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# On the Whitney extension property for continuously differentiable horizontal curves in sub-Riemannian manifolds

Ludovic Sacchelli\*, Mario Sigalotti\*<sup>†</sup>

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## Abstract

In this article we study the validity of the Whitney  $C^1$  extension property for horizontal curves in sub-Riemannian manifolds endowed with 1-jets that satisfy a first-order Taylor expansion compatibility condition. We first consider the equiregular case, where we show that the extension property holds true whenever a suitable non-singularity property holds for the input-output maps on the Carnot groups obtained by nilpotent approximation. We then discuss the case of sub-Riemannian manifolds with singular points and we show that all step-2 manifolds satisfy the  $C^1$  extension property. We conclude by showing that the  $C^1$  extension property implies a Lusin-like approximation theorem for horizontal curves on sub-Riemannian manifolds.

## 1 Introduction

The success of sub-Riemannian geometry in geometric measure theory and nonlinear control is due to its simplicity and flexibility as a modeling tool and to the richness of the phenomena that it exhibits and allows to study. Other branches of mathematics, such as hypoelliptic operator theory and rough path theory use sub-Riemannian geometry as a natural underlying structure [BBS16].

A sub-Riemannian structure on a manifold  $M$  is characterized by a distribution  $\Delta \subset TM$  endowed with a point-dependent norm which can be used for measuring the length of *horizontal curves*, i.e., absolutely continuous curves which are tangent to  $\Delta$ . Horizontal curves play a fundamental role in sub-Riemannian geometry, since the *sub-Riemannian distance* is defined as the minimal length of an horizontal curve connecting two points.

A natural metric property that it makes sense to test on a sub-Riemannian structure is the extendability of regular horizontal curves. The Euclidean counterpart of this property is the well-known Whitney extension theorem for a map  $\gamma$  from a closed subset  $K$  of  $\mathbb{R}$  into  $\mathbb{R}^d$ ,  $d \in \mathbb{N}$ . In this case, the extendability holds under the sole assumption that the variation of the jets of  $\gamma$  on  $K$  is compatible with Taylor's expansions.

We study in this paper the counterpart of the Whitney extension theorem for  $C^1$  horizontal ( $C^1_H$  in the following) curves in sub-Riemannian manifolds. A useful intermediate ground where this problem can be set is provided by Carnot groups. Whitney extension theorems for maps between Carnot groups have been the object of research in the past: in particular the case of real-valued  $C^1$  functions on the Heisenberg group has been considered in [FSSC01] and extended to the general case of real-valued  $C^m$  functions on Carnot groups in [VP06]. The problem which we consider here is different, since the domain of the map which we seek to extend is contained in  $\mathbb{R}$  and the sub-Riemannian structure is taken on the codomain. The latter formulation of the problem has been proposed for Carnot groups by F. Serra Cassano in [SC16].

The question of extendability of  $C^1_H$  curves in Carnot groups has been answered positively in the case of the Heisenberg group by S. Zimmerman in [Zim]. For general Carnot groups, it has been proved in [JS17] that the  $C^1_H$  extension property holds if and only if the group is *pliable*, that is, for every horizontal vector  $v$  the endpoint map  $\mathcal{C}_0 \ni u \mapsto E(v + u)$  is locally open at 0, where  $\mathcal{C}_0$  is the space of

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\*CMAP, École Polytechnique, CNRS, Inria, Université Paris-Saclay, France

<sup>†</sup>Inria, Université Paris-Saclay

continuous functions  $u$  from  $[0, 1]$  to the horizontal distribution of the Carnot group such that  $u(0) = 0$  and  $E(w)$  is the endpoint at time 1 of the trajectory starting at the identity and tangent to  $w$ . This characterization in terms of pliability, together with some tools from geometric control theory, are used in [JS17] to prove that step-2 Carnot groups satisfy the  $C_H^1$  extension property. Several examples of non-pliable Carnot groups are also presented.

A closely related subject is the one of Lusin-like approximations in Carnot groups, namely the property that an absolutely continuous horizontal curve coincides, out of a set of arbitrarily small measure, with a  $C_H^1$  curve. The validity of such a Lusin approximation theorem in the Heisenberg group has been proved in [Spe16, Zim] and extended to the case of step-2 Carnot groups in [LDS16]. In [JS17] it is shown that if a Carnot group is pliable then it satisfies the Lusin approximation property.

In this paper we enlarge the analysis from Carnot groups to general sub-Riemannian manifolds (not necessarily equiregular). The first step of this program is to provide a suitable definition of the  $C_H^1$  extension property in sub-Riemannian manifolds. This is done by showing that  $C_H^1$  curves admit an intrinsic first-order Taylor expansion with uniform reminder, evaluated with respect to the sub-Riemannian distance. This can be seen as a form of uniform Pansu-differentiability for  $C_H^1$  curves (see also the results in [VP06], partially recalled in Section 5). The key for investigating this property is the use of nilpotent approximations, which characterize the infinitesimal metric structure at a point of the sub-Riemannian manifold. In the equiregular case, nilpotent approximations have a Carnot group structure and one can take advantage of the metric estimates given by the celebrated Ball-Box theorem [Bel96]. The non-equiregular case can be tackled by desingularization.

The second step of our analysis consists in providing sufficient conditions for the  $C_H^1$  extension property in sub-Riemannian manifolds to hold true. In the equiregular case, the conditions are expressed in terms of the pliability properties of the nilpotent approximations. More precisely, we prove that the  $C_H^1$  extension property holds if every Carnot group corresponding to a nilpotent approximation of the sub-Riemannian manifold is *strongly pliable*, that is, for every horizontal vector  $v$ , not only the endpoint map  $\mathcal{C}_0 \ni u \mapsto E(v + u)$  is locally open at 0, but also there exists a sequence of points  $u_n$  converging to 0 in  $\mathcal{C}_0$  such that  $E(v + u_n) = E(v)$  and  $u \mapsto E(v + u)$  is a submersion at  $u_n$  for every  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ . Strong pliability introduces a guarantee of structural stability in the invertibility of the endpoint map, allowing to deduce extendability properties on the sub-Riemannian manifold from those of the nilpotent approximations. As a consequence of this condition, we deduce that step-2 sub-Riemannian manifolds satisfy the  $C_H^1$  extension property. More generally, second order conditions for the local openness of the endpoint map can be used to express sufficient conditions for strong pliability in terms of the Goh and the generalized Legendre conditions.

Beyond its own metric interest, the  $C_H^1$  extension property can be used to characterize rectifiability in sub-Riemannian manifolds: we show that, if the  $C_H^1$  extension property holds true, then rectifiability by Lipschitz curves is equivalent to rectifiability by  $C_H^1$  curves. This equivalence is based on a generalization of Lusin approximation theorem for sub-Riemannian manifolds that satisfy the  $C_H^1$  extension property.

## 1.1 Article walkthrough

In Section 2 we recall some basic definitions and properties in sub-Riemannian geometry. In particular, we discuss two important tools used in the paper, namely the nilpotent approximation of a sub-Riemannian structure and the distance estimates given by the Ball-Box theorem. We also recollect some basic facts about the chronological exponential notation and we use the variation of constant formula to prove a useful distance estimate (Lemma 2.6).

Section 3 is dedicated to the study of the  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition. Taking inspiration from the uniform Pansu-differentiability of  $C_H^1$ -curves (Proposition 3.1), we propose a first definition of the  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition on equiregular manifolds (Definition 3.2) that is independent of the choice of frame (Proposition 3.4). In order to extend this result to general sub-Riemannian manifolds, we introduce in Section 3.2 forward and backward  $C_H^1$ -Whitney conditions. These asymmetric conditions turn out to be equivalent to the original  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition on equiregular manifolds (Proposition 3.9). Forward and backward  $C_H^1$ -Whitney conditions can be recast in terms of the nilpotent approximations of the sub-Riemannian structure (Propositions 3.7 and 3.8). This proves useful in Section 3.3, where

the  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition is defined on singular sub-Riemannian manifolds (Definition 3.2) and where it is proved that the  $C_H^1$  extension property is inherited by the projection of an equiregular lift (Corollary 3.12).

In Section 4, we propose a sufficient condition for the  $C_H^1$  extension property to hold in terms of strong pliability (Definition 4.1). Strong pliability is always satisfied at regular values of the endpoint map and can be investigated through second order conditions at critical points (Section 4.1.2). In Section 4.2, we use uniform estimates for the nilpotent approximations to prove that strong pliability implies the  $C_H^1$  extension property for equiregular sub-Riemannian manifolds (Theorem 4.11). As a consequence of this result, together with the previous desingularization analysis, we are able to prove that all step-2 sub-Riemannian manifolds have the  $C_H^1$  extension property (Corollary 4.13).

As a conclusion, we give in Section 5 an application of the  $C_H^1$  extension property, proving that it implies the Lusin approximation of horizontal curves (Proposition 5.3), which in turns can be used to characterize 1-rectifiability (Corollary 5.4).

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## 2 Sub-Riemannian Geometry

In this section we introduce some classical notions from the fields of sub-Riemannian geometry and control theory that we use in the following sections. For more details, we refer to the publications cited below, in particular the books [AS04], [Jea14] and [ABB16].

### 2.1 Sub-Riemannian manifolds

We give the definition of a sub-Riemannian manifold as it can be found in [ABB16].

**Definition 2.1.** Let  $M$  be a smooth connected manifold. A *sub-Riemannian structure* on  $M$  is a pair  $(U, f)$  where

- i.  $U$  is an Euclidean bundle with base  $M$  and Euclidean fiber  $U_q$ , *i.e.*, for every  $q \in M$ ,  $U_q$  is a vector space endowed with a scalar product  $(\cdot | \cdot)_q$  smooth with respect to  $q$ . In particular, the dimension of  $U_q$  is constant with respect to  $q \in M$ .
- ii.  $f : U \rightarrow TM$  is a smooth map that is a morphism of vector bundles, *i.e.*,  $f$  is linear on fibers and the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} U & \xrightarrow{f} & TM \\ & \searrow \pi_U & \downarrow \pi \\ & & M \end{array}$$

is commutative (with  $\pi_U : U \rightarrow M$  and  $\pi : TM \rightarrow M$  the canonical projections).

