MPLS

- Circuit switching
  - Packet switching vs. circuit switching
  - Virtual circuits
- MPLS
  - Labels and label-switching
  - Forwarding Equivalence Classes
  - Label distribution
  - MPLS applications

Packet switching vs. circuit switching

- Packet switching
  - Data traffic divided into packets
    - Each packet contains its own header (with address)
    - Packets sent separately through the network
  - Destination reconstructs the message
  - Example: sending a letter through postal system
- Circuit switching
  - Source first establishes a connection to the destination
    - Each router on the path may reserve bandwidth
  - Source ends data over the connection
    - No destination address, since routers know the path
  - Source tears down the connection when done
  - Example: voice conversation on telephone network

Advantages of circuit switching

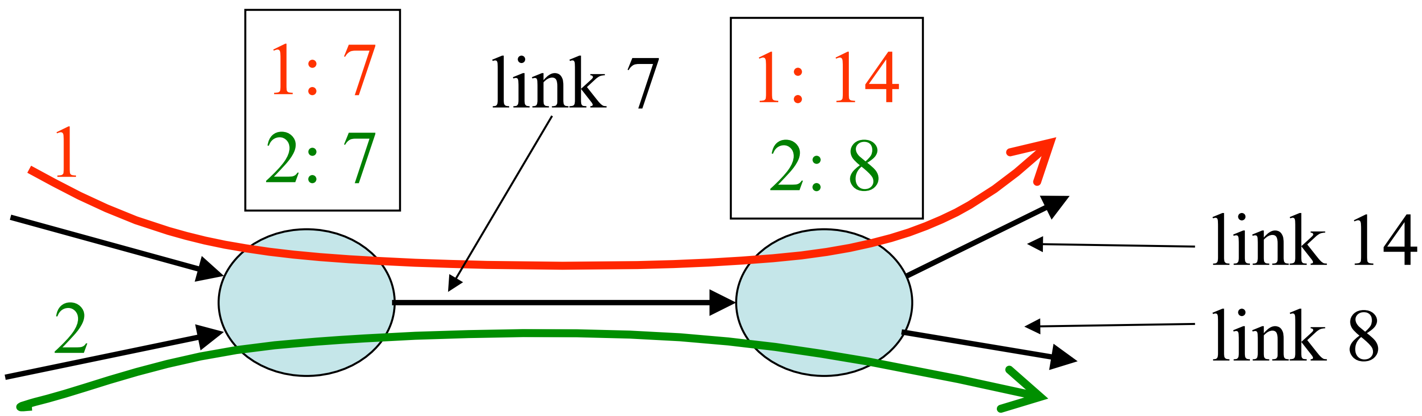
- Guaranteed bandwidth
  - Predictable communication performance
  - Not "best-effort" delivery with no real guarantees
- Simple abstraction
  - Reliable communication channel between hosts
  - No worries about lost or out-of-order packets
- Simple forwarding
  - Forwarding based on time slot or frequency
  - No "longest prefix match" on each packet
- Low per-packet overhead
  - Forwarding based on time slot or frequency
  - No IP (and TCP/UDP) header on each packet

Disadvantages of circuit switching

- Wasted bandwidth
  - Bursty traffic leads to idle connection during silent period
  - Unable to achieve gains from statistical multiplexing
- Blocked connections
  - Connection refused when resources are not sufficient
  - Unable to offer "okay" service to everybody
- Connection set-up delay
  - No communication until the connection is set up
  - Unable to avoid extra latency for small data transfers
- Network state
  - Routers must store per-connection information
  - Unable to avoid per-connection storage and state failover

