

mobility—will allow us to better isolate, identify, and master the key concepts in each area. Note that there are indeed many networked environments in which the network nodes are wireless but not mobile (e.g., wireless home or office networks with stationary workstations and large displays), and that there are limited forms of mobility that do not require wireless links (e.g., a worker who uses a wired laptop at home, shuts down the laptop, drives to work, and attaches the laptop to the company’s wired network). Of course, many of the most exciting networked environments are those in which users are both wireless *and* mobile—for example, a scenario in which a mobile user (say in the back seat of car) maintains a Voice-over-IP call and multiple ongoing TCP connections while racing down the autobahn at 160 kilometers per hour. It is here, at the intersection of wireless and mobility, that we’ll find the most interesting technical challenges!

We’ll begin by illustrating the setting in which we’ll consider wireless communication and mobility—a network in which wireless (and possibly mobile) users are connected into the larger network infrastructure by a wireless link at the network’s edge. We’ll then consider the characteristics of this wireless link in Section 6.2. We include a brief introduction to code division multiple access (CDMA), a shared-medium access protocol that is often used in wireless networks, in Section 6.2. In Section 6.3, we’ll examine the link-level aspects of the IEEE 802.11 (WiFi) wireless LAN standard in some depth; we’ll also say a few words about Bluetooth and other wireless personal area networks. In Section 6.4, we’ll provide an overview of cellular Internet access, including 3G and emerging 4G cellular technologies that provide both voice and high-speed Internet access. In Section 6.5, we’ll turn our attention to mobility, focusing on the problems of locating a mobile user, routing to the mobile user, and “handing off” the mobile user who dynamically moves from one point of attachment to the network to another. We’ll examine how these mobility services are implemented in the mobile IP standard and in GSM, in Sections 6.6 and 6.7, respectively. Finally, we’ll consider the impact of wireless links and mobility on transport-layer protocols and networked applications in Section 6.8.

## 6.1 Introduction

Figure 6.1 shows the setting in which we’ll consider the topics of wireless data communication and mobility. We’ll begin by keeping our discussion general enough to cover a wide range of networks, including both wireless LANs such as IEEE 802.11 and cellular networks such as a 3G network; we’ll drill down into a more detailed discussion of specific wireless architectures in later sections. We can identify the following elements in a wireless network:

- *Wireless hosts.* As in the case of wired networks, hosts are the end-system devices that run applications. A **wireless host** might be a laptop, palmtop, smartphone, or desktop computer. The hosts themselves may or may not be mobile.



## CASE HISTORY

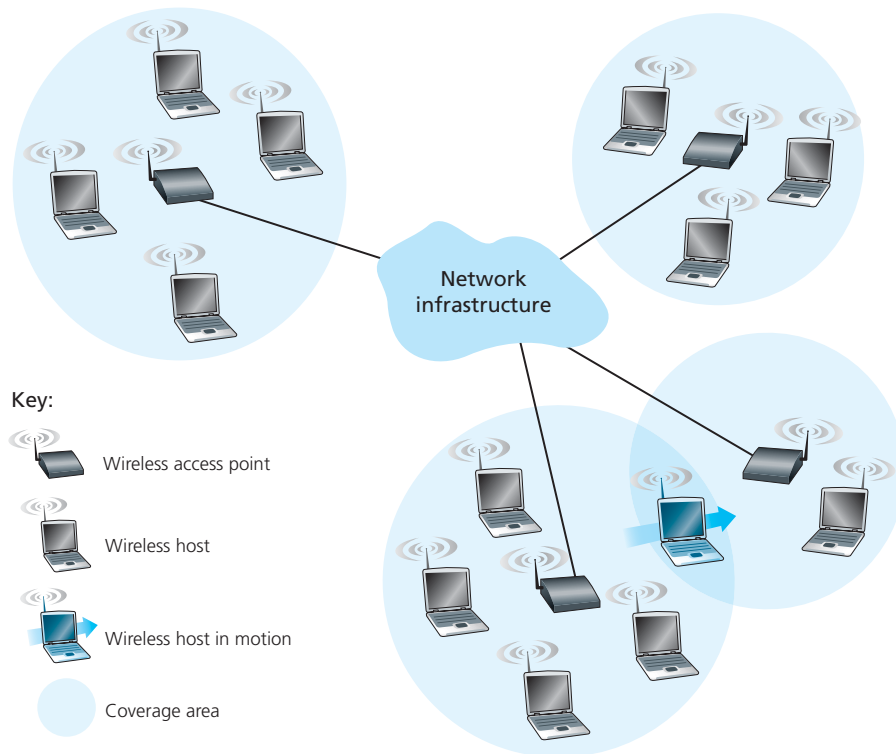
### PUBLIC WIFI ACCESS: COMING SOON TO A LAMP POST NEAR YOU?

