



On the regularity of the free boundary in the optimal partial transport problem for general cost functions

S. Chen^a, E. Indrei^{b,*}

^a Department of Mathematics, Zhejiang University of Technology, Hangzhou 310023, China

^b Center for Nonlinear Analysis, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, USA

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Abstract

This paper concerns the regularity and geometry of the free boundary in the optimal partial transport problem for general cost functions. More specifically, we prove that a C^1 cost implies a locally Lipschitz free boundary. As an application, we address a problem discussed by Caffarelli and McCann [1] regarding cost functions satisfying the Ma–Trudinger–Wang condition (A3): if the non-negative source density is in some $L^p(\mathbb{R}^n)$ space for $p \in (\frac{n+1}{2}, \infty]$ and the positive target density is bounded away from zero, then the free boundary is a semiconvex $C_{loc}^{1,\alpha}$ hypersurface. Furthermore, we show that a locally Lipschitz cost implies a rectifiable free boundary and initiate a corresponding regularity theory in the Riemannian setting. © 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In the optimal partial transport problem, one is given two non-negative functions $f = f\chi_\Omega$, $g = g\chi_A \in L^1(\mathbb{R}^n)$ and a number $0 < m \leq \min\{\|f\|_{L^1}, \|g\|_{L^1}\}$. The objective is to find an optimal transference plan between f and g with mass m . A transference plan refers to a non-negative, finite Borel measure γ on $\mathbb{R}^n \times \mathbb{R}^n$, whose first and second marginals are controlled by f and g respectively: for any Borel set $A \subset \mathbb{R}^n$,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: schen@zjtu.edu.cn (S. Chen), egi@cmu.edu (E. Indrei).

$$\gamma(A \times \mathbb{R}^n) \leq \int_A f(x) dx, \quad \gamma(\mathbb{R}^n \times A) \leq \int_A g(x) dx.$$

An optimal transference plan is a minimizer of the functional

$$\gamma \mapsto \int_{\mathbb{R}^n \times \mathbb{R}^n} c(x, y) d\gamma(x, y), \quad (1.1)$$

where c is a non-negative cost function.

Issues of existence, uniqueness, and regularity of optimal transference plans have recently been addressed by Caffarelli and McCann [1], Figalli [2,3], and Indrei [4]. Indeed, existence follows readily by standard methods in the calculus of variations. However, in general, minimizers fail to be unique and it is not difficult to construct examples when $|\text{spt}(f \wedge g)| > 0$ (with $|\cdot|$ being the Lebesgue measure and $\text{spt}(f \wedge g)$ the support of $f \wedge g := \min\{f, g\}$). Nevertheless, Figalli proved that under suitable assumptions on the cost function, minimizers are unique for

$$\|f \wedge g\|_{L^1(\mathbb{R}^n)} \leq m \leq \min\{\|f\|_{L^1(\mathbb{R}^n)}, \|g\|_{L^1(\mathbb{R}^n)}\},$$

[2, Proposition 2.2 and Theorem 2.10]. Up to now, the regularity theory has only been developed for the quadratic cost. In this case, if the domains Ω and Λ are bounded, strictly convex, and separated by a hyperplane, Caffarelli and McCann proved (under suitable conditions on the initial data) that the free boundaries $\overline{\partial U_m \cap \Omega}$ and $\overline{\partial V_m \cap \Lambda}$ are locally $C^{1,\alpha}$ hypersurfaces up to a closed singular set $\tilde{S}$ contained at the intersection of free with fixed boundary [1, Corollary 7.15]; here, the free boundaries are generated by the sets U_m and V_m which are referred to as the “active regions.” U_m is defined as the interior of the support of the left marginal of the optimal transference plan, and V_m is similarly defined in terms of the right marginal (a characterization of these regions in terms of the cost function is given by [1, Corollary 2.4]).

In the case when there is overlap, Figalli proved that away from the common region $\Omega \cap \Lambda$, the free boundaries are locally C^1 [2, Theorem 4.11]. Indrei improved this result by obtaining local $C^{1,\alpha}$ regularity away from the common region and up to a relatively closed singular set S , necessarily contained at the intersection of fixed with free boundary, see [4, Corollary 3.13] for a precise statement. Moreover, under an additional $C^{1,1}$ regularity assumption on Ω and Λ , he proved that S is $\mathcal{H}^{n-2}$ σ -finite and in the disjoint case $S \subset \tilde{S}$ with $\mathcal{H}^{n-2}(S) < \infty$ [4, Theorem 4.9].

All of the aforementioned regularity results were developed for the quadratic cost. Our main aim in this paper is to obtain free boundary regularity for a general class of cost functions $\mathcal{F}_0$ satisfying the Ma–Trudinger–Wang (A3) condition introduced in [8] and used in the development of a general regularity theory for the potential arising in the optimal transportation problem (see Definition 2.4). With this in mind, we establish the following theorem which readily implies $C_{loc}^{1,\alpha}$ regularity of the free boundary for the family $\mathcal{F}_0$ and thereby solves a problem discussed by Caffarelli and McCann [1, p. 676].

Theorem 1.1 (Lipschitz regularity). *Let $f = f \chi_\Omega$, $g = g \chi_\Lambda$ be non-negative integrable functions and $m \in (0, \min\{\|f\|_{L^1}, \|g\|_{L^1}\}]$. Assume that Λ is bounded and c -convex with respect to Ω , where $c \in C^1(\mathbb{R}^n \times \mathbb{R}^n)$ and satisfies (2.1) and (2.2). Then the free boundaries arising in the optimal partial transport problem are locally Lipschitz graphs inside Ω .*

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