

**[mex217] Skate mail fallacy**

A skater with blades of proper length  $\ell_0 = 15\text{in}$  on his skates moves with velocity  $v = 0.8c$  relative to a flat ice surface, approaching a gap of (Lorentz contracted) width  $d = 6\text{in}$ . He argues that the front end of the blade (point  $A'$ ) will gain support on the far side of the gap (point  $C$ ) before the back end of the blade (point  $B'$ ) loses support on the near side of the gap (point  $D$ ). Therefore, he concludes, he will make it across the gap without accident.

This conclusion is based on the assumption that the blade can be regarded as a rigid body. Demonstrate the fallacy of this assumption as follows: If that assumption were true, point  $B'$  would know that point  $A'$  has reached safety at point  $C$  before a light signal from  $A'$  to  $B'$  could confirm that message, which is impossible.

**Solution:**