



## Elon Musk reportedly interested in investing in western Pennsylvania



Elon Musk  
DAN TAYLOR



By Jake Dabkowski – Reporter, Pittsburgh Business Times

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Elon Musk and Gov. Josh Shapiro discussed the possibility of the tech mogul investing in Pennsylvania while the former attended a Steelers game.

Musk, who serves as CEO of several companies, including electric vehicle giant Tesla, rocket company SpaceX and the social media formerly known as Twitter, X, spoke with Shapiro over the phone while attending Sunday night's Steelers game with former Legendary Entertainment CEO Thomas Tull, who connected the two. Shapiro's office confirmed the call, and when asked for further comment pointed The Business Times to comments made to NBC News. Shapiro, and his

office, referred to the call as relating to interest in Pennsylvania, while NBC News has reported that Musk expressed interest in the Pittsburgh region.

"Hats off to Thomas Tull for always thinking of Pittsburgh first and mixing a bit of business with some Pittsburgh self interest," Brian Kennedy, senior vice president for operations and government affairs at the Pittsburgh Technology Council, said. "Think about the synergies that you could have with a company, in particular like Tesla, that has embraced autonomy. Pittsburgh has the strongest supercluster of autonomous vehicle talent anywhere on the planet."

Kennedy noted that Tesla's hardware approach to autonomous driving differs from many others — while many utilize LIDAR sensors, Tesla utilizes cameras. In Pittsburgh, there are many autonomy startups developing technology backed by the defense department that utilize cameras because LIDAR is impractical for stealth on the battlefield.

John Boyd, president of The Boyd Co., a corporate site selection firm that works across the country and has done business with several Pittsburgh companies, including PNC bank, said he thinks that the "call with Shapiro was significant."

"The role of diplomacy is huge," Boyd said. "Governors having that personal relationship with the CEO and sort of being a partner in growth rather than an adversary [is big]. Shapiro has really prioritized economic development."

Boyd added: "Pittsburgh's technology pedigree is no longer flying under the radar. ... I think [Pittsburgh's] strong showing in Amazon's HQ2 site search [in 2018] really elevated that global stature of Pittsburgh's high tech scene. Carnegie Mellon is regarded and consistently ranked among the nation's premier AI universities. Pittsburgh competes in the same league as larger tech markets like Austin, San Jose and Boston."

Musk's interest in the Steel City comes the same week that AI chipmaker Nvidia announced that Pittsburgh would be its first "AI Tech Community," as part of a larger initiative to connect industry and higher education. Boyd noted that "artificial intelligence is a common denominator among Musk's businesses."

Musk has become a controversial figure in recent years, in part for various political statements and sharing antisemitic conspiracies, the latter of which Musk has apologized for. But despite Shapiro and Musk publicly holding drastically different ideologies, the governor told NBC News that the two did not discuss politics.

"Shapiro is sophisticated enough to understand that these economic development projects are huge and too important to get in the way," Boyd said. "There's one thing that elected officials on both sides of the aisle agree on, it's that they love to be in ribbon cuttings for projects that translate into high-paying jobs."

Kennedy said he believes "Governor Shapiro is the right governor to make this pitch."

"When you're Elon Musk, your phone is often ringing with calls from governors who would like to make a pitch on why their state would be the best to house the next \$3 billion, \$5 billion gigafactory," Kennedy said. "[Shapiro is] the kind of person that puts Pennsylvania first, politics last. We're excited that Elon is having that discussion with him. It's a really good start."

Some of Musk's companies have connections to the Pittsburgh area already. Tesla batteries utilize components manufactured by Matthews International and while the two firms are currently in the midst of a legal battle against each other, the two continue to work together. PPG also manufactures the paints that Tesla uses on its vehicles and North Shore-based lunar lander company Astrobotic Technology Inc. is set to fly its Griffin lander on a SpaceX rocket.