

TheDS's Railroad Tycoon 2 Strategies you won't Find Anywhere Else -

(Last edited 10/19/2011)

The following is my collection of useful tidbits for building and running your railroad. Most of it is information I have not seen presented anywhere else, or not presented as thoroughly. The information primarily concerns strategies of laying out your track, routing your trains, and getting the most speed out of your trains, but there are other areas of interest. None of the strategies presented here are universal; each must be employed based on the circumstances of the particular problem you are trying to solve, and most of the time you will need to combine several of these strategies for an optimal solution. Most of this guide assumes you're playing in single-player mode and have a lot of leeway in how you do what you need to do. I do not have any cheats listed here.

Applicability: Railroad Tycoon 2 Platinum Edition, Patch 1.56, with the Financial and Industrial models both set to Expert. Most of this advice should apply to all versions of RT2, but this is the latest and greatest, and what I've spent most of my time playing. There is a great deal of difference between the original RT2 and the Second Century expansion (TSC). The Gold and Platinum editions include TSC. Patches may correct some bugs or exploits; you may know of something I don't, because I didn't get really into this game until it was no longer supported by Pop Top. I have never played with/against human players, so if you're looking for multiplayer-specific strategies, I don't have much of that here. This guide also assumes you're more than a beginner at this game; that is, you've played it once or twice and can figure out my lingo.

About me: I am TheDS (The Dee Ess), though I also go by Jaycee Adams in my spare time. My website is www.mopjockey.com. My forum is forum.mopjockey.com. Visit these places to learn more about me. Unfortunately, I don't have any other RT2 content currently available (but I am working on a set of maps, which I will eventually release there). This document will ALWAYS be found using this URL: RT2P.Mopjockey.com (unless there is a problem). Other people may have posted copies of it, but this one will always be the most up-to-date version. If you like this document and want to be the first to know when I've updated it, click the LIKE button on my site, or sign up to be a Follower. I anticipate having a major revision by the end of the year.

Building your Railroad

There are many components to building a successful railroad company. Mastering one or two

parts will dramatically improve your game. Mastering them all will see you getting the Gold almost every time. Below, I've divided it up into the following sections:

- Your First Railroad (General advice)
- Placing Stations
- Track Layouts
- Train Routing for Passengers (and Mail)
- Train Routing for Freight (not Mail)
- Train Speed Factors
- Train Support Buildings
- Other Notes
- Additional Strategies (even more advanced stuff than what I've written, including stuff about the Stock Market)
- Misconceptions about the Game's Mechanics
- and finally, Stuff I'd like to see them fix (and stuff I'd like them to leave alone)

You should be aware that every map and scenario is different. Some are very easy, some are very hard, some are made poorly, some have bugs. (Be sure you've got the latest versions of the maps!) I can't cover every conceivable circumstance; at some point, you have to think for yourself. Heck, you will DEFINITELY have to think for yourself! This document is pretty much just guidelines and techniques. It's not possible to hold your hand as you work through this game, so read this, play, read it again, play again, and repeat as necessary until you understand what you're doing.

Now let's get to it.

Your First Railroad

General advice:

The flatter and straighter your railroad lines, the better. But you already knew that, right? With that in mind, start up your first company with all the money you've got, and all the investor money you can get. Then go to your books and see what manager you've got, and what ones are available. Before you spend any money or start playing, SAVE THE GAME. If you screw up your initial start, it can hamper your game. I also recommend casting the Save Game Spell before you undertake major expansions to your railroad, or before you undertake destruction of the other players' railroads, because there's no UNDO button.

With the game saved, get yourself a decent manager if you can, preferably one who will save you

money on buying stations or track or engines (or a succession of all three). Also, take out a Bond; you may as well get it now, especially if you can find a manager that'll make it cheaper. With your money in hand, search out 2 or 3 decent cities or industry-clusters that are close enough together that you can afford to link them.

What constitutes decent, you ask?

Most of the time, it's going to be a place where you can build a station that encompasses at least 8 houses and/or 2-3 industries. Note that you can often place terminals so as to encompass 2 towns or parts of them, to get that magical 8 houses. But don't build anywhere that you can't get at least 4 houses, because you need at least 4 houses to receive Passengers, Mail, and some finished goods. You want 2-3 such cities, so you can run Mail and Passengers between them, but you also want them to accept the finished products, like Goods, Autos, Food, Alcohol, Lumber, and Paper.

While it's usually quite simple to get a pair of cities, finding a couple suitable spare industries can be more difficult, but it's worth it. The first few Passenger and Mail loads will give you a bunch of money, but afterward, they'll bankrupt you if you haven't put that money to good use, so you need industries too. Excellent industries to start with are ones which need only 2 or 3 steps, and don't require combining to form a final product, but you can certainly make a reasonable profit if you're stuck shipping Produce to a Cannery without being able to also send it Steel or Aluminum. In fact, a nice subsidy can be made finding a cluster of Coal or Iron and shipping it straight to a Steel Mill, then deadheading the trains back for more, producing no Steel at all. I think the best industries for making a quick buck at the start are Cattle to Food, Grain or Sugar to Food, Produce, Grain, or Sugar to Alcohol, Wool or Cotton to Goods, and anything that's a single step, like Milk or Coal or Produce to Cities in the early years.

So, your first railroad should have 2 cities of at least 4 (preferably at least one with 8) houses, and an industry or two you can make money off of, possibly needing a spur to a third station. You should have about 1 train per 8-10 houses, though in the 1800's, it's often good to have 1 train per city, devoted to passengers, and then another one for each industry, buying more as they're needed.

When I have a city with a lot of houses, I like to build Passenger Station Improvements downrange (Saloon, Restaurant, Hotel) to cash in on all that passenger production, but often I have to wait until at least one load has been delivered before I can afford them. (TIP: Restaurants, Hotels, and Saloons have their effect on arriving passengers only, so at the start, when you probably don't have two big cities far apart, you'll get more money building these at the small towns where you're taking the city passengers to.) These things can pay for themselves very quickly if you can carry a large load of passengers a long distance, but when you're just starting out, don't kill yourself trying to get them to pay.

How Far Apart should these Cities Be?

You want them to be about 8-15 tiles apart; if they're too close, the trains will be blocking up the lines, preventing other trains from running, and if they're too far apart, you won't have enough money to build the track (or to double track right off the bat), and the time it takes your first

loads to arrive will see your company going in the red and losing money. You pay about 20% or more in interest for going in the red, so don't do it unless it's unavoidable. When you have weak engines, like when you start before about 1850, you'll probably need several engines because they're so slow and you can't carry as many cars with them. After about 1850-1870, depending on the map, your engines should be strong enough that the trains can get from one city to the next in well under a game year.

Placing Stations

One of the first things you'll want to build is a station, not least of all because you need two of them before you can buy an engine. There are 3 sizes to choose from. In general, try to build the smallest you can get away with. Terminals are really nice, but if you're building it JUST to add a 9th house to a City, then you're wasting \$100,000 or so. On the other hand, using a Terminal to turn two Towns into a single City, or to grab an extra industry or two, is definitely worthwhile (unless you've OVER-reached and got TOO MANY industries in a single station). But where to put them?

IN THE CITY CENTER: Most cities have an area in the middle reserved to allow you to build your station there. Some cities are so small that there isn't enough of them to identify a center.

Advantages: Stations can usually be smaller and still get all the industries, saving money.

Disadvantages: Often you cannot get peripheral industries, or combine two towns into one city.

Best Usage: When there's no peripheral industries to grab, or when you want to save money with a smaller station. Sometimes a depot is all that's really needed.

OUTSIDE THE CITY: Often times, there are industries just outside the reach of even a Terminal placed at city center, and it's a good idea to build just outside the center to get those industries.

Advantages: Allows you to grab extra industries or combine two towns into a single city, basically allowing you to make one stop out of 2 or 3.

Disadvantages: Usually requires a Terminal for full effect, and it's a bit annoying and time consuming to pick the exact right spot to place it for maximum effect.

Best Usage: When the city itself just isn't good enough by itself, and there are additional items within range of the station that will allow you to combine what would otherwise be several stations into one.

RESOURCES WAY OUTSIDE TOWN: Most resources are found out in the middle of nowhere.

Do you make a lot of depots, or do you try and get it all with one or two terminals? This is something you must decide as the situation dictates; sometimes it is more efficient to have several stations, allowing more trains to run at once, or covering all the resources with two stations when one terminal isn't good enough to get them all. In extremely dense resource areas,

you want to have multiple stations to break up the traffic. (I once had EIGHT Logging Camps clustered together, and needless to say, that terminal was an eternal knot, not to mention the cities I had to run everything to! I learned from this that you don't want any one station supplying more than about 12 cars a year, or having to take traffic for more than about 24 a year. You can boost the throughput of trains through a station by having them come from alternating directions and having them pull straight through, but this isn't always practical.)

AUXILIARY STATIONS AND QUAD-TRACKING: In your quest to reduce the amount of track you need to a bare minimum, it may occur that a station is getting way too much traffic into or through it. This is usually noticed by either the cluster of trains all awaiting their turns to move (and getting nowhere thanks to all the higher-priority trains coming through) and stacked on top of each other, or you notice a station or several is building up a LOT of rotting Freight, even though you have lots of engines tasked to shipping it. At this point, you need to consider how the problem came about and then deal with it.

Most of the time, it happened because the geography of a region forced you to choose one and only one good route through it, either because there's water on either side or because the mountains would make the route more difficult. In either case, you're going to have to create some Bypasses and probably an Auxiliary station or two to serve the city better. This is bound to be expensive, but the alternative is that the knot remains and you continue to lose money to rotting freight. Another common reason for this is that you have a section of slow track somewhere, like going up a big hill and blocking a crossing the whole time.

