

Fairfax County Zero Waste Strategies Public Information Webinar - Transcript

Webinar recorded on September 19, 2024

00:10

All right, we're going to get started. Good evening, everyone. Welcome to the Public Information webinar. We are going to be talking about the road to zero waste and the proposed strategies to get Fairfax County to that zero waste mark. I am Melissa radiwon. I go by MRad. I am a communications support specialist with RS who is helping Fairfax County with these Zero Waste strategies. I'm going to talk about a couple of housekeeping items if we go to the next slide, our webinar is being recorded, so anybody who was not able to watch it live will be able to watch it back. All of the attendees, you are muted. That means we can't see you, but we do want to hear from you, so please use the Q and A button to submit your questions. Now that is different than the chat function. The Q and A allows us to get the questions in a certain order. We can actually see them separate from the chat, and we can make sure we can check them off as we get those asked and answered. So anytime during the webinar. You don't have to wait to the end anytime during the webinar. Go ahead click that Q and A button. It should be on your bottom navigation for your zoom window, and go ahead and submit those questions. I'll be watching those, and at the end, we'll come back and do a Q and A and I'll help moderate those questions with our speaker who will go to the next slide.

01:44

And the star of the show is Matthew Adams. He is a professional engineer and the division director over the sustainability engineering and environmental compliance team within the solid waste management program as part of the Department of Public Works and environmental services in Fairfax County. So that was a whole mouthful, but what he is responsible for is the enforcement of the solid waste section of the county code, the permitting of collectors in the county, and leads the sustainability and outreach team in finding new ways to engage the public about waste diversion alternatives. He is the lead of the 20 year solid waste management planning efforts which this is part of this zero waste so please join me in welcoming Matthew Adams and Matt. Go ahead. Take it away.

02:37

Well, thank you, MRad, thank you for the nice introduction. Thanks everyone for participating today in the webinar. So I wanted to go ahead and get started. So Fairfax County is currently drafting a new solid waste management plan that will guide the county's effort for managing trash and recycling and composting in the future. Our current state of waste management indicates we are doing a good job at recycling and composting, but about 44% of the waste generated each year, this makes us a leader in the state of Virginia. That being said, though there is plenty of room for improvement, right? So Fairfax County is making efforts to move towards a zero waste goal. So that means that we're trying to minimize the amount of waste that we generate as close to zero as possible. And we can do that by,

you know, in a lot of different ways, either reducing our waste, reusing and repairing items that we have, donating unwanted items for other, you know, or other utilization of those items, recycling materials and composting food scraps, yard waste and other compostables. You know, this is a better alternative to our current method of burning the waste for energy at our waste to energy plant and then landfilling those items in our landfill, right?

04:03

So, so why are we moving to zero waste? In September of 2021 the Board of Supervisors came together and approved the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan. So that's the CECAP plan. That's our CECAP goal, which is to divert 90% of the waste that we generate in the county in any given year from incineration and landfills by 2040 it's a very aspirational goal. It's, you know, 90% diversion would make us a leader in the world for how we do waste diversion. It's, you know. It's something that you know, we feel is very important for our community, moving forward, the county faces future uncertainty related to the waste disposal and hauling which will likely have a significant impact on future costs that will be passed down to the consumer as we continue to generate waste. We. We'll be running out of space to put it. We'll be running out of places to take it. Our population will continue to increase, which will cause, you know, even more waste to be generated if we don't get out in front and try to be proactive in managing that waste, recycled materials can be utilized in the production of new products, saving energy, water and other natural resources that would have been utilized in manufacturing products from raw materials, diverting materials from landfills, especially organic items like food scraps and yard waste, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, which in turns lessen the effects of climate change and can that can cause extreme weather events, hotter temperatures, increased droughts and other health risks. It also provides, you know, an additional resource that we, you know, generate inside of the county now, but when that food waste is composted, or that yard waste is composted, it comes back to being a resource soil that we can put back into the community, and that can help you know with our environmental quality, with our sustainability and with our resilience.

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Zero waste efforts can help keep materials from littering our our land and polluting our waterways, uh, recycling can also save energy, burn less fossil fuels and reduce air pollution. This is a win for public health.

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Zero Waste initiatives can also help reduce inequities. You know, food waste reduction and Food Rescue donation can help address some food insecurities inside of the community, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills or incinerations, incinerators, which are disproportionately located in your marginalized communities, can improve public health.

06:48

Local recycling and composting systems can stimulate and develop a circular economy within you know, local Ontario entrepreneurship, job creation, and it has skill building potential. This helps build even more resiliency in the community, and can improve the health and wealth of the community. As people get more skills, they have more resource resources to do some of these items, new types of

jobs are created around some of these, you know, waste streams, and some of these waste reduction and waste diversion type of technologies. So these are all positive things that are associated to why we're moving to a zero waste goal now.

07:33

So how do we get to zero waste here's a graph that kind of breaks down all of the items that we're talking about, and kind of gives a, you know, a quick summary of kind of how much they affect the previous or the other strategies around them. The big takeaway here is that there's no single answer that will get the county to zero waste. We need to implement several of these strategies to incrementally move us towards an improved waste reduction, recycling and composting materials. These strategies build on one another and strengthen our overall efforts. You know, some of these strategies are deeply rooted in another strategy, so doing just one or just two will definitely have, you know, will minimize some of our efforts if we don't do a lot of the strategies altogether. But by implementing these strategies in their entirety, entirety, the county can achieve a 90% zero waste diversion level. We believe that it is possible. It is doable. It takes the work of an entire community as well as you know, both state government, local government residents and businesses working together to get to a 90% goal, and that's what is outlined in our plan.

08:52

So right now, I'll go over some of the individual strategies in the following slides.

08:58

So this is the overall list of the you know, strategies that we are doing through to get to zero waste. There are several of these strategies, and I'm going to walk through them again one by one, to kind of give you an idea of what these things are, what they mean, how much they can help, what we can do to get there, those sort of things.

09:20

So first out of the gate is the one of our you know, one of the important Zero Waste strategies that we've come up with is to expand the list of recyclables that are currently available in Fairfax County.

09:34

This matters a lot. Having clear and consistent recycling. You know, literature and understanding in the community makes it extreme, makes it a lot easier to know exactly what can be recycled. No matter where you are in Fairfax County, you don't need to remember the different recycling rules. You don't have to think about the different how different cities do it, whether you live outside of the county and you know work in the County, and there's two different rules, or if you you know or you live here and work somewhere else, we're trying to make a consistent set of rules to make it easier, so to minimize the amount of guessing and wish cycling that happens at the curb and at businesses, this also provides for better recycling. With a clear list, you'll have fewer mistakes and be able to recycle more effectively as more items are added to the list. You'll always know you can recycle across the entire county. Better recycling leads to less litter cleaner neighborhoods. You know, as we get more recycling and more options to recycle, this helps reduce the amount of litter that we find in neighborhoods to help keep our neighborhoods cleaner and healthier. This also allows us to invest in new facilities and new

infrastructure, which will allow for recycling of a broader range of recyclables and help keep markets for those materials. Right now, we have a very limited number of things that can be recycled because we do not have the infrastructure to process those markets. We, you know, it's harder for us as a county to be able to do that. So if we, you know, invest more in an expanded list of recyclables and more a larger infrastructure and a more processing power, this allows us to expand that list of recyclables so that we can get a larger piece of the those recyclables out of the waste stream and have find a second use for them, or turn them into a more valuable material. A streamlined and expanded recycling system can divert up to 25,000 tons of material from counties, incineration and landfills. We're talking about reducing 23,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year. That's 25,000 tons of material. It's a lot of material that we can just target with some, you know, entry level, kind of early changes to how we manage waste today,

12:01

Another one of our proposed strategies that's very fundamental to what we're trying to do is that we're trying to expand our education, engagement, evaluation and enforcement efforts inside of the county. So what this will do is we will be able to bring on more staff. We'll be able to bring on more people to be able to, you know, strengthen the impact and the implementation of some of our other strategies by educating other people in the community, by reaching into the community, meeting people where they are meeting, you know, meeting them how they want to be met in a in multiple languages and different places, and having them understand how we do business And what the rules are associated to that, you know, previously talked about simplified list of recyclables makes it so that people will know more what to do and then be able to participate more those individuals that want to do it will be able to do it.

