



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Office of Audits and Investigations

September 23, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert J. Williams, Jr.
Council Administrator

William M. Hunt
Deputy Council Administrator

THRU: Josh Hamlin 
Senior Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

FROM: Alex Hirtle *AJH*
Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

RE: Policy Analysis and Fiscal Impact Statement
CR-50-2020 Comprehensive Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan

CR-50-2020 (*proposed by:* County Executive. *Sponsored by:* Councilmembers Turner, Streeter, Dernoga, Taveras, Hawkins, Ivey, Harrison, Davis.)

Assigned to Committee of the Whole (COW)

A RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE FY 2020-2029 COMPREHENSIVE TEN YEAR SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN for the purpose of adopting the Prince George's County FY 2020-2029 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 as a result of collected fees and fines.

Indirect Impact:

Positive.

14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772
VOICE (301) 952-3431; FAX (301) 780-2097; TDD (301) 925-5167

Legislative Summary:

CR-50-2020 is an updated plan of the FY 2017-2026 Comprehensive Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan. This plan outlines the County's solid waste generation, collection, disposal, recycling, and public information and cleanup programs.

The FY 2020-2029 Comprehensive Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan initially outlines the State requirements for the preparation of the Plan, and reviews State and federal laws concerning solid waste. The Plan provides data indicating the growth of the County in terms of commercial and residential development, and the population increase, all 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 for cost-effective ways to recover valuable materials from the waste stream and prolong the life of the County's disposal facilities.

The Plan outlines the County's current recycling rate of 55.8% and its waste diversion rate of 60.8% (waste diversion is any waste that does not end up in a landfill or other type of disposal facility). It describes the County's MRF processing of solid stream recycling, and how this facility will be upgraded with optical scanners to sort different types of plastics. The MRF currently processes 80,000 tons of recyclables annually. The Plan also describes the County's Organic Composting Facility (OCF), and its upgrade in 2018 to facilitate more food scraps and yard waste, processing 70,000 tons of organic waste annually. It also notes the County's pilot plan for residential curbside pick-up of food scraps, and the County's plan to expand this program in the near future.

The County's primary disposal facility, Brown Station Landfill, is given emphasis in that this facility was reaching capacity and was planned to close several years ago, but an innovative process to infill airspace within the existing footprint should keep the facility open until 2045.

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, that 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 bulky trash program; and its abandoned car and household hazardous waste and electronics drop-off program.

Two documents the Plan emphasizes are the Zero Waste Initiative, which specifies actions to reduce, re-use, and recycle; and the Resource Recovery Master Plan, a guide for long-term strategies to manage our waste and recycling streams.

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 2017-2026 plan.

The County Executive introduced the revised plan on June 9th, 2020, and it was referred to the Council of the Whole. On July 21st, 2020, the County Council held a public hearing on the revised plan.

Resource Personnel:

Marilyn Rybak-Naumann, Department of the Environment Staff

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. 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 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 very good at outlining the partnerships that the Department of the Environment (DoE) 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 on specifics with some initiatives, such as the food scrap waste program, which the report notes will be expanding, but does not provide any numbers or defined course in moving forward with this program. Although not required by MDE, more detailed descriptions and strategies of some of the initiatives may be helpful to the reader.

From a policy standpoint, the Plan provides for reduced waste in the County's disposal facilities, will increase economic growth by creating employment at the MRF, OCF, and other public and private waste diversion facilities, and reduce overall costs in the long-term. Boulder County, Colorado, which implemented similar policies for its solid waste program has reached a diversion rate of 60% and experienced local economic growth and a 25% cost-reduction in managing its waste.²

Fiscal Impact:

¹ 2017 Maryland Solid Waste Management & Waste Divergent Report.

² <https://www.du.edu/korbel/ipps/media/documents/marshallpolicymemo.pdf> pg. 28

- *Direct Impact*

Adoption of CR-50-2020 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-50-2020 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 and programs.

Appropriated in the Current Fiscal Year Budget

Yes.

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.

Issues for Committee Consideration:

- Although not specifically needed under the State requirements, some of the programs outlined in the Plan (such as food scrap collection) were not specific in numbers or detailed goals.
- Additional positive fiscal impacts are possible for the County with the implementation of programs that other jurisdictions have implemented (*i.e.*, “Pay As You Throw,” where a variable waste fee is charged contingent on how much waste is disposed by the household or entity).

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