An Economic Perspective on IPv6 Transition

Geoff Huston

APNIC

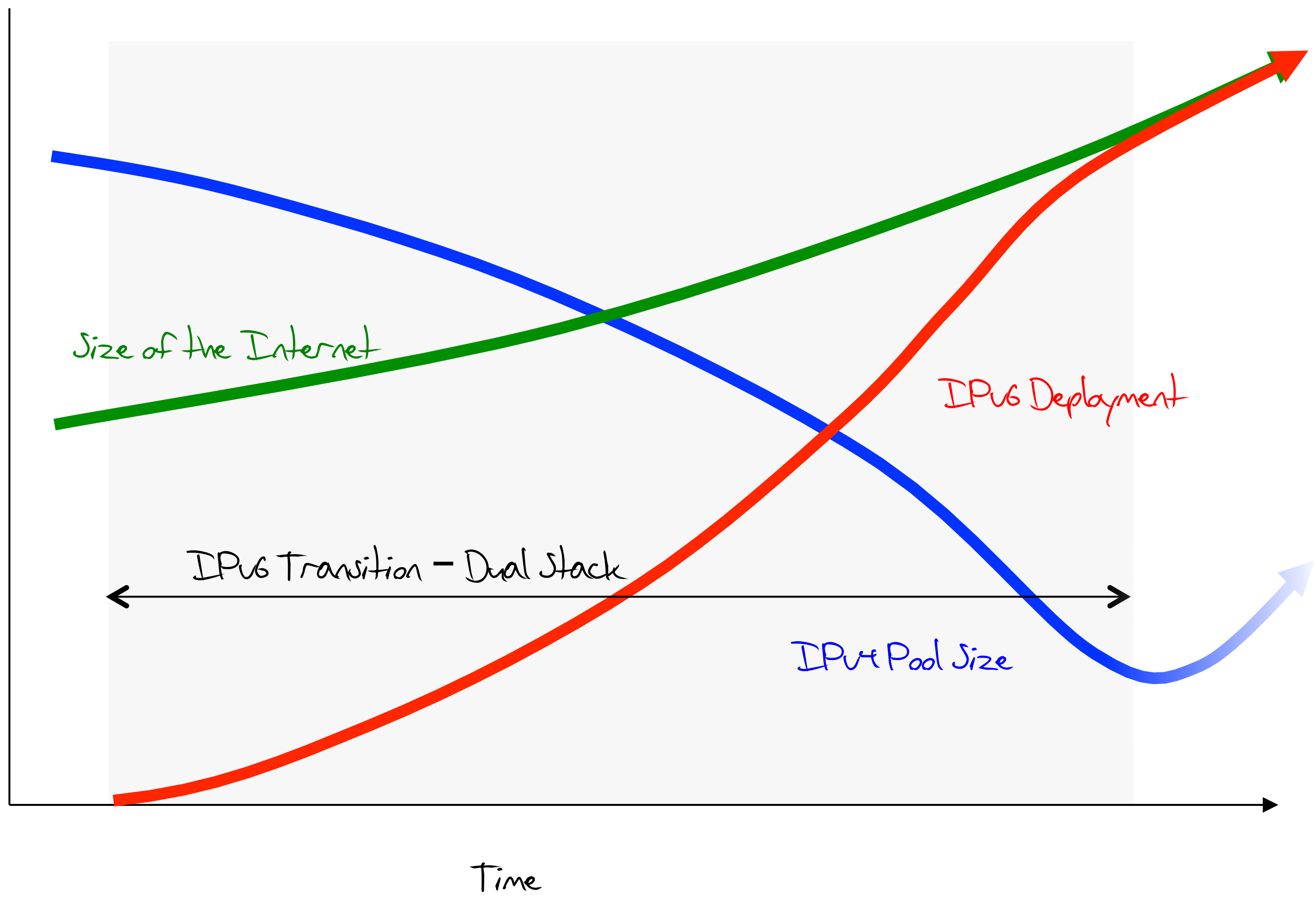
The Fine Print: I am not a economist in terms of my professional qualifications or by virtue of my work experience. Worse still, I think I fit in to the category of amateur economic dilettante! So most of what I offer here I do so tentatively, as it probably needs a little more rigor and precision in basic economic terms than I am able to provide! Geoff

A conventional view of IPv6 transition

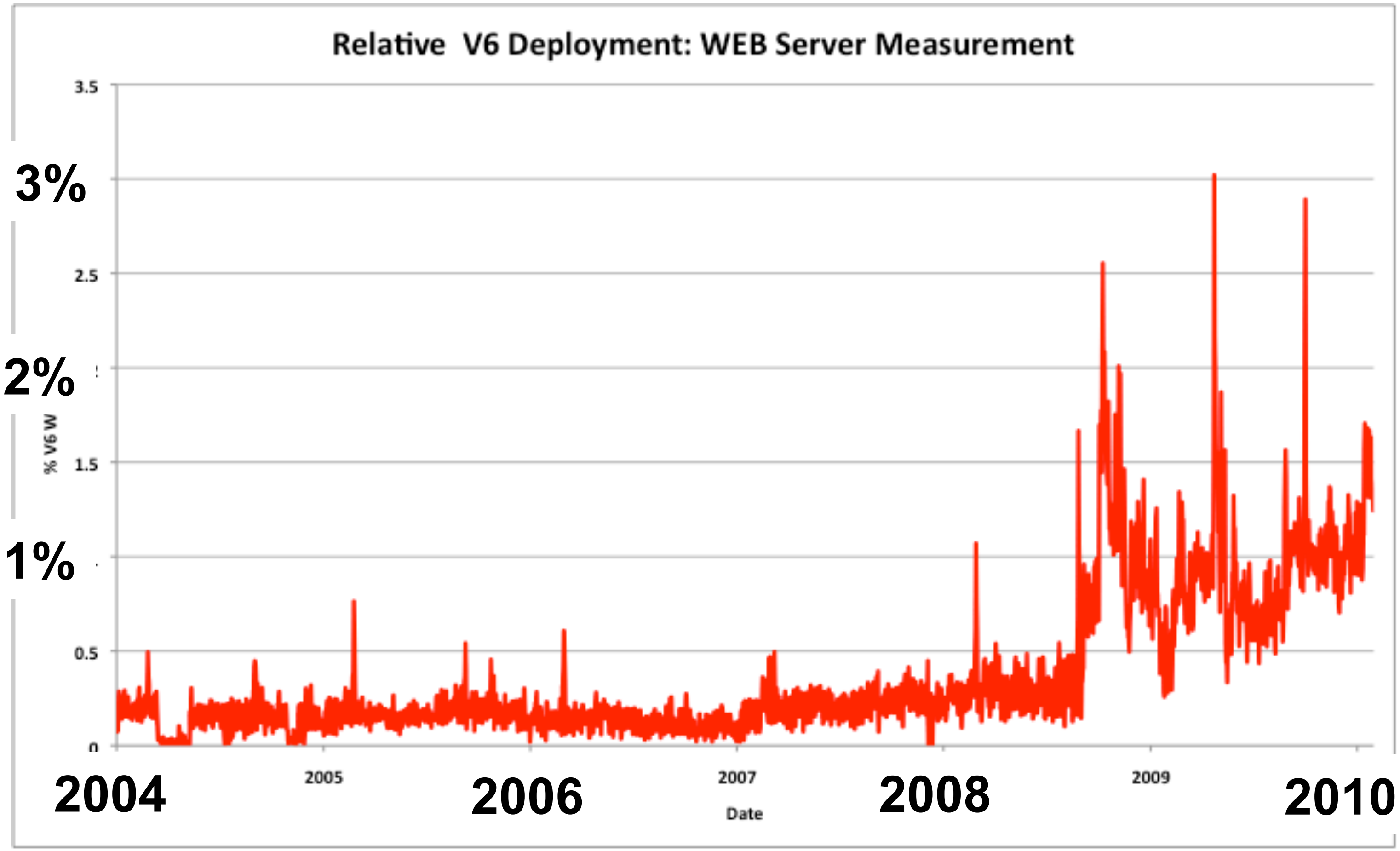
"The minister for communications and information technology does not believe that regulatory intervention is appropriate. Adoption of IPv6 needs to be lead by the private sector. The private sector must recognise that adopting IPv6 is in their own best interests to protect their investment in online capabilities into the future. Issues of advantages and disadvantages, costs, risks, timing, methodology etc, have to be for each enterprise to assess for itself."

