

Report Concerning Space Data System Standards

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| Streaming Services over Bundle Protocol REquirements |

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# Introduction

## Purpose and scope

The purpose of this document is to record requirements for real-time data streaming services over Bundle Protocol, with particular emphasis on streaming digital video over Bundle Protocol. Previous testing of video streams over Bundle Protocol is documented. A common test configuration for continued testing and benchmarking of video (and other streaming data) is also documented.

## References

The following documents are referenced in this Report. At the time of publication, the editions indicated were valid. All documents are subject to revision, and users of this Report are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the documents indicated below. The CCSDS Secretariat maintains a register of currently valid CCSDS documents.

[A list of documents referenced in the report goes here. See CCSDS A20.0-Y-4, *CCSDS Publications Manual* (Yellow Book, Issue 4, April 2014) for reference list format.]

[1] Advanced Video Coding for Generic Audiovisual Services. ITU-T H.264. Geneva: ITU, 2012.

# OVERVIEW

Previous testing and real-life experience with streaming video over networks indicates that video streams are particularly susceptible to network jitter and lost packets. Video decoders typically buffer the incoming data stream to reconstitute the frames of video that were encoded, using “group of pictures” algorithms that combine frames or disassemble video frames into blocks of pixels. If enough data is missing, even with buffering, or if the data arrives jumbled or out of order beyond the limits the decoder’s buffering can handle, the decoder will either freeze the last good frame video and present it as live video output or else simply default to a blank or colored screen.

It is likely that as humans endeavor to explore space beyond low Earth orbit, video will be included as important data transmitted back to Earth. Whether it is used for situational awareness, such as proximity of approaching spacecraft during docking and rendezvous, or for monitoring an Extra Vehicular Activity, or for public use to allow the rest of us on Earth to “go along for the ride,” successful transmission and reception of video will become an important requirement for mission success. As these missions move beyond the Earth-Moon system, it is very likely the data communications will be over delay tolerant networks.

This Green Book explores the requirements for video over bundle streaming protocols and documents the prototyping and testing of video over these protocols. Section 3 presents a number of use cases for video that motivate the requirements listed in section 4. Section 5 discusses the current experimental mechanisms that support streaming video services.

# Use Case Scenarios

## General Usage Scenario

Video transmitted over the Bundle Protocol (BP) can suffer from many disruptions and severely out of order data packets, depending upon the path(s) involved and overall latency/latencies. However, there will almost always be a requirement for a best effort “real-time” video service that displays video as it is received at a mission control center while the entire set of video data is compiled in background from real-time and retransmitted frames. For this case, users should be able to view the ‘newest’ received video and to have awareness of the state of the stream (the time the current image was generated, the completeness of the stream archive, etc.).



Figure 1 DTN video system, showing both real time and archived playback

A typical end user would have a three window display, as shown in Figure 1. Window A is the real-time view from the Spacecraft. Window B is a GUI comprising VCR-like control widgets for replaying the video stream. Window C is the replay video view, controlled from window B. In the above figure, the colors in Window B are used to represent the state of the received video stream; green indicates that 100% of video for a given second was successfully archived, while red indicates that some or all of the video for a given second is still missing.

Window A shows the view from the spacecraft exactly as it was when it was transmitted. It will lag real time by the latency of the transmission link for that distance. The video may freeze or break up once in a while because one or more video frames were lost or corrupted somewhere along the end-to-end DTN path from the camera to the display. When there is such an outage, the missing frames never show up in this window; the displayed image simply remains unchanged until the next frame received in real time arrives. The view in this window is never delayed by any more than the one-way light time (plus processing), and it never regresses.

While the real-time stream video is displayed, all incoming data packets (both real-time and retransmitted) are being recorded and reassembled in the proper order and stored on the local storage system.

The user controls the replay display from window B, commanding the replay view to start N seconds ago and then roll forward or perform other available playback features such as pause, rewind, roll backward, etc.

Window C shows the replay view. This may be no more than the frames that originally were displayed in window A just a few seconds or minutes ago. But in the event that there were some outages in the real-time view in window A, the replay may show more than what was originally displayed. That's because the replay view includes frames that arrived out of ascending bundle creation time order at the user's terminal, due to retransmission of lost/corrupt frames or arrival on different length paths. So, the replay view will always be at least as complete as the real-time view and it may be more complete; moreover, by replaying a second time a bit later one may even find a more complete view as late-arriving retransmitted bundles, which perhaps were themselves lost and retransmitted again, finally arrive.

It is this final compilation that will be used for distribution and archiving. It is recommended that the final compilation be archived without further processing, as these files will be the unaltered original source video. While a decoded processed video stream may be desirable for ease of use in most applications, keeping the original downlink data, in its most complete form, will allow the most options for further exploitation of the video asset in the future.

