

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## Natural gas drillers' damage to roads debated

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HARRISBURG — The Marcellus shale gas industry says drilling companies spent about \$200 million repairing Pennsylvania roads its trucks damaged during the past year, but a PennDOT official claims the industry owes more.

Taxpayers are due as much as \$35 million for "significant damage" that can't be recovered under agreements with companies, according to a transition report the outgoing administration of Democratic Gov. Ed Rendell prepared for Gov.-elect Tom Corbett, a Shaler Republican.

Drillers definitely break up roads with heavy trucks and equipment, particularly in rural areas, said Kathryn Klaber, executive director of the Marcellus Shale Coalition, but they pay for repairs.

"I am not surprised there's some road damage," she said. "We know that. But hundreds of millions of private dollars are going into repairing those roads."

Industry money makes up for shortfalls in state spending on roads, said Klaber, who put the private investment at more than \$200 million.

"Are there road impacts? Absolutely," she said. "But they have been more than fixed by the industry."

PennDOT Deputy Secretary Scott Christie doesn't dispute the \$200 million figure. He said companies were "more than willing to discuss damage," but he said PennDOT's estimate of \$30 million to \$35 million is in addition to what the industry paid.

"Drilling operations are generating a significant increase in truck traffic on roads and bridges surrounding well sites," said PennDOT's transition report. "Most of the activity is taking place in rural areas where travel is predominantly on low-volume secondary roads, which do not have sufficient structural strength to withstand the increased traffic."

More than 2,000 miles of roadway are under agreements requiring drillers to pay for maintenance, the report says. Crews posted those roads with weight restrictions during the past three years.

But some major arteries can't be placed under similar restrictions, even though gas company trucks damage them, Christie said, because other businesses that ship by truck also utilize them.

"If we post that route (with weight restrictions), then we have to tell every business on it that you can't drive on it either without a maintenance agreement," he said.

Matt Pitzarella, spokesman for Range Resources, said his company put \$15 million toward road repairs. He said industry executives are eager to cooperate with Corbett's administration, even if that means paying a "reasonable fee" for damaged highways.

The initial stage of Marcellus shale drilling is a construction process involving trucks and diesel fuel engines that contribute to air pollution. In a separate transition report, the Department of Environmental Protection identified air pollutants released at drilling sites. It monitored air in Washington and Greene counties, North-Central Pennsylvania and the Northeast.

A DEP study of Marcellus shale industry air impacts released in November found "no emission levels that would constitute a concern to the health of residents living near these operations," but the study did not assess the potential cumulative effects from natural gas operations.

Klaber said any air quality problems caused by drilling are small compared to those caused by power plants or vehicles emitting pollutants. She noted that natural gas burns more cleanly than other fossil fuels.

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