



AN OPERATIONS MILESTONE

Credited as an operations milestone for FCC, the company's Dallas MRF is helping the city to meet its waste diversion goals.

BY MEGAN WORKMAN

When Madrid-based FCC Group reported in May an earnings boost of nearly 13 percent in the first quarter of 2017 compared with the same quarter in 2016, the company credited the opening of its Dallas material recovery facility (MRF) as one of two “operations milestones” and

a factor in this increase. The company and its CEO Carlos M. Jarque said at the time that the improvement of 12.7 percent in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) to \$188 million “reflects sustained growth in operating profitability across its business areas.” (The other milestone cited is outside the

United States: In March 2017, the FCC Environment division also started up its ninth energy-from-waste plant, built to serve Worcestershire and Herefordshire in the United Kingdom.)

The Spanish firm entered the United States market in 2008. In 2015, FCC was awarded a contract in Orange County, Florida—the first municipal solid waste (MSW) collection contract given to a Spanish company in the U.S.

FCC has signed eight contracts in the U.S. in the past two years, including six throughout Texas. Together with Dallas, Garland, Mesquite, University Park and Rowlett, FCC will provide services for the treatment of recyclables to 2 million people in north Texas.

Andrea Rodriguez, technical director for FCC in the U.S., says the company's intention is to continue to grow its operations in this country.

She says, "FCC will seek to partner with as many cities and counties in the U.S. that select us to partner with them. This market is the largest market in the world, and we believe there is huge potential."

SWITCHING SERVICES

In June 2017, FCC was awarded a \$33 million recycling collection contract in Rowlett, Texas, after Waste Management (WM), Houston, tried to raise rates by 84 percent during its renewal process, according to a report by CBS 11, a CBS affiliate serving the Dallas and Fort Worth areas. FCC will take over the contract Oct. 1, 2017, with all incoming recyclables making their way through the company's single-stream MRF in Dallas.

Before the vote, a WM area manager posted a letter online calling FCC Environmental a "European conglomerate that has virtually no collection experience or operations in the U.S.," the CBS 11 report says. The manager also said the city may experience a disruption of service because of FCC Environmental's "lack of experience, infrastructure and equipment."

Mayor Todd Gottle called the letter "unprofessional" and pointed to FCC's new 12-acre recycling facility in Dallas, according to the report. He posted his own letter explaining the decision to switch service providers. WM has provided collection services to Rowlett for five years.

While the mayor said there will be no disruption of service, all bids came in high-

er than the city's current rate, and residents will experience a cost increase.

As far as FCC's experience is concerned, Rodriguez points to the company's more than 100 years of proficiency in collection and processing as one point of success. In Dallas specifically, she says growth since the MRF started up in January 2017 is another good sign. "We are growing really fast in Dallas. We hope we can maximize the Dallas MRF as much as possible and that we can even expand our operations; doubling the capacity will be our goal."

Rodriguez, who is from Madrid and came to the U.S. seven years ago, continues, "At the FCC Dallas MRF, we're constantly increasing the number of contracts

"The city of Dallas had to get the permits for us to be in construction," Rodriguez says. "Unfortunately we had the rainiest April in the world, so construction couldn't begin until early May."

Once things were up and running, though, it has been downhill from there. Three buildings sit on the Dallas site—the 60,000-square-foot MRF, an 8,600-square-foot educational center and a 3,500-square-foot maintenance shop.

The MRF's tipping floor space fills 20,000 square feet. For workers, the facility features enclosed cabins, offering climate-controlled, noiseless and odorless workspaces. Seventy workers fill two shifts.

Van Dyk Recycling Solutions (VDRS),



and customers and we're really excited about that. We have a great team of experts in Dallas."

UP AND RUNNING

FCC secured a contract in September 2015 to build and operate a MRF to manage all of the single-stream recyclables in Dallas for a period of 15 years. The contract could be extended for a further 10 years. Rodriguez says the biggest challenge for the Dallas MRF concerned construction. The MRF was constructed on a very tight schedule—in eight months—Rodriguez says.

While the contractors "were really good and worked really fast," construction could not start until permits were approved, she says. This meant delays until around March 2016. Heavy rainfall through April 2016 delayed construction even longer.

