

## Chemistry

# How possible is it to develop a phase-locked algorithm using high school knowledge only?

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## Abstract

The mechanism of the phase-locked loop is demystified with simple physics and mathematics in this essay. A model is built; an algorithm is developed, computationally simulated and mathematically verified; and eventually a design procedure is suggested. An application tool is also created to help with *PLL* design, providing users with the option among an industry standard, academic guideline, my proprietary suggestion, and users' pick. It's ultimately validated by practical experiments.

## Introduction

### Interest and Motivation

I am a baseball fan who loves to watch the live broadcast in my car. The video freezes when the car stops at traffic lights at times. Moving a little further brings back video quality. It's allegedly caused by "phase difference" which, though curious, I failed to understand until the school's curriculum on sinusoidal functions and waves.

### What is a phase?

If we imagine an ant crawling on a unit circle centered at origin on the X-Y plane, then phase,  $\theta$ , is just its dynamic angle counterclockwise and the sine function value,  $\sin(\theta)$ , is assigned as the y-coordinate of the ant's shadow with light projection parallel to the x-axis. (Figure.1-1)

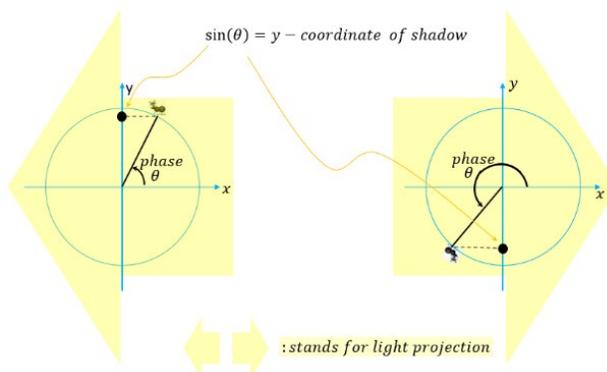


Figure.1-1 Phase and sine function

As the ant crawls in a circle, its phase is linearly proportional to time with the following linear relationship:

$$\theta = 2\pi ft + \theta_0, \text{ where } \theta_0 \text{ is the starting angle at } t = 0 \text{ and } f \text{ is the number of cycle per unit time}$$

Therefore, the **phase is just an expression of time** in a different unit. (Figure 1-2)

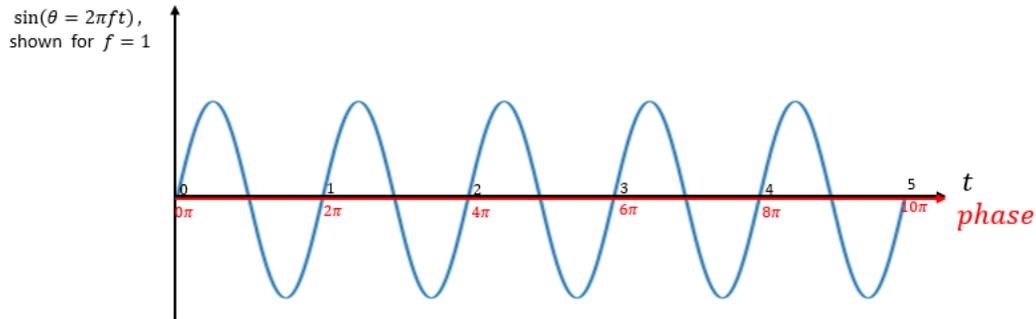


Figure 1-2 Sine function value vs time and phase

### Why is the reception of the broadcast poor?

For wireless communication, message  $m(t)$  needs carrying by a sinusoidal wave,  $\sin(2\pi ft)$  to make the radio  $m(t) \sin(2\pi ft)$  in the air. At the receiver end, the same sinusoidal wave shall be prepared to multiply the coming signal,

$$m(t) \sin(2\pi ft) \cdot \sin(2\pi ft) = \frac{1}{2}m(t) - \frac{1}{2}m(t) \cos(4\pi ft)$$

The message  $m(t)$  could be retrieved as  $\frac{1}{2}m(t)$  while the high-frequency term is removed by special filters. However, if the received signal has some phase offset,  $\theta_{offset}$ , to the locally prepared one, then the equation above becomes:

$$m(t) \sin(2\pi ft + \theta_{offset}) \cdot \sin(2\pi ft) = \frac{1}{2}m(t) \cos(\theta_{offset}) - \frac{1}{2}m(t) \cos(4\pi ft + \theta_{offset})$$

Again, the high-frequency term could be filtered. But the retrieved message is in the form of  $\frac{1}{2}m(t) \cos(\theta_{offset})$ , which means the retrieved message would diminish to nothing if  $\theta_{offset}$  is  $\frac{\pi}{2}$  and thus makes  $\cos(\theta_{offset}) = 0$ .

Recalling that phase is equivalent to time, we can view  $\theta_{offset}$  as the time for radio to travel from a station to a user. As the car is moving,  $\theta_{offset}$  must be changing accordingly. It will make  $\frac{1}{2}m(t) \cos(\theta_{offset})$  vary all the time, close to zero once in a while, which explains why the video gets frozen because of nothing being updated as I was watching the broadcast.

“Can the time-varying phase offset be removed?”

I searched for the answer to the question on the internet and discovered phase differences can be eliminated by **Phase-Locked Loop (PLL)** technique adopted at the receiver end to adjust its sine wave. Digging deeper, I found the communication circumstances are even tougher - not only is there phase offset for the incoming radio signal but also its frequency suffers from *Doppler shift* since the car is moving. However, it's surprising that *PLL* still works to eliminate the frequency shift. This raises my interest and entrenches my intention to understand *PLL* in detail.

### What does *PLL* do?

If the starts of each cycle of sine waves are marked as arrows, then the *PLL* function could be depicted as below to make all arrows aligned. (Figure 1-3)

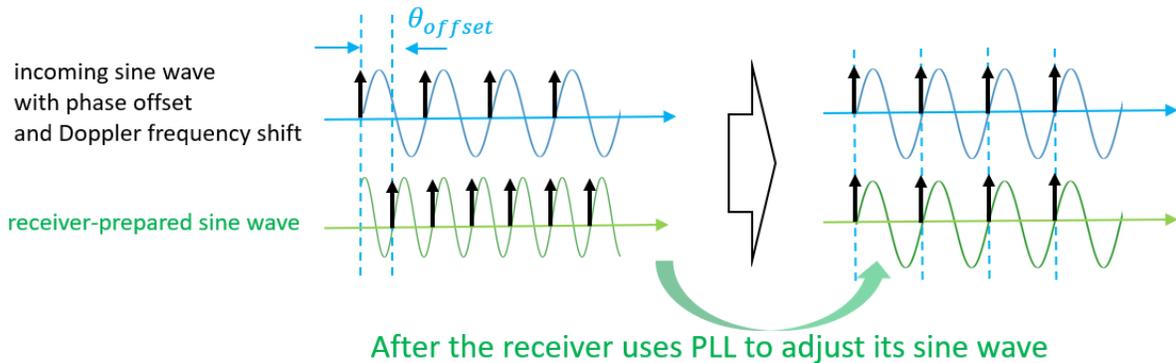


Figure 1-3 Function of Phase-Locked Loop (PLL)

There are many resources to introduce *PLL*, including open college classes (Hajimiri, 2019) (MIT, 2013) and industrial tutorials (Analog Devices, 2009). With them, I could understand the functions of most individual components, and the learning went smoothly until it came to the **control algorithms**: *Laplace transform*, *Mason's loop theory*, and *linear system analysis* are considered as prerequisites, all of which are way beyond the scope of the high school curriculum. However, as the *TOK* of the *IB* program recommends the diverse paths of ways of knowing, I shall go on an exploration with my acquired knowledge. It's very motivating to share my finding and possibly help other high-school students understand *PLL*.

### Research of the *PLL*

The purpose of the *PLL* is to make a controllable signal source, after being divided by  $N$  times, to have the same phase as that of the reference signal. The basic functional blocks of the *PLL* go as Figure 1-4. (Hajimiri, 2019)

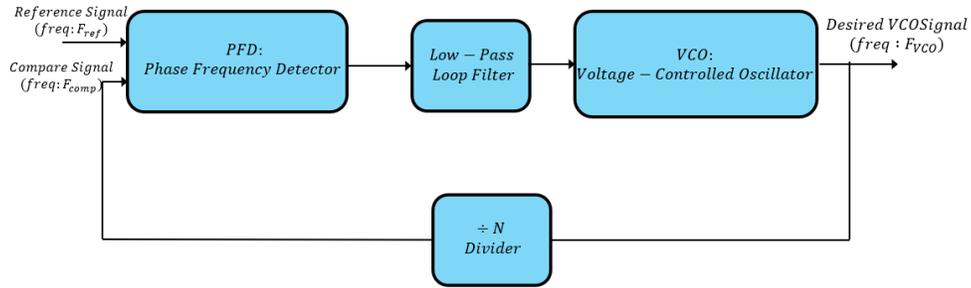


Figure 1-4 Architecture of PLL

**Phase frequency detector (PFD):** The phase-frequency detector compares the timing of the rising edges (the arrow upright in Figure 1.5) of two clock signals. Equivalently, it compares when the cycles start.

