Lesson 3.1: Network Modeling

Understand Network Equilibrium Model: Braess’ Paradox

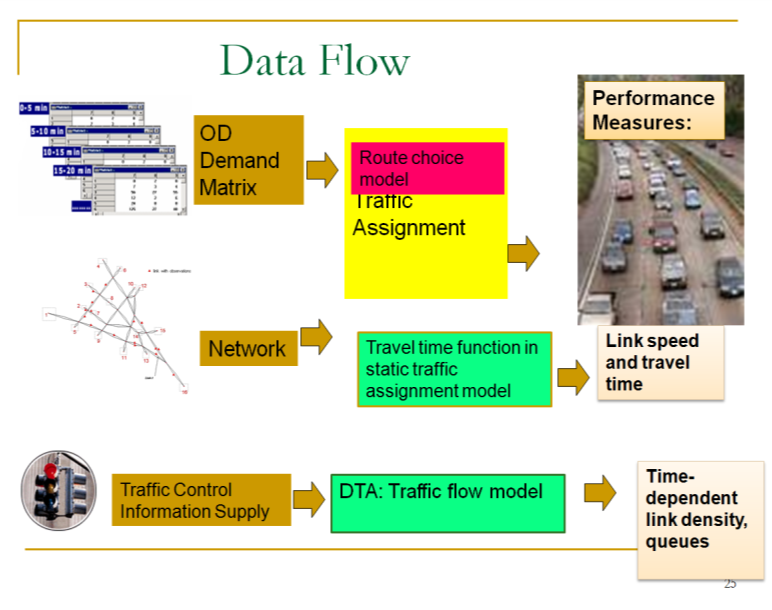
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| Braess' paradox, credited to the German mathematician Dietrich Braess, states that adding extra capacity to a network when the moving entities selfishly choose their route, can in some cases reduce overall performance. This is because the Nash equilibrium of such a system is not necessarily optimal.  The paradox is stated as follows:  "For each point of a road network, let there be given the number of cars starting from it, and the destination of the cars. Under these conditions one wishes to estimate the distribution of traffic flow. Whether one street is preferable to another depends not only on the quality of the road, but also on the density of the flow. If every driver takes the path that looks most favorable to him, the resultant running times need not be minimal. Furthermore, it is indicated by an example that an extension of the road network may cause a redistribution of the traffic that results in longer individual running times."  Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Braess%27s\_paradox |

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**3.1.1 Learning objectives:**

1. How to create a network by importing an Excel file in NeXTA.
2. Understand modeling principles of user equilibrium
3. Know how to setup BPR function parameters for special link types
4. Understand the impact of adding a link and analyze the performance at link, path and network levels
5. The impact of different levels of demand on Braess’ paradox
6. Understand the impact of road pricing on Braess paradox and how to resolve Braess’ Paradox

**3.1.2 General description of traffic assignment:**



Traffic assignment loads an origin-destination (OD) trip matrix onto links of a traffic network, while satisfying a certain route choice behavioral model, e.g., Wardrop’s first and second principles of network equilibrium (Wardrop, 1952).

Traffic assignment is used to predict/estimate how trip-makers may shift to other routes or departure time in response to a number of strategies such as road pricing, incidents, road capacity improvement and traffic signal re-timing.

For example, tolling typically lead to traffic diversion on alternative routes and/or other transportation modes, and many traffic congestion mitigation strategies should be developed to improve the capacity to which the traffic may be diverted, for example, signal optimization, traveler information provision, and transit operation.

The common time periods of network equilibrium analysis can be morning peak, afternoon peak and off-peak, and we can use the time of day factor to calculate the trip in the peak hour (e.g., morning peak may be 11% of daily traffic) from a 24-hour demand volume.

**Static Traffic Assignment**

There are a number of key components for static traffic assignment methods:

1. OD trip table that describes the flow from each origin zone to each destination zone (per hour)
2. A traffic network consisting of nodes, links and link volume delay functions
3. Route choice principle(s) that describes the spreading of trips over alternative routes due to congested conditions
4. Volume delay function, such as the BPR (Bureau of Public Roads) function that shows increased link travel time as an increase in link volume

TT = FFTT [1 + 0.15(v/c)4]

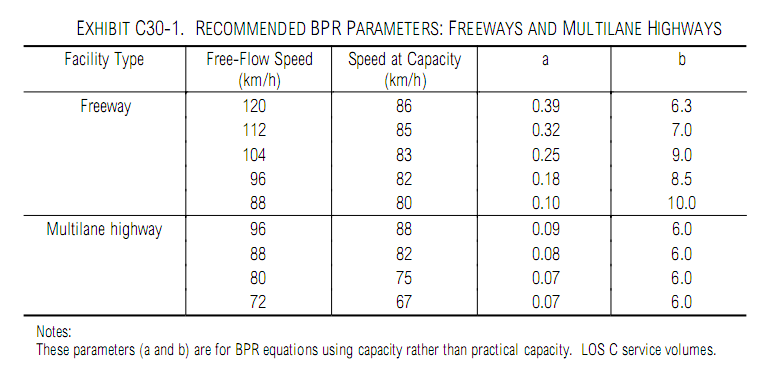
where:

TT = link travel time

FFTT= free-flow travel time of link

v = link flow

c = link capacity

[Remark: Typically, the travel time function of a link only depends on its own flow, while ignoring link volume on opposing or conflicting directions. The link capacity might not be a strict upper limit on link flow.] 

Source: HCM 2000, BPR Parameters for Freeway and Highway

As one of the **simplest** cases of route choice behavior, Wardrop’s first principle, user equilibrium (UE), assumes road users are “selfish (or non-cooperative)” and have complete knowledge about the network. The UE principle requires iterations to reach the following UE conditions:

* No individual trip maker can reduce his path costs by switching routes.
* All used routes between an O-D pair have equal and minimum costs, while all unused routes have greater or equal costs (to the used path costs).

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| References:  Wardrop (1952) proposed the user equilibrium and system optimal principles of route choice behavior in his seminal paper, and Beckman et al. (1956) formulated the static user equilibrium traffic assignment problem as an equivalent convex mathematical programming problem. Since their influential contributions, the development of the static network assignment formulations, algorithms and applications have made remarkable progress. The books by Sheffi (1985) and Patriksson (1994) provide the most comprehensive coverage on the static traffic assignment problem and its variants.  Wardrop, J.G. (1952). Some Theoretical Aspects of Road Traffic Research, Proceedings, Institution of Civil Engineers II(1), pp. 325-378.  Beckmann,M. McGuire, C. B. Winsten. C.B, (1956). [Studies in the Economics of Transportation](http://cowles.econ.yale.edu/archive/reprints/specpub-BMW.pdf). Yale University Press: New Haven: <http://cowles.econ.yale.edu/archive/reprints/specpub-BMW.pdf>  Patriksson, M. (1994) The Traffic Assignment Problem: Models and Methods. Koninklijke Wohrmann, Zutphen, The Netherlands. <http://www.math.chalmers.se/~mipat/traffic.html>  Sheffi, Y. (1985). Urban Transportation Networks: Equilibrium Analysis with Mathematical Programming Methods, Prentice-Hall, NJ. <http://web.mit.edu/sheffi/www/urbanTransportation.html> |

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# Task 1: Build a network for static traffic assignment, and configure BPR parameters

This task will help you be familiar with basic input for traffic assignment and reproduce the famous Braess paradox.

Run

Display

Path or system-wide MOE:

Volume

Speed

Travel time

……..

3. Link MOE Analysis

2. Dynamic Traffic Assignment

Link Traffic Flow Model:

Point Queue Model

No. of iterations = 20

1. NeXTA

Braess’ Network

Generated automatically

a. input\_node.csv

b. input\_node\_control\_type.csv

c. input\_link.csv

d. input\_link\_type.csv

e. input\_demand.csv

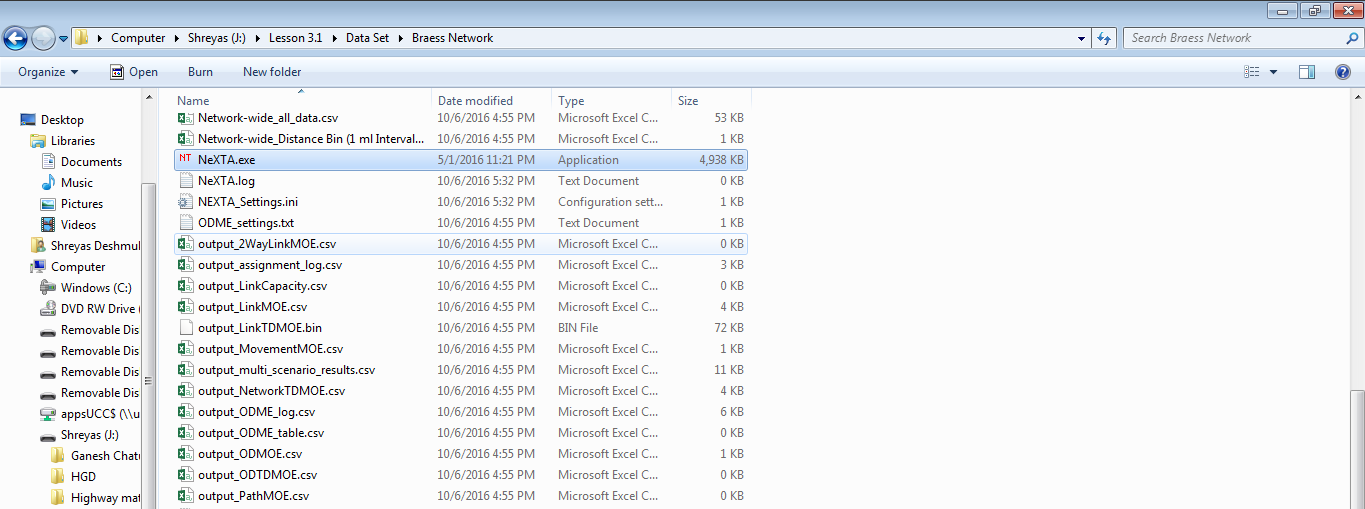
f. input\_activity\_location.csv

g. input\_zone.csv

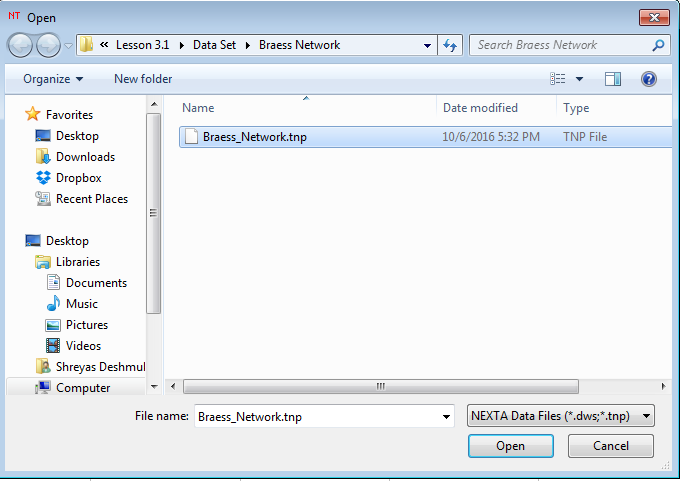
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In this task, the user needs to locate NeXTA.exe, “Braess\_Network.tnp” file.

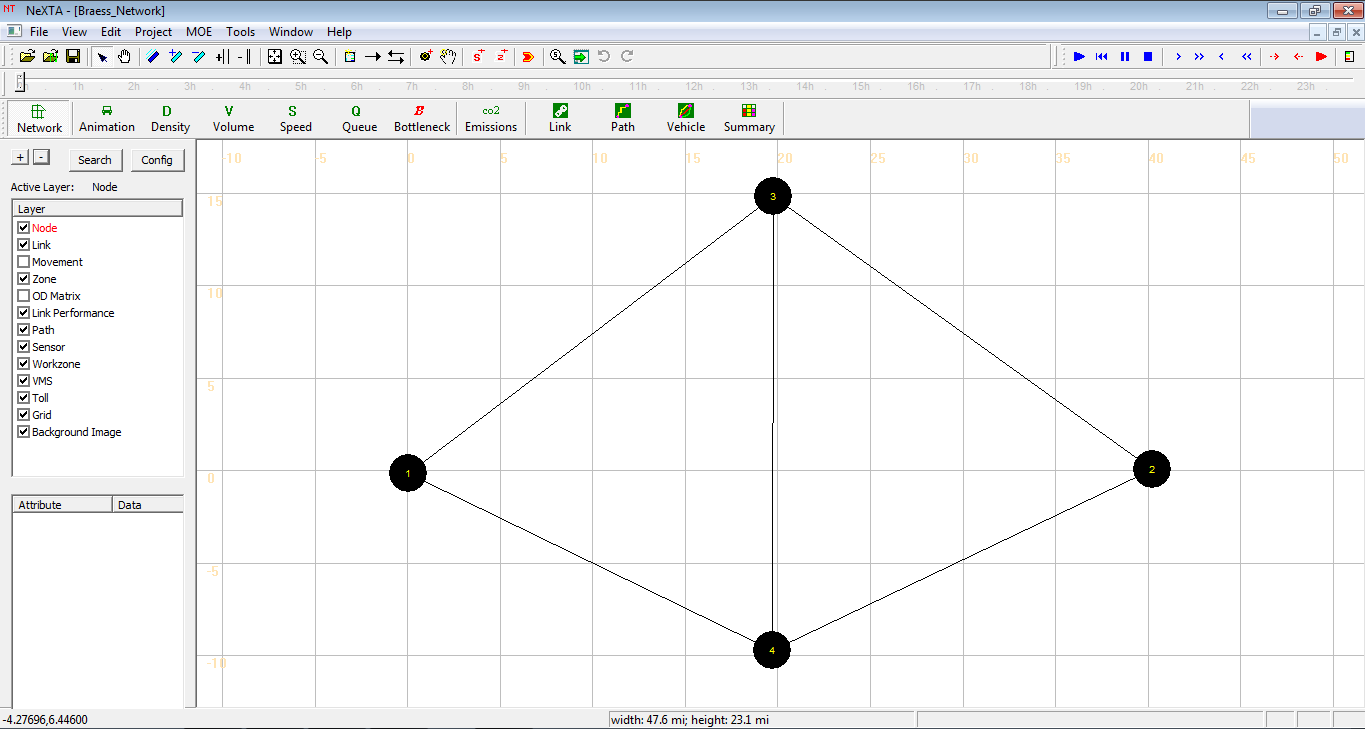
**Step 1:** Locate a file called "NeXTA.exe " from the Braess Network Data Set and open the application.



**Step 2:** Now, in NeXTA, click File 🡪 Open Traffic Network Project 🡪 and open the Braess\_Network.tnp from the Braess Network Data Set.



The following network file will be loaded into NeXTA which has 4 nodes and 5 links. Try to increase or decrease the size of nodes by using the “+” and “-” buttons in the GIS layer panel.



For notational convenience, the following discussion denote link1->3; 4->2; 1->4; 3->2; 3->4 as a, b, c, d, e, respectively.

# Task 2: Run simulation for the Braess network to carry out traffic assignment

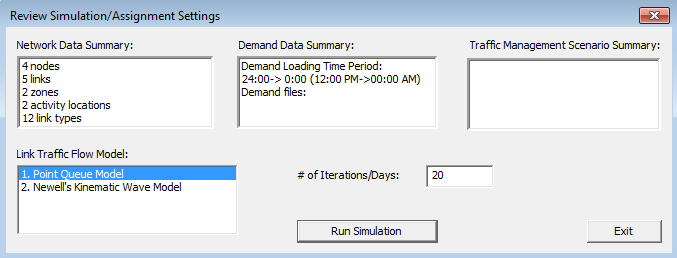
Step 1: You can view the following parameters in the excel file ‘’Braess\_Network.xls” in the Braess Network Data Set. You can also view this data table by making sure the Link layer is active in the GIS layer panel in NeXTA, right-clicking and selecting 'View Link Data Table’.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Travel time function | Link Length | Lane capacity | # of lanes | BPR\_alpha | BPR\_beta |
| Links a, b | (v/100) | 0.01 | 1714 | 1 | 100 | 1 |
| Links c, d | 45 min | 45 | 1900 | 3 | 0 | 1 |

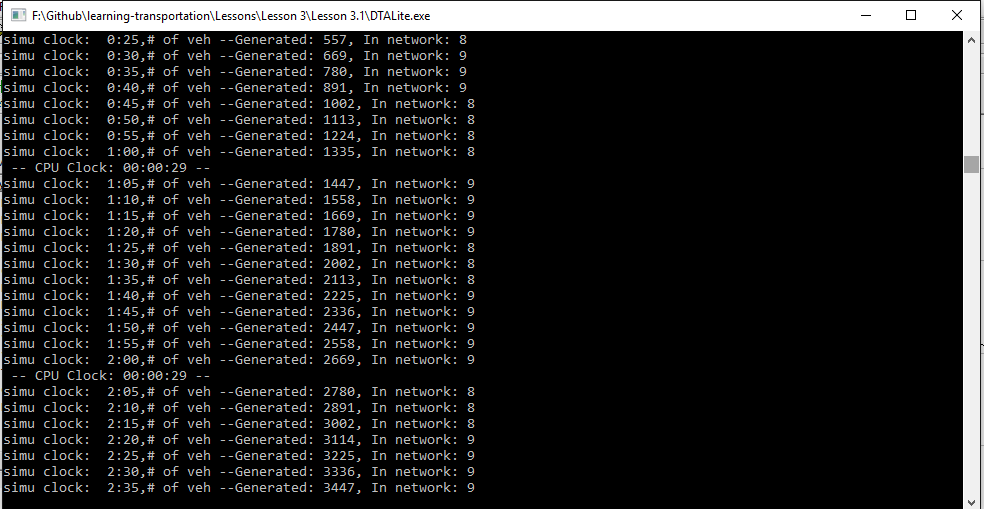
|  |
| --- |
| Question 1:  How do we specify the and for the links in Braess Network.  TT = FFTT[1 + ]      Answer:  t=T/100 is re-expressed as t=v/100 --> FFTT = 0.01; = 100; c = 100; =1  so that the reconstructed function is 0.01\*(1+100v/100) = 0.01+ v/100, which is close to v/100.  t=45 is re-expressed as t=45 --> FFTT = 45; = 0; c = any value; =0  A->B --> FFTT = 0; = any value; c = any value; = any value |

Step 2: Select a traffic flow model and Traffic Assignment Method.

Click the button , then a dialog box named “Review Simulation/Assignment Settings” appears. Point Queue Model’ and 20 iterations.

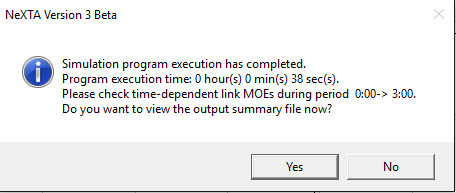


Then click “OK” to start simulation.

