



ARTICLE IN THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

"SIX MONTHS IN CHICAGO PLASTIC BAG BAN
- A MIXED BAG"

LINK : <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-plastic-bag-ban-0131-biz-20160129-story.html>

Chicago legislator Joe Moreno is right to propose that oxo-biodegradable plastic shopping bags be exempted from the city's ban on plastic bags. This is because the main argument against plastic (as distinct from other forms of litter) is that it is such a durable material that it can lie or float around in the environment for decades. This is not the case with oxo-biodegradable plastic bags, which are just as useful as ordinary plastic bags but convert rapidly into biodegradable materials in the open environment at the end of their useful life. They will then biodegrade in much the same way as a leaf.

There is no point in exempting "compostable" shopping bags, because even if they find their way to an industrial compost facility, they will not convert into compost. This is because the industry standards to which they are made (ASTM D6400 and its European and Australian equivalents) require the bags to convert rapidly into CO₂ gas, leaving nothing of any value to the soil. They can also contaminate the compost as they have been known to leave fragments of plastic. They are however more likely to get into landfill, where they can generate methane - which is an even more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂.

If oxo-biodegradable bags are collected during their useful life they can be recycled in the oil-based plastic waste-stream into new shopping bags, but this is not possible with the so-called "compostable" bags.