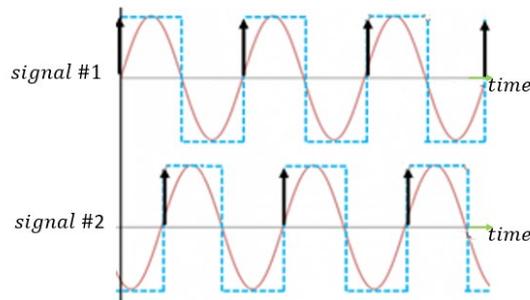


Figure. 1-5 Phase Frequency Detector (PFD) detects the starts of cycles for sinusoidal or pulse signal

PFD consists of the following logic devices (Figure 1-6).

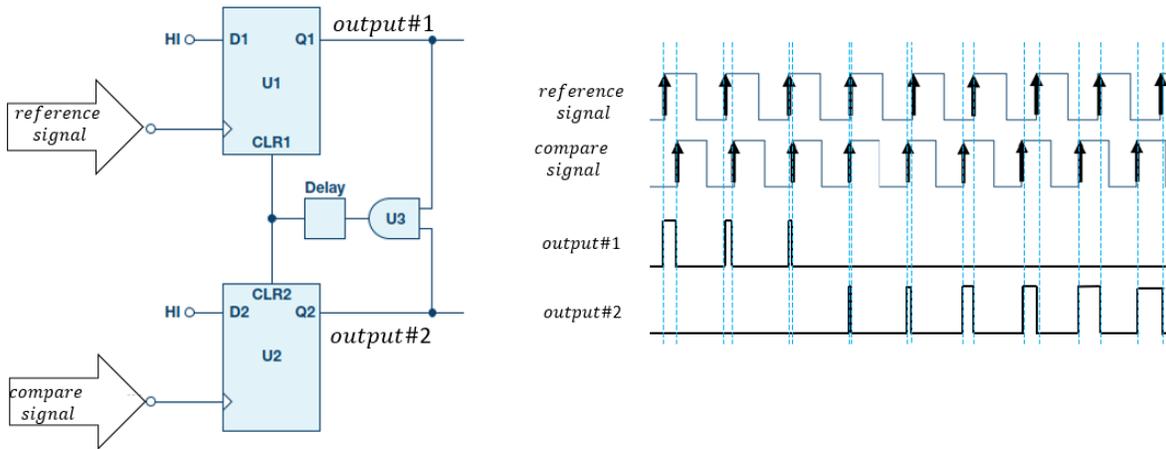


Figure 1-6. The architecture of the Phase Frequency Detector (PFD)

U1 and U2 are D-flipflops. U1 and U2 will set their outputs to “1 (high level)” every time they receive a rising edge, respectively. Once their outputs are both ‘1’, U1 and U2 are reset to 0 and then wait for other rising edges to trigger them again.

**Voltage-Controlled Oscillator (VCO):** It outputs a sinusoidal wave of which the frequency is controllable by turning the control voltage. The ratio of frequency change,  $\Delta F_{VCO}$ , over control voltage change,  $\Delta V_{control}$ , is called the gain of the VCO and denoted as  $K_{VCO}$ . (Unit: Hz/V), i.e.

$$K_{VCO} = \frac{\Delta F_{VCO}}{\Delta V_{control}} \text{ (Figure 1.7)}$$

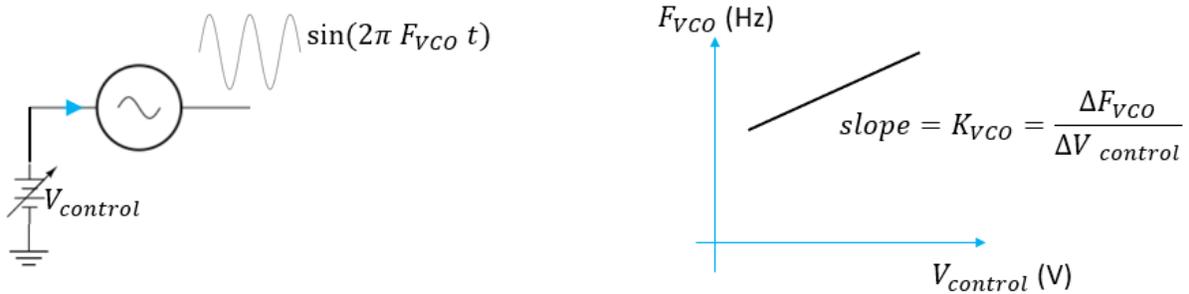


Figure 1.7 Voltage-Controlled Oscillator (VCO) and its Frequency-Voltage transfer function

**N-divider:** Most of the time, we are not simply replicating the reference signal but making a signal of higher frequency by  $N$  times. That is to say, we want this signal, when divided by  $N$ , to have the same phase (and the frequency accordingly) as that of the reference signal. VCO's signal passing a divider produces a new signal, called a *comparison signal*, which has the frequency of  $\frac{1}{N}$  times VCO's original one. Accordingly, the comparison signal has frequency gain equal to  $K_{comp} = \frac{K_{VCO}}{N}$ . (Unit: Hz/V) (Figure 1.8)

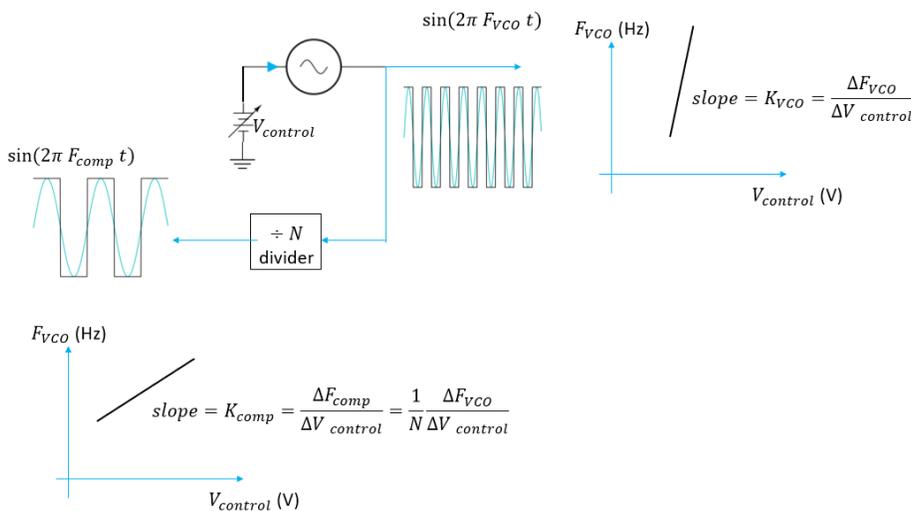


Figure 1.8 The gain of frequency over control voltage changes after N-divider

**Loop filter:** It's the very block to do the control work after receiving a fast/slow signaling from detectors. Based on its circumstances, the *loop filter* adjusts the VCO accordingly. From the appearance, it's made up of resistors and capacitors. However, it's the most difficult part where all the abstruse mathematical transforms and control theories are applied. Bypassing this block will leave my learning on PLL hollow. Therefore, I must figure out a way to crack this.

## The Modeling and development of the algorithm

Most tutorials advise readers to imagine *PLL* as automobile racing. Based on my research, I believe the pace-keeping in the jogging scenario would be a better analogy since the *PLL* goal is not to race, but to keep the same tempo. My modeling goes as below:

### Scenario:

**Scenario description:** A boy tries to keep pace with a girl who is jogging on a dark ground track. The only light is at the platform so the boy could only see the girl pass the platform but nowhere else. The boy could adjust his speed based on his awareness of whether he is late or early relative to the girl.

**Correlation and mapping:** I use a lap of the ground track ( $L$ ) to illustrate a complete phase,  $2\pi$ , of a periodic sine wave; therefore, the location of the position on the track and full track length will be properly corresponding to phase and  $2\pi$ . In a real *PLL* system, the *VCO*'s frequency is tunable; in my scenario, the speed of the boy is controllable. The boy's speed is adjusted when either the boy or girl passes the platform, just as *PFD* sets its output to affect *VCO*'s frequency when a rising edge of the two comparison signals arrives.

As for the loop filter, it corresponds to the **control mechanism**, which is the very part I'm exploring in this essay. In my modeling, it's all about displacement, velocity, and acceleration which are well covered in physics. All of this look promising for me to solve the mystery.

Intuitively, the boy shall increase or decrease his speed right away to mitigate any distance from the girl once he acknowledges whether he is fast or slow. Here comes an initial strategy.

### Algorithm Development:

#### Strategy #1: With speed jump only

The boy joins the jogging with normal speed  $V_B$  on a loop track of length  $L$  initially.

Upon seeing the girl passing the platform, he increases his speed by  $\Delta v_{fixed}$  to  $V_B + \Delta v_{fixed}$ , where  $\Delta v_{fixed}$  is a fixed speed jump.  $V_B + \Delta v_{fixed}$  must be greater than the girl's speed  $V_G$  to make it possible for the boy to catch up with the girl. He maintains this high speed until he passes the platform as well; then he returns to his normal speed  $V_B$ .

Similarly, if the boy leads to pass the platform, he will reduce his speed by  $\Delta v_{fixed}$  to  $V_B - \Delta v_{fixed}$  right away. He will maintain this low speed until the girl passes the platform too; then the boy will return to his original speed,  $V_B$ .

