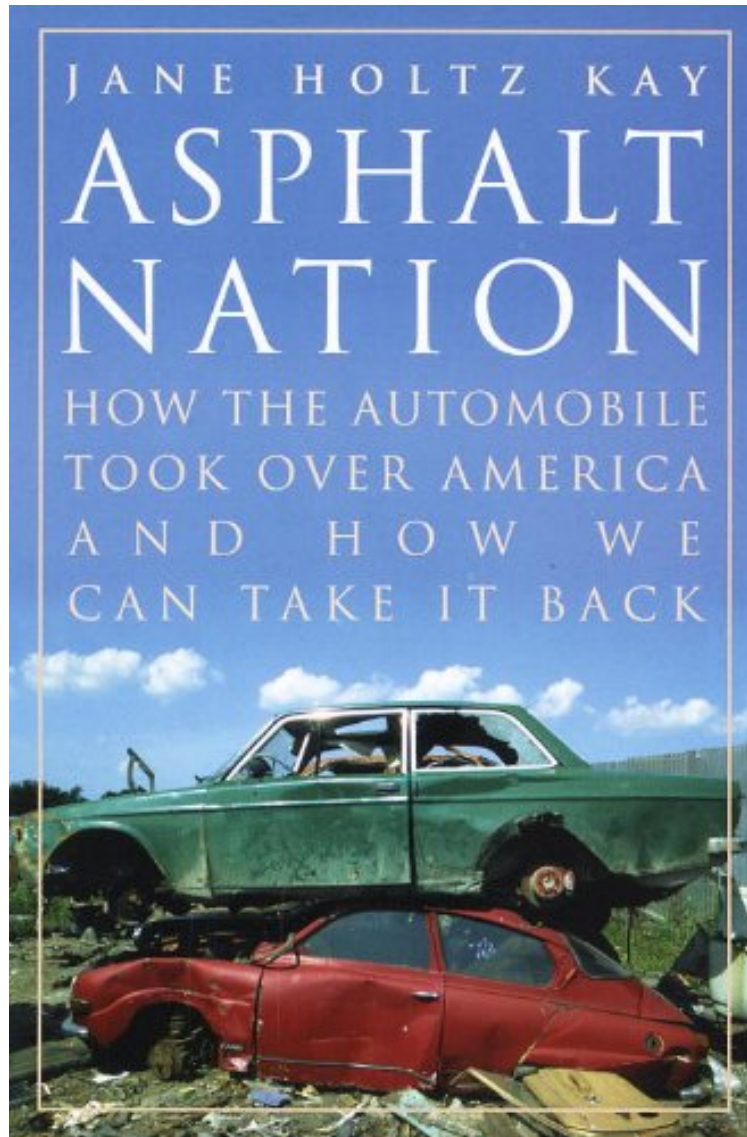


(Read free) Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take It Back

Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take It Back

Jane Holtz Kay

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Jane Holtz Kay : Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take It Back before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take It Back:

31 of 32 people found the following review helpful. Thought provoking, saddening, yet optomisticBy A CustomerAsphalt Nation is wasted on any reader who would dismiss it as another disgruntled environmentalist

diatribe. Aside from the obvious environmental issues of pollution and the consumption of natural resources described by the author, the more compelling sections of the book relate to the social costs of automobile dependency. Among these are the destruction of some of the nation's finest architecture in cities such as Boston and Detroit to make way for highways, roads and parking lots, the second class status assigned to public transportation, particularly railroads and subways which serve to break automobile dependency, and the lack of suitable space for pedestrians and bicyclists in cities and towns designed to accommodate the automobile and further dependency. The point is well made that the Amish reject the automobile not because the internal combustion engine is intrinsically evil, but that the automobile serves to break social ties and alienate fellow human beings - all one need do is to observe the typical American suburb to see this prophecy fulfilled. What we are left with in the end are "uglified" cities, congested roadways, lack of accessibility for those who choose not to drive, and "architecture" (to steal a term from the book), that undifferentiated, generic, plastic looking architecture built along roadways, and also in residential subdivisions which serve the automobile. How many "environmental" issues have I mentioned? These are societal ills. The wanton destruction of our architectural heritage, the dumbing down of our aesthetic appreciation, the lack of societal ties, are the results of decades of poor social policy and the influence of the automobile industry's powerful lobby upon it. We are a nation that needs to preserve and protect our social and cultural heritage and identity.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Read About How Much Cars Have Affected Our World -- Far Beyond Transportation (and the lack of it) By Angelina This book arrived well within the forecasted delivery and in good condition. I am in the process of reading about what cars have done to our culture, of special interest to me as the Millennials are the first generation in the past 50 or more years who are not buying cars -- Big Positive Changes are coming -- and about time, too.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must read for all Zoning Boards. Don't wait ... By Rosalie M.A. A must read for all Zoning Boards. Don't wait until your aquifer is depleted and vegetation is no longer absorbing the CO2. Ms. Kay knows what she is talking about and expresses her ideas, oh, so well.

