

# Portals to fun

By John D'Angelo



**T**he recently released Service Pack 2 (SP2) for Trainz TRS2004 has a new feature with amazing potential for the virtual model railroader. It is simply called a portal. After SP2 is installed, you will find Portal listed in the Objects menu under TRS2004 items. The portal is not listed as a track item because it has a number of special functions that turn it into one of the most useful utilities I have had the pleasure of using in Trainz. In this article we'll take a look at what a portal can do and how it can be configured. Please note that I used the SP2 Beta copy to operate the portals. The final version of SP2 might have some changes from what I show here.

The portal looks like a tunnel entrance, but acts more like a transporter that you would see in a *Star Trek* episode. A portal can be set up to receive trains, turn them around and send them back on the line, create trains and send them out, or receive trains and delete them. In addition, in a real *Star Trek* mode, a portal can transport a train to another portal located far away on a route. In the above picture I have set up two portals at the end of the main line. One portal will receive trains and delete

them, while the other portal will create trains and send them out on the main line. At the other end of the main line I will set two additional portals for train receiving and creation, ensuring a constant flow of traffic.

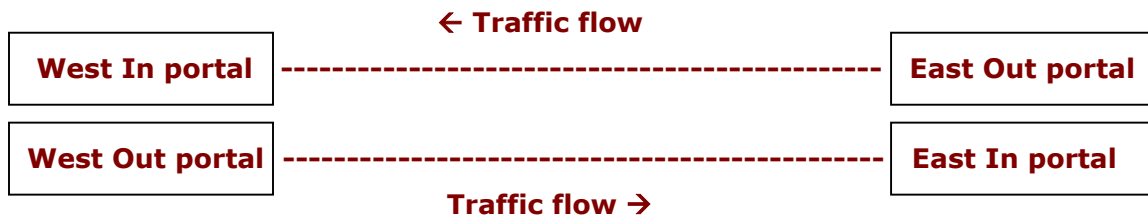
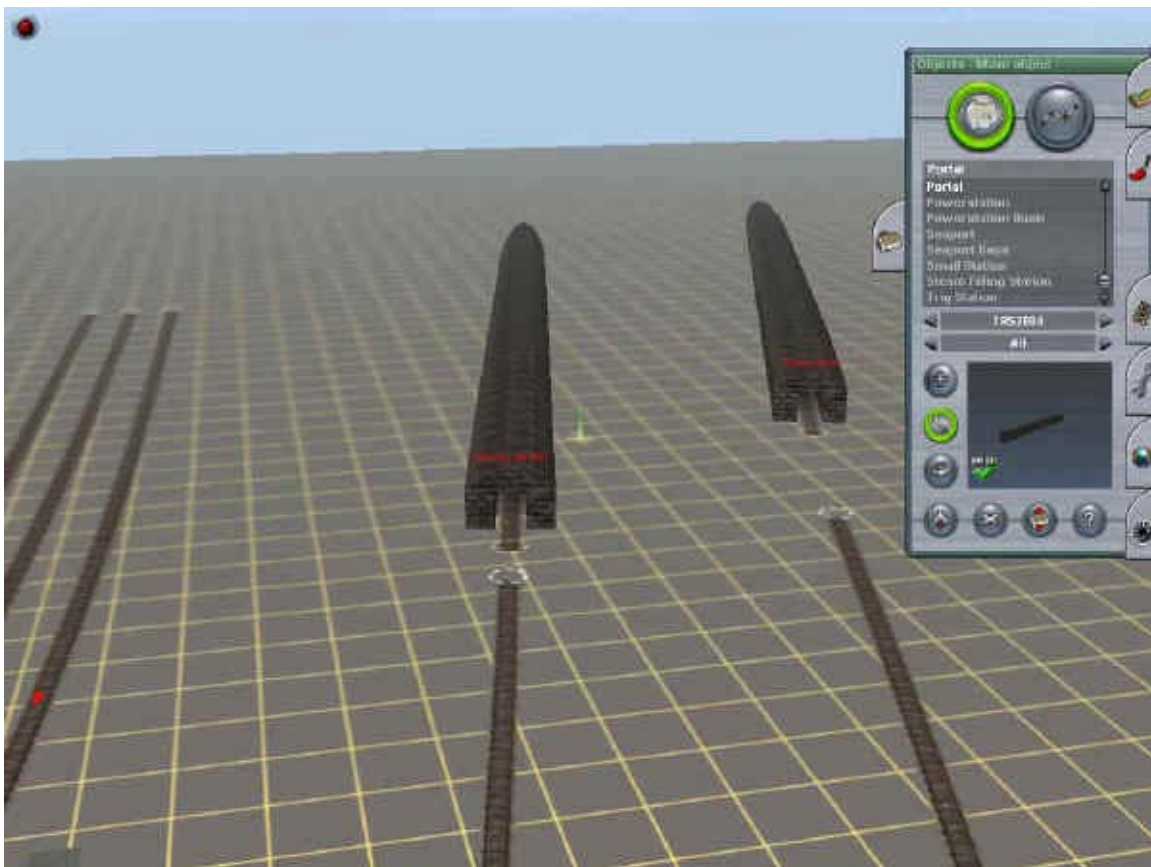
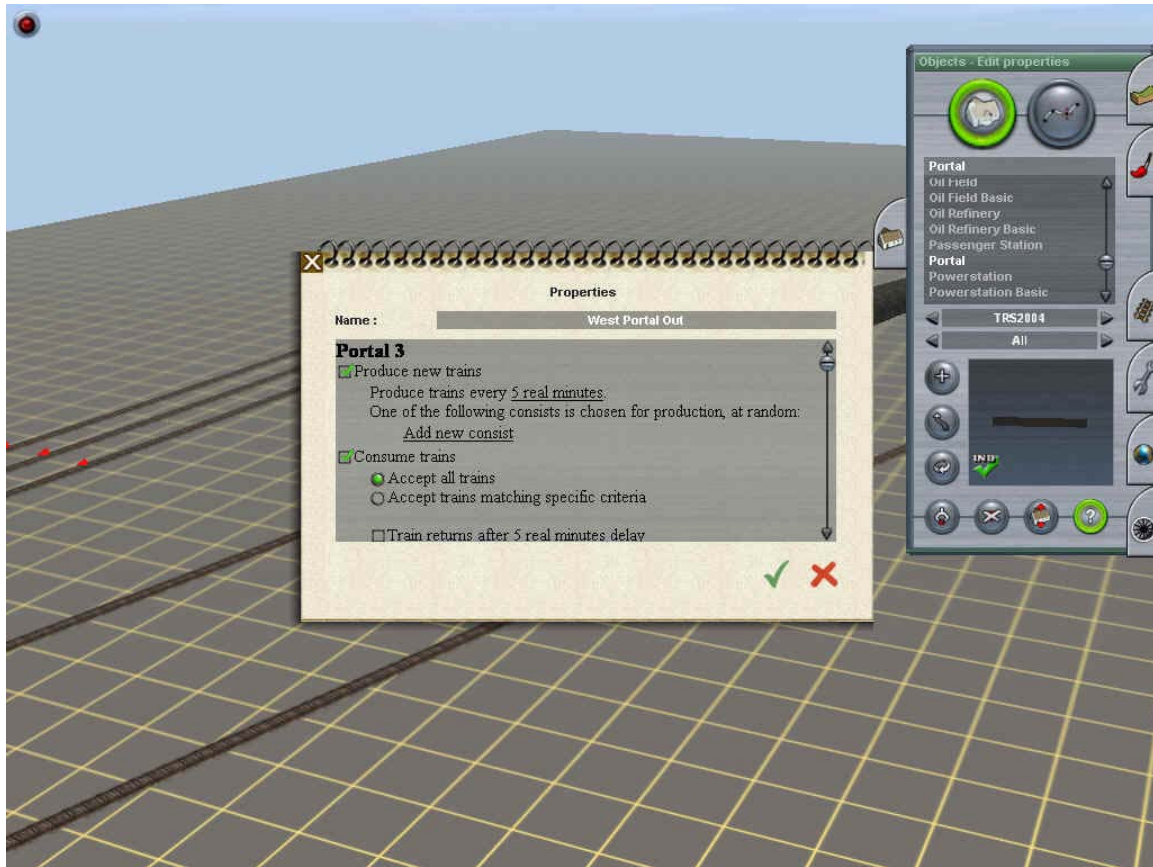


Illustration of the portal setup.

