



STATE OF WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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March 24, 2022

Jennifer Hayden
Environmental Health Supervisor
Whatcom County Health Department
509 Girard Street
Bellingham, Washington 98225

**RE: Whatcom County Comprehensive Solid and Hazardous Management Plan, Docket
TG-220144**

Dear Jennifer Hayden:

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) has completed its review of the Whatcom County Regional Solid Waste System (County) 2022 through 2027 Comprehensive Solid and Hazardous Waste Management Plan (Plan).

The Plan states residents are served by two privately owned transfer stations and one county owned transfer station leased and operated by a private company. Augmenting the transfer stations are four privately owned drop-box sites. The Plan states “private operators adjust their rates as necessary to maintain services.” The solid waste is then transported out of Whatcom County for final disposal. As such, rate changes are controlled by market conditions and competition between sites. The County does not propose to increase tip fees between 2022 and 2027.

The County Plan indicates no ordinances mandated collection of recycling and organic materials. It explains these are optional paid services in many areas of the County and see high utilization by residents. Approximately 90 percent of residents have recycling service, using the three-bin source separated recycling.

The County has considered switching to a comingled recycling collection. While the Plan states that comingled collection might be cheaper immediately, the potential of reducing the quality of recycled materials outweighed the benefits. Combined with the ongoing success of the current system, comingled collection was not implemented.

Like recyclables, the diversion of organic waste from the solid waste stream is offered on a subscription basis provided by Commission regulated haulers. The County does not currently

provide financial support directly to collection programs but has supported education around food waste and composting. The County has also given grants to startup non-profit organizations diverting food from the waste system. The Plan states these programs have been successful in significantly reducing organic waste from small businesses and helped local food banks.

Commission Staff finds no financial rate impact to ratepayers served by regulated solid waste collection companies in Whatcom County and has no further comments on the Plan.

Please direct questions or comments about the Commission's plan review process to Benjamin Sharbono at (360) 664-1242 or benjamin.sharbnono@utc.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Amanda Maxwell
Executive Director and Secretary

cc: Carolyn Bowie
Department of Ecology
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