12:56

Engagement. We're going to expand engagement so it fosters a sense of ownership and a participation within the community. It's encouraging to, you know, it's encouraging active involvement in the waste diversion efforts and promoting, you know, a culture of sustainability in Fairfax County. Behavioral change is hard. Behavioral change in the community is hard. So to do that, we have to have continuous education and continuous engagement, so that we can get a longer lasting behavioral change, where we can get reducing waste to become a daily habit as part of just how people think about they, how they handle their waste, how they purchase their items, how they, you know, go through their daily lives, and you know how that impacts them.

13:43

It also enhances our program's effectiveness. If we begin, we begin actively evaluating how we are doing as a program, going out, and spending a lot more time seeing in very specific places, how things are being managed, how we're going through and improving our programs, putting a lot more metrics and data to what we're doing as a community, and then being transparent with that data and sharing it with the community so that people can see where we are, see what we're doing, see what's happening in the community, and having it, you know, be a part of the solution. And finally, one of the big things we're talking about is expanding enforcement of the new recycling requirements. So that way, we would be incentivizing individuals and businesses, encouraging them to do the right things, and for those individuals that you know, that may not you know, encourage them, incentivize them through enforcement to follow these new codes, to do that, we're going to need more people. Are going to need

more people out in the community enforcing those actions. This is a really big thing. It has a very high potential of diversion. We're talking about 93,000 tons of material a year. Is the potential? What we can talk about getting out of the waste stream just through education, engagement, evaluation and enforcement.

15:07

Next is a thing that's very important. I can't stress this enough, the unified Sanitation Districts is one of the most important strategies I'm going to talk about today. This strategy is what opens the door for a lot of the opportunities to do some of our other strategies that I've talked about previously, as well as emphasizing and building and stressing the strategies that I talked about previously. So what we're talking about is a unified sanitation district. So right now, Fairfax County is a free market where every all the trash haulers can go and residents can bid, or they can, residents can go out to bid from haulers to, you know, try to get the best price and competing as an individual. Well, what we're trying to do is to standardize waste service across the entire county, so that we would break up the county into giant, not giant into different in size districts, to be able to bid those districts out as an entirety, so that we we're getting the best price, as well as a high level of consistent service across the county. So that's one of the benefits. To do this. We're looking to get a high level of service across the county, making it easy to understand and to use waste collection services, plus the county will make sure that waste collectors are held contractually accountable for missed pickups, compliance issues and any number of other issues and implementation of programs through a contract as they bid on these items.

16:42

So we want to make sure that we're always giving the highest quality of service at the lowest price for residents. So to do that, we want to bid these prices out so that everyone in the community, whether you know you your price, your neighbor's price that got two guys down the street. Everyone's prices are fair and transparent. You can see what those prices are for all of the residents in that Sanitation District. Residents will pay the same rate no matter where they live in the county, and they can expect to save, we're expecting to save up to 25% or more on waste collection fees. Moving to this model through the efficiencies that we pick up by instead of, you know, a hauler coming through a neighborhood, or three different haulers in a neighborhood, we have one collector that goes through and picks up the houses, as opposed to skipping houses or moving through the through the neighborhood, there's just a lot of efficiencies that can be picked up doing that, and it also, having less trucks in a neighborhood makes them safer. It makes the wear on tear on the roads better. I mean, the roads will last longer. Our maintenance fees for the roads will go down. We will have significantly less impact, and the the community will be safer with less larger trucks in smaller neighborhoods. And not only that, there is a you know, using those trucks and minimizing those routes and being as efficient as possible allows us to save a substantial amount in greenhouse gas emissions for the community. We're talking about 75,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide is what we're estimating can be reduced from the community moving to a unified Sanitation District due to that type of model. And you know, the big the big thing here is that we're estimating that we're going to be saving the residents in their entirety. All the residents will save, if you put everyone's savings together, would be roughly \$27 million a year in community savings with that 25% reduction in cost, right? So that's a big deal.

18:52

One of the other things that we're talking about that goes along with unified Sanitation Districts is the idea of a pay as you throw system where individuals in the county will pay based on the amount of trash they throw away. Pay as you throw treats trash, kind of like electricity, gas and other utilities or households pay a variable rate depending on the amount of the service they use. If you use less of the service for waste, you save money. So what we're talking about, what we're considering is like a volume based system, where residents in the county will be able to select what size bin they would like to use, whether it's a 35, 65, 95 gallon cart for their waste. So that's not recycling, and that's not organics or yard waste. That is just the the size cart for waste, things that can't be recycled or or, you know, they choose not to recycle or divert to, or the organic stream, and based on the size of that cart, is how much an individual will pay.

19:58

So right now, in the system that we have, you know, if I have an everyone has a 95 gallon cart, if I only put one bag in it, and my neighbor puts 10 bags in his or theirs, we pay the same rate. And that doesn't, you know, that doesn't make sense. So if I got a smaller cart, I would pay less. And that individual who you know doesn't utilize our services that aren't using food waste or recycling, those individuals would pay more. Now we're talking about it that you know organics and recycling would be a flat fee so that you know more, it would incentivize people to reduce the amount of things. The most volume of stuff in your trash is most likely your recycling. So moving that to a cart so that you have more waste and more space in your waste cart is beneficial to you or to beneficial to the residents. The same thing with the weight inside of the inside of your waste bin, food is very heavy food waste, and yard waste is very heavy, so removing that from the waste stream and putting it in an organics cart could significantly reduce the amount that individuals in the county could have to pay for waste reduction, right for the waste disposal.

21:15

So I kind of talked about it, but fair and equitable pricing for households, again, would be based on the amount that they output. It's it's fair so that it allows residents to have more control over how much they pay for waste management based on their participation in our programs. So the more you participate, the more you do the things to divert waste to other places, to you know, some of our other programs is the less you have to pay. It's a win, win for everyone. Let's see here environmental benefits. Since pay as you throw encourages more recycling, it can help divert, you know, 96,000 tons of waste is what we're estimating can be moved out of landfills, out of our incinerator and, you know, moved into some of these other streams, and moved into some of these secondary markets if we have the ability to incentivize people to use them.