We can expect things will reach a steady-state in the long run. It will be either of the two diagrams in *Figure 2-1*.

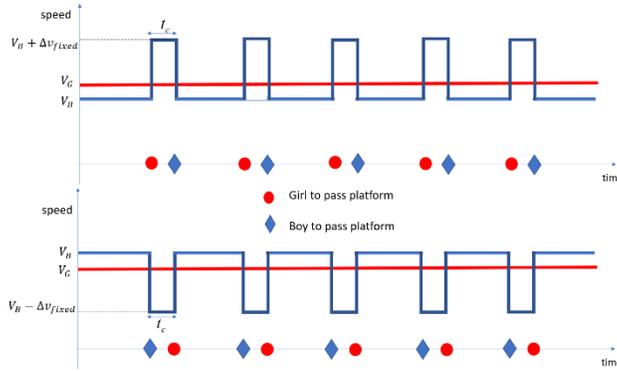


Figure 2-1. Speed vs Time in a long run (steady-state)

The delay time (positive for lag, negative for ahead),  $t_c$ , will stay constant. In steady-state, the boy and the girl will spend the same time,  $\frac{L}{V_G}$ , to finish a loop. Therefore, we get

$$(V_B + \Delta V_{fixed}) \times |t_c| + V_B \times \left(\frac{L}{V_G} - |t_c|\right) = L \quad (\text{The boy's normal speed } V_B \text{ is slower})$$

Or

$$(V_B - \Delta V_{fixed}) \times |t_c| + V_B \times \left(\frac{L}{V_G} - |t_c|\right) = L \quad (\text{The boy's normal speed } V_B \text{ is faster})$$

In either case, it concludes  $\rightarrow |t_c| = \frac{L}{V_G \times \Delta v_{fixed}} \times |(V_G - V_B)|$ .

Hence, I conclude, in steady-state, the delay time reflects the speed difference. Besides, the boy and girl still never pass the platform at the same time (i.e.  $t_c = 0$ ) unless  $V_B$  could be adjusted and equal to  $V_G$ .

Based on this,  $V_B$  shall be adjusted to approach  $V_G$  to make the synchronization. The boy cannot just return to the original speed after the velocity increase/decrease temporarily.

It seems trivial for this initial strategy to fail because the boy only switches between two speeds while the goal is for him to have a steady single-speed equal to the girl. This strategy is intended to explore any signs out of foreseen failures.

**Strategy #2: With speed jump and constant acceleration**

The algorithm should be modified, following up on the initial strategy:

After carrying out the first strategy for a while to identify the delay time which reflects the speed difference, the boy should have additional follow-up below so that the more delay time, the more speed change the boy could make.

Upon seeing the girl pass the platform, the boy not only abruptly raises his speed from  $V_B$  to  $V_B + \Delta v_{fixed}$  but also accelerates at constant acceleration,  $a_{fixed}$ , until he passes the platform; then he reduces his speed by the fixed speed jump  $\Delta v_{fixed}$ .

Similarly, if the boy leads to pass the platform, not only does he abruptly lower down his speed from  $V_B$  to  $V_B - \Delta v_{fixed}$  but also decelerates at  $a_{fixed}$  until the girl passes the platform as well; and then he increases his speed by the speed jump  $\Delta v_{fixed}$ .

Depicting the idea below shows the revised strategy is likely to work (Figure 2-2).

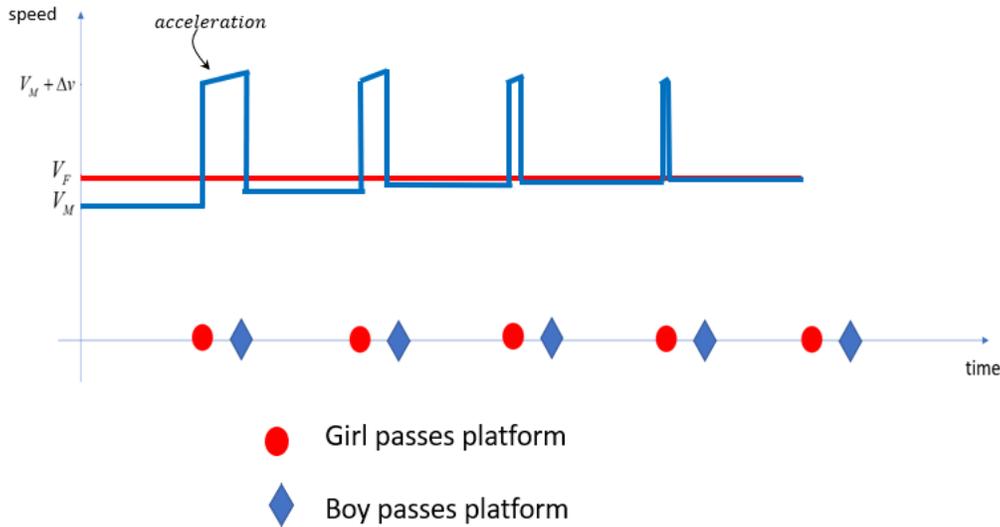


Figure 2-2. Intuition on boy's speed change in strategy #2.

The prerequisite for this strategy is that the boy should take constant acceleration as follow-up only after jogging for a while. However, if the acceleration is low enough, the transition of strategy #1 to #2 should be negligible and I don't expect much difference between the results of 'strategy #1 and then #2' and 'strategy #2 directly'. It would be solid if I could validate the thought scientifically by writing a code to simulate it (*Appendix A, the code is downloadable on my website at [troywuofficial.com](http://troywuofficial.com)*).

The code is mainly to execute the following operations:

*At each time[n]*

1. Check the current flags that reflect whether the boy, the girl, or neither has passed the platform and thus decide which models (constant acceleration, constant deceleration or constant speed) the boy is in. Calculate the boy's next speed. Calculate the next positions for the boy and girl using the current speed.
2. If either of the boy's or girl's next positions exceeds ground track, change the flags, modulo the position and further adjust the boys' calculated next speed

My simulation results preliminarily proved that the modified algorithm works (Figure 2-3). The distance between the boy and the girl reached zero at the end.

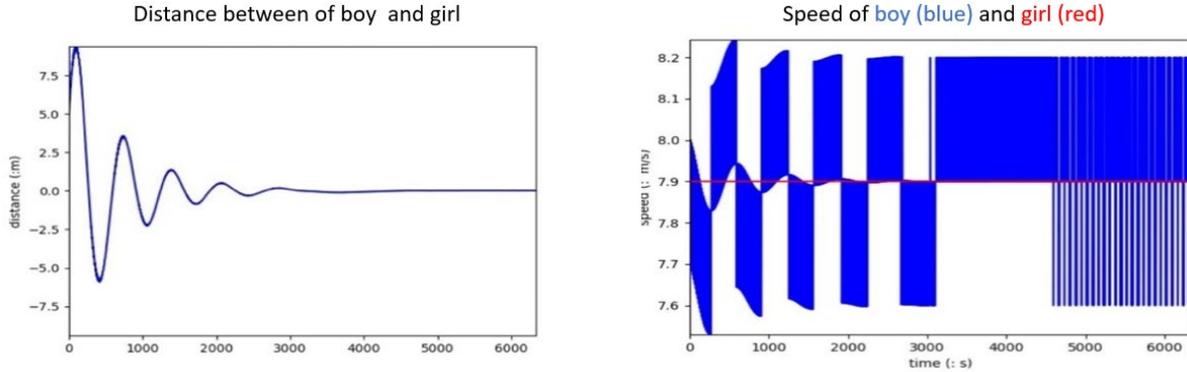


Figure.2-3 Result of jogging simulation.

### Implementation of the Algorithm

The expected control signal on the boy’s speed seems quite odd (Figure 3-1). I wonder, can it be carried out in voltage to control the *Voltage-Controlled Oscillator (VCO)*?

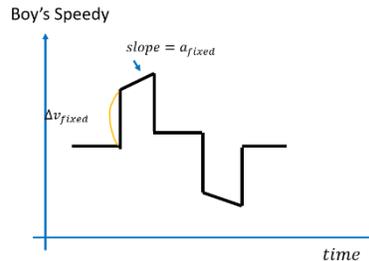


Figure 3-1 Waveform of boy’s speed

It’s trivial to get the voltage pulse train using a voltage source and a switch. It serves the same purpose if we replace the voltage source with a current one and attaching a resistor, according to  $V = IR$ . By adding another electrical component, a capacitor, to accumulate the voltage in series, the waveform turns out exactly as what’s desired. (Figure 3-2)

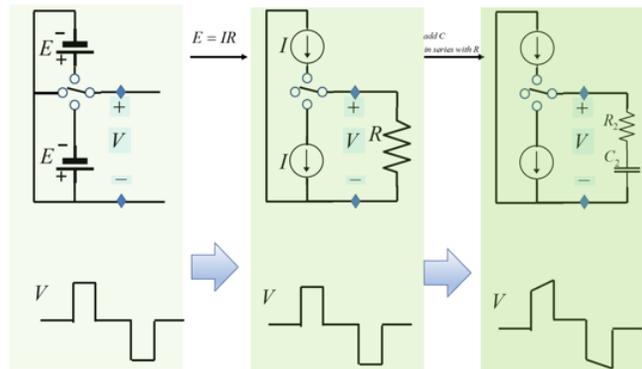


Figure.3-2 Current source together with peripheral components to make a control signal.