Video transmission can be divided into two major classes, with multiple use case scenarios. The two classes are:

1. Interactive: Video transmission where latency is short enough to enable ground controllers to participate interactively in a real-time mode with the crew and spacecraft. For mission critical operations, such as Proximity Operations/Situational Awareness, the upper limit on latency for interactive video is likely to be 4 seconds or less round-trip. Interactive video would be possible in Low Earth Orbit (LEO), Lunar Surface Operations, and most Cis Lunar situations. Non-mission critical operations, such as Personal Video Conferencing, Medical Conferencing and most Public Affairs video could tolerate longer latency, perhaps as much as 10 seconds round-trip. As one-way latency for transmission alone is approximately 5 seconds per 1,610,000 km, support for interactive video would not last very long at all for a Mars Campaign.
2. Monitor: Video transmission where latency is too long to enable interactive real-time operations with the crew and spacecraft. As mentioned above, very shortly after leaving Earth/Moon proximity and flying to Mars, real-time operations via video will cease. Video remains useful for monitoring spacecraft routine operations and for maintenance, but is no longer useful for ground controllers to make real-time changes.

Regardless of the primary mission, the use cases detailed in the Motion Imagery Applications Blue Book (CCSDS 766.1-B-0), Section 3.4 are applicable. These include:

1. Personal Video Conferencing
2. Medical Conferencing
3. Proximity Operations/Situational Awareness
4. Public Affairs
5. High Resolution Imaging
6. Crew training/instruction

There will be other use cases, as detailed below. Priorities of usage are dependent on mission requirements.

### Prioritization of Video

Video may not be the highest mission prority at any given point in time, but in order to support real-time viewing it typically requires the highest network priority. For certain missions (Low Earth Orbit, for example) this is not a concern as there is typically sufficient bandwidth to handle all signals requiring transmission, regardless of priority. For other missions, however, bandwidth will be limited. In these cases, mission planners will have to balance mission priorities with the desire for earth-based controllers to watch video as close to real-time as possible.

To efficently utilize the available space-to-ground bandwidth, video encoding parameters must be carefully set. For example, some videos may be encoded twice with different relative qualities, or indvidual frames may have different priorities. In the first example, the low quality video can continuously be transmitted with a high priority, while the high quality video is sent with a low priority but a higher time-to-live. If the bandwidth is available, the high-quality video may be transmitted continuously as well. In general, video which will be viewed in real-time should be prioritized over other high-bandwidth traffic, such as file transfers. In a DTN network, prioritization of video can be seen as a mechanism to reduce jitter and out-of-order arrivals, which enables a reduction of buffer sizes in receiver applications.

In some cases, it may be possible to use image processing as a metric to provide automated priority determination. This method allows the cameras and/or encoders to set their own relative priority or flow label based upon image rules. For example, an external camera pointed at a spacecraft should not see small “clouds” of particulate, which may indicate a Micro Meteoroid Orbital Debris (MMOD) strike. Therefore, a rule stipulating that “one object (the spacecraft) shall be tracked: if the number of objects in view increases by 200% then increase priority” may be processed by the encoder. While this method does increase CPU usage by a significant amount, techniques exist to lower the burden and/or combine it with other processes, such as the motion estimation step of H.264 encoding.

This logic used for priority determination may be based upon the number of discrete tracked items as well as the size and/or speed of these items. Each of these values may be uniquely weighted, where the exact weights must be determined on a per-mission and/or per-camera basis. Therefore, any common encoder or processor must support the entry of unique and discrete values.

The weights of parameters for interior cameras will be vastly different from those for exterior cameras. For example, the sudden presence of a large cluster of quickly-moving and small objects may be a cause for extreme alarm on an external camera, whereas the same event seen on an interior camera of a manned vehicle may be indicative of a spill near the camera.

While out-of-scope of this document, it may be helpful for developers and integrators to consider that cameras with image processing capability may have ancillary capability to act as a sensor. The output of tracking algorithms may be used as input to automated Fault Detection, Isolation, and Recovery (FDIR) system.

## The Emergency Scenario

The ability of the bundle protocol to transport critical data, even over disrupted networks, is a special advantage in a scenario where there is an emergency or malfunction that disrupts communications.  Consider a scenario where an explosion has disabled many surface (lunar or Mars) systems but several surface DTN nodes remain, storing bundles that include the last few video frames before the anomaly.  As relay satellites pass overhead, there can be multiple routes to deliver those last few video frames – and perhaps subsequent live anomaly video – from those DTN nodes to mission control.   The resulting imagery may be key evidence for an accident investigation to determine the cause of the event.  Such a capability is enabled by the store-and-forward disruption tolerant capabilities of the streaming service over the bundle protocol.

When utilizing DTN for emergency video, the specifics of video encoding should be considered. In catastrophic emergencies, the amount of telemetry will increase while the available bandwidth will likely decrease. Changing the priority of specific frames of video is one way to increase the likelihood that video will get to the emergency teams. This priority increase can be based either upon the importance of individual frames with regards to the decoding of the stream (such as I-Frames, provided that the codec utilizes them) or upon specific time-ranges (immediately prior and after the off-nominal or emergency event).

A particularly simple and secure way to immediately, comprehensively, and automatically revise the priority of a given subset of video frame bundles is to:

* Use the Bundle Protocol Extended Class of Service block to attach a content-indicating “flow label” to each bundle.
* Add to BP implementations the ability to configure bundle forwarding to associate priority levels with flow labels.
* Upon occurrence of a priority-altering event, simply revise the priority associated with the affected video flow.

