

Table 2-6 Employment Trends in Visitor-Serving Industries

| | ROANOKE CITY | | | ROANOKE Metro Area | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | 1988 | 1998 | % Change | 1988 | 1999 | % Change |
| Passenger transit | 285 | 396 | 38.9% | 285 | 396 | 38.9% |
| Transportation by air | 420 | 1,659 | 295.0% | 433 | 1,675 | 286.8% |
| Auto dealers & service stations | 1642 | 2509 | 52.8% | 2916 | 3641 | 24.9% |
| Eating & drinking estabs. | 4120 | 4776 | 15.9% | 6114 | 8002 | 30.9% |
| Hotels & other lodging places | 1080 | 920 | -14.8% | 1768 | 1523 | -13.9% |
| <u>Amusements & recreation</u> | <u>454</u> | <u>432</u> | <u>-4.8%</u> | <u>784</u> | <u>1181</u> | <u>50.6%</u> |
| Totals | 8,001 | 10,692 | 33.6% | 12,015 | 16,022 | 33.3% |

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

I-73 Alternatives. Roanoke stands to gain tourists under all of the three alternative alignments for I-73 which will improve access to major population centers in the Great Lakes, northern Midwest and to the Southeast Coast. Regardless of the alignments for I-73 through or around Roanoke, there are many other options for I-73 south of the City. If an alignment in Eastern Franklin County is chosen for the segment of I-73 that runs south of Roanoke, then the new I-73 could facilitate better access to Smith Mountain Lake, enabling the region to present an attractive package to tourists that includes urban, mountain, and water-based recreation.

The Central Corridor Alignment would support existing tourist-serving industries, which are clustered along I-581 in the downtown Roanoke area, by funneling more potential tourist traffic through the city.

With the East Bypass Alignment, traffic could access tourist sites in the City via I-581 on the North and by Routes 460 and 24 on the east. With the West Bypass Alignment, tourist sites in the City could potentially be accessed from US-221 on the West and from US-220 on the South. If either of those alignments is chosen, then it would be important for the City to ensure that there is a visitor's center and signage at the major highway access points, to increase penetration of the passing tourist trade.

Magnitude of Impacts. Impacts on tourism are particularly important for the City's finances because of the local taxes on restaurants (4% meals tax) and on lodging (6% hotel room tax). An additional 16,000 long-distance travelers could be passing through the Roanoke area each day via I-73 (estimated by the year 2020; see Appendix D). That can represent a potentially important source of additional visitor spending in the City. This market could be most easily tapped with the Central Alignment, but it could also be tapped with the bypass alignments. To achieve that potential impact, the City would have to ensure that there is the necessary marketing information, highway signage, lodging capacity and highway accessibility to the sites. The additional traffic passing the Roanoke area could generate in the range of \$40-60 million of additional hotel and lodging revenues annually (an 18-25% growth of tourism, providing 2000-3000 new jobs in lodging, restaurants, auto services and