Later I learned the current sources in my interference are truly required and are called **charge pumps**. They’re usually integrated into **PFD**, together with the N-divider, as an integrated circuit (IC) called a synthesizer. (Figure 3-3).

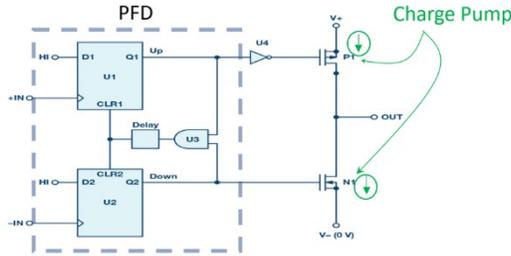


Figure 3-3 PFD IC to include charge pumps.

VCO's frequency is controlled by voltage with frequency-to-voltage gain,  $K_{VCO}$ . The frequency gain will become  $K_{comp} = \frac{K_{VCO}}{N}$  after the divider. Then we can come up with the following conversion. (Figure 3-4)

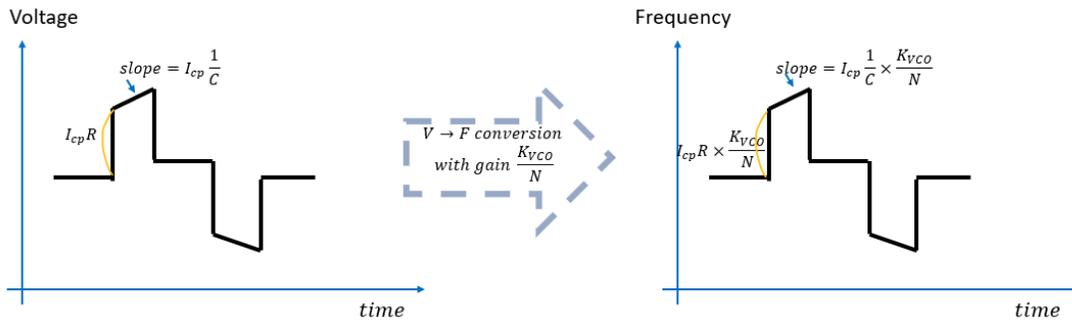


Figure. 3-4. Parameter conversion from controlled voltage to controlled frequency.

Therefore, it is feasible to implement my PLL algorithm with real circuitry (Figure 3-5)

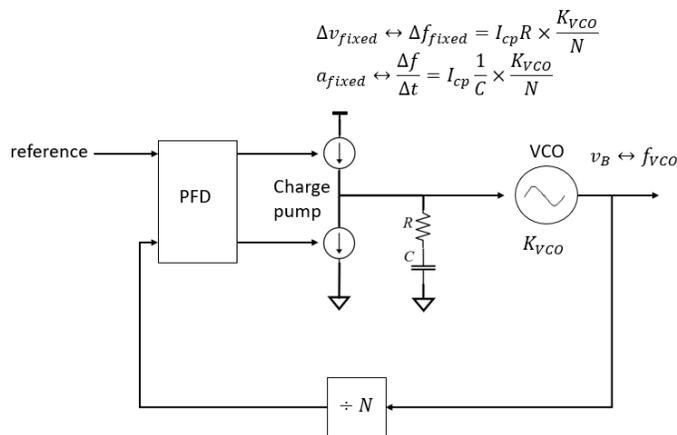


Figure 3-5. Circuitry to carry out Troy's PLL algorithm.

## Theoretical verification and improvement Comparison

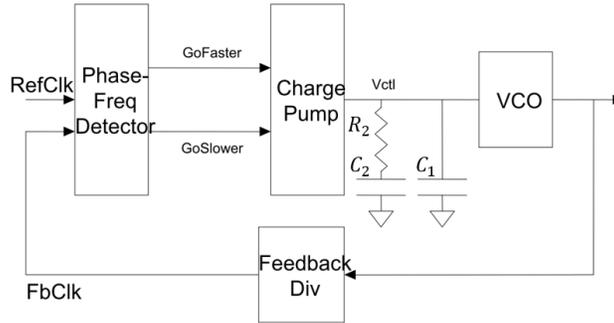


Figure 4-1 PLL reference paper from IEEE

Compared with a reference paper from *IEEE* (Fischette, 2007) (Figure 4-1), my design seems to have one capacitor missing ( $C1$  in the *IEEE* paper) in the **loop filter topology**.

- (i) Can I prove my algorithm still works analytically, in addition to the previous simulation on the concept?
- (ii) Can I figure out what  $C1$  is for?

### Mathematical Analysis

Assuming  $V_G$  is constant, the girl will pass the platform at  $t = 0, T_0, 2T_0, 3T_0, \dots$ , where  $T_0 = \frac{L}{V_G}$ . We will denote the boy's distance from the girl by  $x[n]$  when the girl passes the platform at  $nT_0$ . The boy keeps constant acceleration after a velocity jump  $\Delta v_{fixed}$  to make up  $x[n]$  in  $t_c[n]$  until he passes the platform. (Figure 4-2)

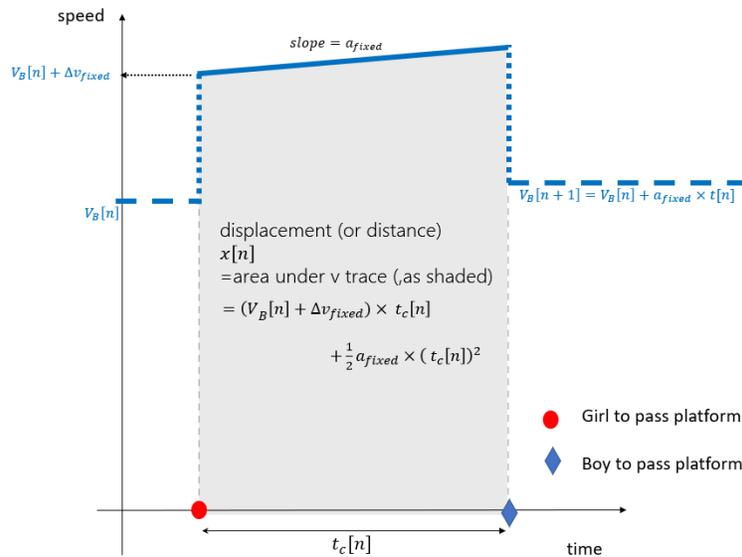


Figure 4-2 Boy's speed vs time plot for the nth cycle

Either by the speed-time area calculation or the displacement formula for constant acceleration, we get

$$x[n] = (V_B[n] + \Delta v_{fixed}) \times t_c[n] + \frac{1}{2} a_{fixed} \times (t_c[n])^2$$

Not to be trapped by the complicated equation, I start with a simple case,  $a_{fixed} \ll \Delta v_{fixed} \ll V_B[n] \cong V_G$ , so that we get

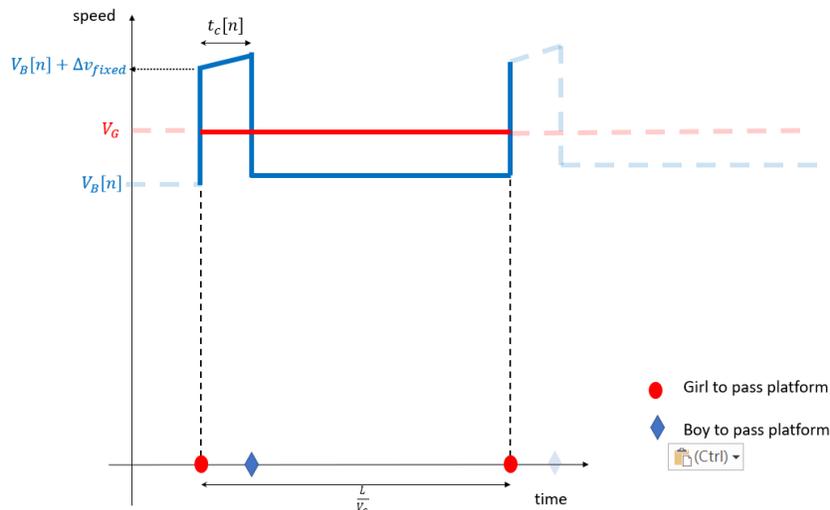
$$t_c[n] \cong \frac{x[n]}{V_B[n] + \Delta v_{fixed}} \cong \frac{x[n]}{V_G}$$

Then  $t_c[n]$  is linearly proportional to  $x[n]$ .

