

TRANSMISSION CONTROL FOR WIRELESS COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

[0001] The present application claims priority to provisional U.S. Application Serial No. 60/778,745, entitled “TRANSMISSION CONTROL FOR A MESH COMMUNICATION NETWORK,” filed March 3, 2006, assigned to the assignee hereof and incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

I. Field

[0002] The present disclosure relates generally to communication, and more specifically to techniques for controlling transmissions in wireless communication networks such as mesh networks.

II. Background

[0003] A mesh communication network is a network composed of nodes (or mesh points) that can forward traffic for other nodes in the network. The nodes of a mesh network may be any devices capable of communicating with other devices. These devices may be laptop computers, handheld devices, cellular phones, terminals, etc. This flexibility allows a mesh network to be formed and expanded at low cost using existing devices. A mesh network is also robust against node failures. If a given node fails, then traffic may simply find another route and bypass the failed node.

[0004] A major challenge in operating a mesh network is controlling transmissions by the nodes such that good performance may be achieved for all or as many nodes as possible. If transmission control is inadequate or ineffective, then the overall performance of the mesh network may be degraded, some or many of the nodes may not achieve their data requirements, and/or other deleterious effects may occur.

[0005] There is therefore a need in the art for techniques to effectively control transmissions in a mesh network.

SUMMARY

[0006] Techniques for controlling transmissions in wireless communication networks are described herein. In an aspect, transmission control for a mesh network may be achieved by ranking stations (or mesh points or nodes) in the mesh network. In one design, the rank of a first station in the mesh network may be determined. At least one station of lower rank than the first station in the mesh network may be identified. The rank of each station may be determined based on various factors, as described below. At least one transmission parameter for the at least one station of lower rank may be set by the first station. The at least one transmission parameter may comprise (i) an arbitration inter frame space (AIFS) indicative of an idle channel sensing time, (ii) minimum and maximum contention windows used to determine a random backoff before accessing a channel, (iii) transmission opportunity (TXOP) duration, and/or (iv) other parameters.

[0007] In another aspect, stations in a wireless network may be assigned different transmission parameter values to achieve the data requirements of each station. In one design, at least one transmission parameter value for at least one transmission parameter may be assigned to each of at least one station. The at least one transmission parameter value for each station may be selected based on the rank of the station, quality of service (QoS) requirements of the station, the amount of traffic carried by the station, the data rate achievable by the station, reverse direction grants to the at least one station, etc. The at least one transmission parameter value may be sent to each station via probe response frames or some other mechanism.

[0008] In yet another aspect, an access point may broadcast its current load information in beacon frames to allow neighboring access points to determine channel occupancy time by the access point. The access point may also make channel measurements in idle periods when the access point is not sending or receiving traffic and may estimate the channel occupancy time by neighboring access points based on the channel measurements.

[0009] Various aspects and features of the disclosure are described in further detail below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1 shows a mesh communication network.

[0011] FIG. 2 shows channel access and transmission by a station.

[0012] FIGS. 3 and 4 show a process and an apparatus, respectively, for setting transmission parameters in a mesh network.

[0013] FIGS. 5 and 6 show a process and an apparatus, respectively, for setting transmission parameters in a wireless network.

[0014] FIGS. 7 and 8 show a process and an apparatus, respectively, for determining channel occupancy time.

[0015] FIG. 9 shows a block diagram of two stations in a wireless network.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0016] **FIG. 1** shows a mesh communication network 100 that includes a number of nodes, which are referred to as mesh points 120, 130 and 140. Mesh points 120 and 130 may forward traffic for other mesh points, while mesh points 140 are leaf mesh points. A leaf mesh point is a mesh point that does not forward traffic for another mesh point. In general, each mesh point may be a station or an access point (AP).

[0017] A station is a device that can communicate with another station via a wireless medium. The terms “wireless medium” and “channel” are synonymous and are used interchangeably herein. A station may also be called, and may contain some or all of the functionality of, a terminal, an access terminal, a mobile station, a user equipment (UE), a subscriber unit, etc. A station may be a laptop computer, a cellular phone, a handheld device, a wireless device, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a wireless modem card, a cordless phone, etc.

[0018] An AP is a station that can provide access to distribution services via the wireless medium for stations associated with that AP. An AP may also be called, and may contain some or all of the functionality of, a base station, a base transceiver station (BTS), a Node B, an evolved Node B (eNode B), etc. In the example shown in FIG. 1, mesh points 120 and 130 may be APs, and mesh points 140 may be leaf stations and/or APs. APs 120a and 120b may be connected directly to a backhaul network 110, which may be a wired infrastructure acting as the backbone for mesh network 100. Deployment and operating costs may be reduced by having only a subset of the APs connected directly to backhaul network 110. APs 130 may communicate with one another and/or with APs 120 in order to exchange traffic via backhaul network 110. Leaf stations 140 may communicate with APs 120 and/or 130.

