

MassDEP Reduce & Reuse (R&R) Working Group Virtual Meeting

Topic: Reviewing Summary Barriers & Strategies

Wednesday, March 24, 2021 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM | Meeting Summary

The R&R Working Group is a forum for discussion of source reduction and reuse regulations, policies, and programs in Massachusetts. The group was established to help in the development of a MassDEP Strategic Reduce and Reuse Action Plan as outlined in the draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan. To learn more about the working group and find past meeting materials, visit:

[MassDEP Reduce & Reuse Working Group](#)

This meeting was held virtually and facilitated by Erin Victor, Environmental Analyst, MassDEP erin.victor@mass.gov. A total 71 people participated in the 3/24/2021 meeting. The discussion sections reflect both written and spoken comments and questions from participants.

Link to Presentation Slides: [Presentation: Barriers & Strategies Discussion](#); Link to Recording: [Video Playback of Virtual Meeting](#)

Agenda:

10:00 – Welcome & Background on R&R Workgroup

10:15 – Barriers: Summary of what we heard and group discussion

11:00 – Strategies: Summary of what we heard and prioritizing actions to include in the draft R&R Action Plan

12:00 – Adjourn

Welcome & Background on R&R Workgroup

- Erin Victor opened meeting at 10:03 and reviewed the purpose of the R&R Working Group and its objectives and the agenda for today's meeting ([see slide deck](#))
 - Overview of Massachusetts Waste Reduction Goals
 - Priority materials for R&R Working Group and Action Plan Development
 - Recap of 2020 Working Group progress – held 10 meetings since March 2020 – (1 in person, 9 virtual). All meeting summaries, recordings, and presentation slides are archived on MassDEP's website.
 - Virtual meetings have allowed us to hear from people who may not have been able to join otherwise.
- Next steps: we got incredible feedback and input from over 320 participants over the past year; we have synthesized this input into two summary documents (summary of barriers; summary of strategies) and are ready to create a draft Reduce & Reuse Action Plan that will be feasible given DEP's capacity.

- In the last meeting, Erin presented [a prioritization matrix](#). Criteria: Impact; feasibility; stakeholder support. This meeting and the follow up survey will help DEP determine how much stakeholder support there is for the different strategies identified by the group over this last year.
- Erin went over the Reuse Action Plan as a “living document.” She is using Airtable which is a tool that helps tag and categorize different strategies. This tool will allow stakeholders to monitor progress as DEP updates actions and status of each strategy.
- Measuring Progress –At the [January 2021 working group meeting](#), we discussed ways we can track our work once we start implementing the plan. Various leading measures, lagging measures, and progress updates were proposed. Looking for any input or thought on these measures of success.

Discussion: Summary of Barriers

- Erin sent out summary documents to the working group and they are posted on MassDEP website [here](#). They reflect over 320 individuals who have contributed input over the past 10 meetings. They are organized by: Cultural, Infrastructural, Policy (systems) and Market Driven barriers.
- **Meeting objective** – Determine if we are missing anything obvious? Have we correctly captured and summarized the working group discussion over the past year? If participants are not prepared to comment today or for anyone unable to make the meeting, they can submit comments through [this survey](#) through April 2.
- Kelley Dennings, Center for Biological Diversity: I love the use of "barriers" and the categories you chose - from individual to systems, etc.
- Bill Stanwood – Read quickly through the two docs. Thinks they are comprehensive with one exception – I hope we can address the cultural aspect of advertising that demonstrates “junk” as something to get rid of. Particularly addressing the “got junk” ads that depict people pointing and the stuff just disappears. We need to partner with orgs/businesses like “got junk” to get them to modify their advertising and to start diverting some of what they collect. They are basically a “transporter” but if there’s a way to incentivize them to reuse/repurpose some of what they collect, and what’s pictured in their ads, that would be meaningful.
- Robin Ingenthron, Good Point Recycling: Got junk companies actually do reuse. It’s similar to the “scrap paper” or “waste paper” debate for recycling 30 years ago. Companies who listed under “scrap” found clients expected to be paid. If they listed “waste paper” they paid less. That’s what’s going on with GotJunk, etc.
- Hien Nguyen from Lexington – under policy barrier – relative to trying to advocate for reusable takeout containers: Currently, the way the MA Public Health “[food code](#)” is written, it allows for refilling of beverage containers provided by customers (e.g. reusable coffee cups) but does not allow filling of customer-provided food containers We need a bill similar to CA’s “bring your own bill” that addresses both “consumer

owned” beverage and food containers. Local BOHs look to the state food code for guidance.