In the following example I set up a pair of portals in one of the West staging yards in Al Barten's Northeastern Junction route, which is available at the Download Station, kuid:68330:15000. First I placed two portals side-by-side to act as out and in portals.

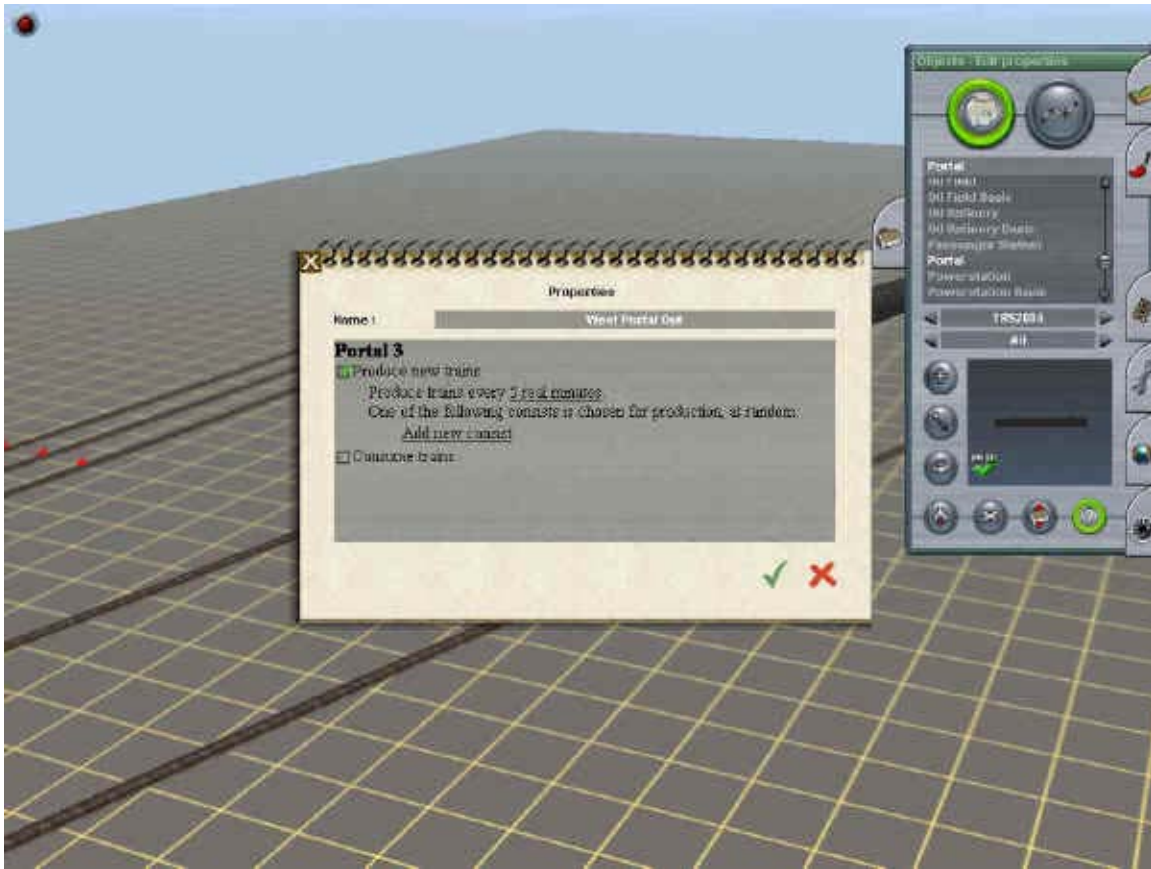


## Setting up the portals



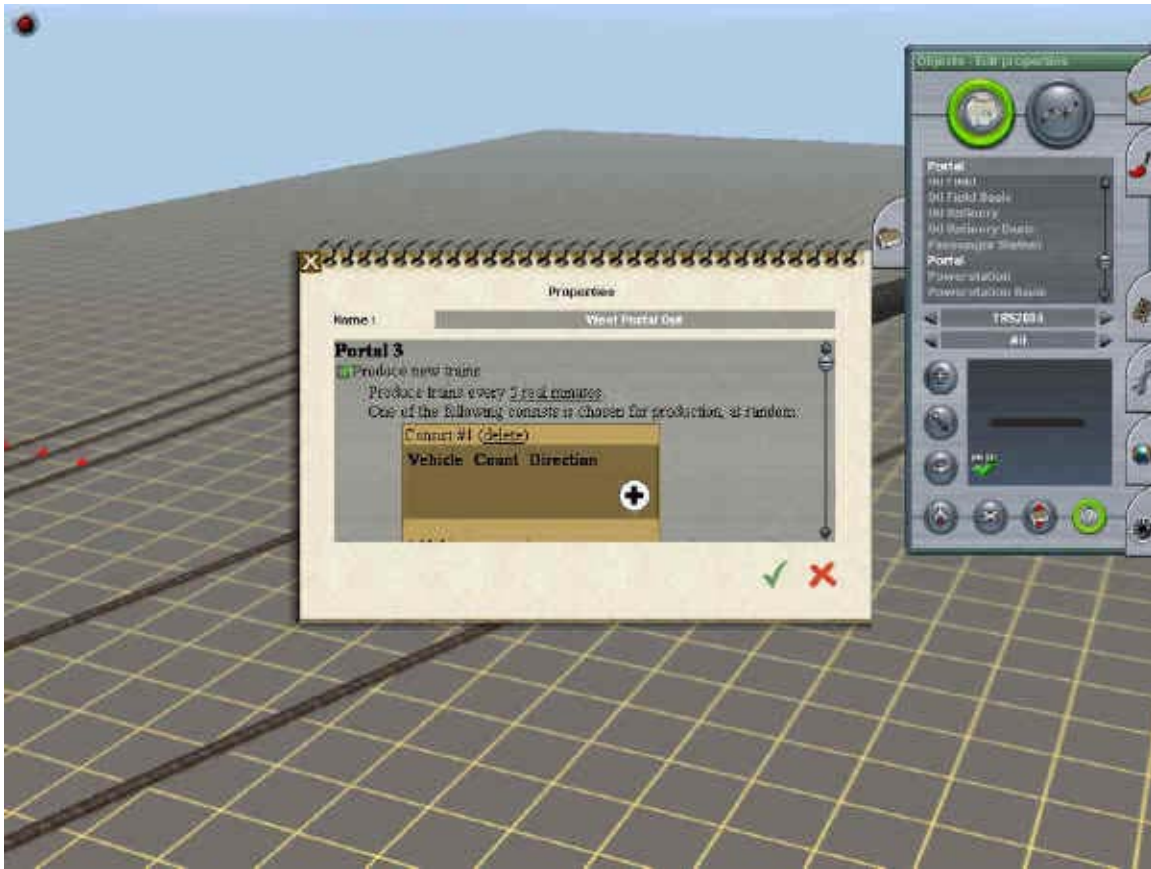
Setting up the portals.

I changed the name of the West production portal from the original "Portal 3" to "West Portal Out". I found that labeling each portal by its function and location saved me confusion. When you start to configure the portal by using the question mark and clicking on the portal, you will see an opening menu. Initially the setting is for the portal to produce new trains and consume existing trains. This would be of use at the end of a single-track line, but since I am working with two tracks, I only need this portal to act as a producer. So I unchecked the Consume trains box. The next series of screen shots shows the steps I took to create a consist for this portal to produce.



