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Solution algorithms for the Bounded Acceleration Shortest Path Problem

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Solution Algorithms for the Bounded Acceleration Shortest Path Problem

Stefano Ardizzoni, Luca Consolini, Mattia Laurini, and Marco Locatelli

***Abstract*—The purpose of this article is to introduce and characterize the bounded acceleration shortest path problem (BASP), a generalization of the shortest path problem (SP). This problem is associated to a graph: nodes represent positions of a mobile vehicle and arcs are associated to preassigned geometric paths that connect these positions. The BASP consists in finding the minimum-time path between two nodes. Differently from the SP, the vehicle has to satisfy bounds on maximum and minimum acceleration and speed, which depend on the vehicle's position on the currently traveled arc. Even if the BASP is NP-hard in the general case, we present a solution algorithm that achieves polynomial time-complexity under some additional hypotheses on problem data.**

***Index Terms*—.**

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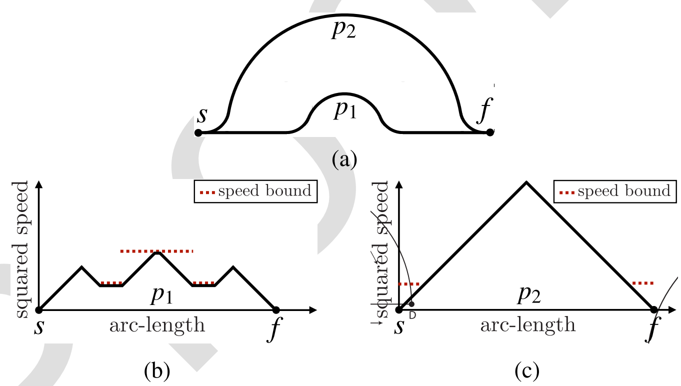

Fig. 1. Comparison of BASP and SP solutions. (a) Paths p_1 and p_2 connecting node s and f. (b) Optimal speed profile on p_1. (c) Optimal speed profile on p_2.

I. Introduction

The combinatorial problem of detecting the best path from a source to a destination node over an oriented graph with *constant* costs associated to its arcs, also known as shortest path problem (SP in what follows), is well known and can be efficiently solved, e.g., by the Dijkstra algorithm (in case of nonnegative costs). The continuous problem of minimum-time speed planning over a *fixed* path under given speed and acceleration constraints, also depending on the position along the path, is also widely studied and very efficient algorithms for its solution exist. But the combination of these two problems, called in what follows bounded acceleration shortest path problem (BASP), turns out to be more challenging than the two problems considered separately. More precisely, in terms of the complexity theory, it is possible to prove that the BASP is NP-hard, while the two problems considered separately are both polynomially solvable. In the BASP, we still have the combinatorial search for a best path as in SP but, differently from SP, the cost of an arc (more precisely, the time to traverse it) is not a constant value but depends on the speed planning along the arc itself, which, in turn, depends on the speed and acceleration constraints not only over the same arc but also over those preceding and following it in the selected path. Fig. 1(a) presents a simple scenario that allows to illustrate the BASP and its difference with SP; it shows two fixed paths p_1 and p_2 connecting positions s and f. The vehicle starts from s with null speed and must reach f with null speed. The solution of SP corresponds to the path p_1, which is the one of the shortest length. The BASP consists in finding the shortest-time path under acceleration and speed constraints. In this case, we assume that the vehicle acceleration and deceleration are bounded by a common constant and that its speed is bounded only on the central, high-curvature section of p_1, in order to avoid excessive lateral acceleration, which may cause sideslip. If the bound on acceleration and deceleration is sufficiently high, the solution of the BASP corresponds to the path p_2. Indeed, even if the latter path is longer, it can be traveled with a greater mean speed. Fig. 1(b) represents the fastest speed profile on p_1. The x-axis corresponds to the arc-length position on the path p_1 and the y-axis represents the squared speed. In this representation, arc-length intervals of constant acceleration or deceleration correspond to straight lines. Fig. 1(c) represents the fastest speed profile on p_2. Even if path p_2 is longer than p_1, it can be traveled in less time. In fact, the vehicle is able to accelerate till the midpoint, and then, to decelerate to the end position f.

The interest for the BASP comes from a specific industrial application, namely the optimization of automated guided vehicles (AGVs) motion in automated warehouses. The AGVs may be either free to move within a facility or be only allowed to move along predetermined paths. In the first case, one needs to employ environmental representations such as cell decomposition methods [1] or trajectory maps [2]. In particular, the authors in [3] present an algorithm based on a modification of Dijkstra's algorithm in which edge weights are history dependent. Our work is related to the second approach. Namely, we assume that AGVs

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cannot move freely within their environment and are instead required to move along predetermined paths that connect fixed operating points. These may be associated to shelves locations, where packages are stored or retrieved, to the end of production lines, where AGVs pick up final products, and to additional intermediate locations, used for routing. All these points are formally represented as nodes of a graph, whose arcs represent connecting paths. If AGVs are not subject to acceleration and speed constraints, the minimum-time planning problem is equivalent to SP and can be solved by the Dijkstra algorithm or its variants: see, for instance, [4]–[6], or other algorithms such as A* [7], Lifelong planning A* [8], D* [9], and D* Lite [10]. However, since the motion of AGVs must satisfy constraints on maximum speed and tangential and transversal accelerations that depend on the vehicle position on the path, these approaches cannot be applied to solve the BASP.

Instead, various works consider the minimum-time speed planning problem with acceleration and speed constraint on an *assigned* path. For instance, one can use the methods presented in [11] and [12], or path-following techniques such as [13] and [14].

As said, despite the fact that a large literature exists on SP and on the minimum-time speed planning on an assigned path, to the authors' knowledge, the BASP has never been specifically addressed in the literature. Formally, the BASP can be framed as an optimal control problem for a switching system, in which switchings are associated to passages from arc to arc and each discrete state is associated to a specific set of constraints. The results presented in this article exploit the very specific structure of the BASP and cannot be applied to generic switching systems. Anyway, the Algorithm V.5 could still apply to other switching systems satisfying an analogous of Proposition IV.3 and identifying a class of such systems could be the topic of future research.

This article is structured as follows. After introducing the notation employed throughout this article in Section II, in Section III, we first briefly discuss the solution of the speed planning problem along a *fixed* path, and then, we provide a formal statement of the BASP, also mentioning an NP-hardness result. In Section IV, we consider a subclass of the BASP, called k-BASP, which can be solved with polynomial time complexity for fixed values of k. Since constant k is problem dependent and is not known in advance, in Section V, we present an adaptive A* algorithm to find k. Finally, Section VI presents different computational experiments.

II. Notation

A directed graph is a pair $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{V}, \mathbb{E})$, where $\mathbb{V}$ is a set of nodes and $\mathbb{E} \subset \{(x, y) \in \mathbb{V}^2 \mid x \neq y\}$ is a set of directed arcs. A path p on $\mathbb{G}$ is a sequence of adjacent nodes of $\mathbb{V}$ (i.e., $p = \sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_m$, with $(\forall i \in \{1, \ldots, m\})\ (\sigma_i, \sigma_{i+1}) \in \mathbb{E}$). An alphabet $\Sigma = \{\sigma_1, \ldots, \sigma_n\}$ is a set of symbols. A word is any finite sequence of symbols. The set of all words over Σ is Σ^*, which also contains the empty word ε, while Σ_i represents the set of all words of length up to $i \in \mathbb{N}$, (i.e., words composed of up to i symbols, including ε). Given a word $w \in \Sigma^*$, $|w|$ denote its length. Given a directed graph $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{V}, \mathbb{E})$, we can think of $\mathbb{V}$ as an alphabet so that any path p of $\mathbb{G}$ is a word in $\mathbb{V}^*$. Given $s, t \in \Sigma^*$, the word obtained by writing t after s is the concatenation of s and t, denoted by $st \in \Sigma^*$; we call t a suffix of st and s a prefix of st. For $r \in \mathbb{V}^*$, $\vec{r}$ is the rightmost symbol of r. In the following, we represent paths of $\mathbb{G}$ as strings of symbols in $\mathbb{V}$. This allows to use the concatenation operation on paths and to use prefixes and suffixes to represent portions of paths. For $x \in \mathbb{R}$, $\lceil x \rceil = \min\{i \in \mathbb{Z} \mid i \geq x\}$ is the ceiling of x. For $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$, we set $a \wedge b = \min\{a, b\}$ and $a \vee b = \max\{a, b\}$, as the minimum and maximum operations, respectively. Finally, given an interval $I \subseteq \mathbb{R}$, we recall that $W^{1,\infty}(I)$ is the Sobolev space of functions in $L^\infty(I)$ with weak derivative of order 1 with finite L^∞-norm. For $f, g \in W^{1,\infty}(I)$, we denote with $f \wedge g$ and $f \vee g$ the point-wise minimum and maximum of f and g, respectively.

III. Problem Formulation

Before giving the formal description of the BASP, in Section III-A, we briefly discuss the solution of the speed planning problem along a fixed path. Although such problem has been already widely discussed in the literature, here, we briefly describe a way to tackle it in order to better understand the following formulation of the BASP.

A. Speed Planning Along an Assigned Path

Let $\gamma : [0, \lambda_f] \to \mathbb{R}^2$ be a C^2 function such that $(\forall \lambda \in [0, \lambda_f])\ \|\gamma'(\lambda)\| = 1$. The image set $\gamma([0, \lambda_f])$ represents the path followed by a vehicle, $\gamma(0)$ the initial configuration, and $\gamma(\lambda_f)$ the final one. The function γ is an arc-length parameterization of a path. We want to compute the speed law that minimizes the overall travel time while satisfying some kinematic and dynamic constraints. To this end, let $\xi : [0, t_f] \to [0, \lambda_f]$ be a differentiable monotonically increasing function representing the vehicle arc-length coordinate along the path as a function of time and let $v : [0, \lambda_f] \to [0, +\infty)$ be such that $(\forall t \in [0, t_f])\ \dot{\xi}(t) = v(\xi(t))$. In this way, $v(\lambda)$ is the vehicle speed at position λ. The vehicle position as a function of time is given by $x : [0, t_f] \to \mathbb{R}^2$, $x(t) = \gamma(\xi(t))$, speed and acceleration are given by $\dot{x}(t) = \gamma'(\xi(t))v(\xi(t))$, and $\ddot{x}(t) = a_L(t)\gamma'(\xi(t)) + a_N(t)\gamma'^{\perp}(\xi(t))$, where $a_L(t) = v'(\xi(t))v(\xi(t))$ and $a_N(t)(t) = \kappa(\xi(t))v(\xi(t))^2$ are the longitudinal and normal components of acceleration, respectively. Here, $\kappa : [0, \lambda_f] \to \mathbb{R}$ is the scalar curvature, defined as $\kappa(\lambda) = \langle \gamma''(\lambda), \gamma'(\lambda)^{\perp} \rangle$, where $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ denotes the scalar product.

We require to travel distance λ_f in a minimum time while satisfying, for every $t \in [0, \xi^{-1}(\lambda_f)]$, $0 \leq v^-(\xi(t)) \leq v(\xi(t)) \leq v^+(\xi(t))$, $|a_N(\xi(t))| \leq \beta(\xi(t))$, $\alpha^-(\xi(t)) \leq a_L(\xi(t)) \leq \alpha^+(\xi(t))$. Here, functions $v^-, v^+, \alpha^-, \alpha^+$, and β are arc-length-dependent bounds on the vehicle speed and on its longitudinal and normal acceleration. It is convenient to make the change of variables $w = v^2$ (see [15]) so that by setting $\Psi(w) = \int_0^{\lambda_f} w(\lambda)^{-\frac{1}{2}} d\lambda$, $\mu^+(\lambda) = v^+(\lambda)^2 \wedge \frac{\beta(\lambda)}{\kappa(\lambda)}$, and $\mu^-(\lambda) = v^-(\lambda)^2$, our problem takes on the following form.

$$\min_{w \in W^{1,\infty}([0,\lambda_f])} \quad \Psi(w) \tag{1a}$$

$$\mu^-(\lambda) \leq w(\lambda) \leq \mu^+(\lambda), \qquad \lambda \in [0, \lambda_f] \tag{1b}$$

$$\alpha^-(\lambda) \leq w'(\lambda) \leq \alpha^+(\lambda), \qquad \lambda \in [0, \lambda_f] \tag{1c}$$

where $\Psi : W^{1,\infty}([0, \lambda_f]) \to \mathbb{R}$ is order reversing (i.e., $(\forall x, y \in [0, \lambda_f])\ x \geq y \Rightarrow \Psi(x) \leq \Psi(y)$) and μ^-, μ^+, α^-, $\alpha^+ \in L^\infty([0, \lambda_f])$ are assigned functions with $\mu^-, \alpha^+ \geq 0$, and $\alpha^- \leq 0$. Initial and final conditions on speed can be included in the definition of functions μ^- and μ^+. For instance, to set initial condition $w(0) = w_0$, it is sufficient to define $\mu^+(0) = \mu^-(0) = w_0$. In [16], we introduced a subset of $W^{1,\infty}([0, \lambda_f])$, called Q, as a technical requirement and an operator based on the solution of the following differential equations:

$$\begin{cases} F'(\lambda) = \begin{cases} \alpha^+(\lambda) \wedge \mu'(\lambda), & \text{if } F(\lambda) \geq \mu(\lambda) \\ \alpha^+(\lambda), & \text{if } F(\lambda) < \mu(\lambda) \end{cases} \\ F(0) = \mu(0) \end{cases} \tag{2}$$

IEEE Proof

$$\begin{cases} B'(\lambda) = \begin{cases} \alpha^-(\lambda) \wedge \mu'(\lambda), & \text{if } B(\lambda) \geq \mu(\lambda) \\ \alpha^-(\lambda), & \text{if } B(\lambda) < \mu(\lambda) \end{cases} \\ B(\lambda_f) = \mu(\lambda_f) \end{cases} \tag{3}$$

with $F, B \in Q$, that allows to compute the optimal solution of the Problem (1). In particular, in [16], it is shown that the optimal solution is $F(\mu^+) \wedge B(\mu^+)$. We refer the reader to [16] for a detailed discussion.

B. BASP Problem

In this section, we provide a formal description of the BASP. Let us consider a directed graph $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{V}, \mathbb{E})$, with $\mathbb{V} = \{\sigma_1, \ldots, \sigma_N\}$. For each $i \in \{1, \ldots, N\}$, the node σ_i represents an operating point $R_i \in \mathbb{R}^2$. In fact, the restriction $R_i \in \mathbb{R}^2$ is not strictly necessary but we imposed it since it holds in the AGV application, which is the main motivation of this work. Each arc $\theta = (\sigma_i, \sigma_j) \in \mathbb{E}$ represents a fixed directed path between two operating points and is associated to an arc-length parameterized path γ_θ of length $\ell(\theta)$, such that $\gamma_\theta(0) = R_i$ and $\gamma_\theta(\ell(\theta)) = R_j$. In the following, we denote the set of all possible paths on $\mathbb{G}$ by P. Similarly, for $s, f \in \mathbb{V}$, we denote by P_s the subset of P consisting in all paths starting from s and by $P_{s,f}$ the subset of P consisting in all paths starting from s and ending in f. We extend this definition to subsets of $\mathbb{V}$, that is, if $S, F \subset \mathbb{V}$, we denote by $P_{S,F}$ the set of all paths starting from nodes in S and ending in nodes in F. Given a path $p = \sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_m$, its length $\ell(p)$ is defined as the sum of the lengths of its individual arcs, that is, $\ell(p) = \sum_{i=1}^{m-1} \ell(\sigma_i, \sigma_{i+1})$.

To setup our problem, we need to associate four real-valued functions to each edge $\theta \in \mathbb{E}$: the maximum and minimum allowed acceleration and squared speed. The domain of each function is the arc-length coordinate on the path γ_θ. Then, given a specific path p, we are able to define a speed optimization problem of the form (1) by considering the constraints associated to the edges that compose p. We define the set of edge functions as $\mathscr{E} = \{\varphi : \mathbb{E} \times \mathbb{R}^+ \to \mathbb{R}\}$. If $\varphi \in \mathscr{E}, \theta \in \mathbb{E}, \lambda \in \mathbb{R}^+$, $\varphi(\theta, \lambda)$ denotes the value of φ on edge θ at position λ. Note that $\varphi(\theta, \lambda)$ will be relevant only for $\lambda \in [0, \ell(\theta)]$. Given a path $p = \sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_m$, we associate to $\varphi \in \mathscr{E}$ a function $\varphi_p : [0, \ell(p)] \to \mathbb{R}$ in the following way. Define functions $\Theta : [0, \ell(p)] \to \mathbb{N}$, $\Lambda : [0, \ell(p)] \to \mathbb{R}$ such that $\Theta(\lambda) = \max\{i \in \mathbb{N} \mid \ell(\sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_i) \leq \lambda\}$ and $\Lambda(\lambda) = \ell(\sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_{\Theta(\lambda)})$. In this way, $\Theta(\lambda)$ is such that $\theta(\lambda) = (\sigma_{\Theta(\lambda)}, \sigma_{\Theta(\lambda)+1})$ is the edge that contains the position at arc length λ along p, and $\Lambda(\lambda)$ is the sum of the lengths of all arcs up to node $\sigma_{\Theta(\lambda)}$ in p. Then, we define $\varphi_p(\lambda) = \varphi(\theta(\lambda), \lambda - \Lambda(\lambda))$.

