

Crossing the San Francisco Bay

Bay Area traffic may be bad now but try and imagine what it was like before bridges and trains!

Boats were once the easiest way to get from here to San Francisco. In 1869, a ferry terminal out in the bay near here finished the journey West for transcontinental railroad passengers.

In 1903, a transit company eventually called the Key System carried local electric train passengers three miles closer to San Francisco on a pier that almost reached Yerba Buena Island. The commute from Berkeley took just 35 minutes! When the Bay Bridge was opened in 1939, electric trains on the bottom deck again improved commute times.

During the 1950's, streetcar and electric train systems throughout the United States were bought out and dismantled by auto, tire, and gas corporations. These efficient systems were replaced by fuel-burning buses and personal cars.

Aerial view of east end of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge under construction. June 7, 1935.

Most cross-bay commuters today use a personal vehicle, and the commute from Berkeley to San Francisco can be more than an hour. Using public transit by bus, ferry, or train helps reduce traffic.



1911 map showing the various streetcar and commuter train lines that would later become the Key System.



Key System A train on the Bay Bridge, 1940's.

Photo: foundsf.org



Key System ticket
Courtesy Harre W. Demoro
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