

Don't Tell Lidar Foe Elon Musk But This Maker Of The Robo-Car Vision Tech Just Raised \$170 Million

Innoviz Technologies, a maker of laser lidar sensors for self-driving and highly automated cars, just closed a \$170 million funding round, its biggest to date, weeks after Tesla CEO Elon Musk [savaged the technology](#) that every major developer of autonomous vehicles uses as a “fool’s errand.”

Proceeds of the Series C round, which was enlarged from an initial \$132 million of funding [announced in March](#), will be used to improve the tech startup’s perception software that helps its solid-state laser sensors better understand and interpret surroundings, the company said. To date, Rosh Ha’ayin, Israel-based [Innoviz](#) said it has raised \$252 million and counts companies including Aptiv, Magna and Samsung-owned Harman as partners.

“In a short amount of time we have successfully created an industry-leading LiDAR solution from the ground up and secured partner and customer wins to push it into series production for one of the top automakers in the world, Omer Keilaf, Innoviz’s CEO and co-founder, said in a statement. With the new funds, the company will also focus on “accelerating our path to mass production, commercializing our perception software offering and delivering next-generation solutions” by improving performance, size and cost, he said.

In addition to supplying lidar sensors to help self-driving cars navigate through the world, Innoviz also wants to offer its technology for use in mapping, robots and drones. While the technology has challenges, including how well it distinguishes between soft and hard objects, cost and electric power consumption, its ability to generate detailed, ghostly 3D point-cloud maps of a moving car’s surroundings in all lighting conditions, working in tandem with cameras and radar, gives self-driving cars awareness of road conditions that’s superhuman.

Nevertheless, to Musk, they are “expensive sensors that are unnecessary,” he told investors and analysts attending Tesla’s April 21 “Autonomy Day.” “It’s like having a whole bunch of expensive appendices. One appendix is bad, now we’ll put on a whole bunch of them. That’s ridiculous. You’ll see.”

Instead, the mercurial billionaire, who’s been promising that Tesla is on the verge of delivering self-driving capability to its owners [since late 2016](#), is confident that a combination of digital cameras, radar and sonar are sufficient to see the world.

Leading self-driving car developers including Waymo, [Cruise](#) and [Aurora](#) have all created or integrated lidar companies into their operations and every major self-driving car test program uses the devices, in combination with cameras and radar.

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