Congestion Control in 100x100: Why TCP is a poor choice and how to redesign it from scratch

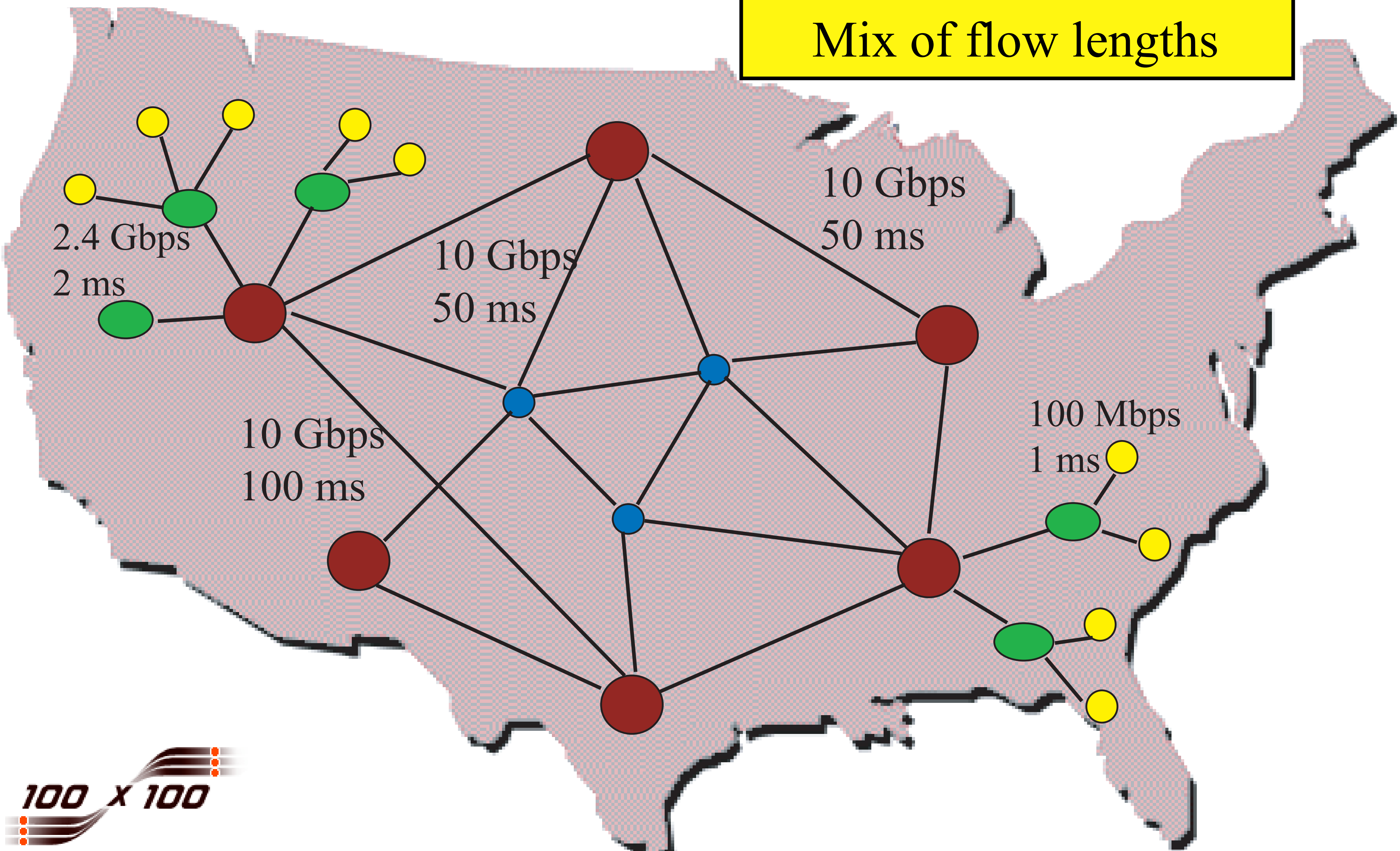
Nandita Dukkipati

Collaborated with Rui Zhang-Shen, Masayoshi Kobayashi
and Nick McKeown

High Performance Networking Group
Stanford University

The 100x100 Network

High link speeds
End-to-end RTT ~ 100 ms
Mix of flow lengths



TCP does not work well

1. Slow additive increase means flows take a long time to acquire spare capacity

2. Unsustainable large equilibrium window; requires extremely small loss $p = 3/(2w^2)$

3. Confused by lossy links -- low throughput in wireless links

4. Unfair bandwidth sharing: Flow throughput $\propto \frac{1}{RTT}$

5. Inefficient Slow Start

   - Flows made to last multiple round trip times
   - Instability -- exponential increase in aggregate traffic

6. Large queueing delay

Explicit Control Protocol (XCP)

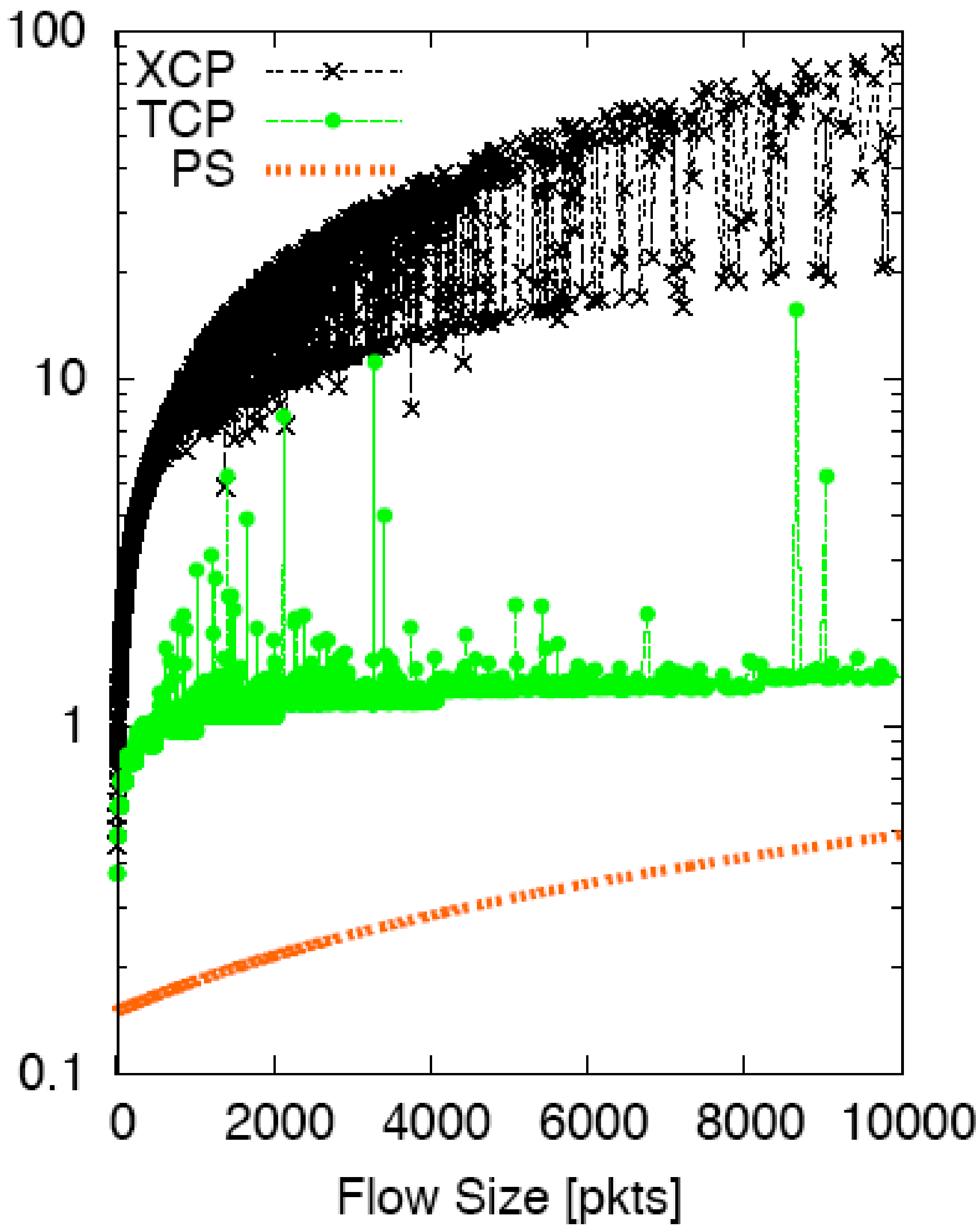
- Proposed by Katabi et. al Sigcomm 2002; part of NewArch project
- Explicit feedback on congestion from the network
- Flows receive precise feedback on window increment/decrement
- Convergence of fair share rates could take many round trip times
- Routers do detailed per-packet calculations

