

Chapter
6

The Regional Transfer System

The concept of a regional solid waste transfer and disposal system in King County was developed in the early 1960s. Its primary purpose was, and continues to be, the protection of public health and the environment. Prior to its development, solid waste was hauled directly to open, unlined landfills across the County. The heightened environmental concern and protection standards that grew out of the 1960s and 1970s, and the tremendous growth in the region over the last 40 years, have shaped the system in operation today. The current transfer system serves three main functions:

- It provides geographically dispersed, convenient, and safe collection points around the County for mixed municipal solid waste (MMSW) from both commercial and self haulers
- It provides collection points for recyclable materials from self haulers
- It reduces traffic on the highways and at the landfill by providing stations where smaller loads can be consolidated into fewer, larger loads for transport

The transfer system continues to evolve to accommodate regional growth and the changing needs of the customers. The most significant change for this 20-year planning period will be the closure of the County's only active landfill – the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. This closure is expected when the landfill reaches capacity in approximately 2012. As the date approaches, the regional transfer system must be readied for waste export (as discussed in Chapter 7). Before waste export is implemented, transfer stations will be equipped to load waste efficiently into trailers that are then exported to

an out-of-County landfill. These and other changes needed at the transfer stations are the subject of this chapter.

The chapter begins with the County’s policies on the regional transfer system. Then the chapter contains a brief description of how the regional transfer system operates today and the issues involved in maintaining an efficient and cost-effective system in the future. This description is followed with separate discussions of recommendations for service-level and facility changes during the planning period.

The recommendations are designed to meet the following criteria:

- Provide needed services that benefit the community
- Ensure rates remain low and stable over time
- Support regional goals for waste reduction and recycling
- Comply with all federal, state, and local laws

County Regional Transfer System Policies

The County policies for the operation and maintenance of an efficient and cost-effective transfer system are as follows:

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

1. Meeting customer needs for convenient, uniform services;
2. Seeking to maintain operating costs for solid waste management lower than those in other jurisdictions;
3. Preparing the mixed municipal solid waste transfer system for eventual waste export;
4. Keeping rates stable and rate increases as low as possible while meeting the costs of managing the system and providing services to solid waste customers; and
5. Protecting environmental quality and public health and safety while providing cost efficient services.

RTS-2. The county should provide for the future of the solid waste transfer system by maximizing use of existing transfer stations, making existing transfer stations as efficient as possible, evaluating the need for new transfer facilities, and focusing capital improvements on balancing service needs of commercial and self-haulers.

RTS-3. The county should focus capital investment to:

1. Maintain the county’s system facilities in a 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; and
4. Expand, relocate or replace, or any combination thereof, transfer stations when safety, efficiency, capacity or customer services needs cannot be met by existing transfer facilities.

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-5. Compactors should be installed at transfer stations in order to achieve operating efficiencies by processing waste more quickly in less space, reducing truck trips between the stations and the disposal site, saving transportation and equipment costs, reducing odors and litter, and preparing for economical waste export. The county should prioritize, to the extent practicable, compactor installation at those transfer stations with the greatest tonnages.

RTS-6. The county shall evaluate the feasibility of siting an additional transfer facility to serve residents of northeast King County.

RTS-7. The county shall establish criteria and standards for determining when a county owned and operated transfer station has exceeded its capacity to efficiently serve the needs of its customers and where new or relocated transfer facilities are needed.

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. The demand management plan shall identify strategies such as incentive rates, programmatic changes and structural changes designed to minimize conflicts between commercial haulers and self haulers and improve customer service. The demand management plan shall include an evaluation of the costs and benefits of these strategies, the impact of implementing these strategies on different sectors of commercial and self haulers that use the transfer station, and impacts on illegal dumping. The demand management plan shall be formulated with the participation of affected cities.

RTS-9. The county, in coordination with affected cities, should continue to improve county transfer station operations to ensure efficient queuing, unloading and exiting.

RTS-10. The county shall designate county-owned transfer stations as either capable of being expanded on-site or constrained from on-site expansion. The purpose of this designation is to maximize the use of existing sites by concentrating capital investment on sites where significant improvements are both physically possible, and supported by the host city. Facilities capable of being expanded may require new construction or major rebuilding in order to provide a full range of solid waste disposal and recycling services for county residents and businesses. Facilities constrained from on-site expansion will receive necessary safety and efficiency improvements, including compactors.

RTS-11 In designating transfer stations as either capable of being expanded on-site or constrained from on-site expansion, the county shall consider the size of the site, other physical characteristics and constraints, the level of support for needed improvements by the host city. The system as a whole shall be assessed to maximize the equitable distribution of full service facilities.

RTS-12. The following transfer stations are designated as capable of being expanded on site: First Northeast, Factoria, Bow Lake, Enumclaw and Vashon.

RTS-13. The following transfer stations are designated as constrained from on-site expansion: Houghton, Renton, and Algona.

RTS-14. The following transfer stations are authorized by the county as adjunct transfer stations to receive, consolidate and deposit mixed municipal solid waste into larger transfer vehicles for transport to and disposal at county authorized disposal sites: Waste Management's Eastmont and Rabanco's Third and Lander facilities.

RTS-15. The county should maintain the use of drop boxes to serve rural customers in the Skykomish and Cedar Falls area until periodic analyses of demographic and disposal trends in the rural areas determine that improvements in the type and level of service and facilities may be needed. The county should explore the use of an access card to provide access to drop box facilities for residents and property owners in the area so that individual property owners could be billed on a monthly basis.

RTS-16. The county should continue to provide solid waste services through the county transfer facilities. However, the county will remain open to considering and implementing future private sector proposals for the transfer system as part of its annual evaluation of the timing of waste export. In evaluating future private sector proposals for the transfer system, the county should balance financial costs and benefits with other relevant factors, including environmental considerations and fairness to existing labor. The county should consider expanding the role of collection companies in the provision of transfer services when the collection companies demonstrate that such expansion reduces the overall costs of solid waste management to county residents and businesses, maintains or improves service levels, and advances the goal that solid waste disposal facilities be dispersed throughout the county in an equitable manner. The county's goal will be to make the transition to waste export as equitable as possible to those affected by the transition.

RTS-17. All public and private transfer facilities shall comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and proposed facility improvements shall be required to meet applicable legal requirements. Legal requirements include, but are not limited to those regarding environmental protection, public health and safety, procurement and labor.

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. Proposed capital improvements are subject to council appropriation and the county's annual budget process. The proposed capital improvement program should demonstrate how the following considerations are addressed:

1. Protecting the safety of customers and employees at any solid waste facility;
2. Planning for permit acquisition requirements and timing;
3. Mitigating impacts to the surrounding community including but not limited to noise, traffic, dust, odor and litter;
4. Including public comment and input, including comment and input from the host jurisdictions, in project development;
5. Preparing for waste export;
6. Minimizing service disruption at transfer facilities and throughout the system during capital construction;
7. Ensuring that no more than one transfer station is closed for capital improvements at any time;
8. Demonstrating the extent to which sites requiring capital improvements are functioning at or near operating capacity for either traffic or tonnage;
9. Demonstrating how the planned capital improvements were evaluated according to the criteria and standards for transfer facility efficiency; and
10. Achieving operating savings.

RTS-19. The capital improvement program for King County shall only fund projects and improvements at facilities owned and operated by King County.

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 21. The county is encouraged to exceed minimum environmental requirements in the operation of its solid waste handling facilities where feasible. The county shall investigate the use and cost of technology and equipment that may allow the county to exceed minimum legal environmental requirements, including, but not limited to, those related to concerns such as air quality and sound.

RTS-22. The county shall evaluate the potential for establishing a special services transfer facility to handle bulky wastes and recycling, and serve self-haul customers.

