On-Chip Networks I: Topology/Flow Control

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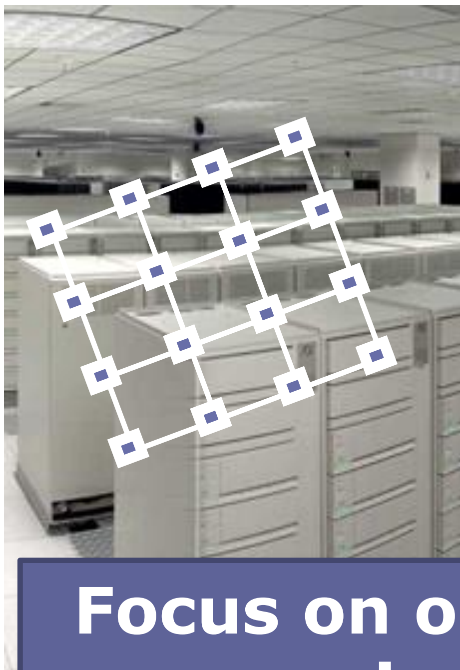
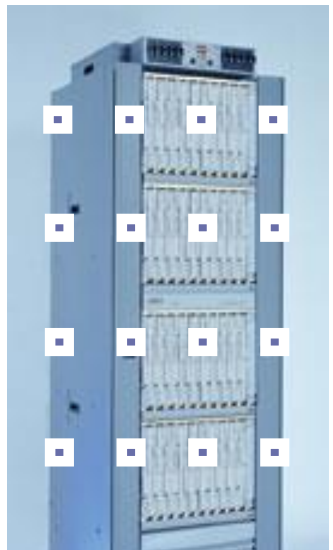
History: From interconnection networks to on-chip networks

