

purpose of a traditional tracked vehicle, each of the driver's and passenger's side tracks will be separate subassemblies, with the frame or hull being the parent assembly.

4.1.1 Track Subassembly

RecurDyn's Trackbuilder is a user-friendly GUI which helps build the tracks. The dimensions, masses, and geometries of the sprocket, idler, idler wheels, and road wheels are all entered at this level. A characteristic track segment is also entered at this level, complete with mass, inertia, and dimensional data. Once the characteristic track segment is entered, the track assembly is built by selecting the track path around the sprocket, road/idler wheels, and idler.

The suspension should also be part of this track subassembly. While the suspension could be part of the parent assembly, having the suspension as part of the track assembly allows for quicker troubleshooting if errors arise. Since the suspension is part of the track subassembly, it can be simulated separately from the entire vehicle model. This also decreases the complexity of modeling the parent assembly.

4.1.2 Model "Parent" Assembly

The parent assembly can be as simple or as complex as is necessary, but if any part of the parent assembly is dynamically complex, the user should consider forming a separate subassembly for that function. Once the subassemblies are all finished and operating correctly in independent simulations, the parent assembly should then be used for overall integration. Once the subassemblies have been imported and integrated correctly <https://www.recurdyn.com/RecurDyn> for a basic simulation run.

4.1.3 Basic Simulation Run

Once the subassemblies are integrated successfully into the parent assembly, a simple simulation (such as velocity input at the track sprockets) should provide a simple test to ensure the model is functioning correctly. This can be done quickly by building a large, flat road and editing the properties of the sprocket revolute joints to include motion. The user should then run a simulation and both view the simulation animation and load the results into the "Plot" post-processor within RecurDyn. The user should ensure that the forces and motions appear realistic and reasonable, and the user should troubleshoot any apparent problems. Once the model is satisfactory, then the advanced controller should be built.

4.2 Control in RecurDyn

CoLink provides control functionality to the RecurDyn suite and is equipped with many signal generating and processing capabilities (10). CoLink combines with the RecurDyn solver to perform a co-simulation. For each time step in the co-simulation, RecurDyn and CoLink communicate. For instance, RecurDyn passes CoLink an error position term, error heading term, and a speed term; and CoLink analyzes this data to generate the proper torque commands of both the driver's and passenger's sprockets to pass back to RecurDyn. For the next time step, the new torques are applied, the solver analyzes the reactions of the vehicle model, and generates the applicable outputs once again and passes them to CoLink. While the native capabilities of CoLink are numerous, the package offers even more capability since it can be linked to MATLAB/Simulink for more advanced computational methods.

4.2.1 Setting up the Model for Control

RecurDyn passes output values to CoLink through a "Plant Output" tool. This plant output tool can send any number of data values to CoLink. Data may include user-defined constants (such as overall vehicle

length and width, which is used for the NATO double lane change maneuver) or may consist of simulation-derived values (axial position, velocity, acceleration, speed, distance, force, torque, radial velocities, literally thousands of possibilities). For the purpose of this analysis, the following were plant outputs:

- Look-Ahead Point – X (longitudinal) and Z (Lateral) positions and velocities (Look-Ahead Point is aligned vertically and laterally with vehicle center of gravity and is longitudinally ahead of vehicle by a factor of about 2x vehicle length).
- Turning-circle course focal point X and Z position
- Look Ahead Point's scalar speed and acceleration
- Vehicle Center of Gravity (CG) X and Z position

The look-ahead point is essential for proper steer control. Figure i below shows a basic schematic of the look-ahead point.