## Low earth orbit

Low Earth Orbit (LEO) involves either direct transmission and reception to and from ground stations or else the use of an orbiting satellite relay, such as the Tracking Data Relay Satellite System (TDRSS). LEO latency is low enough to sustain real-time interactive communication. The bundle protocol still brings enormous advantages by automating the reassembly of transmissions that are disrupted by, for example, acquisition of signal and loss of signal (AOS/LOS) communication handovers and unplanned signal disruptions. DTN protocols should be utilized in LEO even though many of their advantages for communication over very long distances are not relevant.

While it is likely there will always be multiple channels of video in a LEO mission, there may be circumstances that will cause one or more channels to be more important to the immediate task and thus need additional bandwidth. Mission rules should dictate priorities. Typically, Proximity Operations/Situational Awareness & Emergency Medical will have the highest priority. Video surveillance systems that are triggered by events such as leaks or debris strikes would also have high priority.

In some scenarios video may be buffered and sent later if required to complete a sequence of events, such as a debris strike or subtle changes in exterior conditions of the spacecraft. During emergencies, such as crew egress, multiple video feed downlink would be critical to verify the location of each crew member. In such a case video that had been considered low priority might become highest priority with little or no warning.

A common scenario where priorities may rapidly change due to the natural sequence of events is visiting vehicle docking. Docking-related video may be generated by both the docking vehicle (*e.g.* Soyuz) and the vehicle which is being docked to, such as the space station. Many different parties are interested in the video acquired during docking video events, including the astronauts, vehicle support teams, and mission operation teams. In standard operations, video would be transmitted directly between the two vehicles involved in the docking operation before being relayed to the ground. However, failures may occur which result in the involvement of relay satellites or other intermediate nodes. The combination of multiple routes and multiple endpoints showcases the combined functional advantages of the bundle protocol and multicast, as explained further in section 5.4.

In some cases, ultra-high-resolution or high-frame-rate cameras may be used. These cameras do not output their video in any standard video format; they instead rely upon on-board file recording capabilities. The resulting files may become many hundreds of gigabytes in length, and such a file may not be playable until the entirety of the file has been received. For these cases, a robust file transfer method which can gracefully recover from AOS/LOS events is required. For these cases, the use of CFDP-over-DTN is recommended. This technique is covered in section 5.3.

Return (ground to space) video may be requested for operational or crew morale purposes. Operational video, such as training procedures, may be transmitted via files and stored on-board until it is required, while crew-morale video may be sent via streams or files. Streaming video may be used for constant and low priority video, such as television programming, while video messages from family, etc. may be sent as files and replayed when appropriate.

## Cislunar

Cislunar operations should, for the most part, fall under the category of interactive video. With round trip communications latency of 2.5 seconds, on average, this falls within the time frame for ground controllers to use video for active control of mission events. Certain Cislunar operations, such as a lunar orbiting mission with very a high apogee from the moon, might stretch the limits of interactive video usage. It is expected there will be many more video sources, as well as much longer Loss-of-Signal periods, in cislunar operations than in LEO, so all DTN-aware relay nodes must have additional storage in order to cope with this.

As one-way transmission delays increase, the importance of scheduled routing increases. Some routing methods for DTN are dependent upon beacon packet transmission or neighbor discovery. These methods are suboptimal for DTN networks which are afflicted with long delays between proximate nodes, as the period between the transmission of the beacon or neighbor discovery packet and its reception by the spacecraft will cause a loss of valuable space-to-ground utilization time. This leads to a desire for schedulable routing algorithms, such as Schedule-Aware Bundle Routing (SABR). These routing algorithms allow a node to begin transmission based upon a pre-defined schedule. This schedule also provides hints to nodes which may not have direct access to the space-to-ground link. These nodes may refer to this schedule in order to determine the optimal proximate node for transmission to the ultimate bundle destination.

An additional use case scenario for a spacecraft in Cislunar orbit will likely be extended monitoring with the spacecraft uninhabited. One mission profile would be to have a larger spacecraft in Cislunar orbit that serves as a waypoint for surface missions. It would not need to be crewed continuously. Video would be a valuable tool for ground controllers to monitor the spacecraft between crewed periods. This would also be true of pre-positioned assets on the surface prior to manned operations. For this usage, the automated priority determination described in section 3.3 may be of interest.

The use case scenarios listed in 3.1 are all valid for Cislunar orbital operations. However, if lunar landing is involved, there will be additional use cases, such as:

1. Lander spacecraft video feeds from descent, from the surface, and during ascent.
2. Surface EVA from the astronaut/cosmonaut perspective as well as from fixed deployed cameras and rover cameras.
3. Pre-positioning of surface assets prior to human inhabitation.

There will likely be multiple communication paths for imagery, depending upon what imagery is in use. The lander spacecraft should have communication with the orbiting spacecraft and orbiting relay satellites, as well as direct links to Earth. The fixed EVA cameras may be hardwired to the lander, but may be wireless. The EVA suit cameras will certainly need wireless communication links to the lander spacecraft as well as any rover that might be used. The rover will require communications with the lander, orbiting spacecraft, and Earth. There will also be a need for multiple simultaneous video transmissions from any surface operations.

