COMPUTER NETWORKS
CS 45201
CS 55201

CHAPTER 6
Congestion Control

P. Farrell and H. Peyravi

Department of Computer Science
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio 44242
farrell@mcs.kent.edu
http://www.cs.kent.edu/~ farrell

Fall 2001

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Department of Mathematics and Computer Science
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio 44242
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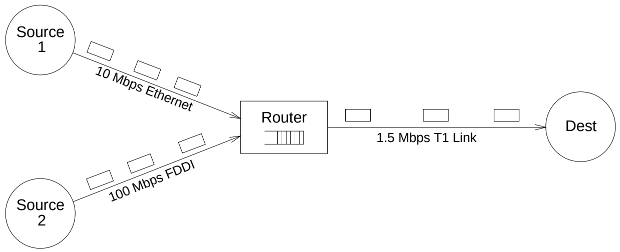
CS 4/55201: Computer Networks Fall 2001

Contents

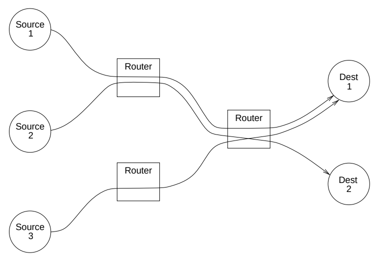
Congestion Control Issues

- Two sides of the same coin
  - pre-allocate resources so that to avoid congestion
  - send data and control congestion if (and when) is occurs

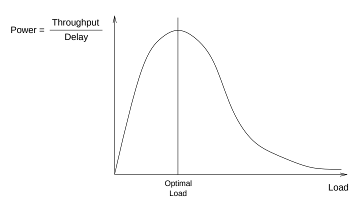


- Two points of implementation
  - hosts at the edges of the network (transport protocol)
  - routers inside the network (queuing discipline)
- Underlying service model
  - best-effort (assume for now)
  - multiple *qualities of service* (later)

- Connectionless flows
  - sequence of packets sent between source/destination pair
  - maintain *soft state* at the routers

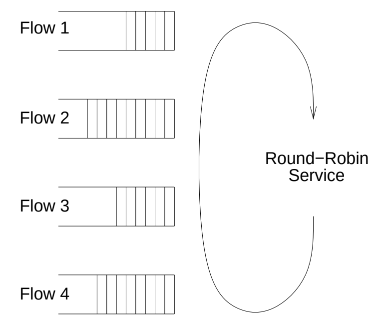


- Taxonomy
  - router-centric versus host-centric
  - reservation-based versus Feedback-based
  - window-based versus rate-based
- Evaluation
  - fairness
  - power (ratio of throughput to delay)



Queuing Disciplines

- First-In-First-Out (FIFO)
  - does not discriminate between traffic sources
- Fair Queuing (FQ)
  - explicitly segregates traffic based on flows
  - ensures no flow captures more than its share of capacity
  - variation: weighted fair queuing (WFQ)



- Problem: packets not all the same length
  - really want bit-by-bit round robin
  - not feasible to interleave bits (schedule on packet basis)
  - simulate by determining when packet would finish
- For a single flow
  - suppose clock ticks each time a bit is transmitted
  - let P_i denote the length of packet i
  - let S_i denote the time when start to transmit packet i
  - let F_i denote the time when finish transmitting packet i
  - $F_i = S_i + P_i$
  - When does router start transmitting packet i?
    - If before router finished packet $i-1$ from this flow, then immediately after last bit of $i-1$ (F_{i-1})
    - If no current packets for this flow, then start transmitting when arrives (call this A_i)
  - Thus: $F_i = MAX(F_{i-1}, A_i) + P_i$
- For multiple flows
  - calculate F_i for each packet that arrives on each flow
  - treat all F_i's as timestamps
  - next packet to transmit is one with lowest timestamp
- Not perfect: can't preempt the packet currently being transmitted