Quite often, you can simply build another terminal near the first, overlapping its area of effect. Next, you route Freight trains through one station and Passenger trains through the other (or something like that). Through-trains may need to be given a third route, a Bypass, so they don't affect either station if both stations are doing plenty of business, and if so, you should be sure to give them an appropriate waypoint if they need it (Tip: CTRL-CLICK the track section in the route map). The key here is to make sure that the extra lengths of track are separate from each other for long enough that trains stopped on one section will not interfere with trains on the other. This is effectively Quad-tracking and expanding your station's capacity, just in a much more track-intensive and eye-soring way.

Alternately, if you're just getting deluged with one kind of industrial cargo at one city, you can build a smaller sub station to service that one industry. Again, make sure the track separation is long enough that trains don't interfere with each other, or you are defeating the purpose of your Bypass.

Two final notes about this: Be wary of the terrain. It's very easy to plunk down a station, then add the track to it, and find you've got a yellow or even red incline next to it! Not good. If the terrain is awful, or even marginal, lay your track first. Lay a few cells of it, so you can get a good, level station. (In extreme mountains, even this might not be enough, but it's all you have.) Second, if you've got a scenario that prevents you from laying unconnected track (which also means laying

unconnected stations), I would suggest fixing that in the scenario if you can. It's very convenient to place a station right where you want it and THEN run the track, plus sometimes you just need to be able to run track all over the place to knock down hills. What I do is I turn off that particular "feature" of the scenario, then resave it appending a "2" to its name, so I know what I did, and still have the original too. If you feel like this is cheating (it makes the Italy scenario a lot easier, frex), then don't do it, but remember, it's YOUR game, and if you want to have or not have that handicap, that's your choice.

CROSSINGS:

There are several ways to make a crossing, and only one of them doesn't cause blockages. Turn on your grid with the G key. Notice where the corners of the squares meet? If you cross your tracks from corner to corner like this, they act as if a bridge has been built. Any other way, and trains can block each other. This works because the game doesn't see the two tracks as being in the same cell.

Now sure, you can't always build that type of crossing, but whenever the possibility arises, it is quite frequently better for you to have extra curves in your route than to allow an inadequate crossing to continue blocking traffic.

Track Layouts

There are a lot of ways to lay out your track. In the beginning, you have very limited options. A little later, while money's a little less tight, you probably have a natural inclination to be as conservative as possible with your track. This is a fairly good habit to have, but if followed too strictly, it can lead to disaster, so you need to know when to break that habit. Here are the possible layout styles. Note that terrain and needs will dictate the physical shape, but the underlying style remains the same.

DIRECT ROUTE: In this arrangement, the trains run through stations without stopping to get to other stations.

Advantages: Generally less track needs building, and fewer Support buildings, as they can be located centrally where traffic will go.

Disadvantages: Trains that have to turn around block both directions of traffic, resulting in high traffic areas requiring extra rails to be laid as Bypasses, which then requires additional Support Stations.

Best Usage: When you can't afford to waste any money, particularly at the very start of a game, or when the land is only available in a narrow strip.

MAINLINE WITH SPURS OR SIDINGS: In this arrangement, there is a single line of track that

itself doesn't go through many cities; instead, as it passes a city, it will break out a spur to that city.

Advantages: If your spurs are long enough to accommodate the lengths of your trains, you can almost completely avoid delays caused by trains that are stopping or turning around.

Additionally, your mainline can be very straight, allowing trains to reach their full speed.

Disadvantages: Requires a lot of extra track for the spurs, and most stations will require Support Buildings, since there is no central station through which most traffic passes. (Tip: build waystations - Depots with nothing to stop for, but have your engine maintenance structures (Sand, Water, Roundhouse).) Additionally, travel times can dramatically increase when going between nearby stations; you really need to have longer routes (stations farther apart) to take full advantage. Lastly, it's very easy to exceed the traffic limit on the mainline; it requires constant attention to notice the problem, and may require a twin be built.

Best Usage: When you have resources just off your desired route that would otherwise require a lot more curves or force most trains to go through a station that only a couple need, or you have a station so thoroughly packed with trains that it would simply cause a huge knot. A Spur need not be connected to the mainline at only one end; this would be a Siding.

CIRCLES: In this arrangement, you typically have a group of 4-6 (or more) cities arranged in a rough circle. The track can be arranged either in Direct Route or Mainline fashion (above), but at some point the two ends meet. (Alternately, you could have Circular Routing (see ROUTING, below) which performs basically the same task; the trains go from one end to the other, never turning around until the end of the line is reached.)

Advantages: Since trains are routed around the circle in a circular fashion, there are fewer turn-around delays, plus any advantages inferred by the previous two Layout methods (fewer Station Supports and more direct linking of cities with Direct Route, trains out of the way with Mainline). With enough cities, you can do City-Skipping Routing (below). Lots of traffic can be fit onto this layout. Often you will need fewer trains for Passenger service.

Disadvantages: Requires even more track, and with poor planning, some trains will have unnecessarily long routes. Often you will need extra trains for poorly planned (or badly placed) freight.

Best Usage: Once you've got a lot of track on the board, if you've got enough room to link cities that are roughly in a circle, it is helpful to do this. Send Passenger trains around it in one direction and Freight trains around it in the other direction. Since Passenger traffic can go in either direction, decide which way freight needs to go first, and route Passengers in the other direction. (Tip: If your Passenger trains go counter clockwise, they will be on the outside of the circle, and the freight trains on the inside. This means you'll see a lot of freight trains getting stopped when they have to go out to spurs on the outside of the circle. Therefore, more often than not, it's a better plan to have Passengers on the inside.)

BYPASS: Not so much a Layout as a feature of one, typically to untie a traffic knot by allowing trains to bypass a busy station or choke point. Bypasses tend to be expensive solutions to the even more expensive problems of traffic knots. Adding bypasses turns a Direct line into more of a Mainline, and your former Primary routes become Spurs or Sidings. It is often required to

make use of the new Spanning Bridges to make some of these bypasses; when you have to use Spanning Bridges, try very hard to arrange it so that traffic only goes in one direction; you don't want trains having to stop on the bridge, and you don't want to have to build another one if you don't have to.

COMBO LAYOUTS: Naturally, your entire train layout will not consist solely of one of the above layout types; you must judge the situation and use the layout that fits the situation in a particular area best. Best of all, you can change your mind as the game changes!

Train Routing for Passengers (and Mail)

Once you've got your layout made, it's time to add engines. Routing for Passengers/Mail is fairly simple: Pick them up and take them to any Town or City. The farther apart these cities are, and the faster you can get them there, the more money you can make. I have made over \$2MILLION from a single load of passengers, but it took a while to build this up.

I have seen people suggest that you don't carry Mail and Passengers on the same train. In my experience, the merits of this suggestion depend on the map. In the early game, or when you have 3 or fewer houses somewhere, or if you have Ports set to produce Mail, you may as well; however, when you have Ports producing Passengers, or when you have really large cities producing lots of Passengers, it's much better to grab 5 of them (plus Dining car) and take them far away, then have some other train pick up the Mail.

Passengers have a unique status in that there are so many things which can boost their value, not least of which is the Dining Car. If you have 6 cars of Passengers waiting, if you pick up 5 of them and make the 6th car a Dining car, then that Dining car is worth AT LEAST as much as that 6th Passenger car. In fact, it tends to be worth a lot more, not least of all because you won't be saturating the destination as much. PLUS you can still carry that 6th Passenger somewhere when he gets 4 of his friends together. So if you have a large city (or a Port that produces Passengers), then by all means, set up a train to pick up 5 Passengers + a Dining Car, Redlight it (so the train is full), give it the best engine you have, and send it all the way across the map if you can. Trips like this generate MILLIONS OF DOLLARS!!! (And to hell with the Mail!)

But if you don't have this situation, generally Mail and Passengers appear too irregularly to bother trying to wait for them, and occasionally you have sudden influxes of them that come from nowhere, so there's no point in paying for a high-speed, VERY expensive engine to just sit. Grab some of each and get them down the line making you money. Generally, my pickups are 2 passengers and 1 mail for towns, and 3 and 2 for cities. When I have a pair of large cities that produce lots of passengers, I set up an express train to fill up and go between them. Here are

some routing strategies.

CITY PAIRS: This routing has a train running between two cities that are often close together. Usually there are 1-2 trains for each pair of cities, but if the cities are far apart, there can easily be more.

Advantages: Very simple to plan out and keep straight in your head.

Disadvantages: Uses approximately one train per city, or more on long routes. On short routes, revenues are very small after the first few runs.

Best Usage: Early in the game, you have little choice but to do this, since you have so few stations to choose from. Later on, this makes a reasonable use of linking up widely separated cities for the major transport distance bonuses.

Station Keeping: The only way to prevent bunching of your trains, and reduce the incidence of empty trains, is to have one train Yellow one city and the other train Yellow the other city. In the instance that your route is a longhaul, then it's okay to Red light the trains to fully load them, assuming those cities are not visited by any other kinds of passenger trains, or the city produces a lot of passengers in relation to the size of your longhaul trains.

CITY IN THE CENTER: This is connecting a large city to two or more other smaller cities nearby and having a train run from each of the smaller cities to the larger one. Thus you save a train, since the central city is serviced many times a year.

Advantages: Still fairly simple to set up and hold in your head. You also save buying an engine, thus you have one less than one train per city.

Disadvantages: The central city gets a lot of traffic. Early on, this is no big deal, but if you have other industries that need to be served, you will soon have a knot. Revenue also tends to be small, since most of the time, you use this to link together close cities.

Best Usage: Early in the game, or later on when reaching into a new area. Best when there are few or no industries to add traffic, and when not a lot of traffic is expected to pass through.

Station Keeping: Much like the previous suggestion, except this time, since you don't have a train "from" the central city, none of the trains that run to it will be Yellowed there; all will be Yellowed at their other city. The main city should get enough traffic that its passengers shouldn't build up too badly, though in lean times you have decent odds of having empty runs from it now and then (so what's new?).

CIRCULAR: This is when you have trains going in a circle, from one city to the next in sequence. Requires at least 3 cities, and effective for as many cities as are in your circle, but for sake of simplicity, don't go above about 8 cities. The track itself need not be arranged in a circle (but it helps). Several cities make use of a pool of trains.

