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# OpenTTD asks people to please stop being mad at Atari for forcing the game off Steam: 'OpenTTD as a project retains its full independence,' and you can still get it for free

**News** By [Andy Chalk](#) published March 20, 2026

OpenTTD developer Owen Rudge says "Atari have worked collaboratively with us," and it also put up some cash to help cover the game's server costs.



(Image credit: OpenTTD)

We warned you last week that [the window was closing on OpenTTD](#), the open source remake of Transport Tycoon Deluxe that was, until quite recently—*we warned you, bro*—available for free on Steam and GOG. The reason, the OpenTTD team explained, was the imminent return of the *real* Transport Tycoon Deluxe, the 1995 business sim developed by Chris Sawyer, which Atari was bringing back as a commercial product.

Sure enough, all happened as it was foretold: Transport Tycoon Deluxe launched, OpenTTD was pulled, and everyone took it about as well as you'd expect, which is to say not well at all. Transport Tycoon Deluxe is currently weighed down with a "mostly negative" user rating on [Steam](#), and reviews helpfully suggesting, for instance, that Atari—and I quote—"can, and

should, eat my entire ass."

That negativity isn't likely to have too much of an impact on Atari's future financial planning—there are only 26 user reviews on Steam and the peak concurrent player count is just 23, so it doesn't appear as though Transport Tycoon Deluxe is flying off the shelves here—but even so, it's causing quite a stir among the small but committed OpenTTD fan base. And now the OpenTTD development team is asking everyone to knock it off, because they say Atari has been very cool about the whole thing, and you can still get the game for free anyway.

"Atari approached us to explain their plans for the Transport Tycoon Deluxe re-release, and what it might mean for OpenTTD," developer Owen Rudge explained in a [new Steam update](#). "They are keen to work with us, and hope that the new release will be welcomed by the community who have been playing OpenTTD for the past 20+ years.

"We discussed these plans, and we understood that a compromise would be needed to balance Atari's commercial interests (which of course they are entitled to pursue as the rights holder) against the availability of a free, well-developed evolution of the game."

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Owen Rudge, OpenTTD dev

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That compromise was to limit access to OpenTTD on Steam and GOG to people who purchase Transport Tycoon Deluxe, while continuing to make the open source version available for free via the [OpenTTD website](#). So yes, OpenTTD is still available for free, just not on Steam or GOG. Rudge said they decided not to pull OpenTTD from those storefronts entirely in order to avoid "unnecessary disruption" for people who'd already claimed it there, and also to help it maintain visibility going forward.

"The OpenTTD project owes a lot—indeed, it owes everything—to Transport Tycoon Deluxe and to Chris Sawyer. Without TTD, there would be no OpenTTD—it's as simple as that," Rudge continued. "As I [covered in 2024](#), OpenTTD started off as a pretty much perfect clone of TTD, and though the game has evolved almost beyond belief since 2004, it is still rooted in the fundamentals of Transport Tycoon Deluxe.

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Atari also agreed to "make a contribution" toward the costs of maintaining OpenTTD's server infrastructure, Rudge added.

I'm not one to hand it to corporations, and there's no question that Atari has a few memorable blemishes on its record: [NFTs](#) is the obvious big one, and I'm still not sure what anyone was thinking about those [hotels](#). (On the other hand, it was a good sport about the whole [Soulja Boy thing](#), which I thought was nice.)

But it seems to have found its footing in more recent years—it's working with [Jeff Minter](#) again, there's a Bubsy game that somehow [might not suck](#), and (this one is actually important) its handling of Nightdive Studios following the [2023 acquisition](#) seems fine, actually—and in this particular instance I'd credit Atari with being more than fair. It's not uncommon for publishers to full-on cease-and-desist projects like OpenTTD to protect their commercial interests, but in this case Atari is allowing OpenTTD to continue to be offered for free, just not on Steam or GOG. It also links to OpenTTD on the Transport Tycoon Deluxe Steam page. That seems pretty damn solid to me.

Not everyone agrees, naturally. Some people in the responses to OpenTTD's update express thanks for the clarity and even a bit of gratitude to Atari for being cool about it, but many others continue to be unhappy with Atari for being "greedy," committing "extortion," or messing with the open source community in some way. There's also a healthy sampling of "f\*\*k Atari" with no further elaboration or supporting commentary.

Rudge acknowledged that some people in the OpenTTD community might still "have strong feelings" about the change, but emphasized that "Atari have worked collaboratively with us, and that OpenTTD as a project retains its full independence."

"Even after reading this, you may still not agree with the choices that we've made, but I would please ask you to share your views respectfully," Rudge concluded. "The Transport Tycoon community has been a source of joy in my own life for well over a quarter of a century, and it would be fantastic for us to be able to continue to enjoy these brilliant games well into the future."

If you want to play Transport Tycoon Deluxe as it was originally envisioned in 1995, you can pick it up for a tenner from [Steam](#) or [GOG](#). If you want the free OpenTTD, which is free, you can get it for free at [openttd.org](https://openttd.org). It remains free.