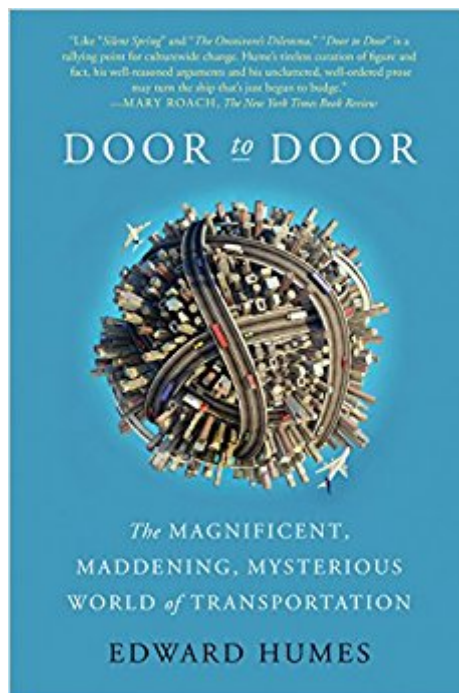




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# Door To Door: The Magnificent, Maddening, Mysterious World Of Transportation



## Synopsis

The Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author of *Garbology* explores the hidden and costly wonders of our buy-it-now, get-it-today world of transportation, revealing the surprising truths, mounting challenges, and logistical magic behind every trip we take and every click we make. Transportation dominates our daily existence. Thousands, even millions, of miles are embedded in everything we do and touch. We live in a door-to-door universe that works so well most Americans are scarcely aware of it. The grand ballet in which we move ourselves and our stuff is equivalent to building the Great Pyramid, the Hoover Dam, and the Empire State Building all in a day. Every day. And yet, in the one highly visible part of the transportation world—the part we drive—we suffer grinding commutes, a violent death every fifteen minutes, a dire injury every twelve seconds, and crumbling infrastructure. Now, the way we move ourselves and our stuff is on the brink of great change, as a new mobility revolution upends the car culture that, for better and worse, built modern America. This unfolding revolution will disrupt lives and global trade, transforming our commutes, our vehicles, our cities, our jobs, and every aspect of culture, commerce, and the environment. We are, quite literally, at a fork in the road, though whether it will lead us to Carmageddon or Carmaheaven has yet to be determined. Using interviews, data and deep exploration of the hidden world of ports, traffic control centers, and the research labs defining our transportation future, acclaimed journalist Edward Humes breaks down the complex movements of humans, goods, and machines as never before, from increasingly car-less citizens to the distance UPS goes to deliver a leopard-printed phone case. Tracking one day in the life of his family in Southern California, Humes uses their commutes, traffic jams, grocery stops, and online shopping excursions as a springboard to explore the paradoxes and challenges inherent in our system. He ultimately makes clear that transportation is one of the few big things we can change—our personal choices do have a profound impact, and that fork in the road is coming up fast. *Door to Door* is a fascinating detective story, investigating the worldwide cast of supporting characters and technologies that have enabled us to move from here to there—past, present, and future.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Like ‘Silent Spring’ and ‘The Omnivore’s Dilemma,’ ‘Door to Door’ is a rallying point for culturewide change. Hume’s tireless curation of figure and fact, his well-reasoned arguments and his uncluttered, well-ordered prose may turn the ship that’s just begun to budge.” (Mary Roach, the New York Times Book Review) “So much effort goes to moving our bodies and our stuff around. And as this book makes very clear, it could be done so much better! A fascinating read, from the center of the world’s car culture” (Bill McKibben, author Deep Economy) “In this groundbreaking work, Ed Humes shows that we could have fast, reliable and incredibly safe transport, if we only had the political guts to choose it. Hopefully, this fascinating work will prompt long overdue changes.” (Samuel Fromartz, editor in chief of the Food & Environment Reporting Network, and author of the award-winning In Search of the Perfect Loaf.) “Humes takes us inside the mammoth transportation systems that move things, and move us, around. Door to Door is an eye-opening account of the massive physical systems that support our increasingly digital world.” (Richard Florida, author of the Rise of the Creative Class, University of Toronto & NYU professor) “This timely book will inspire many readers to change their habits and their views of the future.” (Booklist)

