Kittitas County Transfer Station Relocation Project

Purpose: this document lists Kittitas County's responses to common questions and concerns regarding the Kittitas County Transfer Station Relocation project. For more information, please visit https://kittitascountytransferstation.participate.online/.

The current site

Q: What size is your current site?

A: The current site is approximately 10 acres.

Q: Can you make the current site work? Could the flooding issues be mitigated through dikes?

A: Building stormwater berms/dikes is not allowed per County ordinance, and the current site is not large enough to accommodate future growth.

Q: How many times has the existing transfer station experienced floods?

A: The transfer station has been completely closed due to flooding approximately five times since opening in 2000. The composting and white goods areas have been closed more frequently than that. In addition, during other flooding events, the facility has remained open. However, temporary detour measures are used to keep customer traffic flowing to the transfer station.

Q: If the US 97/Old Highway 10 site can be mitigated for flooding, why can't the current site be mitigated for flooding and expanded?

A: The entire existing transfer station and composting site are located adjacent to Wilson Creek and are within the 100-year floodplain. Topographically, the existing site is at a low elevation relative to the surrounding floodplain. During spring thaw and heavy rain events, the facility is often flooded, impacting many access roads, unloading areas, and operational areas. Due to existing site constraints, there are few options to mitigate flooding at the site and all would be cost prohibitive. Additionally, the existing site has limited area to expand or construct adequate storm water facilities. Current site limitations frequently cause long wait times and safety issues at the unloading zones.

The US 97/Old Highway 10 site sits topographically at a much higher elevation relative to the surrounding floodplain and it has been determined that the existing minor floodplain channels can be relocated with little impact to the new site development and existing floodplain network. Upstream contributory area for the existing minor floodplain channels is small and relocating the channels will not require an extensive hydrology study. Additionally, the site is large enough to accommodate appropriate storm water facilities and to handle projected waste and recycling tonnages.

Q: Has splitting up operations been considered? For example, keeping some operations at the current location and moving some operations such as composting to another location?

A: The County evaluated splitting the transfer and compost operations and determined the cost of operating two separate operations would be more costly than operating at one location.

Q: Can a land swap be done with neighboring property so the current station could be enlarged and made to work?

A: The current site is located in a floodplain and needs to be relocated. Adjacent properties are located in the same floodplain and would be prone to flooding as well.

Q: Could you just add another scale at the current site to separate the commercial trucks from the rest of the traffic?

A: Adding another scale at the current transfer station would eliminate the issue with the rest of site traffic before the scalehouse. However, commercial vehicles would still need to wait in line with other customers (i.e. self haulers) to enter the transfer building.

Q: How many heavy trucks (transfer trucks) are leaving the transfer station per day?

A: Currently three to four transfer vehicles per day are transferred to the landfill for final disposal. In 2040, the number is anticipated to increase to five to six transfer vehicles per day.

Q: Is there a lease at the current transfer station site? What happens to the property when you move?

A: Kittitas County currently leases the current site from the City of Ellensburg. It will be returned to the city.

Q: Can information about how many people are currently and projected to use the transfer station be posted on the website?

A: The Basis of Design report is located on the website and includes information on current and projected customers, tonnages, and material quantities.

Q: More than one entrance and exit lane are needed at the new site for drop-offs.

A: The additional entrance and exit lane will allow customers access to the recycling area without crossing the scale house, thereby minimizing potential conflicts and long wait times.

Q: Will the new station be enclosed? Or open like the current one?

A: The proposed new station will be designed as an enlcosed facility.

Q: Do you have data on where customers are currently coming from? If so, has this been taken into account?

A: The County does not have tabulated data on where self-haul customers are currently coming from. However, based on population density and operational knowledge, we assume that a majority of customers reside in the Ellensburg area.

Siting Process

Q: Are you looking at "economic impact to neighbors" or impacts to house values, land values, county airport development plans, and future leasing potential as criteria?

A: The current proposed seconday screening criteria does not directly include these criteria. However, the criterion, "Proximity to existing and future residential neighborhoods", accounts for the impact to neighbors, and indirectly includes economic impact (based on proximity).

Q: How are you going to value/weight your criteria?

A: The project team will utilize input received from the public at the community meeting and online to determine value/weights of each criteria. In addition, project team members (County and City of Ellensburg staff) as well as Solid Waste Advisory Committee members will provide input on the weighting criteria.

New site size

Q: What is the acreage of all three potential sites?

A: The Cement Plant site is on a 58-acre parcel, the Tjossem Road site is on a 188-acre parcel, and the US 97/Old Highway 10 site is on a 54-acre parcel. All three potential sites have the minimum 25 acres required for the facility. If a site is chosen, the County will negotiate with potential land owners for a minimum 25-acre parcel.

Q: Does the 25 acres layout include a buffer? If so, what is the size of that buffer?

A: The Basis of Design report developed facility sizing requirements for facilities to be located at the new site, including the scalehouse, transfer building, compost operations, Moderate Risk Waste facility, recycling drop-off area, administration building, employee, truck, and trailer parking areas, and onsite roads. The conceptual layouts include a 50-foot buffer.

