

## **Boulder County to study impact of oil and gas vehicles on roads**

By Laura Snider, Camera Staff Writer

The Boulder County commissioners Thursday approved funding for a study of how heavy oil and gas vehicles may impact rural county roads in the future and whether a fee should be charged on those trips to cover increased road maintenance costs.

The commissioners gave the OK for the Transportation Department to pay \$129,000 to the firm Felsburg Holt & Ullevig to do the analysis, which will likely be finished late this year.

The same firm oversaw a similar study for Douglas County, which found that development of each individual pad site -- which is connected to about six wells -- in that county requires 11,040 vehicle trips.

"This firm did work for Douglas County, and they're working with Arapahoe County now," George Gerstle, director of the county's Transportation Department, told the commissioners. "They've come very highly recommended from the Douglas County staff."

In Boulder County, up to 1,800 wells could be drilled in the future under existing regulations, according to a staff analysis. Using the Douglas County study as a guide, that would mean that the county could expect about 3.3 million trips on its rural roads by heavy trucks, which cause more damage than passenger vehicles.

The Douglas County study also found that the additional use by heavy trucks could cost the county between \$13.8 million and \$135.9 million between 2015 and 2030.

The goal of the new study commissioned Thursday is to get a similar analysis of road impacts that is specific to Boulder County, Gerstle said.

"We also asked them to go a little bit further and provide us with options to prevent the potential impacts," he said.

Gerstle said he hopes to have the results of the study around November. At that time, transportation staffers will come up with their own recommendation about how to mitigate possible impacts, including whether to impose a roadway impact fee on the oil and gas industry to help pay for additional road maintenance costs.

"I think this is a good move on our part, and I think this will be great information," said Commissioner Deb Gardner before voting to allocate money for the study.

There is a moratorium against oil and gas drilling in unincorporated Boulder County through Feb. 4. The moratorium is designed to give staffers in a variety of departments the time they need to see if current county policies adequately protect against the impacts of oil and gas drilling.