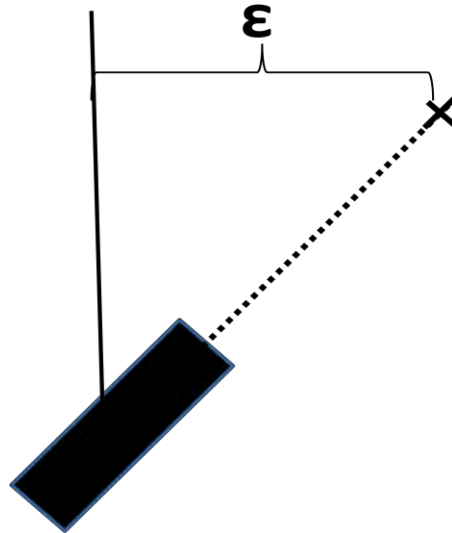


Figure i - Vehicle Look-Ahead Point with Proportional Error Value Shown

The look-ahead point serves as a combination of a future predictor and heading indicator. Since the look-ahead point is directly in front of the vehicle, it predicts the vehicle's future location if there was no steer command given. The look-ahead point is beneficial to steer control. In Figure i above, the vehicle's center of gravity is centered with the desired path. If a look-ahead point was not used, the vehicle would go well off track. With the look-ahead point active, the controller is able to adjust the steer command immediately to return the vehicle to the correct orientation and path.

Additionally, several constants may be set as plant outputs in RecurDyn or, alternatively, can be made into "Constant" blocks within CoLink (user's preference). These necessary constants include

- Vehicle length
- Vehicle width
- Max braking torque available

Note that the max torque available at the sprocket needs to be calculated as well. This is a function of the engine's torque map, the vehicle speed, the transmission, and the final drive ratio; and is better handled within CoLink.

Once these plant outputs are established, the “Plant inputs” need to be defined. The plant inputs are the values that CoLink feeds back to RecurDyn. For the purposes of this analysis, the following plant inputs were used:

- Driver’s side sprocket drive torque
- Passenger’s side sprocket drive torque

CoLink can now be initialized and connected.

4.2.2 Building the CoLink Modules

The model used for this analysis is a three-way controller with one Proportional-Integral-Derivative (PID) controller for speed, one PID controller for steering, and one algorithm to calculate the maximum available vehicle torque. The four figures below highlight this control strategy. Several key assumptions for this controller:

- The “clock” and “switch” blocks allow for a given amount of time (1 second) before any error is accumulated and before any command is given back to RecurDyn. This allows for the model to settle within the simulation prior to any command.
- The simple engine torque model used is not ideal, but for this analysis a limited amount of data was available. The lookup table used gives the max available torque output from the transmission (max engine torque x gear ratio of lowest gear possible at given speed) for a given vehicle speed.
- The “max” and “min” blocks maintain a realistic torque command, both for positive (engine effort) and negative (brake effort).
- “Rate limiter” blocks were used to filter any high frequency command torques.

In the actual controller file built, there are separate sub-assembly blocks for each maneuver type. Each sub-assembly block needs to be tuned (PID) separately. When the user wants a certain maneuver, the user only needs to change which signal is input into the final assembly module.