Given $\hat{\mu}^+, \hat{\mu}^-, \hat{\alpha}^+, \hat{\alpha}^- \in \mathscr{E}$ and path $p \in P$, let $\mathbb{B} = (\hat{\mu}^-, \hat{\mu}^+, \hat{\alpha}^-, \hat{\alpha}^+)$. Assume $(\forall \theta \in \mathbb{E})$ $\hat{\mu}^+(\theta, \cdot) \in Q$ and define $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p) = \min_{w \in W^{1,\infty}([0, s_f])} \Psi(w)$, as the solution of the Problem (1) along path p with $\mu^- = \hat{\mu}_p^-$, $\mu^+ = \hat{\mu}_p^+$, $\alpha^- = \hat{\alpha}_p^-$, and $\alpha^+ = \hat{\alpha}_p^+$. In this way, $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p)$ is the minimum time required to traverse the path p, respecting the speed and acceleration constraints defined in $\mathbb{B}$. We set $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p) = +\infty$ if the Problem (1) is not feasible.

The following is the main problem discussed in this article.

Problem III.1 (BASP): Given a graph $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{V}, \mathbb{E})$, $\mu^+, \mu^-, \alpha^-, \alpha^+ \in \mathscr{E}$, $\mathbb{B} = (\mu^+, \mu^-, \alpha^-, \alpha^+)$, $s \in \mathbb{V}$, and $F \subset \mathbb{V}$, find $\min_{p \in P_{s,F}} T_{\mathbb{B}}(p)$.

In other words, we want to find the path p that minimizes the transfer time between source node s and a destination node in F, taking into account bounds on speed and accelerations on each traversed arc (represented by arc functions $\mu^+, \mu^-, \alpha^-, \alpha^+$). The following properties are a direct consequence of the definition of $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p)$.

Proposition III.2: The following properties hold:

1) let $p_1, p_2 \in P$, $p_1 p_2 \in P \Rightarrow T_{\mathbb{B}}(p_1 p_2) \geq T_{\mathbb{B}}(p_1) + T_{\mathbb{B}}(p_2)$;

2) if $\mathbb{B} = (\mu^+, \mu^-, \alpha^-, \alpha^+)$, $\hat{\mathbb{B}} = (\hat{\mu}^+, \hat{\mu}^-, \hat{\alpha}^-, \hat{\alpha}^+)$ are such that $(\forall \theta \in \mathbb{E})$ $(\forall \lambda \in [0, \ell(\theta)])[\mu^-(\theta, \lambda), \mu^+(\theta, \lambda)] \subset [\hat{\mu}^-(\theta, \lambda), \hat{\mu}^+(\theta, \lambda)]$ and $[\alpha^-(\theta, \lambda), \alpha^+(\theta, \lambda)] \subset [\hat{\alpha}^-(\theta, \lambda), \ \hat{\alpha}^+(\theta, \lambda)]$, then $(\forall p \in P)$ $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p) \geq T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p)$.

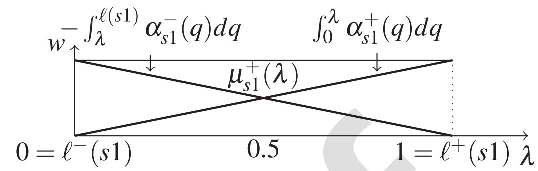

Fig. 2. Computation of $\ell^+(s1) = 1$ and $\ell^-(s1) = 0$.

In particular, the first property states that the minimum time for traveling the composite path $p_1 p_2$ is greater or equal to the sum of the times needed for traveling p_1 and p_2 separately. In fact, in the first case, the speed must be continuous when passing from p_1 to p_2 (due to the acceleration bounds), but this constraint does not need to be satisfied when the speed profiles for p_1 and p_2 are computed separately.

The following proposition (whose proof can be found in [17]) states the theoretical complexity of a simplified version of Problem III.1, called BASP-C, in which maximum and minimum acceleration and speed are constant on each arc.

Proposition III.3: Problem BASP-C is NP-hard.

IV. k-BASP

As we will see in Remark IV.6, SP can be viewed as a special case of the BASP, namely a BASP with unbounded acceleration limits. In fact, also BASP can be viewed as an SP but defined on a different graph with respect to the original one. More precisely, here, we introduce some restrictions on parameters $\mathbb{B}$ that allow reducing the BASP to a standard SP that can be solved by Dijkstra's algorithm on an extended graph. Let $p \in P$, define

$\ell^+(p) = \min\{\{\lambda \in [0, \ell(p)] \mid \int_0^\lambda \alpha_p^+(q)dq = \mu_p^+(\lambda)\}, +\infty\}$;

$\ell^-(p) = \max\{\{\lambda \in [0, \ell(p)] \mid -\int_\lambda^{\ell(p)} \alpha_p^-(q)dq = \mu_p^+(\lambda)\}, -\infty\}$.

In this way, $\ell^+(p)$ is the smallest value of $\lambda \in [0, \ell(p)]$ for which the solution of F in (2), with $\alpha^+ = \alpha_p^+$, starting from initial condition $F(0) = 0$, reaches the squared speed upper bound $\mu^+(\lambda)$. Note that $\ell^+(p) = \infty$ if no such value of λ exists. Similarly, $\ell^-(p)$ is the largest value of $\lambda \in [0, \ell(p)]$ for which the solution of B in (3), with $\alpha^- = \alpha_p^-$, starting from initial condition $B(\ell(p)) = 0$, reaches $\mu^+(\lambda)$. Again, $\ell^-(p) = -\infty$ if no such value of λ exists. Note that if $p, t, pt \in P$, $\ell^+(pt) \leq \ell^+(p)$ and $\ell^-(pt) \geq \ell^-(p)$ (actually, equalities hold if the values are all finite). Finally, we define

$$K(\mathbb{B}) = \min\{k \in \mathbb{N} \mid (\forall p \in P_s) \, |p| \geq k \Rightarrow \ell^+(p) \leq \ell^-(p)\}. \tag{4}$$

We call k-BASP any instance of Problem III.1 that satisfies $K(\mathbb{B}) \leq k$. For instance, consider the following chain graph $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{V} = \{s, 1, 2, f\}, \ \mathbb{E} = \{(s, 1), (1, 2), (2, f)\})$. Here, $(\forall \theta \in \mathbb{E})$ $\alpha^-(\theta) = -1$, $\alpha^+(\theta) = 1$, $\mu^-(\theta) = 0$, $\ell(\theta) = 1$, and $\mu^+((s, 1)) = 1$, $\mu^+((1, 2)) = \frac{2}{3}$, $\mu^+((2, f)) = 1$. In this case, $P_s = \{s, s1, s12, s12f\}$. Moreover, $K(\mathbb{B}) > 2$, since $\ell^+(s1) = 1 > 0 = \ell^-(s1)$, as reported in Fig. 2. Furthermore, $\ell^+(s12) < \ell^-(s12)$ and $\ell^+(12f) < \ell^-(12f)$ and $s12, 12f$ are the only paths of length 3. Fig. 3 shows the computation of $\ell^+(s12)$ and $\ell^-(s12)$; the computation of $\ell^+(12f)$ and $\ell^-(12f)$ is analogous. Hence, in this example, $K(\mathbb{B}) = 3$.

Note that $K(\mathbb{B}) - 1$ represents the maximum number of nodes of a path that can be traveled with a speed profile of maximum acceleration, followed by one of maximum deceleration, starting and ending with null speed, without violating the maximum speed constraint. The following

IEEE Proof

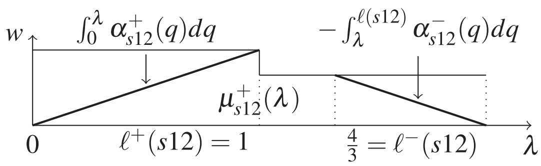

Fig. 3. Computation of $\ell^+(s12)=1$ and $\ell^-(s12)=\frac{4}{3}$.

expression provides a simple upper bound on $K(\mathbb{B})$:

$$K(\mathbb{B}) \leq 1+\left[2\max_{\theta\in\mathbb{E}} \frac{\max\limits_{\lambda\in[0,\ell(\theta)]} \mu^+(\theta,\lambda)}{\min\limits_{\lambda\in[0,\ell(\theta)]} \left(\alpha^+(\theta,\lambda)\wedge|\alpha^-(\theta,\lambda)|\right)\ell(\theta)}\right]. \quad (5)$$

Note that $K(\mathbb{B})=1$ only if $\alpha_-=-\infty$ and $\alpha^+=+\infty$, that is, if we do not consider acceleration bounds. We will present an algorithm that solves the k-BASP in polynomial time complexity with respect to $|\mathbb{V}|$ and $|\mathbb{E}|$. However, note that the complexity is exponential with respect to k so that a correct estimation of $K(\mathbb{B})$ is critical. In general, the bound (5) overestimates $K(\mathbb{B})$. In Section V, we will present a simple method for correctly estimating $K(\mathbb{B})$.

We recall that $\mathbb{V}_k$ represents the subset of language $\mathbb{V}^*$ composed of strings with maximum length k, including the empty string ε. Define $\mathrm{Suff}_k : P\to\mathbb{V}_k$ such that, if $|p|\leq k$, $\mathrm{Suff}_k(p)=p$ and if $|p|>k$, $\mathrm{Suff}_k(p)$ is the suffix of p of length k. The function Suff_k allows to introduce a partially defined transition function $\Gamma:\mathbb{V}_k\times\mathbb{V}\to\mathbb{V}_k$ by setting $\Gamma(r,\sigma)=\mathrm{Suff}_k(r\sigma)$ if $r\sigma\in P$, otherwise, if $r\sigma\notin P$, $\Gamma(r,\sigma)$ is not defined. Define the incremental cost function $\eta: P_s\times\mathbb{V}\to\mathbb{R}^+$ such that, for $p\in P_s$ and $\sigma\in\mathbb{V}$, if $p\sigma\in P_s$, $\eta(p,\sigma)=T_{\mathbb{B}}(p\sigma)-T_{\mathbb{B}}(p)$, otherwise $\eta(p,\sigma)=+\infty$. In other words, $\eta(p,\sigma)$ is the difference between the minimum time required for traversing $p\sigma$ and the minimum time required for traversing p. For simplicity of notation, from now on, we will denote $T_{\mathbb{B}}$ simply as T. The following proposition shows that the incremental cost is always strictly positive.

Proposition IV.1: $\eta(p,\sigma)\geq T(\sigma)$.

Proof: By 1) of Proposition III.2, $T(p\sigma)\geq T(p)+T(\sigma)$. □

The following property, whose proof is presented in the Appendix, plays a key role in the solution algorithm.

Proposition IV.2: Let $p_1,p_2,t\in P$, if $p_1t,p_2t\in P$ and $\ell^+(t)\leq\ell^-(t)$, then $(\forall\sigma\in\mathbb{V})\ T(p_1t\sigma)-T(p_1t)=T(p_2t\sigma)-T(p_2t)$.

The following is a direct consequence of Proposition IV.2. It states that, given $p\in P$ and $\sigma\in\mathbb{V}$, the incremental cost $\eta(p,\sigma)$ does not depend on the complete path p, but only on $\mathrm{Suff}_k(p)$ (its last k symbols).

Proposition IV.3: If $K(\mathbb{B})\leq k$ and $p,p'\in P$ are such that $\mathrm{Suff}_k(p)=\mathrm{Suff}_k(p')$, then $(\forall\sigma\in\mathbb{V})\ \eta(p,\sigma)=\eta(p,'\sigma)$.

Define function $\hat\eta:\mathbb{V}_k\times\mathbb{V}\to\mathbb{R}^+$, such that $\hat\eta(r,\sigma)=\eta(p,\sigma)$ where $p\in P$ is any path such that $r=\mathrm{Suff}_k(p)$. We set $\hat\eta(r,\sigma)=+\infty$ if such path does not exist. Note that the function $\hat\eta$ is well-defined by Proposition IV.3, being $\eta(p,\sigma)$ identical among all paths p such that $r=\mathrm{Suff}_k(p)$. In particular, Proposition IV.3 holds for $p'=\mathrm{Suff}_k(p)=r$ so that we can compute $\hat\eta$ as $\hat\eta(r,\sigma)=\eta(r,\sigma)$. In the following, since $\hat\eta$ is the restriction of η on $\mathbb{V}_k\times\mathbb{V}$, we denote $\hat\eta$ simply by η.

The value k can be viewed as the amount of memory required to solve the problem: once a node is reached, the optimal path from such node to the target one depends on the last k visited nodes. If $k=1$, it only depends on the current node (i.e., no memory is required). This is the situation with the classical SP. More generally, $k>1$ so that the optimal way to complete the path does not only depend on the current node, but also on the sequence of $k-1$ nodes visited before reaching it. Define function $V:\mathbb{V}_k\to\mathbb{R}$ as

$$V(r)=\min_{p\in P_s|\mathrm{Suff}_k\,p=r} T_{\mathbb{B}}(p). \quad (6)$$

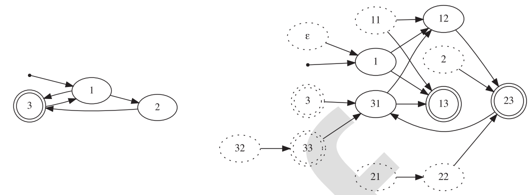

Fig. 4. Graph and its corresponding extension for $k=2$.

Note that the solution of the BASP corresponds to $\min_{r\in\mathbb{V}_k|\vec r\in F} V(r)$ (we recall that $\vec r$ is the last node of r). For $r\in\mathbb{V}_k$, define the set of predecessors of r as $\mathrm{Prec}(r)=\{\bar r\in\mathbb{V}_k \mid r=\Gamma(\bar r,\vec r)\}$. The following proposition presents an expression for $V(r)$ that holds if $\ell^+(r')\leq\ell^-(r')$ for all predecessors r' of r.

Proposition IV.4: Let $r\in\mathbb{V}_k$, if $(\forall r'\in\mathrm{Prec}(r))\ \ell^+(r')\leq\ell^-(r')$, then

$$V(r)=\min_{r'\in\mathrm{Prec}(r)}\{V(r')+\eta(r,'\vec r)\}. \quad (7)$$

Proof: Let $S_r=\{q\in P_s \mid \mathrm{Suff}_k\, q\vec r=r\}$. $V(r)=\min_{p\in P_s\mid\mathrm{Suff}_k\,p=r}T(p)=\min_{q\in S_r}\{T(q\vec r)-T(q)+T(q)\}=\min_{q\in S_r}\{T(q)+T((\mathrm{Suff}_k\,q)\vec r)-T(\mathrm{Suff}_k\,q)\}=\min_{q\in S_r}\{T(q)+\eta(\mathrm{Suff}_k\,q,\vec r)\}=\min_{r'\in\mathrm{Prec}(r),\ q\in S_{r'}}\{T(q)+\eta(r,'\vec r)\}=\min_{r'\in\mathrm{Prec}(r)}\{V(r')+\eta(r,'\vec r)\}$, where we used the facts that $T(q\sigma)-T(q)=T(\mathrm{Suff}_k\,q\sigma)-T(\mathrm{Suff}_k\,q)$, by Proposition IV.2, and that $q\in P_s$ is such that $\mathrm{Suff}_k\,q\vec r=r\Leftrightarrow\mathrm{Suff}_k\,q\in\mathrm{Prec}(r)$. ■

As a consequence of Proposition IV.4, if $(\forall r\in\mathbb{V}_k)\ \ell^+(r)\leq\ell^-(r)$, $V(r)$ corresponds to the length of the shortest path from s to r on the extended directed graph $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}=(\tilde{\mathbb{V}},\tilde{\mathbb{E}})$, where $\tilde{\mathbb{V}}=\mathbb{V}_k$ and $(r_1,r_2)\in\tilde{\mathbb{E}}$ if $r_2=\Gamma(r_1,\vec{r_2})$ is defined, in this case its length is $\eta(r_1,\vec{r_2})$. The left part of Fig. 4 shows a graph consisting of three nodes. Node $s=1$ is the source (indicated by the entering arrow) and the double border shows the final node $F=\{3\}$. The right part of Fig. 4 represents the corresponding extended graph, obtained for $k=2$, consisting of 13 nodes (the cardinality of $\mathbb{V}_2$). Note that some of the nodes are unreachable from the initial state, these are represented with dotted borders.