22:06

One of our important strategies is a mandatory organics recycling system. We want to make it so that individuals have a way to be able to dispose of food waste and organics, so that we can take that waste stream. It makes up about 30% of our total waste is food waste. We want to target that waste to find a second use for it. Um, you know, organics. Organics recycling helps reduce landfill space. It helps reduce the amount of material that gets landfilled and we end up taking that material and composting it, turning it into, you know, compost. So soil that becomes a resource that we can put back into our county gardens. We can put it on projects. You can put it in the soil in some of our, you know, harder hit

environmental areas, as opposed to doing chemical fertilizers. And it also lowers our emissions. The more waste that gets thrown, food waste that gets thrown into a landfill or they, you know, naturally, you know, becomes disposed. Food Waste turns into harmful methane that can be used when this what's what happens when food gets decomposes so it's it's a no brainer that we want to be able to provide this service, so that individuals can take a waste, a potential waste that only has one more use, and then turning it into something really Positive, like composting. Benefits to the soil, benefits to the environment in its totality, and while reducing 150 tons of organic waste that is thrown away every year, this is waste that is in the trash, it's up to 150,000 tons. It's a huge stream that we can target using this method.

24:02

So in conjunction with kind of the Unified Sanitation Districts, as well as with our education program, we wanted to specifically call out and expand our commercial and multi family recycling programs. We want to make sure that everyone in the county has access to recycling no matter where you live or work or or what business you do, we want to make it so that, not you don't only have to recycle at home, there are options in stores, in, you know, apartment buildings as well as offices. We want to make sure that there is recycling everywhere that we go, so that we can maximize the amount of interactions that residents and people have to the to be convenient, to throw away or to recycle some of the waste that they generate. So again, we want to make sure that you have the ability to recycle anywhere and everywhere inside of Fairfax County. You're at home, at work or at school, at a business, we want to make sure that you have that option everywhere.

25:08

If you know moving towards this option, we're willing. We believe that we will be diverting up to 100,000 tons of material from the county's incineration and landfills, while also improving the, you know, the neighborhoods so they generate less litter. You know, we want to make sure that these programs are these individuals are educated, that they businesses know what they're supposed to do and follow new county rules, as opposed to, you know, kind of figuring it out on their own. So we want to make sure that we're targeting and expanding our commercial and multifamily recycling programs.

25:46

A big thing that I think is very important to the community is we're talking about also a source reduction in zero waste centers. So we want to, you know, invest in the community and, you know, create these convenient disposal options which easily that make it easy to drop off, hard to recycle items all in one place, place conveniently located throughout the county. This is a place where a community can come together and learn about recycling that's easy and convenient to them, so that they have a place to take these things and without having to find multiple trips, having to do a lot of research on what to do, is a one stop shop for recycling challenging items. This also gives us the the opportunity to expand the number of things that we can recycle that typically do not go in your curbside bin. These recycling centers could be made so they could easily recycle a broader range of materials. This includes, you know, we're e waste some other the purple bin. We're talking about some of these programs that we're trying to get started. We want to make those broader across the county and more convenient and easy for residents to use, so that way that we can ensure that those items aren't going to a landfill somewhere or aren't being incinerated. And this sort of thing saves money when you use the reuse or

repair services at these centers, potentially, you could extend the life of your belongings. You can save from buying new items.

27:28

And most importantly, it provides a safe place at which for people to dispose of these items. If people don't know what to do with certain certain items, chemicals, things, when you bring them to a center, you know, it's a lot better than not knowing what to do and putting them in the trash where you know, potentially they could get out into the environment. We want to make sure that there's a safe place to take these things in, a place for people to get educated and for them to understand what these centers do, and finally, what this ends up doing is creating new jobs for the community. It gets people educated on what we're supposed to do, how we're supposed to do it, what happens to them when we do recycle, and allows people to really understand and have a focal point for understanding sustainability. You know, there's nothing better than having a solid waste expert in your backyard to be able to tell you what to do or where to go or what happens to it when you turn it in. That's the idea of having a zero waste center, right?

28:37

So the next big strategy is based around the construction demolition debris. We this is a very high impact strategy, construction demolition debris makes up about 23% of the county's overall waste. This is a big chance to cut down on landfill use. Potentially, we can potentially divert 61,000 tons of waste per year by source, separating and providing an alternative for people dispose of this waste, like bricks, concrete, wood, tile, these things that we know that there is a secondary use for providing a place for them to do that and to process that material makes it easy and makes it significantly more sustainable to target those waste streams and get them out of the way of your you know, normal municipal solid waste, we talk about doing this as one of the potential ideas to be as part of a zero waste center. You know, when you show up and have this waste and don't know what to do with it, what do you do with concrete blocks? What do you do with bricks? You know, you take it to zero waste center, and we have a place that we can dispose of that, where we take it, find a new home for it, process it, and turn it into a raw material to be used for something else.

29:53

And that's part of that the conservation of natural resources, right? We want to reduce the need for new materials. Construction and renovation projects. If those things already exist, there's no sense in getting a new one with we already have material that can be used for these projects. This is the potential to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by about 13,000 metric tons every year. So it's, you know, it's not an insect insignificant number. It's a, you know, it's a sizable impact to our community.

30:25

Finally, one of the last things that we wanted to talk about was Fairfax County is trying to support some of this extended producer responsibility, you know, EPR legislation, as well as new technology, things like bottle bills, container deposit laws, you know, where a small refundable deposit is added to the price of beverage containers or other items. When a customer turns the empty container to the retailer at a redemption center, they receive their deposit back. Is the cost of the system is the responsibility of the distributors, right? So we're talking about ways in which to hold the individuals that create the

packaging, that create the materials, to be held responsible, or have some level of responsibility in their creation. So that incentivizes them to want to make a smaller item, to use less packaging, to use more sustainable materials.

31:28

Another good example of this, of meaningful EPR or extended producer responsibility is the plastic bag tax that's currently in Fairfax County, where customers are charged an extra tax, you know, a nickel to use a one time item of a plastic bag that that tax money is then gone and it goes back to funding sustainability programming. This is a, you know, this is holding the, not only the producers of the product, but the consumers of the product, responsible for their for the waste that's about to be generated. We want to make sure that people understand that everyone has to work together, whether it's the person making the item, the person that's selling the item, the person that's using the item, and the person that's disposing of the item, everyone has to work together to make sure that to reach that 90% goal, that everyone has a responsibility to minimize the amount of waste that you that we generate as a community. So we want to incentivize that.

32:30

Let's see here EPR again. I'll go through it again. EPR shifts the responsibility of post consumer waste management to material producers and waste generators, leading to better management of end of life products. EPR programs encourage producers to design product products with their entire life cycle in mind, leading to less waste generated and more efficient use of resources.

32:57

A big thing about this is that we are stimulating innovation. We want to make sure that producers are incentivized to produce more sustainable products, and, you know, innovate on what they're doing now, to improve on the life cycle of that product over time, and to hold the individuals that consume it also responsible, so that we can minimize and work together to reduce the amount of waste that we are generating.

33:24

Finally, to do all of these things. I mean, this is a lot of strategies. One of the things that we are talking about, and that Fairfax County is considering, is the addition of a zero waste fee. So this fee would be a, you know, a fee that is added on to Fairfax County residents, whether it would be single family, multifamily or commercial property owners, so that would be set aside to fund some of our zero waste strategies and programs like building Zero Waste centers, boosting the community's education and engagement and enforcement, establishing Zero Waste grants to help incentivize people in the community to start businesses, to start processing, to start some of these waste reduction industries. Also this money could be used to construct new waste processing facilities, and it also can be used to bring on additional staff so that we can go out into the community and make sure that individuals understand the message, understand what we're doing, and are participating at the best of their ability.

