

# Range Policy of Adaptive Cruise Control Vehicles for Improved Flow Stability and String Stability

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**Abstract**—A methodology to design the range policy of Adaptive Cruise Control vehicles and its companion servo-loop control algorithm are presented in this paper. A nonlinear range policy for improved traffic flow stability and string stability is proposed and its performance is compared against the Constant Time-Headway policy, the range policy employed by human drivers and the Greenshields policy. The proposed range policy is obtained through an optimization procedure with traffic flow and stability constraints. A complementary controller is then designed based on the sliding mode technique. Microscopic simulation results show that stable traffic flow is achieved by the proposed method, up to a significantly higher traffic density.

**Index Terms**—Adaptive Cruise Control, range policy, string stability, traffic flow stability.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) is a driver assistance system designed to provide improved convenience and comfort. An ACC-equipped vehicle detects the presence of a preceding vehicle and measures the distance (range) as well as the relative speed (range rate) by using a forward-looking sensor. It automatically adjusts the vehicle speed to keep a proper range when a preceding vehicle is detected. When no preceding vehicle is detected, it functions like a conventional cruise control vehicle. ACC systems can be categorized into two types: "autonomous" and "non-autonomous". For an autonomous ACC, the vehicle is controlled based on self-gathered information, whereas communications with adjacent vehicles or transportation infrastructure are required for a non-autonomous system. This study is restricted to the autonomous-type, which has a better chance of adoption in the near future.

Recently, ACC became available as an option on high-end passenger vehicles. It was designed mainly for increased convenience and driving comfort. However, from transportation planners' viewpoint, ACC vehicles are likely to impact the traffic characteristics, including highway safety, efficiency and capacity because of their more consistent (and different) behavior compared with human

drivers [1]. Before ACC vehicles are deployed on a large scale, their string behavior and flow characteristics need to be carefully investigated. Otherwise traffic congestion may become worse instead of being better. Whereas early ACC systems are designed mainly for applications with relatively homogeneous traffic behavior, Stop-and-go Cruise Control systems were recently introduced to reduce driver workload under congested driving conditions, including dense urban traffic [2]. In those applications, vehicle speed is low and frequent gearshifts result in widely varied traction behavior.

Two of the most important macroscopic behaviors of ACC vehicles are traffic flow stability and string stability. Traffic flow stability [3] defines the evolution of traffic density and average velocity in response to small variation in traffic density. This characteristic is important for areas upstream of the point where the traffic density disturbance is introduced, e.g., an entrance or exit ramp. A traffic flow is said to be stable (or unstable) when the traffic flow  $Q$  goes up (or down) as the traffic density  $\rho$  is increased. On the fundamental diagram, the slope  $\partial Q/\partial \rho$  indicates the stability of the traffic flow [4]. When the flow-density curve demonstrates a positive slope (when the density is below the characteristic density), small density disturbance propagates as a forward traveling wave and the traffic is stable. Beyond the characteristic density (with a corresponding characteristic speed), the traffic flow becomes unstable. When the traffic flow is unstable, a small density disturbance will affect sections upstream of the disturbance source and less flow can go through. The reduced flow causes local density to go up, which further reduces flow, and eventually could result in a complete jam. When ACC systems are designed, it is desirable to adjust their headway policy so that the traffic flow stability is improved. This can be achieved by ensuring that the slope  $\partial Q/\partial \rho$  remains positive up to a higher traffic density (i.e., achieves a higher characteristic density). This obviously needs to be done without compromising safety.

The string stability problem of a vehicle platoon has been studied since the late 1970's [5], [6]. The term "string stability" refers to the non-amplifying upstream propagation

This work was supported in part by the Automotive Research Center at the University of Michigan.

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of vehicle speed perturbation through a string of vehicles. This property ensures that the variation of preceding vehicle speed will not result in amplified fluctuations in the following vehicle speed. Equivalently, this property guarantees that any perturbation in range error that does not result in a crash downstream will not result in a crash upstream either. A common approach to study string stability is to examine the transfer function from the range error of the preceding vehicle to that of the following vehicle. If this transfer function has a magnitude less than 1 at all frequencies, string stability is guaranteed [7].

Both traffic flow stability and string stability are important macroscopic properties that are influenced by the vehicle range policy. In addition, string stability is dependent on the servo-loop control algorithm. Determining a proper range policy is thus an important first step, which then needs to be complemented by a proper design of the servo control algorithm.

## II. REQUIREMENTS ON RANGE POLICY

Range policy [8]–[10] refers to the selection of the desired following distance as a function of vehicle operating parameters, especially the vehicle forward speed. In general there are two types of range policies: constant range and variable range policies. For a constant range policy, the separating distance is independent of the speed of the controlled vehicle and its implementation requires inter-vehicular communication to ensure string stability [11]. This range policy is used primarily in automated highway research when higher flow rate is of utmost importance. As of today no ACC system on the market uses constant range policy. In this paper our discussion will be limited to variable range policies because requiring vehicle-to-vehicle communication is not an attractive path for ACC implementation in the immediate future.

An ACC range policy should be designed to satisfy the following attributes:

- 1) It should lead to increased traffic capacity and a stable traffic flow up to a higher characteristic density.
- 2) The selected range policy should have a companion ACC servo-controller which ensures string stability without communicating with neighboring vehicles or the infrastructure.
- 3) It should stay close to human drivers' range behavior, at least during the early implementation stage.
- 4) The control effort should be within the vehicle's traction/braking capability.
- 5) The range policy should not be too "sensitive". In other words, a small change in range measurement (due to sensor noise or a vehicle cut-in) should not result in a significant change in the desired vehicle speed. This attribute is related to (4), and both of them ensure the vehicle capability is not frequently exhausted.

