



Chapter
5

Collection of Curbside Recyclables and Mixed Municipal Solid Waste

About 90 percent of the residents in the King County system subscribe to curbside garbage collection services. According to telephone surveys conducted by the Solid Waste Division, about 87 percent of those subscribers also put their recyclable materials at the curb for collection. This chapter discusses the collection of curbside recyclables and garbage, referred to as mixed municipal solid waste (or MMSW), within the incorporated and unincorporated areas of King County.

Private solid waste management companies provide collection throughout most of the region's service area, except in Enumclaw and Skykomish, where the cities operate their own collection systems. According to County records, two private collection companies – Waste Management, Inc. and Rabanco – provide about 99 percent of the collection services in the region. Waste Connections, Inc. provides collection on Vashon Island only. Through these companies and the cities, curbside collection of MMSW and recyclables is available to nearly everyone in the County.

The following sections set out the County collection policies and describe the MMSW and recycling collection systems in King County. Since different legal authorities govern each collection system, they are discussed separately. The system for MMSW collection is discussed first because it predates recycling collection and helped establish the infrastructure for both systems. These discussions are followed by a description of major issues and recommendations for collection services in the region for the next 20 years.

County Collection Policies

The County policies set out for collection are as follows:

CP-1. The county solid waste system shall provide for and designate urban collection service levels for mixed municipal solid waste, recycling and yard waste for residents in all parts of the county except for Vashon Island, Skykomish Valley, and Snoqualmie Pass.

CP-2. The county should promote collection service that has as little impact as possible on roadways and traffic. The cities should consider using their contracting authority to specify which transfer stations the collection companies use.

CP-3. The county and cities should seek to manage demand for self-haul services for customers who self-haul regularly, by encouraging subscriptions to curbside collection.

CP-4. The county shall seek to manage demand for self-haul services for customers who self-haul occasionally, by working with cities and private collection companies to develop cost effective options for disposing of bulky wastes.

CP-5. The county should not consider the possibility of eliminating service to self-haulers, as this would conflict with the county's goals of environmental protection and customer service.

CP-6. A solid waste collection district may be established for the purpose of requiring mandatory curbside collection service if the county and the cities agree that it is in the public interest and necessary for the protection of public health.

CP-7. The county, in consultation with the cities and Solid Waste Advisory Committee should explore the benefits and costs of a uniform method of recycling collection throughout the region.

CP-8. The county should host special recycling collection events and investigate options for expanding this recycling option.

CP-9. If authorized by the state legislature, the county should work with the cities to establish region-wide waste disposal incentive rates that encourage recycling and reduce disposal.

CP-10. The county, in conjunction with the city of Seattle, the cities within the region and Public Health – Seattle & King County shall offer collection of household hazardous waste in conformance with the adopted local hazardous waste management plan prepared under chapter 70.105 RCW.

CP-11. The county should improve collection services for household hazardous waste in the eastern and southern portions of the county in conformance with the local hazardous waste management program. Enhancements should include implementing a pilot stationary collection service at a transfer station and implementing a pilot program to augment current mobile collection services.

CP-12. The county should work with the cities, regional businesses, and regional manufacturers to develop alternative collection opportunities and product stewardship programs.

Collection of Mixed Municipal Solid Waste

The most dramatic change in the collection industry nationally in recent years has been the consolidation of solid waste management companies and a trend toward expanding their range of services. The private solid waste management companies in King County have become vertically integrated, meaning they are able to provide services ranging from collection to landfilling.

Two national companies – Waste Management, Inc. and Allied Waste Industries, Inc. – have purchased most of the smaller companies in the region. Industry consolidations in 1998 included the purchase of Rabanco by Allied Waste Industries, Inc. and the purchase of Waste Management, Inc. by U.S.A. Waste (who took on the Waste Management name). In early 1999, Waste Management purchased RST Disposal and its affiliated companies, and Rabanco purchased the WUTC-certificated area near Issaquah and Sammamish from Waste Connections, Inc. Rabanco also purchased Northwest Waste Industries, which operates mainly in Seattle. Also in 1999, Waste Connections, Inc. purchased American Disposal, the company that provides collection services on Vashon Island. These consolidations

have reduced the number of collection companies operating in the County to three, which has created less opportunity locally for competition for city contracts. Also, these companies are all large national corporations, instead of the local companies that used to operate in most of the region.

