

Chapter 4

The Processor



Stalls and Performance

The BIG Picture

- Stalls reduce performance
 - But are required to get correct results
- Compiler can arrange code to avoid hazards and stalls
 - Requires knowledge of the pipeline structure



Control Hazards

- Branch determines flow of control
 - Fetching next instruction depends on branch outcome
 - Pipeline can't always fetch correct instruction
 - Still working on ID stage of branch
- In MIPS pipeline
 - Need to compare registers and compute target early in the pipeline
 - Add hardware to do it in ID stage



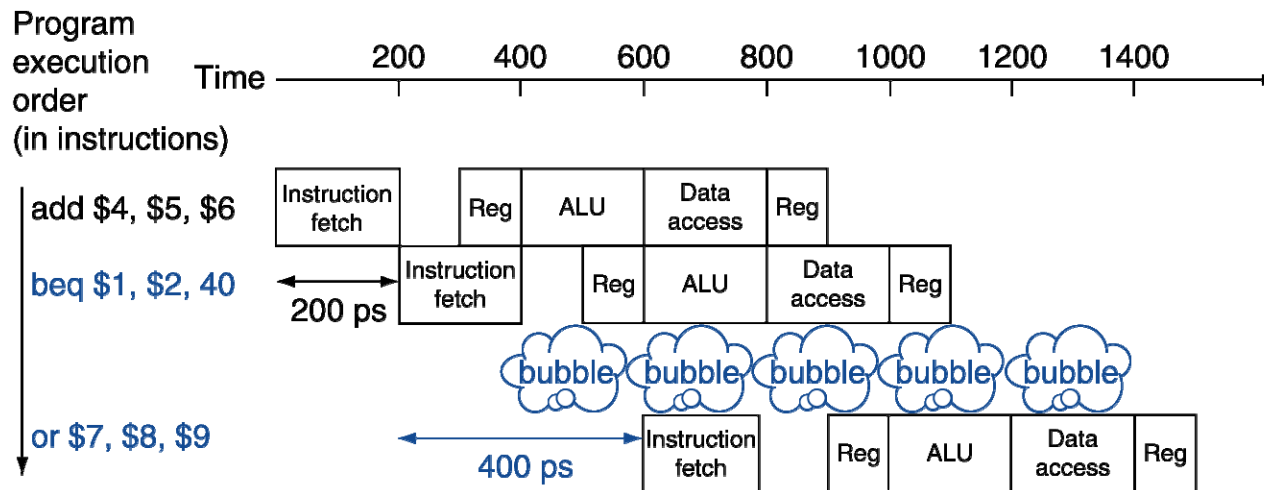
Dealing With Branch Hazards

- Hardware solutions
 - stall until you know which direction branch goes
 - guess which direction, start executing chosen path (but be prepared to undo any mistakes!)
 - static branch prediction: base guess on instruction type
 - dynamic branch prediction: base guess on execution history
 - reduce the branch delay



Stall on Branch

- Wait until branch outcome determined before fetching next instruction



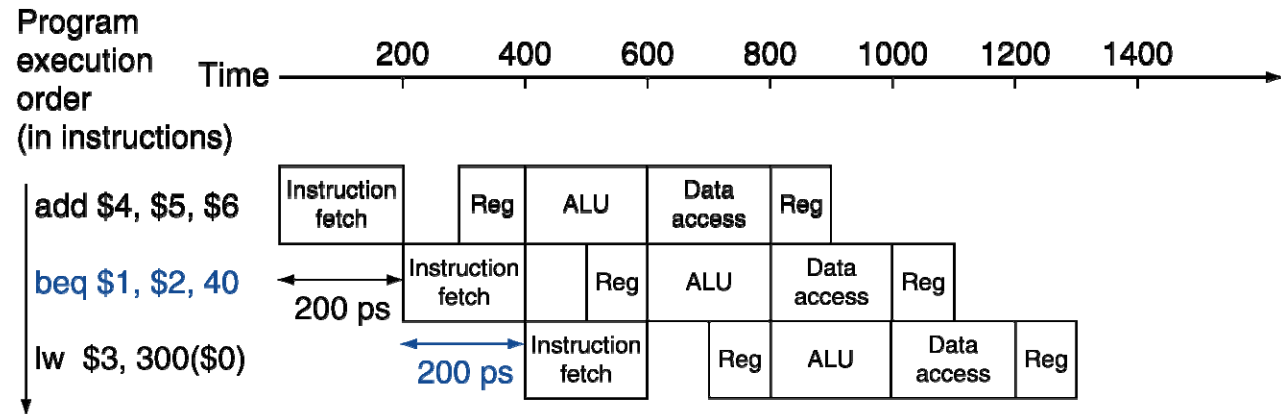
Branch Prediction

- Longer pipelines can't readily determine branch outcome early
 - Stall penalty becomes unacceptable
- Predict outcome of branch
 - Only stall if prediction is wrong
- In MIPS pipeline
 - Can predict branches not taken
 - Fetch instruction after branch, with no delay