The overall ACC design is divided into two steps: (i)

specify a range policy; and (ii) design a controller for the servo-loop. In this paper, the overall ACC system is assumed to have a dual-loop structure (Fig. 1). A main loop ACC controller determines the proper acceleration based on measured range, range rate, speed and acceleration signals. A sub-loop controller then manipulates engine and brake actuators to achieve the desired acceleration or deceleration. Since the emphasis of this study is on the range policy and outer-loop controller, the servo-loop is ignored. We assume that its behavior is approximated by a first-order system:

$$\tau \cdot \dot{a}_i + a_i = a_{i,des} \quad (1)$$

where  $a_i$  is the vehicle's actual acceleration,  $a_{i,des}$  is the acceleration command and  $\tau$  is the servo-loop time constant. The vehicle speed and position are obtained through integration.

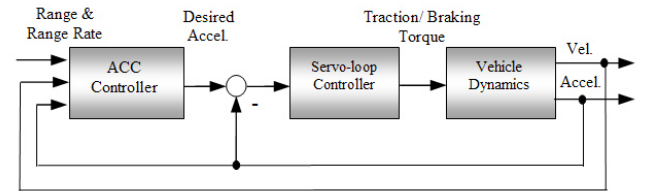


Fig. 1. Dual-loop structure of an ACC system.

## III. CONSTANT TIME-HEADWAY POLICY

The Constant Time-Headway (CTH) policy is commonly suggested as a safe practice for human drivers and is frequently used in ACC designs. The desired intervehicular range given by a CTH policy is:  $R_{des} = A + T_h \cdot v_i$ , where  $A$  is the separation distance when the vehicle is at standstill,  $T_h$  is the time-headway and  $v_i$  is the host vehicle speed. Prototype ACC vehicles commonly offer selectable time-headway between 1 to 2 seconds. For CTH policy, a sliding mode controller without using acceleration information can be designed to guarantee string stability [12]. Let  $e_i$  denote the range error, i.e., the difference between the actual range and the desired range. Define a sliding surface  $S_1 \equiv e_i - T_h \cdot v_i$ , an asymptotically converging algorithm can be obtained by imposing the requirement:

$$\dot{S}_1 = \dot{e}_i = -\lambda \cdot S_1 \quad (2)$$

where  $\lambda$  is the convergence rate of the sliding surface. Since  $\dot{R}_i = v_{i-1} - v_i$ , the desired acceleration is:

$$a_{i,des} = \frac{\lambda}{T_h} \cdot e_i + \frac{1}{T_h} \cdot \dot{R}_i \quad (3)$$

It can be seen that  $a_{i,des}$  is inversely proportional to  $T_h$ , i.e., short time-headway necessitates aggressive control effort and is at higher risk of losing string stability. To avoid string instability, a necessary lower bound on  $T_h$  is  $T_h \geq 2\tau$  [13],

where  $\tau$  is the time constant of the servo-loop (see Eq. (1)). Typically  $\tau$  varies between 0.5 to 1.0 second, and is dependent on the vehicle speed and power-to-weight ratio. When the vehicle servo-loop response is slow, the ACC time-headway needs to be large to maintain string stability. The fact that practicable  $T_h$  is dependent on  $\tau$  signifies the importance of the main-loop control design.

One deficiency of controller (3) is that it is unaware of the existence of servo-loop dynamics. To relax the time-headway limit ( $T_h \geq 2\tau$ ), a more robust control algorithm needs to be designed. If the host vehicle acceleration is available for feedback, an augmented sliding mode controller can be synthesized [12]:

$$a_{i,des} = \left(1 - \frac{\tau T_h}{T_a}\right) \cdot a_i + \frac{\tau}{T_a} \cdot \dot{R}_i + \frac{\tau \lambda}{T_a} \cdot \varepsilon_i. \quad (4)$$

For this controller a compound range error is used:  $\varepsilon_i = R_i - T_h \cdot v_i - T_a \cdot a_i$ , where  $T_a > 0$  is a control gain to be selected. It can be shown that if the time constant  $\tau$  is perfectly known, the string stability condition is guaranteed if  $T_h^2 \geq 2T_a > 0$ . Consequently by defining a special range error and incorporating servo-loop time constant explicitly into the controller, we eliminate the dependence of  $T_h$  on  $\tau$ . In practice the servo-loop is not exactly a first-order system, or its time constant  $\tau$  is not perfectly known. Consequently the controller is reformulated as:

$$a_{i,des} = \left(1 - \frac{\tau_e T_h}{T_a}\right) \cdot a_i + \frac{\tau_e}{T_a} \cdot \dot{R}_i + \frac{\tau_e \lambda}{T_a} \cdot \varepsilon_i \quad (5)$$

where  $\tau_e$  is the estimated time constant. The relationship between the actual and estimated time constant is assumed to be  $\tau = \gamma \cdot \tau_e$ , where  $\gamma$  is an uncertainty scaling factor. Fig. 2 indicates that the controller in (5) is not sensitive to the uncertainty in  $\tau$ . For a slow convergence rate ( $\lambda = 0.5$ ), string stability can be maintained even when the actual time constant is twice as long as the estimated value  $\tau_e$ .

