





MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair Alter and Members of the Climate, Water, Environment, and Parks Committee

THROUGH: Susana Carbajal, Assistant City Manager 

FROM: Richard McHale, Director, Austin Resource Recovery 

DATE: August 21, 2025

SUBJECT: On-Demand Collection Program 6-Month Update

This memorandum was previously distributed to Mayor and City Council on August 21, 2025. There are no changes to this committee copy.

The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize the Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) on-demand operations and activities for the first six months of the program's expansion.

Background

Before the expansion of on-demand services, ARR offered scheduled brush and bulk collection twice a year requiring ARR to drive to each street to collect material. Customers were notified about upcoming collections via mailed postcards. Additionally, household hazardous waste materials (HHW) were collected at ARR's household hazardous waste facility in southeast Austin by appointment.

In January 2025, ARR launched the on-demand collection program for brush, bulk, and HHW materials for curbside customers. The citywide program expansion was initiated after successfully completing pilot programs for the three services, in which staff evaluated the usability and benefits of an appointment-based service. The on-demand program allows for home-to-home routing and greater scheduling flexibility, allowing customers to schedule up to three collections per year, per service. The program also increases opportunities to divert materials from the landfill.

Education Campaign

To launch the program, the department initiated an educational campaign that included distributing information at outreach events and mailing postcards to customers. The overall goals of the campaign were to inform residential customers about changes to on-demand scheduling for bulk, brush, and HHW collection services, educate customers on how to schedule appointments as well as properly set out items for collection, and raise awareness about the benefits of on-demand services, recycling, and proper disposal practices. The bulk, brush, and HHW communication campaign is ongoing to continue public education of these collection services.

Six Month Update

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During the first six months of the program's launch, on-demand services experienced a general increase in the total tonnage of material collected, but a decrease compared to the previous fiscal year during the same timeframe from January through June. The slight reductions in March for brush and bulk collections were due to a temporary suspension of collections to address special event needs such as SXSW. In June, there was a reduction in tons collected for on-demand brush services as a result of ARR's citywide efforts to provide recovery assistance after the May microburst event without requiring scheduled appointments. During the May microburst event, ARR received over 2,800 service requests from the public. Combined efforts by ARR crews and contracted haulers resulted in the removal of 5,696 tons of brush debris and one ton of bulk debris from the impacted areas.

Tons Collected
Table 1. FY25 ON DEMAND TONNAGE (JANUARY TO JUNE)

Material Type	January	February	March	April	May	June	Total FY25	Total FY24
Bulk Landfilled	263	380	250	451	609	599	2552	4503
Bulk Recycled	27	33	10	24	39	25	158	109
Brush Collected	18	152	148	268	375	248	1209	3219
HHW Collected	20	22	26	29	33	29	159	N/A

Household hazardous waste collected 159 tons through the on-demand program over the reported timeframe. On-demand household hazardous waste collection is a new program; therefore, collection data for the previous fiscal year does not exist.

Operational Costs and Diversion Efforts

The department has seen significant decreases, as shown in Table 2, in overtime costs between the two programs, resulting in approximately \$139,000 in savings. Brush collection fuel costs also decreased, saving the department approximately \$22,000. Bulk experienced an increase in miles driven, and fuel costs were \$11,000 more than the previous fiscal year.

ARR's bulk disposal costs have also decreased with on-demand, a reduction of around \$50,000 from the previous fiscal year. All brush material is taken to Austin Water's Hornsby Bend Biosolids facility for processing. On-demand bulk experienced an increase in revenue generated in the first six months, collecting approximately \$12,000 from the recycling of metals and appliances.

Table 2. Operational Costs, Revenue, and Diversion

Category	Metric	FY24	FY25	Difference
Brush	Overtime	\$66,000	\$49,000	(\$17,000)
	Fuel Costs	\$70,342	\$47,730	(\$22,612)
Bulk	Overtime	\$157,000	\$108,000	(\$49,000)
	Fuel Costs	\$68,381	\$79,862	\$11,481

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	Disposal Costs	\$123,000	\$73,000	(\$50,000)
	Revenue	\$140	\$12,000	\$11,860
Bulk	Tons Diverted	109	172	63