Legal authority for the collection and disposal of MMSW is shared among the state – acting through the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) – the counties, and the cities.

Table 2-1 in Chapter 2 lists the planning authorities, their roles, and the guiding legislation for collection in King County. The complete texts of the key pieces of legislation are provided in Appendix E.

Under RCW 81.77 and 36.58, counties are prohibited from collecting MMSW or regulating solid waste collection companies. Either the WUTC or the cities regulate this service. The WUTC regulates collection in all of the unincorporated areas and in cities that choose not to regulate or provide the service. The other cities contract for collection directly, issue licenses for collection, or provide collection themselves.

RCW 36.58 authorizes counties to set up collection districts with the intent of establishing mandatory collection throughout a region. Cities may also participate in the collection districts at their discretion. To date, however, King County and the cities have not chosen to utilize this authority.



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Through industry consolidations, two national companies now control nearly all of the region's solid waste collection business

The WUTC sets and adjusts rates and requires compliance with the adopted solid waste management plan and related ordinances. The WUTC issues certificates to private collection companies for providing services in designated areas. These certificates specify not only the collection territory, but also the type of waste to be collected. The certificates exist in perpetuity in the certificated area unless the certificate holder fails to provide adequate service, in which case the WUTC can revoke or suspend the certificate. Other persons or companies can also purchase certificates from the existing holders.

If a city opts to manage solid waste collection itself, it can do so via three mechanisms:

- **Municipal:** A city can operate its own collection systems and establish its own collection rates.
- **License:** A city can grant licenses to private collection companies, which augment the WUTC certificates. These licenses provide for joint regulation of collection and allow the city to review rates and generate revenues from collection.
- **Contract:** A city can enter into contracts with private collection companies to collect residential and commercial wastes. These contracts supercede the WUTC certificate. Contracts are awarded through a formal bidding process or through direct negotiations.

Table 5-1 summarizes the roles and authority under the various collection scenarios.

Table 5-1. Roles and Authorities for MMSW Collection

Role	A U T H O R I T Y			
	WUTC-Certified	Municipal	License	Contract
MMSW Collection	Collection Company	City	Collection Company	Collection Company
Regulation of Services	WUTC	City	WUTC	City
Rate Approval	WUTC	City	WUTC	City
Billing	Collection Company	City	City or Collection Company	City or Collection Company

Private collection companies holding WUTC certificates in the King County service area are listed in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2. WUTC Certificate Franchise Holders in King County

Rabanco	[G-12,G-60, G-41] dba Eastside Disposal, Kent-Meridian Disposal, SeaTac Disposal, and Rabanco Connections 54 South Dawson Street, Seattle, WA 98134
Waste Management, Inc.	[G-237] dba WM–Seattle, WM–Northwest, WM–Rainier, WM–Sno-King, WM–Federal Way Disposal, WM–RST Disposal, WM–Nick Raffo Garbage Company, and WM-Tri-Star Disposal 13225 NE 126th Place, Kirkland, WA 98034
Waste Connections, Inc.	[G-87] dba American Disposal P.O. Box 399, Puyallup, WA 98371
Note: Franchise numbers provided in brackets.	

Figures 5-1 and 5-2 on the following pages show the certificate areas and collection territories held under contract by each company.

