Measuring the capacity of in-car to in-car vehicular networks

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Abstract

A particular class of vehicular networks is the one that includes off-the-shelf end-user equipments (e.g., laptops and PDAs) running from the interior of vehicles, namely in-car nodes. They are subject to limited communication conditions when compared with nodes specifically designed to this context. Existing works either consider antennas installed on top of the vehicle roof or nodes that operate in infrastructure mode. In this paper, we investigate through real experiments the characteristics of links formed by in-car nodes running off-the-shelf wireless technologies such as IEEE 802.11(a/g) in ad hoc mode. We surprisingly observe that in-car nodes do show enough performance in terms of network capacity to be used in a number of applications, such as file transfer in peer-to-peer applications. Nonetheless, we identify some key performance issues and devise a number of configuration recommendations and future work directions.

Index Terms

Vehicular networks, link capacity, off-the-shelf devices, IEEE 802.11, experimentation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Inter-vehicular networks are one of the most significant and challenging modern communication systems [1]. Both academia and industry are extremely active in such a prolific area of research, and fundamental advances are expected to happen in the next years. The main reason for the success of vehicular networks as a research area is that the related applications have a direct impact on everyday life. In particular, we can cite safety [2], entertainment [3], or driving-assistance [4] applications.

Inter-vehicular communications can take place in two basic ways, either in pure ad hoc mode (VANET, Vehicular Ad hoc NETwork) or with the support of fixed nodes along the roadside (infrastructure mode). In the ad hoc case, vehicles communicate without any external support. In the infrastructure case, some typically static nodes are deployed along the roads in order to improve both connectivity and service provisioning. For more details on applications and categories of vehicular networks, the reader is invited to refer to the survey of Luo and Hubaux [5].

Perhaps the main issue vehicular networking faces today is adoption. Indeed, the basic assumption we have to make when conceiving vehicular networks is that vehicles are somehow equipped with some communication capability, in ad hoc or infrastructure modes. In particular, existing works (as we will see in Section II) assume either that vehicles have external antennas to improve connectivity or that one of the nodes operates in infrastructure mode. At least for the next five to ten years, this assumption will not be realistic.

We can assume that, at least for some period of time, there will be a particular configuration consisting of end-user equipments running as nodes inside vehicles. Users might want to use their laptops or PDAs inside their car as a node of the network without any additional equipment or hardware modification. Furthermore, such a possibility would be an additional feature for users that do not travel with their own vehicles (e.g., in taxis or buses). Joining a vehicular network so easily will make it much more popular. From a software point of view, there would be no problem for managing such nodes. The problem we investigate here is how these nodes would interact with the others from a connectivity point of view. This means that end-user equipments would be a particular class of nodes equipped with off-the-shelf wireless interfaces and operating from the inside of a metallic mass (the vehicle). These nodes, that we call *in-car* nodes, are then subject to different propagation conditions. To verify these different propagation conditions, we have measured RSSI (Received Signal Strength Indication) at different distances between two nodes using the Madwifi driver. We have used two configurations; one is the in-car node where two laptops inside the cars communicate, while in the other configuration the laptops are outside the cars. When the nodes are nearby (separated by 5 m), the RSSI is 11.1 in the in-car configuration against 16.1 for the free-space configuration; at 50 m, the average values are 2.9 and 10.8, respectively, and at 100 m, the values are 2.3 and 7.6. It is then important to understand whether in-car to in-car scenarios with off-the-shelf equipments provide enough communication resources to potential users.