Solving k-BASP corresponds to finding a minimum-length path on $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$ that connects node $s\in\mathbb{V}_k$ to $\tilde F=\{r\in\mathbb{V}_k \mid \vec f\in F\}$. Note that the set of final states $\tilde F$ for the extended graph $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$ contains all paths $p\in\mathbb{V}_k$ that end in an element of F. In the extended graph reported in Fig. 4, this corresponds to finding a minimum-length path from the starting node 1 to one of the final nodes 3, 13, 23, and 33. Note that the unreachable nodes play no role in this procedure. We can find a minimum-length path by Dijkstra's algorithm applied to $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$, leading to the following complexity result.

Proposition IV.5: k-BASP can be solved with complexity $O(|\mathbb{V}|^{k-1}|\mathbb{E}|+(|\mathbb{V}|^k\log|\mathbb{V}|^k))$.

Proof: Dijkstra's algorithm has time complexity $O(|E|+|V|\log|V|)$, where $|E|$ and $|V|$ are the cardinalities of the edge and vertex sets, respectively. In our case, $|V|=|\tilde{\mathbb{V}}|=|\mathbb{V}_k|=\sum_{i=0}^k|\mathbb{V}|^i=O(|\mathbb{V}|^k)$, $|E|=|\tilde{\mathbb{E}}|\leq|\mathbb{V}_{k-1}\mathbb{E}|=O(|\mathbb{V}|^{k-1}|\mathbb{E}|)$. □

The following remark establishes that SP can be viewed as a special case of the BASP without acceleration bounds.

Remark IV.6: If $(\forall\theta\in\mathbb{E})\ (\forall\lambda\in[0,\ell(\theta)])\ \alpha^-(\theta,\lambda)=-\infty$, $\alpha^+(\theta,\lambda)=+\infty$, then $K(\mathbb{B})=1$. The resulting 1-BASP reduces to a standard SP on the graph $\mathbb{G}$ and can be solved with time complexity $O(|\mathbb{E}|+|\mathbb{V}|\log|\mathbb{V}|)$.

V. Adaptive A* Algorithm for k-BASP

The computation method based on Dijkstra's algorithm on the extended graph $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$, presented in the previous section, has two main

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disadvantages. First, $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$ has $\sum_{j=0}^{k} |\mathbb{V}|^j$ nodes so that the time required by Dijkstra's algorithm grows exponentially with k. We will show that it is possible to mitigate this problem and reduce the number of visited nodes by using the A* algorithm with a suitable heuristic. Second, the estimation of $k = K(\mathbb{B})$ from its definition is not an easy task. We will show that it is quite easy to adaptively find the correct value of k by starting from $k = 2$ and increasing k if needed.

The A* algorithm is a heuristic method that allows to compute the optimal path, if it exists (see [18]), by exploring the graph beginning from the starting node along the most promising directions according to a heuristic function that estimates the cost from the current position to the target node. Hence, to implement the A* algorithm, we need to define a heuristic function $h : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}$, such that, for $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, $h(r)$ is a lower bound on $\min_{p \in P_{\vec{r},\tilde{F}}} T(p)$, that is, the minimum time needed for traveling from $\vec{r}$ to a final state in $\tilde{F}$. In general, we can compute lower bounds for the BASP by relaxing the acceleration constraints α^- and α^+. Namely, let $\hat{\mathbb{B}}$ be a parameter set obtained by relaxing acceleration constraints in $\mathbb{B}$. Then, if $K(\hat{\mathbb{B}}) < K(\mathbb{B})$, by Proposition IV.5, the solution of the BASP for parameter $\hat{\mathbb{B}}$ can be computed with a lower computational time than the solution with parameter $\mathbb{B}$. In particular, we obtain a very simple lower bound by removing acceleration bounds altogether, that is, by setting $\alpha^- = -\infty$ and $\alpha^+ = +\infty$. In this way, the vehicle is allowed to travel at maximum speed everywhere along the path and the incremental cost function $\eta(p, \sigma)$ is given by the time needed to travel γ_σ at maximum speed, that is, $\eta(p, \sigma) = \int_0^{\ell(\vec{p}\sigma)} \frac{1}{\sqrt{\mu^+((\vec{p},\sigma),\lambda)}} d\lambda$. Define the heuristic $h : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}^+$ as

$$h(r) = \min_{p \in P_{\vec{r},\tilde{F}}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p). \tag{8}$$

Note that, if $\alpha^- = -\infty$ and $\alpha^+ = +\infty$, h corresponds to the solution of 1-BASP and all values of h can be efficiently precomputed by Dijkstra's algorithm (see Remark IV.6). The following proposition shows that h is admissible and consistent so that the A* algorithm, with heuristic h, provides the optimal solution of the k-BASP and its time complexity is no worse than Dijkstra's algorithm (see [19, Th. 2.9 and 2.10]).

Proposition V.1: Heuristic h satisfies the following two properties.

1) Admissibility: $(\forall r \in \mathbb{V}_k)\ h(r) \leq \min_{q \in P_{\vec{r},f}} T_{\mathbb{B}}(q)$.

2) Consistency: $(\forall r \in \mathbb{V}_k)\ (\forall \sigma \in \mathbb{V})\ h(r) \leq \eta(r, \sigma) + h(\Gamma(r, \sigma))$.

Proof: 1) $h(r) = \min_{p \in P_{\vec{r},f}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p) \leq \min_{q \in P_{\vec{r},f}} T_{\mathbb{B}}(q)$, since $\hat{\mathbb{B}}$ is a relaxation of $\mathbb{B}$.

2) $h(r) = \min_{p \in P_{\vec{r},f}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p) \leq T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(\sigma) + \min_{p \in P_{\sigma,f}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p) \leq T_{\mathbb{B}}(\sigma) + \min_{p \in P_{\sigma,f}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p) \leq \eta(r, \sigma) + \min_{p \in P_{\sigma,f}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p) = \eta(r, \sigma) + h(\Gamma(r, \sigma))$, where $T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(\sigma) \leq T_{\mathbb{B}}(\sigma)$ by 2) of Proposition III.2 and $T_{\mathbb{B}}(\sigma) \leq \eta(r, \sigma)$ by Proposition IV.1. □

Since heuristic h is admissible and consistent, A* is equivalent to Dijkstra's algorithm, with the only difference that the incremental cost function $\eta(r, \sigma)$ is replaced by the modified cost

$$\tilde{\eta}(r, \sigma) = \eta(r, \sigma) + h(\Gamma(r, \sigma)) - h(r) \tag{9}$$

(see [19, Lemma 2.3] for a complete discussion). A description of the A* algorithm can be found in literature (for instance, see [19, Algorithm 2.13]). We define a priority queue $\mathscr{Q}$ that contains open nodes, that is, nodes that have already been generated but have not yet been visited. Namely, $\mathscr{Q}$ is an ordered set of pairs $(r, t) \in \mathbb{V}_k \times \mathbb{R}^+$, in which $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$ and t is a lower bound for the time associated to the best completion of r to a path arriving at a final state. We need to perform the following operations on $\mathscr{Q}$: operation $\texttt{Insert}(\mathscr{Q}, (r, t))$ inserts couple (r, t) into $\mathscr{Q}$; operation $(r, t) = \texttt{DeleteMin}(\mathscr{Q})$ returns the first couple of $\mathscr{Q}$, that is, the couple (r, t) with the minimum time t, and removes this couple from $\mathscr{Q}$; and, operation $\texttt{DecreaseKey}(\mathscr{Q}, (r, t))$ assumes that $\mathscr{Q}$ already contains a couple (r, t') with $t' > t$ and substitutes this couple with (r, t). Furthermore, we consider three partially defined maps $\texttt{value} : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}$, $\texttt{parent} : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{V}_k$, $\texttt{closed} : \mathbb{V}_k \to \{0, 1\}$, such that, for $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, $\texttt{value}(r)$ is the current best upper estimate of $V(r)$, $\texttt{parent}(r)$ is the parent node of r, and $\texttt{closed}(r) = 1$ if node r has already been visited. Maps $\texttt{value}$, $\texttt{parent}$, and $\texttt{closed}$ can be implemented as hash tables.

Algorithm V.2 (A* algorithm for k-BASP):

1) [initialization] Set $\mathscr{Q} = \{(s, h(s))\}$, $\texttt{value}(s) = 0$.

2) [expansion] Set $(r, t) = \texttt{DeleteMin}(\mathscr{Q})$ and set $\texttt{closed}(r) = 1$. If $\vec{r} \in \tilde{F}$, then t is the optimal solution and the algorithm terminates, returning maps $\texttt{value}$, $\texttt{parent}$. Otherwise, for each $\sigma \in \mathbb{V}$ for which $\Gamma(r, \sigma)$ is defined, set $r' = \Gamma(r, \sigma)$, $t' = t + \tilde{\eta}(r, \sigma)$. If $\texttt{closed}(r') = 1$, go to 3). Else, if $\texttt{value}(r')$ is undefined $\texttt{Insert}(\mathscr{Q}, (r,' t'))$. Otherwise, if $t' < \texttt{value}(r')$, set $\texttt{value}(r') = t'$, $\texttt{parent}(r') = r$ and do $\texttt{DecreaseKey}(\mathscr{Q}, (r,' t'))$.

3) [loop] If $\mathscr{Q} \neq \varnothing$ go back to 2), otherwise no solution exists.

Proposition V.3: Algorithm V.2 terminates and returns the optimal solution (if it exists), with a time-complexity not higher than Dijkstra's algorithm on the extended graph $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$.

Proof: It is a consequence of the fact that heuristic h is admissible and consistent (see [19, Th. 2.9 and 2.10]). □

Note that, at the end of Algorithm V.2, $\texttt{value}(f)$ is the optimal value of the k-BASP and the optimal path from s to set F can be reconstructed from map $\texttt{parent}$.

One possible limitation of Algorithm V.2 is that estimating $K(\mathbb{B})$ from its definition can be difficult. A correct estimation of $K(\mathbb{B})$ is critical for the efficiency of the algorithm. Indeed, if $K(\mathbb{B})$ is overestimated, the time complexity of the algorithm is higher than it would be with a correct estimate. On the other hand, if $K(\mathbb{B})$ is underestimated, Algorithm V.2 is not correct since Proposition IV.4 does not hold. Here, we propose an algorithm that adaptively finds a suitable value for k in Algorithm V.2, such that $k \leq K(\mathbb{B})$, but, in any case, allows to find the optimal solution of the BASP. First, we define the modified cost function $W : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}$ as $W(r) = V(r) + h(r)$, where V is given by (6) and h is the heuristic given by (8). If $(\forall r \in \mathbb{V}_k)\ \ell^+(r) \leq \ell^-(r)$, then W is the solution of

$$\begin{cases} W(r) = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)} \{W(r') + \tilde{\eta}(r,' \vec{r})\} \\ W(s) = h(s). \end{cases} \tag{10}$$

Indeed, following the same steps of the proof of Proposition IV.4, $W(r) = V(r) + h(r) = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)} \{V(r') + \eta(r,' \vec{r}) + h(r) + h(r') - h(r')\} = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)} \{W(r') + \tilde{\eta}(r,' \vec{r})\}$. Hence, $W(r)$ corresponds to the length of the shortest path from s to r on $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$, with arc length given according to $\tilde{\eta}$. If condition $\ell^+(r) \leq \ell^-(r)$ is not satisfied for all $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, (10) does not hold for all $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$ and W does not represent the solution of an SP. However, the following proposition shows that we can still find a lower bound $\hat{W}$ of W that does correspond to the solution of an SP.

Proposition V.4: Let $\hat{W} : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}$ be the solution of

$$\begin{cases} \hat{W}(r) = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)} \{\hat{W}(r') + \hat{\eta}(r,' \vec{r})\} \\ \hat{W}(s) = 0, \end{cases} \tag{11}$$

where if $\ell^+(r') \leq \ell^-(r')$ or $|r'| < k$, $\hat{\eta}(r,' \vec{r}) = \tilde{\eta}(r,' \vec{r})$, otherwise $\hat{\eta}(r,' \vec{r}) = h(r) - h(r')$. Then, $(\forall r \in \mathbb{V}_k)$

1) $\hat{W}(r) \leq W(r)$;

2) $(\forall \bar{r} \in \mathbb{V}_k \mid \hat{W}(\bar{r}) \leq \hat{W}(r))\ \ell^+(\bar{r}) \leq \ell^-(\bar{r}) \Rightarrow \hat{W}(r) = W(r)$.

Proof: 1) For $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, let $p \in P_s$ be such that $\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)$. If $\ell^+(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p) \leq \ell^-(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p)$, in view of Proposition IV.2, $T(p\vec{r}) = T(p) + \eta(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p, \vec{r})$, otherwise, obviously, $T(p\vec{r}) \geq T(p)$. Hence, in both cases, by the definition of $\tilde{\eta}$ in (9), $T(p\vec{r}) + h(r) \geq T(p) + h(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p) + \hat{\eta}(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p, \vec{r})$. By contradiction, assume

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$(\exists A \subset \mathbb{V}_k)$ $A \neq \varnothing$ such that $(\forall r \in A)$ $\hat{W}(r) > W(r)$. Let $\bar{r} = \operatorname{argmin}_{\hat{r} \in A} W(\hat{r})$ and $S_{\bar{r}} = \{q \in P_s \mid \operatorname{Suff}_k q \in \operatorname{Prec}(\bar{r})\}$, then $W(\bar{r}) = V(\bar{r}) + h(\bar{r}) = \min_{p \in P_s | \operatorname{Suff}_k p = \bar{r}} T(p) + h(\bar{r}) = \min_{q \in S_{\bar{r}}} T(q\vec{r}) + h(\bar{r}) \geq \min_{q \in S_{\bar{r}}} \{T(q) + h(\operatorname{Suff}_k(q)) + \hat{\eta}(\operatorname{Suff}_k q, \vec{\bar{r}})\} = \min_{r' \in \operatorname{Prec}(\bar{r})} \{\hat{W}(r') + \hat{\eta}(r,' \vec{\bar{r}})\} = \hat{W}(\bar{r})$, where we used the fact that $W(r') = \hat{W}(r')$, that follows from the definition of $\bar{r}$, since the value of r' that attains the minimum is such that $W(r') < W(\bar{r})$. Then, the obtained inequality contradicts the fact that $\hat{W}(\bar{r}) > W(\bar{r})$.

2) Let $A \subset \mathbb{V}$ be the set of values of $r \in \mathbb{V}$ for which 2) does not hold, and by contradiction, assume that $A \neq \varnothing$ and let $\hat{r} = \operatorname{argmin}_{r \in A} \hat{W}(r)$. Then, by definition of $\hat{r}$, it satisfies the following two properties: $(\forall \bar{r} \in \mathbb{V}_k \mid \hat{W}(\bar{r}) \leq \hat{W}(\hat{r}))\, \ell^+(\bar{r}) \leq \ell^-(\bar{r})$, moreover, $\hat{W}(\hat{r}) \neq W(\hat{r})$. Note that, from the definitions of $\hat{W}$, $W(s) = \hat{W}(s)$. Then, $W(\hat{r}) = \min_{p \in P_s | \operatorname{Suff}_k p = \hat{r}} T(p) + h(\hat{r}) = \min_{q \in P_s | \operatorname{Suff}_k q \in \operatorname{Prec}(\hat{r})} \{T(q\vec{\hat{r}}) + h(\operatorname{Suff}_k q) - h(\operatorname{Suff}_k q) + h(\hat{r})\} = \min_{r' \in \operatorname{Prec}(\hat{r})} \{\hat{W}(r') + \hat{\eta}(r,' \vec{\hat{r}})\} = \hat{W}(\hat{r})$, which contradicts the definition of $\hat{r}$. Here, we used (9) and the fact that, since $\hat{W}(r') < \hat{W}(\hat{r})$ and by the definition of $\hat{r}$, $\hat{W}(r') = W(r')$. □

Proposition V.4 implies that $\hat{W}(r)$ is a lower bound of $W(r)$ and that it corresponds to the length of the shortest path from s to r on the extended directed graph $\mathbb{G}$, with arc length given in accordance to (11), namely by the value of function $\hat{\eta}$. Hence, $\hat{W}(f)$ can be computed by Dijkstra's algorithm (which is equivalent to compute V with A* algorithm, with heuristic h). The algorithm that we are going to present is based on the following basic observation. If A* algorithm computes $f^* = \operatorname{argmin}_{f \in \tilde{F}} \hat{W}(f)$ by visiting only nodes for which $\ell^+(r) \leq \ell^-(r)$, then 2) of Proposition V.4 is satisfied for $r = f^*$ and $\hat{W}(f^*) = W(f^*)$ is the optimal value of the k-BASP. If this is not the case, we increase k by 1 and rerun the A* algorithm. Note that the algorithm starts with $k = 2$, since, according to its definition, $K(\mathbb{B})$ equals 1 only if no acceleration bounds are present and, in this case, the BASP is equivalent to a standard SP and can be solved by Dijkstra's algorithm.