- iii. The set of *horizontal vector fields*  $\Delta = \{f(\sigma) \mid \sigma : M \rightarrow U \text{ smooth section}\}$  is a Lie bracket-generating family of vector fields.

A *sub-Riemannian manifold* is then a triple  $(M, U, f)$  where  $M$  is a smooth manifold endowed with a sub-Riemannian structure  $(U, f)$ . The *distribution* of this manifold is the family of subspaces

$$(\Delta_q)_{q \in M} \text{ where } \Delta_q = f(U_q) \subset T_q M,$$

and  $\dim \Delta_q$  is called the *rank of the sub-Riemannian structure at  $q$* .

With an abuse of notation we will sometimes denote the sub-Riemannian manifold  $(M, U, f)$  by  $(M, \Delta, g)$ , with  $g$  a quadratic form on  $\Delta$  obtained by projection of the Euclidean structure, as explained in the next definition.

**Definition 2.2.** An absolutely continuous curve  $\gamma : I \rightarrow M$  is said to be *horizontal* if  $\dot{\gamma}(t) \in \Delta_{\gamma(t)}$  for almost every  $t \in I$ . For  $v \in \Delta_q$ ,

$$g(v, v) = \inf\{(u | u)_q \mid f(q, u) = (q, v), (q, u) \in U\}.$$

We then define the *length of the horizontal curve*  $\gamma$  as

$$l(\gamma) = \int_I g(\dot{\gamma}(t), \dot{\gamma}(t))^{1/2} dt.$$

With this length we are able to define the *Carnot-Caratheodory distance between two points*  $p, q \in M$  as

$$d_{\text{SR}}(p, q) = \inf \{l(\gamma) \mid \gamma : (a, b) \rightarrow M \text{ horizontal}, \gamma(a) = p, \gamma(b) = q\}.$$

**Definition 2.3.** Let  $(M, U, f)$  be a sub-Riemannian manifold and  $\Omega$  be an open subset of  $M$ . We call *frame of the distribution on  $\Omega$*  a family of horizontal vector fields  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  such that there exists a smooth Euclidean frame  $(e_1, \dots, e_m)$  of the Euclidean bundle on  $\pi_U^{-1}(\Omega)$  that satisfies

$$X_j = f_* e_j, \quad 1 \leq j \leq m.$$

As a direct consequence of this definition, we have that for any two frames  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  and  $(Y_1, \dots, Y_m)$  on  $\Omega$ , there exists a smooth map  $c$  from  $\Omega$  to the orthogonal group  $O(m)$  such that

$$X_i(q) = \sum_{j=1}^m c_{ij}(q) Y_j(q), \quad 1 \leq i \leq m, \quad q \in \Omega.$$

**Definition 2.4.** Let  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{U}, \widetilde{f})$  and  $(M, U, f)$  be two sub-Riemannian manifolds. We say that  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{U}, \widetilde{f})$  is a *lift* of  $(M, U, f)$  if there exists  $\phi : \widetilde{U} \rightarrow U$  a fiberwise isometry and  $\psi : \widetilde{M} \rightarrow M$  a submersion such that the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \widetilde{U} & \xrightarrow{\widetilde{f}} & T\widetilde{M} \\ \phi \downarrow & & \downarrow \psi_* \\ U & \xrightarrow{f} & TM \end{array}$$

is commutative.

A consequence of the isometry condition is that for  $\widetilde{d}_{\text{SR}}$  and  $d_{\text{SR}}$  the respective sub-Riemannian distances of  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{U}, \widetilde{f})$  and  $(M, U, f)$ , we have

$$d_{\text{SR}}(\psi(p), \psi(q)) \leq \widetilde{d}_{\text{SR}}(p, q), \quad \forall p, q \in \widetilde{M}. \quad (1)$$

Moreover, any frame  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  of  $(M, U, f)$  admits a lift  $(\widetilde{X}_1, \dots, \widetilde{X}_m)$  (i.e.,  $\pi_* \widetilde{X}_i = X_i$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq m$ ) that is a frame of  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{U}, \widetilde{f})$ .

## 2.2 Nilpotent approximation

Set  $\Delta^1 = \Delta$  and  $\Delta^{k+1} = \Delta^k + [\Delta^k, \Delta]$  for every integer  $k \geq 1$ . At any point  $p \in M$ , the Lie bracket generating condition ensures that there exists an integer  $r \geq 1$ , that we call *step of the sub-Riemannian structure at  $p$* , such that

$$\Delta_p^1 \subseteq \Delta_p^2 \subseteq \dots \Delta_p^{r-1} \subsetneq \Delta_p^r = T_p M. \quad (2)$$

The finite sequence of integers  $(\dim \Delta_p^1, \dots, \dim \Delta_p^r) = (n_1, \dots, n_r)$  is called *growth vector at  $p$* . If the growth vector is constant on a neighborhood of  $p$ ,  $p$  is said to be *regular*, and *singular* otherwise. The manifold itself is said to be *quiregular* if each of its points is regular and we say that it is singular if it contains singular points.

We call *desingularization of  $(M, \Delta, g)$*  a lift  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{\Delta}, \widetilde{g})$  of  $(M, \Delta, g)$  that is equiregular. As shown in [Jea14, Lemma 2.5], at any given point  $p \in M$ , there exists a desingularization on some open neighborhood of  $p$  that has the same step as  $\Delta$  at  $p$ .

The relation between the flag (2) and the distance  $d_{\text{SR}}$  is characterized by the so-called *weights at  $p$* , that is the sequence of integers  $w = (w_1, \dots, w_d)$  such that  $w_j = s$  if  $n_s < j \leq n_{s+1}$  (with  $n_0 = 0$ ). Written in full, that is

$$w = (\underbrace{1, \dots, 1}_{n_1 \text{ times}}, \underbrace{2, \dots, 2}_{(n_2 - n_1) \text{ times}}, \dots, \underbrace{r, \dots, r}_{(n_r - n_{r-1}) \text{ times}}).$$

A set of coordinates  $(x_1, \dots, x_d) : \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^d$  is said to be a *system of privileged coordinates at  $p$*  if  $\Omega$  is a neighborhood of  $p$  and

$$\sup \{s \in \mathbb{R} \mid x_j(q) = O(d_{\text{SR}}(p, q)^s)\} = w_j, \quad 1 \leq j \leq d.$$

This definition implies that privileged coordinates belong to the class of linearly adapted coordinates at  $p$ , *i.e.*, coordinates  $(x_1, \dots, x_d)$  that satisfy

$$dx_i(\Delta_p^{w_i}) \neq 0, dx_i(\Delta_p^{w_i-1}) = 0, \quad 1 \leq i \leq d,$$

with  $\Delta_p^0 = \{0\}$ . Existence of privileged coordinates has been proved in [AS87, BS90, Bel96].

A *continuously varying system of privileged coordinates* on an open  $\Omega \subset M$  is a continuous map

$$\Phi : (p, q) \mapsto \Phi_p(q) \in \mathbb{R}^d$$

defined on a neighborhood of the set  $\{(p, p) \mid p \in \Omega\}$  in  $M \times M$  such that for each  $p \in \Omega$ , the mapping  $\Phi_p$  is a system of privileged coordinates at  $p$ .

The system of coordinates  $\Phi$  can be used to define a pseudo-norm and a dilation, as follows: the *pseudo-norm at  $p \in \Omega$*  is the map  $\|\cdot\|_p : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  defined by

$$\|(x_1, \dots, x_d)\|_p = \sum_{i=1}^d |x_i|^{1/w_i}, \quad (3)$$

with  $(w_i)_{1 \leq i \leq d}$  the weights at  $p$ . Let  $\lambda > 0$  and  $\mathfrak{d}_\lambda : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^d$  be defined by

$$(\mathfrak{d}_\lambda(y))_i = \lambda^{w_i} y_i, \quad 1 \leq i \leq d.$$

For  $p \in \Omega$ , let  $\delta_\lambda^p$  be the *quasi-homogeneous dilation centered at  $p$* ,

$$\begin{aligned} \delta_\lambda^p : \Omega &\longrightarrow \mathbb{R}^d \\ q &\longmapsto \mathfrak{d}_\lambda \circ \Phi_p(q). \end{aligned}$$

Then by construction,

$$\|\delta_\lambda^p(q)\|_p = \lambda \|\Phi_p(q)\|_p.$$

For every horizontal vector field  $X$  and every  $p \in M$ , we call *nilpotent approximation of  $X$  at  $p$*  the uniform limit  $\widehat{X}$  on compact sets of  $\mathbb{R}^d$  of the vector field  $\lambda \delta_{\lambda^*}^p X$  as  $\lambda \rightarrow 0^+$  (see for instance [ABB16, Proposition 10.48]). Given a frame  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  of the distribution, the vector bundle  $(\widehat{X}_1, \dots, \widehat{X}_m)$  endows  $\mathbb{R}^d$  with a structure of homogeneous space that depends on the point  $p$  but neither on the frame or the system of privileged coordinates. This object is either referred to as *nilpotent approximation of  $(M, \Delta, g)$  at  $p$* , when referring to a specific choice of frame, or *sub-Riemannian tangent*, when referring to the homogeneous space. In the equiregular case, the sub-Riemannian tangent is not only a homogeneous space but actually has a Carnot group structure ([Bel96]).

### 2.3 Uniform distance estimates

Adapted coordinates and nilpotent approximations play a fundamental role in distance estimates which compare the pseudo norm (3) with the sub-Riemannian distance. The result below will be applied repeatedly in the rest of the paper.

**Theorem 2.5** ([Jea14, Theorem 2.3]). *Let  $\bar{p} \in M$  be a regular point. There exist an open neighborhood  $\Omega$  of  $\bar{p}$ , a continuously varying system of privileged coordinates  $\Phi$  on  $\Omega$ , and two positive constants  $\varepsilon$ ,  $C$ , such that for every pair  $(p, q) \in \Omega \times \Omega$  with  $d_{\text{SR}}(p, q) \leq \varepsilon$ ,*

$$\frac{1}{C} \|\Phi_p(q)\|_p \leq d_{\text{SR}}(p, q) \leq C \|\Phi_p(q)\|_p.$$

An application of this theorem is the following technical lemma (Lemma 2.6) that will be useful in later results.