[0019] In mesh network 100, APs 120 may also be referred to as wired APs, portal APs, mesh portals, etc. APs 130 may also be referred to as unwired APs, mesh APs (MAPs), etc. APs 120 and 130 and leaf stations or APs 140 may also be referred to as mesh points, mesh nodes, nodes, etc. MAPs 130 may act as entities that forward traffic to wired APs 120. A frame of data (or a packet) may flow from a source to a destination via a route that may consist of one or more mesh points. A routing algorithm may be used to determine a sequence of mesh points for the frame to pass through to reach the destination. In certain situations, an AP may be congested and may request other APs that forward traffic to the congested AP to slow down in order to decongest the network.

[0020] As illustrated in FIG. 1, a hierarchical structure may be imparted to a mesh network if most of the traffic flows to and from the wired APs. When a given mesh point x first connects to the mesh network, the routing algorithm may be executed to determine a sequence of mesh points that may be used by mesh point x to send frames to the nearest wired AP. Mesh point x may thereafter use this route to send/forward frames to the wired AP.

[0021] In the following description, the term “station” may refer to a leaf station or an AP. The stations in mesh network 100 may communicate with one another via any radio technology or any combination of radio technologies, such as IEEE 802.11, Hiperlan, Bluetooth, cellular, etc. IEEE 802.11 is a family of standards from The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) for wireless local area networks (WLANs) and is commonly used throughout the world. The stations may also be deployed over any geographic area such as, e.g., a campus, an urban center, a mall, or other hot zone characterized by higher population density and/or greater data usage.

[0022] A station may communicate with another station for one or more flows. A flow may be a higher layer data stream (e.g., a TCP or UDP stream) that may be sent via a link between two stations. A flow may carry any type of traffic such as voice, video, packet data, etc. A flow may be for a particular traffic class and may have certain requirements on data rate, latency or delay, etc. A flow may be periodic and sent at regular interval or non-periodic and sent sporadically, e.g., whenever there is data to send. For example, a flow for Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) may send a data frame every 10 or 20 milliseconds (ms). A station may have one or more flows for one or more traffic types with a given AP.

[0023] In an aspect, transmission control for a mesh network may be achieved by ranking the mesh points or stations in the mesh network. The ranking may be based on various factors such as the number of hops to the wired APs, the number of stations associated with the APs, the amount of traffic being forwarded by the APs, the types or classes of traffic being forwarded by the APs, the capabilities of the APs, etc. The AP capabilities may be quantified by achievable data rate, buffer size, and/or other factors. All of the factors used in determining rank may be given appropriate weights and combined to obtain a metric that may be used to ascertain the rank of each mesh point.

[0024] In one design, the rank of a given mesh point or station x may be determined based on the number of hops to a wired AP and may be expressed as:

$$\text{Rank (MP } x) = \text{MaxRank} - \text{Number of hops to wired AP} , \quad \text{Eq (1)}$$

where Rank (MP x) is the rank of mesh point x , and *MaxRank* is an arbitrarily chosen maximum value of the rank. Each mesh point in the sequence of one or more mesh points from mesh point x to the wired AP may be considered as one hop. The number of hops to the wired AP may then be equal to the number of mesh points in the sequence of mesh point(s) from mesh point x to the wired AP.

[0025] If there are multiple wired APs in the mesh network, then the rank of mesh point x may be determined based on the minimum number of hops to all wired APs and may be expressed as:

$$\text{Rank (MP } x) = \text{MaxRank} - \underset{y \in \{\text{all wired APs}\}}{\text{Min}} (\text{Number of hops to wired AP } y) . \quad \text{Eq (2)}$$

A high rank value from equation (1) or (2) corresponds to a higher rank, which typically implies higher required throughput, higher access priorities, etc., as discussed below.

[0026] In FIG. 1, wired APs 120a and 120b may have the highest rank of *MaxRank*, MAPs 130a and 130b may have the next highest rank of *MaxRank* – 1, MAP 130c may have the next highest rank of *MaxRank* – 2, and leaf stations or APs 140 may have ranks of *MaxRank* – 2, *MaxRank* – 3, and *MaxRank* – 4. In general, the hierarchical structure for a mesh network may have any number of layers, and the mesh points may have any number of different ranks. Each mesh point may learn its route as well as the number of mesh points to the nearest wired AP based on the routing algorithm.

[0027] A mesh network may utilize any access scheme to allow the mesh points to gain access to the channel. In one design that is described in detailed below, the mesh network utilizes an Enhanced Distributed Channel Access (EDCA) procedure described in IEEE 802.11e, entitled “Amendment: Medium Access Control (MAC) Quality of Service (QoS) Enhancements,” which is publicly available. EDCA is relatively simple to implement and supports prioritized access to the channel by the stations based on QoS requirements of the flows carried by these stations and the amount of traffic through the stations.

[0028] EDCA utilizes three parameters for controlling transmissions via the channel by the stations. Table 1 lists the three transmission parameters and provides a short description for each parameter. A transmission parameter is a parameter that may control access to the channel and/or transmission on the channel after gaining access. The AIFS and contention windows are channel access parameters and are used to control access to the channel. The TXOP duration regulates transmission once the channel has been accessed.

Table 1

Parameter	Symbol	Description
Arbitration inter frame space	AIFS	Idle channel sensing time, or amount of time for a channel to be idle before transmission may occur.
Minimum and maximum contention windows	CW_{min} & CW_{max}	Used to select a random backoff to wait before transmitting on the channel.
Transmission opportunity duration	TXOP Duration	Amount of time a station can transmit on the channel upon gaining access.

