Van Drew asks SJTA for better public transportation

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Cape May Star and Wave

TRENTON — State Sen. Jeff Van Drew wants the South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA) to abandon the idea of a two-lane tunnel beneath the Delaware River to ease the lack of public transportation in the district and improve access to higher education for residents.

Van Drew sent a letter to the state Transportation Commissioner James A. Redden Jr., who also serves as chair of the SJTA board, requesting assistance to address a newly revealed expansion of public transportation in Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties.

"I have long been aware of the existing challenges and difficulties facing those living in the area," Van Drew wrote. "I firmly believe that we are underfunded as our three counties and I am calling upon the South Jersey Transportation Authority to aid and assist with this issue."

Van Drew wrote that the SJTA has asked the Cape May County Planning Board to review transportation needs in the county and to work with the county's Transportation Master Plan.

The SJTA announced earlier this year it would spend $4.4 million to build a tunnel along the Atlantic City Expressway that would connect the city to New Jersey.

Van Drew said the SJTA's proposal lacks a "clear understanding of the area's transportation needs and budgetary constraints."

The meeting at which the SJTA's request to build the tunnel was considered "did not have any stakeholders representing the area, including Van Drew himself," he said.

Van Drew said the SJTA has a "clear misunderstanding of the area's transportation needs and budgetary constraints."

The SJTA's proposed tunnel would be part of the Atlantic City Expressway, which runs along the southern part of the state.

Van Drew said it would cost about $4.4 million to build the tunnel and that it would be "impractical in terms of both cost and logistics." He said it would be more cost-effective to provide "an alternative to the current system."