A number of papers present measurement results that intend to evaluate the communication capabilities in networks of vehicles. Unfortunately, most of these works only consider scenarios with prepared vehicle, i.e., vehicles with external antennas or some other specific hardware. In this paper, on the other hand, we focus on the in-car to in-car scenario. We perform a number of measurement tests in a real scenario in order to get the first insights and help the community understanding the constraints of these environments. We evaluate two variations of the de facto IEEE 802.11 standard (a and g) with both UDP and TCP and investigate the behavior of the

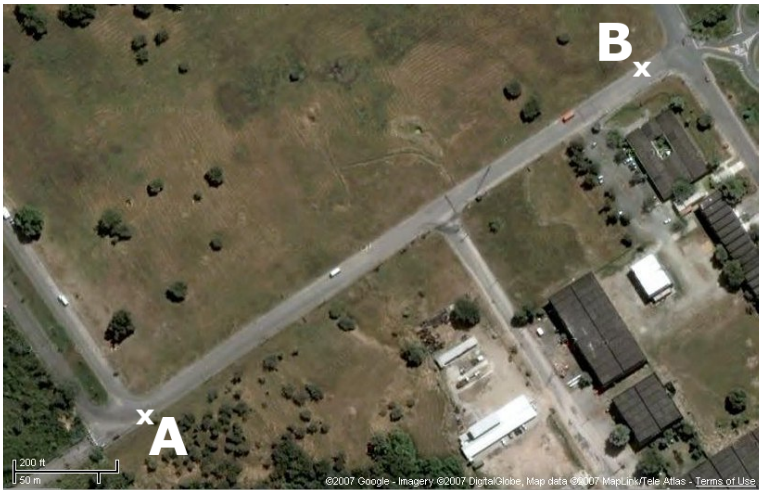

Fig. 1. Satellite view of the 400m-long street used for the experiment. Vehicles have two different start points (noted A and B); these points are far away enough so that nodes are not within the communication range of each other.

system under different speeds and variable packet sizes.

Although the natural feeling would be to consider that in-car nodes are not adapted to vehicular networks, we make interesting observations:

1) We show the feasibility of VANETs composed of off-the-shelf in-car nodes. We show that the data amount transferred during a contact of a few seconds is of the order of few Mbytes. Such an amount of data is enough for a variety of applications, including peer-to-peer applications (important share of the Internet traffic), safety applications such as emergency-break alerts, as well as delay-tolerant communications, to cite a few.
2) For the same network interface, using IEEE 802.11g provides much better goodput than using IEEE 802.11a.
3) When TCP is used, the instant at which the connection is requested is fundamental. A bad choice might result in degraded performance.
4) When UDP is used, there is a clear relationship between packet size and goodput, depending on the car speed, and this relationship is not linear.

Based on our experience and our experimental tests, we also provide recommendations to deploy and enhance an ad hoc vehicular network with in-car nodes. To our knowledge, this is the first work that evaluates inter-vehicle communications in ad hoc mode and with no support of any infrastructure.

II. RELATED WORK

A few papers performed measurement analysis of vehicle-to-infrastructure communications. Ott and Kutscher [6] use UDP and TCP to transfer data between a car equipped with an external antenna and a fixed station connected to an IEEE 802.11b access point. The tests were performed on a German freeway. They report that using an external antenna is mandatory in order to communicate with the access point in their scenario. They varied the car speed from 80 to 180 km/h. The authors seem to have performed a single run of each configuration (speed, packet size, and transport protocol). Results for UDP and 1,250-byte packets show that throughput is low at large distances (more than 250 m from the access point) and reaches about 4 Mbps when in range of the access point irrespective of the speed. Moreover, 8.8 Mbytes could be transferred in a single pass. When using TCP, the throughput presents a significant amount of variability and is lower than with UDP. Cumulative data in a single pass reaches 6 Mbytes.

Gass *et al.* [7] use a scenario that is similar to Ott and Kutscher's one, but do not use external antennas in the car and perform measurements in the Californian desert, where interference due to other access points or cars is non-existent. Car speeds vary from 8 to 120 km/h. Each test was performed only twice. A stream of data consisting of UDP packets with sizes 50, 100, 200, 400, 800, and 1,500 bytes was used in order to evaluate the effect of packet size. The results are presented as the average over the different packet sizes. TCP stream only used 1,500-byte packets. Results show that the maximum average throughput is obtained when closer to the access point; 5.5 Mbps for TCP and 3.5 Mbps for UDP. The authors argue that such an unexpected behavior is due to the different UDP packet sizes used during tests. They have also shown that 92 Mbytes can be transferred when moving at 8 km/h and 6.5 Mbytes at 120 km/h.

