

Other potential negative impacts include the economic risk to the region if the City of Roanoke and other communities fail to provide sufficient sites with highway access for future industrial development. There is also a fear by some residents of Roanoke County that encroachment of commercial and industrial development along the proposed West Bypass alignment could have negative environmental impacts.

On balance, the West Bypass Alignment is likely to have the least impact on the city – either positive or negative. Because only one interchange is planned, this alignment for I-73 will not open up an abundance of land with highway access for development.

### ❖ 3.4 The East Bypass Alignment

The East Bypass Alignment would bypass the city to the east. Under this option, I-73 would overlay I-81 to the north of the city from around Exit 132 east to Exit 150. It would then turn south from exit 150, running through Botetourt and Bedford Counties. The city would still be accessed by I-581, which would function as a spur for I-73 as well as for I-81. No new spur into the city is currently being considered as part of the I-73 East Bypass option.

The East Bypass Alignment passes through the largest supply of flat, developable land in the region. It would have three new interchanges east of Roanoke: one is proposed for the junction with Route 460 in Botetourt County and the other two are proposed for the junctions with Routes 24 and 634 in Bedford County. This area comprises the fastest-growing segment of the region; the population of the eastern side of the metropolitan area is forecast to grow by some 22% by 2010 – contrasting with expectations of stagnant to declining population levels in the City over the next two decades.

Due to both the population growth and the availability of open space, commercial nodes are likely to develop around these suburban interchanges. The development of new land on the east side can be viewed as positive or negative, depending on one's viewpoint and weighting of economic and environmental factors. From a *regional* perspective, the East Bypass Alignment would open up sites in a high growth area to industries that need large sites with convenient interstate highway access. However, it is clear that this option would entail the greatest potential economic risk to the City since it would also be likely to draw some retail and office development out of the city to the vicinity of the new interchanges. Zoning the new interchange sites for industry could mitigate the risks of fostering sprawl commercial development that could weaken the city.

The East Bypass Alignment has the additional disadvantage of providing the least direct route for through traffic on I-73. This alignment is expected to cause some traffic (which we estimate to be roughly 3,000 additional vehicles per day) to use I-581 as a distance shortcut. With no additional capacity programmed for I-581 under