The Transfer System Today

The regional transfer system now comprises a mix of public and private facilities, including eight transfer stations and two rural drop boxes operated by the County and two transfer stations operated by the two major private solid waste management companies in the county – Waste Management, Inc. and Rabanco.

Figure 6-1 on the following page shows the locations of the County system’s transfer facilities and the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. Transfer stations are dispersed geographically throughout the county to maximize the efficiency of solid waste collection.

According to County transaction data, about 75 percent of the system’s MMSW is transported through the County transfer facilities before disposal at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. About 23 percent of the remaining MMSW is transported to the privately owned transfer stations in Seattle, where loads are consolidated and hauled to Cedar Hills. The remaining 2 percent is hauled directly to Cedar Hills because the landfill is the closest facility, or the waste is difficult to handle (see Chapter 8 on special wastes).

Waste Management and Rabanco are the primary commercial haulers in the region. Waste Management owns and operates a transfer station at its Eastmont facility in Seattle, and Rabanco owns and operates a transfer station at Third & Lander, also in Seattle. These two private facilities are part of the solid waste management systems for both King County and the City of Seattle, serving primarily collection vehicles from their own companies and subsidiaries.

In addition to serving the commercial haulers, the County facilities serve self haulers. Self haulers are residential and non-residential customers who choose to bring their garbage and recyclables to the transfer facilities themselves.



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*The Enumclaw
Transfer/ Recycling
Station is one of the
newest stations in the
regional system*

Figure 6-1. Locations of Solid Waste Facilities

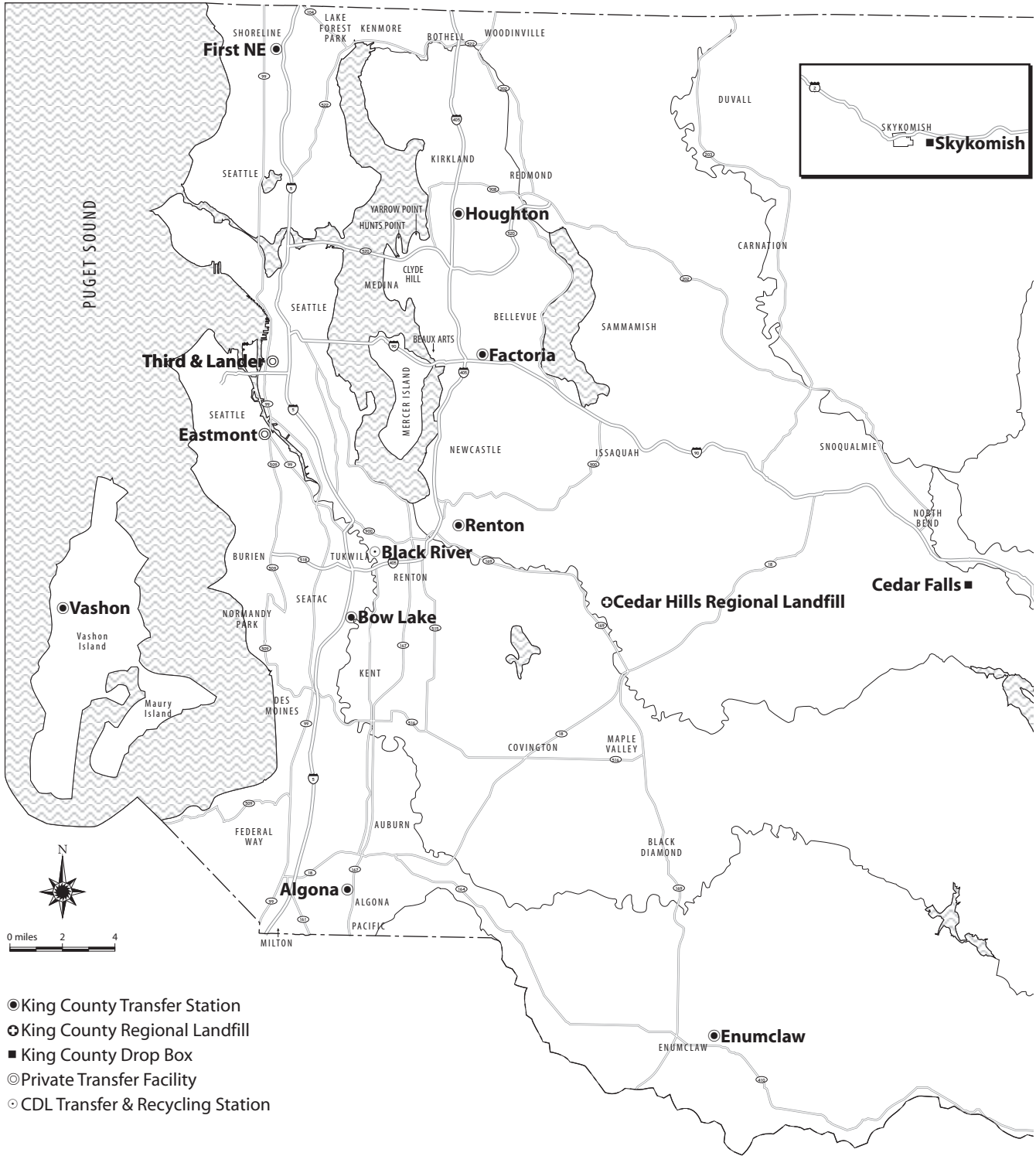


Table 6-1 gives the location and level of service provided at each transfer facility. All County-operated transfer stations are open to self haulers and commercial haulers from at least 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., 362 days a year. The Factoria Transfer Station is open weekdays from 6:15 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Days and hours of operation are set by ordinance by the King County Council (codified in KCC Title 10). According to their plans of operation, Waste Management's Eastmont transfer station is open weekdays from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Rabanco's Third & Lander transfer station is open weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Both private stations have extended hours to serve their own collection vehicles.

County-operated drop boxes are located at Cedar Falls and Skykomish. These facilities are provided as a convenience to self haulers in the rural areas; they are not intended to serve commercial collection vehicles. Table 6-2 shows their locations, services provided, and hours of operation.

Table 6-1. Services Provided at Each Transfer Station

Stations Publicly Owned and Operated by the King County Solid Waste Division			
Transfer Station and Address	Facility Type and Services Provided	Acres Occupied	Round Trip Miles to Cedar
Algona 35315 West Valley Hwy. Algona, 98001	Two-trailer direct load facility. Receives MMSW from commercial and self-haul customers.	4.6	41
Bow Lake 18800 Orillia Rd. South Seattle, 98188	Push-pit facility. Receives MMSW from commercial and self-haul customers and recyclables, including tin, glass, aluminum, mixed paper, newspaper, cardboard, and #1 and #2 plastic.	16.9	33
Enumclaw 1650 Battersby Ave. E. Enumclaw, 98022	Compactor-equipped facility with push pit. Receives MMSW from commercial and self-haul customers and recyclables, including tin, aluminum, glass, mixed paper, newspaper, cardboard, #1 and #2 plastic, yard waste, clean wood, and appliances.	25.0	42
Factoria 13800 SE 32nd St. Bellevue, 98005	Two-trailer direct load facility. Receives MMSW from commercial and self-haul customers and recyclables, including tin, aluminum, glass, mixed paper, newspaper, cardboard, #1 and #2 plastic, and yard waste.	7.8	36