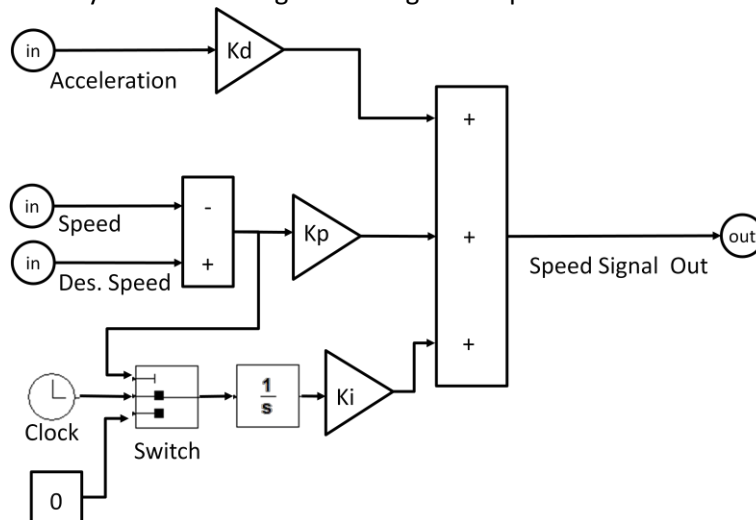


Figure ii - Speed Control

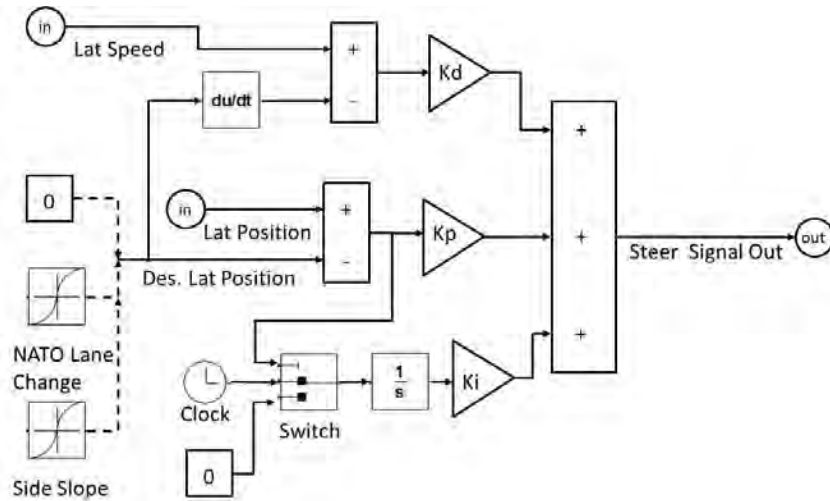


Figure iii - Representative Steer Model

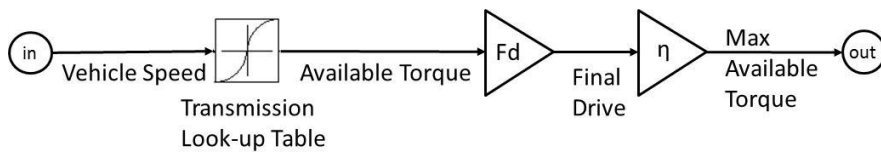


Figure iv - Representative Max Available Torque

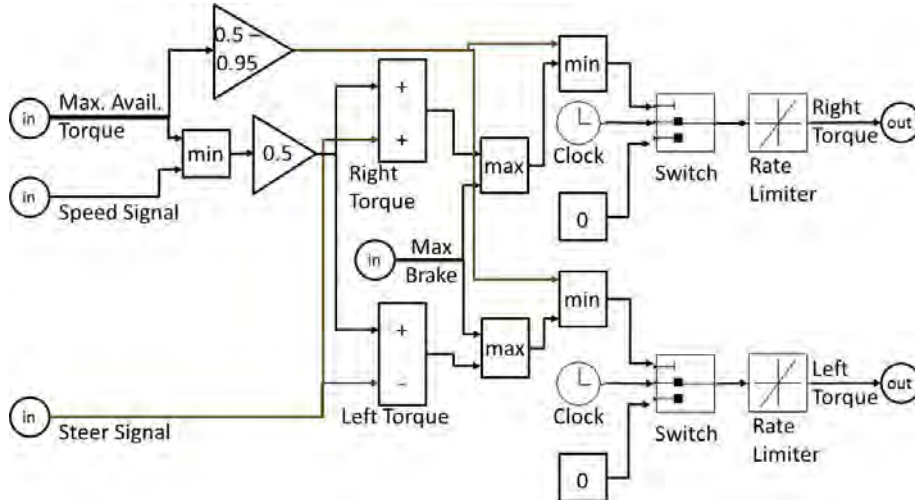


Figure v - Representative Final Module

The steady-state turning circle test utilized a slightly different steer method than Figure iii above. The steady-state turning circle steering was controlled as shown in Figure vi below (X and Z values below are axial positions; "Actual Distance" is the real-time distance between the center of the turning circle and the vehicle; "_aim" refers to the look-ahead point).