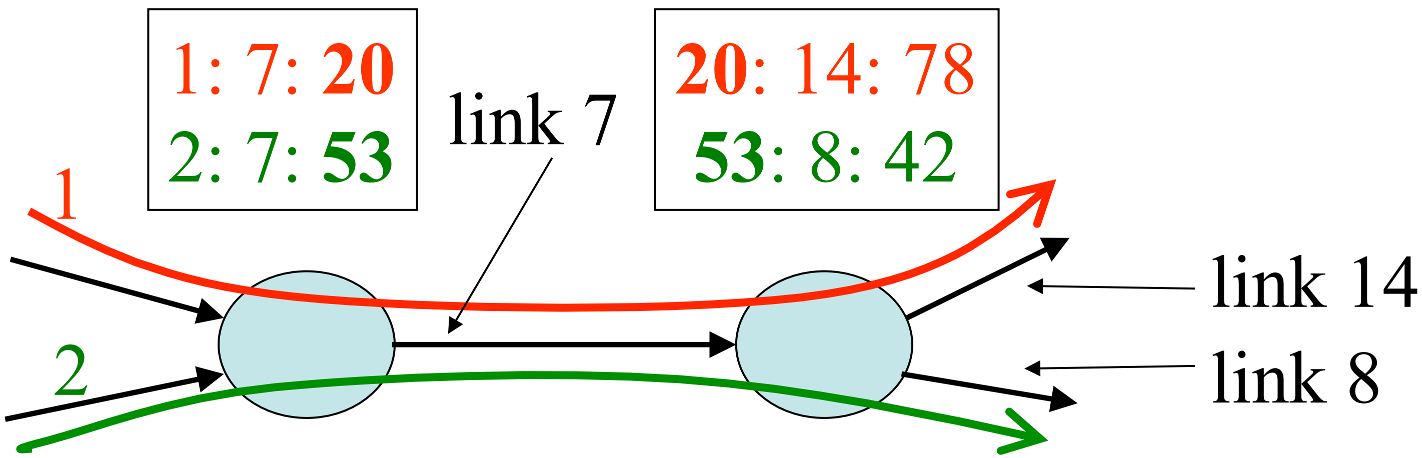
Virtual circuits

- Hybrid of packet and circuit switching
  - Logical circuit between a source and destination
  - Packets from different VCs multiplex on a link
- Virtual Circuit Identifier (VC ID)
  - Source set-up: establish path for the VC
  - Switch: mapping VC ID to an outgoing link
  - Packet: fixed length label in the header



Swapping the label at each hop

- Problem: using VC ID along the whole path
  - Each virtual circuit consumes a unique ID
  - Starts to use up all of the ID space in the network
- Label swapping
  - Map the VC ID to a new value at each hop
    - Table has old ID, next link, and new ID
  - Allows reuse of the IDs at different links



Virtual circuits similar to IP datagrams

- Data divided in to packets
  - Sender divides the data into packets
  - Packet has an address (e.g., IP address or VC ID)
- Store-and-forward transmission
  - Multiple packets may arrive at once
  - Need buffer space for temporary storage
- Multiplexing on a link
  - No reservations: statistical multiplexing
    - Packets are interleaved without a fixed pattern
  - Reservations: resources for group of packets
    - Guarantees to get a certain number of “slots”

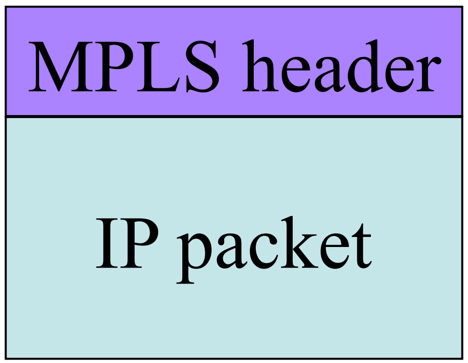
Virtual circuits differ from IP datagrams

- Forwarding look-up
  - Virtual circuits: fixed-length connection id
  - IP datagrams: destination IP address
- Initiating data transmission
  - Virtual circuits: must signal along the path
  - IP datagrams: just start sending packets
- Router state
  - Virtual circuits: routers know about connections
  - IP datagrams: no state, easier failure recovery
- Quality of service
  - Virtual circuits: resources and scheduling per VC
  - IP datagrams: difficult to provide QoS

