A Quick Prediction for Shear Behaviour of RC Membrane Elements by Fixed-Angle Softened Truss Model with Tension-Stiffening

X. Wang, J. S. Kuang

Abstract—The Fixed-angle Softened Truss Model with Tension-stiffening (FASTMT) has a superior performance in predicting the shear behaviour of reinforced concrete (RC) membrane elements, especially for the post-cracking behaviour. Nevertheless, massive computational work is inevitable due to the multiple transcendental equations involved in the stress-strain relationship. In this paper, an iterative root-finding technique is introduced to FASTMT for solving quickly the transcendental equations of the tension-stiffening effect of RC membrane elements. This fast FASTMT, which performs in MATLAB, uses the bisection method to calculate the tensile stress of the membranes. By adopting the simplification, the elapsed time of each loop is reduced significantly and the transcendental equations can be solved accurately. Owing to the high efficiency and good accuracy as compared with FASTMT, the fast FASTMT can be further applied in quick prediction of shear behaviour of complex large-scale RC structures.

Keywords—Bisection method, fixed-angle softened truss model with tension-stiffening, iterative root-finding technique, reinforced concrete membrane.

I. INTRODUCTION

DURING the past several decades, remarkable progress has been achieved in theories of predicting shear strength of 2-D RC membrane elements under pure shear condition. A shear model is required to analytically predict the shear behaviour of RC elements under different loading conditions. A rational shear model has to rigorously satisfy Navier’s three-principals of mechanics of material, including equilibrium equations, compatibility condition and constitutive models, to correctly predict a shear load and deformation history under different loading patterns [1].

A 2-D RC element subjected to membrane stresses is considered as a series of trusses, consisting of compressive concrete struts and tensile steel ties, following which a softened truss model was developed to employ a softened compression constitutive model for concrete to cope with the degraded concrete stress after cracking. Based on the softened truss model rules and rotating angle theory, the rotating-angle softened truss model (RASTM) [2] was proposed, where cracks are assumed to be perpendicular to the direction of principal tensile stress in concrete element. The constitutive model of concrete is based on actual nonlinear and softened behaviour of concrete under compression, and a sophisticated tensile stress-strain relationship is adopted. A smeared model for reinforcing bars covered by concrete was obtained from experiments. As the principal stress direction coincides with the crack direction, the contribution of concrete to shear strength is equal to zero.

To incorporate the contribution of concrete, which, together with contribution of steel, forms the shear strength of a membrane element, the fixed-angle softened truss model (FASTM) was proposed based on the softened truss model rules and fixed-angle theory [3], [4]. The principal direction deviates from the crack direction, creating a concrete shear stress on the cracked surface, which serves as the source of concrete contribution to the shear strength of the RC element.

The two softened truss models both adopt uniaxial constitutive relationship for concrete, which may overestimate the shear strengths of specimens. The softened membrane model (SMM) [5], which is similar to FASTM except for using a biaxial constitutive relationship, was developed and the two-dimensional softening effect was considered. Nevertheless, the improvement to biaxial constitutive relationship shows negligible influence on the prediction of peak shear strength by comparing FASTM with SMM. So FASTM has a superior performance with theoretical accuracy and calculation simplicity. However, the expression of concrete under uniaxial tension in these shear models could not correctly present the tensile stress-strain curve for concrete. It is shown in the experimental study [6] that the tensile stress of concrete vanishes rapidly after the initiation of first crack, which disagrees with the smooth and gentle ascending branch of the original tensile stress-strain relationship from FASTM. The FASTMT effect [7] was developed to enhance the accuracy of shear strength prediction by refining the tensile stress-strain curve of concrete with tension-stiffening effect. A comprehensive tension-stiffening model for post-cracking concrete was adopted including the influence of bond stress-slip relationship, orthogonal reinforcement and crack propagation. The predicted peak shear strength by FASTMT shows excellent agreement with the experimental results.

The modification of tension stiffening effect provides a more comprehensive theoretical background for FASTM and a more rational constitutive model for concrete in tension. However, complex transcendental equations are repeatedly solved in the calculation procedure. Massive computational effort is required for a full profile of shear stress-strain curve and consequently the solving procedure becomes extremely time-consuming. This paper aims to improve the calculation efficiency of shear
prediction by FASTMT without sacrificing the accuracy. A fast
FASTMT is proposed and an iterative root-finding method is
adopted in the algorithm. The elapsed time of each iteration
loop is reduced significantly thus further application in various
large-scale RC structures is allowed.