[0029] FIG. 2 shows channel access and transmission by a station with EDCA. The station may have data to transmit at time T_1 and may sense the channel to determine whether the channel is busy or idle. If the channel is idle for a period of time equal to the AIFS value for that station, then the station may transmit data on the channel starting at time T_2 , where $T_2 - T_1 \geq \text{AIFS}$. The station may be granted a TXOP of a particular duration and may occupy the channel until time T_3 , which is the end of the TXOP duration.

[0030] The station may have more data to transmit at time T_4 and may sense the channel to determine whether the channel is busy or idle. In this example, the channel

is initially idle but becomes busy at time T_5 , since there is another station that has an AIFS value that is less than the AIFS value for this station. The station may then wait until the channel becomes idle at time T_6 and may further wait for the channel to be idle for a period of time equal to its AIFS value, which occurs at time T_7 . The station may then select a random backoff between zero and a contention window (CW), which may be set to CW_{min} initially. The random backoff is used to avoid a scenario in which multiple stations transmit simultaneously after sensing the channel idle for AIFS. The station may then count down the random backoff, pausing whenever the channel is busy and restarting the countdown after the channel is idle for AIFS (not shown in FIG. 2). The station may transmit the data when the countdown reaches zero at time T_8 . The station may be granted a TXOP and may occupy the channel until time T_9 , which is the end of the TXOP duration. Although not shown in FIG. 2, the station may double the contention window after each unsuccessful transmission until the contention window reaches CW_{max} .

[0031] The AIFS is the amount of time a station defers access to the channel after a busy period. The AIFS may thus affect the likelihood of gaining access to the channel. In general, a station with higher priority may be assigned a smaller AIFS value and may be able to access the channel before other stations with larger AIFS values. Conversely, a station with lower priority may be assigned a larger AIFS value and may defer access of the channel to other stations with smaller AIFS values.

[0032] The minimum contention window and (to a lesser extent) the maximum contention window may determine the average amount of time to access the channel. A station with a smaller CW_{min} may, on average, access the channel in a shorter amount of time than a station with a larger CW_{min} .

[0033] In another aspect, stations in a wireless network (e.g., a mesh network) may be assigned different transmission parameter values to achieve the data requirements of each station. The data requirements of a given station may be given by a guaranteed rate, QoS requirements, delay requirements, traffic load, etc. Different stations may carry different amounts of traffic and/or have different QoS requirements. Appropriate transmission parameter values may be assigned to each station to achieve the data requirements of that station.

[0034] For the mesh network shown in FIG. 1 with few wired APs, a hierarchical architecture may be formed where traffic flows within the mesh network may be

dominated by upstream flows towards the wired APs and downstream flows from the wired APs towards the stations. In such a hierarchical mesh network, the following factors may be taken into account in assigning transmission parameter values to individual mesh points or stations.

[0035] The rank of a mesh point may be indicative of the amount of traffic being exchanged via the mesh point. A mesh point of higher rank, such as MAP 130b in FIG. 1, may carry more traffic than a mesh point of lower rank, such as MAP 130c. Furthermore, the traffic through a mesh point of higher rank may have already incurred delays through mesh points of lower ranks. Therefore, a mesh point of higher rank should have higher priority in accessing the channel via smaller AIFS and CW_{min} values.

[0036] The amount of traffic and the QoS requirements of the traffic may be considered in assigning transmission parameter values. Each mesh point that forwards QoS traffic may have a descriptor of each flow being sent through that mesh point. The descriptor for each flow may provide rate information (e.g., the average bit rate and the peak bit rate of the flow) and/or delay information. The delay requirements may be used to determine the desired number of accesses per second, which in turn may be used to determine the transmission parameters, e.g., the contention window size. The TXOP duration assigned to a mesh point may be dependent on the amount of traffic carried by the mesh point.

[0037] The location of a mesh point may determine the maximum data rate achievable by the mesh point. A lower rank mesh point that is located farther from its higher rank mesh point may have a lower data rate connection to the higher rank mesh point. To ensure fairness for the forwarded flows, the TXOPs assigned to this lower rank mesh point may take into account the data rate achievable by the mesh point so that these flows may be appropriately served.

[0038] Other factors may also be considered in assigning transmission parameter values to individual mesh points. For example, the reverse direction TXOP grants of a higher rank mesh point may determine its traffic carrying capability, which may be considered in assigning transmission parameter values to lower rank mesh points. The transmission parameter values may be modified as flows and mesh points are added or removed.

[0039] In one design, a higher rank mesh point sets the transmission parameters for a lower rank mesh point. In another design, a pair of mesh points may negotiate between themselves as to which mesh point will set the transmission parameters. In yet another design, a group of mesh points may choose one mesh point to set the transmission parameters for all mesh points in that group or for a particular class of flows. In general, a mesh point that sets the transmission parameters for one or more other mesh points may be selected based on any factor or factors, which may or may not include rank. In one design that is described below, a mesh point of rank i sets the transmission parameters of mesh points of rank $i-1$ that communicate with this mesh point of rank i .