Figure 5-1. WUTC-Certificated Collection Areas

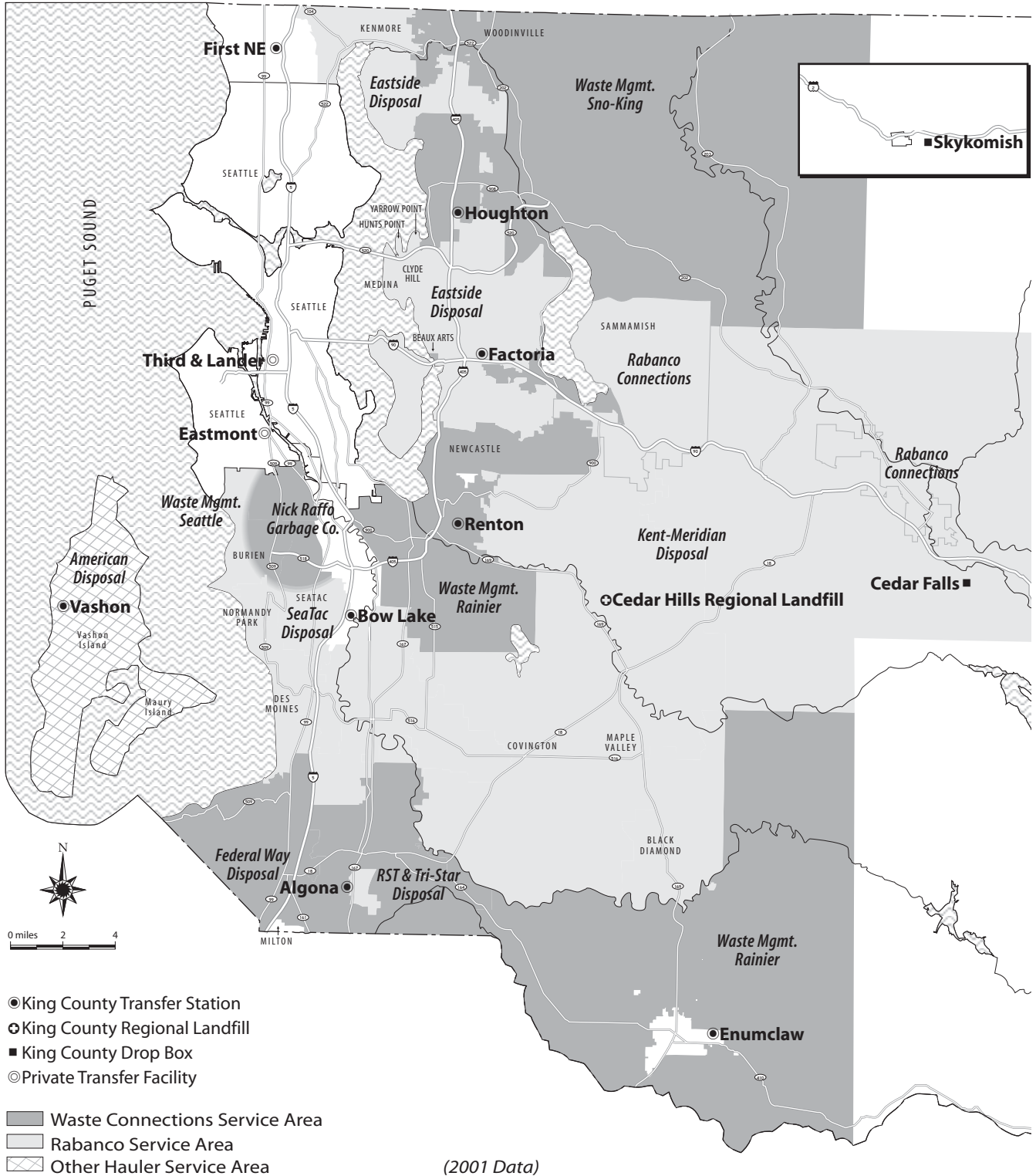
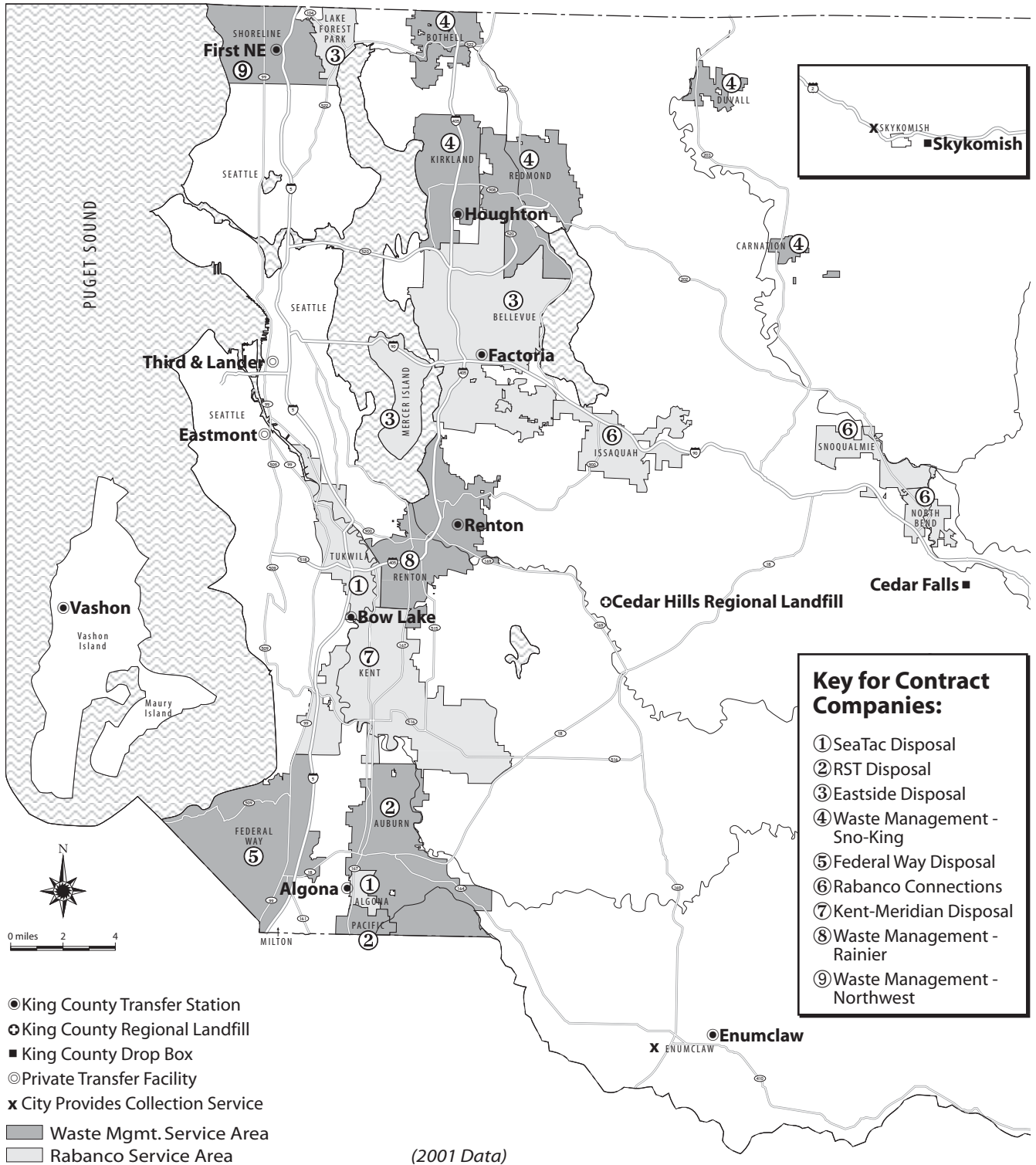


