

Forum: MSTs Activity Design at www.trainsim.com

The following are questions and answers taken directly from the Activity Design forum at Train Sim. These go back to the first questions asked with the product's release til early July 4th. These are listed in no particular order and the same topic maybe referred to again later in the document so keep reading. Reading through the forum will help you get through the editor and will make it fairly easy for you if you are having trouble like I was. I take no credit for the content in this document as sole credit goes to those folks who interact on trainsim's forum's.

Tip: If its a player driveable consist, you may have to run it up to the starting time to see the consist. Use the "verify starting state" under the tool buttons.

Tip: As I'm sure many of us know, there are a good bit of bugs in the Activity editor - the kind that shut the program down and ask you to send a "report" to MS. Here are two "triggers" that I've encountered so far that have led me to this outcome - avoid making these mistakes, as the program will bug out on you.

1 - When creating a passing path, let the computer do it's thing and it will create the entire passing path. Don't attempt to change a switch on your passing path using the "TAKE OTHER EXIT" option, or the program will shut down.

2 - When making pickups of freight cars, be careful not to click the same car twice, or the program will bug out on you.

Finally - as you've seen it said here a few times, DO NOT SEND the error report to Microsoft, as your PC will hard lock up on you, no ESC key, not even a CTRL-ALT-DEL will unleash it, only a complete and total reset of the system, along with the dreaded SCAN DISK message.

"Timetable question..."

I've noticed that when creating services in the activity editor, it sometimes happens that hitting the 'calculate' bar at the bottom of the timetable window causes the program to go stupid--it just sits there, not doing anything. I can't figure out why, since the path I made for the train is valid. I have tried doing it with the various route stations' selection buttons checked and unchecked, with the same results. Is this an indication that the train cannot complete its route for another reason (such as being unable to proceed through a signal block that never goes green due to oncoming traffic)? I am rather curious to see if anyone else has seen this.

A1: In these cases I lowered the performance values and recalculated. This works, and no errors occur.

A2: I found that it is related to the passing path area. Namely, if the path has a passing path in it, then the calculation will freeze on the next station after that passing path. Another thread suggests that if passing paths are linked, two paths have to share the same passing path in order to work properly for meets. Maybe set up that way, it will calculate the route properly.

"ACTIVITY COMPLETED after 1 second!"

Placed the consists, laid out the work order, set the path and the AI traffic, so why is the first thing that happens when I start up my activity is a quick glimpse out the cab followed by the "ACTIVITY COMPLETE" message?!?

A1: Make sure that you don't have any action events flagged with the outcome of "activity complete" other than the final one. Example; You have pick up cars as an activity. The default outcome is set to "activity complete" with an action level of one. Change the outcome to "none" or "display message".

Q: How do I remove an engine from a consist. No matter what I do, I can't drag the engine away or delete it with the editor.

A: If the consist is placed already, right click on the consist you want to delete the engine from. Then click and drag the engine over the white icon just under couplings. This will delete it from the consist.

"Assemble Train at Location?"

I am trying to figure out what the action events, "assemble train" and "assemble train at location" actually means. In an activity I had created, I have it setup so you have to get like 8 specific cars assembled at a location. But when I play this out in the game, that event never triggers and it is set to activation level 1 which makes it active. When in the activity editor and I select this action event, it first has me select a siding where I want it assembled, then I select the cars that I want to go there. The cars are on a different siding then where I want them to be assembled at. For example, 4 of the cars are at siding 8 and the other 4 are siding 10. I want them all to be brought to siding 11 and assembled there but when I bring them there my event won't activate. Anyone have any ideas? Obviously I am doing something wrong here.

A: With this assemble action event, you have to actually assemble all of the cars in EXACT order. It don't matter if they are all the same type of cars either, they have to be assembled in the order the activity creator sets it up in which will also be listed on the player's work order.

Specifically: When you create this action event you need to add the cars you want to be assembled. These cars can be anywhere, on several different sidings, a loading dock, in another town, etc. But the first car you add, that needs to be the first car in the line to be assembled and the second should be second and so on. When you assemble them, they HAVE to be in the exact order you added them in the event for it to trigger. Note too, if you look in your work order(either in the editor or the game), you will see them listed in the order they have to be assembled.

So for example, say when I created the event, the first two cars I added were from siding 2. Then I added another 4 from siding 8. Because I selected the ones in siding 2 first, they must be assembled towards the front of the train and in the order I selected them. Then the other 4 should be hooked to the rear of the first 2 cars. Keep in mind, the circle on a consist when placed in the editor is the rear, so the front of the train would be the far right of the consist. So assemble the cars in order from right to left.

