

## Chapter 3 – Setting Up Staging Tracks

### Staging Tracks

As was noted in the introduction we have two 'stations' that are designated as staging tracks. The purpose of these staging tracks is to represent locations and industries that do not actually exist on our railroad, but which are shippers and/or consignees for shipments on our railroad. The Recipe Book makes this statement:

*Staging tracks have several special functions. Generally these special functions are entirely model-oriented (e.g. fiddling) and have no parallel in prototype practice. The "special functions" do attempt **to model the impact and effects of the unmodeled portion of the North American railroad system***

An example of how staging tracks might be used is to consider a local fuel dealer on the modeled layout. Obviously the dealer needs to get a shipment of heating oil from somewhere and unless you have a refinery or a large tank farm set up on your layout, a refinery could be the hypothetical industry we need to supply the heating oil. To resolve this problem, we could set the refinery up as an industry in some distant city in one of the staging tracks. A tank car would be 'loaded' at the staging track and then delivered to the industry at one of the locations on the railroad.

Let's look at how staging tracks are set up. Click on "The Railroad" on the ProTrak toolbar and select "Staging tracks to offline points" from the dropdown list. You should see a window that looks like Figure 3-1.

##	Staging Track Name	SPOT	Region	Junction at Station	to Railroad	Same track as	CarOrders	Occupancy	Occupancy	Occupancy
1	New York, NY	NY01s	1	North Staging	Conrail	CHIC2s	0	9	NYSL	NYFS
2	Chicago, IL	CHIC2s	2	South Staging	Burlington Northern		0	CHNY	NYCH	8
3	St Louis, MO	STLM3s	3	South Staging	Atchinson, Topeka &		0	10	SLNY	NYSL

Figure 3-1

As you can see in Figure 3-1, there are three staging tracks already defined. These three tracks were copied from the sample railroad when our railroad was initially setup, but let's add two new tracks to the list.

1. Click on "Edit" on the ProTrak toolbar, then select "New/Insert staging track" from the dropdown list. The window shown in Figure 3-2 will appear.



Figure 3-2

If you click on "Yes", a new entry will be inserted on line 1 and the existing entries will be moved down one line each. If you click on "No" the new entry will be added to the end of the list. Normally, which you do is up to you, but for our purposes here we'll click on "No" to add it as the last entry in the list.

2. ProTrak now asks if you want to edit this new entry (Figure 3-3).

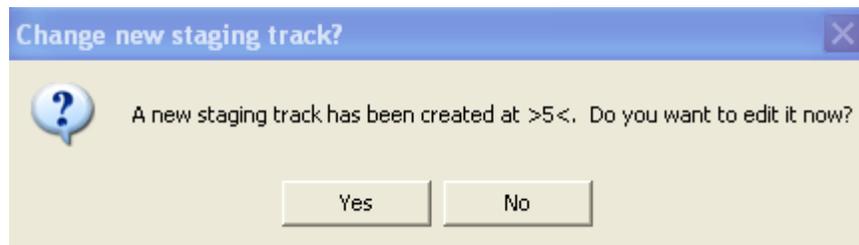


Figure 3-3

For this track, we'll click on 'No'. Go back and repeat para 1 above and when asked if we want to edit the new entry this time we'll click on "Yes" to get the "Changing staging track: 5 of: 5" window displayed (Figure 3-4).

Figure 3-4

- The data field "Connection for" normally contains the name of a distant city. Obviously the name "New staging" is not very descriptive. Let's change this to Seattle, WA. Click on the "Connection for" data field (tt). In the right-hand panel there is a list which shows a large number of cities. (If the right-hand panel contains no data and the "Show online data" box is not checked, click on the "Show online-data" check box, then click back on the "Connections for" data field and the list will appear). We could scroll down through the list (the cities are in alphabetical order by state!), or we can narrow this list to one state only. To do the latter, click on the "Show Specific states" radio button and the window shown in Figure 3-5 appears.

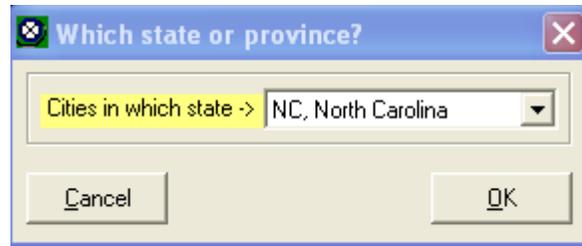


Figure 3-5

Click on the dropdown arrow and choose "WA, Washington" from the list then click on "OK"<sup>(1)</sup>. The list should now only show those cities in the state of Washington. Double-click on Seattle to choose that city. Note that if the location you wish to use is not shown in the list, you can type the information in directly. To do a manual entry, uncheck the "Uncheck for Manual Data Entry" check box at the bottom of the list of cities in the right hand panel. Go back to the "Connection for" data field; erase the data that is already there and then type in the name of the city you want to enter. You might want to do this if you have cars from a friend's layout and want to represent that situation.