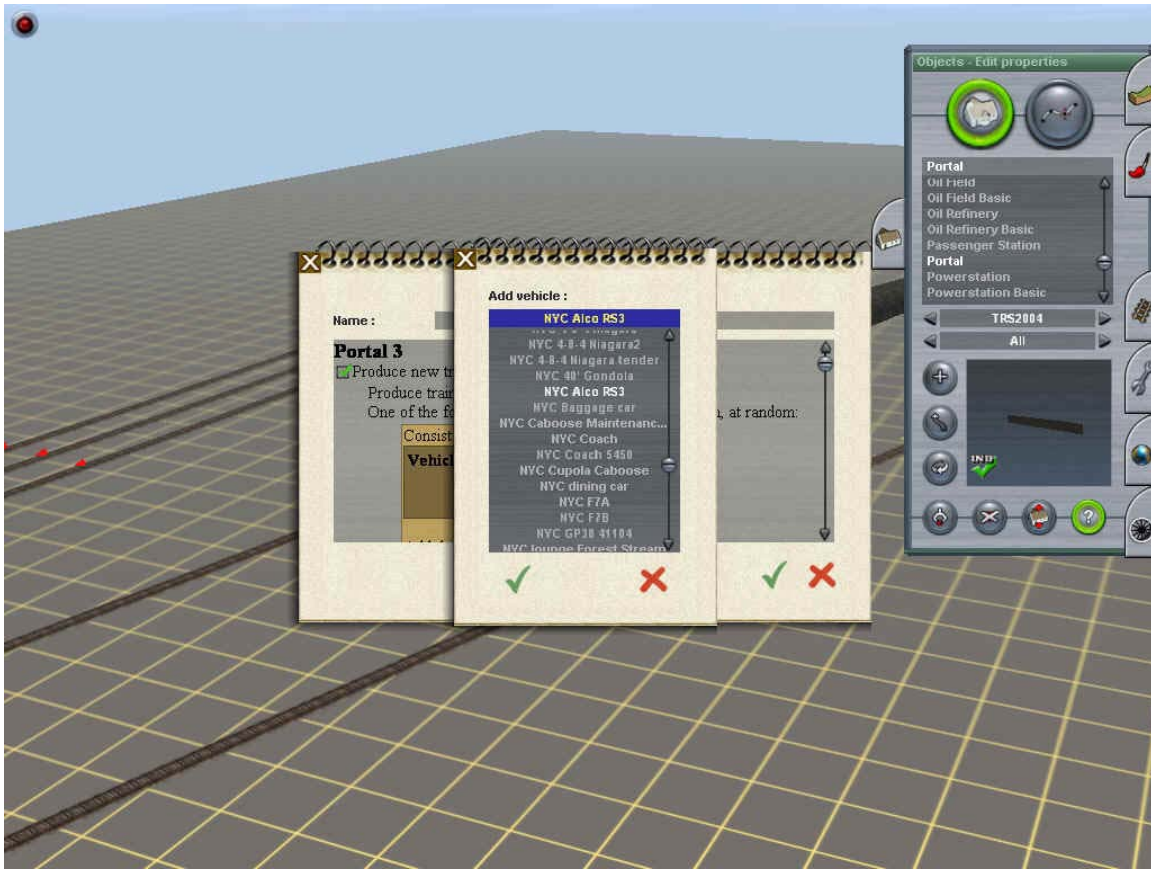
Setting the rate of production.

You can set a rate of production to tell the portal to send out a train at a specific rate. For this operation I chose to have the portal produce one train every five minutes. The rate of production is in real time, so the true rate will not be affected if you are using a fast clock setting. Once the rate of production is chosen, you create the consist to be produced.