The influence of range policy on traffic flow can be demonstrated on the fundamental diagram, which depicts the relationship between traffic flow rate and traffic density. By assuming a uniform vehicle length  $L = 5m$ , the traffic density at steady state is given by  $\rho = 1/(L + A + T_h \cdot v)$ . When the flow is constrained, i.e., when vehicles can not drive at their free-flow speeds, the flow rate is  $Q = \rho v = 1/T_h - (L + A) \cdot \rho/T_h$ . Since the separation distance  $A$  must be positive (else collision occurs at low speeds), the slope  $dQ/d\rho$  is negative. Therefore the traffic flow is always unstable whenever the traffic density is in the constrained flow section.

In summary, although constant time-headway policy is easy to implement and a servo controller can be readily designed to ensure string stability, it has poor traffic flow stability in the constrained flow region. In other words, it is

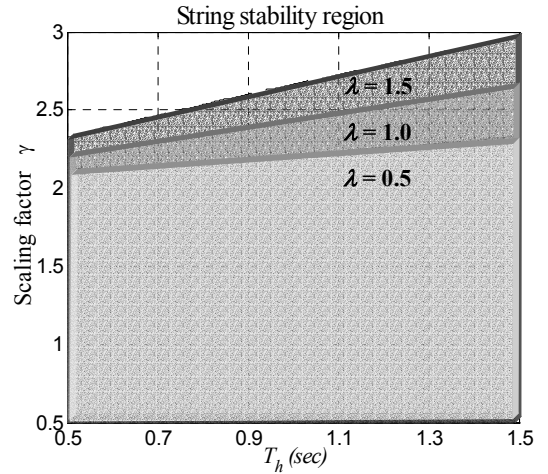


Fig. 2. The influence of time constant uncertainty on string stability for the controller in (5).

prone to unstable flow under density disturbance. For this reason, we believe that CTH range policy is not the best range policy one can use.

#### IV. RANGE POLICY USED BY HUMAN DRIVERS

Even though driver behavior varies widely, human driving data can be used to identify an averaged human range policy. One such averaged driver behavior was recently extracted from the UMTRI's ICCFOT (Intelligent Cruise Control Field Operational Test) database [14]. In this study driving behavior of 107 drivers were recorded. Near-steady state data were collected and the human range behavior was identified. The human range policy was found to be in the form of a quadratic curve:

$$R = A + T \cdot v + G \cdot v^2 \quad (6)$$

where  $A$  is the clearance at standstill,  $T$  and  $G$  are the coefficients identified by curve fitting. The parameter  $T$  for individual drivers turned out to fall mostly between 1 and 2.5 seconds. The parameter  $G$  was found to be strongly correlated to  $T$  by the relation  $G = -0.0246 \cdot T + 0.0108$  (Fig. 3). Interestingly, all 107 human drivers in the ICCFOT database exhibit a negative value of ' $G$ ', i.e., at higher

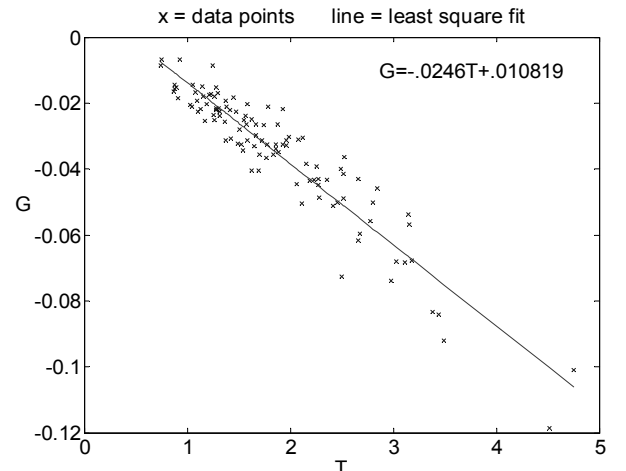


Fig. 3. Relationship between Coefficients  $T$  and  $G$ .

vehicle speeds the effective time-headway ( $dR/dv$ ) reduces.

Another curve fitting result of human driver behavior was reported in [15]. It takes the form of a power function:  $R = 2 + 6.33 \cdot v^{0.48}$ . The comparison of these two observed human driver range policies is presented in Fig. 4. Despite notable mismatch in the specific range values, they are similar qualitatively. In addition, both models indicate that human drivers tend to adopt a smaller effective time-headway at higher vehicle speed.

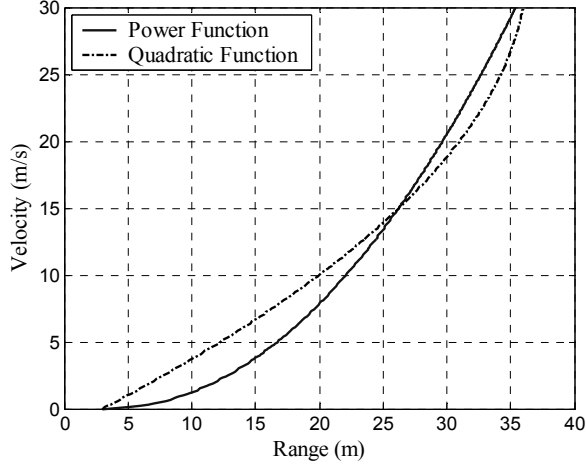


Fig. 4. Range policies employed by human drivers.