Figure 5-2. Cities with Collection Contracts



Collection of Curbside Recyclables

RCW 70.95 provides legal authority to the County and the cities in the regional system to develop this Plan. The Plan establishes the regional policy and standards for recyclables collection, as well as waste reduction and recycling programs. As with solid waste, the cities have the authority over collection of residential recyclables within their jurisdictions.

Residential curbside recycling is available nearly region-wide for the collection of primary recyclables, which includes newspaper, mixed paper, PET and HDPE bottles, glass containers, tin and aluminum cans, and yard wastes.

In the unincorporated areas, the County can direct the collection companies through service level ordinances to pick up certain recyclable materials and to provide a minimum level of services. Cities can influence collection services through their contracts with collection companies. One goal of both the County and the cities is to provide a high level of collection services to customers while maintaining reasonable rates.

For the unincorporated areas, RCW 36.58 authorizes counties to set minimum service levels (what to collect and how often) and to contract for collection of recyclables from residences. In addition, counties may impose fees on these services to fund their waste reduction and recycling programs. King County has opted to not contract for

recycling services, but rather has allowed the WUTC to regulate recyclables collection in the unincorporated areas. In King County, the WUTC regulates collection in accordance with the minimum service level standards established by King County Code 10.18. The County collects a fee from unincorporated area residential accounts (22 cents per account per month) to help fund waste reduction and recycling programs.