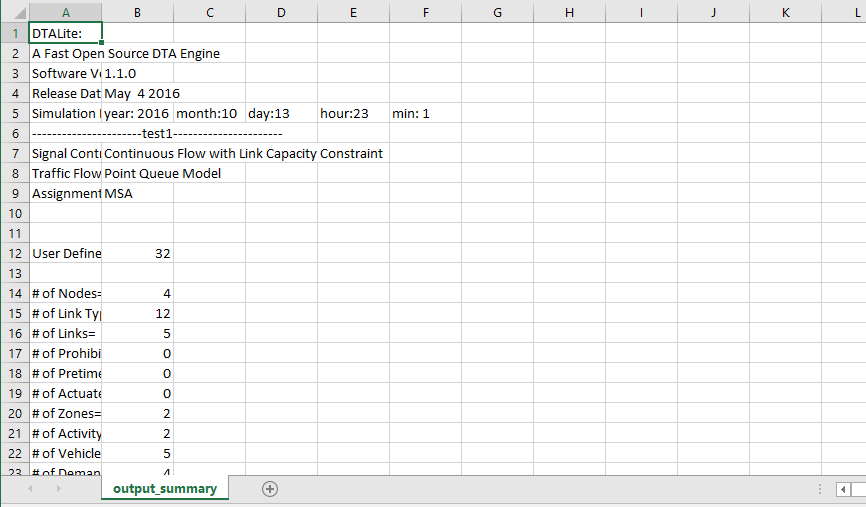


Step 3: Review summary statistics.

When the simulation ends, an information dialog appears, allowing users to view essential simulation statistics.



After clicking the option “Yes”, the user can see the output\_summary.csv file opened in Excel, which shows detailed information about the simulation results.

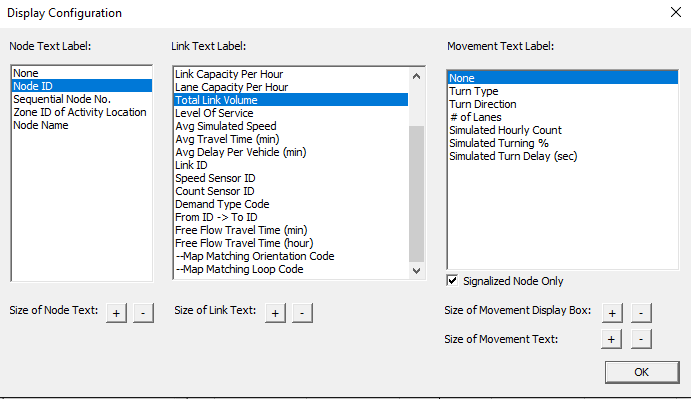


Then close the output\_summary.csv file.

Step 4: Display the link volume.

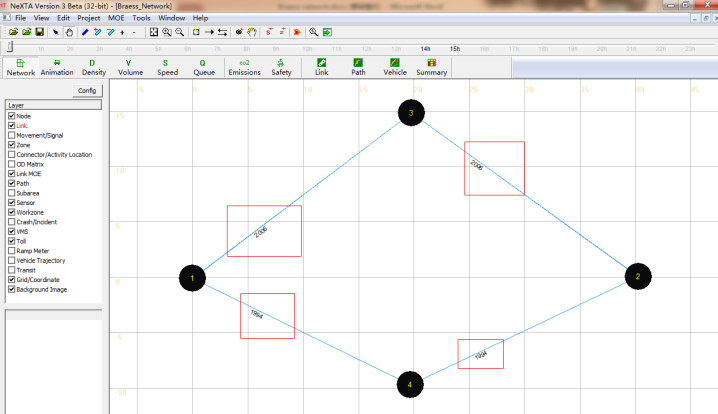
This step is to visualize important link attributes and simulation results on the map. First, click  (the button to the extreme left in NEXTA), which opens up a dialog box titled “Display Configuration”.

Selecting the Link Text Label to be displayed: For example, the users want “Total Link Volume” to be displayed on the map. Under the tab “Link Text Label”, choose “Total Link Volume” from the list and click “OK”.



The volume values on each link are shown in the map as shown below.

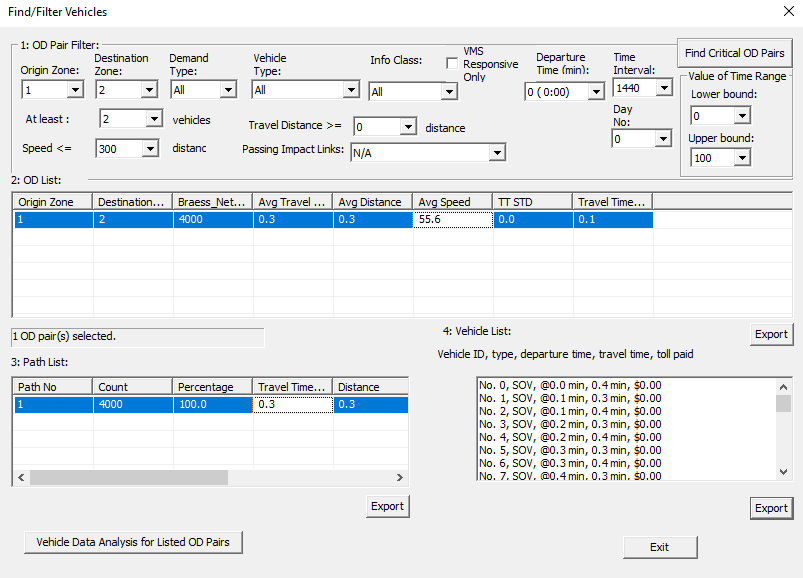
|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| link | a | b | c | d |
| Total Link Volume (vhc) | 2006 | 1994 | 1994 | 2006 |



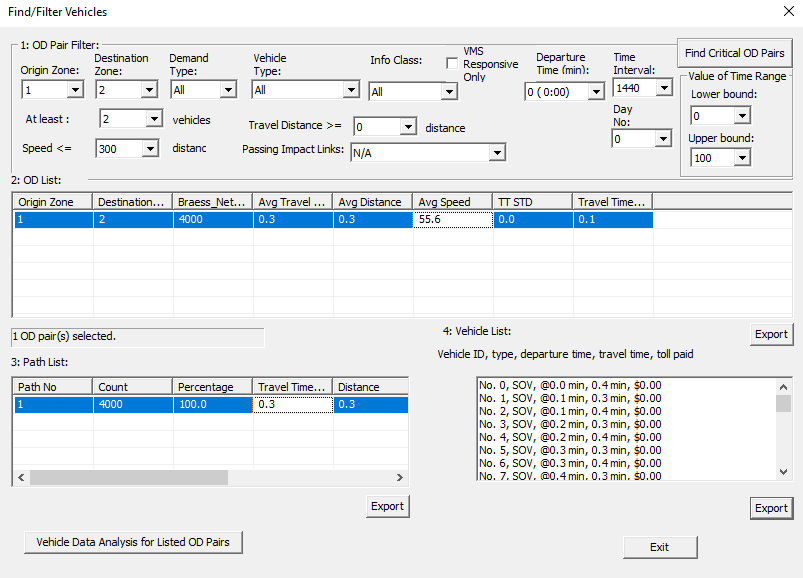
This is a modeless dialog, so users can also change the text label selected. Without closing the “display configuration” dialog box, the user can select different text labels such as Average Travel Time (min), Link Capacity Per Hour, # of Lanes, Free Flow Travel Time, and see the corresponding display for the text label selected on the background map.

Step 5: Prepare statistics for the base case scenario.

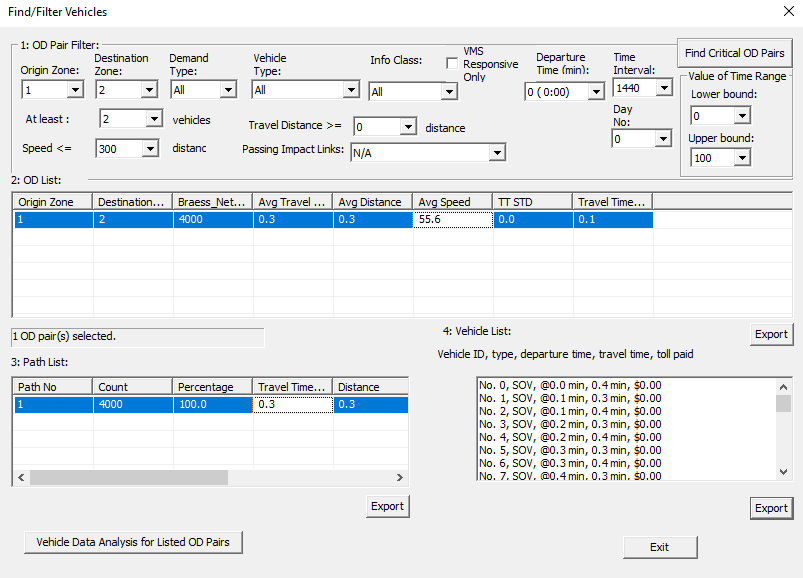
Use the “vehicle” button to verify the path selection information. Click the button  in the toolbar, then a dialog box titled “Find/Filter Vehicles” appears.

