



User Guide

Version 4.4.34

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Disclaimer

I hope you will like the A-Track for Windows program and enjoy using it as much as I have enjoyed creating the system, BUT . . .

While every effort has been made to thoroughly test and verify all functions incorporated into the A-Track for Windows application software when interfaced to the appropriate NCE hardware, please note that the software is supplied on an "as is" basis and without any warranty that it will perform faultlessly in your application. You use the A-Track for Windows application software and all associated hardware items at your own risk, and in accordance with the full terms of the end-user licence agreement which can be found in Chapter 5 of this document.

The author and designer will not in any event be held liable for any improper operation of the A-Track for Windows program, or interference with any other equipment or software program, nor be held liable for any incidental or consequential damages of any sort arising out of its use.

Terry Chamberlain

May 2023

Acknowledgements

While all of the program code involved in the various parts of A-Track was written from scratch, using Visual Basic 6 (and some C), the author would like to acknowledge the inspiration provided by the work of the Java Model Railroad Interface (JMRI) group who showed what could be done when a PC is interfaced to commercial DCC equipment. Solving similar problems for yourself is made a lot easier by knowing that someone else has already found a solution – even if you do not understand exactly how they did it !

Thanks are especially due to Mark Gurries, of JMRI and formerly of the Silicon Valley Lines Model Railroad Club, who collected all of the publicly available NCE documentation together in his System Technical Manual, and continues to add to this data in his web pages. A-Track could not have advanced as far as it has done without this invaluable reference material.

The author would also like to thank the members of the Cochise and Western Model Railroad Club of Sierra Vista, AZ for their assistance in testing and using A-Track under real operating conditions - and for their patient support and help in ironing out the many bugs that cropped up during development. Particular thanks are due to their long-serving Secretary, Charles Cole, who sadly passed away in October 2015. Charles was involved with A-Track from its very early beginnings on an Atari home computer in 1996 and was a constant source of help and useful insights into what model railroaders really wanted.

NCE Corporation was not involved in the creation or development of A-Track.

1 A-TRACK AND YOUR NCE DCC SYSTEM

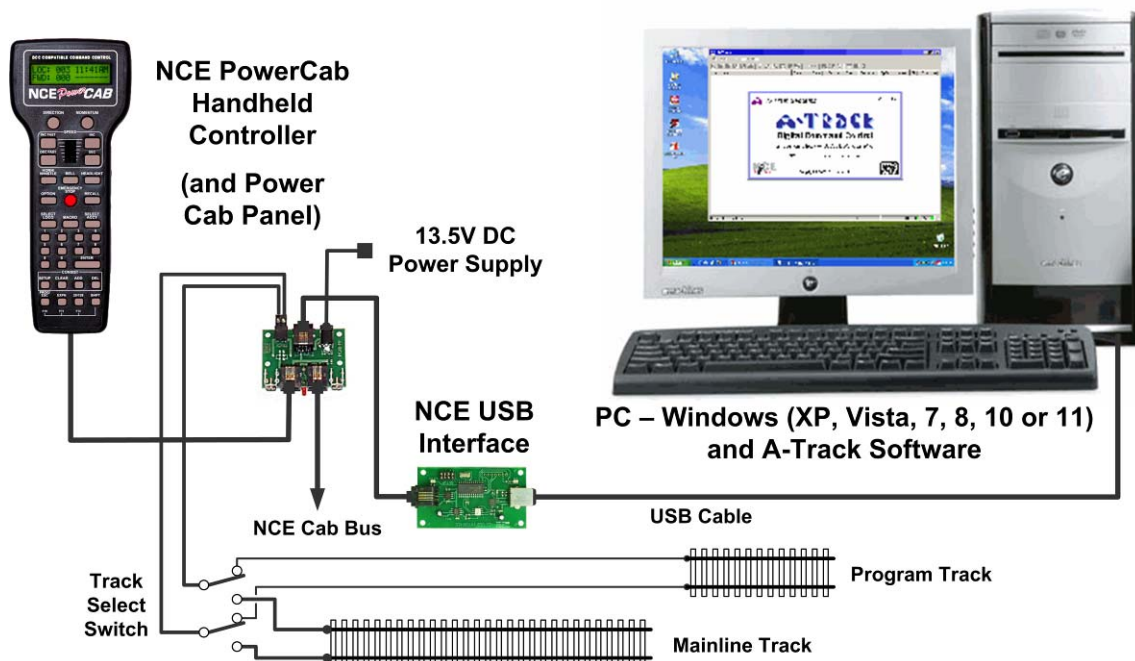
This User Guide is an excerpt from the Reference Manual which describes all features of A-Track in detail. You are not expected to read all of these documents before using A-Track, but rather to dip into them as required when you want to use specific A-Track facilities. However, for the key points that you do need to know before getting to grips with the program just see the Installation Notes and this User Guide.

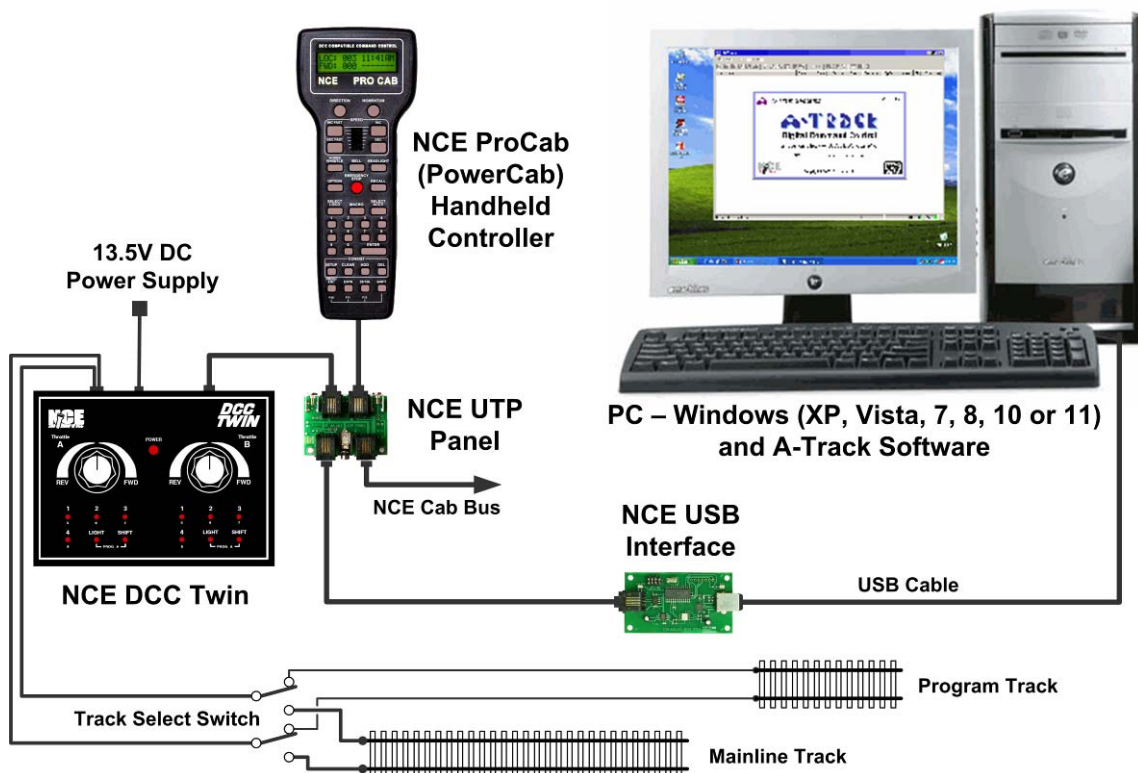
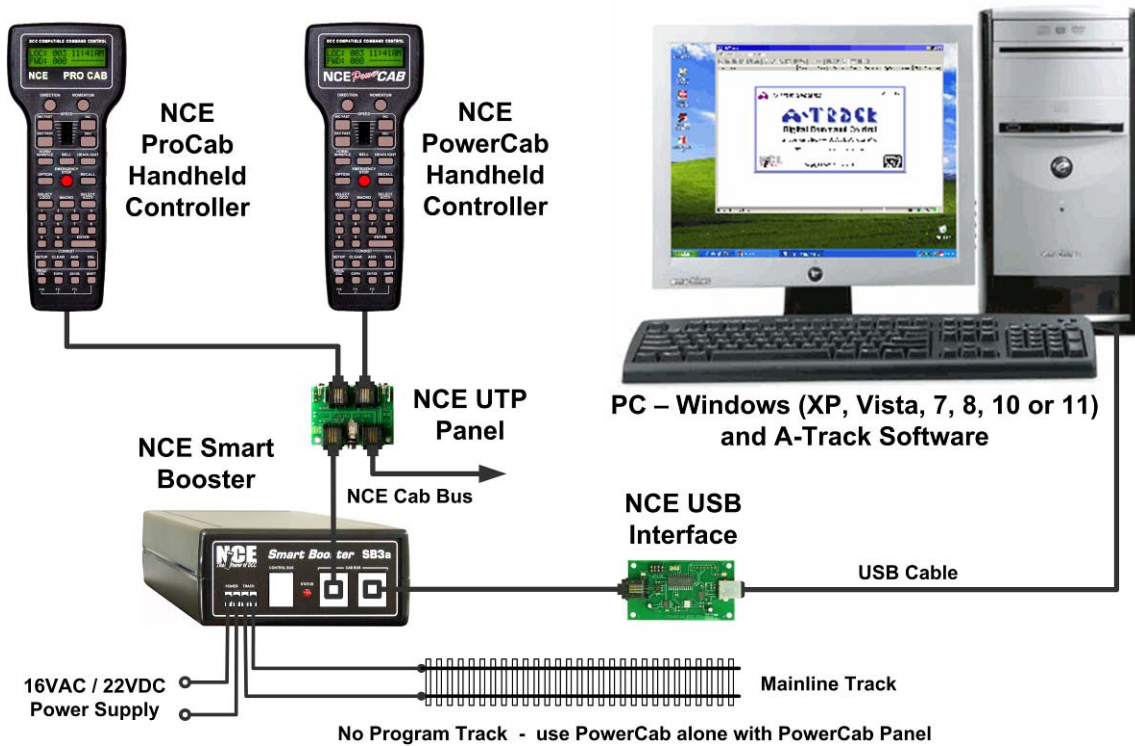
1.1 Principal Features of A-Track

A-Track for Windows (A-Track) is a powerful FREE software application to complement the facilities of your NCE Corporation Power Cab or Power Pro Digital Command Control system

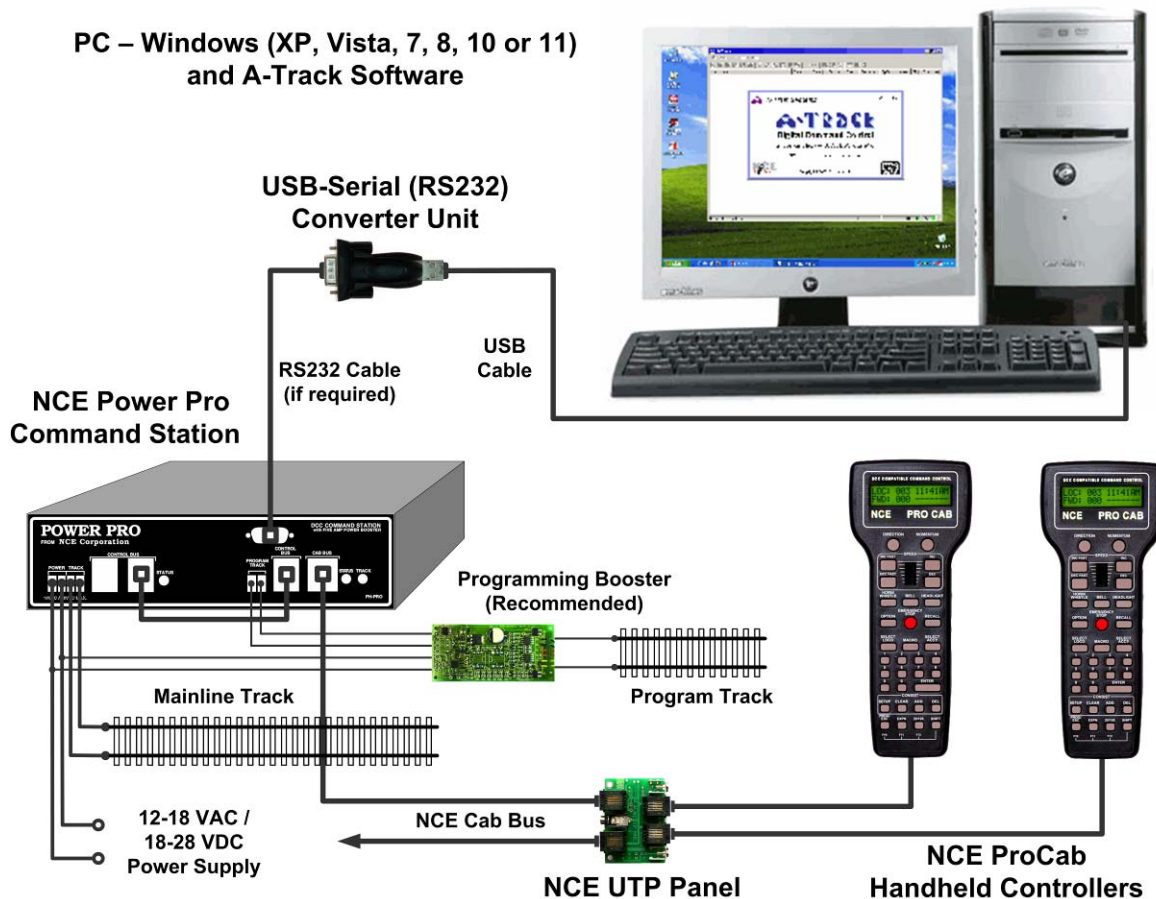
- Helps you organise your roster of locomotives on your railroad
- No need to be a computer expert
- A-Track stores full details of all of your locomotive and accessory (turnout) decoders
 - Easy access to all DCC configuration parameters on your computer screen
 - A-Track can back-up all of the data held within each DCC decoder in your roster
 - Safeguards all the hours of effort put in by you (or your Club's DCC expert) in programming and configuration.
- No change in how your NCE Command Station and Handheld Cabs operate
 - Use them exactly as before
 - A-Track lends a powerful helping hand in the background
- A-Track runs under Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7, Windows 8 (including 8.1), Windows 10, or Windows 11 on a standard Personal Computer (PC)

Using an NCE Power Cab system (including systems based around an NCE SB3a or SB5 Smart Booster unit, or the entry-level DCC Twin), A-Track connects via an NCE USB Interface unit, as shown in the example set-ups below for the different NCE systems –





Alternatively, with an NCE Power Pro Command Station, A-Track connects via a standard Serial Port, if you have an older PC which is fitted with one, or via a USB Port and any readily-available USB-to-Serial (RS232) converter unit, as shown below –



Note that the NCE Power Pro has limited Program Track drive capabilities so that, particularly where sound decoders are fitted to your locomotives, it is strongly recommended that a programming track booster unit (such as the SoundTraxx PTB-100 – note that the alternative DCC Specialities PowerPax is not recommended by NCE) is inserted between the Command Station and the Program Track. Once fitted the unit can be left permanently connected for programming and verifying all types of decoders. A programming track booster unit is not required when using an NCE Power Cab which has a comparatively higher drive capability in Program mode.

When used with either an NCE Power Pro, a Power Cab or Smart Booster Version 1.65 system, or a DCC Twin (and a Version 7 USB Interface where appropriate), A-Track will also let you monitor, set up, save, and restore the complete status and operational parameters of the NCE Command Station and all attached Cabs from your PC

- No need to set everything up from scratch at the start of a session – more time to enjoy your model railroading
- If using a DCC Twin, A-Track lets you perform these functions instead of having to purchase an NCE ProCab for the purpose.

Note, however, that these set-up facilities are not available when A-Track is used with the earlier Version 1.28 of the NCE Power Cab and Smart Booster systems, or with a Version 6 USB Interface.

1.2 Safeguard Your DCC Decoder Configurations

Using A-Track, you can –

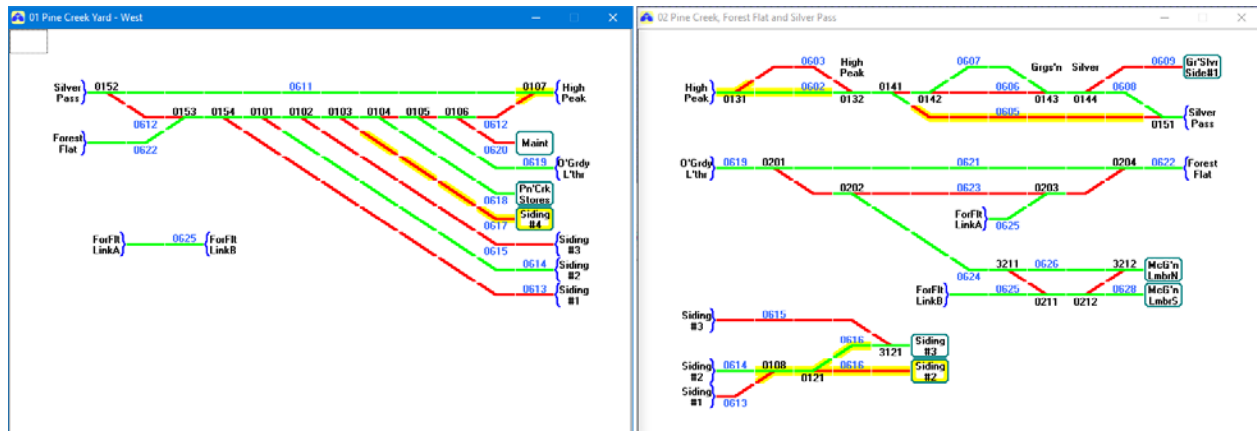
- Read and save the status and parameters of each new locomotive decoder as delivered by the manufacturer
- See the complete configuration details of the locomotive at a glance, on the PC screen, rather than only one parameter at a time by using a standard handheld Cab
- Handle all types of decoders, including sound decoders, from all manufacturers who comply with National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) DCC standards. A-Track has been successfully tested with Bachmann, Broadway Limited (Paragon 2), DCC Concepts, Digitrax, ESU (LokSound), Hornby, Lenz, NCE, Model Rectifier, MTH, QSI (Quantum), SoundTraxx, Tam Valley Depot, Train Control Systems (TCS), Zimo, and ZTC decoders.
- Make changes to the decoder parameters directly on the PC screen, without having to compute or type in complicated numerical values, and immediately try out the effects to see whether to keep the alterations or go back to the original values
- Keep back-up copies of each decoder's settings – especially valuable if you make an error in programming one or more parameters, and completely upset your careful tailoring of a locomotive's performance and characteristics. A-Track lets you to retrieve the previous decoder set-up and restore the locomotive to its previous state (as long as you remembered to save the earlier set-up version before making the changes !).
- Look at the decoder set-ups for several locomotives at the same time, see the differences between them, then tune their speed (and function) characteristics to run together in a consist
- Copy decoder parameters from one locomotive to another – very useful when you purchase a new locomotive similar to one already in your roster, saving a lot of programming time and effort – just make sure you use A-Track first to make a back-up copy of the original settings in the new locomotive (just in case !). Then give the new locomotive an appropriate description and its own DCC address, plus any minor enhancements that you might want to make.

1.3 Control and Monitor Your Layout

As well as handling locomotive decoders, A-Track also lets you program and operate accessory (or stationary) decoders, primarily to control turnouts on your layout.

To make operation as simple as possible, A-Track allows you to construct an on-screen graphical view of all your layout turnouts, such as that shown in the two example panels shown below.

- Double-click any turnout and the commanded position is shown immediately on the panel, together with which track sections are accessible (green) or not (red)
- With either an NCE Power Pro or a Version 1.65 Power Cab system, wire up your turnouts to one or more NCE Auxiliary Input Units (AIUs) and A-Track will be able to sense the actual position of each turnout – checking that the command has worked



- Connect block occupancy detectors to one or more AIUs, and A-Track will also show which track blocks are currently occupied (yellow highlight)
- A-Track lets you select the start and end points of a required route (plus an optional mid-point) and then immediately display the necessary intermediate turnout settings. All turnouts can then be switched with a single click and, if you wish, their settings saved as a Macro for future use.
- Macros are fully supported for NCE Power Pro and all versions of Power Cab systems, and A-Track expands the limited Macro facilities of Power Cab systems to equal those of Power Pro systems.

1.4 Protect Your Decoder, Command Station and Handheld Cab Setups

With NCE Power Pro and Version 1.65 Power Cab systems, A-Track gives you full access to the Command Station, and the ability to display all of the key parameters stored in its internal memory on the PC screen –

- Perform Command Station and Handheld Cab setup directly from the computer
- Define and manipulate the composition of Consists and any stored Macros
- Selectively save (back-up) all parameters stored in the Command Station memory (System, Macros, Consists, and Cab Status) to files on the PC's hard disk, CD-R / DVD-R or USB flash drive (memory stick)
- Restore the Command Station and its attached Cabs to a state corresponding to a previously-recorded operating session
- Save all or part of the equipment roster to files on any of the media listed above, simply for safe-keeping or for loading into another A-Track / NCE system elsewhere

Given the current size of hard disks and the amount of RAM fitted in a modern personal computer, there is no practical limit to the number of different Command Station, Cab or decoder setups which can be saved to, or restored from, the computer's permanent or removable storage. A-Track can handle equipment roster lists stretching to hundreds (or even thousands) of equipment items. However, such large lists tend to be unwieldy to view and manipulate, so it is usually easier to compose and save shorter rosters – corresponding, for example, to an operating session.

1.5 Additional Facilities

A-Track can handle simultaneous connections to several Command Stations where, for example you use a Power Pro to run your main layout and have a Power Cab connected to the programming track. In such a case, you can have two instances of A-Track running on your computer at the same time, allowing you to switch from operations to programming, and back again, at the click of a mouse.

As well as its primary purpose of storing and manipulating the contents of DCC decoders and your Command Station, A-Track also allows you to control any selected locomotive or set of turnouts on the main track directly from the PC, using the mouse and a 'soft' on-screen controller to issue DCC commands directly to the NCE Command Station. Although this control function is really intended as a test facility, to check the results of programming a locomotive decoder, for example, you can call up and operate as many as eight 'soft' controllers on the screen simultaneously - if you think you possess the capability and dexterity to run eight locomotives simultaneously on the layout by yourself !

1.6 Obtaining Your Copy of A-Track

A-Track may be downloaded from the A-Train Systems website at –

<http://www.a-train-systems.co.uk/getatrack>

- completely free of charge for your personal or club use. Support to resolve any problems which you may encounter in using A-Track is also available free through the website.

You can either download A-Track as a simple executable **Setup File**, and then separately download the **Reference Manual** and/or **User Guide** and **Installation Notes**, or else download a complete **Installation Package** (including Adobe Reader).

