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Schumer Opposes Plan to Build a Tunnel in Lower Manhattan

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

The loudest shot to date against the idea of building a short tunnel through Lower Manhattan was fired yesterday by Senator Charles E. Schumer, who said that he opposed the plan if it would divert money from other transportation projects.

Mr. Schumer took issue with a plan to turn several blocks of West Street-Route 9A into a covered roadway between the World Trade Center site and Battery Park City. That plan is backed by Gov. George E. Pataki, but nearby residents have opposed it because of the potential disruptions. It is undergoing environmental review, with two others.

The Democratic senator questioned the favored plan of the Republican governor on economic grounds, saying in a speech to the Regional Plan Association that it might divert \$900 million from regionally oriented projects like a rail link between downtown and Kennedy Airport.

"If we use that \$900 million to sink West Street," Mr. Schumer told listeners at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, "it's very unlikely we'll also have enough money to build a full transportation link. It's a choice. If someone can tell me it's not a choice, let's do both."

He added, "But I have to believe that we can create an appropriate setting for a 9/11 memorial and re-knit Battery Park City and the World Financial Center for less than \$225 million per block."

Mr. Schumer identified the westward extension of the No. 7 subway line as the project most in need of championing, and said he would reserve judgment on the New York Sports and Convention Center proposed for the Jets on the West Side.

The senator startled some in the audience by saying that state officials had earmarked the remainder of a federal Community Development Block Grant for the downtown-Kennedy rail link. State officials maintain that no final decisions have been reached on how to spend the money, though the rail link would almost certainly get some of it.

"We have \$1.2 billion in unspent C.D.B.G. funds available to the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, and they've set that aside for the J.F.K. link," Mr. Schumer said.

In response, the governor's office and the corporation said that Mr. Pataki and his fellow Republican, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, had put a process in place to study four possible routes linking downtown to Kennedy Airport and points east along the Long Island Rail Road.