Much more than in LEO operations, differing communication paths will result in an extremely wide range of possible throughputs. The correct usage of priorities and time-to-live values must be decided based on mission requirements and operational constraints.

The multitude of communication links and endpoints will also lead to the widespread use of bundle multicast, as described in section 5.4. For example, EVA cameras may be of interest to the astronauts in the habitat, as well as the mission control teams. It may be that no single point may simultaneously be in communication with all interested parties. Delay-tolerant bundle multicast is uniquely able to sustain such non-concurrent multicast transmission.

It is assumed there will be return video links to any spacecraft in Cislunar orbit, as those are expected to be longer duration missions. For extended surface operations missions, that will be a requirement as well. The surface operations habitat for that type of mission requires a full communication suite, effectively being a spacecraft on the ground.

This diagram depicts the representative potential communications links needed for lunar surface operations.



As also described in 3.3, Proximity Operations and Situational Awareness Video will likely have highest priority. During complex phases of missions involving lunar landers, rovers, and EVA crew, it is likely that the amount of video data will exceed the downlink capacity of return feeds to Earth stations. In these cases, video may need to be buffered and sent sequentially based on pre-determined prioritization. Crew in an orbiter may need to monitor video in real-time that isn’t downlinked to Earth, or video that will be down-linked later. Therefore a prioritization schema may be necessary for nearby spacecraft that is different from what is downlinked to ground stations. Again, applying prioritization indirectly by flow labeling and router configuration will help make such scenarios manageable and secure.

Cislunar scenarios will be similar to Low Earth Orbit (3.2) for emergency scenarios and large files from high-resolution cameras.

## mars campaign

A Mars campaign will be a virtually identical situation to a Cislunar mission with surface operations. The same variety of communcation between orbiting spacecraft, satellite relays, surface habitats, EVA suits and rovers will be required. However, Earth ground controllers will not be able to work interactively using video, putting Mission Control in a monitor mode as far as downlinked video is concerned. After only a few days of flight, one-way transmission time will reach 5 seconds, rendering interactive use of video essentially useless for the mission. Transmission time, on average, from Mars is 11.65 minutes, one way. It can be as high as 20.76 minutes and, on certain years where Mars and Earth are closest, as low as 3.25 minutes. This puts the burden upon the crew or automated systems to make immediate decisions without the help of Earth-bound mission controllers.

Link disruptions will be more frequent and more severe, putting strain on the bundle protocol while using all the capabilities of BP within DTN to ensure accurate data delivery in both directions. There will be links from orbiting spacecraft and ground operations. Even with 100% coverage of surface operations by orbiting spacecraft, there will still be significant LOS time periods when Earth and Mars are in opposition around the sun. To overcome this would require a DTN node located in a position to allow both the Earth and Mars to “see” the spacecraft at all times, no matter what the relative positions of Earth, Mars, and the Sun. The exact positioning and number of such satellites is out-of-scope of this document and would be dependent upon agency and mission requirements. Note that DTN can address such LOS outages automatically, retaining outbound data in buffers while waiting for the planets’ orbital motion to eventually terminate the interval of opposition, provided that sufficient buffer space is available.

A Mars campaign will also likely pre-position supplies on the surface for the crews. This will happen before the crewed flights leave for Mars. Video capability from the surface would start with the landing of these components; this would be necessary to insure a safe environment for the crew before their arrival.

Return video will also be an important factor as these missions will be 2 years or more in duration. While bandwidth concerns are certainly more of a factor because of distance, a multiple channel video system is envisioned for Mars campaigns as well. Video streaming as well as file transfer will be employed. It will be necessary to get some video scenes from Mars sent to Earth in a real-time mode in order to get the earliest confirmation of certain events. However, much of the video from a Mars Campaign can be treated as file transfers, as real-time live streaming is not useful for Earth-bound ground controllers of Mars assets.

# Requirements

Regardless of the mission profile, there are a number of common requirements for video streaming services.

Certain spacecraft-to-spacecraft video will need to be downlinked for Proximity Operations/Situational Awareness. This will require links between spacecraft and may additionally require a link to the ground.

Spacecraft communications systems will need a data store and forward capability to store video for downlink while the spacecraft is in a Loss of Signal (LOS) situation. When the spacecraft cannot communicate directly to a ground station, it will require on-board recording and storage of video that cannot be transmitted. When communication is restored, those files can be downlinked via CFDP or forwarded in a live streaming mode so as to provide a real-time video feed for ground controllers. Care must be taken to size the storage which is available to the DTN node in order to provide data storage for the entirety of the LOS period. In the case that a spacecraft possesses multiple data pathways (such as S & Ku bands, or Ku and optical) with differing throughputs, the lower-throughput pathway may be utilized for file transfer via CDFP, leaving the higher-throughput pathway for real-time video. This increases the maximum possible video bitrate (and resolution), allowing for higher-quality video transmission. If a certain real-time video stream is mission critical, the more reliable pathway should be used, provided that the end-to-end throughput of the link is more than that of the video.

For LEO missions, receiving video at multiple ground facilities may be required to enhance mission functions or simplify routing. Regardless, communications links between ground facilities are needed to distribute video to all participating agencies.

