DIVERSIONS

OpenTTD

Open source hauls the classic *Transport Tycoon Delux* game into the future.

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Written in 1995 by British computer game developer Chris Sawyer, *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* has thousands of fans around the world to this day. Although the game's development ceased a long time ago, *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* continues to live and evolve through *OpenTTD* (http://www.openttd.org), an open-source version of the original game. *OpenTTD* takes over where *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* left off and adds a wealth of improvements and new features, including bigger maps, new and significantly improved artificial intelligence (AI), support for more than 24 languages, a reworked airport system, an autorail build tool, improved terraforming and even a dubious ability to bribe the town authority. These are only a few picks from the steadily growing list of *OpenTTD*'s new features and improvements.

    OpenTTD's game play remains the same though. It's 1950, you have $100,000 in your pocket, and you've got 100 years to build a prosperous transport company. To achieve this ambitious goal, you build roads, railways, airports and ports that you use to move goods, mail and passengers to earn money. As the years go by and the money starts rolling in, you can buy faster vehicles, bigger airplanes and ships. Building a successful company also means dealing with competitors and local authorities, and *OpenTTD* gives you an opportunity to play against other players or its own AI engine.

    OpenTTD requires some data files from the original game, so you must have a copy of *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* either on diskettes or CD-ROM. The good news is that you can buy a copy of the game cheaply on eBay. Like any Linux application, *OpenTTD* can be installed in several ways:

- Your Linux distribution may include a packaged version of *OpenTTD*. In this case, use your package management software to install the game.

- *OpenTTD* is available as Deb and RPM packages on the project's SourceForge page.

Figure 1. The opening dialog lets you choose the scenario you want to play and change the game's settings.

- You can download the source code and compile the game yourself, and *OpenTTD*'s wiki provides detailed instructions on how to do this (http://wiki.openttd.org/index.php/Compiling_on_Linux).

    Once *OpenTTD* is installed, you have to copy several original *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* files into the /usr/share/games/openttd/data directory. You need to copy the following files:

- Graphics: trg1r.grf, trgcr.grf, trghr.grf, trgir.grf and trgtr.grf.

- Sound: sample.cat.

- Music: all the *.gm files. Copy the music files into the gm folder. If the

folder doesn't exist, create it in the /usr/share/games/openttd/ directory.

If you played *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* before, you'll feel at home with *OpenTTD*. For those who aren't so lucky, the game can be a bit tricky to come to grips with, and the lack of a coherent manual doesn't make life easier for *OpenTTD* newbies. There is no reason to panic, however; the following description will get you started in no time.

The opening dialog window allows you to choose the game you want to play. You have four options here: New Game, Load Game, Create Scenario and Play Scenario. Let's start from scratch and choose New Game, leaving the other settings as they are. Click on the New Game button, select a scenario from the list, for example Super Britania, and double-click on it. This opens the main window with a map and a toolbar at the top. The next step is to figure out where to start and what to build. Obviously, you should find two places on the map that need to be connected and have something you can transport between them to earn money. For example, a power station requires coal, and you can build a road to the neighboring coal mine and transport the coal using trucks. In this case, you have to locate both places on the map. One way to do this is to click on the Industries button (the one that looks like a factory), which displays a floating window containing a list of all industrial locations on the map. Each item on the list contains important information about its production capacity and percentage of the transported goods.

For example, you can see that the Brinfield Coal Mine has 120 tons of coal, and none of the produced coal has been transported. If you double-click on the Brinfield Coal Mine, you'll see its exact location on the map. And, if you take a closer look at the map, you'll see that the mine is located not far from the Brinfield Power Station, which requires coal to run. This means you can make some money by building a road and transporting coal from the mine to the station. To build a road between the mine and the station:

1. Press the Road button and select the appropriate road segment. Use the mouse to place the road segment in the desired location.