Algorithm V.5 (Adaptive A algorithm for k-BASP):*

1) Set $k = 2$.

2) Execute A* algorithm, and at every visit of a new node r, if none of the two conditions $\ell^+(r) \leq \ell^-(r)$ and $|r| < k$ holds, set $k = k + 1$ and repeat step 2).

Note that the algorithm does not compute the exact value $K(\mathbb{B})$. Rather, it underestimates it. More precisely, it stops with the smallest k value needed to solve the BASP between the given source and destination nodes. That is, the smallest k that satisfies the k-BASP definition over the explored subgraph.

Proposition V.6: Algorithm V.5 terminates with $k \leq K(\mathbb{B})$ and returns an optimal solution.

Proof: By Definition (4) of $K(\mathbb{B})$, if $k = K(\mathbb{B})$, the condition $\ell^+(r) \leq \ell^-(r)$ is satisfied for all r. Hence, there exists $k \leq K(\mathbb{B})$ for which the algorithm terminates. Let $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, with $\vec{r} \in F$ be the last-visited node before the termination of the algorithm. By 2) of Proposition V.4, we have that $\hat{W}(r) = W(r) = V(r)$ (since $h(r) = 0$), but, by definition, $V(r)$ is the shortest time for reaching a node in F. □

VI. Numerical Experiments

A. Randomly Generated Problems

We performed various tests on problems associated to graphs with n nodes, for increasing values of n, randomly generated with function geographical_threshold_graph of Python package NetworkX (networkx.org). Essentially, each node is associated to a position randomly chosen from set $[0, 1]^2$. Edges are randomly determined in such a way that

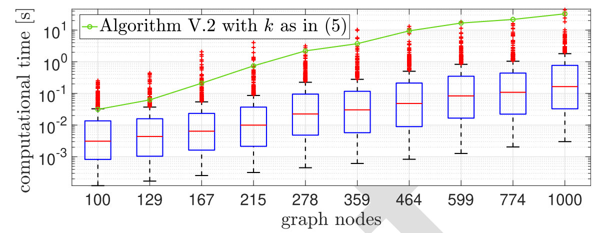

Fig. 5. BASP computing times on graphs of different size.

TABLE I
Percentages of k Values for Graphs of Different Size

n	$k=3$	$k=4$	$k=5$	$k=6$	$\bar{k}$	n	$k=3$	$k=4$	$k=5$	$k=6$	$\bar{k}$
100	80.4%	18.0%	1.6%	0.0%	86	359	61.6%	33.8%	4.4%	0.2%	161
129	81.0%	17.2%	1.8%	0.0%	89	464	60.8%	33.0%	6.0%	0.2%	202
167	77.8%	19.6%	2.0%	0.6%	170	599	51.6%	39.8%	8.2%	0.4%	188
215	72.6%	24.2%	3.2%	0.0%	177	744	49.4%	43.0%	6.4%	1.2%	338
278	63.2%	30.6%	6.2%	0.0%	146	1000	43.6%	46.0%	9.6%	0.8%	300

closer nodes have a higher connection probability. We multiplied the obtained positions by factor $10\sqrt{n}$, in order to obtain the same average node density independently of n. Then, we associated a random angle θ_i to each node, obtained from a uniform distribution in $[0, 2\pi]$. In this way, each node of the random graph is associated to a vehicle configuration, consisting of a position and an angle. Set $\tau(\theta_i) = [\cos\theta_i, \sin\theta_i]^T$. Each edge (i, j) is associated to a *Dubins path*, which is defined as the shortest curve of bounded curvature that connects the configurations associated to nodes i and j, with initial tangent parallel to $\tau(\theta_i)$ and final tangent parallel to $\tau(\theta_j)$. We chose the minimum turning radius for the path associated to edge (i, j) as $r_{ij} = \min\{\ell((i, j))/(d(\theta_i, \theta_j)), 2\}$ where $d(x, y)$ is the angular distance between angles x and y. We set the acceleration and deceleration bounds constant for all paths and equal to 0.1 ms^{-2}. The upper squared speed bound is constant for each arc and given by $2r$, where r is the minimum curvature radius of the path associated to the arc. In our tests, we used the adaptive A* algorithm (see Algorithm V.5). First, we ran simulations for ten values of n, logarithmically spaced between 100 and 1000. For each n, we generated 50 different graphs, and for each one of them, we ran ten simulations, randomly choosing source and target nodes. Fig. 5 shows the mean values and the distributions of the computational times of Algorithm V.5 and it also shows the mean computational times of Algorithm V.2 with k computed as in (5). Note that the mean times of Algorithm V.2 are at least one order of magnitude higher than those of Algorithm V.5. Table I shows, for each n, the percentages of k values returned by Algorithm V.5, and the mean value $\bar{k}$ of k computed as in (5). Note that the values obtained with (5) are on average 54.8 times larger than those returned by Algorithm V.5.

In Section V, we showed that, for a given problem instance, path p^*, corresponding to the solution of the BASP, is in general different from the path $\hat{p}$ obtained as the solution of the BASP with infinite acceleration bounds (which, in fact, is an SP) and from the path $\tilde{p}$ obtained as the solution of SP with edge costs equal to their lengths. We ran some numerical experiments to compare travel times $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p^*)$ and $T_{\mathbb{B}}(\hat{p})$, (i.e., the travel time of p^* and the one of $\hat{p}$ on which speed has been planned using the same acceleration bounds of the BASP), and lengths $\ell(p^*)$ and $\ell(\tilde{p})$. Namely, we generated 50 different random graphs with $n = 100$ with the procedure presented previously. For each instance, we considered ten problems obtained by randomly choosing source and target nodes. Then, we solved the BASP with different acceleration bounds α^+ and α^- logarithmically spaced in $[0.01, 1]$ ms^{-2}, with

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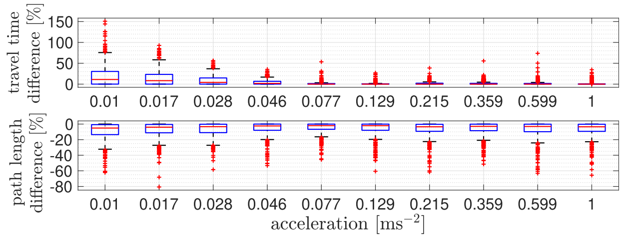

Fig. 6. Travel time difference between BASP and BASP without acceleration bounds and path length difference between BASP and SP with edge costs equal to their lengths.

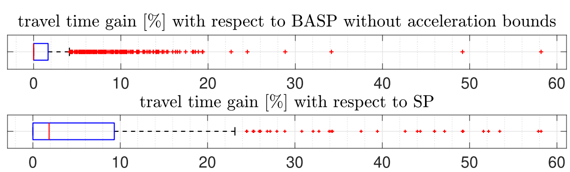

Fig. 7. Travel time gain of BASP on 1000 simulations on the 2 485-node graph with respect to the BASP without acceleration bounds and SP with edge costs equal to their lengths.

$\alpha^+ = \alpha^-$. In Fig. 6 (top), we compare the optimal travel times along paths p^* and $\hat{p}$, that is, for each value of the acceleration and deceleration bounds, we report the relative percentage difference $100\frac{T_{\mathbb{B}}(\hat{p})-T_{\mathbb{B}}(p^*)}{T_{\mathbb{B}}(p^*)}$ obtained for each test. We observe that for low acceleration and deceleration bounds the difference is more significant, while as the acceleration and deceleration bounds increase, the travel time difference between the two paths tends to be smaller. This is due to the fact that, if acceleration bounds are sufficiently high, paths p^* and $\hat{p}$ are the same. In Fig. 6 (bottom), we compare the length of paths p^* and $\tilde{p}$ showing how the BASP solution tends to differ from the SP with edge costs equal to their lengths even for small acceleration bounds. For p^* and $\tilde{p}$ to coincide one needs even smaller acceleration bounds.

B. Real Industrial Applications

Here, we present a problem from a real industrial application representing an automated warehouse provided by packaging company Ocme S.r.l., based in Parma, Italy. The problem is described by a graph of 2 485 nodes and 4 411 arcs. The acceleration and deceleration bounds are constant, equal for all arcs, and given by $\alpha^+ = 0.28$ ms^{-2} and $\alpha^- = -0.18$ ms^{-2}. The speed bounds are constant for each arc but vary among different arcs, according to the associated path curvatures, and they take values on interval $[0.1, 1.7]$ ms^{-1}. The arc lengths take values in $[0.2, 18]$ m and have an average value of 4.2 m. We ran 1000 simulations by randomly choosing source and the target nodes. The average value and the standard deviation of the computational time are 0.1587 and 1.9355 s, respectively. The mean value of k returned by Algorithm V.5 is 5, while the bound obtained with (5) is 105. We compare travel times $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p^*)$, $T_{\mathbb{B}}(\hat{p})$, and $T_{\mathbb{B}}(\tilde{p})$, that is, the travel time of p^* and the ones of $\hat{p}$ and $\tilde{p}$ on which speed has been planned using the same acceleration bounds of the BASP. Fig. 7 compares the optimal travel time gain obtained using p^* over $\hat{p}$ and $\tilde{p}$. Namely, we report the relative percentage differences over 1000 tests. In the first case, we had a 2.17% mean gain and the 25% best performing paths p^* had a 8.53% mean gain over $\hat{p}$. While, in the latter case, we had a 5.85% mean gain and the 25% best performing paths p^* had a 14.16% mean gain over $\tilde{p}$. Note that these results are probably due to the fact that the graph associated to the industrial problem has a low connectivity. Indeed, most nodes in the industrial problem represent positions in corridors and are connected only to the node preceding them and the one following them along the corridor. Nonetheless, in such industrial context, even moderate improvements represent a significant gain for a company.

Appendix

Proposition A.1: Let $\mu, \alpha : [0, +\infty) \to \mathbb{R}^+$, for $i \in \{1, 2\}$, let F_i be the solution of the differential equation (2) where F_i replaces F and $w_{0,i}$ replaces $\mu(0)$, with $0 \le w_{0,i} \le \mu(0)$; and let $\bar{\lambda}$ be such that $\mu(\bar{\lambda}) = \int_0^{\bar{\lambda}} \alpha(\lambda) d\lambda$. Then, $(\forall \lambda \ge \bar{\lambda})\ F_1(\lambda) = F_2(\lambda)$.

Proof: Without loss of generality, assume that $w_{0,1} \ge w_{0,2}$. This implies that $(\forall \lambda \ge 0)\ F_1(\lambda) \ge F_2(\lambda)$. Indeed, assume by contradiction that there exists $\tilde{\lambda}$ such that $F_1(\tilde{\lambda}) < F_2(\tilde{\lambda})$, then, by continuity of F_1 and F_2, this implies that there exists $\hat{\lambda} \le \tilde{\lambda}$ such that $F_1(\hat{\lambda}) = F_2(\hat{\lambda})$, thus $(\forall \lambda \ge \hat{\lambda})\ F_1(\lambda) = F_2(\lambda)$, since, for $\lambda \ge \hat{\lambda}$, $F_1(\lambda)$ and $F_2(\lambda)$ solve the same differential equation with the same initial condition at $\lambda = \hat{\lambda}$, contradicting the assumption. Furthermore, note that $(\exists \tilde{\lambda} \in (0, \bar{\lambda}])\ F_2(\tilde{\lambda}) = \mu(\tilde{\lambda})$. Indeed, if by contradiction $(\forall \lambda \in (0, \bar{\lambda}])\ F_2(\lambda) < \mu(\lambda)$, then $(\forall \lambda \in (0, \bar{\lambda}])\ F_2'(\lambda) = \alpha(\lambda)$ so that $F_2(\bar{\lambda}) - F_2(0) = \int_0^{\bar{\lambda}} \alpha(\lambda)\, d\lambda = \mu(\bar{\lambda})$, which contradicts the assumption. Hence, $(\exists \hat{\lambda} \in \mathbb{R}^+)\ F_2(\hat{\lambda}) = F_1(\hat{\lambda}) = \mu(\hat{\lambda})$, and consequently, $(\forall \lambda \ge \hat{\lambda})\ F_1(\lambda) = F_2(\lambda)$, which implies the thesis, being $\bar{\lambda} \ge \hat{\lambda}$. □

For $p \in P, \lambda \in [0, \ell(p)]$, we set $\mathscr{W}_p(\lambda) = w$, where w is the solution of Problem (1) for path p. In other words, $\mathscr{W}_p(\lambda)$ is the square of the optimal speed profile for traversing the path p, evaluated at arc length λ, with respect to p.

Proposition A.2 1): Let $p_1, p_2, q \in P$, be such that $p_1q, p_2q \in P$, then $(\forall \lambda \ge \ell^+(q))\ \mathscr{W}_{p_1q}(\ell(p_1) + \lambda) = \mathscr{W}_{p_2q}(\ell(p_2) + \lambda)$.

2) Let $p, q_2, q_1 \in P$, be such that $pq_1, pq_2 \in P$, then $(\forall \lambda \le \ell^-(p))\ \mathscr{W}_{pq_1}(\lambda) = \mathscr{W}_{pq_2}(\lambda)$.

Proof: We only prove 1), the proof of 2) is analogous. Note that, for $\lambda \ge 0$, $\mathscr{W}_{p_1q}(\lambda + \ell(p_1)) = \min\{F_1(\lambda), B(\lambda)\}$, $\mathscr{W}_{p_2q}(\lambda + \ell(p_2)) = \min\{F_2(\lambda), B(\lambda)\}$, where F_1 and F_2 are the solution of (2) with $\mu = \mu^+$ and initial conditions $w_{0,1} = \mathscr{W}_{p_1}(\ell(p_1))$ and $w_{0,2} = \mathscr{W}_{p_2}(\ell(p_2))$, respectively, and B is the solution of (3) with $\mu = \mu^+$. By Proposition A.1, for $\lambda \ge \ell^+(q)$, $F_1(\lambda) = F_2(\lambda)$. Consequently, $(\forall \lambda \ge \ell^+(q))\ \mathscr{W}_{p_1q}(\ell(p_1) + \lambda) = \mathscr{W}_{p_2q}(\ell(p_2) + \lambda)$. □

A. Proof of Proposition IV.2

Let Ψ be defined as in (1a), then $T(p_1t\sigma) - T(p_1t) = \int_0^{\ell(p_1t\sigma)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t\sigma}(\lambda))d\lambda - \int_0^{\ell(p_1t)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t}(\lambda))d\lambda = \int_{\ell(p_1)+\ell^-(t)}^{\ell(p_1t\sigma)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t\sigma}(\lambda))d\lambda - \int_{\ell(p_1)+\ell^-(t)}^{\ell(p_1t)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t}(\lambda))d\lambda$, where we used that, by 2) of Proposition A.2, $(\forall \lambda \le \ell(p_1) + \ell^-(t))\Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t\sigma}(\lambda)) = \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t}(\lambda))$. Similarly, $T(p_2t\sigma) - T(p_2t) = \int_{\ell(p_2)+\ell^-(t)}^{\ell(p_2t\sigma)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_2t\sigma}(\lambda))d\lambda - \int_{\ell(p_2)+\ell^-(t)}^{\ell(p_2t)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_2t}(\lambda))d\lambda$. Moreover, by 1) of Proposition A.2, we have that $(\forall \lambda \ge \ell^+(t\sigma))\ \mathscr{W}_{p_1t\sigma}(\ell(p_1) + \lambda)d\lambda = \mathscr{W}_{p_2t\sigma}(\ell(p_2) + \lambda)d\lambda$ and $(\forall \lambda \ge \ell^+(t))\ \mathscr{W}_{p_1t}(\ell(p_1) + \lambda)d\lambda = \mathscr{W}_{p_2t}(\ell(p_2) + \lambda)d\lambda$, which imply that $T(p_1t\sigma) - T(p_1t) = T(p_2t\sigma) - T(p_2t)$, since $\ell^+(t) \le \ell^-(t)$, and as noticed in Section IV, $\ell^+(t\sigma) \le \ell^+(t)$. ■

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Technical Notes and Correspondence

Solution Algorithms for the Bounded Acceleration Shortest Path Problem

Stefano Ardizzoni, Luca Consolini, Mattia Laurini, and Marco Locatelli

***Abstract*—The purpose of this article is to introduce and characterize the bounded acceleration shortest path problem (BASP), a generalization of the shortest path problem (SP). This problem is associated to a graph: nodes represent positions of a mobile vehicle and arcs are associated to preassigned geometric paths that connect these positions. The BASP consists in finding the minimum-time path between two nodes. Differently from the SP, the vehicle has to satisfy bounds on maximum and minimum acceleration and speed, which depend on the vehicle's position on the currently traveled arc. Even if the BASP is NP-hard in the general case, we present a solution algorithm that achieves polynomial time-complexity under some additional hypotheses on problem data.**

***Index Terms*—.**

Q1

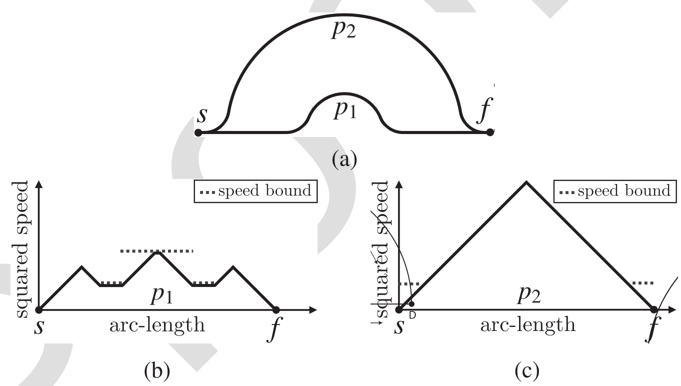

Fig. 1. Comparison of BASP and SP solutions. (a) Paths p_1 and p_2 connecting node s and f. (b) Optimal speed profile on p_1. (c) Optimal speed profile on p_2.

