



March 12, 2024

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

TO: Jennifer A. Jenkins
Council Administrator

Colette R. Gresham
Acting Deputy Council Administrator

THRU: Josh Hamlin 
Director of Budget and Policy Analysis

FROM: Alex Hirtle 
Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

Policy Analysis and Fiscal Impact Statement
CR-002-2024 CY 2024-2033 Comprehensive Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan

CR-002-2024 (*proposed by:* County Executive. *Sponsored by:* Council Members Ivey, Watson, Harrison, Hawkins, and Fisher)

Assigned to Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment (TIEE) Committee

A RESOLUTION CONCERNING CY 2024-2033 COMPREHENSIVE TEN YEAR SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN for the purpose of adopting the Prince George's County CY 2024-2033 Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan as recommended by the County Executive.

Fiscal Summary

Direct Impact:

Expenditures: Possible additional expenditures near-term, likely offset by long-term cost savings.

Revenues: Probable significant additional revenues resulting from collected fees and fines.

Indirect Impact:

Favorable.

Legislative Summary:

CR-002-2024 was introduced by the County Council on January 23rd, 2024. The public hearing was held before the Council on February 27th, 2024- there were no speakers present. This Resolution contains the FY 2020-2029 Comprehensive Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan draft. This plan outlines the County's solid waste generation, collection, disposal, recycling, and public information and cleanup programs.

The CY 2024-2033 Comprehensive Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan initially provides an executive summary of the Management Plan, and then begins with the County's goals, objectives, and policies for solid waste management. It outlines solid waste studies and initiatives that have been published and acted on, including the Zero Waste Initiative (2018), the Residential Capture Rates Study (2022), and moves into the government regulating entities and their roles, including the County, State, Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC Water), and others. Solid waste management laws follow, with examples of both State and local passed legislation and regulations, which include public school recycling requirements, commercial food scrap recycling laws, food service ware bill limits, and recent restrictions on plastic bags. The Plan provides data indicating the growth of the County in terms of commercial and residential development and the population increase, all of which increases solid waste generation and stretches the capacity of acceptance facilities like the County landfill and the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF). This plan underscores the need to find, innovate, and provide cost-effective ways to recover valuable materials from the waste stream and prolong the life of the County's disposal facilities, and outlines current initiatives that have been reducing the solid waste stream into the County's only remaining sanitary landfill at Brown Station Road in Upper Marlboro, and diverting it to facilities such as the County's Organic Composting Facility (OCF) and the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF).

The Plan outlines the County's current (residential) curbside single-stream capture rate of 49.8%, which is below the national rate of 50-60%, and emphasizes that more work can be done to divert waste from the County's landfill. The Plan also provides data from the County's own 2021-2022 Waste Characterization Study that indicates waste going into the County's landfill consists of about 30% organics, which can be paper, paper board, food scraps, and yard trimmings.

Newer waste diversion initiatives the Plan describes is the expanding food scraps diversion program as part of the County's recycling program, updated policies on bulk trash pick-up, and more emphasis on illegal dumping with increased camera surveillance. Additionally, the Department is looking to expand material bans on items such as electronics, paints, carpet and mattresses, box springs, and white goods, directing them from the landfill to secondary markets.

Partnerships are emphasized in the plan, including collaboration with the Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPW&T) including their Adopt-A-Road programs; the Department of Permitting, Inspections, & Enforcement (DPIE) in their cleaning of private properties as allowed under County regulations and the legal process; the Department of Corrections in providing resources for roadside crews for clean-ups; the Police Department in enforcing littering and illegal dumping; and the Health Department in their inspections of waste areas such as landfills and rubble fills.

Other related programs noted in the Plan include the Prince George’s County Public School’s recycling program, which utilizes County resources to fulfill its state requirement for solid waste; the County’s internal recycling program known as CORP (County Office Recycling Program); the expanded bulk trash program; and its abandoned car and household hazardous waste and electronics drop-off program.

The Plan also outlines the outreach and education being done to inform residents of waste initiatives and the importance of recycling and maintaining a clean environment through programs such as anti-litter campaigns. Noted were the Beautification Initiative started in 2019, regional campaigns such as the State’s “Recycle Right”, and recycling awards programs, as well as radio ads and regional meetings with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG).

Current Law/Background:

Title 9 Subtitle 5 of the Environmental Article of Annotated Code of Maryland requires the County to adopt and submit to the Maryland Department of the Environment a comprehensive plan dealing with solid waste disposal systems every ten years. This is an updated version of the FY 2020-2029 plan. This Resolution is for the purpose of adopting the County’s 2024-2033 Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan.

Resource Personnel:

- Karen Williams Gooden, Legislative Counsel, Department of the Environment

Discussion/Policy Analysis:

This Resolution serves as a requirement of the Maryland Department of the Environment in that Comprehensive Ten-Year Solid Waste Management Plans are adopted by the respective jurisdiction- this includes amendments and revisions. In general, Prince George’s County has been progressive and a leader in the management of solid waste within the State of Maryland. Our jurisdiction has been both number one and number two in its percentage of recycling of solid waste (about 55%) and has a waste diversion rate of over 60%.¹ Our innovative programs include the

¹ 2017 Maryland Solid Waste Management & Waste Divergent Report.