XCP -- Pros and Cons

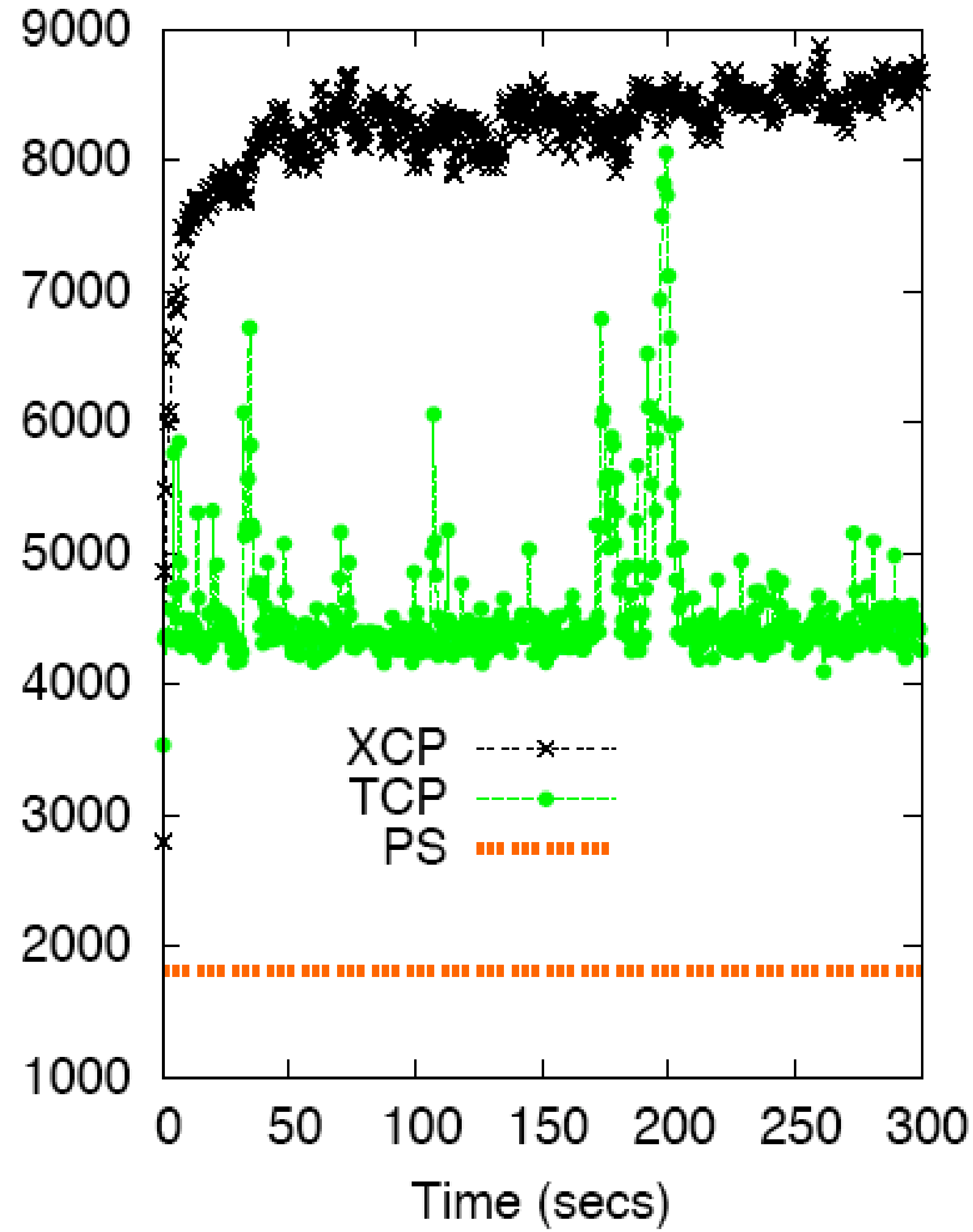
- Pros:
  - Long-lived flows: Works very well -- convergence to fair-share rates, high link utilization, small queue occupancy, low loss.
- Cons:
  - With a mix of flow lengths: Deviates far from Processor Sharing. Unfair and inefficient. All promises for long-lived flows no longer hold.
  - Flow durations: Makes the flows last two orders of magnitude higher than necessary. Worse than TCP.
  - Complexity: Requires detailed per-packet computations

Example: XCP vs. TCP vs. PS

Flow Duration (secs) vs. Flow Size



Active Flows vs. time



List of qualities we are looking for

I. Emulate Processor Sharing
   1. Performance is invariant of flow size distribution
   2. Mix of flows: Results in flows finishing quickly -- close to the minimum achievable
   3. Long flows: Results in high throughput -- even under high bandwidth-delay, lossy links...
   4. All flows get fair share of bottleneck bandwidth

