

❖ 1.3 Issues & Information Covered by this Study

Issues Covered by this Study. This study focuses specifically on how any of the I-73 alignment alternatives would affect Roanoke's economic base (and hence tax base). These effects can occur through essentially five different mechanisms:

- **Expanding Highway Access to Sites** – The location of highways affect the site location decisions of some businesses, particularly those that depend on highway access for incoming or outgoing truck shipments, or which are destinations dependent on highway access for the customer base. A new highway can open up new locations for commercial or industrial activities, and thus shift business patterns between the City and the suburbs.
- **Reducing Travel Times** – Changes in the highway network can affect long distance travel times, changing truck shipment patterns and the market areas which can be served by Roanoke-based businesses. A new interstate route can expand business markets for some manufacturers or distributors.
- **Shifting Traffic Volumes** – The volume of traffic traveling on a road directly affects its supportable level of activity for gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other traveler-serving businesses, as well as potential market size for recreation and tourism destinations. Different highway alignments can increase customer base for some businesses while decreasing it for others.
- **Increasing Congestion** – Increasing traffic delays can limit accessibility to downtown areas and other locations, discouraging growth of local visitors and also discouraging future business investment at those areas. Different highway alignments can improve or worsen those conditions.
- **Disruption of Existing Business Activities** – Construction of additional highways and interchanges generally requires land (and sometimes buildings) to be taken from other existing or planned uses. New highway alignments, widening of existing highways and changes in interchange designs can all displace some businesses (as well as homes).

All of these five factors can simultaneously work to change the nature of Roanoke's economic and tax base.

Issues Not Fully Covered by this Study. This study focuses on how I-73 could affect the city's economic base, *given the Roanoke area's current (1) transportation infrastructure, (2) land use and development policies, and (3) economic development strategies.* Interventions by the City of Roanoke to change public transit services, land development regulations or economic development strategies can increase or decrease the impacts discussed in this report. Related issues concerning the environmental and fiscal consequences of sprawled development patterns and