34:32

The Zero Waste fee is designed to be fair with different costs for everyone. So based on the waste that individuals generate is how much is kind of the idea of what we're trying to base that amount that

individuals would pay. So there we talked about it in the survey, that there are some options that we're talking about as to how much that zero waste fee could be and how and where it is applied. So, uh.

35:00

Just a quick pathway to the plan adoption. This is a quick overview of the timeline for implementation. These proposed strategies are being considered as part of what the overall solid waste management plan that is due to our DEQ, which is the Department of Environmental Quality, is due in April of 2025 this is a process we go through every 20 years. So the last time we did this exercise was in 2004 so this time around, in 2024 we are going through and getting ready for a resubmission to DEQ in April of 2025 so right now we're in September, which is at the public webinar. We're planning for a public hearing to go in front of the board of supervisors for adoption of the plan. So a copy of our plan will be available in likely late December, for the public to consume, and then a public hearing will happen at the Board of Supervisors meeting in February of 2025 which it will we encourage everyone to come out to, you know, give what their thoughts on the public hearing, to let the board know whether they're supported or not, And then inevitably, vote on it and approve the plan, and have it be ready for submission in 2025

36:29

So, so this is the next step. So the next step so, so for anyone on the call that or anyone in the webinar that has not taken the survey, please do this is the best way at which individuals can have their thoughts heard. Can have their opinions, you know, out in the community. So we can start doing this early, so I can hear from you. The deadline for the survey is September 30. Takes about 10-15, minutes to complete the QR code and the link are both attached.

37:01

Also, another big thing that individuals can do, if they're interested in zero waste or in the next steps, or want to hear more about it, or, you know, want to know more about recycling, education and engagement. You can join our mailing list. The QR code is associate is on the slides, as well as a link in there, we provide consistent messaging about what we're doing, what's recyclable, what's, you know, what's some of the really cool projects that we're working on. A lot of that is in the mailing list. Alright, so I've talked for a while. I think we're going to move to questions

37:37

We are, and I must say, our audience, they are rock stars. Given us some questions. I will mention there's a couple of folks who have said, Oh, I got questions about this. I have questions about that. Please submit the actual questions into the Q and A, and I will ask them of Matt. We just, we need to know what you want to ask. We can't unmute you. It's not that type of meeting. So use that function to send us your your questions.

38:08

I do want to do a quick shout out to Kendall Jamison, who is in the the webinar, who mentioned that their church will start commercial composting in November. They believe that this is part of their creation care. They also believe it is their duty as community members. So kudos to Kendall and and

the church. We appreciate those efforts. I'm going to try to group some of these questions together so that we were kind of answering similar things.

38:46

And I will also let everybody know we're recording, so there'll be a recording available after the probably in a week or so. I think we'll get it posted. We will also share out a copy of the slides so that will be available on the Engage Fairfax County website.

39:05

Let's start with, let's start with pay as you throw.

39:11

One comment question is, I imagine one challenge will be balancing pay as you throw with wish cycling. For those who don't know what wish cycling is, it's, it's the the things that aren't truly recyclable yet. We don't have the technology to recycle them, but, oh, we really wish they could be. So we're going to put it into the recycling bin and just hope that somehow it's going to get recycled when maybe it shouldn't be in that bin. So, yeah, so Matt, you think that might be a challenge with the pay as you throw, you know, maybe getting a little more wish cycling in the mix.

39:49

So absolutely, that is something that we're talking about as being, you know, a potential problem for pay as you throw. But if you know this is kind of where those other strategies come together, you know, if we move to a Unified Sanitation District, then, you know, we can empower the collector to leave that to leave that recycle. If people are putting the wrong thing in the wrong bin, you know, they can. They can reject that load and leave like a door hanger or leave a sticker or a flyer behind to let them know. Hey, you know, we're not saying that you you know you meant to do this, but we're saying that maybe you don't know that you know some of those things don't go in there. Maybe that you don't know that that's not a recyclable material. So here, let us educate you on what actually goes in there, so that when you take that stuff out and put in the right bin. When you put it in, you know, your waste bin, or put it back where it belongs, then we'll accept that waste. Then we'll accept your recycling. So we want to make sure that we're empowering collectors and our enforcement staff to go out to make sure that individuals are following the rules and doing the things they're supposed to do. So that's one of the things that we're talking about. We want to make sure that individuals in the community aren't wish cycle, and that then to provide a potential source of education a touch point is to let them know, Hey, you might not be doing it right. Here's how to do it better. And if it continues, then we can, you know, there's we can incentivize differently.

41:20

And Matt even to piggyback on that a little bit, the county is continuously investigating new technologies, new ways of recycling different materials. So who knows what will happen in a couple of years, five years, 10 years down the line? Because you guys are keeping your finger on the pulse of what is happening in the recycling industry.

41:44

Yes, ma'am,

41:46

I'm going to also pay as you throw. We're still on that. How would the pay as you throw collection process apply to businesses? Does it apply and how would it apply to businesses?

41:58

So pay as you throw right now, we're talking about how it applies to single family residents. Commercial would have a separate system, but it's something that we're also considering. The city of New York has a system the unified Sanitation Districts, for how they do their commercial. They're rolling it out now so that, you know, businesses that have, you know, say they only use a 95 gallon card, or they use, you know, giant, you know, a roll off, or, like, a larger size box, each size, it would be very similar, right? Every time that they go up in size, it just costs more for them to throw that to dispose of that waste, because we want them to right size, the amount of waste they're generating, and to use the other options that we have, whether it's food waste recycling, we want to incentivize them to use those as opposed to waste system. So it would be very similar. It's just the size of the carts would be different. Instead of a 35 gallon card, it would be, you know, like a dumpster that would be there, you know, based on where they start and what their business is and how much waste they generate.

43:06

Wonderful.

43:07

I'm going to move to, let's, let's throw in a organics question, How will you manage the pesticides, chemicals in the yard waste?

43:20

So right now, so what ends up happening, so the chemicals and stuff that goes into yard waste, we would much like we do now for yard waste, we have a pretty strict program about, you know, looking in there to make sure that there is not invasive species. There's not a lot of issues. Because, I mean, you we can't have spreading invasive species around, and we don't want pesticides and those sort of things out into the community, so we try to do a very good job of source separating kind of what those things are when it comes to invasive species. But when it comes to yard waste, what ends up happening is that, you know, I guess a good way to put this is that yard waste and compost and food waste, you know, based on what is being generated, goes into different piles, right? So yard waste that has a high likelihood of being contaminated, or having some of those potential, you know, pesticides on them that we probably move that across to mulch, as opposed to being compost for the soil, right? So we're trying to identify what those things are so that we can remove them from the good stuff that we generate for composting, which kind of like food products, right? So we're we're trying to think through how to do that.

44:36

Thank you for tackling that one.

44:39

Next question, you mentioned the expanded list, having this unified list where you can recycle the same thing, whether you're at home, you're at work, you're at play, within the county, you'd be able to recycle everywhere. So would that also include festivals and events that are taking place in the county?