II. Want stability -- convergence to equilibrium operating point

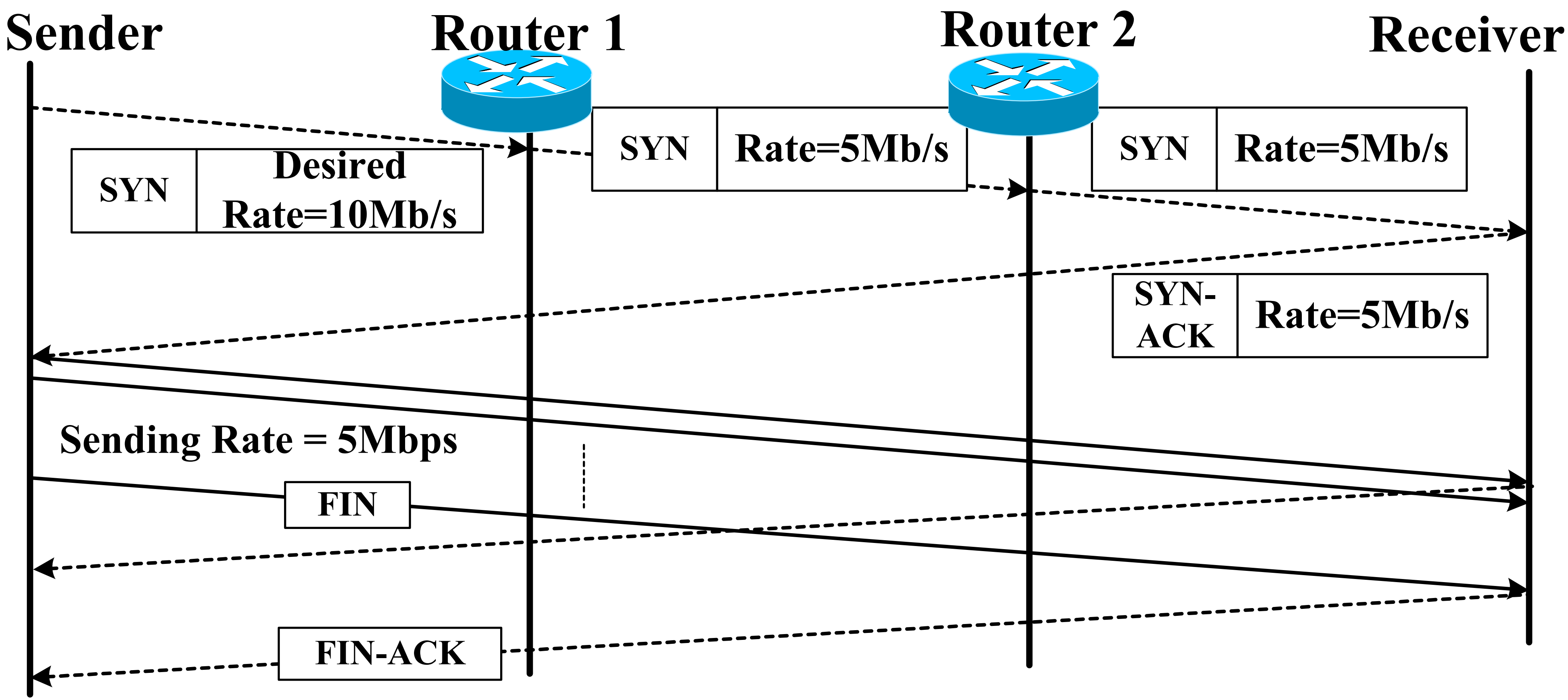
III. Want all the above under any network conditions (mix of RTTs, capacities, topologies) and flow mixes

IV. Without any per-flow state, per-flow queue or per-packet computation in the routers

RCP: Picking the Flow Rate

- Is there one rate a router can give out to all the flows so as to emulate Processor Sharing ?
- Rate $R(t) = C/N(t)$
- RCP is an adaptive algorithm to emulate PS:
  - $R(t)$ picked by the routers based on queue size and aggregate traffic
  - Router assigns a single rate to all flows
  - Requires no per-flow state or per-packet calculation

RCP: The Basic Mechanism



RCP: The Algorithm

Link Capacity

Aggregate Traffic

queue

Average RTT

$$R(t) = R(t - d_0) + \frac{\alpha(C - y(t)) - \beta\frac{q(t)}{d_0}}{\widehat{N(t)}}$$

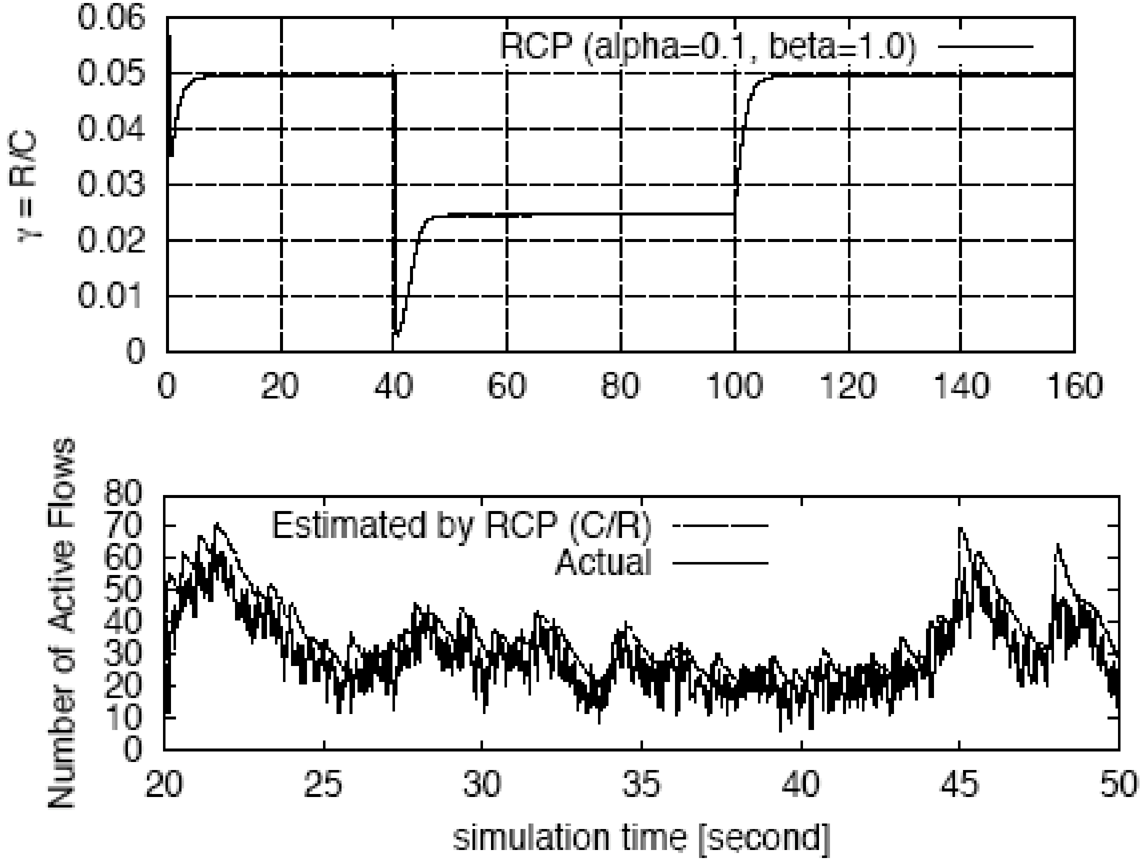
Estimate of # flows

$$\widehat{N(t)} = \frac{C}{R(t - d_0)}$$

$$R(t) = R(t - T)[1 + \frac{\frac{T}{d_0}(\alpha(C - y(t)) - \beta\frac{q(t)}{d_0})}{C}]$$

Understanding RCP

- How good is the estimate, $C/R(t)$?