WiFi hotspots—public locations where users can find 802.11 wireless access—are becoming increasingly common in hotels, airports, and cafés around the world. Most college campuses offer ubiquitous wireless access, and it’s hard to find a hotel that doesn’t offer wireless Internet access.

Over the past decade a number of cities have designed, deployed, and operated municipal WiFi networks. The vision of providing ubiquitous WiFi access to the community as a public service (much like streetlights)—helping to bridge the digital divide by providing Internet access to all citizens and to promote economic development—is compelling. Many cities around the world, including Philadelphia, Toronto, Hong Kong, Minneapolis, London, and Auckland, have plans to provide ubiquitous wireless within the city, or have already done so to varying degrees. The goal in Philadelphia was to “turn Philadelphia into the nation’s largest WiFi hotspot and help to improve education, bridge the digital divide, enhance neighborhood development, and reduce the costs of government.” The ambitious program—an agreement between the city, Wireless Philadelphia (a nonprofit entity), and the Internet Service Provider Earthlink—built an operational network of 802.11b hotspots on streetlamp pole arms and traffic control devices that covered 80 percent of the city. But financial and operational concerns caused the network to be sold to a group of private investors in 2008, who later sold the network back to the city in 2010. Other cities, such as Minneapolis, Toronto, Hong Kong, and Auckland, have had success with smaller-scale efforts.

The fact that 802.11 networks operate in the unlicensed spectrum (and hence can be deployed without purchasing expensive spectrum use rights) would seem to make them financially attractive. However, 802.11 access points (see Section 6.3) have much shorter ranges than 3G cellular base stations (see Section 6.4), requiring a larger number of deployed endpoints to cover the same geographic region. Cellular data networks providing Internet access, on the other hand, operate in the licensed spectrum. Cellular providers pay billions of dollars for spectrum access rights for their networks, making cellular data networks a business rather than municipal undertaking.

- *Wireless links.* A host connects to a base station (defined below) or to another wireless host through a **wireless communication link**. Different wireless link technologies have different transmission rates and can transmit over different distances. Figure 6.2 shows two key characteristics (coverage area and link rate) of the more popular wireless network standards. (The figure is only meant to provide a rough idea of these characteristics. For example, some of these types of networks are only now being deployed, and some link rates can increase or decrease beyond the values shown depending on distance, channel conditions, and the number of users in the wireless network.) We’ll cover these standards