Recycling collection areas are the same as those established for MMSW (Figures 5-1 and 5-2). According to RCW 70.95.092, the County must designate which services will be available in urban areas and which will be available in rural areas. In 1993, King County passed Ordinance 10942, which extended urban service levels into most rural portions of the County. Currently, all urban and rural areas are

provided a uniform level of recycling and yard waste collection services, except for Vashon Island, the Skykomish Valley, and Snoqualmie Pass. These areas are not yet provided the urban level of service because collection services are not readily available for their residents.

Collection of non-residential recyclables presents different challenges. There are diverse businesses and industries in the region, which has made it infeasible to establish uniform requirements for collection containers and equipment that could serve every need. Thus, there are no state or local regulations that require a standard level of non-residential recycling service. A few cities do provide for collection services for non-residential recyclables within their jurisdictions, but businesses may choose an alternative service or



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Residential curbside recycling is available region-wide

choose not to participate at all. In the unincorporated areas, non-residential recycling service is available through the private collection companies. These non-residential generators can work individually with the private collection companies to establish the type of service they need, or choose not to have any collection service.

Issues

For this 20-year planning period, several issues need to be addressed to respond to industry changes and to ensure the continued effectiveness of our regional MMSW and recyclables collection services:

- **Waste Flow and Hauling Patterns:** Private collection companies are not always using the closest transfer station to dispose of their waste loads. Some cities are interested in changing this practice to help keep collection rates low.
- **Demand Management at Transfer Stations:** Strategies such as incentive rates, programmatic changes, and structural changes to transfer stations are needed to improve customer service and minimize conflicts in use between commercial haulers and self-haulers at the County's transfer stations.
- **Collection of Curbside Recyclables:** Changes in the industry and the region may affect how curbside recyclable materials are picked up and what is collected in the future. Under consideration are whether to continue with source-separated collection or convert to commingled collection, and what additional materials might be collected.
- **Special Collection Events:** Special events for collecting bulky items and extra waste are offered by the County and the cities. This chapter discusses how special collection events can be coordinated and staged more economically.
- **Household Hazardous Waste Collection:** The Wastemobile currently provides for the collection of household hazardous wastes. This chapter discusses a recent study of this service and the study's recommendations for improving household hazardous waste collection in the region.
- **Incentive Rates:** Offering incentive rates to households can help promote recycling. If incentive rates were offered, a structure for implementing them region-wide would need to be developed.
- **Alternative Collection Opportunities:** Newly developed programs provide opportunities for County and city residents to take products, such as leftover latex paint and used motor oil, for reuse or recycling to the retailers or manufacturers of the products. This chapter discusses a few of the programs that are currently in place.



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The King County
Wastemobile provides
disposal services for
household hazardous
wastes

Recommendations

The issues presented above are discussed in more detail in this section, followed by the recommendation for this planning period.