Statement by the New Zealand Minister for Communications
24 August 2009

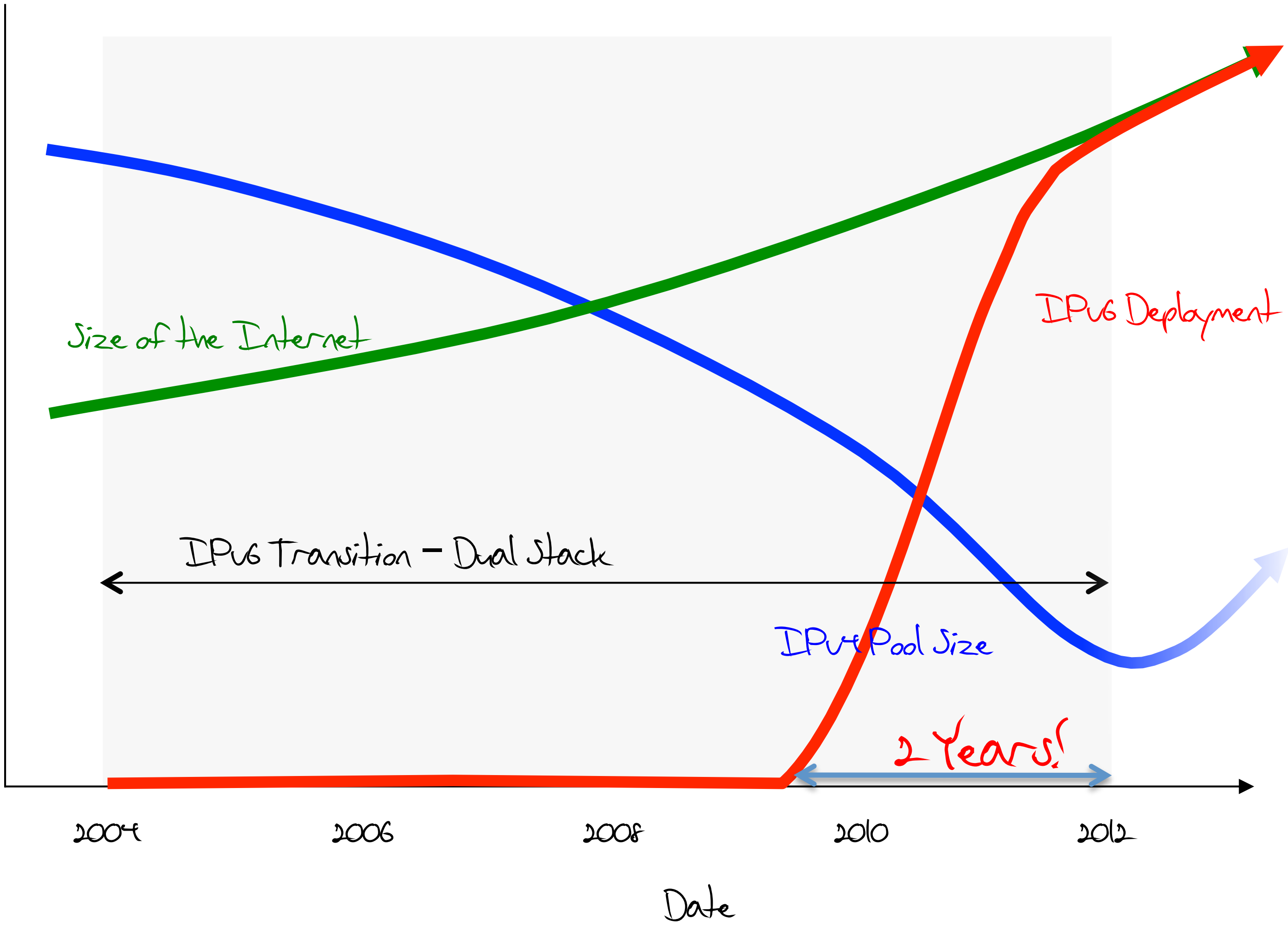
The IPv6 Transition Plan



Measured IPv6 Deployment



The IPv6 Transition Plan - V2.0



Is this Plan Feasible?

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Deploy IPv6 across some 2 billion users, with more than a billion end hosts, hundreds of millions of routers, firewalls and middleware units, audit billions of lines of configuration codes and filters, and audit hundreds of millions of ancillary support systems - ***all within the next 700 days***.

What is Feasible?

What about if we remove the time constraint?

What if we let the unallocated IPv4 address pool run out while we still remain critically dependant on IPv4 in the Internet?

Does adding the factor of a fully depleted IPv4 address pool make this transition harder or does it provide additional incentive for industry players?

Added Impetus?

Will the potential pressure from IPv4 address exhaustion provide sufficient pressure for transition?

Or will we need to encounter the reality of a fully depleted environment and take on the additional risk of added elements of supply disruption into the transition scenario?

Would public intervention mitigate these risks and assist industry with this transition to IPv6?

Lessons from the Past

If this transition to IPv6 is proving challenging, then how did we ever get the IPv4 Internet up and running in the first place?

IPv4 Deployment Lessons

Technology: packet switching vs circuit switching

- lower network costs though pushing of functionality and cost to end systems exposed a new demand schedule for communications services

i.e. packet switching was far cheaper than circuit switching. This drop in cost exposed new market opportunities for emergent ISPs

Circuits to Packets: The Demand Schedule Shift

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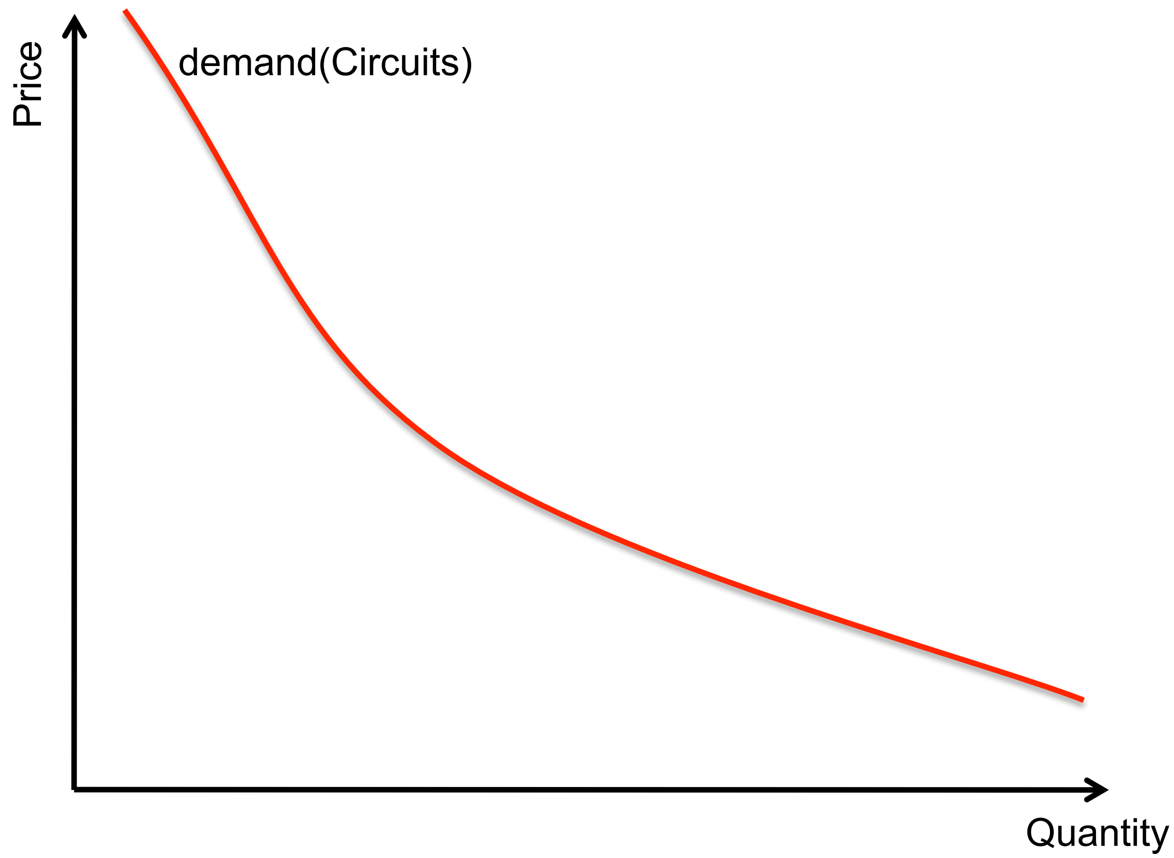

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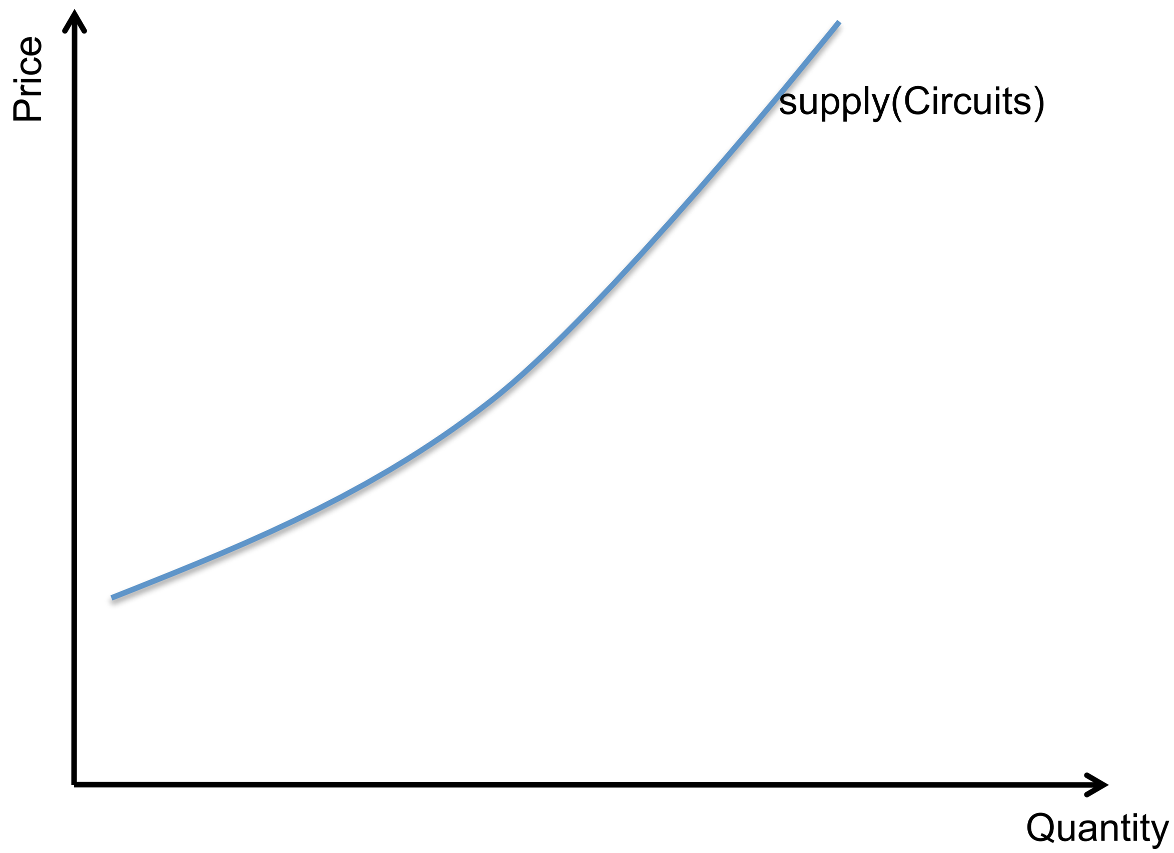