Tip: "Arranging meets"

I finally got a meet between two trains to work where the player was waiting at a red for an AI train. The trick was to set the paths up so that each train takes the same mainline path, and then to specify (for each train) a passing point that uses the same siding. Then it works. It doesn't work if you set it up so that each train has to take a diverging path (although it could).

Anyway, it was awesome waiting at the red signal in game, and wondering if the traffic was going to show, and then seeing in the distance the freight coming around the corner!

"Passing on routes?"

In the activity editor, I noticed a feature called 'create passing point' (or something to that effect). This feature seems pretty important, since I noticed the AI dispatcher tends to become confused if there are two trains moving towards each other on the same line--I ended up waiting for 30 minutes at a stop signal last night, wondering if the dispatcher would ever clear it, and nothing happened (I did try using the 'Tab' key to no avail). So I went back to the activity editor and removed all AI trains moving along the same line as my train, and it worked fine after that. I should think that the passing feature might have helped though, so I'm curious to see if anyone has some pointers on how to use it.

A: To use the Create Passing Point - when you are creating a path, right click on one of the points where the siding meets the mainline. Click the Create Passing Point option (as I'm sure you've already guessed). The siding will be highlighted. To see if this has an effect on the interaction between your train and one of your AI trains, use the Play option on the map in the Activity editor. You can speed it up to 128X if you want to see it go by faster. That way, you can see what effect (if any) the sidings have. I think they actually will help.

"Path Broken? What's it mean?"

Well last night I created my own route, so I thought I had a grasp of it. I deleted that route and set about building my new route today. When I had a large majority done, I went to activity editor, then it all went wrong.

When I go in to "player service" and try to put in the path, I get a "Path Broken" error message. This happens no matter where I place the consist at. Either end of the railroad, it always has the same problem with "path broken". Anyone know what is going on with this.? Even after that, it will not allow me to save the file, or even explore the route. When I first finished it, it would let me have the file in MSTs, but when I went to play it, it would just crash and give me an error message. After that, I couldn't even get it to play at all.

A: Undoubtedly you've made a consist that you want to run and are attempting to place it somewhere on the railroad. Do not do that, instead delete that consist from the railroad and edit your path so its start point is where the tail end of your train should be when you start the game. Once you've edited your path and saved it, and saved the player's service. Click on Tools>Verify Starting State, and your player's consist will magically appear.

"Can't see animated trains in Activity Editor"

From the Activity Editor help file:

"After creating a traffic pattern, check for conflicts between the computer-controlled trains and the player-driveable train by watching an animated representation of the Activity on the 2-D map."

What's driving me crazy is that last Friday and Saturday when I first started fooling around with the Activity Editor I could see the little animated trains when I clicked PLAY. Now they don't show up, and I've tried every combination of the view attributes to see if that effected them, but they are still gone. And yes, I am selecting "Verify Starting State" before pressing play. I have checked a number of different routes and activities, but they no longer show up.

A: Do a full install. I did a full re-install and the 2d icons are back both the moving and consists.

"Consist Maker"

Once you have made a consist, and saved it, can you edit it to add or delete items? If so, how?

A: Yes, you can edit the consist using the activity editor. Under Player Services, or in the Traffic Services, select the consist you want to edit, and then click on edit. Then you can add cars, take cars away, or otherwise edit the consist.

To Add, select the type, and then the car.

To Remove, left click on the car you want to delete in the preview window, and drag it to the icon of a coupler (knuckle) just above the preview window on the left hand side.

To change the direction the loco or car faces, right click on the loco or car in the preview

I hope this helps. Also, the consists are specific to the route, so if you want to edit the dash 9 mixed freight, you need to choose an activity from 'USA 2' (the Marias pass route). So it also saves any new consists you made in the route that you created it in.

"Fellow Activity Builders...A question to you all!"

If I either make a new act. based on an existing one or build a new one based on any of the existing lines, then the changes I make could very well affect your machines because the file imported into yours doesn't match what was there before.

A: Try this..

1. Inside the 'service editor', with your modified 'Long Haul East' selected, click on the "Use as template" button.

2. Now it will want a new filename and path display name (name that shows in choosing a path pull-down menu).

3. Now you have a working copy of "Long Haul East," but named differently so you wont mess up users default path files..

Same can be done for consists.

"Consists"

Did I miss something in my PDFs or is there **no "editor" for consists?**

A: There is a Consist Editor, but the only way I know how to get to it is through the activity design. Look to the right most section, it has "Activity" at the top. Look half way down 'till you see "Player", under "Player Services" push new, the "Service Editor" should pop up. Look down that until you see "Consist." Push New under that. There you have it, the "Consist Editor".