The traffic flow characteristics of the quadratic range policy are analyzed below. At steady state, the traffic density is  $\rho = 1/(L + A + T \cdot v + G \cdot v^2)$ . Flow rate can then be formulated as a function of  $\rho$ :

$$Q = \rho \cdot v = \rho \cdot \frac{\sqrt{T^2 - 4G(L + A - 1/\rho)} - T}{2G}. \quad (7)$$

Take the derivative and set it to zero:  $dQ/d\rho = 0 \Rightarrow$

$$\frac{\sqrt{T^2 - 4G(L + A - 1/\rho)}}{\rho \cdot \sqrt{T^2 - 4G(L + A - 1/\rho)}} - \frac{2G}{\rho \cdot \sqrt{T^2 - 4G(L + A - 1/\rho)}} - T = 0. \quad (8)$$

Solve (8) and accept only the positive solution:

$$\rho_{cr} = \frac{1}{2(L + A) + T \cdot \sqrt{(L + A)/G}}. \quad (9)$$

The critical density  $\rho_{cr}$  is the density when the maximum traffic flow is obtained, which also marks the boundary between stable and unstable traffic flow. A solution for (9) exists only when  $G$  is positive, and the traffic capacity can be obtained by substituting  $\rho_{cr}$  into (7) as long as  $\rho_{cr}$  exists. When  $G$  is negative, the slope  $dQ/d\rho$  is always negative in the constrained flow section.

The fundamental diagrams of the above two nonlinear range policies are shown in Fig. 5. The maximum flows of these two policies are achieved when the vehicles are at the boundary between free flow and constrained conditions. When the flow becomes constrained, traffic volume starts to decrease with increased density. Like the CTH policy, the

traffic flow is always unstable in the constrained region due to the negative-definiteness of  $dQ/d\rho$ . For human drivers,  $G$  is always negative (Fig. 3), which indicates that vehicle strings formed by human drivers are “more unstable” than ACC vehicles using the CTH range policy. In other words, if we design ACC range policies to be close to human driver's natural behavior, the resulting traffic flow stability will be even worse than vehicles using the CTH range policy. Requirement 3 (human-like) listed in section 2 is thus a conflicting goal with requirement 1 (more stable traffic flow).

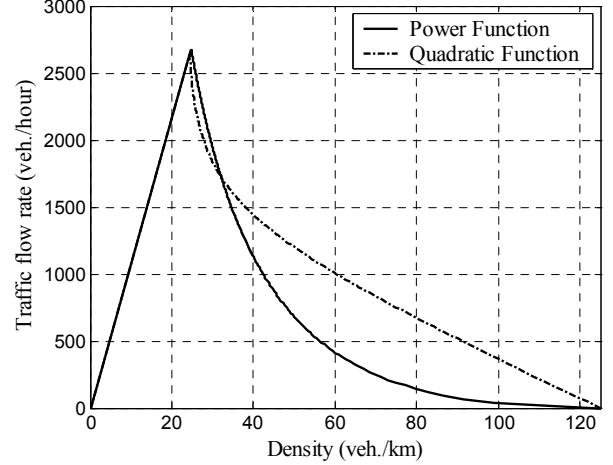


Fig. 5. Fundamental diagram of human range policies.

## V. SYNTHESIS OF A RANGE POLICY FOR TRAFFIC FLOW STABILITY AND STRING STABILITY

The goal of this section is to devise a range policy to achieve a stable traffic flow up to a higher critical density than both human and CTH range policies. The following facts can be derived from (9):

- 1) The quadratic range policy has a local maximum in the constrained flow section on the fundamental diagram only if  $G$  is positive.
- 2) If  $A, T, G$  are all positive, the critical density is upper

$$\text{bounded: } \rho_{cr} < \frac{1}{2(L + A)} = \frac{1}{2} \rho_{jam}.$$

The proposed range policy will be built based on these two facts. A quadratic policy with structure similar to (6) is used. For traffic flow stability,  $G$  is chosen to be positive and  $A$  is fixed at 3m (the uniform separating distance at standstill). Because the acceleration command is inversely proportional to time-headway, the slope  $dR/dv$  should be lower bounded for the sake of string stability. In addition, to characterize control effort quantitatively, the sensitivity [10] of a range

policy is defined as  $S = \frac{1}{2} \cdot \frac{dv_{des}^2}{dR} = v_{des} \frac{dv_{des}}{dR}$ . It has a unit

the same as the acceleration, and represents how much kinetic energy per unit mass should be accumulated or dissipated in response to a unit change of the desired range. A higher sensitivity value indicates a higher demand on vehicles' acceleration and braking capabilities. The range

policy selection is formulated as a constrained optimization problem:

*Objective:* Design  $T$  and  $G$  to maximize the traffic capacity

*Subject to the constraints:*

- 1) The range should be a non-decreasing function of the forward speed, i.e.,  $dR/dv \geq 0$ .
- 2)  $G > 0$  for stable traffic flow.
- 3) Critical density  $\rho_{cr}$  should be maintained close to its upper limit  $1/[2(L+A)]$ . A constraint  $\rho_{cr} \geq 0.0624$  (Veh./m) is imposed.
- 4) The maximum sensitivity over the entire speed range is limited to  $12\text{m/s}^2$ .
- 5) The slope  $dR/dv$  at  $5\text{m/s}$  must be higher than  $0.45\text{s}$  (for string stability).

This optimization problem is converted into the negative null form and solved by using the Matlab Optimization Toolbox. Given the specification  $\rho_{cr} = 62.4$  Veh./km, the range law is obtained:  $R = 3 + 0.0019 \cdot v + 0.0448 \cdot v^2$ , with critical velocity  $v_{cr} = 13.4\text{m/s}$ . This nonlinear range policy is illustrated in Fig. 6 together with a CTH policy and a modified Greenshields policy for comparison.

