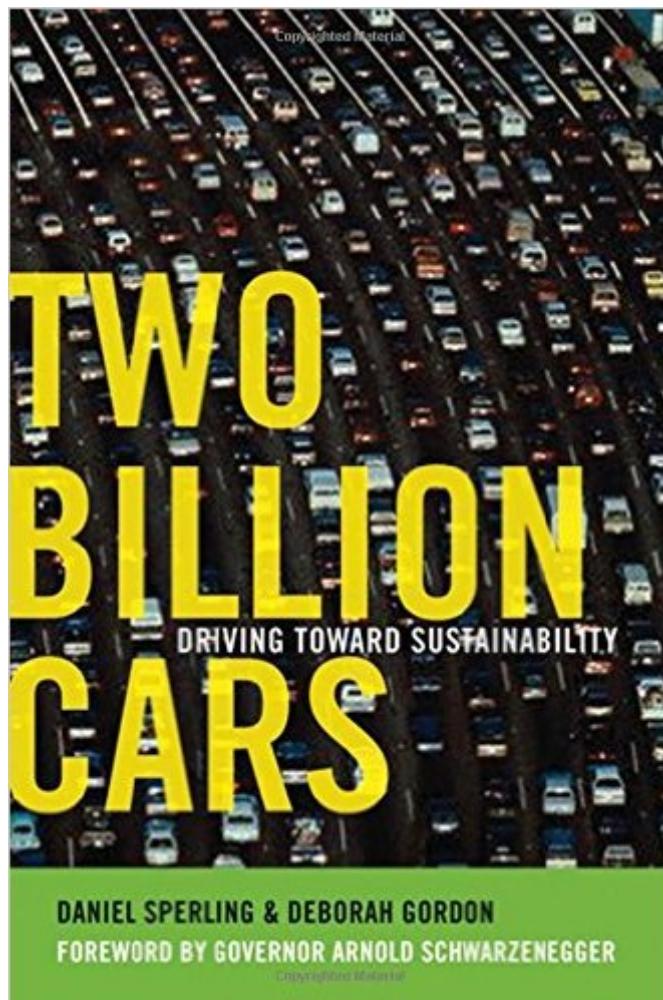


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# Two Billion Cars: Driving Toward Sustainability



## Synopsis

Today there are over a billion vehicles in the world, and within twenty years, the number will double, largely a consequence of China's and India's explosive growth. Given that greenhouse gases are already creating havoc with our climate and that violent conflict in unstable oil-rich nations is on the rise, will matters only get worse? Or are there hopeful signs that effective, realistic solutions can be found? Blending a concise history of cars and their impact on the world, leading transportation experts Daniel Sperling and Deborah Gordon explain how we arrived at this state, and what we can do about it. Sperling and Gordon assign blame squarely where it belongs--on the auto-industry, short-sighted government policies, and consumers. They explore such solutions as getting beyond the gas-guzzler monoculture, re-inventing cars, searching for low-carbon fuels, and more. Promising advances in both transportation technology and fuel efficiency together with shifts in traveler behavior, they suggest, offer us a way out of our predicament. The authors conclude that the two places that have the most troublesome emissions problems--California and China--are the most likely to become world leaders on these issues. Arnold Schwarzenegger's enlightened embrace of eco-friendly fuel policies, which he discusses in the foreword, and China's forthright recognition that it needs far-reaching environmental and energy policies, suggest that if they can tackle the issue effectively and honestly, then there really is reason for hope. Updated with a new afterword that sheds light on the profound changes in the global economy in the last year, *Two Billion Cars* makes the case for why and how we need to transform transportation now more than ever. "Authoritatively prescriptive."--Tom Vanderbilt, *Wilson Quarterly* "Provocative and pleasurable, far-seeing and refreshing, fact-based and yet a page-turner, global in scope but rooted in real places. The authors make a convincing case that smart consumers driving smart electric-drive cars can find the critical path to a safer planet."--Robert Socolow, Princeton University "In this insightful and persuasive book, Sperling and Gordon highlight one of the biggest environmental challenges of this century: two billion cars. They rightly contend that we cannot avert the worst of global warming without making our cars cleaner and petroleum-free. Luckily the authors also offer a roadmap for navigating this problem that is both visionary and achievable."--Frances Beinecke, President, Natural Resources Defense Council

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

Authors Daniel Sperling and Deborah Gordon have written a book describing their proposals for how we must deal with the energy and climate implications of personal transportation. The title is based on the projection of the number of cars we would expect to see in the coming years, as a number of countries develop their economies, notably India and China. With personal transportation accounting for 30% of US carbon emissions, and some very large percentage of our crude oil consumption, it is clear that the transportation picture must change. In the end, the authors make a case for a number of general solutions, many based on their efforts in California. The book will be published soon, but its timing is a bit unfortunate; frequently there are sections that refer to the pre-financial-crisis state of the world: high gasoline and oil prices, a regressive Bush administration in place, and a reasonable set of assumptions about the availability of capital, car companies that were in bad shape but not near-death, and so on. So much has changed in the last few months that even before being published, in some ways the book seems dated. Of course this is mainly a superficial problem, as the policy proposals and observations in most ways transcend the presumably temporal problems the world economy is undergoing, and the new political landscape in a more enlightened Obama administration. Still, it is hard to read parts of the book only because it is clear that so much that is relevant to the problem has changed. The book is organized in 9 chapters. The first 6 chapters present the history and current state of what the authors call the automobile monoculture: a world where most forms of transportation have been squeezed out to make room for one form of transit: the car.

Two Billion Cars is a very informative book on transportation and sustainability issues. The premise

of the book is that currently we have one billion cars, but in twenty years, the planet will have about two billion cars. If there are no changes, this growth in cars will be disastrous in terms of energy usage, congestion, and global warming. The first two chapters are fairly dry, but the book gets more interesting in chapter 3, "Breaking Detroit's Hold on Energy and Climate Policy", which is a terrific short history on how America got to be so car-centric. The book will appeal most to people interested in sustainability issues as they relate to transportation and climate change. Points made in the book:

1. Almost all the growth in vehicles will come from India and China, with annual growth rates in vehicles about 7-8 percent annually. The United States has a current growth rate in vehicles of less than 1 percent annually, so we are less affected by local pollution and congestion, although global warming issues would still be a concern. Whatever India and China do (or fail to do) will have the biggest effect on greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Nothing will get people out of their cars and using mass-transit in the foreseeable future, not even much higher fuel prices. Therefore, making the personal passenger vehicle more environmentally-friendly is the key.
3. We are nowhere near peak oil. The amount of unconventional oil such as tar sands is quite large.
4. The best way to promote energy independence and reduce greenhouse gas emissions is to impose very high fuel mileage standards.

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