Simulation for the Uithoflijn

**Problem description**

Our project concerns the operational performance of the soon-to-be-constructed Uithoflijn, connecting the center of Utrecht with the Utrecht University campus.

The line consists of nine stops: *Centraal Station (CS), Vaartsche Rijn, Galgenwaard, Kromme Rijn, Padualaan, Heidelberglaan, UMC, WKZ, P+R De Uithof*. Trams run in both directions (i.e. CS -> P+R and P+R -> CS respectively).

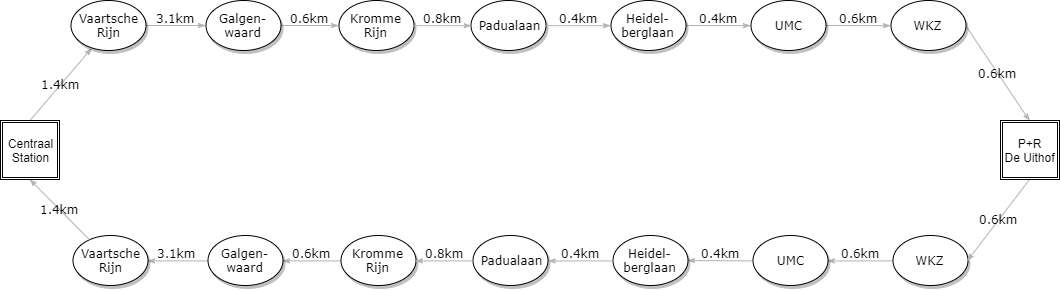


Figure : Transportation Map

*CS* and *P+R* are the line’s endstations, where there is a daily timetable spanning from 06:00 to 21:30. The schedule’s frequency is every 15 minutes for the first hour (i.e. 06:00-07:00) and after 19:00. During the peak hours (i.e. 07:00-19:00) there is a higher frequency of every *f* minutes. Assuming an end-to-end driving time of 17 minutes and a turnaround time of *q minutes*, these frequencies determine the scheduled departures at each endstation as follows:

* .
* .

For safety reasons, there is a 40-second time interval trams have to respect, so a tram cannot depart from a station before 40 seconds from the time of the last departure.

Moreover, trams can enter or withdraw from the line only at *P+R*. At each endstation, there are switches for changing directions, which block for *switch\_delay* seconds after traversing them. All trams have a fixed capacity of 420passengers.

In the case of a tram arriving at a station before the next scheduled departure, the tram has to wait and utilize this time to (dis)embark passengers.

**Research Questions**

1. Which are the feasible frequencies of the tram?
2. What is the maximum amount of passengers the line can handle?
3. What measures do you recommend to improve the operational performance?

As these questions are difficult to answer by analysis alone, we have developed a simulation of the Uithoflijn, based on techniques of *discrete-event* *simulation*.

The implementation is based on an abstract model of the actual system (see *Simulation Model*), which was designed with the help of given data on a corresponding bus route that operates in a similar area and prognostic data from the transportation company (see *Input Analysis*).

Another source of information was a group interview with domain expert Marcel van Kooten Niekerk from the Qbuzz company, which gave us insight on designing our model (see *Appendix: Interview Minutes*).

The resulting system enables us to simulate the tram line in a highly parametric way and gives us the ability for further analysis (see *Output analysis*). In order to validate our model, we run our simulation against simpler artificial data (see *Validation*).

**Assumptions**

In order to manage the complexity of the system and make it possible to provide a bug-free simulation system, we have made the following assumptions:

* There are no unexpected failures to any part of the tram line (line tracks, tram engines, etc…).
* The change of the tram drivers is executed immediately without breaks, thus we can totally ignore any delay relating to that.
* The simulation is not affected by the weather conditions.
* All passengers disembark on arrival at an endstation.
* Every passenger wants to embark on the first tram that he encounteres.
* All trams have the same capacity
* The 40-second safety measure at each station ensures with 100% guarantee that there will be no tram collision between two stops.
* The arrival of the passengers on the stops of the tram line can be adequately modeled as a poisson process of a varying rate λ, which changes every 15 minutes.

**Analysis**

**Simulation Model**

**Events**

As we conduct *discrete-event simulation*, we need to a meaningful set of events that will drive the simulation progress, as they will capture the most significant changes in the state of the system.

The events we propose are the following:

* ***END\_SIM***The simulation has come to an end.
* ***LAMBDA\_CHANGE***The rate λ, at which passengers arrive at the tram stops, changes .  
  (i.e. at this time, the flow of passengers is increased or decreased)
* ***PASSENGER\_ARRIVAL***  
  A passenger arrives at a tram stop.
* ***TRAM\_EXPECTED\_ARRIVAL***A tram has reached a station, but may need to wait for other trams to depart first, resulting in subsequent trams queueing up on the tram line.
* ***TRAM\_ARRIVAL***A tram has progressed through the waiting queue of a stop and has arrived at the station’s platform, where passengers can start (dis)embarkation. At this point in time, there will be a certain delay, named *dwell\_time*.
* ***TRAM\_EXPECTED\_DEPARTURE***A tram is ready to depart for the next stop, but may need to wait before doing so, for safety reasons (40-second rule) or due to the endstation switches being blocked.
* ***TRAM\_DEPARTURE***A tram finally departs for the next stop, which will take a certain time, named *driving\_time*. If there are any trams enqueued on the tram line, the next one can proceed to the station’s platform.
* ***TRAM\_DESTROY***A signal for trams to start withdrawing at *P+R*, when switching from peak hours to off-peak hours, as less trams are required to continute operating until the end of the day.

