Good riddance

West Street tunnel wasn't worth it

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If aesthetics were the only issue, it might make perfect sense to submerge West Street for a few blocks near Ground Zero. A short traffic tunnel could calm a potentially messy scene in a new neighborhood ultimately must serve an army of tourists, mourners, office workers and residents.

It might discreetly hide the normal fuming mass of traffic that blows past the old World Trade Center site ev And it might serve to unify Lower Manhattan with Battery Park City and its wonderful Hudson River esplan

But gracefulness isn't the only issue, and New York State officials were right to scrap the tunnel idea last we end, it created more headaches than it was worth.

Cost was a major matter. The tunnel would have added $700 million to the West Street renovation - money t make an infinitely bigger splash elsewhere.

Convenience was another point. An underground West Street would take longer to build, and it could cause disruptions for utility lines and nearby construction projects such as the iconic Ground Zero Freedom Tower

Then there's the Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. issue. Earlier this month, the financial company suspended plan build a $2-billion headquarters in the area because it disliked how the tunnel would spit out traffic near the t entrance. It's hard to blame the company for that.

So now that the tunnel plan is history, Gov. George Pataki and Mayor Michael Bloomberg have a clear miss They must win Goldman Sachs back to the site. They must ensure that the design for a surface-level West St serves to calm traffic flow. Then they must ask Washington for approval to apply some of the tunnel money downtown rail-link, the project that would offer a seamless ride to the Long Island Rail Road's Jamaica Stat to Kennedy Airport.

The tunnel was a decent idea that somehow went madly awry. The JFK-LIRR-downtown rail link is a far be to spend this money.