Box-to-box networks

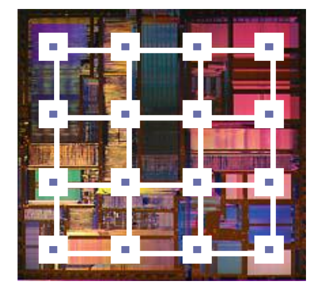


Board-to-board networks



Chip-to-chip networks

On-chip networks

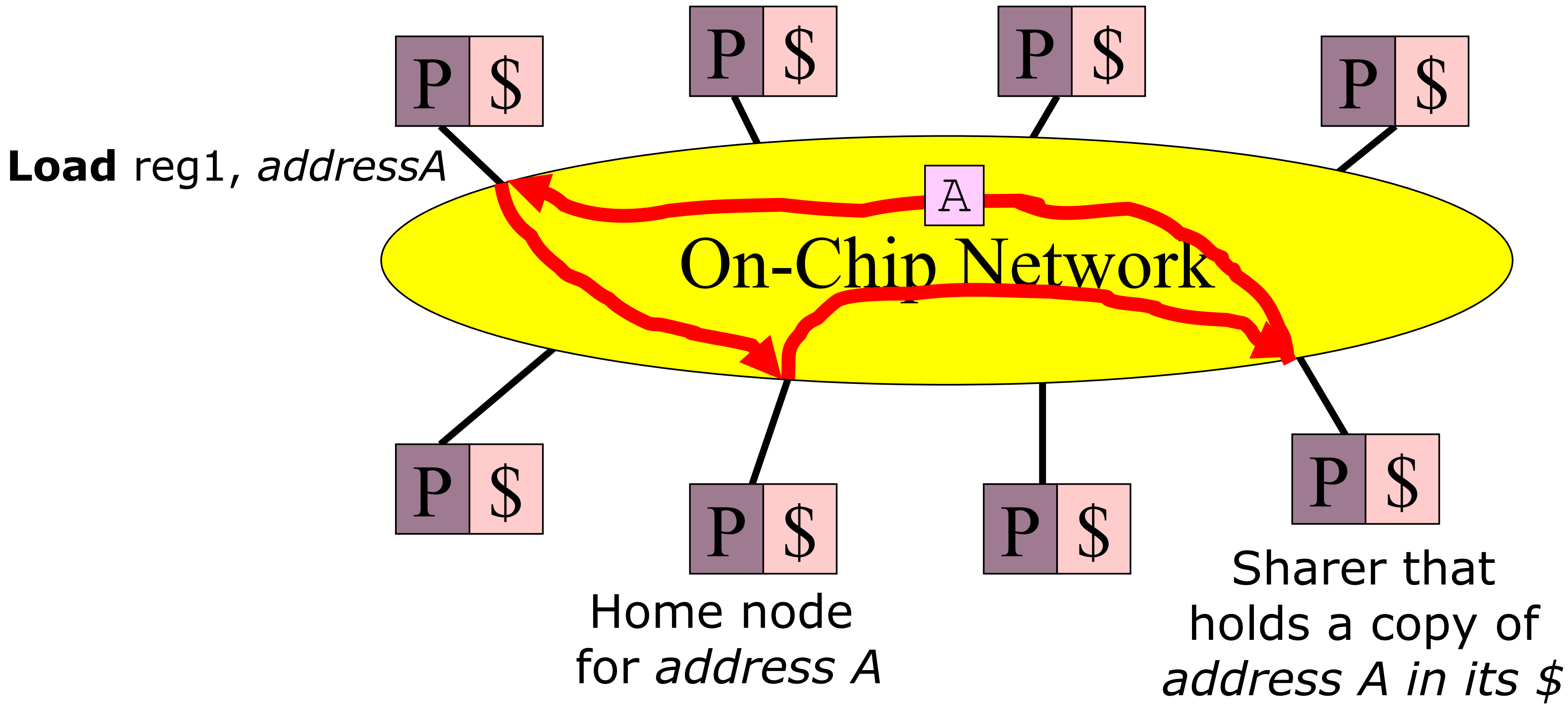


Focus on on-chip networks connecting caches in shared-memory processors

Multi-Chip: Supercomputers, Data Centers, Internet Routers, Servers
On-Chip: Servers, Laptops, Phones, HDTVs, Access routers

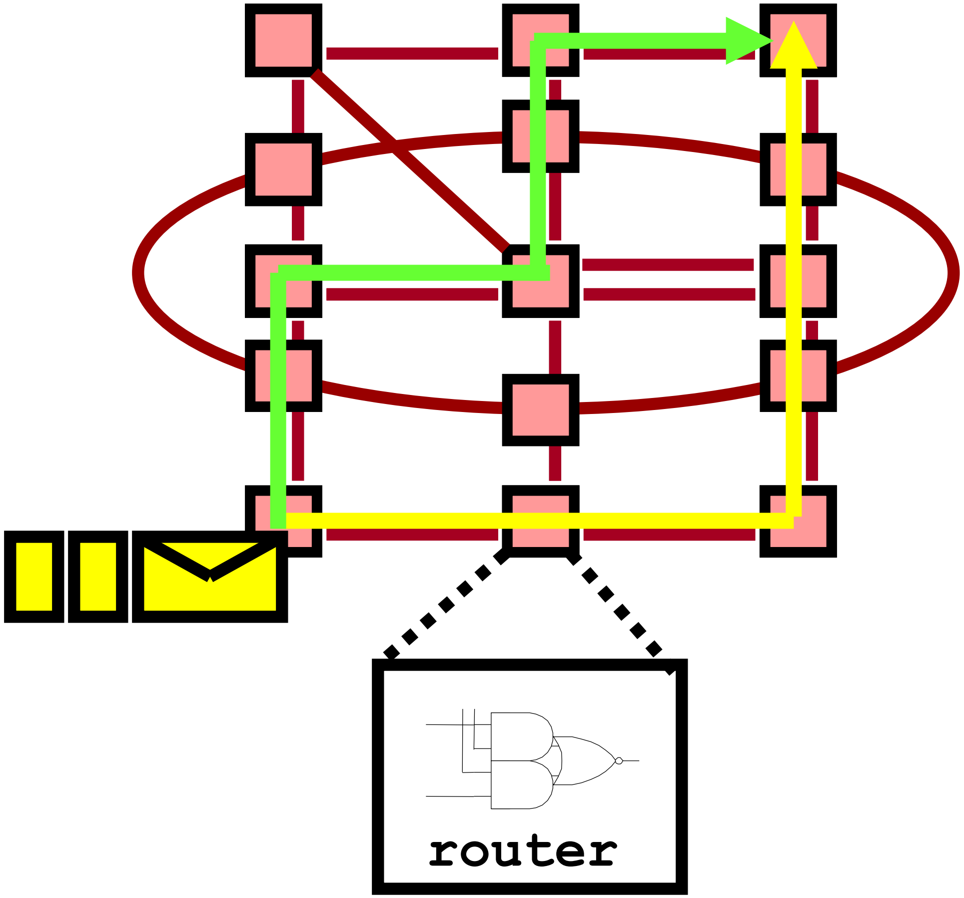
What’s an on-chip network?

E.g. Cache-coherent chip multiprocessor



Network transports cache coherence messages and cache lines between processor cores

Designing an on-chip network



- Topology
- Flow control
- Router microarchitecture
- Routing

Interconnection Network Architecture

- *Topology*: How to connect the nodes up? (processors, memories, router line cards, …)
- *Routing*: Which path should a message take?
- *Flow control*: How is the message actually forwarded from source to destination?
- *Router microarchitecture*: How to build the routers?
- *Link microarchitecture*: How to build the links?