I. Introduction

The combinatorial problem of detecting the best path from a source to a destination node over an oriented graph with *constant* costs associated to its arcs, also known as shortest path problem (SP in what follows), is well known and can be efficiently solved, e.g., by the Dijkstra algorithm (in case of nonnegative costs). The continuous problem of minimum-time speed planning over a *fixed* path under given speed and acceleration constraints, also depending on the position along the path, is also widely studied and very efficient algorithms for its solution exist. But the combination of these two problems, called in what follows bounded acceleration shortest path problem (BASP), turns out to be more challenging than the two problems considered separately. More precisely, in terms of the complexity theory, it is possible to prove that the BASP is NP-hard, while the two problems considered separately are both polynomially solvable. In the BASP, we still have the combinatorial search for a best path as in SP but, differently from SP, the cost of an arc (more precisely, the time to traverse it) is not a constant value but depends on the speed planning along the arc itself, which, in turn, depends on the speed and acceleration constraints not only over the same arc but also over those preceding and following it in the selected path. Fig. 1(a) presents a simple scenario that allows to illustrate the BASP and its difference with SP; it shows two fixed paths p_1 and p_2 connecting positions s and f. The vehicle starts from s with null speed and must reach f with null speed. The solution of SP corresponds to the path p_1, which is the one of the shortest length. The BASP consists in finding the shortest-time path under acceleration and speed constraints. In this case, we assume that the vehicle acceleration and deceleration are bounded by a common constant and that its speed is bounded only on the central, high-curvature section of p_1, in order to avoid excessive lateral acceleration, which may cause sideslip. If the bound on acceleration and deceleration is sufficiently high, the solution of the BASP corresponds to the path p_2. Indeed, even if the latter path is longer, it can be traveled with a greater mean speed. Fig. 1(b) represents the fastest speed profile on p_1. The x-axis corresponds to the arc-length position on the path p_1 and the y-axis represents the squared speed. In this representation, arc-length intervals of constant acceleration or deceleration correspond to straight lines. Fig. 1(c) represents the fastest speed profile on p_2. Even if path p_2 is longer than p_1, it can be traveled in less time. In fact, the vehicle is able to accelerate till the midpoint, and then, to decelerate to the end position f.

The interest for the BASP comes from a specific industrial application, namely the optimization of automated guided vehicles (AGVs) motion in automated warehouses. The AGVs may be either free to move within a facility or be only allowed to move along predetermined paths. In the first case, one needs to employ environmental representations such as cell decomposition methods [1] or trajectory maps [2]. In particular, the authors in [3] present an algorithm based on a modification of Dijkstra's algorithm in which edge weights are history dependent. Our work is related to the second approach. Namely, we assume that AGVs

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Q2

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cannot move freely within their environment and are instead required to move along predetermined paths that connect fixed operating points. These may be associated to shelves locations, where packages are stored or retrieved, to the end of production lines, where AGVs pick up final products, and to additional intermediate locations, used for routing. All these points are formally represented as nodes of a graph, whose arcs represent connecting paths. If AGVs are not subject to acceleration and speed constraints, the minimum-time planning problem is equivalent to SP and can be solved by the Dijkstra algorithm or its variants: see, for instance, [4]–[6], or other algorithms such as A* [7], Lifelong planning A* [8], D* [9], and D* Lite [10]. However, since the motion of AGVs must satisfy constraints on maximum speed and tangential and transversal accelerations that depend on the vehicle position on the path, these approaches cannot be applied to solve the BASP.

Instead, various works consider the minimum-time speed planning problem with acceleration and speed constraint on an *assigned* path. For instance, one can use the methods presented in [11] and [12], or path-following techniques such as [13] and [14].

As said, despite the fact that a large literature exists on SP and on the minimum-time speed planning on an assigned path, to the authors' knowledge, the BASP has never been specifically addressed in the literature. Formally, the BASP can be framed as an optimal control problem for a switching system, in which switchings are associated to passages from arc to arc and each discrete state is associated to a specific set of constraints. The results presented in this article exploit the very specific structure of the BASP and cannot be applied to generic switching systems. Anyway, the Algorithm V.5 could still apply to other switching systems satisfying an analogous of Proposition IV.3 and identifying a class of such systems could be the topic of future research.

This article is structured as follows. After introducing the notation employed throughout this article in Section II, in Section III, we first briefly discuss the solution of the speed planning problem along a *fixed* path, and then, we provide a formal statement of the BASP, also mentioning an NP-hardness result. In Section IV, we consider a subclass of the BASP, called k-BASP, which can be solved with polynomial time complexity for fixed values of k. Since constant k is problem dependent and is not known in advance, in Section V, we present an adaptive A* algorithm to find k. Finally, Section VI presents different computational experiments.

II. Notation

A directed graph is a pair $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{V}, \mathbb{E})$, where $\mathbb{V}$ is a set of nodes and $\mathbb{E} \subset \{(x, y) \in \mathbb{V}^2 \mid x \neq y\}$ is a set of directed arcs. A path p on $\mathbb{G}$ is a sequence of adjacent nodes of $\mathbb{V}$ (i.e., $p = \sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_m$, with $(\forall i \in \{1, \ldots, m\})$ $(\sigma_i, \sigma_{i+1}) \in \mathbb{E}$). An alphabet $\Sigma = \{\sigma_1, \ldots, \sigma_n\}$ is a set of symbols. A word is any finite sequence of symbols. The set of all words over Σ is Σ^*, which also contains the empty word ε, while Σ_i represents the set of all words of length up to $i \in \mathbb{N}$, (i.e., words composed of up to i symbols, including ε). Given a word $w \in \Sigma^*$, $|w|$ denote its length. Given a directed graph $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{V}, \mathbb{E})$, we can think of $\mathbb{V}$ as an alphabet so that any path p of $\mathbb{G}$ is a word in $\mathbb{V}^*$. Given $s, t \in \Sigma^*$, the word obtained by writing t after s is the concatenation of s and t, denoted by $st \in \Sigma^*$; we call t a suffix of st and s a prefix of st. For $r \in \mathbb{V}^*$, $\vec{r}$ is the rightmost symbol of r. In the following, we represent paths of $\mathbb{G}$ as strings of symbols in $\mathbb{V}$. This allows to use the concatenation operation on paths and to use prefixes and suffixes to represent portions of paths. For $x \in \mathbb{R}$, $\lceil x \rceil = \min\{i \in \mathbb{Z} \mid i \geq x\}$ is the ceiling of x. For $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$, we set $a \wedge b = \min\{a, b\}$ and $a \vee b = \max\{a, b\}$, as the minimum and maximum operations, respectively. Finally, given an interval $I \subseteq \mathbb{R}$, we recall that $W^{1,\infty}(I)$ is the Sobolev space of functions in $L^\infty(I)$ with weak derivative of order 1 with finite L^∞-norm. For $f, g \in W^{1,\infty}(I)$, we denote with $f \wedge g$ and $f \vee g$ the point-wise minimum and maximum of f and g, respectively.

III. Problem Formulation

Before giving the formal description of the BASP, in Section III-A, we briefly discuss the solution of the speed planning problem along a fixed path. Although such problem has been already widely discussed in the literature, here, we briefly describe a way to tackle it in order to better understand the following formulation of the BASP.

A. Speed Planning Along an Assigned Path

Let $\gamma : [0, \lambda_f] \to \mathbb{R}^2$ be a C^2 function such that $(\forall \lambda \in [0, \lambda_f])$ $\|\gamma'(\lambda)\| = 1$. The image set $\gamma([0, \lambda_f])$ represents the path followed by a vehicle, $\gamma(0)$ the initial configuration, and $\gamma(\lambda_f)$ the final one. The function γ is an arc-length parameterization of a path. We want to compute the speed law that minimizes the overall travel time while satisfying some kinematic and dynamic constraints. To this end, let $\xi : [0, t_f] \to [0, \lambda_f]$ be a differentiable monotonically increasing function representing the vehicle arc-length coordinate along the path as a function of time and let $v : [0, \lambda_f] \to [0, +\infty)$ be such that $(\forall t \in [0, t_f])$ $\dot{\xi}(t) = v(\xi(t))$. In this way, $v(\lambda)$ is the vehicle speed at position λ. The vehicle position as a function of time is given by $x : [0, t_f] \to \mathbb{R}^2$, $x(t) = \gamma(\xi(t))$, speed and acceleration are given by $\dot{x}(t) = \gamma'(\xi(t))v(\xi(t))$, and $\ddot{x}(t) = a_L(t)\gamma'(\xi(t)) + a_N(t)\gamma'^{\perp}(\xi(t))$, where $a_L(t) = v'(\xi(t))v(\xi(t))$ and $a_N(t)(t) = \kappa(\xi(t))v(\xi(t))^2$ are the longitudinal and normal components of acceleration, respectively. Here, $\kappa : [0, \lambda_f] \to \mathbb{R}$ is the scalar curvature, defined as $\kappa(\lambda) = \langle \gamma''(\lambda), \gamma'(\lambda)^{\perp} \rangle$, where $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ denotes the scalar product.

We require to travel distance λ_f in a minimum time while satisfying, for every $t \in [0, \xi^{-1}(\lambda_f)]$, $0 \leq v^-(\xi(t)) \leq v(\xi(t)) \leq v^+(\xi(t))$, $|a_N(\xi(t))| \leq \beta(\xi(t))$, $\alpha^-(\xi(t)) \leq a_L(\xi(t)) \leq \alpha^+(\xi(t))$. Here, functions $v^-, v^+, \alpha^-, \alpha^+$, and β are arc-length-dependent bounds on the vehicle speed and on its longitudinal and normal acceleration. It is convenient to make the change of variables $w = v^2$ (see [15]) so that by setting $\Psi(w) = \int_0^{\lambda_f} w(\lambda)^{-\frac{1}{2}} d\lambda$, $\mu^+(\lambda) = v^+(\lambda)^2 \wedge \frac{\beta(\lambda)}{\kappa(\lambda)}$, and $\mu^-(\lambda) = v^-(\lambda)^2$, our problem takes on the following form.

$$\min_{w \in W^{1,\infty}([0,\lambda_f])} \Psi(w) \tag{1a}$$

$$\mu^-(\lambda) \leq w(\lambda) \leq \mu^+(\lambda), \qquad \lambda \in [0, \lambda_f] \tag{1b}$$

$$\alpha^-(\lambda) \leq w'(\lambda) \leq \alpha^+(\lambda), \qquad \lambda \in [0, \lambda_f] \tag{1c}$$

where $\Psi : W^{1,\infty}([0, \lambda_f]) \to \mathbb{R}$ is order reversing (i.e., $(\forall x, y \in [0, \lambda_f])$ $x \geq y \Rightarrow \Psi(x) \leq \Psi(y)$) and μ^-, μ^+, α^-, $\alpha^+ \in L^\infty([0, \lambda_f])$ are assigned functions with $\mu^-, \alpha^+ \geq 0$, and $\alpha^- \leq 0$. Initial and final conditions on speed can be included in the definition of functions μ^- and μ^+. For instance, to set initial condition $w(0) = w_0$, it is sufficient to define $\mu^+(0) = \mu^-(0) = w_0$. In [16], we introduced a subset of $W^{1,\infty}([0, \lambda_f])$, called Q, as a technical requirement and an operator based on the solution of the following differential equations:

$$\begin{cases} F'(\lambda) = \begin{cases} \alpha^+(\lambda) \wedge \mu'(\lambda), & \text{if } F(\lambda) \geq \mu(\lambda) \\ \alpha^+(\lambda), & \text{if } F(\lambda) < \mu(\lambda) \end{cases} \\ F(0) = \mu(0) \end{cases} \tag{2}$$

IEEE Proof

$$\begin{cases} B'(\lambda) = \begin{cases} \alpha^-(\lambda) \wedge \mu'(\lambda), & \text{if } B(\lambda) \geq \mu(\lambda) \\ \alpha^-(\lambda), & \text{if } B(\lambda) < \mu(\lambda) \end{cases} \\ B(\lambda_f) = \mu(\lambda_f) \end{cases} \tag{3}$$

with $F, B \in Q$, that allows to compute the optimal solution of the Problem (1). In particular, in [16], it is shown that the optimal solution is $F(\mu^+) \wedge B(\mu^+)$. We refer the reader to [16] for a detailed discussion.

B. BASP Problem

In this section, we provide a formal description of the BASP. Let us consider a directed graph $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{V}, \mathbb{E})$, with $\mathbb{V} = \{\sigma_1, \ldots, \sigma_N\}$. For each $i \in \{1, \ldots, N\}$, the node σ_i represents an operating point $R_i \in \mathbb{R}^2$. In fact, the restriction $R_i \in \mathbb{R}^2$ is not strictly necessary but we imposed it since it holds in the AGV application, which is the main motivation of this work. Each arc $\theta = (\sigma_i, \sigma_j) \in \mathbb{E}$ represents a fixed directed path between two operating points and is associated to an arc-length parameterized path γ_θ of length $\ell(\theta)$, such that $\gamma_\theta(0) = R_i$ and $\gamma_\theta(\ell(\theta)) = R_j$. In the following, we denote the set of all possible paths on $\mathbb{G}$ by P. Similarly, for $s, f \in \mathbb{V}$, we denote by P_s the subset of P consisting in all paths starting from s and by $P_{s,f}$ the subset of P consisting in all paths starting from s and ending in f. We extend this definition to subsets of $\mathbb{V}$, that is, if $S, F \subset \mathbb{V}$, we denote by $P_{S,F}$ the set of all paths starting from nodes in S and ending in nodes in F. Given a path $p = \sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_m$, its length $\ell(p)$ is defined as the sum of the lengths of its individual arcs, that is, $\ell(p) = \sum_{i=1}^{m-1} \ell(\sigma_i, \sigma_{i+1})$.