"Anyone figure out Break Point in editor?"

A: You use a break point at any switch off the mainline where you need to switch a spur or siding. This helps the signal system and the game's AI.

"Reset fixed Objects Option"

I don't know what is it for (Reset fixed Objects).

A: Reset all Fixed Objects: Resets failed signals to active, removes restricted speed zones, and resets fuel points.

"Trouble Deleting Consists"

Ran into trouble today when I tried to delete a previously edited consist. Keep getting error messages. I deleted the locomotive I had assigned to that train in the Trainset folder first and then deleted the entire consist within the editor. Now whenever I attempt to edit other consists I get the error message repeatedly. I can keep canceling it and eventually get back to the editor functioning properly. Can anyone pinpoint what I did incorrectly. I'd had to have to uninstall the whole program and start over (more repeated downloads).

A: If you are going to delete a loco that you have added to MSTs you must make sure that you FIRST delete the loco from EVERY route, activity and consist you have in MSTs. If you don't do this you will get errors saying cant find XXXX.con or something like that. If this does happen (say you missed removing it from a consist) you can use wordpad to read each .con file until you find the one that is referencing your deleted loco. Then you can just change the reference to a loco you DO have. It's better than re-installing. When I delete a loco, I remove it from all consists first, then I rename the loco folder and re-start the activity editor and make sure I don't get errors. Then I delete the folder for good!

"Signals in created activities"

I seem to have figured out how to set my activity's path with all its double-backs, but the activity editor still shows many red signals despite there being not a single AI train on the entire Marias Pass.

A: The signals in the activity editor 2d map always show red unless you manually change one. My latest activity I'm working shows all of them red but when I run the activity it is not so. They are all green unless of course my traffic I have causes a stop signal which it does. Don't worry about

the signal color in the editor it should change in the sim according to traffic and if you have any failed signals etc.

"Path Editor Problems"

I've created a very simple route (no switches) through the route editor and now I am trying to add an Activity. Following the online help I get to the add a Path section. I bring up the Path Editor with a name (I called it Test). The Path Editor has a blank starting and ending location. I follow the instructions and add a Starting and Ending location on the 2D map. However, I look at the editor and there is nothing in the Starting and Ending boxes. I try to leave path editor and save, I get a message that "Path needs a start location." I figure I need to populate the two boxes but with what?

A: Simply type what ever you want as the starting and ending points in the appropriate boxes. May I suggest the platform or siding name?

"Is there anyway to view your text location events on the map? "

Is there anyway to view your text location events on the map? Making these are no problem, but sometimes I forget where I put them and/or want to change the location. 'Hmm.. was that on siding two or three?' Deleting them all and adding them back can be a pain if you have more than a handful.

A: After you make them, they are supposed to show up on the map as a green circle with a corresponding number. Toy around with the View menu and see what luck you have. If none, you might have to do a reinstall to see them on your map, as I had to when both Location Events and dead consists disappeared from the maps.

"Building Realistic Consists"

In the real world, what are the factors that determine where individual cars are positioned in the consist? Is it based solely on where the cars join/leave the train, or do things such as the car weight come into play? Similarly, in long consists, what should determine where additional locomotives are placed?

A: You got it. Weight comes into play in a big way. Loads are always put towards the front end and Empties to the rear. As you brake the brakes apply in the front first and move towards the back of the train. If you have light empty cars in the front the weight of loads behind it can spit it right off the tracks. Some empties can be forward depending on the railroad but always they try and place them back. Haz Mat cars like fuel, acid etc. must be back towards the middle of the train. You wouldn't want a carload of propane right behind your locomotive. With helpers or distributed power every railroad has different policy on how and when they are used. On steep grades you can't just add 5 more units to the front because at some point the draft gear holding the couplers or the knuckle will just snap. Most cases if the helpers will stay with the train like a coal train with a hundred + cars they are cut about 2/3's of the way back in the train. If they are added as helpers just for one bad hill or area they are normally on the rear of the train.

A2: Trains are also blocked to allow simplified switching at intermediate points and destination. For example, cars to be set out along a local job will have the first trailing point setouts at the rear. Facing point setouts will be blocked at the front or rear, depending on how and where the runaround will be done. If the original yard has the time and space, outgoing trains will be blocked to allow for easier switching at destination, although the opposite can be true as well, the train

goes out in what ever order was easiest to makeup, and the destination gets the job. One rule is pretty firm, cars from the same source to a common destination usually stay together. This is why you often see several cars of the same type or same load in series.