**Initialization**

Initially, only a subset of the available trams will start operating, and all other trams will be spawned at 07:00 (start of the peak hours). Then, at 19:00 (end of the peak hours) the majority of the trams will withdraw. To spawn a tram, we enqueue it at *P+R*. At the beginning of the simulation, we schedule all the changes of the λ rate (*LAMBDA\_RATE),* the initial trams divided into those that will begin at *P+R* and those that will go straight to Centraal Station (*TRAM\_EXPECTED\_ARRIVAL*), the rest of the trams that will spawn one hour later (*TRAM\_EXPECTED\_ARRIVAL*), the first passengers at each stop (*PASSENGER\_ARRIVAL*), the withdrawal of the trams at the end of the peak hours (*TRAM\_DESTROY*) and the end of the simulation (*END\_SIM*).

**Event Graph**

Below is the *event graph* of our model, in which nodes represent types of events and edges represent scheduling capability (i.e. an arrow from A to B means events of type A can schedule events of type B). Dashed lines indicate that an event may *immediately* schedule another event, without any time delay.

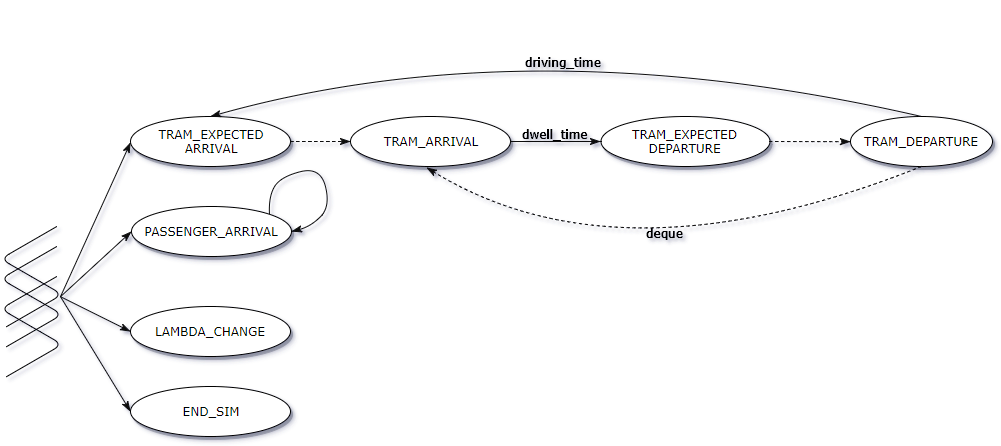


Figure Event graph

**State**

Events will eventually change the overall state of the system. Therefore, the state of the simulation will have to capture any properties of the system that vary over time, in contrast to parameters of a particular execution, which are invariant as time progresses. The state consists of the following components:

* t : current time
* λ : current arrival rate of passengers (one for each stop)
* trams : a list of all the trams, each consisting of the following:
  + capacity : number of passengers onboard
  + [nonstop] : station to go straight to
* stops : a list of all the stops, each consisting of the following:
  + capacity : number of passengers waiting at the stop
  + last\_departure : time of the last train’s departure
  + arrivals : queue of the time each passenger has arrived
  + to\_destroy : number of trams to withdraw
  + [parked\_tram] : the tram currently (dis)embarking passengers

**Performance measures**

In order to evaluate and compare different configurations of the system, we have defined the following important system metrics:

1. *Punctuality*Overall panctuality of the tram operation, measured from the deviation of the actual departure times from the prearranged schedule (only at the endstations). Formally,

We care about the *average* and *maximum* departure delay, as well as the percentage of trams that experienced a departure delay of more than 1 minute. Formally,

1. *Passengers’ waiting time*Amount of time passengers have waited to board the tram, since their arrival at the stop. Formally,

We care about the *average* and *maximum* waiting times, as well as the percentage of passengers that waited more than minutes, where is the current timetable frequency. Formally,

1. *Stop congestion*Overall congestion of each stop, measured from the *average* number of passengers waiting at the same time. Formally,

**Event handlers**

The handling of each event is now given as pseudocode, in order to demonstrate the most significant changes events make to the current state.

