If you find that you have a rattle in the rear of the car that you can't pin down, it is possible that your rear sway bar bushings are on the way out. In my case, I was told during my bi-annual inspection that the rear sway bar bushings were going away which was good as it did explain a rear rattle that I couldn't find despite unloading everything, including the spare, in an effort to trace it. So a quick look in VIDA revealed that Volvo, in their infinite wisdom, departed from pretty much normal practice of having separate pieces in the sway bar assembly by designing a single available assembly that encompasses the bar, mounting bushings and a 2-part bracket. Some have said that the bushings are vulcanized onto the bar but I could find no evidence of that with mine. Apparently Volvo wants $175+ for the bar assembly plus whatever labour it takes to remove one rear coil-over and drop the rear exhaust to R&R the bar (2-3 hours according to some folks' experience) versus the more common practice of charging $8 or so apiece for the bushings and whatever labour it takes to unbolt two bolts per bracket to replace the bushing (maybe 15 minutes total?). So there has to be a better way.

The first step was to try and find some kind of bushing. My XC has a 14mm rear bar and I believe that this is standard throughout the '01-07 model years. A search for cars with 14mm bars found a fair number, such as Acuras, Hondas, Mazdas, and Toyotas, but none of these had a bushing design that was comparable to Volvos. A BMW 540i has a bushing design that is exactly the same as what Volvo uses but the overall size of the bushing is slightly smaller than Volvos and therefore would not fit the bracket properly. To their credit, Volvo seems to use a fairly beefy bushing for a small bar. I went with a poly bushing from Energy Suspensions (PN 9.5103 for non-greaseable set., 9.5153 for greaseable both available in red or black). This bushing is a bit larger in overall size than the stock bushing but that is close enough as a slight modification to reduce its height is required. Photo below shows one bushing/bracket right out of the box.

To begin, I unbolted both mounting brackets for the rear bar after pulling the rear of the car up on ramps. No matter how you elevate the car you need to be even side-to-side to unload the sway bar to eliminate any force that might be applied to the mounting bushings. There is no

need to remove the rear wheels. In fact, the only thing you need to unbolt are the bushing brackets themselves (total of two bolts). You will note that the brackets consist of two pieces that are U-shaped with one smaller piece nested into a larger piece with the whole thing encircling the bushing and mounted with a single bolt through a boss in the rear subframe.

Once unbolted, twist the bracket/bushing assembly around so that the open end of the “U” is pointing down. Tap a flat-bladed screwdriver into the joint between the two pieces. By twisting the blade you can pop the bracket apart and remove it from the bar assembly.

Now simply cut away the old bushing. You may want to clean the bar of any rust, scale,

flaking paint at this point as well as a touch-up of paint at this point.

The Energy Suspensions bushing set comes with two bushing and two brackets that are shaped something like the Greek omega (Ω). By bending the bracket into a U-shape, you can use this bracket to replace the larger "outer" stock bracket.

You will also need to slightly file open the bracket's mounting holes with a rat-tail file to size them to the stock mounting bolt. It does not require much so a trial-and-error approach is best. This will give your bracket the proper configuration to contain the poly bush. However, the bush ends up being just a bit taller than the stock bushing and what the bracket (with the stock "inner" bracket nested into it) will allow, so I used my bench grinder to remove about 1/8in of the bushing height from the flat mounting side of the bush. The poly on these bushing is dense enough that a fine grain wheel actually works fairly well to make this slight "adjustment". Photo below shows the nearly finished replacement bushing sans the inner bracket and the slightly reduced in height bushing.

Using the provided "poly grease", I lubed the bar at the location where the bushing would go and then proceeded to fight the bushing onto the bar. This is actually the hardest part of the whole exercise as you need to lever the bushing open enough to get it on the bar which can be a bit difficult due to the stiffness of the poly. A large flat-bladed screwdriver inserted into the “cut” in the bushing and a 90 degree twist of the blade should open it enough to allow the bushing to start onto the bar. Plenty of grease also helps. As just about anything automotive, the second one is easier. With the bushing mounted on the bar, you simply place the smaller, lower bracket into position between the bush and the subframe and the larger bracket over top of the whole thing. Retain with the stock bolt and off you go. Hopefully, never needing to replace these bushings again.

Total time involved was about 1.5 hour, but all but about 20 minutes of that was working out how to do the first one. The second one was way easier and If I had had instructions similar to these to start with, the total job would not have taken an hour.