

**Pedal People Cooperative Inc**  
PO Box 415  
Northampton, MA 01061  
413.586.8591 / mail@pedalpeople.com

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Solid Waste Reduction and Management Task Force  
Northampton, MA

Dear Task Force Members,

Thank you for inviting us to speak tonight.

We are a human-powered hauling service that transports goods with bicycles and bike trailers. We were started in 2002 by two current members and have grown steadily into a twelve-member worker collective. Our primary service is to collect waste in Northampton, Florence and Leeds and haul it to the Locust Street transfer station. We currently serve 484 households and 39 businesses. Our pricing is similar to conventional trucking companies in the area.

We work closely with our customers to reduce the amount of reusable, recyclable and organic waste headed to the landfill. We began curbside compost collection in 2007; we transport this compost, by bicycle, to Montview Neighborhood Farm in Northampton. Since this service began, we have diverted approximately 45 tons of organic waste from the landfill. We also work closely with our customers to ensure that recyclables and trash are separated correctly. This year, over half of the 500 tons of waste that we have collected has been recycled or composted.

We have had a contract with the city of Northampton for the past three years to empty the downtown trash and recycling containers daily. We deposit this trash in two compactors downtown. Our bicycles and trailers are particularly well-matched to this type of collection, where there are numerous small pickups in close proximity, and where the waste only needs to travel a short distance.

When the landfill closes, Pedal People is committed to adapting our service to the new environment. We can continue delivering waste to the Locust Street transfer station as long as this is permitted. However, we see potential for a more creative, inexpensive and low-impact solution, if the city offers municipal curbside pickup.

Municipal curbside pickup could offer an opportunity for Pedal People, as a human-powered waste collector, and a trucking company, as a hauler, to use each of our technologies at their best for a waste transfer system that is most affordable to both residents and the city.

Pedal People could provide human-powered collection for select neighborhoods in the city. We would pick up from each household in the neighborhood and consolidate the waste in a nearby location. We would work with the city and the selected trucking contractor to find convenient locations on city property for use as drop points. The trucking company would then haul the waste from the drop point to its final destination. These drop locations would provide a decentralized system that would increase our efficiency dramatically. Instead of hauling all waste to a single place (that is as far as 3 miles and often uphill from our collection), with a few extra drop locations, we could lower our distance traveled to under 1 mile. Ideally, these drop points would be downhill from the collection areas.

Due to the increases in efficiency, we estimate that the current worker-owners in our collective could collect from 3 to 5 times as many households; this would be between 1500 to 2500, or around 20% of Northampton's 1 to 4 family households. There is no shortage of people interested in becoming a Pedal Person and we could expand our collective to serve an even greater portion of the city.

There are many advantages for both residents and the city to using Pedal People for human-powered curbside collection. Residents appreciate that we are quiet, pollution-free, and friendly. As we slowly pull trailers piled with waste through residential neighborhoods, we help to calm traffic. We also have a low-impact on the surface of the roads we traverse. If bikes and trailers replace 25-ton garbage trucks on our residential streets, the reduced wear and tear on the pavement would save the city considerable money and headache.

Pedal People has a strong history of working closely with customers to ensure compliance, reduce waste and increase recycling and composting. We are highly visible and approachable and often have conversations with our customers about composting, recycling, and other waste-reduction strategies. When our customers fail to recognize the value in an item they are discarding, we often deliver it to the appropriate place for reuse or recycling. As a curbside collector for the city, we would be in an ideal position to pilot waste-reduction programs.

If the city employs Pedal People for curbside collection, it would enhance Northampton's image as an environmentally-friendly and progressive city. The city would be supporting our local economy and creating green jobs. All Pedal People live in Northampton and the majority of our revenue pays for our labor instead of purchase of heavy machinery and oil. Human-powered curbside collection would provide a model for more environmentally-friendly waste disposal that cities around the country could emulate.

Pedal People has an excellent reputation and the respect of Northampton's citizens. We hope that if the city chooses to begin curbside pickup, we are invited to expand our low-impact business model to better serve our community.

Thank You,

The Pedal People

Alex Jarrett  
Ali Wilson-Pierce  
Annie Sullivan-Chin  
Ben Winter  
Brett Constantine  
Emily Wergin

Lisa DePiano  
Marie Despres  
Mike Hagans  
Molly Merrett  
Romney Biddulph  
Ruthy Woodring