# Intradomain Traffic Engineering

slides by Jennifer Rexford

# Do IP networks manage themselves?

- In some sense, yes:
  - TCP senders send less traffic during congestion
  - Routing protocols adapt to topology changes
- But, does the network run *efficiently*?
  - Congested link when idle paths exist?
  - High-delay path when a low-delay path exists?
- How should routing adapt to the traffic?
  - Avoiding congested links in the network
  - Satisfying application requirements (e.g., delay)
- … essential questions of traffic engineering

# Traffic engineering

- What is traffic engineering?
  - Control and optimization of routing, to steer traffic through the network in the most effective way
- Two fundamental approaches to adaptation
  - Adaptive routing protocols
    - Distribute traffic and performance measurements
    - Compute paths based on load, and requirements
  - Adaptive network-management system
    - Collect measurements of traffic and topology
    - Optimize the setting of the “static” parameters
- Big debates still today about the right answer

# Outline: Three alternatives

- Load-sensitive routing at *packet* level
  - Routers receive feedback on load and delay
  - Routers re-compute their forwarding tables
  - Fundamental problems with oscillation
- Load-sensitive routing at *circuit* level
  - Routers receive feedback on load and delay
  - Router compute a path for the next circuit
  - Less oscillation, as long as circuits last for a while
- Traffic engineering as a *management problem*
  - Routers compute paths based on “static” values
  - Network management system sets the parameters
  - Acting on network-wide view of traffic and topology

# Load-sensitive routing protocols: Pros and Cons

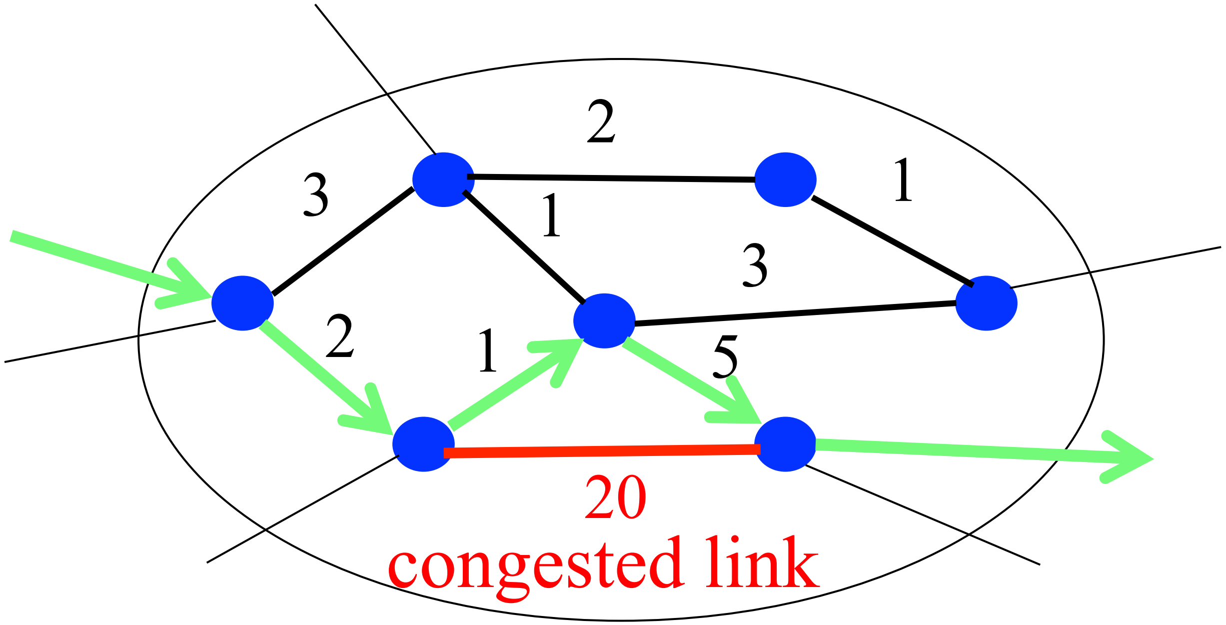
- Advantages
  - Efficient use of network resources
  - Satisfying the performance needs of end users
  - Self-managing network takes care of itself
- Disadvantages
  - Higher overhead on the routers
  - Long alternate paths consume extra resources
  - Instability from reacting to out-of-date information

# Packet-based load-sensitive routing

- Packet-based routing
  - Forward packets based on forwarding table
- Load-sensitive
  - Compute table entries based on load or delay
- Questions
  - What link metrics to use?
  - How frequently to update the metrics?
  - How to propagate the metrics?
  - How to compute the paths based on metrics?