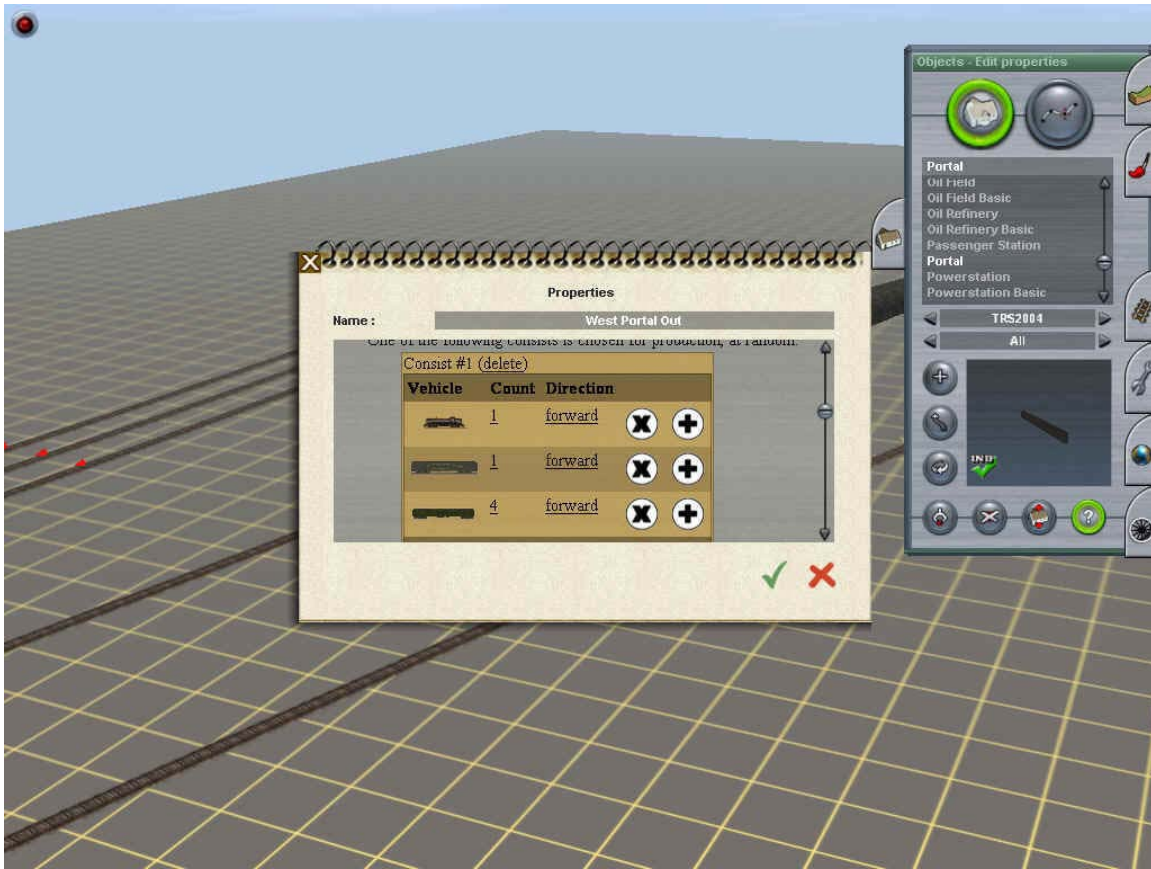
Creating the consist.

Once you choose to create a consist, you will see a sub-menu appear. To add an item of rolling stock, click on the plus mark. When you do this, you will see your entire rolling stock list appear, and you can click on the items you want.



Choosing the consist.