Multi-Protocol Label Switching

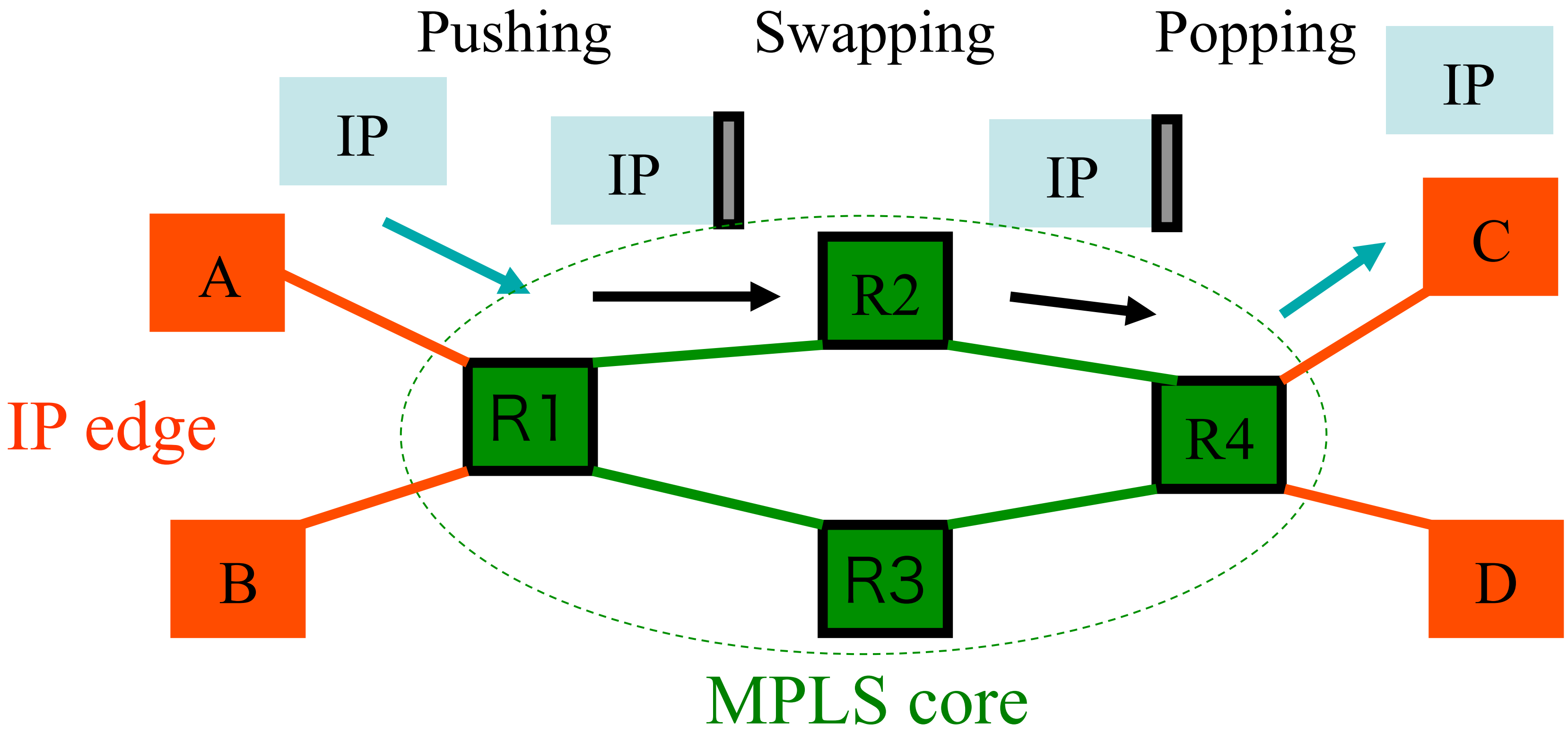
Multi-Protocol Label Switching

- Multi-Protocol
  - Encapsulate a data packet
    - Could be IP, or some other protocol (e.g., IPX)
  - Put an MPLS header in front of the packet
    - Actually, can even build a stack of labels…
- Label Switching
  - MPLS header includes a label
  - Label switching between MPLS-capable routers



Pushing, swapping, and popping

- Pushing: add the initial “in” label
- Swapping: map “in” label to “out” label
- Popping: remove the “out” label



Forwarding Equivalence Class (FEC)