Tip: *[The following tip comes up frequently as the solution to those experiencing unusual behavior in the Activity Editor. -ed]*

Well I bit the bullet and reinstalled MSTS. I DIDN'T uninstall, I just loaded the CD, picked the option 'reinstall' and checked the box that said 'overwrite existing files'. Surprisingly, while time consuming (it needed both CD's), the process was relatively painless. I didn't lose any of the activities I'd designed (I did archive them just in case) or any of the locomotives or cars I'd downloaded. It just replaced all the MSTS default files. Now, my editor works perfectly again! I'd recommend you try this, in fact I'd recommend to anyone who has downloaded a number of people's activities and is now experiencing aberrant behavior in the sim to try this. It WILL overwrite all the consists and paths that were included with the default install, back to the default values, but it WON'T touch any truly NEW things you've loaded or added. Of course if you've upgraded your locos to the improved physics fix available here on train-sim.com, you'll need to do that again.

Also, I found that I once again had the old "failed to open package" bug when I tried to unpack any activities, I went through part of the procedure documented here in this forum to fix that, but when I got to the part where I used 'open with' to select 'tsunpack' as the program, the activity in fact unpacked and my unpacking capabilities were restored! So, again, a relatively painless fix, I thank Microsoft for including the 'Reinstall' feature given the fact that activity designers using the activity packager can often overwrite your default traffic, consist and service files and you could exhibit unexpected side effects with this depending how diligent the activity author was at avoiding this pitfall.

"Error message when loading a downloaded activity"

When trying to install an activity I downloaded I get an error message that says "The installed track database for this route is version 217, the activity was built on 219, continue?" Not quit sure what this means but I do not want to install in case it causes a problem. any help anyone??

A: It means that the activity designer edited the route before designing that activity. It WON'T change or overwrite your route, so it's safe to install. But the designer may have made assumptions about switches that he converted from auto to manual throw, or signals/track he added, etc., which you won't have in your version of that route. So you could load the activity and see if it played through. I'd email the person who authored the activity to see if you need that route, or if he was just playing around in the route editor and accidentally saved some minor change, which can happen and will cause exactly this same result (been there, done that!)

"Kicking Cars?"

Has anyone figured out how to "bleed off the brakes" on the cars so they can be "kicked". This would also allow for "flying switches" or "drops". I've messed around a bit and you have to be going about 60 mph to get cars to "coast" any sizable distance. MSTS seems to simulate cars going into "emergency" when they are cut off. Being able to "kick" and "drop" cars would open up a wide range of very challenging activities. As a real shortline railroader, I would find "kicking"

and "dropping" cars as a fun activity that I'm not allowed to do with real trains for safety reasons. Drew Hosick's runaway activity was a blast, but his 20 or so cars are rolling down a steep grade and not quite what I'm looking for. All I would like to do is "kick" cars on level track. I'll offer the designer of what I deem the best "kick" and "drop" activity a cab ride if they're in my area. Cheers.

A1: This is possible and very easy to do. Just uncouple and the cars will roll a significant distance. At least they seem to roll quite a long ways for me, although I think you are right that their brakes are automatically engaged when uncoupled. (see explanation on this after A2 -Ed)

A2:

1. pull forward of a switch and make sure it's lined right.
2. make sure you have the switching aid up (F9) and know where you're going to make the cut.
3. Put the reverser lever in reverse and start pushing against the cars, and get up to about 10-12mph.
4. Throttle all the way down and put the reverser in forward.
5. As you get near the switch start throttling up and your speed should start to drop.
6. when your speed drops to the 8-6 mph range double click the coupler to cut loose the cars

A2: (Ed: Explaining why a car brakes when it's uncoupled in motion) Every freight car has a control valve. The trainline air pressure which runs through the entire train also runs through each control valve on every car. When the Engineer moves the Automatic Brake Valve in the locomotive cab the air pressure is vented from a valve in the locomotive causing the air pressure to drop in the trainline. When each control valve senses that drop (they are sensitive to a 1 1/2 pound drop) the control valve then opens some of it's internal valves which allows air from the car's air tanks to now travel to the brake cylinders. With the air now in the cylinders the brakes have applied.

Now to release the brakes the Engineer has to return the Automatic Brake Valve to the Release position and at that position the trainline pressure starts to increase because the air system is now recharging. When the control valve senses the increase in pressure it opens another valve which vents the air in the brake cylinders. The brakes have now released and the freight car's control valve opens another valve which sends the air in the trainline to the car's air tanks to recharge the supply.

So the brakes actually apply when air is RELEASED from the trainline.