Topology

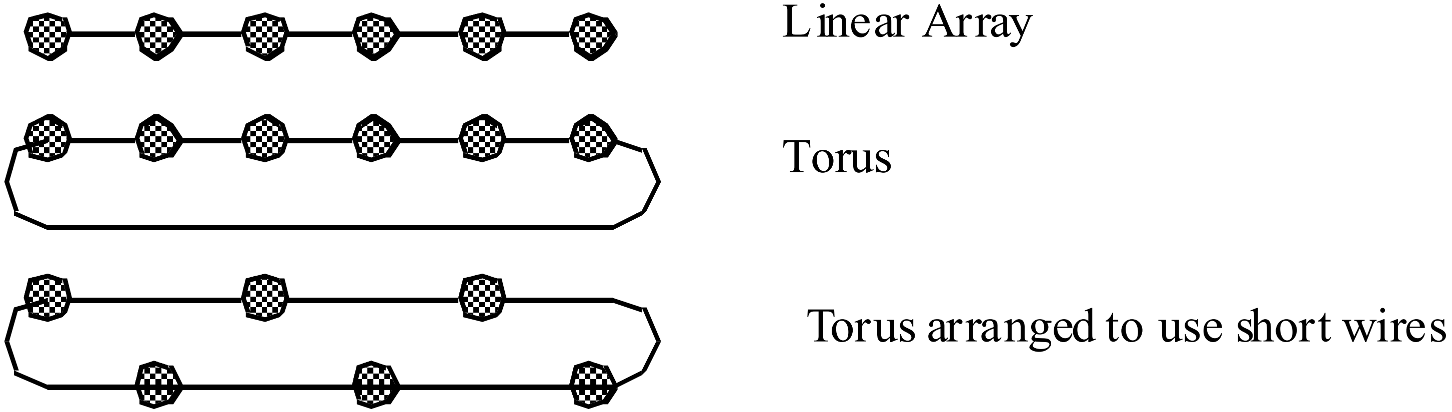
Topological Properties

- *Diameter*
- *Average Distance*
- *Bisection Bandwidth*

Topological Properties

- *Routing Distance* - number of links on route
- *Diameter* - maximum routing distance
- *Average Distance*
- A network is *partitioned* by a set of links if their removal disconnects the graph
- *Bisection Bandwidth* is the bandwidth crossing a minimal cut that divides the network in half

Linear Arrays and Rings

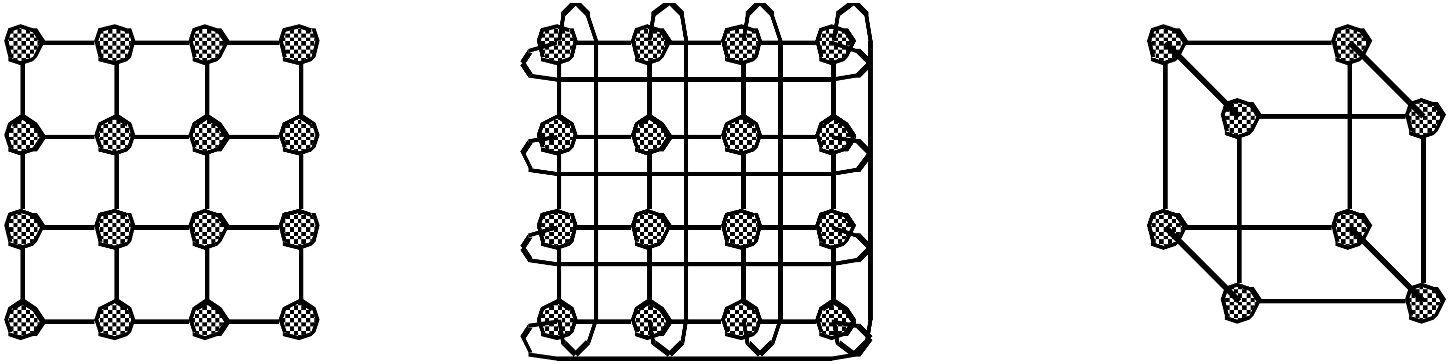


Route A -> B given by relative address R = B-A

	Linear Array	Ring (1-D Torus)
Diameter?		
Average distance?		
Bisection bandwidth?		