# Original ARPANET algorithm (1969)

- Routing algorithm
  - Shortest-path routing based on link metrics
  - Instantaneous queue length plus a constant
  - Distributed shortest-path algorithm (Bellman-Ford)



# Performance of original ARPANET algo

- Light load
  - Delay dominated by the constant part (transmission delay and propagation delay)
- Medium load
  - Queuing delay is no longer negligible
  - Moderate traffic shifts to avoid congestion
- Heavy load
  - Very high metrics on congested links
  - Busy links look bad to all of the routers
  - All routers avoid the busy links
  - Routers may send packets on longer paths

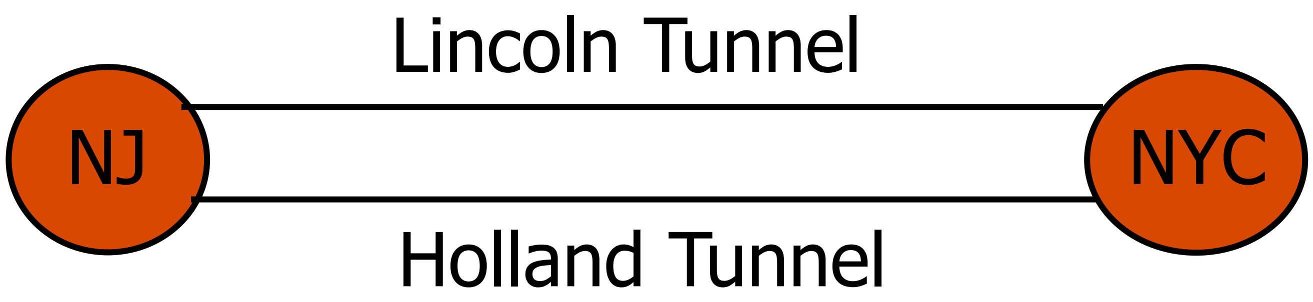
# Second ARPANET algorithm (1979)

- Averaging of the link metric over time
  - Old: Instantaneous delay fluctuates a lot
  - New: Averaging reduces the fluctuations
- Link-state protocol
  - Old: Distributed path computation leads to loops
  - New: Better to flood metrics and have each router compute the shortest paths
- Reduce frequency of updates
  - Old: Sending updates on each change is too much
  - New: Send updates if change passes a threshold

# Problem of long alternate paths

- Picking alternate paths
  - Long path chosen by one router consumes resource that other packets could have used
  - Leads other routers to pick other alternate paths
- Solution: Limit path length
  - Bound the value of the link metric
  - “This link is busy enough to go two extra hops”
- Extreme case
  - Limit path selection to shortest paths
  - Pick the least-loaded shortest path in the network

# Problem of out-of-date information




"Backup at Lincoln" on radio triggers congestion at Holland

- Routers make decisions based on old information
  - Propagation delay in flooding link metrics
  - Thresholds applied to limit number of updates
- Old information leads to bad decisions
  - All routers avoid the congested links
  - … leading to congestion on other links
  - … and the whole things repeats

# Avoiding oscillations from out-of-date info

- Send link metrics more often
  - But, leads to higher overhead
  - But, propagation delay is a fundamental limit
- Make the traffic last longer
  - Circuit switching: Phone network
    - Average phone call last 3 minutes
    - Plenty of time for feedback on link loads
  - Packet switching: Internet
    - Data packet is small (e.g., 1500 bytes or less)
    - But, feedback on link metrics also sent via packets
    - Better to make decisions on groups of packets

