

The Less You Throw Away, the Less You Pay

How can you make your community more responsible for reducing waste and preventing global climate change? How can you help residents save money at the same time? **"Pay-As-You-Throw" (PAYT)/Save Money and Reduce Trash (SMART)** is a trash collection rate-setting system that promotes economic savings and environmental benefits. Environmentally conscious communities have been using this equitable solution since the early 1900s, though it's an approach few people know about.

According to a new national analysis sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), thousands of communities are successfully using **SMART** programs in the United States, along with communities in more than seventeen countries abroad.

Here's how it works: Under traditional trash collection arrangements where residents pay for trash and sometimes recycling collection through a flat fee bill or the general tax base, residents incur no financial consequences no matter how much or little they throw away. With **SMART**, municipalities charge residents for the number of bags they throw away or the size of the trash containers they use, similar to how we pay for electricity and gas. By attaching a unit price to the quantity residents throw away, **SMART** provides a financial incentive for people to throw out less, which means buying less and reusing, recycling, and composting more. In fact, studies show that cities reduce their waste about 44%, which means avoided disposal savings for municipalities and their residents.

In addition, **SMART** programs offer tangible greenhouse gas reductions. Reducing the amount of waste generated also means fewer greenhouse gases are produced during a product's life cycle. When residents recycle their waste rather than throw it away, their recycled materials are turned into new products, helping to limit the demand for virgin materials and saving the energy that would otherwise be required to harvest, process, and manufacture brand new products. Reducing energy use decreases the burning of fossil fuels, resulting in less greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxides) in the air. Likewise when residents buy less to begin with or reuse or donate things rather than simply throwing them away.

SMART programs are now available in approximately 25% of communities in the United States, covering about 75 million residents. States with the largest share of communities with PAYT available include Minnesota, Washington, Oregon, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Iowa and California.

Reports and articles about PAYT have documented the following successes: Worcester, Massachusetts decreased its waste management by 1.2 million and increased its recycling rate and decreased the volume of waste about 50% immediately following the introduction of PAYT.

* In Tacoma, Wash., solid waste management costs fell by more than 50 percent in the PAYT program's first year, and the recycling rate tripled.

* Fort Worth, Texas, increased its recycling rate by 14 points and trash disposal cost decreased by about \$8 million.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, who boasts 130 **SMART** programs in a state where PAYT/**SMART** is not mandated, **SMART** should be an obvious choice for any community that wants to save money, reduce waste and decrease its climate change impact.

Janice Canterbury from the EPA office of Resource Conservation and Recovery says, "While other initiatives may have positive benefits, **SMART** is the single best way to utilize a continual economic incentive to encourage citizens to prevent waste and reduce greenhouse gases, as well as, generating an equitable revenue stream." For more information about PAYT, please visit www.epa.gov/payt. See Kristen Brown's: www.gogreenmilford.com