

# Underlying shortest paths in timetables

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**Abstract:** We introduce methods to speed-up optimal connection queries in timetables based on pre-computing paths that are worth to follow. We present a very fast but space consuming method *USP-OR* which we enhance to considerably decrease the size of the preprocessed data while still achieving speed-ups up to 6 against time-dependent Dijkstra's algorithm implemented with Fibonacci heap priority queue.

**Keywords:** optimal connection, timetable, Dijkstra's algorithm, underlying shortest paths

## 1 Introduction

We consider a problem of looking for an optimal connection (from  $a$  at time  $t$  to  $b \rightarrow c_{(a,t,b)}^*$ ) in timetables on which we carried out some pre-processing. We define **timetable** simply as a set of **elementary connections**, which are quadruples  $(x, y, p, q)$  meaning that a train departs from **city**  $x$  at time  $p$  and arrives to city  $y$  at time  $q$ . A **connection** is simply a valid sequence of elementary connections which may include also some waiting in visited cities. We also define an **underlying graph** ( $ug_T$ ) of the timetable  $T$  whose nodes are the cities and there is an arc  $(x, y) \iff$  some el. connection  $(x, y, p, q) \in T$ .

Place		Time	
From	To	Departure	Arrival
A	B	10:00	10:45
B	C	11:00	11:30
B	C	11:30	12:10
B	A	11:20	12:30
C	A	11:45	12:15

Table 1: An example of a timetable.

Finally, we define the **underlying shortest path** (USP) to be every path  $p$  in  $ug_T$  such that for some optimal connection  $c_{(a,t,b)}^*$ :

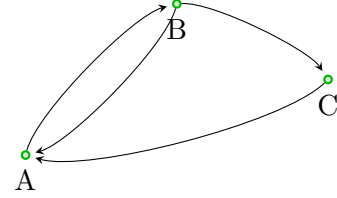


Figure 1: An underlying graph of the timetable 1.

$path(c_{(a,t,b)}^*) = p$ , where function *path* simply extracts the sequence of cities visited by the connection (see picture 2).

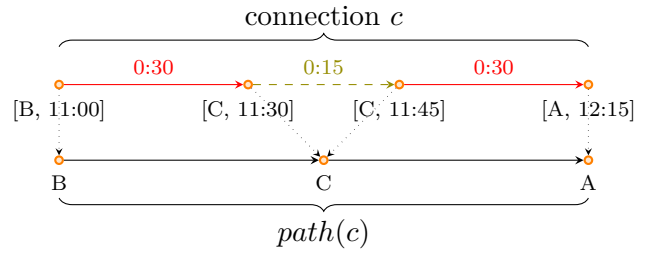


Figure 2: The *path* function applied on a connection to get the underlying path.

## 2 Approaches

### 2.1 USP-OR

Our first method, called *USP-OR* (**USP** oracle), is based on pre-computing USPs between every pair of cities. Then, upon a query from  $x$  to  $y$  at time  $t$  we consider one by one the computed USPs between  $x$  and  $y$  and perform a reverse operation to the *path* function - *expand*( $p$ ) where  $p$  is an USP. The *expand* function simply follows the sequence of cities in  $p$  and from each of them it takes the first available el. connection to the next one, thus constructing one by one a connection from  $x$  to  $y$ .

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**Algorithm 1** *USP-OR* query**Input**

- timetable  $T$
- OC query  $(x, t, y)$

**Pre-computed**

- $\forall x, y$  : set of USPs between  $x$  and  $y$  ( $usps(x, y)$ )

**Algorithm**

```

 $c^* = null$ 
for all  $p \in usps_{x,y}$  do
   $c = Expand(T, p, t)$ 
   $c^* = \text{better out of } c^* \text{ and } c$ 
end for

```

**Output**

- connection  $c$

Define an elementary connection  $e_1$  to **overtake**  $e_2 \iff depart(e_1) > depart(e_2)$  and  $arrive(e_1) < arrive(e_2)$  [Delling and Wagner, 2009]. If the timetable  $T$  has no overtaking el. connections, the *USP-OR* algorithm returns exact answers, which can be easily proved. The table 2 summarizes the parameters of *USP-OR* based on the following parameters of the timetable:

- $\tau$  - the average number of different USPs between pairs of cities - the **USP coefficient**
- $\gamma$  - the average size (i.e. number of el. conn.) of optimal connections - the **OC radius**
- $\delta$  - the **density** of  $T$  defined by  $\frac{m}{n}$  - number of arcs of  $ug_T$  divided by number of cities
- $h$  - the **height** of the timetable - the maximal number of events (i.e. arrival or departure of el. conn.) in a city

<i>USP-OR</i>	guaranteed	$\tau = \mathcal{O}(1),$ $\gamma \leq \sqrt{n},$ $\delta \leq \log n$
<i>prep</i>	$\mathcal{O}(hn^2(\log n + \delta))$	$\mathcal{O}(hn^2 \log n)$
<i>size</i>	$\mathcal{O}(\tau n^2 \gamma)$	$\mathcal{O}(n^{2.5})$
<i>qtime</i>	avg. $\mathcal{O}(\tau \gamma)$	avg. $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n})$
<i>stretch</i>	1	1

Table 2: The summary of the *USP-OR* algorithm parameters.

The value of  $\tau$  for our datasets was found to be quite small ( $\approx 10$ ) and just slightly, if at all, increasing with increasing  $n$  (see plot 3). Average optimal connection size and the density  $\delta$  were as in the second column of table 2 for our timeta-

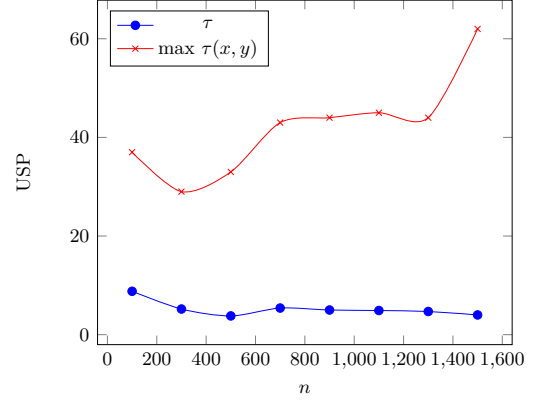


Figure 3: Changing of  $\tau$  with increased number of stations in *sncf* dataset (French railways).

bles. Still, the size of the preprocessed data is too large for practical use, hence the extension of this algorithm, called *USP-OR-A*.

## 2.2 *USP-OR-A*

To decrease the space complexity, in *USP-OR-A* (**USP** oracle with **access** nodes) we compute USPs only among cities from a smaller set - called **access node set** (AN set, denoted  $\mathcal{A}$ ). Given such set in timetable  $T$ , we define for a city  $x$  its **neighbourhood**  $neigh_{\mathcal{A}}(x)$  as all the cities reachable in  $ug_T$  not via ANs. The access nodes within this neighbourhood are called **local access nodes** (LANs,  $lan_{\mathcal{A}}(x)$ ). We do the same in  $\overleftarrow{ug_T}$  ( $ug_T$  with reversed orientation) to get **back neighbourhood** and **back LANs**.

In the preprocessing we:

- find  $\mathcal{A}$  (discussed later)
- $\forall x, y \in \mathcal{A}$  compute USPs between  $x$  and  $y$
- $\forall$  cities  $x \notin \mathcal{A}$  compute  $neigh_{\mathcal{A}}(x)$ ,  $bneigh_{\mathcal{A}}(x)$ ,  $lan_{\mathcal{A}}(x)$  and  $blan_{\mathcal{A}}(x)$

On a query from  $x$  to  $y$  at time  $t$ , we will first make a local search in the neighbourhood of  $x$  up to  $x$ 's local access nodes (*local front search* phase). Subsequently, we want to find out the earliest arrival times to each of  $y$ 's *back* local access nodes. To do this, we take advantage of the pre-computed USPs between access nodes - try out all the pairs  $u \in lan(x)$  and  $v \in blan(y)$  and expand the stored USPs (*inter-AN search* phase). Finally, we make a local search from each of  $y$ 's back LANs to  $y$ , but we run the search

restricted to  $y$ 's back neighbourhood (local back search phase). See algorithm 2 and picture 4 for more clarification.