Advantages: Still somewhat simple, but if it's late in the game when you set this up, finding the appropriate trains can be a headache, since they are likely to be spread around your list. The pool of trains needed for this approach can be as few as one for every TWO cities (dramatic savings!) when the cities aren't too far apart or aren't that big. Bigger cities and routes naturally need more

trains, but you'll rarely need more trains than cities except when things are going really well (large cities, lots of traffic, long route). In some instances, you can get away with single-tracking the whole thing!

Disadvantages: Keeping track of the trains you're using! If you can set a whole circle up at once, then you can keep all the trains together on your list, but otherwise, they will be all over the place. Also, if your cities are close together, they will not generate much revenue.

Best Usage: When you've got an area with a lot of traffic or a new area that WILL have a lot of traffic, setting up a circle will allow you to gather all your passenger trains in that area and send them around the circle. You might even have some trains left over to put into Freight service.

Station Keeping: This can be a bit tougher. For the most part, you want to avoid Yellowing the little cities (the complete opposite of the way to handle City in the Center), because the big cities will need the traffic due to you having fewer engines. However, if you have at least as many engines as cities, then you can assign a city for an engine to be "from", and Yellow it when it's there. Just assign fewer cars to be picked up at the towns and grin and bear it.

SKIPPING: Generally this is applied to Circular Routing on a Circle or Direct/Mainline Layout. Skipping comes in such that, instead of going to the NEXT city, your trains go to the one AFTER that, and come back on the second round or return round respectively. This requires 5 or more cities, and the more, the better. In a Circular Layout, you will appear to make two laps before repeating the route, and in a Direct/Mainline Layout you will reach all cities with a single "lap". So instead of going 1-2-3-4-5-1, you'd go 1-3-5-2-4-1

Advantages: All the advantages of Circular Routing, but allows trains to make more money by going farther between stops.

Disadvantages: Because this is equivalent to a Circular Route in which all the cities are farther apart, you will need a few more trains, probably one per city.

Best Usage: When you have 5 or more cities that need passenger service on either a Circle or Direct Layout; less useful on Mainline, but still worth considering. To keep from bogging yourself down, don't link together more than about 8 cities in this manner. Naturally, you'll need to have plenty of money, so you won't be building these with your initial funds.

Station Keeping: Same as Circular Routing.

LONG LINE: When you have a Direct or Mainline Layout, you send the trains through each stop sequentially, and when the train comes to the last city, it makes a long haul back to the first city.

Advantages: Similar to Circular Routing, but has one big payoff on the route.

Disadvantages: Similar to Circular Routing and Skipping, but since there's only one long leg on the route, the payoff tends to be less than for Skipping.

Best Usage: When you have a bunch of little cities all connected to a big city, and the big city is the last one on the route, allowing you to longhaul a larger payload back to the first city. In this case, you can save some money on passenger buildings by only having your Hotel/Restaurant at the first city. Otherwise, use Skipping or Circular. Also useful if, say, you have a single Power Plant and a series of Coal Mines, and one of them is in the same city; in this case, you pick up the Coal in the Power Plant city, then go down the line, picking up more and more, picking up the last one in the last city, and hauling it all back to the first, where you make money from all the Coal as if it came from the farthest city. (This is actually an exploit, since the game doesn't

track where a load came from, only where it came from last.)

Station Keeping: Pretty much the same as Circular, but you will probably want to have each train ALSO Yellow or even have some Red on the big city at the end, to maximize passengers generating such large revenues.

STAR HOPPING: When you have a bunch of cities connected, and your trains hop all over the place, kind of like drawing a star.

Advantages: Longer hauls should give you more revenue, like Skipping.

Disadvantages: Chances are good you're either using a lot of extra track you don't need or you're increasing the traffic density markedly on the routes you have, eventually requiring you to build more rails for bypasses.

Best Usage: When you don't have a lot of Freight traffic in an area; otherwise, avoid using this, the traffic increase isn't worth it.

Station Keeping: Yeah, good luck with this.

There are plenty of maps in which carrying Mail isn't worth the effort, unless a whole bunch of it gets produced at one time, or you just can't pick up enough Passengers at a given city.

Train Routing for Freight (not Mail)

Routing Freight can sometimes be complicated, especially for Combo Freights. But Freight is what keeps you afloat; it's very regular and predictable (scenario effects notwithstanding) and you can buy the industries you're serving to make even more money.

SIMPLE ROUTING: Many kinds of industrial traffic are describable as "pick up resources at a supplier, take them to a processor, and return the finished product back to the source". Wool and Cotton to Goods is usually like this, as is Sugar and Grain to Food, and even the Bauxite to Aluminum to Goods method works for this.

Advantages: Very very simple. At the source, give a Red light, and further stops get green lights, until you make it back to the source. Sometimes, you have to have a Caboose-leg to finish up the route when your sources are away from the cities. Generally you can handle this with one or two engines, unless the route is long enough to require more to avoid spoilage.

Disadvantages: Only works for a few supply chains, and all too often the route has to be long to do the conversion; long routes are not as good for Freight as they are for Passengers.

Best Usage: Anywhere you possibly can!

Station Keeping: At the start of the game, try hard to get some of these; they're easy and cheap to set up and you don't have the money for fancy stuff yet. Then, pick up only the loads that are available (usually just one car) and let it run so you can start making money. No point in sitting,

waiting for 3 cars to load! After the train has made its full circuit (or nearly has), go ahead and increase the number of cars to your desired level. Then you Redlight the source and Greenlight the rest. If you have a couple spare houses here, and you want to grab incidental Passengers and Mail, DO NOT Redlight! You will be waiting forever to pick up a Mail car, because that's how the game rolls! In this case, you'll have to suffer with just a Yellowlight, and occasionally carry empty cars, OR you could find some other way to pick them up. (I usually have a normally-Greenlight conversion pick up these incidentals, or I just ignore them.)

ENHANCERS – DEAD DROP ROUTING: Enhancers are things that can be used to improve other things, notably Chemicals/Fertilizer and Grain, which can be used to enhance Farms and Ranches respectively. (And since Grain comes from a Farm, it too can be enhanced by Fertilizer!) There are two basic ways to route these. First is to treat it like a Simple Route of its own. For instance, take the Grain to the Cattle Yard and head back; if there's something to prevent deadheading, grab it.

Advantages: Simplicity. Chemical plants tend to be IN cities, reducing deadheading.

Disadvantages: Deadheading, possibly extra engines.

Best Usage: When the Farms being fertilized are at the same station as your Chemical plant, or if you have the fortune to have Granaries at the same stations as Ranches, effectively combining two (or more) dead drops to avoid deadheading. Also should be considered if the station or resource being enhanced is going to multiple destinations.

Station Keeping: When routing these, you should treat the Enhancer like a regular resource, and turn its stop Red.

ENHANCERS – EXTENDED SIMPLE ROUTING: The other way to handle it is to extend the other simple route. For instance, take the Chemicals to make Fertilizer, then to the Granary, then take the Grain to the Cattle Yard, then pick up the cows and convert them to Food.

Advantages: Mostly simple, less deadheading, possibly saving on engines.

Disadvantages: Doesn't work as well when you have to worry about combining cargoes (like turning Produce into Food).

Best Usage: When there is a clear route to take.

Station Keeping: Yellow the Enhancers, Red the Resources, Green everything else. So in Chem-Fert-Grain-Cows-Food, you would Yellow Chem and Grain, Red Cows, and Green Fert and Food (and any deadhead you needed).

COMBINED CARGOES – ALL IN ONE ROUTES: A Combined Cargo is one that requires you bring together two components before the Industry makes any. The amount made is always equal to the number of cars used in its construction, so that two Steel and one Tires makes 3 Autos. All in one Routes are most similar to Extended Simple Routing, above, in that you go around, collecting all the components of the final product and bring them together at the same time with the same train.

Advantages: Usually relatively simple as these kinds of cargoes are concerned; everything is

handled on one route, and you can assign as many trains as you want to it. Since you know the route is going to be long, you can often purchase several engines at a time, keeping your train list a little more organized.

Disadvantages: Potentially a lot of deadheading involved, made worse because you are usually carrying a lot of Freight while doing it, and reducing the distance to travel to the place of sale, which reduces your revenues. (Remember that cargoes are "from" the last station they pulled out of, not where they actually were generated.) When this happens, you need even more engines to make up all the deadheading.

Best Usage: When your component Freights are in close proximity, preferably at the same stations. To illustrate the Auto chain again, it is ideal to have Rubber, Iron, and Coal close together, run them on the same train to the Steel Mill, which ideally will also have the Tire Factory there too, then run the Steel and Tires to the Auto Factory to get your Autos. In practice, you will probably have to stop for each component, and the Steel Mill and Tire Factory probably won't be in the same city either.

Station Keeping: Red light all your Resources, and everything else should be Green. Just keep in mind when you're combining things that you can only get 6 cars on your train, so if you had to make Food out of Steel and Produce or Coffee, you wouldn't want to carry more than one each of Coal and Iron for every two Produce or Coffee. This may lead to a Resource imbalance, requiring you to either ship more Steel and not get Food out of the Cannery, or use the excess to make Goods or some other thing that needs Steel.

COMBINED CARGOES – SPLITTING THE ROUTES: When Combination Cargoes are too complicated for you to run in a simple manner, you must break them up into smaller, simpler routes. The simplest illustration is a train carrying Coal and another carrying Iron, meeting at a Steel Mill to make Steel. Both trains carry away some Steel, possibly to the same or different places.

Advantages: Less deadheading, and generally simpler, even though it may require multiple trains to complete a full chain. You should be able to group together trains from the same chain into a single set of purchases, simplifying your train list. Also, most trains will be making money on each leg from each car carried, instead of carrying cars that just sit on the train.