- Torus Examples:
  - FDDI, SCI, FiberChannel Arbitrated Loop, Intel Xeon

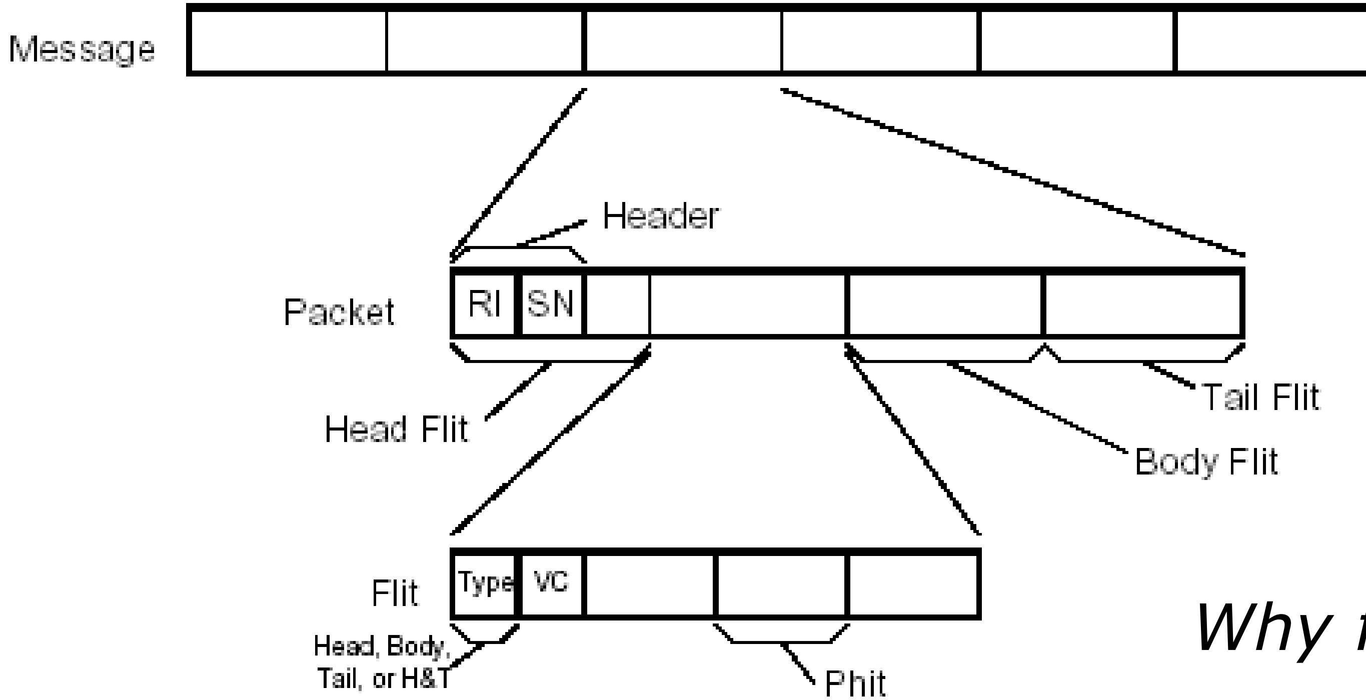
Multidimensional Meshes and Tori



- *d*-dimensional array
  - $n = k_{d-1} \times \ldots \times k_O$ nodes
  - described by *d*-vector of coordinates $(i_{d-1}, \ldots, i_O)$
- *d*-dimensional *k*-ary mesh: $N = k^d$
  - $k = \sqrt[d]{N}$
  - described by *d*-vector of radix k coordinate
- *d*-dimensional *k*-ary torus (or *k*-ary *d*-cube)

Routing & Flow Control Overview

Messages, Packets, Flits, Phits



Why flits?

Packet: Basic unit of routing and sequencing
  - Limited size (e.g. 64 bits – 64 KB)

Flit (flow control digit): Basic unit of bandwidth/storage allocation
  - All flits in packet follow the same path

Phit (physical transfer digit): data transferred in single clock

Routing vs Flow Control

- Routing algorithm chooses path that packets should follow to get from source to destination

- Flow control schemes allocate resources (buffers, links, control state) to packets traversing the network

- Our approach: Bottom-up
  - Today: Flow control, assuming routes are set
  - Next lecture: Routing algorithms

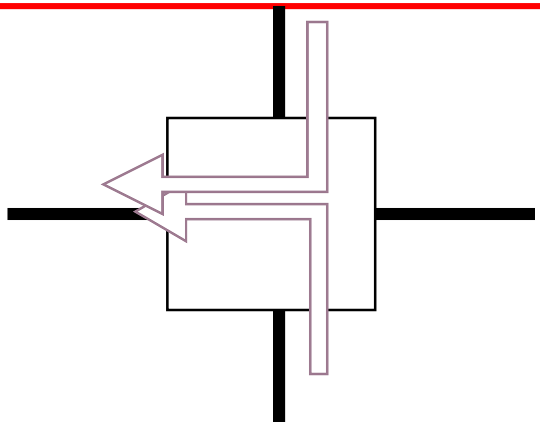
Properties of Routing Algorithms

- Deterministic/Oblivious
  - Route determined by (source, dest), not intermediate state (i.e. traffic)
- Adaptive
  - Route influenced by traffic along the way
- Minimal
  - Only selects shortest paths
- Deadlock-free
  - No traffic pattern can lead to a situation where no packets move forward

(more in next lecture)

Flow Control

Contention



- Two packets trying to use the same link at the same time
  - Limited or no buffering
- Problem arises because we are sharing resources
  - Sharing bandwidth and buffers

Flow Control Protocols

- Bufferless
  - Circuit switching
  - Dropping
  - Misrouting
- Buffered
  - Store-and-forward
  - Virtual cut-through
  - Wormhole
  - Virtual-channel

