



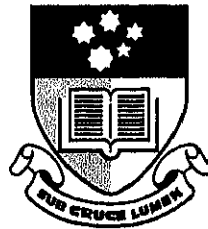
Ionospheric Scintillation Effects on Global Positioning System Receivers

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	VII
DECLARATION	IX
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	XI
LIST OF FIGURES	XIII
LIST OF TABLES	XIX
ABBREVIATIONS	XXI
LIST OF SYMBOLS	XXIII
PUBLICATIONS	XXIX
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. MOTIVATION.....	2
1.2. THESIS OUTLINE AND CONTRIBUTIONS	3
2. BACKGROUND	5
2.1. IONOSPHERIC SCINTILLATIONS	5
2.1.1. The ionosphere.....	5
2.1.2. Morphology of scintillations.....	7
2.1.3. Statistical characteristics of scintillations	10
2.1.4. Wide Band Scintillation Model	15
2.1.5. Phase screen model.....	16
2.1.5.1. Deterministic phase screen	17
2.1.5.2. Random phase screen	18

2.1.6. Summary.....	19
2.2. GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM.....	20
2.2.1. Principles of GPS positioning.....	20
2.2.2. GPS receiver tracking loops.....	23
2.3. A REVIEW OF SCINTILLATION EFFECTS ON GPS.....	25
2.3.1. Carrier tracking loops	26
2.3.2. Code tracking loops	29
2.3.3. Codeless and Semi-Codeless receivers.....	30
2.3.4. Navigation data.....	30
2.3.5. Acquisition.....	31
2.3.6. Optimum tracking of the carrier phase	32
2.3.7. Scintillation effects on navigation.....	32
2.4. SUMMARY.....	33
3. CARRIER TRACKING LOOPS.....	35
3.1. CARRIER LOOP MODEL.....	36
3.2. THE IMPACT OF PHASE SCINTILLATIONS ON CARRIER PHASE TRACKING LOOPS	42
3.2.1. Phase tracking errors and thresholds.....	42
3.2.2. The effects of pre-detection filtering on phase errors	49
3.2.3. Carrier phase range errors.....	51
3.2.4. Doppler errors.....	54
3.2.5. Summary.....	55
3.3. THE IMPACT OF AMPLITUDE SCINTILLATIONS ON CARRIER PHASE TRACKING LOOPS.....	57
3.3.1. Background.....	58
3.3.2. Phase errors from the linear model	60
3.3.2.1. Amplitude scintillations only.....	60
3.3.2.2. Amplitude and phase scintillations	69
3.3.2.3. Amplitude scintillations and dynamics.....	72
3.3.2.4. Additional comments.....	73
3.3.3. Phase errors from the non-linear model	74
3.3.4. The effects of pre-detection filtering on phase errors	77
3.3.5. Summary.....	79
3.4. CARRIER LOOP TRACKING THRESHOLDS	81
3.4.1. Optimum loop bandwidths.....	85

3.4.2. WBMOD predictions of T and S ₄	87
3.4.3. Velocity and elevation angle effects	88
3.4.3.1. Elevation angle effects	88
3.4.3.2. Satellite and receiver velocity	91
3.4.4. Summary.....	94
3.5. THE IMPACT OF FADE DEPTH AND DURATION ON CYCLE SLIPS.....	96
3.5.1. 1 st Order loops.....	99
3.5.1.1. Constant velocity	105
3.5.2. 2 nd Order loops.....	106
3.5.2.1. Constant acceleration	108
3.5.3. Pre-detection filters.....	109
3.5.4. Summary.....	110
3.6. SCINTILLATION EFFECTS ON CARRIER PHASE DIFFERENTIAL GPS.....	111
3.7. CARRIER FREQUENCY TRACKING LOOPS.....	115
3.7.1. The impact of phase scintillations on frequency tracking loops	117
3.7.2. The impact of amplitude scintillations on frequency tracking loops	120
3.8. CONCLUSIONS	121
4. CODE TRACKING LOOPS.....	123
4.1. CODE LOOP MODEL	123
4.2. THE IMPACT OF PHASE SCINTILLATIONS ON CODE TRACKING LOOPS.....	130
4.3. THE IMPACT OF AMPLITUDE SCINTILLATIONS ON CODE TRACKING LOOPS	132
4.3.1. Slow amplitude fluctuations	138
4.4. FREQUENCY-SELECTIVE SCINTILLATION EFFECTS.....	143
4.5. CONCLUSIONS	152
5. CODELESS AND SEMI-CODELESS RECEIVERS.....	153
5.1. CODELESS PROCESSING TECHNIQUES	153
5.2. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS	155
5.3. THRESHOLD CURVES	158
5.4. SCINTILLATION MEASUREMENTS.....	160
5.4.1. Overview of scintillation data.....	160
5.4.1.1. Novatel Millennium™ data	160

