

To: Zero Waste Committee

From: Stephanie Liu, Program Manager, Community Engagement, Solid Waste Services

Date: June 24, 2025

Meeting Date: July 3, 2025

Subject: **Solid Waste Management Plan Update – Idea Generation Engagement Summary**

RECOMMENDATION

That the GVS&DD Board receive for information the report dated June 24, 2025, titled “Solid Waste Management Plan Update – Idea Generation Engagement Summary”.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Metro Vancouver is a North American leader in waste reduction and recycling, having achieved a 65% recycling rate – roughly twice the Canadian average. Metro Vancouver is updating its solid waste management plan, building on the strengths of the current plan and identifying opportunities to further advance waste reduction and recycling, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote a circular economy. The plan update is supported by a robust and inclusive engagement process.

In 2024, Metro Vancouver completed the idea generation phase of engagement, contributing to the development of potential strategies and actions, as well as draft goals and a draft waste hierarchy. An engagement summary report (Reference 1) describes key potential strategies and actions identified through engagement such as improving consistency and compliance in multi-family buildings; expanding infrastructure for repair and reuse; increasing accessible and multilingual communications; and using financial and regulatory mechanisms to encourage waste reduction and recycling.

The ideas gathered through engagement are being compiled and considered using a set of criteria, resulting in a draft set of strategies and actions for further refinement through the next phase of engagement: options analysis.

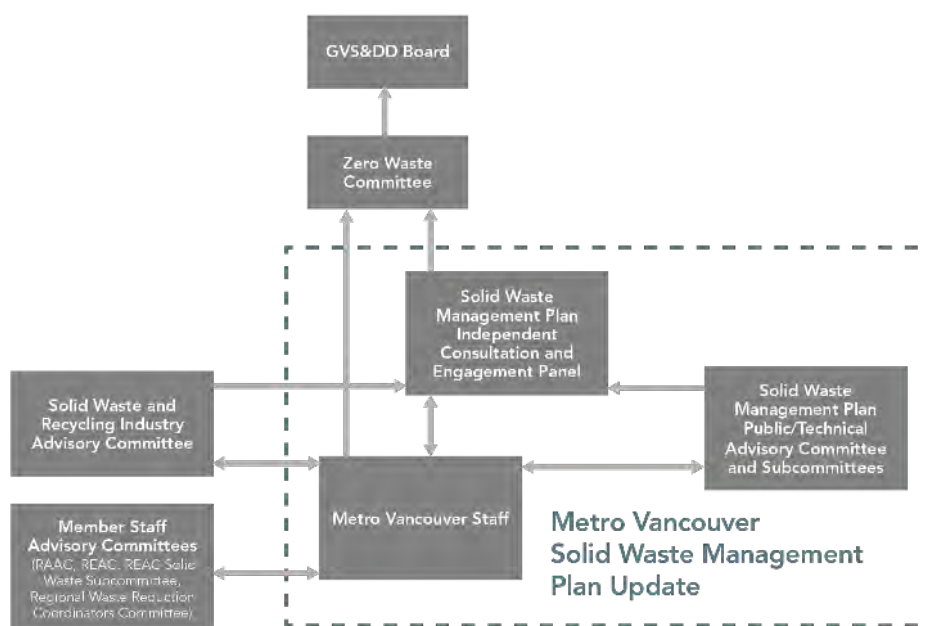
PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Zero Waste committee and GVS&DD Board with information on engagement feedback from the idea generation phase in 2024, related to updating the regional solid waste management plan.

BACKGROUND

In November of 2019 the GVS&DD Board (Board) authorized initiating an update of the regional solid waste management plan. Subsequently, a Solid Waste Management Plan Independent Consultation and Engagement Panel (Engagement Panel) was formed to provide third-party expert advice on the development of a comprehensive and inclusive engagement process. Pre-engagement was completed in 2021 to receive feedback on how audiences prefer to be involved moving forward, and the Solid Waste Management Plan Public/Technical Advisory Committee and Solid Waste and Recycling Industry Advisory Committee were formed in 2022.

The following graphic depicts the various committees involved in providing input as the solid waste management plan is updated.



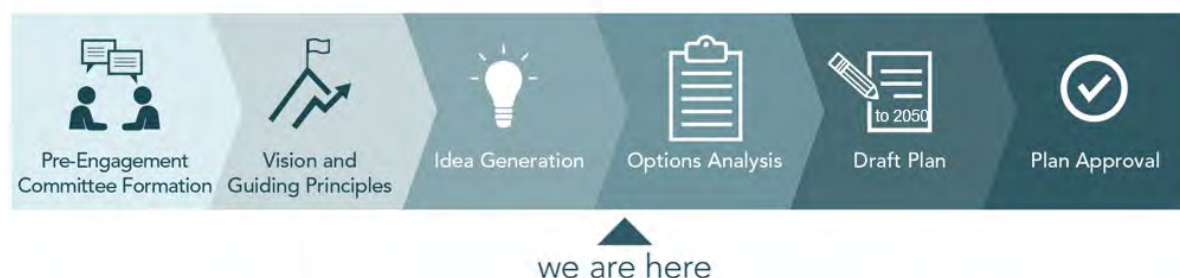
Engagement on vision and guiding principles took place in 2023, and in June 2024 the GVS&DD Board approved the resulting vision statement and guiding principles for an updated solid waste management plan, listed below. The idea generation phase launched shortly after that.