4. The next data field - "To railroad" - is the name of a railroad. Click on the "To railroad" (tt) data field. You will now see a list of railroads in the right-hand panel (see Figure 3-6).

---

<sup>1</sup> Here's a tip when using Windows drop-down lists. If you press the first letter of the item you are looking for (in this case W for Washington), Windows will go to the next entry which starts with that letter. This is a Windows feature and is available for all of these type of dropdown lists

Changing staging track: 5 of: 5

**Staging track represents...**

Connection for: Seattle, WA

To railroad: Atchinson, Topeka &

Through yard:

In Region: 3

**Staging track**

Siding SPOT: NEW05s

Junction is at on-line station: South Staging

Exit is via second staging track: same staging siding-numbe

Staging is terminal point for all cars:  on-line mid-point

**Trackage**

Track length from clearance point: 761 feet

Clearance Plate: U - 3.00 inches

Minimum radius: 9999.0 inches. Max car length: 95 feet

**Trains: Occupancy**

1st train occupying: not occupied

2nd train occupying: not occupied

3rd train occupying: not occupied

Open track remaining: 761 feet

**Cars: Active Staging**

Allow active staging:  Active staging is: OFF

**Railroads in Official Guide**

###	Initial	Railroad
1	PRD	ProTrak Demonstrator
2	ATSF	Atchinson, Topeka &
3	BN	Burlington Northern
4	CR	Conrail
5	CSX	Chesapeake Seaboard
6	NS	Norfolk Southern Rai
7	SP	Southern Pacific
8	UP	Union Pacific
9	CP	CP Rail
10	CP	Canadian Pacific
11	CN	Canadian National
12	A&EC	Atlantic & East Caro
13	AA	Ann Arbor
14	AA	Michigan Interstate
15	AC	Algoma Central
16	ACL	Atlantic Coast Line
17	AD	Atlantic & Danville
18	ADN	Ashley, Drew & North
19	AL	Almanor Railroad
20	ALM	Arkansas & Louisiana
21	ALS	Alton & Southern
22	AMR	Aracata and Mad Rive
23	AN	Apalachicola Norther
24	ANR	Angelina & Neches Ri
25	APA	Apache
26	AR	Aberdeen & Rockfish

Uncheck for Manual Data Entry

Cancel OK

Figure 3-6

5. Scroll down in the list until you find the railroad you want. Double-click on that entry and the value in the "To railroad" data field will be changed. We know that Seattle is served by Burlington Northern, so we'll double-click on entry 3. As with the city name, if the railroad you want is not listed, you may manually enter the name. Uncheck the "Uncheck for..." check box at the bottom of the list of railroads and then manually enter the name of the railroad. Again, this might be what you would need to do to represent your friend's railroad.
6. For now, we can leave the "Through yard" data field blank (or blank it out if there is already data in the field).

7. Even though we've added the new staging track to the end of the list, ProTrak defaults the region to 3<sup>(2)</sup>. Let's change the default and set the "In Region" data field to 5.
8. The "Siding SPOT" is one to four letters plus 1 or 2 numbers such as DET01. ProTrak will automatically append an 's' to the end to indicate that this is a staging track. Click on the "Siding SPOT" (tt) data field and we'll change ours to "SEA01" for the first staging track for Seattle. Note that once you leave the data field, as indicated, ProTrak has added an 's' so the Siding SPOT now appears as "SEA01s".
9. The "Junction is at station" data field contains the station where this staging track is located. In our case, we'll make this West Staging. Click on the "Junction is at station" (tt) data field, then from the list that appears in the right-hand panel (or window), **Double-click** on the station name. As The Recipe Book states, **"Double-click the station from the right-hand window. Do not type the name"**.
10. The "Exit is via second staging track" (tt) data field allows us to specify that the train exits on a different staging track. It may use the same track as is used for another staging track. For example if we had a double ended staging yard, when a train enters from one end we might say that the entered into staging track 'ABC01s' then when it exits from the other end we might say that it exited from staging track 'PDQ02s'.

Note that in this case 'ABC01s' and 'PDQ02s' are opposite ends of the same physical staging track, but listed as two separate entries in the list of staging tracks.