Under the assumption that there will always be a requirement for obtaining imagery in higher resolutions than will be transmitted in real-time, video systems will need access to a file transfer system in order to get that imagery to the ground. A current analog is the use of the Digital Cinema Camera or high resolution imagery from UrtheCast. These systems generate files that are too large for real-time downlink. They are recorded and then downlinked as file transfers.

Many of the streaming video techniques specified here rely upon or are enhanced by the modification of priority levels for different activities. Therefore, the video system should allow for a change of priority levels from an external interface or telecommand. This may be implemented directly upon a DTN-aware video encoder, or upon an encapsulation system lower in the avionics protocol stack. Again, indirectly revising bundle priorities by revising the priorities associated with video flow labels in forwarding nodes may be more effective than attempting to revise individual bundles’ embedded priorities directly.

If real time decoding is desired, care must be taken to select a video encoding bitrate which is less than the worst case end-to-end throughput. While the Bundle Protocol and LTP are very resistant to high Bit Error Rates, the loss and subsequent retransmission of bundles or segments will cause out-of-order arrival data. That may be partially mitigated via the use of large decoding buffers, which may be tuned to be at least 3 times the One Way Light Time of the end-to-end link, in order to provide padding for the additional delay of retransmission.

When using file-based cameras and CFDP downlink, care must be taken to provide a repository of camera data in a location which has sufficient storage and is available for a CFDP agent. Best practices for the deployment of CFDP are out of scope of this document.

For medical or otherwise confidential video, the BP Security Protocol should be utilized (SBSP).

Based on the use-case scenarios listed, the requirements for video transmission over space-based internet services are:

1. A disruptive networking situation for a deep space mission will require a Delay Tolerant Network schema.
	1. The network will be based on CCSDS 734.2-B-1
2. Schedule Aware Bundle Routing (SABR) and opportunistic routing will be required for use of DTN during Cislunar and Mars missions.
3. Schemes to determine the relative priority of video feeds will have to be developed.
	1. It must be possible to change priority mapping in real-time
4. Encryption/private communication capability needs to be validated to meet Agency & User requirements.
5. Multicast communication will be needed.
6. If the same video data is available from multiple paths, a capability is required to properly order and de-duplicate video data.
7. The video system must be able to handle variations in latency and/or throughput in the same video data stream.

# Methods for transmission of video over the Bundle Protocol

## BUNDLE STREAMING SERVICE

Bundle Streaming Service (BSS) is a pair of complementary capabilities designed to provide satisfactory contemporaneous presentation of streamed data in transmission sequence, possibly with some omissions due to data loss in transit, while also supporting retrospective presentation of the same stream with all omissions automatically repaired by background retransmission. The two complimentary components are the BSS Database Library (5.1.1) and the BSS Protocol (5.1.2).

BSS is not a video service per se: unlike the DLR technologies for video over DTN discussed later, it is not specifically tuned for video transmission. By the same token, it is not limited to video transmission: the general character of BSS data delivery can be applied to one-way voice transmission, to “real-time” telemetry, or to any other continuous data stream that can be transported by bundles. Good video display quality will always require application-layer data conditioning such as is performed by transparent gateways (as discussed later) and direct H.264 [1] systems. BSS, in contrast, focuses on transport resilience and buffer management.

### BSS database library

At the receiver of the streamed transmission, the BSS database library is integrated into a user-defined Bundle Protocol application that acquires bundle payloads – application data units (ADUs) such as video frames – destined for a designated BP endpoint. The acquired ADUs can be in any format that is meaningful to the application, as their content is opaque to the BSS library. The sender of those ADUs can be any application.

The receiving application delegates to the BSS library the job of receiving these ADUs upon delivery from the bundle protocol agent (BPA). The BSS library function inspects the bundle creation times of the bundles that transported the delivered ADUs and dispatches the application data in one of two ways:

* If the bundle creation time of the ADU’s carrier bundle is greater than that of any previously received ADU from the same sender, then the content of the ADU is deemed “in order” and is passed to a “real-time” presentation function that must be provided by the application. The ADU content is also written to a database designed for very high-speed access, for future replay.
* Otherwise, the ADU content is deemed to have been delayed in transmission, possibly because it had to be retransmitted. Since it has arrived out of order, it must not be passed to the application’s real-time presentation function: if the data were video frames, for example, to do so would scramble the video display. Instead, the ADU content is only written to the database. ADU content in the database is ordered by transmission time, so over the course of the transmission the in-order and out-of-order data are merged in time sequence into a single uninterrupted stream, so that a higher-quality display of previously presented data can be viewed in replay.

### BSS Protocol

The other component of Bundle Streaming Service is Bundle Streaming Service Protocol (BSSP), a BP “convergence layer” protocol. Like all convergence-layer protocols, BSSP manages the transmission of bundles directly from one BP node to some other, topologically adjacent BP node. To do so, it operates two concurrent transmission channels, one unreliable, the other reliable. The implementations of these channels are opaque to BSSP and are established by node configuration: one BSSP engine might use UDP/IP for the unreliable channel and TCP/IP for the reliable channel, while another might use LTP “green” transmission for the unreliable channel and LTP “red” transmission for the reliable channel.

