

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 I-5 Bridge Replacement.

The Boring Company's "Loop" may be cheaper, faster and more convenient than a dedicated Light Rail or BRT 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. **A tunnel provides the Las Vegas transit corridor. Not a monorail. Not Bus Rapid Transit. Not Light Rail on bridges.**



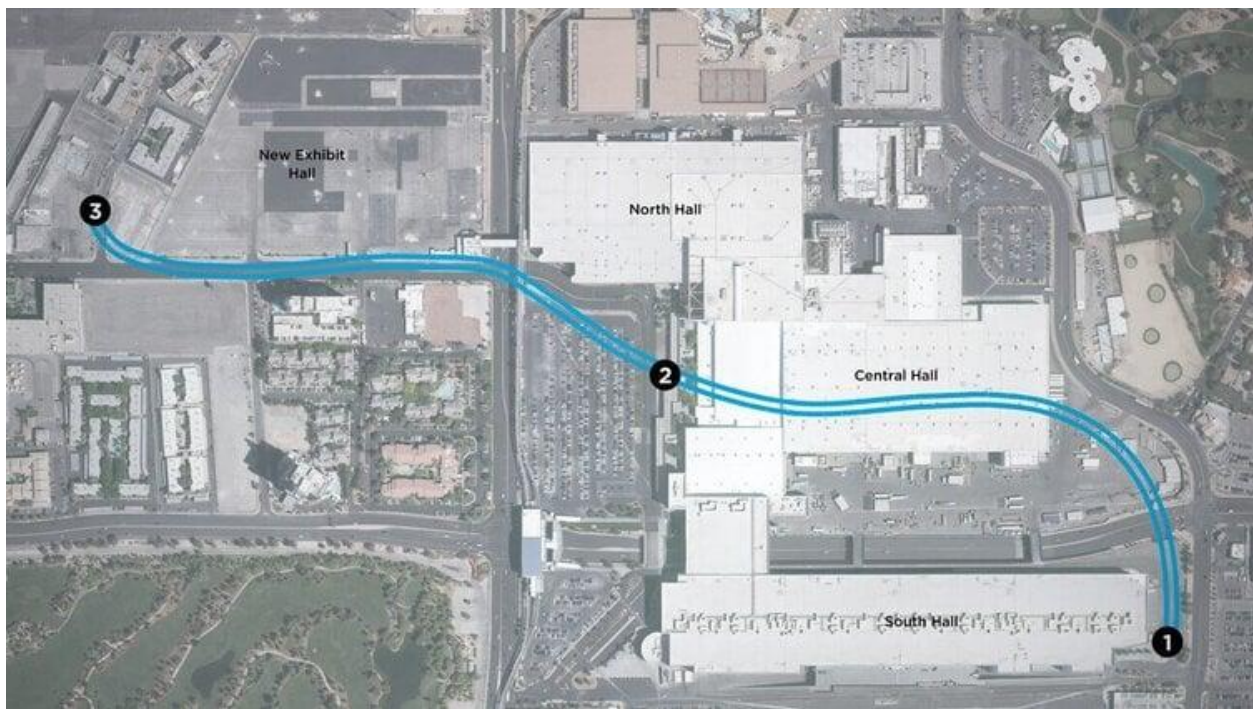
The "Loop" concept would NOT put the entire 6 lane I-5 freeway underground, with space for trucks, cars, bikes and pedestrians, with a massive electrical and ventilation system. The new I-5 bridge can handle routine traffic.

A new 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**.
- **Lower construction and operating costs.**
- **Adds TWO NEW LANES, direct to downtown.**
- **Neighborhood disruption eliminated.**
- **Using the tunnel will be FREE.** Revenue is generated from advertising, sponsorships and facility rentals. That's how Las Vegas runs theirs.

"The Loop" is a one mile tunnel. It cost \$52M and 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 \$780M supplemental cost of running dedicated Light Rail or BRT lanes on the new bridge may be unnecessary. [An FTA CIG grant](#) may cover tunneled transit. It's cheaper, with lower construction and operational costs. No drivers. It reduces congestion, adding two new lanes direct to downtown. Would digging 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 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.