[0040] In IEEE 802.11e, an AP that supports QoS is referred to as a QoS AP (QAP), and a station that supports QoS is referred to as a QoS STA (QSTA). In IEEE 802.11e, a QAP sets the EDCA parameters for all QSTAs for each access category (or priority) in order to ensure fairness among all of the QSTAs associated with that QAP. This scheme ensures fairness but fails to address the QoS requirements of individual flows. In a mesh network, a mesh point of rank i may have several child nodes of rank $i-1$. The traffic carried by each of these child nodes may be different. In one design, a higher rank mesh point may assign different transmission parameter values to each of its child nodes. This design may allow the QoS requirements of individual child nodes to be met.

[0041] A higher rank mesh point may exchange messages with lower rank mesh points to negotiate and/or communicate transmission parameter values assigned by the higher rank mesh point to the individual lower rank mesh points. In one design, the messages may be carried in probe request and probe response frames, which may be similar to those used in IEEE 802.11e. However, the probe response frames may be extended to contain the transmission parameter values assigned to specific mesh points, which may then set their transmission parameters to the values assigned by the higher rank mesh point. Other signaling messages or management action frames may also be defined to transport these transmission parameter values.

[0042] The transmission parameters may be set in various manners. For clarity, several specific designs of setting the transmission parameters are described below. These designs assume that priority is determined by rank, so that a higher ranking mesh point has higher priority. The rank of a mesh point may be determined by the number

of hops to the wired AP, as shown in equations (1) and (2), and/or based on other factors.

[0043] In one design, the transmission parameters may be set for each traffic categories having different QoS requirements. The traffic categories may also be referred to as traffic classes, access categories, access classes, etc. In IEEE 802.11e, up to eight traffic categories may be supported and may be assigned different priorities. For clarity, the setting of transmission parameters for one traffic category is described below. The same process may be repeated for each supported traffic category.

[0044] In one design, mesh points are assigned AIFS values determined based on their ranks. A mesh point with a larger AIFS value may be “starved” by mesh points with smaller AIFS values. Hence, mesh points of higher ranks should have smaller AIFS values compared to mesh points of lower ranks, especially since higher rank mesh points may have more traffic and should thus have higher likelihood of accessing the channel. The mesh portals (e.g., wired APs 120a and 120b in FIG. 1) should have the smallest possible AIFS value. In one design, the AIFS values for mesh points may be given as:

$$\text{AIFS}[i-1] = \text{AIFS}[i] + \delta, \quad \text{Eq (3)}$$

where $\text{AIFS}[i]$ is the AIFS value for a mesh point of rank i , and

δ is an incremental AIFS value that is greater than zero.

[0045] In general, the AIFS values for the mesh points may be selected such that $\text{AIFS}[i-1] \geq \text{AIFS}[i]$, where $\text{AIFS}[i-1]$ may be defined based on any function of $\text{AIFS}[i]$. For example, $\text{AIFS}[i-1]$ may be given as $\text{AIFS}[i-1] = \eta \cdot \text{AIFS}[i]$, where η is a scaling factor that is equal to or greater than one. Other functions may also be used to obtain $\text{AIFS}[i-1]$ from $\text{AIFS}[i]$.

[0046] In one design, the same minimum and maximum contention window values are used for all mesh points, and the TXOP durations are assigned based on the data requirements of the mesh points. This design may allow some mesh points to have higher throughput than others. However, this design may introduce longer delays if a given mesh point is assigned a large TXOP and other mesh points need to wait till the end of the TXOP in order to access the channel.

[0047] In another design, the minimum and maximum contention window values as well as the TXOP duration are assigned to each mesh point based on the data requirements of that mesh point. A minimum contention window may be selected for a given mesh point as follows. It can be shown that over a sufficiently long period of time, the ratio of the number of successful attempts n_i and n_j of two mesh points i and j , respectively, may be approximately related as follows:

$$\frac{n_i}{n_j} = \frac{CW_{\min}^j}{CW_{\min}^i}, \quad \text{Eq (4)}$$

where $CW_{\min}^i$ and $CW_{\min}^j$ are the minimum contention window values for mesh points i and j , respectively. Equation (4) suggests that the ratio of the number of successful accesses, and therefore the delay to obtaining access of the channel, is roughly proportional to the minimum contention window value. Here, the maximum contention window has not been considered.

[0048] A set of higher and lower bounds or thresholds for the minimum contention window may be defined as follows:

1. $CW_{\min}^{LT}$ - a lower bound on the minimum contention window, which may be determined based on the maximum tolerable number of collisions for transmission, and
2. $CW_{\min}^{HT}$ - a higher bound on the minimum contention window, which may be determined based on the highest delay tolerance of a flow.

[0049] The minimum contention window of a flow may be set using equation (4) and may be constrained to be within the lower bound $CW_{\min}^{LT}$ and the higher bound $CW_{\min}^{HT}$. A flow with the highest delay tolerance may have its minimum contention window set to $CW_{\min}^{HT}$. A flow with a smaller delay tolerance may have its minimum contention window set lower than $CW_{\min}^{HT}$.