After the  $n^{th}$  cycle, the boy's speed is equal to the original speed  $V_B[0]$  plus all the accumulated speed change.

$$\begin{aligned} V_B[n + 1] &= V_B[0] + \sum_{i=1}^n a_{fixed} \times t_c[i] \\ &= V_B[0] + \sum_{i=1}^n a_{fixed} \times \frac{x[i]}{V_G} \\ &= V_B[0] + \frac{a_{fixed}}{V_G} \sum_{i=1}^n x[i] \end{aligned}$$

Next, we'll calculate the distance between the boy and girl for the  $n^{th}$  cycle and plot their speed vs time graph below. (Figure 4-3)



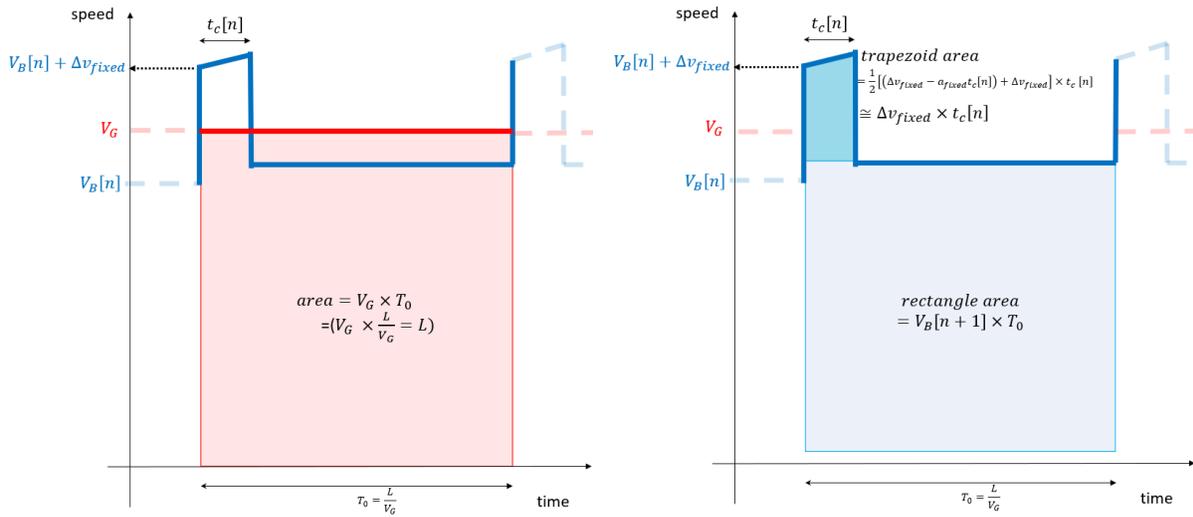


Figure 4-3 Speed-time plot to calculate the respective distance run in the nth cycle

The distance apart for the next cycle will be:

$$\begin{aligned}
 x[n + 1] &= x[n] + \text{distance girl runs (red)} - \text{distance boy runs (blue)} \\
 &= x[n] + V_G \times T_0 - (V_B[n + 1] \times T_0 + \Delta v_{fixed} \times t_c[n]) \\
 &= x[n] + (V_G - V_B[n + 1]) \times T_0 - \Delta v_{fixed} \times t_c[n] \\
 &= x[n] + (V_G - V_B[n + 1]) \times T_0 - \frac{\Delta v_{fixed}}{V_G} \times x[n] \\
 \rightarrow x[n + 1] - x[n] &= (V_G - V_B[n + 1]) \times T_0 - \frac{\Delta v_{fixed}}{V_G} x[n] \dots \dots \dots (2)
 \end{aligned}$$

Then dividing  $T_0$  on both sides, we get

$$\begin{aligned}
 \frac{x[n + 1] - x[n]}{T_0} &= (V_G - V_B[n + 1]) - \frac{\Delta v_{fixed}}{V_G T_0} x[n] \\
 &= (V_G - V_B[0] - \frac{a_{fixed}}{V_G} \sum_{i=1}^n x[i]) - \frac{\Delta v_{fixed}}{V_G T_0} x[n] \\
 &= -(V_B[0] - V_G) - \frac{\Delta v_{fixed}}{V_G T_0} x[n] - \frac{a_{fixed}}{V_G} \sum_{i=1}^n x[i] \\
 &= -(V_B[0] - V_G) - \frac{\Delta v_{fixed}}{V_G T_0} x[n] - \frac{a_{fixed}}{V_G T_0} \sum_{i=1}^n x[i] T_0 \\
 \rightarrow \frac{x[n + 1] - x[n]}{T_0} &= -p - qx[n] - r \sum_{i=1}^n x[i] T_0
 \end{aligned}$$

$$, \text{ where } p = (V_B[0] - V_G), \quad q = \frac{\Delta v_{fixed}}{V_G T_0}, \quad r = \frac{a_{fixed}}{V_G T_0}$$

Since  $T_0$  is small, we might as well replace it to be  $\Delta t$

$$\frac{x[n+1] - x[n]}{\Delta t} = -p - qx[n] - r \sum_{i=1}^n x[i] \Delta t, \text{ where } \Delta t \text{ is very small}$$

The formula above is just an expression of differential/integral equation in series.

I'll rewrite it in the normal form below.

$$\frac{dx(t)}{dt} = -p - qx(t) - r \int_0^t x(t) dt, \quad \text{ where } p = (V_B[0] - V_G), \quad q = \frac{\Delta v_{fixed}}{V_G T_0}, \quad r = \frac{a_{fixed}}{V_G T_0}$$

Differentiating both sides again,

$$\frac{d^2 x(t)}{dt^2} = -q \frac{dx(t)}{dt} - rx(t)$$

$$\frac{d^2 x(t)}{dt^2} + q \frac{dx(t)}{dt} + rx(t) = 0, \quad \text{ where } q = \frac{\Delta v_{fixed}}{V_G T_0}, \quad r = \frac{a_{fixed}}{V_G T_0}$$

The solution will be in the following form

$$x(t) = A e^{-\left(\frac{q - \sqrt{q^2 - 4r}}{2}\right)t} + B e^{-\left(\frac{q + \sqrt{q^2 - 4r}}{2}\right)t} \text{ if } q^2 - 4r \neq 0$$

From the above,

- (i) If  $q^2 - 4r > 0$ , we know that the longer time constant will be

$$\tau = \frac{1}{\frac{q - \sqrt{q^2 - 4r}}{2}} = \frac{2}{q - \sqrt{q^2 - 4r}}$$

Choosing  $q^2 - 4r \cong 0$  gets this dominant time constant to be smallest, equal to  $\frac{2}{q}$

- (ii) If  $q^2 - 4r < 0$ ,

$$x(t) = A e^{-\frac{q}{2}t} e^{-j\frac{\sqrt{4r - q^2}}{2}t} + B e^{-\frac{q}{2}t} e^{+j\frac{\sqrt{4r - q^2}}{2}t}$$

$x(t)$  will be decaying to  $\frac{1}{e}$  with a fixed time constant  $\frac{2}{q}$  while showing oscillation

phenomena.

From (i) and (ii), it numerically proves that my algorithm works to make  $x(t)$ , the phase difference, decay to zero. The best time constant for convergence is also derived as  $\frac{2}{q}$  ( $= \frac{2V_G T_0}{\Delta v_{fixed}}$ )

## Decide Components Values for PLL Design

The derived mathematical equation not only shows my algorithm works but also provides a way to decide the values of those components used in *PLL* design.

I replace the speed, distance, fixed speed jump, and acceleration with electrical counterparts in a real *PLL* below. (Figure 4-4)

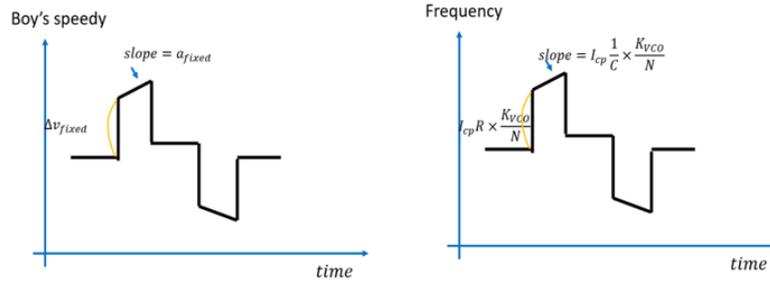


Figure 4-4 Mapping between jogging scenario and practical application

Because distance,  $x(t)$ , is mapped to phase difference,  $phaseDifference(t)$ , then

$$\frac{d^2x(t)}{dt^2} + q \frac{dx(t)}{dt} + rx(t) = 0, \quad \text{where } q = \frac{\Delta v_{fixed}}{V_G T_0}, r = \frac{a_{fixed}}{V_G T_0}$$

will turn out:

$$\frac{d^2[phaseDifference(t)]}{dt^2} + q \frac{d[phaseDifference(t)]}{dt} + r[phaseDifference(t)] = 0$$

$$\text{where } q = \frac{I_{CP} R \frac{K_{VCO}}{N}}{F_{ref} T_0} = \frac{I_{CP} R K_{VCO}}{N}, r = \frac{I_{CP} C \frac{K_{VCO}}{N}}{F_{ref} T_0} = \frac{I_{CP} K_{VCO}}{CN} \quad (\text{note: } F_{ref} T_0 = 1)$$

## Procedure to decide R and C

1. The lock time,  $t_{lock}$ , is usually specified, within which any phase difference shall be thoroughly eliminated. We can choose  $\tau = \frac{t_{lock}}{15}$  to make sure the phase difference has enough time margin to decay to zero.