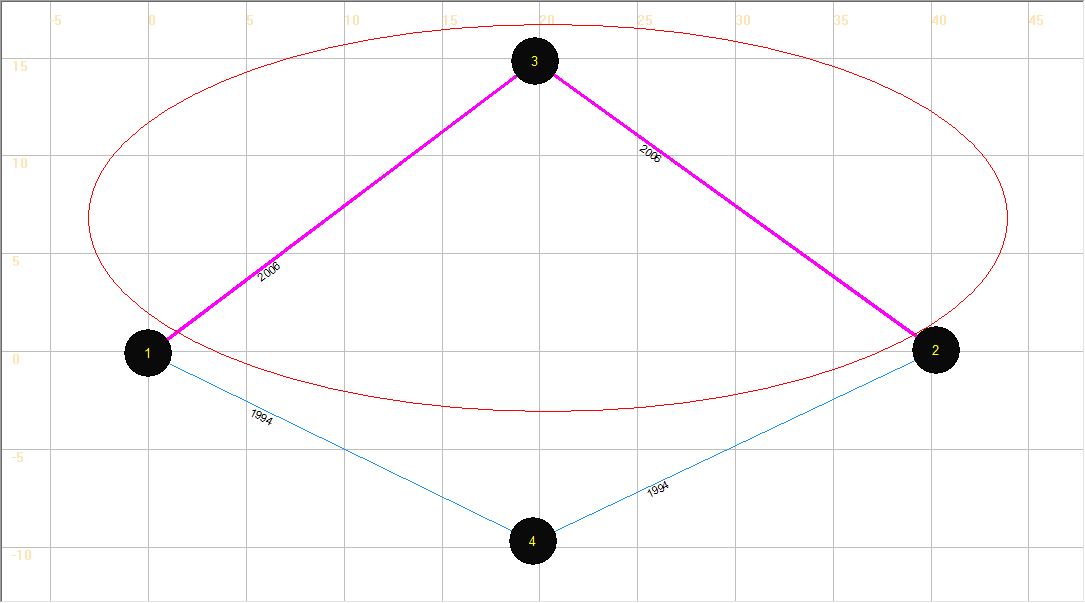


Select “1” under the tab “Origin Zone” and “2” under “Destination Zone”, which displays an OD pair from Zone 1 to Zone 2 under OD list. The Braess\_Network Count, Avg Travel Time, Avg Distance, Avg Speed, TT STD and Travel Time per Mile STD are shown in the OD list. Click on the OD list populated, and then we can see the path list related to the demand, travel time at path 1. .



Choose the path by clicking on the row in “Path List”, and the count of the vehicles taking the selected path are shown in “Vehicle List”. At the same time, the corresponding path is also highlighted in the map.

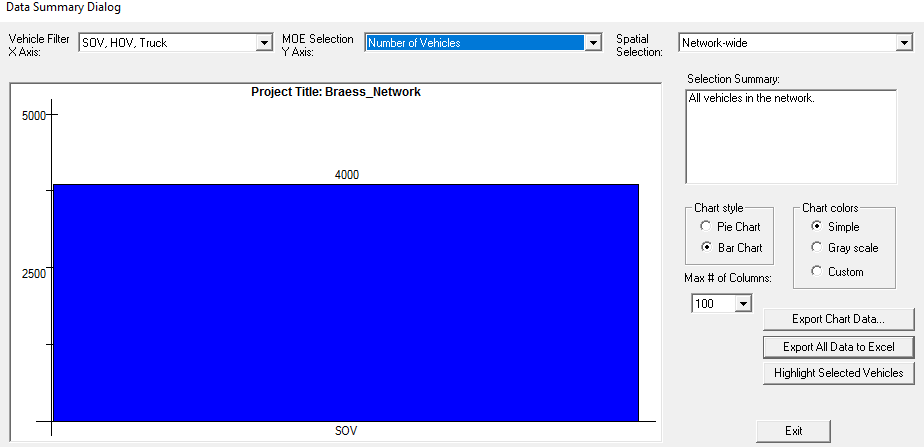




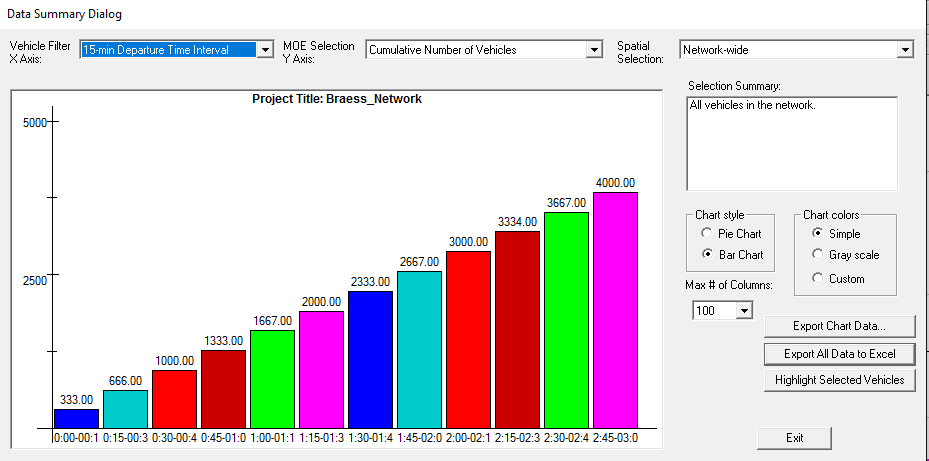
|  |
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|  |

Step 6: Use the “summary” button to verify the overall network performance.

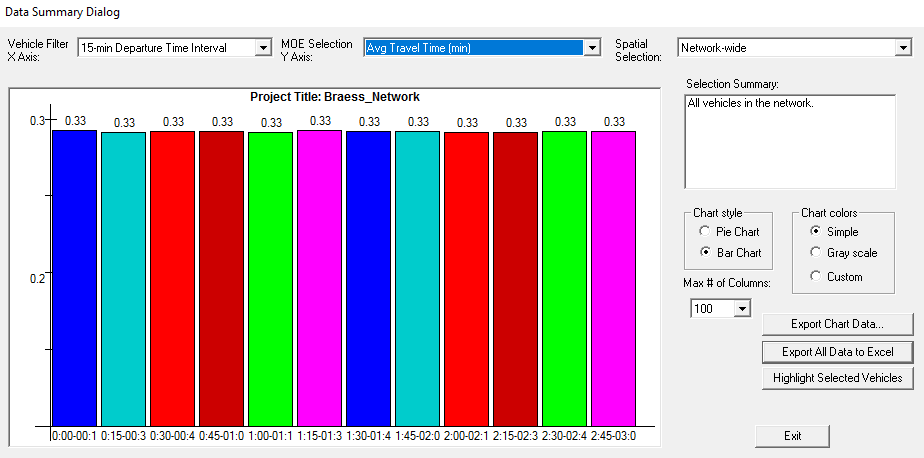
Click the button  in tool bar, then a dialog box named “Data Summary Dialog” appears. Select items in X Axis and Y Axis Drop-down lists (For example, select “15-min Departure Time Interval” and “Cumulative Number of Vehicles”, respectively).



The figure plots the Cumulative Number of Vehicles is shown below as an example.



Select the item “Avg Travel Time (min)” under the Y Axis drop-down list to show the average travel time in the network.



Try to change items in the drop-down lists and figure format (pie chart vs. Bar Chart) to check other network performances.

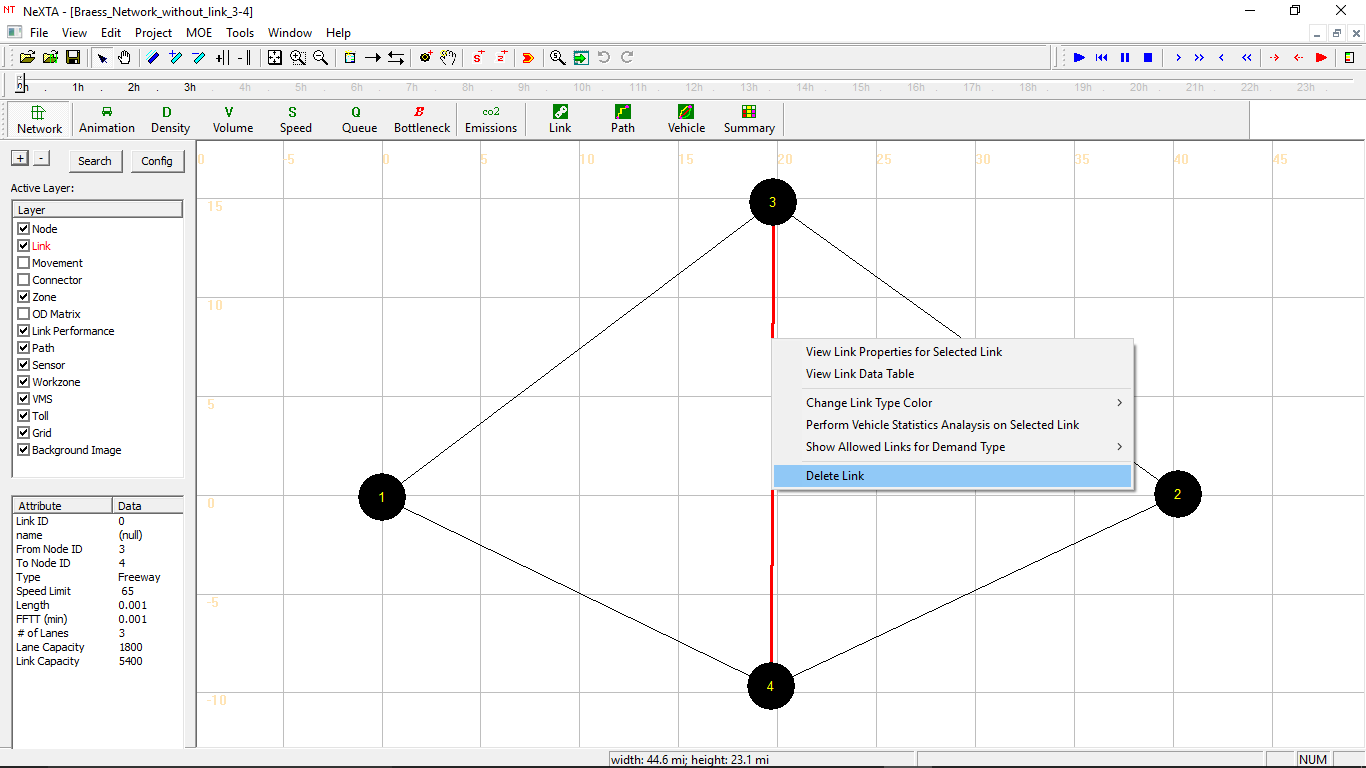
Step 7: Close NEXTA.