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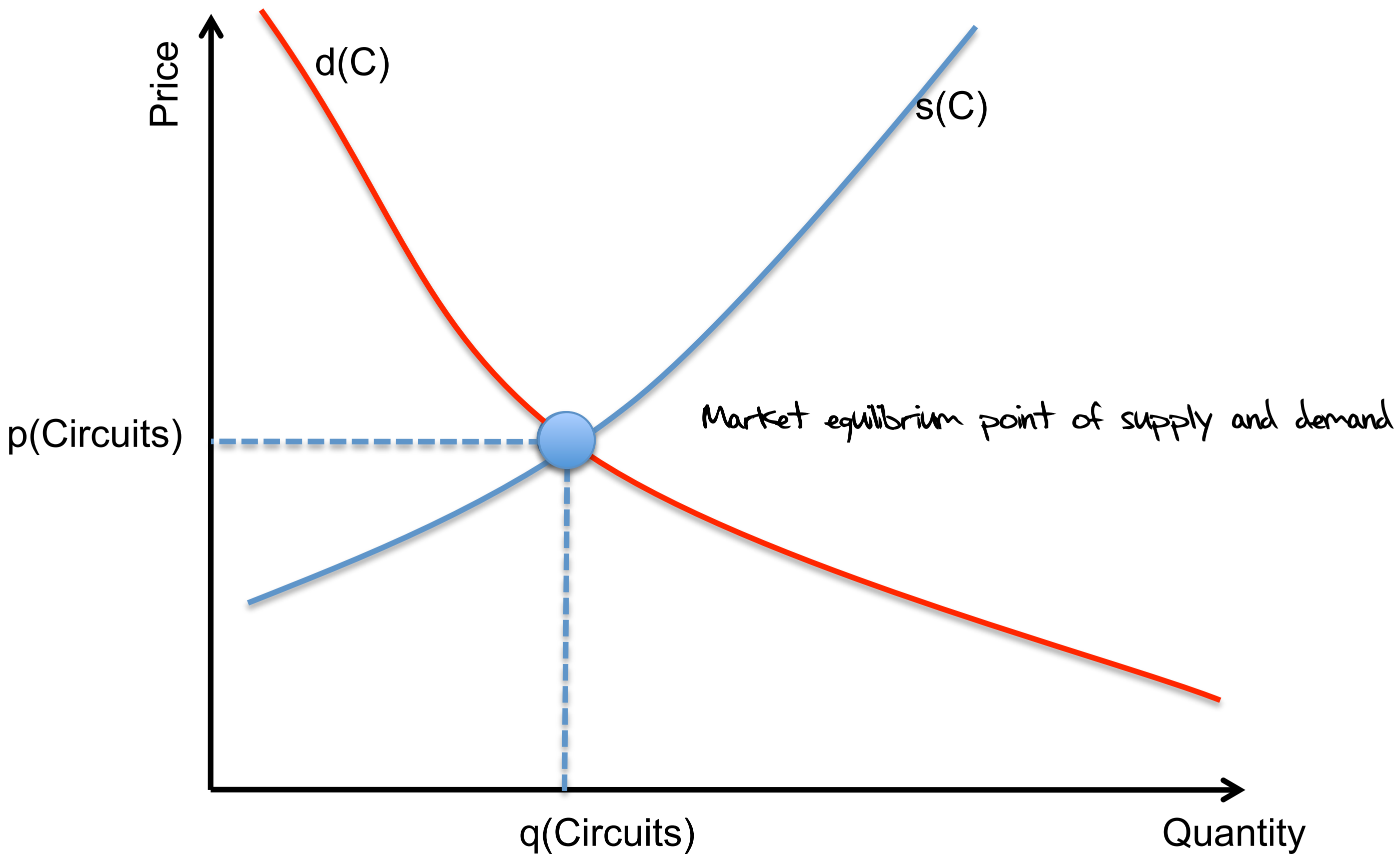

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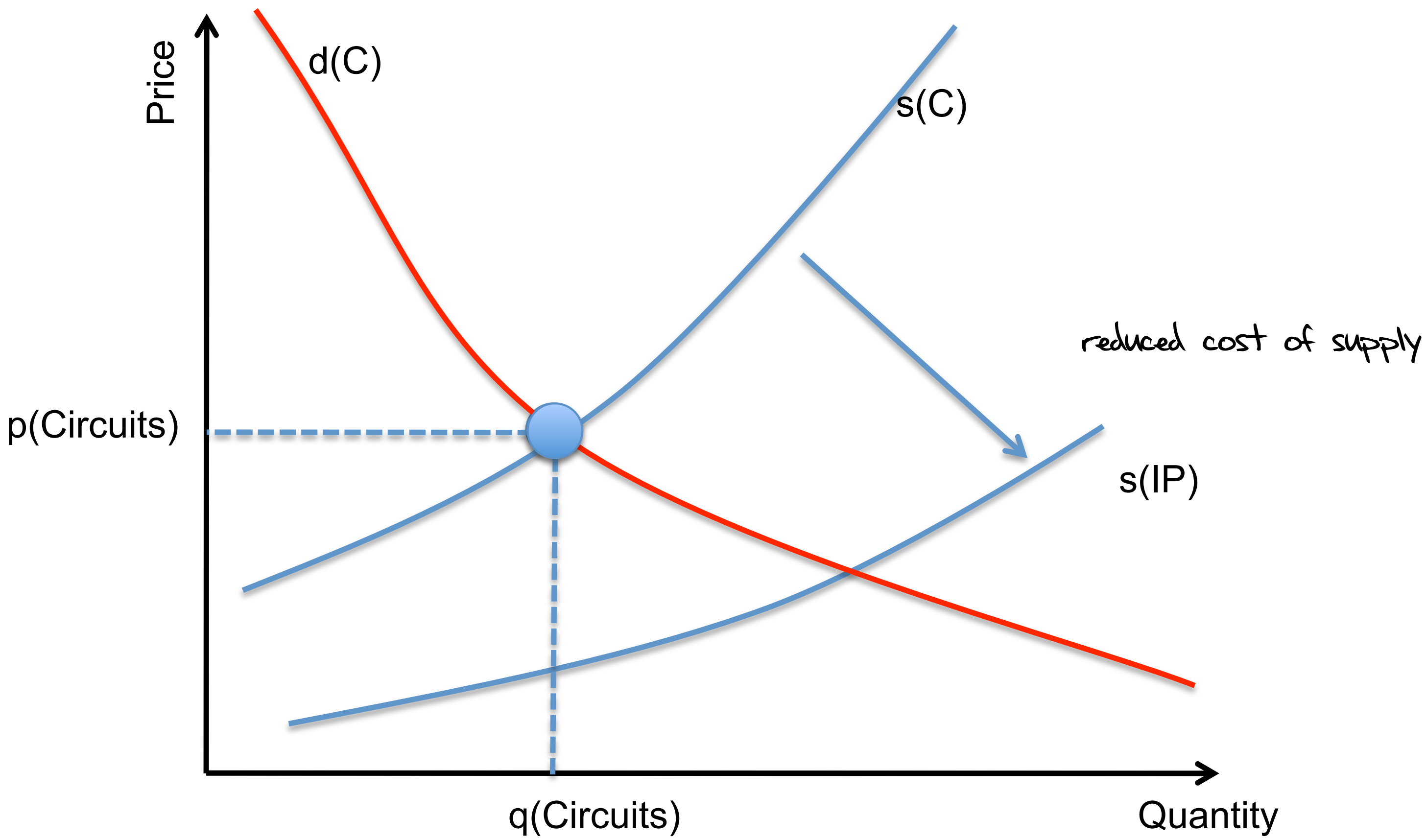

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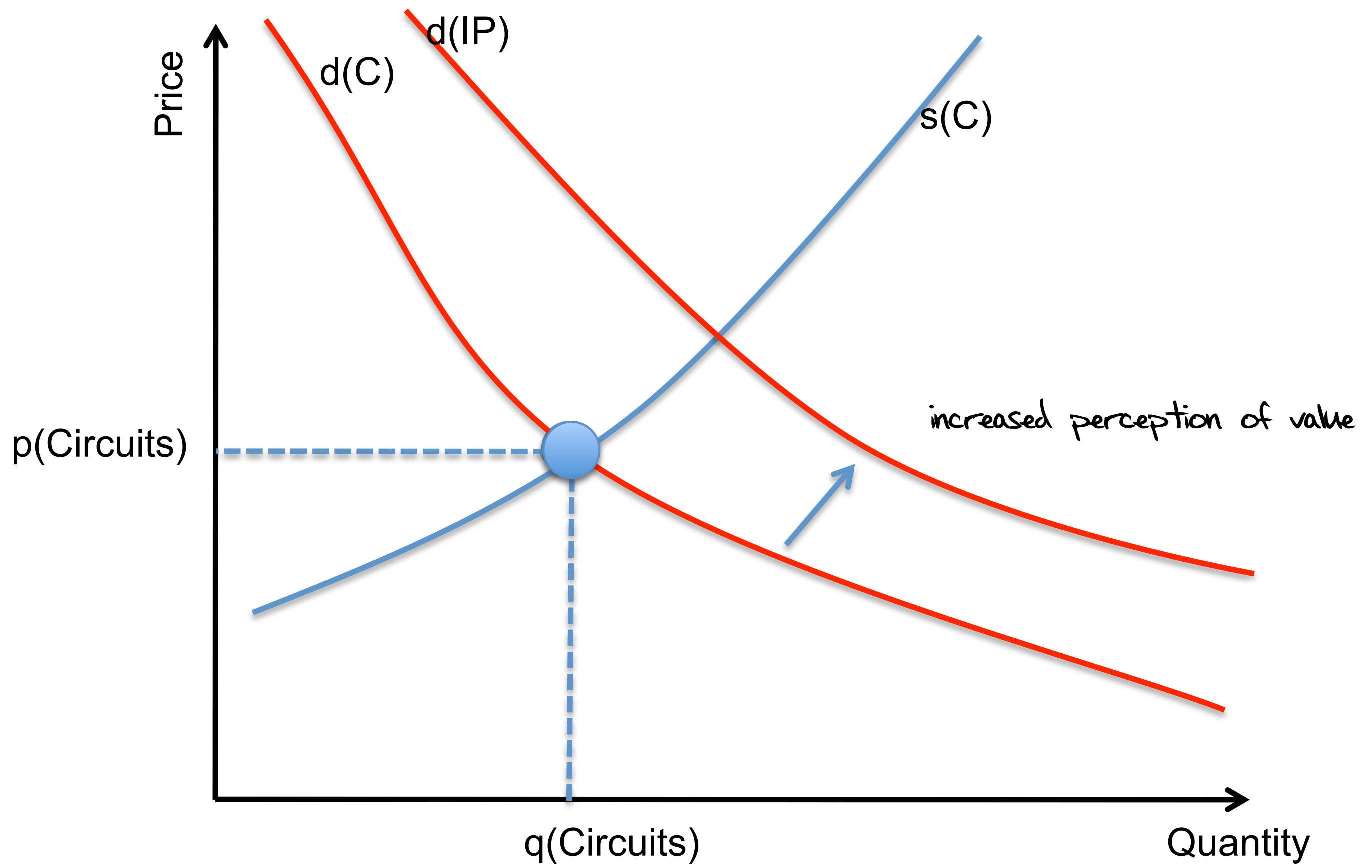

