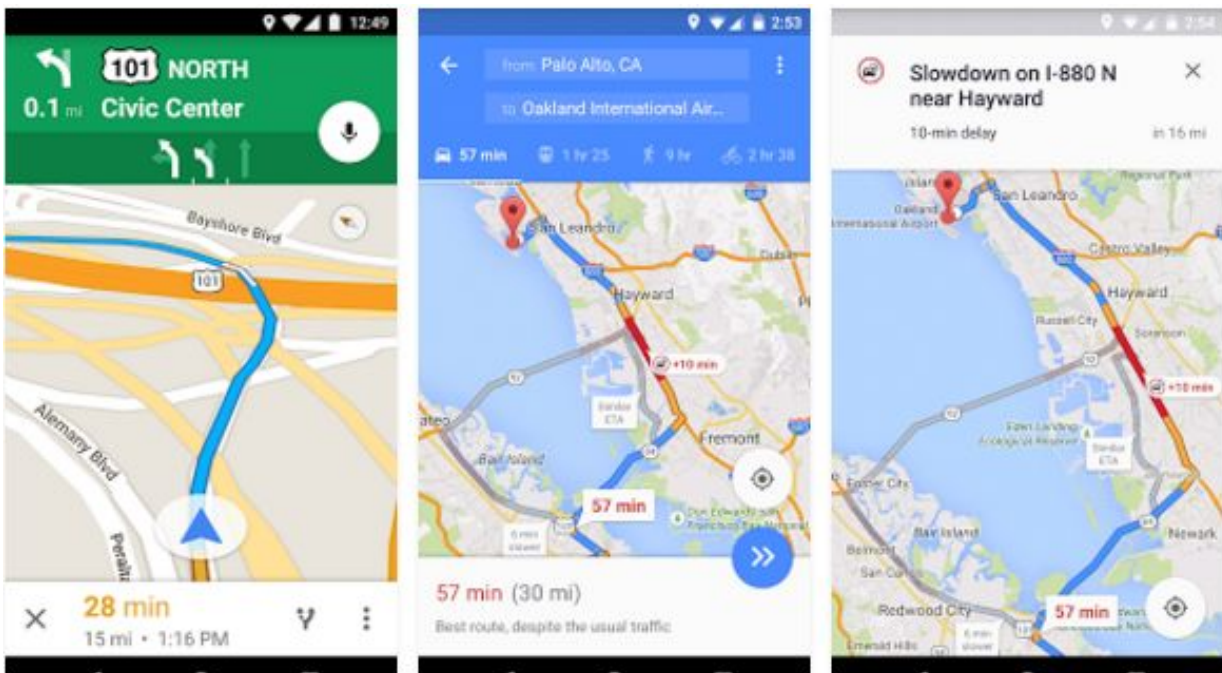


Google Maps for Android harbinger of proactive apps

January 14 2016, by Nancy Owano



On Wednesday there was much happy buzz about updates for Google Maps for Android, bringing the mapping app to version 9.19. In particular, of all the new features everyone was talking about its Driving Mode (for Google Maps for Android).

This new feature may relieve you of the task of declaring your

destination. Google can tell. Google knows where you are headed via the Android mobile operating system and "algorithmic smarts," said Alistair Barr in *The Wall Street Journal*.

"So if you searched for a local hardware store 30 minutes ago and then launched Maps to begin [driving](#), Google would show you the way to that retail establishment and estimate how long it will take to get there."

A posting in *phone.Arena.com* similarly let readers in on Google's smarts in version 9.19: "The new Driving mode feature is typical Google. Using your location history and recent web searches, Google Maps assumes where it is you are going and sends out notifications about traffic conditions, [road](#) closings, and anything else that might make you change the route that you are on."

Android Police had much to say about other [new features](#) Maps v9.19. First, the new settings screen for the timeline: It gives you more control over what is shown.

Then, there is a new audio toggle added to the navigation modes: You can shut off turn-by-turn notifications. *TechShout.com*'s Sohil Nikam on Wednesday said, "Muted, Alerts Only and Unmuted are the three options you can choose while you're navigating to a particular destination." ("The vaguely annoying voice directions of previous Google Map incarnations can also be muted," said *Wired.co.uk*.)

It's the Driving Mode, however, that has tech site writers enthused.

Nikam said, "this new Google Maps feature [predicts](#) your destination and provides you with all the relevant information you'll need to get there."

Cody Toombs in *Android Police* said it uses Google's knowledge of your

habits and [search](#) history to predict where you're going during a drive and can volunteer useful information as you drive. You can get traffic updates and ETAs as you travel. "It's sort of like the commute feature for work and home addresses, but with some data-mining genius to make it more flexible," said Toombs.

How can it predict? "Destination predictions is based on home/work addresses you have set location history data, and recent search history," a Google spokesperson told *VentureBeat*. "Based on location and time of day, Google Map Driving Mode will show ETAs for recently searched-for [destinations](#)."

"The sad part is that the new feature is said to have glitches and is hard to activate," said Nikam in *TechShout.com*. Enabling it on each device appears to be a hassle for now, said *phoneArena.com*, "but hopefully that will be fixed."

VentureBeat meanwhile, reached out to Google about access to Driving Mode.

The spokesperson told *VentureBeat*: "With a simple shortcut on your home screen, you'll head straight into the new driving mode so you're sure to get where you're going on the quickest route possible—without entering a destination." News Editor Emil Protalinski on Wednesday provided additional information: There are two ways to access the new feature. You can add a driving shortcut (press on your home screen, tap Android widgets, and select the Google Maps driving shortcut icon): Or, he said, you can first fire up Google Maps, tap the sidebar menu, and choose a "Start Driving" [option](#).

Said Barr in *The Wall Street Journal*: The Driving Mode feature will be included in an updated version of the Google Maps app that will be released in coming days.

Jordan Crook of *TechCrunch* wrote how Driving Mode "is entirely proactive, showing a [map](#) with traffic statuses on nearby roads, and offering various routes to expected destinations." She said you can still input an address, "but with each direct Google Maps inquiry, the user is giving the company more information to better predict the desired destination based on the day of the week, time of day, etc."

What about all those times we have been waiting for answers by typing a search query into a white box online? One day that will be so yesterday.

Crook placed the feature in the bigger picture of software today and tomorrow. "Over the past few decades, most software has predominantly focused on collecting data from the user based on a search query and a result. But after years of collecting data from users, Google and other tech companies are starting to be more and more proactive about the way they influence our lives. Whether or not you have an explicit question, Google wants to have the [answer](#)."

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