Sounds confusing? It is. But this why it works that way. If the train breaks apart (uncouples, derails, etc.) all of the air escapes from the trainline because one of the air hoses has come apart. When the air escapes at a rapid rate that tells the control valves to place the brakes in Emergency which then stops both parts (if uncoupled) of the train at the maximum braking effect.

So with regards to the subject of this thread if you uncouple your cars in motion the air hoses come apart and would in real life place the entire train in Emergency. To kick a car in real life both the Angle Cock on the train and the one on the car to be kicked would have to be closed so no air would escape from the trainline. The Angle Cock is a valve which closes off the air

pressure on the trainline. There is a Angle Cock on each end of a freight car right beside the coupler.

Discussion: Acknowledging the danger (not including the poor trainman riding the cut trying to get the brakes on in time), how would you have put a cut of cars onto a stub facing you without kicking them?

Response: First of all what you are describing would not be a kick, that would be a drop and that is forbidden nowadays. If you are shoving (pushing) cars (forward or reverse) if you let go of one or more of them in motion you just kicked them. If you are pulling the cars and you let go of one or more, you have dropped them.

To answer your question, you definitely wouldn't do a drop. So you would have to uncouple the cars at a place where you could run around them like at a siding and then couple behind the cut and push them into the spur track.

Another trick used is, if there is a downhill grade facing the spur you could stop before the spur, apply the hand brakes and uncouple the cars to set on the spur. The front portion of the train would pull away, a third crew member would throw the switch and then the brakemen would release the hand brakes and let the cars roll downhill into the spur. The brakemen would ride the car into the spur track and while the car is motion apply the hand brakes to stop. Rare, but used sometimes.

Another response: I saw what you describe as a kick in action in Austria in the mid 80's. A single wagon was sent the whole length of the siding parallel to the station I was standing on, and hit a stationary wagon at the other end. They both leapt about a foot into the air and returned to the track, parked.

The UK terms for these practices are loose shunting and fly shunting (I think fly = drop and loose = kick). In the past, shunting was also sometimes done from an adjacent siding, using chains or ropes.

Q: Can I plan a activity over the whole map? I place the start point at the first station. Automatically a green line is generated, but is not traversing the whole map, because it went the wrong direction.

A1: Right click mouse just before the points (switch) and you should get a message saying "Choose other exit,"(something like that can't remember exact words), choose that option in pop up window. Should then see your green route highlight switch tracks. You must have the path editor window open.

Reply: But I haven't this function. (Ed: a picture is shown displaying the function in A1 is disabled).

Response: You must first define an End Point, as the "Place End Point" menu option is still available.

Another response: I had the same problem. I'm not sure which VIEW selection corrected the problem, but one did. Try selecting the View items one at a time until the 'Other Exit' is active on the switch point.

Q: How do you "point" to one of the cars in your consist if you can't see your consist?

A: In the main screen go to the Tools menu item and click on Verify State. That will take you to the time you have put as the starting time for your scenario. You should now see you consist at your defined starting point.

"Any Way to edit consist path"

I would like to change my end point of my run when using the "Whitefish to Columbia Falls" route. The part I don't get is stopping at the station when done. I don't know where I suppose to stop and properly end my activity. I would like to pull in into a specific siding when done. Is this possible and how? Also how do I get those messages I saw on downloaded activities when you complete each of your "pick ups" or setouts on your work order? I would to have these come up on my own activities.

A: I can answer your first question on stopping a train somewhere other than at a station. What you want to do is use a 'Location Event'. If you do not have a Location Events window open you can click on 'Window' in the toolbar and click on 'Location events window'. That should pop it up for you.

A quick example, you choose the Whitefish to Columbia Falls for a scenario and get that one working. Then you decide you want to take a train from Whitefish and just drive it to the West Columbia Falls Siding 2. Just open the Location event window and click 'New', then you can zoom you map to the West Columbia Falls Siding 2 (notice the cursor turns to a O now over the track) and click where you want the event to occur, in our case at the end of siding 2. You now get a Location event properties window. Just configure it how you want it, this case leave it a Complete activity successfully. Now when you train reaches that point, the activity will end successfully. You can also use location events to display messages like, "Take the next right switch to go to West Columbia Falls Siding 2." or "This is the correct track to leave cars yada, yada, yada." or "Park your train on this siding, track etc.". Hope this helps you some.

"Adding opposing trains for created activities"

How do you add opposing trains or traffic with created activities? I finally have my own activity up and running, but even by choosing the 'Evegrain' for 'Traffic' (which is very high on that activity), I still don't see any other trains out on the line with me. Does anyone know how to get around this and add opposing traffic that isn't just sitting somewhere as a consist?