Disadvantages: Sometimes, one sub-chain will be longer than another, requiring more engines for one than the other, which may complicate things. Also, if poorly timed, some trains will sit and wait for long periods. While not as bad as deadheading, it can be bad if the delays are long.

Best Usage: When sources of resources are too far apart to collect together efficiently. Generally, you want the trains to carry away as many cars of the new stuff as they brought in of the old stuff.

Station Keeping: Not only the Resources, but also the finished product needs to be Red lighted, so that you have neither empty trains nor bunches of Freight rotting away due to over-creation.

COMBINED CARGOES – DEAD DROP ROUTING: Sometimes it's easier to have a train drop off one resource continually, and then have another one bring in the other component and take away the finished goods; particularly when there are several steps to combine into the final product. For instance, one train might bring in Produce to a Cannery, just dropping it off and

running back for more. Later, a train carrying Steel comes in and carries away twice as much Food as it brought in Steel.

Advantages: Allows you to dump cargoes off even when you don't have anything yet to finish the product.

Disadvantages: One or two engines often deadhead, depending on the chain, and you must remember not to bring in more of the second resource than you can carry away of the finished product. Generally, this means not to bring in more than 3 of something, but if one train is dead dropping Steel at the Auto Plant, the train with the Tires better bring in only two cars of Tires, or you're going to be leaving a lot of Autos behind to rot.

Best Usage: Great for when your resources are too spread out, and you can avoid deadheading on the dead dropping trains. Also great for when you only have one component and need to get rid of it; those stored components don't seem to go away, so you can later bring in the other component once you get some and treat it like a straight Simple Route.

Station Keeping: The deadheading train will Red light on the resource and Green on the dead drop, while the other train will Red on the Resource AND on the secondary source, just in case the first train isn't doing its job fast enough. Alternately, you could Yellow light this if you anticipate one train being faster than the other and having to store finished Cargoes at a station for a little while.

COLLECTING CARGOES: Sometimes you have to run to several stations and pick up a lot of the same cargo to deliver to one place, such as running to several Ports to pick up something that comes in only once a year, and deliver them somewhere.

Advantages: Need only one engine instead of several, if the Resource is coming in slowly enough. The train spends its time moving instead of sitting.

Disadvantages: All deadheading except for the last one or two stops. Also, if you're not observant (or new industries appear), you might accidentally sell the cargo you're collecting, since cargoes are always sold if demanded.

Best Usage: When you have several slow producers and especially when the distance to travel is fairly short. Generally, you want to collect from the point closest to the destination and travel outward, to maximize the payment for long distance hauling. Also quite useful when the only place to take a Resource is to an industry in the same city; you have to get it out of there, you may as well pick up some more on your way.

Station Keeping: Generally you want to Red light all stops except the last, and you may want to adjust your flags to not sell.

STOCKPILING: When you drop cargoes off to be picked up by a later train (utilizing the Red Flag), you are Stockpiling. This is done to place cargoes in a more convenient location, typically when the inconvenient location is a mountain.

Advantages: Allows a slow mountain train to gather cargo for a fast, flatland train, speeding up operations considerably over using just one engine or the other, and therefore it should require fewer engines.

Disadvantages: Sometimes a bit complicated, it's related to Dead Dropping Combined Cargoes. This may result in delays from the fast train as it awaits the slow one to drop off its cargo.

Additionally, no station is going to hold more than 15 cars of anything; this is like 2 and a half trains, so be careful!

Best Usage: Most often used to allow a mountain train, like the 3-Truck Shay or the Big Boy, to go into the mountains and grab a lot of cargo and drop it off in a lowland station where a fast train can pick it up and run the whole route. Can also be used as a means of reducing traffic in a high-traffic area, or to pool together components to a Combination Freight run.

Station Keeping: The gathering trains should be Red at the resource and Green at the drop point. The running trains should be Red at this station, or even Yellow if the timing is more important than the quantity. Don't forget to set your drop flags properly, or you'll accidentally sell cargoes instead of just dropping them!

A word about spreading the love: You will probably be sorely tempted to create a single route and just run it in perpetuity. You can do that. However, there will come a time later in the game where you will have either so much freight from a source or your route will be so long, that multiple trains are required to keep up with it. Your natural inclination is to just copy a route that works. FIGHT THAT INSTINCT. Add a little variety. Frex, say you have two Sugar plantations, and you take the Sugar to a Bakery, and then bring the Food right back, but the distance is far enough that you need two trains to keep up with it. (Maybe you're delivering Fertilizer; if so, good!) You could just carry all those cars back and forth, but that creates a glut in both cities, and reduces your income significantly.

Ever notice how your first few carloads earn a lot of money, and then later, you can't seem to stay afloat even in Boom times? Instead of just sending it all to the same place, after you make that pickup, if you have a second bakery to take that Sugar to, take it there! For one, it will reduce the traffic on your main route, for another, the new route might be longer (and intrinsically worth more), and for a third, this new city has a higher demand for the Sugar. Wham, you just made more money without much effort! On top of everything else, now you have another industry you can buy!

But don't stop there! Food goes to any Town or City, so if you have another Town or City near the source of the Sugar (or the Chemicals you're making the Fertilizer from), take it there instead. Now you are feeding TWO cities and not saturating either of them; both cities will pay more!

The income difference between a Demand of 0 and a Demand of 1 is HUGE, and it means you can afford to deadhead a reasonable distance if you just allow those Demand indicators to get off 0, and you do that by allowing more time to elapse between deliveries to a given location. This is the difference between barely getting by in Boom times and doing very well for yourself during a Depression. No, really, it's that powerful.

Train Speed Factors

There are a LOT of things that affect what speeds your trains travel at. Don't take the listed top speed for granted. I know you've read that time and time again, but it's true, and you have to break that habit and think a little bit.

TOP SPEED: It seems rather obvious that an engine with a higher top speed can outrun a engine with a lower one, but this is not always the case. In fact, this is often not the case at all. Read on!

CARGO CARRIAGE: You must consider the load that the engine is going to be put to use pulling. Generally, this is 3-5 cars - toward the lower end for older, weaker engines (even as few as 2 for the earliest) and toward the higher for newer, stronger engines. (Six cars is doable by the late 1800's, but often not desirable.) Some cars weigh more than others too, and the weight differences are not always what I would call logical. In general, choose an engine which has a higher top speed at the expected load. If you have to look up what the weight of the loaded cars are going to be, then do that; just right-click on a car to see its loaded weight.

HILLINESS OF ROUTE: The second major factor in reducing a train's speed is how hilly the route is. If the train will run on a fairly flat route, then you can look to the 0% Grade line as your guide to the fastest. It gets trickier when hills are involved. If there are a lot of hills, choose the engine that will do the best at the expected load on the worst part of the run. If you're going to be hauling 5 cars over a 6% grade somewhere, choose an engine which does this best; even the 3-Truck Shay can outperform a Maglev in the mountains. If the route is mostly flat, but has a couple hills, then you will have to balance high-grade performance with low-grade distance. Trains can retain some inertia, which can sometimes allow a train to climb a hill right after coming down another one, BUT DON'T RELY ON IT. Your trains can get stopped in the middle by other trains, and then have to climb out the hard way, and meanwhile they block everyone else, forcing THEM to climb the hard way too.

CURVES AND BRIDGES: Every time a train has to go around a curve or over a non-stone bridge, it has to slow down to do it, while any part of the train is on that curve or bridge. ALL trains will slow down for curves, and the more cargo you are carrying, the more you will slow down. This effect is very similar to going up a grade, in that good haulers are slowed less than poor ones, but near as I can tell, it's not calculated with the Grade formula.

TRAIN LENGTH: Longer trains take longer to go over bridges or curves, and also take more time to get out of the station, blocking other trains or being blocked longer. Of course, short trains mean there are more of them, but at least they're faster. Short trains are best in high-density areas, and long trains are best in low density areas, but this is often not possible to control, or it must be tweaked as the railroad matures.

ACCELERATION OF ENGINE: Few people realize how important this is to travel speed of a train. A train that has to slow down to go around a curve, cross a bridge, climb a hill, stop for another train, or stop at a station must accelerate up again. The worse the acceleration, the longer this takes. It is possible for poor accelerators on poorly designed layouts to NEVER reach even half their top speed for a given load, even when the legs of the route are otherwise sufficiently long to allow it. I daresay it's possible to have one train with a top speed of 40 outrun another with a top speed of 60 if the faster train has 2 or more levels worse acceleration and the route is sufficiently curvy or busy. Unfortunately, there's no formula I can give you to figure out which engine is best for a given route; you'll just have to trial-and-err your way into sufficient experience to make a good guess, and don't be afraid to replace an engine that isn't doing what you need it to with one that will.

DISTANCE TO TRAVEL AND TRAFFIC: A train that has a very short distance to travel may never get to its top speed, even if it has good acceleration. If the route has a lot of traffic on it, the train may stop a lot, having to get back up to speed again. This is especially painful to trains that have poor acceleration.

Placement of Train Support Buildings

First off, if you have no steam engines, you don't need Water Towers.

Otherwise, AT A MINIMUM, you should have them at every other station on or along a train's route. Longer legs may require going through other stations that have Water Towers built there (even if it's a station solely for supporting trains on extremely long runs (a waystation)). They are cheap enough that in the later part of the game, when you have plenty of money, it is no big deal to have a water tower at ALL stations; eventually you may have so many trains dealing with new routes that you manage to miss your established water towers completely, so it's not a bad idea to water the whole route once you can afford to. The hillier the route, the more Water towers you'll need due to the longer times of travel required, but it's not real bad. Keep an eye out to see if you need extras.

Sand is needed mostly when you have hills. Even flat maps require SOME sand, and on flat maps you can usually get away with having only one Sand Tower every 3 or 5 stations. But when you've got hills, it's a good idea to have sand all around the parts of your track that go over the hills, and in some extreme cases you may need to build stations solely for the purpose of re-sanding a train in the middle of a long climb. Luckily, it's also cheap enough that, once you've got some money, it's not a big deal to put sand everywhere.