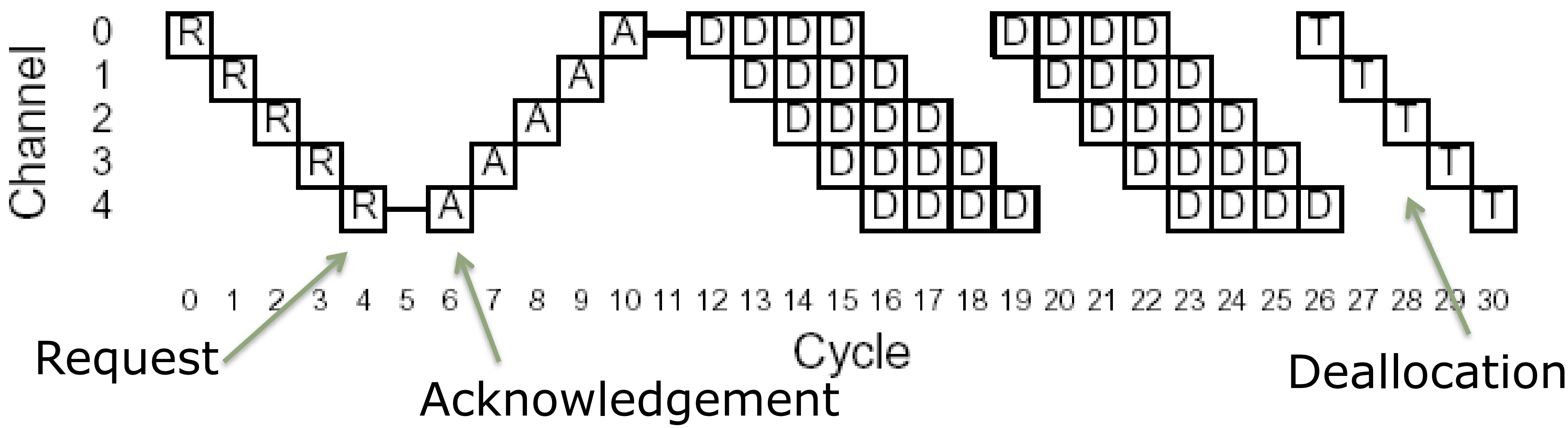
Circuit Switching

- Form a circuit from source to dest

- Probe to set up path through network
- Reserve all links
- Data sent through links

- Bufferless

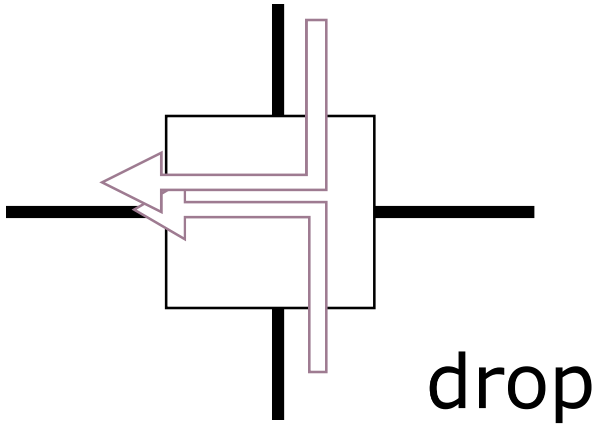
Time-space View: Circuit Switching



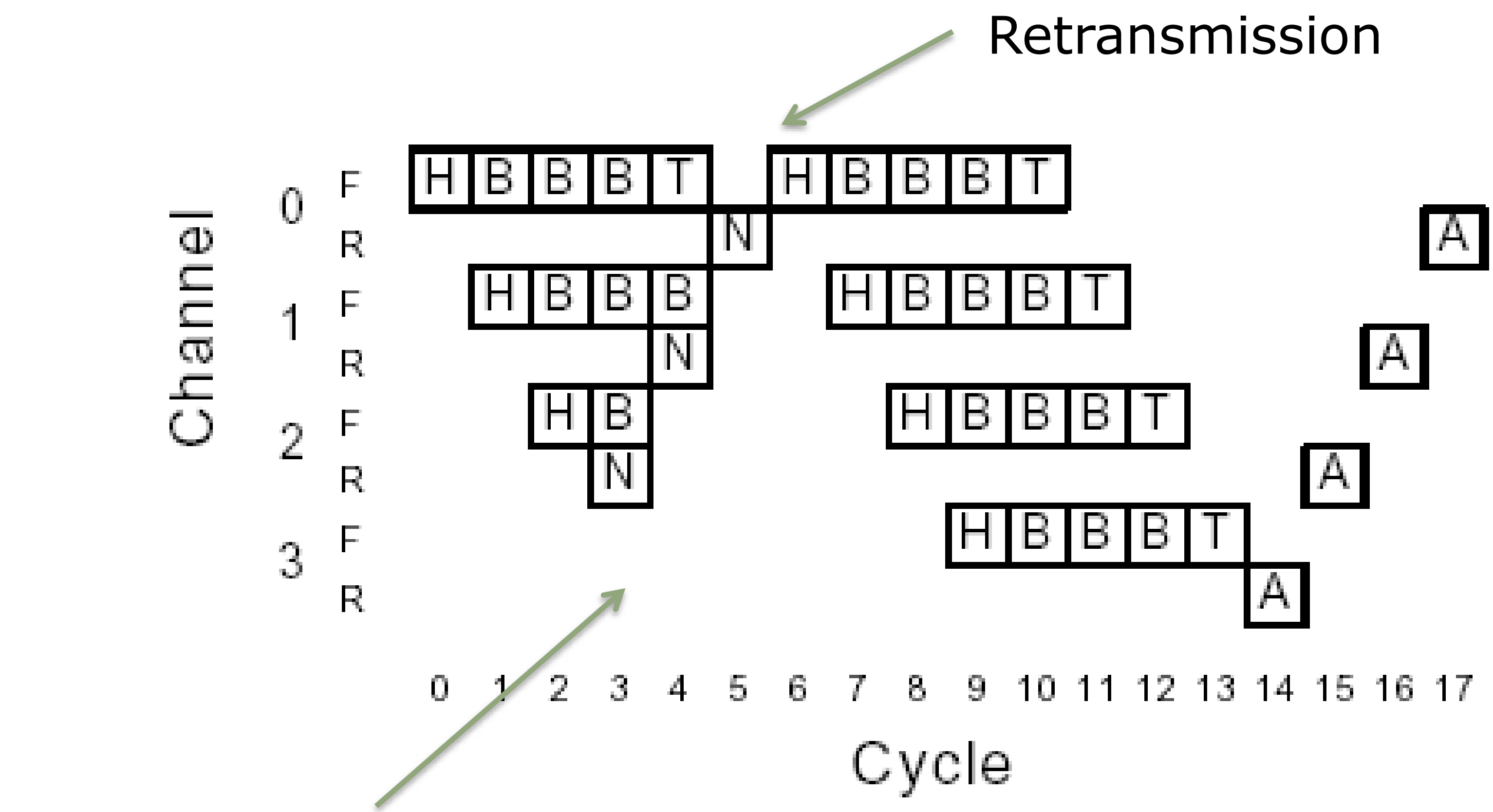
- *Why is this good?* Simple to implement
- *Why is it not?* Wasteful, 3x latency for short packets