In ways both glaringly obvious and deeply hidden, thousands, even millions, of miles are embedded in everything we eat, sell, buy, drive, and touch. The capacity to transport a big-screen TV, a vital medicine, or a coffee cup from a factory in Shanghai to a port in California, then on to your local store or front door may be humanity’s most towering achievement. Yet the same system delivers grinding commutes, a death every fifteen minutes, an ER trip every thirteen seconds, and crumbling, overloaded roads, rails, and bridges we can no longer afford to make or fix. Acclaimed journalist Edward Humes unpacks the epic amount of transportation included in a day in the life of a modern American family as he constructs a transportation detective story that reveals the surprising

triumphs behind every trip we take and every click we make. Door to Door offers a glimpse of a possible future transformed by such new efficiencies as ride-sharing and robots, while examining a very real present where transportation is one of the few big things individuals can change—where personal choices can have a profound impact as that fork in the road fast approaches.

Some of this book is a fascinating and educational analysis of the global logistics system. These parts are great. But, unfortunately, much of this book is a repetitive, droning diatribe about the evils of automobiles. I get it; the author hates automobiles. It doesn't matter whether a given reader loves or hates automobiles, the author's repetitive diatribe gets old and starts to wear on you. The author makes the same point using the same data and same examples again and again and again and again and then he makes it some more. Had an editor restricted the author to making the same point no more than -- oh, say -- three times in a row, this book would have been cut in half. The author beats the dead horse that is his hatred of cars again and again until there is just nothing left but a fine paste. I understand that American cars are part of global logistics. A book about global logistics has to say some things about cars. But American cars are a small part of global logistics. The author himself says this when he very cleverly and interestingly explains the global logistics necessary to bring a package of coffee beans to his local Costco and calculates in detail the number of miles the various components of that package of coffee travel by trains, planes, ships, and trucks, and then adds on eleven more miles by car to get from that retail store to his home kitchen. I had hoped, when I bought this book, to learn more about that amazing global logistics system. I'm happy to also learn some facts about American cars and American roads; as an engineer, I think that some of his claims are wrong, but I am willing to consider them. I was just not expecting to have that pounded into me again and again. I wish the author would have spent more of that effort on global logistics.

I was in the transportation business for 22 years at American President Lines, where I designed computer systems to seamlessly transfer cargo between ships, rail, and trucks for just-in-time delivery. Every few weeks I was on call 24 x 7, because if computer systems are down, cargo isn't going anywhere. Humes writes about the amazing complexity of transportation in delightful ways that will change how you look at the world around you. He begins simply, with how a morning cup of coffee has a transportation footprint of at least 100,000 miles. His 6.3 mile drive to get the coffee is just a small fraction of that journey. The car itself embodies at least 500,000 miles when you add up

how many miles the raw materials for it traveled. And when you add in other miles part of a morning routine -- the orange juice, dish soap, socks -- you're talking over 3 million miles of goods moved. After reading this book, you will appreciate how pizza arrives at your door a great deal more. At a chain-pizza central distribution center in Ontario, California, 14 big rigs arrive at 4 am every day, 2 of them with Mozzarella in 2,736 15-pound bags traveling 233 miles. Other ingredients/miles: 936 cases tomato sauce/278, Pepperoni and other meat/1,400, chicken toppings/1,600, Salt/1,900 and so on. Empty pizza boxes arrive many times a day from 33 miles away (though the pizza box store got them from 2,200 miles distant). And that's just the start of how that pizza eventually arrives at your door. But pizza is nothing compared to what United Parcel Service does. I especially liked what UPS manager Noel Massie had to say about how trucks are vital to the economy and our way of life but treated like interlopers on America's roads. He'd like to see dedicated highway freight lanes -- high-speed lanes just for trucks, isolated from passenger traffic -- and greater public transportation investment to take cars off the road, making room for those freight lanes and more trucks. "It's simple, really. Trucks are like the bloodstream in the human body. They carry all the nutrients a body needs in order to be healthy. If your blood stops flowing, you would die. If trucks stop moving, the economy would die. People have become truck haters. They want them off the road. People don't know what they're asking for." Massie is right -- if trucks stopped running, tens of millions of Americans would die (i.e. (1) Holcomb 2006. When Trucks Stop, America Stops. American Trucking Assoc, 2) McKinnon 2004 Life without Lorries, or 3) A Week without Truck Transport. Four Regions in Sweden). Trucks run on diesel fuel, which is finite. I am flabbergasted that people assume the economy will keep growing and that we can continue to drive cars forever, when conventional oil production peaked in 2005 (90% of oil is conventional). Conventional oil practically flows out of the ground unaided, unconventional oil is nasty, gunky, distant, difficult to get, and uses so much energy that far less is available to society at large. On top of that, the transportation that matters -- ships, rail, and trucks, use diesel engines, nearly as essential as the fuel they burn due to their energy efficiency (twice as good as gasoline engines) and ability to do work. Diesel engines can last 40 years and go a million miles. Indeed, Smil makes the case that civilization as we know it depends on diesel engines (Prime Movers of Globalization: The History and Impact of Diesel Engines and Gas Turbines (MIT Press). Replacing billions of vehicles and equipment with diesel engines before oil starts declining in earnest will be difficult. We don't want to throw out the trillions of dollars invested in current vehicles and the distribution system. Ideally we need a "drop-in" fuel that diesel engines can burn. Diesel engines

