

Miami mayor envisions Musk-built mass transit system

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Elon Musk, Tesla Factory, Fremont (CA, USA) in 2011. Credit: CC BY 2.0

Miami Mayor Francis Suarez believes Elon Musk's Boring Company tunnel-makers could build a new mass transit system in Miami's urban core—a considerably larger vision than the original Brickell Avenue tunnel Musk initially proposed.

Suarez and other Miami officials visited Musk's tunnel system under Las Vegas last week. In a Monday press conference outside city hall, Suarez said the visit helped clarify—and expand—how exactly the tunnels could be used in Miami.

Suarez's new vision involves a pedestrian transportation system connecting commuters from Brickell to as far north as Little Haiti, with multiple stops between. According to Suarez, the system would utilize adapted electric SUVs, like Teslas, that transport up to five passengers each through the tunnel system at high speeds. Private passenger vehicles would not be allowed.

Musk also owns car maker Tesla.

"You get in a car, and you go through a tunnel," Suarez said.

The system, with an estimated price tag of \$10 million per mile, could potentially be paid for entirely by Boring Co. and financed by riders on a user-fee model, Suarez said. That is the model Las Vegas has used, and he said Miami could even "piggyback" off of Las Vegas' procurement bid, which came with a guaranteed maximum price.

Suarez noted the carrying capacity of Boring's system could be as high as 60,000 per hour—higher than the Metrorail's 50,000 people a day. Further savings stem from Musk's tunnels being narrower than other common municipal tunnels built for handling auto traffic.

Musk, who spoke personally by phone with Suarez last month, has seen mixed results getting approval for his tunnel projects. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot has dismissed a plan by her predecessor Rahm Emanuel to build a privately financed tunnel system from the commercial Loop district to O'Hare Airport as a "fantasy."

But Las Vegas has come to embrace the systems. In addition to a tunnel system that connects guests from one end of that city's sprawling convention center to another at under a mile in distance, local officials have also approved a separate tunnel route connecting the convention center to the Las Vegas Strip.

Southern California officials have also approved a four-mile route from a station along its Metrolink to a regional airport. There, cost discussions began at \$45 million, but the final proposal submitted by The Boring Co. put cost of construction at \$85 million, according to the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin.

The convention center [tunnel](#) was built in a little over one year, and Suarez said a similar timeline could be expected for Miami's system—though he declined to tie himself to a specific time frame.

Addressing whether such a system could be built through Miami's porous limestone bedrock, Suarez said Las Vegas' system is built beneath that city's water table and into subsoil that is much denser.

"So it's actually a lot harder to penetrate than it would be here," he said.

Asked why this project is a priority for his administration at the moment, Suarez said the proposed system would help meet the city's growth needs going forward, and that the opportunity was too important, and unique, to pass up. Suarez said Boring Co. itself has an interest in building something here as a further endorsement of its technology and proof-of-concept.

"After seeing it, I even think it's a better idea to do something even more comprehensive," he said.

Suarez said the next steps would be to further digest their takeaways

from the visit and eventually make a proposal to the city council. Ideally, he said, Miami-Dade County officials would also get on board.

To those who doubt its feasibility, he has a simple response.

"Get on a plane and go to Las Vegas and check it out for yourself," he said. "It's there. It's real."

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