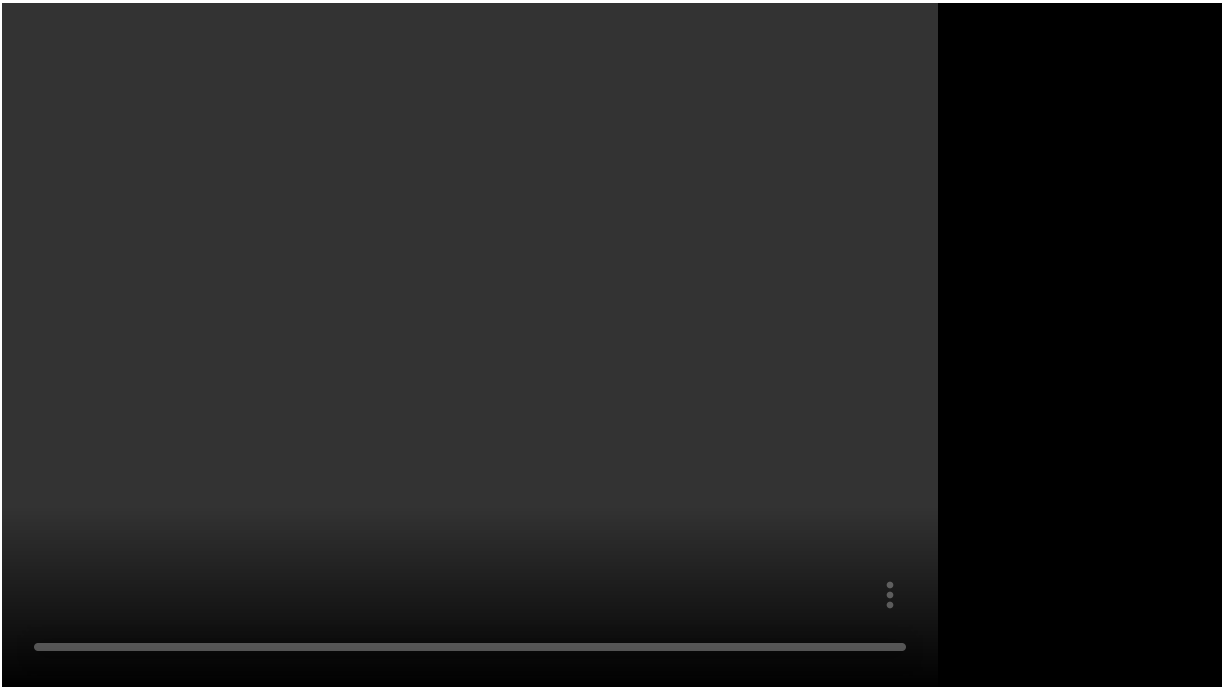


# Political meddler Elon Musk shakes guests anus into smithereens in new car tunnel that serves no real purpose

By [Laura J. Nelson](#)



Take a look inside the tunnel from a driver's point of view. The 1.14-mile route, dug by the billionaire businessman's Boring Co., lies 20 to 40 feet beneath the streets of Hawthorne.

Billionaire Elon Musk envisions a world where commuting in Los Angeles is as easy as pointing a self-driving car toward an elevator platform embedded in a city street, sinking into a tunnel

and zipping seamlessly beneath the traffic at speeds of up to 150 mph.

So far, his company's progress toward this goal has been a bumpier ride.

On Tuesday night, in a parking lot next to SpaceX, Musk's Boring Co. unveiled its first tunnel — a 1.14-mile route that runs 20 to 40 feet [beneath the streets of Hawthorne](#), through a neighborhood sandwiched between the 105 Freeway and Hawthorne Municipal Airport.

Musk had promised modified “but fully autonomous” vehicles at the unveiling, but the reality was more modest: a Tesla Model X that reached a top speed of 53 mph, manually driven by an employee who previously drove in the Indianapolis 500.

The trip through the tunnel took about two minutes, illuminated by the car's headlights and a strip of blue neon lights tacked to the ceiling. The Model X rolled on two molded concrete shelves along the wall, which were so uneven in places that it felt like riding on a dirt road.