Table 6-1. *continued*

Transfer Station and Address	Facility Type and Services Provided	Acres Occupied	Round Trip Miles to Cedar
First Northeast 2300 N. 165th St. Seattle, 98133	Two-trailer direct load facility. Receives MMSW from commercial and self-haul customers and recyclables, including tin, aluminum, glass, mixed paper, newspaper, cardboard, and #1 and #2 plastic. Reusable items for Goodwill also collected.	12.5	73
Houghton 11727 NE 60th St. Kirkland, 98033	Two-trailer direct load facility. Receives MMSW from commercial and self-haul customers and recyclables, including glass, tin, aluminum, mixed paper, newspaper, cardboard, and #1 and #2 plastic.	8.4	48
Renton 3021 NE 4th St. Renton, 98056	Two-trailer direct load facility. Receives MMSW from commercial and self-haul customers and recyclables, including glass, tin, aluminum, mixed paper, newspaper, cardboard, and #1 and #2 plastic.	9.0	24
Vashon 18910 Westside Hwy. SW Vashon, 98070	Compactor-equipped facility with surge pit. Receives MMSW from commercial and self-haul customers and recyclables, including tin, aluminum, glass, mixed waste paper, newspaper, cardboard, #1 and #2 plastic, yard waste, and appliances.	9.4	90
Stations Owned and Operated by Private Companies			
Eastmont (Waste Mgmt.) 7201 W Marginal Way SW Seattle, 98106	Compactor-equipped facility. Receives MMSW from its own collection and container vehicles, and CDL waste, petroleum-contaminated soils, and asbestos from its own vehicles and contractors.	2.7	72
Third & Lander (Rabanco) 2733 Third Avenue Seattle, 98134	Compactor-equipped facility. Receives MMSW from its own collection and container vehicles, and petroleum-contaminated soils, CDL waste, yard wastes, and asbestos from its own vehicles and contractors. Accepts pre-sorted and general recyclables.	13	70
Source: <i>Facility operations plans.</i>			

Table 6-2. Services Provided at the Drop Boxes

Location and Address	Services Provided	Hours of Operation
Cedar Falls 16925 Cedar Falls Rd. SE North Bend, 98045	Receives MMSW from self haulers only, and recyclables, including tin, aluminum, glass, mixed waste paper, newspaper, cardboard, plastic, and yard waste.	8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time; 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time
Skykomish 74324 NE Old Cascade Hwy. Skykomish, 98288	Receives MMSW from self haulers and the City of Skykomish, and recyclables, including tin, aluminum, glass, mixed waste paper, newspaper, cardboard, and plastic.	8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Public Health – Seattle & King County (the Health Department) is the primary local authority for ensuring that all of the system’s transfer stations and drop boxes meet all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations for the protection of human health and the environment. It is the primary mission of the Solid Waste Division to maintain and operate its facilities in a manner that meets or exceeds those standards. Appendix E-3 summarizes the standards that each facility must comply with under the King County Board of Health Code, Title 10.

Issues in Planning for the Future of the Transfer System

The 1992 *Final Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan* recommended an aggressive strategy for upgrading the County’s transfer system, including the siting and construction of three to four new transfer stations. The cost for building the new stations and upgrading others was estimated at the time to cost approximately \$191 million (in 2000 dollars).

In 1995, the King County Council rejected a rate proposal that was designed, in part, to implement the transfer station improvements set forth in the 1992 Plan. The Council also directed that the Solid Waste Division take measures to reduce or eliminate the need for any new stations (KCC 10.22). Subsequent discussions with the cities, the public, and the private solid waste management companies showed support for that direction. The consistent message was to make existing facilities as efficient as possible prior to constructing new facilities, while keeping rates low and stable over time.

The 2001 Plan continues to follow the policy directive set forth in 1995, as well as the input that has been received since then. The recommendations in this chapter are discussed with the following in mind – to minimize required capital investments by focusing on service and facility improvements that address the needs of today’s customers, as well as the future direction of MMSW and recyclables handling.



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Customers make use of the recyclables collection area at the Vashon Transfer Station

New facilities could be considered where existing capacity has been optimized.

Since 1992 the County has made few changes at the transfer stations that would expand the physical structures or services; however, the region's population and customer base have continued to grow. The primary challenge is to see that County facilities can keep pace with continued growth and provide the level of services customers have come to expect. There are two broad categories of issues to consider during this planning period:

- **Service-Level Issues:** Providing efficient service to the commercial haulers who bring in most of the waste by getting them in and out of the station quickly. At the same time, providing adequate services for the self-haul customers.
- **Facility Issues:** Preparing for eventual waste export when the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill closes in approximately 2012, as well as upgrading facilities so they can handle the increased generation of MMSW and recyclables forecast for the region over the next 20 years. Also, establishing criteria and standards for determining when a County-owned facility has exceeded its capacity to efficiently serve the needs of its customers, and where new or relocated transfer facilities are needed.

These issues and the proposed recommendations are discussed in the following sections.

Service-Level Issues

The County is committed to serving all of the system's customers while maximizing the efficiency of its facilities and services. Currently, however, resources at many of the County transfer stations are stretched by the high volume of traffic during peak hours of use. The County stations serve two distinct types of customers – the private solid waste management companies (referred to in this chapter as commercial haulers) and the self haulers. The commercial haulers work under contract with the cities to collect MMSW within their boundaries, or operate under Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission certificates to perform the same function for other areas of the region. The commercial haulers deliver large loads of MMSW to the transfer stations, averaging 5.5 tons per load. Self haulers are those who bring garbage and recyclables to the stations themselves.

Through its Waste Monitoring Program, the County collects data about the solid waste system customers and how they use County facilities, as well as why some customers choose to self haul rather than use curbside collection services. The data collected are supplemented by transaction records from the individual facilities and through annual telephone surveys conducted by the County. These data are an important tool for developing strategies to manage the use of County facilities.

County transaction records show that Waste Management and Rabanco delivered about 74 percent of the MMSW received at County transfer stations in 2000. Self haulers brought the remaining 26 percent. By contrast, 12 percent of the transactions were with commercial haulers, while 88 percent were with self haulers. These figures show that while the majority of the County's waste tonnage is received from commercial haulers, the overwhelming majority of the transactions are with the self haulers.

There are some self-haul customers who regularly haul their waste to County transfer stations. Some of these self-haul customers are located in the rural unincorporated portions of the county and self haul because of personal preference. There are other self-haul customers who occasionally haul their waste to County transfer stations. The most common reasons these customers give for self hauling are that they have a large amount of garbage or items that are too big for curbside pickup (see Chapter 5). This intermittent self hauling of extra or bulky wastes often results from a household move or a major cleaning, remodeling, or landscaping project.

The most recent telephone survey of a random sampling of residences in the service area indicates that about 9 percent of the households in King County visit a transfer station at least once a month. These customers account for about 43 percent of the self-haul transactions. An estimated 68 percent of the households never visit transfer stations. One reason customers commonly give for self hauling is they believe it is cheaper than curbside collection. Collection rate information obtained from the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission and the cities that contract for collection service shows that the average curbside collection rate is \$14.13 per month for weekly, single-can pickup in King County (includes incorporated and unincorporated areas). The minimum fee at the transfer facilities is \$15.25, including tax and surcharge. The curbside collection rate usually includes collection of recyclables as well (see Chapter 5 for more discussion of curbside collection fees).

Table 6-3 shows the number of tons delivered and transactions that occurred at the County and private transfer stations in 2000. Rabanco's Third & Lander station receives some self-haul customers, while Waste Management's Eastmont station accepts self-hauled wastes from businesses but not residents.