Roundhouse needs are dependent on the reliability of your engines. In the early years, engines are fairly unreliable, and need a roundhouse at about every 2-3 stations, depending on your particular layout. In general, the distance between roundhouses should not exceed about 2 screenwidths at normal Zoom (zoom3) for unreliable engines, or even less for very unreliable ones. Keep in mind the routes of your trains and how far they're going. For very reliable trains, you can get away with having just a single roundhouse somewhere along its route, but since you're likely to have several routes, you will probably need 2 or 3 of them even on a small layout. A given engine can usually go about 2 years without needing a Roundhouse, but this varies based on reliability and how much work the engine does.

ALL Station buildings cost money to maintain. These costs seem invisible since you're not told about them, and indeed, I didn't learn about them until recently (like August 2009?), but they show up in your ledger. I haven't experimented to find out the cost, but the important thing to remember is, unless you're making tons of money, don't be haphazard with new support buildings. It's okay to splurge when you need the coverage, but buying roundhouses in every station is probably NOT a good idea, nor is buying any other thing you don't have at least some use for.

Other notes

STATIONS WITH TWO INDUSTRIES TAKING THE SAME CARGO: Suppose you have a city with a Cannery, an Auto Assembly Plant, and a Tool and Die Shop, and you bring in a load of Steel. What happens? Most of the time, it appears that the cargo is split as evenly between the industries as possible, but this is not always the case. It appears that you have four choices:

1. avoid taking that Cargo to that city
2. bulldoze the industries you don't want to use (and keep an eye out for new ones popping up - they do that)
3. create subordinate stations that each serve only the desired industry, or
4. split the whole city up into parts with multiple stations.

WHEN TO SINGLE-TRACK: Most of the time, you need Double-track, but now and then you

can get away with Single-track. When traffic is only going to go in one direction, or there will never be two trains on that part of the line at the same time, you can Single-track. Doing this costs less money initially and costs less in maintenance. I don't know how long to tell you it has to be kept in operation, but there will come a point where the savings on maintenance will equal the difference you would've paid for Double-tracking, at which point it has "paid for itself". (I estimate this point to be in the 2-4 year range.) If you know this area is going to be expanded soon, then don't Single-track unless funds are extremely tight, like at the beginning of the game.

If you set up your Layout such that it resembles a circle, it is possible to use single track for the entire length of this route, assuming you set all your trains to always go around the ring in the same direction at the same time. This is great for clusters of small cities which have few or no Resources or Industries you can take advantage of and you can set up a Circular route for your Passenger trains. This is also good for small spurs and sidings where only one train comes in, because it produces too slowly in comparison to how fast the train moves. However, because you can double the throughput of a station by running trains straight through in both directions, it usually pays to have double track at least around such stations.

At the very beginning, if you have only just enough money to build a single track to join your two starting cities, you can get away with single track for about the first year or so, until production and delays force you to spend your money upgrading your track.

When you're trying to find a route through the mountains, single-tracking initially can save some money, then when you've got the hard parts of the route built, go ahead and double it up if you're going to run multiple trains through it.

And lastly, on any route where you're using dead drops or just a single engine on that route, you don't need the expense of double track, especially through mountains.

But for the most part, you're going to want to double-track. When in doubt, double-track.

WHEN TO USE ELECTRIC ENGINES: Electric track costs about double non-electric track to build and maintain, and Electric engines are usually more expensive to buy. The later engines are fast and reliable, and so are useful when you want to move Passengers around long distances quickly, but they are very expensive. (Shifting Passengers short distances quickly is NOT worth it! You will go bankrupt running a Bullet train between Chicago and Milwaukee!) To offset the costs of getting into Electric, the engines tend to require significantly less fuel and sometimes less maintenance.

You cannot effectively enter the Electric arena unless you've got a lot of money sitting idle, and preferably when the GG1 is available; this engine the **THE SHIZNIK**. A great combination of speed, pulling power, and good Grade handling ability, plus it almost never breaks down and isn't all that expensive as Electric and Diesel engines go. You need the large amount of idle cash to convert your rails to electric, since you're unlikely to start with enough money to start electric from the beginning. (Doing that is folly anyway; it takes you forever to turn enough profit for

your first expansions.)

The first things you should electrify are your Passenger lanes. Electric engines tend to be faster than the other types, and putting this speed to work ferrying Passengers long distances quickly will allow you to convert the rest of your Passenger lines. Freight is a different matter. Some freights are perfectly happy on slow trains, some will do fine on moderately speedy Diesels, but some really want you to make use of speed, and for them, you'll want to electrify their routes. You MAY want to keep things simple and just electrify your whole route over the course of the game, and that way you can be sure that any trains you add in the future will always be able to run on any part of your track without getting stuck or being forced to take the long way around. That's right, once you go Electric, go all the way as soon as you can manage, and stay that way.

Also, be wary of accidentally missing electrifying a single cell somewhere; ALWAYS zoom in close enough to see the electric wires, to be sure the whole route is electrified, and when in doubt, lay it again, because it doesn't cost anything but a couple seconds of time.

Additional Strategies I never promised I'd reveal

STARTING UP YOUR COMPANY: I assume you want to run a railroad and not just do the Stock Market-only route. So, invest every bit of money you've got, and get as much public funding as that allows you. (I've never seen a scenario where this wasn't a good idea.) Now, with all your money and your game started, PAUSE and SAVE the game.

Look around in some of your favorite areas on the map and see if you've got the makings of a starter railroad. If you don't, restart the scenario, SAVE again, and look again until you DO find something you can work with. Once you've got that, start up your company and look immediately at the manager you've got and the ones available. If you can find someone like Ames Oakes, who gives you a higher credit rating, you might want to get him if you need to take out a Bond right away. (Most of the time, you need a Bond.) Also look for people who will give you a discount on the three things you need to start a railroad: Stations, Track, and Engines. Track is probably the least important of the three, at least in the beginning, when you're not going to build a lot of it for a while. (Exception: If building in mountainous areas, you need someone who makes that cheaper! You might also want someone who helps with bridges if you HAVE TO build a bridge; otherwise, try to do without the bridge until you have money to burn.) If you cannot find a decent manager to help you out within 2 or 3 firings, consider reloading your saved game. Now, this doesn't mean you have to have all these guys or your game is a bust. You can play just fine without any of them, so don't spend ALL FREAKIN' DAY trying to get the perfect manager combo.

I'll forgo the obvious stuff and get to what matters: what makes a tenable starting rail line? Well, having a pair of big cities near each other isn't a bad start, as the initial loads of Passengers and Mail should give you enough money for a second line, but you'd BETTER have a place to build

that second line, or otherwise you may get screwed; Passengers/Mail alone are rarely a good way to run a rail line due to their irregular (but usually low) level of supply and easy oversaturation of the destinations. (Sounds contradictory, I know, but it's actually not.)

So that leaves industrial trafficking as your money maker, right? Well, pretty much, yes. What you want is an industry that has 2 or 3 links, and little to no deadheading. Good industry chains include: Sugar to Food. Sometimes this can be done with 2 cities, and sometimes requires 3. Another one would be if you had say an Orchard and a Cannery in two neighboring cities, so that a train need only run Produce back and forth. Note that in this chain, no Food gets created, so there's nothing extra to ship, but later on, you might find a nice source of Aluminum or Steel. But, having just a single Produce and a single Cannery would not be profitable enough on its own. And if you're going to create something (like say Food out of Sugar) you'd better have a place to ship it, otherwise you're losing money.

Naturally, the best tack is to try and do both: get a pair of cities where you can swap some Passengers and Mail for a quick initial boost to your income, and a more steady and reliable source of income in an industrial route. And since most industry chains end at a city, you've got to have one or two of them somewhere, so a combination approach tends to work the best. This DOES require you buy at least 2 trains (often 3 or 4) to start out with, or at least within the first year. And often you can get away with building only 1 out of a necessary 2 legs for an industry if you're going to get a bit of a cash surge from a quick passenger run to build the other one before that industrial train needs it. Or sometimes you can skimp on buying a train you need for a run, until both you have the money and there is a load of cars waiting. But take care to build the necessary station buildings to reduce rot, so that you don't actually lose anything.

BUYING UP INDUSTRIES: Do it! Of course, when you're starting out, you have better uses for that money, and you probably can't afford to buy anything anyway, but keep an eye out for industries you're servicing; within a year or two of you servicing them, they should start to become profitable, and once they do, you need to buy them before someone else buys them out from under you! Naturally, you should plan in advance what industries you're going to service, and work to accrue the money to get them as soon as you can afford to. But do not buy an industry you don't need, or one that isn't making money, and be ready to sell off an industry that's no longer turning a profit. (Tip: Industries that stop turning a profit usually occur because they're not being serviced any more. If someone buys an industry you're using before you can, if you stop servicing it, the industry will eventually stop making money, and often will start COSTING money to own. Alternately, if you're servicing an industry and the next one in the chain disappears (because they occasionally do that when they're not owned), you could see a loss. It's a good idea to buy an industry you're relying on!)

If you see another player is DEFINITELY servicing an industry, and you have the money available, BUY IT! Let them do the work to make you rich! Of course, you should have a preference for industries whose supply or demand you directly control, because once a player sees you're making money off his hard work, he may rearrange his routing to bypass that industry and then it will instead drain you of money, so this will require a bit more participation

on your part to be sure you're not losing money.

Computer players will wait until the industry becomes profitable before buying, so you've got a little leeway. Humans might buy them up just as soon as they see you're intending to use them.

There are 3 basic types of industries: Suppliers, Converters, and Demanders.

Suppliers supply new cars without any help from you. Most of them demand Enhancers, which will increase their output, but they always put out. Suppliers remain profitable so long as you can keep their station empty, so you may want to delay buying one of these until you can see that it is indeed making a profit, or you know you can ship its goods consistently.

