

## Local Government Consensus Update to RSC July 21, 2020

- Sarah Grimm, Lane County
- Scott Keller, League of Oregon Cities
- Pam Peck, Metro
- Timm Schimke, Association of Oregon Counties
- Bruce Walker, City of Portland

### The Past & Present:

1. Oregon is a national leader in recycling. Oregonians value the environmental benefits of recycling and established state policies in the 1980's and 1990's.
2. Our local recycling programs were developed when most products were manufactured in the United States and only a few items were packaged in plastic.
  - This system worked well for many years, but recycling programs now face major challenges and increasing costs.
3. The items we put in our recycling bins today are part of a complex international manufacturing and supply system. The rapid increase in new types of plastic packaging, often with misleading or inaccurate recycling labels, has made recycling more confusing for the public.
  - Contamination has devastating environmental and social impacts on end market communities and has resulted in a rapid rise in system costs.
  - This has been particularly hard for communities that also pay to transport the materials they collect to distant processing facilities.
4. Residents and businesses pay the cost to sort recyclables but have little influence on how those dollars could be used to invest in and modernize the system.
  - Local programs have no control over how and where items are recycled.
  - We cannot assure residents and businesses that materials are properly sorted and recycled responsibly when they travel to markets outside the United States.
5. While residents can buy less stuff and reuse what they have, consumer brands, packaging producers and plastics manufacturers hold the most power to influence change.
  - Experience and history have shown that we cannot rely on voluntary industry commitments – additional requirements or regulations may be necessary to obligate packaging producers to make good on their promises to the public.

## Vision and Next Steps

6. These challenges are not unique to Oregon, but we have once in a generation opportunity to develop a unique response that is grounded in Oregon’s 2050 Vision for responsible materials management. A recycling system that:
  - a. Helps us reduce waste, use fewer resources and protect the environment
  - b. Provides clean materials to manufacturers and ensures materials are recycled responsibly in ways that do not burden end-market communities with plastics, air or water pollution
  - c. Is resilient and able to adapt over the next 30 years as economic conditions, manufacturing practices, consumer preferences, and products and packaging change
  - d. Is transparent and accountable to communities across the state
  - e. Provides convenient and equitable access opportunities for residents to participate in the system, including those who live in rural communities and multifamily homes
  - f. Advances equity and economic opportunity for local, Oregon and Northwest businesses, and businesses owned by people of color
  - g. Supports safe, living wage jobs and opportunities for worker advancement and workforce development, and
  - h. Has stable system financing that meets the needs of today and supports the capital investments needed to adapt to change.
7. The local government representatives on the committee have had several discussions to develop a concept for consideration by the full RSC.
  - We recognize the critical importance of having the entire RSC involved in the consensus process and the difficulty of doing this in an era of virtual/remote meetings.
  - There is much that all of us – the entire RSC – already agree upon. And where we may not have initial consensus, we hope that local governments can serve as a bridge of the public interest of our communities and elected leaders, the state/DEQ, our industry partners (haulers and processors) and end-markets.
  - It is time for us to be bold in modernizing our system – to keep what is working well and propose solutions to what is no longer effective. The status quo works well for many years – but global changes suggest it is time to consider broader system changes for the next 30-40 years.