In order to prove the lemma, we introduce a useful notation for the flow of time-dependent vector fields, the so-called *chronological exponential* [AG78, AS04]. Let  $\mathbb{R} \times M \ni (t, q) \mapsto X_t(q)$  be a complete time-dependent vector field, measurable and locally bounded with respect to  $t$  and smooth with respect to  $q$ . For  $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$ ,  $a \leq b$ , we denote by

$$\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_a^b X_t dt : M \longrightarrow M$$

the map from  $M$  onto itself such that the curve  $\gamma : [a, b] \rightarrow M$  defined by  $\gamma(t) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_a^t X_\tau d\tau(q_0)$  is absolutely continuous, such that  $\dot{\gamma}(t) = X_t(\gamma(t))$  for almost every  $t$  and  $\gamma(a) = q_0$ . For  $a \geq b$  we set  $\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_a^b X_\tau d\tau = (\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_b^a X_\tau d\tau)^{-1}$ . Let us recall the variation of constant formula. If  $X_\tau, Y_\tau$  are two time-dependent vector fields then

$$\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t (X_\tau + Y_\tau) d\tau = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t \left( \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^\tau X_\sigma d\sigma \right)_* Y_\tau d\tau \circ \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t X_\tau d\tau. \quad (4)$$

(Up to localization, we can assume that all involved vector fields are complete.) In particular if  $X$  is a time-independent vector field, Equation (4) takes the form

$$\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t (X + Y_\tau) d\tau = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t e^{\tau \text{ad}X} Y_\tau d\tau \circ e^{tX}, \quad (5)$$

where for each smooth vector field  $V$  on  $M$  we denote by  $\text{ad}V$  the endomorphism of the space of smooth vector fields on  $M$  defined by

$$\text{ad}V(W) = [V, W].$$

Then  $e^{\tau \text{ad}X} Y_\tau$  admits the series expansion

$$e^{\tau \text{ad}X} Y_\tau = Y_\tau + \sum_{k=1}^{N-1} \frac{\tau^k}{k!} [X, \dots, [X, Y_\tau] \dots] + R_N(\tau), \quad N \in \mathbb{N}, \quad (6)$$

and there exists  $C > 0$  such that for all compact  $K$  contained in a given coordinate neighborhood of  $M$ , all integer  $j \geq 0$ ,

$$\|R_N(\tau)\|_{j,K} \leq \frac{C}{N!} e^{C\tau \|X\|_{j+1,K}} \tau^N \|X\|_{j+N,K}^N \|Y_\tau\|_{j+N,K}, \quad (7)$$

where  $\|\cdot\|_{j,K}$  denotes the semi-norm on the space of smooth vector fields

$$\|f\|_{j,K} = \sup \left\{ \left| \frac{\partial^\alpha f}{\partial x^\alpha}(x) \right| \mid x \in K, \alpha \in \mathbb{N}^d, |\alpha| \leq j \right\}.$$

(See [AS04, Equation 2.24].) As a consequence, if  $\tau \mapsto \|Y_\tau\|_{j+N,K}$  is bounded in  $L^\infty([0, \tau])$ , then for  $\tau$  near 0,

$$\|R_N(\tau)\|_{j,K} = O(\tau^N).$$

In the following, for a given frame  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  and a given  $u \in \mathbb{R}^m$ , we denote by  $X_u$  the horizontal vector field  $\sum_{i=1}^m u_i X_i$ .

**Lemma 2.6.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be an equiregular sub-Riemannian manifold of dimension  $d$ , rank  $m$  and step  $r$ . Let  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  be a frame of  $\Delta$  defined on an open subset  $\Omega$  of  $M$ . Pick  $\bar{p} \in \Omega$ ,  $\bar{u} \in \mathbb{R}^m$ , and  $\phi : [0, +\infty) \rightarrow [0, +\infty)$ , continuous at 0 and such that  $\phi(0) = 0$ .*

*Then there exist  $T > 0$ ,  $V_{\bar{p}} \subset \Omega$ ,  $V_{\bar{u}} \subset \mathbb{R}^m$  neighborhoods of  $\bar{p}$ ,  $\bar{u}$  respectively, a function  $\omega : \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$  with  $\omega(t) = o(t)$  at  $0^+$ , such that if  $t \in [0, T]$ ,  $p \in V_{\bar{p}}$ ,  $u, v : [0, T] \rightarrow V_{\bar{u}}$  continuous at 0 and*

$$|u - u(0)| \leq \phi, \quad |v - u(0)| \leq \phi,$$

then

$$d_{\text{SR}} \left( \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t X_{u(s)} ds(p), \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t X_{v(s)} ds(p) \right) \leq \omega(t).$$

*Proof.* Without loss of generality we can assume  $u$  to be constant and the general result follows by triangular inequality.

We apply Theorem 2.5 to endow a compact neighborhood  $\Omega' \subset \Omega$  of  $\bar{p}$  with a continuously varying system of privileged coordinates  $\Phi$ .

We fix  $T > 0$ ,  $V_{\bar{p}} \subset \Omega'$  and  $V_{\bar{u}} \subset \mathbb{R}^m$  neighborhoods of  $\bar{p}$  and  $\bar{u}$ , respectively, such that  $\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t X_{v(s)} ds(p)$  is in  $\Omega'$  for every  $t \in [0, T]$ ,  $p \in V_{\bar{p}}$ ,  $v : [0, T] \rightarrow V_{\bar{u}}$  continuous at 0.

Let  $p \in V_{\bar{p}}$ ,  $u \in V_{\bar{u}}$  and  $v : [0, T] \rightarrow V_{\bar{u}}$ , continuous at 0, be such that  $|u - v| \leq \phi$ . For all  $t \in [0, T]$  let

$$\gamma(t) = e^{tX_u}(p) \quad \text{and} \quad \xi(t) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t X_{v(s)} ds(p).$$

*Step 1:* rewriting  $\xi$  as a perturbation of  $\gamma$ .

Let us set  $X = X_u$  and  $Z_t = X_{v(t)} - X_u$ , so that

$$\dot{\xi}(t) = X(\xi(t)) + Z_t(\xi(t)).$$

By the variation of constants formula,

$$\xi(t) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t (X + Z_s) ds(p) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t e^{\text{sad}X} Z_s ds (e^{tX}(p)).$$

Hence the problem reduces to the evaluation of the distance  $d_{\text{SR}}(\gamma(t), \eta_t(t))$ , where  $\eta_t : [0, t] \rightarrow M$  is the integral curve of the non-horizontal vector field  $W_s = e^{\text{sad}X} Z_s$  with initial condition  $\gamma(t)$ . Notice that

$$\eta_t(s) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^s W_\tau d\tau(\gamma(t)) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^s (X + Z_\tau) d\tau(e^{(t-s)X} p)$$

and in particular there exists  $C > 0$  such that

$$d_{\text{SR}}(\gamma(t), \eta_t(s)) \leq C(t - s).$$

(See Figure 1.)

*Step 2:* bounding the pseudo-norm centered at  $\gamma(t)$  of  $\xi(t)$ .

By possibly reducing  $T$ , we can assume that  $\eta_t(s) \in \Omega'$  for every  $0 \leq s \leq t \leq T$ . We then use the privileged coordinates  $\Phi : \Omega \times \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^d$  at  $\gamma(t)$  to compute the pseudo-norm  $\|\Phi_{\gamma(t)}(\eta_t(s))\|_{\gamma(t)}$ .

Denote by  $(n_1, \dots, n_r)$  the growth vector of the sub-Riemannian structure, by  $(w_1, \dots, w_d)$  the corresponding weights, and by  $x = (x_1, \dots, x_d)$  the coordinates  $\Phi_{\gamma(t)}$ . We want to evaluate for all  $1 \leq i \leq d$  the absolute value of

$$x_i(\xi(t)) = \int_0^t (W_s(\eta_t(s)))_i ds. \quad (8)$$

Taking  $N = r$  in the expansion (6),

$$W_s = Z_s + \sum_{k=1}^{r-1} \frac{s^k}{k!} [X, \dots, [X, Z_s] \dots] + R_r(s). \quad (9)$$

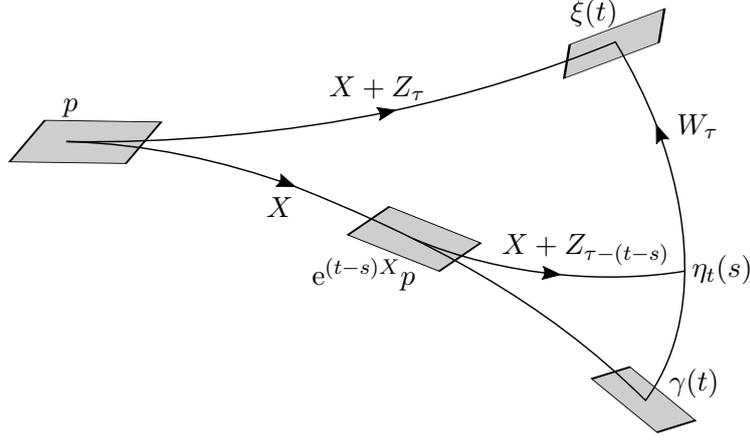


Figure 1: Representation of the curve  $\eta_t$ , where  $\eta_t(s)$  can be seen both as the evaluation at time  $s$  of an integral curve of the non-horizontal vector field  $W_\tau$  and as the endpoint of the concatenation of an integral curve of  $X$  over time  $t - s$  and an integral curve of  $X + Z_\tau$  over the time-interval  $[0, s]$ .