Click on the selected file to download, then select **Save** (not Run) either file or link, to copy the file to a folder on your computer. In Windows XP the default location will be My Documents, or Downloads in Windows Vista, Windows 7, 8, 10, or 11, although you can choose any other folder as a destination if you wish – but take note of where the file is saved so that you can locate it later for installation.

Once installed (see **Sections 3.1** through **3.4**), you have the option of registering your copy of A-Track, also without any charge, from the Help menu and then via the website. Registered users will have priority with regard to support and assistance in rectifying any problems which they come across.

If, after using A-Track, you think that it is of benefit to your model railroading activities, and would like to support future A-Track development and enhancements, then you are welcome to make a voluntary donation - but you will not be 'nagged' or pressured to do so.

Donations can be made safely and securely via [PayPal](#), using any credit or debit card, even if you do not have a PayPal account of your own

Very Important : Please note that the term "completely free of charge" must not be confused with "free for you to exploit as you wish". A-Track is copyrighted software, and not a public domain product. You may not distribute or sell A-Track either alone or as part of any commercial item, as set out in detail in the terms of the A-Track licence in **Chapter 5**.

2 SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Personal Computer

- Pentium 3 processor or better, running at 500 MHz or faster (1 GHz for Windows 10 and 11)
- At least 512 MByte RAM to get the best performance from the Windows Operating System (2 GByte recommended for Windows 7, 8 and 10, 4 Gbyte for Windows 11) – A-Track itself requires minimal memory
- At least 60 MByte of hard disk space available for installation
- Minimum screen resolution of 800 x 600 pixels (1024 x 768 preferred) showing at least 256 colours (8-bit colour setting) or better
- One available RS232 Serial port or USB 2.0 port
- CD-R drive (if installing the software from a distribution CD)
- Printer (optional)

It is assumed in this User Guide that the reader is familiar with the basic operation of a Personal Computer using a Windows operating system, including the use of mouse and keyboard, and is able to find his or her way through file and folder structures to store and retrieve any required files or other data.

In this User Guide, 'click' means a left-click of the mouse, ie. press and immediately release the left mouse button. 'Right-click' means the same action applied to the right mouse button, and 'double-click' means two left-clicks performed in rapid succession.

As far as possible, A-Track uses only common Windows operations to manipulate the data involved in handling DCC decoders and the NCE Command Station and Handheld Cabs. Hence, if anything in the descriptions is not clear, you should be able to find further information and more detailed explanations in any of the multitude of introductory personal computer and Windows books available on the market.

Most of the illustrations in this User Guide have been captured from the screen of a machine operating under Windows 10 or Windows 11. Where operations are significantly different under Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7, 8, or 8.1 screen shots from one of these operating systems are shown as well, or an explanatory note is at least included in the text.

2.2 Operating System

A-Track can be installed under, and will operate with, any of the following Windows operating systems –

- Microsoft Windows XP (Service Pack 2 or later)
(Home, Media, or Professional Edition)
- Microsoft Windows Vista (Service Pack 1 or later)
(Home Basic, Home Premium, Business, or Ultimate Edition)
- Microsoft Windows 7
(Starter, Home Premium, Professional, or Ultimate Edition)
- Microsoft Windows 8 and 8.1

(Standard, Professional, or Enterprise Edition)

- but note that A-Track cannot be run under Windows 8 RT, as installed on tablet machines (now discontinued by Microsoft), since this version does not support desktop applications

- throughout the User Guide, any reference to operation under Windows 8 applies equally to Windows 8.1

- Microsoft Windows 10
(Home, Professional, Enterprise, or Education Edition)
- Microsoft Windows 11
(Home, Professional, Enterprise, Education, or SE Edition)

2.3 DCC Command Station



A-Track will operate in conjunction with any of the following items of NCE equipment –

- NCE Power Cab (Versions 1.28 or 1.65B – note that the original version 1.65 had a serious bug, so you should contact NCE to obtain a 1.65B upgrade EEPROM)
- NCE Smart Booster (SB3, SB3a or SB5 – with Version 1.65B EEPROM)
- NCE DCC Twin
- NCE Power Pro 5-Amp System (PH Pro or PH Pro R)
- NCE Power Pro 10-Amp System (PH-10 or PH-10 R)
(NCE CS02 Command Station plus PB110 Power Booster)

Again, it is assumed in this User Guide that the reader is familiar with the functionality provided by the NCE Power Cab, Smart Booster, or Power Pro Command Station and any associated Handheld Controllers (Cabs), so that the standard details of their operation are not covered in this User Guide.

Please refer to the NCE Power Cab or Power Pro System Reference Manuals, and other available NCE documentation, for full specifications and operating instructions.

3 GETTING STARTED

To help you locate the information you need from this large User Guide, if you use the electronic version (the **.pdf** file) in Adobe Reader, for example, you will find that all chapter and section headings are hyperlinked, so that you can jump to any part of the document from the Contents listing, shown by clicking on the Bookmark icon ( or ) , or via the Adobe Reader **View** menu by going to **Navigation Panels / Bookmarks** (or **Show/Hide / Navigation Panes / Bookmarks** in later versions).

In addition, you can also click on any reference in the text to another section of the User Guide, which will take you straight to that section. Click on the **Back** or **Previous View** button to return to where you started. If these buttons are not shown, search for the relevant set of Toolbar buttons from the Adobe Reader **View** menu.

If you cannot find the information you need, remember that the full Reference Manual is available as Help pages whenever you are running A-Track. All you have to do is press the F1 key on your keyboard, to display the most relevant Help page.

Note that, if you are planning to use a USB-to-Serial Converter or the NCE USB Interface unit to connect your PC to the NCE equipment, the associated driver software can be installed either before or after installation of the A-Track program, although both have to be correctly installed before the full functionality of A-Track will be available. Some guidance on the installation of the various varieties of driver software can be found in **Chapter 13** of the **Reference Manual**.

Before starting installation of A-Track from the Full Installation Package, from a Distribution CD, or directly from the Setup File, ensure that no other applications are running on the PC, and that the active User has administrative rights (this is the normal status when the operating system is either Windows XP Home or Media Edition, in Windows Vista or Windows 7 Starter or Home Editions, in Windows 8 Standard Edition, and Windows 10 or 11 Home Edition, but you may need to log on as an Administrator when using Windows XP Professional Edition, Windows Vista and Windows 7 Business, Professional, or Ultimate Editions, or Windows 8, 10, or 11 Professional, Enterprise or Education Editions).

Once all of the necessary driver and program software is installed, A-Track can be run by any User - no aspect of A-Track operation requires administrator privileges.

3.1 Installation from the Full Installation Package

Having downloaded the Installation Package from the A-Train Systems website (see **Section 1.6**), 'unzip' the compressed file (**A-Track4_Install.zip**) to a convenient folder by right-clicking on the file, and then on the **Extract All** option on the pop-up menu (if you do not have a dedicated file-compression program such as WinZip installed on your computer).

The installer program (**A-Track4_Install.exe**) can be run directly from the folder into which you 'unzipped' the Package by double-clicking on it. Alternatively, you can copy the complete set of unzipped files and folders to a USB flash drive (memory stick), or write them to a CD-R disk, if you wish to install A-Track on another computer (such as one without Internet access) – ensuring that you preserve the unzipped folder structure. Once copied to a CD-R, the A-Track installer should run automatically when loaded into a suitable CD-DVD drive (provided that your computer's 'Autorun' options are set appropriately), as described below for installation from the Distribution CD.

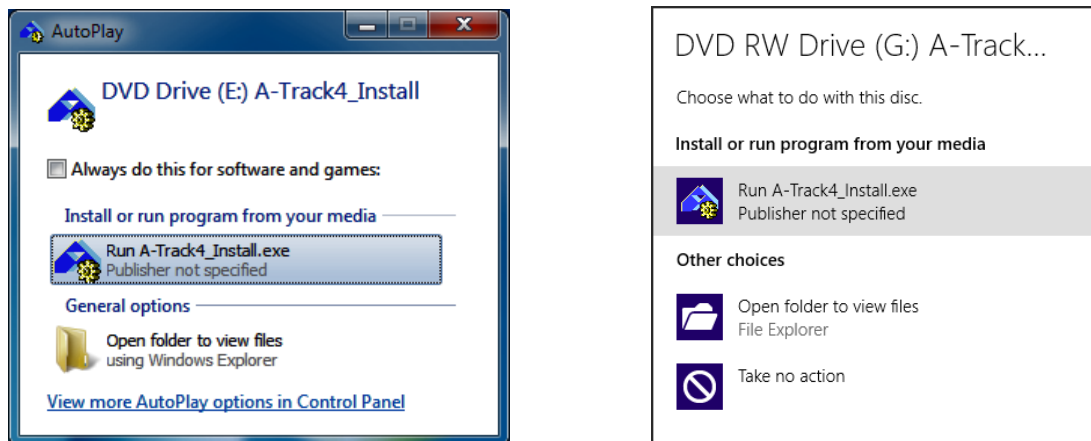
If you have copied the Installation Package to a USB flash drive then, after plugging the device into an available USB port, it is unlikely that the installer will run automatically. Hence, click on **My Computer** in XP, **Computer** in Vista, Windows 7 or 8, or **This PC** in Windows 8.1 or 10, and locate the USB drive (usually **D:** or **E:**). In Windows 8 or 10 you will first need to open File Explorer on the Desktop in order to locate the USB drive in **Computer** or **This PC**. Double-click on the drive icon to reveal the list of files and folders, then double-click on the file named **A-Track4_Install.exe**.

When the A-Track installation window opens, and presents you with a set of simple options, follow the instructions given below for Installation from the Distribution CD.

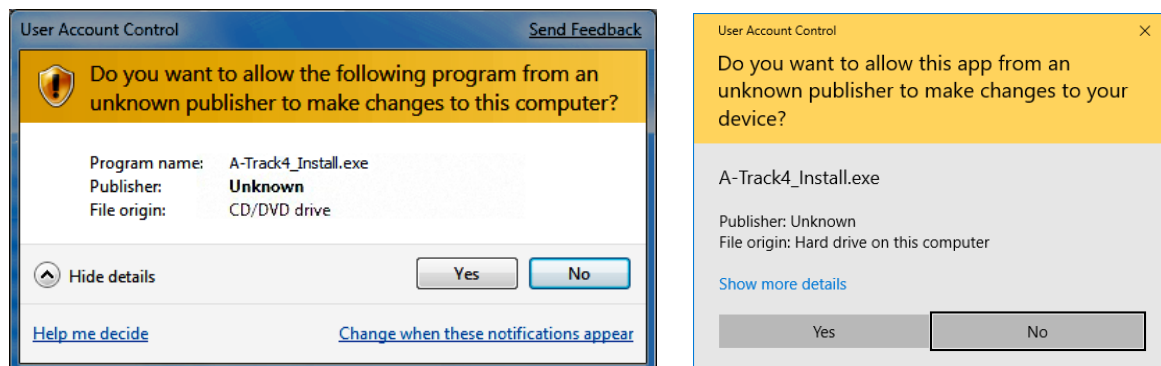
3.2 Installation from the Distribution CD

Insert the distribution CD into your DVD / CD drive, ensuring that no other applications are running on the PC.

Although the installation program will normally run immediately under Windows XP, in the case of either Windows Vista, Windows 7, Windows 8 (8.1), or Windows 10 the standard operating system in-built security measures will first display an AutoPlay window to confirm that you wish to run the program –



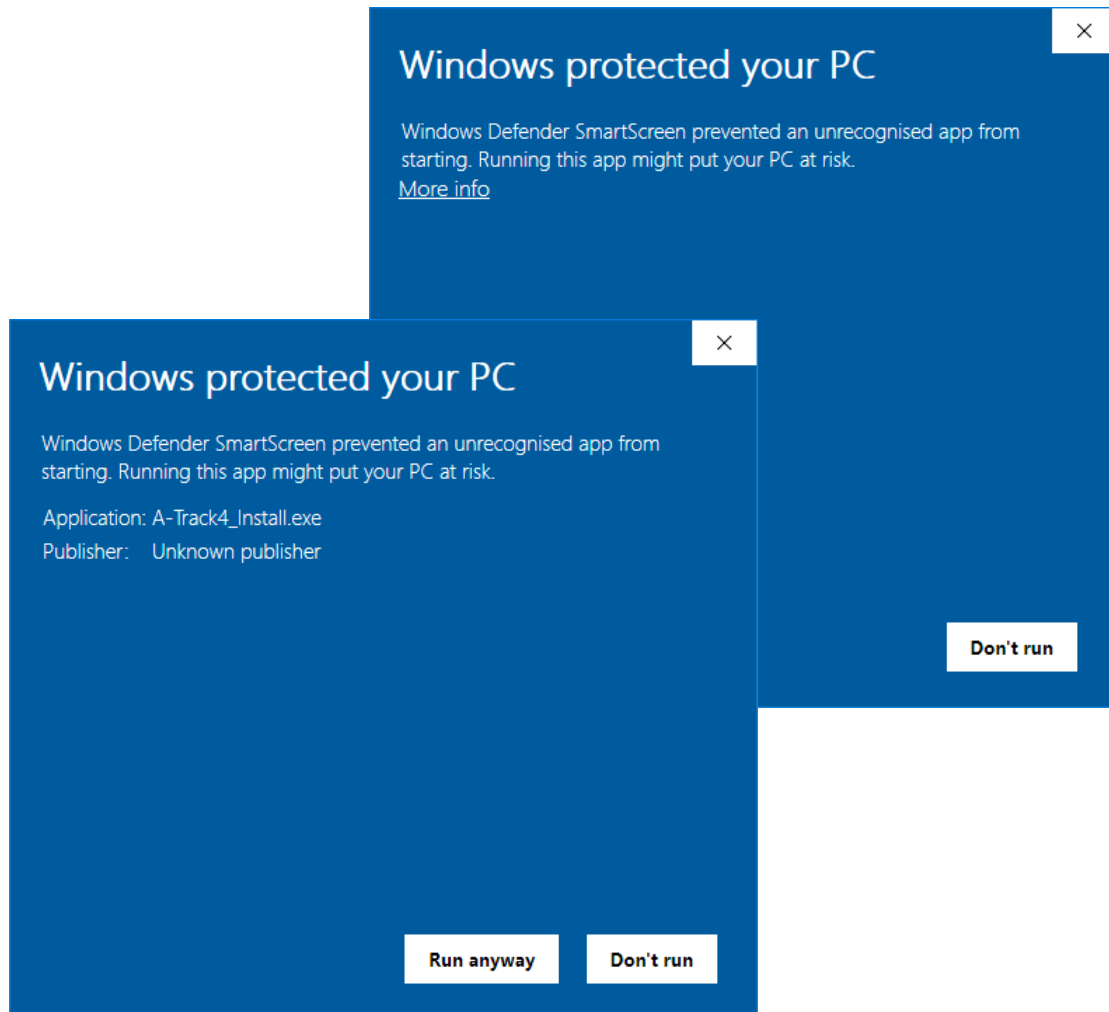
Click **Run A-Track4_Install.exe** to continue, and then click **Yes** on the following security prompt, similar to one of those shown below, to allow the A-Track installation to proceed –



If, for any reason, the Autorun (or AutoPlay) facility has been disabled on the PC, and the CD-R fails to run automatically, click on **My Computer**, **Computer**, or **This PC**,

depending on your version of Windows, and locate the DVD / CD drive (usually **D:** or **E:**). In Windows 8 or 8.1 you will first need to open File Explorer on the Desktop in order to locate the DVD / CD drive in **Computer** or **This PC**. Double-click on the drive icon to reveal the list of files and folders, then double-click on the file named **A-Track4_Install.exe**.

With Windows 10 or 11, because A-Train Systems is not an organisation known to Microsoft, and A-Track is an unrecognised application, you are likely to receive a warning as shown below. A-Track does not contain malware nor pose any kind of danger to your computer. To proceed, click **More info** and then the button labelled **Run anyway**, which appears at the bottom of the window –



You may also receive some cautionary messages from any anti-virus or Internet security software which is installed on your machine.

The A-Track installation window opens and presents you with a set of simple options –



Installation Guidance – View Notes opens a copy of these instructions in webpage format (.htm), and displays them in the browser program installed on your computer. If no browser is found, then Windows will display an error message.

Install A-Track Program – Install will close the installation window and then run the A-Track SetUp process, as described for installation from the Setup File in [Section 3.4](#) below. However, note that, if you have a previous version of A-Track installed on the PC, then it is recommended that you uninstall it before proceeding to install the latest version - most easily done by using the **Uninstall A-Track** option from the Start Menu or Start Screen (also described in [Section 3.4](#) below).

View User Guides – Open Folder will open a folder containing the A-Track User Guide, Installation Guides, and Reference Manual in Portable Document Format (.pdf) which can be read using the Adobe Reader program.

Install Adobe Reader will install a copy of this free program (Version 11.0.8) if you do not already have a suitable version installed on your computer – just follow the prompts to complete the straightforward set-up. Note that Adobe is likely to update this version immediately to the latest Version 11.0.23, which was not directly accessible for download.

Close removes the A-Track installation window from the screen – you can open it again by re-inserting a copy of the Installation Package on CD-R into a DVD / CD drive, by plugging a copy on a USB drive into a USB socket, or by locating and double-clicking on the **A-Track4_Install.exe** file from wherever you stored it.

3.3 Installation from the Setup File

If you have chosen to download the simple Setup File (**A-Track44-301-SetUp.exe** or a later version) from the A-Train Systems website (see [Section 1.6](#)) then locate the file in the folder into which you downloaded it. With Windows 8 you will need to do this from the Desktop, accessed by clicking the appropriate tile on the Start Screen, and then opening File Explorer.

If you have a previous version of A-Track installed on the PC, then it is recommended that you uninstall it before proceeding to install the latest version. The easiest way to do this is to use the **Uninstall A-Track** option from the Start Menu, as shown at the end of **Section 3.4**.

Alternatively, you can open Control Panel and select Add or Remove Programs in Windows XP, or Uninstall a Program in Windows Vista, Windows 7, 8, 10 or 11 (access Programs and Features). Wait for the list of installed programs to be displayed then click on the entry for A-Track, and finally click on the Remove button in Windows XP, or the Uninstall button in Windows Vista, Windows 7, 8, 10 or 11. Once the A-Track program is uninstalled, close the open Control Panel window.

Before running the Setup File (by double-clicking on it) ensure that no other applications are running on the PC. Although the Setup File will normally run immediately under Windows XP, in the case of either Windows Vista, Windows 7, 8, 10 or 11, the standard operating system in-built security measures, as described in the preceding section on installation from the distribution CD, will prompt you to allow the file to run – click **Yes** to continue.

With Windows 10 or 11, because A-Train Systems is not an organisation known to Microsoft, and A-Track is an unrecognised application, you are likely to receive a warning as shown below. A-Track does not contain malware nor pose any kind of danger to your computer. To proceed, click **More info** and then the button labelled **Run anyway**, which appears at the bottom of the window –

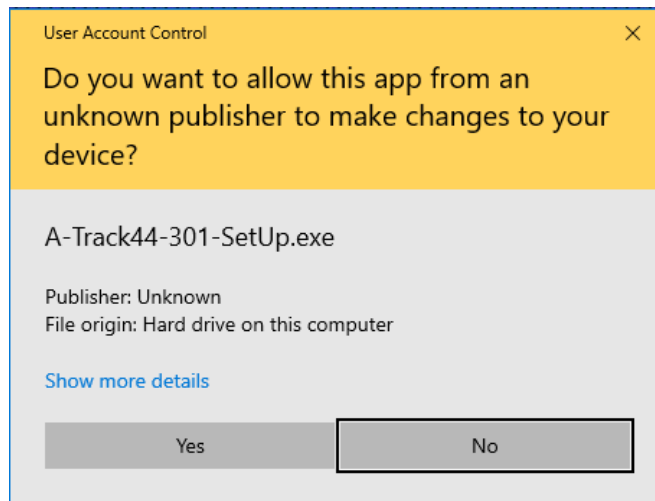


You may also receive some cautionary messages from any anti-virus or Internet security software which is installed on your machine.

3.4 Installing A-Track Step-by-Step

If installing from the Installation Package, click on **Install Program**, or otherwise locate and double-click on the SetUp File (**A-Track44-301-SetUp.exe** or a later version) in the appropriate folder to start the installation.

The default security settings in Windows Vista, Windows 7, 8, 10 or 11 (but not under Windows XP) will then display a couple of warnings, requiring you to allow the set-up program to run –

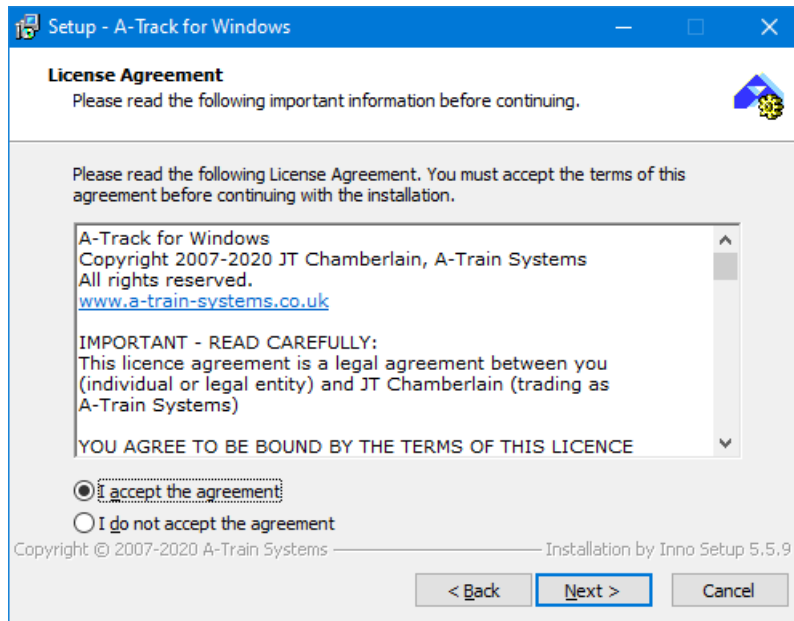


– and you may also receive some cautionary messages from any anti-virus or Internet security software which is installed on your machine – before the A-Track SetUp Welcome screen shown below is displayed. Again, as noted in the SetUp window, it is recommended that any other open programs or windows are closed before proceeding further.