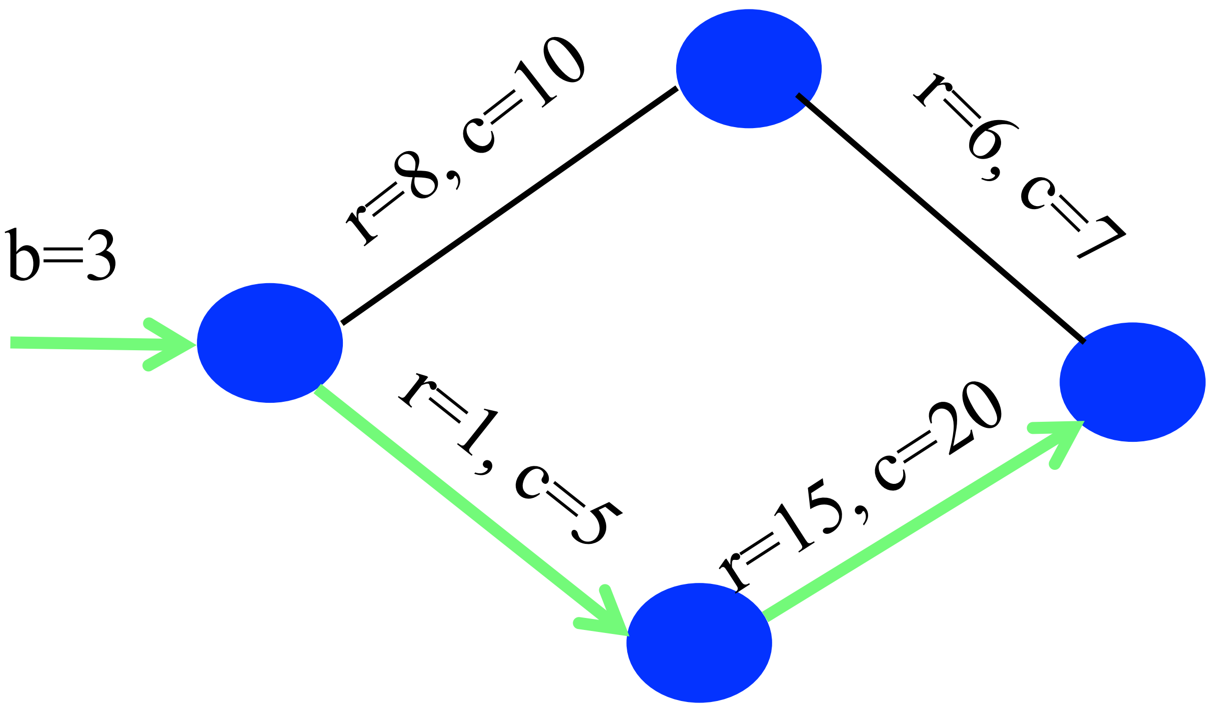
# Quality-of-Service routing on circuits

# Quality-of-Service routing with circuit switching

- Traffic performance requirement
  - Guaranteed bandwidth $b$ per connection
- Link resource reservation
  - Reserved bandwidth $r_i$ on link $I$
  - Capacity $c_i$ on link $i$
- Signaling: Admission control on path $P$
  - Reserve bandwidth $b$ on each link $i$ on path $P$
  - Block: if ($r_i+b>c_i$) then reject (or try again)
  - Accept: else $r_i = r_i + b$
- Routing: Ingress router selects the path

# Source-directed QoS routing

- New connection with *b =3*
  - Routing: Select path with available resources
  - Signaling: Reserve bandwidth along the path ($r = r+3$)
  - Forwarding: Forward data packets along the selected path
  - Teardown: Free the link bandwidth ($r = r-3$)



