

Nashville doesn't need Musk's tunnel -- we need real transit

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For months, Tennessee officials and Elon Musk's Boring Company have pushed ahead with the so-called "Music City Loop," a privately operated tunnel running from downtown to the airport. Marketed as a bold vision for the city, it has been presented as fast, innovative, and transformative. But behind the glossy branding lies an uncomfortable truth: this is not a solution to Nashville's transportation crisis. It is a \$15-million-per-mile transfer of public resources into the hands of a billionaire whose business model depends on deregulation, secrecy and broken promises.

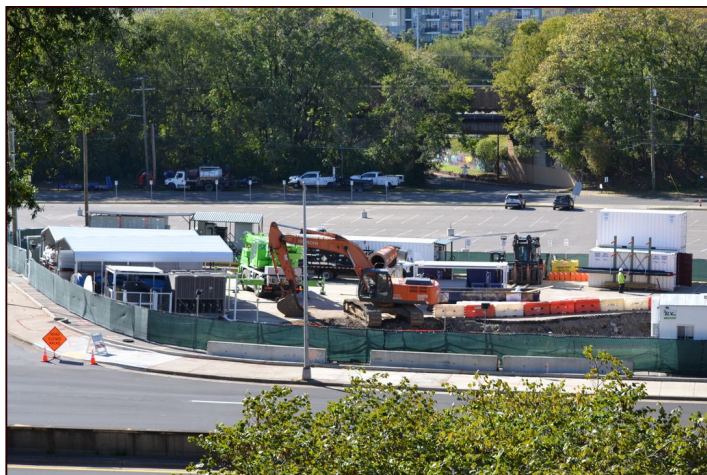
The public never voted on this project. The state quietly handed over land, the Boring Company began acquiring parcels for station sites and officials claimed ignorance even as the company released timelines and routes. The result is a tunnel designed to benefit tourists, developers, and wealthy riders while working-class people who keep Nashville running continue to sit in traffic, rely on unreliable buses and live in a city that refuses to invest in them.

A scam wearing the mask of progress

The Music City Loop is being sold with the same exaggerated promises Musk has used for years. Tennesseans were told it would run at 70 miles per hour, use "self-driving" Teslas, avoid city oversight and cost taxpayers nothing. None of it is true.

The Boring Company's own documents contradict state officials. The tunnel requires Metro approvals for codes, water, fire safety, property use and dozens of operational details. It crosses private land, and the company is already purchasing parcels along the route. The vehicles will not be autonomous. And the company's previous Las Vegas tunnel — once marketed as a 150-mph "revolution" — struggles to move as fast as everyday rush-hour traffic.

Then came the moment that exposed how little Nashville residents have been told: the state began blasting without public notice, as local news quietly reported. People woke up to



Music City Loop construction. Liberation photo

explosions in an already fragile city, forced to learn after the fact that underground blasting had begun in their backyard.

This is not "innovation." It is contempt for the public.

Meanwhile, the everyday reality of Nashville's infrastructure tells a more honest story. Anyone who has driven I-40 in the spring knows the feeling: months of freeze-thaw cycles turn freeway pavement into a minefield of potholes. I've popped a tire on those potholes myself — a reminder that the city already struggles to maintain the ground above us. When sinkholes regularly swallow parts of roads, the idea of drilling tunnels through fragile limestone should alarm everyone.

These concerns aren't speculative. Nashville sits on porous limestone where tunneling risks groundwater disruption, collapses and permanent neighborhood damage. Yet neither the state nor the Boring Company has conducted the environmental review that any legitimate transit project would require. That omission isn't a mistake. It is the model Musk uses everywhere he operates.

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A state government aligned with billionaire interests

The tunnel fits neatly into Tennessee's pattern of handing public resources to private corporations behind closed doors. It mirrors school voucher schemes that defund public education, Cop City-style expansions of police power and political attacks on public universities like Tennessee State University. It also parallels the state's decision to allow Musk's xAI data center in Memphis to pollute primarily Black neighborhoods — a project already linked to toxic releases, machinery violations and environmental risks residents did not choose and do not benefit from.

City leadership has played along. Mayor Freddie O'Connell first claimed he didn't know about the project. When confronted with evidence he did, he said it wasn't serious. When that collapsed, he insisted Metro had no power to intervene. Yet the Boring Company itself contradicted him, saying it would "work closely with Metro" on approvals. The truth is simple: leaders are choosing not to act, not because they lack authority, but because they are unwilling to challenge the state or confront billionaire interests.

Nashville deserves real transit — not a boutique tunnel for tourists

Nashville's transit failures aren't new. For decades, attempts to build light rail or a functional system for working people have been blocked or gutted by the same forces now promoting the tunnel. Developers opposed plans that didn't serve their interests. State officials killed proposals that supported affordable, environmentally sound transit. City leaders repeatedly chose short-term political convenience over long-term public good.

Now, instead of investing in affordable, union-built, publicly accountable transit, they are offering a tunnel that will serve tourists and speculative developers. It will raise housing costs along its route, deepen inequalities and leave the vast majority of working people behind. Real transit systems do not operate as profitable ventures — and they are not meant to. Public transit is a public good because it enables a city to function. Musk's tunnel is the opposite: a luxury amenity disguised as infrastructure.

A movement grows: PSL Nashville leads the fight

While state and city leaders dodge responsibility, working people

have stepped up. The Party for Socialism and Liberation in Nashville has played a central role in exposing the truth behind the Music City Loop — holding a press conference, organizing a public town hall, knocking doors across neighborhoods, building a community information hub, gathering thousands of petition signatures and working with residents along Murfreesboro Pike who are most threatened by tunneling and blasting.

At every stage, the goal has been simple: break the silence. The more people learn about what the tunnel is, the stronger the opposition grows.

This tunnel is not inevitable

The Music City Loop is a dangerous, undemocratic and unnecessary project. It threatens Nashville with geological instability, environmental damage, higher housing costs and deeper political inequality. But it can be stopped through grassroots organizing, public pressure, and the refusal to let politicians hide behind procedural excuses.

Nashville deserves real transit — safe, reliable, environmentally sound, union-built — and a government that protects public resources instead of sacrificing them to billionaires.

The fight is not over. Nashville is not alone.

To learn more about the Music City Loop, view documents, and stay updated on organizing efforts, visit the community-built information hub at BigDumbHole.com.

Feature image: Liberation photo by Lindy Drolsum.

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