[0050] In one design, the TXOP duration is assigned to meet the traffic load carried by each mesh point. The average delay for channel access by a given mesh point, as given by the contention process, may be denoted as D . This average channel access delay may be dependent on the AIFS value and the minimum and maximum contention window values assigned to the mesh point. A TXOP limit, which is the largest TXOP

that may be assigned to the mesh point, may be set as a function of number of frames that arrives during the time between consecutive channel accesses based on a traffic specification (TSPEC) for the mesh point. This TXOP limit may be given as:

$$\text{TXOP}_{\text{limit}} = \frac{D \cdot g}{L} , \quad \text{Eq (5)}$$

where g is a guaranteed rate for an application, and

L is a frame size for the application.

[0051] The guaranteed rate g may be derived from TSPEC parameters if they are known or may be derived based on the peak and mean rate requirements of the application. Using token bucket parameters, the guaranteed rate g may be expressed as:

$$g = \frac{P}{\left[1 + d \cdot \frac{P - \rho}{\sigma} \right] \cdot (1 - p_e)} , \quad \text{Eq (6)}$$

where d represents delay bound, P represents peak rate, ρ represents mean rate, σ represents burst size, and p_e represents error rate. These parameters may be given in the TSPEC.

[0052] The mesh point may have a cumulative flow that is composed of individual flows having potentially different frame sizes and/or different guaranteed rates. In this case, the frame sizes of the individual flows may be weighted based on the contributions of these flows to obtain an average frame size L for the cumulative flow. The average frame size L may be determined as follows:

$$L = \frac{\sum_k g_k \cdot L_k}{\sum_k g_k} , \quad \text{Eq (7)}$$

where g_k is a guaranteed rate for flow k and L_k is a frame size for flow k .

[0053] The TXOP duration may thus be assigned to the mesh point based on the amount of traffic and the QoS requirements of the mesh point. The TXOP limit may be determined, e.g., as shown in equations (5) through (7). The TXOP duration may be equal to the TXOP limit to ensure that the guaranteed rate g can be achieved with the average channel access delay D and the frame size L . The TXOP duration may be

shorter than the TXOP limit when the traffic load is lighter and/or has a data rate that is lower than the guaranteed rate g .

[0054] A higher rank mesh point may change the TXOP limits of lower rank mesh points, e.g., depending on the number of TXOPs granted to the lower rank mesh points through grants in the reverse direction.

[0055] In one design, the assigned transmission parameter values may be sent via probe request and probe response messages. In other designs, the assigned transmission parameter values may be sent via other signaling messages (e.g., access parameter update signaling messages or other management action frames), or as part of data frames, or via other mechanism.

[0056] In yet another aspect, an AP may broadcast its current load information in its beacon frames to allow neighboring APs to determine the channel occupancy time by this AP. The AP may also make channel measurements in idle periods when the AP is not sending or receiving traffic and may estimate the channel occupancy time by neighboring APs based on the channel measurements. The AP may filter the channel measurements to obtain a more accurate estimate of the channel occupancy time by the neighboring APs.

[0057] **FIG. 3** shows a design of a process 300 for setting transmission parameters in a mesh communication network. The rank of a first station in the mesh communication network may be determined (block 312). At least one station of lower rank than the first station in the mesh communication network may be identified (block 314). At least one transmission parameter for the at least one station of lower rank may be set by the first station (block 316).

[0058] The rank of each station may be determined based on the number of hops from that station to a designated station (e.g., a wired AP) in the mesh network. The rank of each station may also be determined based on other factors, as noted above. The at least one station may communicate directly with the first station and may be one rank lower than the first station.

[0059] The at least one transmission parameter may comprise an AIFS, a minimum contention window, a maximum contention window, a TXOP duration, or any combination thereof. The first station may assign at least one transmission parameter value to each station based on data requirements of that station and/or other factors, e.g., based on the rank of the station, the QoS requirements of the station, the amount of

traffic carried by the station, the data rate achievable by the station, reverse direction grants of the first station, etc. The first station may send the at least one transmission parameter value to each station via a probe response message or some other mechanism. The first station may assign the same or different transmission parameter values to the at least one station.

[0060] The first station may autonomously set the at least one transmission parameter for the at least one station. Alternatively, the first station may negotiate with each station to set the at least one transmission parameter for that station. The first station may also be selected by the at least station to set the at least one transmission parameter for the at least one station.

[0061] **FIG. 4** shows a design of an apparatus 400 for setting transmission parameters in a mesh communication network. Apparatus 400 includes means for determining the rank of a first station in the mesh communication network (module 412), means for identifying at least one station of lower rank than the first station in the mesh communication network (module 414), and means for setting at least one transmission parameter for the at least one station of lower rank (module 416). Modules 412 to 416 may comprise processors, electronics devices, hardware devices, electronics components, logical circuits, memories, etc., or any combination thereof.

[0062] **FIG. 5** shows a design of a process 500 for setting transmission parameters in a wireless communication network, which may or may not be a mesh network. At least one transmission parameter value for at least one transmission parameter may be assigned to each of at least one station in the wireless communication network (block 512). The at least one transmission parameter value for each station may be selected based on the rank of the station, the QoS requirements of the station, the amount of traffic carried by the station, the data rate achievable by the station, the reverse direction grants to the at least one station, etc. The at least one transmission parameter value assigned to each station may be sent to that station, e.g., via probe response frames, access parameter update signaling messages, or other management action frames, or as part of data frames, or via some other mechanism (block 514).