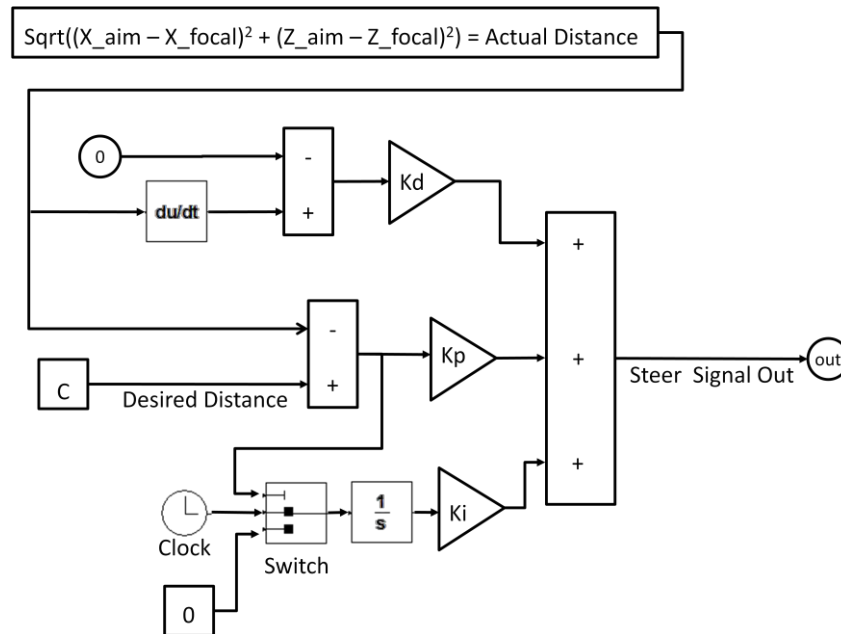


Figure vi - Steady State Turning Circle Steer Command

On a final note for analyzing the success of the controller, the vehicle CG positions, and not just the look-ahead coordinates, should be monitored by the user to ensure that the controller is effective.

4.3 Simulating the Model

Once the model and controller have been built, simulations can begin. For each desired steering maneuver, several iterations will be needed to tune the PID controller. There are different methods available for tuning the controller, and a very useful tutorial is available at the following web reference (11). If needed, both CoLink and RecurDyn have output-to-file and export capabilities to analyze data. Load histories at certain points can also be generated through RecurDyn simulations and sent for further analyses (such as FEA).

5. Results, Process Validation, and Discussion

During the course of this analysis, two separate vehicles were modeled and simulated. During the course of the first model, there was a large learning curve and resulted in many lessons learned. While there are tutorials and manuals available for RecurDyn, many specific modeling issues were present that weren't specifically addressed and slowed the initial modeling process. Through advice from expert M&S engineers both within and outside of TARDEC, the model and controller were successfully completed. For the second vehicle, the modeling process was much quicker, and the only significant effort was retuning the controller. The lessons learned have been documented to assist future users.

The controller requires tuning for each vehicle (and vehicle configuration) tested. This is a cumbersome process that can take anywhere between a few hours to a few days per maneuver, depending on the model simulation time (depending on the level of complication in the model). A possible solution to this issue is to build an adaptive controller, with preview capability.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Ultimately, the RecurDyn package is very useful in generating timely analyses for TARDEC customers. While there were several issues that arose, the issues were overcome and work-arounds now exist. RecurDyn is able to efficiently solve complex interactions without any loss of data fidelity. The templates and controller that were generated will certainly evolve over time. This is to be expected, as different users or different models may discover further issues that need to be resolved. The path forward for improving modeling times is to develop an adaptive control, with preview capability, which will eliminate the need to re-tune the controller for each simulation course and vehicle.

7. Works Cited

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