

The Vehicle Routing Problem with Service Level Constraints

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Abstract. We consider a vehicle routing problem which seeks to minimize cost subject to service level constraints on several groups of deliveries. This problem captures some essential challenges faced by a logistics provider which operates transportation services for a limited number of partners and should respect contractual obligations on service levels. The problem also generalizes several important classes of vehicle routing problems with profits. To solve it, we propose a compact mathematical formulation, a branch-and-price algorithm, and a hybrid genetic algorithm with population management, which relies on problem-tailored solution representation, crossover and local search operators, as well as an adaptive penalization mechanism establishing a good balance between service levels and costs. Our computational experiments show that the proposed heuristic returns very high-quality solutions for this difficult problem, matches all optimal solutions found for small and medium-scale benchmark instances, and improves upon existing algorithms for two important special cases: the vehicle routing problem with private fleet and common carrier, and the capacitated profitable tour problem. The branch-and-price algorithm also produces new optimal solutions for all three problems.

Keywords. Routing, collaborative logistics, service level constraints, integer programming, genetic algorithms.

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