Commercially hauled loads of MMSW delivered to the transfer stations average 5.5 tons



Table 6-3. Numbers of Tons Received and Transactions Reported at Regional Transfer Stations in 2000

Transfer Station	Commercial MMSW Tons	Self-Hauled MMSW Tons	Total MMSW Tons	Commercial Transactions	Self-Haul Transactions	Total Transactions
Algona	71,154	31,229	102,382	14,942	121,941	136,883
Bow Lake	85,946	27,923	113,868	16,762	90,309	107,071
Enumclaw	10,774	10,315	21,089	2,077	41,804	43,881
Factoria	132,166	31,909	164,075	21,890	101,548	123,438
First Northeast	24,537	31,978	56,515	4,716	115,095	119,811
Houghton	144,087	30,537	174,625	26,199	102,748	128,947
Renton	50,229	16,084	66,312	7,781	69,242	77,023
Vashon	2,472	6,353	8,824	457	21,399	21,856
Eastmont (Waste Mgmt.)	175,536	ND	175,536	ND	ND	ND
Third & Lander (Rabanco)	38,199	ND	38,199	ND	ND	ND
County System Total	735,099	186,326	921,426	94,824	664,086	758,910
Eastmont (City of Seattle ^a)	91,722	ND	91,722	ND	ND	ND
Third & Lander (City of Seattle ^a)	136,695	ND	136,695	ND	ND	ND

a) City of Seattle tonnage is not part of the King County solid waste system. The Seattle tonnage that is reported is handled by the two private facilities that serve both the County and Seattle. The remaining Seattle tonnage (247,715 tons) is handled at two Seattle-owned facilities.

Note: ND– no data available

Source: Data for County-operated stations taken from transaction records; data for the private stations taken from the private companies' reports to the Health Department, and Seattle Public Utilities' tonnage reports.

Transaction data show that commercial hauling vehicles that enter the stations are typically unloading an average of 5.5 tons each, while self-hauling vehicles are carrying anywhere from a few hundred pounds to a quarter of a ton. Queuing studies conducted by the County and transaction data show that even with considerably larger loads commercial haulers take less time to empty their trucks because the beds tip to allow garbage to flow into the trailers or pit. These data show that it takes commercial haulers approximately 10 minutes to weigh in, unload, and weigh out, while self haulers average about 30 minutes to do the same.

The goal of the recommendations presented below is to provide efficient service to the system's customers, while optimizing capital investment and retaining the system's ability to serve self-haul customers. As disposal and recycling tonnage and the number of transactions are projected to increase from year to year, providing a high level of service for both the commercial haulers and self haulers requires that the transfer system be modernized, and in some cases new facilities built.

Recommendations for Service-Level Improvements

County transfer stations offer a high level of service to the system's customers. The County recognizes that providing self-haul service at County transfer stations is necessary now and in the future. The question then becomes how to provide this service while maintaining efficient service for the commercial haulers, who collect most of the region's waste.

The objectives for this planning period are to:

- Manage the overall demand for self-haul services in coordination with the County, the cities, and the commercial haulers
- Provide system improvements at individual transfer stations, based on detailed master plans
- Add new transfer facilities as needed



Self-haul customers must complete their transactions at the scalehouse



Managing the Demand for Self-Haul Services

The demand for self-haul services can be managed by increasing subscriptions to curbside garbage and recyclables collection, providing economical services for collecting extra and bulky wastes, and expanding recycling and reuse opportunities in the community. The policies support three primary strategies:

Incentive Rates

- The Solid Waste Division is considering implementing a pilot program to issue a money-saving coupon to a portion of County residents. Residents could choose to redeem the coupon for one of several purposes, including:
 - Dollars off a new subscription for curbside collection
 - Payment toward a one-time curbside collection of bulky or extra waste by a hauler
 - Dollars toward covering the tipping fee at a transfer station during off-peak hours
 - Payment toward recycling materials that are charged a fee, such as appliances or monitors

If successful, the coupon pilot program may be offered to all residents of the County. The program will be evaluated to see which services are effective at managing self-haul trips and are most appealing to residents. Details of program implementation will be coordinated with the cities and the commercial haulers.

- The County will also consider the use of incentive rates to encourage self-haul customers to use transfer facilities at particular hours of the day, to reduce conflicting use, and to ease traffic at the transfer stations.

Programmatic Changes (Cooperative Promotions with the Cities and Commercial Haulers)



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Setting garbage and recyclables at the curb is the most efficient method for managing household wastes

- The Solid Waste Division will work with the cities and commercial haulers to pursue methods to manage self-haul traffic. Some of the methods under consideration include:
 - Staging more community collection events
 - Promoting subscriptions for curbside garbage and recyclables collection
 - Providing economical on-call or monthly pick-up of bulky waste and extra garbage

Structural Changes

- The County will be making structural changes at transfer facilities that will separate commercial haulers from self haulers at the facilities, such as separate queuing and tipping areas where space allows.
- Demand management plans are required before the County will consider restricting access to any customer class at a specific transfer station. The plans will identify strategies designed to minimize conflicts between commercial hauler and self hauler use of the transfer stations and improve customer service.

Facility Issues

King County's transfer system is aging – five of the eight County-operated transfer stations are more than 35 years old. Major improvements are needed during this planning period to meet long-term environmental and operational requirements at these older stations.

The County plans to install waste compactors at its transfer stations when operating efficiencies and tonnages handled justify the investment. Waste compactors will allow the County to process waste more quickly in less space, reduce truck trips between the stations and disposal site, save transportation and equipment costs, and reduce odors and litter.

Installation of waste compactors at County transfer stations will also ready the transfer system for waste export by the time the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill closes in about 2012 (see Chapter 7). The City of Seattle and Snohomish County have already implemented waste export within their jurisdictions. In discussions with County staff, both reported that their waste export contracts require or provide financial incentives for compacting wastes at the transfer stations prior to export. Compacting MMSW increases the amount that can be shipped in a single load from an average of 17 tons to 27 tons. The current reported costs for long-hauling uncompacted wastes are almost 1.5 times higher. Currently, only two of the County's newer transfer stations – Enumclaw and Vashon – are equipped with compactors.

In addition to receiving MMSW, County transfer facilities provide for collection of recyclable materials. The older transfer stations were originally built to process MMSW,

but not to provide for recyclables collection or reuse opportunities. Recycling services have been added wherever possible at County facilities, but often the demand for space has exceeded what is currently available. Primary recyclables – newspaper, mixed paper, PET and HDPE bottles, glass containers, and tin and aluminum cans – are collected at all of the stations except the Algona Transfer Station. Yard waste is collected separately only at the Factoria, Enumclaw, and Cedar Falls facilities. The newer stations at Enumclaw and Vashon were designed and built to provide efficient MMSW disposal and recyclables collection services. In addition to accepting primary recyclables, clean wood and appliances are collected at these two stations. The County’s drop boxes appear to be adequate to serve rural customers in the Skykomish and Cedar Falls areas for the 20-year planning period; however, the County will conduct periodic analyses of demographic trends to determine when additional services and facilities may be needed.



The transfer system needs to be readied for waste export in the future

All capital improvements to County facilities are subject to appropriation of funds by the King County Council as part of the annual budget process. During the next three-year planning cycle, the County will establish criteria and standards for determining when a County-owned and operated transfer station has exceeded its capacity to efficiently serve the needs of its customers, and where new or relocated transfer facilities are needed. For example, the County will evaluate the feasibility of siting an additional transfer station to serve residents of northeast King County. Capital investments to expand or relocate transfer stations, or any combination thereof, will be considered when safety, efficiency, capacity, or customer service needs cannot be met by existing facilities.

The siting of, or significant improvements to, facilities for the transfer or export of solid waste also includes completion of a comprehensive public involvement process. Steps in the process include:

- Early public notification and opportunities for comment throughout the siting process via face-to-face meetings, written notices and surveys, and on-line Internet surveys and information sources
- Establishment of citizen advisory committees and task forces to explore siting options
- Involvement of community leaders and neighborhood organizations
- Workshops and other forums for public input
- Development of evaluation criteria that incorporate local issues
- Analysis of community impacts
- Dissemination of project information through brochures, advertisements, and public notices

This public information process was successfully used to guide the siting and design of the County’s Enumclaw, Factoria, and Vashon Transfer Stations.

Recommendations for Facility Improvements

As discussed earlier, the County's transfer system is aging. During this planning period, the system must be prepared for the challenges of a growing region and changing technologies. Facilities will need to be upgraded to handle projected increases in disposal and recycling tonnage and to ready the system for waste export once the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill closes (see Chapter 7 for details).