A: Once you add the traffic service, click tools, verify start state. This will take you to departure time. Then set the fast forward interval, click play. The trains will start to move, and will show where TS predicts the meet will occur.

A2: First you create your service(A). Then, you create another service(B) (which should be done by the computer). Then, you create a new traffic scheme (lower right corner) and then finally, you

select the computer-service(B) and add this to your traffic scheme. Then you enter the right time and voila, there is your activity, with a AI-train.

"All the Stations"

I am trying to make an activity in the NEC stopping at all stations. I have the starting point at Philadelphia and the ending at Washington. My problem is Washington does not show up in the timetable edit window or anywhere else. When I test the activity it completes at the station just before Washington and I never get to go there. I tried putting and deleting location events but nothing seems to work. Can anyone tell me how to get all the stations in the list?

A1: Try the Remove End Point option while in the path editor. You probably have to find the end point at N. Carolton. Then extend the path to one of the tracks in WUS and mark the end of track as the End of Activity.

A2: If Washington is your destination ,just place your end of route marker at the far end of the station platform. This will then enable Washington in the timetable, tick the box ,recalculate and no need to do anymore (default action ,is to end activity successfully at last station stop)

Response: I discovered my problem was the route was not going all the way to Washington. I found that by right clicking on a signal, this would bring up the option "Take another Exit". I kept doing this til the end of the line was in Washington. After that Washington showed up in the timetable. So it may look like your route is going where you want it but once you zoom way in, you'll discover something different

"Can AI trains start before player train does?"

I'm wondering if it's possible to have a computer operated train start to move after and activity is loaded so that I may follow the computer operated train. Assuming that the activity begins at 9:00 what time should the computer operated train begin?

A: The AI trains start when you tell them to. If the activity starts at 0900 then you can start the AI train at 0900, 0901, whenever. You don't have to move unless you want to, so you can just watch the AI trains pass. Two things -- DON'T start the AI train on the same track that you are sitting on or you will either end the activity prematurely or the AI train will try to run you over. Also if the AI train passes a signal it will turn red and you cannot pass it or the activity will end. You will have to wait until the AI train clears the block ahead of you.

Q: I'd like an AI train to be visible when the activity starts, but I don't want it to move immediately. Say the activity starts at 9:00 and the AI train(s) will be visible, but not begin moving until 9:02:25.

A: To get an AI train to be visible and stationary, try setting a "Wait ..." point on the AI train's traffic path just in front of the AI train. To accomplish this, be sure you're editing the AI train's (traffic) path, then:

1) First, select Tools / Verify Start (this should make your AI train visible, if it is set at the same time as your "start" time).

2) Next, right-click on the AI train's traffic path just in front of the AI train and select the "Set Wait ..." option (I'm doing this from memory and I can't remember the exact wording of the option). You'll be presented a dialog to establish how long you want the AI train to set there. When you close the "timing" dialog, a green "Wait" point should be visible on the path.

3) Save your edit and give it a try.

I tried a similar technique with an AI train on an activity I'm developing and it seems to work fine. On mine, the AI train pulls into the yard; stops for 30 seconds (at the "Wait" point); then, continues on it's way (and is visible the entire time).

"Problem with timetable"

Has anybody figured out how to alter departure times in the timetable? I can only change arrival time and performance for the stops, not the departure time. For the NEC route I only get 30 second stops automatically calculated and would like to make the stops more realistic, like 2 or 3 minutes.

A1: Yes, in order to change wait times you will have to fire up the Route Editor. Then you need to locate each platform, right-click to open the pop-up Properties screen and you'll see the necessary info to change in that. You'll see from this that wait times are fixed and cannot be changed to suit any particular Activity.

A2: Use 'place waiting point' in Path editor and set waiting time as long as you want.

A3: In the activity editor ,it is possible to increase or decrease the amount of peeps waiting to travel at each station. This in itself governs the boarding time.

"Path Editor?"

I assume that after I have set up a path and want to change it I should use the path editor. Don't quite understand what the bottom part of the editor means. "Highlight" "Prev" "Next" "Broken" and "Mouse" mean.

A1: If I remember, the help section for the activity editor is pretty good in this area.

A2: The Path is really make up of small "connections" between the "Start" point and all switch points to the "Stop" point. If you select "Highlight", the screen will center on the "Start" point and the Path will be displayed in red to the next switch point. As you select "..next", the next section of the Path will center on screen and be displayed in red. You can repeat this to trace all the connections associated with a Path.

This is very useful when you've developed a complex path with several "Reverse Direction" points by allowing you to trace out the completed Path. If you check mouse, then you can just use the mouse pointer to move from section to section of the path instead of pressing the NEXT button.

