https://www.100test.com/kao_ti2020/234/2021_2022__E8_80_83_E 7_A0_94_E5_BF_85_E8_c73_234976.htm eBay Give us your tired computers Jan 27th 2005 From The Economist print edition A new plan to recycle old PCs may forestall regulation THE computer industry is built on the assumption that PCs and electrical devices are replaced every few years. It is a strategy that leaves tons of electronic junk in its wake. Over 130 000 PCs are replaced every day in America alone and only a tenth or so are recycled. Ingredients such as cadmium mercury and lead can do terrible things to people and places. In Europe such e-waste is the fastest growing type of refuse accounting for 8% of all municipal rubbish. Regulators have taken note. In California legislation to levy a surcharge on computer sales to defray recycling costs took effect this month. A European Union directive in 2003 requires equipment-makers to recycle but it has not yet been implemented in national laws. Manufacturers such as IBM Dell and HP have been trying to deflect further legislation by introducing their own recycling programmes. But they have had limited success-partly because they tend to charge for recycling unwanted machines. Apples price for taking back one of its computers in America is $30. Now eBay the worlds leading online auction business has come up with an innovative way to encourage people to sell donate or recycle their old machines over the internet. A web-based program "reads" the redundant computers components and gives its

specifications like its memory and processor speed Owners can then ascertain the value of their old PC put it up for sale and get a special mailing kit to simplify shipping. The site also makes it easy to donate a PC to charity or get it to a nearby recycler. The scheme is no altruistic act of corporate social responsibility. It began as an attempt by Patrick Jabal manager of the sites computer and networking category which does $2.5 billion-worth of transactions a year to drum up more business. Watching peoples buying and selling patterns on eBays site Mr Jabal an entrepreneur with an MBA from Harvard Business School noticed an unmet demand for cheap old PCs. Though they were plentiful in the closets of eBay users listing and selling them was problematic. So in order to increase their supply on the site he set out to overcome the difficulties that users had-often no more than an inability to remember the vital statistics of the machine they had been using. Then he stumbled on the issue of waste and realised that the company could do even more. "It was a way to meet a business objective help the environment and help confused consumers " he says. It may also turn out to be a clever market-based way to avoid more regulation. Underground railways Down the tubes Jan 20th 2005 From The Economist print edition MOST people who depend on underground railways try to avoid thinking about them. All being well the immense difficulty of running closely sequenced trains at depths of as much as 250 feet along tunnels that may be over a century old will not make itself apparent during the slog from home to office. When the challenges become evident misery

is the result. So entreaties to pause and consider the engineering marvels running under London and New York may strike the natural audience for these books as perverse. Yet subways have literally shaped both cities. Before they were built   roads were clogged with horses   carriages and pedestrians-one count of Londons commuters in the 1850s found that two-thirds walked. Underground railways meant that the middle classes could combine city jobs and culture with patches of grass. They also enabled the poor to escape overcrowded tenements   the population of New Yorks Lower East Side fell by 60% between 1910 and 1940. Londons was the first underground railway-nearly all of it built in the half-century after 1860-and one of the trickiest. It runs under streets so twisty that they could not simply be dug up in order to lay track- the "cut and cover" method used for much of New Yorks system. Another difference is Londons historic lack of civic government   which meant that the money had to be scrounged   mainly from private investors   all of whom had their own ideas on how the system should work. The lines that now form the backbone of Londons tube system were initially financed and run by a motley crew of domestic and foreign money-men   nearly all of whom ended up poorer as a result. An urban rail system is a natural monopoly   and competition   while it lasted   led to endless disputes. One squabble over a siding in 1884 was resolved by chaining a District line train to the track   three Metropolitan engines tried to pull it loose but failed. Although even then   "trains in drains" were a favourite target for grumbling journalists and frazzled commuters   the system that resulted from

all this chaos was a marvel. It took 70 minutes to trundle around the Circle Line in the early 1890s-just 12 minutes longer than the fastest journey time today and that in a train powered by steam. And even the chaos may have been preferable to the indolence and under- funding that prevailed after 1948 when the tube was nationalised. Christian Wolmars book is a better read than Vivian Hellers though the latter has splendid photographs of the subway in construction. And perhaps it is a bit unfair of Mr Wolmar to harp on the inability of those who built the tube to appreciate the lasting social benefits of a decent rail system under London which is to subject them both to hindsight and to an agenda that was not their own. Yet readers of both books may be reassured by tales of past catastrophes that dwarf present annoyances. Open one of them the next time you are stuck in the tunnel outside Edgware Road or Atlantic Avenue and feel becalmed. The Subterranean Railway How the London Underground was Built and How it Changed the City Forever. By Christian Wolmar. Atlantic Books 351 pages 17.99 100Test

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