Speculative Flow Control: Dropping

- If two things arrive and I don't have resources, drop one of them
- Flow control protocol on the Internet



Time-space Diagram: Dropping

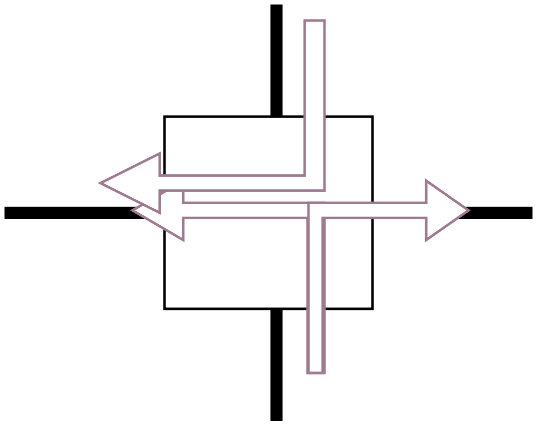


Disadvantages?

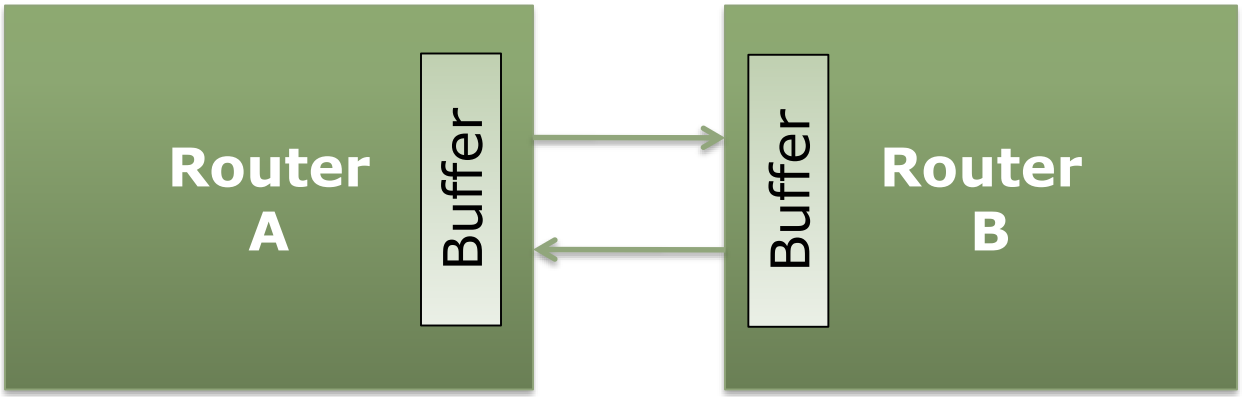
Less Simple Flow Control: Misrouting

- If only one message can enter the network at each node, and one message can exit the network at each node, the network can never be congested. Right?

- Philosophy behind misrouting: intentionally route away from congestion
- No need for buffering
- Problems?



Buffered Routing



- Link-level flow control:
  - Given that you can't drop packets, how to manage the buffers? When can you send stuff forward, when not?