TCP Congestion Control

- Idea
  - assumes best-effort network (FIFO or FQ routers)
  - each source determines network capacity for itself
  - uses implicit feedback
  - ACKs pace transmission (*self-clocking*)
- Challenge
  - determining the available capacity in the first place
  - adjusting to changes in the available capacity

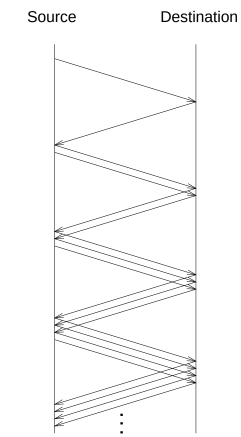
Additive Increase/Multiplicative Decrease

- Objective: adjust to changes in the available capacity
- New state variable per connection: `CongestionWindow`
  - limits how much data source has in transit

```
MaxWin = MIN(CongestionWindow, AdvertisedWindow)
EffWin = MaxWin - (LastByteSent - LastByteAcked)
```

- Idea:
  - increase `CongestionWindow` when congestion goes down
  - decrease `CongestionWindow` when congestion goes up
- Question: how does the source determine whether or not the network is congested?
- Answer: a timeout occurs
  - timeout signals that a packet was lost
  - packets are seldom lost due to transmission error
  - lost packet implies congestion

- Algorithm:
  - increment `CongestionWindow` by one packet per RTT (*linear increase*)
  - divide `CongestionWindow` by two whenever a timeout occurs (*multiplicative decrease*)

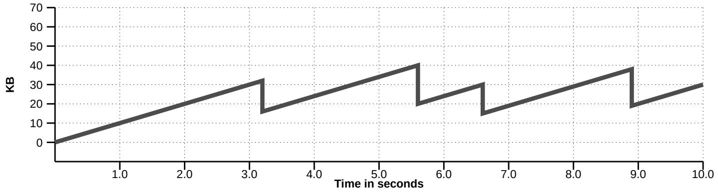


- In practice: increment a little for each ACK

```
Increment = (MSS * MSS)/CongestionWindow
CongestionWindow += Increment
```

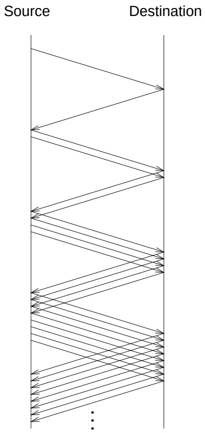
where MSS is maximum message size

- Example trace: sawtooth behavior



Slow Start

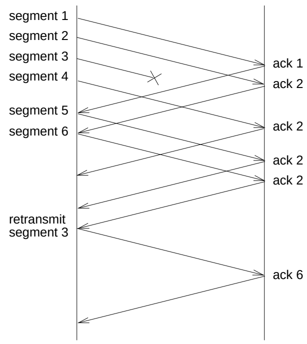
- Objective: determine the available capacity in the first place
- Idea:
  - begin with `CongestionWindow` = 1 packet
  - double `CongestionWindow` each RTT



- Exponential growth, but slower than all in one blast
- Used...
  - when first starting connection
  - when connection goes dead waiting for a timeout

Fast Retransmit and Fast Recovery

- Problem: coarse-grain TCP timeouts lead to idle periods
- Fast retransmit: use duplicate ACKs to trigger retransmission

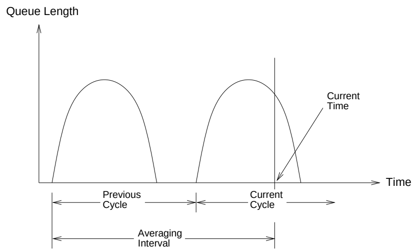


Congestion Avoidance Mechanisms

- TCP's strategy
  - to control congestion once it happens
  - to repeatedly increase load in an effort to find the point at which congestion occurs, and then back off
- Alternative strategy
  - predict when congestion is about to happen, and reduce the rate at which hosts send data just before packets start being discarded
  - we call this congestion *avoidance*, to distinguish it from congestion *control*
- Two possibilities
  - router-centric: DECbit and RED Gateways
  - host-centric: TCP Vegas