Bychkovsky *et al.* [8] have used a completely different scenario. Nine cars belonging to people that work at MIT were used. Normal driving patterns of these people were observed for almost one year. Each car attempts to connect to open access points in the Boston area and to transfer data to a specific host. Maximum measured throughput of a TCP connection was about 700 kbps. The maximum number of bytes transferred during one connection was about 8 Mbytes.

Hadaller *et al.* [9] also use a car equipped with an external antenna to communicate with an access point on a rural highway. All 15 experimental runs were performed with the car moving at 80 km/h and TCP traffic being sent from the access point to the car. Results show that the maximum average throughput near the access point is about 22 Mbps and the maximum data transferred in a run achieves 51.1 Mbytes.

Wellens *et al.* [10] tested data transfers between cars as we do in this work, but using infrastructure mode (one of the cars has an access point, and the other one is a client), with 5 dBi gain external antennas fixed on the roofs. Measurements were performed in urban scenarios as well as in a highway. Results show that the goodput is mostly independent from the speed. The major impact factors are the distance between cars, the availability of line-of-sight, and the rate adaptation algorithm.

Our work is complementary to the aforementioned ones, as we focus on a different scenario and a specific class of nodes. As aforementioned, the scenario we investigate is more likely to happen in a nearer future; unfortunately, measurement campaigns on this specific case are still lacking.

III. MEASURING THE CAPACITY OF IN-CAR TO IN-CAR LINKS USING OFF-THE-SHELF WIRELESS CARDS

As stated before, our vehicular network does not rely on any infrastructure, i.e., its nodes operate in ad hoc mode. Without loss of generality, we consider an application of file transfer; the quality of the network will then be evaluated as the amount of data that can be transferred within the opportunistic link that is formed when two moving vehicles encounter. We underline again that we only use off-the-shelf equipments and available device drivers and software. This is essential as we consider near-term in-car to in-car vehicular networks.

A. *Measurement setup*

Our testbed is composed of IBM T42 Laptops, using Linksys WPC55AG (IEEE 802.11 a/b/g) CardBus interfaces, based on the Atheros chipset, and u-blox EVK-5H GPS devices attached via USB. Laptops are held on the lap of the passenger and no external antenna is used. We use the Linux operating system with kernel version 2.6.22-2-686 and Madwifi driver version 0.9.3.3. We tuned a few parameters of the default bit-rate selection algorithm used in Madwifi, called SampleRate, following [9]. In order to send back-to-back data that is enough to saturate the network (bulk data), we use Iperf version 2.0.2. Sending rate is set to 30 Mbps for UDP.

We set beforehand some simple parameters to avoid any extra delays due to configuration. We fixed the IP addresses of the laptops and set the MAC addresses in the configuration file of ARP to avoid requests. We also fixed both the ESSID and channel at which the network operated. Note that these parameters can be configured by the application running on the user's node (and thus with no intervention from the user herself). Also note that by previously setting a number of parameters, we intend to obtain results that are closer to the optimum achievable conditions under the off-the-shelf scenario.

As mentioned before, an in-car to in-car vehicular ad hoc network is well-suited for P2P applications. Moreover, taking a P2P application as an example, our measurement setup with preconfigured parameters can be easily implemented. P2P applications are characterized by the user's interest in a specific content (rather than a specific server). Therefore, there is no need for the client peer to know the IP address of the content-provider peer. The content request may be broadcast. As for the client's IP, a preconfigured address based on the MAC address or on the license plate number can be used to avoid DHCP. Also, in that case the identification of the wireless network is less important; therefore, using a preconfigured BSSID would be fine.[1] Once the two vehicles enter in contact, a single packet may be sufficient for the client to request a file from the peer. Given those assumptions, the data transfer phase of a contact can be maximized.

