

COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date: 6 November 2023

Subject: Black Cart Survey Results and Recommendations

Boards Routed Through: Environmental Advisory Board

Date: 12 October 2023

Issue:

Council is being presented with the results of the black cart survey and a recommendation for an automated black cart garbage program based on survey results.

Background:

In 2022, results of the Waste and Recycling Public Engagement survey indicated that only 39% of participants believe Airdrie's current garbage collection program is comparable to other cities and 61% of respondents specifically mentioned the desire for an automated black cart program.

In April 2023 Waste and Recycling Services (WRS) staff returned to Council with information on alternative garbage collection programs including the types of collection systems available, municipal comparisons, challenges expressed by staff and collection contractors and estimated costs of an automated program. Council endorsed the recommendation to conduct further resident engagement to gauge the level of resident support for an automated black cart garbage program and for administration to return with recommended service level changes based on results.

In the spring of 2023, in collaboration with Corporate Communications, a five-question survey was developed. A postcard with a unique PIN was mailed to all households that receive curbside collection inviting them to participate in the survey which was open from May 23 to June 30. The survey was promoted on all City social media platforms, City newspapers, the radio, roadside signs, in bus shelters and on buses, by WRS staff at the Airdrie Farmers Market, Genesis Place, the Airdrie Public Library, and grocery stores.

A total of 6058 households or 28% of all eligible households completed the survey. The survey has a confidence level of 99% with a margin of error of $\pm 1\%$. A summary of survey results is presented below.

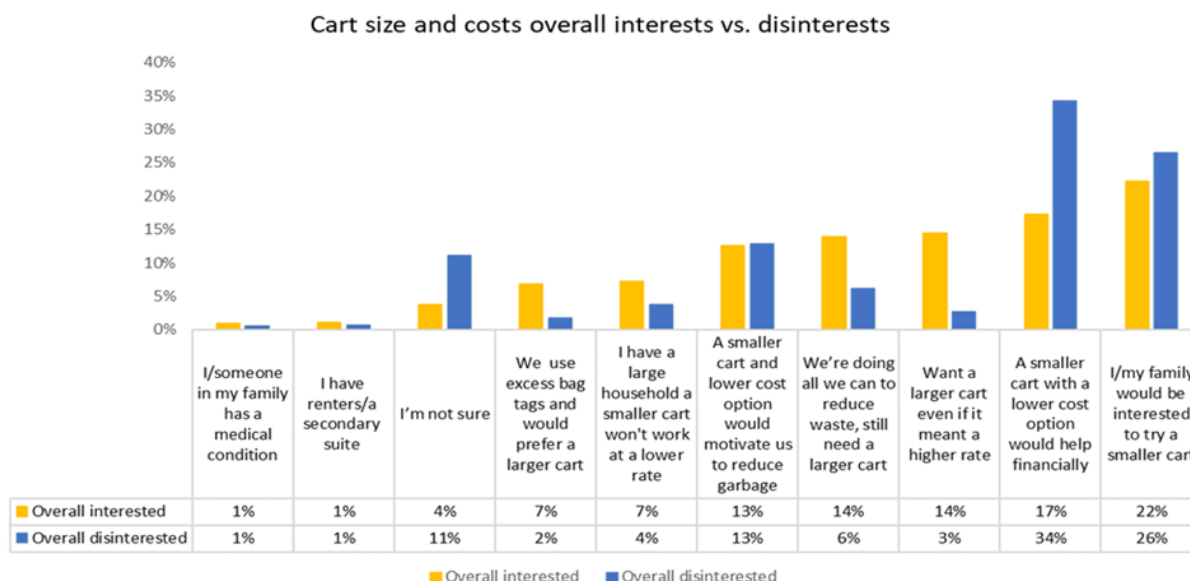
Survey Results

Question 1: Asked, “If the City were to introduce an automated collection service using black carts, is that something you would be interested in?”

Questions 2 and 3: Asked about the challenges and benefits identified by those interested and disinterested in a black cart program. Results are outlined below in order of importance.

Interested 71%		Disinterested 29%	
Benefits	Challenges	Benefits	Challenges
Decreased Litter	Collection Frequency	Cost Savings for a smaller cart	Cost
More reliable Service	Cost	Ability to choose your cart size	Cart Storage
Ability to choose your cart size	Reduced Diversion	Decreased litter	Reduced Diversion
Curb Appeal	Increase in collection day	More reliable service	Collection Frequency
Cost savings for a smaller cart	Cart Storage	Frequency of pick up	Increase in collection days

Question 4: Survey participants were asked to select statements that best reflect their perspective if the City were to offer black carts with different size options and/or different rates for size options. There is consensus that residents would be interested to try a smaller cart, that a smaller cart with a lower cost would help financially and that a smaller cart with a lower cost would motivate them to reduce their garbage.



Service Level Changes to Enhance Diversion

Through ongoing education, contamination levels (material in the blue and green carts that doesn't belong) are improving, however annual waste characterization studies consistently show that on average 51% of what is in the garbage should be diverted to other streams.

Increasing the amount of material diverted at the curb will not be achieved without making significant garbage program changes whether it be through an automated or enhanced manual collection program.

Staff are proposing service level changes and strategies that take into consideration the survey results (both in favour of and opposed to an automated collection program), to maximize community support while still addressing the need to increase diversion.

