

'Carmageddon' or BBQ—it's up to us

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The Mulholland Bridge, looking north from access road near the 405.

Forget nothing to fear but fear itself. As they launched an urgent campaign to keep people away from the 405 Freeway in mid-July, L.A.'s leaders said there's good reason to be afraid—very afraid—of what a 53-hour closure will bring.

With the [shutdown of one of the world's busiest freeways](#) looming, government officials didn't try to gloss over what driving in the area—and around the region—would be like on the weekend of July 15-18.

"It will be an absolute nightmare," said Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

"Avoid the area like the plague...Stay the hell away from the 405 in the middle of July," said L.A. City Councilman Paul Koretz.

"Since this is Los Angeles, we think this project should probably be renamed 'The Nightmare on the 405,'" said Richard Katz, chair of the Metrolink board.

"It's going to be a really horrendous weekend," Michael Miles, district director of Caltrans District 7. "It's going to back up probably all the way to San Bernardino County...It's just going to make a mess...You need to stay away."

"They're calling this [Carmageddon](#)," said Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky. "And our objective is to prove all of the predictors wrong, that it doesn't need to be a Carmageddon."

When it was his turn to speak, L.A. City Councilman Bill Rosendahl threw in the rhetorical towel. “They used all the words, there’s nothing more left to say...I’ve got no hyperbole other than, folks, just grab your calendar and put an X on 15, 16 and 17 and don’t come to this side of town to get over the hill one way or the other.”

Amid all the dire prognostications, there were a few bits of good news to come out of Monday’s news conference, the first salvo in a publicity blitz to ensure the motoring public is well aware that the 405 will be closing for 53 straight hours for demolition of the Mulholland Bridge. (Some ramps will begin closing at 7 p.m. on Friday, July 15. The entire freeway will be closed on Saturday, July 16, and Sunday, July 17, and will reopen at 5 a.m. on Monday, July 18. The [project](#) will add a northbound carpool lane from the 10 to the 101, along with other improvements.)

The weekend won’t be a lost cause for mobility in the region—if travelers rely on public transportation. It was announced that they’ll be able to ride free on [Metro subway lines](#) that weekend. And service will be expanded on Metro bus lines and on the [Metrolink](#) train system. Airport officials announced that they are contacting hotels around [LAX](#) to see if they will offer deals to passengers who want to avoid freeway hassles by getting to the airport the night before their flight.

Even the humble backyard cookout was singled out—more than once—by its fans in high places.

“A BBQ would be good that weekend,” Miles said. Villaraigosa concurred, making the suggestion both in English and Spanish.

And soon—assuming everyone heeds the advice to “stay the heck out of here”—the July freeway closure will be history, Yaroslavsky said. (Although it will all be repeated when the other side of the bridge comes down some 11 months later.)

“It’s going to be over before we know it,” Yaroslavsky said. “So Los Angeles, we need to suck it up.”



Supervisor Yaroslavsky advises motorists to “stay the heck out of here” during freeway closure.

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