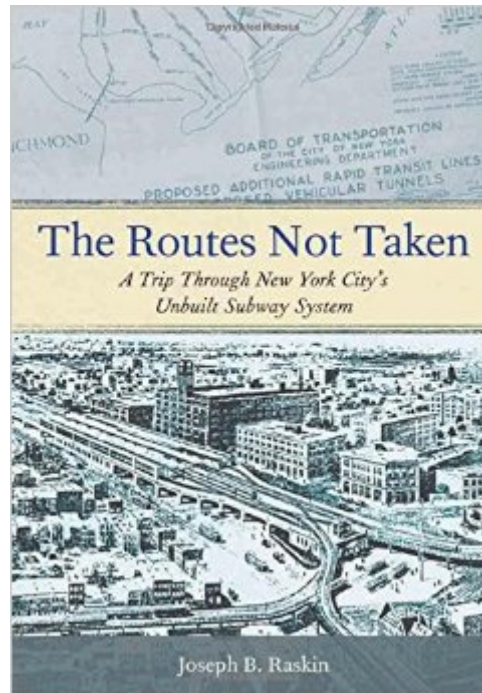


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The Routes Not Taken: A Trip Through New York City's Unbuilt Subway System



Synopsis

Delves deep into the underbelly of the NYC subway system to reveal the tunnels and stations that might have been. Robert A. Van Wyck, mayor of the greater city of New York, broke ground for the first subway line by City Hall on March 24, 1900. It took four years, six months, and twenty-three days to build the line from City Hall to West 145th Street in Harlem. Things rarely went that quickly ever again. *The Routes Not Taken* explores the often dramatic stories behind the unbuilt or unfinished subway lines, shedding light on a significant part of New York City's history that has been almost completely ignored until now. Home to one of the world's largest subway systems, New York City made constant efforts to expand its underground labyrinth, efforts that were often met with unexpected obstacles: financial shortfalls, clashing agendas of mayors and borough presidents, battles with local community groups, and much more. After discovering a copy of the 1929 subway expansion map, author Joseph Raskin began his own investigation into the city's underbelly. Using research from libraries, historical societies, and transit agencies throughout the New York metropolitan area, Raskin provides a fascinating history of the Big Apple's unfinished business that until now has been only tantalizing stories retold by public-transit experts. *The Routes Not Taken* sheds light on the tunnels and stations that were completed for lines that were never fulfilled: the efforts to expand the Hudson tubes into a fullfledged subway; the Flushing line, and why it never made it past Flushing; a platform underneath Brooklyn's Nevins Street station that has remained unused for more than a century; and the 2nd Avenue line long the symbol of dashed dreams deferred countless times since the original plans were presented in 1929. Raskin also reveals the figures and personalities involved, including why Fiorello LaGuardia could not grasp the importance of subway lines and why Robert Moses found them to be old and boring. By focusing on the unbuilt lines, Raskin illustrates how the existing subway system is actually a Herculean feat of countless political compromises. Filled with illustrations of the extravagant expansion plans, *The Routes Not Taken* provides an enduring contribution to the transportation history of New York City.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There's a building at 2nd Avenue and 33rd street with a plaza in front, it's open to the public and very popular with smokers. I never could figure out why anyone would waste the space on a plaza; surely the owners must have lost money on the unused space. But according to this book, the zoning rules required the building to have the plaza; the city wanted to use it for a subway entrance! The building was from the 1970s, a time when Mayor Lindsay and Governor Rockefeller had planned the 2nd Avenue Subway line, all the way to downtown Manhattan. It would be almost 40 years before it was built, a delay that resulted from a combination of financial troubles and a fractured city government. Meanwhile, the plaza remains. Joseph Raskin has opened a big can of worms with this book. He brings to light the massive number of subway lines that were planned throughout the area but stayed just that; plans and nothing more. Never mind the 2nd Avenue subway line, that's been in the works for years. I'm taking about a subway line that would've run all the way to the East Bronx. If you've ever been there (which is unlikely unless you live there) you'll know you can't get there without a car. There was even a plan to build a subway line straight across the city to the Hudson River. Raskin's research for this book places most of the blame on Mayors who didn't care for the subway that much. As the city expanded outward, there was a push to build more roadways for the cars and less emphasis on public transport. And what could exemplify the "subways don't count" attitude like the great Robert Moses, who wrecked the Bronx with his Cross Bronx Expressway? Perhaps the blame should fall on the people as well; more and more New Yorkers drank the cool aid about the "house and car" dream after WWII.

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