

San Francisco Public Works
Abandoned Materials Collection Program
Report to the Refuse Collection and Disposal Rate Board
October 30, 2015

1. BACKGROUND

In July, 2013, Recology assumed responsibility for responding to routine requests (311 calls) for collecting abandoned materials. By dividing the City into five zones and using two trucks per zone (one packer and one box truck), Recology indicated that it would be able to reduce the response time for removing materials and would be able to increase the amount of material diverted from the landfill. The Rate Board approved transfer of the Abandoned Materials Collection (AMC) Program to Recology as part of the 2013 Rate Order, on a pilot basis, and requested that the Director of Public Works provide a report on the effectiveness of the program, using three measures – response time, service level, and diversion.

2. ABANDONED MATERIALS COLLECTION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

Per the Rate Board request, the effectiveness of Recology’s assumption of the AMC Program can be measured according to response time, service level, and diversion, as discussed below.

a. Response Time

The City’s standard response time for 311 street and sidewalk cleaning service requests is 48 hours. One of the objectives of transferring the AMC Program to Recology was to reduce the length of time it takes to remove abandoned materials from City streets and public places. The Director’s Rate Order established the following requirements for Recology to close service requests for abandoned materials:

1. Weekdays: within 4 business hours (240 minutes)
2. Weekends: within 8 business hours (480 minutes)

All 311 calls concerning abandoned materials are referred to Recology. Recology then schedules pickups and closes out the service requests when the materials have been removed from the street. In some instances, Recology refers the request back to the City (e.g., small items that are still collected by litter patrol trucks, broken bags and scattered items that require cleanup, car batteries and other hazardous or dangerous items). Public Works collects all 311 data for abandoned materials and calculates Recology’s actual response time for the service calls they complete, according to the requirements established in the Director’s Rate Order.

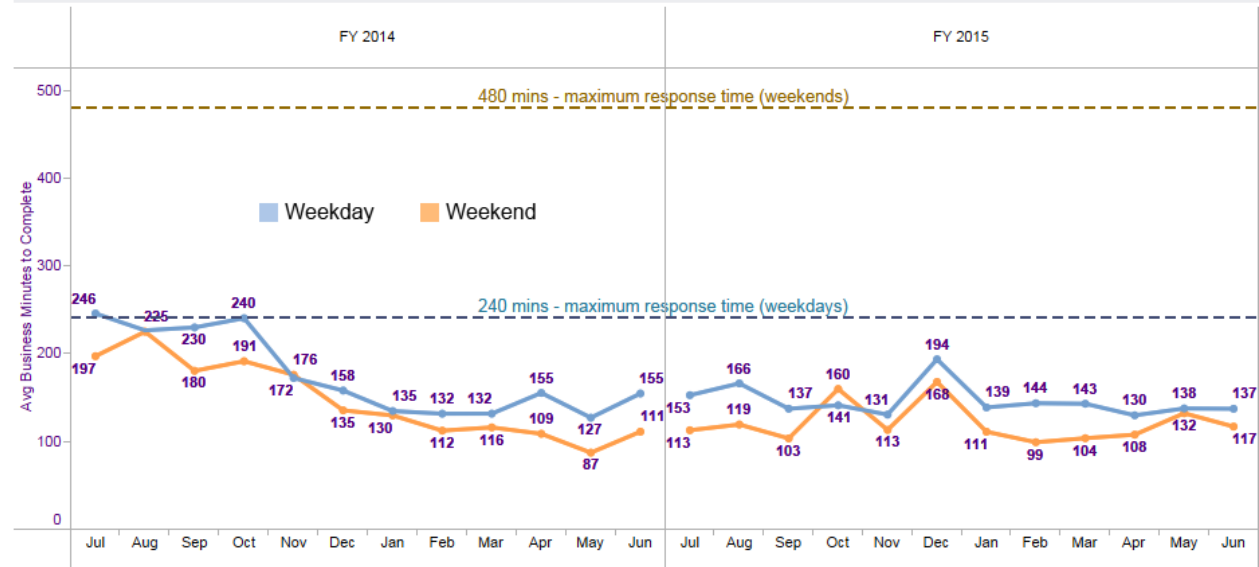
Figure 1 presents the results (in minutes) for Recology’s average response time during the first 24 months of their assumption of the AMC Program.

