43. The Boring Company

In late 2016, during a trip to Hong Kong, Elon Musk, amidst a hectic schedule, found a rare moment for introspection that led to a groundbreaking idea. While discussing city infrastructure with Jon McNeill, Tesla's president of sales and marketing, Musk expressed a fascination with the concept of expanding urban roads into a three-dimensional space through tunnel networks beneath cities. This inspiration led Musk to reach out to Steve Davis, a trusted SpaceX engineer, despite the early hour in California. Musk tasked Davis with exploring efficient and cost-effective tunneling methods, which Davis began to work on immediately, proposing the use of standard tunneling machines without the need for immediate concrete reinforcement, at an estimated cost of around $5 million each.

Upon Musk's return to Los Angeles, a particularly frustrating traffic jam spurred him to publicly announce on Twitter his intent to delve into the tunneling business, initially joking about potential company names before settling on 'The Boring Company' with a characteristic nod to his sense of humor. This initiative represented a continuation of Musk's penchant for audacious projects aimed at redefining transportation infrastructure, reminiscent of his previous proposal for the Hyperloop—a high-speed travel concept involving pods accelerated through a vacuum chamber.

The Boring Company was thus born out of Musk's drive to solve the persistent problem of urban congestion through innovative engineering, while the Hyperloop project, another testament to Musk's visionary approach to transportation, transitioned into an open competition for students, allowing teams from across the globe to contribute their own designs towards making high-speed, efficient travel a reality. Through these endeavors, Musk continued to challenge the conventional limitations of infrastructure and transportation, cultivating a shared vision of a future that leverages technology to overcome some of the most pressing challenges facing urban environments.