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**Algorithm 2** *USP-OR-A* query

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**Input**

- timetable  $T$
- OC query  $(x, t, y)$

**Algorithm**

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let  $lan(x) = x$  if  $x \in \mathcal{A}$ 
let  $blan(y) = y$  if  $y \in \mathcal{A}$ 
Local front search
do TD Dijkstra from  $x$  at time  $t$  up to  $lan(x)$ 
if  $y \in neigh(x)$  then
   $c_{loc}^* = \text{conn. to } y \text{ obtained by TD Dijkstra}$ 
end if
 $\forall u \in lan(x)$  let  $ea(u)$  be the arrival time and
 $oc(u)$  the conn. to  $u$  obtained by TD Dijkstra
Inter-AN search
for all  $v \in blan(y)$  do
   $oc(v) = \text{null}$ 
  for all  $u \in lan(x)$  do
    for all  $p \in usps(u, v)$  do
       $c = \text{Expand}(T, p, ea(u))$ 
       $oc(v) = \text{better out of } oc(v) \text{ and } c$ 
    end for
  end for
end for
 $\forall v \in blan(y)$  let  $ea(v) = end(oc(v))$ 
Local back search
for all  $v \in blan(y)$  do
  perform TD Dijkstra from  $v$  at time  $ea(v)$ 
  to  $y$  restricted to  $bneigh(y)$ 
   $fin(v) = \text{the conn. returned by TD Dijkstra}$ 
end for
 $v^* = \text{argmin}_{v \in blan(y)} \{end(fin(v))\}$ 
 $u^* = \text{from}(oc(v^*))$ 
 $c^* = oc(u^*).oc(v^*).fin(v^*) \quad \# \text{ concat.}$ 
output better out of  $c_{loc}^*$  and  $c^*$ 
Output
  • optimal connection  $c_{(x,t,y)}^*$ 

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We will call  $\mathcal{A}$  a  $(r_1, r_2, r_3)$  AN set if:

- $|\mathcal{A}| \leq r_1 \cdot \sqrt{n}$
- $avg(|neigh_{\mathcal{A}}(x)|)^2 \leq r_2 \cdot n$
- $|lan_{\mathcal{A}}(x)| \leq r_3$

If we can manage to find a  $(r_1, r_2, r_3)$  AN set in time  $f(n)$ , the parameters of the *USP-OR-A* algorithm are as summarized in table 3. Table 4

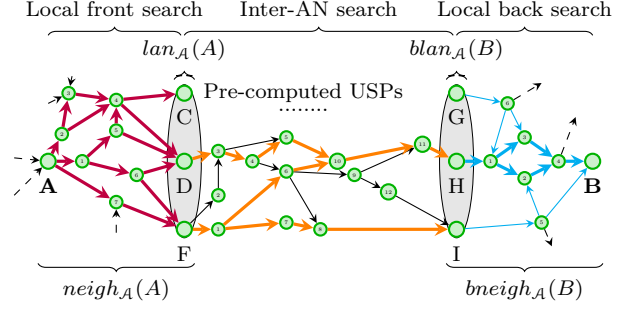


Figure 4: Principle of *USP-OR-A* algorithm. The arcs in **bold** mark areas that will be explored: all nodes in  $neigh_{\mathcal{A}}(x)$ , USPs between LANs of  $x$  and back LANs of  $y$  and the back neighbourhood of  $y$  (possibly only part of it will be explored, since the local back search goes against the direction in which the back neighbourhood was created).

lists the parameters of *USP-OR-A* for timetables with specific properties (as had our datasets) and on which we can find  $(r_1, r_2, r_3)$  AN set with each  $r_i$  being a constant (with regard to  $n$ ).