Task 3: Delete a link 3 > 4 from the Braess Network and run the simulation.

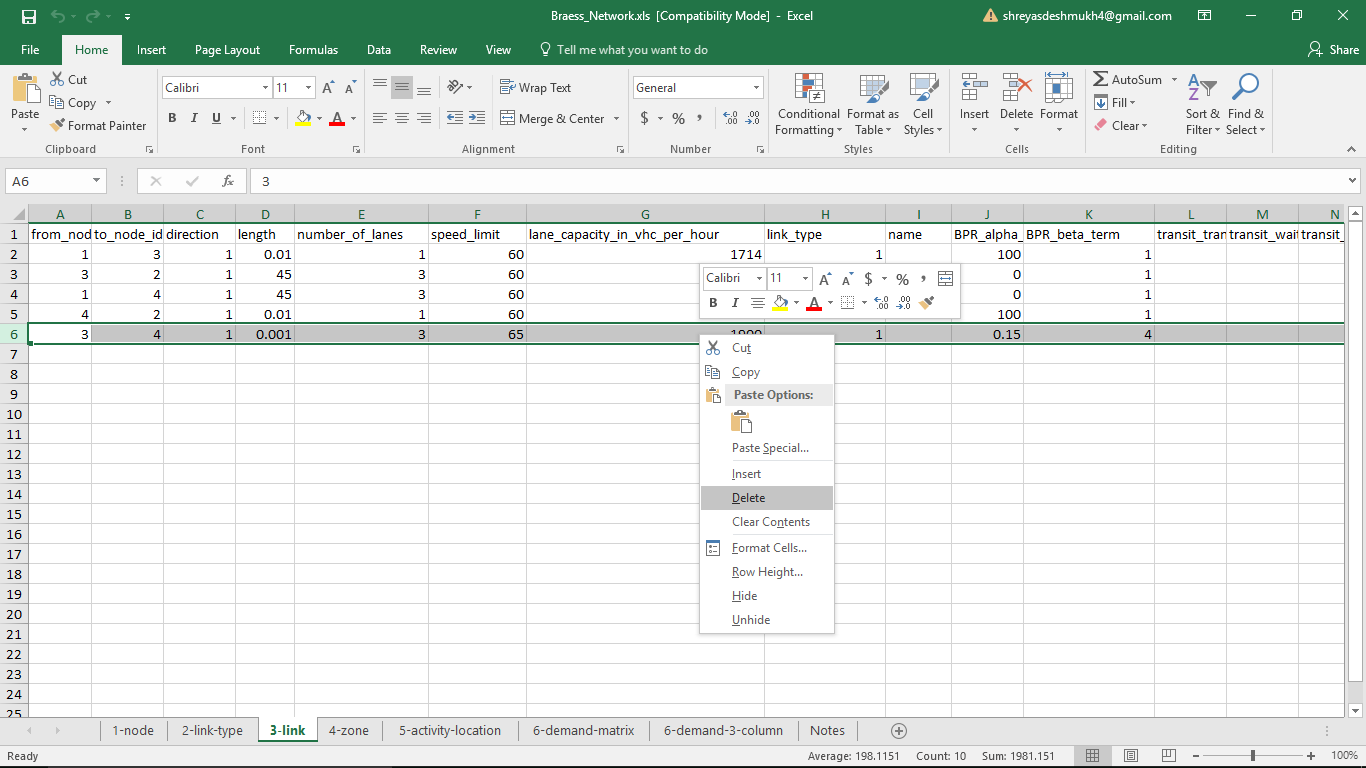
Step 1: Copy the Braess Network Folder in the data set folder. New folder will have the name ‘Braess Network – Copy’. Now rename the folder to ‘Braess Network without link 3 - 4’. From this new folder rename the ‘Braess\_Network.tnp’ to ‘Braess\_Network\_without\_link\_3-4.tnp’.

Step 2: Start NeXTA again from this new folder, open ‘Braess\_Network\_without\_link\_3-4.tnp’. Now, on the GIS layer panel, select Link.

Step 3: Select the link 3 > 4 from the network. Now right click and select ‘Delete link’ as shown.



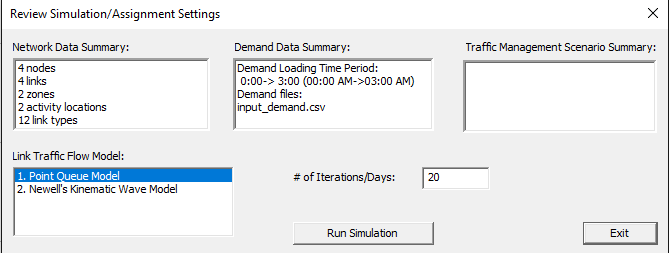
Step 4: Open the excel file ‘Braess\_Network.xls’ to delete the given information about the link 3 > 4. Delete the information about the link 3 > 4 by deleting the entire row in excel. Save and close.



Step 5: Select a traffic flow model and Traffic Assignment Method.

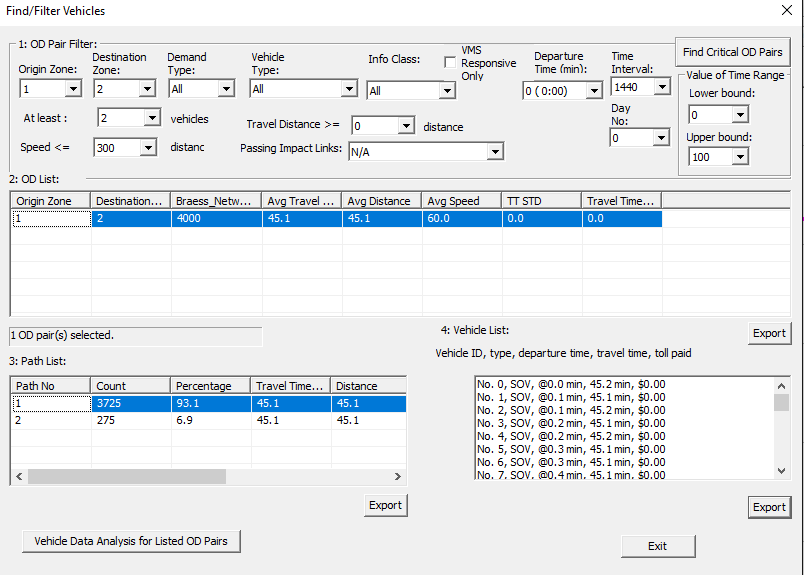
Click the button , then a dialog box named “Review Simulation/Assignment Settings” appears.

Select the Point Queue Model with 20 iterations. Click Run Simulation.



Step 6: Prepare statistics for this scenario.

Use the “vehicle” button to verify the path selection information. Click the button  in the toolbar, then a dialog box titled “Find/Filter Vehicles” appears.