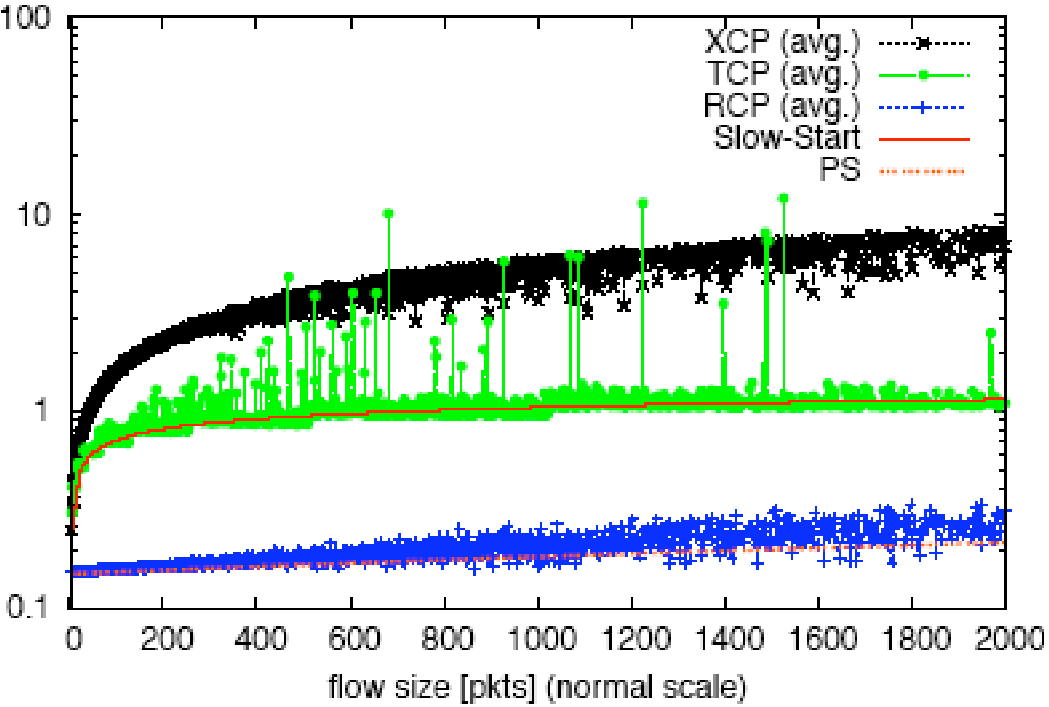


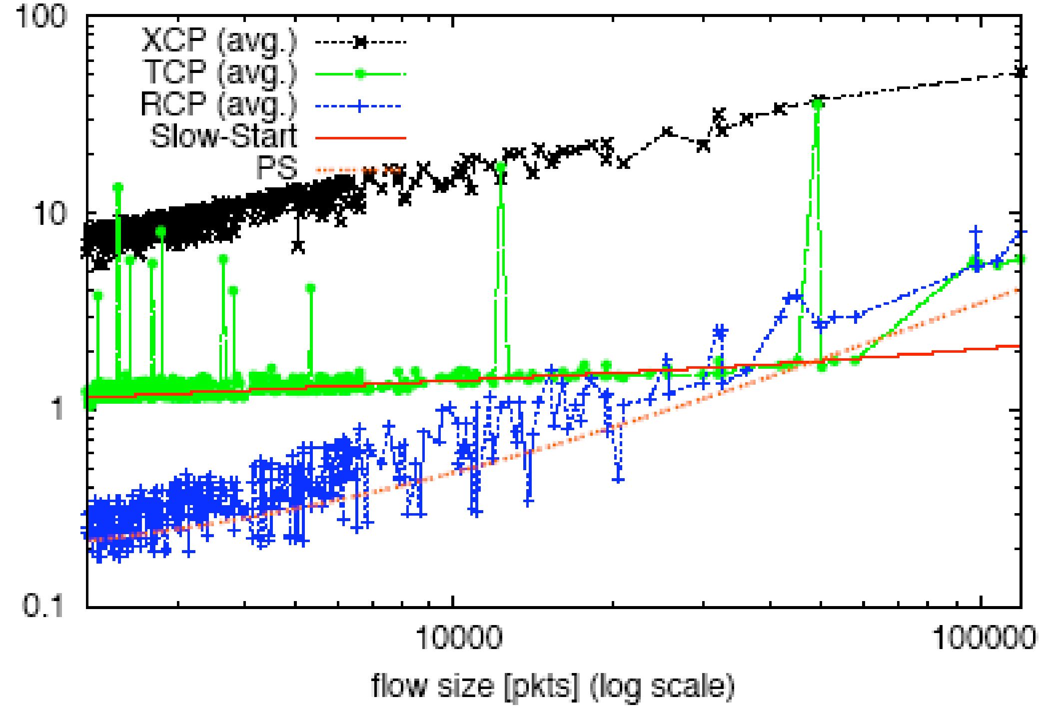
- Handling packet losses
- RCP performs well and is stable for a broad range of it's parameters α and β

RCP Performance

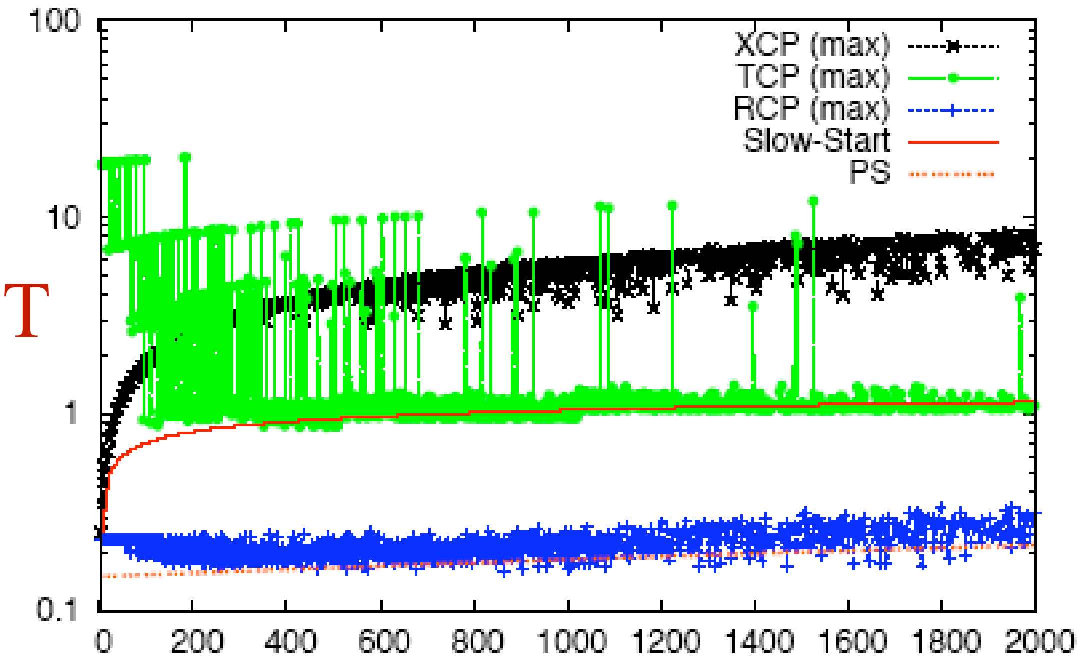
- When traffic characteristics vary
  - Different flow sizes
  - As mean flow size increases
  - Different flow size distributions
  - Non Poisson arrivals of flows
  - As load increases
- When Network Conditions vary
  - As link capacity increases
  - As RTT increases
  - Flows with different RTTs
  - Multiple bottlenecks
- Compared with: $AFCT \geq 1.5RTT + \frac{E[L]}{C}; FCT_{PS} = 1.5RTT + \frac{L}{C(1-\rho)}$
- In each case RCP achieves the goals we set out