According to the desired time constant and relation  $\tau = \frac{2}{q} = \frac{2N}{I_{CP} R K_{VCO}}$ , the R-value to pick would be:

$$R = \frac{2N}{I_{CP} K_{VCO} \tau}, \text{ or alternatively with } \tau = \frac{t_{lock}}{15}, R = \frac{30N}{I_{CP} K_{VCO} t_{lock}}$$

2. The shortest time constant is made when  $q^2 - 4r \leq 0$  is met:

$$\rightarrow \left( \frac{I_{CP} R K_{VCO}}{N} \right)^2 - 4 \frac{I_{CP} K_{VCO}}{CN} \leq 0$$

$$\rightarrow C \leq \frac{4I_{CP} K_{VCO} N}{(I_{CP} R K_{VCO})^2} = \frac{4N}{I_{CP} K_{VCO} R^2}$$

So, the capacitance would be picked by:

$$C = \frac{4N}{I_{CP}K_{VCO}R^2}$$

**Is C1 necessary?**

My algorithm is mathematically proven to work with the practical implementation suggested.

**Then why C1?**

I revisited the result of the jogging simulation to find some room for improvement. The boy’s speed still has large random jumps even after his distance from the girl is almost made zero. That’s because the boy abruptly changes his speed by  $\Delta v_{fixed}$  despite tiny time delay/ahead to pass the platform. It could be considered as over-reaction, which could be prevented if we allow the boy to “take time” to make the needed speed change  $\Delta v_{fixed}$  with finite acceleration. He could still make the change  $\Delta v_{fixed}$  in a short time; but if the time delay/ahead is extremely small, he’ll decrease or increase speed by a negligible amount. It will result in a negligible speed fluctuation. (Figure 4-5)

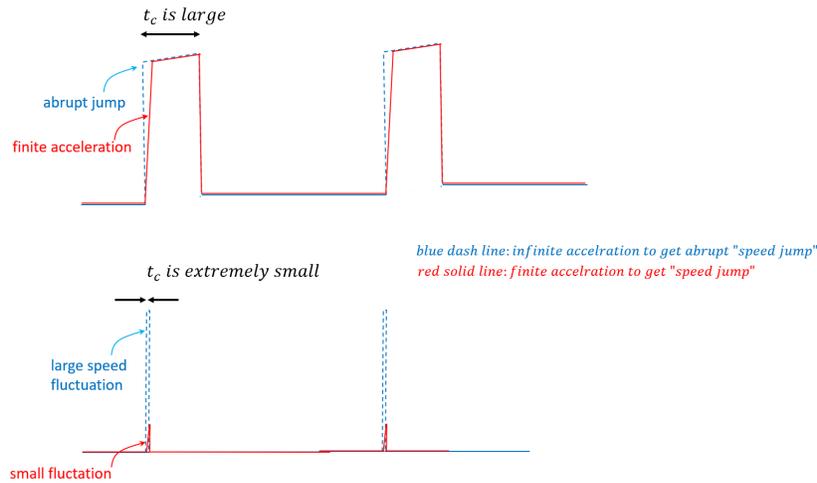


Figure 4-5 Depict finite acceleration cause negligible speed change for an extremely small asynchronization.

This makes strategy #3. (Figure 4-6)

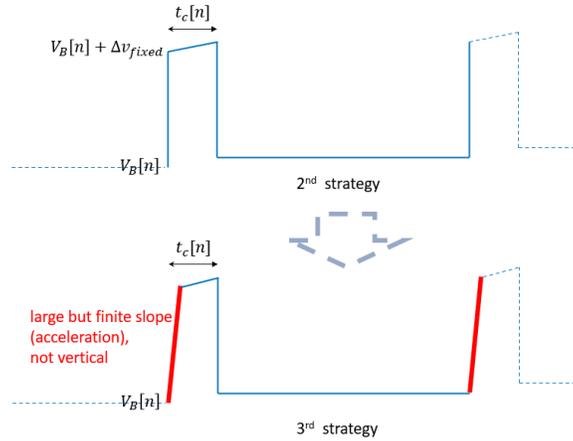


Figure 4-6 2<sup>nd</sup> strategy migrates to 3<sup>rd</sup> strategy

**Strategy #3: With high acceleration to make speed jump and then with low constant acceleration**

Upon seeing the girl passing the platform, the boy shall quickly increase his speed  $V_B$  to  $V_B + \Delta v_{fixed}$  by high acceleration  $a_{fixed\_high}$ . Then, he accelerates at constant low acceleration,  $a_{fixed\_low}$ . After the boy passes the platform, he reduces his speed by  $\Delta v_{fixed}$ .

Similarly, if the boy leads to pass the platform, the boy shall quickly decrease his speed  $V_B$  to  $V_B - \Delta v_{fixed}$  by high deceleration  $a_{fixed\_high}$ . Then, he decelerates at  $a_{fixed\_low}$ . After the girl passes the platform as well, the boy increases his speed by  $\Delta v_{fixed}$ .

**Implementation of Strategy #3**

Adding a capacitor,  $C_1$ , in the following figure, makes the abrupt jump have a finite slope because charging  $C_1$  takes time (Figure 4-7).

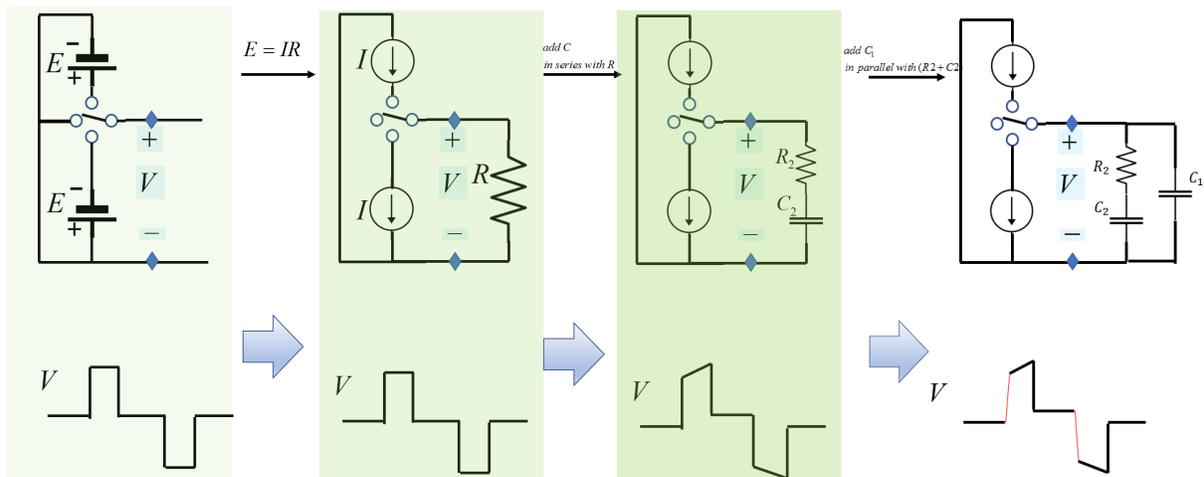


Figure 4-7 Adding  $C_1$  makes an abrupt voltage jump of finite slope

The voltage to frequency conversion will go as below (Figure 4-8)

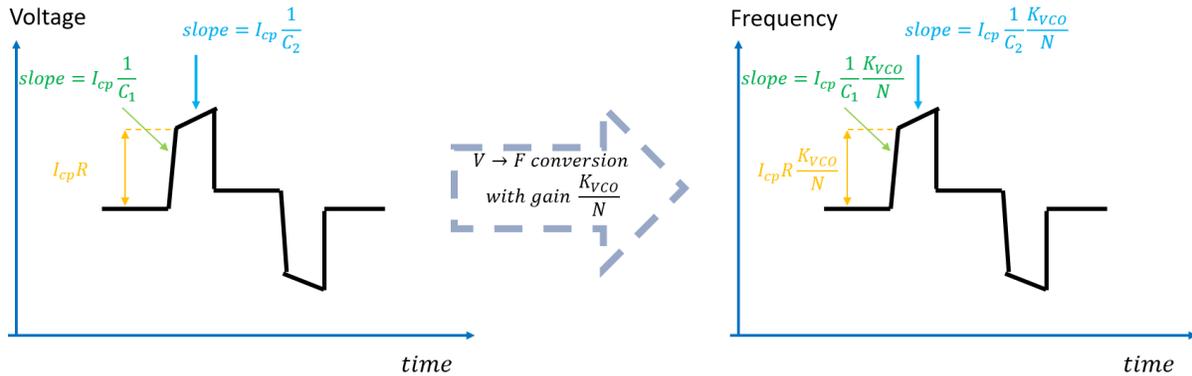


Figure 4-8 Parameter conversion from controlled voltage to controlled frequency.

If  $C_1$  is small enough, say  $C_1 = \frac{C_2}{10}$ , it won't substantially affect the previous formula and result.

