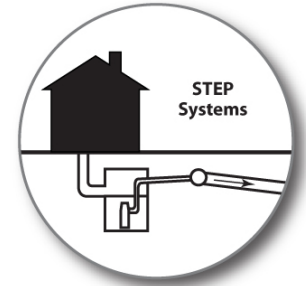


13 – STEP SYSTEM PROGRAM

This chapter presents the long-term strategies for the STEP system program and short-term objectives and actions to be implemented during 2007–2012. These strategies and objectives are in response to challenges and issues described in Chapter 6. The planned policy and programs are summarized in Chapter 17.



As mandated by State statute, the City owns and operates the approximately 1,500 residential and commercial STEP systems within the City and its UGA.

GOAL

Replace STEP systems in Olympia and its growth area through extension of gravity sewers where feasible. The current number of STEP systems will decline over time.

ANALYSIS

Based on the challenges and issues described in Chapter 6, a range of possible strategies was developed for each type of problem. As shown in Table 13.1, each strategy was then evaluated based on four criteria:

- Effectiveness
- Feasibility
- Cost
- Likelihood of success

This analysis resulted in the following key findings:

- To reduce the disproportional expense of maintaining STEP systems, routine maintenance can be reduced slightly without increasing the risk of individual system failure.
- The eventual cost of replacing STEP systems or converting them to gravity service is beyond current financial resources.
- Capital funding will be needed in the short term to replace corroded pipes and deal with odor problems caused by STEP system effluent.

Based on this assessment, strategies, objectives and actions for 2007–2012 were developed. These are described in the following sections.

Table 13.1. STEP System Challenges and Evaluation of Potential Strategies

Goal: Replace STEP Systems Through Extension of Gravity Systems Where Feasible

CHALLENGE	CONTEXT	PROGRAM AND POLICY OPTIONS*	IMPLEMENTATION	EVALUATION				NOTES
<i>Why</i>		<i>What</i>	<i>How</i>	EFFECTIVENESS	FEASIBILITY	PUBLIC COST	LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS	
1. STEP systems require high levels of publicly funded maintenance.	Southeast and Northeast Olympia	<i>Educate homeowners on STEP system operations.</i>	PPI	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Could reduce maintenance costs.
		<i>Reduce level of maintenance/increase risk of individual system failure.</i>	O&M	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Experience indicates that maintenance can be reduced somewhat.
		Recover costs of maintenance.	PPI	High	Moderate	Low (Higher private)	Moderate	Potentially unfair to STEP system customers.
2. High public costs of eventual system replacement or conversion to gravity sewer.	Southeast and Northeast Olympia	Replace current STEP systems as needed with existing resources.	O&M	Low	Low	High	Low	Costs will be beyond current financial resources.
		Recover costs of replacement.	PPI	Moderate	Moderate	Low (Higher private)	Moderate	Requires long-term financial strategy.
		<i>Convert STEP systems to gravity when cost effective in the long term.</i>	CFP, PPI	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	Requires long-term financial strategy.
		Initiate program to actively convert STEP systems to gravity.	CFP	High	Low	Very High	Low	Excessive costs.
		Evaluate potential use of alternative technologies.	PPI	Unknown	Low	Unknown	Low	None proposed at this time.
3. STEP system effluent causes downstream problems in gravity systems (e.g., odor, corrosion).	Southeast and Northeast Olympia	<i>Provide capital funding as needed.</i>	CFP	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Incorporate needs into citywide CFP.
		Recover costs of downstream impacts.	PPI, CFP	High	Low	Low	Low	Inconsistent with financial policies.
		Convert STEP systems to gravity systems.	PPI, CFP	High	Low	Very high	Low	Excessive costs.

*Planned options are in *bold italic*.

STRATEGIES, OBJECTIVES AND PLANNED ACTIONS

Strategy 1. Allow no new STEP systems except in vested subdivisions and individual lots in neighborhoods currently served by STEP systems.

Continued problems with STEP systems validate Council decisions in 2005 to stop accommodating new, non-vested systems. STEP systems are proving costly to maintain.

2007–2012 Objective: No new permits for developments with STEP systems will be approved.

Policy

- Amend the Comprehensive Plan policies to reflect this Plan’s affirmation of the prohibition on permitting of additional STEP systems as defined by Council Resolution No. M-1611 (July 19, 2005).

Strategy 2. Reduce maintenance cost by educating STEP system customers about proper use of their system and reducing the frequency of planned maintenance.

STEP systems require approximately twice the O&M resources and day-to-day costs as do conventional gravity systems.

2007–2012 Objective: Reduce per customer service cost by 20 percent.

Programs

- Improve educational materials for STEP system customers and distribute periodically to customers and neighborhood associations.
- Schedule inspections bi-annually instead of annually, and continually evaluate procedures to reduce emergency calls and unnecessary service.

SPECIFIC SUBSTANTIVE REQUIREMENTS

The following specific substantive requirements shall apply to STEP systems.

1. New STEP systems shall be permitted provided:

- The property being served is a lot of record existing prior to February 15, 2005 abutting on any street, alley, right-of-way or easement in which there is now located a STEP force main; or
- The property is located within a subdivision vested as of July 2005.