

## **Businesses, residents brace for mess during Miller Road reconstruction**

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By Ron Fonger

**rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317**

FLINT TWP. - Betty Lawrence has seen a lot living 40 years on and around Miller Road, and she knows the big reconstruction that starts here today will be another sight to behold.

"Everyone who comes in talks about it," she said Friday from her home on Curtis Road, just north of Miller Road. "It's going to be a mess."

The Genesee County Road Commission, businesses and drivers who make Miller Road one of the busiest in the county hope that mess at least ends up being manageable.

They will start to find out today as Miller Road traffic shifted this morning from I-75 west to Manwaring Drive and the first chunks of road are torn up.

About 21,000 vehicles drive that stretch on an average day and now, they'll have to share one eastbound, one westbound and one turn lane for the next six weeks.

Also starting this week will be work in the intersection of Ballenger Highway and Miller.

As soon as that first phase of work is complete, contractor Zito Construction will move the work area from Manwaring to Linden Road before finishing work in the area from I-75 east toward Ballenger Highway.

John T. Plamondon, construction manager of the road commission, said that when traffic is shifted to the southern-most side of Miller today, work can start on tearing out concrete and asphalt in the northern-most lanes.

"Once we get it set up, things will go smoothly," said Plamondon, who said shoppers shouldn't be scared away from the township because of the job -even if it is the biggest the road commission ever has managed.

The work on Miller Road is expected to cost more than \$10 million and continue until Sept. 15.

Those long months of slow going on Miller worries business owners such as Dave Barclay of Duke's Car Stereo. He's right in the heart of the project and already is worried about the potential for backups and frustration.

"Four months -that's an awful long time," Barclay said.

"My first hope was for a faster turnaround time."

Like others bracing for the reconstruction, Duke's will remind customers it has other Flint area locations that might be easier to get to.

Barclay said he knows most businesses don't have that luxury and believes the summerlong construction will cause some businesses to close before its over.

"It's definitely going to hurt, (and) it's tough enough already in this economy," he said.

At Dale's Natural Foods, Manager Deb Gustafson said some customers already are making plans for how to get to the health food store when Miller Road traffic slows.

Dale's is posting construction updates on its Web site, [www.dalesnaturalfoods.net](http://www.dalesnaturalfoods.net).

"We're really apprehensive, (but) exactly how it's going to affect us, we don't know," Gustafson said.

Area homeowners such as Lawrence, who live on Miller Road's remaining residential side streets, also have mixed feelings about the need to repair the road and the short-term aggravation.

Lawrence, 81, hasn't been driving a vehicle since a car accident in 2005, but she continues to walk on Curtis Road and has regular visitors. She moved her home here from Miller Road as property values soared because of the demand for retail property.

"I imagine we're going to get a lot of noise and smells," she said. "There's nothing much you can do about it but to be stuck."

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