With a cost of $78 million versus $200 million for the Base Alternative, it merits consideration. I appreciate Houghton's concern about traffic, but the commercial trucks go away in this alternative, and that's still an improvement over the current condition.
- We are for the double and triple asterisk alternatives with a self-haul Algona and $70 million in savings. Especially with the decrease in tonnage and with enough recycling we don't know if tonnage will ever go back up.
- This alternative does a poor job of meeting Level of Service criteria. Unless the criteria are meaningless, that should count for something.
- Looking at Level of Service criteria, Alternatives A* and D*** have 14 "nos."
- Traffic can be mitigated. A "no" can be a solvable problem.

Show of hands favoring Alternative D***: 2

What's Next?

Noting that many attendees did not raise their hands in preference for any alternative and 5 of the 9 alternatives did not receive any votes as preferred, SWD Director Pat McLaughlin asked if it was possible to eliminate some alternatives from further consideration. The general feeling was that it was too soon to make any decisions. It was agreed that all 9 alternatives would move forward to the final workshop.

Final Questions and Comments

Q: We need to hear from the haulers. Even distribution of facilities keeps haul costs lower; could that balance against capital costs?
A: SWD has reached out to the haulers. We know that about 60 percent of customer cost is collection. We hope to have more information for the next workshop.

Comments

- I'd like to get information ahead of time.
- Thank you for your hard work.
- If you continue with analysis of all these alternatives, you will have to factor in the cost of failed siting processes.

SWD Director Pat McLaughlin reminded everyone that SWD staff are available to answer questions and receive feedback between workshops. In addition to advisory committee meetings, staff can attend SCA workshops, meet with city managers, and attend council meetings, if desired. SWD Intergovernmental Liaison Diane Yates is available as a point of contact at 206-296-4406 or by email diane.yates@kingcounty.gov. Also, there is a comment form on the website.

Thank you for attending.

The next workshop is Friday, September 27, 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
at the Mercer Island Community Center.
RSVP required.