Figure 1

Recology Response Time

Average Time to Complete per Month and Day of the Week

By month entered: July 2013 - June 2015



As illustrated in Figure 1, Recology has consistently met the response time requirements established in the Director’s Rate Order (with the exception of the first month of the program). Within five months of assuming responsibility, Recology’s average weekday response time had fallen to less than 2.5 hours and has remained at that level for more than 18 months. This significant improvement in response time is due to Recology integrating 311 service call data with its route management system, allowing Recology to optimize collections in each zone. While the weekend response time requirement is longer (8 business hours), Recology has maintained an even shorter response time on weekends (on average less than 2 hours).

b. Service Levels

In its application, Recology expressed concern that faster response times could result in an *increase* in routine service requests, with the AMC Program requiring greater resources than Recology committed to in its rate application. Public Works has compiled 311 service requests for the first two years of the program, as presented in Figures 2a and 2b.

Figure 2a

AMC Requests and Response Time per Fiscal Year

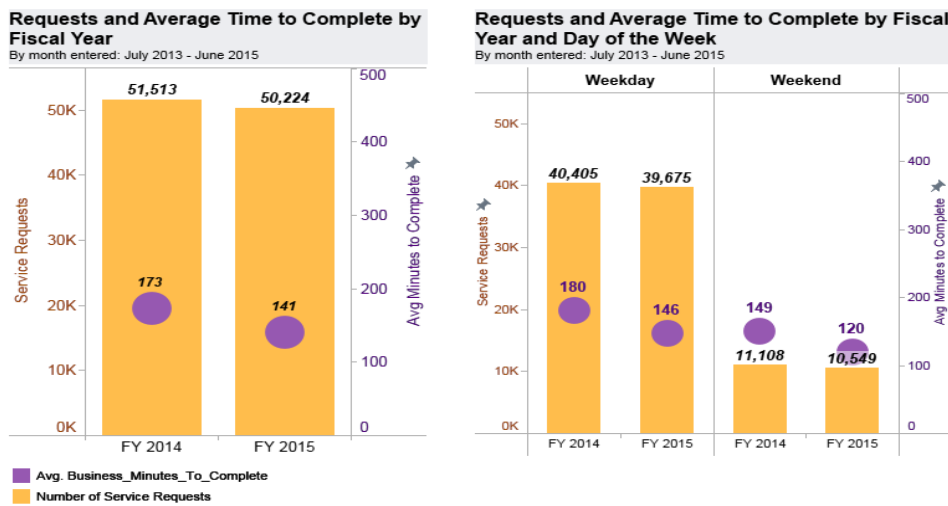
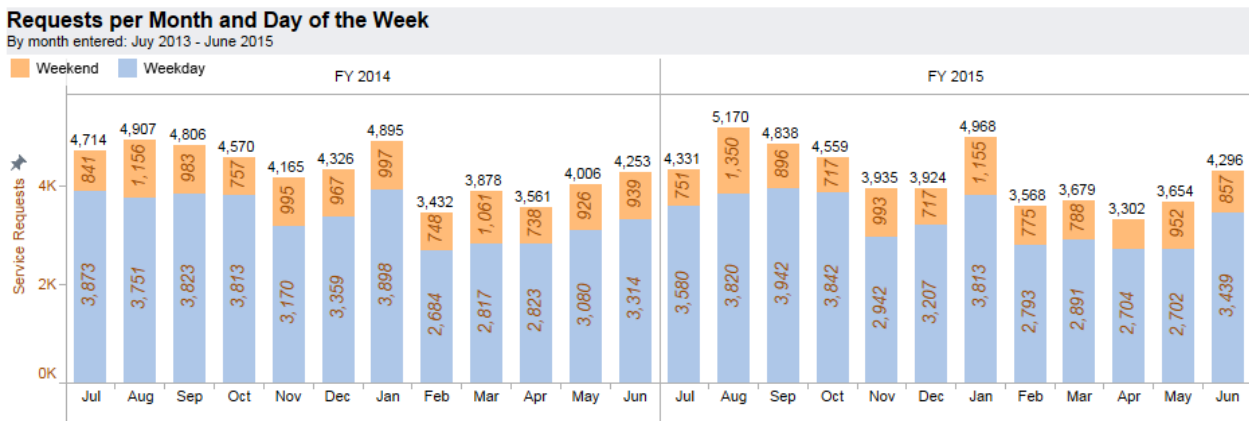


