

Tompkins legislators target gas-drilling traffic

Proposed law aims to protect roadways

By Liz Lawyer • elawyer@gannett.com
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Despite misgivings about any future natural gas drilling in Tompkins County using the hydraulic fracturing method, county legislators are proceeding with preparations for the possibility of drilling here with a law requiring drilling traffic to have a permit before using county roads.

A state law prohibits **local governments** from making laws regulating the drilling industry, but makes an exception for laws protecting local roadways.

On Friday, the county legislature's Facilities and Infrastructure Committee approved a draft of a law requiring projects within the county with high-frequency, high-impact **vehicle** traffic to apply for a permit from the county. The proposal will be reviewed by the legislature's Government Operations Committee before going to the full legislature for consideration.

County Attorney Jonathan Wood said the law would not give the county the authority to limit the amount of **truck** traffic, "but it will allow us to set a bond and determine the condition of the roads ... before, after and during the activity and ensure the county is compensated for damage to the roads."

Legislator Pam Mackesey, D-Ithaca, said she had concerns about the enforceability of the law.

"I worry about how effective this is going to be, but we absolutely have to have something on the books," she said.

The Facilities and Infrastructure Committee rejected an alternate resolution to ask the state to clarify a law allowing local governments to **protect** their roads from the effects of drilling.

Legislator Mike Lane, D-Dryden, said, "I don't think we should pass (the alternate resolution). I think we should go along with our local laws and say, 'We have the right to do this.' If we pass this resolution, then we're putting up a red flag saying we don't know if we're allowed to do this."

The Facilities and Infrastructure Committee also discussed public meetings for road projects on Pine Tree Road and Hanshaw Road. There are not specific dates set for the meetings, but they will likely be held after Thanksgiving, a spokesperson for the county highway department said.

A resolution to prohibit the leasing of county-owned land for hydraulic fracturing was postponed until the next meeting. The resolution has been to the full legislature once, but was sent back to committee due to controversy over some of its **language**.



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