[0063] The at least one transmission parameter may comprise an AIFS indicative of an idle channel sensing time. The station that is assigning the at least one transmission parameter value may be associated with a first AIFS value. At least one AIFS value that is larger than the first AIFS value may be assigned to the at least one station to give

the at least one station lower probability of accessing the channel than the assigning station.

[0064] The at least one transmission parameter may comprise a minimum contention window and/or a maximum contention window used to determine a random backoff before accessing the channel. A minimum contention window value may be selected for each station based on guaranteed rate and/or delay requirements of at least one flow sent by that station. The minimum contention window value may be constrained to be within a lower bound and a higher bound determined for the station. The lower bound may be determined based on the maximum tolerable number of collisions for transmissions sent by the station. The higher bound may be determined based on the maximum delay requirements of the at least one flow sent by the station. A minimum contention window value may be selected for each flow based on the higher bound, the delay requirements of that flow, and the maximum delay requirements for all of the at least one flow. A maximum contention window value may also be selected for each station.

[0065] The at least one transmission parameter may comprise TXOP duration. The TXOP duration for each station may be selected based on average channel access delay, delay requirements, guaranteed rate, achievable data rate, average frame size, etc., for the station. The average frame size for a station with multiple flows may be determined based on a weighted average of the frame sizes for the multiple flows, e.g., as shown in equation (7).

[0066] **FIG. 6** shows a design of an apparatus 600 for setting transmission parameters in a wireless communication network. Apparatus 600 includes means for assigning at least one transmission parameter value for at least one transmission parameter (e.g., AIFS, minimum contention window, maximum contention window, TXOP duration, etc.) to each of at least one station in the wireless communication network (module 612), and means for sending the at least one transmission parameter value to each of the at least one station (module 614). Modules 612 and 614 may comprise processors, electronics devices, hardware devices, electronics components, logical circuits, memories, etc., or any combination thereof.

[0067] **FIG. 7** shows a design of a process 700 for determining channel occupancy time. Load information for an access point may be determined (block 712) and broadcast in beacon frames (block 714). The load information may be indicative of an

amount of time the access point occupies the channel. Channel measurements may also be obtained in idle periods when the access point is not sending or receiving data (block 716). Channel occupancy time by neighboring access points may be estimated based on the channel measurements (block 718). The channel measurements may be filtered to obtain a more accurate estimate of the channel occupancy time by the neighboring access points.

[0068] FIG. 8 shows a design of an apparatus 800 for determining channel occupancy time. Apparatus 800 includes means for determining load information for an access point (module 812), means for broadcasting the load information in beacon frames, with the load information being indicative of an amount of time the access point occupies the channel (module 814), means for obtaining channel measurements in idle periods when the access point is not sending or receiving data (module 816), and means for estimating channel occupancy time by neighboring access points based on the channel measurements (module 818). Modules 812 to 818 may comprise processors, electronics devices, hardware devices, electronics components, logical circuits, memories, etc., or any combination thereof.

[0069] FIG. 9 shows a block diagram of two stations 900 and 950 in a wireless communication network, e.g., a mesh network. Station 900 may be a wired AP 120, and station 950 may be a MAP 130 in mesh network 100 in FIG. 1. Station 900 may also be a MAP 130, and station 950 may be a leaf station 140 in mesh network 100.

[0070] At station 900, a transmit (TX) data processor 912 receives traffic data from a data source 910, control data (e.g., transmission parameter values) from a controller/processor 920, and scheduling information from a scheduler 924. TX data processor 912 processes (e.g., encodes, interleaves, modulates, and scrambles) the data for each recipient station based on a rate selected for that station, processes control data and scheduling information, and generates output chips. A transmitter (TMTR) 914 processes (e.g., converts to analog, amplifies, filters, and upconverts) the output chips and generates a modulated signal, which is transmitted via an antenna 916 to the recipient stations.

[0071] At station 950, an antenna 952 receives the modulated signal from station 900 and provides a received signal. A receiver (RCVR) 954 processes the received signal and provides samples. A receive (RX) data processor 956 processes (e.g., descrambles, demodulates, deinterleaves, and decodes) the samples, provides decoded

data for station 950 to a data sink 958, and provides control data and scheduling information to a controller/processor 960. A TX data processor 972 receives traffic data from a data source 970 and control data from controller/processor 960. TX data processor 972 processes the traffic data and control data based on a rate selected for station 950 and generates output chips. A transmitter 974 processes the output chips and generates a modulated signal, which is transmitted via antenna 952.

[0072] At station 900, antenna 916 receives the modulated signals from station 950 and possibly other stations. A receiver 930 processes a received signal from antenna 916 and provides samples. An RX data processor 932 processes the samples and provides decoded data for each transmitting station to a data sink 934 and provides control data to controller/processor 920.

