

# NVIDIA takes one step closer to Linux support

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(Phys.org)—Good news: NVIDIA has a technology called Optimus which since its 2010 launch is regarded as a great extender for notebook, netbook, and ultrabooks. Some NVIDIA fans think favorably of Optimus as "awesome" in the way it can tap into the discrete GPU when needed to conserve power. They like the way battery life is preserved as GPU power is switched off when not needed and switched on when needed again. As the company explains, NVIDIA Optimus technology automatically and instantaneously uses the high performance NVIDIA GPU for GPU-Compute applications, video, and 3-D games; and low power integrated graphics for applications such as web surfing or email. The Optimus approach in "dynamic" switching based on application needs is notable and according to reports a growing number of laptops from the commercial majors are equipped with Optimus.

Sad news: Linux fans, especially gamers, have expressed frustration in not being able to enjoy the most out of [mobile computers](#) that carry the Optimus switching technology as a power-saving mechanism.

Linux users have had the option of checking out the Bumblebee project, which notes that "Many recent notebooks with a discrete nVidia card in it and an i3/i5/i7 processor use the nVidia Optimus technology to improve battery life. Unfortunately, this software solution is only available in Windows 7 and later. The Bumblebee Project is a [set](#) of tools developed by people aiming to provide Optimus support under Linux (legacy nVidia hybrid graphics is supported too) while waiting for kernel and drivers to support these notebooks."

Even Linus Torvalds let loose on his frustration bordering on disgust earlier this year at an entrepreneur session in Finland. He was asked why NVIDIA did not offer support for its [GPU](#) under Linux. Torvalds responded that NVIDIA was a thorn and that he thought it very sad that NVIDIA was being difficult about it.

But back to some good news. The latest word is that NVIDIA is working to achieve Linux compatibility with its Optimus graphics switching technology.

In a recent [e-mail](#) sent to a developer listserv, NVIDIA software engineer Aaron Plattner expressed remarks that indicate NVIDIA is working on Linux support. Plattner in the e-mail said that he has created a working proof of concept driver.

Reader comments to news sites reporting the NVIDIA engineer's e-mail have been favorable, in fact happy. Compatibility moves will benefit NVIDIA audiences as well as fans of Linux. Hopes are that the two will work things out. Certainly among the hopefuls are those who use their laptops for gaming and need better [battery life](#). Running Linux on

Optimus-equipped laptops, for many, will be ideal.

**More information:** [bumblebee-project.org/](http://bumblebee-project.org/)

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