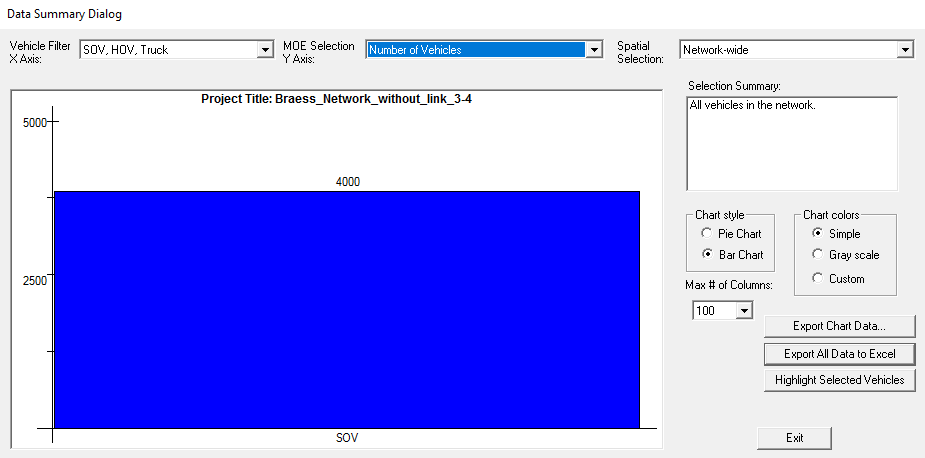


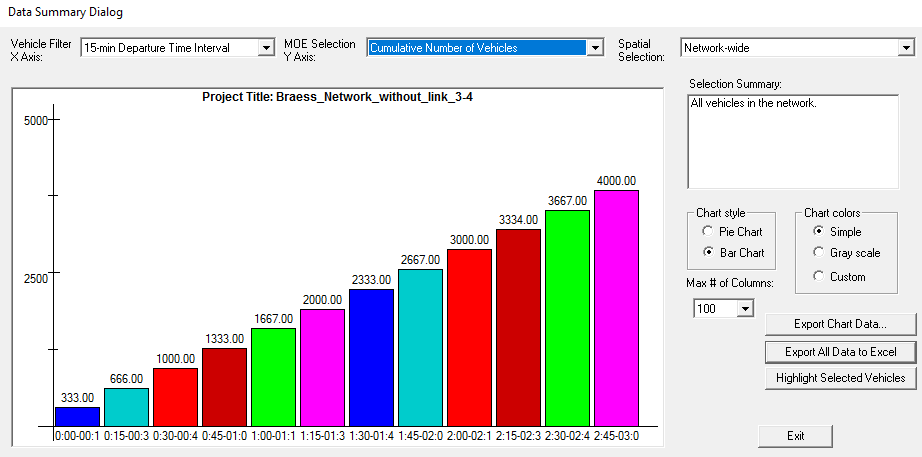
Select “1” under the tab “Origin Zone” and “2” under “Destination Zone”, which displays an OD pair from Zone 1 to Zone 2 under OD list. The Braess\_Network\_without\_link\_3-4 Count, Avg Travel Time, Avg Distance, Avg Speed, TT STD and Travel Time per Mile STD are shown in the OD list. Click on the OD list populated, and then we can see the path list related to the demand, travel time at path 1 and path 2.

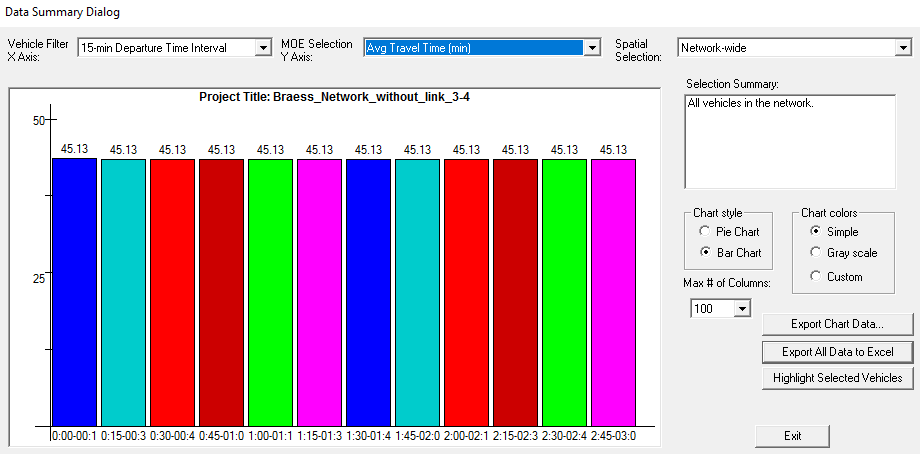
Step 7: Use the “summary” button to verify the overall network performance.

Click the button  in tool bar, then a dialog box named “Data Summary Dialog” appears. Select items in X Axis and Y Axis Drop-down lists (For example, select “15-min Departure Time Interval” and “Cumulative Number of Vehicles”, respectively).

The Number of Vehicles and the Cumulative Number of Vehicles over a 15-min Departure Time Interval remains the same. But the Avg Travel Time for the 15-min Departure Time Interval changes as shown.





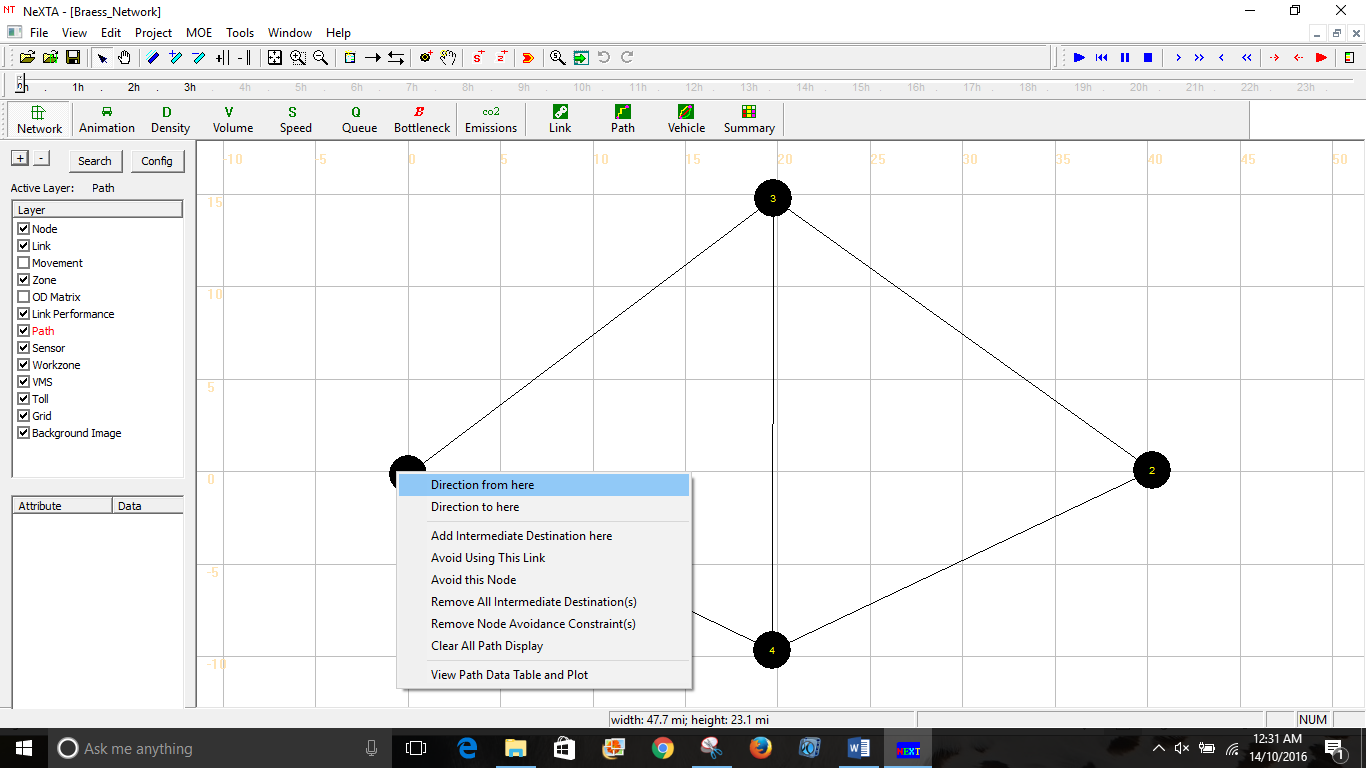


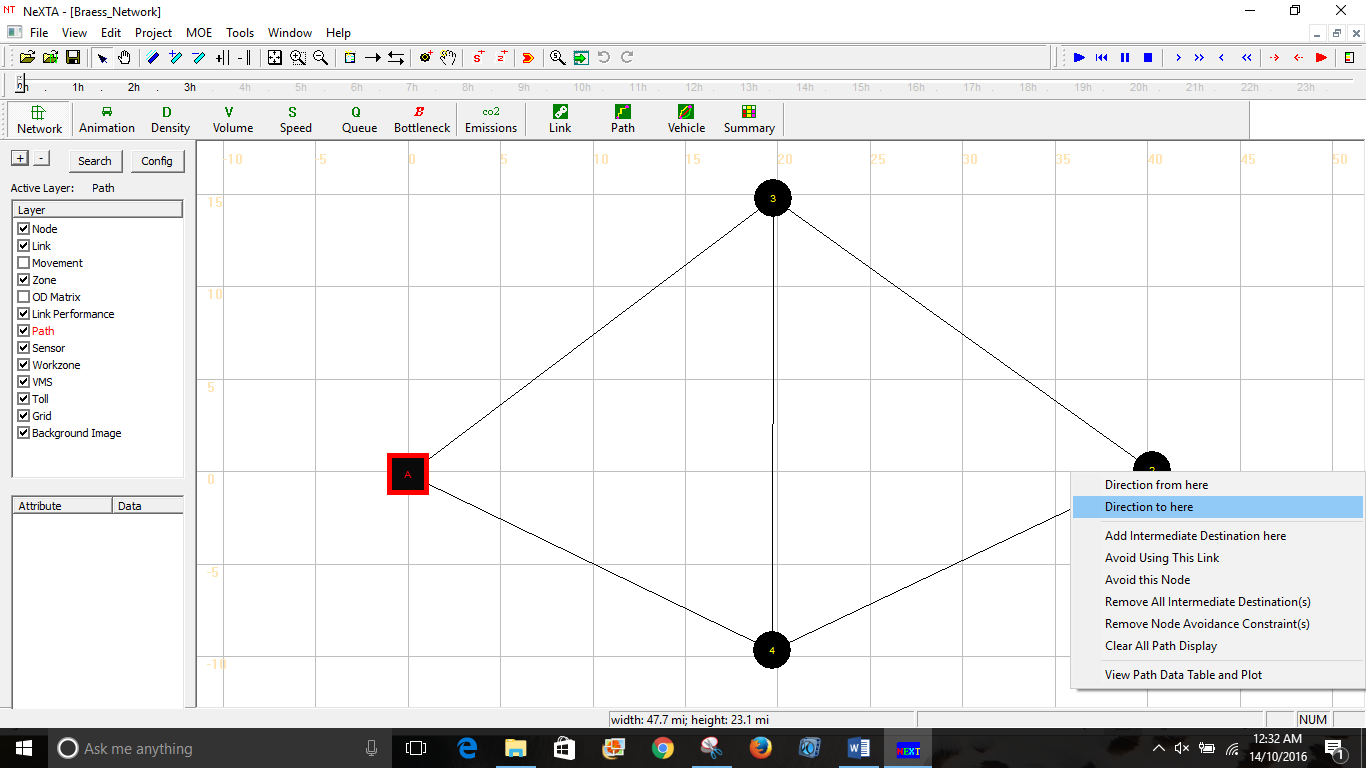
As observed above, the Avg Travel time over a 15-min Departure Time Interval changes because one of the link was removed from the network. Network Performance can be verified further by checking different options from the Drop-down list.