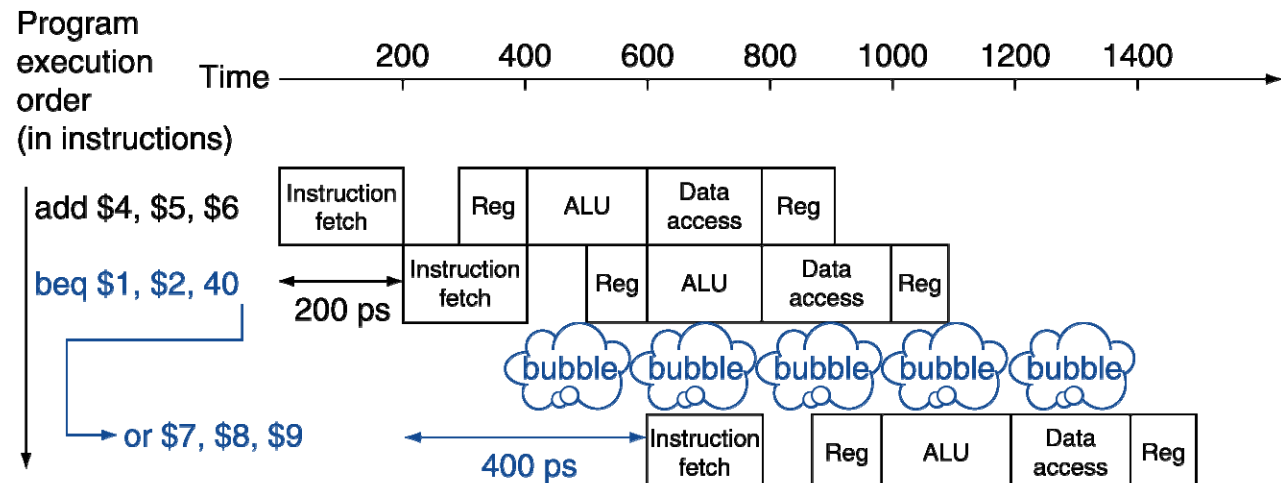


MIPS with Predict Not Taken

Prediction correct



Prediction incorrect



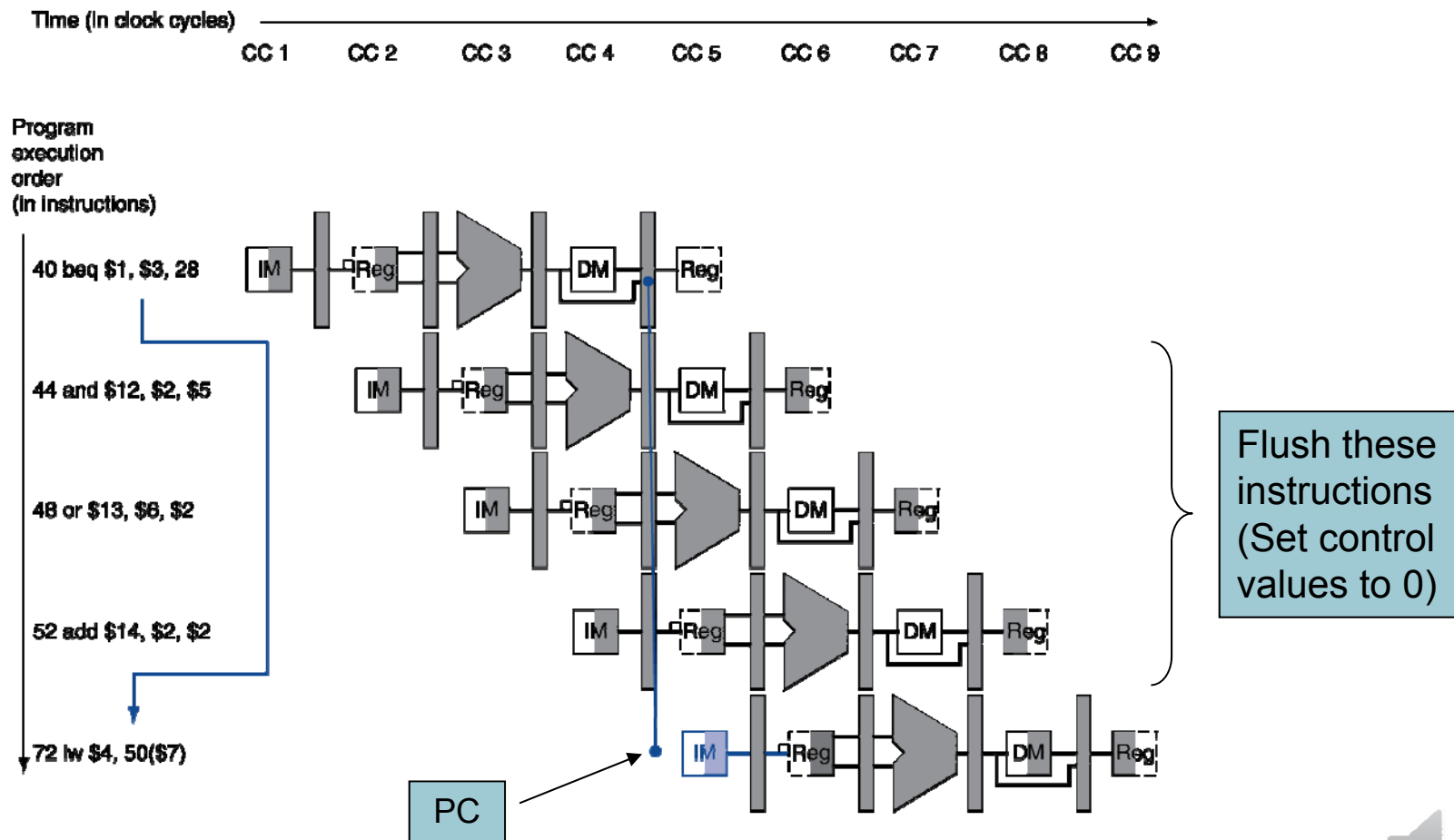
More-Realistic Branch Prediction

- Static branch prediction
 - Based on typical branch behavior
 - Example: loop and if-statement branches
 - Predict backward branches taken
 - Predict forward branches not taken
- Dynamic branch prediction
 - Hardware measures actual branch behavior
 - e.g., record recent history of each branch
 - Assume future behavior will continue the trend
 - When wrong, stall while re-fetching, and update history