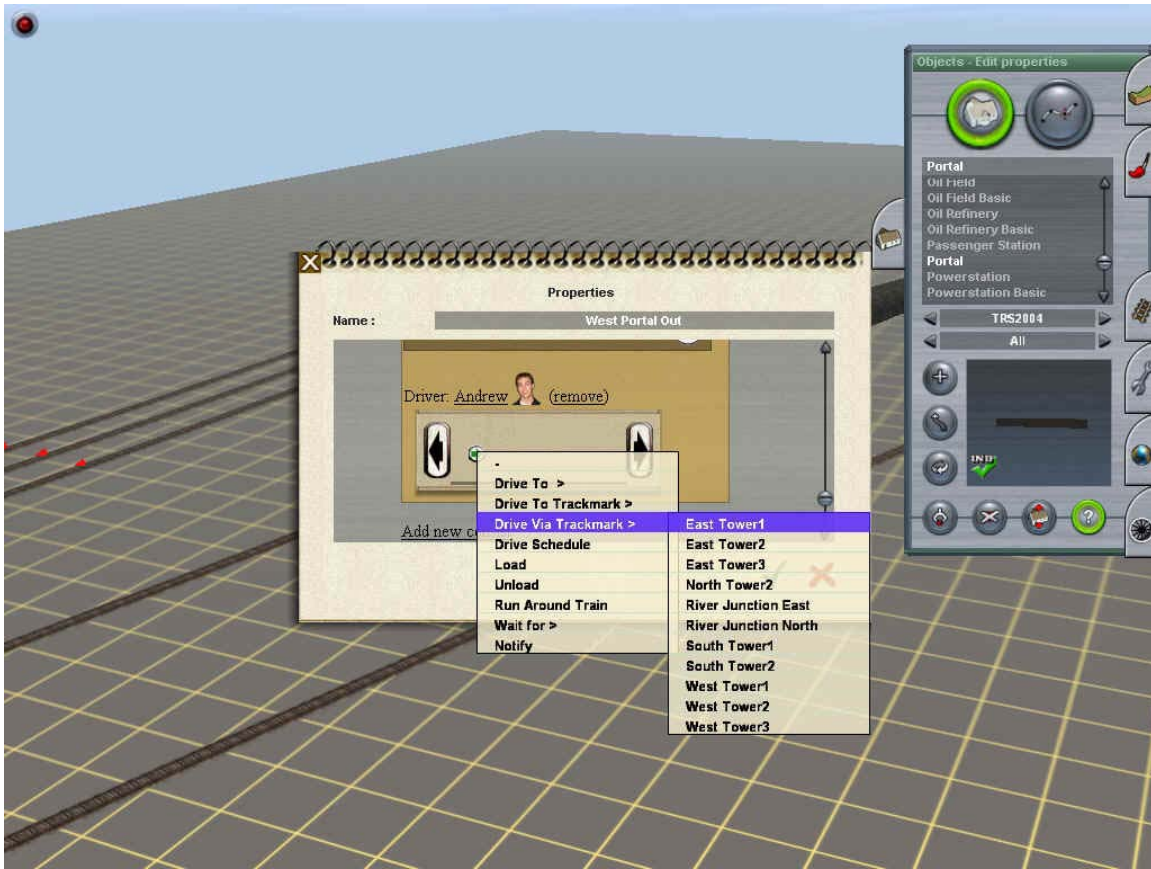
I chose a NYC Alco RS3 for the locomotive. As each piece of rolling stock was added to the list, additional plus marks showed until I completed the list of cars. Even after the list has been completed, you can still return at any time to adjust the consist parameters.



Completed consist.

The consist I built was made up of the locomotive, a baggage car and four coaches. For the third car of the consist, which is a coach, I changed the count number from 1 to 4. When the portal sends out the train it will have four coaches on it. This makes it very easy to generate trains with groups of cars such as hoppers for a coal run.

The final step in the creation of a consist is to assign a driver and give him operating instructions. For the time being I have instructed him to drive via East Tower1. After I create the East Portal In, I will instruct him to drive there.



