

To: I-5 Bridge Committee Members
From: Sam Churchill, Hayden Island
Re: Comments for January 20th, I-5 Bridge meeting
Date: January 20, 2021

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on congestion solutions for the I-5 corridor near Vancouver.

The Boring Company's "Loop" may be cheaper, faster and more convenient than a dedicated BRT or Light Rail lane on a traditional bridge.

I have no idea whether this is true. **Neither does the I-5 Bridge Committee.**

In a few weeks, the Las Vegas Convention Center "LOOP" will open. Everyone will hear about it. Could it supplement the I-5 bridge for transit? Let's find out.



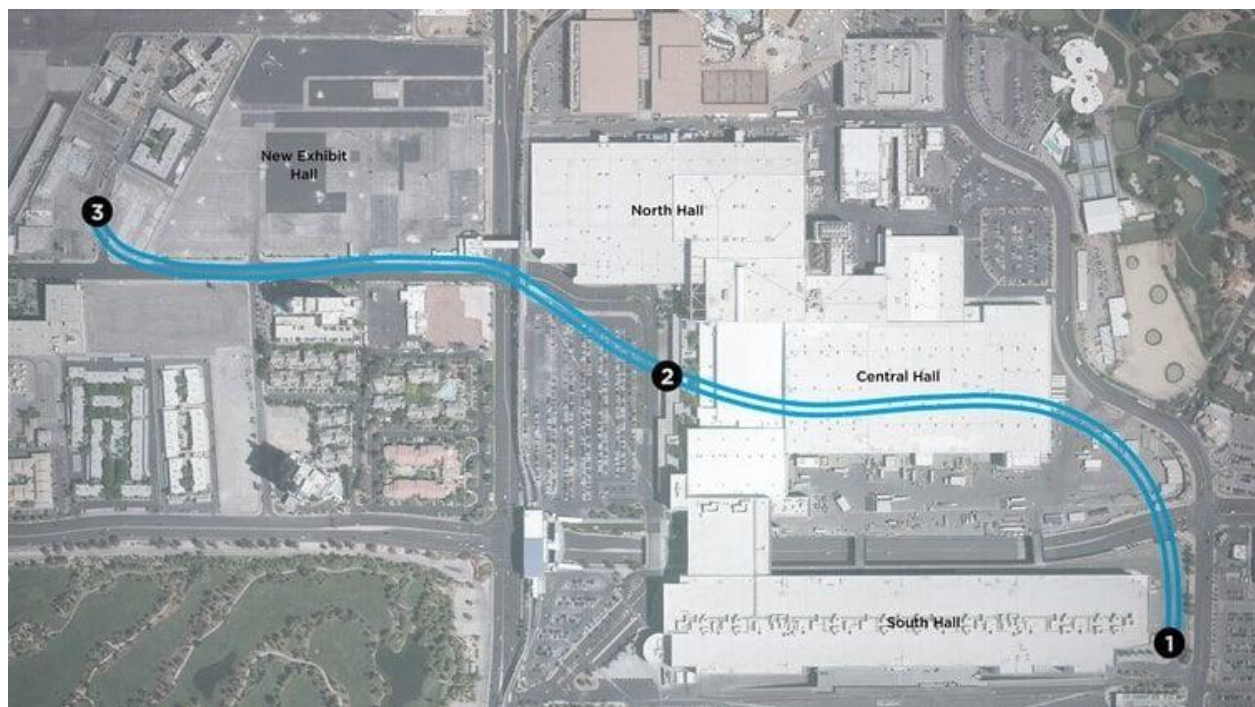
The "Loop" concept would NOT put the entire 6 lane I-5 freeway underground, with space for trucks, cars, bikes and pedestrians. It would NOT require a massive ventilation system. A new bridge can handle routine traffic.

A new 6 lane bridge, with bike and pedestrian space may make sense, although it will cost billions. **But additional hundreds of millions for dedicated Light Rail or Bus Rapid Transit lanes does NOT make sense.** Consider The Loop.

Why underground EV shuttles make sense for mass transit:

- **A Boring Company tunnel costs FAR LESS** than two additional (dedicated) lanes for **Light Rail** or **Bus Rapid Transit**.
- **Las Vegas will pay the tunneling company \$167,000 per month** as a management fee to maintain operations.
- **Lower operating and construction costs.**
- **Adds TWO new lanes direct to downtown.**
- **Neighborhood disruption eliminated.**
- **Using the tunnel will be FREE.** Revenue generated through advertising, sponsorships and facility rentals. That's how Las Vegas runs theirs.

"The Loop" is a one mile tunnel. It uses **Tesla's EVs to shuttle people** under the Las Vegas Convention Center. It may be expanded in the following years to include most of the Las Vegas Strip.



