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Assessment of the condition of a railway track based on finite element modeling

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Abstract: This article discusses the use of finite element (FE) modeling to analyze the characteristics of a railway track. Graphs of spatial displacements of rail and sleeper nodes are provided, and an analysis of maximum displacements at different points in time is performed. In conclusion, the importance of the obtained results for further study of the dependence of stresses on deformations of track elements is noted, which contributes to optimization of design and improvement of the reliability of railway infrastructure.

Keywords: stress, von Mises, track superstructure, rail, sleeper, modeling, model

1. Introduction

This study used commercial finite element software ABAQUS, which allows predicting the degree of fracture of rails, sleepers and other track elements, promptly assessing the technical condition of the railway track infrastructure taking into account loads, traffic intensity of high-speed and other categories of trains and climatic conditions.

As it is known, each material has its own specific characteristics, and taking these factors into account in the modeling process is of great importance and gives us acceptable results for subsequent calculations. The ABAQUS software used gives us such an opportunity, taking into account the above factors [1,2]. The following elements of the track superstructure were used in the modeling.

Table 1

Technical characteristics of the track superstructure

| Elements of the railway superstructure | Density (kg/m ²) | Young's modulus (E) | Poisson's ratio (ν) |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Rail (steel) | 7850 | 210 GPa | 0.3 |
| Sleeper (reinforced concrete) | 1200 | 80 GPa | 0.3 |

2. Research methodology

Statement of the problem

In this study, conducted to assess the fatigue limit, wear resistance and operational strength of both elements of the system, the calculation of stresses arising from the interaction of the wheel with the rail was carried out using the finite element method. In this case, the wheel was considered under conditions of movement on a straight

section of the track with an axial load on the wheel of 125 kN and a speed of 80 km/h.

The displacements in rail nodes N488 and N1556 for a given pitch of 17 at $t = 0.658$ s are 0.8094 mm and 0.8266 mm, respectively. The maximum displacement is observed at $t = 0.7585$ s and reaches 0.8864 mm. The study considered two sleepers under the wheel, as well as nodes of sleepers N3 and N3' with the largest displacement values. The location of nodes N3 and N3' is shown in Figure 1, and the changes in the sleeper displacement are shown in Figure 2.

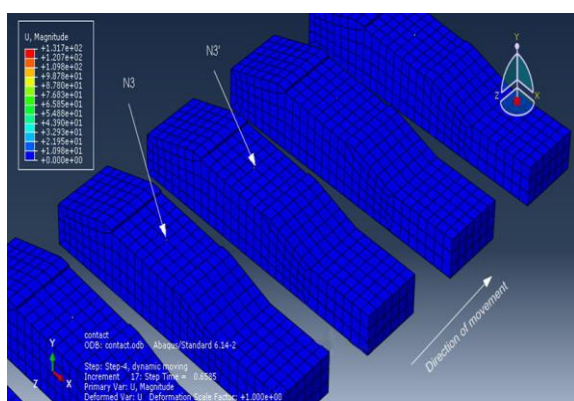


Fig. 1. Location of nodes N 3 and N 3'

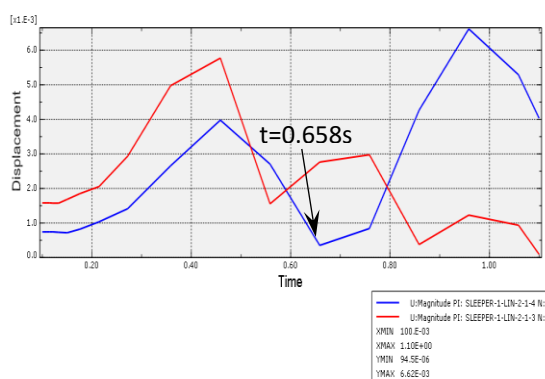



Fig. 2. Spatial displacement of sleepers

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The maximum displacements recorded at $t = 0.658$ s for step 17 are observed in the middle of the sleepers. The displacement of node N3 is 2.7627×10^{-3} , and that of node N3' is 0.354×10^{-3} .

Axial displacements in rail nodes. The displacements of nodes U1 for rails N483 and N1556 are recorded as

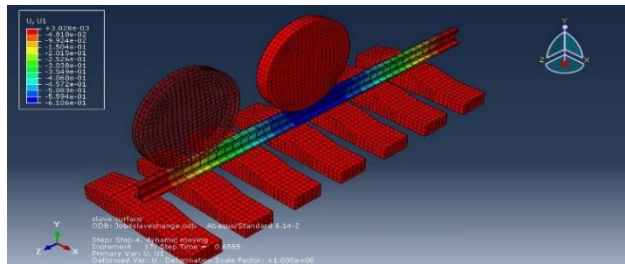


Fig. 3. Displacement - U 1 of the rail at step 17 $t = 0.658$ s

maximum at step 17 at $t = 0.658$ s, amounting to -0.585 mm and -0.615 mm, respectively. The graph includes both nodes, since it is at these points that the largest displacements are recorded. The data are presented in Figures 3 and 4.