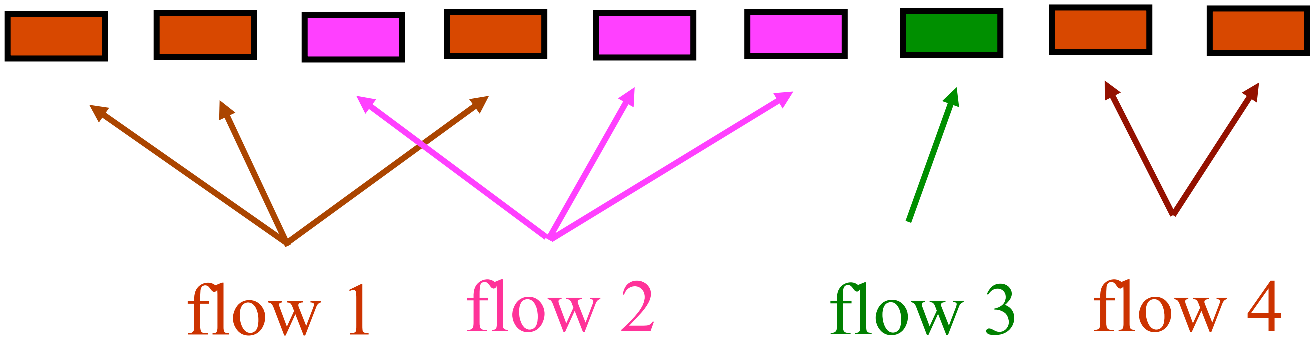
# QoS routing: Path selection

- Link-state advertisements
  - Advertise available bandwidth ($c_i - r_i$) on link $i$
    - E.g., every $T$ seconds, independent of changes
    - E.g., when metric changes beyond threshold
  - Each router constructs view of topology
- Path computation at each router
  - E.g., Shortest widest path
    - Consider paths with largest value of $min_i(c_i-r_i)$
    - Tie-break on smallest number of hops
  - E.g., Widest shortest path
    - Consider only paths with minimum hops
    - Tie-break on largest value of $min_i(c_i-r_i)$ over paths

# How to get IP packets on to circuits?

- Who initiates the circuit?
  - End system application or operating system?
  - Edge router?
- Edge router can infer the need for a circuit
  - Match on packet header bits
    - E.g., source, destination, port numbers, etc.
  - Apply policy for picking bandwidth parameters
    - E.g., Web connections get 10 Kbps, video gets 2 Mbps
  - Trigger establishment of circuit for the traffic
    - Select path based on load and requirements
    - Signal creation of the circuit
    - Tear down circuit after an idle period

# Grouping IP packets into flows




- Group packets with the “same” end points
  - Application level: single TCP connection
  - Host level: single source-destination pair
  - Subnet level: single source prefix and dest prefix
- Group packets that are close together in time
  - E.g., 60-sec spacing between consecutive packets

# But, staleness can still be a problem…

- Link state updates
  - High update rate leads to high overhead
  - Low update rate leads to oscillation
- Connections are too short
  - Average Web transfer is just 10 packets
  - Requires high update rates to ensure stability
- Idea: QoS routing only for long transfers!
  - Small fraction of transfers are very large
  - … and these few transfers carry a lot of traffic
  - Forward most transfers on static routes
  - … and compute dynamic routes for long transfers

# Identifying the long transfers

- A nice property of transfer sizes
  - Most transfers are short, but a few are *very* long
  - Distribution of transfer sizes is "heavy tailed"
- A nice property of heavy tails
  - After you see 10 packets, it is likely a long transfer
  - Even the *remainder* of the transfer is long
- Routing policy
  - Forward initial packets on the static default route
  - After seeing 10 packets, try to signal a circuit
  - Forward the remaining packets on the circuit
- Avoids oscillation even for small update rates
  - http://www.cs.princeton.edu/~jrex/papers/sigcomm99.ps