The testbed was deployed over a straight and 400m-long street of the UFRJ campus (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro), under light traffic. Fig. 1 shows a satellite view of the street as well as two points A and B that indicate the points at which the cars start moving towards each other. This represents a sparse topology, which is expected to happen quite frequently in reality [11]. In order to be sure that our experiments were performed with little external influence, we conducted a mapping of existing access points that could interfere with our results. No other IEEE 802.11 networks operate in this area, except some with weak signals on other channels that were detected near point B (next to the building). We underline however that this segment is out of range of the crossing point where data were transferred. At their starting points, the cars are out of range. We varied both car speeds from 20 km/h to 60 km/h, ranging the relative speed from 40 km/h to 120 km/h. One of the cars serves as an Iperf server, whereas the other car is the client. Iperf client sends bulk data (in TCP and UDP) to the Iperf server, and the amount of data received is obtained by running tcpdump on the server car. GPS devices record the position of both cars four times per second, which is the highest frequency of measurements supported by our GPS devices.

Laptops were synchronized using UTC (Coordinated Universal Time) obtained from GPS and cars start moving at the same time. At start, a script launches Iperf at the server car. Iperf is also run at the client, but its instantiation time depends on the transport protocol. When

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[1] Such a strategy was adopted by the IEEE 802.11p working group, which decided to strongly simplify the setup procedures in the upcoming standard, allowing the use of a wildcard BSSID to avoid lengthy association and authentication procedures.

TABLE I
MAIN MEASUREMENT SETUP PARAMETERS.

Parameter	**Value**
IP address	fixed
ARP	manual
ESSID	fixed
Channel	fixed
Wireless technology	IEEE 802.11a/g
Transport protocol	UDP/TCP
Speed	20/40/60 km/h
Packet size	150/500/1,460 bytes

using UDP, Iperf is immediately run at the client when cars begin to move. We tried to use the same approach with TCP, but obtained no successful reception at the server, because of TCP connection timeouts. To avoid this issue, we modified the client script to send ping packets and to start Iperf when first ping response is received. Both cars move on the right side of the road at the same speed and cross approximately in the middle of the street.

We performed our experiments using IEEE 802.11 technology, in both a and g modes. We will present most of the results with IEEE 802.11g because, as we will see in Section III-B, for our setup, IEEE 802.11a leads to poor performance – the contact time was shorter and the amount of data successfully transferred much smaller than the one obtained with IEEE 802.11g. For a similar reason, we perform more analyses using UDP as the transport protocol. Indeed, UDP is more appropriate for lossy links, and we believe it will play the main role in future vehicular networks. TCP reduces the bit rate because of its window-based packet loss recovery mechanism, and is often blamed for applying network congestion algorithms when the link is lossy. We argue that most applications for vehicular networks can handle packet loss without TCP. For instance, exchanging a file can be done using UFTP [12], an FTP application running over UDP.

We also varied other parameters when performing the measures, namely the speed and the packet size. When the speed of a car increases, the contact time decreases and then the total amount of data transferred also decreases. Regarding packet size, small packets are less exposed to data errors and have more chances to arrive with a correct checksum than larger packets.

We performed a total of 150 runs during a couple of days. Each configuration (IEEE 802.11 standard, speed, and packet size) was tested 10 times, to get more accurate results, and for each experiment we show the average values of those 10 runs.

Main measurement setup parameters are summarized in Table I.

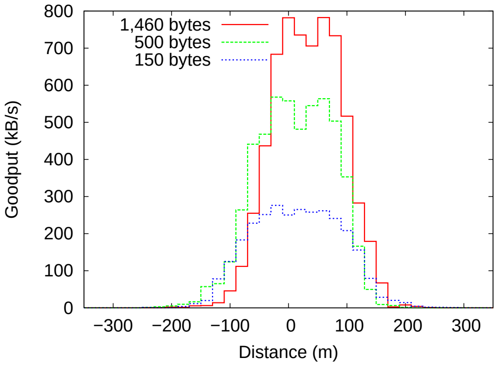


Fig. 2. Average goodput over UDP using IEEE 802.11g between cars moving at 20 km/h.

