

Tesla prototype is snakelike arm, guides itself into port to charge

August 8 2015, by Nancy Owano



Tesla Motors has revealed a new charger for its vehicles—a robotic-arm, snakelike car charger. A video shows it at work and it is quite easy to watch more than once as it rises and makes its way into the car. Bill Howard in *ExtremeTech* saw it as a "multi-segmented" robotic arm, which "rises up and slithers snake-like" toward the left rear quarter panel of the Tesla toward the charging port, aligns itself, and connects.

Howard also [offered](#) a step by step view of how it works: The arm, of 18 flexible segments "like a gooseneck lamp on chromium-plated steroids," slides out from the wall. It gets close to the [car](#). The charging port pops open, "likely by car-to-charger communication," he said, and the arm bends forward and guides itself into the charging port. The process takes a few seconds.

The senior editor for *Geek.com*, Matthew Humphries, suggested the concept behind this effort was that you drive home or to a [charging station](#), park, and the charging [system](#) does the rest of the work for you, hooking the car up through its charge port. In order to do that, said Humphries, Tesla needed a way of "detecting where the car's charging port is, and then inserting the cable successfully."

Humphries said he assumed the tentacle had an embedded camera in the end to search out the lit charging port on the car and line things up.

Overall, the charging system for Tesla cars suggests ingenuity is alive and well at the company. This is not for sale; it is a prototype. Elon Musk earlier on had referred to it as a solid metal snake. "Btw, we are actually working on a charger that automatically moves out from the wall & connects like a solid metal snake. For realz," he tweeted last year.

The BBC said it is a prototype and "the company has no plans to sell it in the near [future](#)."

Nonetheless, a number of sites made a case for why it would not be foolish to expect this charger eventually to come to light.

Humphries in *Geek.com* noted what was practical about the choice of a snake-like tentacle structure. "Your car will never be parked in exactly the same place and the charger can't move, so you need a connection that is flexible."

Humphries thought we might see a system which is further refined to make it quicker at finding and attaching to the port. "I also expect Tesla will make this a standard feature at its charging stations," he added, for its convenience factor.

Likewise, the executive editor for *SlashGear*, Chris Davies, said, "Tesla's goal is to remove one of the lingering frustrations from electric car ownership: plugging it in when you get home, or indeed walking back to the garage in the morning only to discover you forgot to do that and the battery is [flat](#)."

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