Figure 2b

AMC Requests per Month



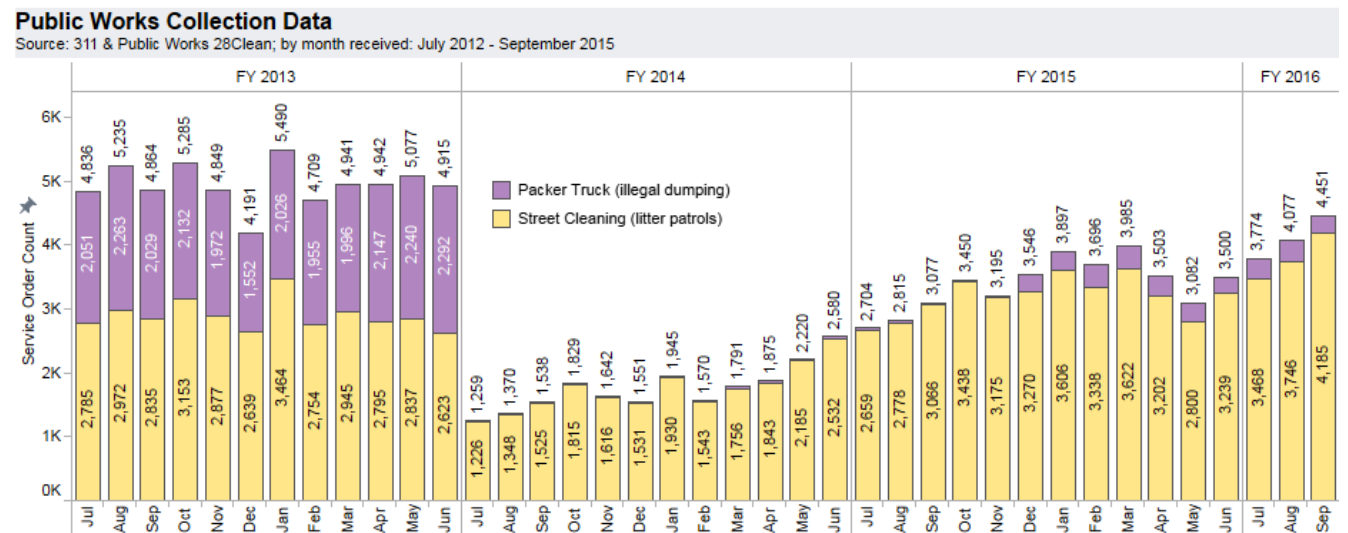
In the first two years of responsibility, Recology completed more than 50,000 service requests each year (responding to about 40,000 weekday calls and 10,000 weekend calls), as shown in Figure 2a. As illustrated in Figure 2b, the number of service requests completed by Recology each month has

remained relatively constant over the two-year period. The monthly data also show the seasonal fluctuation in service requests, with spikes in the late summer (August) and the beginning of the year (January). These spikes are likely attributable to people moving in and out of dwellings at the beginning of the school year and post-holiday discards of replaced and unwanted items.

As part of the AMC Program, Recology also indicated that it would direct drivers to collect abandoned materials along their routes, even if it was not part of a scheduled pickup in response to a 311 service request. While Recology drivers have instituted this practice and report unscheduled pickups internally, these pickups are not reflected in the 311 data for tracking service requests or average response time. Nevertheless, they represent an added benefit of transferring the AMC Program to Recology.