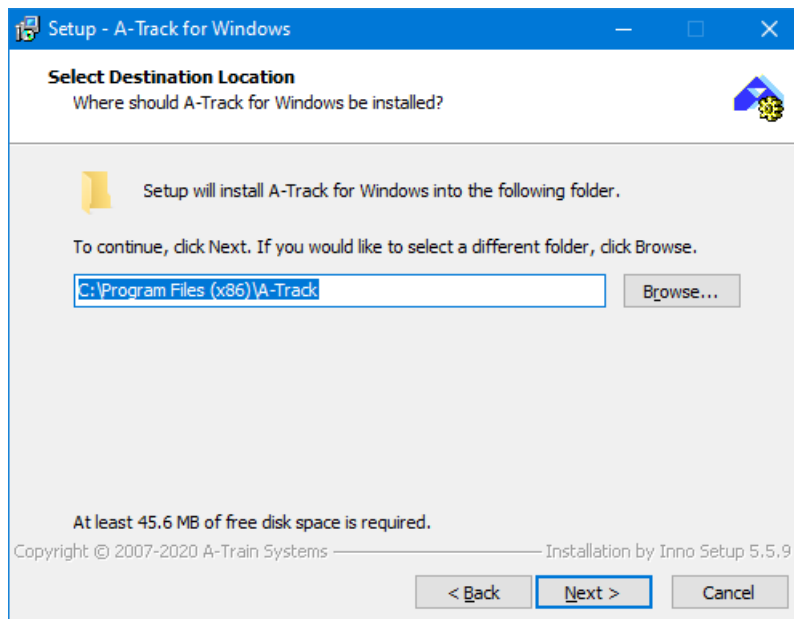


Click on **Next** to continue with the installation (or **Cancel** to quit SetUp) and to display the end-user licence screen. Here the full text of the licence, under which the A-Track software is provided, is available if you wish to read it (printed in full in **Chapter 5** of this User Guide).

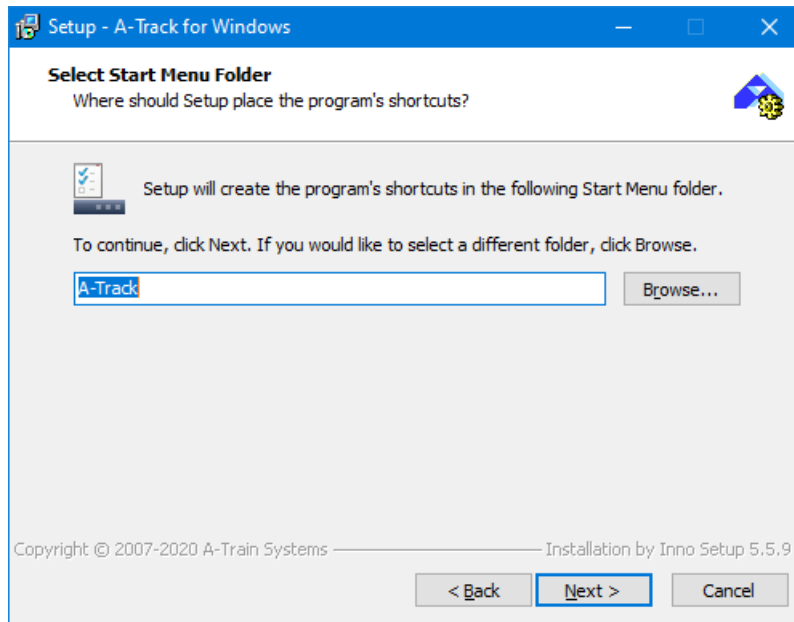
You must accept the terms of the licence, by clicking on '**I accept the agreement**', in order to display the **Next** button and to be able to continue with A-Track installation –



Click **Next** to display the default destination folder for A-Track. Unless you have very good reasons to change the install destination (and understand the possible complications of doing so) it is recommended that you leave it as shown at **C:\Program Files (x86)\A-Track** (or **C:\Program Files\A-Track**) -

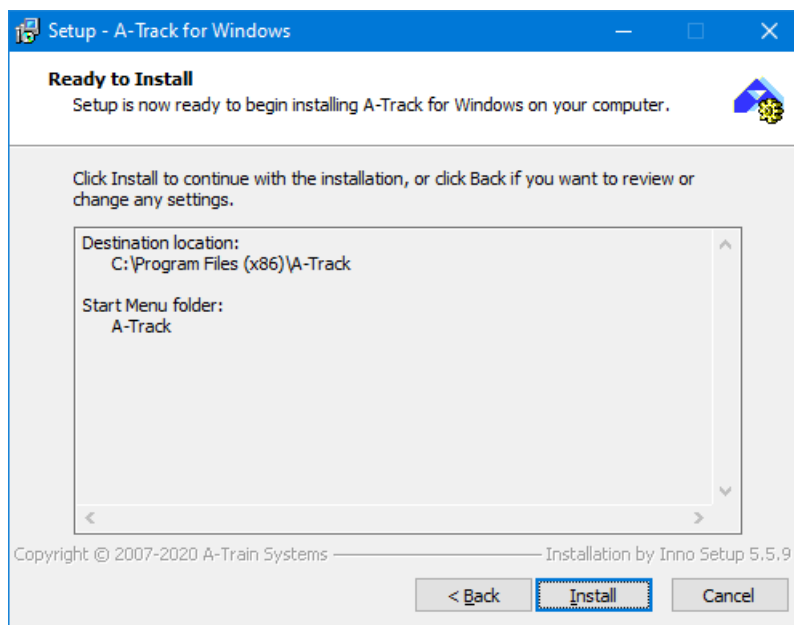


Click on **Next** to continue. The set-up program will now ask you to confirm that it should proceed to create a set of entries for A-Track on the computer's Start Menu. These will be complemented by the placement of an A-Track icon on the Desktop. As in previous windows, you are also offered the options of returning to change your previous selection (**Back**), or of abandoning the A-Track SetUp (**Cancel**) -

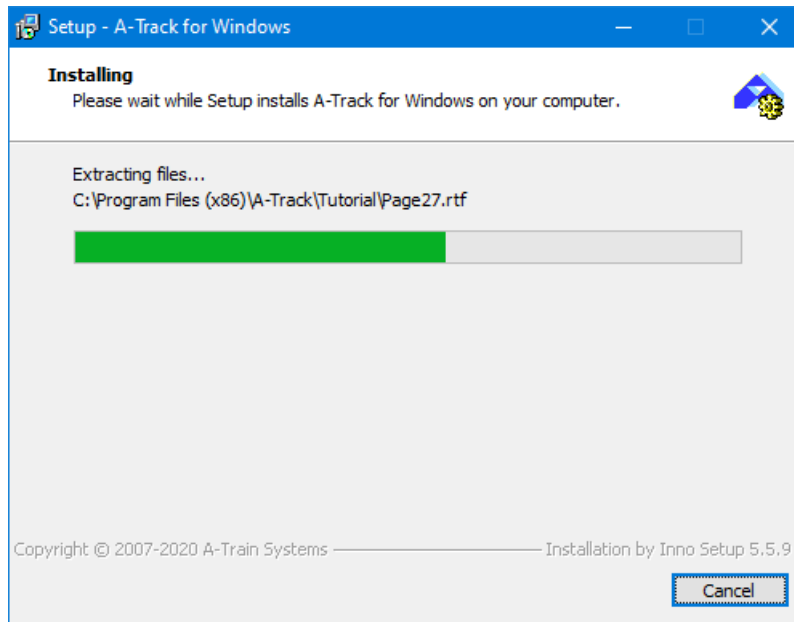


Accepting the default option gives A-Track its own entry on the Start Menu, but you can choose to place the A-Track entry within an existing Start Menu folder (such as Accessories) by using the **Browse** button.

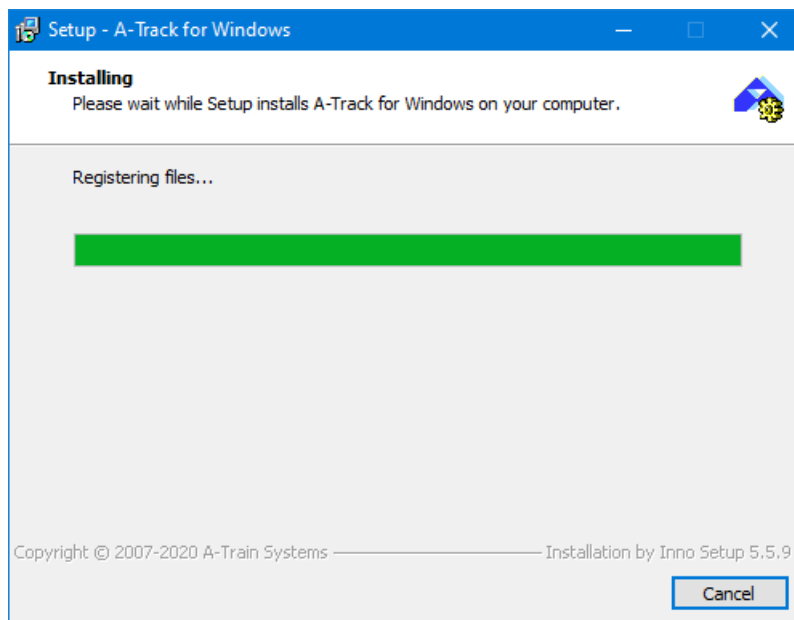
When you are happy, click **Next** to continue –



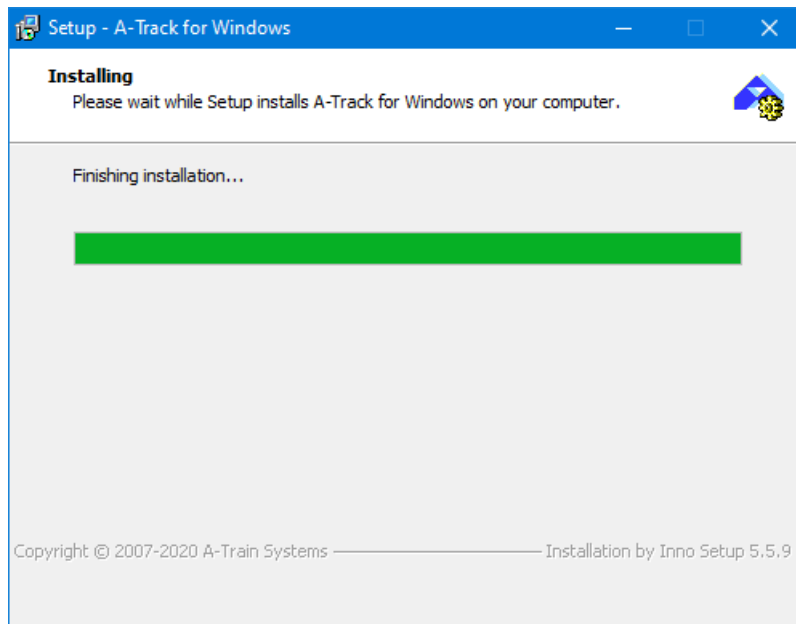
On the confirmation screen, if you are satisfied with the installation settings, click **Install**. Setup will then proceed to install all of the files required to support A-Track, together with the A-Track executable program itself. If any of the Windows support files are already installed in the PC then SetUp will only install a replacement version if it is more up-to-date than the existing file -



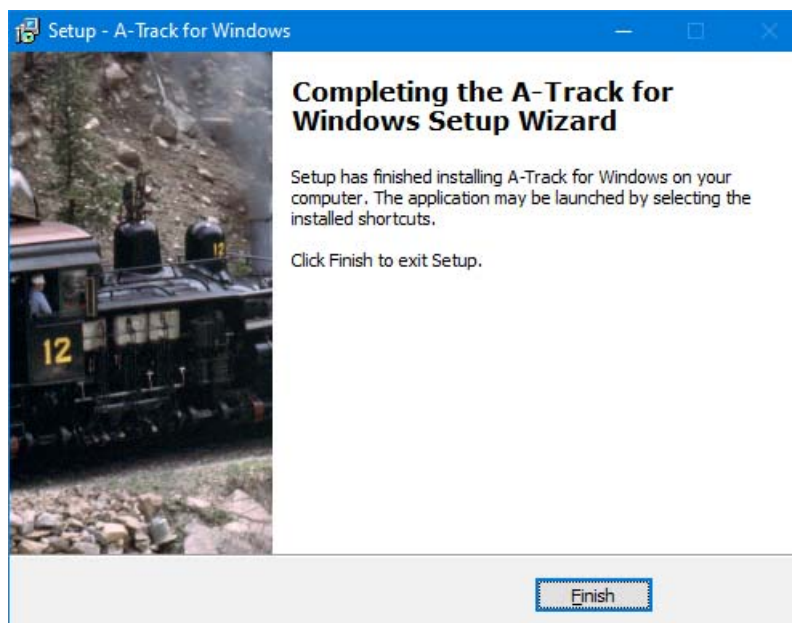
Installed files are linked into the Windows Registry as required –



- followed by some tidying of the installed files -



- and then a final window is displayed to show that the A-Track installation is complete -

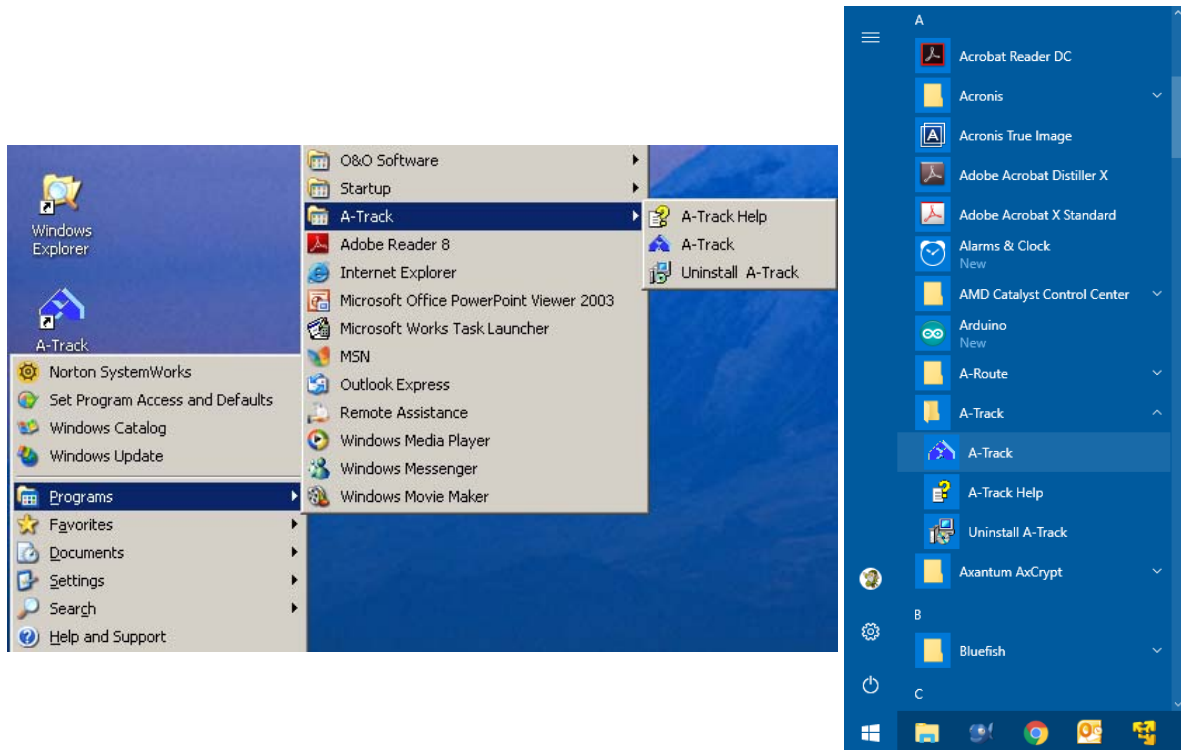


Click **Finish** to close A-Track SetUp and return to the Desktop.

To launch A-Track double-click on the program icon (🚂) on the Desktop. In Windows 8 (and in Windows 10) a corresponding tile (🚂) is placed on the Start Screen.

In Windows versions other than Windows 8, you can also launch A-Track from the Start Menu by clicking on **Start**, then **Programs** (or **All Programs**, depending on your selected Start Menu format). Locate and move the mouse to the A-Track folder, and then click on the **A-Track** program as shown in both the Windows XP screen-shot

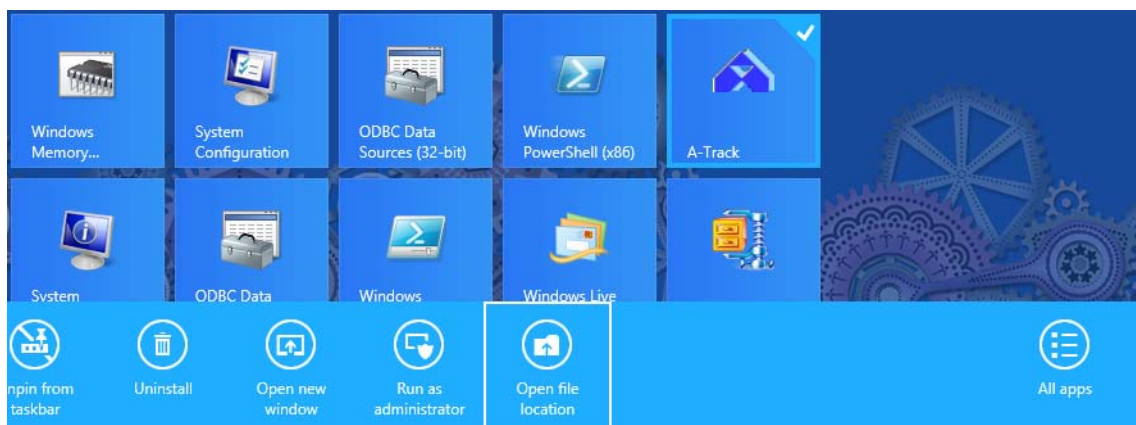
below, which also shows the A-Track Desktop icon, and that from Windows 10 on the right –




Note that, as well as an entry for the executable program, **A-Track**, the A-Track Start Menu folder also contains a link to the **A-Track Help** file. This file contains the full text of the A-Track User Guide (this document) and, as will be described later, can be accessed from anywhere within the A-Track program while it is running by using the normal **Help** menu, or by pressing the **F1 key** at any time.

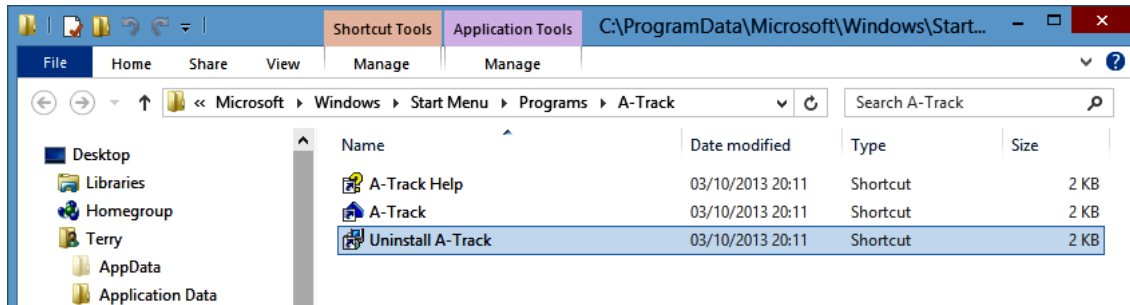
The third entry within the A-Track Start Menu folder is **Uninstall A-Track** which will launch an Uninstall utility to completely remove A-Track from your computer. This is an alternative route to program removal compared to going through the Windows Control Panel.


However, (for reasons known only to Microsoft) this option is not displayed directly on the Windows 8 Start Screen, but can be accessed by a *right-click* on the A-Track tile –

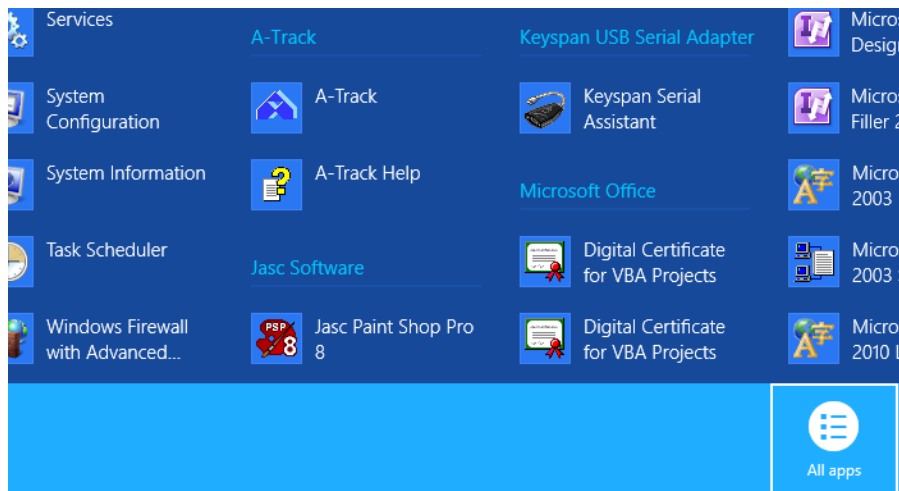


If an **A-Track** tile does not appear on the Start Screen, you can access the program by a *right-click* on a blank area of the Start Screen, then on the '**All apps**' option (or in Windows 8.1 click the **All Apps**  button on the Start Screen), and then locating the **A-Track** group of tiles.

While you can click on 'Uninstall' and go through the normal Control Panel process, an alternative is to click instead on the '**Open file location**' option and then double-click on the **Uninstall A-Track** option shown when the File Explorer window opens –

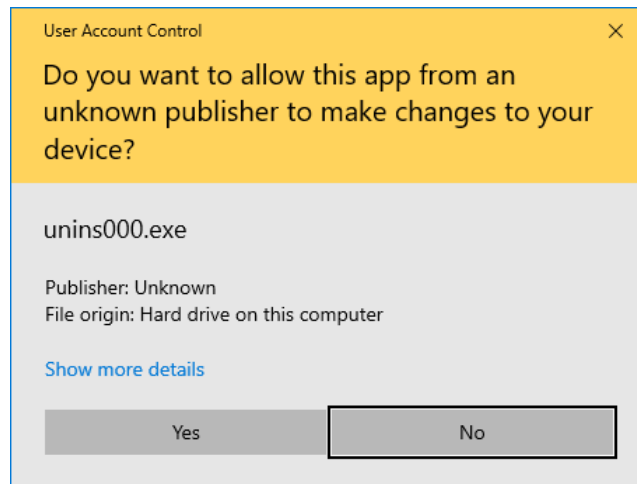


This window also gives you access to the **A-Track Help** file, although alternatively this can be reached from the Start Screen by a *right-click* on a blank area of the Start Screen, then on the '**All apps**' option (or, in Windows 8.1, click the **All Apps**  button on the Start Screen), and then locating **A-Track Help** in the appropriate group of tiles –

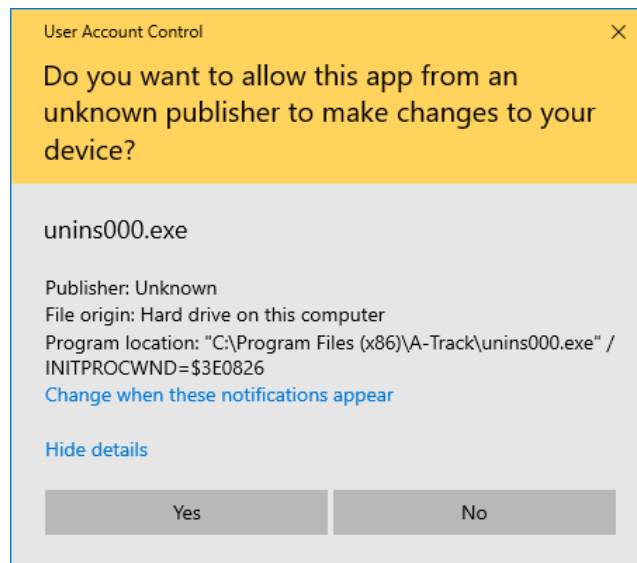


Returning to Uninstall, note that, when using Windows Vista, Windows 7, Windows 8, Windows 10, or Windows 11 their default security settings will display one or two warnings, requiring you to allow the uninstall program to run.