### Complete PLL Design Procedure

It's time to consolidate the exploration and algorithm and make simple the guideline of the complete PLL design. (Figure 4-9)

### Phase-Locked Loop Architecture And Parameters

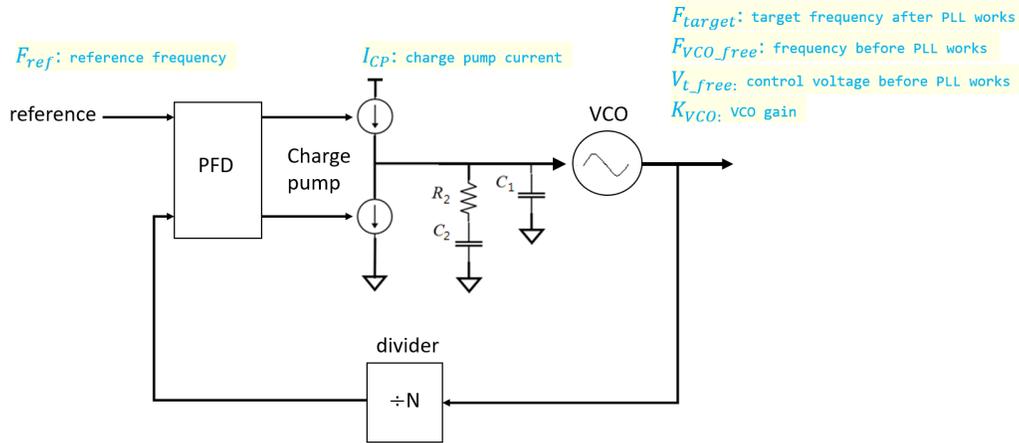


Figure 4-9 Complete design of PLL

Step #1: To learn VCO's V-F gain ( $K_{VCO}$ ) and divide value ( $N$ )

Step #2: To learn PFD's charge pump current ( $I_{CP}$ )

Step #3: To learn the lock time ( $t_{lock}$ ) within which the phase difference shall decay to zero

Step #4: To decide  $R_2$  by  $R_2 = \frac{30N}{I_{CP}K_{VCO}t_{lock}}$

Step #5: To decide  $C_2$  by  $C_2 = \frac{4N}{I_{CP}K_{VCO}R_2^2}$

Step #6: To decide  $C_1$  by  $C_1 = \frac{C_2}{10}$

### Experimental validation

I consulted several experts in the engineering industry for design references. *Richard Huang*, an advanced Electronic Engineer in Garmin, introduced me to two typical design guidelines, each from a textbook and application note from Philips (NXP now). I'll compare my design result with these two references, according to the practical parameters and specifications for a PLL of GPS. (*Appendix B, C*). My practical design is described in *Appendix D*.

I'm pleased to learn my design values are within 10% difference from NXP's, and I notice that, even for the two recommended Rohde's and NXP's notes, there's a significant difference for design values. There seems to be some design flexibility in general.

### Virtual validation with simulation

Due to COVID-19, I failed to visit the laboratory of Garmin in Taiwan to conduct my experiment. Before I finally did my experiment in my bedroom, I developed an application tool to simulate the full phase-locked loop. It follows the flow chart of my code simulating the jogging model (*Appendix A*).

**Simulation Challenge:** The major challenge is to resolve a differential equation set consisting of Kirchhoff's Current Law for each node and I-V characteristic of  $C_1$ ,  $R_2$ , and  $C_2$ . It's involved in a differential-difference conversion and an inverse matrix. (*Appendix E*).

**Simulation Result (Video Demo):** (*Wu, 2020*)

(1) The simulation confirms that both the phase and frequency differences could be eliminated in 1mS as requested. The behavior of my design is close to NXP's. (*Figure 5-1, Figure 5-2*)

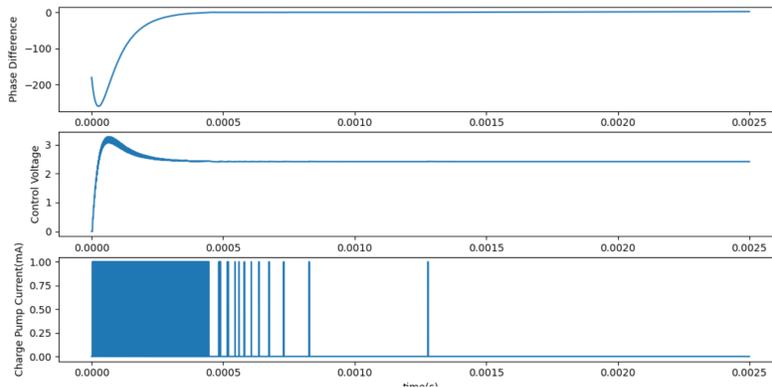


Figure5-1 Simulation result with Troy Wu's design guideline

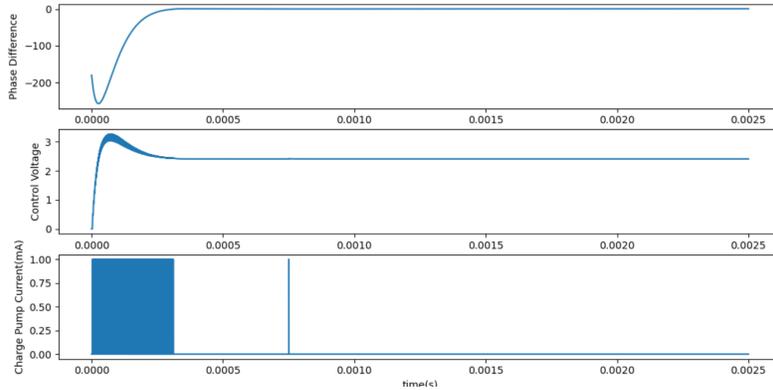


Figure 5-2 Simulation result with NXP's design guideline

(2) Ulrich Rohde's solution with default ratio=10 is not good enough. (Figure 5-3)

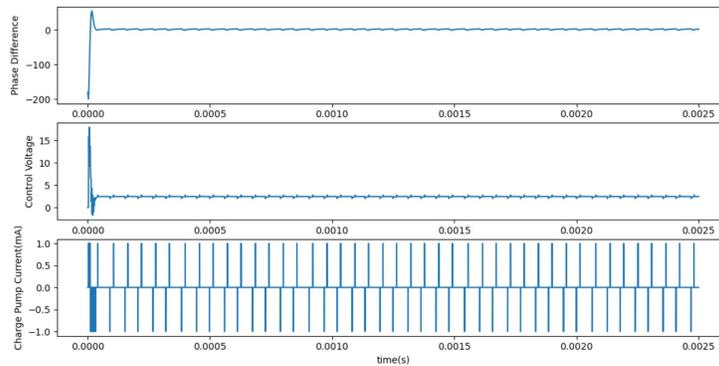


Figure 5-3 Simulation result with Ulrich Rohde's design guideline with option=10

After tweaking the ratio option to be 100, it turns out to perform way better. (Figure 5-4)

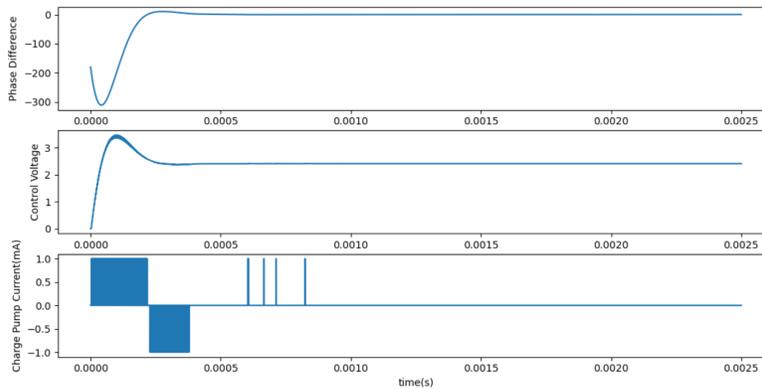


Figure 5-4 Simulation result with Ulrich Rohde's design guideline with option=100

(3) Removal of C1 still works. (Figure 5-5). As expected, we observe the control voltage is “spiny” if without C1.

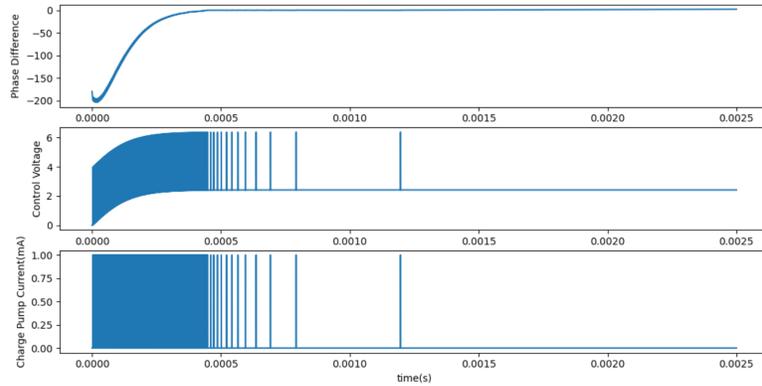


Figure 5-5 Simulation result with Troy Wu’s design guideline but without C1

### Practical validation through experiment

I am grateful that Garmin supports me with PLL modules and the rework of my design values. (Figure 5-6). I bought an oscilloscope of bandwidth 100MHz (Rigol DS1102Z-E) and pre-scalers (Fujitsu MB506 Evaluation Board) which divide the frequencies of PLL outputs to fit in the oscilloscope operation range. Because the wiring is complicated (Figure 5-7), I will adopt abstract blocks to describe the setups.