When a bundle is presented to BSSP for transmission, the BSSP convergence layer adapter inspects the bundle’s creation time and dispatches the application data in one of two ways:

* If the bundle creation time is greater than that of any previously presented bundle from the same sender, with the same destination, then the bundle is transmitted using the unreliable channel. That is, data presented in order are forwarded in order over the unreliable channel, to minimize end-to-end delivery latency.
* Otherwise, since the bundle has been determined to be out-of-order, the bundle is transmitted over the reliable channel where it is subject to automatic retransmission upon detection of data loss. It will arrive somewhat later than the in-order data, but its eventual end-to-end delivery is virtually assured.

Upon reception of a bundle sent on the reliable channel, the receiving BSSP engine simply passes the bundle up to the BPA for delivery or further forwarding.

Upon reception of a bundle sent on the unreliable channel, the receiving BSSP engine passes the bundle up to the BPA in the same way, but it also sends an acknowledgment back to the sending BSSP engine.

When the sending BSSP engine receives a BSSP acknowledgment for some forwarded bundle, its transmission of that bundle is deemed complete. But if no such acknowledgment is received prior to expiration of a per-bundle timer that was set at the moment of transmission on the unreliable channel, then transmission on the unreliable channel is deemed to have failed. At that point the bundle is re-dispatched on the reliable channel exactly as if its creation time had been out of order when originally presented.

### Some notes on BSS

The two components of BSS (database library and protocol) are complementary, but neither is reliant on the other; each can be used by itself if that is desirable in a given deployment configuration.

A key advantage of the BSSP design is that, because it operates at the convergence layer underneath BP, it can support bundle multicast. Bundle multicast functions by sending copies of a given bundle to multiple topological neighbors; each such copy is conveyed separately by the applicable convergence-layer protocol, and any retransmission that is required in the course of that conveyance is managed privately by that convergence-layer adapter without any impact on transmission to any other neighbor. BSSP enables streaming application data presented to BP to be efficiently forwarded to an unlimited number of final destination applications with minimal end-to-end latency in a virtually error-free manner.

## ENCODING AND ENCAPSULATION of video via DTN

The Deutsche Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt (DLR) has developed two systems for video transmission via DTN networks. The first is a transparent gateway which aims to provide a simple transport for UDP-based media protocols and is agnostic to the protocol running above it. The second is a more advanced encoder which integrates directly with a H.264 video encoder and decoder and is designed to function natively with DTN.

### Transparent Gateway

The transparent gateway is a set of applications which encapsulate UDP data into DTN bundles while maintaining the timing information that is important to video transmission. This technique is primarily used for MPEG Transport Streams. The gateway will ingest a user-configurable number of UDP packets directed towards it and assemble those packets into a block, prepending to each packet the packet’s size and a nanosecond-resolution timestamp, generated as a delta between times of UDP packet reception at the gateway. Once the complete block has been assembled, a header containing a count of packets and a sequence number is prefixed to the serialized data and the block is transmitted.

The gateway can be utilized as a drop-in replacement for existing link-layer protocols. Other multimedia protocols such as RTP have been successfully tested with the gateway.

The gateway implementation was complicated by the interleaving inherent in MPEG-TS data, as well as by the 4-bit MPEG-TS sequence counter. The 4-bit counter overruns quickly, and will not typically (at higher bitrates) lend itself to the resequencing of data, even when that data is occurring within the same one-second DTN timestamp. The gateway receiver aims to prevent this by utilizing the sequence number to reorder packets before outputting them at a rate based upon the reception delta value, located in the header. By tuning the input buffer size, a user can reduce the visual impact of out-of-order packets.



Figure 2 Overview of Transparent Gateway

### Direct H.264 transmission

In the process of testing the transparent gateway, it was quickly discovered that DTN provides a greater advantage and requires less overhead when utilized with larger bundles, hence the addition of the ability to aggregate multiple UDP packets described above. It was also noticed that there is functional redundancy between MPEG-TS and the Bundle Protocol (alongside associated protocols); MPEG-TS specifies a packetizer and container for temporally-redundant media data, such as audio and video, as well as providing forward error coding. The Bundle Protocol specifies a container, while lower-level protocols such as LTP provide the packetizer and error reduction/forward error coding mechanisms. It was decided to remove this redundancy, in the hopes of reducing end-to-end bitrate and providing a protocol which is compatible with DTN best practices.

The direct H.264 DTN encoder does not attempt to interleave data, instead relying on the underlying DTN stack to perform that task. Instead, the encoder outputs individual compressed frames as single bundles. Minimal metadata is added in Concise Binary Object Representation (CBOR) format: width, height, and frame-rate, all of which are requirements for the initialization of the H.264 decoder. Frames are encoded in the packet-oriented H.264 Network Abstraction Layer (NAL) format. The decoder simply initializes a decoder and decodes the data provided in the bundles before finally displaying them.