<i>USP-OR-A</i>	guaranteed
<b>prep</b>	$\mathcal{O}(f(n) + (r_1 + r_2)(\delta + \log n)hn^{1.5})$
<b>size</b>	$\mathcal{O}(r_2n^{1.5} + r_1^2\tau_{\mathcal{A}}\gamma_{\mathcal{A}}n)$
<b>qtime</b>	avg. $\mathcal{O}(r_2r_3\sqrt{n}(\log(r_2n) + \delta) + r_3^2\tau_{\mathcal{A}}\gamma_{\mathcal{A}})$
<b>stretch</b>	1

Table 3: Guaranteed parameters of the *USP-OR-A* algorithm.  $\tau_{\mathcal{A}}$  and  $\gamma_{\mathcal{A}}$  are defined just like  $\tau$  and  $\gamma$ , but on the set of cities from  $\mathcal{A}$ .

<i>USP-OR-A</i>	$\tau, r_1, r_2, r_3$ const., $\gamma \leq \sqrt{n}, \delta \leq \log n$
<b>prep</b>	$\mathcal{O}(f(n) + hn^{1.5} \log n)$
<b>size</b>	$\mathcal{O}(n^{1.5})$
<b>qtime</b>	avg. $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n} \log n)$
<b>stretch</b>	1

Table 4: Parameters of the *USP-OR-A* algorithm under certain conditions, generally fulfilled by our timetables.

### 2.3 Selecting access nodes

The challenge in *USP-OR-A* algorithm therefore comes down to the selection of a good access node set. However, consider the following problem:

minimize  $|\mathcal{A}|$  such that  $\forall x \notin \mathcal{A} : |\text{neigh}_{\mathcal{A}}(x)| \leq \sqrt{n}$ . We call this the problem of the optimal AN set.

**Theorem 1.** *The problem of the optimal AN set is NP-complete*

*Proof.* We will provide a sketch of the proof, which in full extend would be available in [Hajnovic, 2013]. We will make a reduction of the *min-set cover* problem to the problem of optimal AN set.

Consider an instance of the min-set cover problem:

- A universe  $U = \{1, 2, \dots, m\}$
- $k$  subsets of  $U$ :  $S_i \subseteq U$   $i = \{1, 2, \dots, k\}$  whose union is  $U$ :  $\bigcup_{1 \leq i \leq k} S_i = U$

Denote  $\mathcal{S} = \{S_i \mid 1 \leq i \leq k\}$ . The task is to choose the smallest subset  $\mathcal{S}^*$  of  $\mathcal{S}$  that still covers the universe ( $\bigcup_{S_i \in \mathcal{S}^*} S_i = U$ ). For each

$j \in U$ , we will make a complete graph of  $\beta_j$  vertices (the value of  $\beta_j$  will be discussed later) named  $m_j$  and for each set  $S_i$  we make a vertex  $s_i$  and vertex  $s'_i$ . We now connect all vertices of  $m_j$  to  $s_i \iff j \in S_i$ . Finally, for we connect  $s_i$  to  $s'_i$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq k$ .

**Example.** Let  $m = 10$  (thus  $U = \{1, 2, \dots, 10\}$ ) and  $k = 13$ :

- $S_1 = \{1, 3, 10\}$
- $S_2 = \{1, 2\}$
- ...
- $S_{13} = \{2, 3, 10\}$

For this instance of min set-cover, we construct the graph depicted on picture 5.

Define  $\alpha_i$  to be the number of sets  $S_j$  that contain  $i$ :  $\alpha_i = |\{S_j \in \mathcal{S} \mid i \in S_j\}|$  and assume the constructed graph has  $n$  vertices. We want the  $\beta_i$  to satisfy  $\beta_i \geq 2$  and  $\beta_i + 2\alpha_i - 1 \leq \sqrt{n}$  but  $\beta_i + 2\alpha_i > \sqrt{n}$ . The last two inequalities would mean that if at least one  $s_j$  connected to  $m_i$  is chosen as an access node, the neighbourhood for nodes in  $m_i$  will be still  $\leq \sqrt{n}$ , but if none of them is chosen, the neighbourhood will be just over  $\sqrt{n}$ . We leave out the details of the construction at this place.

