Proposal for Emoji: Tunnel

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Incomplete: 6 of 7 required screenshots are still to be added (section 3E). Not ready to submit.

1. Identification

CLDR short name: tunnel

Keywords: passage | underpass | underground | burrow | dig | through | escape | hope | focus | breakthrough

Category: Travel & Places, transport-ground, after railway track

2. Images

	72×72	18×18
Color		
Black & white		

License: The four images are original work, created for this proposal by the submitter with the assistance of an AI tool. The submitter owns the rights in them and licenses them to the Unicode Consortium under the Emoji Proposal Agreement & License.

3. Selection factors: inclusion

A. Multiple meanings

Yes. The object itself, “tunnel”: “a horizontal passageway through or under an obstruction.” https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tunnel Beyond it, Merriam-Webster defines each of these senses.

- **The end is in sight.** “light at the end of the tunnel”: “a reason to believe that a bad situation will end soon or that a long and difficult job will be finished soon.” https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/light%20at%20the%20end%20of%20the%20tunnel

- **Seeing only one thing.** “tunnel vision”: “extreme narrowness of viewpoint” and “single-minded concentration on one objective.” https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tunnel%20vision
- **Working through.** “tunnel”: “to make (one’s way) by or as if by making a tunnel.” https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tunnel
- **A wrist condition.** “carpal tunnel syndrome”: “a condition caused by compression of a nerve where it passes through the wrist into the hand…” First known use: 1950. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/carpal%20tunnel%20syndrome
- **Testing in moving air.** “wind tunnel”: “a tunnellike passage through which air is blown at a known velocity to investigate air flow around an object…” First known use: 1903. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wind%20tunnel
- **An amusement-park ride.** “tunnel of love”: “a dark tunnel in an amusement park through which passengers are conveyed usually by boat.” https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tunnel%20of%20love

B. Use in sequences

Yes. Each sense above has a sequence that says it.

🚗🌈 driving through one

🌈💡 light at the end of the tunnel

👀🌈 tunnel vision

⛏️🌈 digging through

✋🌈 carpal tunnel

🌬️🌈 a wind tunnel

❤️🌈 the tunnel of love

C. Breaks new ground

Yes. In CLDR 49, which supplies the keywords for emoji search, no emoji has the word for a tunnel among its keywords or in its name in 8 of the 12 languages checked (section 4). The one tunnel drawn in Unicode is the backdrop to 🚇 metro’s train. A tunnel is not a variant of any existing emoji.

D. Distinctiveness

A tunnel mouth is a simple, recognizable shape: a dark arch in a hillside with a road or a track running into it. The example images add daylight at the far end, which separates a tunnel from a cave or a hole and carries the first figure of speech. The 18×18 images above show that the arch, the bore, and the light survive at that size.

E. Usage level: frequency

Google Search

Screenshot needed: Google Search: tunnel

Open https://www.google.com/search?q=tunnel in a private browser window. Click Tools so the number of results shows.

Save it as `docs/emoji-proposals/tunnel/google-search-tunnel.png` and run `bun run emoji:pdf`.

Screenshot needed: Google Search: elephant

Open https://www.google.com/search?q=elephant in a private browser window. Click Tools so the number of results shows.

Save it as `docs/emoji-proposals/tunnel/google-search-elephant.png` and run `bun run emoji:pdf`.

Google Video Search

Screenshot needed: Google Video Search: tunnel

Open https://www.google.com/search?tbm=vid&q=tunnel in a private browser window. Click Tools so the number of results shows.

Save it as `docs/emoji-proposals/tunnel/google-video-tunnel.png` and run `bun run emoji:pdf`.

Screenshot needed: Google Video Search: elephant

Open https://www.google.com/search?tbm=vid&q=elephant in a private browser window. Click Tools so the number of results shows.

Save it as `docs/emoji-proposals/tunnel/google-video-elephant.png` and run `bun run emoji:pdf`.

Google Trends: Web Search

Screenshot needed: Google Trends, Web Search: elephant and tunnel, 2004 to present, worldwide

Open https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&q=elephant,tunnel in a private browser window.

Save it as `docs/emoji-proposals/tunnel/trends-web.png` and run `bun run emoji:pdf`.