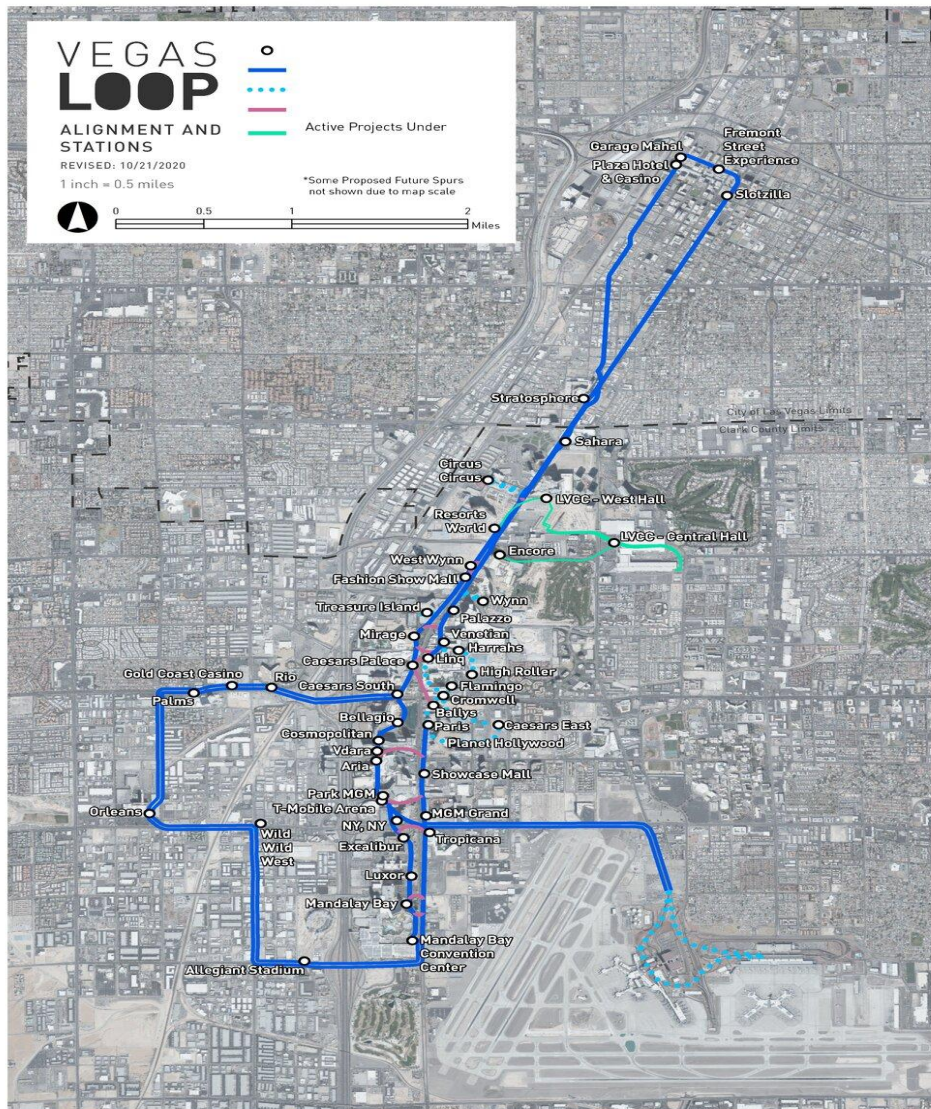
The convention center system will employ self-piloted Teslas traveling in 14-ft-wide tunnels bored 40 ft below grade, with the goal of moving 4,400 people per hour. Extensions of that system have been announced for the Encore and Resorts World hotels, which are near the convention center.



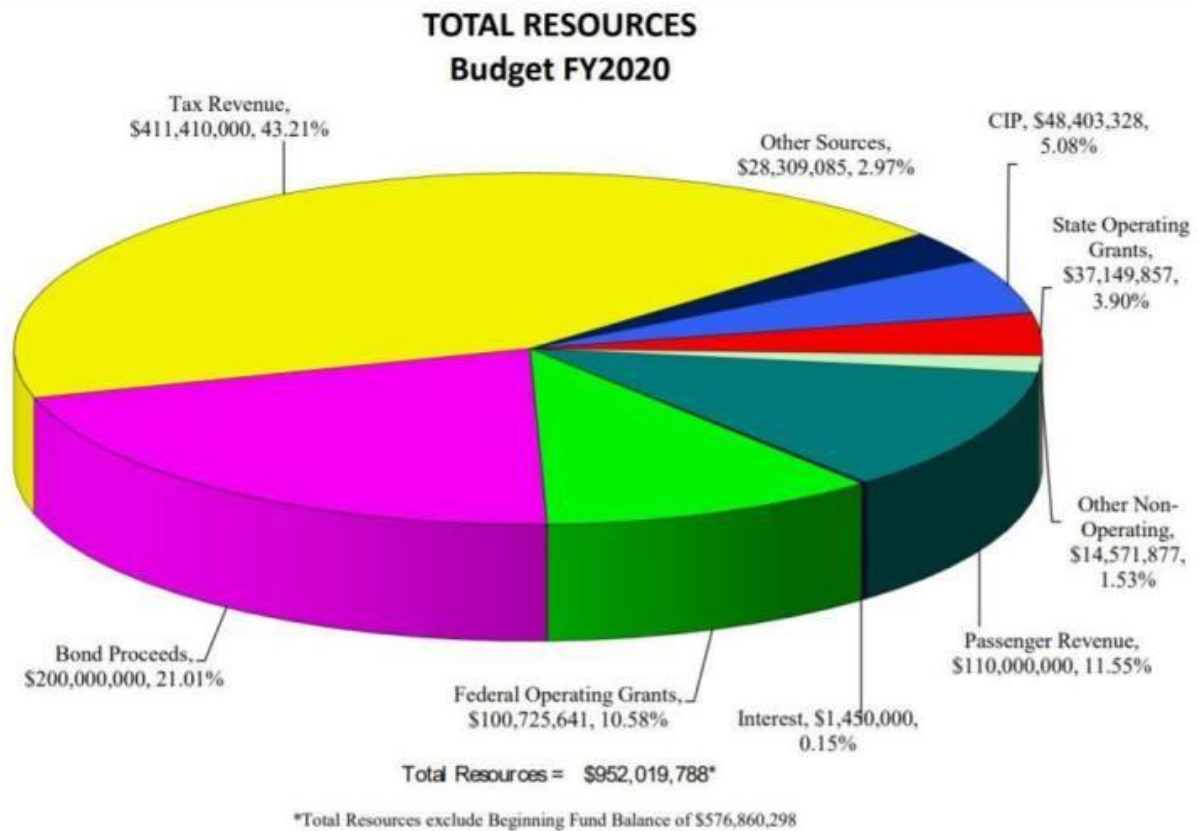
Advantages of The Loop over BRT lanes:

- 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? Possibly. 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? 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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<http://www.hayden-island.com/tunnel-vision-for-i-5/>

http://www.hayden-island.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The_Loop_Alternative.pdf

<https://www.boringcompany.com/>

<https://www.lvloop.com/>