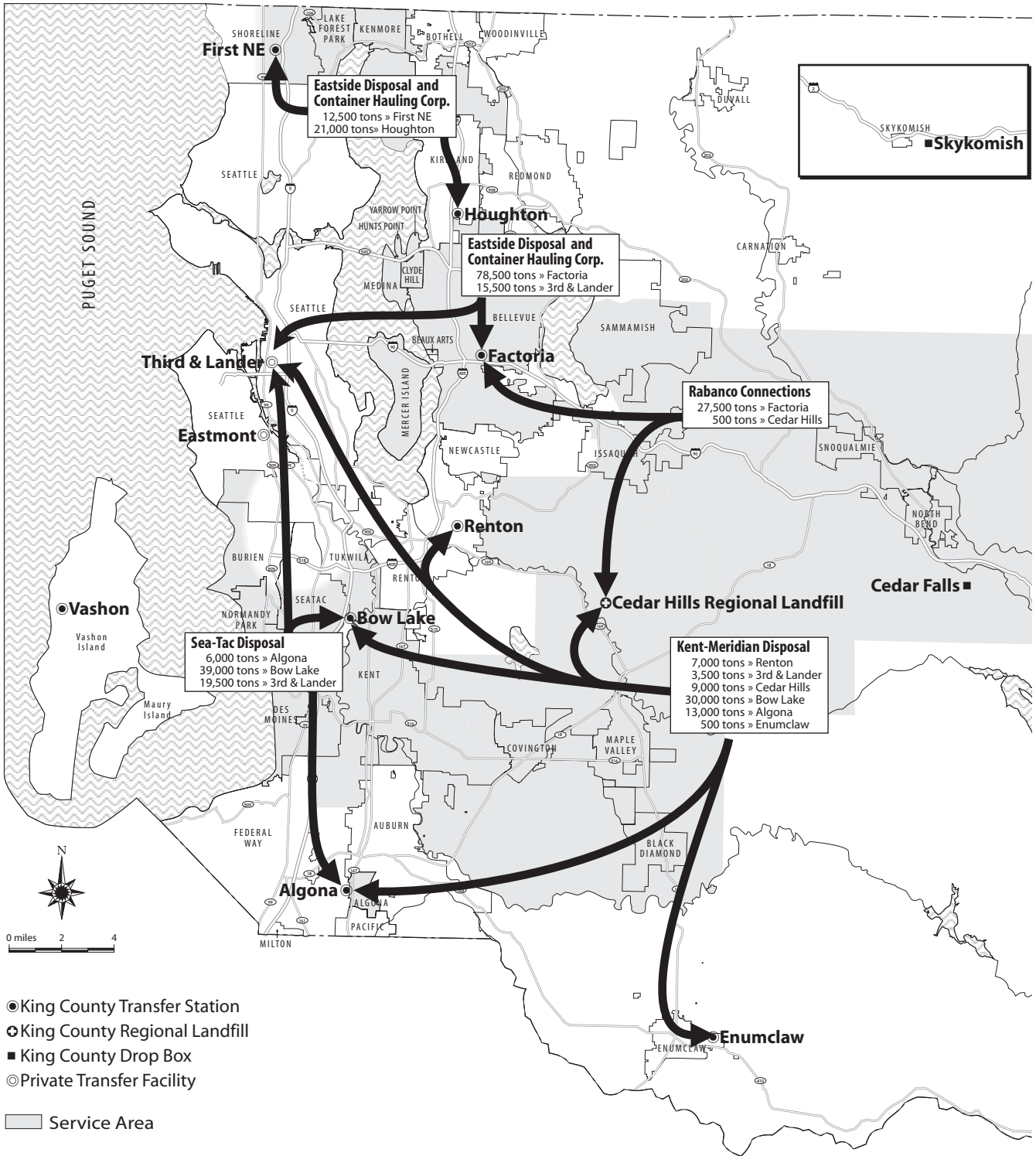
Waste Flow and Hauling Patterns

King County's eight transfer stations are located conveniently throughout the County and have the capacity to handle all of the MMSW generated in the region; however, the private collection companies do not always haul their loads of MMSW to the nearest County transfer station. Instead, County tonnage and transaction records show that about 23 percent of these loads are driven to the private companies' own transfer stations in Seattle before being transported to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. Figures 5-3, 5-4, and 5-5 on the following pages show the hauling patterns and associated tons transported to facilities in the County and to the privately owned stations in Seattle.

MMSW collected in the cities and unincorporated areas, but transported through the private transfer stations in Seattle, is ultimately delivered to Cedar Hills, where the collection companies are charged a regional direct disposal fee. This rate is \$23 less than the transfer station tipping fee (see description of the regional direct fee in Chapter 10).