The remainder  $R_r$  can be bounded using (7). For each coordinate  $(R_r(s))_i$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq d$ , we have that

$$\|(R_r(s))_i\|_{0, \Omega'} \leq \frac{C}{r!} e^{Cs\|X\|_{1, \Omega'}} s^r \|X\|_{r, \Omega'}^r \|Z_s\|_{r, \Omega'}.$$

Since  $|v - u| \leq \phi$ , the compactness of  $\Omega'$  and  $V_{\bar{u}}$  implies the existence of  $C$  uniform such that

$$|(R_r(s))_i| \leq C s^r \phi(s).$$

We now use non-holonomic order arguments (see [Jea14, Section 2.1]) to bound the principal term of the expansion in (9).

Let  $V_s^k = (\text{ad}X)^{k-1} Z_s$  for  $k \geq 1$ . The vector fields  $X$  and  $Z_s$  being horizontal,  $V_s^k \in \Delta^k$ . As a consequence, the vector  $V_s^k$  has a non-holonomic order greater than or equal to  $-k$  at any  $p \in \Omega'$ . Coordinate-wise, at  $\gamma(t)$ ,  $\text{ord}_{\gamma(t)}(\partial_{x_i}) = -w_i$ , so that  $(V_s^k)_i$  then has non-holonomic order

$$\text{ord}_{\gamma(t)}((V_s^k)_i) \geq \max(w_i - k, 0).$$

Since  $V_s^k$  depends linearly on  $v - u$ , there exists  $C_k > 0$  such that for  $q \in \Omega'$  sufficiently close to  $\gamma(t)$ ,

$$\left| (V_s^k)_i(q) \right| \leq C_k \phi(s) \text{dSR}(\gamma(t), q)^{\max(w_i - k, 0)}.$$

Since  $\eta_t(s)$  can be seen as the endpoint of an horizontal curve starting at  $\gamma(t)$  of length of order  $t$ ,

$$\left| (V_s^k)_i(\eta_t(s)) \right| \leq C_k \phi(s) t^{\max(w_i - k, 0)}.$$

Thus

$$\int_0^t |(Z_s)_i(\eta_t(s))| \text{d}s \leq C_1 t^{\max(w_i - 1, 0)} \int_0^t \phi(s) \text{d}s = t^{w_i} \psi^1(t),$$

and

$$\int_0^t \left| (s^{k-1} V_s^k)_i(\eta_t(s)) \right| \text{d}s \leq C_k t^{\max(w_i - k, 0)} \int_0^t s^{k-1} \phi(s) \text{d}s = t^{w_i} \psi^k(t),$$

where for all positive integer  $k$  we denote by  $\psi^k$  the positive bounded function  $\psi^k : [0, T] \ni t \mapsto C_k t^{-k} \int_0^t s^{k-1} \phi(s) \text{d}s$ , which is continuous and such that  $\psi^k(0) = 0$  (by continuity at 0 of  $\phi$ ). Thus, for all  $1 \leq i \leq d$ ,

$$|x_i(\xi(t))| \leq t^{w_i} \Psi_i(t),$$

with  $\Psi_i : [0, T] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$  a bounded function continuous at 0 such that  $\Psi_i(0) = 0$ . Hence we have the uniform bound

$$\|\Phi_{\gamma(t)}(\xi(t))\|_{\gamma(t)} \leq \sum_{i=1}^d t(\Psi_i(t))^{1/w_i} = \psi(t)t, \quad (10)$$

with  $\psi : [0, T] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$  a function continuous at 0 such that  $\psi(0) = 0$ .

*Step 3: Uniform estimates.*

As  $t \rightarrow 0$ ,  $\overrightarrow{\exp} \int_0^t e^{\text{sad}X} Z_s ds$  uniformly converges to the identity on  $\Omega'$ . Using the notations of Theorem 2.5, there exists  $T > 0$  such that if  $0 \leq t \leq T$ ,

$$d_{\text{SR}}(\gamma(t), \xi(t)) \leq \varepsilon$$

and therefore

$$d_{\text{SR}}(\gamma(t), \xi(t)) \leq C\|\Phi_{\gamma(t)}(\xi(t))\|_{\gamma(t)}.$$

Plugging in (10),

$$d_{\text{SR}}(\gamma(t), \xi(t)) \leq C\psi(t)t.$$

Thus, letting  $\omega(t) = C\psi(t)t$ , we have the uniform bound

$$d_{\text{SR}}\left(e^{tX_u(p)}, \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_0^t X_{v(s)} ds(p)\right) \leq \omega(t).$$

□

### 3 $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition on sub-Riemannian manifolds

We begin this section by proposing a definition of  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition for curves in sub-Riemannian structures that requires the choice of a frame of the sub-Riemannian structure. We then show that such a definition is intrinsic and we explore a few consequences.

#### 3.1 Whitney frame-wise condition

We denote by  $(M, \Delta, g)$  a sub-Riemannian manifold of dimension  $d$ . Let  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  be a frame of  $\Delta$  defined on an open subset  $\Omega$  of  $M$ .

We say that  $(f, L)$  satisfies property  $\mathcal{P}_X$  on  $K$  if the following is true.

$\mathcal{P}_X$  :  $K$  is a compact in  $\mathbb{R}$ ,  $f : K \rightarrow \Omega$  is continuous, and  $L : K \rightarrow TM$  is continuous such that  $L(t) \in \Delta_{f(t)}$  for all  $t \in K$ . Moreover there exists  $\omega : \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$  such that  $\omega(t) = o(t)$  at  $0^+$  and for all  $t, s \in K$

$$d_{\text{SR}}\left(f(t), e^{(t-s)\sum_{i=1}^m u_i X_i} f(s)\right) \leq \omega(|t-s|)$$

with  $u_1, \dots, u_m$  defined by the relation  $L(t) = \sum_{i=1}^m u_i X_i(f(t))$ .

This definition is motivated by the following proposition.

**Proposition 3.1.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be a sub-Riemannian manifold and  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  be a frame of  $\Delta$  defined on an open subset  $\Omega$  of  $M$ . Let  $f : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \Omega$  be a  $C_H^1$  curve. Then  $(f|_K, f|_K)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X$  on  $K$  for any compact subset  $K$  of  $\mathbb{R}$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $u \in C(\mathbb{R}, \mathbb{R}^m)$  be such that  $X_{u(\tau)}(f(\tau)) = \dot{f}(\tau)$  for every  $\tau \in \mathbb{R}$ . Then

$$f(t) = \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_s^t X_{u(\tau)} d\tau(f(s))$$

for every  $s, t \in \mathbb{R}$ .

Let  $K$  be a compact subset of  $\mathbb{R}$  and  $K'$  a connected compact set of  $\mathbb{R}$  containing  $K$ . For every  $s \in [0, +\infty)$ , set  $\phi(s) = \sup_{t \in K'} |u(t+s) - u(t)|$ . Notice that  $\lim_{s \rightarrow 0^+} \phi(s) = 0$  by uniform continuity of  $u$  on compact subsets of  $\mathbb{R}$ .

Let us first consider the equiregular case. Let  $s \in K$ . We set  $v = u(s) \in \mathbb{R}^m$  and we apply Lemma 2.6 at  $f(s)$ . We get the existence of  $\omega_s : \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$ , such that  $\omega_s(t) = o(t)$  at  $0^+$  and

$$d_{\text{SR}} \left( f(t), e^{(t-t')X_{u(t')}} f(t') \right) \leq \omega_s(|t - t'|) \quad (11)$$

for all  $t$  and  $t'$  close enough to  $s$ . By compactness of  $K$ , having (11) at any point  $s \in K$  yields that  $(f|_K, \dot{f}|_K)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X$  on  $K$ .

Assume now that the manifold is singular. For every  $s \in K$  there exists a neighborhood  $\Omega_s$  of  $f(s)$  contained in  $\Omega$  and a desingularization  $\psi : \tilde{\Omega}_s \rightarrow \Omega_s$  such that  $\tilde{\Omega}_s$  is an open set in an equiregular sub-Riemannian manifold  $\tilde{M}$ . Let  $(\tilde{X}_1, \dots, \tilde{X}_m)$  be the lifted frame of  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  on  $\tilde{\Omega}_s$ .

Then we fix  $\tilde{f}(s) \in \psi^{-1}(f(s))$  and we set for all  $t$  in a neighborhood of  $s$

$$\tilde{f}(t) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_s^t \tilde{X}_{u(\tau)} d\tau(\tilde{f}(s)).$$

By construction,  $\psi(\tilde{f}) = f$ . We apply the equiregular reasoning on  $\tilde{f}$  at  $s$ , and we get the existence of  $\omega_s : \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$  such that  $\omega_s(t) = o(t)$  at  $0^+$  and

$$\tilde{d}_{\text{SR}} \left( \tilde{f}(t), e^{(t-t')\tilde{X}_{u(t')}} \tilde{f}(t') \right) \leq \omega_s(|t - t'|)$$

for all  $t$  and  $t'$  close enough to  $s$ . By projecting this inequality (see Inequality (1)), we get

$$d_{\text{SR}} \left( f(t), e^{(t-t')X_{u(t')}} f(t') \right) \leq \omega_s(|t - t'|).$$

We conclude with the same compactness argument as in the equiregular case.  $\square$

We then define the  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition and the  $C_H^1$ -extension property as follows.

**Definition 3.2** ( $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition). Let  $K$  be a closed subset of  $\mathbb{R}$ ,  $f : K \rightarrow M$  continuous, and  $L : K \rightarrow TM$  continuous. We say that the  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition holds for  $(f, L)$  on  $K$  if for every  $t \in K$ , there exist a compact neighborhood  $K'$  of  $t$  in  $K$ , an open set  $\Omega \subset M$  and a local frame  $X$  of  $\Delta$  on  $\Omega$  such that  $(f|_{K'}, L|_{K'})$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X$  on  $K'$ .

**Definition 3.3** ( $C_H^1$ -extension property). We say that a sub-Riemannian manifold  $M$  has the  $C_H^1$  extension property if for all closed subset  $K$  of  $\mathbb{R}$ , all pair  $(f, L) : K \rightarrow M \times TM$  continuous satisfying the  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition, there exists an horizontal  $C^1$ -curve  $\gamma : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow M$  such that

$$\gamma|_K = f, \quad \dot{\gamma}|_K = L.$$

In the case where  $(M, \Delta, g)$  is equiregular, we are able to show that the property of satisfying  $\mathcal{P}_X$  is intrinsic to the curve and does not depend on the choice of the frame.