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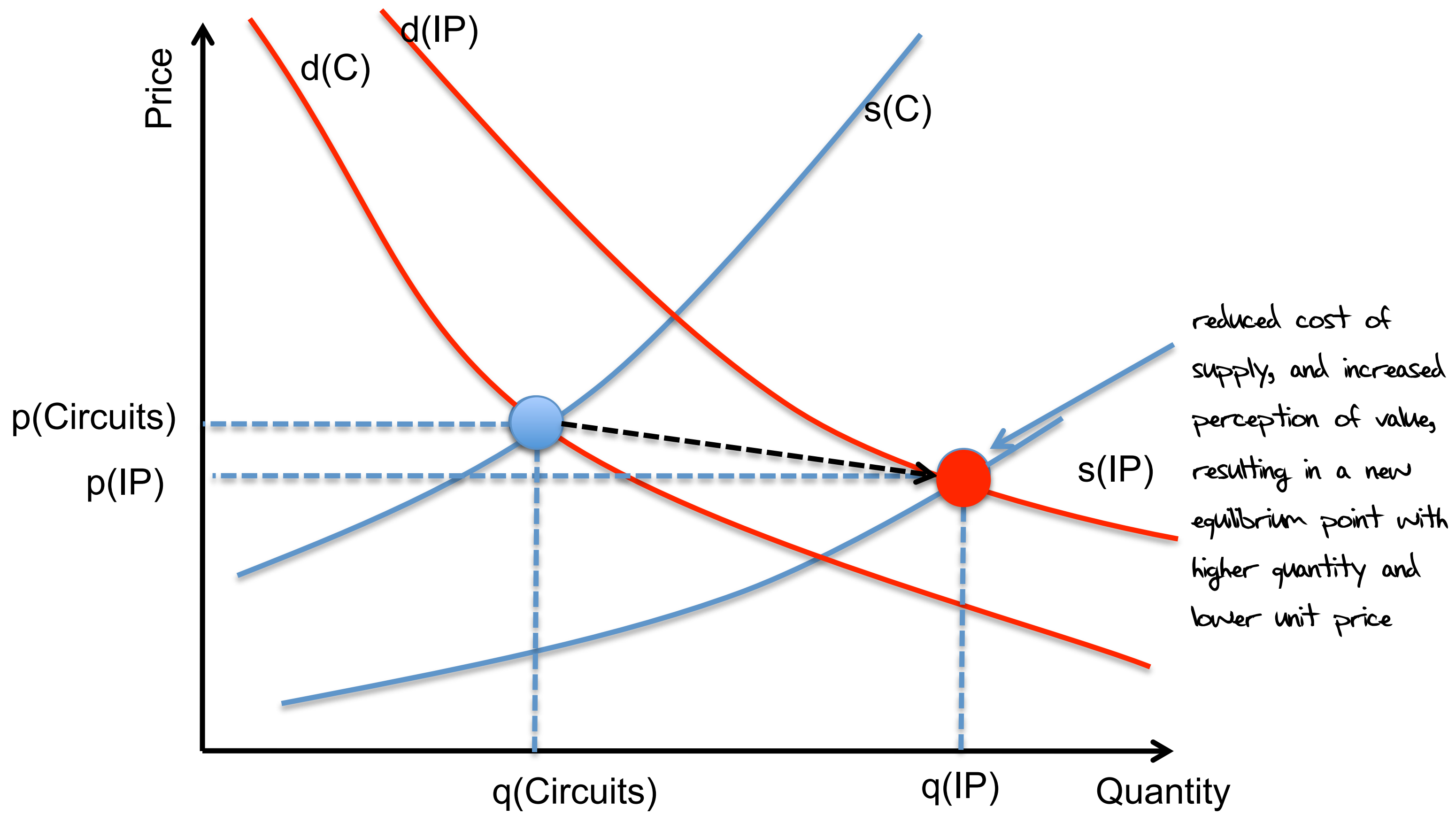

IPv4 Deployment

Business: exposed new market opportunity in a market that was actively shedding many regulatory constraints

- exposed new market opportunities via arbitrage of circuits
  - buy a circuit, resell it as packets
- presence of agile high-risk entrepreneur capital willing to exploit short term market opportunities exposed through this form of arbitrage
- volume-based suppliers initially unable to redeploy capital and process to meet new demand
  - unable to cannibalize existing markets
  - unwilling to make high risk investments

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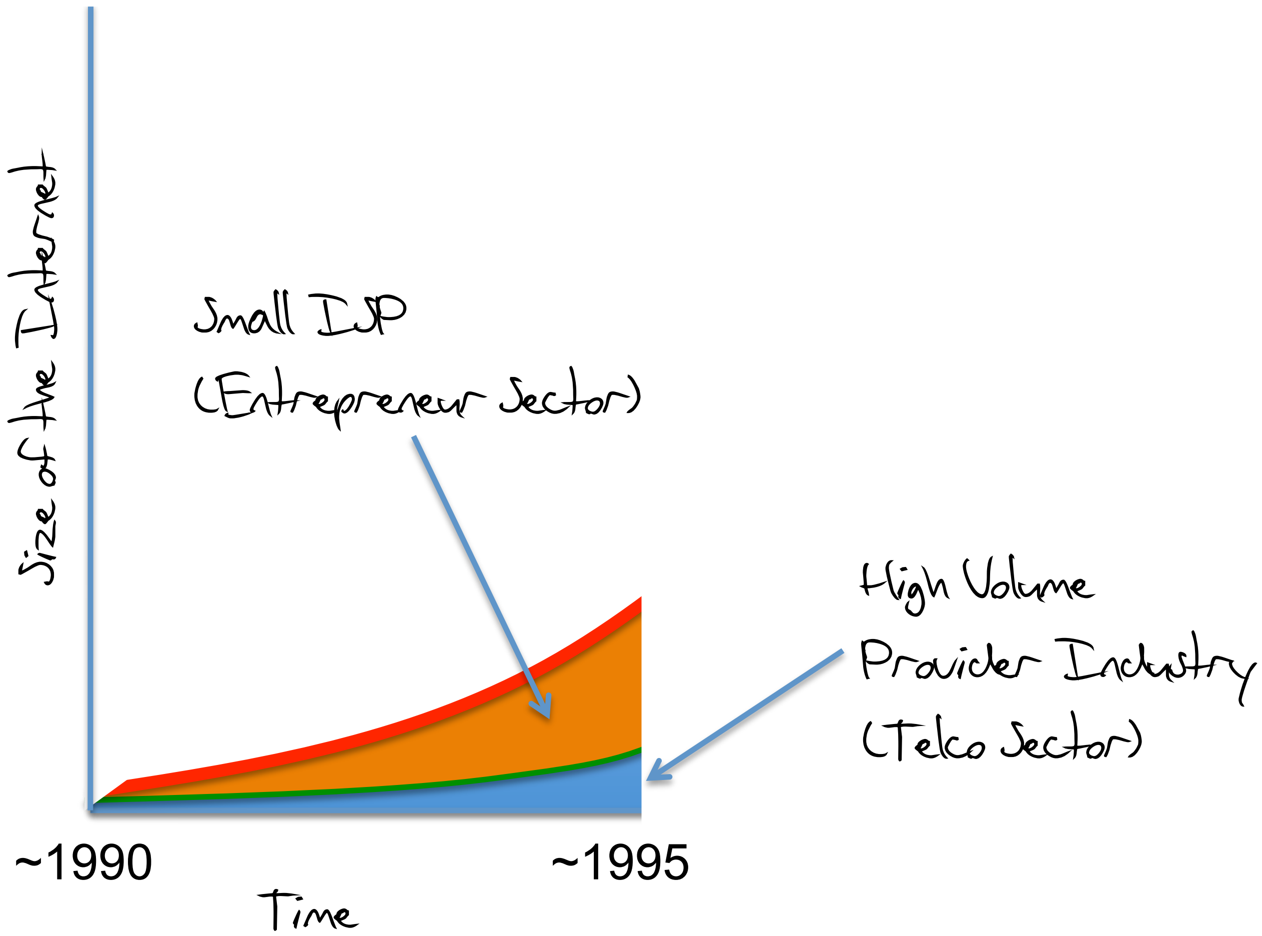

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- the maturing market represented an opportunity for large scale investment that could operate on even lower cost bases through economies of scale