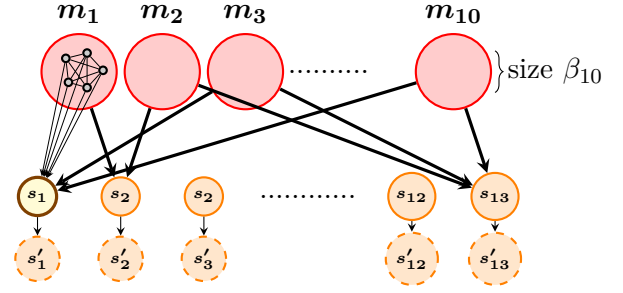


Figure 5: In  $m_i$ , there are actually complete graphs of  $\beta_i$  vertices (as shown for  $m_1$ ). **Thick** arcs represent arcs from all the vertices of respective  $m_i$ . The  $s_i$  vertices are connected to their  $s'_i$  versions. If e.g.  $s_1$  is selected as an access node,  $s'_1$  is no longer part of any neighbourhood.

Now consider an optimal AN set which contains a vertex from within some  $m_i$ . If this is the case, **either** some  $s_j$  to which  $m_i$  is connected is selected as AN, **or** all vertices from  $m_i$  are access nodes **or** the neighbourhood is too large. Keep in mind that the local access nodes are also part of neighbourhoods, so unless we select for AN some of the  $s_j$  that  $m_i$  is connected to, the neighbourhood of any non-access node in  $m_i$  will be too large. As there are at least two nodes in every  $m_i$ , it is more efficient to select some  $s_j$  rather than select all nodes in  $m_i$ . Thus when it comes to selecting ANs *it is worth to consider only vertices  $s_j$* .

From this point on, it is easy to see that it is optimal to select those  $s_j$  that correspond to the optimal solution of min-set cover. The reason is that each of the  $m_i$  will be connected to at least one access node  $s_j$  and will thus have neighbourhood size  $\leq \sqrt{n}$ , while the number of selected access nodes will be optimal.  $\square$

We have therefore approached selection a good AN set heuristically. We iteratively selected ANs by their importance until the average square of the neighbourhood size was not  $\leq \sqrt{n}$  (i.e. the  $r_1$  parameter of the set was  $\leq 1$ ). To estimate the city's importance, we tried three values:

- Degree of the node in  $ug_T$
- Betweenness centrality [Brandes, 2001] of the node in  $ug_T$

- Our own value called **potential**, high for those nodes that are good local separators in  $ug_T$

Our algorithm, called *Locsep*, computes the city’s potential in the following way: we explore an area  $A_x$  of  $\sqrt{n}$  nearest cities around  $x$ . We do this in an underlying graph with no orientation and no weights. Next we get the front and back neighbourhoods of  $x$  within  $A_x$  ( $fn(x) = neigh(x) \cap A_x$ ,  $bn(x) = bneigh(x) \cap A_x$ ). For a set of access nodes  $\mathcal{A}$ , let us call a path  $p$  in  $ug_T$  **access-free** if it does not contain a node from  $\mathcal{A}$ . Now as long as  $x$  is not in  $\mathcal{A}$ , there is a guarantee that for every pair  $u \in bn(x)$  and  $v \in fn(x)$  there is an access-free path from  $u$  to  $v$  within  $A_x$ . Our interest is how this will change after the selection of  $x$ .

Let  $bneigh_i = bneigh(b_i) \cap A_x$  for each arc  $(b_i, x) \in ug_T$ . We run a restricted (to  $A_x \setminus \{x\}$ ) search from each  $bneigh_i$  during which we explore  $e_i$  vertices in  $fn(x)$ . This is going to contribute up to  $e_i |bneigh_i|$  to  $x$ ’s potential, depending on if the cities in  $bneigh_i$  actually have large neighbourhoods (and thus selecting  $x$  would help). More details regarding the *Locsep* algorithm will be in [Hajnovic, 2013]. For illustration of the principle of computing the potential, see picture 6. Also, see plot 7 for comparison of *Locsep* algorithm to the approach of choosing ANs based on high degree/BC values.