MRF and OCF, each diverting tens of thousands of tons of waste annually from landfills or other waste disposal facilities. The Solid Waste Plan is good at outlining the partnerships that the Department of the Environment (DoE or the Department) utilizes in diverting or disposing of solid waste. It cites Plan 2035 authored by the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning as one tool for managing growth and in turn managing waste, and planning the locations of waste and recycling facilities, and transfer stations. Likewise, it credits departments such as the police who enforce littering laws and illegal dumping, as well as the Department of Corrections who supply resources for roadside cleanup crews. Non-profits such as Keep Prince George’s County Beautiful, and watershed groups that facilitate stream cleanups are all included in the plan, as solid waste management within the County is a complex and integrated series of tasks and programs, not a duty of just one, or even a few county departments.

By contrast, the Plan appears short or vague on specifics with some initiatives or data points. For example, solid waste generation is estimated, citing waste importation and exportation are dependent on those entities who report numbers to the State and/or County. The Plan indicates these statistics are not readily available; however, waste haulers either based in or utilizing in-County facilities either need to be licensed within the County, or their loads can be recorded at the point of entry into County facilities. The Department may want to take advantage of these tools to provide a more accurate rate of waste generation.²

Along this same theme, the Plan does not provide data for how many persons are recycling food scraps and other organic matter within their own household (back yard composting, etc.). This data could be important to provide more accuracy in how much waste is being diverted from the County’s landfill.

Because the Department uses national averages to estimate waste generation, it’s important the Department must utilize the most recent data for population to make its estimates; however, the report posted population forecasts for the County show lower population forecasts for the County than the latest forecasts that are now available- this would underestimate the amount of trash generated, and provide flawed estimates in the Plan and could contribute to inaccuracy in recycling rates, landfill expiration dates, and other data required by the State and utilized by organizations such as MWCOG.³

Under the Plan’s Source Reduction and Recycling, one of the bullets listed for County Plans and Strategies is “Implement Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policies for products such as electronics, tires, carpet...etc.” While this certainly is a laudable goal, this type of policy is not known to be implemented at the County level- all indicated legislation for this type of policy has been done at either the national or State level; the Department will need to work closely with the County Delegation and other elected officials to have this implemented within the State so the County can benefit from such a policy.⁴

² 2024-2033 Comprehensive Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan Draft, III-7

³ IBID, II-1, Table 2-1. The Draft Plan displays data from M-NCPPC Planning Dept., Round 9.2 Cooperative Forecasts, 2021. The latest population forecasts are currently available from MWCOG and The Research Section, Information Management Division, Planning Department (Round 10).

⁴ <https://epr.sustainablepackaging.org>

Given some of the data and statistics that the Plan provides, it is apparent that, despite the Department's efforts and generally positive results, much more work needs to be done. For example, household waste generation of organic material and paper is still more than 50% of the total waste stream that goes into the Brown Station landfill.⁵ Also, capture rates for aluminum cans stands at only 37%. Given aluminum is one of the most valuable commodities for recycling (\$1,210/ton vs. plastics at \$237/ton)⁶, it makes sense not only ecologically, but financially, to re-set County policies to encourage more aluminum (can) recycling. A first step may be to reimplement mandatory recycling within the County.

Finally, in terms of the Plan's content, it would be helpful for some readers, especially those not so familiar with the many acronyms and abbreviations incorporated into the report, to have a glossary of these terms that a reader could refer to when confronted with such an item. All abbreviations and acronyms are initially spelled out and placed in parenthesis, but a separate glossary that the reader could refer to at any point in the document would be helpful.

Fiscal Impact:

- *Direct Impact*

Adoption of CR-002-2024 will have a direct impact on the County, both positive and negative. Although data from DoE was not forthcoming, it can be expected that the County will continue to have a significant positive impact from the solid waste enterprise fund; additionally, it can be expected that there may be a negative fiscal impact due to expenses such as increased litter cleanups, cameras for surveillance, and other program expenditures.

- *Indirect Impact*

Adoption of CR-002-2024 would provide indirect positive fiscal impacts to the County in terms of additional employment as solid waste programs expand, such as the curbside food scrap pickup program, the MRF and OCF programs; additionally, it could be said that intangible positive impacts such as a cleaner and more aesthetically pleasing environment will improve the health of residents and incentivize people to move into the County due in part to its progressive policies, programs and cleaner environment.

Appropriated in the Current Fiscal Year Budget

Yes.

⁵ IBID, ES-5

⁶ 2021 Report, The Aluminum Can Advantage, The Aluminum Association, Arlington, Va.

Effective Date of Proposed Legislation:

The Resolution shall take effect on the day following the first regularly scheduled Council meeting day which occurs after the County Executive transmits her comments on this Resolution, or on the day that the County Executive indicates she has no comments, or ten (10) working days following transmittal of this Resolution to the County Executive, whichever shall occur first.

If you require additional information, or have questions about this fiscal impact statement, please reach out to me via phone or email.