In 1935 Greenshields [16] derived a parabolic equation for the flow-density relationship on the basis of a linear velocity-density assumption:

$$v = V_f \cdot \left(1 - \frac{\rho}{\rho_{jam}}\right) \quad (10)$$

$$Q = \rho V_f \cdot \left(1 - \frac{\rho}{\rho_{jam}}\right) \quad (11)$$

where  $V_f$  is the free-flow speed,  $\rho_{jam}$  is the jam density. Greenshields' model and its derivatives dominated the field for nearly 50 years and were accepted for their agreement with measured human driving data. In [10] a modified Greenshields range policy was employed in ACC system to demonstrate its superiority over CTH policy in terms of traffic flow stability:

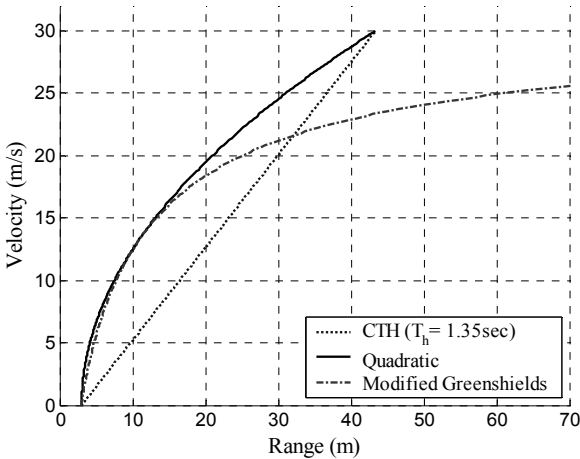


Fig. 6. The proposed quadratic range policy, also presented are a CTH policy and the Greenshields policy.

$$v = V_f \cdot \left[1 - \left(\rho/\rho_{jam}\right)^l\right]^m \quad (12)$$

$$Q = \rho V_f \cdot \left[1 - \left(\rho/\rho_{jam}\right)^l\right]^m \quad (13)$$

where  $l$  and  $m$  can be manipulated to meet particular specifications on traffic capacity and critical density. This modified Greenshields policy leads to a stable flow up to the critical density  $\rho_{cr} = \rho_{jam} \cdot \left(\frac{1}{1+lm}\right)^{1/l}$ . At  $\rho_{cr}$  the

corresponding speed is  $v_{cr} = V_f \cdot \left(\frac{lm}{1+lm}\right)^m$ , based on which traffic capacity can be obtained. A typical plot of the modified Greenshields range policy is also shown in Fig. 6. This range policy has a notable problem: its range at high speeds is unreasonably large, which may invite frequent cut-ins and practically discourage the driver from using it.

Fig. 7 presents the traffic flow characteristics of three range policies. The points shown in triangle symbols are  $Q$ - $\rho$  data under various conditions measured from a single lane on a multiple-lane highway [17]. They represent actual traffic characteristics of human drivers. The three range policies are chosen to yield the same traffic capacity of about 3000 Veh./hour to make the comparison fair. The critical densities of the suggested quadratic range policy and Greenshields policy are considerably higher than that of the CTH policy (62.4 vs. 27.8 Veh./km), thus their traffic flow stability regions are significantly extended. Over the entire traffic density range, the proposed quadratic range policy yields higher traffic volume than the Greenshields.

Although the traffic flow of the proposed range policy is higher than that of the Greenshields policy, Fig. 8 shows the maximal sensitivity of the proposed policy is lower than that of the Greenshields ( $11.2$  vs.  $13.6$   $\text{m/s}^2$ ). The proposed quadratic range policy has a near-constant sensitivity over a wide speed range (Figure 8), whereas the Greenshields has a peak at the medium speed range. In summary due to its simple form, increased critical density, higher traffic volume and lower sensitivity, the proposed quadratic policy does

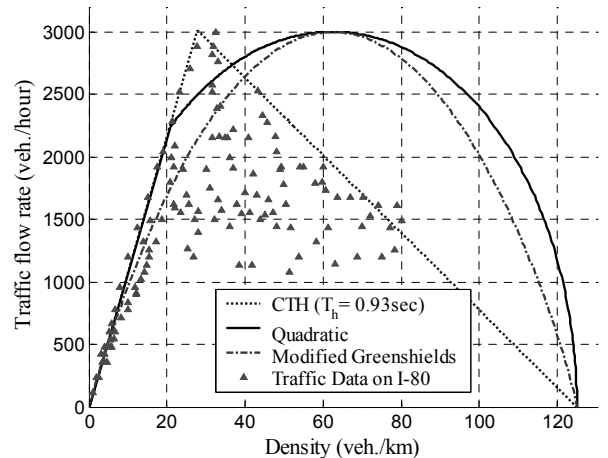


Fig. 7. The traffic flow characteristics of the CTH policy, the proposed quadratic policy, and a modified Greenshields policy.