Branch Hazards

- If branch outcome determined in MEM



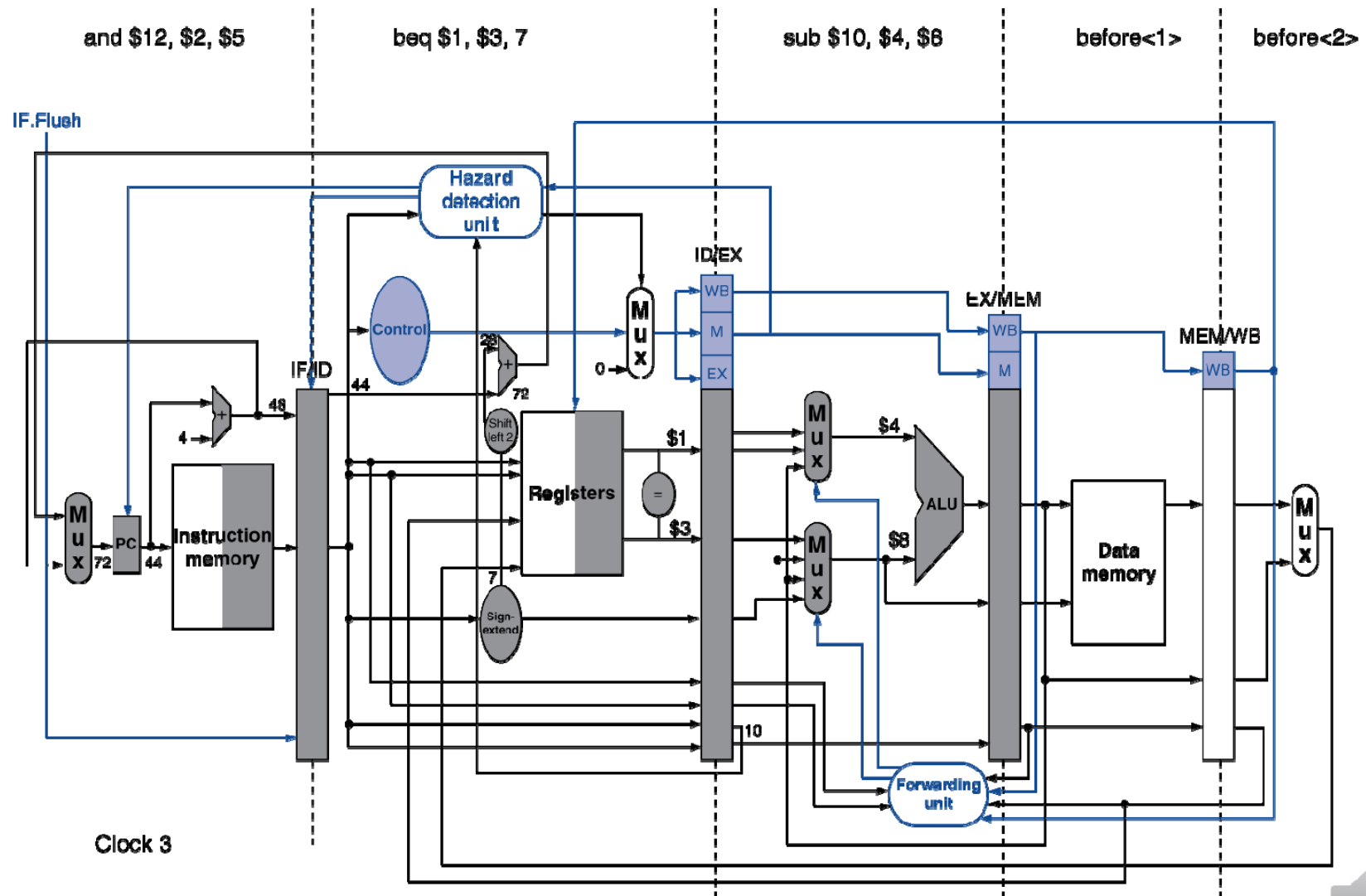
Reducing Branch Delay

- Move hardware to determine outcome to ID stage
 - Target address adder
 - Register comparator
- Example: branch taken