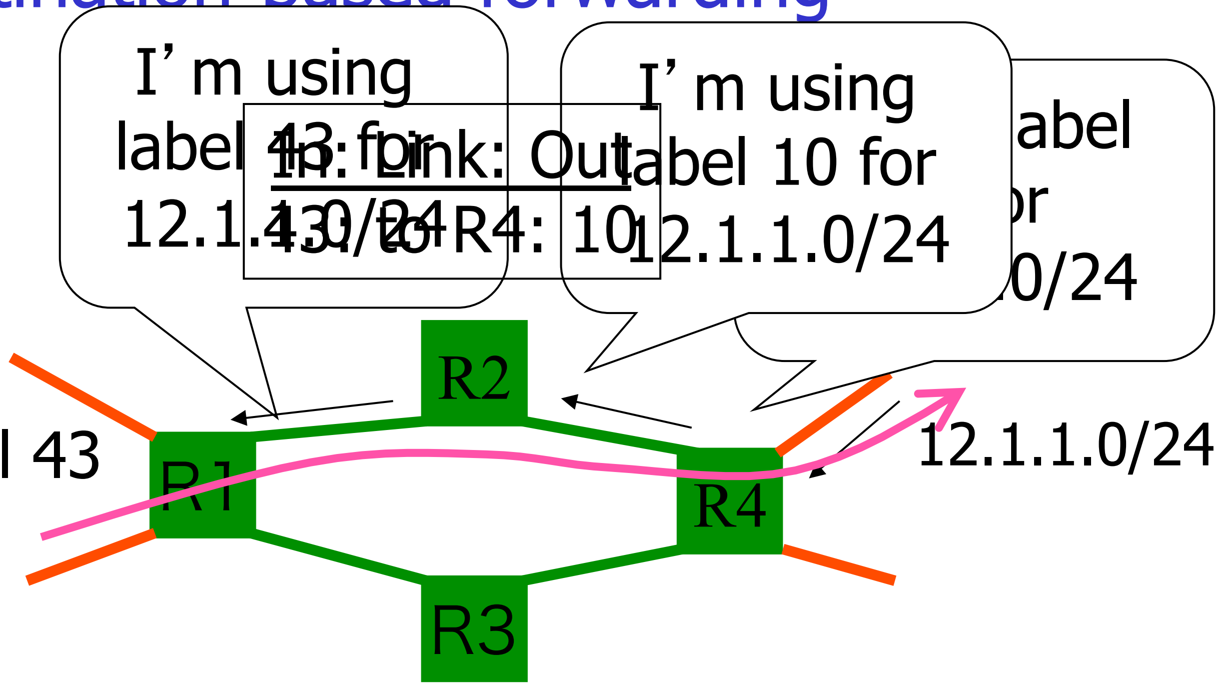
- Rule for grouping packets
  - Packets that should be treated the same way
  - Identified just once, at the edge of the network
- Example FECs
  - Destination prefix
    - Longest-prefix match in forwarding table at entry point
    - Useful for conventional destination-based forwarding
  - Src/dest address, src/dest port, and protocol
    - Five-tuple match at entry point
    - Useful for fine-grain control over the traffic
  - Sent by a particular customer site
    - Incoming interface at entry point
    - Useful for virtual private networks

A label is just a locally-significant identifier for a FEC

Label Distribution Protocol

- Distributing labels
  - Learning the mapping from FEC to label
  - Told by the downstream router
- Example: Destination-based forwarding