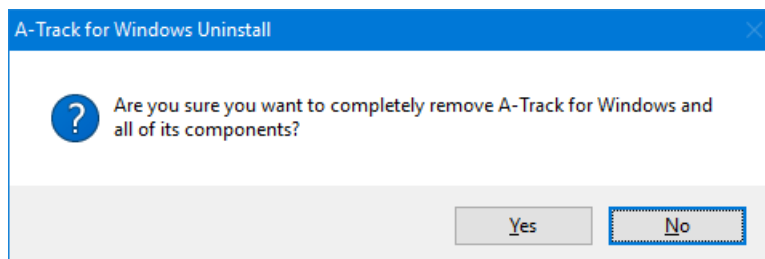
The Uninstall process then starts (except in Windows XP) with two requests for confirmation –



Since the A-Track installer gives the uninstaller a rather anonymous filename (unins000.exe), you can always check that this is the correct file by clicking on 'Show more details', where you can see that this is, in fact, the A-Track uninstaller –

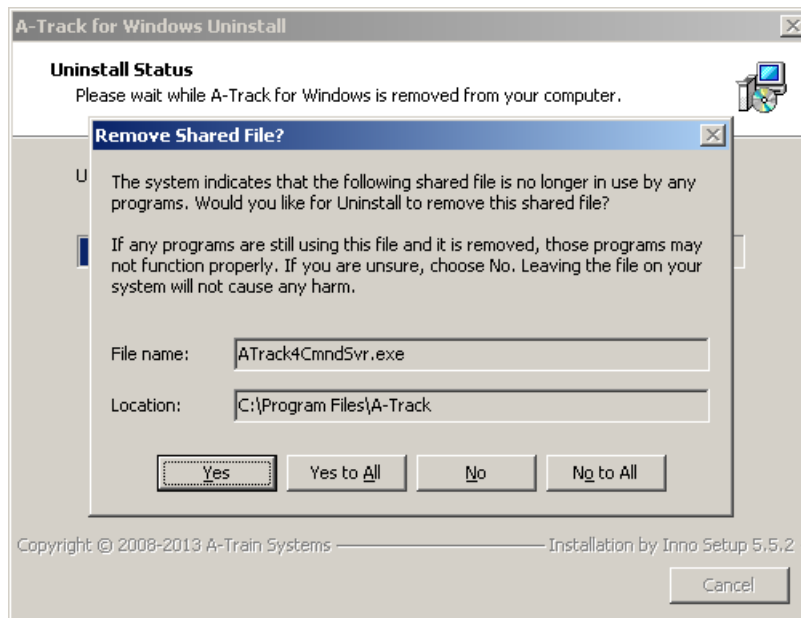


With or without showing the details, click **Yes** to proceed, when you will see the second request for confirmation –



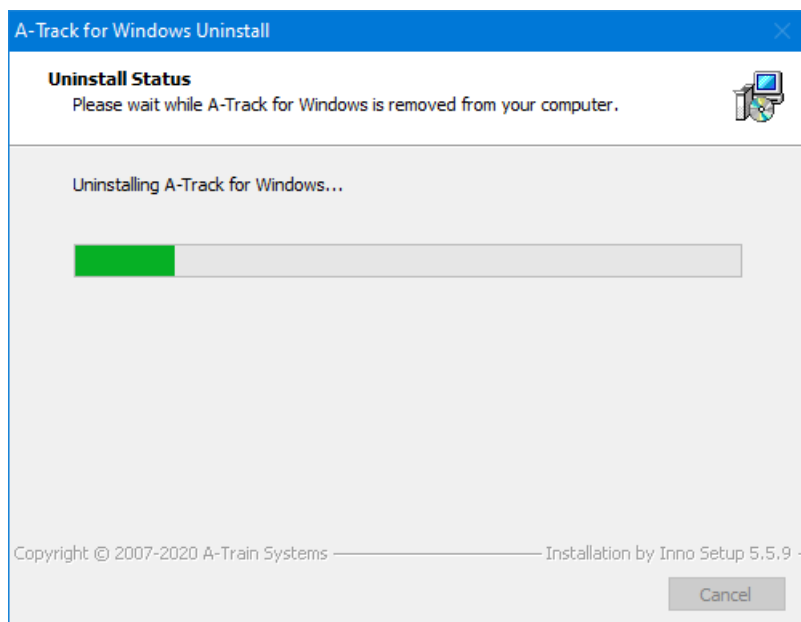
Click **Yes** again to continue (or **No** to abandon the uninstall process).

During the uninstall process in Windows XP you may be presented with a set of windows inviting you to remove shared files which were installed with A-Track, and which are not believed to be used by any other installed program. For example –

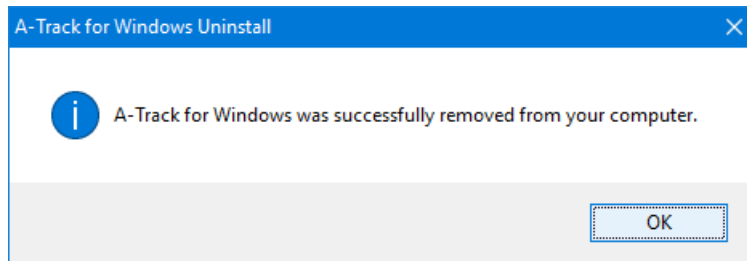


Leaving these files in place will not cause any harm, nor slow down the performance of your computer, and is the ultra-safe approach, but you can choose to uninstall them if you wish, by clicking on the appropriate button shown above.

The A-Track program itself is then uninstalled –

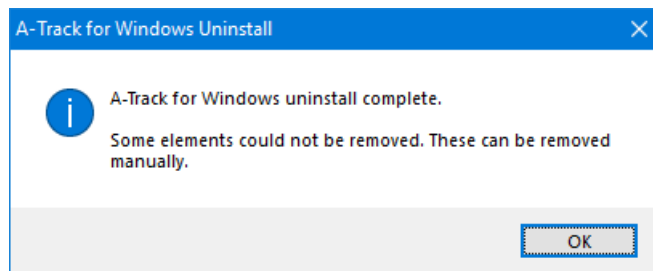


– followed by a final confirmation window –



Click **OK** to complete the uninstall process.

In some circumstances you may see a different confirmation window –

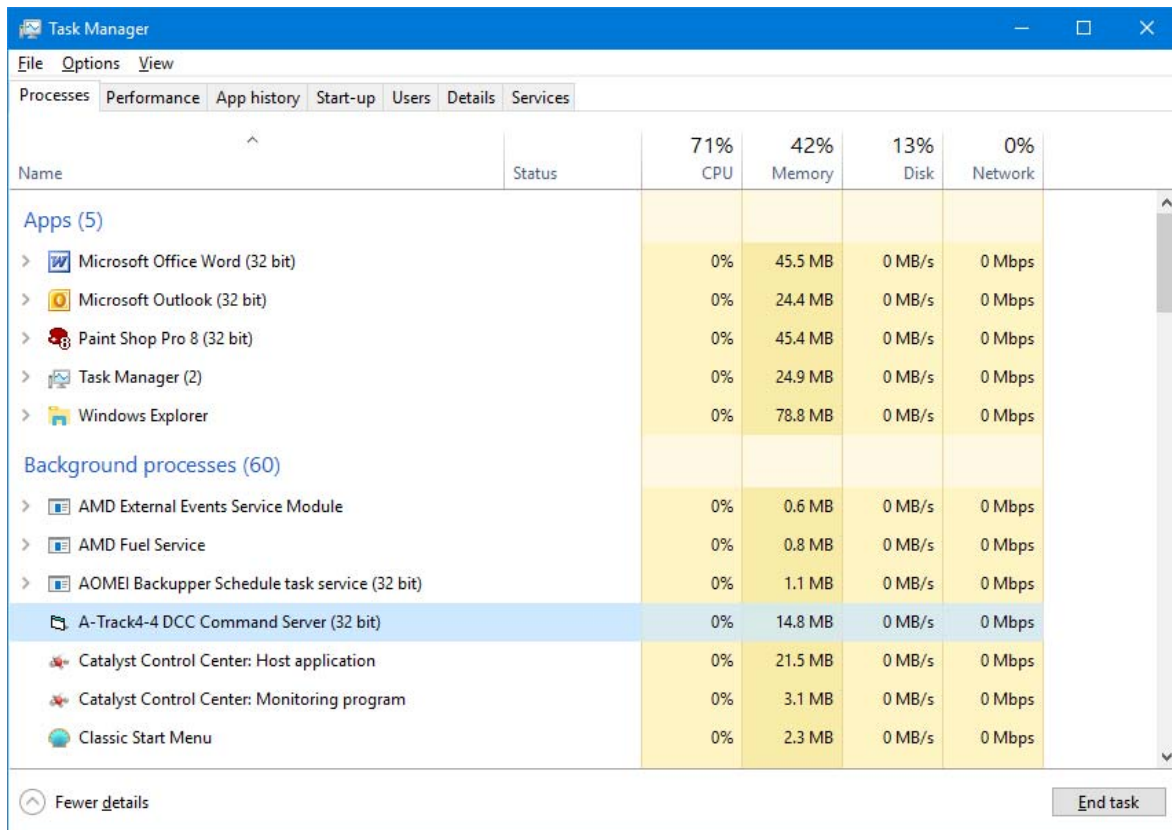


Generally this will occur when changes have been made to the installation folders or their contents following installation (not to be recommended at any time), or you have saved some of your own files to an installation folder (again not really recommended), and the A-Track uninstaller is unable to remove one or more installation folders because they contain a file which is either unrecognised or is currently open.

After clicking **OK** in such cases, you can either leave the remaining files or folders in place, since they will not generally have any adverse effects on your computer's operation, or you can open the **A-Track** installation folder in **C:\Program Files** (or **C:\Program Files (x86)**) and manually delete, or move, the offending files or folders.

One situation where this can arise is where, for some reason, A-Track has not shut down correctly and the A-Track Command Server file is still running in the background.

In such a situation, one option is to open Task Manager, locate the file (A-Track4-4 DCC Command Server) in the list of background processes, and click the **End task** button, as shown below –



After ending the A-Track Command Server task, you will then be able to delete the file and the installation folder.

Alternatively, you can simply close all of your other programs and restart the computer. Once restarted, and with no parts of the A-Track application running, you should be able to delete the A-Track installation folder, if required, without further problems.

Note that, in all cases, uninstalling A-Track will still leave a small set of A-Track custom settings within the Registry. These settings are stored automatically during your normal use of A-Track and reflect your preferences regarding window formats and views, together with lists of the most-recently used files and any selected options. If you then reinstall A-Track at a later time, your preferred settings will be re-applied to configure A-Track. The custom settings occupy a very small proportion of the Registry and will not have any discernable effect on the performance of your computer or other applications.

Warning : unless you know *exactly* what you are doing, **do not attempt to edit or delete any item within the Registry**, since any change made incorrectly can have disastrous consequences (changes take effect **immediately**, and there is **no Undo facility**), and may crash your computer completely or render it unable to run properly in future.

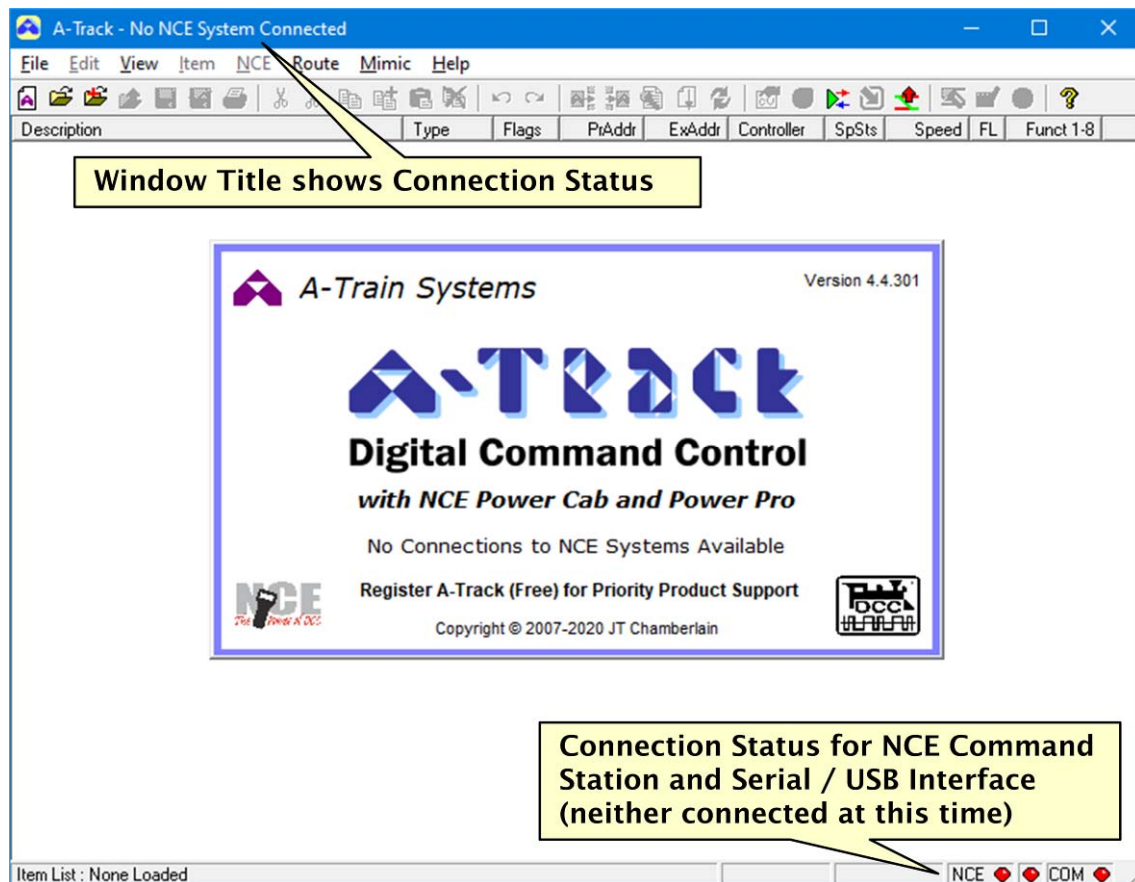
3.5 Starting the Program

Start A-Track from the Start Menu, as shown in [Section 3.4](#), or by double-clicking the A-Track icon (A) on the Desktop, or in Windows 8 by clicking the A-Track tile (A) on the Start Screen.

A-Track displays a start-up window in front of its main window, and then checks to see if any NCE Power Cab, Smart Booster, DCC Twin, or Power Pro Command Stations are connected to any of the PC's Serial or USB ports (and powered-on) –



If no connections are detected, then you will see the window contents as displayed below –

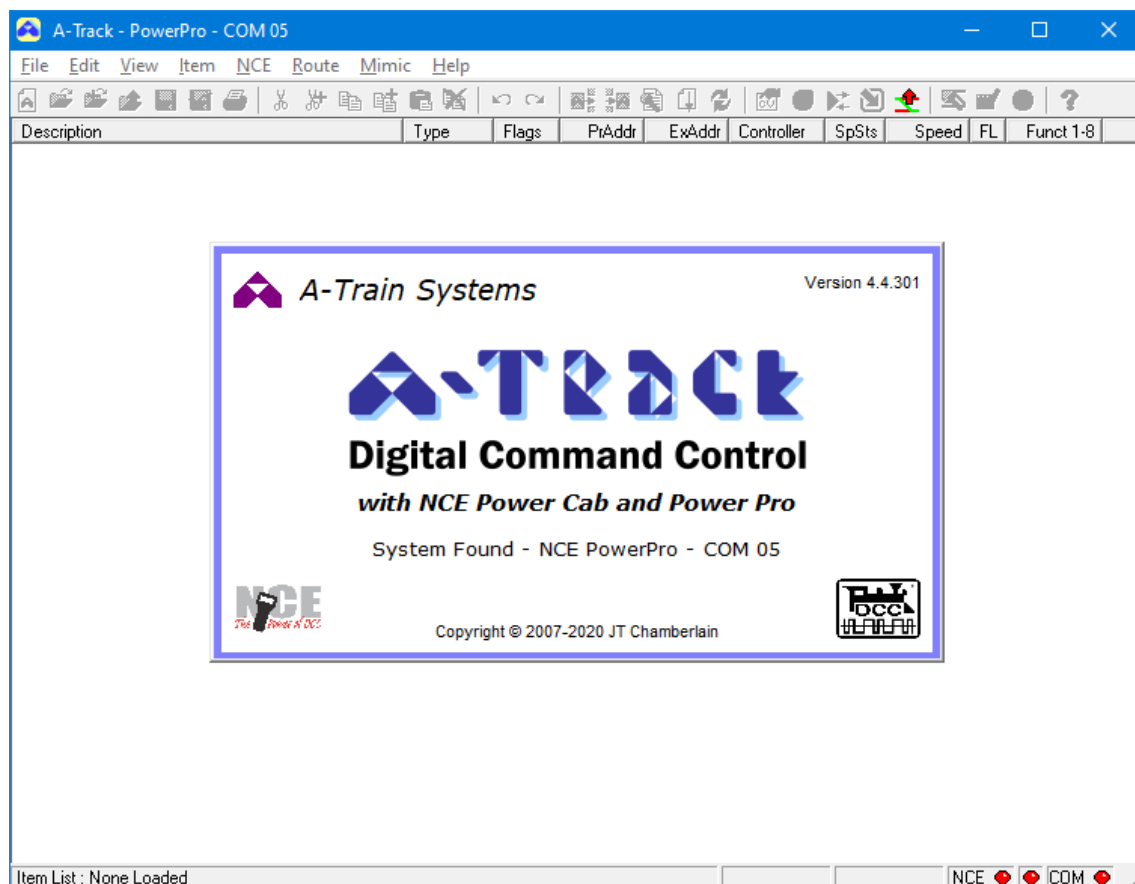


The three indicators on the status bar (in the bottom righthand corner of the main A-Track window) are **red** to show that no NCE hardware unit is currently connected or operational, and this status is also shown on the window title bar.

If any NCE Command Stations are connected to your PC, and switched on, the presence of up to four such systems will be detected by A-Track, and you will then be able to select which of those Command Stations you wish to use with A-Track at this time. Each Command Station will, of course, be connected to a separate section of track, such as the main layout, a fiddle yard, an isolated programming track or, possibly, a separate accessory (turnout) network.

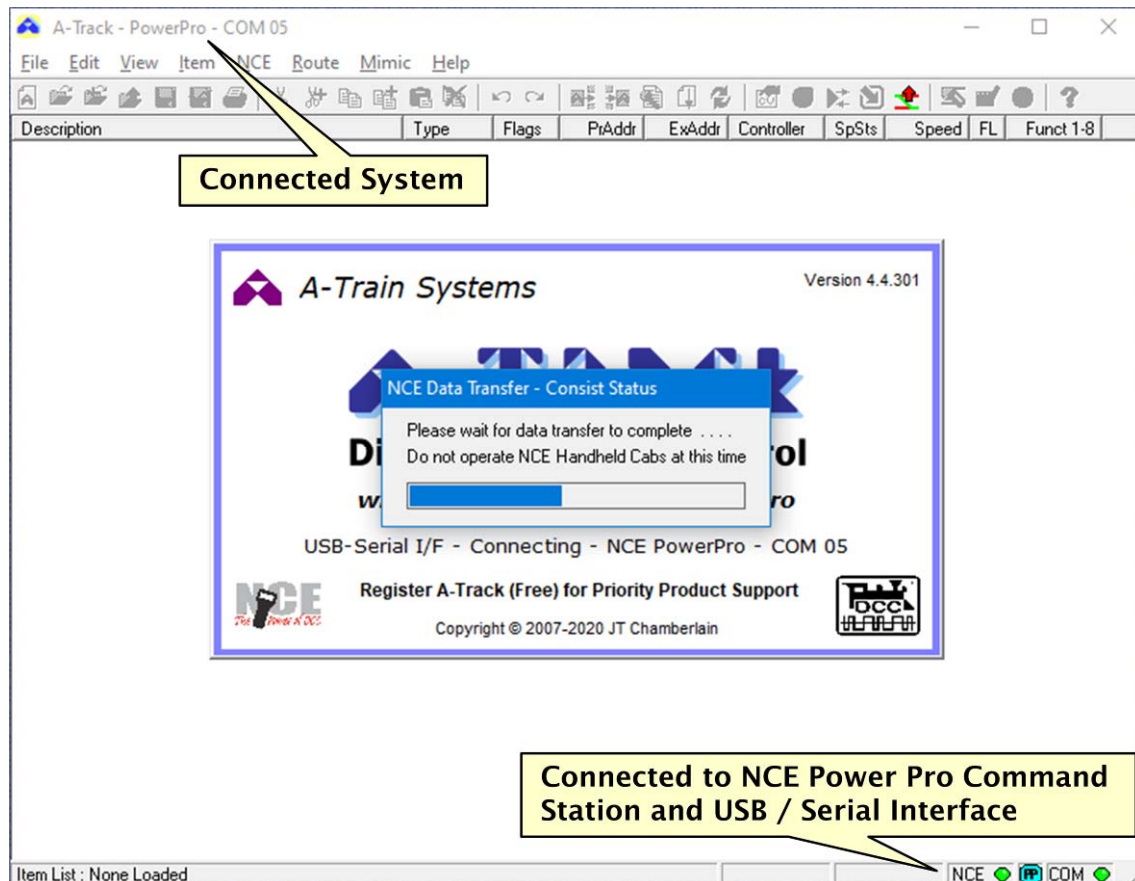
Power Pro systems are connected either via a suitable RS232 Serial cable or USB-to-Serial converter plugged into the 9-pin Serial Port socket on the front panel of Power Pro system, with the other end of the serial or USB cable plugged into the appropriate PC port. Alternatively, Power Cab, Smart Booster, or DCC Twin systems are connected via an NCE USB Interface unit connected between the Command Station's Cab Bus and one of the PC's USB ports (either USB 2 or USB 3 ports can be used).

The handling and selection of multiple Command Station connections is dealt with in detail in **Section 9.6** of the **Reference Manual**, but it is easier to start with the more usual case where only a single Command Station is connected to A-Track. In all cases, a message appropriate to the type of system being connected will be displayed in the start-up window –



If a connection to an NCE Power Pro Command Station exists when A-Track is started, successful completion of the connection will cause both the left- and rightmost indicators to turn **green** (assuming the Command Station is switched on) and the identity of the connected Command Station will appear in the title bar of the window, as shown below. The program then transfers the data representing the status of all Consists (sets of locomotives to be controlled as a single unit), as currently held in the Command Station, to the memory of the PC. Retrieval of the data block takes less than 10 seconds to complete, with progress displayed on the screen, again as shown below.