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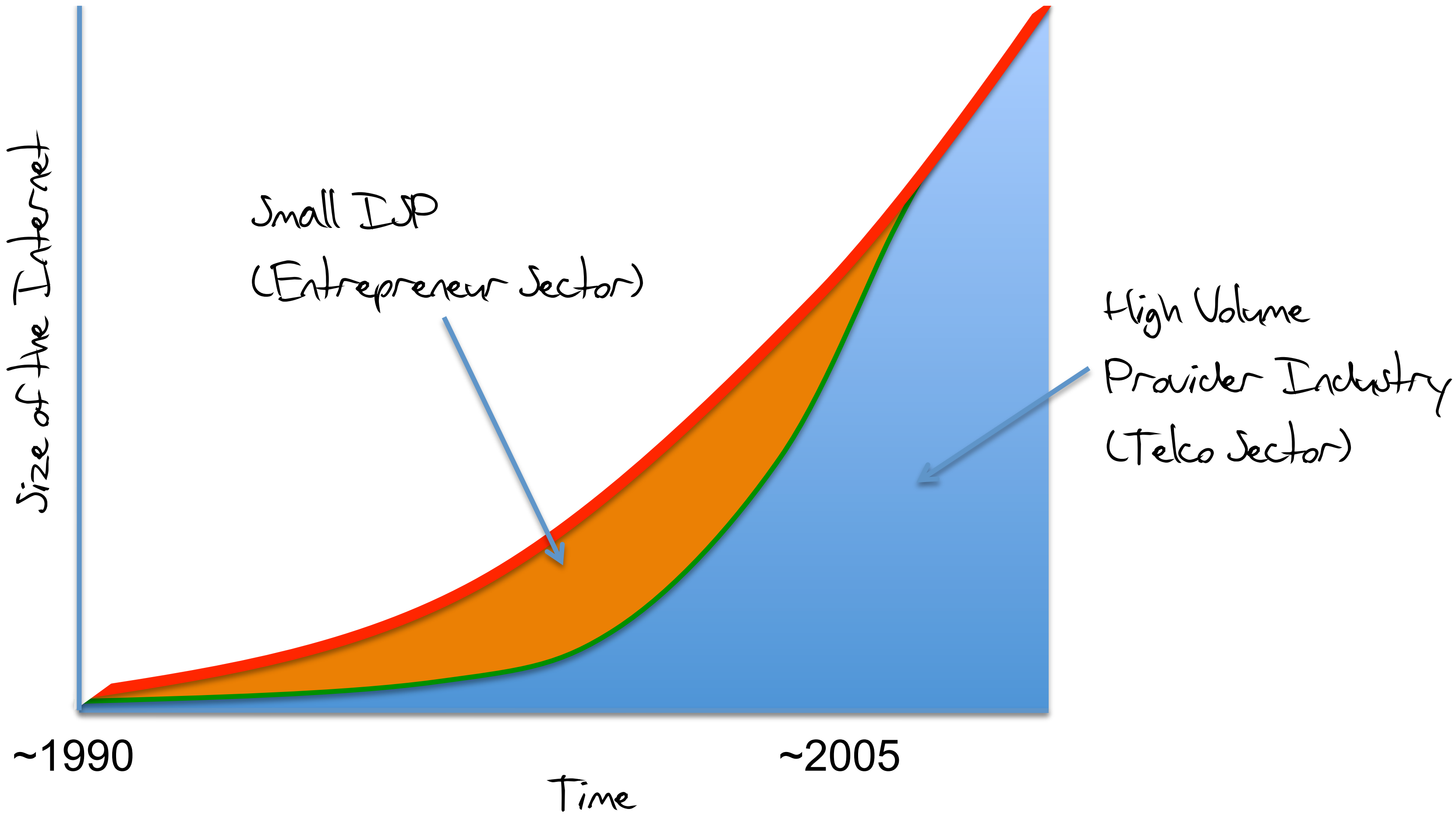


What about IPv6 Transition?

- Will the same technology, cost and regulatory factors that drove the deployment of the IPv4 Internet also drive this industry through the transition from IPv4 to IPv6?

IPv6 vs IPv4

Are there *competitive differentiators*?

✗ $\text{cost}_4 = \text{cost}_6$

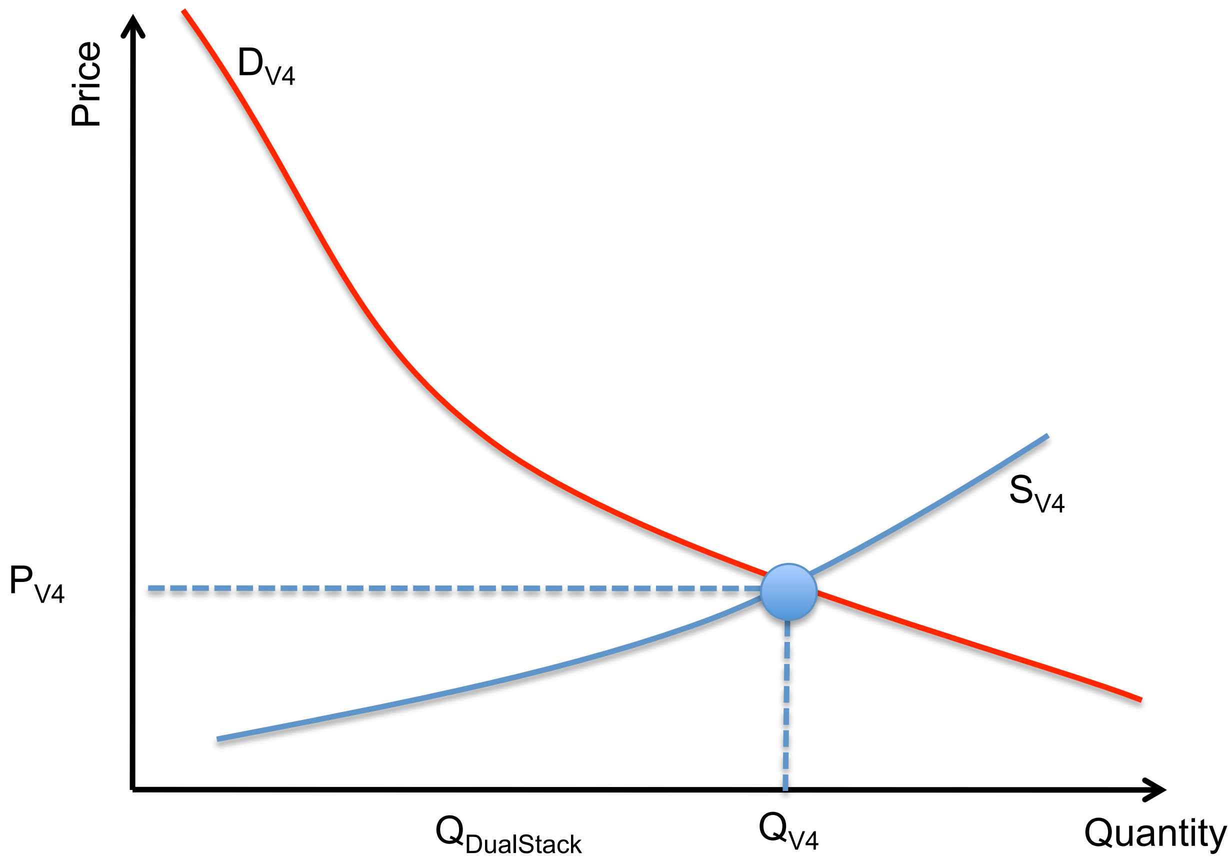
✗ $\text{functionality}_4 = \text{functionality}_6$

no inherent consumer-visible difference

no visible consumer demand

no visible competitive differentiators other than *future risk*

IPv4 to Dual Stack: The Demand Schedule Shift



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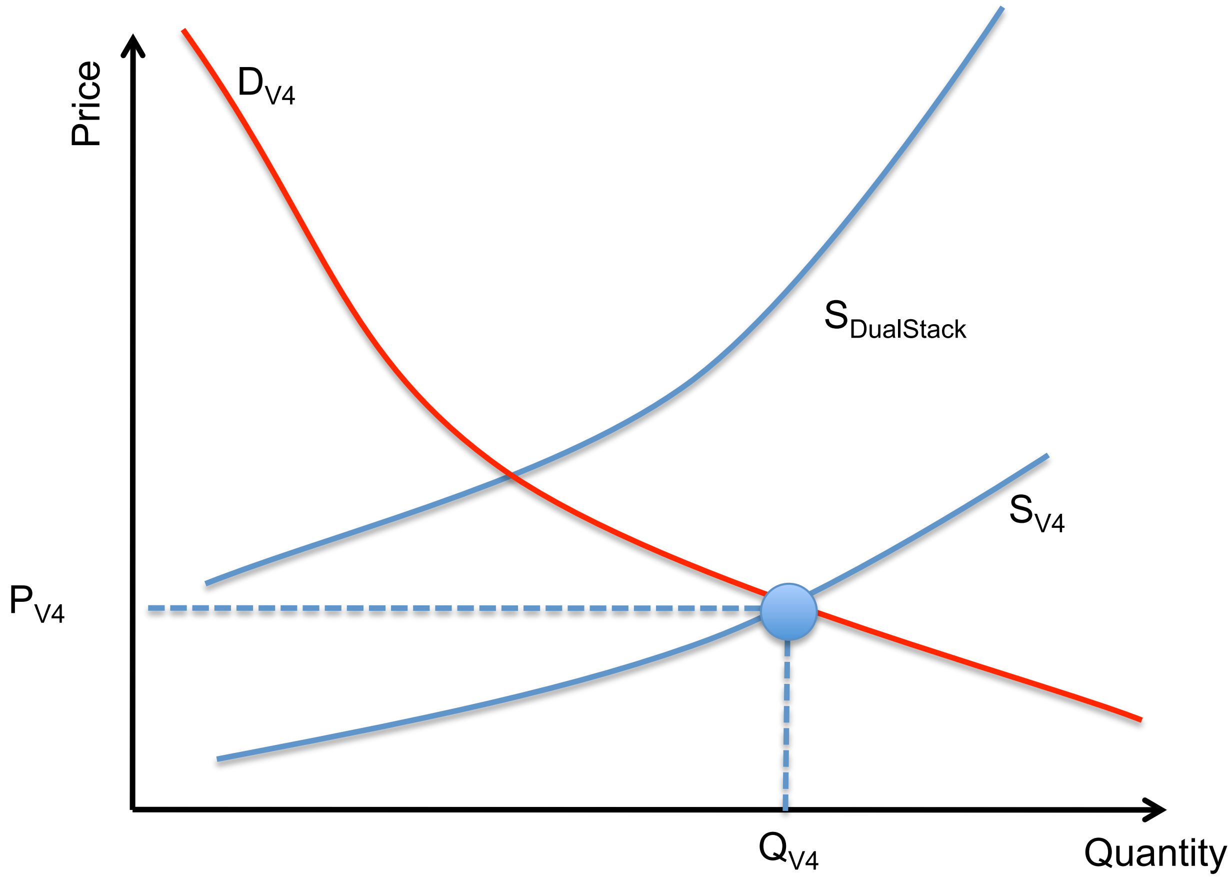
Supply side cost increase due to Dual Stack operation