	Current Program	Enhanced Manual Program	Automated Program
Garbage volume	One Bag: 25kg limit 90cm x 127cm limit (120L)	Per bag: 20kg limit 60cm x 90cm limit (75L)	Multiple cart sizes: Small (80 – 100L) Medium (120 – 180L) Large (240L)
Cost for service	Equal distribution amongst all single-family households	Tag-a-bag	Variable, based on cart size
Collection frequency	Weekly Two days per week for collection services	Biweekly Two days per week for collection services	Biweekly Two days per week for collection services
Excess waste	Up to three additional bags with an excess waste tag	Managed through tag-a-bag program	Up to three transparent bags with an excess waste tag
Medical exemption program	Households with a medical condition can apply for a medical exemption	Households with a medical condition can apply for a medical exemption	Households with a medical condition can apply for a medical exemption to set out a black bag next to their cart
Diaper exemption program	Two or more children under four can apply for a diaper exemption	Managed through tag-a-bag program	Managed within cart sizes

Strategies of an automated collection program

- Variable Cart Size/Variable Rate – will create a financial incentive to change waste disposal behavior and allows households to find the right size cart for their needs
- Biweekly collection – will encourage diversion by promoting food waste and recycling disposal to the organics and recycling carts, regardless of the method of collection
- Transparent bags for excess waste within an automated program – will encourage diversion by not accepting organic or recycling material as excess waste
- Removal of the Diaper Exemption Program – residents will be able to manage their waste through variable cart sizes. As needs change, carts can be sized up or down.

An enhanced manual program option has also been developed to promote diversion

- Tag-a-bag manual program - provides the resident direct control over their garbage program costs and encourages residents to consider how much waste they create

Next Steps

Developing a rate structure is a complex process that requires known variables which are not readily available including collection and disposal costs, cart distribution, and cart costs.

In a report to Council in April 2023, staff estimated that an automated collection program has an anticipated yearly increase between \$12 and \$16 per household. Cost assumptions were based on a like for like program and included a 20 - 30% increase in waste to landfill, 15% decrease for collection service, ongoing cart maintenance, reduced revenue from excess waste tag sales, repayment to the waste management reserve and anticipated inflation.

Once a decision for waste collection is made by Council, staff can move forward with a formal marketplace competition that establishes service level expectations to determine collection and disposal costs. If an automated program is endorsed, WRS will further educate and consult with residents to establish cart size distribution which is necessary to determine cart costs. Staff can then return to Council with the final program design, rate structure and program roll out timeline.

The black cart survey has provided insight to inform and define the garbage programs presented. The recommendation is based on survey results, industry best practices and a program that supports waste diversion.

Alignment with South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and AirdrieONE:

The Five-Year Waste Management Plan is a significant tool for implementing the vision, guiding principles, goals, objectives, and strategies of the AirdrieONE Sustainability Plan specific to the focus of Waste Management. Identifying best opportunities to increase waste diversion is part of the Five-Year Waste Management Plan.

Boards Routed Through:

At the October 12, 2023, Environmental Advisory Board meeting, members unanimously supported administrations recommendation that Council approve the revised garbage collection program as presented and that administration return in 2024 with the final program design and rate structure.

Discussions were had regarding space for storing a third cart on zero-lot lined properties, the use of a transparent bag for excess waste, carts for homes with secondary suites, how collection points are determined and how this may impact cart set-out and collection.

Administration Recommendation:

1. That Council endorses the revised garbage collection program that includes all the following service levels:
 - a. Automated garbage collection;
 - b. Variable garbage cart sizes;
 - c. Variable rate structure reflective of garbage cart sizes;
 - d. Biweekly collection;
 - e. Two collection days per week;
 - f. Transparent bags for excess waste; and
 - g. A medical exemption program.

2. That Council directs Administration to return in 2024 with the final program design and rate structure.

Alternatives/Implications:

1. Council could choose to endorse a modified automated collection program by selecting some of the service levels outlined by Administration. A modification could result in further program changes.
2. Council could choose to direct administration to move forward with the amended manual waste collection program option. This alternative does not take into consideration the majority view of community stakeholders. Residents will not feel heard or that their input has been considered in decision making.
3. Council could choose to request staff return with additional information prior to endorsing a garbage collection program. Councils' decision on future waste programs is required for the department to move forward with new collection contracts. Should a Council decision be deferred, the time required to implement contracts and program changes could be delayed beyond current contract extension options.

Communications Plan:

Waste and Recycling Services will work with Corporate Communications to share information from the report and council's recommendation with the public. A robust education program will be developed to engage and inform the public on changes to the curbside garbage program.

Recommendation:

1. That Council approves the revised garbage collection program that includes all the following service levels:
 - a. Automated garbage collection;
 - b. Variable garbage cart sizes;
 - c. Variable rate structure reflective of garbage cart sizes;
 - d. Biweekly collection;
 - e. Two collection days per week;
 - f. Transparent bags for excess waste; and
 - g. a medical exemption program.
2. That Council directs Administration to return in 2024 with the final program design and rate structure.

Leanne Moreira
Program Coordinator

Presenter:	L. Moreira
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Attachments:	#1 Survey results and recommendations
Appointment:	N/A