
Council Meeting Date: March 4, 2002

Agenda Item: 6(b)

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE: King County 2001 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan
DEPARTMENT: Public Works
PRESENTED BY: Art Maronek / Jesus Sanchez 

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT: In August 1995, Council passed Resolution 26, authorizing the execution of an Interlocal Agreement (ILA) between the City and King County for solid waste management services. The ILA designates King County as the entity to prepare a comprehensive plan to manage regional solid waste transfer and disposal for participating cities and unincorporated areas of the County. The County transmitted the completed Plan on November 28, 2001. With 120-days allowed for cities to review the Plan, Council has until March 31, 2002, to adopt, reject or take no-action in relation to the Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: None of the alternatives presented for discussion would impact the finances of the City. Impacts on service rates, if any, are discussed in reference to each potential action.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is required. On March 25, staff will return to Council with an Action item consistent with the discussion of this issue.

Approved By: City Manager  City Attorney 

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INTRODUCTION

In October 2001, the King County Council approved the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan. The Regional Policy Committee, in its capacity as the Solid Waste Interlocal Forum, unanimously recommends the Plan's adoption. The City has until March 31, 2002, to adopt the Plan, reject it, or take no action. The Plan will go to the Washington Department of Ecology for final approval, if cities taking action to adopt it represent three-quarters of the population of the jurisdictions that act on the plan. The Plan goes back to the King County Council to be re-written, if cities taking action to reject it represent three-quarters of the population of the jurisdictions that act on the plan. If Council chooses to do nothing, the City will be subject to the decision of the majority of cities that took action for adoption or rejection, as described above. Staff recommends that Council adopt the Plan.

BACKGROUND

On August 7, 1995, Council authorized an Interlocal Agreement with King County to participate in the County's regional solid waste management system as outlined in the existing 1992 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan. During 1996, City staff analyzed the options of the City developing its own solid waste plan and managing solid waste, independent of the County, its facilities and services. Council participated in a workshop on June 3, 1996, that focused on the analysis of opportunities for Shoreline to become its own solid waste utility. Staff recommended that the City stay with the King County solid waste system. On August 13, 1996, Council took the recommended no-action, which automatically renewed the Solid Waste Interlocal Agreement with King County through June 2028.

In its 2000-2001 Work Plan, Council identified its goal to "pursue Interstate 5 (I-5) Access to the King County Solid Waste Transfer Station." In the 2001-2002 Work Plan, Council intends to "support and pursue King County's proposed improvements to the solid waste transfer station to mitigate its impacts on the community and improve operations." Council adoption of the King County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan, which includes the proposed improvements to the First N.E. Transfer Station and the intent to mitigate for community impacts, would further Council's Work Plan goal.

DISCUSSION

In order for the 2001 Comprehensive Solid Waste Plan to be implemented, the cities who participate in the Solid Waste Interlocal Forum Agreements must adopt the Plan. The cities have 120 days from the time that they receive the Regional Policy Committee's recommendation on the Plan to act. During the cities' 120-day adoption period, the Department of Ecology will also be reviewing the plan to decide whether to approve the plan following the cities' action.

Staff has prepared a discussion regarding the three alternative actions that Council can take in response to the King County 2001 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan. NOTE: A copy of this Plan is available in the City Council office for review.

Take No Action

If Council chooses to take no action, the City will become part of whatever decision the majority of cities choose that took action for adoption or rejection, as described above.

As of mid-February, eleven cities (Lake Forest Park, Kenmore, Mercer Island, Clyde Hill, Renton, Auburn, Kent, Sammamish, Covington, Newcastle and Issaquah) had adopted the Plan.

Reject the Plan

If Council chooses to reject the Plan, and if the cities that reject it represent three-quarters of the population of the jurisdictions that act on the Plan, the Plan will be sent back to King County for revision. No city has indicated to the County or to Shoreline's representative on the Regional Policy Committee that it intends to reject the Plan.

During the revision process, cities would be asked to collaborate on re-writing the Plan. The revised Plan would be sent to the King County Council for adoption and to the Regional Policy Committee for recommended action. The City of Shoreline is represented on the Regional Policy Committee by Kathy Keolker-Wheeler, Vice-Chair of the Committee and President of the Association of Suburban Cities.

At this point, if the Plan is rejected and sent to King County for revision, then implementation of the Plan and, consequently, transfer station improvements to the First Northeast Station in Shoreline will be delayed.

