C'MON BABY, DRIVE SOUTH
ACADIANA SHOPPERS MUST BE LISTENING TO JOHN HIATT, BECAUSE MOST ALL THE RETAIL DEVELOPMENT IS AROUND ACADIANA MALL.

By Leslie Turk

When they do leave their small towns for "big city" shopping, they are also abandoning their own communities to some extent. While a number of towns in Acadia have made some strides in convincing local people to shop their stores first, the shopping "expansion" afforded by the Acadia Mall area--where, in one day, you can hit countless stores selling everything imaginable--is far outweighing their hometown benefits.

It's an old client, says Rayburn, but Lafayette "really is a Fun City," and the Hub City's position as a retail center is paying off. According to the School Board's sales tax office, taxable sales in August increased 16.28 percent over last year. Taxable sales are up more than 12 percent in both prior months as well.

The business activity on the Southside is good for the city's economy, however, the concentration of activity is leading to some problems, the most obvious of which is traffic congestion.

With the Christmas season fast approaching, it's going to get much worse. The area has seen a lot of development over the last year, an obvious indication that traffic problems this year will be compounded.

"You'll find that the road system will be overtaxed, especially as we enter this season," says Dean Tickell, city transportation engineer. "It's handling today's traffic, but we're not prepared to handle new businesses.

"Certainly, the state needs to proceed with their plans to build an expansion at that intersection. That ought to be the next thing to come on line. I know it's a very expensive project," Tickell says the overpass is not yet funded for construction.

Improvements to the road system were made recently as last year, he says, when deceleration and deceleration lanes were added and other improvements with roads all the way from Ridge Road to MacArthur.

"We've done some everything we can do with traffic signals, We take extra care during the repair in the deceleration way. Only two months ago, the city took a traffic count at the intersection of Ridge Road and Ambassador Cv., and Ambassador Cv. Park Up and adjusted the timing of the light. It was also adjusted in anticipation of the new Super K opening soon in the area.

Super K did a traffic impact study. They determined how their traffic flow would impact the area," Tickell says. The discount retailer has decided to move their deceleration lanes, on deceleration lane, both on Ridge Road at the intersection of Ridge Road and Ambassador Cv., he says.

"It was to their benefit, as well as the city's, to make that decision." Tickell says the city is working to get more new businesses to conduct such studies and make the necessary adjustments to the road system, so traffic can move more smoothly. For instance, the city recently put up a light on new businesses.
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Congress Street by the Woodlawn Theatre. "The light was part of a three-party agreement," he says.
Developers in the Congress Street area have agreed to make a number of other changes that will help traffic along. The city's public works department has agreed to put a traffic signal in at the intersection of Congress Street and West Avenue. The signal will be activated when the new Wal-Mart Supercenter is completed.

"We anticipate the new Wal-Mart on Congress Street will deal with the traffic problem caused by the opening of the new stores," said Wal-Mart spokesperson Tom Smith. "The new store will be open by the end of the year and we expect it to help alleviate some of the congestion on Congress Street."