

NEWS BREAK

Article: **Can light rail repair what a freeway broke?**

Section: **MAIN, A12**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, March 22, 2026**, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

Feel free to adapt this lesson for your students. For instance, some educators may assign this as a homework task, while others might facilitate the reading and discussion of questions within small groups or larger class discussions.

****Please take a moment to review all NIE content before classroom use to ensure it is suitable for your students.****

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Learning Objectives:

After reading the article, students will analyze how transportation projects (like highways and light rail) can both harm and benefit communities, especially communities of color.

Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about, using this picture?
- Are there any clues? What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the meaning of the word.

As Dixon suggests, after decades of **gentrification**, many of the people who fought for a better neighborhood have left, priced out as the area grew wealthier, and whiter.

Gentrification Guess:

Gentrification Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. All eyes are on the floating bridge, a phenomenon of engineering know-how, as light rail prepares to glide across the surface of _____.
2. At Judkins Park Station in the Central District, with the Northwest African American Museum across the street and images of native son Jimi Hendrix decorating the station itself, light rail arrives to a neighborhood pummeled by what two things?
3. The scars remain: What are the two things the article highlights?
4. In the days when the highway divided the neighborhood, Black residents made up 73% of the Central District's population, and just 16% were white. Now the neighborhood is roughly ____% Black and ____% white.
5. The Black Legacy Homeowners project helps Black Seattleites buy and keep their homes for what?
6. As a Black family in the 1950s, they had little choice of where they could live, thanks to the American government. _____, as it was called, rated certain neighborhoods as "hazardous" for home loans, which segregated Black people and other communities of color.
7. As a child, Dixon didn't know this and had no idea of the change he was about to witness. But it began with the Yesler-Atlantic Urban Renewal Project in 1958, which zeroed in on Judkins with the intent to remove "blight." What did this mean?
8. And like a surgeon's scalpel, highway projects provided the tool, slicing with precision through _____ across the U.S. Work began on the massive interchange for I-90 and the Thomson Expressway, which was intended to head north largely along what today is Martin Luther King Jr. Way. I
9. In 1968, more than _____ homes were demolished, out of an estimated 4,000 houses that stood in the highways' paths. With homes coming

down, residents rallied to prevent what had happened with I-5, when _____ people lost their homes.

10. A _____ of middle-class white homeowners, retired people, environmentalists and activists, like Dixon's Black Panthers, rang the alarm. "It would've divided up the community, which had been happening in many parts of the country through Black communities, cutting them off and cutting them up," Dixon said. "Of course, that was intentional, and we fought it." The resistance worked.
11. "We have Jimi Hendrix outside and the Sam Smith lid park, but the people who Sam Smith sought to help are being erased. In the end, if we don't do anything about displacement, we'll be erased. It'll just be a bunch of white people and murals and artworks," Salisbury said. "We're just going to turn into another _____."

Class Discussion Questions:

- What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
- At first, I thought _____, but now I think _____?

Deeper-Dive "Connect & Explain" comprehension questions for small groups, entire classes or journal entries and/ or essay prompts for extended enrichment:

1. How did past policies like redlining and freeway construction shape the present-day reality of the Central District? Explain how decisions made decades ago are still affecting people today.
2. When projects like I-90 or light rail are built, who benefits the most—and who bears the costs? Use examples from the article to support your thinking.
3. The light rail is seen as progress. In what ways could it still cause harm? Explain how something positive for a city can be negative for certain communities.
4. What responsibility do governments have to repair harm caused by past decisions like highway construction through Black neighborhoods? What actions would meaningful repair look like?
5. Compare displacement caused by I-90 in the past with displacement happening today due to rising housing costs. How are they similar? How are they different?
6. Why were highways often built through communities of color instead of wealthier white neighborhoods? What does this reveal about power and decision-making in cities?
7. The neighborhood includes tributes to people like Jimi Hendrix and historic landmarks, but many longtime residents are gone. Why is remembering a community different from actually preserving it?

8. Can projects like the Judkins Park light rail station truly “fix” the damage caused by I-90? Why or why not? What might still be missing?
9. If you were a city planner, what would you do differently to make transportation projects fair and inclusive? Explain specific policies or design choices.
10. What can ordinary people (including teens) do to influence decisions about housing, transportation, and development in their communities? Why does civic participation matter in situations like this?

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