- Mladen Gajic, Plastic Score: Some BYO Container programs work around that by treating it just like Dining-In, serving the customer on a regular plate, and then it's on the customer to transfer it to their own container.
- Kathi Mirza, MAC for SE District 2: It would be beneficial if legislation for polystyrene takeout use covered schools food service as well.
- Doug Kobold, California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC) – CPSC is embarking on some pilots looking at fast fashion and doing a lot of work, so please watch them on this. Looking at reparability, light weighting, and recyclability of clothing. With 400+ different fabric blends, it is difficult to recycle the material. Also found that primary material on the west coast is not the clothing (that is being shipped to other countries for reuse) it is housewares. Dishware, glasses, etc. Looking to create “thrift hubs.” If reuse orgs get stuff they cannot sell (say 1 or 2 wine glasses), they can take it to a thrift hub where stuff can be consolidated into full sets and marketed for sale online. For materials that might be fixable, there will be an opportunity to create jobs to repair these things/teach repair skills and then make them marketable and resalable. .
- Peter Mui, Fix-it Clinic – The challenge for consumer electronics (either sent to a reuse org or thrift hub) is if they are broken, you no longer have the provenance of the item is critical to being able to repair it; hard to repair if the original owner isn't there to explain what went wrong. Peter's vision is someday middle schools will teach kids to repair broken items from their homes.
- Amy Perlmutter, Perlmutter Associates: There are so many vacant storefronts now, maybe some can somehow be used for some of Doug's ideas. I would love to see stores that sell repairable, broken things and people who like fixing can buy them cheaply.
- Norma Chanis Wachusett Earthday: We pass on a great deal of household goods for free in our ReUse bldg. Space and curators who track how long things sit or how much we have takes time but saves on literal tons of items from trash.
- Amy Perlmutter, Perlmutter Associates: Noted that the cultural barriers all seem to all focus on end of pipe instead of prevention. For example, apparel has a high environmental footprint, people should buy less first. Perhaps more school curricula as well as ed campaigns focused on prevention.
- Alex Husted, Helpsy: I appreciate Amy's comment bringing awareness to the high environmental footprint that comes with purchasing apparel and Doug's sharing his west coast innovative efforts on thrift. I work for HELPSY and our mission is to divert textiles from landfills. We accept clothing and textiles in all conditions, as some can be reused and given a second life but others (torn, with holes, missing buttons etc) can be recycled.
- Robin Ingenthron, Good Point Recycling – Pre User Neutral Territory Electronics Reuse-repair-recycling (PUNTERRR.com) had its first successful sale of Walmart store returns in Fair Trade Recycling this month.