To setup our problem, we need to associate four real-valued functions to each edge $\theta \in \mathbb{E}$: the maximum and minimum allowed acceleration and squared speed. The domain of each function is the arc-length coordinate on the path γ_θ. Then, given a specific path p, we are able to define a speed optimization problem of the form (1) by considering the constraints associated to the edges that compose p. We define the set of edge functions as $\mathscr{E} = \{\varphi : \mathbb{E} \times \mathbb{R}^+ \to \mathbb{R}\}$. If $\varphi \in \mathscr{E}, \theta \in \mathbb{E}, \lambda \in \mathbb{R}^+$, $\varphi(\theta, \lambda)$ denotes the value of φ on edge θ at position λ. Note that $\varphi(\theta, \lambda)$ will be relevant only for $\lambda \in [0, \ell(\theta)]$. Given a path $p = \sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_m$, we associate to $\varphi \in \mathscr{E}$ a function $\varphi_p : [0, \ell(p)] \to \mathbb{R}$ in the following way. Define functions $\Theta : [0, \ell(p)] \to \mathbb{N}$, $\Lambda : [0, \ell(p)] \to \mathbb{R}$ such that $\Theta(\lambda) = \max\{i \in \mathbb{N} \mid \ell(\sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_i) \leq \lambda\}$ and $\Lambda(\lambda) = \ell(\sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_{\Theta(\lambda)})$. In this way, $\Theta(\lambda)$ is such that $\theta(\lambda) = (\sigma_{\Theta(\lambda)}, \sigma_{\Theta(\lambda)+1})$ is the edge that contains the position at arc length λ along p, and $\Lambda(\lambda)$ is the sum of the lengths of all arcs up to node $\sigma_{\Theta(\lambda)}$ in p. Then, we define $\varphi_p(\lambda) = \varphi(\theta(\lambda), \lambda - \Lambda(\lambda))$.

Given $\hat{\mu}^+, \hat{\mu}^-, \hat{\alpha}^+, \hat{\alpha}^- \in \mathscr{E}$ and path $p \in P$, let $\mathbb{B} = (\hat{\mu}^-, \hat{\mu}^+, \hat{\alpha}^-, \hat{\alpha}^+)$. Assume $(\forall \theta \in \mathbb{E})$ $\hat{\mu}^+(\theta, \cdot) \in Q$ and define $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p) = \min_{w \in W^{1,\infty}([0, s_f])} \Psi(w)$, as the solution of the Problem (1) along path p with $\mu^- = \hat{\mu}_p^-$, $\mu^+ = \hat{\mu}_p^+$, $\alpha^- = \hat{\alpha}_p^-$, and $\alpha^+ = \hat{\alpha}_p^+$. In this way, $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p)$ is the minimum time required to traverse the path p, respecting the speed and acceleration constraints defined in $\mathbb{B}$. We set $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p) = +\infty$ if the Problem (1) is not feasible.

The following is the main problem discussed in this article.

Problem III.1 (BASP): Given a graph $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{V}, \mathbb{E})$, $\mu^+, \mu^-, \alpha^-, \alpha^+ \in \mathscr{E}$, $\mathbb{B} = (\mu^+, \mu^-, \alpha^-, \alpha^+)$, $s \in \mathbb{V}$, and $F \subset \mathbb{V}$, find $\min_{p \in P_{s,F}} T_{\mathbb{B}}(p)$.

In other words, we want to find the path p that minimizes the transfer time between source node s and a destination node in F, taking into account bounds on speed and accelerations on each traversed arc (represented by arc functions $\mu^+, \mu^-, \alpha^-, \alpha^+$). The following properties are a direct consequence of the definition of $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p)$.

Proposition III.2: The following properties hold:

1) let $p_1, p_2 \in P, p_1 p_2 \in P \Rightarrow T_{\mathbb{B}}(p_1 p_2) \geq T_{\mathbb{B}}(p_1) + T_{\mathbb{B}}(p_2)$;

2) if $\mathbb{B} = (\mu^+, \mu^-, \alpha^-, \alpha^+), \hat{\mathbb{B}} = (\hat{\mu}^+, \hat{\mu}^-, \hat{\alpha}^-, \hat{\alpha}^+)$ are such that $(\forall \theta \in \mathbb{E})$ $(\forall \lambda \in [0, \ell(\theta)])[\mu^-(\theta, \lambda), \mu^+(\theta, \lambda)] \subset [\hat{\mu}^-(\theta, \lambda), \hat{\mu}^+(\theta, \lambda)]$ and $[\alpha^-(\theta, \lambda), \alpha^+(\theta, \lambda)] \subset [\hat{\alpha}^-(\theta, \lambda), \ \hat{\alpha}^+(\theta, \lambda)]$, then $(\forall p \in P)$ $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p) \geq T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p)$.

In particular, the first property states that the minimum time for traveling the composite path $p_1 p_2$ is greater or equal to the sum of the times needed for traveling p_1 and p_2 separately. In fact, in the first case, the speed must be continuous when passing from p_1 to p_2 (due to the acceleration bounds), but this constraint does not need to be satisfied when the speed profiles for p_1 and p_2 are computed separately.

The following proposition (whose proof can be found in [17]) states the theoretical complexity of a simplified version of Problem III.1, called BASP-C, in which maximum and minimum acceleration and speed are constant on each arc.

Proposition III.3: Problem BASP-C is NP-hard.

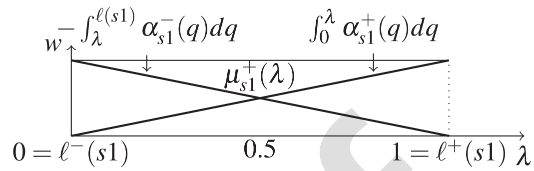

Fig. 2. Computation of $\ell^+(s1) = 1$ and $\ell^-(s1) = 0$.

IV. k-BASP

As we will see in Remark IV.6, SP can be viewed as a special case of the BASP, namely a BASP with unbounded acceleration limits. In fact, also BASP can be viewed as an SP but defined on a different graph with respect to the original one. More precisely, here, we introduce some restrictions on parameters $\mathbb{B}$ that allow reducing the BASP to a standard SP that can be solved by Dijkstra's algorithm on an extended graph. Let $p \in P$, define

$\ell^+(p) = \min\{\{\lambda \in [0, \ell(p)] \mid \int_0^\lambda \alpha_p^+(q)dq = \mu_p^+(\lambda)\}, +\infty\}$;

$\ell^-(p) = \max\{\{\lambda \in [0, \ell(p)] \mid -\int_\lambda^{\ell(p)} \alpha_p^-(q)dq = \mu_p^+(\lambda)\}, -\infty\}$.

In this way, $\ell^+(p)$ is the smallest value of $\lambda \in [0, \ell(p)]$ for which the solution of F in (2), with $\alpha^+ = \alpha_p^+$, starting from initial condition $F(0) = 0$, reaches the squared speed upper bound $\mu^+(\lambda)$. Note that $\ell^+(p) = \infty$ if no such value of λ exists. Similarly, $\ell^-(p)$ is the largest value of $\lambda \in [0, \ell(p)]$ for which the solution of B in (3), with $\alpha^- = \alpha_p^-$, starting from initial condition $B(\ell(p)) = 0$, reaches $\mu^+(\lambda)$. Again, $\ell^-(p) = -\infty$ if no such value of λ exists. Note that if $p, t, pt \in P$, $\ell^+(pt) \leq \ell^+(p)$ and $\ell^-(pt) \geq \ell^-(p)$ (actually, equalities hold if the values are all finite). Finally, we define

$$K(\mathbb{B}) = \min\{k \in \mathbb{N} \mid (\forall p \in P_s)\, |p| \geq k \Rightarrow \ell^+(p) \leq \ell^-(p)\}. \tag{4}$$

We call k-BASP any instance of Problem III.1 that satisfies $K(\mathbb{B}) \leq k$. For instance, consider the following chain graph $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{V} = \{s, 1, 2, f\}, \ \mathbb{E} = \{(s, 1), (1, 2), (2, f)\})$. Here, $(\forall \theta \in \mathbb{E})$ $\alpha^-(\theta) = -1$, $\alpha^+(\theta) = 1$, $\mu^-(\theta) = 0$, $\ell(\theta) = 1$, and $\mu^+((s, 1)) = 1$, $\mu^+((1, 2)) = \frac{2}{3}$, $\mu^+((2, f)) = 1$. In this case, $P_s = \{s, s1, s12, s12f\}$. Moreover, $K(\mathbb{B}) > 2$, since $\ell^+(s1) = 1 > 0 = \ell^-(s1)$, as reported in Fig. 2. Furthermore, $\ell^+(s12) < \ell^-(s12)$ and $\ell^+(12f) < \ell^-(12f)$ and $s12, 12f$ are the only paths of length 3. Fig. 3 shows the computation of $\ell^+(s12)$ and $\ell^-(s12)$; the computation of $\ell^+(12f)$ and $\ell^-(12f)$ is analogous. Hence, in this example, $K(\mathbb{B}) = 3$.

Note that $K(\mathbb{B}) - 1$ represents the maximum number of nodes of a path that can be traveled with a speed profile of maximum acceleration, followed by one of maximum deceleration, starting and ending with null speed, without violating the maximum speed constraint. The following

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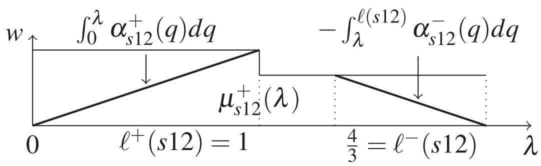

Fig. 3. Computation of $\ell^+(s12) = 1$ and $\ell^-(s12) = \frac{4}{3}$.

expression provides a simple upper bound on $K(\mathbb{B})$:

$$K(\mathbb{B}) \le 1 + \left[2 \max_{\theta \in \mathbb{E}} \frac{\max\limits_{\lambda \in [0,\ell(\theta)]} \mu^+(\theta,\lambda)}{\min\limits_{\lambda \in [0,\ell(\theta)]} \left(\alpha^+(\theta,\lambda) \wedge |\alpha^-(\theta,\lambda)|\right) \ell(\theta)} \right]. \quad (5)$$

Note that $K(\mathbb{B}) = 1$ only if $\alpha_- = -\infty$ and $\alpha^+ = +\infty$, that is, if we do not consider acceleration bounds. We will present an algorithm that solves the k-BASP in polynomial time complexity with respect to $|\mathbb{V}|$ and $|\mathbb{E}|$. However, note that the complexity is exponential with respect to k so that a correct estimation of $K(\mathbb{B})$ is critical. In general, the bound (5) overestimates $K(\mathbb{B})$. In Section V, we will present a simple method for correctly estimating $K(\mathbb{B})$.

We recall that $\mathbb{V}_k$ represents the subset of language $\mathbb{V}^*$ composed of strings with maximum length k, including the empty string ε. Define $\mathrm{Suff}_k : P \to \mathbb{V}_k$ such that, if $|p| \le k$, $\mathrm{Suff}_k(p) = p$ and if $|p| > k$, $\mathrm{Suff}_k(p)$ is the suffix of p of length k. The function Suff_k allows to introduce a partially defined transition function $\Gamma : \mathbb{V}_k \times \mathbb{V} \to \mathbb{V}_k$ by setting $\Gamma(r,\sigma) = \mathrm{Suff}_k(r\sigma)$ if $r\sigma \in P$, otherwise, if $r\sigma \notin P$, $\Gamma(r,\sigma)$ is not defined. Define the incremental cost function $\eta : P_s \times \mathbb{V} \to \mathbb{R}^+$ such that, for $p \in P_s$ and $\sigma \in \mathbb{V}$, if $p\sigma \in P_s$, $\eta(p,\sigma) = T_{\mathbb{B}}(p\sigma) - T_{\mathbb{B}}(p)$, otherwise $\eta(p,\sigma) = +\infty$. In other words, $\eta(p,\sigma)$ is the difference between the minimum time required for traversing $p\sigma$ and the minimum time required for traversing p. For simplicity of notation, from now on, we will denote $T_{\mathbb{B}}$ simply as T. The following proposition shows that the incremental cost is always strictly positive.

Proposition IV.1: $\eta(p,\sigma) \ge T(\sigma)$.

Proof: By 1) of Proposition III.2, $T(p\sigma) \ge T(p) + T(\sigma)$. □

The following property, whose proof is presented in the Appendix, plays a key role in the solution algorithm.

Proposition IV.2: Let $p_1, p_2, t \in P$, if $p_1 t, p_2 t \in P$ and $\ell^+(t) \le \ell^-(t)$, then $(\forall \sigma \in \mathbb{V})\ T(p_1 t\sigma) - T(p_1 t) = T(p_2 t \sigma) - T(p_2 t)$.

The following is a direct consequence of Proposition IV.2. It states that, given $p \in P$ and $\sigma \in \mathbb{V}$, the incremental cost $\eta(p,\sigma)$ does not depend on the complete path p, but only on $\mathrm{Suff}_k(p)$ (its last k symbols).

Proposition IV.3: If $K(\mathbb{B}) \le k$ and $p, p' \in P$ are such that $\mathrm{Suff}_k(p) = \mathrm{Suff}_k(p')$, then $(\forall \sigma \in \mathbb{V})\ \eta(p,\sigma) = \eta(p,' \sigma)$.

Define function $\hat{\eta} : \mathbb{V}_k \times \mathbb{V} \to \mathbb{R}^+$, such that $\hat{\eta}(r,\sigma) = \eta(p,\sigma)$ where $p \in P$ is any path such that $r = \mathrm{Suff}_k(p)$. We set $\hat{\eta}(r,\sigma) = +\infty$ if such path does not exist. Note that the function $\hat{\eta}$ is well-defined by Proposition IV.3, being $\eta(p,\sigma)$ identical among all paths p such that $r = \mathrm{Suff}_k(p)$. In particular, Proposition IV.3 holds for $p' = \mathrm{Suff}_k(p) = r$ so that we can compute $\hat{\eta}$ as $\hat{\eta}(r,\sigma) = \eta(r,\sigma)$. In the following, since $\hat{\eta}$ is the restriction of η on $\mathbb{V}_k \times \mathbb{V}$, we denote $\hat{\eta}$ simply by η.

The value k can be viewed as the amount of memory required to solve the problem: once a node is reached, the optimal path from such node to the target one depends on the last k visited nodes. If $k = 1$, it only depends on the current node (i.e., no memory is required). This is the situation with the classical SP. More generally, $k > 1$ so that the optimal way to complete the path does not only depend on the current node, but also on the sequence of $k-1$ nodes visited before reaching it. Define function $V : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}$ as

$$V(r) = \min_{p \in P_s | \mathrm{Suff}_k\, p = r} T_{\mathbb{B}}(p). \quad (6)$$

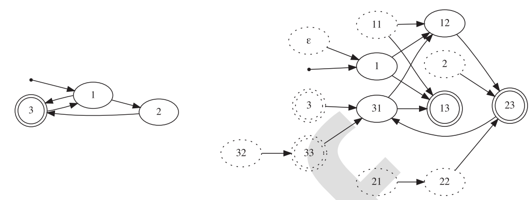

Fig. 4. Graph and its corresponding extension for $k = 2$.

Note that the solution of the BASP corresponds to $\min_{r \in \mathbb{V}_k | \vec{r} \in F} V(r)$ (we recall that $\vec{r}$ is the last node of r). For $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, define the set of predecessors of r as $\mathrm{Prec}(r) = \{\bar{r} \in \mathbb{V}_k \mid r = \Gamma(\bar{r}, \vec{r})\}$. The following proposition presents an expression for $V(r)$ that holds if $\ell^+(r') \le \ell^-(r')$ for all predecessors r' of r.

Proposition IV.4: Let $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, if $(\forall r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r))\ \ell^+(r') \le \ell^-(r')$, then

$$V(r) = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)} \{V(r') + \eta(r,' \vec{r})\}. \quad (7)$$

Proof: Let $S_r = \{q \in P_s \mid \mathrm{Suff}_k\, q\vec{r} = r\}$. $V(r) = \min_p \in P_s \mid \mathrm{Suff}_k\, p = r T(p) = \min_{q \in S_r} \{T(q\vec{r}) - T(q) + T(q)\} = \min_q \in S_r \{T(q) + T((\mathrm{Suff}_k\, q)\vec{r}) - T(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, q)\} = \min_{q \in S_r} \{T(q) + \eta(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, q, \vec{r})\} = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r),\ q \in S_{r'}} \{T(q) + \eta(r,' \vec{r})\} = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)} \{V(r') + \eta(r,' \vec{r})\}$, where we used the facts that $T(q\sigma) - T(q) = T(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, q\sigma) - T(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, q)$, by Proposition IV.2, and that $q \in P_s$ is such that $\mathrm{Suff}_k\, q\vec{r} = r \Leftrightarrow \mathrm{Suff}_k\, q \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)$. ■

As a consequence of Proposition IV.4, if $(\forall r \in \mathbb{V}_k)\ \ell^+(r) \le \ell^-(r)$, $V(r)$ corresponds to the length of the shortest path from s to r on the extended directed graph $\tilde{\mathbb{G}} = (\tilde{\mathbb{V}}, \tilde{\mathbb{E}})$, where $\tilde{\mathbb{V}} = \mathbb{V}_k$ and $(r_1, r_2) \in \tilde{\mathbb{E}}$ if $r_2 = \Gamma(r_1, \vec{r_2})$ is defined, in this case its length is $\eta(r_1, \vec{r_2})$. The left part of Fig. 4 shows a graph consisting of three nodes. Node $s = 1$ is the source (indicated by the entering arrow) and the double border shows the final node $F = \{3\}$. The right part of Fig. 4 represents the corresponding extended graph, obtained for $k = 2$, consisting of 13 nodes (the cardinality of $\mathbb{V}_2$). Note that some of the nodes are unreachable from the initial state, these are represented with dotted borders.

