Packet Transactions: Programming the Data Plane at Line Rate

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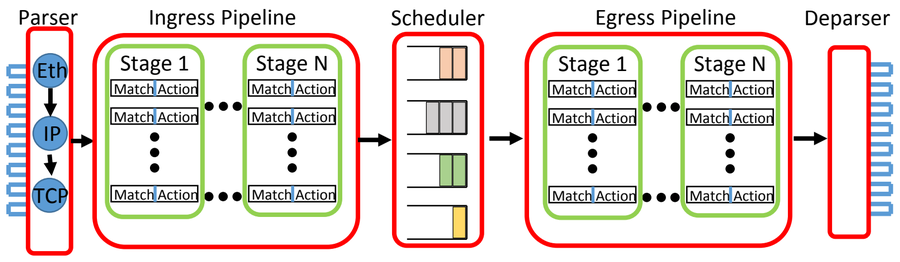
Programming the data-plane at line rate

- Programmable: Can we express a new data-plane algorithm?
- Line-rate: Highest capacity supported by a communication standard

Programmability at line-rate



- OpenFlow: Match-Action interface, fixed fields, fixed actions
- P4, RMT, FlexPipe, Xpliant: Protocol-independent match-action pipeline.

Isn't P4 sufficient?

- Match-action is perfect for forwarding
- But, limiting for stateful algorithms

Packet Transactions

- Imperative code block in subset of C (domino) that is atomic and isolated from other such blocks
- One packet transaction per pipeline
- More familiar to NPU, Click programmers

Programming with Packet Transactions

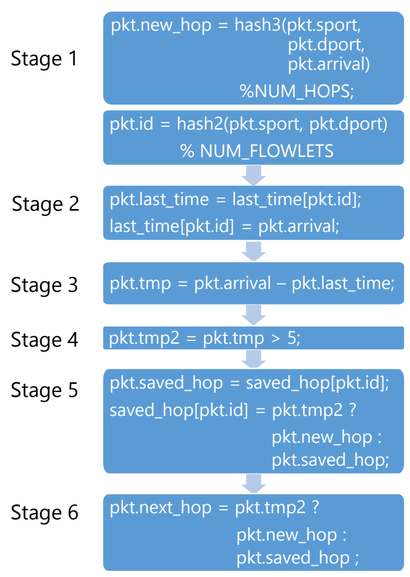
Domino

```
#define NUM_FLOWLETS 8000
#define THRESHOLD    5
#define NUM_HOPS     10

struct Packet { int sport; int dport; ...};
int last_time [NUM_FLOWLETS] = {0};
int saved_hop [NUM_FLOWLETS] = {0};

void flowlet(struct Packet pkt) {
  pkt.new_hop = hash3(pkt.sport, pkt.dport, pkt.arrival)
                      % NUM_HOPS;
  pkt.id  = hash2(pkt.sport, pkt.dport) % NUM_FLOWLETS;
  if (pkt.arrival - last_time[pkt.id] > THRESHOLD) {
    saved_hop[pkt.id] = pkt.new_hop;
  }
  last_time[pkt.id] = pkt.arrival;
  pkt.next_hop = saved_hop[pkt.id];
}
```

P4



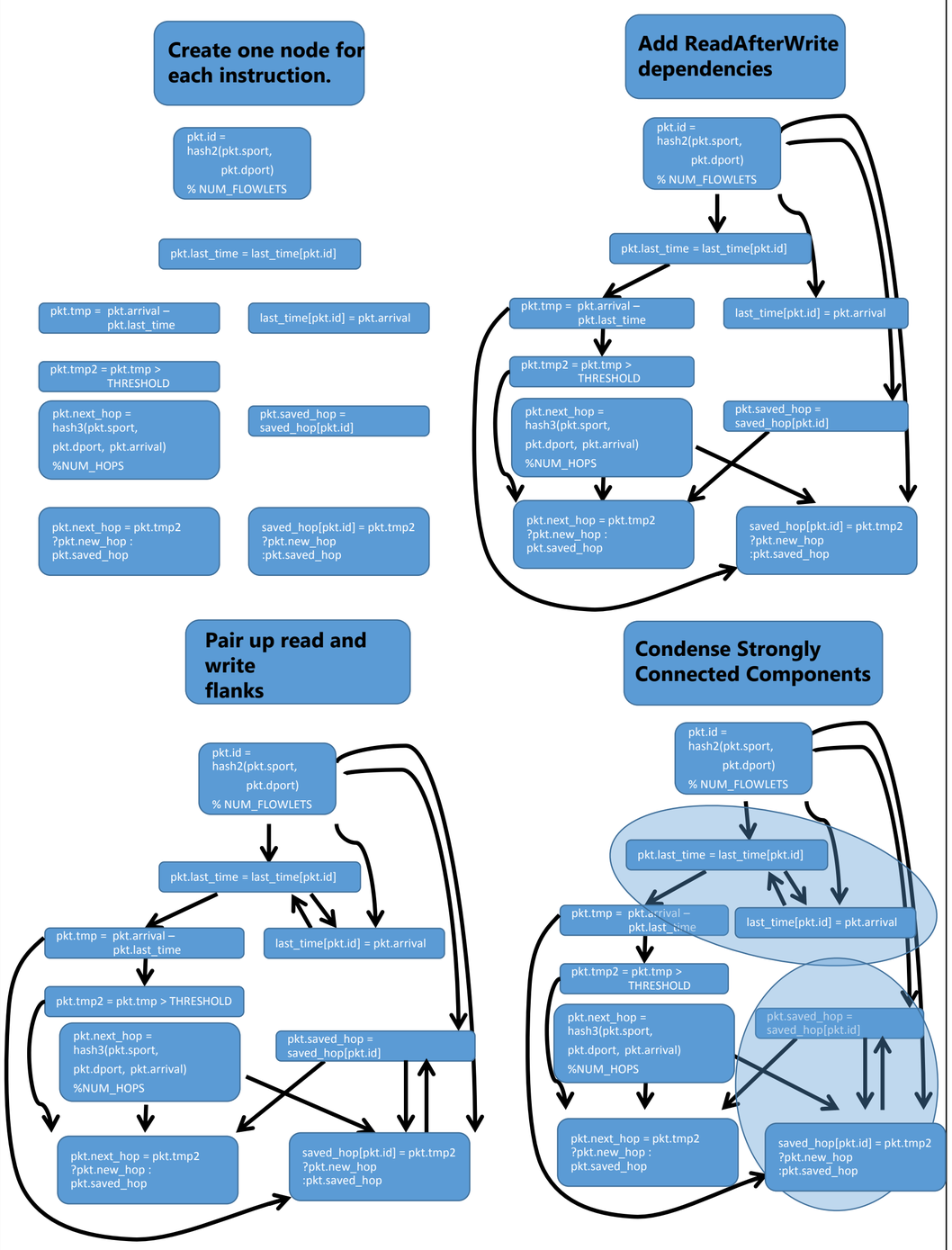
Compilation steps

If Conversion:
Rewrite branches into conditional operators

Read Write Flanks:
Read state variables into packet variables

Static Single Assignment Form:
Rename variables to have unique names

Critical Path Scheduling



Generating P4 code

- Required changes to P4
  - Sequential execution semantics
  - Expression support
  - Both available in v1.1
- Encapsulate every SCC in a default action