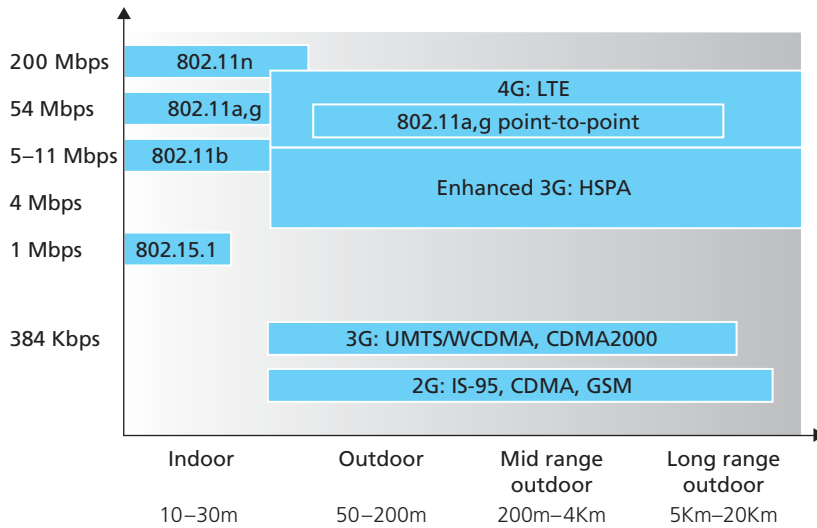


**Figure 6.1** ♦ Elements of a wireless network

later in the first half of this chapter; we'll also consider other wireless link characteristics (such as their bit error rates and the causes of bit errors) in Section 6.2.

In Figure 6.1, wireless links connect wireless hosts located at the edge of the network into the larger network infrastructure. We hasten to add that wireless links are also sometimes used *within* a network to connect routers, switches, and other network equipment. However, our focus in this chapter will be on the use of wireless communication at the network edge, as it is here that many of the most exciting technical challenges, and most of the growth, are occurring.

- **Base station.** The **base station** is a key part of the wireless network infrastructure. Unlike the wireless host and wireless link, a base station has no obvious counterpart in a wired network. A base station is responsible for sending and receiving data (e.g., packets) to and from a wireless host that is associated with that base station. A base station will often be responsible for coordinating the transmission of multiple wireless hosts with which it is associated. When we say a wireless host is “associated” with a base station, we mean that (1) the host is within the wireless communication



**Figure 6.2** ♦ Link characteristics of selected wireless network standards

distance of the base station, and (2) the host uses that base station to relay data between it (the host) and the larger network. **Cell towers** in cellular networks and **access points** in 802.11 wireless LANs are examples of base stations.

In Figure 6.1, the base station is connected to the larger network (e.g., the Internet, corporate or home network, or telephone network), thus functioning as a link-layer relay between the wireless host and the rest of the world with which the host communicates.

Hosts associated with a base station are often referred to as operating in **infrastructure mode**, since all traditional network services (e.g., address assignment and routing) are provided by the network to which a host is connected via the base station. In **ad hoc networks**, wireless hosts have no such infrastructure with which to connect. In the absence of such infrastructure, the hosts themselves must provide for services such as routing, address assignment, DNS-like name translation, and more.

When a mobile host moves beyond the range of one base station and into the range of another, it will change its point of attachment into the larger network (i.e., change the base station with which it is associated)—a process referred to as **handoff**. Such mobility raises many challenging questions. If a host can move, how does one find the mobile host's current location in the network so that data can be forwarded to that mobile host? How is addressing performed, given that a host can be in one of many possible locations? If the host moves *during* a TCP

connection or phone call, how is data routed so that the connection continues uninterrupted? These and many (many!) other questions make wireless and mobile networking an area of exciting networking research.

- *Network infrastructure.* This is the larger network with which a wireless host may wish to communicate.

Having discussed the “pieces” of a wireless network, we note that these pieces can be combined in many different ways to form different types of wireless networks. You may find a taxonomy of these types of wireless networks useful as you read on in this chapter, or read/learn more about wireless networks beyond this book. At the highest level we can classify wireless networks according to two criteria: (i) whether a packet in the wireless network crosses exactly *one wireless hop* or *multiple wireless hops*, and (ii) whether there is *infrastructure* such as a base station in the network:

