



Efficiency in Motion: Mill Valley Refuse Reduces Garbage Collection Routes up to 22% with RouteSmart



Data-Driven, Community-Focused Efficiency

Through its partnership with RouteSmart, Mill Valley Refuse Service has reduced scheduled recycling days by 22% and garbage days by 12%, improved department capacity utilization, and increased labor productivity by 7 percent, all while reinforcing its long-standing commitment to customer satisfaction and environmental stewardship.

Growing Complexities in a Legacy Framework

With more than 119 years of service in Southern Marin County, Mill Valley Refuse faced a daunting challenge: route plan inefficiencies caused by aging systems and increasingly complex service demands. The company's previous solution was limited in scope. Routes remained static for years, leading to inconsistent workloads, underutilized trucks, and difficulty absorbing operational changes such as retirements and driver callouts. Its back-office route management system lacked modern integration, making scenario planning and route forecasting cumbersome and reactive.



Key Benefits

22%

reduction in recycling
collection days (from 45 to 35)

21%

reduction in overtime

12%

reduction in garbage collection
days (from 65 to 57)

7%

increase in labor
productivity

Operational rebalancing

of routes created room to absorb retirements without adding headcount as specific routes were optimized and reallocated

Operational Drag and Lost Opportunities

This legacy approach was beginning to drag down performance. Drivers' routes varied in duration and effort, leaving valuable daily labor capacity and tonnage capacity untapped. Multiple lines of business needed route reorganization to mitigate overtime increases due to driver shortages. Strategic planning was stifled due to poor data visibility, and customer satisfaction risked stagnation. The company needed a shift—not just in tools, but in culture.

“Before RouteSmart, route changes were infrequent and not well optimized. We couldn’t see the data clearly, and that made it hard to justify or communicate changes to our team.”

— Gene Della Zoppa, CEO, Mill Valley Refuse Service

RouteSmart Online Sparks a Strategic Culture Shift

In 2023, Mill Valley Refuse transitioned directly to RouteSmart Online on a recommendation from a neighboring hauler and never looked back. With support from the RouteSmart client support team, the company began visualizing, analyzing, and refining routes like never before—using the software’s scenario planning, weight-balancing tools, and geospatial mapping to uncover inefficiencies that had gone unnoticed for years.

CEO Gene Della Zoppa described how they compared routes “before and after” for drivers to secure buy-in, consolidated underutilized routes, and increased garbage truck capacity from 90% to 95%. Scenario analysis helped them plan for future automated collection vehicles, rebalance workloads across jurisdictions, and reduce overtime by 16% in Q1 2025 alone.

“We’re using RouteSmart Online to test automated vehicle adoption, better understand seasonal trends with material weights, and even help plan future equipment upgrades. It’s a strategic tool now — not just a routing tool.”



Gene Della Zoppa

Strategic Wins



Scenario Planning: RouteSmart’s planner mode enabled long-term forecasting for transitioning to fully automated collection vehicles and evaluating capital needs based on real routing data.



Visual Buy-In: Route maps displaying changes before and after optimization was completed, were shared directly with drivers, earning buy-in through transparency and collaboration.



Community Service Alignment: Dual-stream recycling and peak traffic-time avoidance strategies were incorporated, improving both operational efficiency and resident satisfaction.



Futureproofing: The company is now exploring integration and deeper utilization of RouteSmart’s tools, including geocoding, route splitting, and automation modeling.

[**Hear more about Mill Valley Refuse on the Right on Time with RouteSmart podcast**](#)