Asphalt Nation is a major work of urban studies that examines how the automobile has ravaged American cities and landscape, and how we can fight back. The automobile was once seen as a boon to American life, eradicating the pollution caused by horses and granting citizens new levels of personal freedom and mobility. But it was not long before the servant became the master--public spaces were designed to accommodate the automobile at the expense of the pedestrian, mass transportation was neglected, and the poor, unable to afford cars, saw their access to jobs and amenities worsen. Now even drivers themselves suffer, as cars choke the highways and pollution and congestion have replaced the fresh air of the open road. Today our world revolves around the car--as a nation, we spend eight billion hours a year stuck in traffic. In Asphalt Nation, Jane Holtz Kay effectively calls for a revolution to reverse our automobile-dependency. Citing successful efforts in places from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, Kay shows us that radical change is not impossible by any means. She demonstrates that there are economic, political, architectural, and personal solutions that can steer us out of the mess. Asphalt Nation is essential reading for everyone interested in the history of our relationship with the car, and in the prospect of returning to a world of human mobility.

.com Commuters, here's some food for thought: collectively, Americans spend more than 8 billion hours each year stuck in traffic. This is just one of the horrifying statistics mentioned in Jane Holtz Kay's Asphalt Nation, an eye-opening look at the relationship between Americans and their cars. Kay asserts that the automobile is destroying our communities, our environment, and our economic competitiveness, and her supporting arguments are pretty persuasive. In addition to the billions of hours wasted in gridlock, Kay notes that our daily drives are becoming longer and more frequent, and that increased mileage has nullified any advances in emission controls. Asphalt Nation is comprised of three parts: the first, "Car Glut: A Nation in Lifelock," examines the impact of the automobile culture on life in the United States today. "Car Tracks: The Machine That Made the Land" traces the history of cars from Henry Ford to the present, while "Car Free: From Dead End to Exit" imagines a happier future without automobile dependency. What makes Asphalt Nation far more interesting than the typical anti-auto diatribe is Kay's discussion of the cultural mores that helped create America's current car glut--namely, our attitudes toward land use and growth management; her comparisons between American and European practices in these areas are particularly interesting. Others have written about the American love affair with the automobile, but Holtz revisits the discussion with lively writing and a dramatic narrative.

From Booklist Despite some occasional discord, most Americans' love affair with the automobile continues unabated. In fact, highway speed limits have been raised in some places, and Chicago has reopened venerable State Street to auto traffic. Yet antiautomobile activists, highway engineers, and transportation bureaucrats have all begun to reach the same conclusion. Pollution, congestion, and destruction of our landscape from automobiles and highways have reached the crisis stage. Kay is the Nation's architecture critic and author of Lost Boston (1988). She documents the degree to which Americans have become dependent upon the automobile and measures the costs of America's "car culture." But Kay also offers solutions, many of which have been successful in places across the country. Hers is an impassioned plea to design public spaces to accommodate pedestrians, to stop

building new highways, to reverse the neglect of public transit and mass transportation, to promote the use of bicycles, and to design communities for people instead of machines. David Rouse From Kirkus sA committed, soft-spoken diatribe against the car culture that romanticizes the alternatives, by the architecture critic for the Nation. Kay marshals all the expected arguments plus a host of novel ones (behind the wheel ``we forfeit the . . . right to muse"), addressing issues of social, political, industrial, and individual responsibility, and costs to health, to ecosystems, to humane and aesthetic ideals. In a long-winded and discursive narrative, she makes the case that the proliferation of highways generates more traffic and exponentially more accidents, pollution, and by extension more sprawl, more waste (antifreeze, tires, etc.), and more environmental toxins. Her most sobering chapter examines the spiraling inequity of automotive disenfranchisement for the poor and older citizens: the destruction of poor urban neighborhoods for highway projects, the diversion of public monies away from public transit. After identifying the symptoms of ``car glut," Kay looks at the history of the problem, citing Franklin Roosevelt for ratifying the motorization of America with the New Deal road-making programs and postwar Veterans Administration mortgages for enabling suburban single-family housing (which spurred the growth of the Interstate Highway System and suburban sprawl). Kay advocates housing centralization and calls for the development and linkage of quality train and trolley systems; for rezoning to legalize multifamily and pluralistic building usage; and for city and town design that fosters walkability, privacy, and pleasure. Also, she recommends levying higher tolls and gasoline taxes, smog fees, and peak-congestion fees to discourage driving, and contends that the polity must say no to future highway expansion. There's little question that Kay's earnest arguments are compelling, but they seem to downplay the difficulties (and costs) involved in getting from our present situation to this new world, and the impact that such changes would have on an American economy deeply dependent on the automobile. They also ignore the essential fact that Americans have largely embraced a car culture. -- Copyright copy;1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.