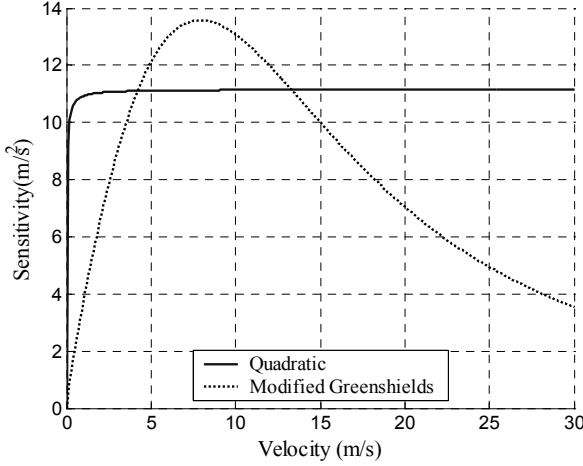


Fig. 8. Sensitivities of the proposed quadratic range policy and the Greenshields policy.

seem to be a viable alternative compared with the CTH or the Greenshields policy.

## VI. CONTROLLER FOR NONLINEAR RANGE POLICY

A sliding mode control algorithm is designed to implement the nonlinear range policy proposed in the previous section. To begin with we define a compound range error for the new range policy:

$$\varepsilon_i = R_i - (A + T \cdot v_i + G \cdot v_i^2) - T_a \cdot a_i \quad (14)$$

where  $T_a$  is a positive parameter to be determined. The sliding surface is selected to be:  $S_2 = \varepsilon_i$ . To ensure sliding motion, the relationship  $\dot{S}_2 = \dot{\varepsilon}_i = -\lambda S_2$  is imposed. Substitute the simplified sub-loop dynamics (1) into the sliding motion condition:

$$\dot{R}_i - T_v \cdot a_i - T_a \cdot (a_{i,des} - a_i) / \tau = -\lambda \varepsilon_i \quad (15)$$

where the equivalent time-headway  $T_v \equiv dR/dv = T + 2G \cdot v_i$ . As a result the acceleration command is:

$$a_{i,des} = \left(1 - \frac{\tau T_v}{T_a}\right) \cdot a_i + \frac{\tau}{T_a} \cdot \dot{R}_i + \frac{\tau \lambda}{T_a} \cdot \varepsilon_i \quad (16)$$

The sliding mode control guarantees the stability for individual vehicle, namely range error and velocity error will converge to zero asymptotically. In order to investigate its string stability characteristics, the ACC system is linearized around a nominal vehicle speed  $v_{0,i} = v_{0,i+1} = v_0$  and the corresponding range  $R_{0,i} = R_{0,i+1} = R_0$  with  $R_0 = A + T \cdot v_0 + G \cdot v_0^2$ . At a certain moment the lead vehicle speed is perturbed, thus introducing disturbance to the trailing vehicles. Let  $v_i = v_0 + \Delta v_i$ ,  $\dot{v}_i = \Delta \dot{v}_i$  and  $R_i = R_0 + \Delta R_i$ ,  $\dot{R}_i = \Delta \dot{R}_i$ . It can be shown [13] that for linearized systems the transfer function of the range error

propagation is the same as that of the speed variation:

$$G(s) = \frac{e_i(s)}{e_{i-1}(s)} = \frac{\Delta v_i(s)}{\Delta v_{i-1}(s)} \quad (17)$$

Therefore, the study on string stability boils down to checking the maximum magnitude of the transfer function of the velocity variation. We choose  $T_a$  to be  $T_a = T_v^2/k = (T + 2Gv_i)^2/k$ , where  $k$  is a scaling factor. Under the assumption that deviations from the nominal range and vehicle velocity are small, combine Eqs. (1) and (16), the transfer function of speed variation is:

$$\frac{\Delta v_i(s)}{\Delta v_{i-1}(s)} = \frac{k\tau \cdot s + k\tau\lambda}{\tau T_v^2 \cdot s^3 + (k\tau T_v \cdot s^2 + \tau\lambda T_v^2 \cdot s^2) + (k\tau \cdot s + k\tau\lambda T_v \cdot s) + k\tau\lambda} \quad (18)$$

To ensure string stability, the magnitude inequality  $\|\Delta v_i(s)/\Delta v_{i-1}(s)\| \leq 1$  must hold for all frequencies, therefore the requirement is reduced to:

$$T_v^2 \cdot \omega^4 + (k^2 - 2k + \lambda^2 T_v^2) \cdot \omega^2 + (k^2 - 2k) \cdot \lambda^2 \geq 0 \quad (19)$$

After some algebraic reductions, it is found that this inequality constraint is always satisfied if  $k > 2$ . The control law in (16) together with the condition  $k > 2$  guarantees that the desired nonlinear range policy is tracked in a string-stable fashion provided that the speed variation is so small that the linear assumption still holds.

## VII. SIMULATION RESULTS

The effectiveness of the nonlinear controller to maintain the proposed range policy will be verified by simulations. The scenario is as follows (Fig. 9): the vehicles on the main lane are confined to travel in a single lane of the highway. An on-ramp is located at 500m downstream from the highway entrance. When the average position of Veh. 2 and 4 crosses the end of the ramp, Veh. 3 merges into the main lane, i.e., almost right in the middle between Vehicles 2 and 4. The speed of Vehicle 3 is assumed to match that of Veh. 2, however its initial range may deviate from its desired value. At this very moment the lead vehicle of Veh. 4 switches from Veh. 2 to Veh.3. Although only 5 vehicles are show in Fig. 9, this merging process is repeated for every four vehicles

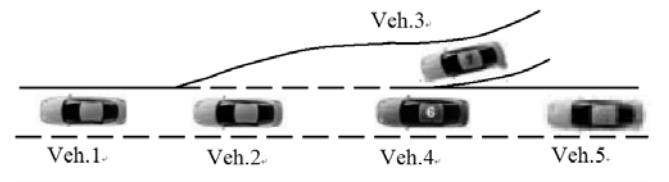


Fig. 9. Merging simulation scenario.