Recology’s service levels can be compared to Public Works activities prior to transferring the AMC Program in July 2013. As illustrated in Figure 3, in fiscal year 2013 Public Works responded to an average of 5,000 service calls per month for abandoned materials, dispatching either packer trucks or litter patrol pickups. This is comparable to the number of service requests now being completed by Recology.

Figure 3
Public Works Requests Before and After Transfer of AMC Program



In July 2013, Public Works reduced its deployment of packer trucks for abandoned materials, although it retained responsibility for some service calls, per an agreement with Recology (e.g., construction debris, hazardous materials, small items, broken bags and scattered items that require cleanup, homeless encampment items), which were assigned to litter patrol vehicles.

Figure 3 shows the reduction in service requests handled by Public Works with Recology’s assumption of the AMC Program for routine 311 calls in July 2013. Nevertheless, in the last 18 months, Public Works has seen a significant increase in the number of service calls handled by litter patrol vehicles (i.e., items for which Recology is not responsible, as noted above). In December 2014, Public Works placed several packer trucks back into service to support its Litter Patrol Services. Public Works is currently researching

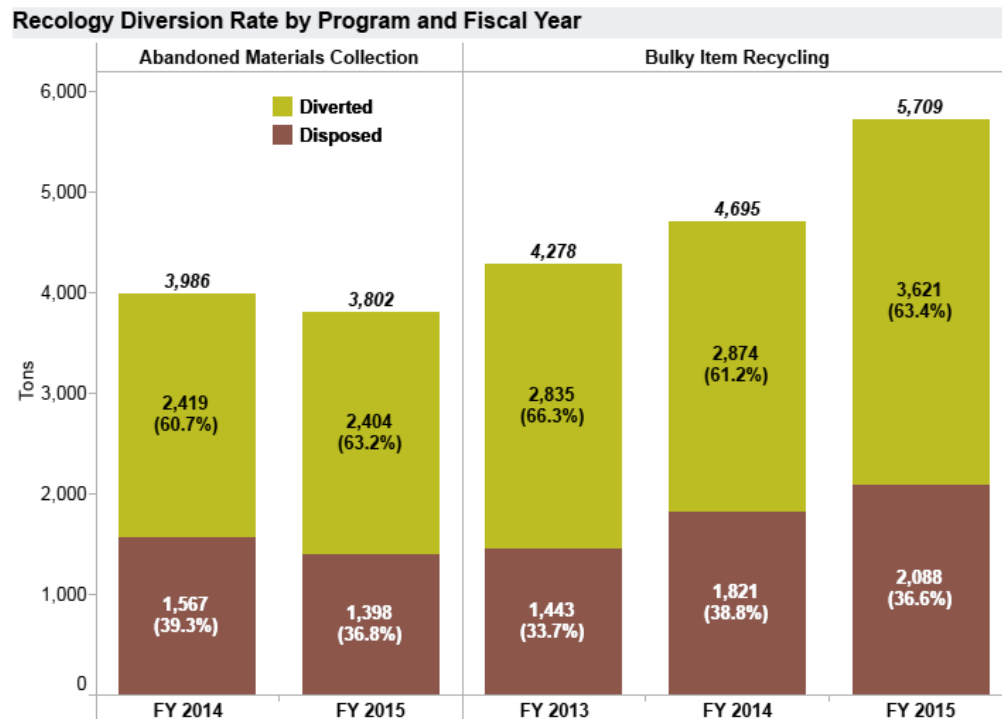
the potential causes of the increase in requests for service, which may be a byproduct of the economic growth the City is experiencing.

c. Diversion

A major objective of transferring the AMC Program to Recology was to increase the amount of materials diverted from the landfill, consistent with the City’s zero waste goals. Recology’s approach (two trucks per zone) allows them to operate the AMC Program more like the Bulky Item Recycling (BIR) Program, where potentially recoverable items (such as mattresses, electronics, appliances) are segregated at pickup.

