



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Dont' Drop Tunnel Option From Consideration for I-81 Project

JEFF BISHOP, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR January 6, 2017

| ISSUE: **HIGHWAYS, TRAFFIC SAFETY**



ONEONTA, 01/06/17 – Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I/Ref – Oneonta) today called on the New York State Department of Transportation to revisit the options being considered for the Route 81 viaduct project in downtown Syracuse.

“Reconfiguring a major highway like Route 81 is a complicated task and it is important that we get it right,” said Senator Seward. **“I have discussed this issue with a number of constituents – local elected officials, small business owners, and transportation experts – and it is clear that both the viaduct and tunnel options are worth exploring further while the boulevard approach is extremely problematic. Unfortunately, at this time, the tunnel option has been dropped from formal**

consideration. I am joining with other area stakeholders in calling for the tunnel design to be reinstated for further study.”

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) is scheduled to release an environmental impact report on the configuration options later this month. At this time the viaduct and community grid (boulevard) designs are the only options being considered for the report. Senator Seward has joined with other state lawmakers from the Central New York State Legislative Delegation in calling for the tunnel option to be included in the NYSDOT report.

Letters have been sent to NYSDOT Commissioner Matthew Driscoll and Governor Cuomo formally requesting that the tunnel option be included in the upcoming environmental impact report. Further, if the report cannot be modified in time to meet the planned release date, the legislators are requesting that the report be postponed until all three options can be studied.

“The footprint of this project may be downtown Syracuse, but the impact will be regional. Portions of my senate district in Cayuga and Cortland counties are rightly concerned about traffic flow and highway safety issues that must be considered and, for that reason, I want to see all practical options explored,” Seward concluded.