



## Rider Spotlight



## The Ride Home

A bus ride in the modern world can take you just about anywhere. It can bring you to your place of work, be your means to stop by the beach, carry you off to the boardwalk for a different kind of ride, or even be your escort to a night with friends downtown. The most important trip, however, may be one that most of us share: the bus ride home. For James, however, “the trip home” takes on a whole different meaning.

“I am from the very southern tip of Sweden, a province called Skåne,” James explains, “but I’ve lived in Europe, Southeast Asia, and America, so about half my life overseas (outside Sweden).” At the moment his travels have taken him here to Santa Cruz, working on a Bachelor’s in Business Administration, with a focus on finance, taking classes such as organizational behavior, business ethics, information technology management. “I don’t have a car or license, so METRO buses help a lot with school, among other things.” James goes to school “over the hill,” so the Hwy-17 Express bus ride is a big help to him. While it’s obvious James spends a lot of his time reading for his college work, he is also an avid reader in his free time. James is actually quite erudite, and while his knowledge touches many topics, a pretty relevant one came up quite early in our conversation.

“I feel that despite the Bay Area’s urban sprawl, the public transportation network is very functional and very good, despite the great distances.” James has a vast knowledge of both our and Sweden's public transport systems. It's this sizable knowledge that lends weight to his words as he describes his favorite aspects of how we do things around here. “One of the best things about Santa Cruz is real time fleet tracking, so a rider can see where their bus is, and not only that but, if it is early or late it adjusts the schedule live to compensate for it.” James goes on to detail how prevalent the public transport system is in Sweden. Even the schoolkids use the public buses instead of school buses. While this specific example may not be something soon on the plate for us, the continual transition toward more use of METRO’s buses for those of Santa Cruz county seems to point toward public transport being the "way of the future" in some sense. James describes that the bus has often been a big help in his busy college life, but it's more than that.

For James, location is everything. “I enjoy Sweden, it’s a beautiful country, especially from May to September. A lot of beautiful coastal areas to visit, in the very north there are expansive open natural areas that are protected. Most cities are steep in rich history, history which is often still visible today, very likely even right in the center of these cities. However the climate and darkness gets to me, which is why I would prefer Santa Cruz.” James says he loves it here. “I always have enjoyed traveling in America, a massive continent disguised as a country, which means there’s so much gorgeous scenery and nature to take in.”

James doesn’t just love the location of Santa Cruz, he also really appreciates the people. “When people disembark, they tell the operator ‘thank you!’ I find that very pleasant, as it’s something one would never do in Northern Europe.”

James has gone a lot of places in his life, and as of right now, METRO is there to help with his daily travels. “At the end of the day, METRO makes my life here possible. I appreciate it.” METRO appreciates you, James.

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-by Gary Scotty Gregg III

