

Fund organics recycling infrastructure

HENNEPIN COUNTY MINNESOTA

Request for funding to expand organics recycling infrastructure

Hennepin County is requesting \$2 million in bonding to expand the county's Brooklyn Park Transfer Station to manage more organic materials. In 2019, of all the organics collected in the county and sent to compost sites, almost 40% was transferred through the county's transfer station.



The organics are currently managed in a temporary space which is at full capacity and creating operational issues. The expansion is necessary to improve facility design to accept and manage larger volumes of recyclable organic material. Expanding organics recycling is the only way for the county to push past its plateaued recycling rate of 50% and to reach the state mandated 75% recycling goals.

Infrastructure development needs to keep pace with organics collection programs

Hennepin County began working with schools, cities and businesses in the early 2000s to remove organic material from waste. In 2005 the county began subsidizing the cost to deliver source-separated organics at the transfer station to increase hauler participation. The legislature acted in 2014 to encourage metropolitan counties to do more. The county saw that incentive as affirming its effort and worked to further increase volumes of

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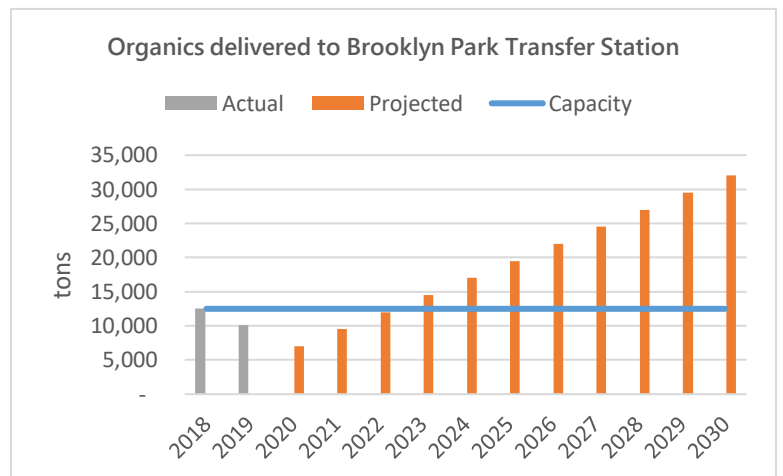
organics delivered to the site. The county continues to lead by revising our recycling ordinance in 2019 to lay the foundation for additional progress.

- Business food waste recycling requirements went into effect January 1, 2020.
- Cities are required to offer residents the opportunity to recycle organics by January 1, 2022.
- Organics tonnage is expected to increase, and additional capacity is needed to collect, transfer, and process organics.
- Good infrastructure reduces the cost of organics. Cities and waste haulers emphasized how critical additional organics infrastructure is to their ability to provide cost-effective organics service for residents and businesses.
- Improvements at the transfer station will support operations to reduce contamination, the most pressing concern at compost sites and a crucial component to maintaining viable end markets for finished products.

Brooklyn Park Transfer Station is at full capacity

The transfer station was designed to handle trash, not organics. The organics are being managed out of a temporary bunker on the waste tipping floor.

- Organics contain lots of liquids, which drains after it is dumped on the tipping floor. The drainage system is inadequate to manage these liquids and has been damaged by the amount and nature of these liquids.
- The quantity of organics being managed at the site continues to increase, causing significant operational issues. There is no space left to expand organics.
- The transfer station is in close proximity to where organics are generated. This reduces the cost to collect and transport organics to composting facilities located in Rosemount and Shakopee.



In 2019, more organic materials were delivered directly to the compost sites and significant efforts were made to reduce contamination. The projected decrease in 2020 is due to COVID-19.

Action on organics recycling is needed to meet our waste management and climate goals

In 2019, Hennepin County recycled 588,000 tons of waste, recovered 54,000 tons of organics (excluding yard waste), managed 335,000 tons through waste-to-energy, and still sent 427,000 tons to landfill. Hennepin has a goal to achieve zero waste to landfill by 2030, and we cannot achieve that without a robust source-separated organics program.

- Food is the most common material in the trash, making up about 20% of waste.
- Food is a problem in landfills because when it decomposes it produces methane, which is 84 times more potent of a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period.
- Climate experts rank reducing methane from landfills as a top climate change solution because of its potential to rapidly slash emissions. Some methane gas can be recovered from landfills or flared to reduce its extreme contribution to climate change. Nonetheless, efforts to capture methane from landfills are modestly successful. Composting and methane digestion are more beneficial strategies because they reduce emissions effectively and can create more valuable products, including compost and renewable natural gas.
- This project would reduce carbon emissions by up to 12,568 MTCO₂E by diverting more organics from the trash.