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She's dead Jim! (Can we replace a car with a bike?)

Today I officially join the ranks of the bike commuter. Perhaps a subset of those ranks, since it's a not-by-choice thing. After 12 (or is it 13) years, the purple Dodge Grand Caravan appears to have died, this time without likely resurrection. Four years ago it had a new (rebuilt) transmission put into it, at about 100k miles or so. This apparently is common for Dodge cars of that vintage. I knew at the time that it wouldn't be worth putting a lot of money into it, because if it's not this that's going out, it's going to be something else. Well, that something else came 40,000 miles further down the road as the rebuilt transmission has now suffered the same fate as the original.

Trek Transport w/Electric Assist

Why would someone who owns a bike shop and lives works & breathes bikes not want to commute to work? It's not quite 3 miles, and it's all downhill... what's not to like? Well there's that uphill that at the end of the day, there's carrying my "missile case" (my laptop case that has everything needed to run the world), and there are transfers that need to go between our shop in Redwood City and Los Altos.

It's that last part that creates the hardship, because it's just not so easy moving bikes from one store to the other without using a car. This is not to say we aren't going to try though! We've orders a Trek Transport, as seen in the photo (click on it for more details) that might make hauling a bike, or two, possible. By bike. Down Foothill Expressway. Hopefully not with a heavy crosswind! It's hoped that the electric assist will actually make it practical; at 15mph my brother Steve, partner and in charge of our Los Altos store, can make it in just over an hour ride from his home in Redwood City to Los Altos.

Will this mad experiment work? We hope so. It's certainly going to attract attention as Steve rides down Foothill with a boxed bike being carried on a bike! Utlimately we will need another shop vehicle though, but I'm holding out for something like a hybrid Honda Element, something square & practical & easy to maintain. I don't picture Steve hauling bikes, on a bike, in the rain. I might be that stupid, but he has far more sense than that.

I'll put in another pitch for electric-assist bikes. Karen, my wife, aka "Shop Mom" in the Redwood City store, is, well, not really a cyclist. Hasn't been since the pre-kids days, but it's nuts to be commuting back & forth 3 miles each way by car. Because we've got that big hill in the way heading home, a regular bike just doesn't hold that much commuting attraction for her. But with her Trek E+ electric assist hybrid (which you still have to pedal by the way; the assist is only there when you're putting in your own effort), she motors up the hill! The impractical has become practical. Now we just need to convince her to use it for more than just trips to & from the shop. Working on that one. It's truly amazing how people get into thinking that you have to use a car to go to the bank, for example. Why? No good reason. It's just the way people think.