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# Tunnel Is Proposed as Option in Rebuilding of West Street

By EDWARD WYATT

The State Department of Transportation released preliminary plans yesterday for two alternative overhauls of West Street from the World Trade Center site south to Battery Park, one of which would place part of the street in a tunnel that would cost \$860 million and take nearly five years to build.

That option is preferred by Gov. George E. Pataki, who in April endorsed the idea of a tunnel from Vesey Street to Liberty Street that would "divert loud, fast-moving highway traffic underground to protect the dignity of the memorial" at the trade center site.

Already, however, community groups have formed in opposition to the tunnel idea. A group calling itself the Coalition to Save West Street contends that the tunnel would further isolate Battery Park City, because its entrance ramps would restrict traffic into and out of the neighborhood and create pedestrian hazards.

The group favors what the Transportation Department calls the at-grade alternative, a revamped eight-lane roadway similar to what existed before Sept. 11, 2001, but with enhanced pedestrian access across West Street and landscaped medians. That plan would take two and a half years to design and build and cost about \$175 million.

Whichever plan is chosen, it will be combined with a landscaped promenade to be built between the trade center site and Battery Park. The promenade, a \$140 million project that would take two and a half years to design and build, is to include a 40-foot-wide pedestrian way along the eastern side of West Street to encourage the development of street-level activities, like cafes and retail shops.

Construction of the promenade is to begin in July 2004 and to be completed in November 2005. West Street, a state highway also known as Route 9A, will remain open during the construction.

On the west side of the street, the Transportation Department would rebuild and expand some of the playgrounds and green spaces that form the edge of Battery Park City. A one-acre triangle park would be created just north of Battery Place, forming a connection between Hudson River Park and Battery Park.

Information about the alternatives is available from the Transportation Department at (212) 201-0917 or from the Web site [www.route9a.info](http://www.route9a.info).

Richard Schmalz, the Route 9A project director, said a decision on which alternative to pursue would be made in November 2004. Over the next year, the department will draft an environmental impact statement outlining each proposal, and a public hearing is tentatively scheduled for June 2004. Construction on the project area near the trade center site will begin either in mid-2005 or mid-2006.

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