In our case, since our yard has a loop to allow the train to exit in the same fashion as it entered, we'll stay with the default of "same staging siding number". The dropdown arrow beside the "Exit is via second staging track" data field will show what other options we have.

11. The last line in the 'Staging track' block will show how this staging track is configured. For most of us, we have one or two staging tracks which are the end(s) of the railroad. In some cases, however, you may require staging track somewhere between the two ends, where the staging track

---

<sup>2</sup> The staging Region number is used to group staging tracks together into a common destination. For example if you have five staging tracks, all of which represent the same "off-staging" destination, you would then assign them the same region number. When starting out, it is best to give each staging track its own unique number. A more in-depth discussion of regions will be found in Appendix E under the section headed "Gateways, Regions and other considerations".

actually forms part of the mainline. Jim Moir's own railroad has this situation where part way between Brampton and Peterboro he has a staging track at Toronto, ON. A train which enters this staging track from one end, pauses for a period of time to allow cars that have been routed to that staging yard to be unloaded and reloaded. Once that has been completed the train then then exits out the other end of the staging track. In our case, both East Staging and West Staging are dead-ends – a terminal point for all cars so we can leave the radio button as ProTrak has defaulted it - "Staging is terminal point for all cars".

12. The "Track length from clearance point" is the length of the staging track **in scale feet**. Since we can probably better enter this in actual inches, we'll change the "Track length from clearance point" (tt) data field to 55i (note the lower case 'i' at the end of the number to signify that the value we've just entered is in inches). As soon as we leave this data field, ProTrak converts the length entered to scale feet and inserts 398 in place of the 55i that we entered. To make the conversion occur, tab away from the "Track length..." data field or click on any other data field in the "Changing staging track..." window.
13. If the "Clearance Plate" data field doesn't already show "U-3.00 inches", click on the dropdown arrow beside the "Clearance Plate" data field then select "U – 3.00 inches" from the dropdown list that appears.
14. The "Minimum Radius" field currently contains 9999.0 – in effect meaning it is undefined. Let's change that figure to a realistic figure of 30.
15. Leave the remaining data fields untouched for now. Figure 3-7 shows what your final window for this staging track should look like.

Changing staging track: 5 of: 5

**Staging track represents...**

Connection for: Seattle, WA  
 To railroad: Burlington Northern  
 Through yard:   
 In Region: 5

**Staging track**

Siding SPOT: SEA01s  
 Junction is at on-line station: West Staging  
 Exit is via second staging track: same staging siding-number  
 Staging is terminal point for all cars:  on-line mid-point

**Trackage**

Track length from clearance point: 398 feet  
 Clearance Plate: U - 3.00 inches  
 Minimum radius: 30.0 inches. Max car length: 85 feet

**Trains: Occupancy**

1st train occupying: not occupied  
 2nd train occupying: not occupied  
 3rd train occupying: not occupied  
 Open track remaining: 398 feet

**Cars: Active Staging**

Allow active staging:  Active staging is: OFF

**Manual Data Entry**

Show online data

Cancel OK

Figure 3-7

16. If everything is correct, click on "OK".
17. You will see the progress window shown in Figure 3-8 as it checks waybills. Please be patient while this checking process happens. Initially, the check will happen reasonably quickly, however as more data is added, it may take longer to complete.