B. Measurement results

We now present the measurement results we obtained during the experimentation. To the purposes of this paper, we decided to focus on the data transferred during a contact between the two vehicles. We define the contact time between two vehicles as the time interval between the first packet correctly received and the last one. This parameter alone is significant for a large plethora of applications. The average goodput is plotted versus distance between cars. Negative values refer to cars approaching and positive values indicate cars moving away from each other. We define goodput as the application available throughput; i.e., the number of bits per unit of time excluding protocol overhead (headers) and retransmission packets.

Fig. 2 shows the average goodput of data received by the car running the Iperf server, when both cars are moving at 20 km/h. As shown in Table II, the average contact time is about 42 seconds. Within the contact time, as we can observe in Table II and in the graphs, larger packets allow transferring greater amounts of data because of the smaller protocol overhead. The peak goodput is of 6.4 Mbps, obtained with 1,460-byte packets when the cars are side by side.

When we increase the speed of the cars to 40 km/h, setting the packet size to 1,460 bytes still allows to transfer more data during the crossing. Nevertheless, as shown in Fig. 3, the peak goodput is around 4.8 Mbps. The difference on the amount of data transferred for 500- and 1,460-byte packets is less important than with 20 km/h. Besides contact time, which is about half the one for 20 km/h, we observe a tradeoff between car speed and packet size. This tradeoff becomes clearer in our tests for 60 km/h.

We also performed the same experience with cars moving at 60 km/h. The results are shown in Fig. 4. As we can see, our observations are confirmed, with some variations. Table II shows the total amount of data transferred between the two vehicles to have further insight into the

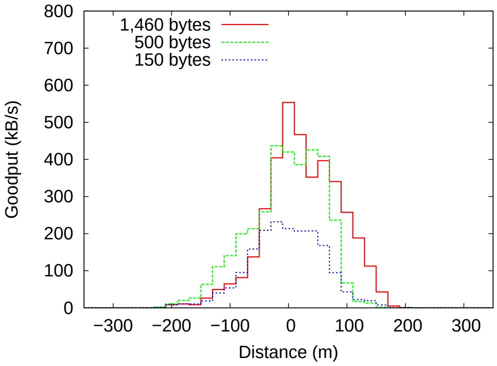


Fig. 3. Average goodput over UDP using IEEE 802.11g between cars moving at 40 km/h.

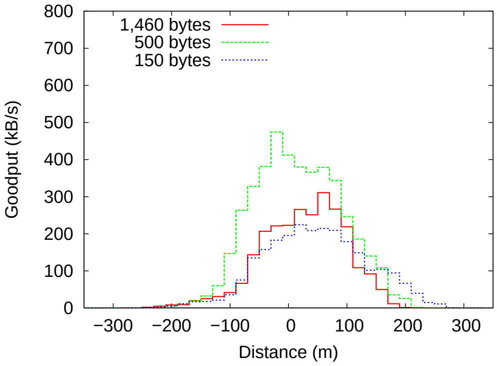
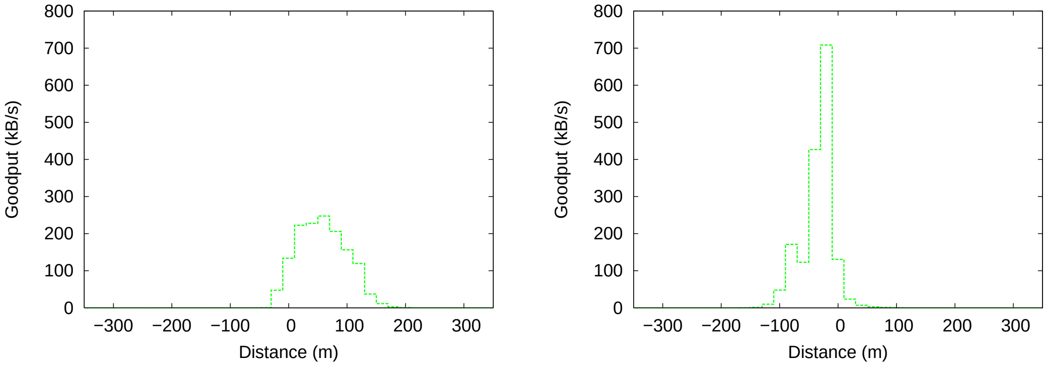


