

Variable Set-Out: Summary of Results from Customer Engagement





Introduction and Background 3

In-Person Interviews..... 4

Key Findings 4

Telephone Survey 4

Key Findings 5

Online Engagement..... 6

Key Findings 6

Key Themes from Customer Behaviour Exploration..... 6

Introduction and Background

Waste and Recycling Services (WRS) has researched various options for introducing Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) to the residential black cart program as it continues to find ways to enhance fairness and encourage customers to continue to divert and reduce waste.

Following Administration’s recommendation in 2018 that the PAYT option of the three-cart size is not the best fit for Calgary, due to the potential cost impacts on The City and households, Administration proposed to Council to consider the possibility of implementing a program that will allow the use RFID chips on the black carts to charge customers based on how often they set out their carts. This proposal was approved by Council in January 2020. The specific direction on 2020 January 13 are as follows:

1. Explore customer behaviour in 2020 to develop a detailed plan for piloting variable set-out; and
2. Report back to the SPC on UCS no later than Q2 2021 with results from the review of customer behaviour and a detailed pilot plan including proposed pilot communities, rates that will be piloted, a detailed cost estimate, and a plan for funding the pilot.

The customer behaviour exploration phase was completed in 2020. The objectives of this phase included understanding:

- Current household set-out behaviours.
- Customer awareness of how set-out behaviours impact cost of service, driver safety, and the environment.
- Factors that could motivate customers to set out their carts less often.
- Potential level of support for a variable set-out program.

Three customer engagement activities were performed as follows:

Engagement Type	Date
In-person Interviews	February 2020
Telephone Survey	July 2020
Online Engagement	August 2020

The following sections detail key findings from each customer engagement activity and a summary of common themes across all three customer engagements.

In-Person Interviews

In February 2020, The City of Calgary Waste and Recycling Services requested the services of the City of Calgary Innovation Lab to conduct research to understand what motivates single-family households to set-out their black carts for collection.

The research involved interviewing individuals who live in single-family households at the Calgary Home and Garden Show from February 25 – 28, 2020. During this period, 185 interviews were conducted with each interview lasting about five to ten minutes. The interviews primarily involved using the “Card Sort” technique. The Card Sort technique involved providing participants with a stack of cards containing factors that may motivate people to set out their carts and requesting them to sort the cards based on what applies to them in varying degrees of importance. Participants were also asked questions to better understand their responses during the card sorting process.

Participants were from various communities across The City and included both homeowners and renters with an overwhelming majority being homeowners. The average household size of participants was 2 – 4 people and most of them set out their carts in the alley.

KEY FINDINGS

More than 50% of participants highlighted the following as reasons they set out their black cart for collection.

- Scheduled collection day.
- The cart is full.
- It is on the chore list.
- City of Calgary reminder

These findings suggest that setting out the black cart is largely a habitual activity for most households that participated in the survey. Households also seem to rely on The City of Calgary garbage reminders which are sent to households when requested, for example through the Calgary Garbage Day app.

Telephone Survey

In July 2020, Administration contracted a third-party research consultant, Ipsos, to conduct a survey of single-family households in Calgary. The objective of the research was to better understand the following:

- Cart set out behaviors, including location of set out, frequency of set out, and amount set out for each of single-family households’ black, blue, and green carts.
- Reasons households set out their carts.
- The likelihood of households setting out their black carts less often than every two weeks.
- Motivators and barriers to setting out carts less often, including how realistic single-family households feel it would be to set out carts less often.

- Level of support for the Variable Set-Out program.
- Impact of potential savings/ discount on set-out behaviors.

Ipsos conducted a telephone survey (landlines and mobile phones) with a representative sample of 500 Calgarians aged 18 or older living in single-family households.

KEY FINDINGS

- Reasons for setting out carts most commonly include habitual activity, with 83 per cent agreeing “we’re supposed to on collection day”.
- 73 per cent of single-family households set out their black cart every two weeks, while 10 per cent set out every four weeks. About 16 per cent indicated that their cart is always out.
- 89 per cent of households indicated that their black cart is at least half full when set out for pick up.
- 64 per cent of households would consider setting out their carts less often if The City asked them to do so.
- 69 per cent of households would likely set out their black carts less often if it would result in a decrease in municipal operational costs, 62 per cent of households would set out less if they understood the environmental impacts of their set out behaviors.
- 28 per cent of households think it is very realistic for them to set out their black carts less often.
- 59-63 per cent of households indicated that they would support a variable set-out program if implemented. The support for the program is linked mostly to the expectation that households will save money, followed by the realization that their black carts are not always full.
- Majority of households opposed to a variable set-out program highlighted expecting a service they already pay for, volume of waste they generate and concerns about others placing garbage in their bin as reasons for opposing a variable set-out program.
- The likelihood of setting out less often increased with higher potential discount/savings.
 - At \$0.20 cents a month, 52 per cent of households would be very (22 per cent) or somewhat (30 per cent) likely to set their black cart out less often.
 - At \$0.50 a month, 60 per cent of households would be very (30 per cent) or somewhat (30 per cent) likely to set their black carts out less often.
 - At \$1 a month, 67 per cent of households would be very (40 per cent) or somewhat (37 per cent) likely to set their black carts out less often.
 - At \$2 a month, 72 per cent of households would be very (51 per cent) or somewhat (21 per cent) likely to set their black carts out less often.
- Majority of households (80 per cent) believe that a PAYT program would encourage people to dump their garbage in others’ black carts.
- 72 per cent of households believe that it is not a great use of municipal resources to pick up black carts that are less than half full.
- 71 per cent of households believe that paying more for garbage penalizes larger families.

Online Engagement

Administration conducted an online public engagement of single-family households in August to September 2020. 11,850 responses were received through the online engagement portal.

The objective of the engagement was to gain additional insight into current household cart set-out behaviour and what would influence households to set out their carts for collection less often than they currently do.

KEY FINDINGS

A summary of engagement responses (What We Heard) are provided below¹.

- 75 per cent of households who participated in the engagement indicated they set out their black cart for collection every two weeks, while about 10 per cent set their carts out once every four weeks.
- Key reasons for setting out include amount of waste in the cart and the reminders received from The City.
- About 64 per cent of households indicated that they would somewhat (30 per cent) or very likely (34 per cent) set out their carts less often if The City asked them to set out their carts only when needed.
- The biggest concerns most households had about setting out black carts less often were:
 - Not making it to the next scheduled pick up before it was full and overflowing
 - It is always full at the scheduled pick up
 - The smell it produces
- Households were almost equally divided (for, against and not sure - needs more information) when asked if paying for garbage based on how often the cart is set out is a fair payment model.
- 75 per cent of households indicated that they will consider setting out their carts less often if they will save money, while about 40 per cent will consider setting out less if they are aware of the environmental impacts and if it will save The City money.

Key Themes from Customer Behaviour Exploration

- Cart set-out is a habitual activity amongst households, most households set out their carts every two weeks.
- Almost two-thirds of single-family households would be likely to set out their carts less often if The City asked them.

¹ Engagement responses are not statistically valid as the methodology used for this activity does not include ensuring a representative sample across all required demographics.

- Increased knowledge and awareness of the impact of current waste generation and disposal habits may influence customer behavior.
- Cost savings may be an additional incentive to reducing set-out. A higher financial incentive will reduce set-out rates.
- Some households expressed having too much waste every two weeks or not having enough room for waste if they do not set out every collection period to consider setting their carts less often.
- Households are concerned about not having enough room for garbage between collection periods if they set out their carts less often.
- There is concern amongst households about other people using their carts if a variable set-out program was implemented.