23rd IAA SYMPOSIUM ON VISIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE (D4)
The Modern Day Space Elevator as a Permanent Transportation Infrastructure (3)

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REVOLUTIONIZING SPACE ACCESS: THE POTENTIAL OF SPACE ELEVATORS IN FUTURE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Abstract

As humanity moves toward a permanent presence in space, the cost and efficiency of transportation beyond Earth's atmosphere remain major challenges. Traditional rocket-based launch systems, despite advancements in reusability and efficiency, still suffer from high costs, limited payload capacity, and significant environmental impact. In this context, the space elevator presents a revolutionary alternative, offering continuous and cost-effective access to space without the need for conventional rocket propulsion.

A space elevator consists of a tethered structure extending from Earth's surface to geostationary orbit (approximately 35,786 km), supported by centrifugal force. A climber system would transport cargo and passengers along this structure, dramatically reducing launch costs and increasing the frequency of space access. If realized, this technology could facilitate large-scale space industrialization, including satellite deployment, space tourism, and interplanetary missions.

However, numerous technical, logistical, and economic challenges must be addressed before a space elevator becomes viable. One of the most significant hurdles is the development of ultra-strong materials capable of withstanding the immense tensile stress required for a 35,000 km tether. Carbon nanotubes and graphene-based composites show promise, but current manufacturing capabilities are insufficient for large-scale construction. Additionally, the dynamics of orbital debris, atmospheric disturbances, and potential security threats pose risks to long-term stability.

This study explores recent advancements in materials science, robotic climbers, and counterweight stabilization mechanisms that could bring space elevators closer to reality. Economic feasibility is also evaluated by comparing projected infrastructure costs, maintenance expenses, and the long-term savings compared to conventional rocket launches.

By assessing both the promises and the challenges of space elevator technology, this research provides a comprehensive perspective on its role in the future of space transportation. While full-scale implementation remains decades away, breakthroughs in materials, automation, and orbital infrastructure could make space elevators a key component of sustainable space access in the coming century.

Keywords: space elevator, space transportation, advanced materials, orbital infrastructure, space travel, carbon nanotubes, geostationary tether, future space technology