Example 1: Achieves PS for different Flow Sizes

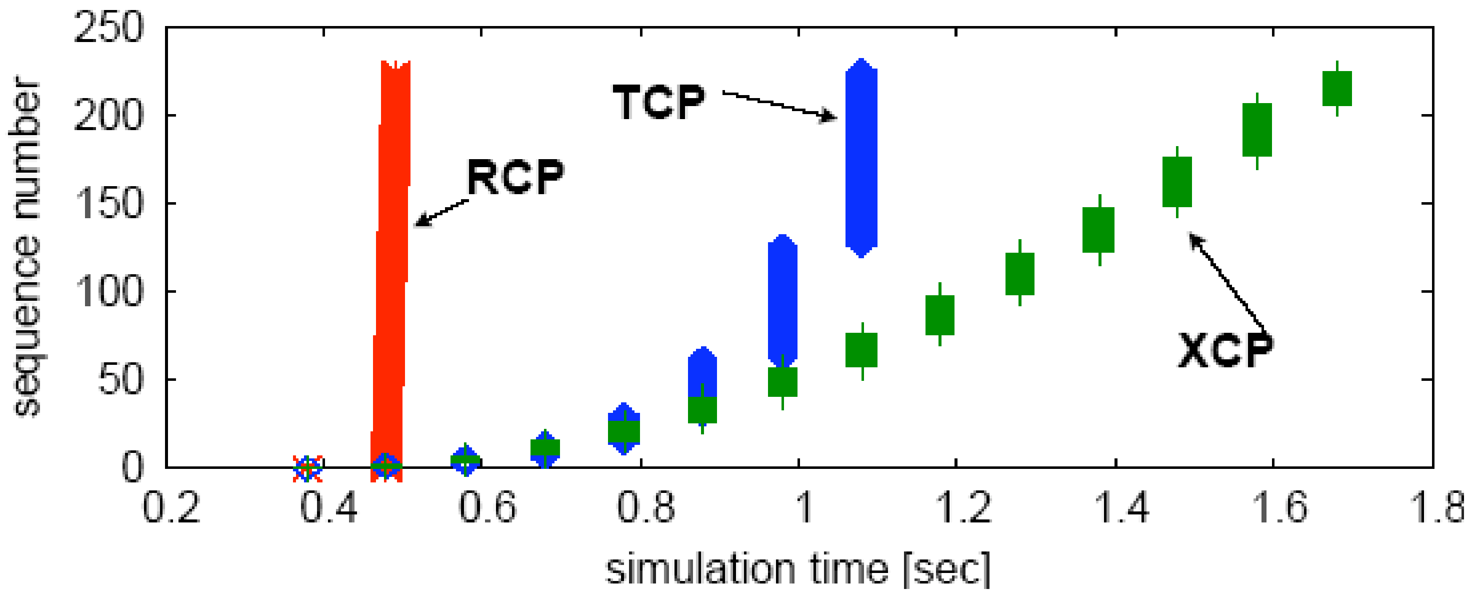


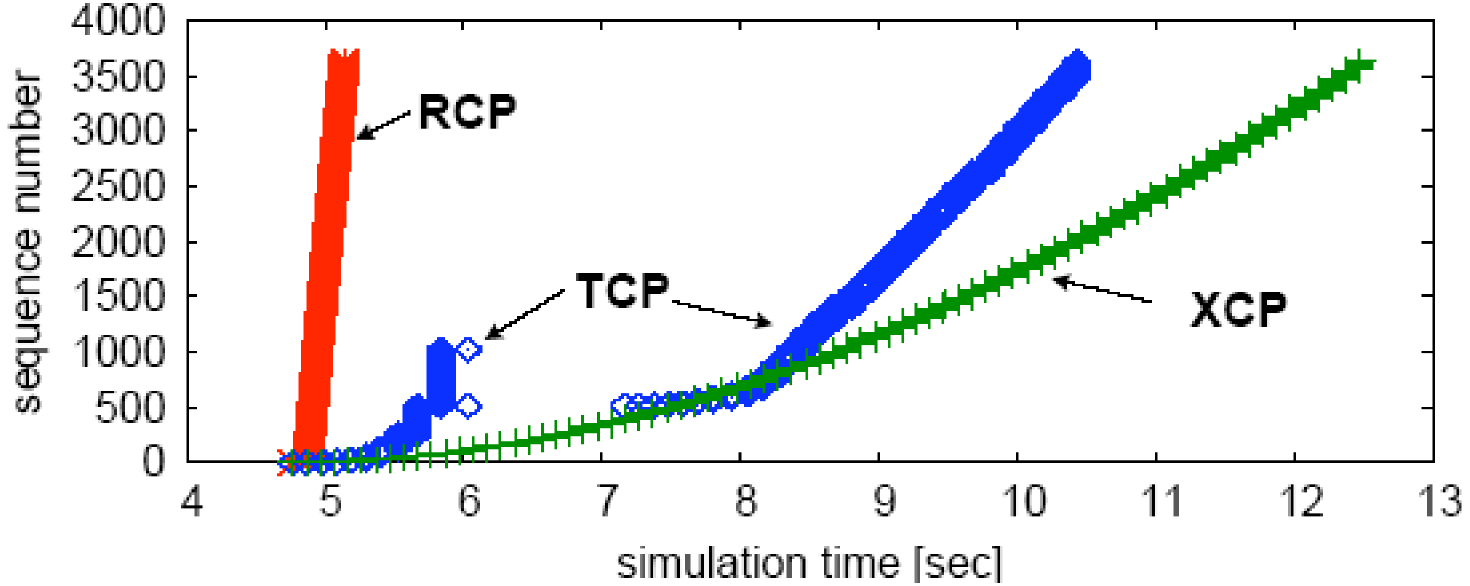