Mileage

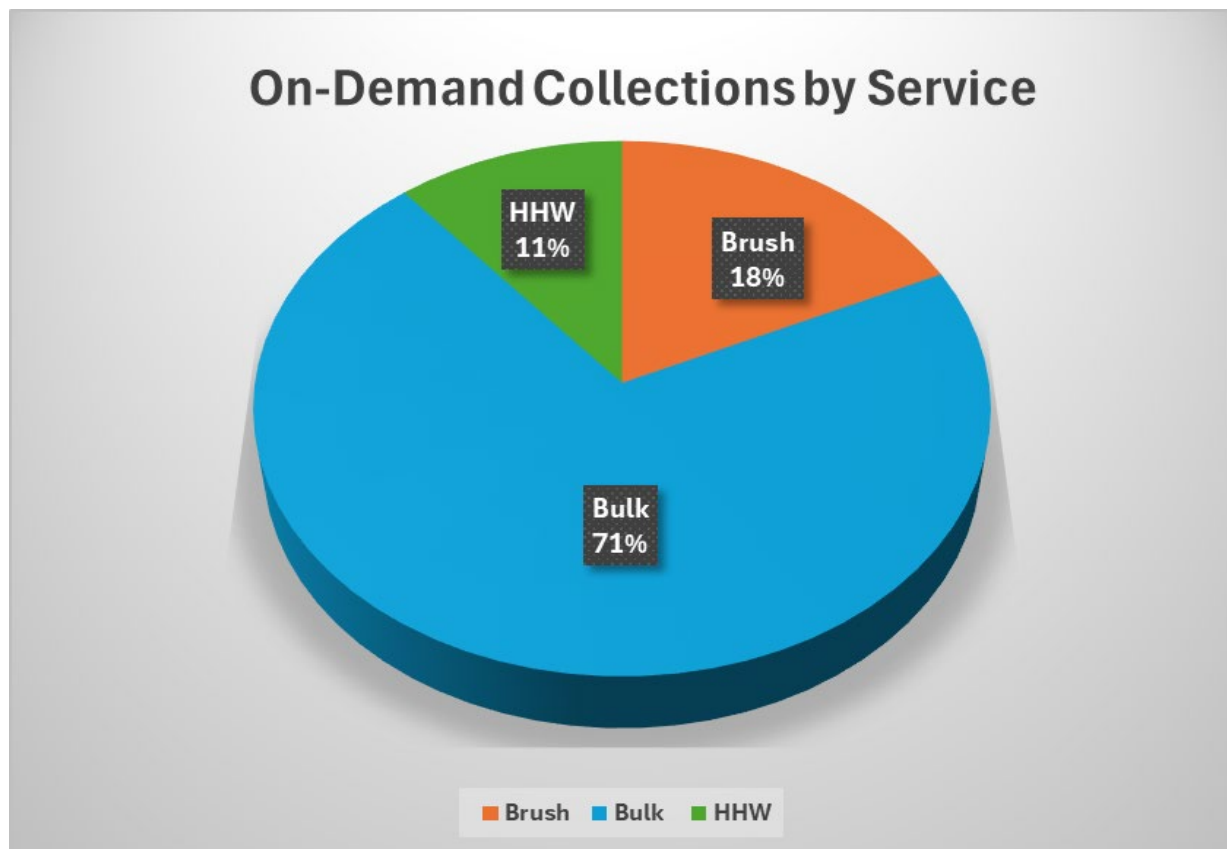
When comparing mileage between fiscal years, as shown in Table 3, brush collection experienced a significant decrease in miles driven, while bulk collection showed an increase in total miles. Of the increase in bulk mileage, 32% is due to diversion-related materials. Over the initial reporting period, on-demand HHW collection drove approximately 8,000 miles within this reporting period, with no comparable data available from the previous fiscal year.

Table 3. FY24-25 Mileage Comparison

Category	FY24	FY25	Difference
Brush	73,712	50,016	(23,696)
Bulk	71,656	83,688	12,032

Appointments

Through the end of June, ARR has collected approximately 31,000 appointments across all services. Bulk collection accounts for 71% of the total, with brush and household hazardous waste accounting for 18% and 11%, respectively. Demand for appointments was greatest for all services during the month of May and has generally been increasing as program awareness grows.



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Customer Satisfaction

During the first six months of the program expansion, ARR surveyed end users to gauge overall customer satisfaction, including ease of scheduling and timeliness of service delivery. The survey participants were randomly selected from customers who received one or more on-demand services and calculated to a 95% confidence level with a five percent margin of error, ensuring that the survey results were statistically significant and representative of the population's views.

Based on the survey, overall satisfaction with the service has been positive, with over 90% of responders giving the service five stars.

Star Rating	Bulk Collection	Brush Collection	HHW Collection
1 Star	2.7%	1.7%	0.8%
2 Star	1.1%	0.7%	0.6%
3 Star	2.0%	1.3%	0.1%
4 Star	6.0%	8.3%	3.9%
5 Star	88.2%	88.0%	94.6%

Ease of scheduling and timeliness also received high ratings, with 98% of customers being either very satisfied or satisfied with scheduling, and 95% either very satisfied or satisfied with timeliness.

Service	Category	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Not Applicable
Bulk	Ease of Scheduling	87.60%	10.50%	2.70%	0.70%
	Timeliness	85.20%	11.20%	5.30%	1.60%
Brush	Ease of Scheduling	85.70%	11.90%	1.80%	0.80%
	Timeliness	77.90%	15.30%	6.30%	1.40%
HHW	Ease of Scheduling	91.20%	7.40%	1.00%	0.50%
	Timeliness	91.90%	5.70%	1.10%	0.80%

General Observations

- Tonnage and number of stops are down from the previous year. This may be due to seasonality as bulk and brush experience their peak seasons during the summer and fall. Customers may also be waiting to use the collection opportunities until later in the year.
- Increase in materials designated for diversion (metals, appliances, etc.,) has been a factor in increased mileage in bulk collection. ARR is exploring alternative vehicle types for collection that may help reduce mileage impacts.
- On-demand scheduling allows ARR to adjust appointments and respond quickly when disasters occur.
- ARR will continue to collaborate with Watershed Protection, Austin Fire Department, and Austin Energy on residential vegetation removal educational initiatives regarding tree trimming and keeping brush trimmings out of the creeks, as well as distributing informational resources on accessing services.
- ARR is evaluating the feasibility of on-demand services for neighborhood cleanup events.
- On-demand collection services provide customers the opportunity to clean residential properties to avoid code violations for debris on property.

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- ARR will continue the education campaign and improve messaging on proper material setouts for collection, scheduling appointments, and the benefits of on-demand services, recycling, and proper disposal practices.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to track these metrics for the next six months to complete a one-year review. Reviews will continue periodically thereafter to make necessary adjustments to the on-demand program, continuously improve customer service, and monitor cost savings to ratepayers.

If you have any questions, please contact Richard McHale, Director, Austin Resource Recovery Department, at (512) 974-4301 or Richard.McHale@austintexas.gov.

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