Map destinations in 12.1.1.0/24 to out-label 43 and link to R2



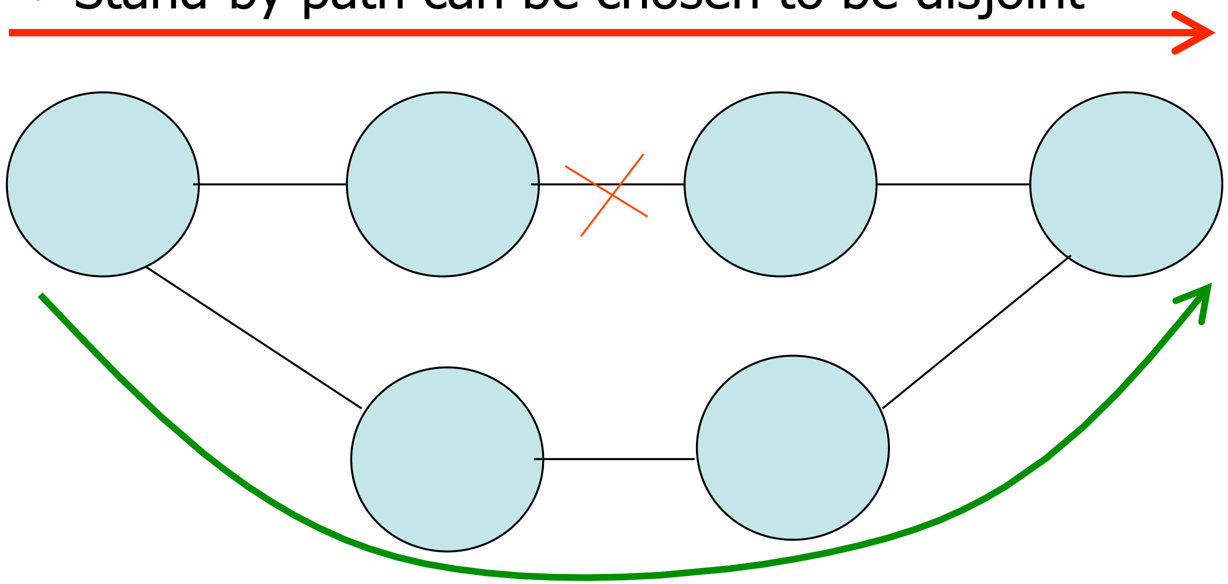
Applications of MPLS

TE with constraint-based routing

- Path calculation
  - Constrained shortest-path first
  - Compute shortest path based on weights
    - But, exclude paths that do not satisfy constraints
    - E.g., do not consider links with insufficient bandwidth
- Information dissemination
  - Extend OSPF/IS-IS to carry the extra information
    - E.g., link-state attributes for available bandwidth
- Path signaling
  - Establish label-switched path on explicit route
- Forwarding: MPLS labels

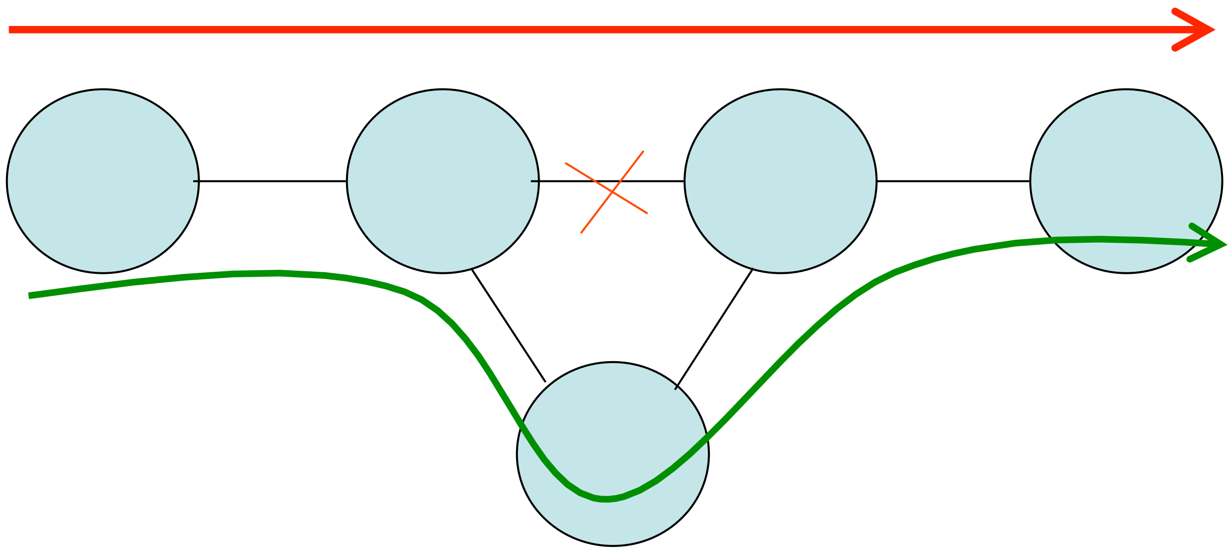
Surviving failures: Path protection

- Path protection
  - Reserve bandwidth on an alternate route
    - Protect a label-switched path by having a stand-by
  - Much better than conventional IP routing
    - Precise control over where the traffic will go
    - Stand-by path can be chosen to be disjoint