The recommendations proposed below are designed to maximize the utility of regional transfer and disposal facilities while keeping disposal fees low and stable. They take into consideration the capacities and limitations at each transfer station, as well as projected growth trends, and tailor modifications and capital investments accordingly. The estimated \$75 million capital program over the next 12 years builds in the capacity and flexibility for future growth while keeping projected rate increases as low as possible. The aim is to ensure that King County customers have access to vital services for garbage disposal and recycling.

Input on Facility Improvements

The transfer system recommendations were shaped by a number of issues that arose during Plan development and on policy direction from the King County Council, which include the following:

- King County Council directives require that any plan to improve the transfer system keep capital investment costs low and customer rates stable. Council direction further specifies that proposals from the private sector be solicited and considered.
- The cities and the public indicated a desire for expanded recycling services at the transfer stations. Most frequently mentioned items were appliances, yard waste, clean wood, and recyclable construction, demolition, and landclearing (CDL) debris. The collection of moderate risk waste at the transfer stations was also requested. The cities and the public also indicated that stations need to be flexible to new technologies, as well as changes in activities or handling practices over time.
- Long-term queuing capacity at the transfer stations needs to be addressed. Queuing lanes at some facilities need to be reconfigured to meet projected future demand and keep customers off adjacent streets, and to be a good neighbor. Separate queuing lanes for commercial haulers and self haulers would also allow the commercial haulers to get through the system faster. In some cases, site constraints do not allow for additional mitigation, and methods to move some of the business to other transfer stations may be necessary.
- Private-sector proposals were received during the input phase for this Plan. The two major solid waste management companies that serve the region have proposed to expand their MMSW transfer activities in King County.

Public meetings were held throughout the County to hear input on the draft 2000 Plan



- Applicable civil service laws generally prohibit public employers from contracting with private entities to perform work which regularly could be, and historically has been, performed by public employees, and which could continue to be performed by public employees.
- Policy of the King County Council's Management, Labor and Customer Service Committee states that contracting out of work currently performed by represented County employees shall not be proposed to the Council until a work program has been completed that involves the affected bargaining unit in exploring other alternatives to meet management goals (Appendix C-3).
- The King County Executive's policy is not to contract out County work that is being performed by County workers.
- Most cities expressed concern about private vs. public ownership of the transfer system. They are concerned that industry consolidations have limited market competition in the private sector. Many of the cities have indicated that their influence over service levels and rates is best maintained by continued public ownership of the majority of the MMSW transfer system.
- All transfer facilities must comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws. As such, any proposed facility improvements would be required to meet all laws covering issues such as environmental protection, public health and safety, procurement, and labor before they could be implemented.

Summary of Alternatives Considered

In the draft 2000 Plan issued in April, several alternatives for the transfer system were put forward for consideration. These alternatives were further discussed and analyzed among all of the Plan participants during the public comment period for the draft. Aside from the recommendation proposed herein, one alternative considered in the draft Plan was to maintain the transfer system in its current condition, with capital improvements limited to those required for general maintenance and public health and safety. This alternative was rejected during Plan development because it would result in the overall degradation of the transfer system and levels of service in the region. In addition, this alternative did not incorporate the installation of waste compactors necessary to make an efficient and economical transition to waste export in the future.

The draft Plan also looked at proposals from the private solid waste management companies – Rabanco and Waste Management, Inc. – to expand their roles within the regional system. Rabanco's proposal called for closing the County's Renton Transfer Station and replacing its function entirely with their own Black River CDL Transfer and Recycling Station, which is also in Renton. In a second proposal, Waste Management suggested that the County implement a competitive process that would allow both public and private service providers to vie for new facilities and system improvements in the future. Both of these proposals were examined in detail to weigh possible advantages and disadvantages to the regional system and its ratepayers. In these analyses, neither proposal showed benefits to the ratepayers in terms of improved service levels or reduced costs. Therefore, the proposals are not recommended for further consideration at this time. A more detailed evaluation of the proposals and analyses is presented in this chapter following discussion of the proposed recommendation.



Details of the Recommendation

The proposed recommendation for the future of the solid waste transfer system provides a blueprint for achieving the following objectives:

- Meeting customer needs for convenient, uniform services
- Seeking to maintain operating costs for solid waste management that are lower than those in comparable jurisdictions
- Preparing the MMSW transfer system for eventual waste export
- Keeping rates stable and rate increases as low as possible while meeting the costs of managing the system and providing quality services to solid waste customers
- Protecting environmental quality and public health and safety while providing cost-effective services

The strategy is to make maximum use of the existing transfer stations located within the service area; to install waste compactors at the transfer stations to achieve operating efficiencies; to prepare for waste export at the transfer stations, with priority given to the transfer stations with the largest volumes where practicable; and to improve the capacity for providing the full range of collection services for MMSW and recyclable materials at the larger sites. The recommendation designates three categories of stations – expandable stations, constrained stations, and adjunct stations.

Expandable stations are located on larger sites that have room for physical expansion of transfer buildings and services. Expandable stations can be enlarged and upgraded to serve commercial haulers and self haulers separately throughout the site, and provide primary and some secondary recycling collection services (such as yard waste and appliances collection) to self haulers. *Constrained stations*, on the other hand, are generally located on smaller sites where it is not possible to enlarge existing transfer buildings or expand services beyond what is currently available. At these stations, the separation of self haulers from commercial haulers for garbage disposal will remain at the tipping floor only, and the stations will only be able to accommodate collection of primary recyclables from self haulers. *Adjunct stations* are the two privately owned transfer stations in Seattle, which add overall capacity and flexibility to the system. The

County and private stations are designated as follows:

- **Expandable Stations** – First Northeast, Factoria, Bow Lake, Enumclaw, and Vashon: These sites can accommodate enlarged facilities and expanded services. The Factoria Transfer Station in particular is recognized as being important to improve soon, as it meets the objectives of waste export preparation at a high volume station and it relieves the pressure on the Houghton Transfer Station. The Enumclaw and Vashon Transfer Stations are relatively new and are not expected to need expansion in the planning period. They were built to accommodate extensive recyclables collection and are already equipped with compactors for waste export.

The Factoria Transfer Station is a proposed expandable station



- **Constrained Stations** – Houghton, Renton, and Algona: These transfer stations are located where expansion is not possible. The transfer buildings can be upgraded but not enlarged. As such, no expansion of services is planned for these sites – with the noted exception of Algona where the provision of primary recyclables collection services is planned. These stations will get waste compactors to achieve operating efficiencies and to prepare for waste export, with the highest volume stations being prioritized for the installation of waste compactors.
- **Adjunct Stations** – Waste Management’s Eastmont and Rabanco’s Third & Lander transfer stations: These two privately owned facilities within Seattle serve primarily their own commercial hauling vehicles. MMSW is currently hauled from these stations directly to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill.
- **New Facilities** – The County will study the feasibility of building a new transfer facility to serve customers in northeast King County.

Proposed facility improvements will be based on facility master plans approved by the County Council. Submittal of facility master plans to the King County Council will begin by January 2002. The County Council has previously reviewed plans and approved a budget for the expansion of the Factoria Transfer Station and has given direction to go forward with the project.