can't burn gasoline or ethanol, and can be harmed by biodiesel, so most engine warranties restrict biodiesel from nothing up to 20% of diesel fuel. Nor can diesel engines run on natural gas (CNG or LNG). Trucks are too heavy to run on batteries, and too expensive to build with dual modes of propulsion (so they can get off the electric line to go to their destination). If overhead electric catenary wires were used, how many more power plants would need to be built? And not all "trucks" can use them, we can't string overhead wires over millions of acres of farmland to run tractors and harvesters on, and all the other off-road trucks that mine, log, maintain the electric grid transmission wires, etc. Anyhow, if the intersection of transportation and energy interests you, I recommend

• When Trucks Stop Running: Energy and the Future of Transportation (SpringerBriefs in Energy)

Most books, including this one, assume endless growth will continue and discuss ways of reducing congestion. But not to worry -- oil and other vital resources such as phosphorus will decline soon enough, because energy and natural resources are finite. We've all been brainwashed to ignore that by the neoclassical economic system which denies such obvious truths as limits to growth. A book that explains this, and which ought to be the standard economics textbook is

• Energy and the Wealth of Nations: Understanding the Biophysical Economy. After you read it, you will understand why the economists of today will be considered as crazy as Scientologists and other religious cults in the future

• Inside Scientology: The Story of America's Most Secretive Religion. This book worries about congestion a lot, but I don't think that should be the focus of transportation policy, after the current oil production plateau ends and begins to exponentially decline, congestion will no longer be a problem. What matters is reducing oil consumption, and consuming less in general, which will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

• Door to Door

• is an excellent book. I liked it so much I'm reading it again! Like James Joyce

• Ulysses

• Edward Humes

• Door to Door

• is organized around one day

• February 13, 2015 (which also happens to be the author's Anniversary). It's not

• Bloomsday

• but Humesday!

• As he goes through his day Humes explores the complicated, vital subject of transportation

• how we and our goods get from place to place. Among other things we learn about container ships and super busy ports, trucks, trains, planes, cars, highways, aluminum cans, iPhones, pizza, coffee beans, our crumbling infrastructure, the overload of our systems, the enormous problem of deaths on our roads, counter-intuitive traffic fixes that work, past, present,

future. It is a magnificent, maddening, mysterious world. Especially compelling are the stories of the strong-willed people who try to make the system work. To name just a few: Geraldine Knatz, the marine biologist who transformed the Port of Los Angeles; Noel Massie, President of UPS in the Southern half of California, who keeps deliveries on time; Janette Sadik-Khan who innovated New York City streets. The book bursts with facts. Many are alarming--not just the deplorable state of our infrastructure-- but that there are 4 Traffic Deaths Every Hour (over 35,500 people are killed a year). The loss of life is the equivalent of 4 airplanes crashing every week! Where is the public outrage about this carnage? Its causes are known and chief among them Drunk Drivers, Speeding, and Distracted Drivers. There are already devices, and the technology to create them, that could prevent a driver from speeding, using a cell phone, driving while drunk. There are forward-looking collision avoidance systems used for a decade on airplanes. Why aren't they on our cars? Where is the public Demand for them? Where? I agree with the conclusion of the New York Times review by Mary Roach. "Door to Door" is the "Silent Spring" or "The Omnivore's Dilemma" for the world of transportation, a world that needs major overhaul. Humes tells us how to do it. His definitive book "is a rallying point for culturewide change. It is a MUST READ!

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