44:59

Awesome. Yeah, so that's actually a really good point, and thank you for bringing that up right now. Fairfax County government is we have a couple of contracts and things that we've been using to pilot some like reusable cups, reusable foodware, reusable, you know, reusable dishes and plates based on, you know, at events. And you know, we see it at, I was at Merriweather Post pavilion the other day for a concert, and they have these reusable cups, reusable food, where dishes to minimize the amount of waste. So Fairfax County is currently piloting something very similar internally for our events, and so for some of our other the some of the events that we have with the public in the idea to see how well it works, so that inevitably, we can start moving other events, you know, to make that a requirement in the community. But so that is something we're considering, and that's something that we're trying right now. It's very cool that you brought that up, but it's not a part of the plan just yet. It's part of that, you know, long term visioning. But that's a really good point, and something that we should definitely add.

46:13

Probably something that, I mean, you could be encouraged, whether it's required, it's definitely would be encouraged and and whoever is the the organizer of said festivals and events could definitely take on that initiative to have a zero waste event, if they chose. So if you're out there hosting events...

46:36

Somebody snuck in an organics question while I wasn't looking. So we're going to jump back to organics real quick. Will each family have a compost bin?

46:45

So we talked about the, you know, the pick your size of the the waste bin, the trash bin, but will each family have a compost bin or recycle bin, that sort of thing. So that's actually so good question. So that's something that we're actually that's kind of why we're having these discussions. We're having these we want to hear from the individuals on the survey, like, how much space we want to make sure we want to be conscious of people's space. So do we want to have three bins where it's a waste bin, a recycling bin and a yard waste, slash food waste bin, so we put all the yard waste and food waste in the same bin? Or do we want to move to four bins where, you know, there's a yard waste bin, a waste bin, a recycling bin and a small food container bin. So we want to hear from the residents, you know, what's a concern for them? What option do they think is, you know, best, that would work best for them? Because, you know, we have a couple of options there, and I want to hear from the residents about what works best for them and what's would be what they want to do that would, that would make them the most likely to participate in the program. So that there's a couple of options there, and we're considering them all, but we haven't really nailed down a specific strategy yet, because we're waiting for the survey results.

46:56

So if you haven't taken the survey yet, make sure you get in the link. Maggie, who is in our tech support today, she put the links in the chat as well. To make it real easy, if you didn't catch the QR code, you can click on the link. Oh, there she goes again. She got it back in the chat. So go ahead and click on that link. Kind of reserve that over on the side, and make sure you take that survey, because it's really informative to Fairfax County. And how to, you know what the challenges are, and you know what, what type of strategies you you all are going to be supporting.

48:40

Let's, let's think about some of these fees you were talking about, and and the Zero Waste centers, like all those things are related. So will the proposed household fee only go to solid waste related items, or will those fees potentially be used on other non solid waste county programs and activities and whatnot. Is it earmarked for that?

49:08

The Zero Waste fee will only go to zero waste to recycling and solid waste management efforts. If we don't, I'll be honest that I would like to keep as that as much in house to solid waste as possible, so I do not want to share it. So because there's so much to do, there's so many cool programs to have, that the Zero Waste fee and any fee associated to solid waste management would go specific to solid waste management programs.

49:38

Will there be a fee to drop off items at the zero waste centers. Have you guys gotten that far in the planning to know that element?

49:47

So the idea is that the Zero Waste fee, the fee that all the county residents and businesses, and you know anyone that could potentially use those services, that's what part that would pay for. So the idea is that a lot of the things that would be there would be free. The idea is to make them convenient, cheap and easy for residents to be a to partake in. So the idea is that those would be free, and they would be paid for through the Zero Waste fund, or the Zero Waste fee accordingly.

50:19

You had mentioned the plastic bag fee, and there were a couple of questions that came in on, do we know how much Fairfax has recovered using that fee? And is there, are there ways to to bulk up, you know, like, if we they take a bunch of plastic bags back to be recycled. Is there a way to get a refund on those, those fee, those five cent fee, or whatever the I'm sorry, the plastic bag fee is,

50:50

Yeah. So I do know that that number exists. I'll be honest, I do not have it off the top of my head. I do know that it, is rather sizable. It's in the I believe it is in the millions of dollars. Is what has come in since the onset of the plastic bag tax. So that's been really good for us to do sustainability programming and to do some of these sustainability projects out in the community. So I do know that it's been successful from a fun generation point of view. I don't know if I would. I would rather people not use the bags at all. But I mean, so it's, I think that it has lowered the amount of people that use the bags as well as

generated a revenue source. So I don't know how much it is, and what was the follow up question? MRad? If we can bring it all together, right? So right now, there is not a program to take all of the plastic bags and to give you a refund for them. Though, there are places in which, at the local grocery store, or for places that when you gather those bags, there are recycling programs at most grocery stores that will take those plastic bags, and I can tell you where they go. What ends up happening is that a company comes called TRex usually comes and will pick that material up into a factory or plant in Winchester, Virginia, where it is turned into lumber, like a lumber a compost lumber program, and they use that to, you know, build decks and other it turns into a construction material.

52:35

It is just amazing what they can turn things into. It went from a plastic bag to your backyard deck. It's amazing.

52:42

That was pretty cool.

52:43

And Katie, who's also supporting us behind the scenes, she just put a link in the chat. So if you're interested in learning more about the plastic bag tax, follow that link that Katie put in. And yep, actually it looks like it went to host some panelists. If we get that to go to everyone, then that would be great. So just repost that to everyone. Next there we go. Thanks, Katie.

53:10

Next question. Oh, we're go. We're going back to organics. I think we're just going to keep back and forth. You're triggering people to come up with more questions. So it's not just about having enough space for a compost bin, but there's also a bit of an odor that can go with the organics. You know you're throwing food scraps in with. You know what? You know, maybe there's yard waste, whatnot. Did you know, especially for homeowners who have to, who are required to keep their cans in their garages, maybe an HOA requirement to keep the can and the garage can't have it exposed. Have we? Have we thought that far have do we have ways to address that issue?

53:49

Absolutely. So that's part of kind of what we're talking about is we understand that there is a concern for odor, for other vectors, or vermin or smell there, you know, there's a concern for this. So a way to combat that is more consistent pickup, right? Either having, you know, we can pick up once a week, we can pick up, pick up twice a week. We can pick up. We can, you know, have a smaller bin. Or, you know, you can have the ability to put your food waste in a compostable bag, certain, certain compostable bags to help keep the smell down. You know, there's opportunity, and that's something that we're considering, and that's why we want to make sure that it's also in a plastic or inside of a bin. Is to keep, you know, you know, rats, vermin and mice from getting to the food waste, right? So we want to make sure that we're protecting it. So that is a concern, and that's something that we're talking about. So it's either we can pick it up more consistently, or we make sure that we have the opportunity that, you know, to close the lid, to keep the smell in to a container.

55:02

And I think that also addresses another comment that came in with with bugs. So it's not only odor, but in vermin and pests, it's, it's, you know, it's, you get the creepy crawlies too. So, yeah, I think you're, you're addressing all of those issues, that it's definitely going to be part of the plan,

55:19

Something we're considering when we know it's an issue, and we know that, you know, there are communities that do this, and we want to mirror kind of what they're doing to minimize the amount of those issues, but, but so just, just thought that out there, we want to make sure that, you know, we're given residents options, and that we're addressing those and we know it's a concern, so we, you know, we hear that, and we're working to address it.

55:42

Can you explain again about the Unified Sanitation Districts? There's a question about not quite understanding how it's going to reduce the the overall pickup, the number of trucks coming down the street, because if they still have to go to all of the houses, but I think it has to do with the number of collection haulers, the the different companies that might have to come down the streets. Can you explain that again?