### 3 Performance and comparisons

We have run tests on the datasets described in table 5. We compared the query time of *USP-OR*, *USP-OR-A* with *Locsep* and time-dependent Dijkstra’s algorithm using priority queues based on Fibonacci heaps (*TD Dijkstra* for short). The average query times for these algorithms (at our timetables) are theoretically determined as:

- $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n})$  for *USP-OR*
- $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n} \log n)$  for *USP-OR-A* with *Locsep*

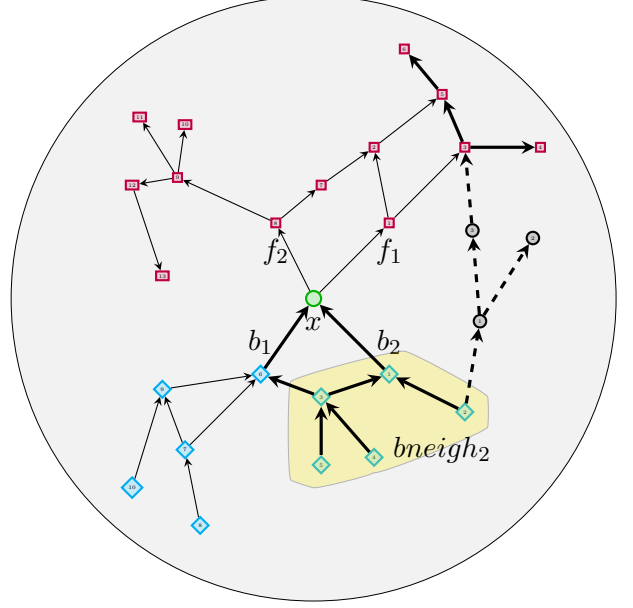


Figure 6: The principle of computing potentials in *Locsep* algorithm. We explored an area of  $\sqrt{n}$  nearest cities (in terms of hops) around  $x$ . Little **squares** are nodes from  $neigh(x)$  and **di-amonds** are part of  $bneigh(x)$ . The highlighted area represents the back neighbourhood for node  $b_2$ . From its nodes we run a forward search (the **thick** arcs). Nodes from the  $neigh(x)$  that were not explored in this search can only be reached via  $x$  itself and contribute to  $x$ ’s potential.

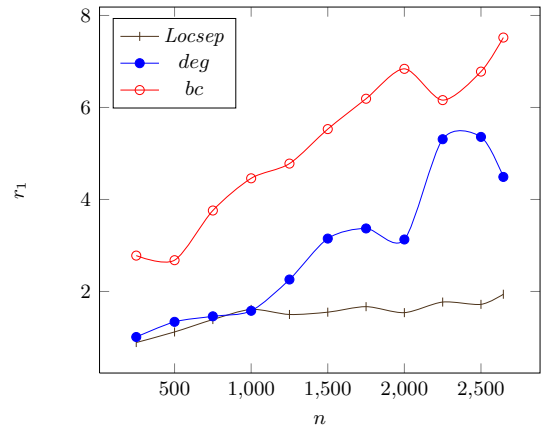


Figure 7: The necessary size of  $\mathcal{A}$  when selecting ANs based on degree, BC or *Locsep* potential in *sncf* dataset ( $|\mathcal{A}| = r_1 \sqrt{n} \approx r_1 51$ ). Ideal situation would be a constant or non-increasing value, to which *Locsep* comes closest.

- $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$  for *TD Dijkstra*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Actually, the complexity of time-dependent Dijkstra’s algorithm with Fibonacci heap priority queues is  $\mathcal{O}(m + n \log n)$  [Sommer, 2010], but in our timetables  $m \leq n \log n$

For the dataset of French railways (*sncf*) we measured how the query times evolve with increased  $n$  (see plot 8) and for the dataset of Slovak railways (*zsr*) we measured the evolution of query times with respect to increased time range (plot 9). Finally, for all of our timetables, we measured the speed-up against TD Dijkstra, i.e. how many times faster were our algorithms then TD Dijkstra. For the speed-ups, refer to table 6.