Facility improvements for safety and efficiency at most County transfer stations and major improvements at the three older expandable stations are recommended. Table 6-4 shows the planned improvements and projected costs. These proposed capital improvements are subject to the County’s annual budget process and County Council appropriation. As such, proposed capital improvements will demonstrate how the following considerations are addressed:

- Protecting the safety of customers and employees at any solid waste facility
- Planning for permit acquisition requirements and timing
- Mitigating impacts to the surrounding community including, but not limited to, noise, traffic, dust, odor, and litter
- Including public comment and input, with comment and input from the host jurisdictions, in project development
- Preparing for waste export
- Minimizing service disruption at transfer facilities and throughout the system during capital construction
- Ensuring that no more than one transfer station is closed for capital improvements at any time
- Demonstrating the extent to which sites requiring capital improvements are functioning at or near operating capacity for either traffic or tonnage
- Demonstrating how the planned capital improvements were evaluated according to the criteria and standards for transfer facility efficiency
- Achieving operating savings

Table 6-4. Recommended Capital Improvements and Costs^a

Facility	Improvements	Year Completed	Total Cost
Factoria	Build replacement station, install compactor; improve queuing; expand recycling area	2004	\$24,800,000
First Northeast	Rebuild or replace transfer building; improve queuing; expand recycling area; install compactor	to be determined	\$4,000,000- \$14,400,000
Bow Lake	Retrofit transfer building; expand recycling area; install compactor	2006	\$11,600,000
Algona	Install compactor	2008	\$ 6,000,000
Houghton	Install compactor ^b	to be determined	\$ 4,000,000
Renton	Install compactor	to be determined	\$4,000,000
Possible new transfer station in Northeast King County	Build new transfer facility, install compactor	to be determined	unknown
Sub total			\$54,800,000- 64,800,000
All Stations (except Enumclaw and Vashon)	Scalehouse replacement, repairs, and major maintenance as needed	varies	\$10,200,000
Total Cost			\$75,000,000

a) All improvements other than at the Factoria station are subject to approval of facility master plans by the King County Council.
b) Improvements to Houghton are linked to the analysis of a possible new transfer station in northeast King County. Closure of Houghton may be possible if the new transfer station and Factoria can more efficiently serve the Houghton Transfer Station customer base.

By 2012, all stations will be equipped with waste compactors to achieve operating efficiencies and prepare for waste export (see Chapter 7). All of the planned improvements at transfer stations should result in adequate tipping stalls and queuing space to efficiently handle both commercial and self-haul traffic. If customer service needs cannot be met by the planned improvements to existing facilities, additional capital investment to expand or relocate transfer stations, or any combination thereof, will be evaluated.

A goal of the planned Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is to expand recyclables collection at transfer stations, wherever practicable. At the expandable stations, additional items considered for collection are appliances, yard waste, clean wood, and recyclable CDL debris. Collection of used oil and antifreeze will also be considered. At the constrained stations, additional recyclables collection is subject to space constraints. Moderate risk waste will be collected wherever site conditions allow, with approval and agreement from the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program and local jurisdictions (see Chapter 5).

Implementation of this CIP will accommodate projected future growth and build in the flexibility to respond to changing collection and handling technologies. Needed capital improvements can be made while keeping rate increases low. Figures 6-2 and 6-3 show the County’s current forecast of the basic fee through 2020. Figure 6-2 shows the basic fee as it rises relative to inflation; Figure 6-3 shows the current forecast of the basic fee adjusted for inflation. As the figures illustrate, the most substantial rate increases occur when projected waste export costs are phased in after 2012. Earlier rate increases cover the cost of recommended capital improvements (see Table 6-4 for details) and expected increases in operating and program costs. Assumptions used in developing this forecast are presented in Appendix F-1.

Figure 6-2. Forecast of the Basic Fee Through 2020 (with inflation)

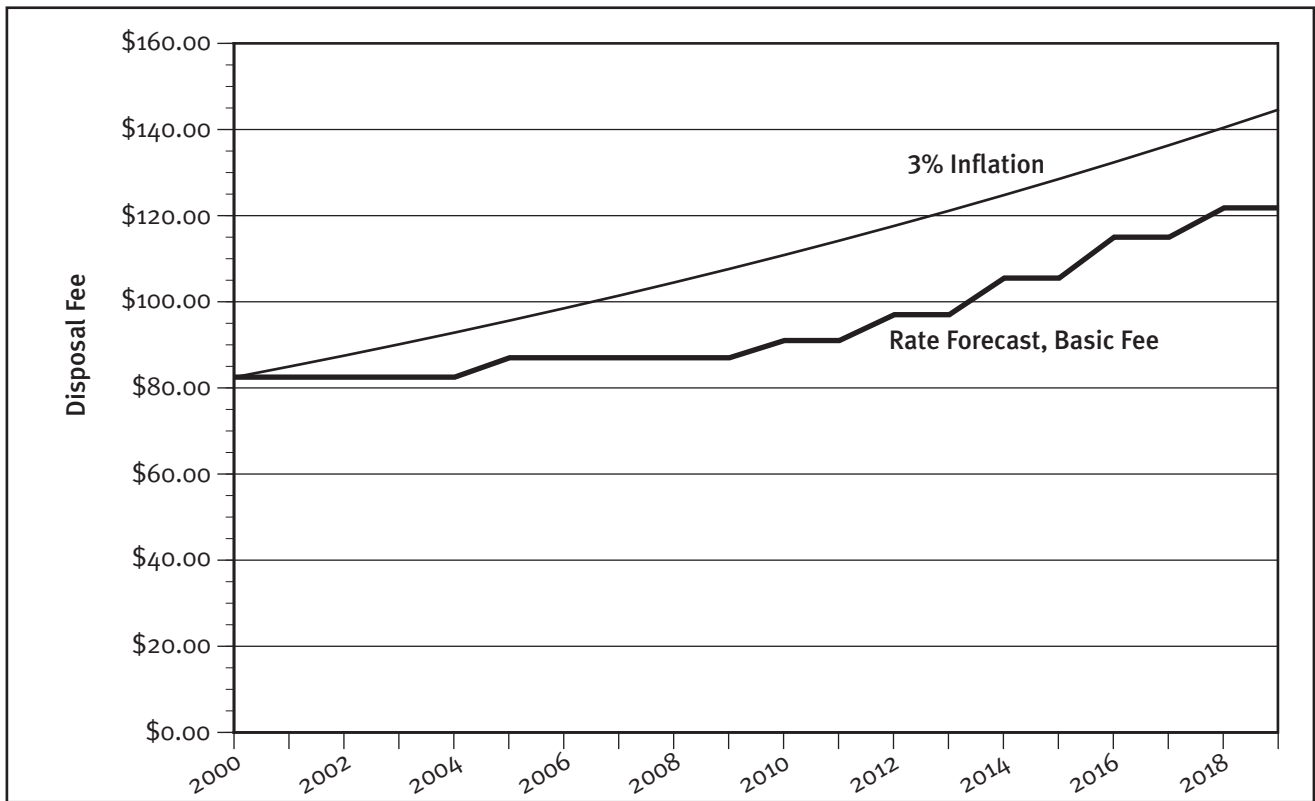
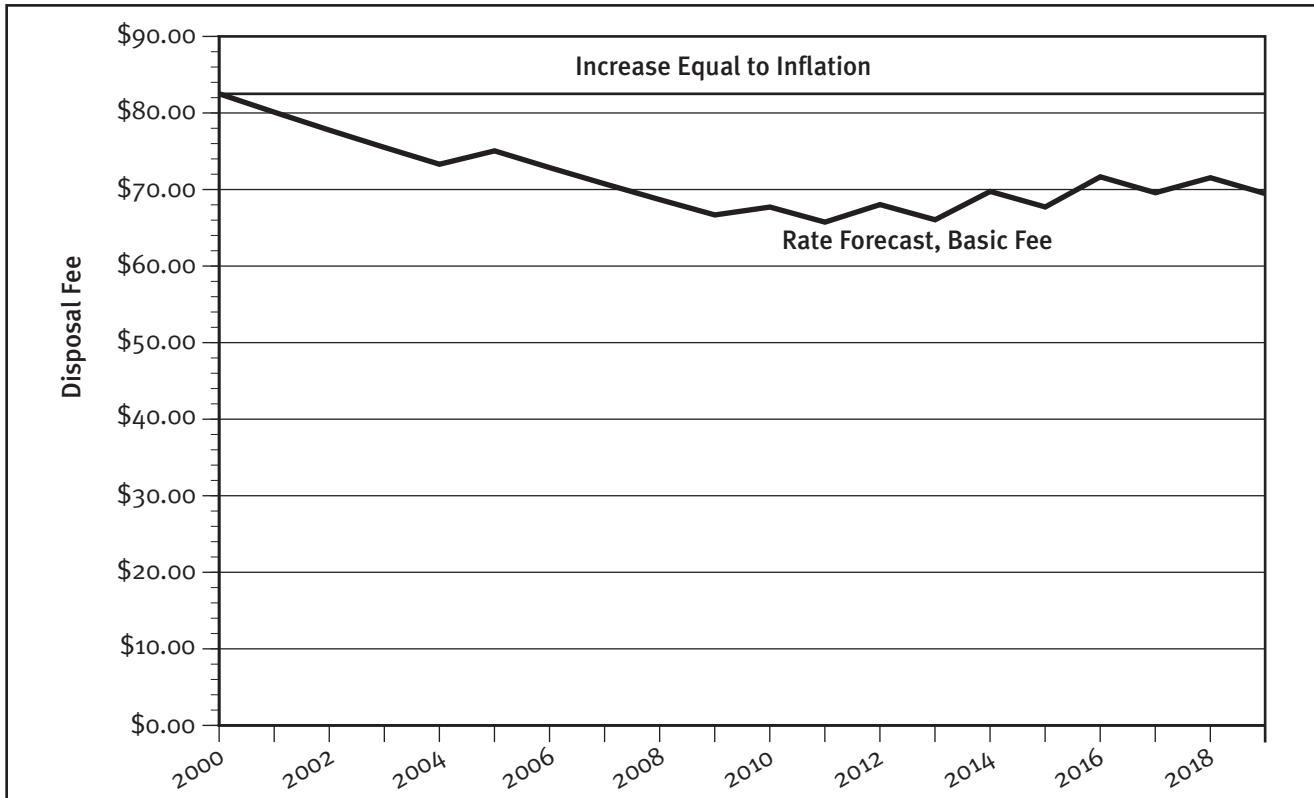