II. MODEL DESCRIPTION

A. Basic Principles

The 2-D RC membrane element is subjected to in-plane
shear stress \( \tau_{tt} \), and biaxial stresses, \( \sigma_1 \) and \( \sigma_2 \), along \( l-t \)
coordinate, which is also the direction for longitudinal and
transverse reinforcement. For reinforcement grid, \( \rho_l \) and \( \rho_t \)
are the reinforcing ratios along \( l \) – axes and \( t \) – axes, and \( f_r \) as
well as \( f_c \) are the average stresses in longitudinal and transverse
steel, respectively. In fixed angle theory, the principal stresses
of concrete stress are denoted as \( \sigma_1' \) and \( \sigma_2' \) and shear stress
along crack surface is \( \tau_{12} \), and the cracks are assumed to be
propagating along the \( 2-t \) coordinate. The corresponding \( 1-t \)
coordinate is defined as the principal direction of applied
stresses, and it is obtained by rotating the \( l-t \) coordinate of
in-plane stresses by a fixed angle of \( \alpha_1 \), as illustrated in Fig. 1.

![Fig. 1 Stress states and coordinates of fast FASTMT](image)

B. Equilibrium Conditions

In fixed-angle theory, the concrete stress condition in \( l-t \)
coordinate is transformed into a \( 1-2 \) coordinate, which is the
principal coordinate of applied stresses. The angle between two
coordinates is denoted as \( \alpha_1 \) and its value remains fixed as the
loading increases proportionally. Accordingly, the governing
equations for equilibrium condition of fixed-angle softened
truss model are:

\[
\sigma_i = \sigma_i' \cos^2 \alpha_i + \sigma_i'' \sin^2 \alpha_i - \tau_{12}' \sin \alpha_i \cos \alpha_i + \rho_i f_c
\]

(1)

\[
\sigma_i = \sigma_i' \sin^2 \alpha_i + \sigma_i'' \cos^2 \alpha_i + \tau_{12}' \sin \alpha_i \cos \alpha_i + \rho_i f_c
\]

(2)

\[
\tau_{ij} = (\sigma_i' - \sigma_j') \sin \alpha_i \cos \alpha_i + \tau_{12}' \cos \alpha_i - \sin \alpha_i
\]

(3)

C. Strain Compatibility

The compatibility conditions of fast FASTMT are obtained
by assuming the cracks propagate along \( 2-t \) axis and the
principal stress direction coincides with the principal strain
direction. By transforming a set of strains in \( l-t \) coordinate
into \( 1-2 \) coordinate, the governing equations are:

\[
\varepsilon_i = \varepsilon_i' \cos^2 \alpha_i + \varepsilon_i'' \sin^2 \alpha_i - \frac{\gamma_{12}}{2} \sin \alpha_i \cos \alpha_i
\]

(4)

\[
\varepsilon_i = \varepsilon_i' \sin^2 \alpha_i + \varepsilon_i'' \cos^2 \alpha_i + \frac{\gamma_{12}}{2} \sin \alpha_i \cos \alpha_i
\]

(5)

\[
\frac{\gamma_{12}}{2} = (\varepsilon_i - \varepsilon_2') \sin \alpha_i \cos \alpha_i + \frac{\gamma_{12}'}{2} (\cos^2 \alpha_i - \sin^2 \alpha_i)
\]

(6)

D. Constitutive Laws

The concrete under compression is treated as an orthotropic
material with a softening coefficient \( \zeta \), which softens the
strength capacity of cracked concrete and is developed based on
experimental studies. The angle \( \beta \) represents the deviation
between angle of principal direction of applied stresses and the
angle of principal direction of concrete stresses. The governing
equations for concrete under compression are:

\[
\sigma_i' = \frac{\zeta}{\varepsilon_0} \left( 2 \left( \frac{\varepsilon_i}{\varepsilon_0} \right) - \left( \frac{\varepsilon_i}{\varepsilon_0} \right)^2 \right), \quad \frac{\sigma_i'}{\varepsilon_0} \leq 1
\]

(7a)

\[
\sigma_i' = \frac{\varepsilon_0}{\varepsilon_i} \left[ 1 - \left( \frac{\varepsilon_i}{\varepsilon_0} \right)^2 \right], \quad \frac{\varepsilon_i}{\varepsilon_0} > 1
\]

(7b)

\[
\zeta = \frac{5.8}{\sqrt{f_c}} \leq 0.9 \left( \frac{1}{1 + 400 \varepsilon_1} \right) \left( \frac{1}{1 + 24'} \right)
\]

(8)

\[
\beta = \frac{1}{2} \tan^{-1} \left( \frac{\gamma_{12}'}{\varepsilon_1 - \varepsilon_2} \right)
\]

(9)

where \( \varepsilon_0 \) represents the strain level under maximum
compressive stress and the value is taken as -0.00235.