Stamford, Connecticut, supplied the sorting system for the MRF, including a series of StarScreens (manufactured by Lubo Systems) that separate old corrugated containers (OCC), glass, fiber and containers, including VDRS' newest offering, the Anti-Wrapping ONP (old newspapers) screen, the widest screen in the industry at 13.3 feet with 440 stars, the equipment provider says. The stars incur virtually no wrapping, even after hours of operation, VDRS says. Cleaning and maintenance time is reduced to less than 10 percent that of traditional star screens.

A total of four TOMRA (formerly TITECH) Autosort 4 optical sorters recover any remaining fiber and separate all plastics. An overbelt magnet and eddy current recover ferrous and aluminum cans, respectively, while a glass cleanup system

(from Walair) creates four fractions of clean, sellable glass. The system is capped off by a Bollegraaf HBC-120S baler.

While the plant is capable of processing 140,000 tons per year, Rodriguez says it has not yet reached that capacity. The Dallas MRF receives about 7,500 tons of single-stream materials each month, she says.

Several independent haulers pick up from residential curbside programs throughout the area and bring the materials to the Dallas MRF for processing. In the case of Garland, FCC picks up collected curbside materials from the city's transfer station.

Rodriguez says FCC plans to add 15 diesel trucks to its fleet this summer to "improve residential and commercial collection." She says the company continues to expand its presence in Texas with the help of word of mouth. "We believe that the city [of Dallas] is really happy with our services, and other cities have since asked us as others have recommended us. That's good," Rodriguez says.

“At the FCC Dallas MRF, we're constantly increasing the number of contracts and customers and we're really excited about that.”

— Andrea Rodriguez,
FCC Dallas technical director

KEEPING THINGS LOCAL

While Dallas represents growth for FCC, the company is working to serve as a source of growth for Dallas in regard to its zero waste plan. The city's goal is to increase waste diversion to 40 percent by 2020; 60 percent by 2030; and 80 percent ("zero waste") by 2040.

Rodriguez says FCC is helping the area to meet its diversion goals in several ways. First, the company incorporated an educational center as part of its MRF. With a 360-degree, enclosed gallery view of the MRF's operations, visitors can see first-hand equipment and people at work as well as how material moves through the



plant. The center also has a 100-person classroom. Rodriguez says FCC plans to host school groups beginning this fall as educating children is vital to the success of recycling. FCC has figures to prove its educational programs have increased waste diversion in other cities where they have been implemented, she says.

Rodriguez explains, "Educating the kids is really important because when you educate kids in the school, they will go home and tell mom and dad, 'Hey, we need to put a recycling bin in here and separate cardboard.'"

She adds, "A lot of the cities we work in, we show that we increase the rate of tonnage that goes into our facilities for recycling after implementing programs in the schools that we work with. We have numbers to prove that. We are sure that we can help the city of Dallas to achieve their zero waste goal, and it's also beneficial to us because the more tons we have, the better."

Another point of education is communicating with residents directly, which Rodriguez says FCC will be doing in Dallas through newsletters.

Beyond education, FCC is helping Dallas to meet its diversion goals by using local end markets. Most of the materials processed at the Dallas MRF are sold back into local markets, Rodriguez says. This benefits the community in a couple of ways.

"We always want to support local markets because it's more beneficial to the


community. It encourages people to recycle more if they can see their own benefits," Rodriguez says.

She also shares that investments in quality equipment and hard workers have resulted in cleaner streams on the MRF's back end. She says the MRF's recovered glass and paper bales have been highly regarded since its opening. FCC separates the glass into four fractions, which are sold into the Texas market. Fiber and glass comprise about 80 percent of the recyclables FCC's Dallas MRF recovers, Rodriguez says.

"We're very proud to be able to say our glass has been declared the cleanest in the state of Texas by our customers," she says.

She adds of the MRF's recovered paper, "Our fiber has been determined the cleanest in the area. The local paper mills are very happy with our OCC and paper."

Despite the level of success FCC already has achieved in Dallas, Rodriguez says FCC's work has just begun.

"At FCC, we have 100 years of experience working in this industry. The U.S. market is the largest in the world, and we believe there is huge potential for collection and processing activities in the U.S., and we'd like to implement our knowledge here," Rodriguez says. 

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