**Proposition 3.4.** Assume  $(M, \Delta, g)$  to be an equiregular sub-Riemannian manifold. Let  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  and  $(Y_1, \dots, Y_m)$  be two frames of  $\Delta$  defined on an open subset  $\Omega$  of  $M$ . Let  $K \subset \mathbb{R}$  be compact and  $(f, L) : K \rightarrow \Omega \times TM$  be continuous. Then  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X$  on  $K$  if and only if it satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_Y$  on  $K$ .

*Proof.* Let us assume that  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X$  on  $K$ . In particular, there exists  $\omega_X : \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$ , such that  $\omega_X(t) = o(t)$  at  $0^+$  and, for all  $t, s \in K$ ,

$$d_{\text{SR}} \left( f(s), e^{(s-t)X_u} f(t) \right) \leq \omega_X(|s - t|),$$

with  $u_1, \dots, u_m$  defined by the relation  $L(t) = \sum_{i=1}^m u_i X_i(f(t))$ . Let us prove that  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_Y$ .

Let us define  $u, v : K \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$  continuous such that  $X_{u(t)}(f(t)) = Y_{v(t)}(f(t)) = L(t)$  for every  $t \in K$ . Since  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  and  $(Y_1, \dots, Y_m)$  are both frames of  $\Delta$ , there exist smooth functions  $(c_{ij})_{1 \leq i, j \leq m}$  such that for all  $q \in \Omega$ ,

$$Y_j(q) = \sum_{i=1}^m c_{ij}(q) X_i(q).$$

Then

$$\sum_{j=1}^m v_j(t) Y_j(q) = \sum_{i=1}^m \left( \sum_{j=1}^m v_j(t) c_{ij}(q) \right) X_i(q), \quad t \in K, q \in M.$$

As a consequence of Lemma 2.6, for all  $t \in K$  there exist  $T_t > 0$ ,  $V_{f(t)} \subset \Omega$ ,  $V_{u(t)} \subset \mathbb{R}^m$  neighborhoods of  $f(t)$ ,  $u(t)$  respectively, there exists  $\omega_t : \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$  with  $\omega_t(s) = o(s)$  at  $0^+$ , such that if  $p \in V_{f(t)}$ ,  $u \in V_{u(t)}$  and  $v \in \mathbb{R}^m$  satisfy  $X_u(p) = Y_v(p)$  then

$$d_{\text{SR}}(e^{sX_u} p, e^{sY_v} p) \leq \omega_t(s), \quad s \in [0, T_t].$$

By compactness of  $K$  and  $f(K)$ , there exists  $\omega : \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$ , with  $\omega(t) = o(t)$  at  $0^+$  such that for all  $s, t \in K$

$$d_{\text{SR}}(e^{(s-t)X_{u(t)}} f(t), e^{(s-t)Y_{v(t)}} f(t)) \leq \omega(|s-t|).$$

Then for  $s, t \in K$ ,

$$\begin{aligned} d_{\text{SR}}(f(s), e^{(s-t)Y_{v(t)}} f(t)) &\leq d_{\text{SR}}(f(s), e^{(s-t)X_{u(t)}} f(t)) + d_{\text{SR}}(e^{(s-t)X_{u(t)}} f(t), e^{(s-t)Y_{v(t)}} f(t)) \\ &\leq \omega_X(|s-t|) + \omega(|s-t|). \end{aligned}$$

Thus  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_Y$  on  $K$  with  $\omega_Y = \omega_X + \omega$ . □

### 3.2 Forward and backward Whitney condition

To expand the notion of  $\mathcal{C}_H^1$ -Whitney condition to singular sub-Riemannian manifolds, we first have to break the symmetry in the definition of  $\mathcal{P}_X$  by comparing only flows going forward or backward in time. This new definition has two virtues. First, the asymmetric definition turns out to be equivalent to the symmetric one and it is easier to lift on a desingularized manifold. Second, the asymmetric definition lends itself well to the use of dilations, which will be useful in Section 4.

Consider an equiregular sub-Riemannian manifold  $(M, \Delta, g)$  of dimension  $d$ , rank  $m$  and step  $r$ . Let  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  be a frame of  $\Delta$  defined on an open subset  $\Omega$  of  $M$ .

We say that  $(f, L)$  satisfies the property  $\mathcal{P}_X$ -forward, denoted by  $\mathcal{P}_X^F$ , or  $\mathcal{P}_X$ -backward, denoted by  $\mathcal{P}_X^B$ , on  $K$  if the following is true.

$\mathcal{P}_X^F$ :  $K$  is a compact subset of  $\mathbb{R}$ ,  $f : K \rightarrow \Omega$  is continuous, and  $L : K \rightarrow TM$  is continuous such that  $L(t) \in \Delta_{f(t)}$  for all  $t \in K$ . Moreover there exists  $\omega : \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$ , such that  $\omega(t) = o(t)$  at  $0^+$  and

$$d_{\text{SR}}(f(t), e^{(t-s)\sum_{i=1}^m u_i X_i} f(s)) \leq \omega(t-s) \quad \forall t > s \in K,$$

with  $u_1, \dots, u_m$  defined by the relation  $L(t) = \sum_{i=1}^m u_i X_i(f(t))$ .

$\mathcal{P}_X^B$ :  $K$  is a compact subset of  $\mathbb{R}$ ,  $f : K \rightarrow \Omega$  is continuous, and  $L : K \rightarrow TM$  is continuous such that  $L(t) \in \Delta_{f(t)}$  for all  $t \in K$ . Moreover there exists  $\omega : \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$ , such that  $\omega(t) = o(t)$  at  $0^+$  and

$$d_{\text{SR}}(f(s), e^{-(t-s)\sum_{i=1}^m u_i X_i} f(t)) \leq \omega(t-s) \quad \forall t > s \in K,$$

with  $u_1, \dots, u_m$  defined by the relation  $L(t) = \sum_{i=1}^m u_i X_i(f(t))$ .

In analogy with Definition 3.2, we introduce the following notions.

**Definition 3.5** (Backward and forward  $\mathcal{C}_H^1$ -Whitney condition). Let  $K$  be a closed subset of  $\mathbb{R}$ ,  $f : K \rightarrow M$  continuous, and  $L : K \rightarrow TM$  continuous be such that  $L(t) \in \Delta_{f(t)}$  for all  $t \in K$ . We say that the *backward (respectively, forward)  $\mathcal{C}_H^1$ -Whitney condition holds for  $(f, L)$  on  $K$*  if for every  $t \in K$  there exist a compact neighborhood  $K'$  of  $t$  in  $K$ , an open set  $\Omega \subset M$  and a local frame  $X$  of  $\Delta$  on  $\Omega$  such that  $(f|_{K'}, L|_{K'})$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X^B$  (respectively,  $\mathcal{P}_X^F$ ).

The reasoning in Section 3.1 still holds when we consider  $\mathcal{P}_X$ -backward and  $\mathcal{P}_X$ -forward. Hence the following result.

**Proposition 3.6.** *Assume  $(M, \Delta, g)$  to be an equiregular sub-Riemannian manifold. Let  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  and  $(Y_1, \dots, Y_m)$  be two frames of  $\Delta$  defined on an open subset  $\Omega$  of  $M$ . Let  $K \subset \mathbb{R}$  be compact and  $(f, L) : K \rightarrow \Omega \times TM$  be continuous. Then  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X^F$  (respectively,  $\mathcal{P}_X^B$ ) on  $K$  if and only if it satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_Y^F$  (respectively,  $\mathcal{P}_Y^B$ ) on  $K$ .*

Proposition 3.7 below reformulates the forward  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition using dilations in privileged coordinates.

**Proposition 3.7.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be an equiregular sub-Riemannian manifold. Let  $K \subset \mathbb{R}$  be compact and  $(f, L) : K \rightarrow \Omega \times TM$  be continuous. Assume that there exists a continuously varying system of privileged coordinates  $\Phi : \Omega \times \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^d$  as in Theorem 2.5. Then the pair  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X^F$  if and only if for all  $l \in K$ , for all sequences  $(a_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}, (b_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  in  $K$  such that  $a_n < b_n$  and  $a_n, b_n \rightarrow l \in K$ , we have*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \delta_{\frac{1}{b_n - a_n}}^{f(b_n)}(f(a_n)) = e^{-\widehat{X}_u(l)}(0).$$

*Proof.* Let  $l \in K$ ,  $(a_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}, (b_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  in  $K$  be such that  $a_n < b_n$  and  $a_n, b_n \rightarrow l \in K$ . By assumption there exists two positive constants  $\varepsilon, C$ , such that for every pair  $(p, q) \in \Omega \times \Omega$  with  $d_{\text{SR}}(p, q) \leq \varepsilon$ , it holds

$$\frac{1}{C} \|\Phi_p(q)\|_p \leq d_{\text{SR}}(p, q) \leq C \|\Phi_p(q)\|_p.$$

Then, for  $n$  large enough,

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{C} \left\| \Phi_{f(b_n)} \left( e^{(b_n - a_n)X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n) \right) \right\|_{f(b_n)} &\leq \\ d_{\text{SR}} \left( f(b_n), e^{(b_n - a_n)X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n) \right) & \\ &\leq C \left\| \Phi_{f(b_n)} \left( e^{(b_n - a_n)X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n) \right) \right\|_{f(b_n)}. \end{aligned} \quad (12)$$

By introducing a dilation in the pseudo norm, we get

$$\begin{aligned} \left\| \Phi_{f(b_n)} \left( e^{(b_n - a_n)X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n) \right) \right\|_{f(b_n)} &= (b_n - a_n) \left\| \mathfrak{D}_{\frac{1}{b_n - a_n}} \circ \Phi_{f(b_n)} \left( e^{(b_n - a_n)X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n) \right) \right\|_{f(b_n)} \\ &= (b_n - a_n) \left\| \delta_{\frac{1}{b_n - a_n}}^{f(b_n)} \left( e^{(b_n - a_n)X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n) \right) \right\|_{f(b_n)}. \end{aligned}$$

Denoting  $t_n = b_n - a_n$ , we get

$$\delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} \left( e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n) \right) = e^{t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} X_{u(a_n)}} \left( \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} f(a_n) \right).$$

Hence

$$\delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} f(a_n) = e^{-t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} X_{u(a_n)}} \left( \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} \left( e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n) \right) \right). \quad (13)$$

Since  $u$  and  $f$  are continuous on  $K$  and  $a_n, b_n \rightarrow l \in K$ ,  $t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} X_{u(a_n)}$  locally uniformly converges towards  $\widehat{X}_u(l)$ . This is a consequence of the local uniform convergence of  $\lambda \delta_{1/\lambda} X_u$  towards  $\widehat{X}_u$  as  $\lambda \rightarrow 0$  (see [ABB16, Proposition 10.48]). Thus  $e^{-t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} X_{u(a_n)}}$  locally uniformly converges towards  $e^{-\widehat{X}_u(l)}$ .

