Frame Relay

- Designed to be more efficient than X.25
- Developed before ATM
- Larger installed base than ATM
- ATM now of more interest on high speed networks

Frame Relay Background - X.25

- Call control packets, in band signaling
- Multiplexing of virtual circuits at layer 3
- Layer 2 and 3 include flow and error control
- Considerable overhead
- Not appropriate for modern digital systems with high reliability

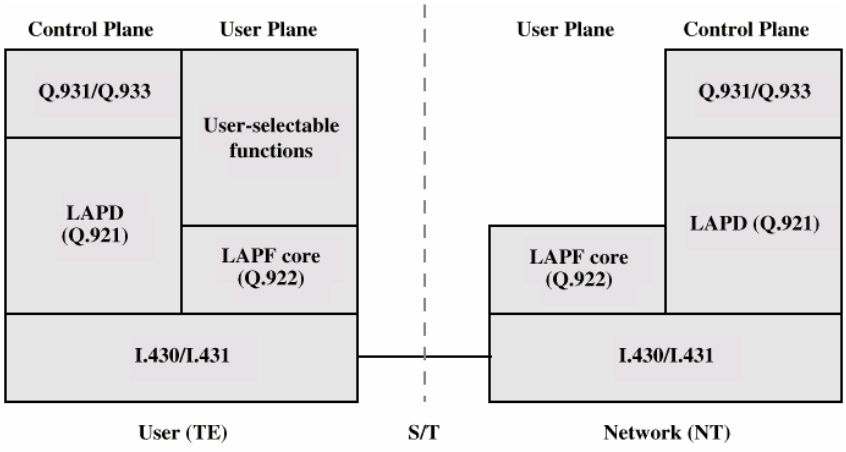
Frame Relay - Differences

- Call control carried in separate logical connection
- Multiplexing and switching at layer 2
  - Eliminates one layer of processing
- No hop by hop error or flow control
- End to end flow and error control (if used) are done by higher layer
- Single user data frame sent from source to destination and ACK (from higher layer) sent back

Advantages and Disadvantages

- Lost link by link error and flow control
  - Increased reliability makes this less of a problem
- Streamlined communications process
  - Lower delay
  - Higher throughput
- ITU-T recommend frame relay above 2Mbps

Protocol Architecture



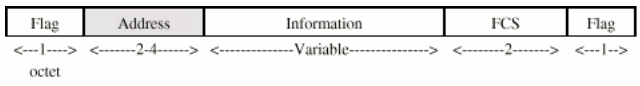
Control Plane

- Between subscriber and network
- Separate logical channel used
  - Similar to common channel signaling for circuit switching services
- Data link layer
  - LAPD (Q.921)
  - Reliable data link control
  - Error and flow control
  - Between user (TE) and network (NT)
  - Used for exchange of Q.933 control signal messages

User Plane

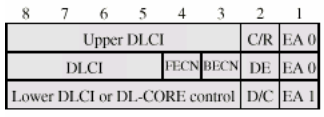
- End to end functionality
- Transfer of info between ends
- LAPF (Link Access Procedure for Frame Mode Bearer Services) Q.922
  - Frame delimiting, alignment and transparency
  - Frame mux and demux using addressing field
  - Ensure frame is integral number of octets (zero bit insertion/extraction)
  - Ensure frame is neither too long nor short
  - Detection of transmission errors
  - Congestion control functions

LAPF Core Formats

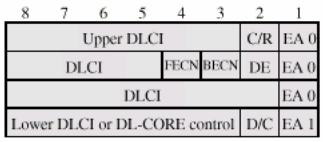


(a) Frame format

(b) Address field - 2 octets (default)



(c) Address field - 3 octets



(d) Address field - 4 octets

EA	Address field extension bit
C/R	Command/response bit
FECN	Forward explicit congestion notification
BECN	Backward explicit congestion notification
DLCI	Data link connection identifier
D/C	DLCI or DL-CORE control indicator
DE	Discard eligibility

User Data Transfer

- One frame type
  - User data
  - No control frame
- No inband signaling
- No sequence numbers
  - No flow nor error control

Required Reading

- Stallings Chapter 11
- ATM Forum Web site
- Frame Relay forum