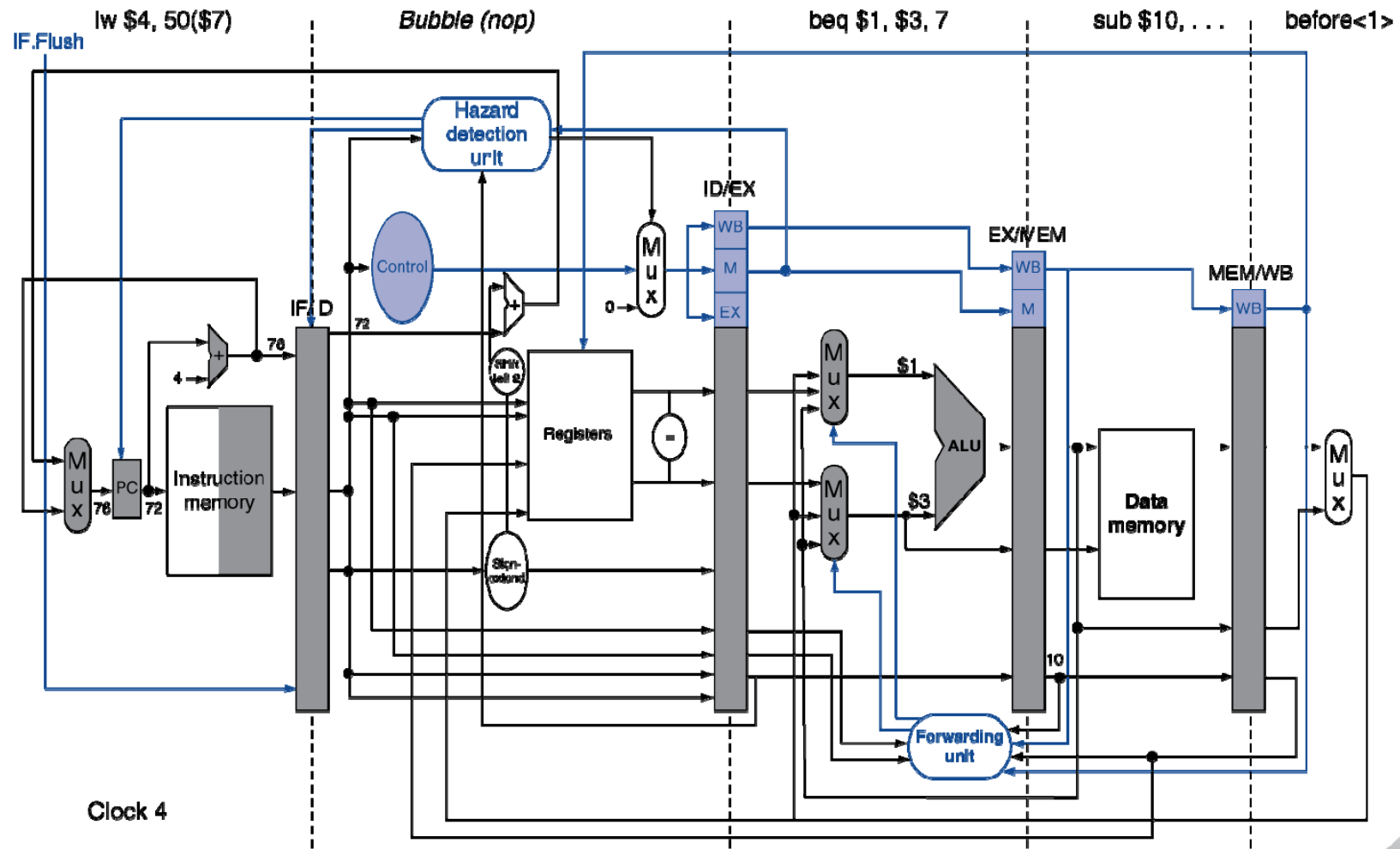
```
36:  sub  $10, $4, $8
40:  beq  $1,  $3,  7
44:  and  $12, $2, $5
48:  or   $13, $2, $6
52:  add  $14, $4, $2
56:  slt  $15, $6, $7
    ...
72:  lw   $4,  50($7)
```



Example: Branch Taken



Example: Branch Taken



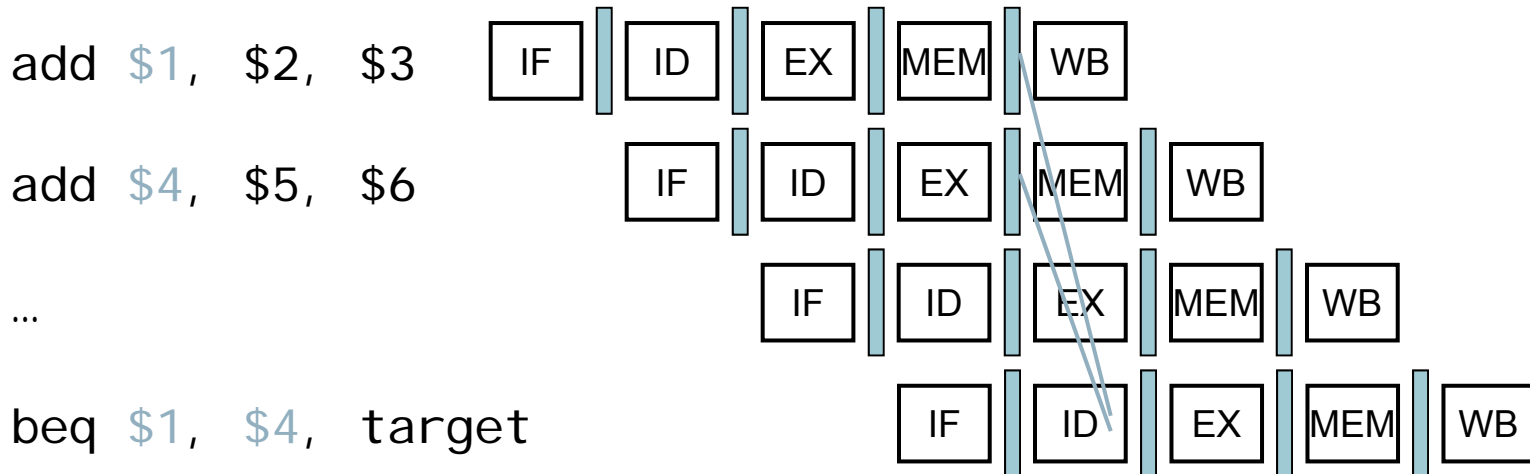
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Data Hazards for Branches