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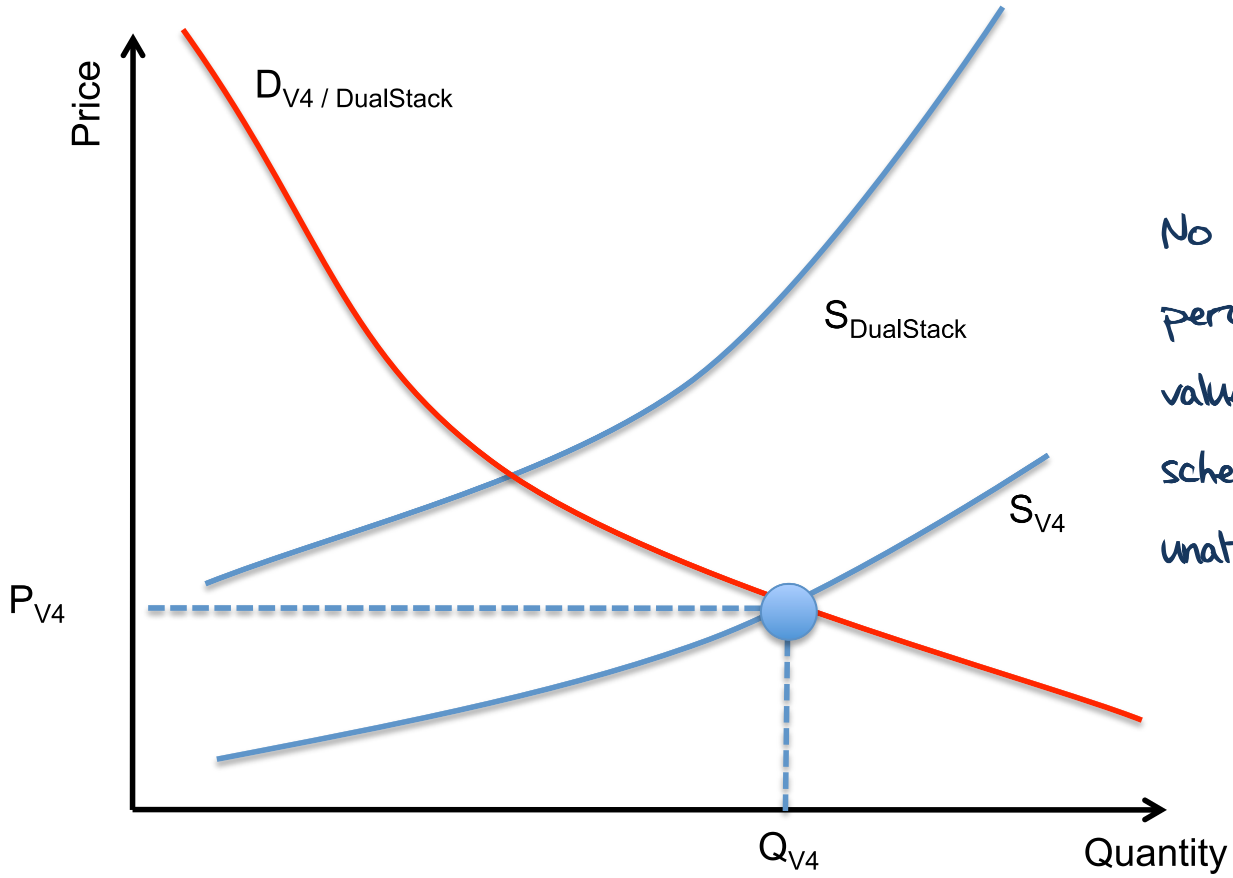

No change in perception of value, so demand schedule is unaltered

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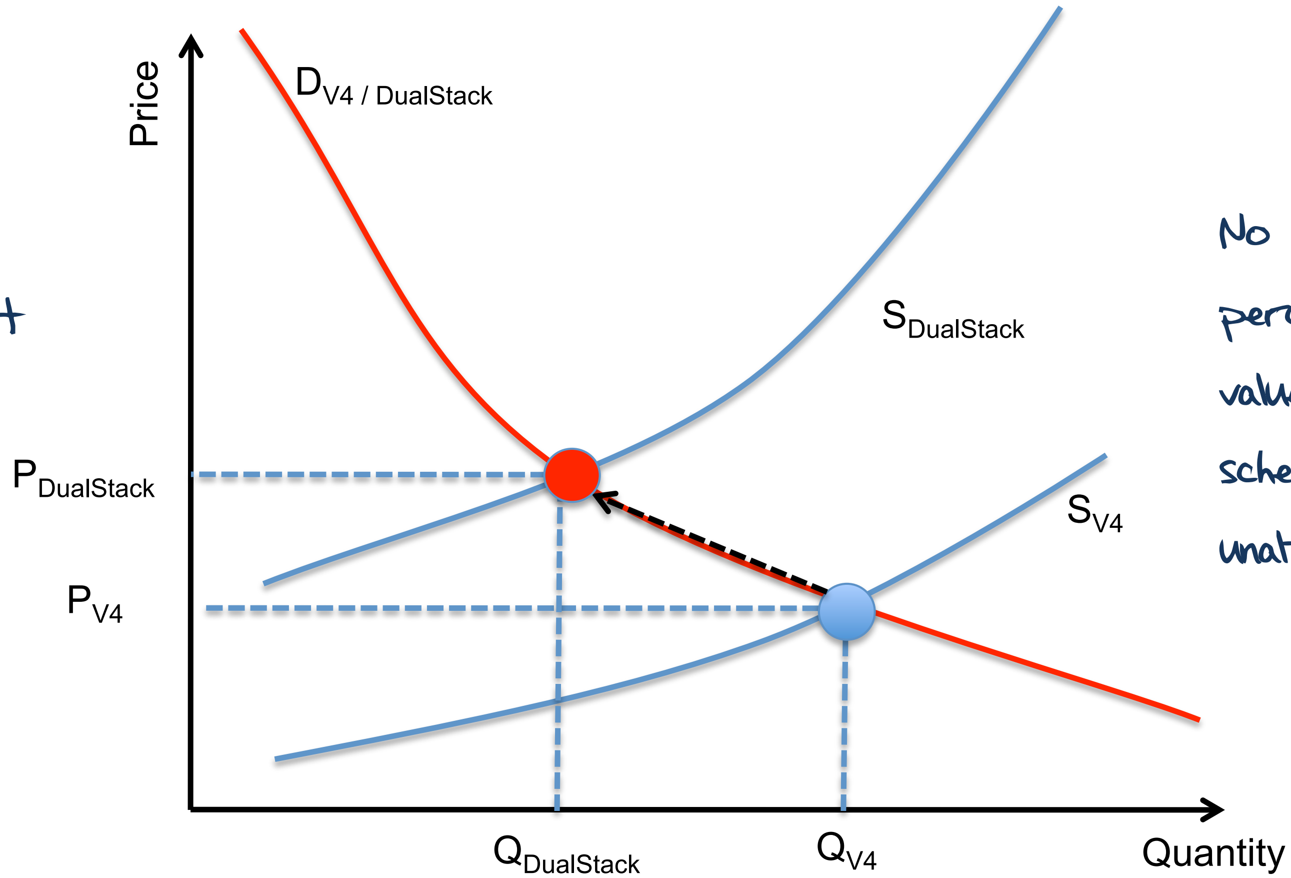

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Equilibrium point is at a lower quantity if Dual Stack supply costs are passed on to customers

The Transition to IPv6

Given that we've left it so late in terms of the scale of the transition and the degree of difficultly with IPv4 exhaustion, and given that there appears to be little economic motivation from the supply side of the industry to embark on this transition --- *will it happen at all?*

The Transition to IPv6

Alternatively, is this transition an instance of a *market failure*?

“Market Failure”

Wikinomics:

“In economics, a market failure exists when the production or use of goods and services by the market is not efficient. That is, there exists another outcome where market participants' overall gains from the new outcome outweigh their losses (even if some participants lose under the new arrangement). Market failures can be viewed as scenarios where individuals' pursuit of pure self-interest leads to results that are not efficient – that can be improved upon from the societal point-of-view. The first known use of the term by economists was in 1958, but the concept has been traced back to the Victorian philosopher Henry Sidgwick.”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Market_failure

The Transition to IPv6

Alternatively, is this transition an instance of a *market failure*?

Individual self-interest leads to inefficient supply outcomes, as self-interest does not lead the installed based of consumers and suppliers to underwrite the cost of dual stack operation within the transition

IPv6 Transition as a Public Good?

