Control plane, User plane & Management plane are three elements of a plane used in Networking. User plane also known as data plane, forwarding plane or carrier plane. All these planes are implemented in routers and switches.

The Control plane actually makes decision about routing or forwarding packets. It creates a route for sending packets and frames from sender to receiver. Routing can either be static or dynamic. In static routing, we need to setup best path between source and destination manually. Wherein dynamic, It uses dynamic protocols to find the best path and update the routing table. Dynamic protocols include RIP, IGRP, EIGRP, OSPF etc.

After creating the path, router understand how to route to remote networks. Then, the actual packets are send through this path. The packets that goes through this routers are known as User plane or Data plane.

In a real world example, A public transport bus which pick up and drop people in different places inside a city. An authorized person plans the route for bus inside the city before the travel. This planning stage is Control plane. This helps to understand where to drop and from where to pickup the people.

After learning the route, bus will start moving and there will be people inside the bus. This process is data plane, the actual movement.

In short, user plane uses the path created by control plane. In conventional networking devices both control and user plane reside in networking devices. In SDN, control panel is implemented in the software which enables programmatic access and makes network administration more flexible.