56:12

No problem. So an easy way to think about this is that right now, in Fairfax County, just imagine. We'll just do a thought exercise, a hypothetical that you live on a cul de sac, and there are five houses on that cul de sac, right? Those five houses could all have a different waste collector. So those individuals that waste collector, one truck can drive down that street, pick up one house, one day a week, and then leave. And then that same day, another truck comes up and picks up one house and then leaves. And the same day, a third guy comes and picks up that one house and then leaves. So and this happens with multiple streams. So not only do they pick up your waste that way, they pick up your recycling that way. They pick up your yard waste that way. So, so you went from, you know, the opportunity for one truck to go to each house and pick it all up in one day, as opposed to three different, four different, five different trucks driving down one neighborhood to pick up one house individually, and all of the travel time all the houses they drive past that they don't pick up is the efficiency that we're talking about gaining.

57:29

Wonderful. There was a quick question, if we if you know, if Charlottesville is considered a unified district, they seem to operate like you were describing. I'm not sure if you know that off the top of your head.

57:43

I do not know off the side top of my head. I do know that. I mean, they're Arlington works this way. Where they have, they have county collection, we would bid our collection out to, you know, the hauling community, because we're so large. But you know, they have a one hauler group where they go out Arlington does so. And there are some other municipalities, especially, like in San Francisco, San Jose,

they have a unified Sanitation Districts where they have one contractor come and pick all their stuff up. But I do not know about Charlottesville.

58:21

And say some of the the HOAs may, you know as that, that neighborhood, that whoever's under the HOA may contract as a whole currently Correct?

58:30

Right. So, so that's actually even a better way to think about it. So instead of, um, so right now, most people in Fairfax County have an HOA, but not most people there. A lot of people have an HOA where they the HOA negotiates for the price of however many homes, 100 homes, 150 homes, or even down to 15 homes. And that's their negotiating power. And that the holler the collector will come in and pick those up. Fairfax County's talking about, instead of having it be an HOA of 100 homes, having it being an HOA of 10,000 homes, having an HOA of a lot, or having a having a collector bid on the size, a significantly larger size, to pick up efficiencies so that there's not as much travel time. There's not windshield time of driving from place to place. They just go and pick it up until they're full, then move on to the next one.

59:26

All right, we have a another question about the fees, they want to understand. I see so just clarifying that there are going to be some sort of controls at the county level that prevent those fees from being diverted to other initiatives. So if this zero waste fee comes into play, part of that I don't know if I'd want to call it legislation, but the policy itself will delineate how those fees can and cannot be used? Is that correct?

1:00:02

Yes, absolutely. That is guaranteed. The Zero Waste fee will be used for zero waste measures and solid waste management. You know, it'll be used inside of the solid waste management specific to it. It's very much like so when you pay your wastewater or your when you pay your water bill, and there's a wastewater charge as associated to it, that that wastewater bill, the water or the what you pay for your wastewater only can be used. Your sewer bill can only be used for wastewater, for sewer assets, activities, capital construction. It only can be used for that. It's very much the same here. This zero waste fee can only be used for solid waste management activities.

1:00:54

And one other question on the fees, how are the average fees per household expected to compare to current household expenditures on solid waste management in the county.

1:01:06

So we're expecting right now that there to be a 20% decrease, roughly about a 20% decrease, well up to a 20% decrease in the overall cost. So the right now, the average person in Fairfax County pays anywhere between, you know, five to \$600 a year on what they're spending on their waste collection services. So through these efficiencies, we believe that they will pay anywhere. I mean, they'll pay 20% less than that on average.

1:01:42

Okay, how can you implement a mandatory program on HOAs that have covenants that require providing garbage services through The HOA fees?

1:02:00

Right. So that is a concern that but so what ends up happening is the the county, by my understanding, is that when this is enacted by the board, the county government supersedes the those HOA covenants, and then it becomes that pretty much the county has that authority to do so. Understanding Now I may have to get more clarification, but that's my understanding. I'm not an attorney.

1:02:39

Okay, going back to unified Sanitation Districts, won't you have to contract to several companies to for collection. They're not sure if there's, you know, just one company that could cover all the homes and all the businesses.

1:02:55

So that's very astute. That's a that's actually a good observation. We are imagining that it will be multiple haulers. There will be multiple collectors, not not, you know, and they're right now in Fairfax County, there's, I think there's 24 different collectors that all operate within Fairfax County's borders. But, you know, of varying different sizes. You know, there's some large companies, there's some small companies, we think that there's going to be several different vendors voting, bidding on different Sanitation Districts. And we'd like to, you know, we want to make sure that we give everybody an opportunity to be able to bid on some of these projects. So, yeah, that's true. I don't think it'll be one collector. I think it'll be multiple collectors.

1:03:42

And then secondary to that question, same person, you would basically be moving customer service of every homeowner to the county office that would handle any of the calls of pickup problems, any daily issues with collection. Is that correct? Correct?

1:04:00

So those would come to us. So that way, that we could contractually the, that way, when there are issues, then we, when we go out and, you know, we can investigate, you know, say, just for example, there's a missed pickup, you know, your trash was left on a curb. Uh, we can go out and send someone out to investigate, see what happened. If there is an issue where, you know, the waste collectors not doing what they're supposed to be doing, they're, you know, consistently not picking up your waste, then we can hold them accountable based on the contract for liquidated damages, so then we can incentivize them to do the best job possible.

1:04:42

And we have a commercial business question, will you be working with restaurants? Or how will you work with restaurants and smaller carryout places to encourage and help them to maybe stop using plastic and Styrofoam? Or is, you know, some sort of, uh program to address the various materials.

1:05:04

So again, I mean a lot of those materials, the way we're thinking about it is that we're incentivizing those restaurants. We're incentivizing those businesses to to use the more expensive it is to throw away waste that they're for their trash is the more expensive it is. It that's the incentive to shift gears to a more sustainable option, right? If you're paying significantly more for waste than you are for recycling or compost, these businesses should change. They will likely change their business model to include some of these, these items, because it's more profitable for them to do so if trash becomes very expensive. And we've, you know, given them alternatives. We've given them education about what they're supposed to be doing. We're enforcing some of these rules, enforcing, you know, county changes and some of these Zero Waste initiatives on businesses. Then we're incentivizing them to change their business model, so that they, you know, change the type of material that they're spent. They're putting out using more sustainable options, like reusable dishware, reusable cookware, that sort of stuff, so that individuals stop throwing it away.

1:06:19

In addition to that, would you say you mentioned the expanding the list of recyclable material that's accepted? So some of these may fall into the newly expanded list, correct?

1:06:32

Yep, absolutely.

1:06:34

So there's a two to play there, right? Like reducing the use of certain materials that aren't recyclable. But then with the expanded list, some of those may actually be captured and be recycled.

1:06:44

That's true

1:06:45

I like that. Oh, we have some, you know, community engagement questions for you. Matt. First up, you would the county be willing to have folks come out and talk to HOAs to explain these new strategies and how they are going to be implemented?

