

Aaron's experience with public transportation

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This is an entertaining story about my trip from Palo Alto to Sacramento. My first stop was the Caltrain San Antonio station. When I arrived at the San Antonio station I found myself on the wrong side of the tracks and, unlike the trains in Sacramento, there were huge fences blocking all access for pedestrians to cross the rails to get on the train going in the opposite direction. After asking around for a while I finally found someone who could tell me how to get on the other side. I needed to go to the very end of the platform (about 200 feet away) and go under a pedestrian tunnel to get to the other side. By the time I finally got to the other side my train was coming. I quickly pulled my ATM card out to pay for my tickets at the machine but my card was denied. I tried over and over again until finally my card was accepted; at this time the train was almost ready to take off. I jumped on my bike and sailed toward the train. The train attendant looked at me and signaled the train to take off leaving me stranded for an hour until the next train would show up. I learned later that in the bay area most Caltrain workers hate seeing bicycles being ridden anywhere near the train and will leave most riders if they see them on their bikes (a very weird policy, but now I know). An hour later I get on the train. I found a place that my bike fit nicely and have just sat down when I was addressed. A Caltrain worker yelled at me "Your bike doesn't go here!" and quick rushed down toward the rear of the train. I responded "Where should I put my bike?" The Caltrain worker ignores my response and continued walking, (I really love Caltrain at this moment). When the Caltrain worker got back, 15 minutes later, he said that he will be "escorting" me off the train at the next exit. After being removed from the train at the next stop I notice that there were a lot of bicyclists getting on the train, but they were getting on at the very front of the train (this is where my bike belonged, but no one told me). I had a fairly uneventful train ride up to San Francisco after that. After arriving in San Francisco I got out my map to the Greyhound bus station and started to bike toward my destination. The map I was using had me going down Haight Street which unfortunately has some of the steepest hills in all of San Francisco. I ended up on Haight and Ashbury which I quickly found out is nowhere near the Greyhound bus station (apparently they sound similar in mapquest). In fact, from the Caltrain station, Haight and Ashbury is in the opposite direction of Greyhound. I then had to bike the 8 miles (literally, to the opposite side of San Francisco) to the Greyhound station. Once at Greyhound I found out that they don't store bicycles at the station (even though I called ahead and was specifically told that they did). They were able to sell me a \$16 cardboard box that I could store my bike in (Greyhound can only store things in sealed containers). Unfortunately, this box was on the small side so I had to disassemble my bike to get it to fit in the box. When I say disassemble I don't just mean take the wheels off, I mean take every single piece of the bike apart down to the handle bars and the peddles! After shoving my bike into the incredibly small box I was then told that that Greyhound only accepts cash (my day is just getting better and better). I tried the ATM at the station but the machine kept reporting an error. The Greyhound attendants said that they had some problems with the machine before but that it was maintained

by a third party so they had no idea what might be wrong with it. The attendants were able to direct me to an ATM that was several blocks away, so away I went (I was surprised that the fee to use this ATM was \$4!). After getting back with the \$20 to pay for my bike I was informed that when I was out my bus had left without me and that I would have to take the next one which would be arriving at 1:30AM and would get to Sacramento at 3:45AM. They then informed me that this would involve a transfer charge of \$15, cash! I love public transportation.