



Synchronion

by otimon

Clear plans for public transport

Tips and tricks

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This collection gathers practical knacks that make the work in Synchronion faster and the result cleaner. It presupposes knowledge of the tools from the manual.

Entering timetables quickly

In the outbound journey a single time suffices; Create outbound fills in the rest from the stored travel and dwell times. That saves entering every single minute.

Times are entered with the tab key: it follows the course of the journey, from the departure of the first station via the arrival and departure of every intermediate station to the arrival at the destination and then back in the return direction. Enter a figure, tab, next figure, and the hand stays on the number pad.

If xx remains anywhere on the graphic, a time is still open there. The placeholder is the quickest check across a whole plan; only at pass-throughs is any label missing altogether, because no time of its own applies there.

If only a single field is to be set, a double click on it suffices; Synchronion enters the remembered value for exactly this station and this transport mode.

The more often times are entered, the better the suggestions become, because Synchronion remembers the travel and dwell times across projects. Passed on through the library, this store of experience benefits the whole team.

The values highlighted in orange in the Memory comparison column show where an entry deviates from the familiar value. That is a quick check against typing errors.

With a symmetrical timetable, Set the return journey automatically and the entry of the outbound journey suffice; the return journey arises as a mirror image on its own.

For a following train in a half-hourly interval, Copy line with a time offset of 30 minutes suffices, instead of drawing and entering the line anew.

A clean layout

The nodes determine their size themselves, according to the number of adjoining lines. Helping by hand is worthwhile only when the result really does not please.

If kinks or overlaps arise in the lines, the nodes usually lie too close together or in such a way that the angles of 0, 45 and 90 degrees can no longer be kept. Here it helps to pull the nodes concerned apart, rather than working on the lines themselves.

After moving several nodes, Sort restores a tidy sequence of the lines with one click, without every line having to be re-sorted individually. Sorting may be tried without hesitation: it adopts a new arrangement only if it has measurably fewer crossings and overlaps, and otherwise reports that everything stays unchanged.

Lines dragged by hand stay in place when sorting. Anyone who wants to keep a deliberately chosen sequence drags the lines concerned onto their slot once themselves; they then count as fixed points around which the sorting takes place.

When placing new nodes the grid helps: it shows exactly the lattice on which nodes and lines lie, and keeps the spacings regular. It does not appear in the export.

To move the view, hold down the space bar, as in graphics programs. This works with every tool, even in the middle of drawing a line. When drawing as far as the edge of the picture, the view moves along by itself anyway.

Centre brings the whole graphic back into the picture when the view has been lost while zooming.

A waypoint guides a line around others in a targeted way when its direct course would become confusing.

While drawing, the hand stays on the keyboard: N selects New line, K the Nodes tool, S the Line tool. When naming a new node you type the place name, choose the operating point with the arrow keys and adopt it with the enter key. A node left out while drawing makes no redrawing necessary: in the Line tool you drag the line with the Ctrl key held down onto the missing node until the latter is framed in green, and let go; the node is taken into the line at the fitting place. This applies to lines drawn by hand.

If arranging leads into a dead end, the reset takes back only one category in a targeted way, for instance only the sorting or only the node positions; everything else is preserved.

Creating an overview

Hidden nodes and sections condense a graphic onto a corridor or onto a few lines. The underlying data are preserved in full while doing so.

So that it remains visible where a hidden line continues to, the Connection tool shows it as a labelled stub; the destination can be adjusted there. If many stubs are shown, a command in the sidebar hides them again together.

Small but served stations belong on a section as intermediate stops, instead of being drawn as nodes of their own. That keeps the graphic calm.

If station and bus station lie so close together that two nodes make the graphic restless, you combine them into an interchange node: select them with Ctrl in the Nodes tool and press Merge. The line data remain untouched, so the project can still be handed back to a planning system.

A station passed through without stopping is marked in the Edit line window by the Pass-through checkbox; it then carries no times of its own, and the fields of the row are emptied. The travel time of the longer section belongs to the two stops before and after it, otherwise it is missing for the return journey.