During the transfer period, you should not operate any of the NCE Handheld Controllers (Cabs) since there is a small risk that communications between A-Track and the Command Station can be disrupted –




If you hover your mouse cursor over the status bar panels containing the NCE and COM indicators, pop-up labels will appear displaying, respectively, the Command Station Software Version, and which of your computer's COM ports is currently being used by A-Track to connect to the Command Station, together with the bit (baud) rate at which the serial link is operating, as shown below –

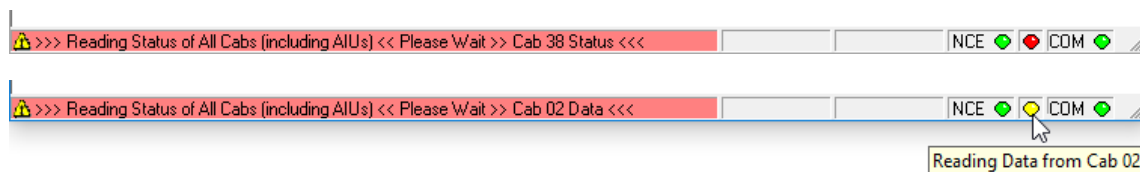



You will also notice the display of a banner in the lower part of the start-up window inviting you to register (free) for full, priority support of A-Track. Registration is purely voluntary, and A-Track is fully functional in all respects after installation.

If you do choose to register your copy of A-Track, by following the simple steps described in **Chapter 11** of the **Reference Manual** then, whenever you subsequently start A-Track, your name will be displayed in the start-up window instead of the registration invitation. You may install and operate A-Track on as many computers as you like, but note that each installed copy of the application will have a different serial number. Although this means that each installation has to be registered separately (if you wish to do so), the online registration process via the A-Train Systems website, as described in **Section 11.1** of the **Reference Manual**, is fully automated, and so does not require a great deal of time nor effort.

If an NCE Power Pro Command Station is not connected until after A-Track has completed its initialisation, loading of the Consist data block is postponed until the Command Station is plugged in, and powered on. Loading will then proceed as before (although it may take up to 10 seconds before A-Track recognises the new connection and the data transfer starts), with display of the progress bar in the centre of the A-Track window. Allow the data transfer to complete without interruption.

The third, middle indicator on the status bar, which is initially **red**, then replaced with an icon indicating the type of connection established ( here), is used to show the progress of A-Track in acquiring the status of all NCE Handheld Cabs connected to the NCE Power Pro Command Station. After retrieval of the Consist data, the lefthand panel of the status bar will turn **red** and will show which Cab details are being accessed, firstly whether a particular Cab is connected and then loading the data for each active Cab, as shown in the examples below –



During this process, the middle indicator on the status bar will alternate between **red** and **yellow** while the status of all Cabs is being read, then between **yellow**, and **green** while the full data from all connected Cabs is retrieved. If any Auxiliary Input Units (AIUs) are connected to the NCE Cab Bus, the middle indicator will briefly flash **blue** while the state of their inputs is being loaded. Hovering your mouse cursor over the middle indicator will also display a pop-up label showing the current operation in progress, as can be seen above. After the full scan is completed, the middle indicator returns to the icon representing the type of connected Command Station ( here).

The time taken to complete this full scan is 2 to 3 seconds per connected Cab if connected to an NCE Power Pro, or about 5 to 7 seconds per Cab when using an NCE Power Cab or Smart Booster Version 1.65 system, or a DCC Twin system. Including setup time, and because the complete status for Cab Address 02 is always transferred to A-Track, whether or not a Cab with this address is actually connected, the minimum total scan period is about 15 seconds.

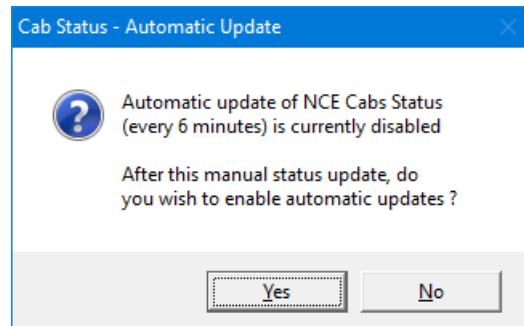
Thereafter, A-Track will monitor the status of the Locomotive allocated to, and currently under control from, each connected NCE Cab (but not those in the Cab Recall List), reading the status of each Cab in turn at approximately 1-second intervals,

together with the status of any connected AIUs (and hence the position of all connected layout turnouts and/or occupied track blocks). If you are using a USB-to-Serial converter which is fitted with one or more LED indicators, then you may see the indicators flash to show the transfer of the relevant commands and responses. This will definitely be the case when you are using an NCE Power Cab or Smart Booster Version 1.65 system, or a DCC Twin system, with a Version 7 NCE USB Interface unit, as described later in this Section.

While a Command Station is connected, you can update the displayed Cab allocation and full Cab status at any time by clicking the **Refresh** (🔄) icon on the A-Track toolbar or by clicking on **View** on the A-Track menu bar, followed by **Refresh Item Allocation & Status** (See **Sections 4.1, 9.4, and 12.3** of the **Reference Manual**).

In normal operation you really only need to use the **Refresh** (🔄) facility when you plug in a new Handheld Cab or connect an extra Auxiliary Input Unit to the Command Station.

When you use the View menu option, you will be asked whether you wish a periodic scan (every 6 minutes) of attached NCE Cabs to be performed automatically –



Click **Yes** to enable future automatic scans of NCE Cab status, or **No** to leave further scans disabled (a scan will be performed this time). Leaving scans disabled is preferred if you are actively using A-Track, particularly if are intending to adjust the setup of the NCE Command Station or Cabs, or to change Consist or Macro settings, without being interrupted periodically (all editing is disabled during a Cab status scan). Further details of the way in which the NCE System Status data is handled can be found in **Chapter 9** of the **Reference Manual**.

A **tick** mark next to the **Refresh Item Allocation & Status** option on the View menu will be displayed to indicate that periodic scans of attached NCE Cabs are enabled. In this state, every 6 minutes, A-Track will automatically re-scan the status of the NCE Cabs attached to the Command Station. The current Cab allocation and status will be cleared from the **Item List** (as described in **Section 3.7**, and in detail in **Chapter 4** of the **Reference Manual**), the lefthand panel of the status bar will turn red and will show the scan details, and the middle indicator on the status bar will sequentially show **red**, **yellow** and **green**, returning to the appropriate connection icon when the full re-scan has been completed. Your choice of whether to enable or disable periodic scans of attached NCE Cabs is saved by A-Track and will be applied each time the program is subsequently started (until you change the setting).

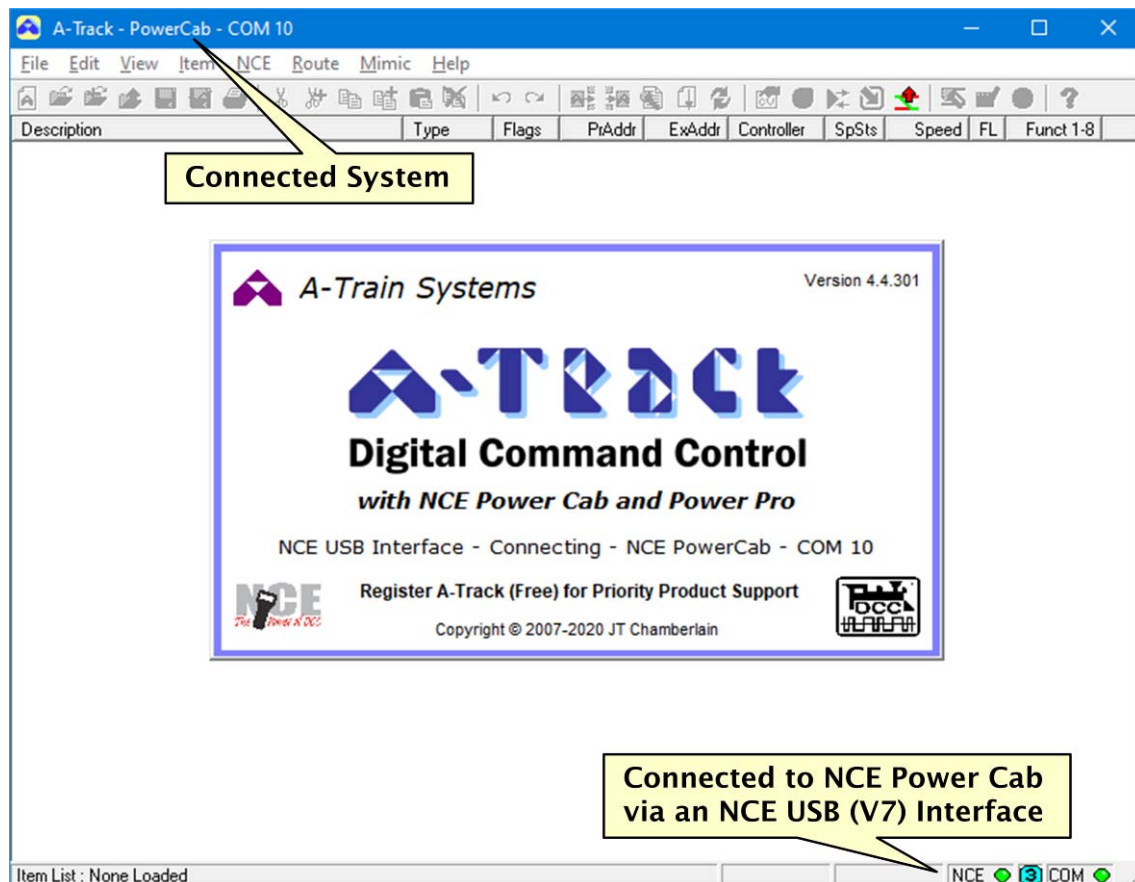
Connecting your computer (and A-Track) to an NCE Power Cab, Smart Booster, or DCC Twin via an NCE USB Interface unit, will also result in both the left- and rightmost indicators turning **green**, assuming that the relevant NCE equipment is powered on.

However, when using an NCE Power Cab, Smart Booster, or DCC Twin as the Command Station, the third, middle indicator on the A-Track status bar will now be replaced by an icon showing the type of connected unit reported by the NCE USB Interface. Note that the NCE USB Interface does not actually identify the type of NCE equipment to which it is connected, but simply reports the current setting of its three active configuration jumper links (JP2, JP3, and JP3 – JP1 is not used). See the latest NCE USB Interface documentation for full details.

Important Note : When an NCE USB Interface is connected between the PC and a Power Cab, Smart Booster, or DCC Twin system, the USB Interface uses one of the available Cab Addresses. A Version 6 USB Interface always uses Cab Address 03, while A-Track will set a Version 7 USB Interface to Cab Address 10. Hence, to prevent any interference and ensure correct system operation, you should make certain that none of your attached Handheld Controllers (Cabs) are set up with either Address 03 or 10, depending on the type of USB Interface being used.

Version 1.65 Power Cab systems reserve address 08, 09, and 10 for AIUs and like devices, and you can use addresses 03, 04, or 05 for connecting Handheld Cabs or additional AIUs (address 02 is used by the Power Cab itself). When using a Smart Booster or DCC Twin system, addresses 02, 06, and 07 are also available for use by either Handheld Cabs or AIUs. Refer to your NCE system documentation for details of how to set the Address assigned to a particular Cab.






Connecting to an NCE Power Cab Version 1.65 through an NCE USB Interface results in the A-Track window shown below –











The icon displayed in the middle indicator position on the A-Track status bar reflects the jumper link settings which are automatically read by A-Track when it is connected to the NCE USB Interface, and depends on which version of the USB Interface unit you are using, as well as the setting of the configuration links.

For the two versions of the USB Interface unit currently in use (Versions 6 and 7), the displayed icons are shown in the following tables. Note that jumper 1 (JP1) should always be set to OFF to ensure that the speed of the USB COM port (the connection to the PC) for the Version 6 USB Interface is maintained at the required 9600 bps –

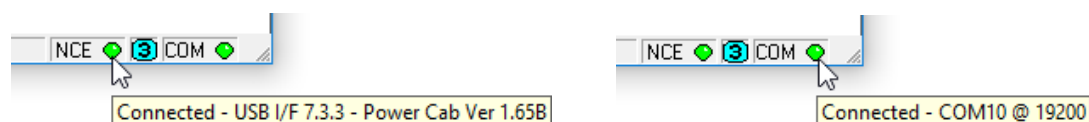
NCE USB Interface Version 6 (pre-2013)

Icon	Connection	Jumpers	Icon	Connection	Jumpers
	Power Cab	All OFF		All Systems	JP3,4 ON
	Smart Booster	JP4 ON			
	Power Pro 2007	JP3 ON		Undefined	All other settings

NCE USB Interface Version 7 (2013 on)

Icon	Connection	Speed	Jumpers	Icon	Connection	Speed	Jumpers
	Power Cab Version 1.28c	9600	All OFF		Power Cab Version 1.28c	9600	JP2 ON
	Smart Booster SB5 / SB3a Version 1.65	19200	JP4 ON		Smart Booster SB3 / SB3a Version 1.28d	19200	JP2,4 ON
	Smart Booster SB5 / SB3a Version 1.65	9600	JP3 ON		Power Pro 2007	9600	JP2,3 ON
	Power Cab / DCC Twin Version 1.65	19200	JP3,4 ON		All Systems Version 1.65	19200	JP2,3,4 ON

Again, if you hover your mouse cursor over the status bar panels containing the NCE and COM indicators, pop-up labels will appear displaying, respectively, the NCE USB Interface Software Version, and which of your computer's COM ports is currently being used by A-Track to connect to the Interface, together with the bit (baud) rate at which the serial link is operating, as shown below –



Note that, as here, when using a Version 1.65 NCE Power Cab system with a Version 7 NCE USB Interface, the System Type can actually be read from the Command Station and so can be displayed accurately. With a Version 6 NCE USB Interface and/or a Version 1.28 NCE Power Cab system, the System Type cannot be read from the Command Station, so can only be assumed from the state of the USB Interface configuration links.

Important Note : To ensure that A-Track will generate the correct set of commands when communicating with the NCE equipment, **it is highly recommended** that you set the NCE USB Interface configuration links so that their positions correspond to whatever type of NCE Command Station is connected to the other side of the NCE USB Interface. Failure to do this can cause the complete system to **lock up**. The position of the configuration links should **only** be changed when the NCE USB Interface unit is not powered, ie. disconnected from the Cab Bus (unplug the lead from the 6-pin RJ12 socket). While changing the links while the NCE USB Interface unit is powered will not cause any ill effects, such a change will be ignored both by the Interface unit itself and by A-Track until the unit is disconnected then re-connected.

While setting the NCE USB Interface configuration links to the All Systems position (JP3 and JP4 ON for a Version 6 unit, or JP2, JP3 and JP4 ON for a Version 7 unit) will generally work for most connected systems, this configuration makes it more difficult for A-Track to identify the type of connected system, and to ensure that only appropriate commands are generated.

Since a Version 6 NCE USB Interface, regardless of the type of Command Station to which it is connected, does not provide access to the Command Station internal data store, A-Track is unable to access either the Consist data block or the status of any connected NCE Handheld Cabs (including a Power Cab and any attached Auxiliary Interface Units), and no subsequent data transfer or scan of Cabs or AIUs takes place.

If either the interface cable, USB-to-Serial converter, or NCE USB Interface is not plugged in, or the relevant NCE Command Station is not connected or switched on, when A-Track is started, then the status indicators will remain **red**. All program functions will be fully operational except, of course, those which deal directly with the NCE equipment.

Whenever a Command Station is subsequently connected, A-Track will proceed to identify automatically the type of NCE equipment which has been connected, as far as possible, and to set both the left- and rightmost indicators to **green**. After connecting to an NCE Power Pro Command Station or to a Version 1.65 NCE Power Cab system with a Version 7 NCE USB Interface, A-Track will then retrieve the Consist data block and start the scan of the attached NCE Handheld Cabs (including Auxiliary Input Units), with the middle status indicator changing colour appropriately, as described previously. However, with any equipment connected via a Version 6 NCE USB Interface, A-Track will simply display the appropriate icon in place of the middle indicator.

Recommendation : The best way to establish a fully-reliable connection to an NCE Command Station is to connect the Command Station through the appropriate interface to your PC, power up both PC and NCE equipment, then start A-Track. If A-Track is already running on the PC before connecting and powering up the NCE equipment, ensure that **only** the main A-Track window is open.

Note that, once a connection has been established, if the NCE Command Station is disconnected or switched off, the leftmost indicator will change to **yellow**, returning to **green** when the unit is again operational. Be aware that A-Track can take between 10 and 20 seconds to react to any change in the state of the Command Station, depending on the number of active COM ports on your computer which have to be scanned.

If, at any time when A-Track is running, the interface cable is disconnected from the PC, then both of the left- and rightmost indicators will change to **yellow** within 2 seconds, returning to **green** within 15 seconds after the connection is re-established (and the Command Station is operational). However, it is recommended that the Command Station is **not** deliberately disconnected from the PC Serial or USB port while the A-Track program is running, to avoid any possible data corruption, although such disconnection will not result in any physical damage to the equipment.

If the switch-off, disconnection, or other communication error does occur at a critical time when data is being transferred to or from the Command Station, then the hardware or software may be left in a state from which an orderly recovery is not possible. This is very likely to occur if the disruption occurs during the A-Track initialisation period, or if the equipment is re-connected very quickly after any disconnection. In such cases, first disconnect the serial or USB cable, then close down A-Track, and switch off the NCE Command Station. Allow around 20 seconds for the Command Station to power down fully, then switch it back on, reconnect the cable to the PC, and start the A-Track program again.

With all types of Command Station, the middle status indicator will revert to **red** after any disconnection, then subsequently show **yellow** and **green** followed by display of the relevant system-type icon, after reconnection and completion of a full Handheld Cab status scan where appropriate.

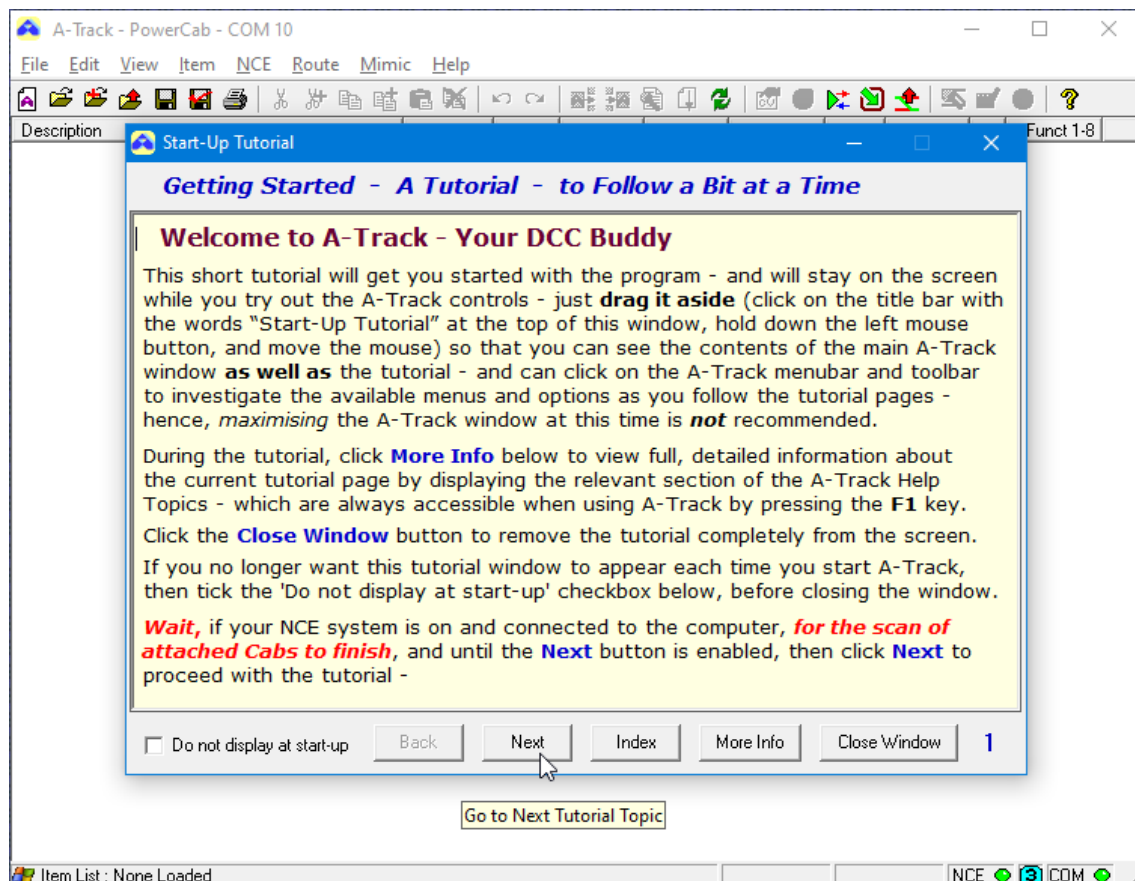
3.6 An Introductory Tutorial

Once A-Track has completed its initialisation, the start-up window disappears and will be replaced by a **Tutorial** window which you can use to get a feel for the basic facilities provided by the A-Track program, including how to access the key menus and functions, and which will then guide you through the first steps in using A-Track with your own roster of locomotives.

The opening page of the Tutorial is shown below, with its straightforward controls. Having read the first page, click on the **Next** button to display the next page. Thereafter, you can return to a previous page by clicking the **Back** button, which will then be enabled. For your information, the number of the **current page** is displayed in the bottom righthand corner of the Tutorial window.

If you want further information about the topic described on any Tutorial page then a click on the **More Info** button will open another window showing the appropriate section from the full **A-Track Help Topics** (the contents of this document).

You can stop viewing the Tutorial, and remove it from the screen, at any time by clicking on the **Close Window** button.



Although the Tutorial window is always displayed in front of the main A-Track window (and all other open windows), you should drag it to one side, to leave the Tutorial window on the screen where you can see most of the main A-Track window as well the contents of the Tutorial (move the mouse pointer to the window title bar, where the


text 'Start-Up Tutorial' is shown, hold down the left mouse button, and move the mouse to drag the window to where you want it to be, then release the mouse button).

As you step through the Tutorial, various A-Track functions and features will be demonstrated, with additional windows being opened as necessary. It is important to note that all of the main A-Track controls, and those in all of the demonstration windows, are fully operational when the Tutorial is running, especially if an NCE Command Station is connected and powered-on (like the Power Cab Version 1.65 system indicated here). Hence, you are free to explore further, at any time, any particular A-Track feature which is of interest to you – which is by far the best way to get to grips with A-Track. You cannot cause any damage to the program or its files by doing so.

However, note that, after branching off on your own from the Tutorial, and changing the state of the loaded A-Track data, it may not be possible for the Tutorial to continue on its intended course when you click the **Next** or **Back** button. A message to this effect will be displayed, inviting you to click **Close Window**, after which you can, if you wish, restart the Tutorial by clicking on **Help** on the A-Track menu bar, followed by **Start-Up Tutorial** (See the menu details in [Section 4.8](#)).