Is the transition to IPv6 is *non-excludable* and *non-rivalrous?*

In which case this transition issue parallels that of a *public good*

- With an implication that conventional market dynamics in a deregulated environment will not lead to this transition being undertaken
- And a corollary that if this transition is considered to be necessary or essential then some form of public good solution needs to be considered

Public Good "solutions"

There are a number of conventional approaches to the distribution of a *public good:*

- Assurance contracts
- Coasian solutions
- Government enterprise provisioning
- Tariffs
- Subsidies
- Taxation remedies
- Regulatory impost

Regulatory Impost

- A regulatory constraint is placed on the ISP carrier licence holders that IPv6 services are to be provided by a given deadline
  - as has happened with digital television in many regulatory regimes.
- This regulatory constraint acts a form of a *assurance contract*, where all providers are in effect bound to produce a particular solution

Government Purchase Contracts

- Where the public sector collectively require the provision in IPv6 in all their service contracts.
- This is a form of a *coasian solution* where a group of potential beneficiaries pool together their willingness to pay for the public good.
  - We have seen this approach in the past with the Government OSI Profiles (GOSIP) of the late 1980's when the approach proved ineffectual.
  - There is no assurance that such collective actions on the part of the public sector have sufficient mass and momentum to create a broader sustainable market that will impel the private sector to undertake the transition.

Subsidies and Incentives

- Where the production of the good is subsidised in some fashion by public funds
  - This can be in the form of direct payments to service providers, or in the form of vouchers to consumers which can be redeemed only in exchange for the supply of a specified service.
- Related incentive measures include the use of taxation incentives related to infrastructure investment, where the investment in a certain class of infrastructure or in a certain sector can be provided with advantaged taxation treatment.

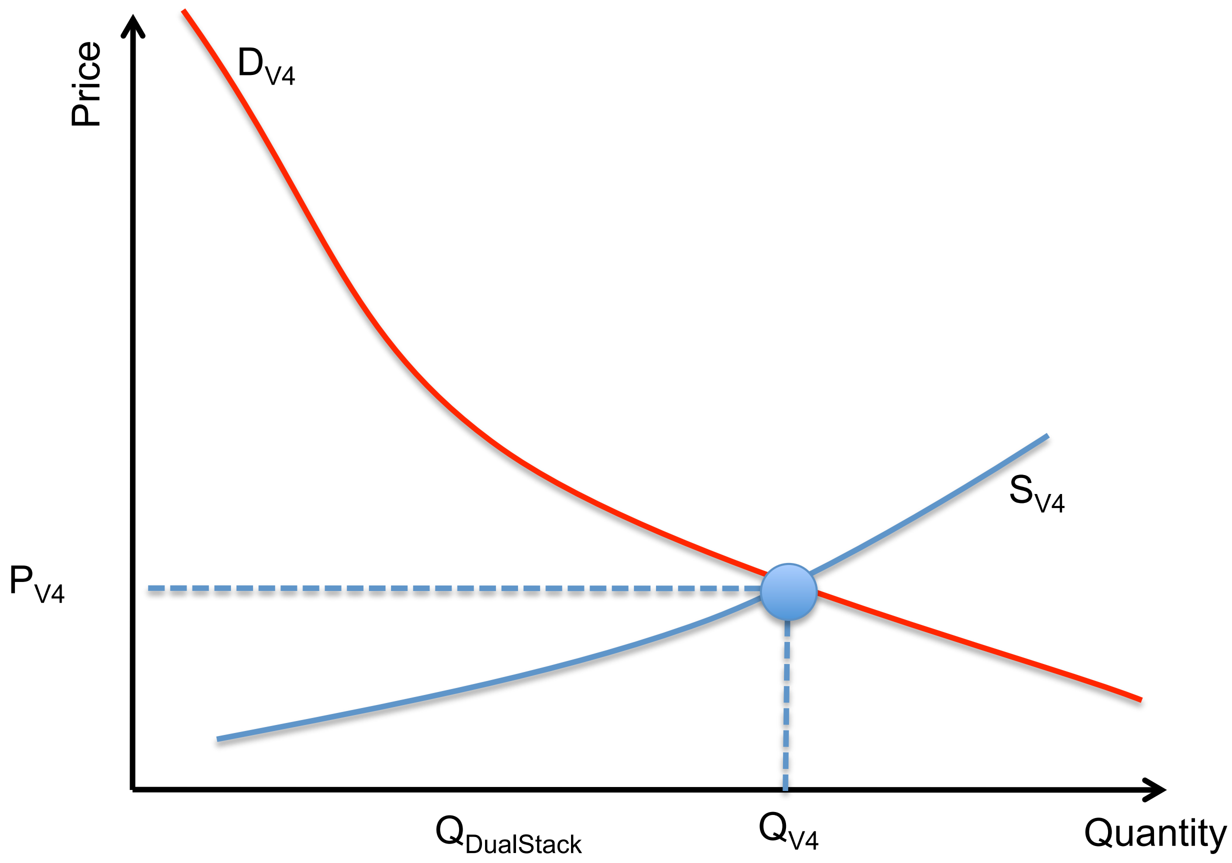
Public Provision

- Where the service is provided by a publically-owned enterprise.
- The funding for such an enterprise can be provided by government-backed investment bonds, or directly from public revenues, and operating losses are underwritten by the public purse.
  - This measure was used for most national telephone service providers for a significant part of the twentieth century, so it is not exactly a completely foreign concept for this industry.

What About IPv4 Exhaustion?

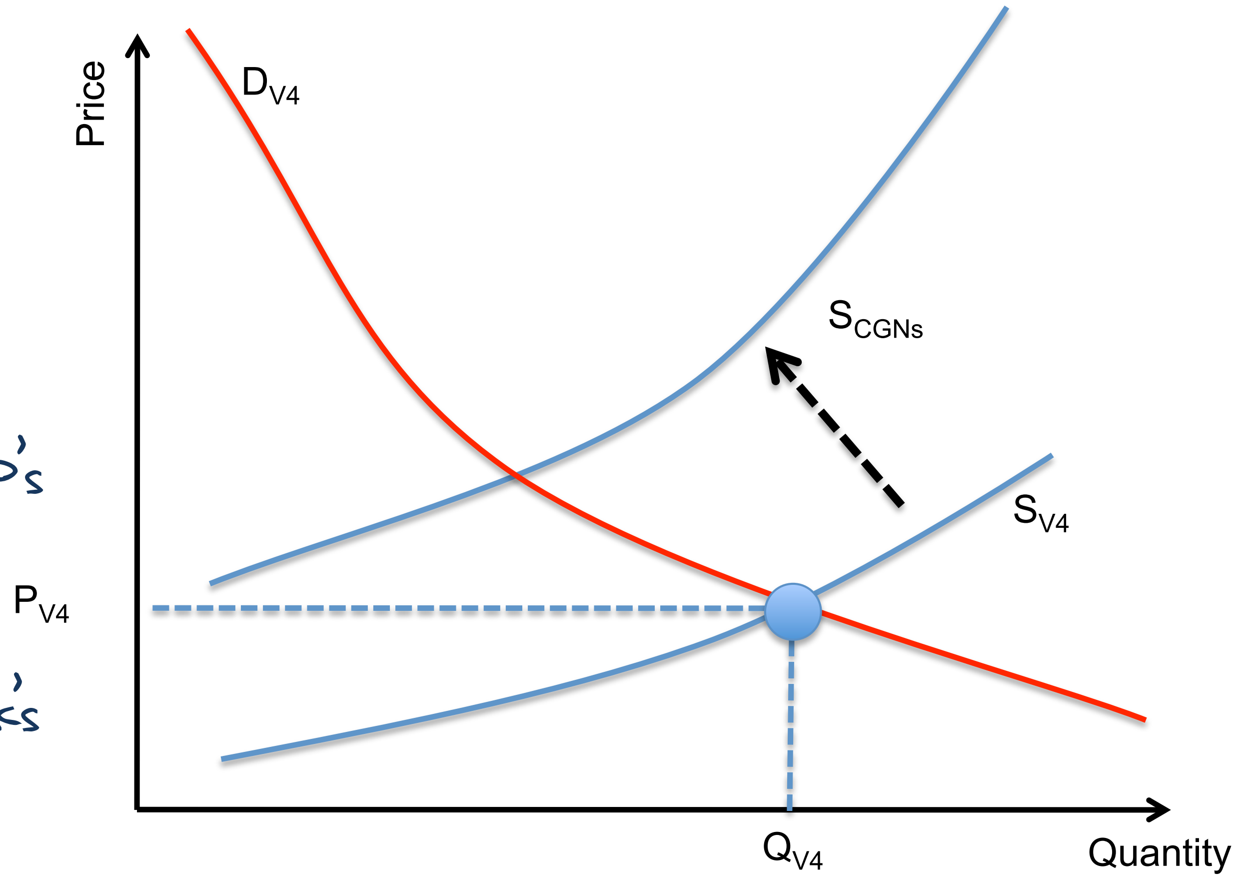
- Does IPv4 address exhaustion change this picture?
- What are the economic implications of service providers adding CGNs to the current service offering based on IPv4?