- Metrics of interest:
  - Throughput/Latency
  - Buffer utilization (turnaround time)

Techniques for link backpressure

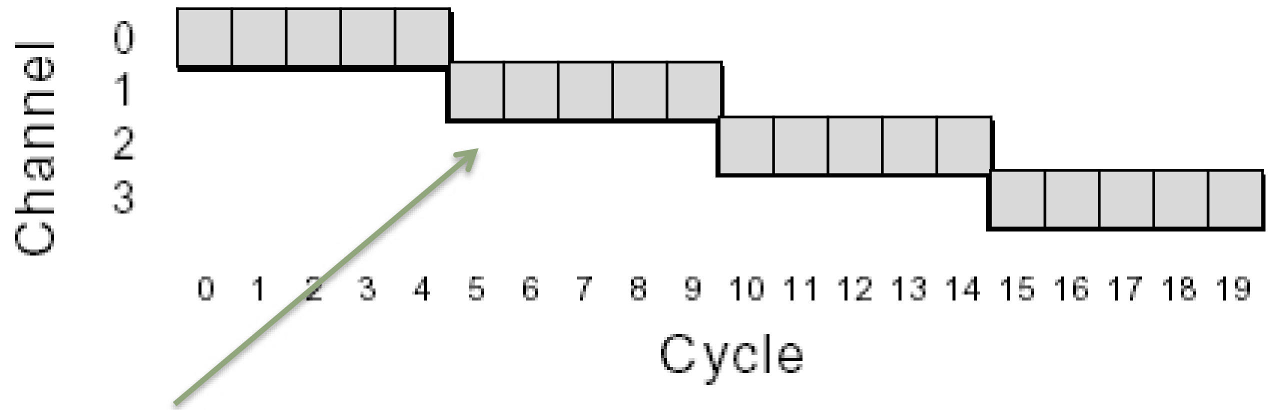
- Naïve stall-based (on/off):
  - Can source send or not?
- Sophisticated stall-based (credit-based):
  - How many flits can be sent to the next node?
- Speculative (ack/nack):
  - Guess can always send, but keep copy
  - Resolve if send was successful (ack/nack)
    - On ack – drop copy
    - On nack - resend

Store-and-Forward (packet-based, no flits)

- Strategy:
  - Make intermediate stops and wait until the entire packet has arrived before you move on

- Advantage:
  - Other packets can use intermediate links

Time-space View: Store-and-Forward



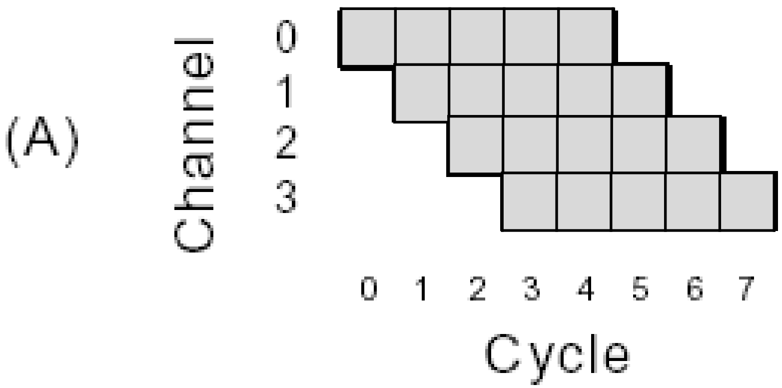
Could be allocated at a much later time without packet dropping

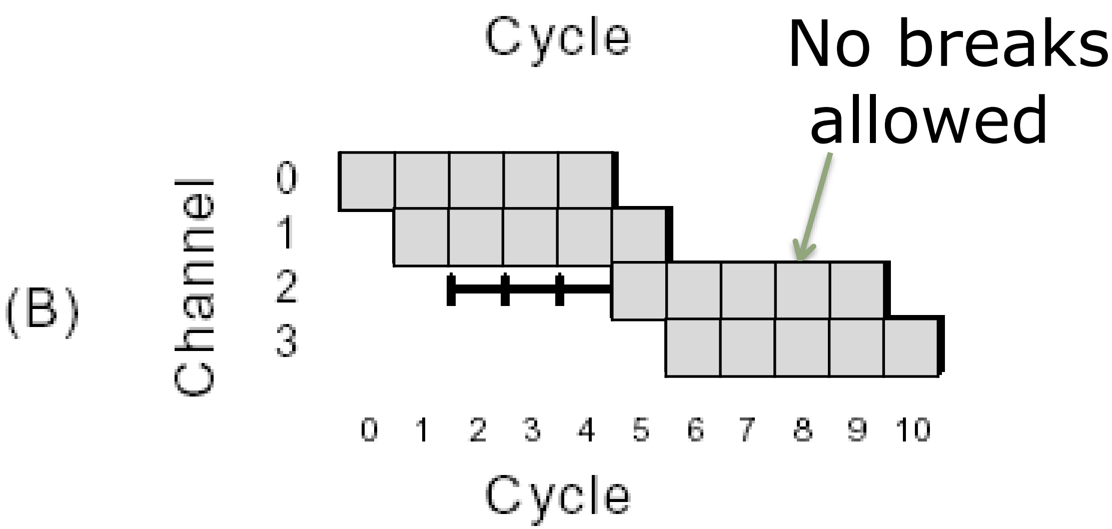
- Buffering allows packet to wait for channel
- *Drawback?*

Virtual Cut-through (packet-based)

- Why wait till entire message has arrived at each intermediate stop?
- The head flit of the packet can dash off first
- When the head gets blocked, whole packet gets blocked at one intermediate node
- Used in Alpha 21364