For concrete in tension, a comprehensive tension-stiffening
model [8]-[10] is employed. It assumes a linear bond stress-slip
relationship between reinforcement and the surrounding
concrete and includes the effect of orthogonal reinforcement.
The stress-strain relationship can be divided into several stages
and the governing equations are listed accordingly.

In linear stage, the concrete is within its elastic range and
\( \varepsilon_1 \leq 0.00008 \). The tensile stress-strain relationship gives:

\[
\sigma_i' = E_i \varepsilon_i
\]

(10a)

After the initiation of first crack, the maximum tensile stress
in concrete starts to converge to tensile strength of concrete \( f_c' \)
and the nonlinear stress-strain curve for \( 0.00008 \leq \varepsilon_1 \leq 0.001 \)
becomes:
\[
\sigma' \frac{\varepsilon}{f'_{r}} = \frac{1}{2} \quad (10f)
\]

\[
\epsilon_{t} = \left( \frac{f_{r} \rho_{s} \cos \theta + f_{r} \rho_{t} \sin \theta}{E_{r}} \right) \frac{\epsilon_{t}}{f'_{r}} \frac{1}{E_{r}} \quad (10g)
\]

\[
\sigma' = \frac{1}{2} \quad (10h)
\]

For the curve between the crack stabilisation point and the lower boundary point and the curve between the lower boundary point and the termination point, the normalised tensile stress-strain curve is plotted linearly.

It is observed in experiments [6] that a marked reduction occurs in the tensile capacity of concrete at higher deformations, and the normalised curve neglects such reduction. To account for this phenomenon and the accumulated damage to concrete by gradually increasing cracks, a variable tensile strength \( f'_{e} \) [8] is introduced to replace the fixed tensile strength \( f'_{r} \):

\[
f'_{e} = f'_{r} \exp \left[ -C \left( \epsilon_{t} - f'_{r}/E_{r} \right) \right] \quad (10k)
\]

where \( C \) is a damage parameter and \( C = 550 \).

For concrete in shear, the relationship between shear stress and shear strain gives:

\[
\tau'_{s} = \frac{\sigma' - \sigma'_{s}}{2 \left( \epsilon_{t} - \epsilon_{s} \right)} \gamma_{s} \quad (11)
\]

For reinforcement, a smeared model of steel is used and the stress-strain curve is obtained from experiments and only for embedded steel covered by concrete instead of bare steel bars.

The notations \( f_{s} \) and \( f_{r} \) denote the reinforcement stresses along the \( l \) and \( t \) directions, respectively. The governing equations for embedded mild steel bars are as:

\[
f'_{s} = E_{s} \epsilon_{s}, \quad \epsilon_{l} \leq \epsilon_{s} \quad (12a)
\]

\[
f'_{s} = \left( 0.91 - 2B_{s} \right) f'_{s} + \left( 0.02 + 0.25B_{s} \right) E_{s} \epsilon_{l}, \quad \epsilon_{l} > \epsilon_{s} \quad (12b)
\]

where

\[
E_{s} = \frac{1}{\rho_{s} \left( f'_{s} \right)^{1.5}} \quad (12c)
\]

\[
f'_{r} = 0.31 \sqrt{f'_{r}} \text{ (MPa) and } \rho_{s} \geq 0.15\% \quad (12d)
\]

\[
f'_{r} = E_{s} \epsilon_{s}, \quad \epsilon_{l} \leq \epsilon_{s} \quad (13a)
\]

\[
f'_{r} = \left( 0.91 - 2B_{r} \right) f'_{r} + \left( 0.02 + 0.25B_{r} \right) E_{s} \epsilon_{l}, \quad \epsilon_{l} > \epsilon_{s} \quad (13b)
\]

where

\[
E_{s} = \frac{1}{\rho_{s} \left( f'_{r} \right)^{1.5}} \quad (13c)
\]

\[
f'_{r} = \left( 0.93 - 2B_{s} \right) f'_{r} \quad (13d)
\]

\[
B_{r} = \frac{1}{\rho_{s} \left( f'_{r} \right)^{1.5}} \quad (13e)
\]
By subtracting and summing (1) and (2), two equilibrium equations are obtained to check the convergence of stress and strain solutions:

\[
\rho_f f_l + \rho_s f_s = (\sigma_l + \tau_l) - (\sigma_s' + \sigma_l')
\]