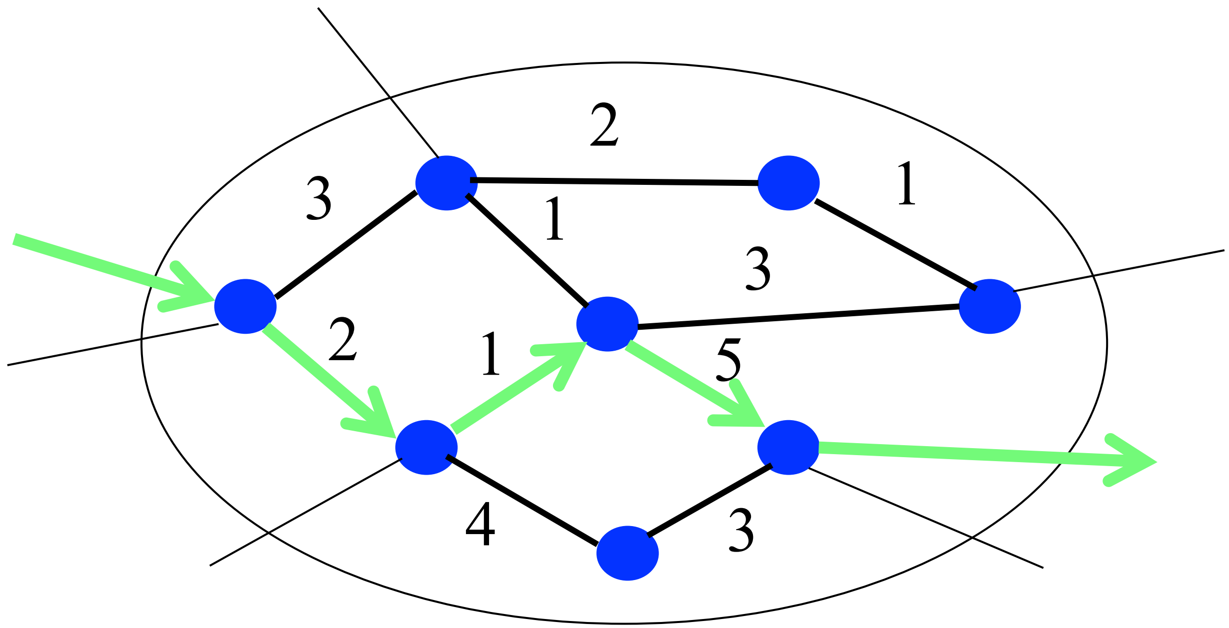
# Ongoing work on QoS routing

- Standards activity
  - Traffic-engineering extensions to the conventional routing protocols (e.g., OSPF and IS-IS)
  - Use of MPLS to establish the circuits over the links
  - New work on Path Computation Elements that compute the load-sensitive routes for the routers
- Research activity
  - Avoid propagating dynamic link-state information
  - Based decisions based on past success or failure
  - Essentially inferring the state of the links

# Traffic engineering as a network-management problem

# Using traditional routing protocols

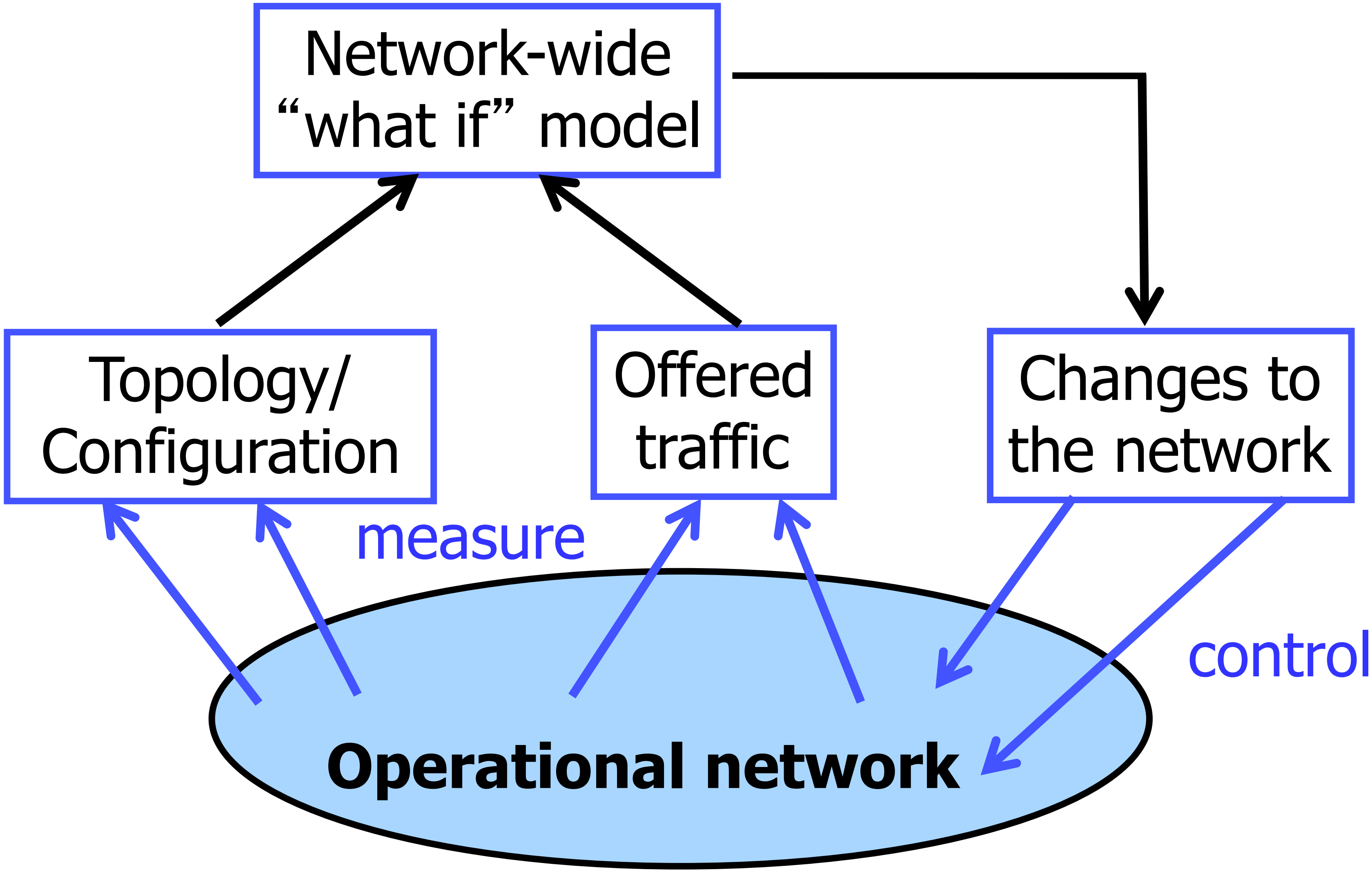
- Routers flood information to learn topology
  - Determine "next hop" to reach other routers…
  - Compute shortest paths based on link weights
- Link weights configured by network operator