- Kathi Mirza, MAC for SE District 2: We need to connect social service orgs with generators or reused/donated items. Social service orgs may face the barrier of helping folks obtain furnishings and household items when moving into permanent housing.
- Deb Beatty Mel, Boston Bldg Resources: To the point about furniture quality decreasing, you could also add appliances. Major appliances have a shorter lifespan today than they did years ago.
- Julia Wolfe, OSD: How about a "durability" rating system? Design for longevity. Some type of third-party certification. Are there any examples of this out there? This would be helpful for procurement folks.
- Deb Beatty Mel, Boston Bldg Resources: I believe some European nations have established a durability rating system.
- Khrysti Barry, CET: <https://www.reliableappliancecs.com/blog/most-reliable-home-appliance-brands-2020.html>
- Anne Marie Green, U.S. PIRG: Yes, France just kickstarted a repairability rating system for all electronics. See here: <https://grist.org/climate/why-frances-new-repairability-index-is-a-big-deal/>
- Peter Mui Fixit Clinic Berkeley CA US: Here's the best summary for France's Repairability Index I've found thus far: <https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/indice-reparabilite>
 - Some key points from a webinar I attended:
 - They've launched with five categories: washing machines, smartphones, laptops, televisions, electric lawn mowers (wired, batteries, robots)
 - Manufacturers self-declare, this self-declaration is based on a principle of transparency, subject to the vigilance of consumers / stakeholders and to the controls and sanctions of the French government.
- Todd Koep:@Julia Wolfe, there is a company out of England that was trying to get the durability ratings and pushed hard for them. Buy Me Once is the name of the company. The woman who started it spoke at a reuse seminar in Boston about 3-4 years ago
- Amy Perlmutter, Perlmutter Associates: I remember Tara Button, from Buy Me Once, mentioning that she was working, or going to work, with credit card companies so people who don't have a lot of money can buy better quality goods, which tend to be more expensive.
- Robin Ingenthron, Good Point Recycling: Market cannibalism – manufacturers are destroying goods so they don't have to compete against their own reuse. Example: solar panels still working but the OEM wanted them destroyed even though they were still under warranty. Solar panels are increasingly in Construction & Demolition Debris. Pick up the phone and call DCAMM about Wrentham solar field, turn it into a pilot program.
- Robin Ingenthron, Good Point Recycling: We found massive destruction going on at Costco and Walmart; sent 2 people to CA to buy used (returned) TVs; often the return is just buyer's remorse; Walmart destroys these items after the mfr. sends the refund but with instructions to destroy on-site.
- Doug Kobold, CPSC: We find quite a few industries that are doing what Robin is talking about. They want to sell new products first!

- Peter Mui, Fix-it Clinic: Some manufacturers will send a customer a new toaster if their item is broken under warranty and instead of mailing back the broken toaster, they ask for them to send a picture of their current toaster where they cut the cord – removing “threat” of someone repairing/reusing that item.
- Peter Mui, Fix-it Clinic: In CA they are facing a crisis because they mandated that all new construction must have solar panels so now the market is creating new builder grade solar panels that are the lowest quality panel they can possibly get in order to meet the mandate. These are not built to last.
- Doug Kobold, CPSC – CA mattress program – the renovators for mattresses find it difficult to get hands on good mattresses because mattress companies don’t want to repair mattresses. They want to sell new ones. In Mattress EPR for MA, should include a line in the bill requiring reuse/refurbishment.
- Amy Perlmutter, Perlmutter Associates: Totally agree with Doug. Product Stewardship has led to more destruction and taking materials away from local recyclers in some places.

Discussion: Summary of Strategies

- The [Summary of Strategies](#) document was broken down by “levers” that MassDEP could utilize: Education/Behavior Change; Tools/Resources/Technical Assistance; Grants/Incentives; Job Training/Workforce Development; Networking; Legislation; Procurement
- Questions: are we missing anything obvious that would contribute to wider adoption of reduce/reuse/repair/share here in MA? Have we correctly captured and summarized the working group discussions over past year? What should MassDEP prioritize for inclusion in the Reduce & Reuse Action Plan
- We are using a new tool called [MetroRetro](#) to do dot voting in real time.
- Erin gave an overview of the MetroRetro tool and set some parameters. She gave the group 20 minutes to go through the tool and vote on which strategies they would like to see MassDEP prioritize for inclusion in the draft Reduce & Reuse Action and add any ideas that were missing.
- Anyone uncomfortable using this platform or unable to make the meeting will have an opportunity to provide input through April 2 through the following survey/poll: [Prioritizing Reduce & Reuse Working Group Strategies \(airtable.com\)](#)
- After the ranking exercise on MetroRetro, Erin went over the things that had the most votes so far. (Opportunities for feedback are welcome until April 2)
 - Tools: lot of interest for statewide guidance for restaurants; assisting nonprofits; providing model language to encourage BOH rules that allow for BYO food service containers. Lots of votes for food containers.
 - Job training: Partner with voc-tech schools; piloting a workforce development grant; support development of job training for home deconstruction
 - Networking: identifying orgs to take the lead like Reuse Minnesota
 - Grants: continue to provide reuse micro grants
 - Support right to repair and EPR legislation