Name	Description	Cities	UG arcs
<i>cpru</i>	Reg. bus (SVK - RK)	871	2415
<i>cpza</i>	Reg. bus (SVK - ZA)	1108	2778
<i>montr</i>	Public tr. (Montreal)	217	349
<i>sncf</i>	Railways (FRA)	2646	7994
<i>sncf-inter</i>	Inter-city rail. (FRA)	366	901
<i>sncf-ter</i>	Regional rail. (FRA)	2637	7647
<i>zsr</i>	Railways (SVK)	233	588

Table 5: Datasets used for testing.

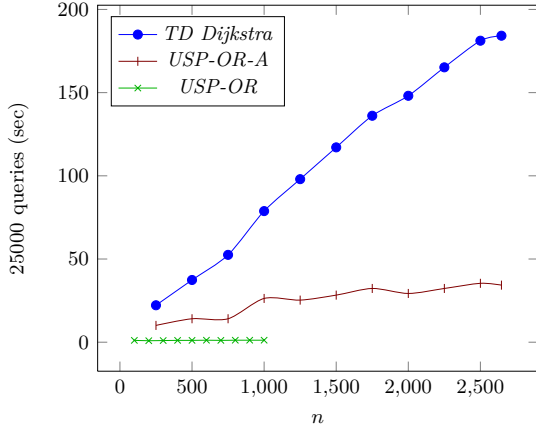


Figure 8: Query times (in sec., 25000 queries). *USP-OR-A* + *Locsep* vs. *USP-OR* vs. *TD Dijkstra* on *sncf* dataset. Changing  $n$ .

As for the size of the preprocessed data, we compared *USP-OR* to *USP-OR-A* with *Locsep* in a similar way we did for the query times: in plots 10, 11 there are the actual sizes (in MB) of the data preprocessed by our algorithms and the amount of memory needed to actually represent the timetable in memory (as a time-dependent graph [Delling and Wagner, 2009]). In table 7 we provided the ratios specifying how many times

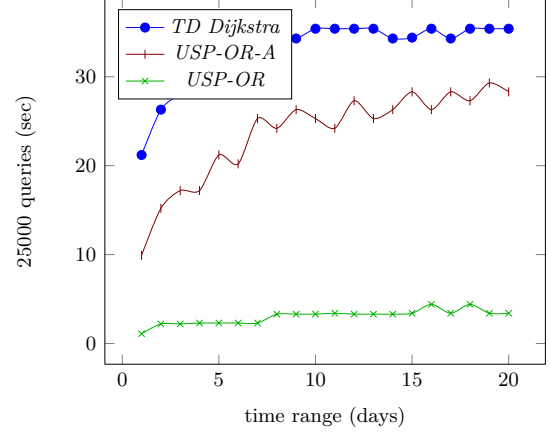


Figure 9: Query times (in sec., 25000 queries). *USP-OR-A* + *Locsep* vs. *USP-OR* vs. *TD Dijkstra* on *zsr* dataset. Changing time range.

Name	<i>USP-OR</i>	<i>USP-OR-A</i>
<i>cpru</i>	14.5	1.7
<i>cpza</i>	14.3	1.7
<i>montr</i>	8.8	1.5
<i>sncf</i>	64.8	5.4
<i>sncf-inter</i>	27.0	3.6
<i>sncf-ter</i>	78.3	6.3
<i>zsr</i> (daily)	19.3	2.14

Table 6: Speed-up of *USP-OR* and *USP-OR-A* with *Locsep*.

more MB was pre-computed then the memory needed for the time-dependent graph. Again we remind the theoretically determined sizes of pre-processed data for our algorithms (and on our timetables):

- $\mathcal{O}(n^{2.5})$  for *USP-OR*
- $\mathcal{O}(n^{1.5})$  for *USP-OR-A* with *Locsep*

## 4 Conclusion

In [Delling et al., 2009a] the authors have considered the optimal connection problem in time-expanded graphs, and achieved speed-ups of up to 56 against Dijkstra’s algorithm in railway timetables with about 30000 stations.