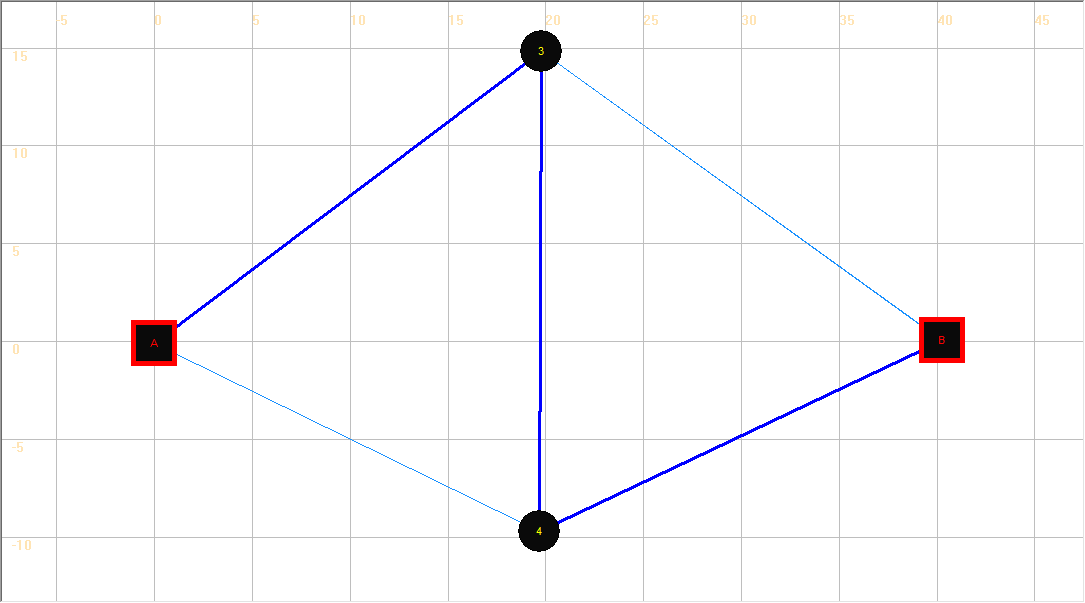
# Task 4: Using NEXTA to display the shortest path in Braess network.

Click “Path” on the GIS Layer Panel Menu on the left side of your screen. Right click on Node 1 to choose the option “Direction from here”. Node 1 becomes a red highlighted box, ‘A’, indicating the start point of the shortest path. Then right click on Node 2 to choose the option “Direction to here” and it becomes a red highlighted box, ‘B’.

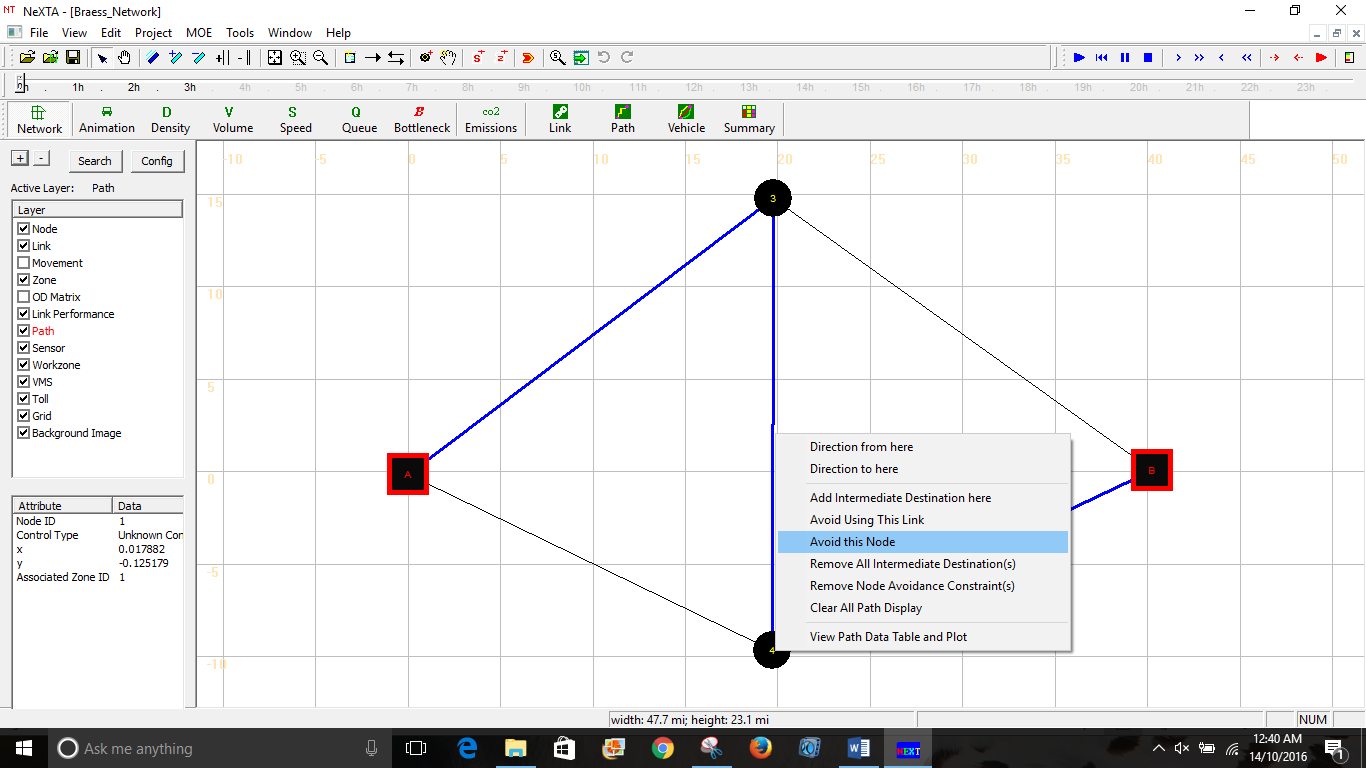




The shortest path from Node 1 to Node 2 is highlighted in the map as shown below. To unselect A and B, you can uncheck the path layer.



To perform selected path analysis along the path A->3->B, please go to the path layer, right click on node 4, click on the “avoid this node” menu, which will block two related incoming links. The path from node 1 to node 2 is now changed and no vehicle uses node 4 as it has been prevented.



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Travel time | Flow |
| Path 1 | Link a(40.01) + Link d(45) = 85.01 min | 0 |
| Path 2 | Link c(45) + Link b(40.01) = 85.01 min | 0 |
| Path 3 | Link a(40.01)+ Link e(0.001)+ Link b(40.01) = 80.02 min | 4000 |

Step 5: Close the NEXTA.

# Task 5: Compare System-wide Performance Differences between Two Networks.

The Braess paradox is a User Equilibrium (UE) system that is not necessarily System Optimal (SO). Under the UE principle, the users are assumed to be greedy and rational to choose their own route with minimum cost, and users are familiar with the system. The UE conditions are described as follows:

No individual trip maker can reduce his path costs by switching routes. All used routes between an O-D pair have equal and minimum costs, while all unused routes have greater or equal costs (to the used path costs).

From the displayed values of the volume on two different networks mentioned above, we can complete the following table.

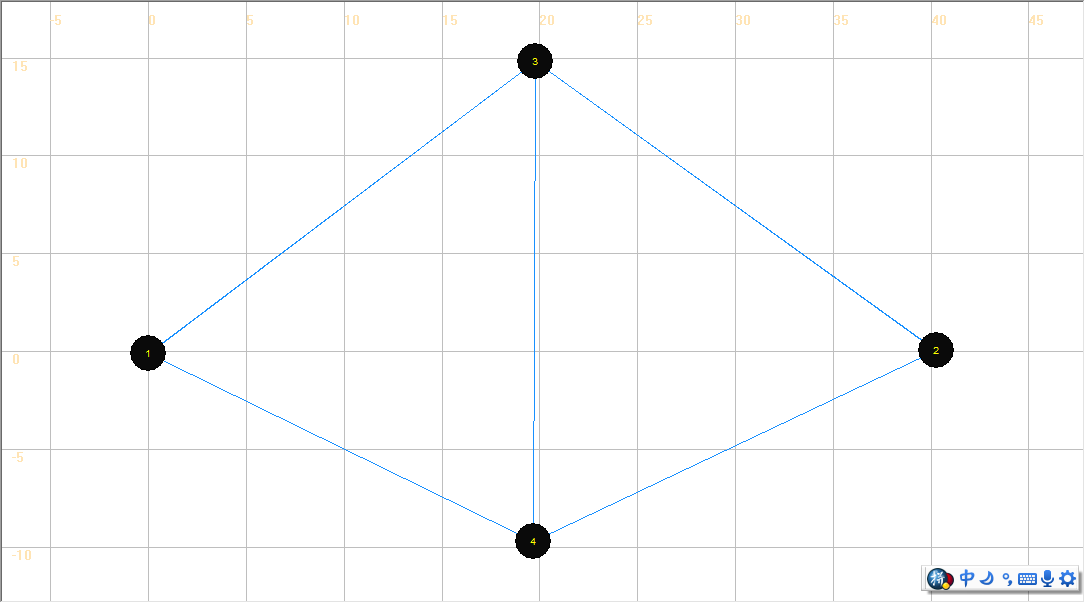
|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Without adding link e | Adding link e |
| Total number of vehicles | 4000 | 4000 |
| System-wide total travel time | 180519.80 | 320083.8 |
| Average travel time for each vehicle | 45.13 | 80.02 |
| Volume on link a | 2006 | 4000 |
| Volume on link c | 1994 | 0 |
| Path 1 travel time | 65.07 | 85.01 |
| Path 1 volume | 2006 | 0 |
| Path 2 travel time | 64.95 | 85.01 |
| Path 2 Volume | 1994 | 0 |
| Path 3 travel time | —— | 80.02 |
| Path 3 Volume | 0 | 4000 |