In dense areas the Time label tool pushes overlapping time labels apart. A time label hidden by accident remains recognisable by its dashed frame and comes back with a click.

Clear corridor views

Every corridor view belongs condensed onto one corridor. First show the lines of the corridor, then adopt the columns with Lines → columns; in this way all stations disappear that serve only other branches. For the next corridor the current view is saved as a view and a new one is set up.

Arrange is the best point of departure: afterwards the columns stand in route order, the column grid is switched on, and every intermediate stop has a column of its own. Finer points are settled by dragging the columns, the line names and the dots; the shadow preview always shows where the element will land.

If the intermediate stops of two lines do not align cleanly beneath one another, the plus sign below the graphic inserts an empty column; afterwards you drag the dots onto the fitting column.

The number of intermediate stops is corrected fastest directly on the band: a click adds one, a right click takes one away. The network graphic and the Edit line window then show the same number.

If a line name does not fit, a double click on it changes its text; an empty text leaves the row without a label. The apostrophe of the opposite direction does not appear in the corridor view, where the outbound and return directions bear the same name.

Split routes is best left switched on. From the number of stops and the travel time, Synchronion recognises which lines demonstrably run different routes between two nodes, and gives their intermediate stops columns of their own. Whatever is still not right afterwards is set up by empty columns and by dragging individual dots, which is markedly less work than without this pre-sorting.

Labelling lines clearly

The Caption tool places a label directly on a line, so that it is clearly named at the desired place. Its text arises from the first word of the description.

If the derived text does not fit, the desired name belongs in the description of the line; a double click on the label overwrites it directly.

Working consistently as a team

House typeface, colours, node style and branding are set up once and secured as a settings set. New projects then start immediately in the right appearance.

A recurring framework of nodes is stored as a template; future projects build on it.

If the library is passed on, everyone works with the same sets, templates and the same store of experience of travel and dwell times.

If a project is passed on to a team of another language, it is worth creating it in that team's language: the interface follows the choice of language on the start screen immediately, whereas the designations of the transport modes that arose at creation remain in place as project data.

Under Transport modes in use, groups and countries are restricted to what is needed, for instance only Switzerland and only rail traffic. Positioning and suggestions thereby become faster and more apt; the display at the bottom states the number of active service points.

Working securely and without a connection

Switch on Auto-save and determine a file once with Choose target ..., best in a synchronised folder. It is silently overwritten thereafter: one current backup instead of many copies.

The project proper is the saved JSON file. It is used for backing up and for exchange, because everything runs locally on your own device. An orange Save button is the reminder that no such file exists yet; after the first save it turns blue again.

When leaving via To the start page, the path Save and return leads in one go through the file dialogue and only then to the start screen. If the file dialogue is cancelled, the application stays in the project, so nothing is lost.

After a window closed by accident it suffices to open Synchronion again: the screen last shown comes back. To conclude a project, or on a shared computer, To the start page ends the work; the kept state is discarded in doing so.

After an import from timetable data, the proposed pairing of outbound and return direction should be checked first. The times of imported lines are locked in the Edit line window; the times labelled on the graphic are changed where needed by the Time label tool.

On exporting

In the preview the legend is pushed to a free place and the network graphic is scaled at its corner handles until the division is right. With Adjust fonts, title, legend, project name and date are set separately.

The preview zoom changes only the view, not the export. If the arrangement has become muddled, Reset layout to default restores it.

The sample lines of the legend always have the stroke weight with which the lines appear on the sheet. When the header block is reduced, only texts and logo follow, the lines remain true to scale; if the rows thereby seem too tight, the legend is simply chosen too small.

The sheet format used last applies again to new projects at the next start, and the save dialogues for project, graphic and viewer file return separately to the folder used last. A storage location set up once thus carries across sessions.

For plotter or banner dimensions outside the standard series, the custom size at the top of the format list suffices; width and height are entered there in millimetres and saved with the project.

Anyone who only wants to show a result passes on the viewer file instead of a PDF. The recipient needs no access, can switch between network graphic and corridor view and can zoom, but cannot change anything. Whether they may produce PDF and SVG from it themselves is decided by the checkbox when creating it.