The native H.264 transmitter is extremely robust to interruption and packet loss. As LTP provides retransmission and fragmentation capability and will not present a bundle to the application layer before transmission has completed successfully, each bundle can be assumed to be intact. As such, each frame can be assumed to be intact as well. The order of packets is maintained via the timestamp provided by the bundle protocol together with a per-second count of frames. Any packet which contains a timestamp less than the current “running” timestamp is assumed to have arrived out-of-order and is archived. Once the one-second frame count is equal to the framerate from the metadata, the video for that second is assumed to be 100% retrieved. The disadvantage of this system is the uniqueness of its implementation. The encoder and decoder are built using the FFMPEG libraries but are otherwise self-contained. It is technically possible to integrate it with other IP-based encoders and decoders by creating a new and functionally-identical MPEG TS output. It must be noted that the encoder must use a codec which supports frame-based output, such as H.264, motion JPEG2000, or H.265.



Figure 3 Single Video Frame - As generated by encoder

### DTN Video Application Demonstrator using Epidemic Routing (D-VADER)

To test the robustness of the direct H.264 transmission system, a second implementation was developed, utilizing Android smart-phones and IBR-DTN. The D-VADER application is written in Java and used the H.264 encoder available in the Android operating system to directly generate compressed frames of video from the on-board camera of the phone. This data is prefixed with the same CBOR header described in section 5.2.2 and is sent via 802.11n, using the TCP convergence layer of IBR-DTN, to another IBR node located on a laptop. The IBR instance situated on the laptop relays the video-bundles to an ION node, which runs the same application as utilized for direct H.264 transmission.

There were several major differences between this test and other video-over-DTN tests, the largest being the use of dynamic neighbor discovery and routing. The Android application was seen to be a surrogate for a mobile camera (such as an EVA helmet camera). The inherent unpredictability of communication links for such a camera implied a requirement to avoid static routing. Instead, the IP Neighbor Discovery protocol was used to allow the Android device to determine its available neighbors for forwarding. The Android node did not possess knowledge of an end-to-end route towards the final ION node, so it attempted to forward via the neighbor which it did have knowledge of.

## CFDP-Over-DTN

While the primary focus of this green book is real-time streaming video applications, the use of files as a transfer medium cannot be ignored. For these applications, the use of the CCSDS File Delivery Protocol (CFDP) should be investigated. CFDP, specified in CCSDS standard 727.0.B-4, provides a bidirectional file transfer system designed for spacecraft applications. CFDP may run over space link protocols (such as AOS) as well as the Bundle Protocol, but in the context of this book, we exclusively focus on the Bundle Protocol transport of CFDP protocol data units.

## Multicast Video Transmission Via Bundle Protocol

The ION BP implementation provides facilities for interplanetary multicast (IMC) via the “CBHE-Compatible Bundle Multicast” mechanism, defined in the IETF draft burleigh-dtnrg-imc-00. This document specifies methods which allow for reliable multicast over bundles encoded with Compressed Bundle header Encoding (CBHE). IMC works in conjunction with reliable convergence layer adapters (such as TCP or LTP) in order to provide a high order of reliability for multicast bundles.

In IMC, multicast networks are built as limited overlays on a spanning tree which in turn overlays all nodes in a given IMC domain (DTN network). Each IMC-aware node which receives a multicast bundle must distribute it to all “kin” (parent and all children, within the spanning tree) which are interested in that specific multicast. If the forwarding node is also interested in the specific multicast, it must also present the node to local applications.

# Demonstration scenarios for future study

## Testing to date

Due to the complexity of video, the Bundle Protocol, and the interactions between the two, care must be taken to avoid unintentionally changing multiple variables which may affect the outcome of the tests. These may be both parameters within the DTN stack (such as the selection of convergence layer adapters, as well as the parameters required by each CLA) and also those within the video transmission system (such as bitrate, I-frame interval, etc.).

DLR has performed tests which focused on both video-encoding parameters and transmission methods (specified in section 5.2.1 and 5.2.2), while separately testing the impact of adjustments to DTN-related parameters. These tests used LTP or UDP as a Convergence Layer Adapter. Custody transfer would be used in parallel with either CLA. Initial testing found that the performance of the ION TCP convergence layer was unsuitable for video-related tasks. More recently, the DLR tests which utilized D-VADER (5.2.3) also used TCP as a CLA, and did perform well at bitrates from 1-4 mbps. For video-related tests, Ericsson encoders (CE-XH 40) and decoders (RX-1290) were used. For other tests, as well as for the implementation of the native solution, FFMPEG was used as an encoder and decoder, and VLC was used as a player for the transparent gateway. Our native solution includes a decoder and viewer, so the use of VLC was unnecessary. Some tests were performed using H.265 using x265 and mp4box. It was noted that the CPU requirements for H.265 compression were extremely high, so it was decided to performing further testing at a later date when encoding is more efficient.

In general, it has been found that the native H.264 system provides higher video quality, although the integration between that system and the rest of a video pipeline is complex. The transparent gateway was simple to install and integrate, but was less robust in the event of failure.

The native transmission system running over LTP with a 25-frame buffer (one second at PAL rates), with an 8mbps encoding bitrate (chosen to match the ISS on-board encoding parameters), has been found to be resistant to extremely high Bit Error Rates (>1%) without visual degradation when running without artificially-induced end-to-end delays. If the One Way Light Time (OWLT) delay is short enough, it is possible for any LTP retransmissions to occur before the next frame is due to be displayed. If the delay is longer than one second, then there may be some visual impact, but that impact appears as dropped frames and is preserved in the archive. The time to archive can be shortened by using Bundle Streaming Service, though DLR has opted to not implement it.