- *Single-hop, infrastructure-based.* These networks have a base station that is connected to a larger wired network (e.g., the Internet). Furthermore, all communication is between this base station and a wireless host over a single wireless hop. The 802.11 networks you use in the classroom, café, or library; and the 3G cellular data networks that we will learn about shortly all fall in this category.
- *Single-hop, infrastructure-less.* In these networks, there is no base station that is connected to a wireless network. However, as we will see, one of the nodes in this single-hop network may coordinate the transmissions of the other nodes. Bluetooth networks (which we will study in Section 6.3.6) and 802.11 networks in ad hoc mode are single-hop, infrastructure-less networks.
- *Multi-hop, infrastructure-based.* In these networks, a base station is present that is wired to the larger network. However, some wireless nodes may have to relay their communication through other wireless nodes in order to communicate via the base station. Some wireless sensor networks and so-called **wireless mesh networks** fall in this category.
- *Multi-hop, infrastructure-less.* There is no base station in these networks, and nodes may have to relay messages among several other nodes in order to reach a destination. Nodes may also be mobile, with connectivity changing among nodes—a class of networks known as **mobile ad hoc networks (MANETs)**. If the mobile nodes are vehicles, the network is a **vehicular ad hoc network (VANET)**. As you might imagine, the development of protocols for such networks is challenging and is the subject of much ongoing research.

In this chapter, we’ll mostly confine ourselves to single-hop networks, and then mostly to infrastructure-based networks.

Let's now dig deeper into the technical challenges that arise in wireless and mobile networks. We'll begin by first considering the individual wireless link, deferring our discussion of mobility until later in this chapter.

## 6.2 Wireless Links and Network Characteristics

Let's begin by considering a simple wired network, say a home network, with a wired Ethernet switch (see Section 5.4) interconnecting the hosts. If we replace the wired Ethernet with a wireless 802.11 network, a wireless network interface would replace the host's wired Ethernet interface, and an access point would replace the Ethernet switch, but virtually no changes would be needed at the network layer or above. This suggests that we focus our attention on the link layer when looking for important differences between wired and wireless networks. Indeed, we can find a number of important differences between a wired link and a wireless link:

- *Decreasing signal strength.* Electromagnetic radiation attenuates as it passes through matter (e.g., a radio signal passing through a wall). Even in free space, the signal will disperse, resulting in decreased signal strength (sometimes referred to as **path loss**) as the distance between sender and receiver increases.
- *Interference from other sources.* Radio sources transmitting in the same frequency band will interfere with each other. For example, 2.4 GHz wireless phones and 802.11b wireless LANs transmit in the same frequency band. Thus, the 802.11b wireless LAN user talking on a 2.4 GHz wireless phone can expect that neither the network nor the phone will perform particularly well. In addition to interference from transmitting sources, electromagnetic noise within the environment (e.g., a nearby motor, a microwave) can result in interference.
- *Multipath propagation.* **Multipath propagation** occurs when portions of the electromagnetic wave reflect off objects and the ground, taking paths of different lengths between a sender and receiver. This results in the blurring of the received signal at the receiver. Moving objects between the sender and receiver can cause multipath propagation to change over time.

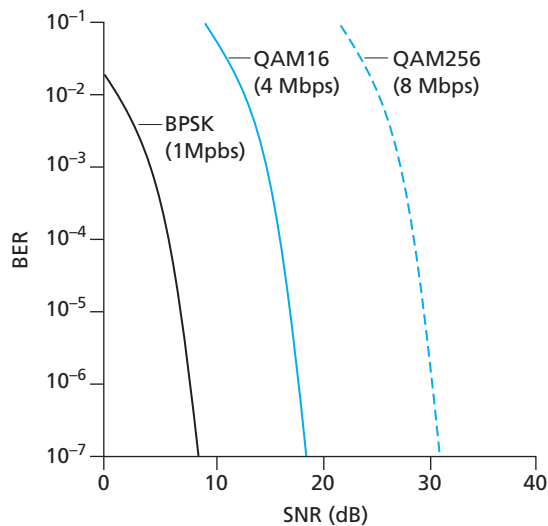
For a detailed discussion of wireless channel characteristics, models, and measurements, see [Anderson 1995].

The discussion above suggests that bit errors will be more common in wireless links than in wired links. For this reason, it is perhaps not surprising that wireless link protocols (such as the 802.11 protocol we'll examine in the following section) employ not only powerful CRC error detection codes, but also link-level reliable-data-transfer protocols that retransmit corrupted frames.