Solving k-BASP corresponds to finding a minimum-length path on $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$ that connects node $s \in \mathbb{V}_k$ to $\tilde{F} = \{r \in \mathbb{V}_k \mid \vec{f} \in F\}$. Note that the set of final states $\tilde{F}$ for the extended graph $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$ contains all paths $p \in \mathbb{V}_k$ that end in an element of F. In the extended graph reported in Fig. 4, this corresponds to finding a minimum-length path from the starting node 1 to one of the final nodes 3, 13, 23, and 33. Note that the unreachable nodes play no role in this procedure. We can find a minimum-length path by Dijkstra's algorithm applied to $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$, leading to the following complexity result.

Proposition IV.5: k-BASP can be solved with complexity $O(|\mathbb{V}|^{k-1}|\mathbb{E}| + (|\mathbb{V}|^k \log |\mathbb{V}|^k))$.

Proof: Dijkstra's algorithm has time complexity $O(|E| + |V| \log |V|)$, where $|E|$ and $|V|$ are the cardinalities of the edge and vertex sets, respectively. In our case, $|V| = |\tilde{\mathbb{V}}| = |\mathbb{V}_k| = \sum_{i=0}^k |\mathbb{V}|^i = O(|\mathbb{V}|^k)$, $|E| = |\tilde{\mathbb{E}}| \le |\mathbb{V}_{k-1}\mathbb{E}| = O(|\mathbb{V}|^{k-1}|\mathbb{E}|)$. □

The following remark establishes that SP can be viewed as a special case of the BASP without acceleration bounds.

Remark IV.6: If $(\forall \theta \in \mathbb{E})$ $(\forall \lambda \in [0, \ell(\theta)])$ $\alpha^-(\theta,\lambda) = -\infty$, $\alpha^+(\theta,\lambda) = +\infty$, then $K(\mathbb{B}) = 1$. The resulting 1-BASP reduces to a standard SP on the graph $\mathbb{G}$ and can be solved with time complexity $O(|\mathbb{E}| + |\mathbb{V}| \log |\mathbb{V}|)$.

V. Adaptive A* Algorithm for k-BASP

The computation method based on Dijkstra's algorithm on the extended graph $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$, presented in the previous section, has two main

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disadvantages. First, $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$ has $\sum_{j=0}^{k} |\mathbb{V}|^j$ nodes so that the time required by Dijkstra's algorithm grows exponentially with k. We will show that it is possible to mitigate this problem and reduce the number of visited nodes by using the A* algorithm with a suitable heuristic. Second, the estimation of $k = K(\mathbb{B})$ from its definition is not an easy task. We will show that it is quite easy to adaptively find the correct value of k by starting from $k = 2$ and increasing k if needed.

The A* algorithm is a heuristic method that allows to compute the optimal path, if it exists (see [18]), by exploring the graph beginning from the starting node along the most promising directions according to a heuristic function that estimates the cost from the current position to the target node. Hence, to implement the A* algorithm, we need to define a heuristic function $h : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}$, such that, for $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, $h(r)$ is a lower bound on $\min_{p \in P_{\vec{r},\tilde{F}}} T(p)$, that is, the minimum time needed for traveling from $\vec{r}$ to a final state in $\tilde{F}$. In general, we can compute lower bounds for the BASP by relaxing the acceleration constraints α^- and α^+. Namely, let $\hat{\mathbb{B}}$ be a parameter set obtained by relaxing acceleration constraints in $\mathbb{B}$. Then, if $K(\hat{\mathbb{B}}) < K(\mathbb{B})$, by Proposition IV.5, the solution of the BASP for parameter $\hat{\mathbb{B}}$ can be computed with a lower computational time than the solution with parameter $\mathbb{B}$. In particular, we obtain a very simple lower bound by removing acceleration bounds altogether, that is, by setting $\alpha^- = -\infty$ and $\alpha^+ = +\infty$. In this way, the vehicle is allowed to travel at maximum speed everywhere along the path and the incremental cost function $\eta(p,\sigma)$ is given by the time needed to travel γ_σ at maximum speed, that is, $\eta(p,\sigma) = \int_0^{\ell(\vec{p}\sigma)} \frac{1}{\sqrt{\mu^+((\vec{p},\sigma),\lambda)}} d\lambda$. Define the heuristic $h : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}^+$ as

$$h(r) = \min_{p \in P_{\vec{r},\tilde{F}}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p). \tag{8}$$

Note that, if $\alpha^- = -\infty$ and $\alpha^+ = +\infty$, h corresponds to the solution of 1-BASP and all values of h can be efficiently precomputed by Dijkstra's algorithm (see Remark IV.6). The following proposition shows that h is admissible and consistent so that the A* algorithm, with heuristic h, provides the optimal solution of the k-BASP and its time complexity is no worse than Dijkstra's algorithm (see [19, Th. 2.9 and 2.10]).

Proposition V.1: Heuristic h satisfies the following two properties.

1) Admissibility: $(\forall r \in \mathbb{V}_k)\ h(r) \leq \min_{q \in P_{\vec{r},f}} T_{\mathbb{B}}(q)$.

2) Consistency: $(\forall r \in \mathbb{V}_k)\,(\forall \sigma \in \mathbb{V})\ h(r) \leq \eta(r,\sigma) + h(\Gamma(r,\sigma))$.

Proof: 1) $h(r) = \min_{p \in P_{\vec{r},f}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p) \leq \min_{q \in P_{\vec{r},f}} T_{\mathbb{B}}(q)$, since $\hat{\mathbb{B}}$ is a relaxation of $\mathbb{B}$.

2) $h(r) = \min_{p \in P_{\vec{r},f}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p) \leq T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(\sigma) + \min_{p \in P_{\sigma,f}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p) \leq T_{\mathbb{B}}(\sigma) + \min_{p \in P_{\sigma,f}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p) \leq \eta(r,\sigma) + \min_{p \in P_{\sigma,f}} T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(p) = \eta(r,\sigma) + h(\Gamma(r,\sigma))$, where $T_{\hat{\mathbb{B}}}(\sigma) \leq T_{\mathbb{B}}(\sigma)$ by 2) of Proposition III.2 and $T_{\mathbb{B}}(\sigma) \leq \eta(r,\sigma)$ by Proposition IV.1. □

Since heuristic h is admissible and consistent, A* is equivalent to Dijkstra's algorithm, with the only difference that the incremental cost function $\eta(r,\sigma)$ is replaced by the modified cost

$$\tilde{\eta}(r,\sigma) = \eta(r,\sigma) + h(\Gamma(r,\sigma)) - h(r) \tag{9}$$

(see [19, Lemma 2.3] for a complete discussion). A description of the A* algorithm can be found in literature (for instance, see [19, Algorithm 2.13]). We define a priority queue $\mathscr{Q}$ that contains open nodes, that is, nodes that have already been generated but have not yet been visited. Namely, $\mathscr{Q}$ is an ordered set of pairs $(r,t) \in \mathbb{V}_k \times \mathbb{R}^+$, in which $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$ and t is a lower bound for the time associated to the best completion of r to a path arriving at a final state. We need to perform the following operations on $\mathscr{Q}$: operation `Insert`$(\mathscr{Q},(r,t))$ inserts couple (r,t) into $\mathscr{Q}$; operation $(r,t) =$ `DeleteMin`$(\mathscr{Q})$ returns the first couple of $\mathscr{Q}$, that is, the couple (r,t) with the minimum time t, and removes this couple from $\mathscr{Q}$; and, operation `DecreaseKey`$(\mathscr{Q},(r,t))$ assumes that $\mathscr{Q}$ already contains a couple (r,t') with $t' > t$ and substitutes this couple with (r,t). Furthermore, we consider three partially defined maps `value` $: \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}$, `parent` $: \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{V}_k$, `closed` $: \mathbb{V}_k \to \{0,1\}$, such that, for $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, `value`(r) is the current best upper estimate of $V(r)$, `parent`(r) is the parent node of r, and `closed`$(r) = 1$ if node r has already been visited. Maps `value`, `parent`, and `closed` can be implemented as hash tables.

Algorithm V.2 (A* algorithm for k-BASP):

1) [initialization] Set $\mathscr{Q} = \{(s, h(s))\}$, `value`$(s) = 0$.

2) [expansion] Set $(r,t) =$ `DeleteMin`$(\mathscr{Q})$ and set `closed`$(r) = 1$. If $\vec{r} \in \tilde{F}$, then t is the optimal solution and the algorithm terminates, returning maps `value`, `parent`. Otherwise, for each $\sigma \in \mathbb{V}$ for which $\Gamma(r,\sigma)$ is defined, set $r' = \Gamma(r,\sigma)$, $t' = t + \tilde{\eta}(r,\sigma)$. If `closed`$(r') = 1$, go to 3). Else, if `value`$(r')$ is undefined `Insert`$(\mathscr{Q},(r,' t'))$. Otherwise, if $t' <$ `value`(r'), set `value`$(r') = t'$, `parent`$(r') = r$ and do `DecreaseKey`$(\mathscr{Q},(r,' t'))$.

3) [loop] If $\mathscr{Q} \neq \varnothing$ go back to 2), otherwise no solution exists.

Proposition V.3: Algorithm V.2 terminates and returns the optimal solution (if it exists), with a time-complexity not higher than Dijkstra's algorithm on the extended graph $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$.

Proof: It is a consequence of the fact that heuristic h is admissible and consistent (see [19, Th. 2.9 and 2.10]). □

Note that, at the end of Algorithm V.2, `value`(f) is the optimal value of the k-BASP and the optimal path from s to set F can be reconstructed from map `parent`.

One possible limitation of Algorithm V.2 is that estimating $K(\mathbb{B})$ from its definition can be difficult. A correct estimation of $K(\mathbb{B})$ is critical for the efficiency of the algorithm. Indeed, if $K(\mathbb{B})$ is overestimated, the time complexity of the algorithm is higher than it would be with a correct estimate. On the other hand, if $K(\mathbb{B})$ is underestimated, Algorithm V.2 is not correct since Proposition IV.4 does not hold. Here, we propose an algorithm that adaptively finds a suitable value for k in Algorithm V.2, such that $k \leq K(\mathbb{B})$, but, in any case, allows to find the optimal solution of the BASP. First, we define the modified cost function $W : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}$ as $W(r) = V(r) + h(r)$, where V is given by (6) and h is the heuristic given by (8). If $(\forall r \in \mathbb{V}_k)\ \ell^+(r) \leq \ell^-(r)$, then W is the solution of

$$\begin{cases} W(r) = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)} \{W(r') + \tilde{\eta}(r,' \vec{r})\} \\ W(s) = h(s). \end{cases} \tag{10}$$

Indeed, following the same steps of the proof of Proposition IV.4, $W(r) = V(r) + h(r) = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)} \{V(r') + \eta(r,' \vec{r}) + h(r) + h(r') - h(r')\} = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)} \{W(r') + \tilde{\eta}(r,' \vec{r})\}$. Hence, $W(r)$ corresponds to the length of the shortest path from s to r on $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$, with arc length given according to $\tilde{\eta}$. If condition $\ell^+(r) \leq \ell^-(r)$ is not satisfied for all $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, (10) does not hold for all $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$ and W does not represent the solution of an SP. However, the following proposition shows that we can still find a lower bound $\hat{W}$ of W that does correspond to the solution of an SP.

Proposition V.4: Let $\hat{W} : \mathbb{V}_k \to \mathbb{R}$ be the solution of

$$\begin{cases} \hat{W}(r) = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)} \{\hat{W}(r') + \hat{\eta}(r,' \vec{r})\} \\ \hat{W}(s) = 0, \end{cases} \tag{11}$$

where if $\ell^+(r') \leq \ell^-(r')$ or $|r'| < k$, $\hat{\eta}(r,' \vec{r}) = \tilde{\eta}(r,' \vec{r})$, otherwise $\hat{\eta}(r,' \vec{r}) = h(r) - h(r')$. Then, $(\forall r \in \mathbb{V}_k)$

1) $\hat{W}(r) \leq W(r)$;

2) $(\forall \bar{r} \in \mathbb{V}_k \mid \hat{W}(\bar{r}) \leq \hat{W}(r))\ \ell^+(\bar{r}) \leq \ell^-(\bar{r}) \Rightarrow \hat{W}(r) = W(r)$.

Proof: 1) For $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, let $p \in P_s$ be such that $\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p \in \mathrm{Prec}(r)$. If $\ell^+(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p) \leq \ell^-(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p)$, in view of Proposition IV.2, $T(p\vec{r}) = T(p) + \eta(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p, \vec{r})$, otherwise, obviously, $T(p\vec{r}) \geq T(p)$. Hence, in both cases, by the definition of $\tilde{\eta}$ in (9), $T(p\vec{r}) + h(r) \geq T(p) + h(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p) + \hat{\eta}(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, p, \vec{r})$. By contradiction, assume

$(\exists A \subset \mathbb{V}_k)$ $A \neq \varnothing$ such that $(\forall r \in A)$ $\hat{W}(r) > W(r)$. Let $\bar{r} = \operatorname{argmin}_{\hat{r} \in A} W(\hat{r})$ and $S_{\bar{r}} = \{q \in P_s \mid \mathrm{Suff}_k\, q \in \mathrm{Prec}(\bar{r})\}$, then $W(\bar{r}) = V(\bar{r}) + h(\bar{r}) = \min_{p \in P_s | \mathrm{Suff}_k\, p = \bar{r}} T(p) + h(\bar{r}) = \min_{q \in S_{\bar{r}}} T(q\vec{r}) + h(\bar{r}) \geq \min_{q \in S_{\bar{r}}} \{T(q) + h(\mathrm{Suff}_k(q)) + \hat{\eta}(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, q, \vec{\bar{r}})\} = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(\bar{r})} \{\hat{W}(r') + \hat{\eta}(r,' \vec{\bar{r}})\} = \hat{W}(\bar{r})$, where we used the fact that $W(r') = \hat{W}(r')$, that follows from the definition of $\bar{r}$, since the value of r' that attains the minimum is such that $W(r') < W(\bar{r})$. Then, the obtained inequality contradicts the fact that $\hat{W}(\bar{r}) > W(\bar{r})$.

2) Let $A \subset \mathbb{V}$ be the set of values of $r \in \mathbb{V}$ for which 2) does not hold, and by contradiction, assume that $A \neq \varnothing$ and let $\hat{r} = \operatorname{argmin}_{r \in A} \hat{W}(r)$. Then, by definition of $\hat{r}$, it satisfies the following two properties: $(\forall \bar{r} \in \mathbb{V}_k \mid \hat{W}(\bar{r}) \leq \hat{W}(\hat{r}))\, \ell^+(\bar{r}) \leq \ell^-(\bar{r})$, moreover, $\hat{W}(\hat{r}) \neq W(\hat{r})$. Note that, from the definitions of $\hat{W}$, $W(s) = \hat{W}(s)$. Then, $W(\hat{r}) = \min_{p \in P_s | \mathrm{Suff}_k\, p = \hat{r}} T(p) + h(\hat{r}) = \min_{q \in P_s | \mathrm{Suff}_k\, q \in \mathrm{Prec}(\hat{r})} \{T(q\vec{\hat{r}}) + h(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, q) - h(\mathrm{Suff}_k\, q) + h(\hat{r})\} = \min_{r' \in \mathrm{Prec}(\hat{r})} \{\hat{W}(r') + \hat{\eta}(r,' \vec{\hat{r}})\} = \hat{W}(\hat{r})$, which contradicts the definition of $\hat{r}$. Here, we used (9) and the fact that, since $\hat{W}(r') < \hat{W}(\hat{r})$ and by the definition of $\hat{r}$, $\hat{W}(r') = W(r')$. □

Proposition V.4 implies that $\hat{W}(r)$ is a lower bound of $W(r)$ and that it corresponds to the length of the shortest path from s to r on the extended directed graph $\tilde{\mathbb{G}}$, with arc length given in accordance to (11), namely by the value of function $\hat{\eta}$. Hence, $\hat{W}(f)$ can be computed by Dijkstra's algorithm (which is equivalent to compute V with A* algorithm, with heuristic h). The algorithm that we are going to present is based on the following basic observation. If A* algorithm computes $f^* = \operatorname{argmin}_{f \in \tilde{F}} \hat{W}(f)$ by visiting only nodes for which $\ell^+(r) \leq \ell^-(r)$, then 2) of Proposition V.4 is satisfied for $r = f^*$ and $\hat{W}(f^*) = W(f^*)$ is the optimal value of the k-BASP. If this is not the case, we increase k by 1 and rerun the A* algorithm. Note that the algorithm starts with $k = 2$, since, according to its definition, $K(\mathbb{B})$ equals 1 only if no acceleration bounds are present and, in this case, the BASP is equivalent to a standard SP and can be solved by Dijkstra's algorithm.