Demanders only demand things, and never give anything back. These industries are about the safest to buy, because they rarely lose money, and need only a minimal amount of incoming goods to make them happy. Note that cities and Military Depots are Demanders that you cannot buy; whenever possible, ship your cargo to a place that can be bought so you can make money. Frex, in the early game, you can ship Coal straight to Cities. If you have a Power Plant somewhere, ship it there instead and buy the Power Plant. (Later, when Waste becomes available, you can extend the chain to a Landfill.)

Converters require you to bring 1 or 2 things together, and then they make something out of that for you to haul away, and always in equal carloads to what was brought in. (Exception: Waste. 3 Coals or 3 Diesels make 1 Waste, 1 Uranium makes 2 Waste.) Converters are also fairly safe to buy, and they can turn a small profit even if you don't haul away anything from them, so long as they are supplied now and then. Of course, you'll make the maximum profits if you haul in stuff for it to convert, then haul away what it produces. Frex, it can be very enriching to ship Coal to a Steel Mill, even if you don't have the Iron to make Steel. Later, if you DO get the Iron, it's still got all that Coal waiting to be combined!

If you click on an industry, you can see how well it's doing. If you don't own it, the most information you get is a general rating. ALL industries start out at Good. Don't buy a "Good" industry unless you're sure it's going to make a profit... generally because YOU are servicing it. Otherwise, wait until its level has improved. (Tip: This is especially true of computer-serviced industries. It's very rare they service one, and you need to check it every few years to make sure they're still servicing it.)

If you own the industry, you get information about how much money it's making. In your head, you should convert this to a percentage to see how well it's doing. Generally, a Supplier is maxed out if it's giving you about 20% of its purchase value in profits a year, a Demander is maxed out at about 25%, and a converter is maxed out at around 30%, but I've seen higher. If your Suppliers are themselves supplied with Enhancers, their profits can go up even higher, since they are effectively now Converters. If you manage to max out an industry, chances are real good that the demand at that station is at about 0 or 1, and therefore you're getting very little money for each carload. DON'T oversaturate an industry if you don't have to, keep Demand at at least a 1; this makes you MORE money than your industry profits!

Industries are powerful cash cows because they allow you to get money on BOTH the sale of the carload, AND the year-end profits.

You should keep an eye on your station demand levels, and if they're dipping too low, you should try to find a new place to send excess cargo. The ideal mix of year-end profit and demand level is probably to ship about 4-6 conversions-worth of goods. For example, in a city with an Automobile factory, you can probably get the most money out of shipping in 8-12 Steel and 4-6 Rubber, and shipping out the resultant 12-18 Autos. Much less than that, and you won't max out your profit, but much more than that and your demand level will drop to nothing. The exact amount of shippage depends on the industry involved, of course, and if you have a station with two of the same industry (or two which can otherwise be serviced by one train) then your demand AND year end profits will be effectively doubled. Demand MIGHT also be affected by demand downstream, but I don't have any proof of this. Frex, if you have lots of cities you're taking Autos to, then the demand for Steel and Rubber at an Auto Plant should stay high, and so you might make lots of money off a single Plant, whereas if you don't have as many cities to take Autos to, then their demand goes down, and you'll need to have a second Auto Plant for the same level of profit off your Steel and Rubber.

One last note of import: Buy industries AFTER your quarterly dividend payouts, preferably just before the end of the year. This means October and November are the best months to buy them. Buying them just before the payout may mean you don't have enough cash left over to pay out your dividend, dropping it and lowering the value of your company's stock. Also, by the end of the year, you should be able to tell if you're sending in enough freight or not, and you get the full profits from it no matter what part of the year you bought it. So you can ship to a nuclear power plant like gumbusters, buy the plant in December, and still make a quarter million in profits!

Oh, one more last note. More of a reminder, really. Whenever possible, buy the more expensive industries because they give the largest dollar return. Frex, if you can afford to buy a Nuclear Plant, it's better to buy that first than buy the 2 or 3 Uranium Mines supplying it first. One good year's profit on that Plant will pay for the Mine. OTOH, if you have opponents in a buying mood, they will be more easily able to afford to buy cheap industries to get a piece of the pie, and so you might have to snap those up first.

DEMAND: Cities have a Demand rating from 0 to 9. Most of them start out in the 3-6 range, and getting higher requires 2 Industries or an awful lot of houses, depending on the Demand. Higher demands mean you make higher profits when you ship goods to that city. You already knew that, but you probably don't understand why your first railroad makes half a ton of money the first year, and hardly anything after that. It's simply the Demand level is getting saturated, going down to 0, and you don't make any money on the sale.

The Demand indicator for a good will go down approximately 1 level per 2 cars delivered, and go back up approximately 1 level per 6 months. I haven't done any testing to determine the actual values, and there may be more factors involved, and it seems to also depend on the cargo. When you make a large delivery, and then continually deliver lots of loads in a short amount of time,

you will keep the Demand level at 1 or 0, and make almost nothing on the delivery. (If you own the Industry there, you'll make back part of what you're losing, making ownership of Industries important.)

The solution is to spread your deliveries out as much as practical.

A lot of the time, you want to spread something out to at least two cities. If you have a single train able to keep up with the Producer, then you probably want to give the train two destination cities, alternating between them. Essentially, your route will look like Wool > TMill1 > Town1 > Wool > TMill2 > Town2, where Wool is the Producer, TMill1 and TMill2 are two different Textile Mills, and Town1 and Town2 are two different Towns. The train then deadheads after delivering the Goods to get more Wool. Note that one of the Towns could be the same Town the Wool is picked up at, removing one of the deadheads. But the point is, in this instance, the Wool goes to 2 different Textile Mills, the Goods go to 2 different Towns, the Demand indicators don't go down too quickly, and the Wool is all getting picked up and isn't rotting away.

BONDS: Until you've got enough income rolling in, take every opportunity to issue Bonds, while saving Stock issuances for when you're just a bit shy of doing something important. Don't go hog-wild on Bonds, of course, but it's okay to have 3 or 4 of them at high interest rates when you're just starting out, because the surges of money you get from the initial connections to new cities will easily outstrip the money lost to interest. For every Bond you have, you should try to keep an emergency reserve of cash of about \$50,000; more than that, and you can be putting that money to work making money, less than that and you might not have enough to cover a lean quarter and pay out your dividends. Once the interest rates drop, though, refinance! The fee to get or pay off a Bond is 2%, so that means that in two years, the savings from a 2% reduction in interest will equal the fee of paying off the old Bond and getting a new one! If the interest rate gets to 5% (or less in rare circumstances) immediately refinance all your Bonds, and feel free to have up to 10 of them at that rate! You're going to want to pay them off, of course, but while your railroad is still growing, you're going to be making money a lot faster than you'll be paying it in interest, but later on, when things have settled down, your income isn't growing as fast, and you need to get rid of the bonds. Having about 4 or 5 at 5% is probably easily manageable in any game.

I have seen in someone else's strategy guide that they implore you to AVOID Bonds like the plague, citing that they are simply a waste of money. I guarantee you that a player who issues a proper number of Bonds is going to out-build and financially outstrip the crap out of a player who patiently waits for the money to come in and avoids debt, EVERY TIME, and the debt-fearing player will find his railroad getting taken over and destroyed before he knows what happened.

STOCK MARKET: Man, this is the trickiest part of the game to master. I would be surprised to find someone who could consistently beat out other players AND avoid losing his shirt in a downturn. The only way to be sure you won't lose your shirt is to NEVER go into debt... or to

keep your debt to a bare minimum. But, just like always avoiding Bonds is a bad idea, always avoiding Margin is also a bad idea if you want to own your company... and everyone else's.

The base price of a Stock depends on two things: the computed value of the company and the current economic state. The computed value is simply the total value of your railroad – including trains, rails, stations, cash, and debts – divided by the number of shares that exist. This is the Book Value per Share. Next, the state of the economy is factored in, such that Normal means no modification, and each state better or worse than this is a +/- 10 or 20% shift. All else being equal, the Stock Price will tend to drift toward this value – but all else is seldom equal.

There are a number of influencing factors that adjust the final Stock Price up or down, but Profit appears to be the most important one, Dividend is somewhat important (as it depends on profit), and Goodwill may have a small effect.

Because company value is so important, the most ready way to increase the value of your stock is to increase your cash. If you buy stuff, it costs what it costs (unless you have someone who gives a discount or penalty to the price of stuff, and then the cost may be slightly different), so in general, buying stuff doesn't change the value of your company. However, you must be careful not to spend so much that you cannot pay your monthly operating fees or your quarterly Dividend. Also, if you "buy" back a Bond, the processing fee will reduce the value of your company. Likewise, selling a new Bond will also decrease your value. Retiring or upgrading trains means a loss in the short term because the old train just plain disappears, but if it's a train that was costing you a lot of money, then over the long term it will be a gain. Selling an industry you've bought is a loss, because you sell it at half its value. And of course, bulldozing is a loss in the short term because that track or station just disappears, but over the long run, if it was costing you more money than it was gaining you, it will be a gain. And of course, all those monthly fees themselves reduce your company value. The only thing that really increases it is trains arriving and you getting paid for that.

Adjusting your Dividend can be a way of giving your Stock Price a small boost, but be careful to ensure that you have the money to pay it! If the board lowers the Dividend for you, it tends to be a little worse than if you lower it yourself, plus don't forget that you've just paid out all that money and now your company is worth less than before the payout.

So, over the short term, you can't do much to improve your stock value, but there's a lot of stuff you can do to erode it (including halting your trains).

Now, while you might be able to make a killing on the Stock Market by lining up a lot of trains and stopping them all before they reach their destinations, and holding them for a year, and do the consequent actions needed on the Stock Market to make this all happen, your railroad is going to be losing money both short and long term, and that's going to mean your stock manipulation strategy isn't going to pay off as well as you might like. I'd only do this if it was the only way to get someone who had a lot of my stock into debt, so they have to sell it off.