Vision: *A thriving region where nothing is wasted and resources are valued.*

Guiding Principles:

1. *A solid waste and recycling system that is affordable, convenient, and consistent across the region*
2. *A solid waste system that is resilient to climate change and future challenges*
3. *Accountability from residents, businesses and governments to prevent waste*
4. *Environmental stewardship and climate action*
5. *Inclusive solid waste services and programs*
6. *Innovation and collaboration to support a vibrant regional economy that keeps products and materials in circulation*
7. *Transparency about what happens to garbage and recycling*

The following timeline shows the multiple engagement phases of the solid waste management plan update process.



IDEA GENERATION ENGAGEMENT

During the idea generation phase in 2024, Metro Vancouver sought to hear from interested parties about potential actions and strategies that could be included in an updated solid waste management plan. These ideas will be evaluated in the subsequent phase, options analysis, by applying a set of criteria and conducting engagement on the draft strategies and actions.

Idea generation engagement activities were designed and carried out to reflect Metro Vancouver's commitment to delivering a robust and inclusive engagement process and to ensure voices from impacted residents and businesses in Metro Vancouver are considered. The engagement approach was also informed by guidance from an independent panel of engagement experts.

Feedback

Metro Vancouver heard from a wide range of audiences including First Nations, member jurisdictions, neighbouring regional districts, hospitality and food retail sectors, health authorities, not-for-profit organizations, and the public. Feedback from each meeting, workshop, or conversation was recorded and compiled in a feedback log consisting of nearly 3,000 discrete lines of data.

The feedback was analyzed and organized into 13 categories. The engagement summary report (Reference 1) provides detail about the types of ideas falling under these categories, and Metro Vancouver's response. Many of the comments were already incorporated in the vision and guiding principles for the draft plan, other comments helped to inform draft goals and a draft waste hierarchy for an updated plan, and other comments were identified as potential strategies and actions to consider as part of the options analysis phase. The feedback log (Reference 2) provides a full record of engagement feedback.

Feedback that represented ideas for strategies and actions were identified; that data has been consolidated, and is undergoing further evaluation using a set of criteria, developed based on the Board Strategic Plan, the vision and guiding principles, and engagement feedback. The resulting short list of strategies and actions, along with the full list of ideas from idea generation, will be shared publicly during the options analysis phase of engagement.

Below is a snapshot of the categories of feedback, listed alphabetically:

- **Accessibility and inclusivity** to achieve equity in waste systems by addressing barriers users may experience.
- **Accountability and transparency** for residents to understand what happens to their waste and recycling, including providing detailed data and clearer definitions.
- **Affordability, convenience, and consistency** including better support for multi-family buildings, consistent services across the region, and simplified infrastructure.
- Shifting towards a **circular economy**, including promoting circular product and packaging design, and expanding infrastructure and programs for repair and reuse.
- **Collaboration** through stronger partnerships across jurisdictions and sectors to share knowledge and drive systems change.
- **Education, engagement, and awareness** by using clear, accessible, and multilingual communications to increase public understanding and participation in waste reduction.
- **Environmental stewardship and climate action**, linking waste reduction to greenhouse gas emission reduction and sustainable resource management.
- **Infrastructure and capacity**, including suggestion for decentralized systems and expanding capacity to accommodate long-term needs.
- **Innovation and technology**, including ideas on using artificial intelligence and smart tools to improve sorting, reduce contamination, and enhance user experience.
- **Markets and economy**, including the need for stable recycling markets, ideas on tax incentives and rewards to promote recycling, and stronger engagement with businesses to scale circular solutions.
- Ideas on consistent **policy and regulation** across the region included expansion of extended producer responsibility programs, penalties for excess packaging, mandated recycling, and regulations on construction waste.
- Ideas for increasing participation and reducing contamination in **recycling and composting** programs included improved labelling, education, incentives, and regulation.
- **Waste prevention** was a top priority, with excess packaging, single-use items, and food waste being prominent topics discussed.

Engagement Process

In 2024, Metro Vancouver engaged with local First Nations and member jurisdictions, adjacent regional districts, advisory committees, and the public to generate a set of potential actions and strategies for inclusion in the updated plan. These ideas will be evaluated in the upcoming phase: options analysis.