(14)

\[
\rho_f f_l - \rho_s f_s = (\sigma_l - \tau_l) - (\sigma_s' + \sigma_l') \cos 2\alpha_l + 2\epsilon_{\sigma_l}^0 \sin 2\alpha_l
\]

(15)

### III. ANALYSIS METHOD

#### A. Solution Algorithm

13 governing equations of fast FASTMT, (1)-(13f), contains 16 unknown variables, including 8 stresses \((\sigma_l, \sigma_s, \tau_l, \sigma'_l, \sigma'_s, \tau'_l, f_l, f_s)\), 6 strains \((\epsilon_1, \epsilon_2, \gamma_{12}, \epsilon_1, \epsilon_2, \gamma_{12})\), as well as the angle \(\beta\) and the softening coefficient \(\zeta\). If 3 additional unknown variables are provided, the remaining 13 parameters can be solved by the 13 governing equations and the required stresses and strains are obtained.

For a 2-D RC membrane specimen subjected to membrane stresses, the pure shear condition provides two of the three unknown variables, \(\sigma_1 = \sigma_2 = 0\). The last unknown variable can be chosen by selecting a value for \(\epsilon_2\), due to the fact that \(\epsilon_2\) varies linearly with shear strain \(\gamma_{12}\). With all three unknown variables obtained, the set of equations can be solved by iterative procedures shown in Fig. 2:

1) Select a value for \(\epsilon_2\).
2) Assume the values for principal strains \(\gamma_{12}\) and \(\epsilon_1\).
3) Calculate the strains \(\epsilon_1\) and \(\epsilon_2\) in \(-t\) coordinate by (4) and (5).
4) Solve for concrete principal stresses \(\sigma'_1, \sigma'_2\) and \(\tau'_l\) by calculating the parameters including the angle \(\beta\) and softening coefficient \(\zeta\) by (8) and (9).
5) Solve for reinforcement stresses \(f_l\) and \(f_s\) in \(-t\) coordinate by (12a)-(12f) and (13a)-(13f).
6) Check if the two convergence conditions (14) and (15) are satisfied. Otherwise, adjust the values of \(\gamma_{12}\) and \(\epsilon_1\) so that the convergence criteria can be satisfied.
7) Solve for shear strain \(\gamma_{lt}\) and shear stress \(\tau_{lt}\) in \(-t\) coordinate by (3) and (6).
8) Change the value for \(\epsilon_2\) and repeat step 1 through 7. In this way, a set of \(\gamma_{lt}\) and \(\tau_{lt}\) for various \(\epsilon_2\) can be obtained and the shear stress-strain curve can be plotted.

#### B. Fast FASTMT

The analyse method was performed off-line using a commercial software package MATLAB R2013b [11] and the key step is to find the values of \(\gamma_{12}\) and \(\epsilon_1\) that satisfy the equilibrium criteria. As shown in Fig. 3, this calculation procedure starts by enumerating all possible values of concrete principal strain denoted by \(\epsilon_1(i)\) and \(\gamma_{12}(j)\). Following this, a \(i \times j\) matrix \(P(i,j)\) will be constructed and each grid \(P(i,j)\) represents the square summation of the difference between the two sides of the two equilibrium equations, (14) and (15), with variables \(\epsilon_1(i)\) and \(\gamma_{12}(j)\). The equilibrium conditions are satisfied if the value of square summation \(P(i,j)\) approaches to zero with a certain tolerance. The minimum \(P(i,j)\) will be located and the corresponding coordinate \((i,j)\) will be returned, eventually one set of \(\gamma_{12}(i,j)\) and \(\epsilon_1(i,j)\) which best satisfies the two equilibrium equations will be selected.

In the process of solving for the square summation value \(P(i,j)\), multiple transcendental equations (10b) and (10c) in the tensile stress-strain relationship for post-cracking concrete will be involved repeatedly. In MATLAB, a built-in function solve is adopted and the program then returns the numerical solution of the stress-strain relationships. However, the elapsed time for each equation is non-negligible. As a result, it becomes significantly time-consuming since billions of transcendental calculations are required in order to obtain a full shear stress-strain curve.

