

Agencies tout vision of I-73's economics

Three chambers of commerce will hawk the potential benefits of the planned road.

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The Roanoke Times

March 18, 2008

Three chambers of commerce will offer evidence today of how a proposed interstate could enhance the economies of Southside and Southwest Virginia.

A new report, by Richmond-based Chmura Economics & Analytics, will inform business and government leaders about the economic potential of Interstate 73.

I-73 is a proposed, multibillion-dollar interstate between Canada and South Carolina, with one stretch requiring heavy construction running between Roanoke and the North Carolina line.

Virginia has not funded its leg. In addition, its design has been held up by a lawsuit.

In spite of the slow progress on the road, chamber officials will open their new report to public viewing at news conferences this morning in Martinsville, about noon in Rocky Mount and this afternoon in Roanoke.

The Virginia Tobacco Commission refused Monday to release a copy of the report, saying its duty to the Martinsville area chamber, which commissioned the report, outweighed the newspaper's request to see an advance copy.

The report was paid for in part with public funds.

"We have a copy that we've been asked to keep confidential," said Tim Pfohl, the commission's grant program director.