If  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X^F$  then equation (12) implies that

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left\| \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} \left( e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n) \right) \right\|_{f(b_n)} = 0.$$

It follows from (13) and the local uniform convergence of  $e^{-t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} X_{u(a_n)}}$  towards  $e^{-\widehat{X}_u(l)}$  that

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} f(a_n) = e^{-\widehat{X}_u(l)}(0).$$

Conversely, assume now that for all  $l \in K$ , for all sequences  $(a_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ ,  $(b_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  in  $K$  such that  $a_n < b_n$  and  $a_n, b_n \rightarrow l \in K$ , we have

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \delta_{\frac{1}{b_n - a_n}}^{f(b_n)}(f(a_n)) = e^{-\widehat{X}_u(l)}(0).$$

To prove that  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X^F$ , we prove that

$$\lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sup_{\substack{a, b \in K \\ 0 < b - a < t}} \frac{1}{b - a} d_{\text{SR}} \left( f(b), e^{(b-a)X_u(a)} f(a) \right) = 0.$$

Thanks to estimate (12), we are left to prove that

$$\lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sup_{\substack{a, b \in K \\ 0 < b - a < t}} \left\| e^{(b-a)\delta_{1/(b-a)}^{f(b)} X_u(a)} \left( \delta_{1/(b-a)}^{f(b)}(f(a)) \right) \right\|_{f(b)} = 0.$$

Assume that there exist  $\eta > 0$ ,  $(a_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  and  $(b_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  in  $K$  such that, for all  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ ,  $0 < b_n - a_n < 1/n$  and

$$\left\| e^{(b_n - a_n)\delta_{1/(b_n - a_n)}^{f(b_n)} X_u(a_n)} \left( \delta_{1/(b_n - a_n)}^{f(b_n)}(f(a_n)) \right) \right\|_{f(b_n)} > \eta.$$

Up to extraction, the sequences  $(a_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  and  $(b_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  converge to some  $l \in K$ , so that

$$\delta_{\frac{1}{b_n - a_n}}^{f(b_n)}(f(a_n)) \rightarrow e^{-\widehat{X}_u(l)}(0).$$

Moreover

$$e^{(b_n - a_n)\delta_{1/(b_n - a_n)}^{f(b_n)} X_u(a_n)} \rightarrow e^{\widehat{X}_u(l)}$$

locally uniformly on  $\mathbb{R}^d$ . Thus

$$e^{(b_n - a_n)\delta_{1/(b_n - a_n)}^{f(b_n)} X_u(a_n)} \left( \delta_{1/(b_n - a_n)}^{f(b_n)}(f(a_n)) \right) \rightarrow 0$$

in  $\mathbb{R}^d$ , concluding the contradiction argument.  $\square$

With an analogous proof we obtain the similar backward result.

**Proposition 3.8.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be an equiregular sub-Riemannian manifold. Let  $K \subset \mathbb{R}$  be compact and  $(f, L) : K \rightarrow \Omega \times TM$  be continuous. Assume that there exists a continuously varying system of privileged coordinates  $\Phi : \Omega \times \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^d$  as in Theorem 2.5. Then the pair  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X^B$  on a compact  $K \subset \mathbb{R}$  if and only if for all  $l \in K$ , for all sequences  $(a_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ ,  $(b_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  in  $K$  such that  $a_n < b_n$  and  $a_n, b_n \rightarrow l \in K$ , we have that*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \delta_{\frac{1}{b_n - a_n}}^{f(a_n)}(f(b_n)) = e^{\widehat{X}_u(l)}(0).$$

We are now ready to prove that forward and backward  $C_H^1$  Whitney conditions are equivalent.

**Proposition 3.9.** *Assume  $(M, \Delta, g)$  to be an equiregular sub-Riemannian manifold. Let  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  be a frame of  $\Delta$  defined on an open subset  $\Omega$  of  $M$ . Let  $K \subset \mathbb{R}$  be compact and  $(f, L) : K \rightarrow \Omega \times TM$  be continuous. The pair  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X^F$  on  $K$  if and only if  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X^B$  on  $K$ . Both are equivalent to  $(f, L)$  satisfying  $\mathcal{P}_X$  on  $K$ .*

*Proof.* By symmetry of the definitions, we only prove that  $\mathcal{P}_X^F \Rightarrow \mathcal{P}_X^B$  using Proposition 3.8. The converse would use Proposition 3.7.

By applying Theorem 2.5 at  $f(l)$ , we select a compact neighborhood  $\Omega$  of  $f(l)$ , a continuously varying system of privileged coordinates  $\Phi$  on  $\Omega$  and two constants  $\varepsilon$  and  $C$  such that for all  $(p, q) \in \Omega \times \Omega$  with  $d_{\text{SR}}(p, q) \leq \varepsilon$ ,

$$\frac{1}{C} \|\Phi_p(q)\|_p \leq d_{\text{SR}}(p, q) \leq C \|\Phi_p(q)\|_p.$$

Let  $(a_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  and  $(b_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  be two sequences in  $K$  such that  $a_n < b_n$  and  $\lim a_n = \lim b_n = l \in K$ . Let us denote by  $t_n = b_n - a_n$ .

By assumption  $\frac{1}{t_n} d_{\text{SR}}(e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n), f(b_n)) \rightarrow 0$ . Applying Proposition 3.8, let us prove that

$$\delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)}(f(b_n)) \xrightarrow{n \rightarrow +\infty} e^{\widehat{X}_{u(l)}}(0).$$

Since  $d_{\text{SR}}(e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n), f(b_n)) \rightarrow 0$ , there exists sequence  $(v_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  of controls,  $v_n : [0, 1] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$ , such that

$$|v_n| = d_{\text{SR}}(f(b_n), e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n))$$

almost everywhere on  $[0, 1]$  and

$$f(b_n) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^1 X_{v_n(s)} ds (e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n)).$$

Then

$$\delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)}(f(b_n)) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^1 \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)} X_{v_n(s)} ds \left( \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)} (e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n)) \right). \quad (14)$$

Now, notice that

$$\delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)} X_{v_n(s)} = \sum_{i=1}^m \frac{v_n^i(s)}{t_n} \left( t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)} X_i \right)$$

and that  $\left( t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)} X_i \right)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  locally uniformly converges towards  $\widehat{X}_i$  on  $\mathbb{R}^d$ , while the  $L^\infty$ -norm of  $\frac{v_n}{t_n}$  is upper bounded by

$$\frac{1}{t_n} d_{\text{SR}}(f(b_n), e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n)),$$

which converges toward 0 almost everywhere on  $[0, 1]$ .

Hence, by continuity of the endpoint map with respect to the control,  $\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^1 \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)} X_{v_n(s)} ds$  locally uniformly converges towards the identity. On the other hand,

$$\delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)} (e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n)) = e^{t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)} X_{u(a_n)}}(0).$$

Again by local uniform convergence of  $t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)} X_i$  towards  $\widehat{X}_i$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq m$  and by the convergence of  $(u(a_n))_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  towards  $u(l)$ ,

$$\delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)} (e^{t_n X_{u(a_n)}} f(a_n)) \rightarrow e^{\widehat{X}_{u(l)}}(0),$$

so that (14) implies

$$\delta_{1/t_n}^{f(a_n)}(f(b_n)) \xrightarrow{n \rightarrow +\infty} e^{\widehat{X}_{u(l)}}(0).$$

□

### 3.3 Whitney condition on singular sub-Riemannian manifolds

The aim of this section is to extend what we know about the  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition to the case of sub-Riemannian manifolds with singular points. This extension stands on the following result.

**Proposition 3.10.** *Let  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{\Delta}, \widetilde{g})$  be an equiregular lift of  $(M, \Delta, g)$  on the open set  $\Omega$ . Let  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  be a frame of  $(M, \Delta, g)$  on  $\Omega$  and  $(\widetilde{X}_1, \dots, \widetilde{X}_m)$  be a frame of  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{\Delta}, \widetilde{g})$  on  $\widetilde{\Omega}$ , the lift of  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$ .*

*Let  $K \subset \mathbb{R}$  be compact and  $(f, L) : K \rightarrow \Omega \times TM$  be continuous. If  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X$  on  $K$ , then there exists a continuous lift  $(\widetilde{f}, \widetilde{L}) : K \rightarrow \widetilde{\Omega} \times T\widetilde{M}$  of  $(f, L)$  that satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_{\widetilde{X}}$  on  $K$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $u : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$  be defined as follows. We set  $u|_K$  to be continuous and such that  $X_{u(t)} = L(t)$  and  $g(L(t), L(t)) = \|u(t)\|^2$  for all  $t \in K$ . For every  $(a, b) \subset K^c$  such that  $a, b \in K$ , let  $d(a, b) = d_{\text{SR}} \left( e^{(b-a)X_{u(a)}} f(a), f(b) \right)$  and let

$$M = 2 \sup \left\{ \frac{d(a, b)}{b-a} \mid (a, b) \subset K^c, a, b \in K \right\} < \infty.$$

Let  $(a, b) \subset K^c$ ,  $a, b \in K$ . Since  $b - \frac{d(a, b)}{M} > a$ , we can define  $u$  on  $\mathbb{R}$  in the following way:

- if  $t \in \left( a, b - \frac{d(a, b)}{M} \right)$ , we set

$$u(t) = \frac{b-a}{b-a-d(a, b)/M} u(a),$$

- on  $\left[ b - \frac{d(a, b)}{M}, b \right)$  we take  $u$  measurable such that

$$\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_{b-d(a, b)/M}^b X_{u(s)} ds \left( e^{(b-a)X_{u(a)}} f(a) \right) = f(b)$$

and

$$|u(t)| = M, \quad \text{for all } t \in \left[ b - \frac{d(a, b)}{M}, b \right).$$

On the non-compact components of  $K^c$ , we set  $u$  to be such that  $X_{u(t)} = L(b)$  if the component is of the form  $(-\infty, b)$ , and  $X_{u(t)} = L(a)$  if the component is of the form  $(a, \infty)$ .