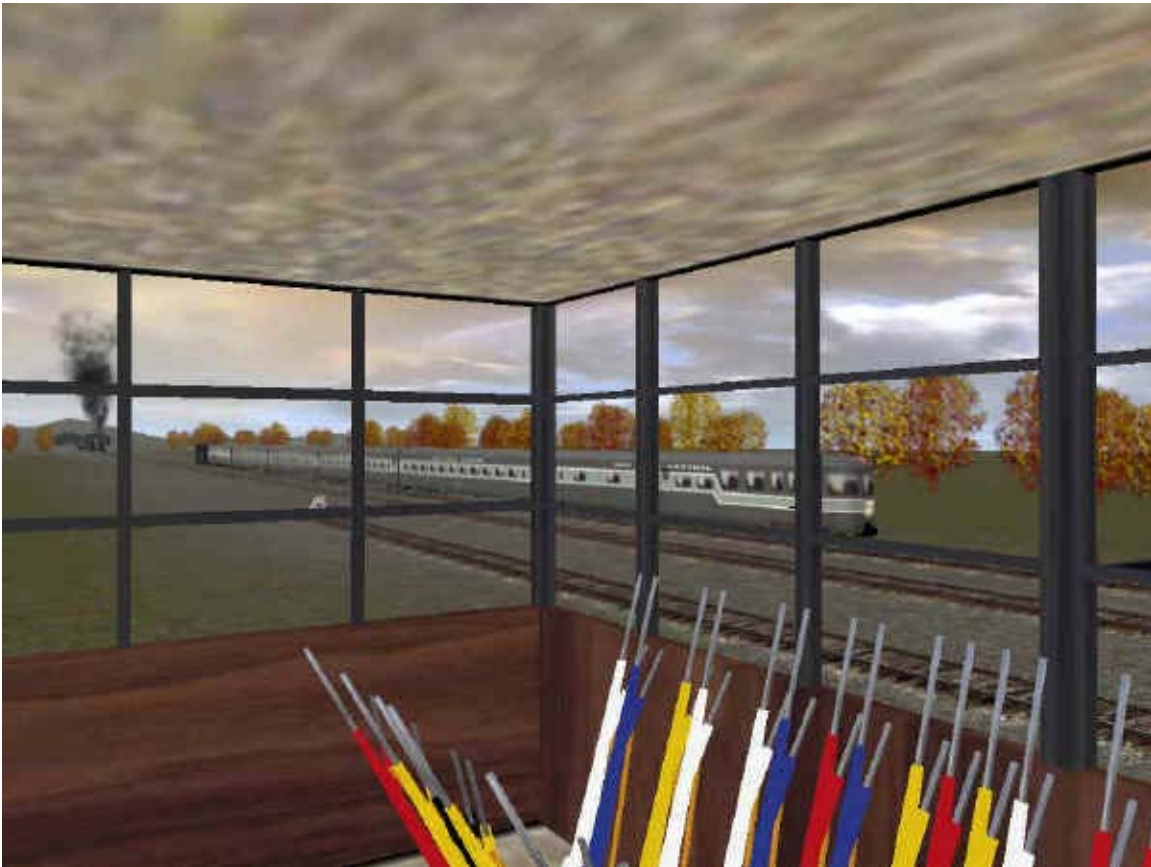
Creating a driver.

**But wait, there's more!** As the infomercial announcer stated, there is lots more! You can have the portal create more than one consist. When I was testing out the portal operation I set up a simple two-track operation as was shown in the illustration of the portal setup. In the East Out portal I set up two different passenger trains and a freight train. The engineers had instructions to drive to the West In portal where they would be deleted. In the West Out portal I created four trains, two passenger trains and two freight trains. They would be routed to the East In portal. I placed block signals on the route in each direction to help keep the traffic spaced. I set the clock at a minimum 1-minute interval for the creation of consists, and ran the program. Wow! Talk about action! Remember the scene from Walt Disney's *Fantasia* where the Sorcerer's Apprentice, played by Mickey Mouse, uses magic to make the brooms carry water and he falls asleep? Well, this was something like that scene. By the way, when consists are created by the portal they get sent out in a random sequence. The two freight and two passenger trains could come out in a number of different combinations. Every minute, from each side of the route, a different train would appear as it came out of the portal and then would drive to the other portal.

You could almost hear the music from *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* playing in the background as varied trains dutifully crossed in front of my viewing position, which was from inside Jetstreamsky's Signal Box, kuid:4468:9497. (See "Thinking inside the box," *VMR Journal*, 1 May 2004.)

I have only scratched the surface of using portals in this article, but I hope it is enough to get you up and running with them. The possibilities are great for numerous ways to make traffic move across a route. The idea of being able to send a train to one portal and have it come out of another portal boggles the mind! Here's an idea:

Imagine four levels of tracks up a mountainside with tunnels at each end. A train gets created at the bottom, travels across to the other tunnel, then appears at the second level and moves across to the tunnel, then appears at the third level and so on. As it appears on the fourth level, a new train comes out of the portal at the bottom and starts its run. What a great screen saver that could make!



Portal-generated action.

Have a lot of fun with your portals!

***John***

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