

Good day folks.

At long last Version 1.0 of the ProTrak Basics Manual has been completed and has been released. You will find the manual in the files section of the ProTrak Yahoo group in a folder called PTBM. There is one sub folder – Ver 1.0 which contains the actual pdf files. As updates to the manual are released, the affected chapters will be placed in their own sub-folder. There is also a read-me document, which shows how the various sections of the manual are put together. If you re-assemble your document in the same order as discussed in the read-me document the Table Of Contents will make sense. You will note that some of the chapters or appendices are not present, even though the titles are in the Table of Contents. These chapters (and appendices) have not yet been written but the titles have been included in the TOC to help you get a feel of where we plan to go. The manual is also available on the ProTrak web site at [www.protrak.cc](http://www.protrak.cc)

A few words about the manual and about why it came about. Like most of you I am a ProTrak user, and like many before me, struggled to understand the program and to get it up and running correctly. As a result, I felt there was a need for a tutorial on ProTrak and suggested that this might be a good idea. There seemed to be support for the development of a tutorial within the ProTrak community and after the attempt to put this together as a cooperative effort using Wiki failed, I decided that I would simply start writing the manual. The first 'how does this look' piece of the manual was e-published in the fall of 2007. Since then a team of 17 of us have been working on the manual. I did the majority of the writing with a number of the other members of the group acting as editors making sure that the text matches the screen shots and that the text is grammatically correct and is punctuated properly.

The manual, as the name implies, is a BASICs manual. It is intended for the new user so many of the features of ProTrak are not even mentioned or if mentioned are indicated as being an advanced feature. The text details setting up a simple railroad in ProTrak and will take the reader through the process step-by-step. It includes a very large number of actual ProTrak screen images which occurred during the setup. These screen images are supplemented by the detailed text. A look at the manual shows that in Chapters 1 thru 10 there are 227 pages with 219 screen shots. Add to the chapter page count the 85 pages in the appendices and the 8 other pages, the manual currently totals 320 pages.

Early on in our collaborative effort one of the members of the group, Joe Brann, said that our aim should be to make the manual "non-misunderstandable" and I believe we have accomplished that goal. The editorial group and I firmly believe that we have very significantly decreased the slope of the ProTrak learning curve with our efforts. Having said that, I am sure that someone will find a mistake or

two. If that someone is you, please let me know what you found and where you found it so that I can make the correction(s). If you do find something which need correcting, I would appreciate it if you would send me an e-mail message and please make the subject of your e-mail "PTBM Comment" so that I can be watching for them. You may send comments to [ptbm@protrak.cc](mailto:ptbm@protrak.cc) and they will get to me.

As with all things of this nature, constructive criticism is welcomed. If there is something you think needs to be added, please let me know. The manual was written to assist a first time user of ProTrak so some of the material may seem a bit simplistic but in order that the user not miss something, we've tried to cover things in some detail. Again, if you send me a comment please make the subject of your e-mail "PTBM Comment".

It goes without saying that without Jim Moir's enthusiastic assistance and backing, including his permission to include in the document his copyrighted screen images, I could not have put the manual out and my heartfelt thanks goes out to him. I also need to thank the efforts of the various members of the editorial panel. Some have been looking at the grammar and punctuation, some helping out with adding pointers to some of the screen shots, some by working through the manual to make sure things happen as I say they do, and some by providing material from their own 'library'.

One final word about the manual. The manual is being made available to all at no charge. You are free to print off a copy for yourself, however you may not, under any circumstances reproduce the manual as a commercial product. The manual is copyrighted and without the expressed written permission of both myself and Jim Moir, commercial reproduction is prohibited. Having said that, If you print off one copy and go to your local copy shop and have 2 more copies made for friends, recovering your costs for their copies is not considered commercial reproduction. No one involved with this project is receiving any money for their efforts and we don't want anyone else to profit from our labours.

A few words about myself. I am currently retired, but spent a substantial portion of my working career as a software developer. Writing documentation for the software being developed and training users on it were part and parcel of my work, so writing this manual was a natural. I live in Edmonton Alberta, am married and have two grown sons; one lives here in Edmonton and the other in Calgary, Alberta.

I hope everyone enjoys using the ProTrak Basics Manual.

Doug Seymour

