BUILT ENVIRONMENT SUBCOMMITTEE: MEETING #4

Meeting Date/Time: Wednesday, May 14, 2025, 9:00am-11:00am
Meeting Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83463314399?pwd=DCSLaMuECZF3RLKpkxB0FesaCuW34r.1&from=addon

Attendees

Subcommittee Members

- Amanda Ingmire, Oregon DEQ
- Lauren Zimmermann, City of Portland, Bureau of Planning & Sustainability
- Nate Tisdell, Linn County
- Sonya Carlson, BRING
- Shane Sanderson, Linn County

Staff

Facilitator: Elizabeth Start, Start Consulting Group
Subject Matter Expert: Joel Schoening, RRS
Researcher: Marcus Coleman, RRS

Notes

Key Takeaways

- *Focus Area 3 (End-of-life building material diversion) emerged as the top priority, followed by Focus Area 1 (Adaptive reuse of existing buildings)*
- *Increasing tipping fees was proposed as a potential funding mechanism, but requires careful consideration of regional impacts*
- *Connecting material reuse to housing initiatives and local programs (e.g. Oregon Build Project) could be an effective strategy*
- *Need to balance short-term actionable strategies with longer-term high-impact goals for emissions reduction*

Topics

Focus Area 1: Adaptive Reuse of Existing Buildings

- Strategies include encouraging renovations over new construction and aligning historic preservation with sustainability goals
- High waste impact potential by reducing demolition waste
- Time horizon varies but generally medium to long-term
- Could tie into housing crisis solutions for increased traction
- DEQ launching $25.5M low embodied carbon housing program with 9 local governments

Focus Area 2: Embodied Carbon in Codes

- Strategies include low carbon building standards and green material certification incentives
- Potential for high environmental impact but longer-term implementation
- Deprioritized compared to other focus areas, but still important for long-term emissions reduction

Focus Area 3: End-of-Life Building Material Diversion

- Emerged as top priority for near-term action
- Strategies include rural-ready deconstruction/salvage and construction waste management plans
- High potential waste impact - C&D debris ~30-35% of landfill waste in Oregon
- Commercial deconstruction has much higher impact than residential
- Connecting to local reuse/housing programs could increase feasibility

Ideas

- Attach adaptive reuse and building preservation strategies to the state's efforts to address the housing crisis, as this could help get more traction and funding for these initiatives.
- Prioritize the "end-of-life building material diversion" strategy, as this seems to have the biggest potential impact compared to the other focus areas discussed.

- Explore using increased tipping fees as a way to generate funding to support material recovery and diversion programs, though be mindful of potential unintended consequences like illegal dumping.
- Identify ways for local jurisdictions to get involved, such as connecting construction waste to local reuse programs like the Oregon Build Project.
- Emphasize the need for infrastructure and market pathways to support construction waste diversion, rather than just relying on management plans.
  Consider prioritizing commercial building deconstruction over residential, as the impact can be much greater.

Considerations

Cost and Time Horizon:

- Adaptive reuse projects can range from $250-$700/sq ft, with a variable time horizon depending on building conditions, regulations, and funding.
- Deconstruction and material recovery operations can cost $500k-$1M per year to run, with additional costs for permits and certifications.
- The time horizons varied, with some strategies taking 1-5 years to implement, while others were more long-term (2-5+ years).
- Impacts:
- Adaptive reuse and preservation strategies have high impacts in terms of reducing waste, lowering emissions, and boosting the economy.
- Embodied carbon and green building standards also have high environmental and economic impacts.
- Material recovery and diversion efforts were seen as having the biggest near-term impact on the waste stream.

Barriers and Funding:

- Lack of funding and incentives was a key barrier, though examples were provided of state and local programs offering tax credits, grants, and other financial support.
- Regulatory and permitting challenges, as well as lack of market pathways for recovered materials, were also discussed as barriers.
- The need to advocate at the state level for increased funding and policy support was highlighted.
- Potential to use increased tipping fees as a funding source, though concerns were raised about unintended consequences.

Coordination and Prioritization:

- The importance of aligning these strategies with the state's housing and climate goals was emphasized.
- Prioritizing the material recovery/diversion strategy as the top recommendation, with the other focus areas as secondary, was discussed.
- Identifying roles and actions for local jurisdictions, in addition to state-level efforts, was seen as important.

Questions

- Are we looking at low density or high density living spaces for the adaptive reuse conversion projects?
- How do we ensure these strategies don't further divide rural and urban areas in terms of access and impact?
- Can you provide more details on the $25.6 million DEQ grant program for adaptive reuse and housing conversion projects?
- How could we advocate to the state for a dedicated fund or multiple funds to incentivize adaptive reuse and preservation?
- If we raise tipping fees, how do we ensure the funds are used effectively and equitably across the region to support these programs?
- What is the actual volume and tonnage of construction and demolition materials that could be impacted by the different strategies?
- What is the actual impact of deconstruction versus material recovery and diversion efforts in terms of volume and tonnage?
- How can we better connect construction waste to local reuse programs like the Oregon Build Project?

Action: Research and Analysis

- Gather more data on the existing building stock that is vacant or underutilized across the state, to help make the case for adaptive reuse and preservation strategies.
- Investigate the details of Oregon's existing state tax credit program for historic preservation, and compare it to more robust programs in other states.
- Analyze the potential volume, tonnage, and impact of construction and demolition material recovery and diversion efforts versus deconstruction.
- Research the rules and regulations around how tipping fee revenue can be used, including whether it needs to be kept within the region where it's collected or if it can be pooled regionally.
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to quantify the long-term cost savings and environmental benefits of investing in material recovery infrastructure and programs, compared to the alternative of increased landfilling and transportation.
- Identify successful examples of local jurisdictions connecting construction waste to community reuse programs, and document the logistics and impacts of those efforts.
- Explore the potential for aligning these material management strategies with the state's housing and climate goals, to strengthen the case for funding and implementation.