# Approaches for setting the link weights

- Conventional static heuristics
  - Proportional to physical distance
    - Cross-country links have higher weights
    - Minimizes end-to-end propagation delay
  - Inversely proportional to link capacity
    - Smaller weights for higher-bandwidth links
    - Attracts more traffic to links with more capacity
- Tune the weights based on the offered traffic
  - Network-wide optimization of the link weights
  - Directly minimizes metrics like max link utilization

# Measure, model, and control



# Traffic engineering in ISP backbone

- Topology
  - Connectivity and capacity of routers and links
- Traffic matrix
  - Offered load between points in the network
- Link weights
  - Configurable parameters for routing protocol
- Performance objective
  - Balanced load, low latency, service level agreements …
- Question: Given the *topology* and *traffic matrix*, which *link weights* should be used?

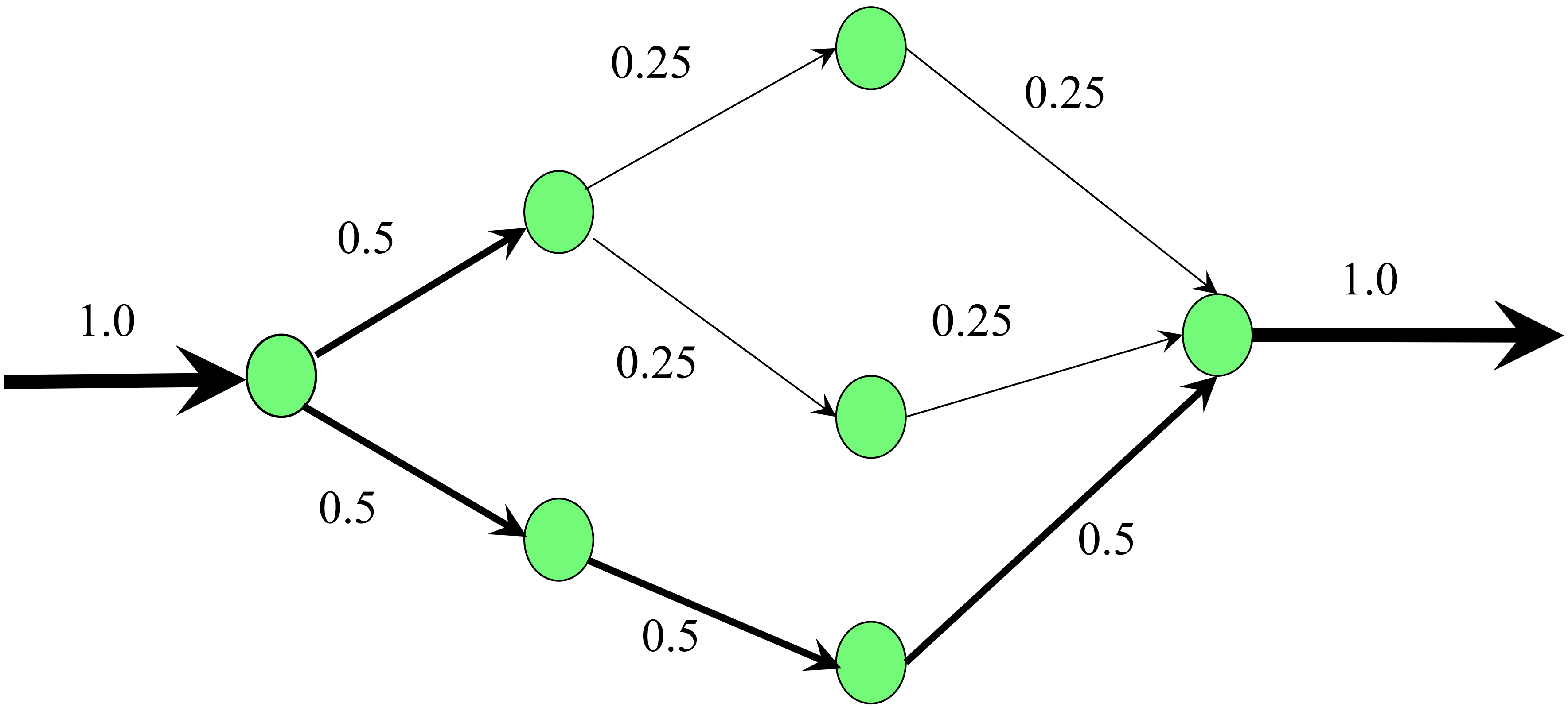
# Key ingredients of the approach

- Instrumentation
  - Topology: monitoring of the routing protocols
  - Traffic matrix: fine-grained traffic measurement
- Network-wide models
  - Representations of topology and traffic
  - “What-if” models of shortest-path routing
- Network optimization
  - Efficient algorithms to find good configurations
  - Operational experience to identify key constraints

# Formalizing the optimization problem

- Input: graph $G(R,L)$
  - $R$ is the set of routers
  - $L$ is the set of unidirectional links
  - $c_l$ is the capacity of link $l$
- Input: traffic matrix
  - $M_{i,j}$ is traffic load from router $i$ to $j$
- Output: setting of the link weights
  - $w_l$ is weight on unidirectional link $l$
  - $P_{i,j,l}$ is fraction of traffic from $i$ to $j$ traversing link $l$

# Multiple shortest paths with even splitting




Values of $P_{i,j,l}$

# Complexity of optimization problem

- NP-complete optimization problem
  - No efficient algorithm to find the link weights
  - Even for simple objective functions
- What are the implications?
