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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Works
Report: #2025-INFO-78
Date: October 24, 2025

Subject:

Update on the Cart-based Waste Collection Pilot Expansion

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Regional Municipality of Durham (Region) Council on its direction for staff to investigate and report back on expanding automatic cart-based waste collection beyond the current automated cart-based residential garbage collection pilot (Pilot) project area.

2. Background

2.1 Beginning in July 2024, staff conducted the Pilot on two waste collection routes; one located in the Town of Ajax and one in the Township of Scugog. The Pilot utilized a borrowed, fully automated collection vehicle for the collection of garbage.

2.2 At the March 26, 2025 meeting, Regional Council approved [Report #2025-WR-2](#) providing an update on the Pilot and directed staff to adopt a fully automated cart collection system for garbage and organics when new residential waste collection contracts are procured.

- 2.3 Based on the success of the Pilot, Regional Council approved Works Committee's additional recommendation to [Report #2025-WR-2](#) directing staff to "investigate and report back on the feasibility and costs of continuing the current pilot program in the Town of Ajax and the Township of Scugog locations, as well as what the costs would be to expand the pilot program to the rest of the Region's waste collection areas within the existing contractual framework(s)."
- 2.4 The current Pilot is based on the collection contractor borrowing a fully automated waste collection vehicle from another municipal contract for a pilot only. This arrangement is not sustainable on a go forward basis and a fully automated waste collection vehicle will no longer be available to the Region. As such, staff presented options for expanding the cart-based waste collection operation to Works Committee at its June 2, 2025, meeting based on retrofitting an existing manual collection vehicle with a cart tipping device for a semi-automated solution. This Report ([#2025-WR-4](#)) resulted in the following Regional Council direction:
- a. Retrofit one collection vehicle to semi-automated collection to continue servicing the two automated collection pilot routes on a permanent basis;
 - b. Negotiate amendments to Contracts C003008 and C003326 to expand cart-based collection of garbage and organics to include Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday collection routes effective January 1, 2026, to optimize the use of the retrofitted collection vehicle with annual operating costs not to exceed \$30,000;
 - c. Financing be approved from the Solid Waste Management Reserve Fund for the purchase of carts and 2026 operating costs be included in the 2026 budget; and
 - d. Staff be directed to continue to investigate and report back on the financial and logistical implications of expanding cart-based waste collection to the remaining households in Ajax and Pickering.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 Report [#2024-WR-4](#) titled "Proposed Automated Cart-Based Garbage Collection Pilot Project" authorized staff to undertake an Automated Cart Collection Pilot to assess the health and safety and operational impacts of residential automated cart collection. The pilot commenced in July 2024.

- 3.2 Report [#2025-WR-2](#) titled “Update on the Automated Cart-Based Garbage Collection Pilot Project and Future Waste Collection Contract Delivery” provided an update on the Automated Cart Pilot and made recommendations to transition to automated cart collection for garbage and organics when new collection contracts were tendered with start dates in 2028 and 2030.
- 3.3 Report [#2025-WR-4](#) titled “Extension of Cart-based Waste Collection Pilot in the Town of Ajax and the Township of Scugog and Expansion Options” authorized staff to make the necessary contract adjustments as outlined in section 2.4 above.

4. Expanding Cart-Based Collection

- 4.1 Based on the success of the Pilot, staff hoped to expand cart-based collection to more residents sooner than the upcoming contract to service the Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock, and the Municipality of Clarington in 2028. However, the costs associated with early adoption of cart-based collection are prohibitive.
- 4.2 Regional Council authorized annual operating expenditures of up to \$30,000 to utilize the semi-automated collection vehicle beyond the two Friday Pilot routes. Due to the additional collection time associated with semi-automated collection, the projected operating costs far exceed the authorized amount. Consequently, the use of the collection vehicle beyond the original two Friday collection routes used in the Pilot will not be pursued further.
- 4.3 Staff have also investigated retrofitting additional collection vehicles to semi-automated collection to expand this service more widely. Again, the operating costs for a semi-automated collection vehicle are significantly higher making early adoption of cart-based collection unfeasible. Operating costs are estimated to exceed \$2.0 million for operating semi-automated cart-based garbage collection over the remaining life of the existing residential waste collection contracts.
- 4.4 Due to the costs of early expansion of cart-based collection using semi-automated collection vehicles, staff will complete the existing collection contracts for all six local area municipalities serviced under Region-managed collection contracts to full term using the existing manual collection vehicles. A competitive procurement process will require automated cart-based collection for all six Regionally serviced local area municipalities when the contracts are re-tendered.

- 4.5 The Municipality of Clarington and Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge are currently in the tendering process with a new contract starting on April 1, 2028. The City of Pickering and Town of Ajax contract will be retendered in 2028 for a July 1, 2030 contract start date.

5. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 5.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following Strategic Direction(s) and Pathway(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

a. Connected and Vibrant Communities

- C1. Align Regional infrastructure and asset management with projected growth, climate impacts, and community needs.

b. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action

- E4. Lead the transition to sustainable living through waste management, diversion, and the circular economy.

c. Strong Relationships

- S5. Ensure accountable and transparent decision-making to serve community needs, while responsibly managing available resources.

- 5.2 This report aligns with/addresses the following Foundation(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

a. Processes: Continuously improving processes to ensure we are responsive to community needs.

b. Technology: Keeping pace with technological change to ensure efficient and effective service delivery.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Staff will continue servicing the existing Pilot project residents with semi-automated waste collection to ensure that the affected residents continue to receive the benefits of using carts for garbage collection only without interruption until the replacement waste collection contracts start in 2028 in the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge and the Municipality of Clarington, and in 2030 for the City of Pickering and Town of Ajax.

- 6.2 Staff will cease investigating expansion of the cart-based waste collection Pilot beyond the current area since a fully automated collection vehicle is no longer available to the Region and proceeding requires retrofitting existing collection vehicles with cart tipping devices for semi-automated waste collection which is slower and increases operating costs significantly without delivering the benefits of fully automated collection to the Region.
- 6.3 Procurement is currently underway for fully automated collection for the Municipality of Clarington and the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge for the next contract that commences on April 1, 2028.
- 6.4 Fully automated collection for the Town of Ajax and City of Pickering will be required in the next contract that commences on July 1, 2030. Procurement for that contract will occur in 2028.
- 6.5 For additional information, contact: Andrew Evans, Director, Waste Management Services, at 905-668-4113 extension 4102, or Peter Veiga, Manager, Waste Management Operations, at 905-668-4113 extension 3720.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by:

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Commissioner of Works