1:07:08

Absolutely. I mean, we're always willing to come out once this is approved, or once we understand kind of what we're doing from the board, once the board has given us direction as to what we are going to do, or how we're going to approach the zero waste issue, then that'll definitely be part of that engagement process, to go out into the community and to educate as many people and to answer as many questions as humanly possible about what these strategies mean, what the timeline is for them when we expect these things To change, like for example, in a unified Sanitation Districts. If the board, if the Board of Supervisors, voted tomorrow that we were going to move this way, we couldn't do anything for five years. Legislatively, by law in Virginia, we cannot change any of the Sanitation Districts. We cannot move to a unified Sanitation District for a minimum of five years. So, so, yeah, so

we've got five years of engagement, education and outreach to some of these communities to help them better understand what we're trying to do, what it means, and how the best way moving what's the best thing to do moving forward?

1:08:18

Let me, let me double down on that, you know, the idea that there's five years before that particular strategy would be implemented. You're, you're not looking at implementing these strategies, you know, next year, like these, these are things that are going to be phased in. First they have to be approved, right? And then they will be phased in. So it's not an immediate like a light switch isn't going to be turned and everybody's going to go to zero waste. So there's a little bit of, there's some lead time in there. Let's say, right?

1:08:51

It's a good point that, you know, this is a 20 people have to remember that, and everyone needs to remember this is a 20 year plan. So this is how we get to zero waste by 2040 so, I mean, I'm committed to be along for the ride, but 2040 is a long time. So, but we plan to take steps along the way to incrementally increase our recycling rate, increase our diversion rate, increase our participation in these programs, and slowly over time, you know, change our habits, change our behavior, and you know, have alternatives to waste diversion.

1:09:28

Another engagement question, could we have tours of the recycling system or facilities in Fairfax County? There appear to be a lot of myths and and discouraging info out there. So is there a way for people to see it actually being recycled?

1:09:46

There is a way. We occasionally we do not own a Material Recovery Facility. Fairfax County does not own it right now. They are privately owned. So we have to work with our partners, our private partners that own these facilities. So there is an opportunity to do so. If you would like to be able to do that, you can contact Fairfax County's trash mail, or, you know, contact me, or contact someone inside of the webinar or leave a comment, and we can get in contact with you and try to figure out how's the best way to do that, but remember that it is possible, but we do have to partner with some of our with a private company to do that.

1:10:36

Okay, so, and I will say there are a lot of comments coming into the the question and answers, and we're not gonna be able to get to all the comments, but I want to reassure everybody that these comments will go to the county. They will see all of these. Matt is agreeing with me. You might not be see him shaking his head, yes, but yes, they they will see these comments, and they will review them. Again, all of this helps to inform them as they develop these plans and consider these strategies, because implementation, it's going to be complex, and so this is very helpful that you're providing this information. So if I don't get to every single one that's listed here, please don't think that we've ignored them. We will be seeing them, and the county will receive all of them.

1:11:26

Let me looking for some questions here. Hold on one second.

1:11:35

Oh, what about this? I think this goes back to the the unified Sanitation District. I think that's our winner on the strategy with most questions. What about trucks that pick up more than one kind of waste so they don't have to come up multiple times? So there's trucks that have the dividers that they can do recycling and compost, or recycling and trash or whatever it happens to be the combination, right?

1:12:01

So there are trucks that exist that do both things, right? You see them, especially, I saw one in San Jose that split right down the back where one side is one thing and one side is another. Honestly, those are actually not very cost efficient, because they have to be custom made to do that, or they're very they're not industry standard. And it actually works a lot better to have one giant, I mean, to have one larger truck pick up as much as they can and then, you know, move to the next spot as it as opposed to having, you know, two separate things so that you're still going to your trucks will just fill up faster. So then you have to bring another truck out. It's just more efficient and more effective to go out and have a larger size truck to be able to fit as much material in there as possible, so that you only have to show up. You can collect as much waste in the community as possible to reduce windshield or like travel time back and forth, right where you're not picking up stuff.

1:13:00

I also believe they would have to empty the truck at different facilities, depending upon

1:13:05

That's also a good point. That's more that's more travel time, where there's two different facilities, and it would make it more challenging. That's a good point.

1:13:13

Um, there's a few different comments in the questions. I'm going to try to smoosh them all together and ask a question. So bear with me, Matt, as I'm trying to compose the question based off of a few. So I think it goes back to the unified Sanitation Districts with HOAs covenants. Your the Virginia State law may supersede, you know, or doesn't supersede, HOAs rules and guidelines. So I think that might be something that needs to be dug into further.

1:13:50

Right. I think that's something we're gonna have to dig into further. I mean, that is a really good comment, that is a good question that we need to consider, or that we need to put out information to the community about what that means. It's just, you know, I currently do not have that in front of me.

1:14:06

All right, but we're going to take that information back, and that will definitely be something that will warrant further investigation. I want to give you an opportunity to to address, you know, what's so wrong with the system you have today? Because, you know, Fairfax County is doing a really good job,

right? You guys are good in the sense of your recycling rate. You are not at the bottom as a, you know, comparatively to communities across the the country. But you know it, why do we need to to make this effort to go towards more zero waste?

1:14:45

Okay, that's a good question. So, so right now, inside of Fairfax County, we generate about 1.2 million tons of waste a year. That's both recycling and municipal solid waste. So that's the waste. And, you know, gets burned and our waste to energy plant. So that was the energy plant that we're burning it in it, you know, it reduces in size. So it goes from a million ton, or from 600,000 tons, which is about how many, how much municipal solid waste we generate. It gets burned, and then it turns into ash, and that ash is disposing of our landfill. So we have a landfill, but unfortunately, even though it's at a very reduced size, eventually we're going to run out of space where you know the more that we are putting into our incinerator, into the incinerator or into our waste energy plant. If we continue to reduce our landfill space, our air, or what they call airspace, our capacity of our landfill. And when that fills up, when our landfill is full, we do not have alternatives by, you know reasonable alternatives to send it to. I mean, if you think about it, there there are no there are very few privately owned landfills or facilities in which we can take that Ash to. And there is, there aren't any properties in Fairfax County. There's no place for us to build a new one. So now we're talking about instead of, you know, the waste energy plan, or ash being disposed of right next door, the closest private owned landfills two hours away, and that's the closest one. So the cost for waste disposal, the cost of of managing waste will will grow exponentially because we have nowhere else to take it. So we're, you know, from a just from a cost perspective, just from a long term health of the community, it's going to be very expensive to get to dispose of this ash or dispose of waste once our landfill is full. So making those initial investments now, I mean, you know, they mean a lot, because that, you know, extends the life of our facilities. It extends it's better for our environment. It's better for it's more sustainable. It has better, you know, it is better climate you know, climate change, it battles climate change. These are all benefits to the community, but it's also, you know, in the long term, it gives us resiliency in the future. So we have a place for our kids to be able to, you know, our kids to be able to recycle and be sustainable. It's a solution for the future of our community, is what it's really trying to do.

1:17:44

Let me give you another mashup of questions into one question, and this has to do with how do we know the things are getting recycled? And part of this, I want to might be like a two part to that being the main one. How do we know these materials that we're going to put in a recycle bin and are actually going to get recycled? And then secondarily, do we have any statistics? Or can we will statistics be available on, you know, how much plastic is being recycled within the the county, or the various materials that are recycled within the county.

