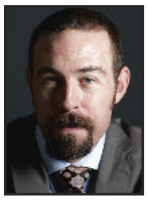


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The people on the bus

Taking the bus, train or public transit buys you time to concentrate on the case.


Cooper

By Miles B. Cooper

Ed Begley, Jr. I am not. He's a prolific actor (271 roles according to IMDb) known more for eco-evangelism than any role he's played. I own a car – a late-model gas-guzzling V-6. I'm not proud that it guzzles. But Teslas are too expensive and Priuses are, well, Priuses. Apologies to Prius drivers. Greater apologies to those driving behind them (Prius drivers, it's not your fault – the fuel consumption display goads your behavior).

Why the disclaimer? Because I'm about to tout alternative transportation. The environment is not my major motivation. Productivity, costs savings, case preparation and jury research are.

Be productive

When was the last time you were completely focused? Was it on a plane? If yes, there's a reason. No cell phones. E-mails are not constantly popping up. You could be as productive on a daily basis without the TSA love. You'll need to park your car though. You'll explore BART, light rail, the ferry, and local modes when you travel. When you drive, at most you can make phone calls (hands-free, of course), but you cannot take notes or read. I emphasize this last point on behalf of the pedestrians and cyclists who may be around you (myself included).

• ***Amtrak****:* The much-maligned Amtrak is hands-down the best way to get to Fresno. The last time I took it, I ran into two other lawyers doing the same thing. In the Bay Area, take BART to Richmond and walk 50 yards to the connecting Amtrak station (Amtrak has a bus from San Francisco, but it gets stuck in bridge traffic). If you ever have to go between San Diego and Los Angeles, revel in it. Take the Pacific Surfliner, sit on the train's west side, and glance at the ocean while you work.

• ***Megabus****:* If you regularly make Bay Area-to-LA runs, there's a new option. Megabus offers direct travel between LA's fantastic Union Station and San Francisco Caltrain, West Oakland BART, or Diridon Caltrain in San Jose. Yes, I said bus. This is not the stop-everywhere Greyhound of yore. One stop – halfway – to stretch your legs. Lots of students, techies, and budget-minded travelers. No TSA. No secondary screening. Seven hours of completely uninterrupted time to focus on your case, with a power supply in every seat and Wi-Fi (caveat: the data-hungry demographic can cripple the Wi-Fi – I use an iPhone hotspot).

Recently, I took a bike, removed the wheels and seat, put it all in a hockey bag, and checked it in the luggage compartment. With a bike and LA's Metro (which allows unrestricted bike access – ahem, BART Board) you'll move faster than cars and wonder why anyone complains about LA traffic. If this appeals, e-mail me for a few pointers (okay – now I'm sounding Begley-esque but my absolute disdain for sitting in traffic drives the behavior).

Penny pinching

Costs have an immediate effect on the client's recovery. The more you save, the better. My rule – I spend money as if it was my own personal cost bill at the end of a case. That means if I can save a little money and remain efficient, I take the thrifty route. An example: I was flying in and out of Spokane frequently. Cabs: $20. Rental car: $30 per day plus $10 per day parking. The public bus from the airport to downtown: $2.50. Most airports have a similar option if you ask. The Megabus option I mentioned is usually $58 round trip from SF-LA. Southwest is $180-400. There's a time commitment with the bus but if you covet quiet time, it is a net benefit.

People

Life generates a swirl of people around us – many of them like-minded. Our colleagues. Our community. Our families. People tend to be from our demographic. Break that up to connect with the greater population of potential jurors. Switching up transit modes is an outstanding way to achieve this. And, if you're handling any public transit cases, you must ride public transit at least a couple of times. A theoretic understanding is vastly different than granular knowledge gained by the five senses.

Preparation

Alternative transportation takes a little planning. When I'm evaluating a new route to a courthouse, I usually research it for 10 to 15 minutes (if you drive, you'd need driving directions and parking information anyway). I've found a strange thing occurs though when I'm planning alternative transportation routes. Because I have to account for transit schedules, I plan earlier. When I do, I prepare for depo earlier. There are thus fewer late-night copy sessions or frenzies to get out the door. This lowers my stress level. More important, it improves the outcome from the deposition.

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Try it

Give it a try, just once. Pick an upcoming event. Leave the car in the garage. If you don't find a benefit, you never have to try it again. But I think you may be surprised.

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