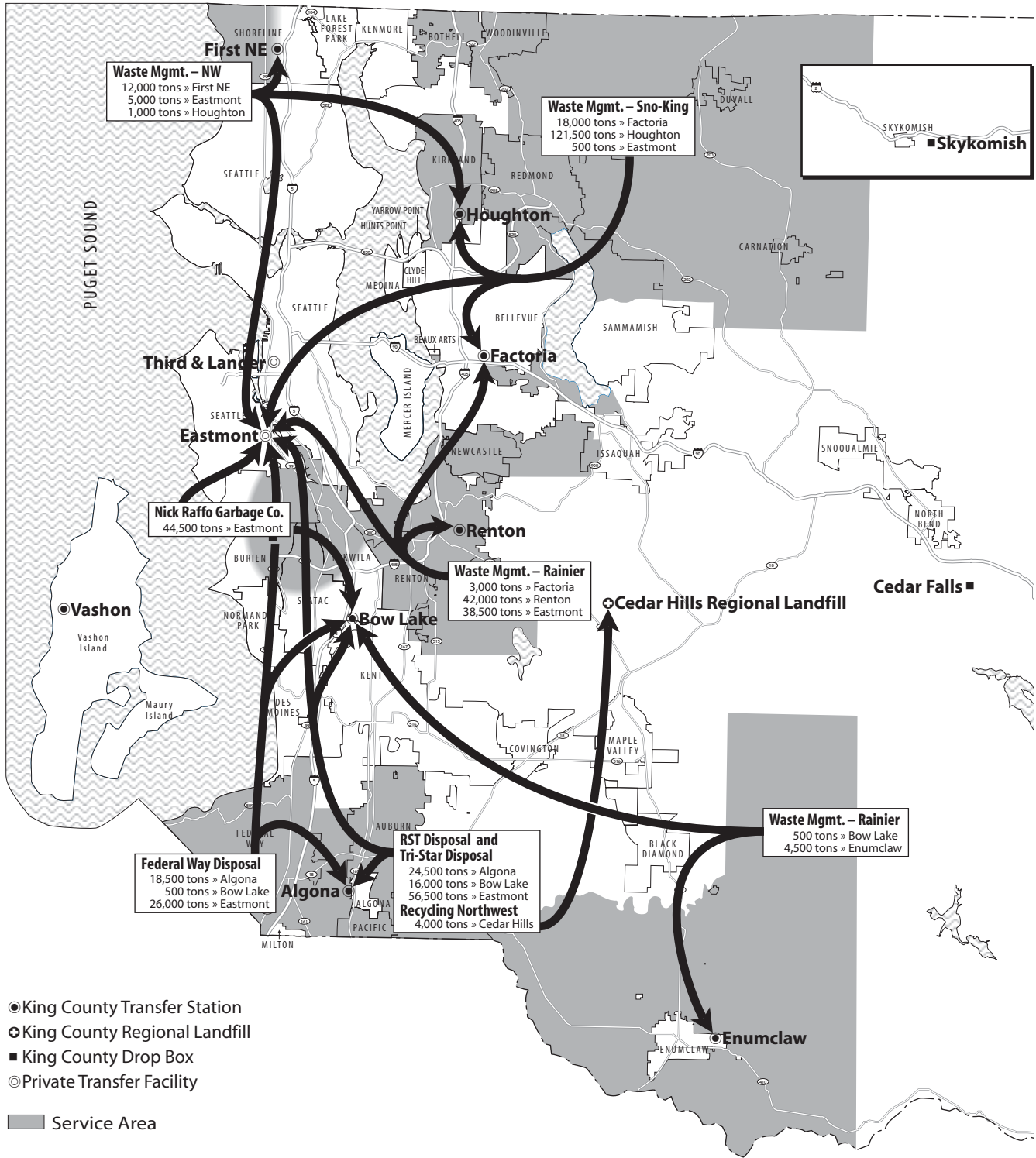
When private collection vehicles bypass closer County transfer stations to take advantage of the regional direct fee, it increases their travel time and distance. This additional time on the roadways uses more resources, increases road wear and pollution, and leads to increased collection costs. To encourage the private collection vehicles to use County transfer stations, the County must ensure that vehicles are processed efficiently through the station queue. In meetings with the private solid waste management companies during Plan development, representatives asked that the County seek ways to reduce congestion and long lines at County transfer stations.

Figure 5-3. Waste Transport by Rabanco Companies



1999 Tonnage figures rounded to the nearest 500 tons.
 Source: King County disposal data, hauler collection reports, and facility flow reports.

Figure 5-4. Waste Transport by Waste Management Companies



1999 Tonnage figures rounded to the nearest 500 tons.
 Source: King County disposal data, hauler collection reports, and facility flow reports.