An iterative root-finding method is then adopted instead of the built-in solve function in MATLAB. Due to the monotonicity and the continuity of post-cracking concrete tensile stress-strain equations, the bisection method is chosen to solve the multiple transcendental problems. This method repeatedly bisects a certain interval and selects the interval that contains a root, consequently the interval shrinks into half each time. The equations can be solved by the following procedures:
1) Select an initial interval for possible crack spacing \( \alpha \), and the upper bound of this initial interval should be relatively large to represent the uncracked stage.
2) Bisect the interval and select the section where the function values of the two end points have opposite sign.
3) Reset the initial interval and repeat step 1 and 2 until the interval length is within the tolerance.

IV. RESULTS AND COMPARISONS

The fast FASTMT is applied to a series of typical 2-D RC membrane elements tested by Pang and Hsu [12] as shown in Fig. 4 to validate the prediction accuracy. The elements are subjected to pure shear condition, where the inclination angle of crack is \( \alpha_t = 45^\circ \) and the initial stress value follows\( \sigma_t = 0 \). The material properties are tabulated in Tables I and II.

![Fig. 4 Testing RC membrane element B2 [12]](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE I</th>
<th>REINFORCEMENT PROPERTIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal Reinforcement</td>
<td>Transverse Reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \rho_t )</td>
<td>( \rho_l )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.789%</td>
<td>1.193%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f_r ) (MPa)</td>
<td>( E_r ) (MPa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>462.6</td>
<td>192 400</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE II</th>
<th>CONCRETE PROPERTIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( f'_c ) (MPa)</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( e_0 )</td>
<td>0.00235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The testing result for specimen B2 under pure shear is compared with the obtained values from fast FASTMT and also the original curve from FASTM in Fig. 5. The original FASTM overestimates shear strength of the 2-D RC membrane element under large shear strain and the deviation may be caused by the irrational decreasing curve of tensile stress without considering the effect of tension-stiffening. While the fast FASTMT, which includes the loss of bond stress under large slip distance and the gradual concrete tensile stress loss due to newly initiated cracks, exhibits a relatively conservative prediction for low strain level and accurate result for peak shear strength.

After adopting the bisection method, the fast FASTMT excels in the simplicity and efficiency in the root-finding process. For a single transcendental function employed by concrete tensile stress-strain relationship, the elapsed time for the built-in solve function in MATLAB is approximately 0.70 seconds, while by using bisection method the required time approaches to zero. For the full profile of tensile stress-strain curve with tension stiffening effect, the elapsed time for built-in solve function is approximately 2.80 seconds, while the bisection method requires only 0.06 seconds. To obtain the shear stress-strain curve of a RC panel under pure shear condition, the elapsed time of built-in solve function is more than 17 hours, while the bisection methods requires approximately 10 minutes.

![Fig. 5 Comparison of fast FASTMT, FASTM and experimental data](image)

V. CONCLUSIONS

The fast FASTMST aims for quickly predicting the shear strength of RC membrane element and it is based on the fixed-angle theory and softened truss model theory, which excels in both calculation accuracy and simplicity. The tensile stress-strain relationship in the fast FASTMT includes the comprehensive effect of tension-stiffening of RC after the first initiation of crack, thus the influences of bond stress-slip relationship, orthogonal reinforcement and crack propagation are incorporated. In the calculation procedure performed in MATLAB, an iterative root-finding method is adopted to solve the tensile stress-strain relationship for post-cracking concrete.

The testing result of a RC panel under pure shear condition is compared with the fast FASTMT and the original FASTM. Based on the comparison, the following conclusions can be drawn:
1) The calculated shear stress-strain curve of fast FASTMT shows a better agreement with the experimental data than the original FASTM. The overestimation of shear strength of FASTM is affected by the irrational decreasing rate of tensile stress under large strain level.
2) The total elapsed time of the fast algorithm is greatly shortened owing to the bisection root-finding method. Additionally, the fast FASTMT allows a smaller step when plotting the shear stress-strain curve, which inherently generates a more thorough and detailed shear behaviour of
the full monotonic loading process.
3) The high efficiency as well as the accuracy of fast FASTMT enables a further application in quick shear behaviour prediction of complex large-scale RC structures.

REFERENCES