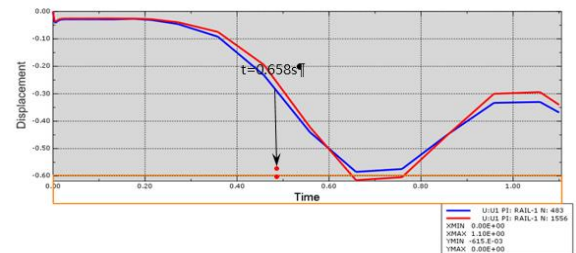


Fig. 4. Displacement of U 1 at step 17, $t = 0.658$ s at nodes 483 and 1556

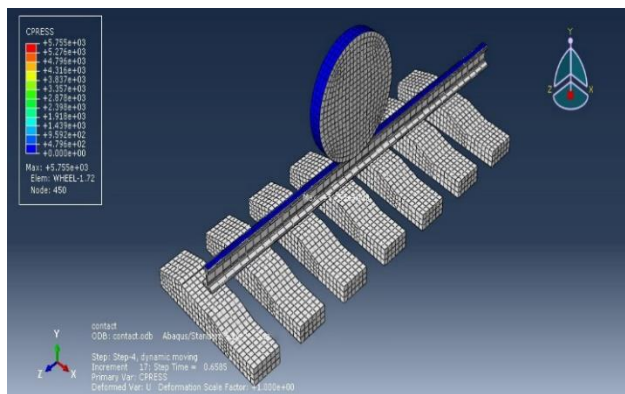


Fig. 5. Contact stress on the surface at step 17

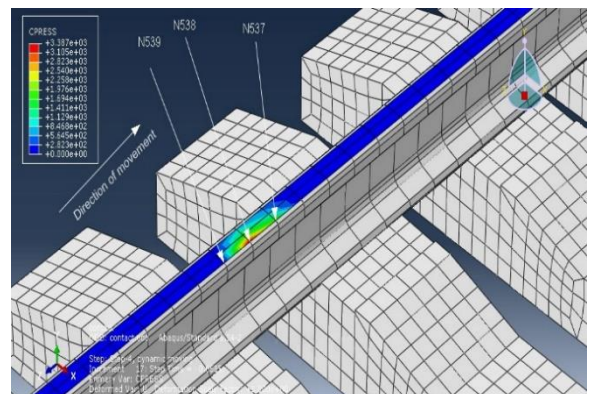


Fig. 6. Distribution of contact stress (KN) on the surface during displacement

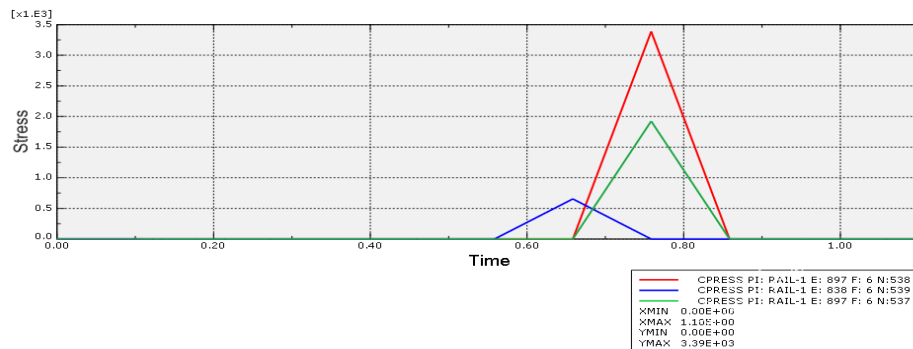


Fig. 7. Distribution of CN at nodes 537, 538 and 539

Thus, with an axle load of 125 kN, the maximum stress value for a given step 17 at time $t = 0.658$ s reaches 0.654×10^3 N/cm², and in node N538 the maximum value of Cpress

is recorded, amounting to 3.3871×10^3 N/cm², which is shown in Fig. 7.