The Start-Up Tutorial window will appear each time you start A-Track unless you click on the '**Do not display at start-up**' checkbox in the bottom-left corner of the window. At any future time after you have done this, the Tutorial window can be displayed once more from the **Help** menu by selecting **Start-Up Tutorial**.

If you want to print out any page shown in the Tutorial window for reference, you can highlight the text by using the normal Windows procedure with the left mouse button, copy the highlighted text (hold down either **Ctrl** (Control) key, then press the **C** key), and paste it into any word processor.

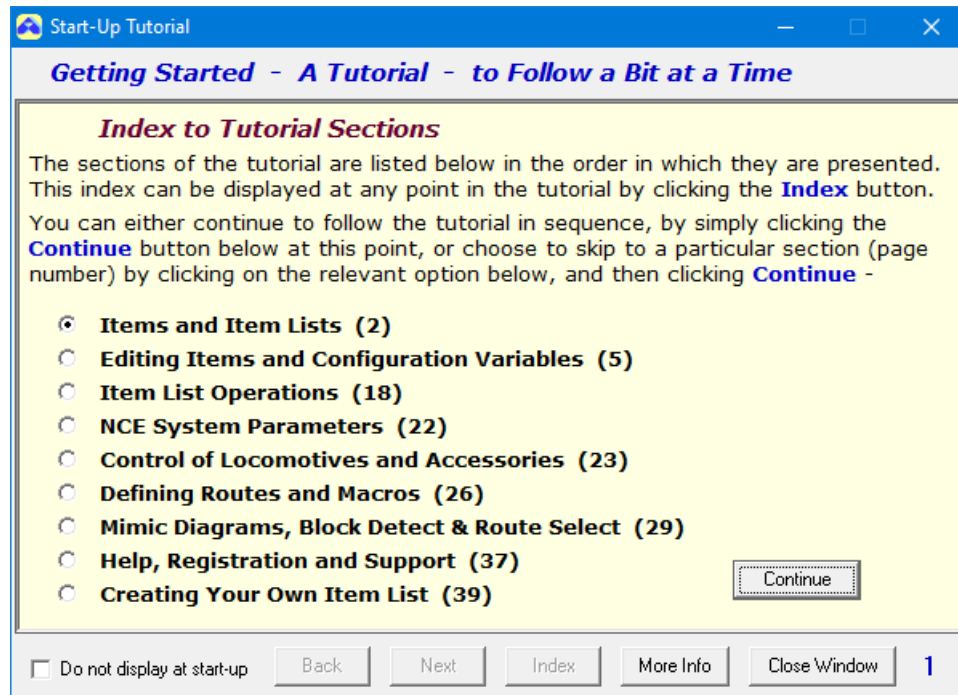
A more comprehensive set of Help pages (the full text of this Reference Manual) can be viewed by clicking on **Help / Help Topics** on the A-Track menu bar, or on the  icon on the A-Track toolbar, or by pressing the **F1** key on the keyboard at any time. Using the **F1** key will open the Help Topic most appropriate to the current A-Track activity in progress.

As noted in [Section 3.4](#), you can also access the Help pages directly (without running the A-Track program) from the Windows Start Menu, by clicking on **Program Files** or **All Programs**, selecting **A-Track**, then clicking again on **A-Track Help**.

From the Windows 8 Start Screen, the link to the A-Track Help file is revealed by right-clicking on a blank area of the screen, then on the '**All apps**' option, and then locating the **Help** entry in the **A-Track** group of tiles.

Although the Tutorial has been kept as short as possible, while still covering all of the main A-Track features, you will probably find it difficult to absorb all of the information presented in a single session. Hence, the Tutorial has been split into nine sections, each covering a single topic. After following one or two sections you can quit the Tutorial, try out the features described for yourself, and then return to the Tutorial at a later time, to pick up at the next section.

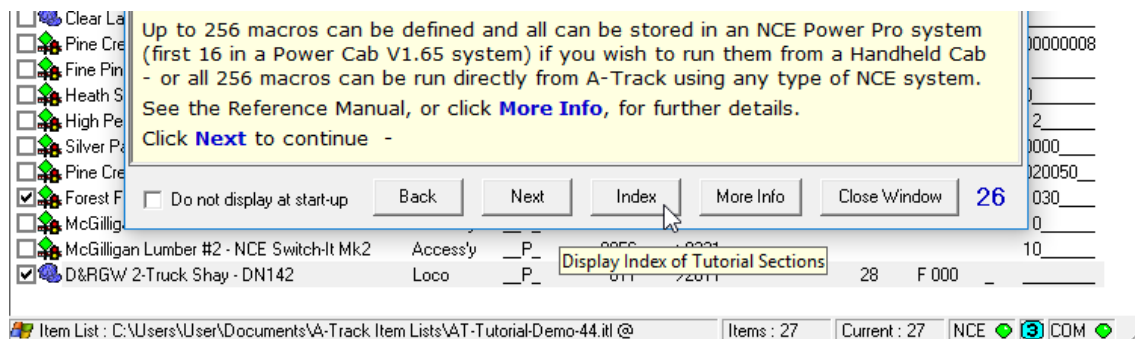
After clicking the **Next** button on the Welcome page, the **Section Index** page will appear, as shown below –



To start viewing the first section of the Tutorial, simply click the **Continue** button or, if you wish to skip forward to a later section, click on the name of that section before clicking **Continue**. The starting page number of each Tutorial section is shown in brackets after the title of the section.

Wait until the necessary part of the Tutorial has been loaded (or reloaded) and then proceed with the Tutorial. You can move forward or back through the complete Tutorial from any selected section by using the **Next** and **Back** buttons.

At any point, a click on the **Index** button will display the Section Index page from which you can skip to any other section -



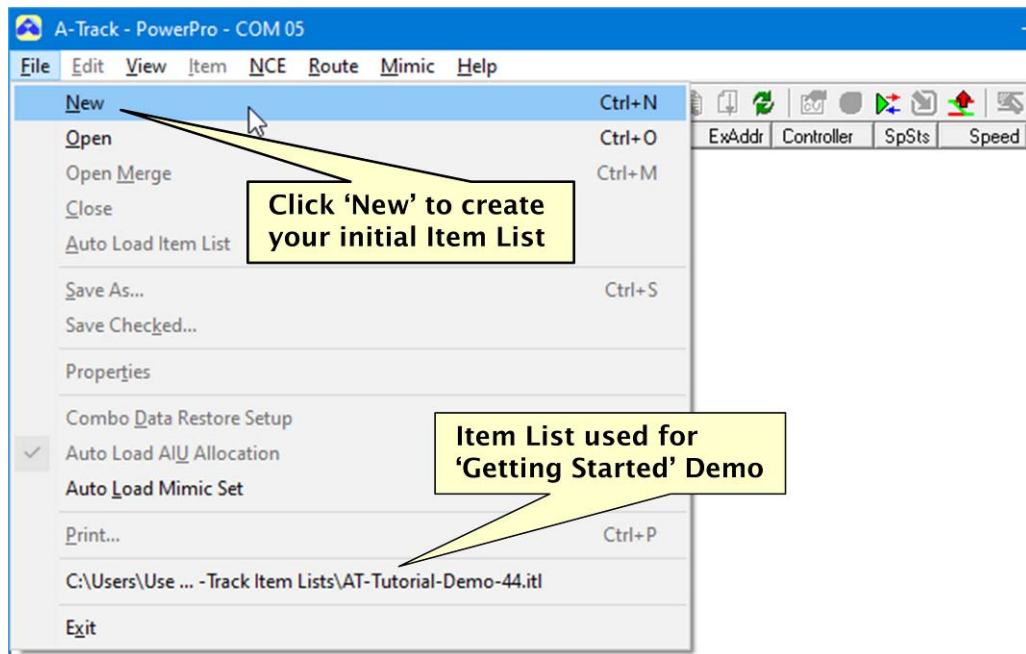
3.7 Making a Quick Start

If you do not wish to work your way through the complete Tutorial, the final part, which takes you through your first practical steps in using A-Track, where you can collect details from selected locomotives in your roster, is detailed in this Section of the User Guide for your convenience.

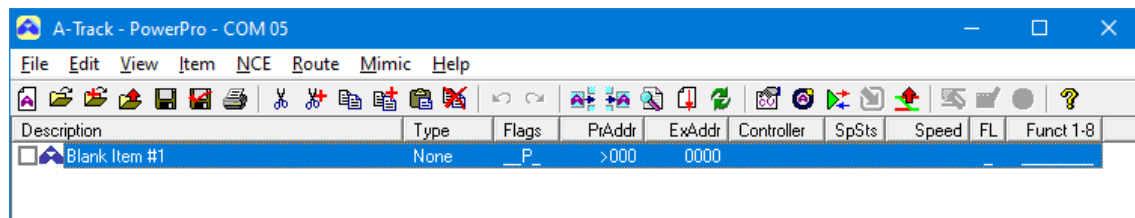
It is assumed that you have gleaned enough from the Tutorial to understand that the details of each of your locomotives (or other pieces of equipment) in your roster will be held by A-Track as an Item, with a group of Items forming an Item List. Full details of Item Lists, and of Item List operation, are covered in **Chapter 4** of the **Reference Manual**.

Ensure that your computer is connected to, and communicating with, an operational NCE Command Station – either a Power Cab or Power Pro system – with the status indicators in the bottom righthand corner of the A-Track window showing **green**, as described in **Section 3.5** above.


Next, click on **File** on the Menu Bar, and then **New**, as shown below –

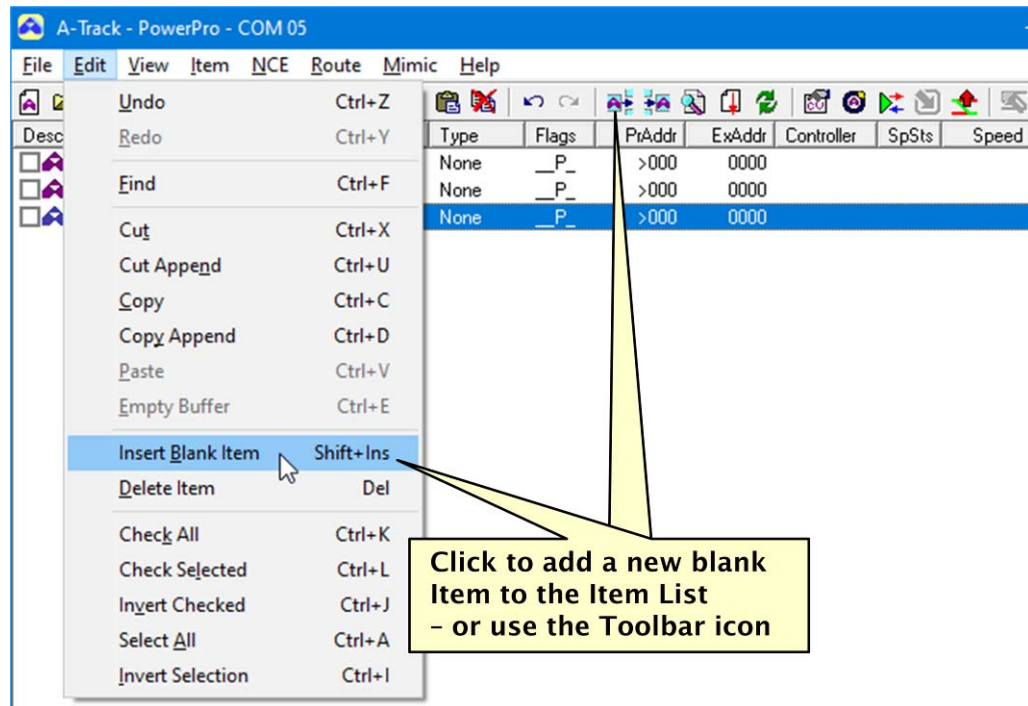


- which will create your first Item List, containing a single blank Item, that you can then use to collect full details of the first locomotive in your roster –

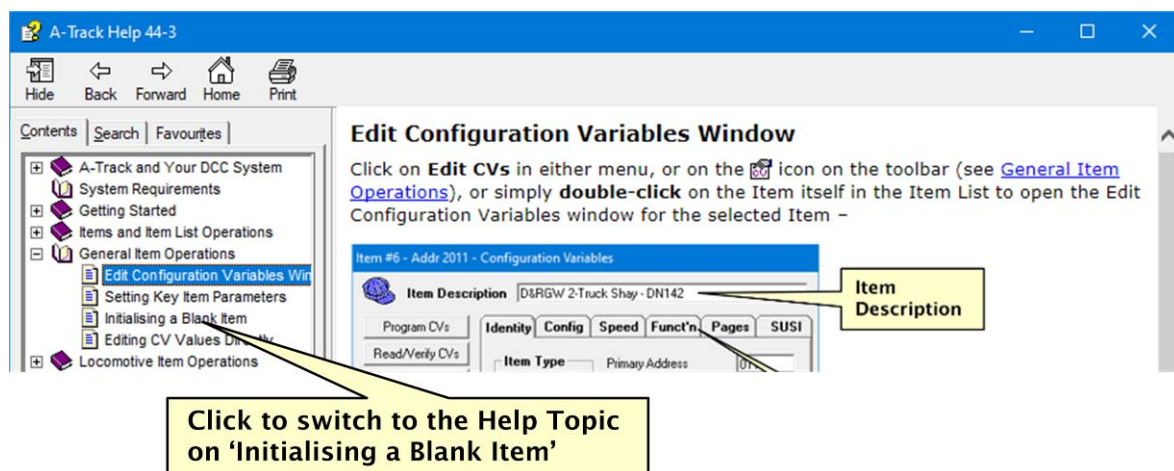


At this point you can, if you wish, click on **Edit**, and then on **Insert Blank Item**, to add further blank Items to match the number of locomotives you have. Alternatively,

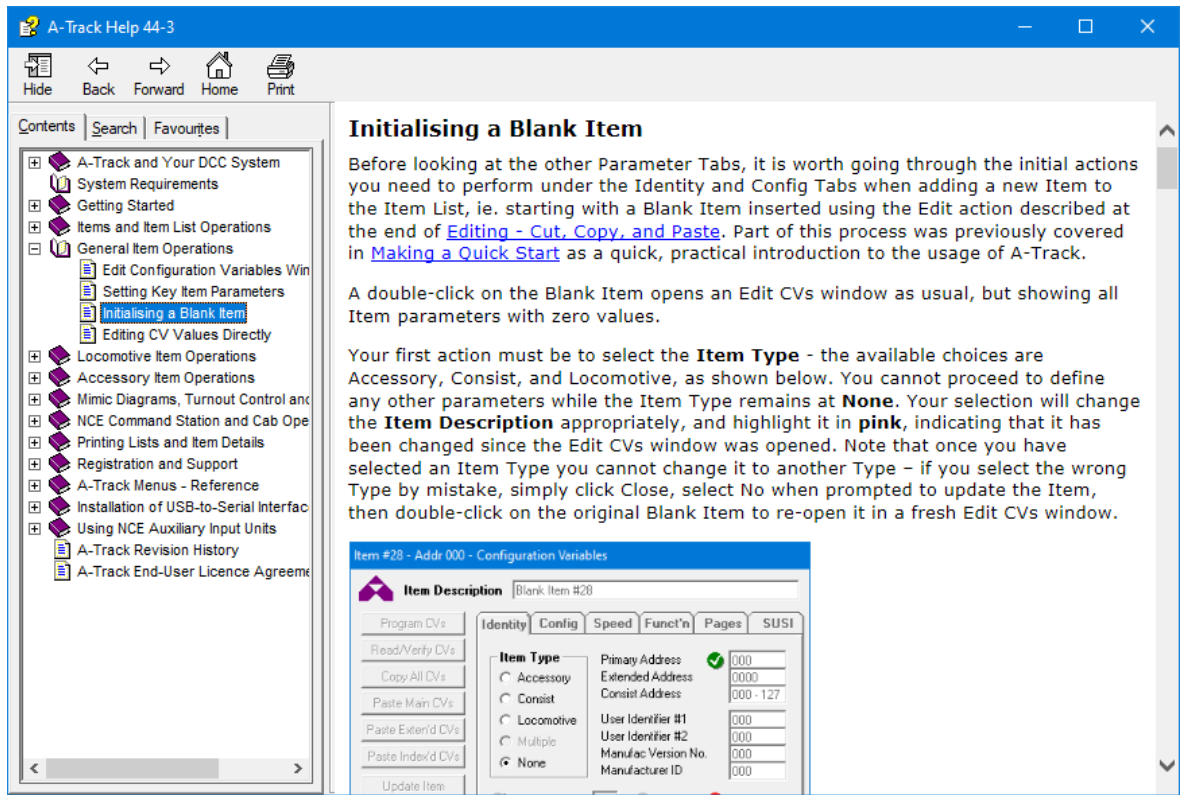
you can repeatedly click on the  icon on the Toolbar to perform the same operation – or you can leave this step until later –



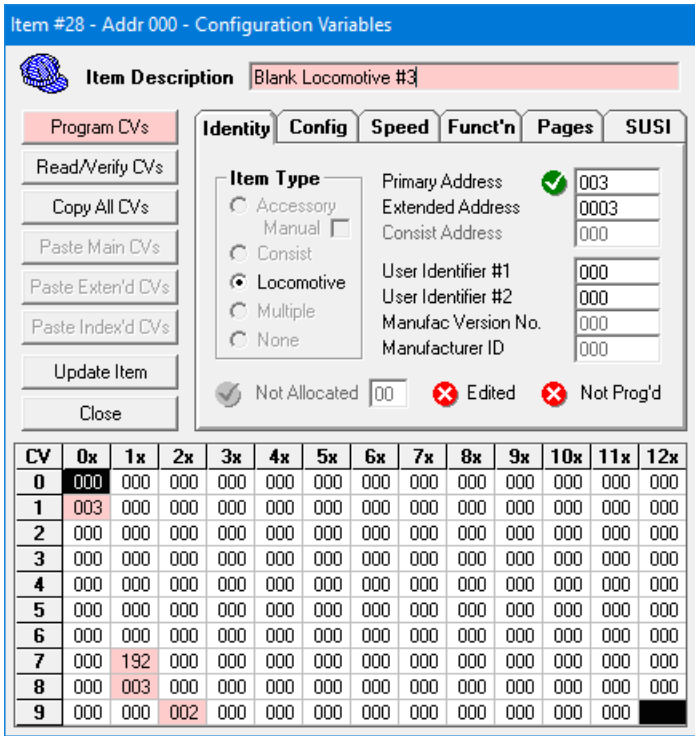
Now, **double-click** on one of the blank Items in the Item List – which will open an **Edit Configuration Variables** window. Full descriptions and details of all of the features and functions of this window can be found in **Chapter 5** of the **Reference Manual**. However, for the moment, press the **F1** key on the PC keyboard which will open A-Track's **Help Topics**, and show you the page describing the 'Edit Configuration Variables Window'. Now click, in the lefthand panel of the **Help Topics** window, on the topic 'Initialising a Blank Item' under 'General Item Operations' –



In this Help Topic you will be able to see the steps required to change the blank Item into a Loco Item with a Description which matches one of your locomotives. The same information can be found in **Section 5.3** of the **Reference Manual** –



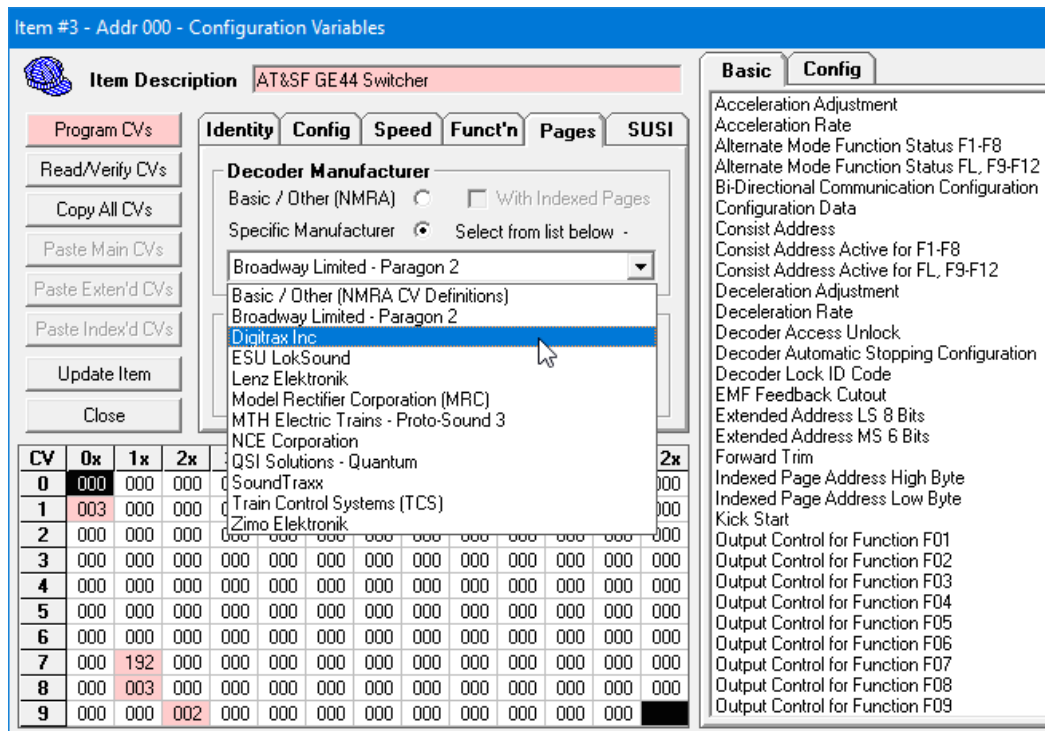
In accordance with the instructions, click on the **Locomotive** option in the **Item Type** section of the Edit CVs window, as the first step in entering your first locomotive's details into A-Track –



- then click in the **Item Description** box and type a suitable description for that locomotive, to replace the '*Blank Locomotive*' caption which A-Track generates automatically.

Next, click on the **Pages** Parameter Tab, where you should click the **Specific Manufacturer** option button in the **Decoder Manufacturer** section.

If the make of decoder fitted appears in the drop-down list when you click on the down-arrow (▼) at the righthand end of the listbox, then click on that maker's name. Otherwise (or if you do not know the make of decoder) click the **Basic / Other (NMRA CV Definitions)** option button. Remember that full help with setting up Item details can be accessed by selecting the appropriate section of the A-Track Help Topics, displayed by pressing the **F1** key again if necessary.