Q: How many acres of asphalt will be at the new site? Will all 25 acres be paved?

A: On-site roads and parking areas will be paved as well as operational areas at the compost facility. The exact amount of paved area depends on the design of the station.

Roads and infrastructure

Q: Are infrastructure upgrades to roads used by transfer station traffic being included in the conceptual cost estimates of the potential sites?

A: The conceptual cost estimates include costs to upgrade nearby roads at each site that service the proposed facility.

Q: The railroad is right near the current site. Have you looked at utilizing it to haul trash and commodities away?

A: The cost to develop rail loading and unloading infrastructure is prohibitive for the amount of waste being sent to the landfill. The County currently transfers municipal solid waste to the Wenatchee Landfill which has capacity for another 75+ years.

Water-related concerns

Q: What is the depth of ground water at the three potential sites? And is that a potential impact?

A: The depth to groundwater at the three proposed sites is shallow. Shallow groundwater depths will impact site development cost by requiring import of structural fill to raise the tipping building to allow loading of tranfer trailers.

Q: If the motivation for moving is flooding, what is the potential for flooding on these three sites? What is the recent history of flooding at the three potential sites?

A: The project team utilized FEMA floodplain mapping to identify potential sites. If a potential site had less than 25 acres outside the 100-year floodplain, the site was removed from further consideration. Based upon available floodplain information, the Cement Plant site (58-acre parcel) and the Tjossem Road site (188-acre parcel) both have over 25 acres of usable connected land outside of the 100-year floodplain. The US 97/Old Highway 10 site (54-acre parcel) has 25 acres of land outside the 100-year floodplain but will require a minor floodplain channel relocation to create the continuous 25-acre area for the new facility. Flooding impacts are not anticipated with a new facility outside and above existing 100-year floodplain networks. The new facility will be appropriately designed and constructed to handle all site storm water demands.

Q: The Tjossem Road and Cement plant sites are further away from domestic wells. Is this a consideration given potential impacts to groundwater?

A: The transfer station and compost facility will have a leachate collection system to manage contact water and a storm water collection system to control impact to ground water.

Q: Has rain and snow runoff been taken into account and will it contaminate nearby surface water?

A: On-site stormwater flow will be conveyed via channels and culverts to lined stormwater retentions ponds. The site will comply with all stormwater management requirements including the development and implementation of a stormwater management plan.

Sight and smell related concerns

Q: Would the new transfer station be seen from the freeway or have odor issues?

A: Due to the expected height of the building, the facility would likely be seen from the freeway if it were built at any of the sites. However, the new station will have architectural features to address visual and odor concerns.

Costs/next steps

Q: Has the county begun property negotiations with the private site owners?

A: No. The county has asked property owners if they are willing to sell, but has not begun any discussions about purchase.

Q: Did you look at tax information to determine values of properties in question?

A: The project team utilized the County's Geographic Information System (GIS) database to identify and evaluate properties. The GIS database includes land values from the county's Tax Assessor office for each property.

Q: How will the project be financed?

A: The Kittitas County solid waste program operates as an enterprise fund and revenue is generated by charging tipping (dumping) fees at the Cle Elum and Ellensburg Transfer Stations.

Portions of the tipping fees have already been set aside to pay for a new facility, but that isn't enough. In addition, the County will likely use other financing mechanisms to develop the facility.

Q: How would you pay for the private property? Would you end up with a mortgage? Is there other funding available?

A: The County is considering various funding options for purchasing land and development costs.

Q: Will property taxes be raised to pay for the new facility?

A: No. Property taxes are not used to operate the current system and property taxes will not be raised to pay for the new facility. The facility will be financed by using portions of the tipping fee and other financing methods.

Other

Q: Why were there not sites considered east of town?

A: As part of the intial screening, the project team identified a number of potential sites east of town. Potential sites located near Kittitas were eliminated because of the long travel distance for a majority of facility users (within the City of Ellensburg area). In addition, sites east of Ellensburg were eliminated due to lack of utilities (water and sewer).

Q: What services are you looking to add or decrease? Recycling only milk jugs and pop bottles does not provide enough plastic recycling options.

A: The proposed new facility will have a dedicated recycling drop-off area located before the scale house to allow customers to unload material for free (same as the current facility). The County will continualy evaluate potential new mateials to add to the drop-off areas.

Q: What will the environmental review process be for this project?

A: The environmental review process will be in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The County will obtain applicable local, state and federal permits.

Q: Has a traffic study been completed? Is the traffic study available to review?

A: A traffic study will be conducted during the permitting/environmental permitting process. To estimate projected traffic flows to and from the facility, the project team assumed a 30-year design life, population projections prepared by Washington State's Office of Financial Management, and 2015 and 2016 existing scale house traffic data to perform conceptual design of the facility. This information is summarized in the draft December 2016 Basis of Design (BOD) report which is located on the project's website.