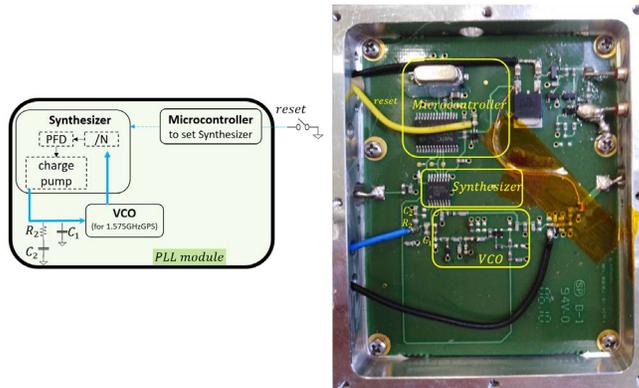


Figure 5-6 PLL module of GPS frequency 1.57542GHz (Courtesy of Garmin)

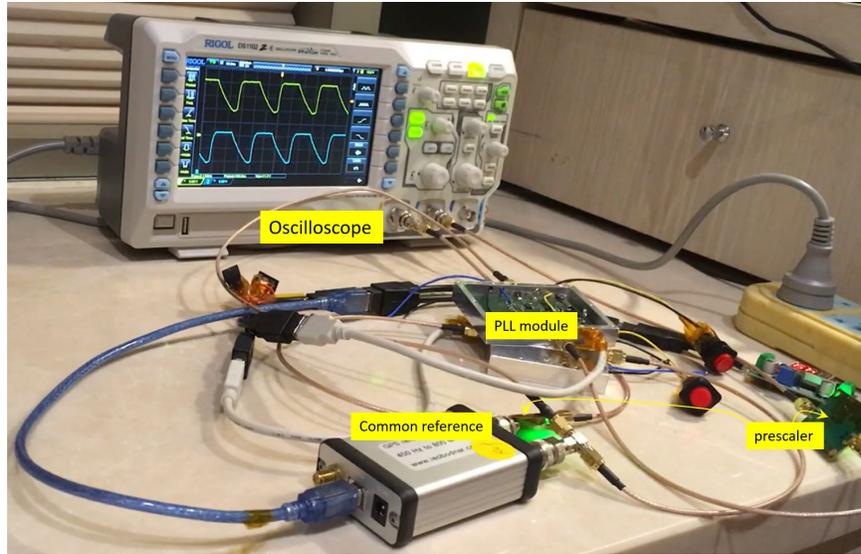


Figure 5-7 Picture of setup to learn whether two PLL modules work simultaneously.

Does control voltage go as simulated?

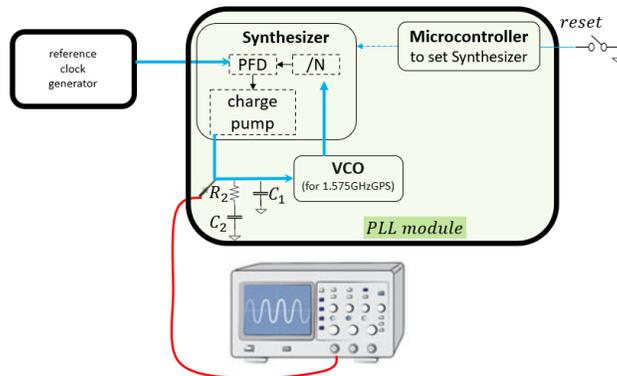
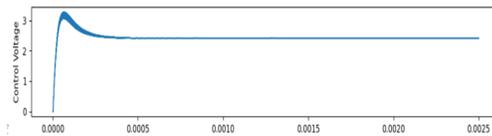


Figure 5-8 Setup for measurement of the control voltage



Measured control voltage



Simulated control voltage

Figure 5-9 Comparison between measured and simulated control voltages with loop filter consisting of C1, R2, and C2.

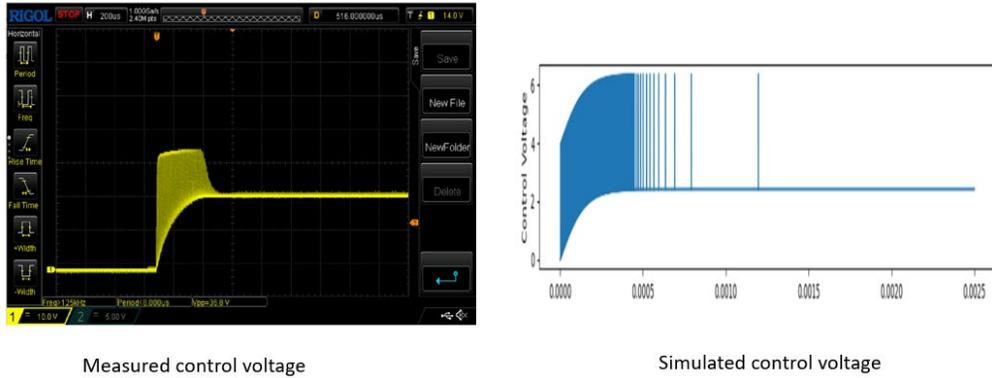


Figure 5-10 Comparison between measured and simulated control voltages with loop filter consisting of R2 and C2 only, without C1.

Analysis:

- i. The waveforms of control voltage go as simulated by my application tool. It gets stable in 500us with C1 and 800us without C1, both meeting the target,  $t_{lock} \leq 1ms$
- ii. The waveform without C1 goes as spiny as simulated. However, the amplitude over 3.68V is truncated. It's reasonable because we supply the board with only 5V. To reflect the practical consideration, I modified my code to allow users to set limitations on the control voltage.

The result of the revised code goes as below with the voltage ceiling being 3.68V. 0.2nF capacitance is set to C1 to reflect parasitic capacitance everywhere. The simulation result matches the experiment. (Figure 5-11)

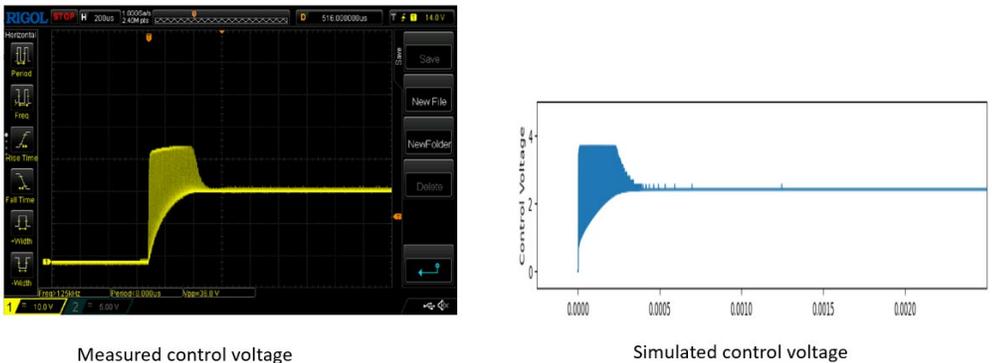


Figure 5-11 Comparison between measured and simulated control voltages of loop filter without C1, after voltage ceiling is added in the simulation code.

Whether PLL works?

I have two PLL modules on hand, each with C1 and without C1. I expect they are phase-locked to each other if they're phase-locked to a common reference. It means the second channel (CH2) shall be stationary to the triggered one (CH1 in this case).

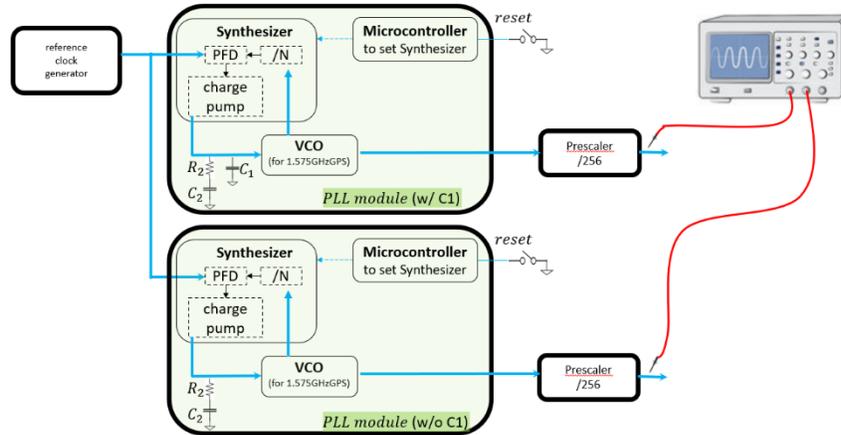


Figure 5-12 Setup to check out whether PLLs work

**Result and Analysis:**

The result shows before PLLs are enabled, CH2 is “running” with reference to CH1. After PLLs are enabled, CH2 becomes stationary to CH1, indicating their phases are locked to each other. (Figure 5-13)



Figure 5-13 Two PLLs have phases locked to each other after enabled.

**Conclusion**  
**Goal Review**

The theory of operation for phase-locked loop became crystal clear after building a model and developing an algorithm which is computationally simulated and mathematically verified in the positive. I was excited to come up with a design procedure that consolidates my works to be useful for others. An application tool is made to help with PLL design, providing users with the option to choose among an industry standard, an academic guideline, my proprietary suggestion, and users’ pick. My assertion is ultimately validated by practical experiments. I believe others

could crack PLL easily through the sharing of this essay, the simulation code, and the application tool.

### **Lesson learned**

Exploring PLL was a long journey full of uncertainties and surprises. I'm glad that I was impulsive enough to dive in and see the spectacular view. Jumping out of a stereotype brings a life definable by myself. I am so grateful for the advice and help from my teachers, many experts in this field and Garmin Corporation. The experience entrenches my favorite company's slogan I've lived by --- "Just do it".

*For references, footnotes, endnotes and appendices, click [here](#).*