

INTERESTED IN TRANSPORTATION? THERE ARE DEFINITELY APPS FOR THAT...

By John Bell

My interest in—or rather obsession with—transportation applications (apps) for smart phones and tablets began a few years ago while working on intercity passenger rail service (Amtrak) at the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). Actions leading up to the October 2013 implementation of Section 209 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 were clarifying the increased state DOT financial and management roles and responsibilities for numerous states, including New York, having Amtrak routes with lengths less than 750 miles. The ability to obtain current schedules and other operational information via smart phones, not only for Amtrak but for other interconnected modes also, was a potentially valuable resource worth exploring.

While posting articles in the LinkedIn Group that I manage, **Friends of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition** (visit <http://linkd.in/1nMSUfD>), I kept finding articles about a wide array of transportation and/or travel-related apps for iPhones, Androids, and other types of smart phones. The more I discovered, the more I realized how vast and important this growing topic was already.

After searching to see if any LinkedIn groups existed to discuss the subject of transportation apps, I discovered there weren't any. I subsequently created the LinkedIn group **Transportation Apps** (www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4863724) and began posting articles and working to build membership.

While I have been pleased that the **Transportation Apps** group has grown to 186 members, I have been truly amazed at the vast number and types of transportation-related apps I have and continue to discover. Even more amazing is that I have only seen a small portion of them. More amazing still is what will become available in the future.

I try to not only read and post articles about as many apps as I possibly can, but to download and test them as well. I wish I had more time, travel opportunities, and memory on my Android device to store, test, use, and review more of them. I have a few excellent “go to” apps that I use all the time, including:

- **Amtrak** – Complete schedule information, purchase and display tickets, access Amtrak's Guest Rewards program and read their travel magazine, Arrive. (see www.amtrak.com/get-mobile-application-and-access)
- **Skyscanner** – Searches millions of flights on more than 1,000 airlines worldwide in seconds (www.skyscanner.com/mobile.html)
- **DC Metro Transit** – An app which I rely on every time I go to Washington, DC (see: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.funforphones.android.dcmetro>)

Based on my tiny sampling of the enormous and ever-expanding universe of transportation apps, I have concluded that no transportation modes have been overlooked. Don't believe me? If you're interested in learning more about:

- Auto-rickshaw rides in Mumbai?... then take a look at: <http://thecityfix.com/blog/smartphone-apps-ease-auto-rickshaw-rides-in-mumbai/>

- Avoiding getting stuck in the middle seat on an airplane?... check out: www.tripit.com/blog/2013/05/never-sit-in-a-middle-seat-again.html
- Building your own subway system?... then play the game **Mini Metro** at: www.theatlanticcities.com/commute/2014/03/addictive-new-game-lets-you-build-your-own-subway-system/8578/

To find a certain type of app, simply go to your operating system's corresponding app store and search for it. There is a good chance there is at least one or many from which to choose. Developers that don't see a specific “application” covered well enough or at all often consider further investigation. If the need exists, you might even consider building your own app. I wish you the best if you do and hope the world beats a path to your door, or at least to your transportation app. **itej**



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Join the *Transportation Apps* LinkedIn Group

Purpose: Ever increasing demands on our passenger transportation networks is forcing efficiency and effectiveness improvements within and between all the connected modes. Tremendous advances in the development, availability and wide-spread usage of transportation apps for smart phones, tablet and notebook computers are proving to be a very important method for improving transportation for intercity passenger rail as well as the other connecting modes. The purpose of this group is to share, describe, and discuss transportation apps that improve passenger transportation within and between all transportation modes.

To request membership: Visit the Transportation Apps LinkedIn Group at www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4863724. Click Join and your request will be reviewed by the group manager.