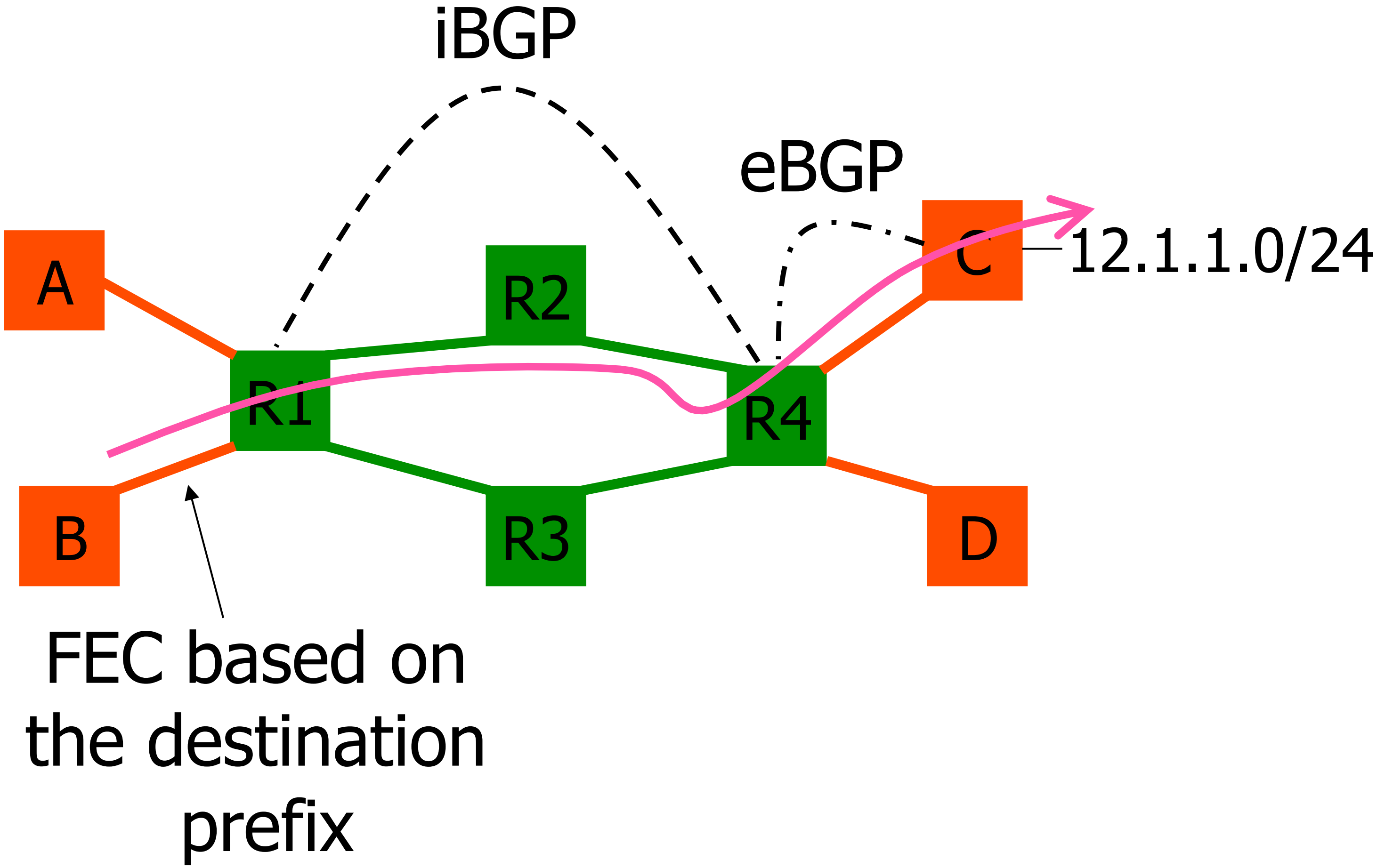


Surviving failures: Fast reroute

- Ensure fast recovery from a link failure
  - Protect a link by having a protection sub-path
- Much faster recovery than switching paths
  - Affected router can detect the link failure
  - … and start redirecting to the protection sub-path