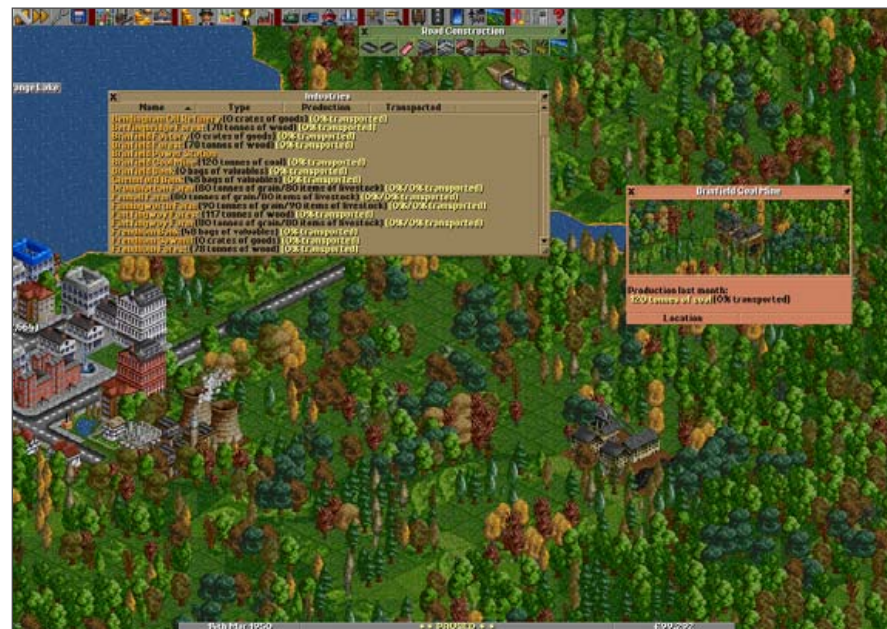2. Right-click to add the road segment to the map.

Figure 2. The Industries window can help you find places that may need you.

3. Repeat this step until the road is built.

4. Next, you have to add lorry (truck) stations at both ends. Click on the Road button and select the lorry station with the appropriate orientation (so that the station faces the road). Add one lorry station somewhere close to the power station and another one next to the coal mine.

5. You also have to add a road depot to produce and maintain trucks. Again, click the Road button, select the Road Depot (remember the correct orientation) and place it on the road, for example, close to Brinfield.

6. Finally, you have to add a truck. Double-click on the road depot, and click the New Vehicles button in the Brinfield Road Vehicle Depot. Select the

Figure 3. Here is a truck transporting coal from the coal mine to the power station.

Balogh Coal Truck and press Build Vehicle. This places a new truck in the Road Vehicle Depot and opens the Road Vehicle 1 window.

7. The very last thing you have to do is to specify orders for your truck.

In this case, you have to instruct it to pick up coal at the coal mine and deliver the load to the power station. To do this:

1. Press the Orders button (it looks like a broken arrow) in the Road Vehicle 1 window.

2. Press Go to.

3. Click on the lorry station next to the coal mine.

4. Then, press the Full load button.

5. Now, press the Go to button again.

6. Click on the lorry station next to the power station.

7. Press the Unload button.

8. In the Road Vehicle 1 window, press the Stopped button to get the truck going, and you are done.

Note: this may all sound complicated, but once you've figured out the basics, you easily can build more-complicated transport connections.

Of course, there is much more to the game, and you'll undoubtedly figure out most of *OpenTTD*'s features as you spend time building your transport empire. The good thing is that you don't have to play alone. *OpenTTD* supports muliplayer mode, and it can act as a server. To start your own *OpenTTD* server, press the Multiplayer button in the Welcome dialog window, and press Start server. Select the desired scenario, and press the Start Game button. Now your friends and family members can join the fun.

OpenTTD comes with a limited selection of scenarios, but you can build your own scenarios as well. You also can download and install scenarios available on the Web (http://easttown.co.uk/TTDX/index.php and http://ttdscenarios.com/index.php are good places to start). Download the scenario you want, unzip it and place the scenario file into the /usr/share/games/openttd/scenario directory.

Finally, a word of caution—*OpenTTD* can be very addictive, and once you get started, it is difficult to stop. So, make sure you don't have any deadlines or homework looming before you start the game. And, don't forget to join the Transport Tycoon Forums (http://www.tt-forums.net) to meet *OpenTTD* players and developers as well as to check out other people's creations.■

Dmitri Popov is a freelance writer whose articles have appeared in Russian, British and Danish computer magazines. His articles cover open-source software, Linux, Web applications and other computer-related topics.