The Loop uses smaller, cheaper, 14ft tunnels. **They may replace the \$780M supplemental cost of placing Light Rail or BRT on the new bridge.** Small tunnels are used by the battery-powered electric shuttles. No driver. That's WHY it's 10x cheaper. Would going under the river be more expensive than digging in dry dirt? Probably. Would it be a show-stopper? Probably not.

I am not ignoring the advice of the Washington state civil engineer who believes putting the ENTIRE freeway under the Columbia makes sense. But it may not be a good solution here. **We must connect with SR-14 and Marine Drive.**



A traditional bridge may be the best solution. But don't put Light Rail or BRT on it.

A multi-modal bridge won't open two NEW lanes into downtown. The Bridge alone will NOT help the traffic jam into and out of downtown. The Loop adds two NEW lanes. With NO neighborhood inconvenience or added pollution.

The Loop cost is 10X lower than BRT. The Loop is FREE in Las Vegas. That's a solution EVERYONE likes. Would it work here?

Broad Support

The downtown leg of the project has support from the city's resort community.

"We were very excited from the get-go," Stephen Thayer, vice president and general manager of The Strat resort, told the council. "Very few times in someone's lifetime you can get behind something that is transformational."

The Vegas Loop project began with a \$52-million tunnel system linking the Las Vegas Convention Center campus, where construction began in late 2019. The two 0.8-mile-long tunnels are nearly complete but will remain unused while the convention center is closed during the pandemic.

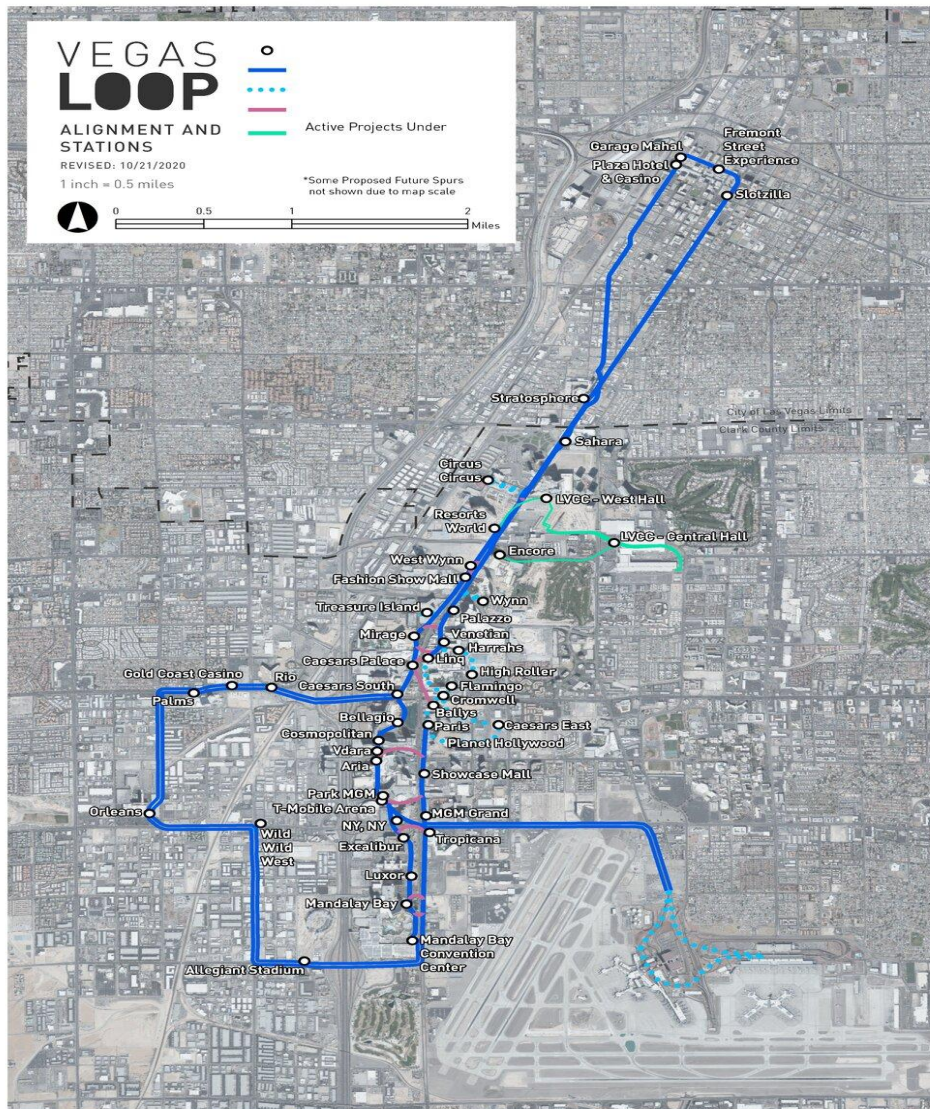
The convention center system will employ self-piloted Teslas traveling in 14-ft-wide tunnels bored 40 ft below grade, with the goal of moving 4,400 people per hour. Extensions of that system have been announced for the Encore and Resorts World hotels, which are near the convention center.