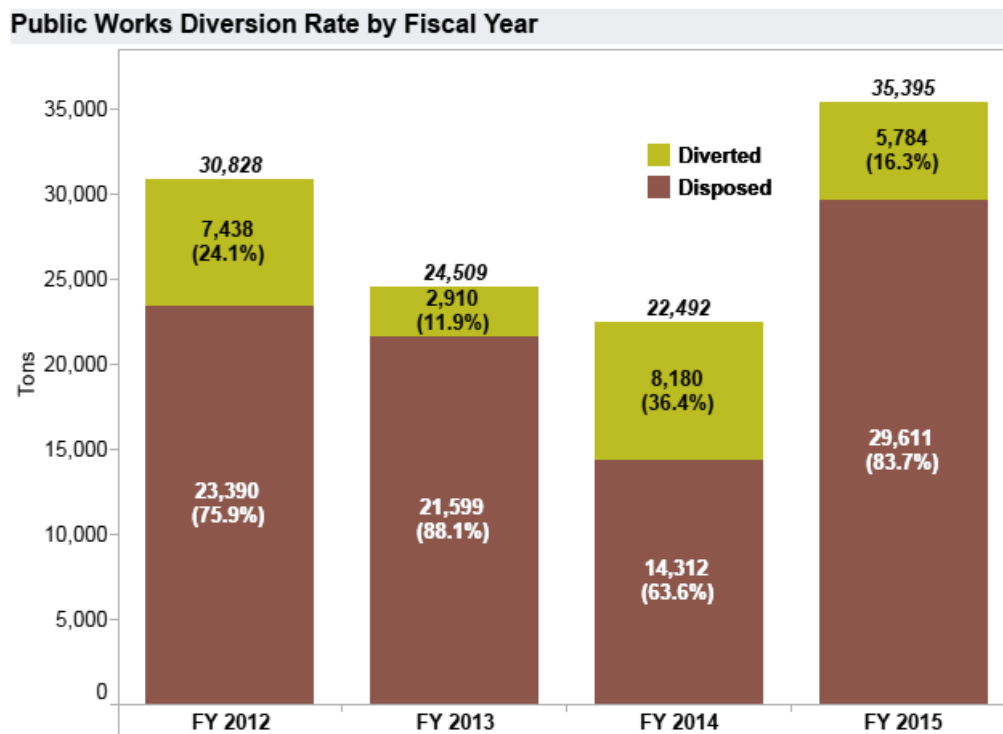
Figure 4 summarizes the amount of materials and percent diverted by Recology since their assumption of the AMC Program. Recology measures the total amount of materials diverted from landfill at its facilities (including the transfer station and recycling center) and then uses sampling to calculate the actual diversion rates for individual programs, such as the AMC and BIR. For comparison, Figure 4 also summarizes the same information for the BIR Program for the past three years. As illustrated, Recology has been able to divert more than 60 percent of the materials picked up through the AMC Program from the landfill, which is comparable to the diversion rate they are achieving through the BIR Program.

**Figure 4
Recology Diversion Rate**



In contrast, the diversion rate for materials brought to the transfer station by Public Works has been consistently lower, ranging from 12-36 percent in the last four years, as summarized in Figure 5. The higher diversion rate in 2014 is due to the composting street sweepings; this practice was discontinued in 2015 because of a lack of market demand for the recovered materials. It is important to note that Public Works tonnage includes street sweepings and event cleanups in addition to litter patrol and packer truck collections, and includes more and different types of materials than what is being collected by Recology as part of the AMC Program. Public Works and Recology will explore whether additional diversion can be achieved for the materials Public Works collects.

Figure 5
Public Works Diversion Rate



In addition to achieving a higher diversion rate, Recology has collected more materials (measured in tons) in the first two years of the AMC Program than they assumed in their rate application. Based on historical experience and 311 data, Recology estimated that they would collect and process 3,086 tons annually (see Exhibit 41 of 2013 rate application), whereas they have collected nearly 4,000 tons annually since assuming responsibility for the AMC Program. This represents about 25-30 percent more materials than Recology factored into the rate base. In effect, Recology is providing a higher service level than was anticipated in the 2013 rate application.