1:18:25

So right now, we know that there is material, the material that is going into the there's a certain amount of material that's going into your curbside recycling, or recycling material. There are some things that are going in there that are that come out as contaminants or residue, right? But a majority of the waste that you put in the curbside bin, we have reached out to our, you know, material recovery facilities, to our partners, our private partners, and kind of ask them where this material is going. And they, I don't

have this position in front of me, but they absolutely told us that where this stuff is going, what they're using it for. This is information that they brought back to us, right? Because this is a concern, because we know that people, there's a lot of conflicting information about what happens to material once it hits, once it's put into the recycling bin, right? So we've started asking that question, but remember that these are private industries, right? So this is, we do not Fairfax County does not own them. We have no regulatory oversight over top of them. We just, we, you know, we send them our materials, they process them and then send them off to be recycled or to they bail them and send them off to be recycled as part of our strategies. One of the things that we're talking about is having an expanded list where we invest in infrastructure, in our own materials recovery facility, so we develop our own markets, so that we know for certain, for sure, and we can put that information up and share it with the community where this stuff is going. How we're how it's being handled. Who is it going to what's it being used for? A good example of this is how we've handled glass, right? Glass, historically. I mean, everybody knows glass, for the longest time, has been put in the curbside recycling bin. I can tell you for a fact that when recycled, when people put glass in the curbside bin today, that it does not get recycled, it ends up by the time it gets to the Material Recovery Facility and sorted, it is broken into tiny pieces through the process of, you know, picking it up, putting in the back of the truck. They they crush it then to make more space, to fit more stuff on the truck. It gets dumped on the floor where it breaks again, where it's picked up with a loader, where it breaks again. It's put through a bunch of machines where it's broken again, to the point where this material turns into sand, and it's not recycled, because it's not in individual pieces, and it gets contaminated with all of these other small things that come into the material, dirt, small plastics, lids, all of this stuff gets pushed out as a residual so the glass never gets recycled. When we separate that material and people participate in the Purple bins, I can guarantee you today, 100% that anything that goes into that purple bin is sent. We pick it up, put it on it's all glass. We take it up, put it in a tractor trailer, and it goes to Pennsylvania, where it is used to make reflective paint for the roads. It's used for reflective the reflection on safety vests. It's put back into glass to make more glass. It 100% is recycled, and that's because we've separated it to make sure that those materials are being recycled and guaranteed.

1:21:57

Thank you. Thank you for that. Speaking of the different types of materials, um, obviously I can't put my couch or my mattress or my refrigerator in my curbside bin right? Um, so I believe this is where those Zero Waste centers come into play. Is that correct?

1:22:18

Yes, ma'am. So there's a couple of options here. So there's a couple of things. Well, there's, we're talking about adding what that's called bulk is things that doesn't fit in the bin. Adding bulk collection as part of the contract. That's an option, that that waste collectors will have to come out and pick up bulk. That's an option. But we're not sure if we're going to go that route. We going to, we want to make sure that bulk disposal is an option at zero waste centers, so that we can sort the waste so, you know, you bring in, you know, a wooden chair when it goes in, when it goes into the Zero Waste center, we can go all right, well, that's wood, so actually, put in the wood pile, right? We want to make sure that we're source separating it, and to make sure that individuals have the ability to be able to dispose of that waste. And there are options for individuals that don't have the ability to break it, to us, don't have the or that you can always call a collection company. You can, you know, there's junk callers, there's

individuals we don't want to put those guys out of business, so there is an opportunity for there actually to be additional business, for people to come and pick up bulk waste. So there's a couple of different options. We're not real set on one of them, but I do know for certain that I want to offer bulk disposal at convenience centers, because I think that that would be a very meaningful thing for the community to have, if they have the ability to bring it to us.

1:23:42

And Matt, one question, I think, is really where I want to get in before we run out of time. Today, we're getting close. But will part of the contract with these recycling and waste collectors? Will they be required to provide metrics of how much has been collected, what's been recycled is that going to be something that the county will require of those service providers?

1:24:07

So what will end up happening is that we'll know exactly, you know how much waste is generated, like, I won't know to the individual house, right? How much a household generates, but I'll know how much the Sanitation District generates, I'll know exactly how much is recycled, because remember, those individuals will have the contract, and they'll know they'll specifically have that contract, and they'll that'll be part of the metrics that are presented as to how much is generated in each area, how much we're recycling. And then, depending on what other strategies that we use, we can go through and determine exactly how much is being recycled. If we invest in additional murphs or material recovery facilities, as well as organic facilities or even CDD facilities, we can, you know, we can get as granular with the detail as we invest in the system. So.

1:25:00

Gotcha. And I know we only have a few minutes left, and we have a couple more slides that we're going to want to get to, but Matt, do you want to last parting thoughts?

1:25:11

And you know, I have a couple more slides on different resources that people can reach. But from your perspective, is there any thought you want to leave people with? Right? So there's a couple of things that I really want to thank everyone for coming out to the webinar and asking some really good questions. You know, given the opportunity to, you know, to talk to some of this stuff, and for individuals that you know, this is obviously a very important thing that we're moving forward to, and your participation, and participation in our programs, participation in some of the things that we're doing. And, you know, spreading the word on that is very important. So I want to thank everyone that showed up, that came to the webinar today. And the kind of the parting thing that I want to leave with is that, you know, the idea for the solid waste management plan is that we are investing in the future of our or of our community, right? We want to make sure that we have a long term strategy for minimizing waste in the community, and it's going to take a partnership between state, local and the residents all working together. Because, you know, if, if it were cheap, easy or convenient, we would have already done it. So we want to work together moving forward, to be able to try to tackle this monumental task and to reach that 90% diversion goal, because it's good for the environment, it's good for the organization and it's good for the community.

1:26:40

Well, I want to thank you, Matt for giving us a great overview of these proposed strategies. If we could advance the slide one, I want to remind people that there's still time to take the survey. The deadline is september 30, so the end of this month, if you haven't had a chance to take it. It takes about 10-15, minutes to complete the survey. I know you can't click on the link on your screen. You can scan the QR code on your screen and take it right there on your phone. Or, like we said, we're going to be sharing out the slides that'll have the link. You can go to the county website. You can go to the Engage Fairfax County website, or you can click on the link that Maggie just put in the chat and go to take that survey. I also highly, highly encourage you join the mailing list. You've taken the time to be here today to listen to these proposed strategies. So keep getting informed the mailing list, they will give you updates on different activities, best practices. They'll give you updates on the board of supervisors, as they have the public hearing and the approval process. So please join the mailing list. Keep informed. More information is going to be coming out as the plan evolves.

1:28:07

And if we go to the next slide again, these are all different links that are existing resources for you right now. There's the recycling and trash web page, and I believe Maggie is a rock star. They're in the chat as well. So you can the recycling and trash web page, Fairfax recycles newsletter web page, the Engage Fairfax County web page, and then there's that trash mail, at which I love that email address, trash, mail at Fairfax county.gov, that gives you a chance. If you have additional questions or the current services that you have, you have a resource for your your ideas and your questions.

1:28:58

I believe that our last slide is the Thank you. Slide And again, the recording of this webinar and the slide deck are going to be on that engage dot Fairfax county.gov, you might want to bookmark that in your in your laptop or in your your cell phone, so that you can go back there and get additional information. Sign up for the newsletter, take the survey, all sorts of good stuff. I thank you for sticking around with us for an hour and a half. It has been very informational. Hopefully you found it informational as well. Stay tuned for more stuff coming out of Fairfax County, but for now, I bid you a good night. Be safe, be happy, and we'll talk more soon.