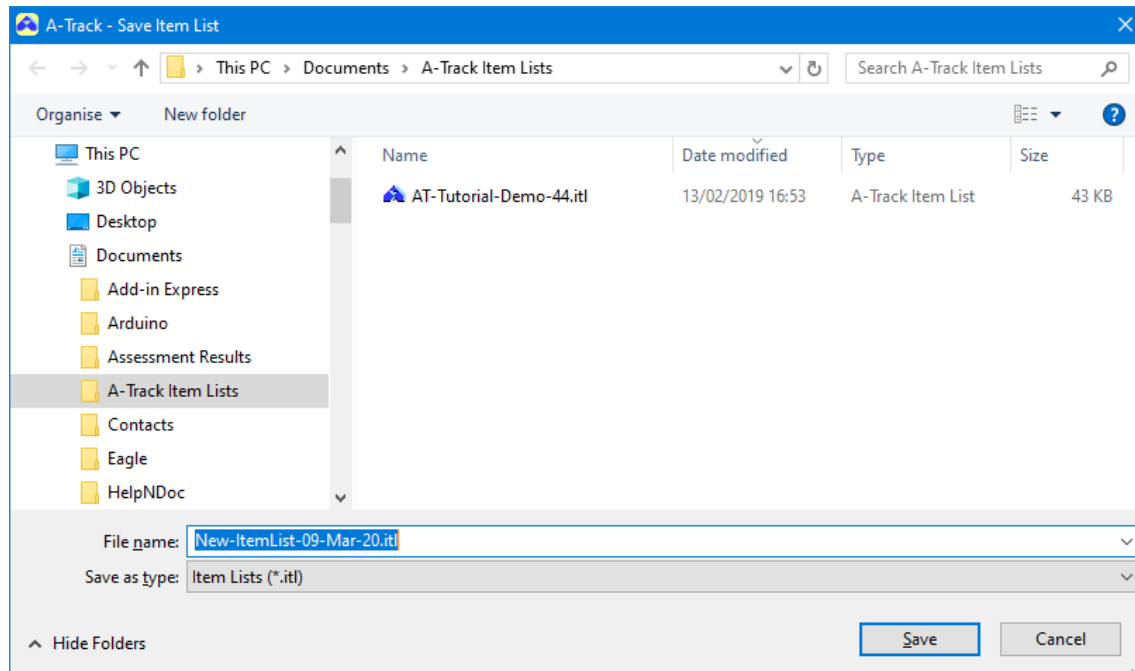
Before adding any more details to your newly-created Loco Item, the safe way forward is to click the **Update Item** button to save the basic Item back to the Item List.

With the first initialised Item shown in the Item List, you can repeat the same steps with each of any other blank Items you added to the new Item List, by double-clicking on them to open their own Edit CVs window, and finally saving the updated Items back to the Item List.

At this point, before proceeding to the next stage of collecting each Item's Configuration Variable values from the actual locomotives, it is a good idea to safeguard your initialised Item List, by saving it to a folder on your PC. To do this, click on **File** on the Menu Bar, followed by **Save As**, on the drop-down menu.

When the **A-Track - Save Item List** window appears, a suggested filename with today's date is displayed (**New-ItemList-09-March-20.itl** in this example) – you are free to change it to whatever other format you prefer.

If you ran the Tutorial to the stage of loading the demonstration Item List, then the destination folder offered will be **Documents / A-Track Item Lists** (otherwise **Documents** or **My Documents**), but you can select any other folder if you wish. Select a folder from the folder list in the lefthand pane in Windows Vista, Windows 7, Windows 8, or Windows 10 (as shown below), or click the down-arrow (▼) at the end of the **Save In:** listbox for Windows XP, or choose to create a new folder, into which to store the Item List (see **Section 4.2** of the **Reference Manual**) –



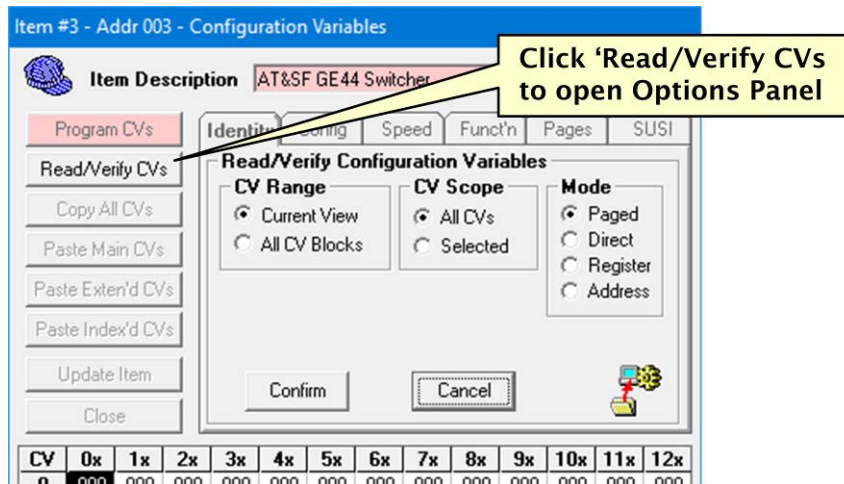
Once you are satisfied with the choice of destination folder, and the filename, click **Save** to save your new Item List file to the selected folder (or **Cancel** to abandon the operation).

The next step is to again double-click on your just-initialised Item in the Item List to re-open its **Edit CVs** window.

Now, place your first locomotive on your programming track (or, if you are using a Power Cab and do not have a separate, switched programming track as shown in the connection diagram in **Section 1.1**, ensure that it is the **ONLY** locomotive on the main track). Note that, if your locomotive has a sound decoder, and you are using an NCE Power Pro system, then you will generally need to connect a **programming booster unit** (such as the SoundTraxx PTB-100 – note that the alternative DCC Specialties PowerPax is not recommended by NCE) between the Power Pro and the programming track – a booster is not required with an NCE Power Cab system.

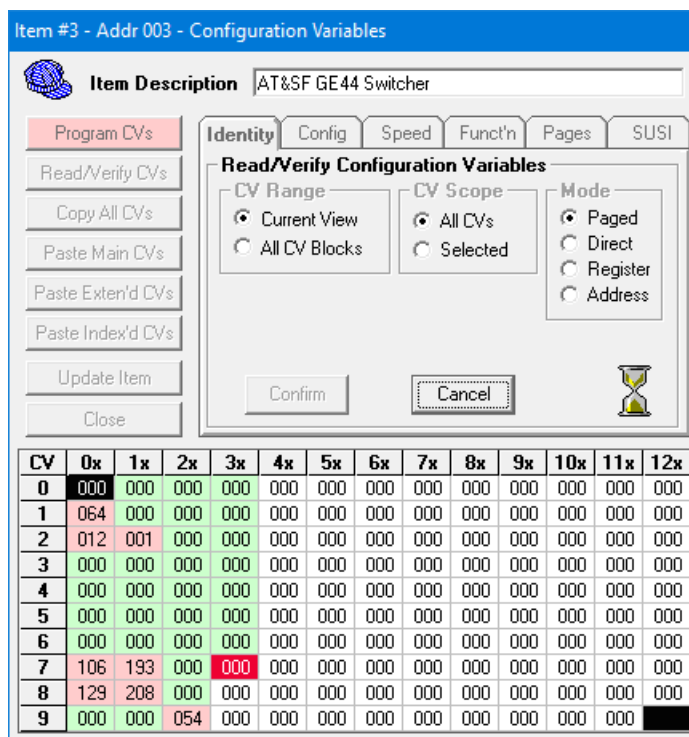
Click the **Read/Verify CVs** button in the Edit CVs window (as shown below) to display the **Read/ Verify Configuration Variables** panel where, for a first attempt at reading your locomotive decoder's CV values, you should set the **CV Range** and **Scope** options to **Current View** and **All CVs**, and the **Mode** to **Paged**. While Direct Mode will read CV values more quickly, it is not always supported, particularly in older decoders. Paged Mode is generally guaranteed to work but, the higher the programmed value of a CV, the longer it takes to determine the actual value of the CV

from the decoder (since the Mode tries every possible value starting at zero until the trial value matches the actual CV value) –



When you have set the options, click **Confirm** to start the Read/Verify operation.

During the Read/Verify operation, the CV currently being accessed will be highlighted in **red** in the grid in the lower half of the Edit CVs window. Once the CV value held in the decoder has been determined, it will be displayed in the grid and highlighted in **light green** if the value read is the *same* as that held in the Item, or highlighted in **pink** if it *differs* from the Item's stored value.

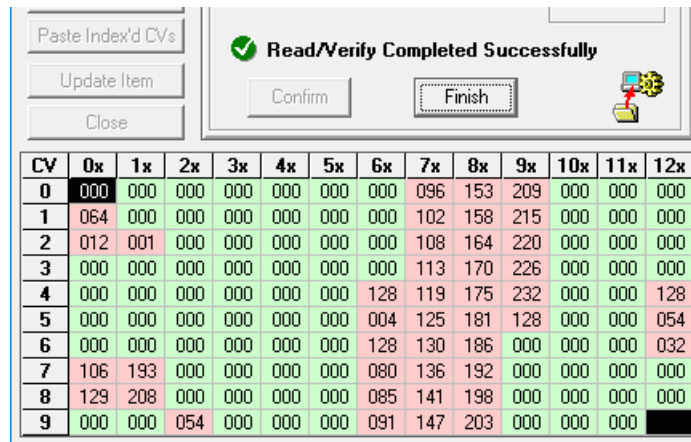


Wait patiently while the first 128 CV values are read from the decoder and displayed in the grid. If required, the whole operation can be stopped at any time by clicking the

Cancel button, although you will have to wait patiently for the current CV Paged Read operation to complete (up to 20 seconds).

If you need further assistance with the Read/Verify operation, you can read the instructions in the Help Topic 'Reading and Verifying CV Values' (press the **F1** key to open up Help again if you closed it down), or refer to **Section 6.6** of the **Reference Manual**.

When the Read/Verify operation is complete click the **Finish** button in the Edit CVs window. If an error occurred because of a connection problem, correct it and restart the Read/Verify operation (this is fully explained in the Help Topic).



CV	0x	1x	2x	3x	4x	5x	6x	7x	8x	9x	10x	11x	12x
0	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	096	153	209	000	000	000
1	064	000	000	000	000	000	000	102	158	215	000	000	000
2	012	001	000	000	000	000	000	108	164	220	000	000	000
3	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	113	170	226	000	000	000
4	000	000	000	000	000	000	128	119	175	232	000	000	128
5	000	000	000	000	000	000	004	125	181	128	000	000	054
6	000	000	000	000	000	000	128	130	186	000	000	000	032
7	106	193	000	000	000	000	080	136	192	000	000	000	000
8	129	208	000	000	000	000	085	141	198	000	000	000	000
9	000	000	054	000	000	000	091	147	203	000	000	000	000

If all went well, you may now wish to read all of the decoder's CVs by changing the **CV Range** option to **All CV Blocks**, and perhaps the **Mode** to **Direct**.

Click the **Update Item** button at any point to save the Item's CV data back into the Item List and close the Edit CVs window. Repeat the operations as often as required to obtain the full set of CV values currently programmed into this locomotive's decoder, then use **File / Save As** to save the updated Item List as your reference before making any of your own changes to the locomotive decoder's CV settings.

Repeat this acquisition of CV Values for all of your locomotives, then again click **File** and **Save As** to save your Item List - which is now a record of the original setups of your locomotive roster, and which (if you keep it safe) will give you the ability to restore these settings should any later changes you make to CV values prove to be less than optimum.

There is no need to complete the recording of your locomotive roster's decoder setups in a single session. You can close A-Track at any point by using the standard Windows **Close** button (✖ or ⌵) in the top righthand corner of the window, or by clicking **Exit** from the File menu. If necessary, A-Track will prompt you to save any changes you have made to the Items or Item List before closing the program.

When you are ready to continue with A-Track, you can start the program again as explained previously in **Section 3.5**. Alternatively, if you are intending to resume work with a saved Item List, you can simply locate the Item List file in the folder where you saved it, and then **double-click** on the file. This will open A-Track and load the Item List with a single action.

4 A-TRACK MENUS - REFERENCE

A description is provided in the following sections of the specific action performed by clicking each entry in each of the A-Track menus, including a note of any defined keyboard shortcut, ie. the key, or combination of keys, which can be pressed to perform that menu action immediately, together with any corresponding icon on the A-Track toolbar.


Rather than using the mouse, all menus and menu items can also be activated from the keyboard by using the specified **access keys**. The appropriate access key for each menu option on the menu bar (one letter in the option description) is underlined when the *left Alt* key is pressed. Pressing the underlined letter while keeping the left Alt key held down will display the appropriate menu, eg. **Alt-F** to show the Eile menu – then release both keys.


Any desired item on the displayed menu can then be invoked by pressing the letter key corresponding to the underlined character in the name of that menu item, eg. with the File menu shown, pressing the **M** key will activate an Open Merge operation (which, in passing, also has a direct shortcut key of **Ctrl-M**, ie. hold down either Control (Ctrl) key then press the M key).

While the menu access keys will always be displayed when the *left Alt* key is pressed, they may or may not appear underlined while A-Track is running normally, depending on your computer's system settings. If you wish to see the access keys at all times then you need to change one of the Windows display parameters as described below. Access keys will be shown thereafter on the menus and menu bars of all applications.

In Windows XP, right-click on an empty area of the Desktop then, on the pop-up menu, click Properties. In the Display Properties window click on the Appearance tab and then on the Effects button. Untick the checkbox labelled 'Hide underlined letters for keyboard navigation until I press the Alt key'.

In Windows Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8, right-click on an empty area of the Desktop then, on the pop-up menu, click Personalize. In the window which opens click on the Ease of Access link (bottom-left) and then on the 'Make the keyboard easier to use' link (you may have to scroll down to find this link). In the next window which appears, scroll down (again) to locate the entry 'Make it easier to use keyboard shortcuts', tick the checkbox labelled 'Underline keyboard shortcuts and access keys', click Save in Windows Vista, or OK in Windows 7 and Windows 8, and end by closing all open windows.

In Windows 10 (starting with the Fall Creators Update – Version 1709) open Settings  from the Start Menu or Start Screen, select Ease of Access then, in the left pane, scroll down and click on Keyboard. In the right pane, scroll down to find 'Change how keyboard shortcuts work' and ensure that 'Underline access keys when available' is set to On.

In Windows 11, open Settings  from the Start Menu, select Accessibility, then scroll down to the 'Interaction' section. Click on the Keyboard entry then scroll down again to the 'On-screen keyboard, access keys and Print screen' section where you should set 'Underline access keys' to On.

4.1 File


New – Opens a new Item List containing a single Blank Item. If an Item List is already loaded and has been changed in any way, then you are asked whether you wish to save the current Item List before it is replaced with the new List.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-N** Toolbar Icon : 

Open – Opens an existing Item list. A standard Windows Open File Dialog is displayed, allowing you to navigate to the folder where the target Item List is held. If an Item List is already loaded and has been changed in any way, then you are asked whether you wish to save the current Item List before it is replaced with the selected Item List.



Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-O** Toolbar Icon : 

Open Merge - Opens an existing Item list and adds its constituent Items to the end of the currently displayed Item List. A standard Windows Open File Dialog is displayed, allowing you to navigate to the folder where the Item List to be merged is held.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-M** Toolbar Icon : 

Close – Closes the currently open Item List and removes it from display. If the Item List has been changed in any way, then you are asked whether you wish to save the current Item List before it is closed.

Auto Load Item List – Enables or disables an option to open the last-opened Item List automatically each time A-Track is started (eliminating the need to open that Item List manually each time after starting the application). The menu entry shows a tick mark when the auto-load option is enabled.

Shortcut Key : None Toolbar Icon :  (Enabled) or  (Disabled)

Save As – Saves the currently open Item List to permanent storage. A standard Windows Save File Dialog is displayed, allowing you to navigate to the drive and folder where the current Item List is to be saved. You can either enter a new filename under which to save the Item List, or click Save to save the List under its existing filename. If you choose the latter option then you are asked to confirm that you wish to overwrite the previous version of the Item List.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-S** Toolbar Icon : 

Save Checked – Saves only those Items in the open Item List which are checked, ie. where the checkbox to the left of the Item Description is ticked, to permanent storage. A standard Windows Save File Dialog is displayed, allowing you to navigate to the drive and folder where the current Item List is to be saved. You can either enter a new filename under which to save the Item List, or click Save to save the List under its existing filename. If you choose the latter option then you are asked to confirm that you wish to overwrite the previous version of the Item List.

Note : By choosing to overwrite the existing Item List you will *permanently lose* all those Items which were *not* checked – so make sure that you really want to eliminate them, or have another copy of those Items stored safely elsewhere.



Shortcut Key : None Toolbar Icon : 

Properties – Displays details of the currently-open Item List file including file format, folder location, file size, number of Items, and the dates of creation and last modification.

Combo Data Restore Setup – Provides a facility to load a previously stored copy of Command Station parameters, including Handheld Cab locomotive allocations, Consist definitions and Macros, when using a Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or a DCC Twin, which do not retain parameters defined by A-Track after power-off. Includes provision to enable automatic loading of the specified file each time A-Track is started (eliminating the need to restore Command Station parameters manually each time after starting the application). The menu entry shows a tick mark when the auto-load option is enabled.



Auto Load AIU Allocation – Enables or disables an option to load a previously defined allocation of turnouts and/or block detectors to connected Auxiliary Input Units automatically each time A-Track is started (eliminating the need to open that AIU Allocation List manually each time after starting the application). The menu entry shows a tick mark when the auto-load option is enabled.

Shortcut Key : None

Toolbar Icon :  (Enabled) or  (Disabled)


Auto Load Mimic Set – Enables or disables an option to load a previously defined set of Mimic Diagrams automatically each time A-Track is started (eliminating the need to load that Mimic Set manually each time after starting the application). Note that the Mimic Set is not displayed automatically after loading – access the Display Mimic option on the Mimic menu to view the loaded Mimic Diagrams. The menu entry shows a tick mark when the auto-load option is enabled.

Shortcut Key : None

Toolbar Icon :  (Enabled) or  (Disabled)

Print – Allows you to print all or part of the Item List, details of selected Items, a Route MacroList, or an AIU Allocation List to any printer selected from those installed on the computer or accessible via the local network, or to an output file, and to select the basic print format and characteristics that you require.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-P**

Toolbar Icon : 

Most Recently Used Files – Shows the filenames of the most-recently opened Item Lists. Click on any displayed name to open the corresponding Item List. Up to eight filenames can be displayed in the list – when you open the ninth distinct Item List then the oldest filename is dropped from the list to make way for that of the latest Item List.

Exit - Closes any currently open Item List, and removes it from display, before terminating the A-Track program. If the Item List, details of selected Items, or loaded Route Macro List have been changed in any way, then you are asked whether you wish to save the relevant parameters or file before the program is closed.

Shortcut Key : None

Window Close button :  or 

4.2 Edit

Undo – Restores the Item List to the state it was in prior to the immediately preceding Edit action. This includes returning an edited Item and its constituent data values to their state before they were changed. Up to 32 Edit actions can be recorded and undone. If more than 32 Edit actions are performed before Undo is activated, then only the most recent 32 remain in the record, and can subsequently be reversed.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-Z**

Toolbar Icon : 


Redo – Re-performs the Edit action which was reversed by an immediately preceding Undo operation. This includes returning an Item and its constituent data values to their edited state. Redo is not active until an Undo action has been performed.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-Y**

Toolbar Icon : 

Find – Searches the Item List for Items whose Description, Primary Address, or Extended Address match an entered string of characters. The direction of search can be selected, and the search parameters changed, at any time to refine the Find operation.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-F**

Toolbar Icon : 

Cut – Deletes from the Item List all Items which are currently selected, and places a copy of each of these Items in the Copy Buffer, replacing any previous contents of the Buffer.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-X**

Toolbar Icon :  (Item Pop-Up menu)

Cut Append - Deletes from the Item List all Items which are currently selected, and adds a copy of each of these Items to the current contents of the Copy Buffer.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-U**

Toolbar Icon :  (Item Pop-Up menu)

Copy - Copies from the Item List all Items which are currently selected, and places a copy of each of these Items in the Copy Buffer, replacing any previous contents of the Buffer.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-C**

Toolbar Icon :  (Item Pop-Up menu)

Copy Append - Copies from the Item List all Items which are currently selected, and adds a copy of each of these Items to the current contents of the Copy Buffer.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-D**

Toolbar Icon :  (Item Pop-Up menu)


Paste - Retrieves all Items currently in the Copy Buffer, and adds a copy of each of these Items to the displayed Item List. The contents of the Copy Buffer remain unchanged, and no Item in the displayed Item List is either changed or overwritten - even if it is identical to one of the added Items (such Items are thus duplicated).

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-V**

Toolbar Icon : 


Empty Buffer - Clears completely all Items currently in the Copy Buffer. This action can be neither reversed nor undone - so any Items which were Cut to the Buffer will be lost permanently.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-E**

Toolbar Icon : 

Insert Blank Item - Adds a new Blank Item to the displayed Item List, ready for its description and parameters to be set. Note that you do not have control over where in the Item List the inserted Item will appear - this depends on the current Sort settings.

Shortcut Key : **Shift-Insert**

Toolbar Icon : 

Delete Item - Deletes from the Item List all Items which are currently selected. The deleted Items are not moved to the Copy Buffer, but the action can be reversed by using the Undo facility.

Shortcut Key : **Delete**

Toolbar Icon :  (Item Pop-Up menu)

Check All - Places tick marks in the checkboxes to the left of the Descriptions of all Items in the displayed Item List. Such Items are then said to be 'checked' (rather than selected). The action can be reversed by using the Undo facility.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-K**

Toolbar Icon : None

Check Selected - Places tick marks in the checkboxes to the left of the Descriptions of those Items in the displayed Item List which have been highlighted. Such Items are then said to be 'checked' (as well as selected). The action can be reversed by using the Undo facility.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-L**

Toolbar Icon : None

Invert Checked - Reverses the state of the checkboxes to the left of the Descriptions of all Items in the displayed Item List, ie. places a tick mark in each checkbox which is currently empty, and removes the tick mark from any Item which is currently checked. The action can be reversed by using the Undo facility.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-J**

Toolbar Icon : None

Note : To remove tick marks from all Items in the Item List, use Check All followed by Invert Checked.

Select All - Selects (ie. highlights) all Items in the displayed Item List.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-A**

Toolbar Icon : None

Invert Selection - Reverses the state of selection of all Items in the displayed Item List, ie. highlights each Item which is not currently selected, and removes the highlight from any Item which is currently selected. The action can be reversed by using the Undo facility.

Shortcut Key : **Ctrl-I**

Toolbar Icon : None

Note : To remove selection from all Items in the Item List, use Select All followed by Invert Selection. Alternatively, simply click on any Item - this will remove highlighting from all Items except the Item which has just been clicked.

4.3 View

Toolbar - Hides the A-Track toolbar icons (the row directly below the A-Track menu bar). Click again to show the icons once more. The menu entry shows a tick mark when the toolbar icons are displayed.

Status Bar - Hides the A-Track status bar (the row along the bottom of the A-Track window). Click again to show the status bar once more. The menu entry shows a tick mark when the status bar is displayed.

Show Checked Only – Displays only those Items which are 'checked' ie. have tick marks in the checkboxes to the left of the Descriptions. Click again to display the full Item List again. The menu entry shows a tick mark when only 'checked' Items are displayed.

