

By Angie Brunkow Staff Reporter

Don't be surprised if you find yourself stuck in traffic reminiscent of Husker football games between Lincoln and Omaha before the holidays.

Charles Lamphera, director of the Bureau of Business Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said many Lincoln shoppers make a shopping exodus to Omaha during the giftgiving season.

Don LaChere, general manager of Oakview Mall at 144th and Center streets in Omaha, said he estimated that up to 10 percent of the mall's weekend shoppers were Lincoln residents, and he hoped to see that number increase before Christmas.

Lamphera said the exodus of shoppers was not a new or isolated incident

Many retail chains locate in the "niche markets" of big cities because they can draw from the surrounding communities and hinterlands, he said.

People say it's well worth the trip.

-LaChere Oakview Mall general manager

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The combination of the central city and surrounding areas leads to a sizable market, he said.

Large urban centers like Omaha, Kansas City, Mo., and Minneapolis tend to attract retail stores and customers from the higher spectrums, he said

These stores feature specialty items and clothing, he said.

But Lamphera said shoppers taking their business to Omaha would not necessarily hurt Lincoln retail.

Lincoln's niche is in mid-level trade and volume stores like Wal-Mart, he said.

Those stores draw shoppers from the smaller communities surrounding Lincoln, he said.

LaChere said Oakview Mall would target the Lincoln audience.

The mall will have billboards posted before Christmas and ads placed in the Lincoln Journal-Star, he said.

LaChere said the cost and bother of driving didn't deter Lincolnites. People say it's well worth the

trip," he said. LaChere said shoppers were drawn

to Omaha because they could "make a day of it.

Shoppers have access to specialty shops, a variety of malls and restaurants, and they have an opportunity to see the city, he said.

Higher incomes, easier transportation and flexible work schedules allow shoppers to make the 45-minute trip without a lot of hassle, he said.

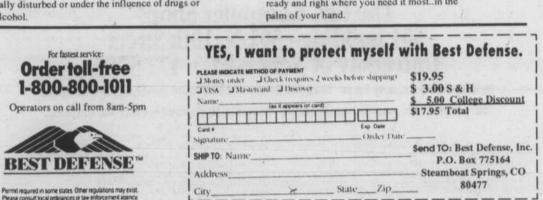


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