The transparent gateway running over LTP with a 2 second buffer have been shown to handle 8 mbps H.264 transport streams and allow for some packet loss with no visual degradation. Running with a smaller buffer demands a “perfect” connection, where even a small packet loss may cause a momentary disruption of audio or video.

## Proof of Concept demonstrations

In future proof-of-concept testing, one of the main goals – besides determining if BP is applicable for video applications – will be to assess the quality of the transmitted video. A Picture Quality Analysis (PQA) system will be utilized.

The PQA generates a number of measurements. It works by comparing a reference video scene from its library to the same scene processed through whatever encoder/decoder systems and networks make up the video transmission path. The PQA uses a human vision system software model. As encoded video quality video is different depending upon the complexity of the scene to be encoded, different scenes with varying amounts of spatial and temporal resolution are used. This presents scenes to the encoder that are easy to encode and scenes which will stress any encoder. The PQA generates mean opinion scores – Picture Quality Ratings (PQR) – and absolute comparisons for each pixel in a frame between the reference and the test video. The absolute measurement is called the Peak Signal-To-Noise Ratio (PSNR) of the scene.

These are the most commonly used measures of video quality. When HDTV systems were being developed, PQR measurements were done by statistical analysis of scores generated by “Golden Eyes” viewers. These people were video quality reviewers specially trained to note the slightest impairments to a video image. The PQA performs the same function as the Golden Eyes but with complete objectivity and repeatability.

Three demonstrations are proposed to show the applicability of BSS to video transmission.

### Demonstration 1

This will benchmark the encoder and decoder to be used for subsequent tests. The system will be set up with no network impairments. It will essentially be a direct connection from the encoder to the decoder. Selected reference scenes will be run through the system and the decoded output used as test scenes for the PQA. More than one data rate for video will be utilized, with 4, 8 and 12 Mbps suggested. The scores obtained from this demonstration will serve as the benchmark for comparison with all subsequent demonstrations.

### Demonstration 2

This demonstration will use the same encoder, decoder, and video data rates as the first demonstration. A BSSP convergence layer will be utilized as the underlying convergence layer adapter within DTN. The initial part of the demonstration will be to transmit video over BSS with the lowest latency and no network impairments. As in the first demonstration, the output of the decoder will serve to provide the test scenes for comparison to the reference scenes using the PQA and to provide a first set of scores to compare to the benchmark to determine if BSS inherently adds errors that impact video quality. From there, various network impairments will be added to determine their effect on video quality.

### Demonstration 3

Demonstration 3 will utilize experience from DLR using Android operating system devices working as DTN nodes, using the Direct H.264 Transmission method outlined in section 5.2.2. Again, the initial setup will provide the best network performance, with subsequent setups adding various network impairments. As in the first two demonstrations, video scenes output from the decoder will be used for PQA testing. The same video data rates will be utilized as in the other demonstrations.

### Induced Impairments

No data network is perfect. There are a number of impairments which will be present in any topology other than two devices directly connected to each other. As part of Demonstrations 2 and 3, these impairments will be added until network performance is degraded to the point of real-time video transmission being unusable. Real-time video will be deemed unusable when the output of the decoder cannot be used to discern any significant information about the reference scene.

The most common network impairments are:

* Packet Loss Rate
* Bit Error Rate
* Jitter
* Packet Misordering

Adding these impairments one at a time will provide useful data as to what impairments affect video and to what degree as the impairments are worsened. However, all of these impairments are present to some degree in virtually every network. As a more relevant test, all of these impairments will be brought up to the point that represents typical space-to-ground links. The parameters for the test will be taken from CCSDS 880.0-G-3, WIRELESS NETWORK COMMUNICATIONS OVERVIEW FOR SPACE OPERATIONS, GREEN BOOK, Table G1. This point will be taken as a baseline. The test scenes will then be run again to determine if typical operating conditions add degradation to the video quality. Each of the impairments listed above will be increased one at a time until the video is unusable. Then all of these impairments will be stepped up together to determine at what point the cumulative effects of the impairments make the video unusable.

In addition to the impairments listed above, space based networks are subject to variable latency and to disruptions in the signal path that are not common in ground based networks. Both of these situations will be added into the demonstrations as well.

A test campaign more specifically concerning DTN will be a program of changes in signal prioritization. Both demonstrations 2 & 3 will incorporate a prioritization scheme to determine the effect of DTN prioritization on video. Two data sources will be utilized on the same DTN link. One source will be video data. The other source will be random data representing other mission data flow. This could be telemetry data or file transfer. One scenario will be for the video signal to have priority, with the data rate of the second source raised until it is in contention with the video. If the prioritization scheme is set up properly, the second data source should stop adding bandwidth when it starts trying to use the bandwidth of the video signal. The video signal data rate should remain constant.

A second test will involve a constant bit rate for the video with the second data channel bursting data periodically. This would simulate potential transmission conditions during an emergency.

1. [ANNEX TITLE]

[Annexes contain ancillary information. See CCSDS A20.0-Y-4, *CCSDS Publications Manual* (Yellow Book, Issue 4, April 2014) for discussion of the kinds of material contained in annexes.]