entering the main lane. In the following simulation, the cruising speed on the highway is 25m/s, which is higher than the critical velocity  $v_{cr}$  (13.4m/s), so we should expect to observe stable traffic flow. All of the vehicles are assumed to adopt the nonlinear range policy proposed in Section V and are equipped with the ACC controller in (16). It is assumed that all vehicles have a sub-loop time constant  $\tau = 0.8s$  (see Eq. (1)), but in the ACC controllers its estimated value is  $\tau_e = 1.0 s$ . To ensure that the acceleration and deceleration efforts are within practical range, we limit the acceleration within  $a_{max} = 0.7664$  and  $a_{min} = -3.5388$  (m/s<sup>2</sup>), which are extracted from human driving data [18].

Figures 10-12 show the position, velocity and acceleration histories of selected vehicles during the merging process. The simulation involves more than 150 vehicles. Instead of presenting the trajectories of all vehicles, only 2 out of every 10 vehicles are shown here. In each plot there are two groups of curves. The thick solid lines are the trajectories of the merging vehicles, and the thin dash-dotted lines represent the vehicles originally in the main lane. In a space-time chart, the speed of moving vehicles determines the slope of the trace, and stationary vehicles appear as horizontal lines.

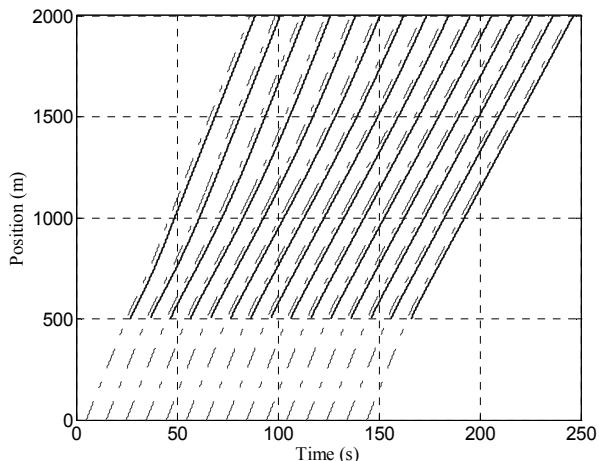


Fig. 10. Space-time chart of the ACC vehicles.

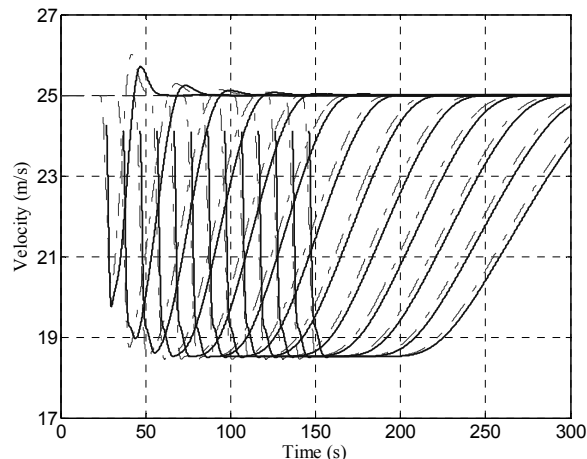


Fig. 11. Speed of ACC vehicles in the merging simulation.

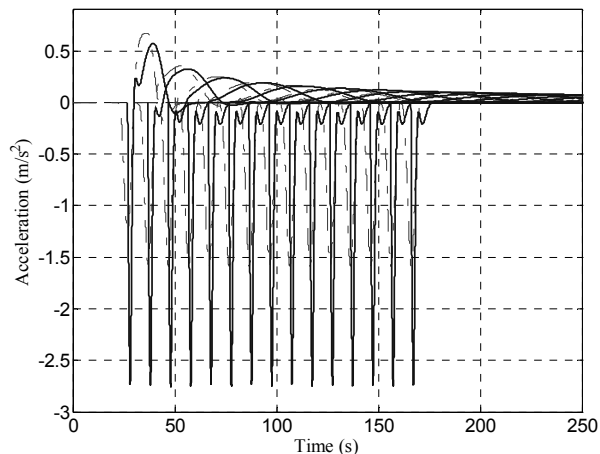


Fig. 12. Acceleration of ACC vehicles in the merging simulation.

Fig. 10 indicates that although vehicles merging into the traffic continually induce density disturbance to the traffic flow on the main lane, the traffic density recovers its original value downstream and the traffic flow remains stable as anticipated. In Fig. 11 the abrupt drop of speed is caused by the sudden change of measured range. However it is apparent that the velocities are lower-bounded and no vehicle comes to a stop and the traffic will not accumulate near the ramp intersection. Fig. 12 shows that the string stability is maintained, since the peak values of the acceleration attenuate upstream, both acceleration and deceleration will not exceed vehicle's capability.

Fig. 13 shows the behavior of vehicles using the Constant Time-Headway policy. The main loop controller takes the form of (5), which is a linear counterpart for (16). The result indicates that traffic builds up upstream of the ramp intersection, so the flow is unstable given the density disturbance input, which is in agreement with the analysis results.