Having considered the impairments that can occur on a wireless channel, let's next turn our attention to the host receiving the wireless signal. This host receives an electromagnetic signal that is a combination of a degraded form of the original signal transmitted by the sender (degraded due to the attenuation and multipath propagation effects that we discussed above, among others) and background noise in the environment. The **signal-to-noise ratio (SNR)** is a relative measure of the strength of the received signal (i.e., the information being transmitted) and this noise. The SNR is typically measured in units of decibels (dB), a unit of measure that some think is used by electrical engineers primarily to confuse computer scientists. The SNR, measured in dB, is twenty times the ratio of the base-10 logarithm of the amplitude of the received signal to the amplitude of the noise. For our purposes here, we need only know that a larger SNR makes it easier for the receiver to extract the transmitted signal from the background noise.

Figure 6.3 (adapted from [Holland 2001]) shows the bit error rate (BER)—roughly speaking, the probability that a transmitted bit is received in error at the receiver—versus the SNR for three different modulation techniques for encoding information for transmission on an idealized wireless channel. The theory of modulation and coding, as well as signal extraction and BER, is well beyond the scope of this text (see [Schwartz 1980] for a discussion of these topics). Nonetheless, Figure 6.3 illustrates several physical-layer characteristics that are important in understanding higher-layer wireless communication protocols:

- *For a given modulation scheme, the higher the SNR, the lower the BER.* Since a sender can increase the SNR by increasing its transmission power, a sender



**Figure 6.3** ♦ Bit error rate, transmission rate, and SNR

can decrease the probability that a frame is received in error by increasing its transmission power. Note, however, that there is arguably little practical gain in increasing the power beyond a certain threshold, say to decrease the BER from  $10^{-12}$  to  $10^{-13}$ . There are also *disadvantages* associated with increasing the transmission power: More energy must be expended by the sender (an important concern for battery-powered mobile users), and the sender's transmissions are more likely to interfere with the transmissions of another sender (see Figure 6.4(b)).

- *For a given SNR, a modulation technique with a higher bit transmission rate (whether in error or not) will have a higher BER.* For example, in Figure 6.3, with an SNR of 10 dB, BPSK modulation with a transmission rate of 1 Mbps has a BER of less than  $10^{-7}$ , while with QAM16 modulation with a transmission rate of 4 Mbps, the BER is  $10^{-1}$ , far too high to be practically useful. However, with an SNR of 20 dB, QAM16 modulation has a transmission rate of 4 Mbps and a BER of  $10^{-7}$ , while BPSK modulation has a transmission rate of only 1 Mbps and a BER that is so low as to be (literally) “off the charts.” If one can tolerate a BER of  $10^{-7}$ , the higher transmission rate offered by QAM16 would make it the preferred modulation technique in this situation. These considerations give rise to the final characteristic, described next.
- *Dynamic selection of the physical-layer modulation technique can be used to adapt the modulation technique to channel conditions.* The SNR (and hence the BER) may change as a result of mobility or due to changes in the environment. Adaptive modulation and coding are used in cellular data systems and in the 802.11 WiFi and 3G cellular data networks that we'll study in Sections 6.3 and 6.4. This allows, for example, the selection of a modulation technique that provides the highest transmission rate possible subject to a constraint on the BER, for given channel characteristics.

A higher and time-varying bit error rate is not the only difference between a wired and wireless link. Recall that in the case of wired broadcast links, all nodes receive the transmissions from all other nodes. In the case of wireless links, the situation is not as simple, as shown in Figure 6.4. Suppose that Station A is transmitting to Station B. Suppose also that Station C is transmitting to Station B. With the so-called **hidden terminal problem**, physical obstructions in the environment (for example, a mountain or a building) may prevent A and C from hearing each other's transmissions, even though A's and C's transmissions are indeed interfering at the destination, B. This is shown in Figure 6.4(a). A second scenario that results in undetectable collisions at the receiver results from the **fading** of a signal's strength as it propagates through the wireless medium. Figure 6.4(b) illustrates the case where A and C are placed such that their signals are not strong enough to detect each other's transmissions, yet their signals *are* strong enough to interfere with each other at station B. As we'll see in Section 6.3, the hidden terminal problem and fading