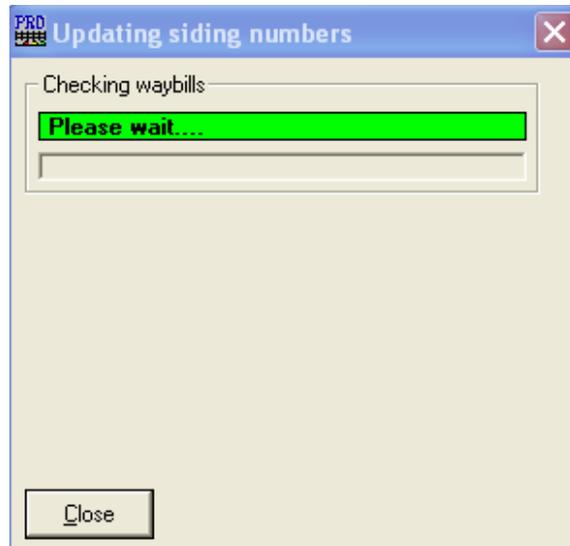


Figure 3-8

18. You may also get the messages shown in Figure 3-9 and/or Figure 3-10.

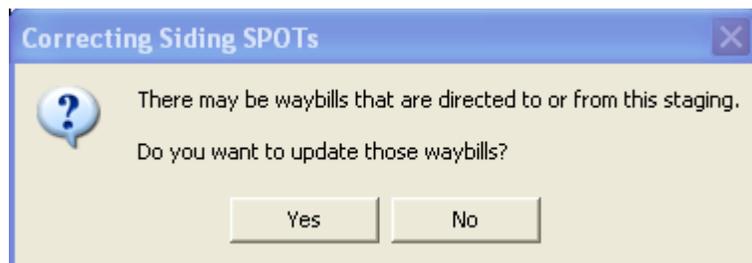


Figure 3-9

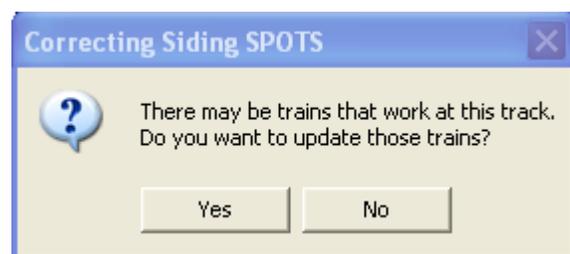


Figure 3-10

If either of these windows appears, click on "Yes". Once all of the checks have been completed you will be returned to the "Offline Connections: Staging Tracks" window.

You've now set up a staging track however the other four staging tracks are not correct as they point to staging tracks that do not exist. These

need to be corrected or deleted. In addition, Jim has stated "You should **not** use any of "NYY01s, "CHIC2s" or "STLM3s" on your railroad" so we'll choose new SPOTs for the three tracks that now have one of the 'restricted' SPOTs IDs.

19. For line 1, double-click on the line to open the "Changing Staging Track: X of: Y" window and make the following changes:
  - a. change the SPOT to read NYC01s rather than NYY01s to comply with Jim's admonition above;
  - b. change the "Junction is at station" to East Staging for this staging track;
  - c. change the "Exit is via second staging track" using the dropdown arrow to read "same staging siding number
  - d. change the 'Track length...' field to read 55i (remember lower case i);
  - e. change the 'Clearance Plate' to 'U' and
  - f. change the 'Minimum radius' field to '30'.
20. Click on "OK" to complete the changes.
21. As with the staging track we entered, checks are done on waybills and siding SPOTs. As noted when we added the staging track for SEA01s, you will likely receive the message shown in Figure 3-9. Click on "Yes" to have ProTrak correct the SPOTs. This process will be repeated for each waybill that ProTrak finds which requires changing.
22. When a waybill is found that is in error, a window similar to Figure 3-11 will be displayed. Near the bottom of the window you will see the question "Change this waybill?" followed by two radio buttons. Select the "Yes" radio button to correct the waybill. This process will be repeated for every waybill that is found in error.



Figure 3-11

23. In addition to the out-of-date waybill issue, since we've changed the SPOT for the staging track, we'll likely get the message shown in Figure 3-10. Again, click on "Yes" to have ProTrak update the SPOTs.

24. As with waybills, a window similar the one shown in Figure 3-12 will appear.

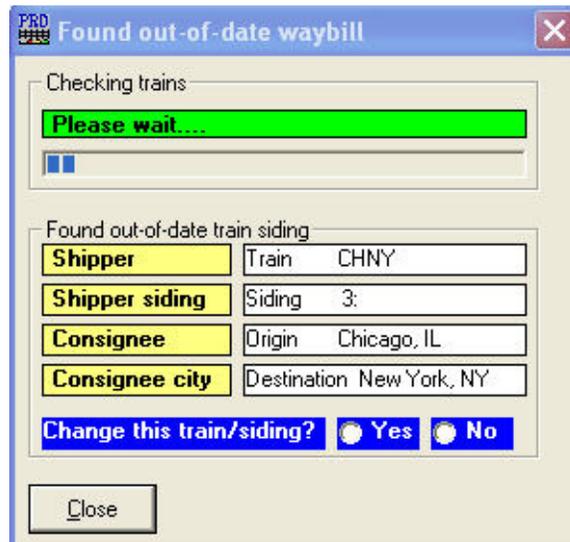


Figure 3-12

25. Again, near the bottom of the window is the question "Change this train/siding?" followed by two radio buttons. Select the "Yes" radio button