Oh, one very important tip (if you haven't discovered this already). You should avoid using "EDIT" whenever you are experimenting with Services, Consists, and Paths. I suggest you create "New" ones or use the "Use as Template" option and give them an easy to identify name. Keep in mind that if you "EDIT" anything for the default items (services, consists, etc.) you may affect other

activities that are also using the same service, consist, paths, etc.). I've noticed this happening, especially to consists.

"Trying to Design Passenger Activities"

How can you make a train or consist "Wait at a Starting location (at the Start of activity) a bit longer than say 5 or 6 seconds..

A1: To Make the station stops longer go to view and make sure you have "Stations" on. Find the little blue line that defines the beginning or end of the platform. Right click on it and choose "properties" you can set the number of passengers at that station for each activity. The more people the longer the load unload time. To stop at other stations you have to check the station stops in the service box. after you change the passengers setting for the station recalculate the timetable. It just calculates the load unload times and time from station to station.

A2: How about adding a wait time point?

Tip: "Commandments for good activity building!"

1. Upload the packaged file in a regular zipped file.
2. Every uploaded activity will have accompanying text files outlining any technical information regarding the activity and any necessary disclaimers.
3. When possible use "new". for services, consists, paths, and traffic. This would include changing the file name. most problems look to be caused by altering default files without changing the file name.
4. If we don't use new then we have to use "use as template". and change the name.

Q: When you put a helper on, does the helper become a powered unit or does MSTs treat it like a car that's been picked up, i.e., more dead weight?

A: I can confirm that if you create a pickup of a helper it does go active and work. It will shut back down the second you uncouple it. Even works with Steam locos. The only bug is that is I create a mission where you cut the helper in the audio streams start hanging up and bug out. Too many streams at once. If however I create a new consist with the Helper (protection) cut in it works fine. Cutting it out on the other side of the hill is no problem. Also be careful how many cars and helpers you put in the train. The more you add the more the frame rate goes down and the program gets unstable.

"Time events window"

I have been playing around with the activity editor for a few tries now. However when I mark the window 'Time events Window' no window appears. Where do I add time events?

A: If any event window is not visible after you've attempted to select it from the menu, try choosing "Reset Window Positions" in the Window Menu. Also, an important point about Time Events (I just spent 3 hours trying to figure out why mine wasn't working). When you set a Time Event value, it should be set to the time calculated FROM the START time of your activity; NOT

the true "clock" time. For example, if your activity is set to start at 12:00, and 5 minutes later you want a Time Event to activate; set the Time Event to: HR 00 MIN 05 SEC 00 (NOT ... HR 12 MIN 05 SEC 00, which is what I "assumed" would work).



"Error when Saving an Activity"

I have consistently received an error stating something like, "Not all necessary information has been entered, activity may not work."

A: I thought I had been performing your suggestions, but apparently not. I did read in here to not have the starting or ending point at a switch. I was doing that, too. So the program was crashing.

"Multiple AI Train question"

I've been able to place static consist and create some good player services and figured out how to place one AI train, but it isn't clear to me how to place multiple AI trains.

A: What I did was look at a couple of the downloaded activities to see how they did it. A couple of them used the same AI service at 5 or 10 minute intervals, others made shorter paths and used different paths and consists. To answer your question as to how to place them (since you said you already added one), you do more than one just like you did the first one, except I've found I couldn't overlap them or at least have one start while another was still in the same signal block. It took me 2 hours this morning to figure that one out. The block I was starting one on was not long enough to let the first one pass the signal block.

Q: When I want to edit the timetable, usually the times hardly change. When I set the expected performance a lot lower (from 75 to 30) nothing happens! And in the timetable window, under the performance header, it reads 88 and 94... Not 30! When I run the activity I can never make it in time. Is there any way to change the times manually?

A: One workaround is to change the number of passengers at the platform/station. This number seems to change the wait time, giving you a margin at the station.

"Use-As-Template and Adding Cars on a Siding in an Activity"

I have two questions please:

1- what does Use-As-Template do in the activity editor...what is its function?

2-When making an activity, how do I add box cars (like on a siding for future pick up) so they are there when someone uses the activity?

A: 1)When you are working on activities "Use As Template" will open the current Activity, Consist, or Path Editor Window with the name (of the Activity, Consist, or Path) appended with a different number. For example, if you open an Activity named "Whitefish_Local" and selected "Use As Template", the Activities Editor would open with the File Name and Display Name appended; something like "Whitefish_Local0". This way, you will have all the same links to the original's Consists, Paths, etc.; you could then modify the Activity and it would be saved under the different name (and not affect the original). This is sometimes better than selecting NEW (which means you have to set up everything; or, worse, EDIT which (if you not careful) may mess up the original file.

