



Why is the Town considering connecting West Acton to the sewer district?

Connecting West Acton to the sewer district was a recommended solution of the Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan (CWRMP) to improve water quality town-wide. The CWRMP was a requirement of the MA Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and it identified West Acton as a high-priority water quality area due to the dense development and its proximity to environmentally sensitive areas.

Q. What are the advantages to the Town?

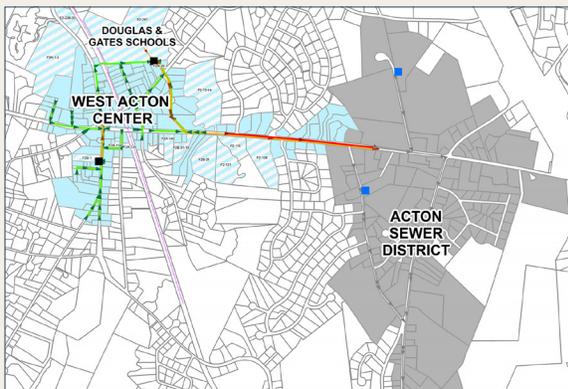
Sewers are convenient and reliable.

Continuing the project to West Acton would:

- support the Gates School property
- provide economic sustainability for a key Town Village
- provide environmental resource protection

Q. Do we need to expand sewers if the CWRMP recommended it?

The CWRMP was developed by a Citizens Advisory Committee with assistance from the Board of Health and consultants. Its recommendations were based on what the Committee determined was most feasible to improve water quality. Sewer systems generally improve water quality better than septic systems because they are more strictly regulated and managed.



Q. What is the current status of the project?

The Selectmen formed the West Acton Sewer Action Advisory Committee (WASAAC) who are reviewing the details of the project.

Q. Does the budget request at the 2019 Annual Town Meeting mean the project is happening?

No. The funds in the sewer enterprise budget are funds for a preliminary design to study feasibility. Final design & construction funds would require approval at a future town meeting.

Q. What about the Schools?

The AB School District is considering a twin-school in West Acton which may use sewers if available.

Q. When would sewers be built?

It is anticipated that the project would take up to three years to design and construct if full funding is approved.

Q. How much would it cost and who will pay for it?

The total cost of the project is estimated between \$12 to \$14 million with approximately \$3 to \$4 million being borne potentially by the Town and AB School District. The remaining cost would be borne by those served by the project. Property owners in the project area would be assessed a "betterment" charge, which reflects the value added to their property due to the presence of sewer.

Q. Where can I find more information?

On the WASAAC committee webpage: <http://www.acton-ma.gov/605/West-Acton-Sewer-Action-Advisory-Committee>



Q. What is the cost to the average home owner and how would I be charged?

The betterment assessment is expected to be in the approximate range of \$27,000 to \$35,000 per single-family property. The preliminary design would refine this estimate. Other costs include connecting to sewer and monthly sewer usage. Please review the estimates provided with this handout.

For multi-family units (condos, in-law apartments, etc) with less than 3 bedrooms, the assessed charge is likely to be a 2/3rds betterment, as in the existing sewer district. Current sewer users had the option of paying in advance with no interest or over a 30-year period with nominal interest; those options presumably would be available to West Acton users.

Q. How does this cost compare to replacing my septic system?

Health Department septic loan records show construction quotes ranging from \$27,000- \$46,000 with design quotes comparable to sewer connection quotes.

Q. How are other properties (commercial, etc) assessed?

Non-residential properties are assessed using an equivalent betterment formula to relate it back to a single-family home and to be fair and equitable. Public properties are only assessed "avoided costs" equal to what it would have cost to build an on-site treatment system if sewer were unavailable. For the public, "avoided costs" assessment makes the cost of sewer the same as a treatment system for any public property.

Q. What if I have a new septic system? Do I need to connect to the sewer?

No. Acton does not have a mandatory connec-

tion policy. Homeowners with older systems in the existing sewer district tended to connect early while others waited, sometimes until they sold their homes. Betterment payments begin once the sewer project is complete but owners can delay their connection, the associated connection costs and monthly sewer use billing.

Q. What if I have a septic system that may need an upgrade?

In the existing sewer district, properties with failing systems were given waivers from the Board of Health pending their connection to the completed sewer system. The same process is anticipated for West Acton.

Q. How is the Town paying for this?

The Town may use a loan program through the State Clean Water Trust; borrowing money at low or no-interest from the State Revolving Fund (SRF). MassDEP has evaluated the project and determined it improves water quality; rating it a priority project eligible for funding.

Q. Is there a deadline for the SRF funding or any other deadlines related to the project?

There is no hard deadline for SRF funding, which is evaluated annually, and there is no obligation to accept funding even if a project is eligible. MassDEP may, however, change its project priority rankings year to year.

The possibility of a new twin-school in West Acton is one factor that could affect the timing of a proposed sewer district expansion to West Acton. WASAAC therefore is evaluating options to provide a new twin-school with sewer service by the school's anticipated opening.