Adopt the Plan

The 2001 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan updates the existing 1992 Plan and outlines how King County, in partnership with the cities, will manage solid waste in the County for the next 20 years. Although the specific roles and responsibilities for developing and operating the solid waste system are defined in the Interlocal Agreements between the County and the cities, the Plan expands the role of cities from policy review to collaborative County/city development of regional solid waste policy and rates. (p. 10-2)

To ensure that the Plan is responsive to new needs, Interlocal Agreements "require that adopted solid waste management plans be reviewed, and any necessary revisions proposed, at least once every three years, or more frequently if warranted. If an issue arises and agreement cannot be reached between the affected jurisdictions, a formal request is made by the County or affected city(ies) to the Regional Policy Committee...to consider a plan amendment." (p. 1-8)

Since September 2000, the solid waste management plan has been under review by the suburban cities, the Regional Policy Committee and the King County Council. The Regional Policy Committee unanimously recommends that cities adopt this plan. Policies in the Plan address the regional transfer and disposal system, as well as waste reduction and recycling programs that provide grant funds to cities, which would

continue under the proposed Plan. The grant amounts are determined each year by County tipping fee revenues, and appropriations made during the County's annual budget process.

First Northeast Transfer Station

- **Transfer Station Activity Concerns**

The aspect of the Plan that is most visible to Shoreline residents is the regional transfer system, since the First Northeast Transfer Station is within Shoreline City limits. Residents living near the transfer station are concerned about personal safety, noise, odors, aesthetics and pollution generated by truck traffic and transfer station activity. Key policies in the Plan that address these concerns are on pages 6-2 and 6-5 and include:

RTS-1 The county's objectives for its transfer system are:

5. Protecting environmental quality and public health and safety while providing cost efficient services.

RTS-21 The county is encouraged to exceed minimum environmental requirements in the operation of its solid waste handling facilities where feasible...including, but not limited to, those related to concerns such as air quality and sound.

- **Self-haul Concerns**

Many Shoreline residents self-haul their garbage to the First Northeast Transfer Station. In March 2001, a survey of Shoreline residents, who had purchased a compost bin, showed that 20% had previously self-hauled yard waste to the transfer station on a regular basis. Shoreline residents, who self-haul to the First Northeast Transfer Station, would be concerned about maintaining their access to the Transfer Station. Key policies, on pages 6-2 and 6-3, address self-hauling and include:

RTS-4 The county should prioritize efficient service to commercial haulers while still providing services for *self-haul customers*, provided that nothing in this policy permits limiting standard hours of operation at county transfer facilities for self-haul customers without council approval by ordinance.

RTS-8 Before restricting access to any customer class at a specific transfer station, the executive shall transmit for council approval by motion a demand management plan for that transfer station.

A demand management plan refers to a plan that creates incentive rates, as well as a new program and structure to minimize conflicts between self-haulers and commercial haulers, ultimately improving customer service. At the transfer station, the focus would be on reducing traffic impacts and mitigating congestion.

- **Potential Rate Impacts to Consumers**

In King County, the solid waste system is financed directly by the users of the system in the form of fees for garbage collection and disposal. As policy **FIN-4** states, "The county should keep garbage disposal fees as low as possible and should manage the solid waste system to keep rate increases as low as possible while meeting the costs of managing the system and providing service to solid waste customers." (p. 10-2)

Although no rate recommendations are included in the Plan, several disposal rate alternatives are presented as starting points for regional dialogue as waste export is implemented. The following are brief descriptions of the three primary alternatives:

1) Regional Direct Fee

The regional direct fee is the cost paid by private collection companies to transport waste directly to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill from their own private transfer stations. This fee is \$23 less than the basic fee charged at County transfer stations. About 75% of the waste collected by the private companies is taken to County-owned transfer stations, where the rate is \$82.50 per ton. The private companies still charge ratepayers the basic fee of \$82.50 per ton, regardless of which transfer station is used. In Shoreline, Waste Management's contract requires that solid waste be taken to the King County First Northeast Transfer Station. The use of County-owned transfer stations will reduce or delay the need for a rate increase.

The proposed alternative is to reduce the difference between the regional direct fee and the basic fee charged at County transfer stations in order to remove the financial incentive to the private companies to haul wastes to their own transfer station. With this change, ratepayers would not be financially impacted by the private collection companies' choice of transfer stations, but the basic fee could be reduced.

