

3. FINDINGS -- IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVE ALIGNMENTS

❖ 3.1 "No Build" vs. "Build" Scenarios

Traffic Congestion. The "No Build" Scenario assumes that I-73 is not built. Without any widening of I-581 / US-220 or construction of bypass routes or development of other transportation alternatives by the City, traffic congestion along I-581/US-220 is forecast to significantly worsen and become very severe by the year 2020, with continuing traffic delays. That translates into additional vehicle operating costs, driver costs for trucks and negative environmental consequences. (See Appendix C for detailed traffic analysis.) Most importantly for Roanoke's economy, that scenario will serve to degrade access to the downtown area, and make the City much less attractive for visitors, local shoppers and for future business location decisions.

Business Market Access. The "No Build" Scenario will keep Roanoke's interstate access focused on I-81's northeast-southwest direction, with travel times northwest (to Ohio and Michigan) over 100 minutes longer and travel times southeast (to North Carolina) nearly 60 minutes longer than would occur under any of the I-73 alternatives. That is likely to further constrain the area's ability for manufacturing, wholesaling and distribution sectors to continue growing by limiting their ability to serve markets in those directions.

The "Build" Scenario, under any of the alternative alignments, will provide businesses in Roanoke with improved access to markets and suppliers located in the Great Lakes/Midwest and Southeast Coast regions.

Pass-By Traffic. It will also provide 16,000 additional pass-through trips (i.e., travelers with both origins and destinations outside of the Roanoke region) daily, which can generate business for Roanoke businesses in the traffic-serving and tourism sectors (including restaurants, hotels, retail stores and gas stations). The capture of pass-through traffic can be very real; currently 28% of the visitors to Roanoke are spending time and money in the city while passing through on their way to other destinations (see Appendix B). The additional traffic is estimated to have a value in the range of \$40 - 150 million annually for Roanoke area businesses. (Of course, the portion of those benefiting businesses which are in the City would depend on the alignment that is selected).