

# CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

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## Businesses along busy M-59 shopping corridor brace for 2-year road project

By [ANNALISE FRANK](#)



The 3.9-mile redo of M-59/Hall Road between M-53 and Romeo Plank Road in central Macomb County will close lanes up and down the length of construction for the next two summers.

When a massive, two-year road reconstruction project is ramping up on one of the busiest shopping strips in town, retailers buckle their seatbelts for a bumpy ride.

The nearly four-mile redo of M-59/Hall Road between M-53 and Romeo Plank Road in central Macomb County will close lanes up and down the length of construction for the next two summers, crimping traffic to hundreds of stores that depend on it for business.

The Michigan Department of Transportation plans to keep all businesses accessible at all times during construction, but that doesn't mean shoppers want to fight their way through it in the district that includes Lakeside Mall and the Mall at Partridge Creek.

Storefronts along the construction corridor, which can see more than 50,000 cars per day, will likely take a 10 to 25 percent hit, said retail consultant Ken Dalto, founder and owner of Farmington Hills-based Kenneth J. Dalto & Associates.

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#### ABOUT THE PROJECT

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- **What:** A two-year reconstruction project of M-59/Hall Road
- **Where:** Sterling Heights, Utica, and Clinton, Macomb and Shelby townships
- **Cost:** \$60 million-plus
- **Impact:** During construction, three lanes will be open both directions of M-59 between M-53 and Romeo Plank Road 6 a.m.-9 p.m. each day. However, the M-59 bridge over the M-53 expressway will only have two lanes open each direction through the middle of summer.
- **Schedule:** Construction will proceed this year at Delco Boulevard east nearly to Garfield Road. Next year will tackle farther east to Romeo Plank Road.

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"Two years is an eternity in retail," Dalto said. "You can make some of it up around Christmas, but you can't depend on it."

To mitigate the damage, companies — especially luxury goods sellers and restaurants, which will see the biggest declines — need to take a three-pronged approach, he said: announce in-store sales, get the word out about their status mid-construction and boost their online presence.

"They have to find a way to attract people to go through the construction," he said. "The falloff from the construction will be greater than the fallout from the loss from (discounting)."

#### Allaying fears

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Michigan Department of Transportation Construction Engineer Jim Petronski speaks at a meeting Tuesday that aimed to inform and reassure those affected by a two-year M-59 reconstruction project.

Worries about the construction played out last week as the Michigan Department of Transportation sought to reassure representatives of businesses affected by the project.

Real-time updates on road and driveway closures will be available at [MovingMacomb.org](http://MovingMacomb.org) throughout the \$60 million project that began last week, said MDOT Construction Engineer Jim Petronski.

Beauty Bar Salon co-owner Cortney Forster certainly has worries.

The Sterling Heights salon has four entrances — two on Hayes Road and one on M-59. The impending 10-day closure of Hayes Road is "a little scary," said the other co-owner, Stacy Roberts.

But being able to warn clients on social media about the timing of the closures is helpful, she said.

"It'll ease some of the pain that'll be caused by it," Roberts said.

Petronski spoke at a public information meeting at the Clinton-Macomb Public Library last week. He gave out his cellphone number and said MDOT wanted to emphasize transparency.

The department has spoken with about 80 percent of the 400 affected businesses in Sterling Heights, Utica, and Clinton, Macomb and Shelby townships, he said.

Mike Keys, a Charter Township of Clinton trustee, and John Myers III, a community activist in Macomb County and resident of Sterling Heights, planned the meeting to "get businesses together, so people understand it's more of an education than, 'Hey, we're going to screw you,'" Myers said.

For attendee Debi Zentz, campus director of Heritage Church's Sterling Heights location on Schoenherr Road and M-59, the biggest priority was making sure people could still easily access the church. Zentz said that like for businesses, she was nervous about the impact.

The project will maintain access to all businesses during work on the main road, Petronski said. It will also open temporary lanes to ease congestion. Business driveways will be blocked for five to seven days each while they are repaved, but workers will not close consecutive driveways or turnarounds.

Driveway work is set to start in mid-April. The intersections of Schoenherr Road and Hayes Road with M-59 will also close for 10 days each in the summer.

During the event's question-and-answer segment, other business owners asked about signage, power outages, logistics and the driveway closings. Petronski said he does not know of any scheduled utility outages, and that detours will be posted.

## **Construction timeline**

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The 2017 leg of the project is scheduled to end in October, breaking for winter and the holiday shopping season. The entire project will finish in October 2018.

Contractors that don't meet deadlines will be fined, Petronski said.

The prime contractor on the project is Angelo lafrate Construction Co., based in Warren. Macomb-based Rauhorn Electric Inc., Canton-based Cadillac Asphalt LLC and traffic control specialist Poco Inc. in Canton have also signed on.

MDOT chose hot mix asphalt for the project instead of new concrete. The asphalt is 13 percent cheaper, easier to maintain and quicker to repair, meaning it could lessen the impact on businesses, Petronski said.

Funding for the \$60 million price tag is 82 percent covered by federal sources, 17.5 percent by the state and Sterling Heights picking up the remaining 0.5 percent, MDOT Communications Representative Diane Cross said in an email.