  - Have to resort to *searching* through weight settings

# Optimization based on local search

- Start with an initial setting of the link weights
  - E.g., same integer weight on every link
  - E.g., weights inversely proportional to capacity
  - E.g., existing weights in the operational network
- Compute the objective function
  - Compute the all-pairs shortest paths to get $P_{i,j,l}$
  - Apply the traffic matrix $M_{i,j}$ to get link loads $u_l$
  - Evaluate the objective function from the $u_l/c_l$
- Generate a new setting of the link weights

repeat

# Making the search efficient

- Avoid repeating the same weight setting
  - Keep track of past values of the weight setting
  - … or keep a small signature of past values
  - Do not evaluate setting if signatures match
- Avoid computing shortest paths from scratch
  - Explore settings that changes just one weight
  - Apply fast incremental shortest-path algorithms
- Limit number of unique values of link weights
  - Do not explore $2^{16}$ possible values for each weight
- Stop early, before exploring all settings

# Incorporating operational realities

- Minimize number of changes to the network
  - Changing just 1 or 2 link weights is often enough
- Tolerate failure of network equipment
  - Weights settings usually remain good after failure
  - … or can be fixed by changing one or two weights
- Limit dependence on measurement accuracy
  - Good weights remain good, despite random noise
- Limit frequency of changes to the weights
  - Joint optimization for day & night traffic matrices

# Application to AT&T’s backbone

- Performance of the optimized weights
  - Search finds a good solution within a few minutes
  - Much better than link capacity or physical distance
  - Competitive with multi-commodity flow solution
- How AT&T changes the link weights
  - Maintenance every night from midnight to 6am
  - Predict effects of removing link(s) from network
  - Reoptimize the link weights to avoid congestion
  - Configure new weights before disabling equipment