

The Elegant Way

General Purpose: To Persuade

Specific Purpose: To encourage intercity rail travel between Sacramento and the Bay Area instead of using a personal vehicle.

Organizational Pattern: Reasons

I. INTRODUCTION

1. **Attention Getter:** We've all been taunted by the silver bullets breezing past us while we sit in gridlock traffic on the interstate. They glide effortlessly on steel rails while we are jostled to and fro on broken asphalt.
2. **Relevance to Audience:** We've all had trips to the Bay Area ruined by a 4-hour standstill in the concrete maze of the MacArthur Interchange, approaching the Bay Bridge, or on the Yolo Viaduct, miles away from the nearest exit (not to mention the nearest restroom).
3. **Credibility Statement:** When I lived abroad, it became second nature for me to take advantage of Europe's vast and cheap transit systems to travel between major cities instead of taking a car and worrying about parking, access, and traffic.
4. **Thesis:** Taking Capitol Corridor instead of your car is safer, less expensive, and more comfortable and convenient than taking the freeway to San Francisco.
5. **Preview:** After all, if you're going to spend more than an hour in your seat, you might as well travel a more elegant way.

TRANSITION: Now, there's been quite a bit of back-and-forth about how *safe* or *unsafe* the city of San Francisco is — who can ignore the constant Water Torture drip of articles about petty crime in the city? — but in general we take for granted other safety aspects of travel to San Francisco.

II. BODY

1. **Safety:** The road routes into San Francisco are subject to not only vast amounts of traffic, but also bottlenecks through which this traffic must travel, unless they want to take the hours-long detour down the East Bay and up the Peninsula.
 - a. Though the primary entrance to San Francisco, the Bay Bridge, had its eastern span rebuilt in 2013, the Eastern approach to the bridge dates to the original construction in the 1930s. The MacArthur Maze collects and distributes 22 lanes of freeway traffic to and from Interstates 80, 580, 880, and 980 (in addition to a significant amount of the Port of Oakland's truck traffic via Grand Ave.)
 - a. The bottleneck effect of this junction alone guarantees hellish traffic conditions during rush hour, not to mention inevitable traffic slowdowns at any time of day. *You try to move 238,000 cars in and out of the city every day! (Traffic Volumes AADT)*

- b. The continuous presence of heavy trucking traffic, distracted drivers, and other road hazards make this a very dangerous stretch of highway: from 2012-2022, over 500 severe or fatal crashes were registered on Alameda County interstates alone.
- b. Because its trains (obviously) don't share a right-of-way with all this traffic, Capitol Corridor has never had a serious accident or incident in its history.
 - a. Since 2018, Capitol Corridor trains use a system called Positive Train Control, which guarantees your train will keep the speed limit. It'll even stop if it senses that your train's on a collision course!
 - b. CalTrans performs frequent inspections of its tracks and rolling stock, making it one of the safest transit systems on the continent, and reducing delays.
 - i. While there have been some high-profile Amtrak derailments in the past decade or so, CalTrans is an independent operator, so it doesn't depend on other agencies for maintenance or safety.

TRANSITION: Now, it's often said that young people see ourselves as invincible, that nothing bad will ever happen to us. I'm not sure how true that is. But one thing that's always been true is that we are always looking to save money.

- 2. *Cost:* With gas prices at all-time highs, expensive parking in the city, and rising tolls, a round-trip car journey to the city costs ~\$80-120. The same journey costs half of this amount on Capitol Corridor.
 - a. Compared to driving, CC fares are half as expensive, and cheaper parking at stations outside of San Francisco and the lack of tolls also contribute to the cost disparity.
 - a. CC also offers attractive discounts for students or people who travel to the city often.
 - b. Student discounts from CalTrans take another 15% off the train journey.
 - c. Buying 10-pack tickets can take the cost down even further.
 - b. CalTrans receives lots of Federal and State subsidies to keep its services running at attractive prices.
 - a. The Bay Area has a robust public transit system that can take you anywhere you please at pretty much any time, for cheaper than the cost of parking, not to mention gasoline.
 - b. Gas companies routinely pass on fees and fines to their customers. This means that the taxes charged to them for the maintenance of our growing road network are taken out of our pocket twice — once as a sales tax, again as a price hike, and a third time as a bridge toll.
 - c. Once you've taken your car to the City, you need to find a place to park it, but parking in the city is also quite expensive.
 - a. Taking city-owned parking lot under Union Square as a baseline, it's not uncommon to find all-day parking prices north of \$40.
 - b. Private lots are more expensive and not necessarily safer.
 - c. On the other hand, Parking at Roseville and Rocklin stations is free; parking at Sacramento Valley Station is only \$10 for an all-day pass.

TRANSITION: Sure, bringing your car with you seems like a worthwhile convenience, even if it's more expensive to get there, and MUCH more expensive to park — but it's still not half as convenient as the train:

3. *Comfort & Convenience:* While you *will* spend at least two hours traveling from one place to the other, no matter which way you do it, you can at least spend those two hours *productively* at your seat on the Capitol Corridor.
 - a. CC trains provide more comfort and space than your car.
 - a. The Café car and clean bathrooms onboard mean you don't have to worry about scrambling for the freeway exit when nature calls. There is space to move around and stretch out.
 - b. On-board wifi and electricity is reliable enough to depend on for productive work, or stream content.
 - i. Car drivers seem to do this anyway, but since you're not the one driving the train, you're not endangering yourself, your passengers, or other people in traffic.
 - b. CC runs hourly-ish service from the Bay Area to Sacramento all day long, so you can leave town as early or as late as you please, without having to mind rush hour traffic.
 - a. Some peak-hour services continue all the way up to Auburn.
 - b. Train tracks don't run across the Bay Bridge, but there are many options to cross the bay: Ferry, BART, or Amtrak bus shuttle (included in the ticket price and timed to arrive at Emeryville before your train leaves).

TRANSITION: In America, we're used to taking our cars everywhere, we simply can't seem to live without these heavy, expensive things. This blinds us to cheaper, more convenient, and safer modes of travel (where they exist). Any of these arguments on their own probably wouldn't do much to sway me either way, but in aggregate, it's easy to see why taking Capitol Corridor to the Bay Area is a no-brainer.

III. CONCLUSION

1. **Thesis:** Taking Capitol Corridor instead of your car is safer, half as expensive, and *much* more comfortable and convenient than taking the freeway to San Francisco.
2. **Summary/Review:** This is a “solved problem” in other parts of the world, where people rightly recognize that a “road trip” from one big city to another is more hassle than it's worth — tolls, traffic, parking, the safety of their vehicle — add up to more than the imagined shame of simply getting a taxi or a bus at their destination when they have a perfectly good car at home.
3. **Memorable Close:** Instead of trying to get your money's worth out of your car, consider taking the train on these types of short-haul trips. Instead of being taunted by the silver bullet flying past, take the Capitol Corridor to the Bay Area — leave the traffic behind for a change.

References:

California Department of Transportation. (2023). *Traffic Volumes AADT* [Dataset]. California Dept. of Transportation. <https://data.ca.gov/dataset/traffic-volumes-aadt>

California Highway Patrol. (2023). *Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System* [Dataset]. UC Berkeley. <https://tims.berkeley.edu>

Things to Remember!!!

- Use complete sentences in your preparation/final outline.
 - Cite your complete sources in your outline.
*You will have to cite your complete sources in your speech as well.
- Reference page in APA style (see examples and handouts on Canvas).