Max. FCT

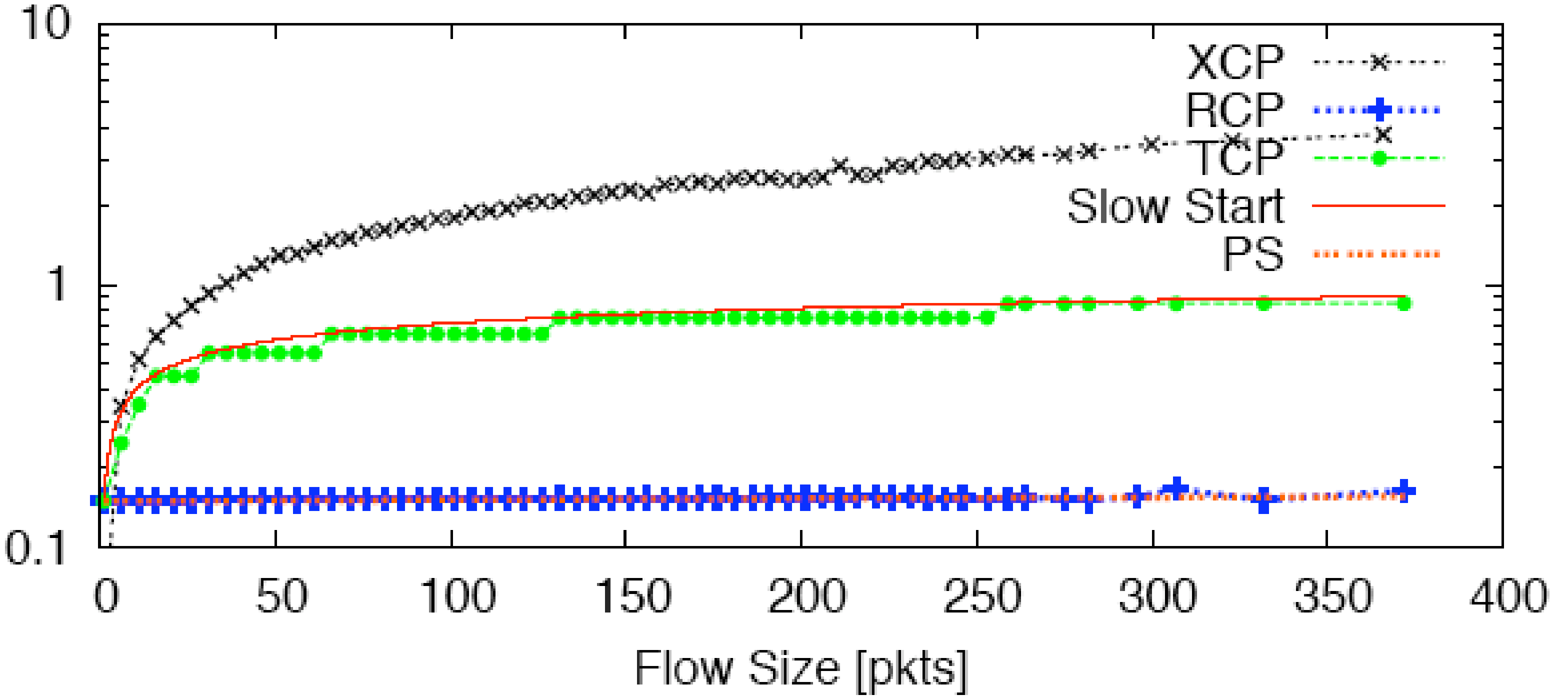


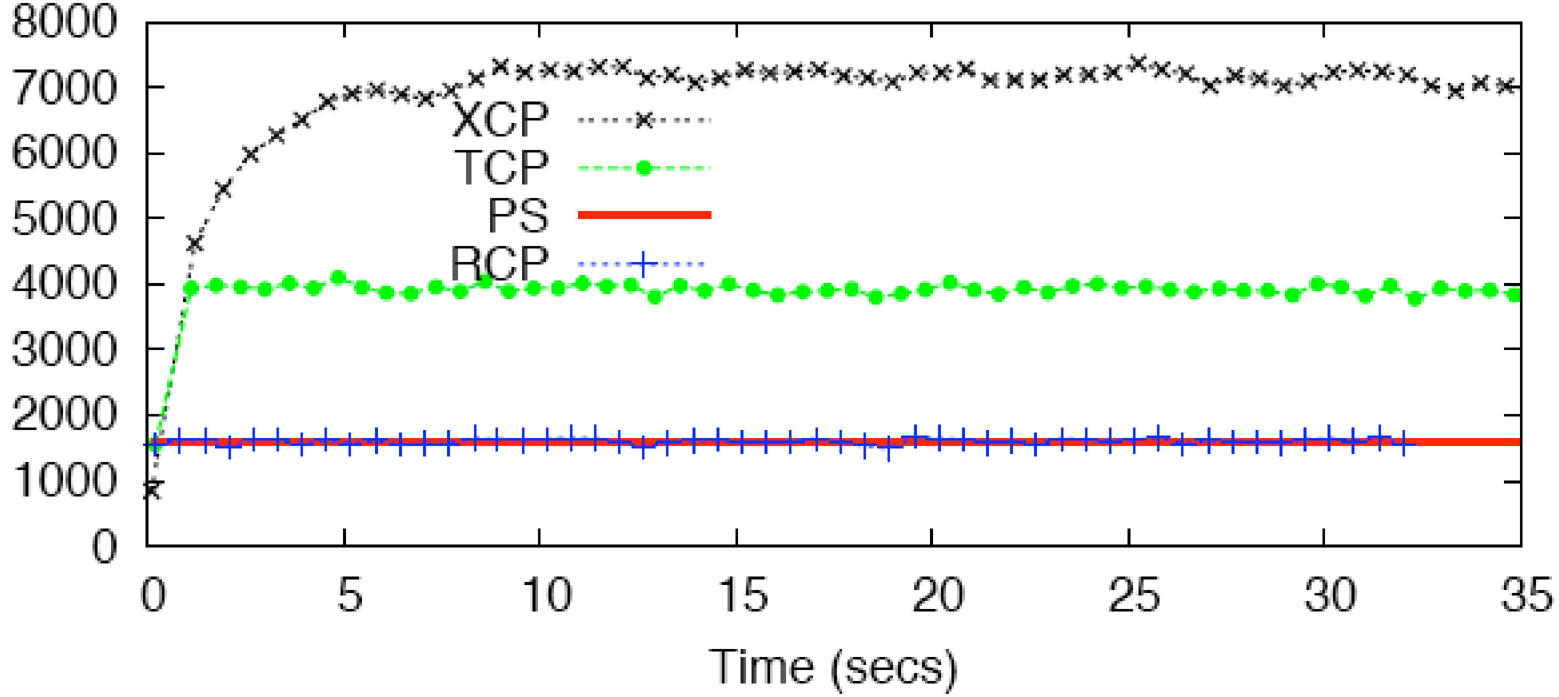
RCP vs. TCP vs. XCP