Fig. 4. Average goodput over UDP using IEEE 802.11g between cars moving at 60 km/h.

capacity of the links formed in the three scenarios. For each value, the table also indicates the standard deviation (denoted by σ). On the one hand, as expected, higher speeds produce shorter contact times and smaller amounts of data transferred. On the other hand, we observe that the higher the speed, the lighter the impact of the packet size on the amount of data transferred. In the case cars move at 60 km/h, we can even observe a slight decrease in this value: 2.7 Mbytes were transferred using 500-byte packets, whereas only 1.6 Mbytes of data were transferred using 1,460-byte packets. These measurements indicate a tradeoff between packet size and speed. To better understand this tradeoff, we computed the average goodput and average packet error rate for each speed and packet size. Goodput is calculated by dividing the amount of data transferred by the contact time. Packet error rate is computed by comparing tcpdump traces obtained at the server and at the client.

As shown in Table II, for 150- and 500-byte packets, goodput and packet error rates are similar for the same packet size and different speeds. Nevertheless, for larger 1,460-byte packets, the goodput decreases whereas the packet error rate increases. This effect can be explained by



(a) TCP over IEEE 802.11g.

(b) UDP over IEEE 802.11a.

Fig. 5. Average goodput for cars moving at 40 km/h and using 500-byte packets.

TABLE II

AVERAGE AMOUNT OF DATA TRANSFERRED, CONTACT TIME, AND GOODPUT FOR CAR-TO-CAR TRANSFERS OVER UDP AND IEEE 802.11G.

Speed	**Packet size (in bytes)**	**Transferred data (in Mbytes)**	**Contact time (in seconds)**	**Goodput (in Mbps)**	**Error Rate**
20 km/h	150	6.2 (σ=0.87)	45.17 (σ=6.73)	1.11 (σ=0.14)	0.06 (σ=0.01)
	500	10.7 (σ=2.35)	41.30 (σ=5.09)	2.08 (σ=0.38)	0.05 (σ=0.02)
	1,460	13.0 (σ=2.58)	38.48 (σ=6.67)	2.75 (σ=0.55)	0.06 (σ=0.01)
40 km/h	150	1.7 (σ=0.35)	16.46 (σ=2.43)	0.84 (σ=0.13)	0.15 (σ=0.03)
	500	3.3 (σ=1.12)	15.57 (σ=3.33)	1.72 (σ=0.47)	0.10 (σ=0.05)
	1,460	3.6 (σ=2.16)	14.90 (σ=3.66)	1.90 (σ=0.87)	0.15 (σ=0.09)
60 km/h	150	1.5 (σ=0.32)	11.72 (σ=2.40)	1.08 (σ=0.22)	0.13 (σ=0.03)
	500	2.7 (σ=1.23)	11.51 (σ=2.30)	1.81 (σ=0.69)	0.10 (σ=0.05)
	1,460	1.6 (σ=1.39)	10.83 (σ=2.78)	1.15 (σ=0.90)	0.25 (σ=0.18)

variations of channel conditions due to fading, which are faster for higher vehicle speeds. Channel estimation is done only at the beginning of the packet. The higher the packet size, the higher the variations of channel conditions within the transmission of a single packet, as pointed out in [13]. Thus, the higher the speed, the higher the impact of fading over the amount of data transferred. This is the main reason why we observe a drop in the goodput. Nevertheless, the reduction of the amount of data transferred when speed increases is mainly due to a shorter contact time.

We now compare the performance of TCP against UDP. Using TCP instead of UDP reduces the average total amount of data transferred (Fig. 5(a)). At 40 km/h, we were able to transfer only 1.5 Mbytes using TCP and 500-byte packets, whereas UDP was able to transfer 3.3 Mbytes with 500-byte packets at the same speed. Table III shows that TCP performs worse than UDP. For example, at 60 km/h, for 4 runs out of 10, no data were received at all. As a result, the

TABLE III

AVERAGE TOTAL AMOUNT OF DATA TRANSFERRED FROM CAR-TO-CAR OVER TCP AND WITH 500-BYTE PACKETS.

