PORTLAND METRO SIMPLIFIES HAULER REPORTING WITH RE-TRAC CONNECT

METRO

OVERVIEW

Metro serves more than 1.5 million people across the Portland tri-county area. It plans and oversees the region's solid waste system by working with local communities and industry partners to reduce waste while managing garbage, recycling and composting in a safe, healthy, and cost effective manner.

It owns and operates two trash and recycling stations, hazardous waste facilities, and collects material recovery data from haulers serving the region's waste shed.

REDUCE WASTE
WHILE MANAGING GARBAGE, RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING IN A SAFE, HEALTHY, AND COST-EFFECTIVE MANNER.

CENTRALIZED DATA
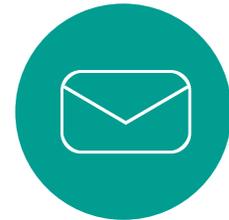
ENHANCED COMMUNICATION
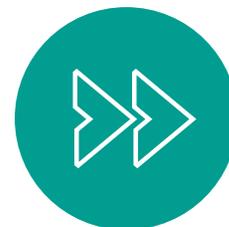
STREAMLINED DATA COLLECTION

The Challenge

Prior to Re-TRAC Connect™, each local government in the region collected recovery data from their haulers using paper forms. The resulting forms were emailed or physically mailed to Metro so its staff could enter the data into a Microsoft Access database.

While collecting data from local governments, Metro used a separate process to collect hauler data to fulfill statutory requirements by submitting the reports to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Even though the data was essentially the same hauler data collected from local governments, it needed to be aggregated by wasteshed (and not by jurisdiction) before submitting to the DEQ. Merging these two data collection processes seemed impossible due to the differences in reporting formats and aggregation.

Metro needed a better solution. The process of collecting forms from local governments then entering them into the Access database was labor intensive. In addition to collecting data from local governments, Metro had to commit even more staff time to prepare the report for Oregon DEQ.

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The Solution

Metro first learned about Re-TRAC Connect at the Association of Oregon Recycler's Annual Conference. In the spring of 2013, Metro and local governments determined that a consistent reporting platform would benefit both haulers and local jurisdictions.

The local governments requested that Metro lead the transition from a multi-format reporting system to the web-based system. Metro then entered into a contract with Re-TRAC Connect to build and maintain an online reporting system for the region and convened a work group comprised of local jurisdictions to guide the development and implementation of the system.

The work group consolidated the reporting form by building consensus around regional terms and definitions. The resulting terms and definitions were shared with haulers during workshops and continue to be accessible via the Regional Material Collection Database in Re-TRAC Connect.

Their effort to build regional consistency made a big difference and while it's difficult to measure the extent to which the quality of the data has improved, Metro and regional partners believe it has.

Metro focused on local government reporting because it seemed like the easier problem to solve. However, Metro soon learned that the data entered into Re-TRAC Connect could be formatted and submitted in a way that met DEQ's reporting requirements, which meant that the system satisfied both the quarterly and annual reporting needs. The resulting regional system is known as Metro's Regional Materials Collection Database.

> " The resulting terms and definitions were shared with haulers during workshops and continue to be accessible. "

The Results

By using Re-TRAC Connect, Metro and its regional program managers save a significant amount of administration time. The entire data collection process is streamlined to optimize efficiencies at both levels. All 55 haulers in the region are using the system and local governments are reporting 100% hauler participation.

Haulers seem to like Re-TRAC Connect and so far, Metro has not received any complaints about using the new system. Regional program managers now rely on Re-TRAC's analytics to perform the data analysis. With Re-TRAC, they generate reports to aggregate their jurisdiction's data, verify the accuracy, and then approve it before submitting to Metro.

Metro's program manager saves time too. Since Metro is required to submit aggregated hauler data to the Oregon DEQ, the program manager simply generates a report from Re-TRAC to aggregate the data by hauler and exports it to a PDF format that meets state requirements.

In this way, data is seamlessly passed from regional administrators, to Portland Metro, and finally to Oregon DEQ in much less time than its former system.

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- Rosalynn Greene, Policy Analyst and Program Evaluator
METRO REGIONAL GOVERNMENT