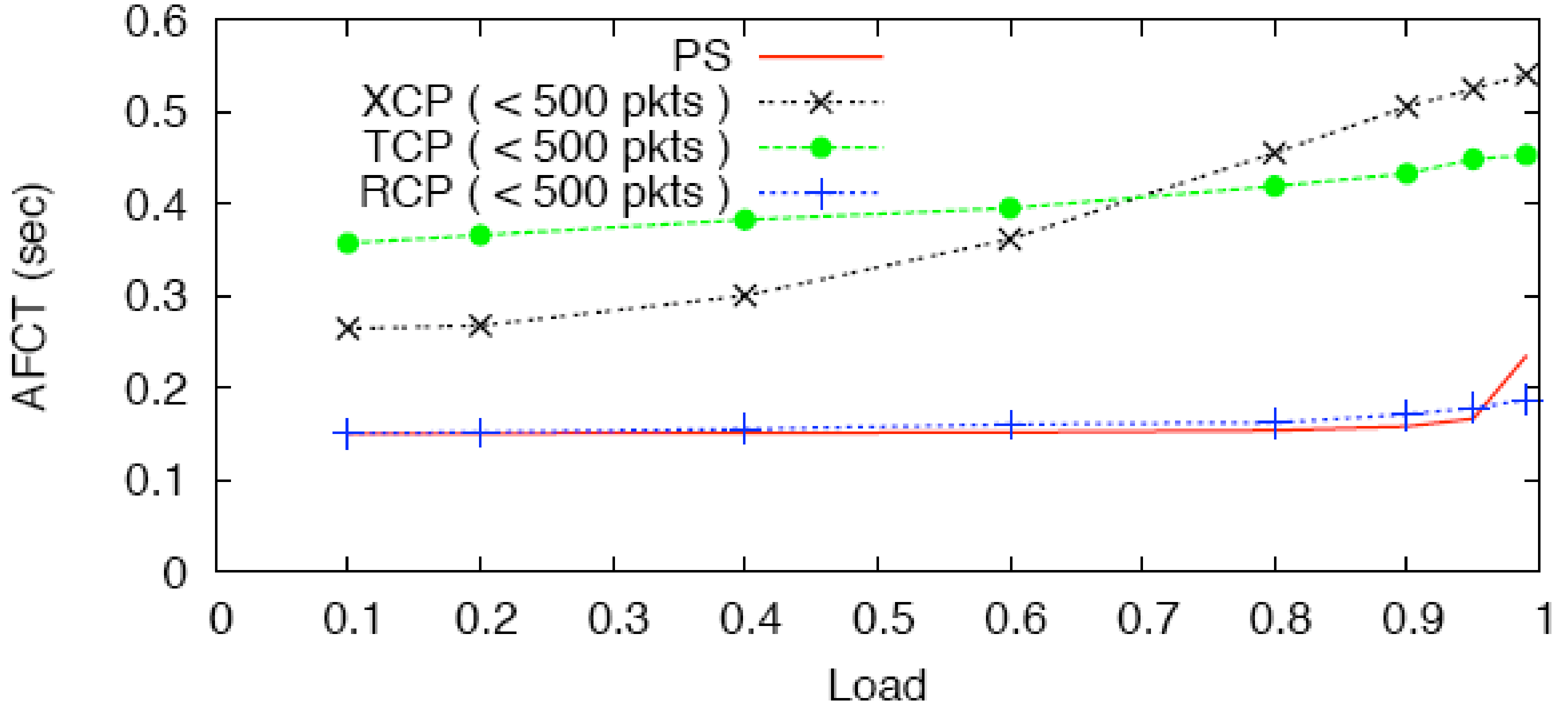


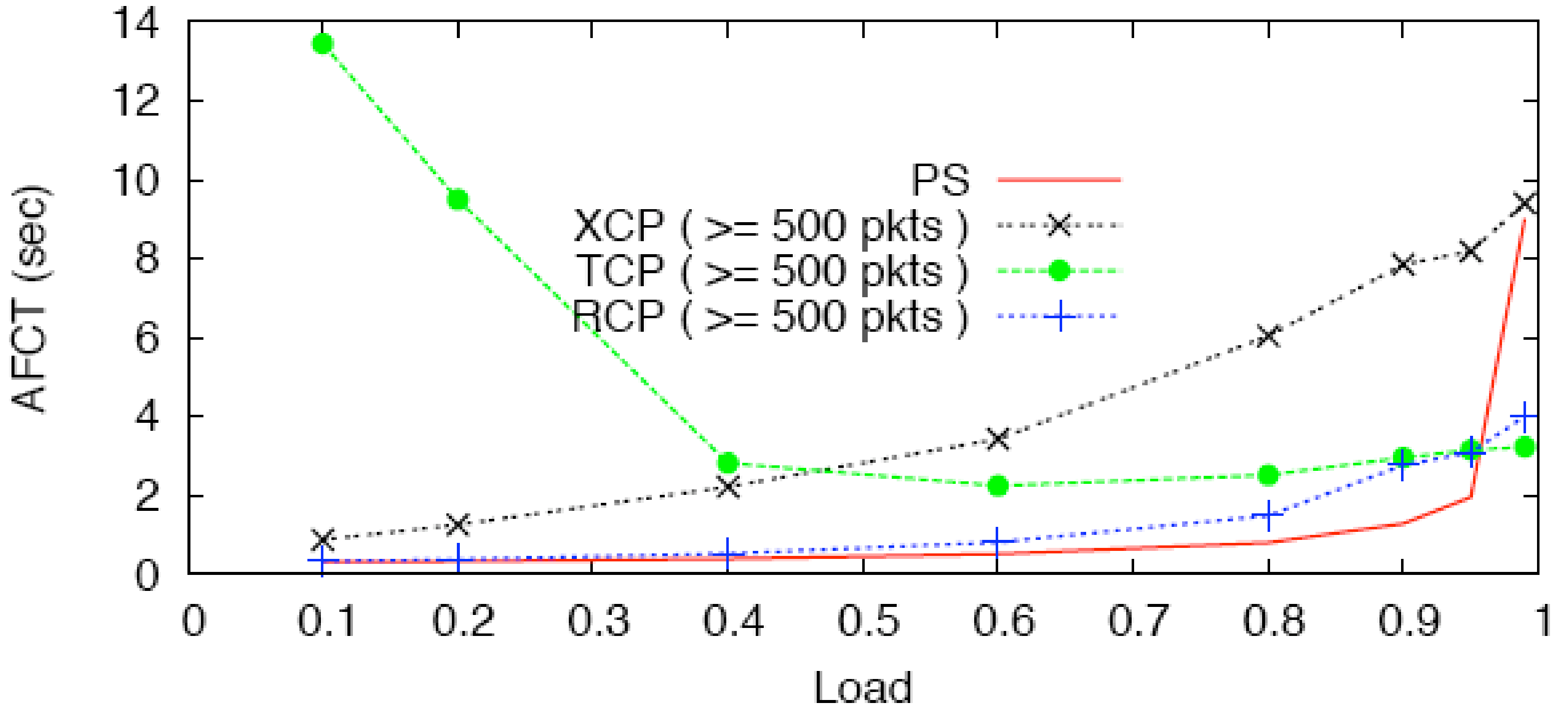
Example 2: Achieves PS for any flow size distribution