The engagement process was guided by a set of seven issue/opportunity discussion questions which were developed based on a review of the existing solid waste management plan, previous engagement feedback, and solid waste management statistics. These discussion questions served as a framework during idea generation engagement and were discussed by multiple audiences including member jurisdiction staff, adjacent regional districts, advisory committees, and the public. Some groups addressed one or two topics that were most relevant to their community or industry, while other groups addressed several or all of the topics:

What actions can build on our success to:

- *Rethink and prevent waste in the first place?*
- *Enhance accountability for eliminating waste?*
- *Leverage knowledge and expertise through collaboration?*
- *Increase participation and reduce contamination in organics and recycling programs?*
- *Promote confidence in recycling systems?*
- *Help us expand inclusive programs and services?*
- *Plan for future infrastructure and systems for waste management across the region?*

Metro Vancouver's overall approach to the idea generation phase was to meet audiences where they were. This meant providing accessible online engagement options, attending community events where people were already gathered, and working with not-for-profit organizations that had long-standing, established relationships with their membership or networks. In addition, Metro Vancouver had a dedicated engagement web page (Reference 3) with an online questionnaire that was open to the public.

First Nations, Member Jurisdictions, Neighbouring Regional Districts

Metro Vancouver began Idea Generation engagement by sending letters to First Nations, member jurisdiction mayors and councils, and neighbouring regional district boards (Fraser Valley Regional District, Sunshine Coast Regional District, and Squamish-Lillooet Regional District) to describe this phase and invite participation.

Metro Vancouver received input from the Regional Engineers Advisory Committee, Regional Engineers Advisory Committee Solid Waste Sub-Committee, and the Regional Waste Reduction Coordinators' Committee through the Metro Vancouver Conference Day event, a workshop, and regular committee meetings. Metro Vancouver received feedback from neighbouring regional district staff through a virtual meeting and presented to the FVRD Board.

In July 2024, four local First Nations attended a joint meeting to discuss potential strategies, actions, and priority goals for the updated solid waste management plan. Meeting participants included representatives from the following local First Nations:

- q̓w̓a:ḥł̓əḥ (Kwantlen)
- k̓w̓ik̓w̓əł̓əm (Kwikwetlem)
- Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish)
- Semiahmoo

Feedback received at the July 2024 meeting included questions about the regional recycling rate, increasing services for repurposing materials and reducing plastic packaging, tracking the effectiveness of the plan update implementation and transparency of data, options for expanding existing solid waste facilities, and investment into new technologies for innovative solutions in renewable energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Detailed feedback from First Nations will be provided to the Ministry of Environment and Parks.

Solid Waste Management Plan Public/Technical Advisory Committee

The Solid Waste Management Plan Public/Technical Advisory Committee chose to form working groups to contribute their feedback to the idea generation phase of the plan update. The chosen topics for three working groups were Construction and Demolition Waste Management, Food Waste and Organics Management, and Plastics Management. In addition, six regular committee meetings were held in 2024. Eighteen committee members participated in one or more working groups and each working group was led by a committee member chair. Staff provided administrative support to the working groups.

Working groups met several times, resulting in a final presentation and recommendations. Working group meeting notes and recommendations are published on the committee website (Reference 4). Some of the recommendations included setting waste reduction and collection targets including interim goals, embedding a construction zero waste hierarchy within Metro Vancouver's procurement and policies, and working across sectors and levels of government to improve food waste policies. The committee also had other opportunities at regular meetings to contribute feedback on idea generation to ensure committee members who were not a part of the working groups had a chance to provide feedback.

Solid Waste and Recycling Industry Advisory Committee

The Industry Advisory Committee elected to incorporate small group discussions into regular meetings to allow deeper focus on key topics related to the solid waste management plan update. Members also took part in two in-person workshops during the idea generation phase to contribute directly to the plan development. Feedback from this group demonstrated their commitment to leveraging solid waste management opportunities and innovative solutions for the region, highlighted the importance of public and private sector collaboration, and included ideas on planning, infrastructure, accountability, and education. Meeting notes, including small group feedback summaries, are available on the committee web page (Reference 5).

Public

In fall 2024, staff engaged the public through various channels including an online questionnaire, community events, and opportunities to present directly to the Zero Waste Committee, Solid Waste Management Plan Public/Technical Advisory Committee, and Independent Consultation and Engagement Panel. Engagement was promoted through an e-blast, newspaper advertisements, QR codes on weigh scale receipts, and social media posts. Metro Vancouver received 228 responses to the online questionnaire and engaged 1,385 residents at community events, and 6,500 residents at the PNE who participated in an engagement activity.