- If a comparison register is a destination of 2nd or 3rd preceding ALU instruction

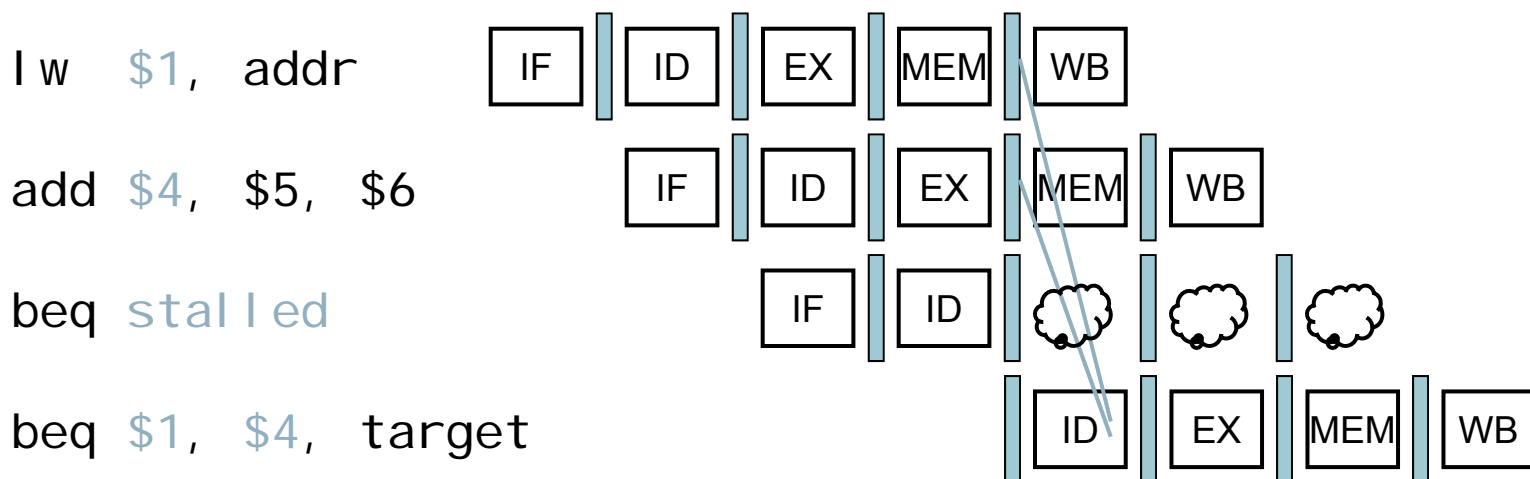


- Can resolve using forwarding



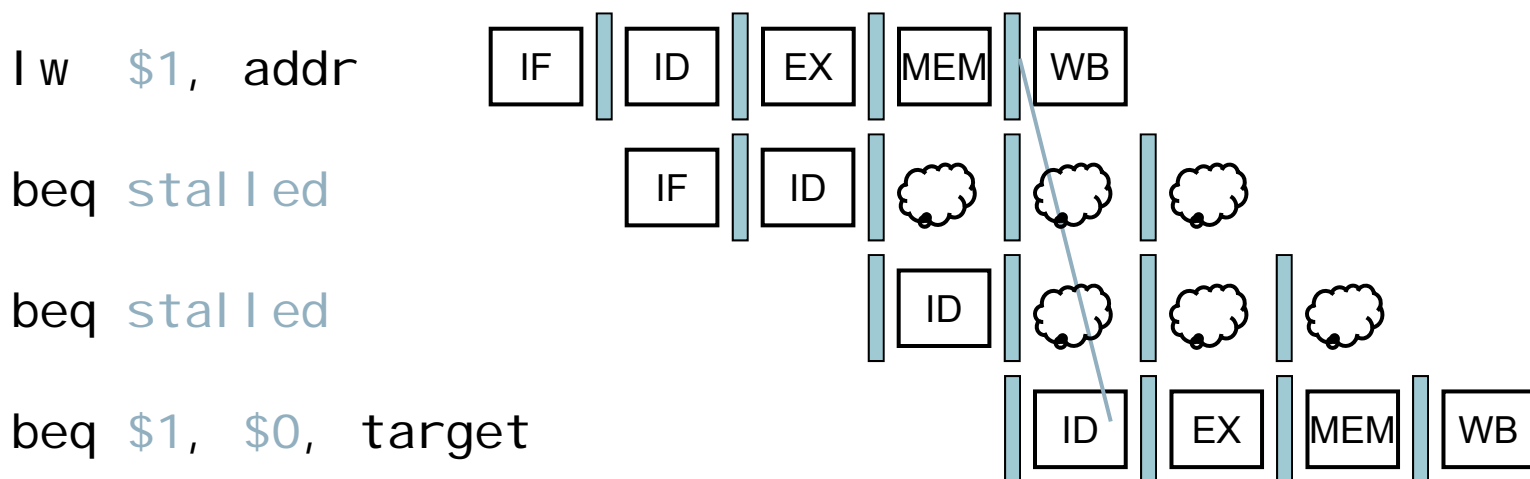
Data Hazards for Branches

- If a comparison register is a destination of preceding ALU instruction or 2nd preceding load instruction
 - Need 1 stall cycle