- Developing an education campaign
- Procurement policies that drive demand
- Ann Marie Green, U.S. PIRG, Right to Repair Campaign Associate: I work with an independent repair technician in Delaware; his story about how he got into STEM and repair is a compelling one; getting kids engaged in repair at an early age can help seed a culture of repair; Perhaps we need to start younger than Voc-Tech schools teaching kids repair skills.
- Robin Ingenthron, Good Point Recycling: On procurement strategies, will likely face enormous pressure if you try to get state procurement team to buy used goods. Much more potential to future-proof new goods via procurement.
- Peter Mui, Fixit Clinic: California has a State Agency Buy Recycled Campaign (SABRC) is a joint effort between CalRecycle and the Department of General Services (DGS) to implement state laws requiring state agencies and the Legislature to purchase recycled-content products (RCP) and track those purchases. [State Agency Buy Recycled Campaign](#) This has mostly been about consumables like paper products and non-durable goods thus far. Does MassDEP have the authority to implement something similar in MA? And the teeth to enforce it?
- Julia Wolfe, OSD: OSD has included refurbished items in a number of contracts (computers, copiers, auto parts, some hospital goods, furniture...) but it is up to the buyer to choose those items.
- Mladen Gajic, Plastic Score – <https://www.plasticscore.co/> is a crowd-sourced plastic score for restaurants. It helps create transparency around which restaurants do better in terms of material use (like plastics, Styrofoam). Drives restaurants to improve their score and helps provide data to support legislation to help move things forward.
- Peter Mui, Fix-it Clinic – plugged Global Fixer – a 24/7 global network of repairers that can walk people through troubleshooting their stuff. High School students in CA are using the Discord server to help with repair through the Global Fixers Server.
- What we need in Mass is a bridge to this global online repair platform by helping people access the tools they need for the repair. Tool libraries could include “repair kits”
- To have your item looked at by the ever-growing network of community repairers from around the world register at <http://bit.ly/fixitcheckin> (select “Repair via the Global Fixers Server using Discord” from the pulldown menu and complete the rest of the form to start the onboarding process.)

Additional Strategy Ideas Raised by Working Group:

- Education & Behavior:
 - Analyze what the environmental requirements are for MA core curriculum and provide recommendations on how to improve info (if needed) to include issues around life cycle, carbon, biodiversity, waste, etc, along with repair, reuse.
 - Use the PlasticScore app to incentivize restaurants to reduce waste, and connect them with resources to help them improve
- Tools, Resources, and Technical Assistance:

- Compile a list of Zero Waste Plans from different municipalities
- Job Training/Workforce Development:
 - Review the [2012 Recycling and Jobs in Massachusetts, A Study of Current and Future Workforce Needs](#) report to identify workforce needs of the repair, reuse, recycling industries in the state, and strategies identified to bring together workforce dev professionals and recycling industry.
 - Develop a high school appliance repair program to normalize handiness/repair skills for both girls and boys from younger age.
- Networking:
 - Connect social service agencies with suppliers of household goods and furniture
- Legislation:
 - Create list of reuse/repair barriers in EPR laws in other states and how to address/avoid in future Mass version of EPR laws
 - Identify ways to provide tax or other incentives to property owners who provide affordable options to reuse organizations for storage, etc.
- Procurement:
 - Create a durability rating system for some categories of products
 - Procurement (e.g. Commonwealth buys solar panels) should include presumed right to sell for reuse
- Meeting was wrapped up early at 11:21am.

Announcements:

- Tentative 2021 R&R working group schedule – proposing that we meet in mid-June once a draft action plan is ready for input from working group
- Tentative Next Meeting:
 - Date: June 16, 2021
 - Time: 10AM
 - Location: Virtual.
 - Meeting topic: Working group input on Draft R&R Action Plan
- DEP is now accepting applications for the [Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grant program](#) for 2021.
 - This grant program provides up to \$5,000 for eligible for profit and non profit organizations for innovative, short term waste reduction initiatives.
 - [Grant Guidelines](#)
- **Networking Resources** MassDEP encourages participants to continue the dialogue on reduce/reuse/repair/share between now and our next meeting online utilizing the following resources:
 - **R&R Working Group Directory**
 - [R&R Working Group Directory](#) find the contact information to directly connect with other working group participants

- To join the R&R workgroup directory or update your information, email: erin.victor@mass.gov
- **MA Reduce & Reuse Network (googlegroups)**
 - Join by emailing: ReduceReuseNetwork-MA+subscribe@googlegroups.com
 - Contribute to discussion by emailing: ReduceReuseNetwork-MA@googlegroups.com