2) Implement Transaction Fee

A second alternative would institute a flat fee per transaction at transfer stations to cover the cost of handling each load, in addition to the cost of handling the actual wastes. With this model, the overall cost for disposal would drop below the basic rate of \$82.50 per ton when disposing of 1.3 tons or more. While this alternative would reduce the overall fees per ton for large haulers and private collection companies, it would shift costs from curbside collection subscribers to customers who haul small loads to a transfer station. Since most Shoreline residents subscribe to curbside service, the average ratepayer would see a cost savings in this model.

3) Combined Alternative

The third option is to implement both of the above alternatives simultaneously. The result would be an 8.5 % savings in the disposal costs to the average ratepayer, using current fees as the example.

The City can provide input to the rate selection process through the Suburban Cities Association representative on the Regional Policy Committee, as well as through membership on the Solid Waste Policy Work Group, which will be formed after adoption of the Plan.

- Upgrade and Improvement Issues

Concern has been expressed that the exact date for upgrading the First Northeast Transfer Station is not included in the Plan. Since the First Northeast Transfer Station is one of the oldest (1967) in the county, improvements are needed to address operational, environmental and employee facility requirements. Plan details on page 6-19 state that "major improvements at the three older expandable stations are recommended." First Northeast Transfer Station, as an expandable site, can

accommodate enlarged facilities and expanded services (**RTS-12**). The following key policies (pages 6-2, 6-3 and 6-4) address implementation:

RTS-3 The county should focus capital investment to:

1. Maintain the county's system facilities in safe condition for both the system's customers and the system's employees.
2. Upgrade its transfer facilities to serve a future waste export system when the Cedar Hills regional landfill reaches its permitted capacity, or at such earlier time as the county may decide.
3. Improve transfer stations to improve efficiency, capacity and customer service.

RTS-18 The county shall prepare the capital improvement program required to implement the Final 2001 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan under K.C.C. 4.04.200 through 4.04.270.

All proposed facility improvements will be based on a facility master plan (page 6-19) and will be subject to a comprehensive public involvement process (page 6-15). The City has been working closely with the County planner to insure that Shoreline's best interests are included in all master plan documents. The Master Plan will set specific development standards for the site, which will be presented to Council for adoption. After adoption, the City will review the building permits for the transfer station, ensuring consistency with the Master Plan. A First Northeast Transfer Station Full Development Conceptual Alternatives Report was transmitted to the King County Council by January 1, 2002, as required.

To continue the planning process, the King County Council appropriated \$2.7 million in 2002 for Facilities Master Plan Implementation design work. Specific upgrades for the First Northeast Station include rebuilding or replacing the transfer building; improving queuing; expanding the recycling area; and installing a compactor at a projected cost of \$4,000,000 - \$14,400,00 in County funds (Table 6-4, page 6-20). All capital improvements are subject to County Council appropriation and the County's annual budget (policy **RTS-18**).

In order to address immediate safety issues at the First Northeast Transfer Station, \$602,000 has been appropriated in 2002 to replace the scalehouse, and \$80,000 is available to add more lighting to the full trailer parking area, as well as to replace the existing stairway between the employee parking area and the transfer building.

- **Ramp Construction for Direct I-5 Access**

City staff is working with King County and Washington State's Congressional Delegation to seek legislative approval to build the ramps. Funds have been set-aside for the transfer station upgrade, including ramp design and construction (\$900,000), however, the final specific amounts will be dependent on a variety of factors, such as year of construction, etc.

- **Mitigation**

As reflected in Council's 2001-2002 Work Plan, mitigation is needed for the impacts on the community that result from upgrading the transfer station. Key policies in the Plan include:

RTS-20 Prior to making any improvements to transfer stations or locating new transfer facilities, the executive shall work with affected communities to develop mitigation measures for environmental impacts created by the construction, operation, maintenance or expansion of transfer facilities.

RTS-18 (page 6-4) specifically targets "mitigating impacts to the surrounding community including but not limited to noise, traffic, dust, odor and litter."

The policies listed above create a framework that supports an effective partnership with cities to plan long-term for a more efficient countywide solid waste management system. In addition to the required public involvement process that is necessary prior to implementing any improvements at the First Northeast Station, the City will have control over the facility master plan by granting or denying the City permits that will be required.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is required. On March 25, staff will return to Council with an Action item consistent with the discussion of this issue.