Data Hazards for Branches

- If a comparison register is a destination of immediately preceding load instruction
 - Need 2 stall cycles



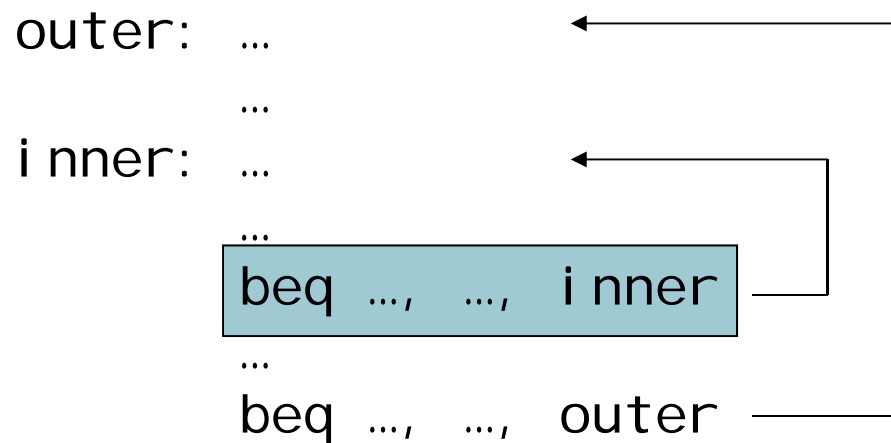
Dynamic Branch Prediction

- In deeper and superscalar pipelines, branch penalty is more significant
- Use dynamic prediction
 - Branch prediction buffer (aka branch history table)
 - Indexed by recent branch instruction addresses
 - Stores outcome (taken/not taken)
 - To execute a branch
 - Check table, expect the same outcome
 - Start fetching from fall-through or target
 - If wrong, flush pipeline and flip prediction



1-Bit Predictor: Shortcoming

- Inner loop branches mispredicted twice!

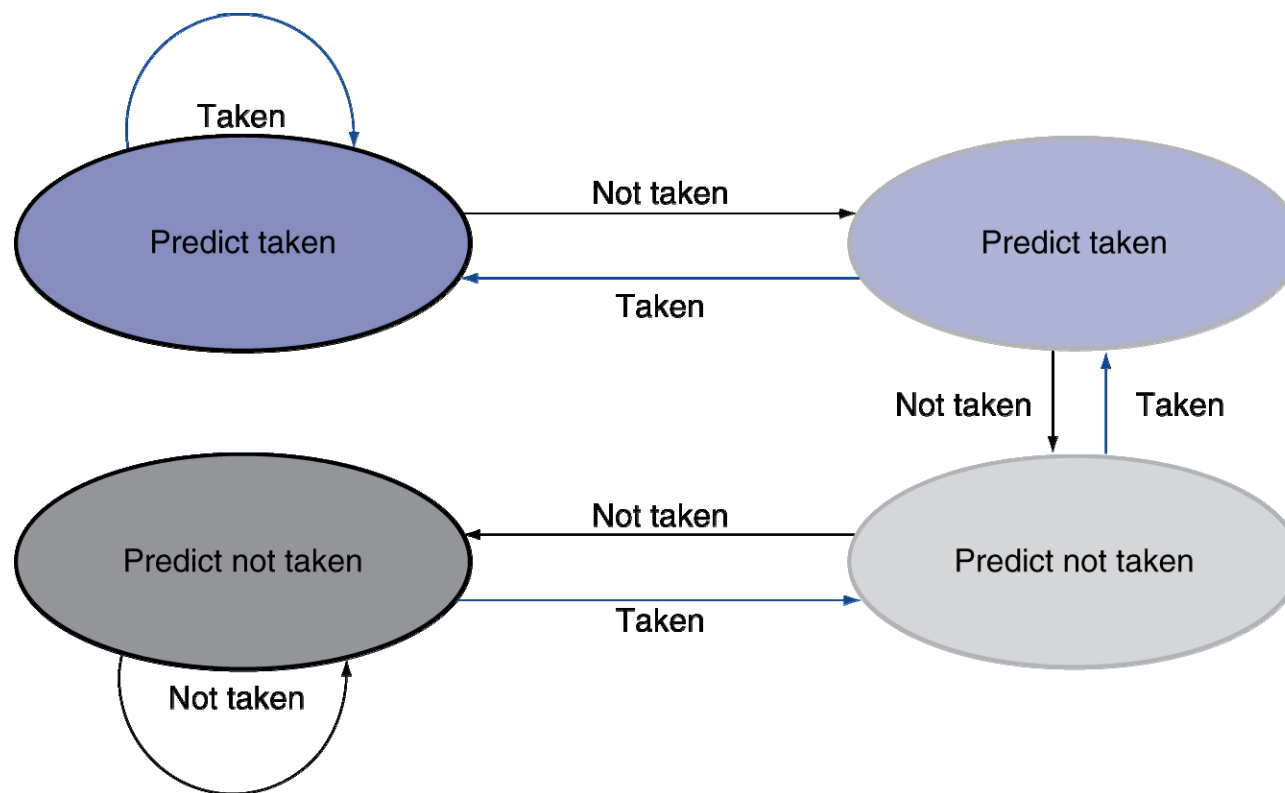


- Mispredict as taken on last iteration of inner loop
- Then mispredict as not taken on first iteration of inner loop next time around