DECbit

- Add binary congestion bit to each packet header
- Router
  - monitors average queue length over last busy+idle plus current busy cycle



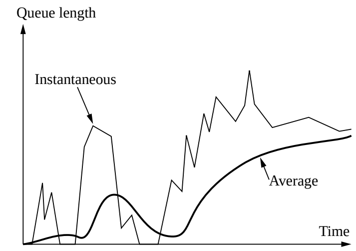
  - set congestion bit if average queue length greater than 1 when packet arrives
  - attempts to balance throughput against delay
- End Hosts
  - destination echos bit back to source
  - source records how many packets resulted in set bit
  - if less than 50% of last window's worth had bit set, then increase `CongestionWindow` by 1 packet
  - if 50% or more of last window's worth had bit set, then decrease `CongestionWindow` by 0.875 times

Random Early Detection (RED) Gateways

- Notification is implicit
  - just drop the packet (TCP will timeout)
  - could make explicit by marking the packet
- Early random drop
  - rather than wait for queue to become full, drop each arriving packet with some *drop probability* whenever the queue length exceeds some *drop level*
- RED: fills in the details
  - compute average queue length

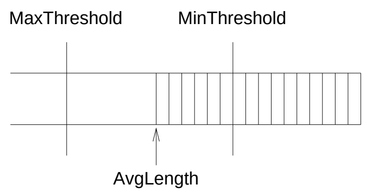
```
AvgLen = (1 - Weight) * AvgLen
         + Weight * SampleLen
```

    - $0 <$ `Weight` < 1 (usually 0.002)
    - `SampleLen` is queue length each time a packet arrives



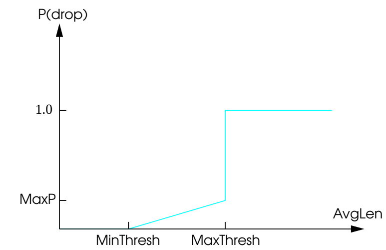
- two queue length thresholds

```
if AvgLen <= MinThreshold then
   enqueue the packet
if MinThreshold < AvgLen < MaxThreshold
   calculate probability P
   drop arriving packet with probability P
if MaxThreshold <= AvgLen
   drop arriving packet
```



- probability P
  - not fixed
  - function of AvgLen and how long since last drop (count) keeps track of new packets that have been queued while AvgLen has been between the two thresholds

```
TempP = MaxP * (AvgLen - MinThreshold)
        / (MaxThreshold - MinThreshold)
P = TempP/(1 - count * TempP)
```

- Notes
  - probability of dropping a particular flow's packet(s) is roughly proportional to the share of the bandwidth that flow is currently getting
  - MaxP is typically set to 0.02, meaning that when the average queue size is halfway between the two thresholds, the gateway drops roughly one out of 50 packets.
  - if traffic is bursty, then MinThreshold should be sufficiently large to allow link utilization to be maintained at an acceptably high level
  - difference between two thresholds should be larger than the typical increase in the calculated average queue length in one RTT; setting MaxThreshold to twice MinThreshold is reasonable for traffic on today's Internet

TCP Vegas

- Idea: source watches for some sign that some router's queue is building up and congestion will happen soon; e.g.,
  - RTT is growing
  - sending rate flattens
- Algorithm
  - let `BaseRTT` be the minimum of all measured RTTs (commonly the RTT of the first packet)
  - if not overflowing the connection, then

    `ExpectedRate = CongestionWindow / BaseRTT`

  - source calculates current sending rate (`ActualRate`) once per RTT (read how)
  - source compares `ActualRate` with `ExpectedRate`

```
Diff = ExpectedRate - ActualRate
if Diff < α
⟶ increase CongestionWindow linearly
else if Diff > β
⟶ decrease CongestionWindow linearly
else
⟶ leave CongestionWindow unchanged
```


- Parameters
  - α: 1 packet
  - β: 3 packets
- Why not multiplicative decrease?
- Go to multiplicative if there is a timeout