When you have only a little stock, like less than 10% of a given company, you're fairly safe from sudden downturns in the market. But when you have a lot of stock, even as little as 50% of a company, even little downturns can send your broker into a panic, and then each share you sell drops the price and gets you deeper into debt instead of pulling you out of it, and you quickly lose your shirt. And if you're at 100% ownership, you don't even have the option of having the company issue Bonds and buying back shares to raise the price so you can sell some without your broker being a PITA. So you must be careful about how much debt you go into.

The amount of debt you can "safely" get into is measured by your Purchasing Power, but your Personal Cash also plays a factor. While stocks tend to go up, especially in the first year or two of a company's existence, or after a new leg has been added to the line, there are also dips. If not for those dips, it would be perfectly safe to expend the whole of your Purchasing Power, but stock prices go down too, and you can't buy too much without getting a major problem when the values drop.

In general, if your Purchasing Power exceeds your negative Personal Cash, you should be safe, but the economy can crash very fast sometimes. Any time the economy changes, you should check out your stocks to be sure you're still safe. If the economy seems to be taking a downturn, you should sell off stock that you can do without, or you may be forced to sell it at a bigger loss later. (Of course, if your safety margin is too low, selling may drop you over the line! Don'cha just love it?!)

Generally, be wary of buying a lot of stock when the economy is Booming, because the only place the economy can go is down. Early in the game, it's not as big a deal simply because you can't buy enough stock that soon for it to matter, but if the Boom lasts a long time, you may have a lot of stock by the time it comes back down, and then you're going to lose.

You'd think that a Depression would be the perfect time to buy up stock, because the economy has nowhere to go but up, but don't be fooled! An extended Depression means your stations are generating fewer cars, which means your trains are either running with fewer loads or are making fewer runs. Some trains might be effectively unused because the stations aren't producing as much as they did when the economy was Booming. And of course, your bills don't go down all that much, so with this smaller income, your company's value is going to decrease, and that means your Purchasing Power is going to decrease, and if you've spent it all snapping up the latest bargain, you're going to get stuck and then your competitors will be able to snap up all that stock you have to dump to keep from going bankrupt. So just because you're in a Depression doesn't mean you should snap up stocks. Wait 'til the economy improves a little, THEN start snapping it back up, because it's highly likely to rise further and further. Just be sure you don't buy too much that you can't sell it when it starts coming back down again.

There are a few Managers who have an effect on the Stock Market. These people, when they're hired, reduce the value of YOUR STOCK ONLY. Essentially, they make it cheaper to buy YOUR STOCK. Why would you want these guys? Obviously, when you want to buy some of your own stock! Some of you may think you see a neat trick right now: sell some of your stock, then hire one of these guys, buy it back, fire the guy, sell, and repeat if possible. In general, this

isn't worth the effort; the gain will tend to be small, and thanks to the exchange fees, you're more likely to lose money than gain it. Give it a try some time and you'll see it's just folly.

When should you Sell Short? I don't know, but I know it's rarely of use, and any time I've found the opportunity to do it, I wasn't allowed to. The computer will Short Sell your stock sometimes, and you can use this offensively: simply buy up all your stock, and they are forced to buy back at the higher value, then you can sell it back and try to snare them again. You can only afford to do this if you already have a lot of money.

Common Misconceptions About the Game's Mechanics

Recently I've discovered that there are still a few active RT2 sites and forums, and they seem filled with people not understanding how the game works; some things about the game seem to me to be basic understandings, but if people can make these mistakes, then I guess not, so I thought I'd try to clear up some of them. Please remember that if you're not using the latest version and patches, some of these might possibly not apply.

The computer player plays fairly. Of course it does..... NOT! The computer pretty much only runs Passengers and Mail, and avoids other goods as much as possible; it's rare it will have any other cargo. The computer can apparently take these cargoes and get full value anywhere. Even on those rare occurrences when the computer can make legal chains, they rarely succeed in doing it, so buying computer-fed industries must be watched carefully. Additionally, computer track layouts are rarely efficient. Despite this, they can still make a lot more money than you can if you're not careful, so be careful!

If I switch Chairmanship of a company and fix their routes, they will stay fixed when I go back to my company. No. When a human is not in control of a company, a computer takes over. That computer doesn't have to worry about the same things humans have to worry about, so while you're away from your company, it will get screwed up. When you come back to it, if you weren't gone too long, enough things may be the same that you're fooled into thinking that everything you set up remained the same, but 99 times out of 100, some changes were made that're gonna creep up on you when you least expect it. As if that wasn't bad enough, all the fixing you did for the computer company will be for naught in a year or two as it goes back to doing things the wrong way. So if you're going to switch companies temporarily, PAUSE THE GAME (and saving it beforehand wouldn't hurt either) and make sure you're controlling your own company before you unpaused it.

What you CAN do, since the AI likes to choose inappropriate locations for stations and often makes them too small so they're not as profitable as they could be, is set them up with what they're good at making a profit. Finding a pair of Towns (or Cities) which aren't too far apart and without difficult terrain between them, and maybe have a simple industry or two, will work well. You build them a new railroad and set the dividend up high and then trust it to do what it does best: make insane profits off of passengers. And buy the industries.

I should never Buy Stock on Margin. Well, that is the only way to be sure you won't go broke, but try something: start a new game and spend the first few years buying as much stock as you possibly can, and pay out as much as you can in dividends. After 5 years (or when the market spans you, whichever comes first), see what your personal value is. Now, go into the scenario editor and make it impossible to buy on margin, and replay for the same length of time and see how much you're worth. A lot less, most of the time. If your scenario depends on you having a large personal fortune, you're not going to get it unless you Buy on Margin. There's risk involved with doing that, though, and the more stock you have, the more risk you're facing, so you must be careful. On top of that, you pay interest on the money you're borrowing, so you NEED dividends to keep you afloat.

I should never get Bonds. Only saw this once, but it was in someone's strategy guide. I commented on this earlier in the document, so I'll summarize: This is a recipe for disaster. You need Bonds to build your initial track, and you also need them to cover when you overbuy on margin (but it DOES cost you, so don't overbuy). Bonds must be used responsibly, or you will lose. You can easily make a higher interest yield than the bond's interest rate, even with a decently-fed industry, but mostly bonds should be used to expand your railroad into new cities, which have high demand values for the first few loads.

If I chair another company, I can build track with it that will benefit MY company. I suppose, but just remember, when you run on another player's track, you pay that player for the privilege; you could wind up paying all the profit (or more) of the run, if you run on too much of their track. Even just crossing over their track, or going to one of their stations can be expensive. Also remember that their trains take priority on their tracks. If you want to do this for just an occasional run, this is probably an acceptable course of action, but if you're making a permanent route, you'll want to build your own track and station. (Tip: the computer companies will tend to suck a city dry of cargo, so don't use the same city industries (or houses) as a source as the computer player, if you can avoid it. I have even seen it steal a load I was converting (like from Wool to Goods), so I try to never use their cities as anything more than destinations. It's been a long time since I bothered; I wouldn't unless the expense was just too great to build my own station.)

What's the deal with the cargo time limitations and stuff? Okay, first, Producers tell you how many cars per year they make. This value changes a bit based on the Economy level, and some can increase if supplied with Enhancers (Farms and Ranches, for instance). These cars will sit there until their "Days to Deliver" timer runs out (should be called "Days to Pickup"). This varies from 300 days for things like Mail and Milk, to 1600 days for things like Grain and Gravel. Some cargoes can have their "Days to Deliver" altered with certain station buildings, but I'm not sure if this is a doubling bonus or the removal of a halving penalty (I believe it's the latter). If you've got a train at the station making a pickup, and waiting for a load, cargoes already on the train DO NOT ROT. It's like they're in suspended animation while the train is waiting for further goods to be picked up. Once it starts rolling, though, the Rot Factor starts to take effect. The higher the cargo's Sensitivity value, the faster it loses value. However, the further you take something, the more it's worth, to the point that taking something twice as far away is generally worth significantly more than double the revenue (though exactly how much, I don't know, and

the speed of the route must be taken into account too). About half the cargoes don't go up a whole lot with this extra distance factor. I'm not sure if the rotted value can be restored by stopping to pick up something else (I'm inclined to believe it does, though), but if you're stopping closer to the destination, you're going to get a smaller income for a shorter haul, since the source city for the cargo gets reset.

What affects my Salary, and should I care? Apparently, doing a good job running your company will get your salary boosted, and having good years may get you bonuses. When the economy goes down, your salary will tend to fall as well. I don't know all the details, but here's some things that you may not realize. When you switch companies (presumably to destroy that company and come back to yours) you will be judged on what you did while you were at that other company, and if you're destroying several at once, you'll get griped at quite thoroughly, and your salary will nosedive to nothing. You'll have to wait a few years before you do it again, or you may get kicked out of chairmanship of your own company, even if you do own the majority. To minimize this effect, do all your banditry in December.

Now, why should you care? The Salary comes out of the company's money, and early in the game, you probably don't have hardly anything coming from your dividends, so the only way you get money to buy stock is with your Salary. Without your salary, you'd take forever to be able to buy additional stock. Since you pay interest when you have negative cash, if you bought on Margin, your debt would increase until your company was strong enough to pay out a large dividend, taking probably several years, during which your company is burning all kinds of money paying out to other shareholders, some of which could be other players. So the Salary is rather critical in the first half of the game, or any time you're low on cash. You are paid 1/12 of your salary per month and 1/4 of your dividends every 3 months. (You also pay 1/12 of your manager's salary every month.) I think Interest is also paid every month, but it might be paid every 3 months; whichever the case, if you're in the black, you earn a little interest, and if you're in the red, you pay a LOT of interest.