Adding CGNs to IPv4: The Demand Schedule Shift



Adding CGNs to IPv4:
The Demand Schedule Shift

Supply side cost increase due to SP's requirement to deploy CGNs within the network's infrastruture



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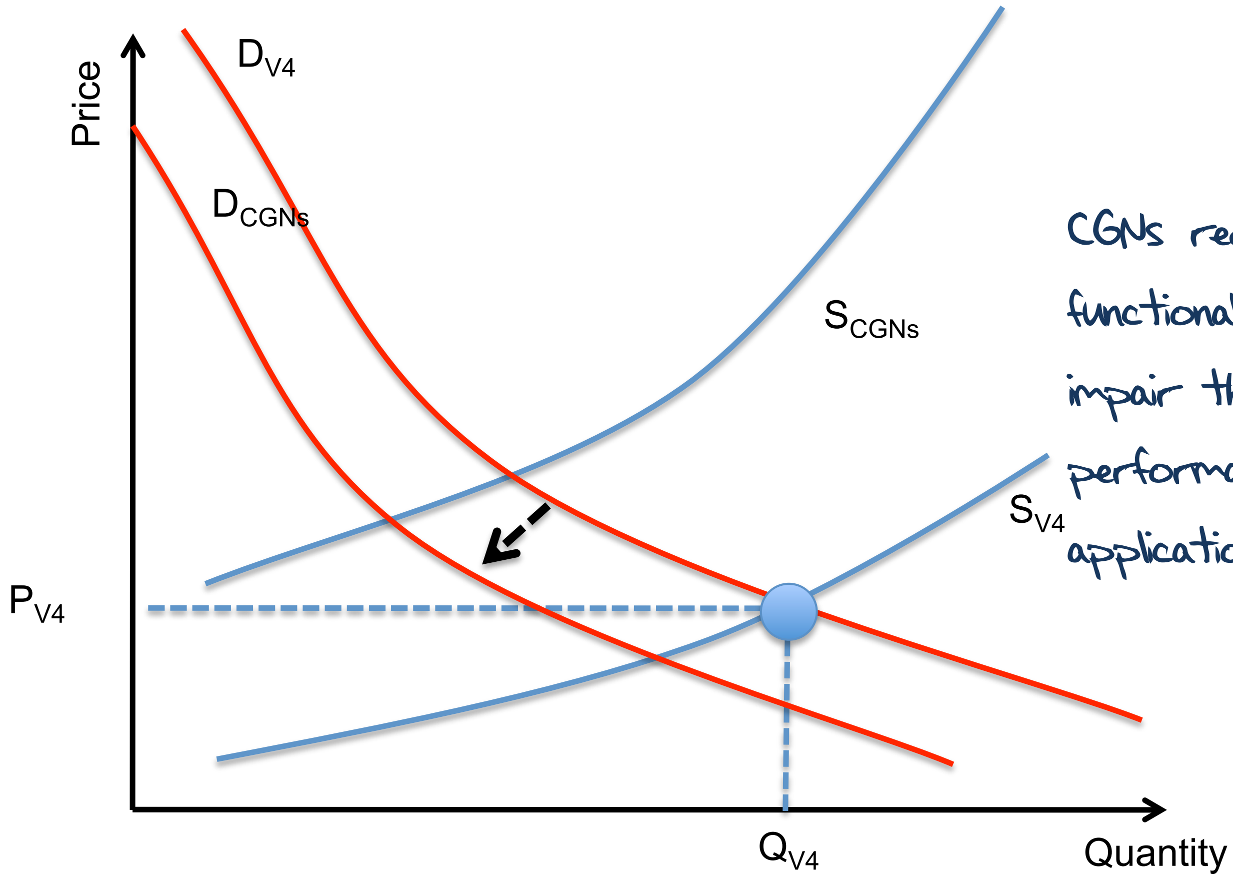

CGNs reduce functionality and impair the performance of some applications

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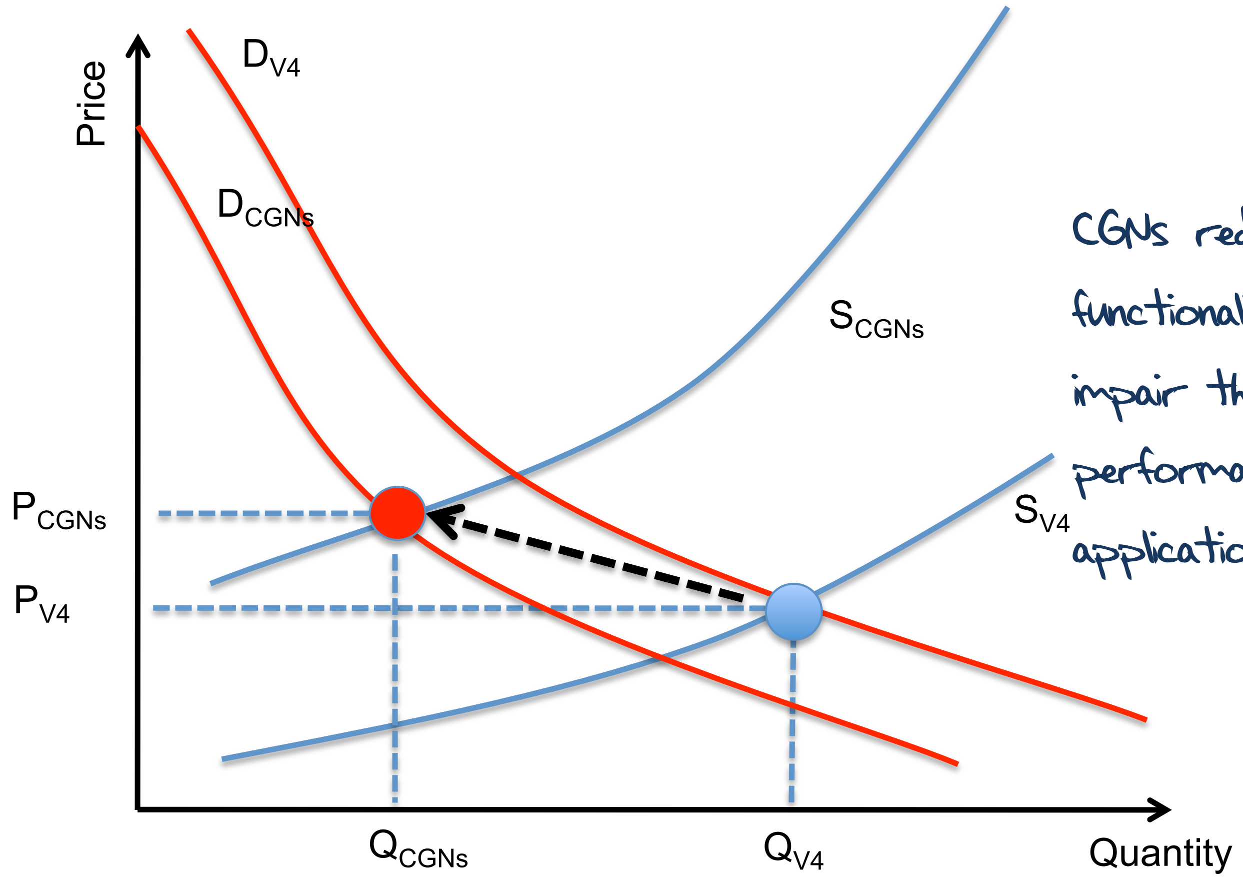
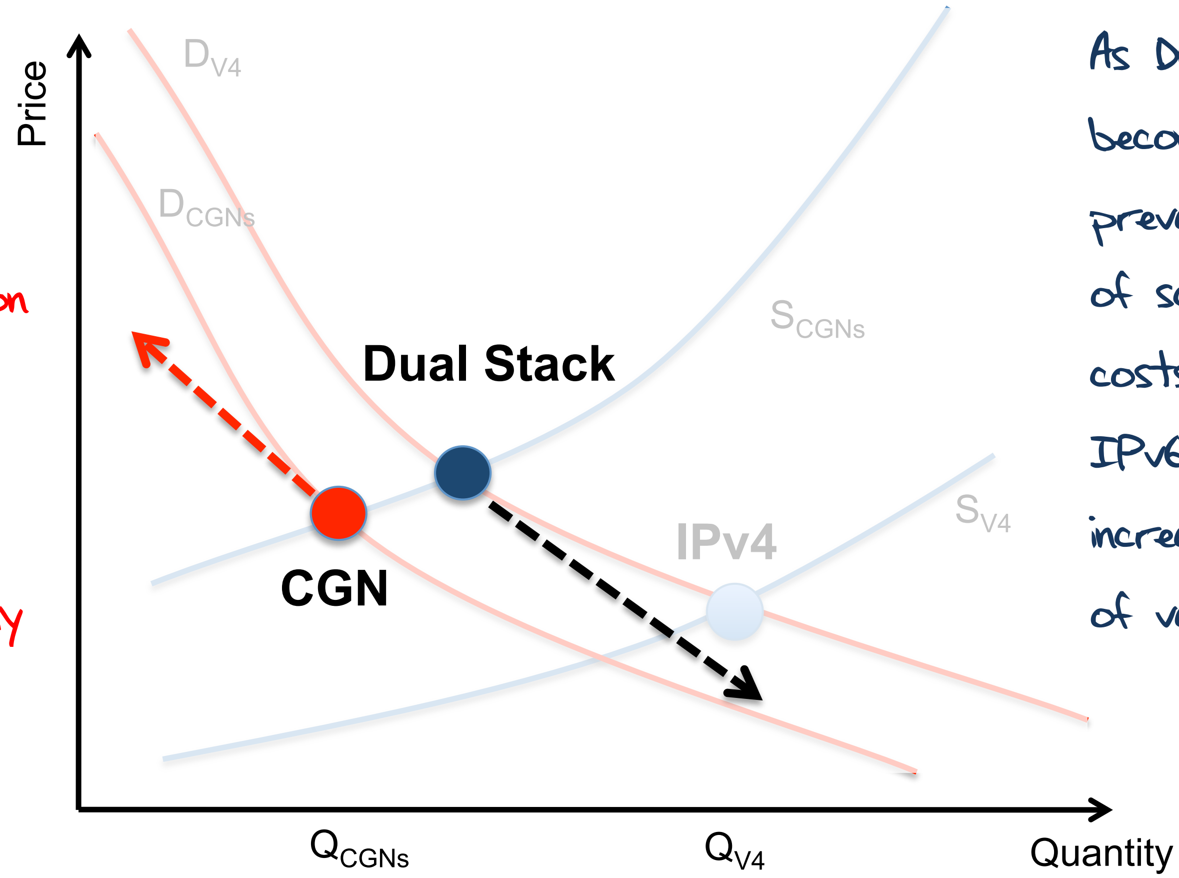


CGNs reduce functionality and impair the performance of some applications

CGNs represent higher cost and lower value for customers

IPv4/CGNs or Dual Stack?
The Demand Schedule Shift over Time

As NAT compression becomes more intense the IPV4 CGN approach become decreasingly viable



As Dual Stack becomes more prevalent economies of scale push down costs and increased IPv6 adoption increases perception of value

Your Thoughts?

Thank You