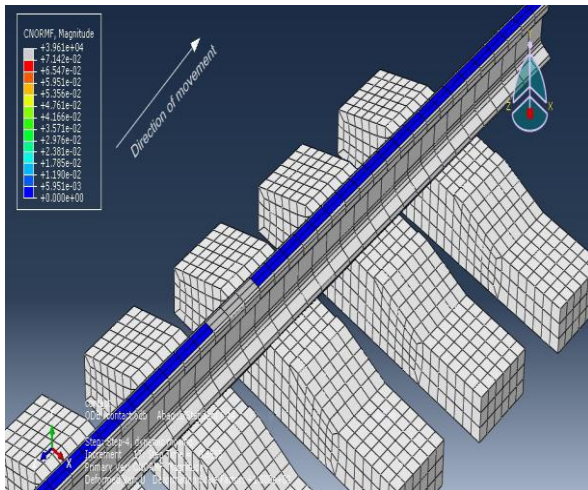


Fig. 8. Distribution of contact stress on the surface with increment

From Figure 9 it can be determined that for node N 1549 the force is equal to $9.866 \times 10^3 \text{ N}$, for node N1550 $36.673 \times 10^3 \text{ N}$, for unit N1551 20.690×10^3 and for N1552 $35.859 \times 10^3 \text{ N}$ [5,6,7].

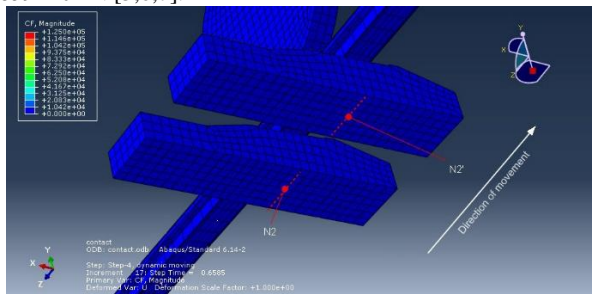


Fig. 10. Research of nodes from PC

The analyses show that the maximum reaction force occurs in the middle of the sleepers at nodes N2 and N2'. The displacements with a step of 17 of the reaction force are equal to $F=0.519$ for $N2 \times 10^3 \text{ N}$ and $F=0.389$ for $N2' \times 10^3$, which is shown in Fig. 11 [12].

3. Conclusion

Based on the calculated stress values, it can be concluded that for further research it is advisable to use a model based on elastic-plastic materials [6]. Verification of the limiting conditions adopted for finite element modeling requires experimental testing, which requires a special test bench.

When investigating the reaction forces on sleepers, the maximum values were recorded at nodes N2 and N2', where the forces amount to 0.519 kN. These forces can have a significant impact on the operational characteristics of the railway track.

The simulation showed that the static and dynamic analyses of the track under a load of 125 kN allow us to evaluate the changes in stresses and displacements depending on different time stages. The static analysis uses automatic increments with a step of 0.0001, while the dynamic analysis is carried out with a step of 0.001, which ensures high accuracy and stability of the results.

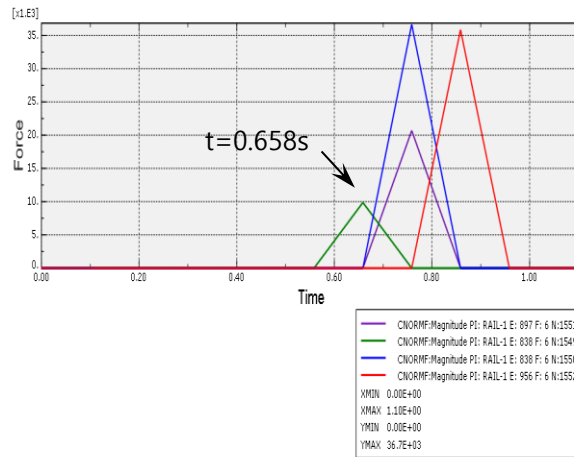


Fig. 9. Distribution in nodes 1549-1551

For the analysis, two sleepers located under the wheel were considered. 14 nodes were analyzed, which are located parallel to the bottom of the rail (dotted line in Fig. 10).

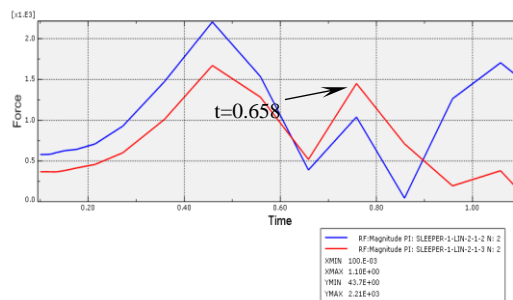


Fig. 11. Values of RS at nodes N 2 and N 2'

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