For comparison purposes, a modified Gipps model is used to predict how human will react in the same merging maneuver. The modified Gipps model is based on the original Gipps model [19][20], but is modified to match the

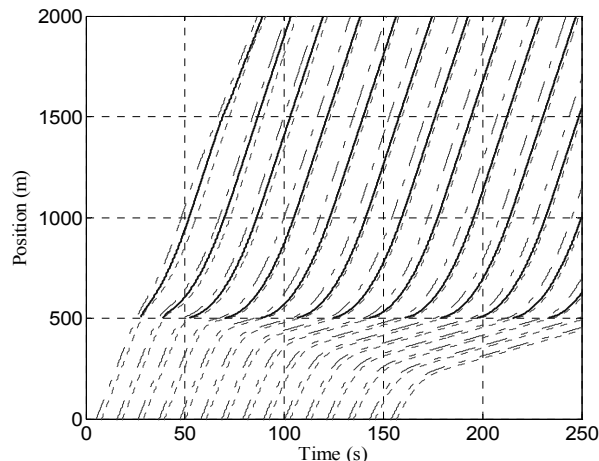


Fig. 13. Space-time chart for ACC vehicles with CTH range policy.

TABLE I  
PARAMETERS IN THE MODIFIED GIPPS MODEL

Symbol	Description	Value	Unit
$a_n$	Peak acceleration	0.7664	m/s <sup>2</sup>
$V_F$	Free-flow velocity	30	m/s
$b_n$	Peak deceleration	-3.5388	m/s <sup>2</sup>
$\hat{b}$	Estimated peak deceleration of the preceding vehicle	-4.0	m/s <sup>2</sup>
$R_{min}$	Separating distance at standstill	3.5094	m
$\tau_r$	Apparent reaction time	0.67	s

ICCFOT measurement data [18]. The model assumed that the driver wants to travel as fast as possible, at the same time subject to safety concern and vehicle performance limits. The vehicle speed of the modified Gipps model is given by

$$v_n(t + \tau_r) = \min \left\{ \begin{array}{l} v_n(t) + 2.5a_n\tau_r \left( 1 - \frac{v_n(t)}{V_F} \right) \sqrt{0.025 + \frac{v_n(t)}{V_F}} \\ b_n\tau_r + \sqrt{(b_n\tau_r)^2 - b_n \left[ 2[x_{n-1} - x_n - R_{min} - v_n(t)\tau_r] - \frac{v_{n-1}(t)^2}{\hat{b}} \right]} \end{array} \right. \quad (20)$$

The definition and values of the model parameters are explained in Table I. The values are the average of 107 human drivers identified in [18]. Fig. 14 shows that some curves have near-zero slopes after 150s, which means those vehicles stop completely and the traffic is accumulating near the entrance ramp. Fig. 15 confirms that vehicle speed drops to zero near the ramp intersection, and both flow stability and string stability are lost.

From these simulation results, it can be seen that the proposed ACC range policy maintains traffic flow stability under challenging conditions, which is beyond the competence of human drivers. The companion control law proves to be effective in regulating the range error and preserving string stability for the nonlinear range policy.

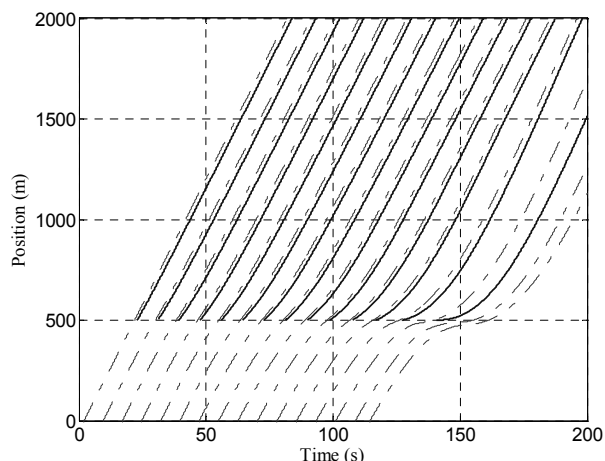


Fig. 14. Traffic-space-time chart for human controlled vehicles.

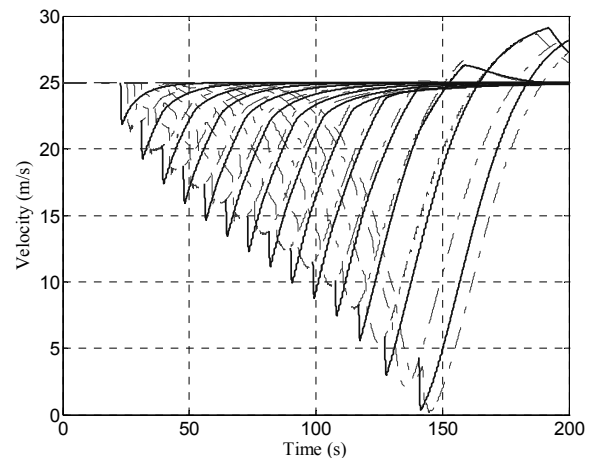


Fig. 15. Vehicle speed with human drivers in the merging simulation.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The design of an ACC range policy and a companion control policy is presented in this paper. The proposed range policy is obtained from a constrained optimization procedure, which balances between flow stability, string stability and sensitivity. One of the imposed constraints extends traffic flow stability region to much above what was observed in manual driving. The behavior of the proposed algorithm is compared with human drivers as well as a modified Greenshields policy. It is confirmed that higher critical density and lower maximum sensitivity are achieved. A nonlinear ACC controller based on the sliding mode technique is designed to ensure string stability. A merging simulation is conducted to verify the analysis results.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research is partially supported by the Automotive Research Center at the University of Michigan. The authors also wish to thank Paul Fancher of UMTRI for providing valuable data and insightful discussions.

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