Note : This action does not remove any Item from the Item List – it simply hides 'unchecked' Items from view, which can be useful when dealing with long Item Lists.

Large Icons - Displays the Item List using the Large Icon view, ie. each Item is shown by a large icon corresponding to its Type, with a label taken from the Item Description (abbreviated if necessary) and the Item's checked status. The Item List is displayed in as many columns as will fit within the A-Track window.

Small Icons - Displays the Item List using the Small Icon view, ie. each Item is shown by a small icon corresponding to its Type, with a label taken from the Item Description (abbreviated if necessary) and the Item's checked status. The Item List is displayed in as many columns as will fit within the A-Track window.

List - Displays the Item List using the List view, ie. each Item is shown by a small icon corresponding to its Type, with a label taken from the Item Description (abbreviated if necessary) and the Item's checked status. The Item List is displayed with one Item per row.

Details - Displays the Item List using the Details view, ie. the Item List is displayed with one Item per row and with ten columns to show the Item's Description, Type, Status Flags, Primary Address (Consist Address for Consists, Decoder Address for Accessories), Extended Address (blank for Consists, selected Output Address for Accessories), Controller to which the Item is currently allocated (*only used with NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab and Smart Booster, and DCC Twin Systems*), Speed Step precision, current Speed and Direction, Headlight state (*the last two only used with NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab and Smart Booster, and DCC Twin Systems*), and state of Functions 1 to 8 (or Outputs 1 to 8 for Accessories), respectively. The Description field also contains the Item's checked status and a small icon corresponding to its Type.

Note : Either the Item's Primary or Extended Address (Decoder or Output Address for Accessories) will be preceded by a '>' character to indicate which Address will be active when the Item is under individual control on the layout. When the Item Type is Multiple (a member of a Consist) then the Consist Address will be shown in the inactive Address column, instead of either the Primary or the Extended Address, and will be preceded by an '=' character.

Arrange Icons - Displays a secondary menu showing six options –

- **by Description** - Sorts the displayed Items into alphabetic order according to the text of the Item's Description. Clicking on this menu entry again will change the Item sort order from ascending to descending or vice versa.

- **by Type** - Sorts the displayed Items into alphabetic order according to the Item's Type (Loco, Consist, Multiple, or Accessory). Clicking on this menu entry again will change the Item sort order from ascending to descending or vice versa.
- **by Flags** - Sorts the displayed Items into alphabetic order according to the state of the Item's Status Flags (Active - A, Edited - E, Not Programmed - P, and Consist Activated - V). Clicking on this menu entry again will change the Item sort order from ascending to descending or vice versa.
- **by Primary Address** - Sorts the displayed Items into numeric order according to the value of the Item's Primary (or Consist or Accessory Decoder) Address. Clicking on this menu entry again will change the Item sort order from ascending to descending or vice versa.

Note : The preceding '>' character, to indicate that the Primary Address is active for an Item, or '=' character to indicate membership of a Consist, is taken into account when sorting, so that all Items with an active Primary or Decoder Address, or in a Consist, will be grouped together before sorting into numeric order.

- **by Extended Address** - Sorts the displayed Items into numeric order according to the value of the Item's Extended (or Accessory Output) Address. Clicking on this menu entry again will change the Item sort order from ascending to descending or vice versa.

Note : The preceding '>' character, to indicate that the Extended or Output Address is active for an Item, or '=' character to indicate membership of a Consist, is taken into account when sorting, so that all Items with an active Extended or Output Address, or in a Consist, will be grouped together before sorting into numeric order.

- **by File Order** - Sorts the displayed Items into the order in which they are held within the Item List's stored file. This order corresponds (approximately) to the order in which Items have been added to the Item List. Note that, whenever an Item is changed or modified in any way, it is moved to the end of the Item List.

Items can also be sorted into File Order by clicking on the  toolbar icon.

One (and only one) of the Arrange Icons sub-menu entries will always show a tick mark to indicate the current sort order of the Item List.

Note : In Details view, the Item List can be sorted by any of the above categories (apart from File Order) simply by clicking on the appropriate column header. Clicking on the same column header again will change the Item sort order from ascending to descending or *vice versa*. When clicked, the column header will show a small icon to indicate ascending (▲) or descending (▼) sort order.

Line Up Icons - In the current release of A-Track this only has an effect in Small Icons and Large Icons views where, if the icons are shown in a few columns, this menu option will increase the number of columns to fill the full width of the window. Normally, in Large Icons and Small Icons views, the Item entries automatically realign themselves after any Item has been dragged to a different position within the window.

Note : Your choices of View type and format, and all associated parameters, are saved by A-Track and will be applied each time the program is started.

Consist Status – Cmd Stn / Item List - Displays all Consists which are currently defined in either an NCE Command Station Consist table (*only NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab and Smart Booster, and DCC Twin*) or the A-Track Item List, or both, together with a list of the Locomotive addresses assigned to the selected Consist within the Command Station (but not necessarily in the Item List).


Consist Status – Backup File / Item List - Displays all Consists which are currently defined in either a selected Consist backup file or the A-Track Item List, or both, together with a list of the Locomotive addresses assigned to the selected Consist within the Consist backup file (but not necessarily in the Item List).

Note : Where any Locomotive assigned to a Consist is identified in the Item List, its description is displayed alongside the address. Where appropriate, details of a selected Consist can be copied from the Item List to the NCE Command Station ('activated') or from the Command Station to the Item List ('transferred') - in either case overwriting any previous definition of that Consist held in the destination. Although a selected Consist can be copied from a Consist backup file to the Item List ('transferred'), overwriting any previous definition of that Consist, Consists cannot be copied to an attached NCE Power Pro Command Station ('activated' – where the Consist address is programmed into the actual assigned Locomotives on the track) directly from a backup file. The Consist must first be transferred into the A-Track Item List.

AIU Status – Turnout / Block Allocation – Opens a utility which allows you to allocate the direction-sensing connection from any turnout connected to the Output of an Accessory decoder, or the output of a Block Detector (indicating block occupancy), to a selected input of an attached Auxiliary Input Unit. The allocations can then be saved to an AIU Allocation List stored on your PC. Allocations can be loaded into A-Track from the utility, either directly or after a saved AIU Allocation List has been retrieved from storage.

Refresh Item Allocation & Status – Initiates an immediate rescan and update of the full NCE Handheld Cab allocations and status shown in the righthand columns of the Item List when using Details view (*only enabled when connected to an NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station*).

Shortcut Key : None

Toolbar Icon : 

Note : Although clicking on the toolbar icon (shown above) simply initiates a rescan, clicking on the View menu option itself will display a prompt allowing you to disable or continue the periodic scan of attached NCE Cabs and AIUs (disabled by default). Note that the status of locomotives currently under control from each NCE Cab, and of the turnouts and blocks monitored by AIUs, is continuously scanned at 1-second intervals. A full scan (as performed when A-Track starts, or when a new Item List is loaded) is only useful if you wish to check on the allocation of locomotives to the Recall list of each NCE Cab, but should be disabled when you want to adjust parameters relating to the NCE Power Pro Command Station or Cabs, or change Consist or Macro settings, to prevent periodic interruptions. The tick mark next to the option on the View menu will only be shown whenever periodic scans of attached NCE Cabs are enabled. Click again on the option when you wish to stop automatic scans of NCE Cab status.

Monitor AIU/Cab Scan, when activated, will display the addresses of those Handheld Cabs and AIUs which A-Track is monitoring in turn at 1-second intervals in the Status Bar panel which normally shows the number of Items in the Item List. A **tick** mark next to the option shows that it is enabled – click again to disable the option and remove the scan display from the Status Bar.

4.4 Item

Edit CVs / Edit Output Details - Opens an Edit Configuration Variables window for the currently selected Item. If several Items are selected (highlighted) then the Edit CVs window is opened for the last-selected Item (identified in the Item List by an outline box drawn around the appropriate Item). The Edit CVs window allows you to view, modify, and save values for each of that Item's Configuration Variables (or Output Details for Accessory Items) as well as a number of other parameters.

Note : You can open as many separate Edit CVs windows on the screen as you wish, at the same time, each for a different Item, so that you can easily compare, and transfer, CV values between Items.

Shortcut Key : None

Toolbar Icon :  (Item Pop-Up menu)

Allocate NCE Cab – *Only enabled with NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Systems* - Opens an Allocate Item to NCE Cab window for the currently selected Loco or Consist Item. If several Items are selected (highlighted) then the Allocate Item window is opened for the last-selected Item (identified in the Item List by an outline box drawn around the appropriate Item). The window allows you to allocate control of the selected Loco or Consist Item to any NCE Handheld Controller (Cab), via the Command Station, and to adjust the Item's position in the selected Cab's Recall list.

Shortcut Key : None

Toolbar Icon : None (Item Pop-Up menu)

Note : If the Item currently selected (highlighted) in the Item List has been allocated to an NCE Handheld Controller, then the Allocate NCE Cab entry on the Item menu changes to Deallocate, and the Operate option is disabled. The identity of the allocated NCE Cab appears in the Controller column of the Item List row corresponding to the Item under control. Not applicable to Accessory Items.

Deallocate - *Only enabled with NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Systems* - Opens a Deallocate Item from NCE Cab window for the currently selected Loco or Consist Item. If several Items are selected (highlighted) then the Deallocate Item window is opened for the last-selected Item (identified in the Item List by an outline box drawn around the appropriate Item). The window allows you to remove the selected Item from the NCE Handheld Controller (Cab) to which it has been allocated.

Shortcut Key : None

Toolbar Icon : None (Item Pop-Up menu)

Note : Once an Item has been deallocated, and that Item is selected in the Item List, the Deallocate entry on the Item menu changes back to the Allocate NCE Cab option, and the Operate option is enabled. Not applicable to Accessory Items.

Operate - Opens an Operate Item window for the currently selected Item. If several Items are selected (highlighted) then the Operate Item window is opened for the last-selected Item (identified in the Item List by an outline box drawn around the appropriate Item). The window provides a 'soft' controller on the screen, giving you control of the Item's speed, direction, and functions for Locomotive Items, or output states for Accessory Items, using mouse and keyboard.

Shortcut Key : None

Toolbar Icon :  (Item Pop-Up menu)

Note : Up to eight Operate Item windows, corresponding to eight selected Items, can be opened simultaneously on the screen. However, the facility should be used with caution as it is very easy to lose track (literally) of which Item is under control from a particular Operate Item window when more than two or three are active.

4.5 NCE

Note : For all **Backup** options a standard Windows Save File Dialog is displayed, allowing you to navigate to the drive and folder where the Backup file is to be saved. You can edit the displayed default filename by adding specific details to it, enter a completely new filename, or select an existing file to be replaced with the current Backup details. Click Save to save the Backup file. If you have chosen to overwrite a previous version of the Backup file then you are asked to confirm your choice.

System Backup - Saves the NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station setup parameters to a disk file.

Consist Backup - Saves the complete table of Consists stored in an NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station to a disk file.

Macro Backup - Saves all Macros, or a selected set of Macros, from the table stored in an NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station to a disk file. In the case of a Power Pro, a window is displayed to allow selection of a set of 64 Macros to be backed up.

Handheld Cab Backup - Saves the setup parameters and list of locomotives or consists allocated to each of a set of NCE Handheld Cabs, as stored in the NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station, to a disk file. In the case of a Power Pro, a window is displayed to allow selection of the set of Cabs to be backed up.

Power Cab / Smart Booster / DCC Twin Combo Backup - Saves the NCE Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station setup parameters, combined with the tables of Consists and Macros to a disk file.

Note : For all **Restore** options a standard Windows Open File Dialog is displayed, allowing you to navigate to the folder where the target Backup file is held. Note that selecting the appropriate file, and clicking Open, will initiate the update of the relevant NCE Command Station parameters immediately, without any request for confirmation.

System Restore - Opens an existing System Backup file and transfers the contents to the NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station.

Consist Restore - Opens an existing Consist Backup file and transfers the contents to the NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station.

Macro Restore - Opens an existing Macro Backup file and transfers the contents to the NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station.

Handheld Cab Restore - Opens an existing Handheld Cab Backup file and transfers the contents to the NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station.

Power Cab / Smart Booster / DCC Twin Combo Restore - Opens an existing System Combo Backup file and transfers the contents to the NCE Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station.

Command Station Setup - Displays a window showing the current values of the NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station Setup parameters, allowing any of the accessible parameters to be changed and returned to the Command Station. The NCE Power Pro Command Station may also be reset to its power-on state, or have its factory-default parameters restored.

Handheld Cab / AIU Status - Displays a window showing the connection status of all NCE Handheld Cabs, and of any attached Auxiliary Input Units, together with the last known status of, and the list of locomotives allocated to, the currently-selected Cab, or of the turnouts or track blocks allocated to the currently-selected AIU. Click on the address of any Cab or AIU to update and display its detailed status and allocation list. Parameters of a selected Cab can be changed and returned to the Command Station, and the complete allocation list for the Cab (but not for an AIU) can be cleared. Note, however, that locomotives or consists cannot be allocated to the current Cab using this window, nor can the turnouts or blocks allocated to an AIU be changed (see **Sections 4.3, 4.4** and **4.9**, dealing with the View, Item and Pop-Up menus).

Find Connected Systems – Disconnects any currently connected NCE Command Station, scans all possible serial (COM) ports for attached NCE systems, and then displays a list of up to four systems for the user to select which NCE Command Station is to be connected to A-Track.

Select Connection – when more than a single NCE system is attached to your computer, this option displays a list of all identified NCE systems with a tick mark next to the currently-connected system (if any). Click any entry to disconnect A-Track and then re-connect to the selected NCE Command Station.

4.6 Route

Display Route Macro Table - Opens a blank Route Macro Table with entries for up to 256 Macros. Sets of Route Macros can then either be constructed within the table or loaded from existing Macro Backup files, edited and then saved back to the same or new Macro Backup files. Macros can also be transferred to or from an NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin Command Station, or can be executed directly from A-Track.

New Macro Sets - Clears the existing Route Macro Table if one has been opened previously, or opens a blank Route Macro Table with entries for up to 256 Macros.

4.7 Mimic



Load Mimic Set - Opens an existing Mimic List file and makes a list of the Mimic panels contained in the loaded Mimic Set available when the Display Mimic option on the Mimic menu is selected. The list of Mimics will also appear on the screen next to the mouse cursor as soon as the Mimic panels are loaded. Clicking on the name of any Mimic panel on the list will display that panel and place a tick mark next to its entry in the list. Clicking on the Show All option will display all of the panels in the Mimic Set, place a tick mark next to all entries in the list, and change the option to Hide All.

Save All Mimics - Saves the currently-loaded Mimic Set to a disk file. A standard Windows Save File Dialog is displayed, allowing you to navigate to the drive and folder where the Mimic List file is to be saved. You can edit the displayed default filename by adding specific details to it, enter a completely new filename, or select an existing file to be replaced with the current Mimic Set data. Click Save to save the Mimic List file. If you have chosen to overwrite a previous version of the Mimic List file then you are asked to confirm your choice.

New Mimic – Creates a blank Mimic panel and adds it as the last panel to any currently-loaded Mimic Set. All panels in the Mimic Set are then displayed on the screen. The name which the new panel is given by default (New Layout Mimic #n) will also be added to the end of the Display Mimic list with a tick mark next to its name.

Prepare Find Route – When selected, allows the Find Route operation to be performed by using a single left-click (or tap on a touch-sensitive screen) without the requirement for a Control (Ctrl) key to be held down at the same time. The menu entry shows a tick mark when this Find Route option is enabled.

Shortcut Key : None

Toolbar Icon :  (Enabled) or  (Disabled)



Prepare Edit Mimic - When selected, allows the Mimic Edit window to be opened with a single left-click (or tap on a touch-sensitive screen) as well as with a right-click of the mouse. Note that only single Mimic elements can be edited using this option on its own, since selecting a block of elements requires a Shift (⇧) key to be used as well. The menu entry shows a tick mark when this Edit Mimic option is enabled.

Shortcut Key : None

Toolbar Icon :  (Enabled) or  (Disabled)

Prepare One Click - When selected, allows you to change the state of any turnout on a Mimic panel with a single left-click instead of a double-click. The menu entry shows a tick mark when the One Click option is enabled..

Shortcut Key : None

Toolbar Icon :  (Enabled) or  (Disabled)

Note: Although, when a Mimic Set is loaded, the Prepare Find Route option will always be enabled, the Prepare Edit Mimic option will only be enabled if there is no connection to an NCE Command Station (or the Command Station is switched off). Conversely, the Prepare One Click option is only enabled when there is an active connection to an NCE Command Station. Only one of the 'Prepare' options listed above can be enabled at any given time. Selecting any one of the options will automatically disable the other two.

Refresh All – Updates the displayed state of all turnouts and track blocks on all Mimic panels with the latest status acquired either from issued Accessory commands or from data input directly through attached Auxiliary Input Units.

Note : Update of turnout and block occupancy status should occur automatically as part of A-Track normal operations, although there may be a delay of a few seconds before all turnouts and track blocks are updated, particularly with large layouts. Normally, it should not be necessary to use the Refresh All menu option.

Display Mimic – Displays a secondary menu with a list of all Mimics in the loaded Mimic Set. Clicking on the name of any Mimic panel on the list will display that panel and place a tick mark next to its entry in the list. Clicking on the Show All option will display all of the panels in the Mimic Set, place a tick mark next to all entries in the list, and change the option to Hide All.

Arrange Mimic Set - Displays a secondary menu showing two options –

- **Cascade** – Displays all Mimic panels in the loaded Mimic Set as a series of overlapping, cascaded windows, originating in the top left corner of the screen. This allows all Mimic panels to be accessed from the screen, although the details of only the Mimic in the foremost window will be fully visible.
- **Tile** - Displays all Mimic panels in the loaded Mimic Set separately, centred on the screen. With screen sizes less than 1536 x 1024 pixels, only a single Mimic panel will be visible at any one time whereas, with wider screens, up to four (or even six) Mimic panels can be displayed at once. Use the '**D**' (Down) and '**U**' (Up) keys to display any Mimic panels in the Mimic Set which are not shown currently on the screen in place of those panels which are being displayed.

Reorder Mimic Set - Opens a utility which allows you to change the order in which the Mimic panels of a loaded Mimic Set are stored and displayed on screen. The reordered Mimic Set must be saved before A-Track is closed in order to preserve the changes.

4.8 Help

Help Topics - Displays a comprehensive set of Help pages containing all of the information contained in the Reference Manual. The standard Windows HTML Help format is employed, with all Help pages accessible from a Contents list. Although an Index facility is not available, there is a full Search capability which can be employed to locate all pages containing a particular word or phrase.

Note : Help pages are context-sensitive, so that, when you press the F1 shortcut key at any point when using A-Track, the Help page most appropriate to that part of the program which is currently active will be displayed.

Shortcut Key : **F1**

Toolbar Icon : 

Start-Up Tutorial - Displays the first page of the 'Welcome to A-Track – Your DCC Buddy' demonstration and tutorial, ready to take you through the basic features of the program's operation.

Note : A tick next to this menu entry indicates that the 'Welcome to A-Track' tutorial will be displayed whenever A-Track is started. If you do not wish this to occur, first click this entry to display the 'Welcome to A-Track' help page, then tick the 'Do not display at start-up' checkbox located below the tutorial text before closing the window.

Register / Activate – Opens a window which displays information relating to the version of A-Track which is running, the Serial Number generated when you installed A-Track, details of the version and build of Windows installed on this computer, the type and software version of the NCE System to which you last connected and the current registration / activation status.

If this copy of A-Track has not been registered, the window allows the user to enter his or her name (or the name of a club), and then, provided the computer has an active Internet connection, to access an online facility which will generate an Activation Key (code). The Key should then be copied by the user into the Register / Activate window in order to complete registration. After registration / activation, the window displays the Registered User's name, the Activation Key value, and the date of registration.

Support / Report Problems – Opens a window which displays information relating to the version of A-Track which is running, the Serial Number generated when you installed A-Track, details of the version and build of Windows installed on this computer, and the type and software version of the NCE System to which you last connected. If this copy of A-Track has been registered, the window also shows the Registered User Name and the date of registration. Otherwise, enter your name and then, provided the computer has an active Internet connection, access an online facility which allows you to submit a request for support or to report a problem which you encountered with A-Track.

Check for Updates – Opens a window which displays the currently-installed A-Track version number and the allows you to check, provided the computer has an active Internet connection, whether a more recent version is available for download from the A-Train Systems website. If this is the case, you can then download the setup file for the new version. It is recommended that you uninstall the current version of A-Track before running the setup file to install the updated version. All of your settings and personalisation for A-Track will be preserved and applied to the new version, as will any registration information. There are also options to set a check for updates to be run automatically by A-Track at your choice of interval, provided the computer has an active Internet connection at that time.

About A-Track - Opens a window displaying the Version number of the program, a brief description, and copyright and trademark information

4.9 Pop-Up

When an Item in the Item List is right-clicked, a pop-up menu appears and offers a set of actions selected from the Item and Edit menus. The details are summarised below, but see the entries in the preceding Item and Edit menu descriptions for more complete information.

Edit CVs / Edit Output Details - Opens an Edit Configuration Variables window for the selected Item.

Allocate NCE Cab - Opens an Allocate Item to NCE Cab window for the selected Loco Item to allow you to allocate control of the selected Item to an NCE Handheld Controller (only displayed if connected to an NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin System, and the Item is not currently allocated).

Deallocate - Removes the selected Loco Item from control by the allocated NCE Handheld Controller (only displayed if connected to an NCE Power Pro, Version 1.65 Power Cab or Smart Booster, or DCC Twin System, and the Item is currently allocated).

Operate - Opens an Operate Item window for the selected Item to give you control of the Item's speed, direction, and functions for Locomotive Items, or output states for Accessory Items, from the PC screen (only enabled if the Loco Item is not currently allocated).

Delete Item - Deletes the Item from the Item List (Item is **not** copied to the Copy Buffer).

Cut - Deletes the Item from the Item List, and places a copy of the Item in the Copy Buffer, replacing any previous contents of the Buffer.

Cut Append - Deletes the Item from the Item List, and adds a copy of the Item to the current contents of the Copy Buffer.

Copy - Copies the Item from the Item List, and places a copy of the Item in the Copy Buffer, replacing any previous contents of the Buffer.

Copy Append - Copies the Item from the Item List, and adds a copy of the Item to the current contents of the Copy Buffer.

5 A-TRACK END-USER LICENCE AGREEMENT

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1. DEFINITIONS

"A-Track for Windows " means the A-Track for Windows software and everything included in its official distribution packages, such as the documentation, example files and all other modules and applications.

"A-Train Systems" means JT Chamberlain trading as A-Train Systems.

"official distribution package" means a packaged set-up file, in the form of an executable installation program containing A-Track for Windows, which is available on portable media or through a file download from a designated page on the A-Train Systems website at www.a-train-systems.co.uk, or other authorised source.

"licence agreement" means this text document. This licence

agreement is a legal agreement between you (individual or legal entity) and A-Train Systems. You must accept all the terms and limitations in this licence agreement if you wish to use, run, or copy A-Track for Windows in any way.

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