# Laying tracks

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# 1 Concept

Tracks are implemented very flexibly in LOTUS. Background and premise were that on the one hand tram turnouts and crossings are very different and highly individually designed, on the other hand, however, crossing pieces and switch tongues should be represented cleanly. And of course nobody should be forced to design everything in the 3D program by himself.

The result is the track concept which can be found in LOTUS: Rails and, if necessary, sleepers and ballast are developed separately and are only assembled to a track in the map editor. The map editor then also ensures that frogs, switch tongues and sleepers are inserted in such a way that a clean, true-to-the-original picture is produced - and that without prefabricated switches. A pleasant side effect of this division is that on the one hand, conductor rails and the like can be integrated without any problems and on the other hand, they can be combined as desired between ballast beds, sleepers and rail types.

# 2 Laying tracks

To lay a track in the map editor, first switch to "Track" mode (open the "Tracks" section on the left). There you can now select one of the existing track templates and - just like reference lines and other splines - start laying with "New track segment". As soon as two tracks intersect, LOTUS will automatically insert crossing pieces and as soon as a branch is constructed, the map editor will create animated switch tongues.

Since the effort to determine the position of switch blades and frogs increases with the number of tracks, this calculation can be optionally switched off as long as you are not finished laying the tracks anyway. How to do this is explained in the article Map-Editor Operation in the section "Refresh Settings".

After laying a track, its properties (rail type, sleepers etc.) can be changed at will. However, this is quite time-consuming, because the change really has to be done segment by segment.

# 3 Creating track templates

It is therefore much more practical to create track templates for the required tracks. These track templates are located in the Config\Railtracks directory and have the file extension *.railtrack. Therefore, they can be copied, deleted, saved or shared (please only if the map editor is not running 😉 ).

To create new track templates, first select the track template that comes closest to the planned template and then click on "New". After choosing a new (file) name, the properties dialog box appears with the settings of the previously selected track template. Only when "OK" is clicked, the map editor creates a new track template from the settings and saves it. From now on it is available in all maps.