5.4.2. A comparison of models with measurements.....	162
5.5. CONCLUSIONS	163
6. NAVIGATION DATA	165
6.1. BACKGROUND.....	165
6.2. THE IMPACT OF PHASE SCINTILLATIONS ON NAVIGATION DATA.....	168
6.3. THE IMPACT OF AMPLITUDE SCINTILLATIONS ON NAVIGATION DATA.....	170
6.4. THE COMBINED EFFECT OF SCINTILLATIONS ON NAVIGATION DATA.....	175
6.5. A NOTE ON WORD ERROR PROBABILITIES	177
6.6. CONCLUSIONS	179
7. ACQUISITION	181
7.1. ACQUISITION MODEL.....	181
7.2. DETECTION AND FALSE ALARM PROBABILITIES	182
7.2.1. Phase scintillation effects.....	187
7.2.2. Correlation sidelobes.....	190
7.3. ACQUISITION TIMES.....	193
7.3.1. Acquisition search strategy	193
7.3.2. Mean time to acquire	194
7.3.2.1. Amplitude correlation times	196
7.3.2.2. Short amplitude correlation times.....	197
7.3.2.3. Long amplitude correlation times	200
7.3.3. Independence	204
7.3.4. False alarms	206
7.4. CONCLUSIONS	207
8. OPTIMUM TRACKING OF THE CARRIER PHASE	209
8.1. WIENER FILTER APPROACH.....	209
8.1.1. Causal Wiener filters.....	210
8.1.2. Non-causal Wiener filters	217
8.1.3. Doppler errors.....	218
8.1.4. Optimum post-loop filters.....	222
8.2. DIRECT DETERMINATION OF THE MMSE	225

8.2.1. Doppler errors.....	227
8.3. CONCLUSIONS	229
9. SCINTILLATION EFFECTS ON NAVIGATION.....	231
9.1. PREDICTING THE PERFORMANCE OF A SINGLE LINK.....	231
9.2. PREDICTING THE PERFORMANCE OF MULTIPLE LINKS.....	233
9.3. PREDICTING NAVIGATIONAL ACCURACY	234
9.4. PREDICTIONS BASED ON WBMOD.....	238
9.5. CONCLUSIONS	245
10. SUMMARY	247
10.1. OVERVIEW	247
10.2. CONCLUSIONS	249
10.3. FURTHER RESEARCH	252
APPENDIX A: SCINTILLATION MODEL	255
APPENDIX B: GPS TRACKING LOOP SIMULATORS	265
APPENDIX C: TRACKING THRESHOLDS AND CYCLE SLIPS.....	269
APPENDIX D: THERMAL NOISE ERRORS	275
APPENDIX E: DOPPLER ERRORS	285
APPENDIX F: IONOSPHERIC PIERCE POINT VELOCITY	289
APPENDIX G: WBMOD PREDICTIONS OF F_C.....	295
BIBLIOGRAPHY	297

Abstract

The Global Positioning System (GPS) is used extensively in both the military and civilian communities for such diverse activities as navigation, surveying, remote sensing, asset management and precise timing. The tremendous popularity of GPS has stemmed from the low cost and small size of modern GPS receivers, and from the high accuracy and reliability of the system. This second factor has also resulted in GPS being considered as a sole means of navigation for critical safety of life applications such as precision approach and landing for aircraft and narrow channel navigation for ships.

A number of environmental factors are known to affect the performance of GPS, including electromagnetic interference, multipath, foliage attenuation, atmospheric delays and ionospheric scintillations. In this thesis, the effects of ionospheric scintillations on GPS will be examined.

Ionospheric scintillations are rapid variations in the amplitude and phase of transionospheric radio signal resulting from density irregularities in the ionosphere. Scintillations have the capacity to affect both the accuracy and reliability of GPS systems by compromising the performance of the code and carrier tracking loops of a receiver. In order to quantify this effect, a widely used stochastic model of scintillation activity is combined with various tracking and acquisition models to produce a collection of receiver performance measures. These include the magnitude of the code and carrier range measurement errors, a measure of the tracking state of the carrier loop, the mean time to acquire, and the bit error probability for the navigation data. An advantage of the stochastic model chosen in this study is that it is linked to an existing predictive scintillation model which is based on large amounts of scintillation data collected over the previous 20 years or so. Consequently, by combining these models it is possible to predict the performance of a given receiver type at any future time and location.