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*From the Los Angeles Times*

## **L.A.'s future is up in the air**

By Ray Bradbury

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SOMETIME IN THE next five years, traffic all across L.A. will freeze.

The freeways that were once a fast-moving way to get from one part of the city to another will become part of a slow-moving glacier, edging down the hills to nowhere.

In recent years we've all experienced the beginnings of this. A trip from the Valley into Los Angeles that used to take half an hour — all of a sudden it takes an hour or two or three. Our warning system tells us something must be done before our freeways trap us in the outlying districts, unable to get to our jobs.

In recent months there has been talk of yet another subway, one that would run between downtown L.A. and Santa Monica. That would be a disaster.

A single transit line will not answer our problems; we must lay plans for a series of transportation systems that would allow us to move freely, once more, within our city.

The answer to all this is the monorail. Let me explain.

More than 40 years ago, in 1963, I attended a meeting of the L.A. County Board of Supervisors at which the Alweg Monorail company outlined a plan to construct one or more monorails crossing L.A. north, south, east and west. The company said that if it were allowed to build the system, it would give the monorails to us for free — absolutely gratis. The company would operate the system and collect the fare revenues.

It seemed a reasonable bargain to me. But at the end of a long day of discussion, the Board of Supervisors rejected Alweg Monorail.

I was stunned. I dimly saw, even at that time, the future of freeways, which would, in the end, go nowhere.

At the end of the afternoon, I asked for three minutes to testify. I took the microphone and said, "To paraphrase Winston Churchill, rarely have so many owed so little to so few." I was conducted out of the meeting.

In a panic at what I saw as a disaster, I offered my services to the Alweg Monorail people for the next year.

During the following 12 months I lectured in almost every major area of L.A., at open forums and libraries, to tell people about the promise of the monorail. But at the end of that year nothing was done.

Forty years have passed, and more than ever we need an open discussion of our future. If we examine the history of subways, we will find how tremendously expensive and destructive they are.

They are, first of all, meant for cold climates such as Toronto, New York, London, Paris, Moscow and Tokyo. But L.A. is a Mediterranean area; our weather is sublime, and people are accustomed to traveling in the open air and enjoying the sunshine, not in closed cars under the ground.

Subways take forever to build and, because the tunnels have to be excavated, are incredibly expensive. The cost of one subway line would build 10 monorail systems.

Along the way, subway construction destroys businesses by the scores. The history of the subway from East L.A. to the Valley is a history of ruined businesses and upended lives.

The monorail is extraordinary in that it can be built elsewhere and then carried in and installed in mid-street with little confusion and no destruction of businesses. In a matter of a few months, a line could be built from Long Beach all the way along Western Avenue to the mountains with little disturbance to citizens and no threat to local businesses.

Compared to the heavy elevateds of the past, the monorail is virtually soundless. Anyone who has ridden the Disneyland or Seattle monorails knows how quietly they move.

They also have been virtually accident-free. The history of the monorail shows few collisions or fatalities. If we constructed monorails running north and south on Vermont, Western, Crenshaw and Broadway, and similar lines running east and west on Washington, Pico, Wilshire, Santa Monica and Sunset, we would have provided a proper cross section of transportation, allowing people to move anywhere in our city at any time.

There you have it. As soon as possible, we must call in one of the world's monorail-building companies to see what could be done so that the first ones could be in position by the end of the year to help our huddled traffic masses yearning to travel freely.

The freeway is the past, the monorail is our future, above and beyond.

Let the debate begin.

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