Speed	**Transferred data**
20 km/h	3.9 Mbytes, σ=2.53 Mbytes
40 km/h	1.5 Mbytes, σ=0.62 Mbytes
60 km/h	0.08 Mbytes, σ=0.10 Mbytes

average amount of data received per run is very small, around 80 kbytes.

We performed some tests using the same dual-mode wireless cards operating on IEEE 802.11a. Because of its higher frequency (over 5.15 GHz), the overall transmission range of IEEE 802.11a is shorter than IEEE 802.11g. In addition, transmissions using higher frequencies are more prone to propagation problems, such as diffraction, reflection, and absorption. In our experiments, the result of this property is a shorter contact time between the cars, as shown in Fig. 5(b). We can then see that TCP leads to poor performance when compared with UDP, and shows to be a bad choice of transport protocols in such a scenario. Even for UDP, the performance over IEEE 802.11a is quite limited: 3.1 Mbytes transferred at 20 km/h, 1.6 Mbytes at 40 km/h, and only 0.8 Mbytes transferred at 60 km/h.

According to our experiments, the capacity of in-car to in-car links is sufficient to transfer amounts of data of a few Mbytes. Such a result is complementary to existing works that focus on more specific conditions, once no special equipment was used and the scenario is pure ad hoc. We confirm that two cars crossing can run typical peer-to-peer file sharing applications and have enough bandwidth to exchange documents, short videos or MP3 files; and this only with off-the-shelf hardware, and despite the small contact time.

We show that in-car to in-car networking is possible even though stated differently by Ott and Kutscher in [6]. Ott and Kutscher fixed ESSID and IP address in their experiments, similar to our setup. Nevertheless, their different scenario and other parameters that were not optimized, such as the fixed wireless channel and modified bit rate selection algorithm, lead to poor performance without external antennas. Using our setup on the other hand, we could achieve reasonable goodput with no external antenna.

Our results show low TCP performance in in-car to in-car environment. This is also reported by Bychkovsky *et al.* [8]. In their tests, they do not fix ESSID, IP address, and wireless channel. Nevertheless, similar to our setup, they also use in-car nodes, but in their case, to communicate with access points. Hadaller *et al.* [9] observed better TCP goodput compared with Bychkovsky *et al.*'s work. In Hadaller *et al.*, the authors use external antennas and they fix the IP address.

TABLE IV

APPLICATION CHARACTERISTICS AND SUITABILITY FOR IN-CAR TO IN-CAR SCENARIOS.

Applications	**Characteristics**				**Suitability**
	Required contact time	**Transport protocol**	**Amount of traffic**	**Type of architecture**	
P2P	long	TCP or UDP	large	distributed	suitable
Security	short	UDP	small	distributed	suitable
Assistance	short	UDP	small	distributed	suitable
DTN-like	variable	TCP or UDP	variable	distributed	suitable
FTP	long	TCP or UDP	large	client-server	suitable
HTTP	variable	TCP	variable	client-server	not yet suitable
Email	variable	TCP	variable	client-server	not yet suitable
Voice	variable	UDP	variable	client-server	not yet suitable
DNS	short	UDP	small	client-server	not yet suitable

Besides some improvements on the default bit rate selection algorithm, the main difference to Bychkovsky *et al.* and our setup is the use of external antennas.

Ott and Kutscher, Bychkovsky *et al.*, and Hadaller *et al.* have improved TCP performance by checking if the network is available before trying the connection. As we confirmed in our work, the time TCP connections are established should be carefully chosen to avoid underutilization of network resources. Moreover, the goodput of TCP is low because packet losses are higher and the congestion window remains small, especially at the beginning and at the end of the contact.

C. Discussion and Recommendations

The network capacity depends on a number of parameters, as measured in our experiments. We confirmed that the car speed is indeed directly related to the transfer capacity. We also found that decreasing the packet size reduces the capacity loss due to speed, and can even increase this capacity. Considering the same dual-mode off-the-shelf hardware, IEEE 802.11g is more suitable for in-car to in-car networking than IEEE 802.11a, because of its greater range. UDP is also more appropriate than TCP for our context because it reaches higher goodput in presence of lossy links. Another reason is that TCP spends time during connection establishment. In practice, waiting for the destination car to be in range requires regularly checking its presence running a script sending pings, for instance.