2-Bit Predictor

- Only change prediction on two successive mispredictions



Calculating the Branch Target

- Even with predictor, still need to calculate the target address
 - 1-cycle penalty for a taken branch
- Branch target buffer
 - Cache of target addresses
 - Indexed by PC when instruction fetched
 - If hit and instruction is branch predicted taken, can fetch target immediately



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Exceptions and Interrupts

- “Unexpected” events requiring change in flow of control
 - Different ISAs use the terms differently
- Exception
 - Arises within the CPU
 - e.g., undefined opcode, overflow, syscall, ...
- Interrupt
 - From an external I/O controller
- Dealing with them without sacrificing performance is hard



Handling Exceptions

- In MIPS, exceptions managed by a System Control Coprocessor (CP0)
- Save PC of offending (or interrupted) instruction
 - In MIPS: Exception Program Counter (EPC)
- Save indication of the problem
 - In MIPS: Cause register
 - We'll assume 1-bit
 - 0 for undefined opcode, 1 for overflow
- Jump to handler at 8000 00180



An Alternate Mechanism

- Vectored Interrupts
 - Handler address determined by the cause
- Example:
 - Undefined opcode: C000 0000
 - Overflow: C000 0020
 -: C000 0040
- Instructions either
 - Deal with the interrupt, or
 - Jump to real handler



Handler Actions

- Read cause, and transfer to relevant handler
- Determine action required
- If restartable
 - Take corrective action
 - use EPC to return to program
- Otherwise
 - Terminate program
 - Report error using EPC, cause, ...

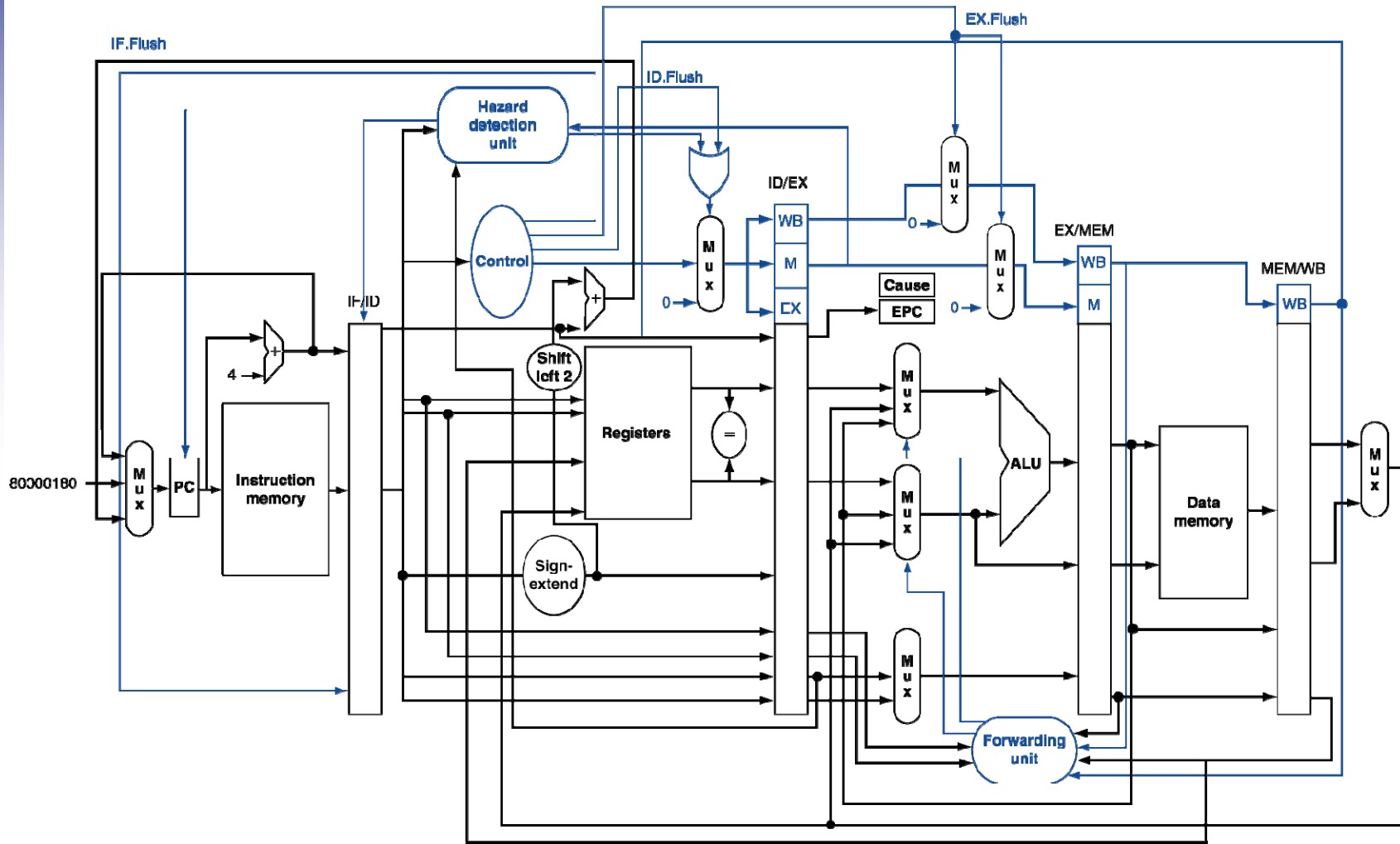


Exceptions in a Pipeline

- Another form of control hazard
- Consider overflow on add in EX stage
add \$1, \$2, \$1
 - Prevent \$1 from being clobbered
 - Complete previous instructions
 - Flush add and subsequent instructions
 - Set Cause and EPC register values
 - Transfer control to handler
- Similar to mispredicted branch
 - Use much of the same hardware



Pipeline with Exceptions



Exception Properties

- Restartable exceptions
 - Pipeline can flush the instruction
 - Handler executes, then returns to the instruction
 - Refetched and executed from scratch
- PC saved in EPC register
 - Identifies causing instruction
 - Actually PC + 4 is saved
 - Handler must adjust



Exception Example

- Exception on `add` in

40	sub	\$11,	\$2,	\$4
44	and	\$12,	\$2,	\$5
48	or	\$13,	\$2,	\$6
4C	add	\$1,	\$2,	\$1
50	sl t	\$15,	\$6,	\$7
54	lw	\$16,	50(\$7)	

...

