

## End is near for huge Miller Road reconstruction project in Flint Township

by RoNeisha Mullen | The Flint Journal  
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FLINT TOWNSHIP, Michigan -- Retailers along Miller Road are thrilled that construction crews are nearing the end of a five-month-long reconstruction project. Shelly Arceo, owner of Fit Zone for Women in the Somerset Town Centre plaza on Miller Road, said the construction, combined with warm weather, has slowed business. "It's been very difficult," Arceo said. "Summer is a slow time for fitness anyway, and the road has really been an obstacle for people." Most of the construction work on the \$10-million project appears to be complete, leaving just the final paving, curbing and driveways to be completed. Crews are working on the north side of Miller Road between Ballenger Highway and the I-75 northbound entrance ramp. The road is down to three lanes in that area and from Best Buy to Linden Road, where turf restoration is being done and driveways are being poured.

John Plamondon, construction manager for the county Road Commission, said the project is scheduled to be completed on Sept. 15. Some entrances to stores and plazas are closed so that driveways can be reconstructed. The setup forces drivers to use service drives to get to their destinations. Plamondon said businesses should be easier to access during the final paving, which is scheduled to begin later this week.

"The top course of paving will be done at night," Plamondon said. "We don't want people driving over it and we want to help maintain access to businesses." Arceo said crews have done a good job of keeping on schedule. "I'm impressed with the timeliness of it," Arceo said. "They've been amazing at keeping up and it's going to be great when it's done."

Right turns into some stores are almost impossible because barrels near the entrances are too close together, leaving barely enough space for cars to get through.

But the difficult setup hasn't deterred customers from traveling to the area to shop at their favorite stores. "I don't mind coming to Dale's Natural Foods because I like the products," said Ellen Morgan of Fenton. "Even with the construction, you go to the places where you know you're going to get good service and the products you want."

Several retailers on the strip are offering discounts and contests for customers who brave the construction. Don Wolfe, owner of Dale's Natural Foods, said business has been steady at the organic grocery market during the construction.

"Business is close to our normal pace," Wolfe said. "The store experienced a low period when cement was being poured right out front, but that was short lived and it had to happen." Arceo said she's also seeing her regular clients, but walk-ins have slowed. "People who aren't used to coming here get frustrated trying to get in the parking lot, so they just pass us by," Arceo said. Geri Cummings still visits the area four or five times a month. But, the Lennon woman said she may have to find a new route to get to the area. "I used to take the back way, behind the store," Cummings said while shopping for computer software at Best Buy. "There's a line of traffic out there, so I guess everybody knows that way now."