Based on our experience and on the related work [6], [9], we recommend applying beforehand simple parameters to avoid extra delays:

- Fixing the IP addresses to avoid DHCP delays (that would have been done through a multi-hop path or an AP infrastructure).
- Fixing the ESSID and the channel (frequency) to avoid scanning delays.

- For networks with limited and known users, setting the MAC addresses of all other users on each device to avoid ARP requests.

Nevertheless, fixing these parameters beforehand is simple if the network is small, or if some default values are defined a priori (e.g., by a central authority). In a larger scope, some parameters are hard to be set beforehand. In this case, we give more general recommendations that have the same goal of the aforementioned ones, but can be used in most cases:

- To maximize the contact time, for example, by increasing the transmission power.
- To avoid management issues. Handling management issues today may require infrastructure access points, at least for bootstrapping. However, in the next years, we expect some parameters to be set dynamically without central management (e.g., ESSID and channel settings, rate-control algorithms).
- To avoid addressing issues, for example, by using identifiers such as the car's license plate, associating MAC and IP addresses, broadcasting addresses, or using here again an infrastructure in a first step.
- To avoid routing, for example, by determining the path in advance, if the trajectories of the vehicles are known. We can also limit communications to nodes in range. In this case, an important open issue would be to evaluate the frequency at which trajectories are known in advance (for example when drivers type their destination in their GPS devices).

Software designers must also keep in mind these recommendations before creating new applications, or adapting legacy ones for in-car to in-car networking scenarios. Concerning current well-known applications, Table IV summarizes basic characteristics and the suitability of each one for in-car to in-car networking. Distributed applications are adapted for this scenario, because they are in accordance with the architecture of the network itself. Note that DTN-like (Delay Tolerant Networks) applications can handle high delays and frequent disconnections [14]. These applications highly suit in-car to in-car environments, since mobile networks are prone to frequent link breakages.

According to our experiments, we also recommend implementing or using applications that handle packet losses by themselves, as done by UFTP, instead of relying on TCP mechanisms. This allows using UDP as a transport protocol. Applications such as P2P, security, and assistance already suit these requirements. With our hardware, we also recommend using IEEE 802.11g because of its higher range for in-car to in-car networking. On the other hand, IEEE 802.11a frequency band is closer to IEEE 802.11p one – to be released in 2010 for vehicular networks. Nevertheless, IEEE 802.11p is specifically designed for vehicular networks, using narrower channels to compensate for the increased delay spread and improved transmission masks [15]. Finally, an adaptation algorithm should be used to optimize the in-car to in-car goodput. This algorithm should reduce or increase the packet size dynamically according to the car speed. This could be done for instance by a sublayer between the physical layer and higher levels to adapt the packet size. Different layers could communicate to adapt this size, from the application to the physical layer.

Following these simple recommendations, with off-the-shelf hardware and available drivers and software, should help increasing the capacity of in-car to in-car vehicular networks.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we presented a number of experimental evaluations of the capacity of in-car to in-car communications. We performed a number of tests in the context of a simple scenario composed of two cars. Our analysis allowed us to derive a number of recommendations that can help users improving the performance of their applications and setting suitable parameters. It is important to note that the results we show here serve as a benchmark for future analysis of richer topologies running equipments similar to ours.

While our results allow understanding the basic properties of communications over in-car to in-car links, there are more questions ahead before vehicular networking can be fully characterized. One of them is the analysis of denser scenarios subject to interferences. It would also be interesting to run real applications on the nodes to derive realistic expectations users would have from such networks. We also plan to perform more tests with multi-hop communications in order to generalize our results to other applications of vehicular networks (both in terms of combined contact time and end-to-end goodput). Additionally, we also plan to experiment with IEEE 802.11p devices as soon as they become available.

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