|  |
| --- |
| Remarks:  Comparing the average travel times before and after the addition of link e, it is interesting that the average travel time increases from 65.01-min to 80.02-min, due to the addition of link e. After adding link e into the Braess Network, all the vehicles travel through link e, and the system-wide total travel time increases significantly. However, for one single vehicle, the driver does not have an incentive to switch his route, as the travel times for the other two paths (Path 1 and Path 2) are 85.01 minutes when all the other vehicles travel through link e (except for that one vehicle). Therefore, there is a paradox on Braess network under reasonable assumptions, necessary and sufficient conditions in a general transportation network. |

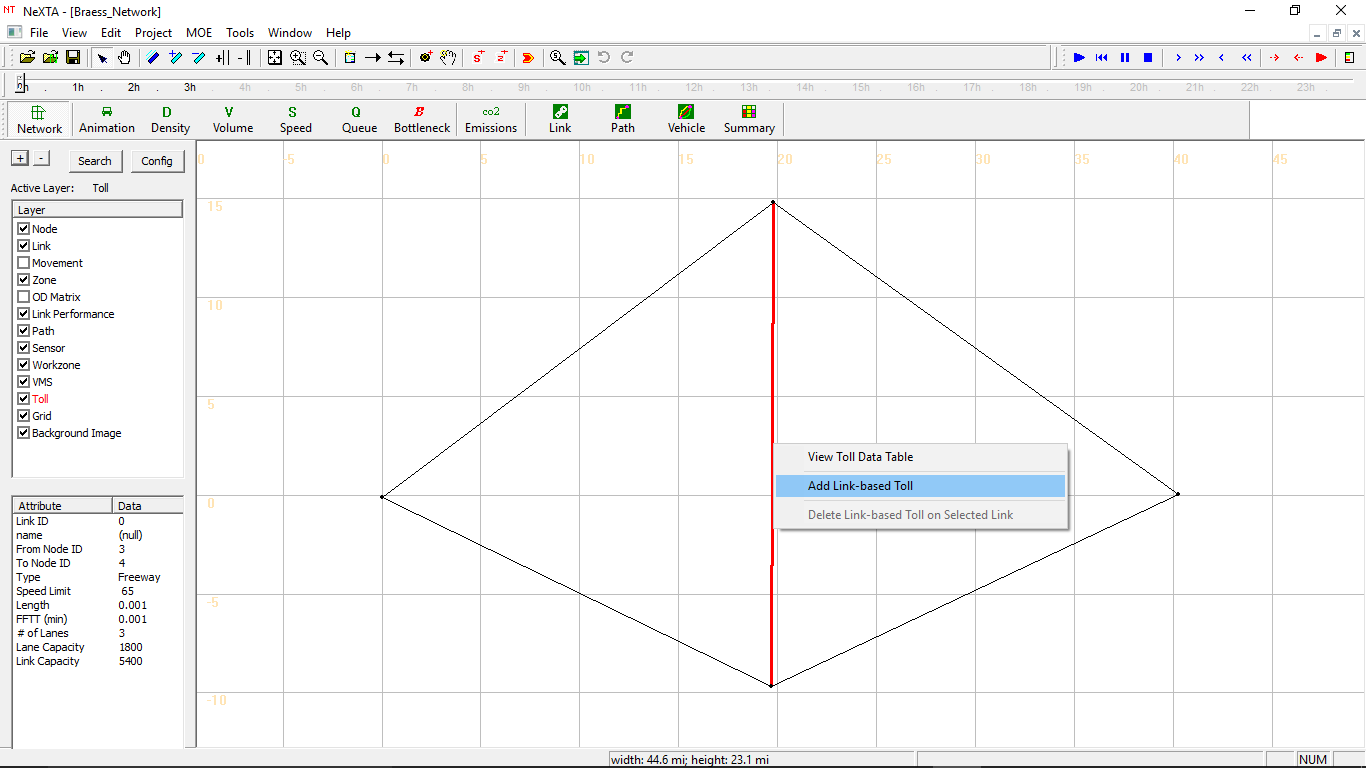
It should be noted that the length of link e must be short enough to ensure that the travel time on path 3 is less than the travel times on both path 1 and 2.

# Task 6: Add a Link Toll and Run Static Simulation

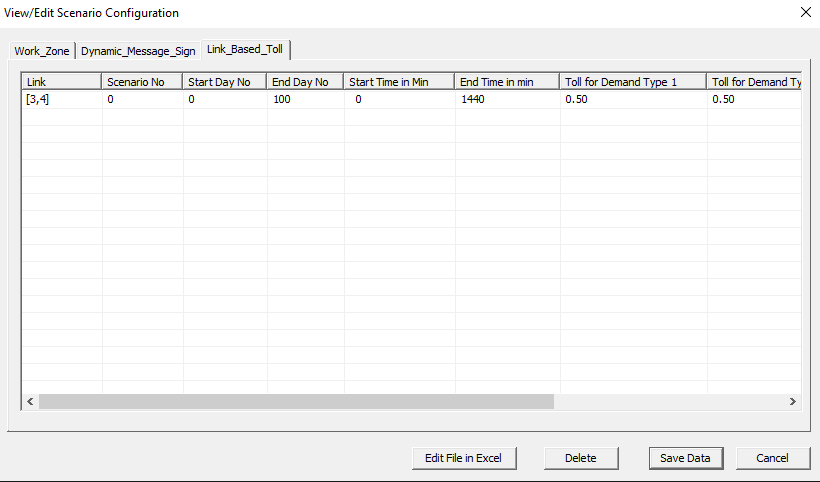
Step 1: Click  on Tool bar to open “Braess\_Network.tnp” file. We can see that the Braess network with link e is displayed on the map.



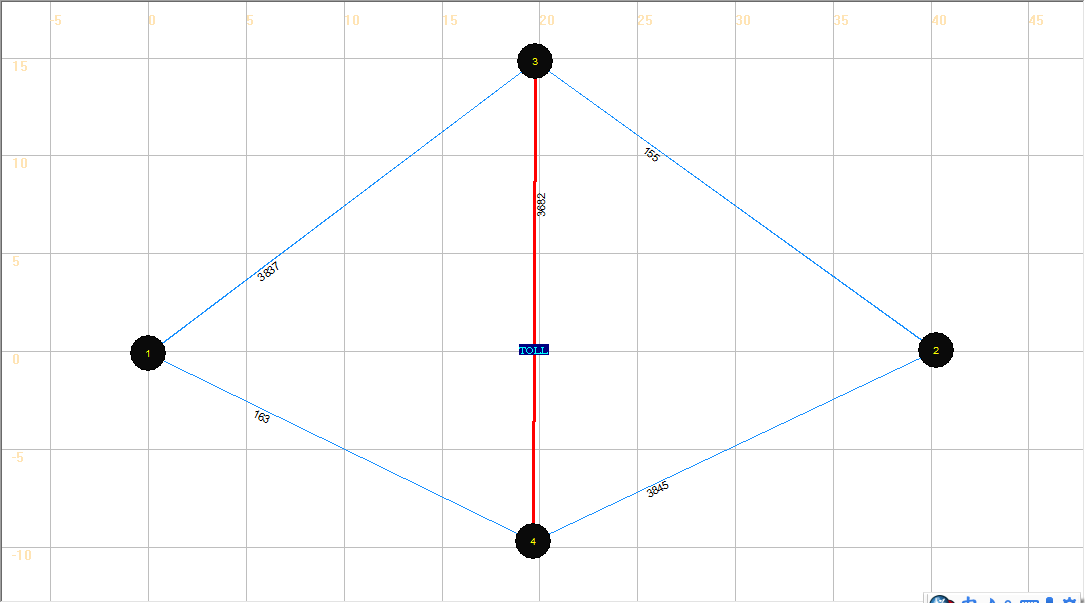
Step 2: Click “Toll” on the GIS Layer Panel, and then click  to select link e. Set link e as a Toll link by clicking “Add Link-based Toll” in the right click drop-down list.



A dialog box named “View/Edit Scenario Configuration” appears. The users can modify the values of the charge of toll on the link. After inputting the desired charge of toll, click “Save Data”.



Step 3: Run simulation on the new network and display the volumes on the map.



|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | a | b | c | d | e |
| Total Link Volume(vhc) | 3837 | 3845 | 163 | 155 | 3682 |

We can see some vehicles shifting from Path 3 to Path 1 and Path 2 because of introducing the toll on path 3.

Step 4: Close NEXTA.