



## Request for City Council Committee Action From the Department of Public Works

**Date:** March 31, 2009  
**To:** Honorable Sandra Colvin Roy, Chair Transportation and Public Works Committee  
**Referral to:** Honorable Paul Ostrow, Chair Ways and Means/Budget Committee  
**Subject:** **Pilot Program to collect organic materials for composting**

**Recommendation:**

1. Expand the pilot program to collect Source Separated Organic materials (SSO).
2. Purchase specialized composting mobile refuse containers (MRC's, or "garbage carts") manufactured by Otto Systems.
3. Utilize a portion of the Fund Balance of Solid Waste and Recycling Services to support the balance of the pilot program.

**Previous Directives:**

September, 2007, Begin Linden Hills Pilot Program with Schaeffer carts

**Prepared by:** Susan Young, Solid Waste and Recycling Services, 673-2433

**Approved by:**

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Steven A. Kotke, PE, City Engineer, Director of Public Works

**Presenters:** Susan Young, Solid Waste and Recycling Services

**Reviews:** Permanent Review Committee (PRC): Not Applicable  
Civil Rights Affirmative Action Plan: Not Applicable  
Policy review Group (PRG): Not Applicable

**Financial Impact**

No Financial Impact

**Community Impact**

<b>Neighborhood Notification:</b>	NA
<b>City Goals:</b>	NA
<b>Comprehensive Plan:</b>	Consistent
<b>Zoning Code:</b>	Not Applicable

**Background/Supporting Information**

Minneapolis has long been a leader in solid waste management activities and has piloted innovative programs that have anticipated regulatory mandates and which have resulted in outstanding services to our customers and positive environmental benefits. Minneapolis has, therefore, been able to develop operational methods that are cost-effective and convenient for our customers, and which seamlessly integrate new regulatory mandates into our solid wastes management system.

The State of Minnesota and Hennepin County have been encouraging the separate collection and composting of home organic wastes (Source Separated Organics, or SSO) as the next significant step in commercial and residential wastes reduction. SSO include wastes such as food scraps, pizza boxes, paper

towels, non-recyclable papers, etc. SSO are considered to be the largest component of the waste stream that can be diverted for a "recycling" (compost) management option, and so aid the state in meeting its 50% waste reduction goals. Hennepin County has a special tipping fee of \$15.00 per ton (as opposed to a garbage tipping fee of \$41/ton) for SSO, to encourage cities and haulers to initiate SSO collection programs. Minneapolis has assisted Hennepin County and several school districts in pilot organics collections programs. Minneapolis also required analysis of the pounds and percents of SSO in the joint City-County Recyclables Research project, and found that, depending on demographic makeup, 30 – 40 % of Minneapolis garbage, by weight, is SSO.

In September, 2008 a pilot program for collection of SSO began in the Linden Hills Neighborhood. The Linden Hills Neighborhood, with approximately 4,500 households in the side of the City served by a contract hauler, was the location of the first pilot program because of strong neighborhood support, synergy with the efforts of a neighborhood non-profit organization (Linden Hills Power and Light) which is seeking ways for the Neighborhood to reduce its environmental footprint, and support by the Council Member. A cart, manufactured by Schaeffer Systems, SSI, is being used in this pilot. An original supply of compostable bags was given to residents. The County has been an enthusiastic supporter of the program through technical assistance, continued support of the lower SSO tipping fee, and a \$76,800 grant.

Initial results of the pilot are promising, and include:

- Virtually every block in the pilot program has at least one Block Captain
- 42% of the neighborhood residents are participating in the Pilot program
- An average of 3 tons of SSO per week are being collected
- Operational changes have been made as a result of experience, and the two trucks initially required for the route have been reduced to one
- Residents are purchasing and using compostable bags in their carts and are finding less costly "wrapping" alternatives
- The "quality" of the SSO from the residents is very good, with little contamination

A less positive aspect of the pilot has been that the Schaeffer Carts are experiencing significant predation by squirrels and other sharp-toothed critters. This damage is more pronounced than is experienced with our existing grey, Otto carts.

We are currently spending approximately \$1,200 per week for SSO-only collection costs in the Linden Hills neighborhood. Approximately 3 tons of organics are being collected each week, with 43% of the residents signed up for the program. The tipping fee for the 3 tons of organics per week is \$45; 3 tons of garbage tipped at HERC would cost \$123. The grant with Hennepin County, which restricts the current pilot to only SSO, ends in September. The report analyzing the results will be provided to Committee in mid-October. It is anticipated that a more cost effective program will result when yard wastes can be co-collected with the SSO; that analysis will be included with the October report.

It is requested that Solid Waste and Recycling Services be authorized to expand the pilot program into additional neighborhoods. It is proposed that a neighborhood with similar demographics to Linden Hills but with a less intensive organization effort be included to determine the effect of Compost Captains, and it is proposed that a neighborhood with a higher rental population on the "City collection" side be included to better compare tonnages of SSO, garbage and recycling before and after the pilot project begins. It is also requested that SW & R purchase 2,500 Otto Yard waste carts so an evaluation can be made about whether this organics cart is more difficult for critters to damage than the Schaeffer carts (used in the Linden Hills pilot). The cost of the carts is estimated to be approximately \$115,000. The expanded program is expected to cost approximately an additional \$1200 per week, which can be funded from existing appropriations in Solid Waste and Recycling Services. Since additional carts will be needed for this pilot, testing an alternate design is appropriate. The additional Solid Waste and Recycling Worker FTE previously authorized will be sufficient to also staff the expanded pilot areas. It is requested that an appropriation from the Solid Waste and Recycling Fund be authorized to purchase the Otto carts; the fund has sufficient balance for this purchase.