Time-space View: Virtual Cut-through



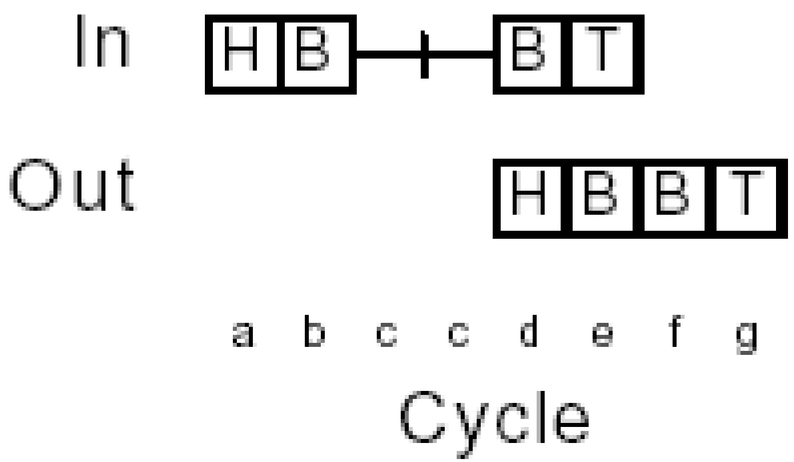


- *Advantages?*
- *Disadvantages?*

Flit-Buffer Flow Control: Wormhole

- When a packet blocks, just block wherever the pieces (flits) of the message are at that time.
- Operates like cut-through but with channel and buffers allocated to flits rather than packets
  - Channel state (virtual channel) allocated to packet so body flits can follow head flit

Time-space View: Wormhole

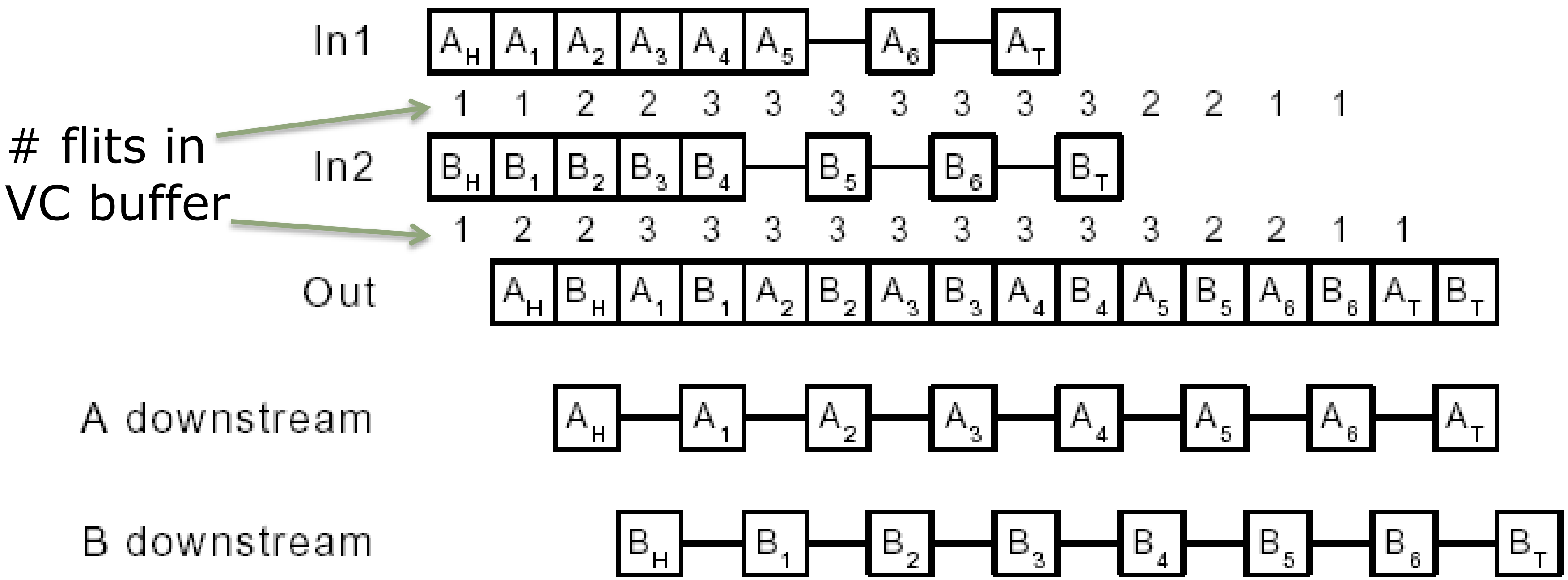


- *Advantages?*
- *Disadvantages?*

Virtual-Channel (VC) Flow Control

- When a message blocks, instead of holding on to links so others can't use them, hold on to virtual links
- Multiple queues in buffer storage
  - Like lanes on the highway
- Virtual channel can be thought of as channel state and flit buffers

Time-space View: Virtual-Channel



- *Advantages?*
- *Disadvantages?*

Thank you!

Next Lecture:

Router (Switch) Microarchitecture

Routing Algorithms