

## **Introduction**

This report has been prepared by the Ramsey/Washington County Resource Recovery Project in response to County Board resolutions directing a full exploration of a public collection system for solid waste. The respective County resolutions are found in Appendix 1.

This study has its roots in a crisis that emerged in early 2001 related to waste deliveries to the Resource Recovery Facility. The crisis was triggered by a business decision made by BFI to violate its waste delivery agreement with the Counties and internalize waste by delivering it to its own Pine Bend Landfill. While BFI triggered the current crisis, the situation has been evolving over the past few years as Waste Management, Inc. decided to deliver only a small portion of the waste it collects in the Counties beginning in 1996, and Superior Services decided to do the same beginning in 2001. Throughout this time the majority of independent waste haulers continued to deliver all of the waste they collect in the Counties to the Resource Recovery Facility.

On March 22, 2001 the Ramsey/Washington County Resource Recovery Project Board held a workshop regarding the future of the Project. At the conclusion of that workshop the Board directed a number of staff activities. One of those activities was to report back to the Board on the following approach: "Evaluate how public collection can be implemented most expediently in the Counties." Public collection means that the Counties would assume responsibility for solid waste collection for residential waste or both residential and commercial waste. This would be done pursuant to traditional local public health authority and the Counties' ability to provide solid waste services as a public service, as many municipalities and counties have already done.

On May 24, 2001 the Project Board received and discussed a staff report on Public Collection, and approved a recommendation that the Ramsey and Washington County Boards fully explore and consider development and implementation of a public collection system for solid waste. During that discussion, the Commissioners recognized that the problems at the Resource Recovery Facility were but a symptom of overall problems in waste management, and that the current market for solid waste collection and disposal is preventing achievement of environmental, health and safety goals.

In June 2001 the Ramsey and Washington County Boards each adopted resolutions to conduct the study, and delegated the responsibility for coordination of the study to the Project Board. The Board appropriated funds and authorized contracts to complete the work. The initial timeline, which called for the study to be complete at the end of 2001, was extended into 2002 to provide more time for public engagement.

This report includes a description of the problem, the methods used in the study, a description of public collection, the results of the public engagement process, and analysis of four options.