We approached the problem through the time-dependent model and have developed exact



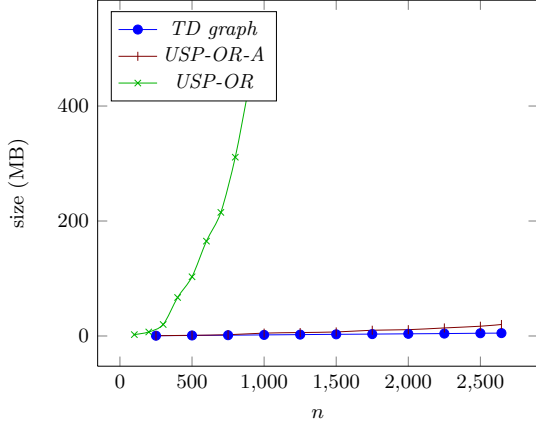


Figure 10: Size (in MB) of preprocessed data. *USP-OR-A + Locsep* vs. *USP-OR* vs. *TD Dijkstra* on *sncf* dataset. Changing  $n$ .

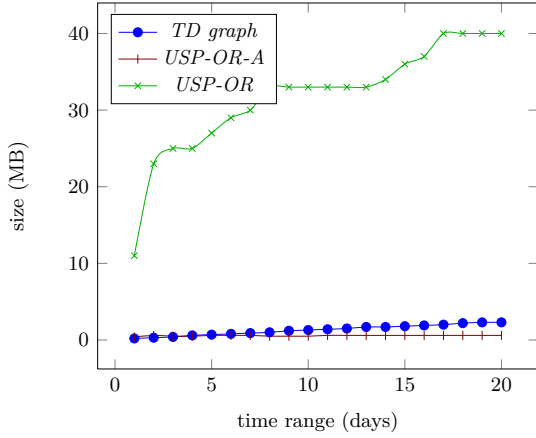


Figure 11: Size (in MB) of preprocessed data. *USP-OR-A + Locsep* vs. *USP-OR* vs. *TD Dijkstra* on *zsr* dataset. Changing time range.

Name	<i>USP-OR</i>	<i>USP-OR-A</i>
<i>cpru</i>	396.7	3.0
<i>cpza</i>	265.1	3.5
<i>montr</i>	61.1	1.3
<i>sncf</i>	106.2	4.0
<i>sncf-inter</i>	30.3	1.5
<i>sncf-ter</i>	87.4	2.6
<i>zsr</i> (daily)	60.8	2.2

Table 7: The ratio  $\frac{\text{size of TD graph}}{\text{preprocessed size}}$  for *USP-OR* and *USP-OR-A* with *Locsep*.

methods to considerably speed-up the query time for optimal connections in timetables

compared to the time-dependent Dijkstra’s algorithm using Fibonacci heaps as priority queues (running in  $\mathcal{O}(m + n \log n)$ ). Our first algorithm - *USP-OR* - achieves speed-ups of up to 65 on our largest dataset representing French railways (2500+ stations). However, it does so at the cost of high space consumption, requiring more than 100 times the space that is needed to represent the timetable itself. Theoretically, for real-world timetables (that usually have certain properties), this algorithm has the space complexity  $\mathcal{O}(n^{2.5})$  and the average query time  $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n})$ .

Our second algorithm called *USP-OR-A* is still 6 times faster than time-dependent Dijkstra’s algorithm and at the same time, for all of our datasets it requires space up to 4 times the space needed to represent the timetable. We believe the speed-up of *USP-OR-A* against Dijkstra’s algorithm can be even higher for bigger timetables, since its query time is theoretically determined as  $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n} \log n)$ , while the algorithm can handle much bigger datasets for its space complexity is essentially  $\mathcal{O}(n^{1.5})$ .

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank very much to my supervisor Rastislav Kráľovič for valuable remarks, useful advices and consultations that helped me stay on the right path during my work on this project.

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