Then for any  $t_0, t \in K$ , we have

$$\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_{t_0}^t X_{u(s)} ds (f(t_0)) = f(t).$$

Indeed for all  $(a, b) \subset K^c$ , such that  $a, b \in \partial K$ ,

$$\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_a^b X_{u(s)} ds (f(a)) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_{b-d(a, b)/M}^b X_{u(s)} ds \left( e^{(b-a)X_{u(a)}} (f(a)) \right) = f(b).$$

Let  $t_0 \in K$  and let  $\tilde{f}(t_0)$  be such that  $\psi \left( \tilde{f}(t_0) \right) = f(t_0)$ , where  $\psi$  is as in Definition 2.4. We define the curve

$$\gamma : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \tilde{M}$$

such that for all  $t \in \mathbb{R}$ ,

$$\gamma(t) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_{t_0}^t \tilde{X}_{u(s)} ds \left( \tilde{f}(t_0) \right).$$

Then for all  $t \in K$ , we set  $\tilde{f}(t) = \gamma(t)$  and  $\tilde{L}(t) = \dot{\gamma}(t) = \tilde{X}_{u(t)}(\gamma(t))$ .

We claim that  $(\tilde{f}, \tilde{L})$  is a lift of  $(f, L)$ . By construction of  $u$  and  $\gamma$ ,

$$\psi(\gamma(t)) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_{t_0}^t \psi_* \tilde{X}_{u(s)} ds \left( \psi(\tilde{f}(t_0)) \right) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_{t_0}^t X_{u(s)} ds (f(t_0)) = f(t)$$

for all  $t \in K$  and, since  $\dot{\gamma}(t) = \tilde{X}_{u(t)}$ , we have  $\psi_* \tilde{L}(t) = X_{u(t)} = L(t)$ .

Let us now prove that such a lift satisfies the Whitney condition. To alleviate notations in the following, we set  $g = \tilde{f}$  and  $Y_i = \tilde{X}_i$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq m$ . Moreover, up to restricting  $\tilde{\Omega}$ , we assume that there exists a continuously varying system of privileged coordinates

$$\Phi : (p, q) \mapsto \Phi_p(q) \in \mathbb{R}^d,$$

on  $\tilde{\Omega}$ . As a consequence of Proposition 3.9 it is enough to show that for all  $l \in K$ , for all sequences  $(a_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ ,  $(b_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  in  $K$  such that  $a_n < b_n$  and  $a_n, b_n \rightarrow l \in K$ , we have

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \delta_{\frac{1}{b_n - a_n}}^{g(a_n)}(g(b_n)) = e^{\widehat{Y}_{u(l)}(0)}. \quad (15)$$

For any interval  $(a, b)$  in  $\mathbb{R}$ , by construction

$$g(b) = \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_a^b Y_{u(s)} ds(g(a)),$$

thus, by reparametrizing,

$$\delta_{\frac{1}{b-a}}^{g(a)}(g(b)) = \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_a^b \delta_{\frac{1}{b-a}}^{g(a)} Y_{u(s)} ds(0) = \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_0^1 (b-a) \delta_{\frac{1}{b-a}}^{g(a)} Y_{u(a+t(b-a))} dt(0).$$

For any sequences  $(a_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ ,  $(b_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  in  $K$  such that  $a_n < b_n$  and  $a_n, b_n \rightarrow l \in K$ ,  $(b_n - a_n) \delta_{\frac{1}{b_n - a_n}}^{g(a_n)} Y_i \rightarrow \widehat{Y}_i$  locally uniformly on  $\mathbb{R}^d$ , for all  $1 \leq i \leq m$ . Hence to prove (15), we now show that for  $v_n(t) = u(a_n + t(b_n - a_n))$ ,  $t \in [0, 1]$ ,

$$v_n \xrightarrow[n \rightarrow +\infty]{L^1((0,1), \mathbb{R}^m)} u(l).$$

For all  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ , let  $K_n = (b_n - a_n)^{-1}(K - a_n) \cap [0, 1]$ . By uniform continuity of  $u|_K$  on compact subsets of  $K$ ,  $(v_n|_{K_n})_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  uniformly converges to  $u(l)$ . Regarding  $(v_n|_{K_n^c})_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ , as a first step, let us compare  $u$  to  $u(l)$  on an interval  $(a, b) \subset K^c$ ,  $a, b \in K$ .

For  $t \in (a, b - d(a, b)/M)$ , we have set  $u(t) = \frac{b-a}{b-a-d(a,b)/M} u(a)$ , and for  $t \in [b - d(a, b)/M, b)$ , we have imposed  $|u(t)| = M$ . Then

$$\begin{aligned} \int_a^b |u(s) - u(l)| ds &\leq \left( b - a - \frac{d(a, b)}{M} \right) \left| u(a) \frac{b-a}{b-a-d(a,b)/M} - u(l) \right| + \frac{d(a, b)}{M} (M + |u(l)|), \\ &\leq (b-a) |u(a) - u(l)| + \omega(b-a) \left( 1 + \frac{2|u(l)|}{M} \right), \end{aligned} \quad (16)$$

where we used  $\mathcal{P}_X$  for the inequality  $d(a, b) \leq \omega(b-a)$ .

Since  $K$  is a closed subset of  $\mathbb{R}$ ,  $K^c$  is a countable union of open intervals, notably for all  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  there exist  $I(n) \subset \mathbb{N}$  and two countable (or finite) families of reals  $(c_n^k)_{k \in I(n)}$  and  $(d_n^k)_{k \in I(n)}$  such that

$$K^c \cap (a_n, b_n) = \bigcup_{k \in I(n)} (c_n^k, d_n^k).$$

Then

$$K_n^c \cap (0, 1) = \bigcup_{k \in I(n)} \left( \frac{c_n^k - a_n}{b_n - a_n}, \frac{d_n^k - a_n}{b_n - a_n} \right),$$

and for all  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ ,  $k \in I(n)$ ,  $(c_n^k, d_n^k)$  is a connected component of  $K^c$ , hence a bound of type (16) holds. Thus

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\frac{c_n^k - a_n}{b_n - a_n}}^{\frac{d_n^k - a_n}{b_n - a_n}} |v_n(t) - u(l)| dt &= \frac{1}{b_n - a_n} \int_{c_n^k}^{d_n^k} |u(s) - u(l)| ds \\ &\leq \frac{(c_n^k - d_n^k)}{b_n - a_n} \left| u(c_n^k) - u(l) \right| + \frac{\omega(d_n^k - c_n^k)}{(b_n - a_n)} \left( 1 + \frac{2|u(l)|}{M} \right), \end{aligned}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{K_n^c} |v_n(t) - u(l)| dt &= \sum_{k \in I(n)} \int_{\frac{c_n^k - a_n}{b_n - a_n}}^{\frac{d_n^k - a_n}{b_n - a_n}} |v_n(t) - u(l)| dt \\ &\leq \|v_n|_{K_n} - u(l)\|_\infty + \left( 1 + \frac{2|u(l)|}{M} \right) \sum_{k \in I(n)} \frac{\omega(d_n^k - c_n^k)}{b_n - a_n}. \end{aligned}$$

As shown previously,  $\|v_n|_{K_n} - u(l)\|_\infty \rightarrow 0$ . Regarding  $\sum_{k \in I(n)} \frac{\omega(d_n^k - c_n^k)}{b_n - a_n}$ , recall that  $\omega(t) = t\phi(t)$  with  $\phi(t) \rightarrow 0$  as  $t \rightarrow 0^+$ . Then

$$\frac{1}{b_n - a_n} \sum_{k \in I(n)} \omega(d_n^k - c_n^k) < \frac{1}{b_n - a_n} \sum_{k \in I(n)} (d_n^k - c_n^k) \phi(d_n^k - c_n^k) < \sup_{[0, b_n - a_n]} \phi.$$

In other terms,

$$\sum_{k \in I(n)} \frac{\omega(d_n^k - c_n^k)}{b_n - a_n} \xrightarrow{n \rightarrow +\infty} 0,$$

and

$$\int_0^1 |v_n(t) - u(l)| dt = \int_{K_n \cap (0,1)} |v_n(t) - u(l)| dt + \int_{K_n^c \cap (0,1)} |v_n(t) - u(l)| dt \xrightarrow{n \rightarrow +\infty} 0.$$

□

**Corollary 3.11.** *Let  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  and  $(Y_1, \dots, Y_m)$  be two frames of the singular sub-Riemannian structure  $(M, \Delta, g)$  on the open subset  $\Omega \subset M$ . Let  $K \subset \mathbb{R}$  be compact and  $(f, L) : K \rightarrow \Omega \times TM$  be continuous. Then, as in the equiregular case,  $(f, L)$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_X$  if and only if  $(f, L)$  on  $K$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_Y$  on  $K$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $c : \Omega \rightarrow O(m)$  be the smooth map onto the orthogonal group such that

$$Y_i = \sum_{j=1}^m c_{ij} X_j, \quad 1 \leq i \leq m.$$

Without loss of generality, there exists an equiregular lift  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{X}_1, \dots, \widetilde{X}_m)$  of the sub-Riemannian structure  $(M, X_1, \dots, X_m)$  on  $\Omega$ . We denote by  $\psi : \widetilde{M} \rightarrow M$  the associated submersion. Then let us define for all  $q \in \widetilde{\Omega}$

$$\widetilde{Y}_i(q) = \sum_{j=1}^m c_{ij}(\psi(q)) \widetilde{X}_j(q), \quad 1 \leq i \leq m.$$

Then  $(\widetilde{Y}_1, \dots, \widetilde{Y}_m)$  is a smooth frame for the sub-Riemannian manifold  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{\Delta}, \widetilde{g})$ , and

$$\psi_* \widetilde{Y}_i(\psi(q)) = \sum_{j=1}^m c_{ij}(\psi(q)) \psi_* \widetilde{X}_j(\psi(q)) = Y_i, \quad 1 \leq i \leq m.$$

Let  $(f, L)$  be a curve in  $\Omega$  satisfying  $\mathcal{P}_X$  on  $K$ . By applying Proposition 3.10, it can be lifted to a curve  $(\widetilde{f}, \widetilde{L})$  satisfying  $\mathcal{P}_{\widetilde{X}}$  on  $K$ . Since the structure is regular on  $\widetilde{\Omega}$ , we have that  $(\widetilde{f}, \widetilde{L})$  satisfies  $\mathcal{P}_{\widetilde{Y}}$  on  $K$  by Proposition 3.4. Let us conclude by proving that  $(f, L)$  must then satisfy  $\mathcal{P}_Y$  on  $K$ .

