

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## ❖ 1.1 Objective

The City of Roanoke engaged Economic Development Research Group to assess the likely economic impacts on the city of three alternative alignments for the planned location of Interstate 73 through or around Roanoke. The city is concerned with the question of how any of those alternatives may affect the city's economic base and tax revenues. There is also concern about whether any of the alternatives may lead to disinvestment in established commercial areas in the City.

This report examines the potential positive and negative impacts associated with each of the I-73 alternatives. To provide an appropriate base of reference, this report also examines potential future changes in the city's economic base and traffic conditions associated with not building I-73.

## ❖ 1.2 Alternatives for I-73

The proposed I-73 highway has been designated by the US Congress as a high priority corridor for the national highway system. It would provide a direct inter-state travel route linking Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina. There are many alternative alignments for I-73 through the state of Virginia, but this report concerns only the alignment in the vicinity of Roanoke. The current routing alternatives may: (1) go through the center of Roanoke, referred to here as the "Central Alignment," (2) bypass the city to the west, referred to as the "West Bypass Alignment," or (3) bypass the city to the east, referred to as the "East Bypass Alignment."

These three basic alignments are illustrated in Figure 1-1 on the next page. It is important to note that the diagram is meant to roughly represent the basic concepts of the three alignments and not the exact routing.

As shown in the map, there are two basic versions of the Central Alignment below Elm Avenue in Roanoke – one turns southwest in the southern part of Roanoke, while the other turns southeast. There are also several alternative routings for I-73 south of Roanoke, some of which come closer than others to Smith Mountain Lake. Any of those routings south of Roanoke could be followed regardless of whether the Central, East Bypass or West Bypass alignment is used for the Roanoke area. Since all of those options are beyond the city limits and do not directly affect the City of Roanoke, they are not of concern for this study.