Figure 6-3. Forecast of the Basic Fee Adjusted for Inflation (Year 2000 Dollars)



The projected forecast of basic fees includes a three percent annual inflation rate. This is based on current short-term economic forecasts. Using other measurements of inflation or different assumptions about the rate of change in the Consumer Price Index would yield essentially the same result. These forecasts will need to be updated periodically to monitor all system costs.

Analysis of Private-Sector Proposals

The County will remain open to considering and implementing private-sector proposals for the transfer system as part of its annual evaluation of the timing of waste export. In evaluating private-sector proposals for the transfer system, the County will balance financial costs and benefits with other relevant factors, including environmental considerations and fairness to existing labor. The following private-sector proposals were examined in developing this Plan.

Rabanco and Waste Management each proposed separate alternatives to the County to expand their roles within the regional transfer and disposal system. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Rabanco suggested closing the County’s Renton Transfer Station and replacing its function entirely with their own Black River CDL Transfer and Recycling Station. Waste Management suggested that the County implement a competitive

process that would allow both public and private service providers to vie for new facilities and system improvements in the future. Both alternatives would expand the private sector's role in the operation of the regional system. The Solid Waste Division examined the proposals to weigh benefits to the region's customers and facilities. Neither of the proposals demonstrated benefits to County ratepayers that would outweigh the costs involved in implementing them. Specifically, there appeared to be no benefits in terms of cost, efficiency, or service for any of the participants in the regional system except for the commercial haulers themselves.

Both alternatives lack specifics on several key issues needed to evaluate their feasibility completely. The discussion below presents an analysis of both proposals based on the information received by the Solid Waste Division to date.

Evaluation of Rabanco's Black River Alternative

Rabanco's Black River alternative outlined in the draft Plan proposed the following:

- That King County close the Renton Transfer Station and direct MMSW to Rabanco's Black River CDL Transfer and Recycling Station in Renton (assuming the facility is permitted to receive MMSW by the Health Department). Rabanco suggested this closure could save the County money currently earmarked for capital improvements to the Renton Transfer Station. According to Rabanco, the Black River station has the capacity to handle the volumes of MMSW and associated vehicle traffic and would operate on the same schedule as the Renton Transfer Station. Rabanco also stated that it would offer employees displaced at the Renton Transfer Station the first opportunity to fill any new positions at the Black River station.
- That Rabanco's SeaTac Disposal and Kent-Meridian Disposal trucks be rerouted from the County's Bow Lake Transfer Station to Rabanco's Black River station.
- That MMSW be loaded from the Black River station in railcars (along with CDL) for waste export and disposal at Rabanco's Roosevelt Regional Landfill in eastern Washington, or delivered to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill for disposal (see Chapter 7 for disposal recommendations).

Rabanco's original proposal lacked sufficient detail to conduct an informed analysis for the draft Plan. Between issuance of the draft and final Plans, Rabanco submitted additional information to the Solid Waste Division; however, as indicated by the discussion that follows, there are still constraining issues and uncertainties that make the benefits to the region's customers unclear and their proposed alternative incongruous with County policies and goals.

Station Location and Traffic: King County Comprehensive Plan Policy F-250 states that "Solid waste handling facilities should be dispersed throughout the County in an equitable manner." The Renton Transfer Station is on the eastern plateau in the City of Renton. It is adjacent to a maintenance facility for the County Road Services Department and other mixed-use sites. The station is conveniently located for Renton's self haulers; for residents of Covington, Maple Valley, and the unincorporated areas of south-

east King County; and for the commercial hauler that serves residents of Renton and areas to the east. The Division's most recent waste monitoring survey showed that 61 percent of the self-haul traffic at the station is from the City of Renton and 15 percent is from the unincorporated area.

Rabanco's Black River CDL Transfer and Recycling Station is located on the west side of Renton, just within the city limits in an industrial area. It is approximately 5 miles from the County's Bow Lake Transfer Station in Tukwila. Redirecting customer traffic from the Renton station to the Black River station would not support the equitable distribution of transfer facilities throughout the County. In fact, with the proximity to the Bow Lake station, there would be excess capacity in the Tukwila/Renton area, while the areas east and south of Renton would be underserved. Because of the population growth in this latter area, the County could eventually be required to site a new station to serve these area residents. The City of Maple Valley, the Four Creeks Unincorporated Area Council, and Solid Waste Advisory Committee have expressed concern over possible closure of the Renton facility for this reason.

Additional traffic impacts in Renton could also result from the switch in stations. The Renton Transfer Station is located above downtown Renton, while the Black River facility is west of downtown near the City of Tukwila. Under Rabanco's alternative, commercial haulers and self haulers on the plateau or in areas to the east that currently use the Renton Transfer Station would have to travel through Renton on I-405 or across surface streets to get to the Black River facility. Based on disposal data and customer surveys for the Renton Transfer Station, the potential for traffic impacts could be significant in and around downtown Renton from customers driving off the plateau to the Black River site. Current estimates indicate that it could add more than 435 round trips per week by self haulers and commercial haulers commuting from east of Renton.

Service Levels: The Black River facility is currently designed, operating, and permitted to accept only CDL waste and recyclable CDL materials from commercial haulers and self haulers. Implementation of Rabanco's Black River alternative would be contingent upon its ability to obtain a permit from the Health Department to handle MMSW at the station. Rabanco has indicated it would provide the same level of services at Black River that the County is proposing to offer at the Renton station, including areas for collecting recyclable materials. Rabanco is not proposing any enhancements to the level of service beyond those recommended for the Renton Transfer Station.

