

MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission
FROM: Commissioner Steven Meiner
DATE: July 28, 2021

SUBJECT: REFERRAL TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND QUALITY OF LIFE
COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS THE FEASIBILITY OF UNDERGROUND
TUNNELS TO ALLEVIATE SURFACE LEVEL TRAFFIC CONGESTION.

ANALYSIS

As more people are migrating to South Florida, we need to rethink the way we approach transportation. One trending concept is the use of underground tunnels to alleviate surface-level traffic congestion. Other cities are following suit, such as the City of Fort Lauderdale recently opening an RFP to construct underground mobility infrastructure. The specific purpose of this discussion is to explore the feasibility of underground mobility infrastructure in Miami Beach.

Please feel free to contact Amadeus Huff for additional information.

SUPPORTING SURVEY DATA

N/A.

Applicable Area

Citywide

**Is this a "Residents Right
to Know" item, pursuant to
City Code Section 2-14?**

No

**Does this item utilize G.O.
Bond Funds?**

No

Legislative Tracking

Commissioner Steven Meiner

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

- ▢ Miami Herald Article

Fort Lauderdale eyes Elon Musk to build an underground tunnel system to the beach

By [Rob Wile](#) July 07, 2021 04:37 PM,



Elon Musk, co-founder and CEO of Tesla Inc., arrives in a modified Tesla Model X electric vehicle during an unveiling event for The Boring Company Hawthorne test tunnel on Dec. 18, 2018, in Hawthorne, California. The Boring Company will officially open the Hawthorne tunnel, a preview of Musk's larger vision to ease traffic in Los Angeles. Robin Beck, Pool Getty Images

The city of Fort Lauderdale has accepted an unsolicited bid from Elon Musk's Boring Company to build an underground transportation system under Las Olas Boulevard from its downtown Brightline Station to Las Olas Oceanside Park.

Because the bid was unsolicited, the exact details of the 2.2-mile proposal,

including its cost, will remain unknown until a 45-day window to accept competing bids closes.

But in an interview Wednesday, Fort Lauderdale Mayor Dean Trantalis noted Boring Co. officials had previously estimated a cost of between \$10 and million \$15 million per mile for the tunnel itself, not including station stops. And he said the project would be similar to the one Musk has already completed underneath the Las Vegas Convention Center that sees Teslas ferrying passengers between a series of underground stations on an approximately one-mile roadway loop.

The scale of the Vegas project, which officially opened to the public in June, has been dramatically reduced over time to what [Musk himself has colloquially referred to as "Teslas in tunnels."](#) A recent feature in industry publication [AutoWeek said](#) the network is really just "taxis [that] travel underground in tunnels that were bored out for them. *And, they're electric.*"

In March, the engineer responsible for the world's deepest traffic tunnel, in Switzerland, called Musk a "whipper of foam."

"On his reference project in Las Vegas, Musk drilled 20 meters in one week. We can do the same route in one day," Martin Herrenknecht said, according to Tesla blog [Teslarati](#).

Still, Trantalis called the need to alleviate traffic congestion on Las Olas "acute," especially during holidays and special events.

"We're very thankful we have become a popular city, and that people enjoy the amenities and excitement Fort Lauderdale generates," Trantalis said. "But with so many people interested in coming to our city, we've got to find a way to make the experience enjoyable and not drive people away because of traffic concerns."

Trantalis said the city also continues to work on [a proposal to build a train tunnel under the New River](#) that would eliminate the need for the existing Florida East Coast Railway bridge.

"That's a second project we're focused on," Trantalis said.

Trantalis said city and Broward County officials would look to put together funding for the project from resources that include Broward's one-cent transportation tax fund, the Florida Department of Transportation, and possibly federal funds. In May, Vice Mayor Heather Moraitis wrote to Gov. Ron DeSantis [urging him to collaborate with the city on the project](#). A DeSantis spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

Fort Lauderdale may have pulled ahead in the race among South Florida cities to build Musk's next tunnel. Miami Mayor Francis Suarez continues to pursue a similar transportation system, albeit larger. Suarez said in an interview Tuesday that city commissioners are being briefed on it and are lining up trips to visit Musk's existing structure in Las Vegas.

"We're looking at something more comprehensive, something larger that might require more work," Suarez said.

In March, [he detailed an underground project that would ship passengers on modified Teslas inside a tunnel spanning Brickell and Little Haiti](#).

Meanwhile, North Miami Beach Commissioner Michael Joseph said he and, likely, other city officials plan to go to Vegas to tour the project there later this summer. [Joseph spoke with Boring Co. officials in March about building a system under State Road 826](#).

"If I think it would be good for the citizens of North Miami Beach, we'll move it forward," he said in an interview Wednesday. "From what I've been told,

their tech allows them to do this at a reduced cost, but I'm looking to learn more by seeing it up close."



Rob Wile covers business, tech, and the economy in South Florida. He is a graduate of Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism and Columbia University. He grew up in Chicago.