Metro Vancouver made efforts to reach out to sectors, particularly those that are impacted by the solid waste management plan but have not participated in previous phases of the plan update process, including seniors, food retail and food service, construction and demolition, and multi-family housing. Four virtual dialogue sessions were facilitated with representatives from key sectors including food and beverage, health care, and tourism. Three interviews were held with representatives from housing and food retail sectors.

Collaborative Engagement

Metro Vancouver initially introduced the Collaborative Engagement program during the vision and guiding principles phase, offering funding and support to not-for-profit organizations to conduct engagement with their members or networks. To help reduce barriers for the participating organizations, Metro Vancouver provided a comprehensive toolkit of resources including materials to support engagement planning. The success of the program in its first year led Metro Vancouver to repeat the program during the idea generation phase, with a few improvements based on participant feedback in the previous year. These improvements included providing printable resources to ensure groups without access to technology could participate, simplifying technical language to increase accessibility, and increasing the amount of time for organizations to plan and schedule their engagement activities.

Through this program, Metro Vancouver heard from over 1,500 individuals from underrepresented or equity-denied communities. These participants were very grateful to be given the opportunity to contribute to the solid waste management plan update process and they would not be participating without this program. The program also took a non-directive approach for engagement, allowing participating organizations to decide what engagement activity would work for them and their audiences.

In 2024 Metro Vancouver worked with 16 organizations and reached over 650 residents. Participating organizations delivered engagement activities including workshops, questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, newsletters, a shoreline cleanup event, virtual forums, and social media engagement. The Collaborative Engagement program will continue in Fall 2025 during the options analysis phase.

More information can be found on the Collaborative Engagement web page (Reference 6).

Solid Waste Management Plan Independent Consultation and Engagement Panel

Metro Vancouver receives guidance from the Solid Waste Management Plan Independent Consultation and Engagement Panel (Engagement Panel) on the development and implementation of engagement on the solid waste management plan update. The Engagement Panel is an independent, third-party panel including: Andrea Reimer (Chair), Cheryl Brooks, Peter Fassbender, and Veronika Bylicki. Sarah Kirby-Yung, Metro Vancouver Board Director and Chair of the Zero Waste Committee, is the Zero Waste Committee liaison on the panel. In addition to providing advice during engagement planning and implementation, the public was invited to present directly to the Engagement Panel, offering an opportunity to provide feedback on the engagement process itself.

Below is a message provided directly by the Engagement Panel:

The idea generation engagement summary is an important milestone in the work to build Metro Vancouver's next solid waste management plan, and the Panel is pleased to offer our comments on it.

As Zero Waste Committee members may remember from earlier submissions, through pre-engagement in the early stages of our work the Panel established three main tests by which to judge the effectiveness of engagement. These are (1) transparency of both the process and the information that staff are using to inform the process; (2) provision of multiple engagement avenues to allow participants to "right size" their participation, and (3) persistent innovation in reaching those that have not traditionally had effective pathways for participation, including First Nations and equity-denied groups.

In our opinion this most recent phase has met these tests through continuous innovation by staff of processes that support these outcomes. The engagement in the idea generation phase has also substantively addressed some general areas of focus we suggested in our last report to the Zero Waste Committee in June 2024, on the occasion of the vision and guiding principles engagement report. Specific items that have seen good progress in this phase of engagement:

- *We were heartened to see that diligent efforts to engage local First Nations resulted in a direct meeting with some First Nations, as well as ongoing efforts by Metro Vancouver to increase First Nations engagement with the creation and expansion of several working groups.*
- *Specific sectors with high touchpoints on solid waste such as hospitality and tourism which have been difficult to engage, were the most engaged we've seen since this work began in 2020. Specific factors in this success are an expanded Collaborative Engagement program and through targeted outreach that builds*

on the relationships staff have built in these sectors over the course of the engagement work.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this phase of engagement and we are happy to answer questions as they arise.

ALTERNATIVES

This is an information report. No alternatives are presented.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Engagement on the solid waste management plan update is included in the approved Solid Waste Services budget.

CONCLUSION

Metro Vancouver is a North American leader in waste reduction and recycling. Through updating the regional solid waste management plan, it strives to further advance waste reduction and recycling, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote a circular economy. The plan update process is supported by a robust and inclusive engagement process, going above and beyond provincial requirements. In 2024, Metro Vancouver completed the idea generation phase of engagement contributing to the development of potential strategies and actions, as well as draft goals and a draft waste hierarchy. An engagement summary report describes key potential strategies and actions identified through engagement, organized into categories. The ideas gathered through engagement are being consolidated and assessed using key criteria, to produce a draft set of strategies and actions for engagement in the next phase: options analysis.

REFERENCES

1. Metro Vancouver. (2025). Solid Waste Management Plan Idea Generation Engagement Summary Report. <https://metrovancover.org/services/solid-waste/Documents/idea-generation-engagement-summary-report.pdf>.
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