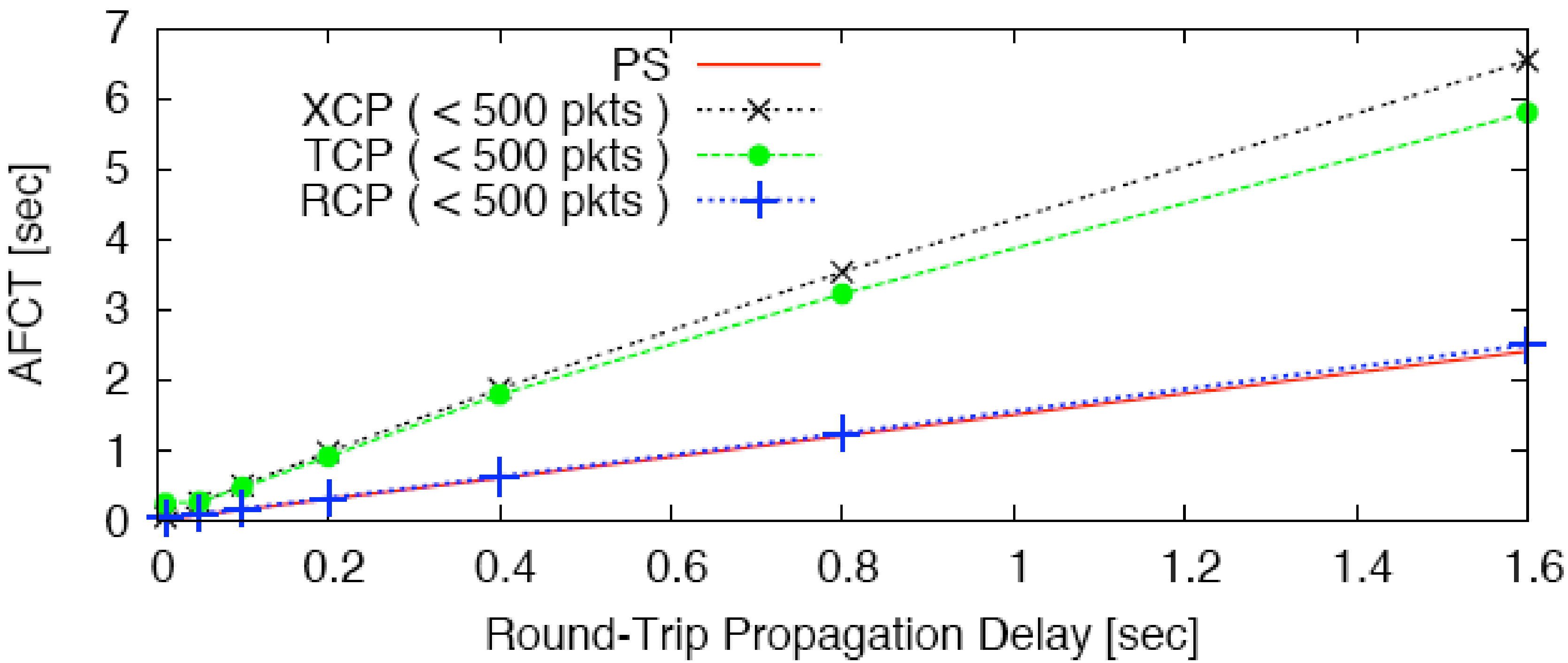


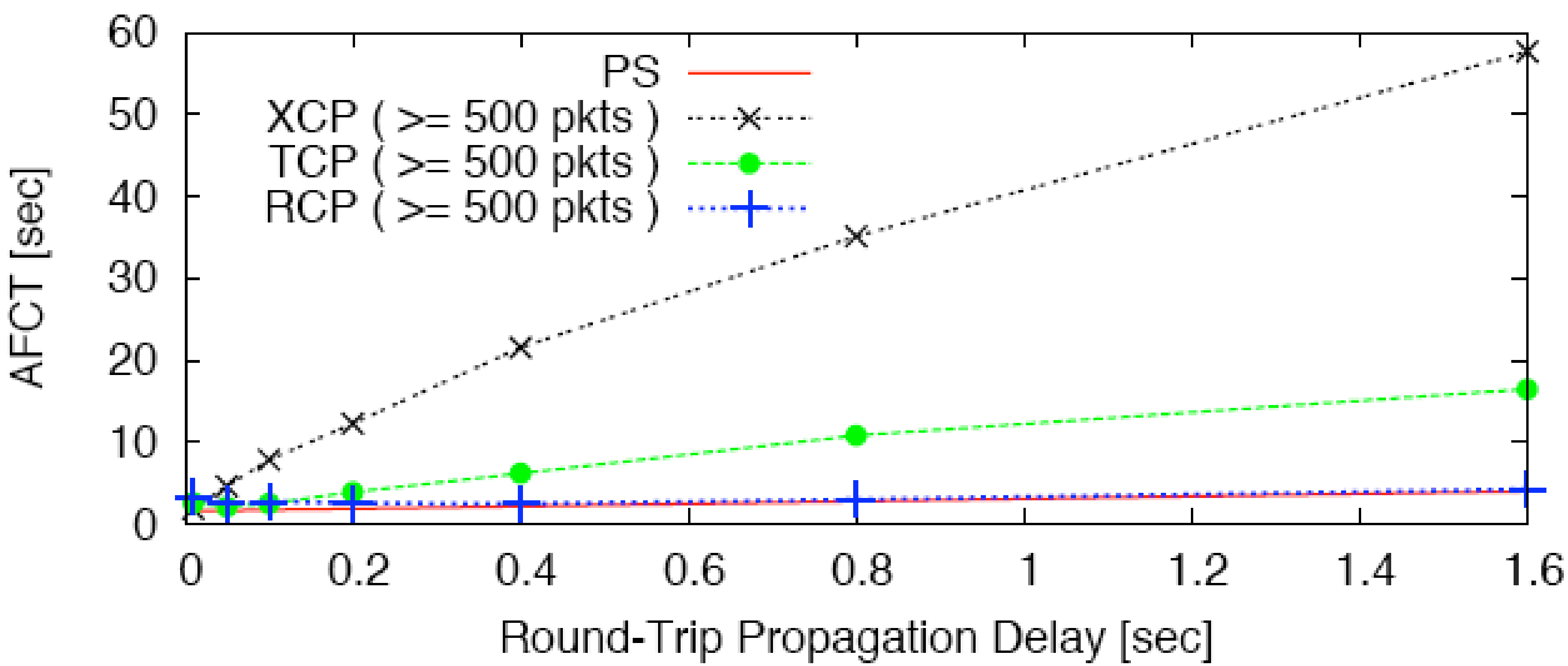
Example 3: Achieves PS irrespective of offered load





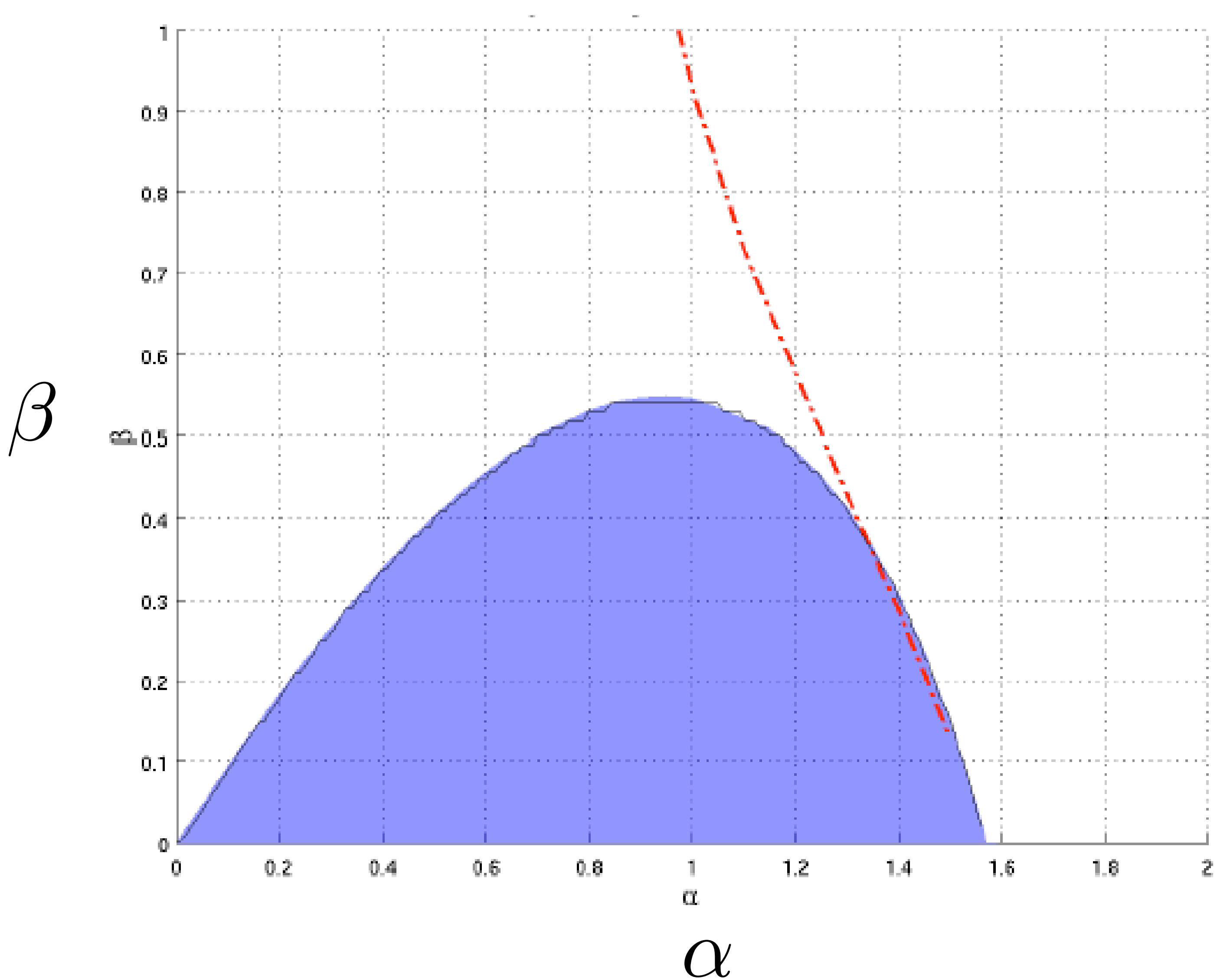
Example 4: Achieves PS for any RTT





RCP is Stable

Stable Independent of C, RTT and # Flows



Conclusion

- TCP is unsuitable for high bandwidth-delay network such as the 100x100
- XCP is a bold attempt but hasn't achieved what it set out to do
- Making network faster doesn't help; Flow durations and performance is constrained by protocols
- Consequences of RCP's close emulation of PS:
  - Scales naturally with link capacities, RTTs, network conditions
  - Won't matter anymore what mix of flows, applications generate
  - Will have a network whose performance is predictable and close to the best achievable