Capital Costs and Impacts on Rates: One potential advantage of the Black River alternative cited by proponents is that the County would avoid the capital costs for future upgrades to the Renton Transfer Station, which total \$4 million by 2012. This cost covers the installation of a compactor at the station to prepare for waste export. To compare the projected long-term effects on rates, Solid Waste Division staff asked Rabanco to provide data on its capital costs to ready the Black River facility to receive MMSW and recyclables, but Rabanco did not provide the information. They did state in a letter that their capital costs would be "internalized by Rabanco and included in the service level fee charge."

With the data available, the Division conducted a preliminary analysis of the possible impacts to ratepayers from replacing the Renton Transfer Station with the Black River facility. In the absence of actual figures from Rabanco, the analysis assumed their costs, including the installation of a waste compactor, and revenues would be the same as those for the County. The estimated implementation date was projected to be 2004.

The analysis estimated that the shift to the Black River facility would divert 117,000 tons of MMSW annually from the County's Renton and Bow Lake Transfer Stations. While there would be some savings in operational costs from closing the Renton station, the overall net loss to the County would be about \$9.30 per ton. Although the Bow Lake station would remain open, the loss in tonnage would result in higher operational costs at that station, which contributes to the overall rise in the system-wide per ton disposal rate. In the long term, the projected revenue loss for the County over the 20-year planning period would be \$14.5 million (in 2004 dollars). The annual revenue loss of \$970,000 would result in a rate increase to customers of \$1.00 per ton to maintain services at the remaining County-owned stations.

Under this scenario, Rabanco would profit by the same amount – \$9.30 per ton. Under state law (RCW 81.77.160), the private companies can, and do, charge the prevailing regional per ton disposal rate to their customers – i.e., the County's disposal rate, without justification based on their operating costs or profit. Past practice would lead to the conclusion that if the County raised its fees by \$1.00 per ton to make up for the revenue loss from closing the Renton station, Rabanco's transfer station fees would also be raised by \$1.00. That would further increase their profits at the expense of the ratepayers.

Environmental Concerns: Concern has been expressed that the Renton Transfer Station is located over a recharge area for the Renton aquifer. To ensure that the site poses no risk of contamination to the aquifer, the Solid Waste Division conducts routine surface water quality testing monthly and quarterly. Testing is conducted according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency guidelines, and the test results are reviewed by the Health Department and City of Renton experts. Both the Health Department and City experts concur that surface water runoff from the site poses no health risk.

The Black River facility is located near the City of Renton's Black River riparian forest, a managed natural area. The riparian forest is home to a great blue heron rookery. Use of the Black River facility as an MMSW transfer station would increase the amount of truck traffic and associated noise along Monster Road SW, immediately adjacent to the riparian forest. Recent evidence compiled by the County's Wildlife Program indicates that the number of herons in the riparian forest is declining, possibly due to increased development in the area. Use of the Black River facility as an MMSW transfer station may cause additional stress to the heron population in the area.

Procurement Issues and Contracting Out of Work: According to County procurement policies and state law, King County cannot issue a contract for services without first going through a competitive procurement process. Rabanco’s proposal to close Renton and replace it with their Black River facility would trigger the need for this process. Both the public and private sector would have the opportunity to bid on the service.

Under contract with King County, the Rabanco facility currently provides only construction, demolition and landscaping debris (CDL) transfer and disposal services at Black River. To provide a level of service comparable to that at the Renton station, Rabanco would need to add MMSW and recyclables transfer services at the station. Rabanco suggested they could make this change in service levels through an amendment to their existing CDL handling contract with the County (see Chapter 8). However, since Rabanco’s current proposal is outside the scope of the original Request for Proposals and would be for a different service than that provided by the original contract, a contract amendment would not be adequate. Instead, this change would require a new contract and a competitive procurement process.

Another issue involves restrictions placed on the County regarding the contracting out of work. With the suggested closure of the Renton Transfer Station, Rabanco has proposed to either hire affected County employees at similar wages and benefits, or contract with the County for labor. Either method of staffing the Black River facility would change the contracted condition of County workers and therefore would require collective bargaining with the affected bargaining units before any change in working conditions could occur (RCW 41.56). Currently, the union contracts in place for workers at County facilities include clauses that prohibit the contracting out of their work to another party. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that an agree-

ment could be reached with County workers to either be hired by Rabanco or become contracted employees at a Rabanco facility.

Evaluation of Waste Management’s Competitive Process Alternative

Waste Management suggested an alternative whereby the construction and operation of new transfer facilities, or facility upgrades, would be open to a competitive bidding process. Under their proposal, both private- and public-sector entities would bid for transfer station upgrades and improvements. Proposals would be reviewed and evaluated in the context of the current solid waste plan against criteria developed by a panel of private industry representatives, the cities, and the County.

During the development of this Plan, some members of the public and cities indicated that they wanted the operation of the solid waste system to remain in the hands of the public sector. Over the years, King County has developed a transfer and disposal



▲
A transfer station operator prepares to run a compactor at the Enumclaw Transfer/Recycling Station

system that is accessible and affordable to residents throughout the region. It was not built with an eye on profitability, but to be accountable to public needs, including 1) accessibility to residents in both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County, 2) uniformly affordable disposal rates, and 3) environmental stewardship through aggressive waste reduction and recycling programs and education. Some of the County's eight transfer stations cost more to operate than others due to factors such as location, waste volumes, and customer mix. To ensure affordable rates for all residents, the County's operational costs are averaged to offer a reasonable, uniform disposal rate at all stations. Also factored into the disposal rate are waste reduction and recycling programs and services, including educational programs. County policies and programs are driven by input from the cities, members of the public, advisory groups, and the private solid waste management companies. It is a system that is accountable to those it serves from the planning stages through the assessment of fees.

As shown in the example of Rabanco's proposal, there is no evidence to suggest that shifting operation of the transfer system to the private sector would increase system efficiency, result in savings to the ratepayer, or improve or expand services.

There are several legal, policy, and contractual constraints that would effectively eliminate the County's ability to institute a competitive bidding process while there are public employees working under labor contracts. These constraints are as follows:

- The King County Adopted Labor Policy (October 1996) states that "It shall be the policy of the King County Council that the contracting out of work presently performed by represented County employees shall not be proposed to the Council until a work program has been completed that involved the affected bargaining unit in exploring other alternatives to meet management goals."
- Current labor contracts with the two major bargaining units at County transfer facilities include a clause forbidding the contracting out of work except under special conditions. The County is required to notify the bargaining unit of its intention to contract out and, when requested, bargain the decision and/or the effects of that decision.
- Washington's Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Act, RCW Chapter 41.56.030(4) requires that public employers engage in collective bargaining over hours, wages, and working conditions. Failure to bargain over these "mandatory subjects of bargaining" constitutes an unfair labor practice (RCW 41.56.140(4)). The Public Employees' Relations Commission administers the Act and has consistently ruled that the decision to assign work historically performed by employees in a bargaining unit to others outside that unit must be bargained. There is no reason to assume that labor unions representing workers at County transfer stations would be amenable to having their jobs contracted out to the private sector.
- Applicable civil service laws generally prohibit employers from contracting with private entities to perform work which regularly could be, and historically has been, performed by public employees, and which could continue to be performed by public employees.

As outlined above, the competitive process alternative would require significant changes in law or policy, or lengthy negotiations with the affected bargaining units. The time that would be required to effect these kinds of changes would conflict with the schedule required for preparing the regional transfer system for waste export by 2012.

A few cities expressed interest in including a design, build, and operate approach to siting or constructing new facilities and making major improvements to existing stations. Under the design, build, and operate procurement process, one company is contracted to perform all three functions. Typical County practice is to issue separate contracts for the three functions. RCW 39.10.050 allows public agencies to use a design/build (but not operate) procurement process. The County is considering using this alternative procurement process for the design and construction of the replacement Factoria Transfer Station.