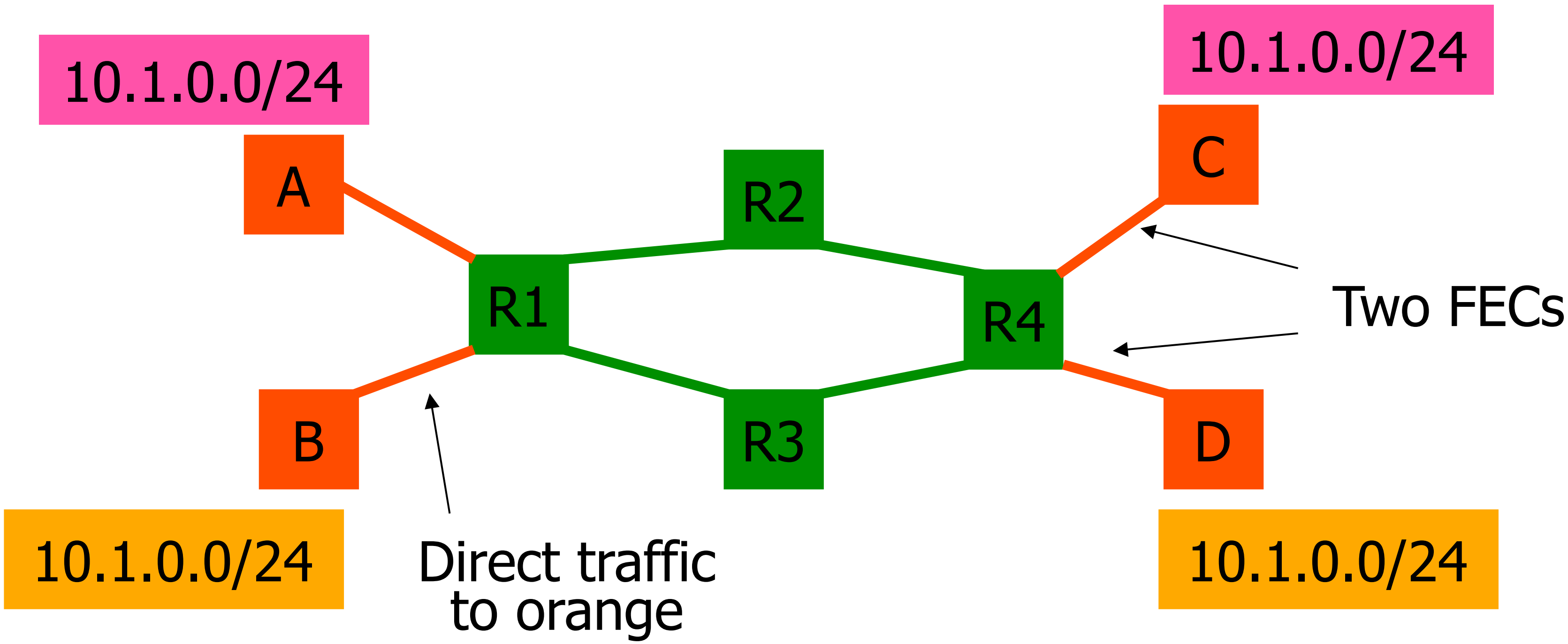


BGP-Free core



Routers R2 and R3 don't need to speak BGP

VPNs with private addresses



MPLS tags can differentiate green VPN from orange VPN.

Status of MPLS

- Deployed in practice
  - BGP-free core
  - Virtual Private Networks
  - Traffic engineering
- Challenges
  - Protocol complexity
  - Configuration complexity
  - Difficulty of collecting measurement data
- Continuing evolution
  - Standards
  - Operational practices and tools