I can boost my personal wealth by stopping my trains. The trick is, sell off your initial stock, build your initial railroad, pick up a lot of cargo (as much as you can afford), then get the trains right to the destinations, and stop them just before they get there. Then after a year or two, your stock value will plummet because you're not making any money. Finally, buy up a ton of stock, release the trains, set the dividend as high as possible, and watch the cash flow in. (If you can find a Manager that reduces your stock value, get him so you pay less to buy up.) Perhaps you can do this in the middle of the game too, but I've only heard of doing it at the start. This is actually a bad thing to do. First, and most importantly, you're crippling yourself, because your first years are make-or-break. If you give your opponents that much opportunity to build, they will bury you. (Timid computer opponents might not.) Your salary is going to suffer because you aren't performing, you won't be able to siphon anything from your company through dividends because you have no stock, with the reduced amount of money you have you won't be able to buy up as much stock as you want, the value of the cargoes you're sitting on is decaying to almost nothing so your stock value won't go up much, and if you have any debts or bonds, those are going to rack up too. Even if you're successful and wind up owning more stock than you

otherwise would in that 2 years' time, you sorely tempt other players to buy your stock while it's cheap (raising its value, when you're wanting it to sink) and your company will take longer to build up in value, reducing the value of the stock you finally bought. Besides, what a boring waste of game time!

I have seen someone suggest that the only way he could beat a particular scenario was to do this trick. I haven't had the chance to check out the scenario in question myself to refute it, but I'll bet if the player in question managed his early railroad better, he'd probably solve his problem.

Newer Engines are always better, or, You can't make a profit from modern Engines. Modern diesels and electrics are very expensive, both to buy and to maintain. Is it worth it to buy them? It all depends on how you run your railroad. In earlier parts of the game, the engines are all cheap enough that you can profit from short hauls (say 10 cells or so). The newer engines, though, cost so much to maintain that you can't afford to use them on short runs, you **MUST** use them for longer runs (30 or more cells). Simply replacing your handy dandy Atlantic with a Pacific should show you that you can't use the Pacific to make short runs, you have to use it for long runs. You go broke trying to do short runs. The effect becomes more pronounced when it's time to upgrade to a bullet train.

Why should this be so? Because of the overhead of stopping! It takes a significant amount of time to stop at a station, unload, load, and then get back up to speed. You're paying for all this idle time, so you want to minimize it, and that means making longer runs. One other reason is if you have very busy rails or bad chokepoints, you could wind up with trains having to stop to avoid crashing. It just takes one or two to make a Maglev completely bury you. Maglevs are for racing all the way across the map, 50 to 300 cells should be good for them, if there's no hills. You **CAN** make money off a Maglev, but you have to be smart to do it. No short legs, no hills, minimize curves, and no heavy traffic to stop for. If you have a habit of upgrading your trains as the game progresses, but not doing anything about the routes, your early routes that had a lot of short legs will stop being so profitable because of all the station delays.

More questions as I detect them.

That's all, folks!

I occasionally make minor updates to this document, mostly an attempt to make it more readable, but sometimes I learn that someone's having problems with something, or I discover something new, and add that to this. You could probably check this once a year and keep up to date.

Below are some idle thoughts. As you may not know, RT3 and Sid's new game Railroads seemed to me to be pure crap. Okay, they had a couple good ideas, but mostly, they're crap, and after wasting an hour of my life on each, I came screaming back to RT2P, despite its many imperfections.

What I'd like to see improved about this game

I've seen lots of lists, most made by people with no real understanding of what they're asking for. Since I'm smarter than most such people, I'll tell you what I think would be the best things to improve about this game, stealing the good ideas as I see fit. Some of these ideas could be used to make the next game. On the other hand, there are a handful of freeware versions of some older games out there, like FreeCol mimics Colonization, FreeCiv mimics Civilization, and Explorers mimics Settlers of Catan, and they're free to use. If someone wants to start up such a project for Railroad Tycoon, the following lists are for you.

1. Track laying needs to be improved a little. Allow the player to lay out the track, adjusting it as he sees fit, able to see the grades and all that, and then when he's satisfied with it, he hits an OK button, and the track is built. In addition, it would be nice to have a way to rapidly destroy ONLY track, perhaps with a brush like in the map editor.
2. Cars need to know where they originated from. The current system hampers the usefulness of sending a mountain train to collect from a Supplier and taking it to a place where a faster but less-mountain-worthy train can grab it and take it away. (Note: I did just a bit of experimenting recently, and this "bug" may have been fixed; I still need to do more experimenting.)
3. Allow the player to have the industry he desires be constructed where he wants it. All too often, there are times on a map where there is one extremely inconvenient place (or NO place) to take the hoards of some other freight, like if you've got Rubber Plantations all over South America, but the only Tire Factory is in Cuba (if one even exists). Naturally, this would cost a lot of money. I've also noticed in one of my scenarios that if I start at a certain date, when an industry is "new", eg, Electrical Plants in like 1890, it can sometimes take forever for one to appear, meaning you might have Diesel piling up for a few years, BUT if the game started in 1890, then there are usually sufficient Electrical Plants to handle the Diesel, and I'd like this problem to go away.
4. Allow a player to buy out another player's industry, or at least make an offer for it. Naturally, the new value of the industry should be tracked for when it's bought out again, but this won't affect the sell price if it's just sold off to no one.
5. Allow building of WYE intersections.
6. Allow bridges over track. RRT3 seems to have done this, and it's something needed. If not bridges, then make the 90 degree crossings not interfere with each other; I don't really need to see a train bridge any more than I need to see a tunnel. (Note: there are three ways to make a 90 degree crossing. The one that makes use of crossing at the corners - where no cell has 4-directional track - is the only way to make a "bridge".)
7. I'd also like to see a random map generator, with the ability to specify average levels of hilliness, rivers, water, and so forth. I realize this would be difficult.
8. I'd ALSO also like to see a set of standardized events that could be added or removed from maps. Frex, some random price fluctuations and various status report items that you'd

otherwise not be able to find out except indirectly. Or being able to adjust the likelihood of city connection bonuses. Or being able to alter the effects of economy levels a little.

9. Allow the game to be modded a little more! I'd like to see new industries, new engines, maybe adjust some of the prices or performance values. Some one else thought that owning certain industries should have other in-game effects, like owning a Coal Mine should reduce the costs of running steam engines and such; that'd be a great mod. Maybe more types of station buildings. Let us at it!
10. Let's get rid of the 25% chance that a breakdown is a crash. I have to use the /nowreck switch, and that kills BOTH. Breakdowns aren't so bad, though they could stand to have shorter durations; 6 months is ridiculous. The /nowreck switch could be used literally, to disallow wrecks only. WHEN you have 100 trains, having breakdowns and crashes happens several times a year and gets really ridiculous.
11. Allow the Train List and Station List to be sortable! Stations should be sortable by name, order of construction, industries (both originating and consuming), and cars available to be hauled (both total quantity and by type). Sorting by buildings may be useful as well. Trains should be sortable by purchase date, starting city, starting load, engine type, and current speed (makes it easier to find stopped trains so you can upgrade them without making them stop; also makes it easier to find traffic knots). I might also like a custom sort, which would allow me to drag-n-drop trains or stations to wherever in the list I want them.
12. In that vein, it also needs to be possible to more rapidly upgrade trains. It's rather irritating to have to manually upgrade 100+ trains. (The only thing more irritating than upgrading 100+ trains is trying to find specific ones to alter their routes.)
13. In THAT vein, when a train crashes, I'd like to know what the engine was before, or what the route was, because it often matters what I replace with; I don't want to replace a mountain-climber with a speedster, or vice versa, and there's pretty much no way to tell what you should use. (Note: If I'm not mistaken, there's a workaround: simply decline rebuying the train, then go look for it in your list and double-click on it. Exit the screen and buy your new train, which will be given the same route as the last train you looked at (the crashed one). Cool!)
14. Improve the screen resolution; that is, allow me to run the game at 1600x1200 or 1440x900 if I so desire. This would allow a player to see a lot more of the map at a given time. Fancy new graphics aren't needed (unless added by modders).
15. Make it possible for players that have had their companies taken from them to NOT be able to build a new company. Supposedly there's an option for this in the Editor, but I can't get it to work. It's very frustrating to go to all that effort to kill off the other companies and purge their unholy blights from my map, only to have the player make an all-new one because they didn't go deep enough in the hole to be stuck with negative cash and no way to start a new company.
16. Revamp the Scenario Editor. Events and maps should be easily transferable from one scenario to another. Copy and Paste operations are DESPERATELY needed, as are typing-in abbreviations for variables. Cities need to be allowed to change size due to Events, or even be founded or removed by them; a lot of scenarios take place when some cities come into being half-way through and become huge overnight. (Anchorage, Alaska, is one example of a town that went from founding to metropolis in only a few decades.) Effects need to be calculable, so that a single event can handle things smoothly that

currently require a handful of them to handle in tiers. (Frex, awarding an amount of money per car shipped.) Commands and Variables need to allow shorter names (which the computer can automagically expand to full length for readability purposes), because it's a PITA to have to type some of the longer ones and make sure you spelled everything perfectly and in the right order.

17. Allow editing of trains, including adding them. The train editor needs to be simple, yet powerful enough to reduce unnecessary work. I may want to use the same graphics for several trains, for instance, or the same (or nearly the same) stats. Of course, this will require exposure of the engine performance formulas and variables (you don't think there's a huge list of stats for each engine, do you?), and that might require some effort for us editors to understand, so keep it as simple as possible.

What I don't want to see

There are also plenty of less-than-ideal ideas out there that I disagree with. A few of the more prevalent ones:

1. Tunnels. They sucked for RT1 (except in rare circumstances) and they're really unrealistic most of the time. I know of no tunnels longer than a couple miles, nevermind tunnels that are hundreds of miles. I know a lot of people clamor for them, but they're not needed.
2. Longer trains. I know modern trains can be a mile and a half long, but 6 cars is plenty for this game.
3. Multiple engines. It's nice and simple as it is. On the other hand, there might be a way to develop some kind of helper engine and treat it like a building at a station, but I can't think of a good way to make it work.
4. Requiring me to carry empty cars back to where I got them. OH. MY. GOD. BECKY. Look at that dumb idea!

Document tasks todo:

Make it more readable!

Add pictures to illustrate some concepts.

Other:

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