- to have the SPOT changed. As with waybills, you will have to repeat this multiple times until all affected trains have had the SPOT changed.
26. For lines 2 and 3, click on the "Junction is at station" data field and change it to "East Staging" by double-clicking on that entry in the right-hand panel. Change the SPOT for line 2 to read CHI02s rather than CHIC2s and change the SPOT for line 3 to read STL03s rather than STLM3s. Also make sure that the following are correct and change if necessary:
- "Exit is via..." is set to 'same staging siding-number';
  - "Staging is..." is set to 'terminal point for all cars';
  - "Track length..." is set to '55i';
  - "Clearance Plate" is set to 'U';
  - "Minimum Radius" is set to '30'.
- Click on "OK" to finish the changes. As with the changes to the staging track on line 1, you will be prompted about updating SPOTs for both waybills and trains. In all cases click on the "Yes" radio button to have ProTrak update the SPOTs.
27. Line 4 represents a new staging track that we created earlier, but where we did not edit the data. To show you how it's done, we'll just delete that line. Click on line 4 to select that line. Click on "Edit" on the ProTrak toolbar, then select "Delete a staging track" from the dropdown list. You will get the message shown in Figure 3-13.



Figure 3-13

Click on "Yes". You will now receive the messages shown in Figures 3-14 and 3-15.



Figure 3-14

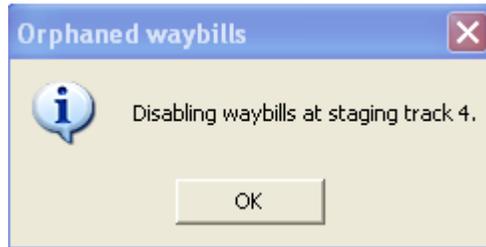


Figure 3-15

In both cases, click on "OK". Once you've done that, you should be left with a list of four staging tracks for New York, Chicago, St. Louis and Seattle. Figure 3-16 shows what the "Offline Connections: Staging Yards" window should look like once all the changes have been completed. (A larger version of Figure 3-16 can be found in Appendix C). Note that the values in the "CarOrders" and "Occupancy" columns may differ and that's OK.

Offline Connections: Staging Tracks										
##	Staging Track Name	SPOT	Region	Junction at Station	to Railroad	Same track as	CarOrders	Occupancy	Occupancy	Occupancy
1	New York, NY	NYC01s	1	East Staging	Conrail		12	CHSL		
2	Chicago, IL	CHI02s	2	East Staging	Burlington Northern		7	CHSL		
3	St Louis, MO	STL03s	3	East Staging	Atchinson, Topeka &		0			
4	Seattle, WA	SEA01s	5	West Staging	Burlington Northern		0			

Figure 3-16

We'll get into more detail about staging tracks and how they work when we get to Chapter 5 – Setting up the Trains. For now, let's close the "Offline Connection: Staging Tracks" window to reduce the clutter on our screen. (If there are any other ProTrak windows, open, you might want to close them as well).

### Minimum Data Items – Staging Tracks

- Siding Number (Siding SPOT)
- Junction Name (Junction is as station)

(See Default and Minimum Data Items in Chapter 2 for an explanation)

## **FAQs Staging Tracks**

Section M of Appendix L deals with staging track setup and operations.

### **Gateways**

Before we leave staging tracks, we should briefly mention "Gateways". Gateways are the connections, beyond your immediate staging, that allow empty cars to be routed to their home railroad. If your railroad is set in the mid-west somewhere (let's say Iowa), you have no way to directly connect with, say the Apalachicola Northern (located in northwestern Florida). The gateways file that comes with ProTrak has the connections required to allow the routing to occur. ProTrak will find cars with no routing <sup>(3)</sup> and will prompt you to either add the railroad for that car or ask you to enter a default (temporary routing). If you follow these prompts, it is unlikely that you will ever need to add a railroad to the gateway file. However, later, over time, you may wish to refine the home routings.

A more in-depth discussion of Gateways and Staging Track Regions is presented in Appendix E.

---

<sup>3</sup> There are two 'triggers' to cause ProTrak to ask for information about routing. The first is that the railroad (and of course reporting marks) must be listed in the "Gateways and other railroads" file. The second is if ProTrak's routing routine cannot find a route home for the car. You will also find a "help file" on gateways in Appendix E.

## **Summary**

In Chapter 3 you should have done the following:

- Used pull down Railroad menu to get to Show Offline Connections via staging tracks;
- Used Edit menu to Add or Delete staging tracks;
- Used the changing staging track data panel to make adjustments to a staging track.

You have learned about the following::

- What connections are;
- What a Siding SPOT is and how to name the SPOT;
- How to set a siding length from a clearance point;
- What Gateways are and how they play a part in car routing.

Again, we've set up more of the "tombstone" data - staging tracks this time. We can now move on to Chapter 4 where we'll set up the main yard for our railroad.