[0073] Controllers/processors 920 and 960 direct the operation at stations 900 and 950, respectively. Controllers/processors 920 and/or 960 may also implement process 300 in FIG. 3, process 500 in FIG. 5, process 700 in FIG. 7, and/or other processes for transmission control. Memories 922 and 962 store data and instructions for stations 900 and 950, respectively. If station 900 is a wired AP, then a communication (Comm) unit 924 may support communication between station 900 and a backhaul network.

[0074] The techniques described herein may be implemented by various means. For example, these techniques may be implemented in hardware, firmware, software, or a combination thereof. For a hardware implementation, the processing units used to perform the techniques may be implemented within one or more application specific integrated circuits (ASICs), digital signal processors (DSPs), digital signal processing devices (DSPDs), programmable logic devices (PLDs), field programmable gate arrays (FPGAs), processors, controllers, micro-controllers, microprocessors, electronic devices, other electronic units designed to perform the functions described herein, a computer, or a combination thereof.

[0075] For a firmware and/or software implementation, the techniques may be implemented with instructions (e.g., procedures, functions, etc.) that perform the functions described herein. The firmware and/or software instructions may be stored in a memory (e.g., memory 922 or 962 in FIG. 9) and executed by a processor (e.g., processor 920 or 960). The memory may be implemented within the processor or external to the processor. The firmware and/or software instructions may also be stored in other processor-readable medium such as random access memory (RAM), read-only

memory (ROM), non-volatile random access memory (NVRAM), programmable read-only memory (PROM), electrically erasable PROM (EEPROM), FLASH memory, compact disc (CD), magnetic or optical data storage device, etc.

[0076] The previous description of the disclosure is provided to enable any person skilled in the art to make or use the disclosure. Various modifications to the disclosure will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art, and the generic principles defined herein may be applied to other variations without departing from the spirit or scope of the disclosure. Thus, the disclosure is not intended to be limited to the examples described herein but is to be accorded the widest scope consistent with the principles and novel features disclosed herein.

CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An apparatus comprising:
at least one processor configured to determine a rank of a first station in a mesh communication network, to identify at least one station of lower rank than the first station in the mesh communication network, and to set at least one transmission parameter for the at least one station of lower rank; and
a memory coupled to the at least one processor.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the rank of each station is determined based on number of hops from the station to a designated station in the mesh communication network.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one transmission parameter comprises at least one of an arbitration inter frame space (AIFS), a minimum contention window, a maximum contention window, and a transmission opportunity (TXOP) duration.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one processor is configured to assign at least one transmission parameter value to each of the at least one station based on data requirements of the station.
5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one processor is configured to assign at least one transmission parameter value to each of the at least one station, and to send the at least one transmission parameter value to each station via a probe response message.
6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one processor is configured to autonomously set the at least one transmission parameter for the at least one station.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one processor is configured to negotiate with each of the at least one station to set the at least one transmission parameter for the station.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first station is selected by the at least station to set the at least one transmission parameter for the at least one station.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one station communicates directly with the first station and is one rank lower than the first station.

10. An apparatus comprising:

at least one processor configured to determine a rank of a first station in a mesh communication network, to identify at least one station of higher rank than the first station in the mesh communication network, to select one of the at least one station of higher rank to set at least one transmission parameter for the first station, and to receive at least one transmission parameter value from the selected station of higher rank; and
a memory coupled to the at least one processor.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the at least one processor is configured to perform channel access based on the at least one transmission parameter value.

12. A method comprising:

determining a rank of a first station in a mesh communication network;
identifying at least one station of lower rank than the first station in the mesh communication network; and
setting at least one transmission parameter for the at least one station of lower rank.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the setting the at least one transmission parameter comprises

assigning at least one transmission parameter value to each of the at least one station based on data requirements of the station.

14. An apparatus comprising:
means for determining a rank of a first station in a mesh communication network;
means for identifying at least one station of lower rank than the first station in the mesh communication network; and
means for setting at least one transmission parameter for the at least one station of lower rank.

15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the means for setting the at least one transmission parameter comprises
means for assigning at least one transmission parameter value to each of the at least one station based on data requirements of the station.

16. A processor-readable medium including instructions stored thereon, comprising:
instructions for determining a rank of a first station in a mesh communication network;
instructions for identifying at least one station of lower rank than the first station in the mesh communication network; and
instructions for setting at least one transmission parameter for the at least one station of lower rank.

17. An apparatus comprising:
at least one processor configured to assign at least one transmission parameter value for at least one transmission parameter to each of at least one station in a wireless communication network, and to send the at least one transmission parameter value to each of the at least one station; and
a memory coupled to the at least one processor.

18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the at least one processor is configured to determine a rank of each station and to assign the at least one transmission parameter value to each station based on the rank of the station.

19. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the at least one processor is configured to assign the at least one transmission parameter value to each station based on quality of service (QoS) requirements of the station.

20. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the at least one processor is configured to assign the at least one transmission parameter value to each station based on amount of traffic carried by the station.

21. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the at least one processor is configured to assign the at least one transmission parameter value to each station based on data rate achievable by the station.

22. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the at least one processor is configured to assign the at least one transmission parameter value to each station based on reverse direction grants to the at least one station.

23. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the at least one transmission parameter comprises an arbitration inter frame space (AIFS) indicative of an idle channel sensing time.

24. The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the at least one processor is configured to assign the at least one station with at least one AIFS value that is larger than a first AIFS value for the apparatus to give the at least one station lower probability of accessing a channel.

25. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the at least one transmission parameter comprises a minimum contention window used to determine a random backoff before accessing a channel.

26. The apparatus of claim 25, wherein the at least one processor is configured to select a minimum contention window value for each station based on a guaranteed rate for at least one flow sent by the station.

27. The apparatus of claim 25, wherein the at least one processor is configured to select a minimum contention window value for each station based on delay requirements of at least one flow sent by the station.

28. The apparatus of claim 25, wherein the at least one processor is configured to determine a lower bound and a higher bound for the minimum contention window for each station, and to select a minimum contention window value for each station to be within the lower and higher bounds for the station.

29. The apparatus of claim 25, wherein the at least one processor is configured to determine a higher bound for the minimum contention window for each station based on maximum delay requirements of at least one flow sent by the station, and to select a minimum contention window value for each station to be less than or equal to the higher bound for the station.

30. The apparatus of claim 25, wherein the at least one processor is configured to determine a lower bound for the minimum contention window for each station based on maximum tolerable number of collisions for transmissions sent by the station, and to select a minimum contention window value for each station to be equal to or greater than the lower bound for the station.

31. The apparatus of claim 25, wherein the at least one processor is configured to select a minimum contention window value for each of at least one flow sent by each station based on a higher bound for the minimum contention window, delay requirements of the flow, and maximum delay requirements for the at least one flow.

32. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the at least one transmission parameter comprises a maximum contention window used to determine a maximum random backoff before accessing a channel.

33. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the at least one transmission parameter comprises transmission opportunity (TXOP) duration.

34. The apparatus of claim 33, wherein the at least one processor is configured to select the TXOP duration for each station based on delay requirements of at least one flow sent by the station.

35. The apparatus of claim 33, wherein the at least one processor is configured to select the TXOP duration for each station based on an average channel access delay, a guaranteed rate, and an average frame size for the station.

36. The apparatus of claim 35, wherein the at least one processor is configured to determine the average frame size for a station with multiple flows based on a weighted average of frame sizes for the multiple flows.

37. The apparatus of claim 33, wherein the at least one processor is configured to select the TXOP duration for each station based on data rate achievable by the station.

38. A method comprising:
assigning at least one transmission parameter value for at least one transmission parameter to each of at least one station in a wireless communication network; and
sending the at least one transmission parameter value to each of the at least one station.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein the assigning the at least one transmission parameter value comprises

assigning the at least one transmission parameter value to each station based on at least one of a rank of the station, quality of service (QoS) requirements of the station, amount of traffic carried by the station, and data rate achievable by the station.

40. The method of claim 38, wherein the assigning the at least one transmission parameter value comprises

assigning at least one of an arbitration inter frame space (AIFS) value, a minimum contention window value, a maximum contention window value, and transmission opportunity (TXOP) duration to each station.

41. An apparatus comprising:

means for assigning at least one transmission parameter value for at least one transmission parameter to each of at least one station in a wireless communication network; and

means for sending the at least one transmission parameter value to each of the at least one station.

42. The apparatus of claim 41, wherein the means for assigning the at least one transmission parameter value comprises

means for assigning the at least one transmission parameter value to each station based on at least one of a rank of the station, quality of service (QoS) requirements of the station, amount of traffic carried by the station, and data rate achievable by the station.

43. The apparatus of claim 41, wherein the means for assigning the at least one transmission parameter value comprises

means for assigning at least one of an arbitration inter frame space (AIFS) value, a minimum contention window value, a maximum contention window value, and transmission opportunity (TXOP) duration to each station.

44. A processor-readable medium including instructions stored thereon, comprising:

instructions for assigning at least one transmission parameter value for at least one transmission parameter to each of at least one station in a wireless communication network; and

instructions for sending the at least one transmission parameter value to each of the at least one station.

45. The processor-readable medium of claim 44, wherein the second instruction set comprises

instructions for assigning at least one of an arbitration inter frame space (AIFS) value, a minimum contention window value, a maximum contention window value, and transmission opportunity (TXOP) duration to each station.

46. An apparatus comprising:

at least one processor configured to determine load information for an access point and to broadcast the load information in beacon frames, the load information being indicative of an amount of time the access point occupies a channel; and

a memory coupled to the at least one processor.

47. The apparatus of claim 46, wherein the at least one processor is configured to obtain channel measurements in idle periods when the access point is not sending or receiving data, and to estimate channel occupancy time by neighboring access points based on the channel measurements.

48. The apparatus of claim 47, wherein the at least one processor is configured to filter the channel measurements to obtain a more accurate estimate of the channel occupancy time by the neighboring access points.

49. A method comprising:

determining load information for an access point; and

broadcasting the load information in beacon frames, the load information being indicative of an amount of time the access point occupies a channel.

50. The method of claim 49, further comprising:

obtaining channel measurements in idle periods when the access point is not sending or receiving data; and

estimating channel occupancy time by neighboring access points based on the channel measurements.