2)To add cars in the Activity Editor, simply zoom in on the siding you wish to place the cars and "right-click" on the track. A dialog should come up with "Place Consist" available. When you select "Place ..." another dialog is displayed which allows you scroll through the available Consists (box cars are available in the defaults).

Tip: "Here's help with overtaking trains, reverse points, and mandatory stops."

I have been fiddling with the Activity Editor for hours and believe I have found a reliable way to force a train (AI or player) to stop in a block to allow other trains to overtake it by using reversing points.

Apparently, the AI Dispatcher "looks ahead" for about five signals/blocks in front of a train when clearing signals, but only clears enough signals to reach either the end of the path, or a reversing point. Therefore, when designing a path, I placed a reversing point about 4 car lengths before a signal at an interlocking, and then placed a second reversing point just behind the first (effectively forcing a train to pull up, back up a couple of feet, and then proceed forward again).

The AI Dispatcher will only clear blocks to allow the train to move into the block with the double reversing points, then after the train has stopped, reversed a couple of feet, and started forward again, the Dispatcher will clear additional blocks as normal (if traffic allows).

This has been a great addition to my AI paths because it forces a train to stop at a certain point. If this is done before a crossover, or other interlocking, and since the signals ahead of the stopping point are not cleared until the AI train reverses a few feet, it allows other AI trains, or the player train, to overtake it through the crossover/interlocking since its signals are free to be cleared first.

It can also be used with the player path (say on a slow freight) to force the player to stop and allow other faster passenger AI trains to overtake it, however the player needs to know exactly where to stop and must perform the brief reverse movement in order for the next signals to clear. I accomplished this with location event "messages" instructing the player to "Wait here for further traffic clearance" or similar.

I determined that the reverse point is considered crossed when the center of the lead engine crosses the reverse point. This holds true regardless of which direction the train is moving. Place dummy consists on the path when planning reverse points, with the expected number of cars the train will have when it reaches the point, place the point, then delete the dummy consist.

Reply: One more point, when putting in reverse points for player trains, you have to give the train enough room to fully clear any switches behind the train, before it starts to reverse. This becomes important when you're designing local freight activities and have to deal with computer controlled switches. If the player pulls across a reverse point, but a good portion of the train is still over the switch to the spur you want him to back in to, then the reverse point won't work correctly: you can pull past it so your entire train clears the trailing switch, but then the computer dispatcher will never throw the switch back into the spur, even when you reverse and begin to shove. This wouldn't be an issue if you were in a siding long enough to hold the whole train, as illustrated in this thread though.

I've also noticed that the AI dispatcher uses switches just like signals, if there aren't any signals in the area: he'll clear a train ahead of you if you're reversing and will clear the crossover, you'll know he did it because you'll see the switch throw (using F8), watch out if you move ahead anyway and "force" the switch the train will collide with you!

"Tip for using reverse points in paths"

When you make a complex path with multiple reverse points be sure to play it all out while in the activity editor before running the game. This will show you if it all is going to work out ok and the train will follow the path you have created. Then when you play the activity in the game, be sure you drive your train PASS the reverse points before you change direction. This will allow those switches behind your reverse points to change automatically. Unless of course its a manual switch. But if its an auto switch and you don't drive pass the reverse point it will not throw the switch behind you.

"Waiting point"

Does anybody know how to get an AI train to stop and wait for more than 2 seconds? I've tried inserting waiting points but when I leave the activity editor, they get reset back to zero. I've looked into all the different files generated (paths, services, activities, etc.) but can't find anything that looks like a waiting point or something that has the time I inserted.

A: After you place the entire AI path from start to end, go to the point on that path where you want the pause, right click and choose waiting point. A box should appear asking in seconds how long you want it to pause. After typing this in and closing the box a tiny watch-hands will appear at that point.

"IN-TRAIN FORCES"

I've created my consists, set the durability slider all the way to the right for all cars, and know matter how slow I couple, I always get the error message IN-TRAIN Forces have been exceeded. How can IN-TRAIN Forces be exceeded when I make the coupling at 1 mph?

A: I've noticed this too. There seems to be a bug in MSTs with this setting ... if you set the in train forces a little to the LEFT of all the way to the right, you won't have this problem. I haven't tried all the way to the left so I don't know if the slider is actually backwards, but there does seem to be an issue, even with the activities included w/ MSTs, with this setting. Try it 95% to the right and see what happens.