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## IDOT shifting motorists along not-so-scenic drive

**Sterling construction will wrap for year before December's surge in shopping**

October 15, 2003

By **MATT BUEDEL**  
*of the Journal Star*

PEORIA - The swath of reflective orange continues to grow along Sterling Avenue this week, but gift buyers can look forward to construction-free traffic for holiday shopping excursions near Northwoods Mall.

Traffic on small sections of West Lake Avenue and Scenic Drive between Sterling and Rockwood Drive will be shifted for about one month starting this week. Work at those locations and on southbound Sterling is scheduled to be complete by Nov. 28.

"Our contractor is not allowed to work on Sterling over the holiday season" to accommodate businesses and alleviate seasonal congestion, said Illinois Department of Transportation district construction engineer Matt Jerab.

The portion of West Lake closed Monday, and traffic is being rerouted to a temporary, unnamed street just north of Kouri's Pub. That street connects Sterling and Rockwood but does not cross either of those roads. A temporary traffic light has been erected at the intersection with Sterling.

Scenic Drive between Sterling and Rockwood is scheduled to close Thursday after inclement weather pushed the



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closure back one day. Motorists who drive that stretch will be redirected to Eugenia Avenue, which runs along the southern border of the Sterling Shell gas station. Eugenia has been closed but will reopen in conjunction with the closure of Scenic.

Jereb said West Lake and Scenic at those locations are closing to align the intersections with new stretches of Sterling. The work is scheduled to be complete by the time the city annually converts traffic on Scenic between Sterling and War Memorial Drive to relieve holiday backups around the mall. Construction on Sterling will resume after the new year.

In the meantime, a new restaurant is opening in the Westlake Shopping Center while another that has been on Sterling for decades is suffering from the hassles of roadwork.

The Q Smokehouse Buffet will open Friday, featuring a barbecue style that owner Alan Pearson said originated in Texas.

"We knew this (construction) was coming before we selected this location," Pearson said. "We didn't really think, especially long-term, that the construction would affect us. ... It will end up being a great asset."

Ken Kouri, co-owner of Kouri's Pub, is less optimistic, though he does acknowledge the importance of the I-74 overhaul. A dissected parking lot and shrinking clientele, among other hassles, has clouded his view of the project.

"We have had a lot of aches and pains as far as parking issues and fighting some of their equipment," Kouri said. "I do know that our sales are not the same as in years past."

Fewer new faces have been surfacing at the pub, and some regulars fed up with access problems have quit coming as often.

"The Northwoods mall area is the center of Peoria. ... That area will be awesome," Kouri said. "A lot of times, you don't look into the future, you're worried about today."

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