*# END\_SIM*

**def** handle(state):

state.end\_simulation := True

*# LAMBDA\_CHANGE*

**def** handle(state):

state.λ := next λ

*# PASSENGER\_ARRIVAL*

**def** handle(state, passenger, stop):

**if** (tram = stop.parked\_tram):

tram.embark(self)

UPDATE

**else**:

stop.enter(passenger)

UPDATE

inter\_arrival := generate passenger\_arrival(stop)

SCHEDULE new PASSENGER\_ARRIVAL(now + inter\_arrival, stop)

*# TRAM\_DESTROY*

**def** handle(state, trams\_to\_withdraw):

state.stops["P+R"].to\_destroy := trams\_to\_withdraw

*# TRAM\_EXPRECTED\_ARRIVAL*

**def** handle(state, tram, stop):

**if** tram.nonstop:

**return**

**if** stop.parked\_tram == None:

SCHEDULE new TRAM\_ARRIVAL(now, tram, stop)

**else**:

**if** stop.to\_destroy > 0:

stop.to\_destroy--

delete tram

**else**:

stop.enqueue(tram)

*# TRAM\_ARRIVAL*

**def** handle(state, tram, stop):

stop.parked\_tram = tram

**if** tram.nonstop == stop:

tram.nonstop := None

**if** tram.nonstop:

SCHEDULE new TRAM\_EXPECTED\_DEPARTURE(now, tram, stop)

**else**:

p\_out\_percentage := GENERATE passenger\_exit\_percentage(self.stop)

p\_out := tram.capacity \* p\_out\_percentage

tram.disembark(p\_out)

p\_in := min(420 - tram.capacity, stop.capacity)

tram.embark(p\_in) -> update passenger\_waiting\_time

UPDATE

dwell\_time := GENERATE dwell\_time(p\_in, p\_out)

safety\_time := now - (stop.last\_departure + 40sec)

**if** stop == endstation:

next\_schedule := state.timetable[stop].next\_schedule()

seconds\_late := now - next\_schedule

UPDATE

**if** next\_schedule > now:

wait\_for\_schedule := next\_schedule - now

**else**:

wait\_for\_schedule := 0

delay := max(safety\_time, dwell\_time, wait\_for\_schedule)

SCHEDULE new TRAM\_EXPECTED\_DEPARTURE(now + delay, tram, stop)

*# TRAM\_EXPECTED\_DEPARTURE*

**def** handle(state, tram, source, target):

source.parked\_tram := None

dwell\_inter := GENERATE dwell\_time(intermediate\_passengers)

dwell\_switch := source.use\_switches()  
 delay := dwell\_inter + dwell\_switch

SCHEDULE new TRAM\_DEPARTURE(now + delay, tram, source, target)

*# TRAM\_DEPARTURE*

**def** handle(state, tram, source, target):

source.last\_departure := now

dt := GENERATE driving\_time(source, target)

SCHEDULE new TRAM\_EXPECTED\_ARRIVAL(dt, tram, target)

**if** (next\_tram = source.queue.pop()):

SCHEDULE new TRAM\_ARRIVAL(now, next\_tram, source)

**Input Analysis**

**Modelling of input data**

**Choice and motivation for applied distributions**

**Output Analysis**

**Questions answered by the experiments**

**Investigated scenarios**

**#runs**

**Tables**

**Graphs**

**Observations from tables/graphs**

**Statistical analysis**

**Compare interesting scenarios (>= 10), using confidence intervals**

**EXTRA: Comparison with a standard**

**EXTRA: All pairwise combinations**

**EXTRA: Ranking and selection**

**Validation**

**Conclusions**

**Appendix: Interview minutes**

The meeting with a domain expert from the Qbuzz company validated some of our assumptions and certainly aided us on important decisions of our modelling process, as well as provided us with hard constraints on the actual operation of the tram line.

Regarding some sane assumptions we can make in our simulation:

* No failures anywhere in the tram line.
* No driver breaks or changes, everything is ideally done in zero time.

Regarding the operational aspects of the tram line we concluded the following facts:

* Simulation begins at 6 a.m. and runs for the whole day until 10 p. m.
* There is a frequency of 15 minutes during the off-peak hours (06:00-07:00 and 19:00-22:00) and parametric frequenct of minutes during the peak hours (07:00-19:00).
* The first schedules at both endstations must be absolutely satisfied, i.e. the first tram has to leave no later than 06:00.
* The last schedules at both endstations should not be delays, i.e. no tram departure after 21:30.
* Trams can only pop-up at the *P+R* station and only during the start of the simulation and during the switch from off-peak to peak hours (07:00).
* Tram can only withdraw from the *P+R* station during the end of the simulation and during the switch from peak to off-peak hours (19:00).
* There should be a 40-sec safety interval between trams, which is only asserted at the stations and not in between.
* The turnaround time is at least 3 minutes, but includes the .

Regarding the endstations’ layout, we were given a simple explanation of the switch mechanism that takes place, as shown in the following picture:

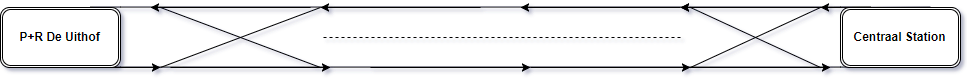


Figure Endstation layout

Finally, there are 2 possible models of dwell times at the stations (values in seconds):

1. *Non-stochastic option*

where is the number of passengers that board the tram and is the number of passengers that disembark.

1. *Stochastic option*

which is drawn from a γ-distribution with shape parameter and minimum value .