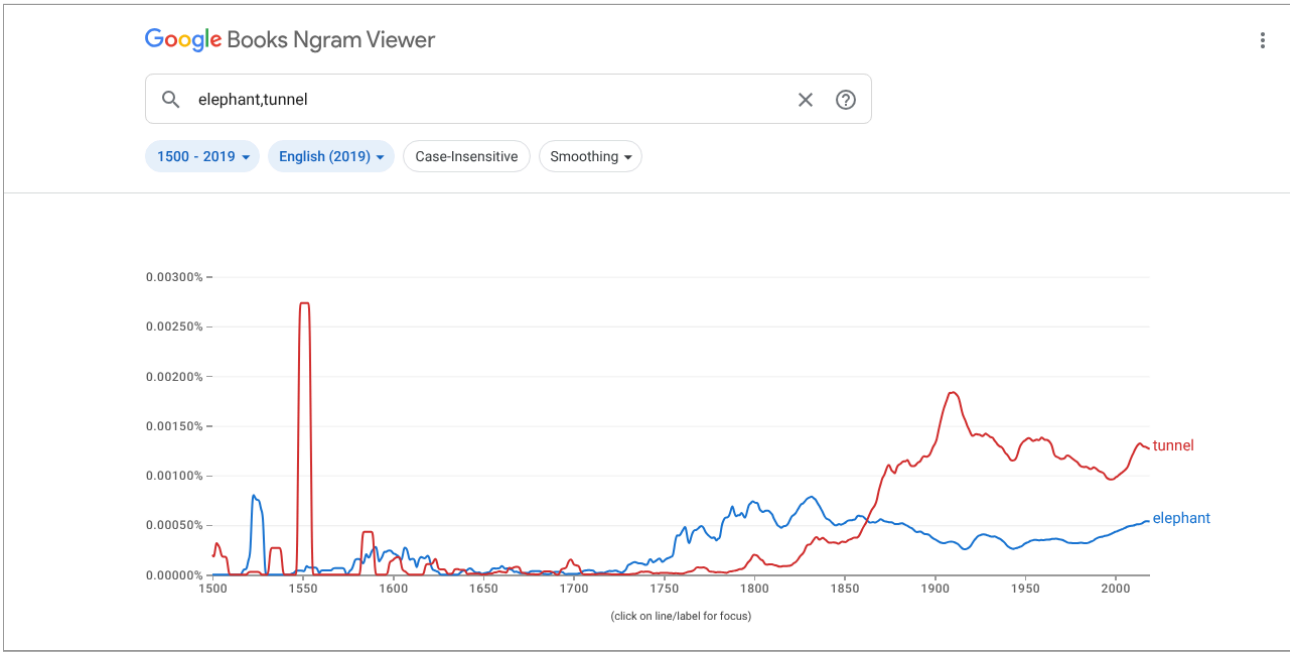
Google Trends: Image Search

Screenshot needed: Google Trends, Image Search: elephant and tunnel, 2008 to present, worldwide

Open https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all_2008&gprop=images&q=elephant,tunnel in a private browser window.

Save it as `docs/emoji-proposals/tunnel/trends-images.png` and run `bun run emoji:pdf`.

Google Books Ngram Viewer



Google Books Ngram Viewer: elephant and tunnel, 1500 to 2019, English (2019). https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=elephant%2Ctunnel&year_start=1500&year_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=3. Captured 12 November 2026.

In 2019, “tunnel” was 0.00131% of the words in English books and “elephant” 0.000569%: 2.30× as frequent. The same comparison in the 2019 collections of five other languages, each beside that language’s word for elephant (year 2019, no smoothing, read on 12 November 2026):

Books	Term	Share	Reference	Share	Ratio
English	tunnel	0.00131%	elephant	0.000569%	2.30×
German	Tunnel	0.00103%	Elefant	0.000219%	4.68×
Italian	tunnel	0.00107%	elefante	0.000415%	2.57×
Spanish	túnel	0.00113%	elefante	0.000505%	2.24×
Russian	туннель, тоннель	0.000691%	слон	0.000331%	2.09×
French	tunnel	0.000954%	éléphant	0.000483%	1.98×

F. Completeness

n/a

G. Compatibility

n/a

4. Selection factors: exclusion

Already representable

In part. 🚇 metro is the nearest. It denotes an underground railway, and Emojipedia describes its designs as “generally depicted as a forward-facing train traveling along tracks or rails and emerging from a tunnel” https://emojipedia.org/metro. It cannot stand for a road tunnel, a mine, a way out, or either figure of speech, because what it shows is a train. 🕳️ hole is an opening with no far end. No sequence of existing emoji reads as “tunnel.”

Unicode’s own keyword data points the same way. CLDR 49 gives no emoji for the word in 8 of the 12 languages below. Where it gives one, the emoji shows a train: 🚇 metro in Russian, Portuguese, and Arabic, and 🚃 mountain railway in Korean. A language counts as giving an emoji when its word is in that emoji’s keywords or name (read on 12 November 2026). https://github.com/unicode-org/cldr/tree/release-49/common/annotations

Language	Word	What CLDR 49 gives
English	tunnel	No emoji
German	Tunnel	No emoji
French	tunnel	No emoji
Spanish	túnel	No emoji
Italian	tunnel	No emoji
Japanese	トンネル	No emoji
Chinese	隧道	No emoji
Hindi	सुरंग	No emoji
Russian	тоннель	🚇 metro, as one of its keywords
Portuguese	túnel	🚇 metro, as one of its keywords
Arabic	نفق	🚇 metro, as one of its keywords, in the plural (أنفاق)
Korean	터널	🚃 mountain railway, in its name, which in Korean is “train tunnel” (기차 터널)

Overly specific

No. One plain tunnel mouth represents every kind of tunnel.

Open-ended

No. A tunnel is one concept, not one of a family of variants. Other infrastructure exists, such as a dam or a canal, but none carries figures of speech as common as those in section 3A.

Transient

No. Merriam-Webster dates the word to 1508. Its share of English books has stayed between 0.000918% and 0.00201% in every year since 1900 (Google Books Ngram Viewer, English 2019, no smoothing).

Faulty comparison

This proposal does not rest on comparison with emoji that already exist.

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5. Other information

Design. The example shows a road tunnel in a hillside. A rail tunnel would serve as well. The defining features are the arch, the dark bore, and the light at the far end.

Earlier proposals. Unicode's Emoji Proposals Status list shows no earlier proposal for a tunnel. It shows "Cave" declined twice (submitted in 2020 and 2026). A tunnel is a different thing: it is built, it has two ends, and the figures of speech in section 3A belong to it and not to a cave. https://unicode.org/emoji/emoji-proposals-status.html