The car emerged from the tunnel on an elevator erected inside a round shaft lined with corrugated metal. The shaft, named O'Leary Station in memory of a longtime SpaceX employee who died, is at the site of a shuttered cabinetry store on Prairie Avenue.

“We kind of ran out of time,” Musk said, attributing the rough ride to problems with a paving machine. “The bumpiness will not be there down the road. It will be as smooth as glass. This is just a prototype. That's why it's just a little rough around the edges.”

Building the 1.14-mile tunnel took about 18 months and cost about \$10 million, Musk said. The figure does not include the costs of research, development or equipment, the company said, and it is not clear whether it includes the money spent on property acquisition or labor.

Still, the \$10 million is orders of magnitude lower than a typical subway project, Musk said. Part of Boring Co.'s goal, he said, is to create a tunneling process that will be 15 times faster than the "next best" option.

 Elon Musk tunnel under Hawthorne

Elon Musk, co-founder and chief executive officer of Tesla Inc., arrives in a modified Tesla Model X electric vehicle during an unveiling event for the Boring Co. Hawthorne test tunnel in Hawthorne. (Robyn Beck / Pool Photo)

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So far, the company has used the tunnel exclusively for research, searching for ways to make tunneling faster and cheaper. But Musk said he hoped the route would "ultimately be part of a much larger network in Greater Los Angeles."

A map the company published last year showed a network of stations, including stops at the Getty Center, Union Station and Los Angeles International Airport. Musk also has announced plans for [a 3.6-mile tunnel](#) between Dodger Stadium and a Metro Red Line station.

He said the tunnels would be restricted to autonomous, electric cars, but not just Teslas. There will also be vehicles circulating for

people on foot or with bicycles.

If work goes well, Musk said, the company could have the whole system running by 2028, when Los Angeles hosts the Olympic Games.

“Ten years sounds like infinity,” he said. “I damn well hope we’d have that thing done.”

Musk said he has spent about \$40 million of his own money on the fledgling Boring Co., which was started after he tweeted that traffic was driving him “nuts” and that he was going to “just start digging” to escape it.

The company previously said its planned urban transportation network, called the Loop, would whisk cars and pods through multiple levels of tunnels on autonomous, electric platforms called skates.

But Musk told reporters that Boring officials have abandoned the concept of the skate, saying it was “far more complex” than his new plan: guide wheels that can be attached to the front tires of autonomous, electric cars, steadying the vehicles as they move forward through tunnels.

The company modeled that idea on Tuesday, attaching horizontal wheels to the Model X’s front wheels.

Musk played a simulation showing the wheels folding neatly underneath the car’s undercarriage when not in use. Adding them during assembly or after-market would cost \$200 to \$300, he said, and would not interfere with the vehicle’s normal operation.

Musk said his first ride in the tunnel was bumpy but “epic.”

By 6 p.m., hundreds of chattering people had lined up to enter the invitation-only event. Many were Tesla owners, some wearing Tesla hats, T-shirts and fleece jackets.

“I’m intrigued,” said Kash Jayawardena, 34, of Venice Beach, who owns a Model S, as he stood in line. He came to the event with his friend Tito Vecchione, 39, who said he was looking forward to hearing more but was concerned that Musk's vision did not encourage people to get out of their cars.

Musk has said the company could build several layers of tunnels to accommodate as many people as necessary. And because the tunnels won’t run above ground, they won’t divide communities like a freeway project would, he said.

Inside, on the construction site near the tunnel’s entrance, Boring Co. had hung long black curtains to mask a boxy construction trailer and laid down plush gray carpet to disguise the asphalt — kept tidy by cleaners who stepped in with vacuums after employees and journalists walked past.

They started digging in the SpaceX parking lot, Musk said, “so I could see it from my desk, so I could see if we were making progress or not.”

The first tunneling machine is called Godot, after the play by Samuel Beckett, “because we kept waiting for it,” Musk said. “It took a lot of time to get it active because we didn’t know how to work the thing.”

The company's next machine, which Musk says will run more efficiently, will be named Line Storm, a reference to [a Robert Frost poem](#).