Algorithm V.5 (Adaptive A* algorithm for k-BASP):

1) Set $k = 2$.

2) Execute A* algorithm, and at every visit of a new node r, if none of the two conditions $\ell^+(r) \leq \ell^-(r)$ and $|r| < k$ holds, set $k = k + 1$ and repeat step 2).

Note that the algorithm does not compute the exact value $K(\mathbb{B})$. Rather, it underestimates it. More precisely, it stops with the smallest k value needed to solve the BASP between the given source and destination nodes. That is, the smallest k that satisfies the k-BASP definition over the explored subgraph.

Proposition V.6: Algorithm V.5 terminates with $k \leq K(\mathbb{B})$ and returns an optimal solution.

Proof: By Definition (4) of $K(\mathbb{B})$, if $k = K(\mathbb{B})$, the condition $\ell^+(r) \leq \ell^-(r)$ is satisfied for all r. Hence, there exists $k \leq K(\mathbb{B})$ for which the algorithm terminates. Let $r \in \mathbb{V}_k$, with $\vec{r} \in F$ be the last-visited node before the termination of the algorithm. By 2) of Proposition V.4, we have that $\hat{W}(r) = W(r) = V(r)$ (since $h(r) = 0$), but, by definition, $V(r)$ is the shortest time for reaching a node in F. □

VI. Numerical Experiments

A. Randomly Generated Problems

We performed various tests on problems associated to graphs with n nodes, for increasing values of n, randomly generated with function geographical_threshold_graph of Python package NetworkX (networkx.org). Essentially, each node is associated to a position randomly chosen from set $[0, 1]^2$. Edges are randomly determined in such a way that closer nodes have a higher connection probability. We multiplied the obtained positions by factor $10\sqrt{n}$, in order to obtain the same average node density independently of n. Then, we associated a random angle θ_i to each node, obtained from a uniform distribution in $[0, 2\pi]$. In this way, each node of the random graph is associated to a vehicle configuration, consisting of a position and an angle. Set $\tau(\theta_i) = [\cos\theta_i, \sin\theta_i]^T$. Each edge (i, j) is associated to a *Dubins path*, which is defined as the shortest curve of bounded curvature that connects the configurations associated to nodes i and j, with initial tangent parallel to $\tau(\theta_i)$ and final tangent parallel to $\tau(\theta_j)$. We chose the minimum turning radius for the path associated to edge (i, j) as $r_{ij} = \min\{\ell((i, j))/(d(\theta_i, \theta_j)), 2\}$ where $d(x, y)$ is the angular distance between angles x and y. We set the acceleration and deceleration bounds constant for all paths and equal to 0.1 ms^{-2}. The upper squared speed bound is constant for each arc and given by $2r$, where r is the minimum curvature radius of the path associated to the arc. In our tests, we used the adaptive A* algorithm (see Algorithm V.5). First, we ran simulations for ten values of n, logarithmically spaced between 100 and 1000. For each n, we generated 50 different graphs, and for each one of them, we ran ten simulations, randomly choosing source and target nodes. Fig. 5 shows the mean values and the distributions of the computational times of Algorithm V.5 and it also shows the mean computational times of Algorithm V.2 with k computed as in (5). Note that the mean times of Algorithm V.2 are at least one order of magnitude higher than those of Algorithm V.5. Table I shows, for each n, the percentages of k values returned by Algorithm V.5, and the mean value $\bar{k}$ of k computed as in (5). Note that the values obtained with (5) are on average 54.8 times larger than those returned by Algorithm V.5.

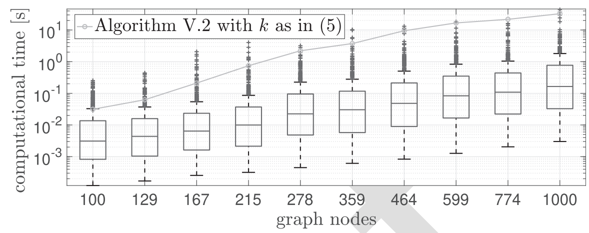

Fig. 5. BASP computing times on graphs of different size.

TABLE I
Percentages of k Values for Graphs of Different Size

n	$k=3$	$k=4$	$k=5$	$k=6$	$\bar{k}$	n	$k=3$	$k=4$	$k=5$	$k=6$	$\bar{k}$
100	80.4%	18.0%	1.6%	0.0%	86	359	61.6%	33.8%	4.4%	0.2%	161
129	81.0%	17.2%	1.8%	0.0%	89	464	60.8%	33.0%	6.0%	0.2%	202
167	77.8%	19.6%	2.0%	0.6%	170	599	51.6%	39.8%	8.2%	0.4%	188
215	72.6%	24.2%	3.2%	0.0%	177	744	49.4%	43.0%	6.4%	1.2%	338
278	63.2%	30.6%	6.2%	0.0%	146	1000	43.6%	46.0%	9.6%	0.8%	300

In Section V, we showed that, for a given problem instance, path p^*, corresponding to the solution of the BASP, is in general different from the path $\hat{p}$ obtained as the solution of the BASP with infinite acceleration bounds (which, in fact, is an SP) and from the path $\tilde{p}$ obtained as the solution of SP with edge costs equal to their lengths. We ran some numerical experiments to compare travel times $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p^*)$ and $T_{\mathbb{B}}(\hat{p})$, (i.e., the travel time of p^* and the one of $\hat{p}$ on which speed has been planned using the same acceleration bounds of the BASP), and lengths $\ell(p^*)$ and $\ell(\tilde{p})$. Namely, we generated 50 different random graphs with $n = 100$ with the procedure presented previously. For each instance, we considered ten problems obtained by randomly choosing source and target nodes. Then, we solved the BASP with different acceleration bounds α^+ and α^- logarithmically spaced in $[0.01, 1]$ ms^{-2}, with

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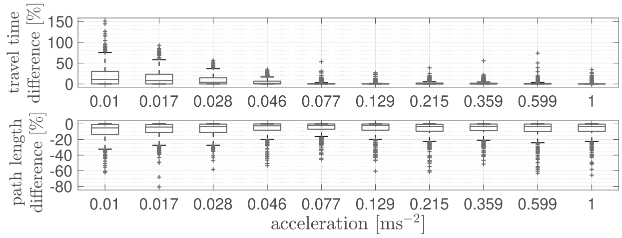

Fig. 6. Travel time difference between BASP and BASP without acceleration bounds and path length difference between BASP and SP with edge costs equal to their lengths.

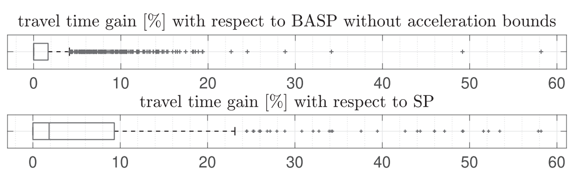

Fig. 7. Travel time gain of BASP on 1000 simulations on the 2 485-node graph with respect to the BASP without acceleration bounds and SP with edge costs equal to their lengths.

$\alpha^+ = \alpha^-$. In Fig. 6 (top), we compare the optimal travel times along paths p^* and $\hat{p}$, that is, for each value of the acceleration and deceleration bounds, we report the relative percentage difference $100\frac{T_{\mathbb{B}}(\hat{p})-T_{\mathbb{B}}(p^*)}{T_{\mathbb{B}}(p^*)}$ obtained for each test. We observe that for low acceleration and deceleration bounds the difference is more significant, while as the acceleration and deceleration bounds increase, the travel time difference between the two paths tends to be smaller. This is due to the fact that, if acceleration bounds are sufficiently high, paths p^* and $\hat{p}$ are the same. In Fig. 6 (bottom), we compare the length of paths p^* and $\tilde{p}$ showing how the BASP solution tends to differ from the SP with edge costs equal to their lengths even for small acceleration bounds. For p^* and $\tilde{p}$ to coincide one needs even smaller acceleration bounds.

B. Real Industrial Applications

Here, we present a problem from a real industrial application representing an automated warehouse provided by packaging company Ocme S.r.l., based in Parma, Italy. The problem is described by a graph of 2 485 nodes and 4 411 arcs. The acceleration and deceleration bounds are constant, equal for all arcs, and given by $\alpha^+ = 0.28$ ms^{-2} and $\alpha^- = -0.18$ ms^{-2}. The speed bounds are constant for each arc but vary among different arcs, according to the associated path curvatures, and they take values on interval $[0.1, 1.7]$ ms^{-1}. The arc lengths take values in $[0.2, 18]$ m and have an average value of 4.2 m. We ran 1000 simulations by randomly choosing source and the target nodes. The average value and the standard deviation of the computational time are 0.1587 and 1.9355 s, respectively. The mean value of k returned by Algorithm V.5 is 5, while the bound obtained with (5) is 105. We compare travel times $T_{\mathbb{B}}(p^*)$, $T_{\mathbb{B}}(\hat{p})$, and $T_{\mathbb{B}}(\tilde{p})$, that is, the travel time of p^* and the ones of $\hat{p}$ and $\tilde{p}$ on which speed has been planned using the same acceleration bounds of the BASP. Fig. 7 compares the optimal travel time gain obtained using p^* over $\hat{p}$ and $\tilde{p}$. Namely, we report the relative percentage differences over 1000 tests. In the first case, we had a 2.17% mean gain and the 25% best performing paths p^* had a 8.53% mean gain over $\hat{p}$. While, in the latter case, we had a 5.85% mean gain and the 25% best performing paths p^* had a 14.16% mean gain over $\tilde{p}$. Note that these results are probably due to the fact that the graph associated to the industrial problem has a low connectivity. Indeed, most nodes in the industrial problem represent positions in corridors and are connected only to the node preceding them and the one following them along the corridor. Nonetheless, in such industrial context, even moderate improvements represent a significant gain for a company.

APPENDIX

Proposition A.1: Let $\mu, \alpha : [0, +\infty) \to \mathbb{R}^+$, for $i \in \{1, 2\}$, let F_i be the solution of the differential equation (2) where F_i replaces F and $w_{0,i}$ replaces $\mu(0)$, with $0 \leq w_{0,i} \leq \mu(0)$; and let $\bar{\lambda}$ be such that $\mu(\bar{\lambda}) = \int_0^{\bar{\lambda}} \alpha(\lambda)d\lambda$. Then, $(\forall \lambda \geq \bar{\lambda})\ F_1(\lambda) = F_2(\lambda)$.

Proof: Without loss of generality, assume that $w_{0,1} \geq w_{0,2}$. This implies that $(\forall \lambda \geq 0)\ F_1(\lambda) \geq F_2(\lambda)$. Indeed, assume by contradiction that there exists $\bar{\lambda}$ such that $F_1(\bar{\lambda}) < F_2(\bar{\lambda})$, then, by continuity of F_1 and F_2, this implies that there exists $\hat{\lambda} \leq \bar{\lambda}$ such that $F_1(\hat{\lambda}) = F_2(\hat{\lambda})$, thus $(\forall \lambda \geq \hat{\lambda})\ F_1(\lambda) = F_2(\lambda)$, since, for $\lambda \geq \hat{\lambda}$, $F_1(\lambda)$ and $F_2(\lambda)$ solve the same differential equation with the same initial condition at $\lambda = \hat{\lambda}$, contradicting the assumption. Furthermore, note that $(\exists \tilde{\lambda} \in (0, \bar{\lambda}])\ F_2(\tilde{\lambda}) = \mu(\tilde{\lambda})$. Indeed, if by contradiction $(\forall \lambda \in (0, \bar{\lambda}])\ F_2(\lambda) < \mu(\lambda)$, then $(\forall \lambda \in (0, \bar{\lambda}])\ F_2'(\lambda) = \alpha(\lambda)$ so that $F_2(\bar{\lambda}) - F_2(0) = \int_0^{\bar{\lambda}} \alpha(\lambda)\, d\lambda = \mu(\bar{\lambda})$, which contradicts the assumption. Hence, $(\exists \hat{\lambda} \in \mathbb{R}^+)\ F_2(\hat{\lambda}) = F_1(\hat{\lambda}) = \mu(\hat{\lambda})$, and consequently, $(\forall \lambda \geq \hat{\lambda})\ F_1(\lambda) = F_2(\lambda)$, which implies the thesis, being $\bar{\lambda} \geq \hat{\lambda}$. □

For $p \in P, \lambda \in [0, \ell(p)]$, we set $\mathscr{W}_p(\lambda) = w$, where w is the solution of Problem (1) for path p. In other words, $\mathscr{W}_p(\lambda)$ is the square of the optimal speed profile for traversing the path p, evaluated at arc length λ, with respect to p.

Proposition A.2 1): Let $p_1, p_2, q \in P$, be such that $p_1q, p_2q \in P$, then $(\forall \lambda \geq \ell^+(q))\ \mathscr{W}_{p_1q}(\ell(p_1)+\lambda) = \mathscr{W}_{p_2q}(\ell(p_2)+\lambda)$.

2) Let $p, q_2, q_1 \in P$, be such that $pq_1, pq_2 \in P$, then $(\forall \lambda \leq \ell^-(p))\ \mathscr{W}_{pq_1}(\lambda) = \mathscr{W}_{pq_2}(\lambda)$.

Proof: We only prove 1), the proof of 2) is analogous. Note that, for $\lambda \geq 0$, $\mathscr{W}_{p_1q}(\lambda + \ell(p_1)) = \min\{F_1(\lambda), B(\lambda)\}$, $\mathscr{W}_{p_2q}(\lambda + \ell(p_2)) = \min\{F_2(\lambda), B(\lambda)\}$, where F_1 and F_2 are the solution of (2) with $\mu = \mu^+$ and initial conditions $w_{0,1} = \mathscr{W}_{p_1}(\ell(p_1))$ and $w_{0,2} = \mathscr{W}_{p_2}(\ell(p_2))$, respectively, and B is the solution of (3) with $\mu = \mu^+$. By Proposition A.1, for $\lambda \geq \ell^+(q)$, $F_1(\lambda) = F_2(\lambda)$. Consequently, $(\forall \lambda \geq \ell^+(q))\ \mathscr{W}_{p_1q}(\ell(p_1)+\lambda) = \mathscr{W}_{p_2q}(\ell(p_2)+\lambda)$. □

A. Proof of Proposition IV.2

Let Ψ be defined as in (1a), then $T(p_1t\sigma) - T(p_1t) = \int_0^{\ell(p_1t\sigma)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t\sigma}(\lambda))d\lambda - \int_0^{\ell(p_1t)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t}(\lambda))d\lambda = \int_{\ell(p_1)+\ell^-(t)}^{\ell(p_1t\sigma)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t\sigma}(\lambda)) d\lambda - \int_{\ell(p_1)+\ell^-(t)}^{\ell(p_1t)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t}(\lambda))d\lambda$, where we used that, by 2) of Proposition A.2, $(\forall \lambda \leq \ell(p_1)+\ell^-(t))\Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t\sigma}(\lambda)) = \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_1t}(\lambda))$. Similarly, $T(p_2t\sigma) - T(p_2t) = \int_{\ell(p_2)+\ell^-(t)}^{\ell(p_2t\sigma)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_2t\sigma}(\lambda))d\lambda - \int_{\ell(p_2)+\ell^-(t)}^{\ell(p_2t)} \Psi(\mathscr{W}_{p_2t}(\lambda))d\lambda$. Moreover, by 1) of Proposition A.2, we have that $(\forall \lambda \geq \ell^+(t\sigma))\ \mathscr{W}_{p_1t\sigma}(\ell(p_1)+\lambda)d\lambda = \mathscr{W}_{p_2t\sigma}(\ell(p_2)+\lambda)d\lambda$ and $(\forall \lambda \geq \ell^+(t))\ \mathscr{W}_{p_1t}(\ell(p_1)+\lambda)d\lambda = \mathscr{W}_{p_2t}(\ell(p_2)+\lambda)d\lambda$, which imply that $T(p_1t\sigma) - T(p_1t) = T(p_2t\sigma) - T(p_2t)$, since $\ell^+(t) \leq \ell^-(t)$, and as noticed in Section IV, $\ell^+(t\sigma) \leq \ell^+(t)$. ■

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IEEE Proof