** APP NAME:**  Transit: Real-Time Transport

**VERSION:** 4.1.3

**DEVELOPER:** Transit App, Inc

**LAST UPDATED:** January 12, 2017

**DOWNLOADS:** 1,000,000+

**PLAY STORE RATING:** 4.2 Stars (32,725 Reviews)

**Transit: Real-Time Transport**, or just **Transit**, is an immensely popular trip navigation app whose main features includes real-time tracking of transit vehicles, support for the transit systems of over 125 cities, and one-click planning of trips.

**Usability**

As its popularity would suggest, the Transit app is quite easy to use, with many intuitive features to help new users get started.

Like many modern navigation apps, Transit uses the popular Google Maps API to display locations. Due to the prevalence of Google Maps, most users are familiar with its look and feel, allowing even first time users of the app to quickly get their bearings.

<image of Gmaps>

The one complaint that can be raised with this however is that on the overlay the app uses to display bus and train lines, the symbol for train stations is very small and does not scale with the map’s zoom level; which could cause confusion for newcomers to the Vancouver area who may not know the actual locations of the stations. This issue with the small and potentially unclear icons is an issue that is common throughout the app.

Perhaps one of the strongest points of the app is its trip planning ability. Assuming that the phone’s location tracking option is enabled, the user simply needs to select the line they wish to travel on, and then select the station they wish to get off at. The app will then calculate the schedule and notify the user when to get on/off the train. The map will also then update to track the user’s progress on the trip, with a trip itinerary complete with estimated arrival times for each station along the way displayed under the map.

<image of trip in progress>

The trip planning does have several weaknesses. Selecting the direction of the line at first was confusing, as each train line is represented as one button; for example the Expo line, which has trains going to Waterfront and Production-Way is only shown as the Expo Line, with the Waterfront train being the default selection. In order to the change direction, the user must swipe the button. This can be especially confusing as there is no prompt to do so, and both directions share the same colour.

The most glaring issue however becomes apparent when planning a trip that involves a line with multiple trains on the same track; i.e. the King George and Production-Way trains on the Expo line. Assuming the user was at a station such as New Westminster or Columbia travelling east-bound, there was no apparent way to select which train to take; the app making the decision for the user. To clarify, at one point the user could only select the westbound Waterfront train or the eastbound King George train; even though they may want to take the Production-Way train.

<image of bugged NW station>

A while later, at app on its own (with no obvious input from the user) changed the eastbound selection to Production-Way. Now the opposite was the case, with the user being unable to plan a trip to Surrey.

The app’s features are very easy to figure out, and would be suited for everyday use. The simplicity of the trip planning is extremely useful feature, with the map assisting greatly in visualizing the trip’s route. Despite this, the bugs with certain lines bring down the score; the final score for usability being **28/35**.

**Aesthetics**

The app’s design is one of its strong points; the app overall having a very clean and modern look. Its selection of colours for the controls is bright and contrasts well with the white background of the app and of Google Maps.

<image of buttons>

The font-type used for the text is a sans-serif type that renders very well on the screen; this combined with the enlarged font-size for line names/numbers results in a readable UI that is clear and easy to understand.

The main complaint with the appearance of the app is that the screen can very quickly become cluttered with different information, notifications, and menus which can make navigation a nightmare. This is most readily apparent when a trip has already been planned and is in progress, and the user looks up the schedule for another line. The screen will then become filled up with the app’s header, the map display, the schedule view, and finally the plan notification at the bottom.

<image of clusterfuck>

Overall, the app is very pleasing on the eyes, with a good selection of colours and well positioned text. Although the screen can become cluttered at times, these issues are minor and can be easily mitigated. The final score for aesthetics is **18/20**.

**Responsiveness**

For the most operations, Transit runs smoothly and quickly; giving the desired output in a timely manner. However, there are some issues that decrease the app’s responsiveness. The first is the fact that it relies on the phone’s internal GPS feature in order to make full use of the app’s trip location tracking feature. Needless to say then, if said GPS is interrupted, then so will the trip tracking. This is less a fault with the app’s design than it is an inherent issue with any real-time data, and so this issue is relatively minor.

The second issues it that because much of the displayed data, such as available lines, are relative to where the current location is set, when the user moves the location cursor around on the map, the app controls have a tendency to “jump” or even disappear. This is most readily apparent in the case of where if the user has a menu open and is scroll through a list, they may accidently brush up against the map display; causing the location to change and the menu they had open to close.

Finally, the third and probably most important issue is that the app’s description of being ‘real-time’ is misleading, as the location tracking for the Skytrain is based on the train schedule, and not on the current location of the vehicle itself. This can be clearly seen when an in-progress trip is being tracked; the phone’s location is shown to be in a different location than the train icon.

<image of tracking>

It is important however to note that it the app’s primary area is bus lines, and so the real-time tracking feature described may be more relevant to buses than to trains. However, because the focus of this review is strictly on the Skytrain system, how well the app works with buses is not considered directly with in the score.

Because of the app’s main draw doesn’t actually work as intended with the Skytrain, the responsiveness rating suffers; combined with several issues with the app’s behaviour, brings the final responsiveness score to **10/20.**

**Support**

As one of the most popular apps, it should be no surprise that finding support for Transit is very easy. The developers maintain a semi-active blog on their site as well as a Twitter account which posts updates once or twice a month. Despite this, they are quite active in answering questions, with the Twitter account responding to users who have technical issues with the app. The same applies to the Google Play store, where the developers on occasion respond to user reviews and comments that highlight issues in an attempt to improve the app.

The only complaint that can be raised is that a full changelog of the app could not be found anywhere on their site or their Google Play page. This is mildly annoying, as the descriptions of their updates can be very vague and unhelpful to users who want a more technical explanation.

Regardless, it’s clear that the developers are committed to continuously improving their product, and so the support score for the app is **14/15**.

**Additional Features**

Although the focus of this review is on how well the app handles the Skytrain system, Transit does have other features that branch out of that scope. The app’s region is not limited to only Translink; it supports (from their description) over 125 cities in both North America and Europe, such as Edmonton’s ETS or Toronto’s TTC.

The same trip planning and real-time tracking features that Transit has for the Skytrain is also afforded to bus lines. In fact, it is probable that the app was originally built with buses in mind as the primary service; with buses being more numerous than trains. Although it was not tested as thoroughly, the real-time tracking for buses appeared to be more accurate than for the Skytrain; with the location at least not being estimated from the schedule.

Although the scope of the review left out some of the app’s features in the main sections, when analyzed said features contribute greatly to the app, and would undoubtedly raise the app’s scores were they able to be fully considered. Because of these reasons, the score for additional features is **10/10**.

**Final Conclusions**