- Handler

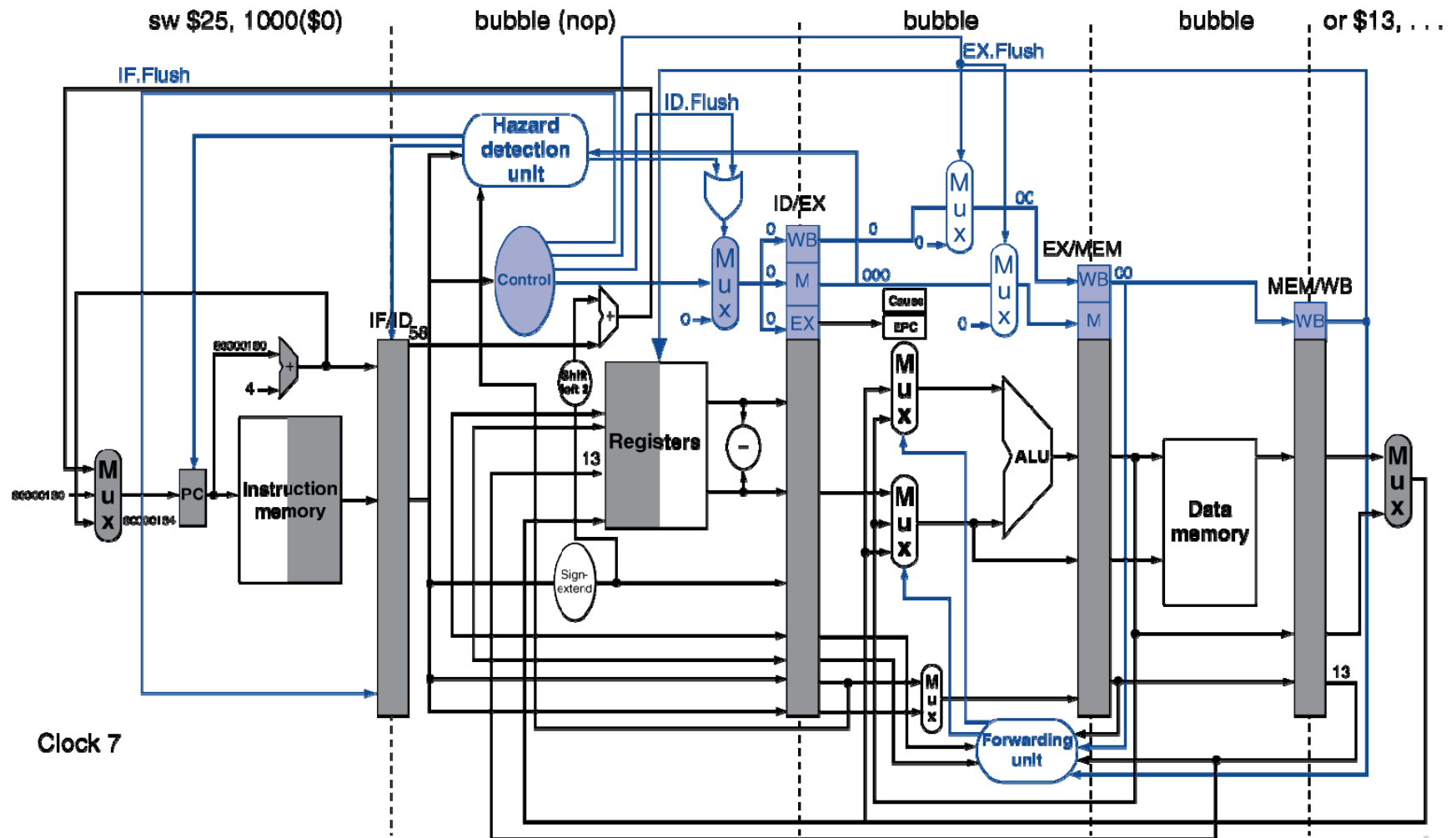
80000180	sw	\$25,	1000(\$0)
80000184	sw	\$26,	1004(\$0)

...





Exception Example



Multiple Exceptions

- Pipelining overlaps multiple instructions
 - Could have multiple exceptions at once
- Simple approach: deal with exception from earliest instruction
 - Flush subsequent instructions
 - “Precise” exceptions
- In complex pipelines
 - Multiple instructions issued per cycle
 - Out-of-order completion
 - Maintaining precise exceptions is difficult!



Imprecise Exceptions

- Just stop pipeline and save state
 - Including exception cause(s)
- Let the handler work out
 - Which instruction(s) had exceptions
 - Which to complete or flush
 - May require “manual” completion
- Simplifies hardware, but more complex handler software
- Not feasible for complex multiple-issue out-of-order pipelines