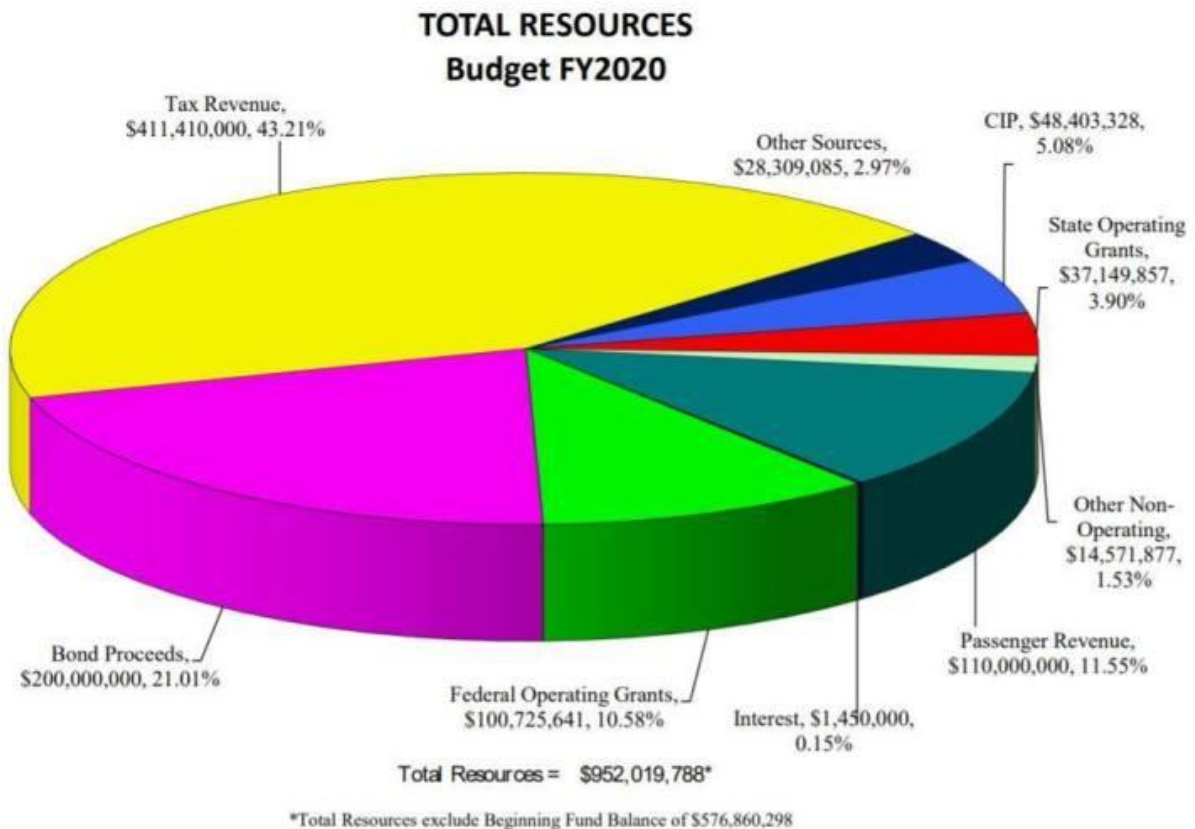
Advantages of The Loop over BRT lanes:

- Save money. Free mass transit. No subsidies.
- Reduce congestion into and out of downtown
- Eliminate neighborhood disruption and pollution
- Reduce political rancor

Will the Biden administration kick in the money to help pay for Loop tunnels instead of BRT? I have no idea. But mass transit is currently subsidized by businesses. Musk says Loop construction costs \$10-\$50 million/mile. TriMet says Light Rail costs \$200M/mile. A downtown Portland Loop for \$400 million? Maybe. **Cheaper than BRT on the bridge. Reduces congestion. Free.**



One stop at Expo. One stop in Vancouver and downtown Portland. Possibly one stop for Hayden Island. **Done.** Neighborhood shuttles take you to the hub.



We all want a new bridge. Nobody wants to pay a toll. That's all I'm saying. After The Loop opens in Las Vegas, people will wonder why we can't do it here. **Why subsidize BRT or Light Rail?**

Thank you for your time and consideration

Sam Churchill

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