As consequence of (1),

$$d_{\text{SR}} \left( \widetilde{f}(t), e^{(t-s)\widetilde{Y}_u} \widetilde{f}(s) \right) \geq d_{\text{SR}} \left( \psi \left( \widetilde{f}(t) \right), \psi \left( e^{(t-s)\widetilde{Y}_u} \widetilde{f}(s) \right) \right) = d_{\text{SR}} \left( f(t), e^{(t-s)Y_u} f(s) \right).$$

Thus  $\mathcal{P}_X \Rightarrow \mathcal{P}_Y$ . □

As a consequence, Definitions 3.2 and 3.3 for  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition and extension property are independent of the choice of the frame, and we have the following immediate corollary.

**Corollary 3.12.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be a possibly singular sub-Riemannian manifold and let  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{\Delta}, \widetilde{g})$  be an equiregular lift of  $(M, \Delta, g)$ . If  $(\widetilde{M}, \widetilde{\Delta}, \widetilde{g})$  has the  $C_H^1$  extension property, then so does  $(M, \Delta, g)$ .*

## 4 A sufficient condition for the $C_H^1$ extension property

### 4.1 Strong pliability

**Definition 4.1** (Strong pliability). Let  $(q, u) \in M \times \mathbb{R}^m$  and let  $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{R}^d, (\widehat{X}_1, \dots, \widehat{X}_m))$  be a nilpotent approximation of  $(M, \Delta, g)$  at  $q$ . Define the space  $\mathcal{C}_0 = \{v \in C^0([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m) \mid v(0) = 0\}$  and the map

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{F}^u : \mathcal{C}_0 &\longrightarrow \mathbb{G} \times \mathbb{R}^m \\ v &\longmapsto \left( \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_0^1 \widehat{X}_{u+v(s)} ds(0_{\mathbb{G}}), v(1) \right). \end{aligned}$$

The pair  $(q, u)$  is said to be *strongly pliable* if for all  $\eta > 0$  there exists  $v \in \mathcal{C}_0$  such that  $\|v\|_{\infty} < \eta$ ,  $\mathcal{F}^u(v) = \mathcal{F}^u(0)$  and  $\mathcal{F}^u$  is a submersion at  $v$ .

A pair  $(q, u) \in M \times \mathbb{R}^m$  is strongly pliable in particular when  $\mathcal{F}^u$  is submersion at 0. This definition relates to what has been called pliability of the vector  $\widehat{X}_u$  in [JS17], *i.e.*, the property that  $\mathcal{F}^u$  is locally open at 0. Naturally, if  $(q, u)$  is strongly pliable then  $\widehat{X}_u$  is pliable. Recall also that if  $(q, u)$  is pliable then the curve  $[0, 1] \ni t \mapsto e^{tX_u}$  cannot be rigid in the sense of [BH93].

#### 4.1.1 Regular points of the endpoint map

For every  $v \in \mathcal{C}_0$ , set  $F(v) = \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_0^1 \widehat{X}_{u+v(s)} ds(0_{\mathbb{G}})$  and  $j(v) = v(1)$  so that  $\mathcal{F}^u(v) = (F(v), j(v))$ . We have  $D_v j = j$  by linearity, so that  $D_v \mathcal{F}^u = (D_v F, j)$ . With  $P_t = \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_0^t \widehat{X}_{u+v(s)} ds$ ,  $0 \leq t \leq 1$ , we have  $D_v F(w) = \int_0^1 P_{1*} P_s^{-1} \widehat{X}_{w(s)} ds(0_{\mathbb{G}})$ . We use this characterization to evaluate the corank of  $\mathcal{F}^u$  at  $v$ .

Let  $(\lambda, \mu) \in \mathbb{R}^{d+m}$ . If  $(\lambda, \mu) \in \text{Im} D_v \mathcal{F}^u$  then

$$\lambda \cdot \int_0^1 P_{1*} P_s^{-1} \widehat{X}_{w(s)} ds(0_{\mathbb{G}}) + \mu \cdot w(1) = 0 \quad \forall w \in \mathcal{C}_0.$$

Let us rewrite

$$\lambda \cdot \int_0^1 P_{1*} P_s^{-1} \widehat{X}_{w(s)} ds(0_{\mathbb{G}}) = \sum_{i=1}^m \int_0^1 w_i(s) \psi_i(s) ds = \langle w, \psi \rangle_{L^2([0,1], \mathbb{R}^m)}$$

with  $\psi_i(s) = \lambda \cdot P_{1*} P_s^{-1} \widehat{X}_i$ . Then for all  $w \in \langle \psi \rangle^{\perp}$ , the codimension 0 or 1 subspace of  $\mathcal{C}_0$  orthogonal to  $\psi$ , we have that

$$(\lambda, \mu) \cdot D_v \mathcal{F}^u(w) = \mu \cdot w(1) = 0.$$

Having  $\mu \cdot w(1) = 0$  for all  $w \in \langle \psi \rangle^{\perp}$  implies that  $\mu = 0$ . Hence elements of  $\text{Im} D_v \mathcal{F}^u$  are of the form  $(\lambda, 0)$  with  $\lambda \in \text{Im} D_v F$ , and regular values of  $\mathcal{F}^u$  need only be regular values of  $F$ .

To study the regularity points of  $F$ , we introduce a more classical endpoint map, that is, the extension of  $F$  to  $L^{\infty}([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m)$ :

$$\begin{aligned} G : L^{\infty}([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m) &\longrightarrow \mathbb{G} \\ v &\longmapsto \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_0^1 \widehat{X}_{u+v(s)} ds(0_{\mathbb{G}}). \end{aligned}$$

**Lemma 4.2.** *The pair  $(q, u)$  is strongly pliable if and only if for all  $\eta > 0$  there exists  $v \in L^{\infty}([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m)$  such that  $\|v\|_{L^{\infty}} < \eta$ ,  $G(v) = G(0)$  and  $G$  is a submersion at  $v$ .*

*Proof.* If  $(q, u)$  is strongly pliable, then for all  $\eta > 0$  there exists  $v \in \mathcal{C}_0$  such that  $\|v\|_{\infty} < \eta$ ,  $F(v) = F(0)$  and  $F$  is a submersion at  $v$ . Since  $G$  is an extension of  $F$ , the same conclusion follows by replacing  $F$  by  $G$ .

Let now  $\eta > 0$  and pick  $v \in L^{\infty}([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m)$  such that  $\|v\|_{L^{\infty}} < \eta$ ,  $G(v) = G(0)$  and  $G$  is a submersion at  $v$ , *i.e.*,  $D_v G : L^{\infty}([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^d$  is surjective. By the remarks above, we are left to prove that there exists  $w \in \mathcal{C}_0$  such that  $\|w\|_{\infty} \leq 2\eta$  and  $F(w) = F(0)$  and  $F$  is a submersion at  $w$ .

We have that  $G \in C^1(L^{\infty}([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m), \mathbb{R}^d)$  where  $L^{\infty}([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m)$  is endowed with the  $L^2$ -topology (see for instance [Tré05, Proposition 5.1.2], [Tré00, Section 3]). The density of  $\mathcal{C}_0$  in  $L^{\infty}([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m)$  for

the  $L^2$  topology then implies that there exists a  $d$ -dimensional subspace  $E$  of  $\mathcal{C}_0$  and a constant  $\varepsilon > 0$  such that  $D_w G(E) = \mathbb{R}^d$  for all  $w \in L^\infty([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m)$ ,  $\|v - w\|_{L^2} < \varepsilon$ .

Let  $(w_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  be a sequence of controls in  $\mathcal{C}_0$  that converges to  $v$  in  $L^2$  such that  $\|w_n\|_\infty \leq \|v\|_{L^\infty}$ , let  $(\phi_1, \dots, \phi_d)$  be a basis of  $E$  with  $\|\phi_i\|_\infty \leq 1$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq d$ , and let

$$\begin{aligned} G^n : \mathbb{R}^d &\longrightarrow \mathbb{G} \\ \alpha &\longmapsto G\left(w_n + \sum_{i=1}^d \alpha_i \phi_i\right). \end{aligned}$$

The regularity of  $G$  implies that  $(G^n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  locally uniformly converges towards

$$\begin{aligned} G^\infty : \mathbb{R}^d &\longrightarrow \mathbb{G} \\ \alpha &\longmapsto G\left(v + \sum_{i=1}^d \alpha_i \phi_i\right). \end{aligned}$$

Since  $G$  is a submersion at  $v$ , there exists a ball  $B \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ , centered at 0 of arbitrarily small radius  $r > 0$ , such that  $G^\infty$  has  $\pm 1$  topological degree at  $G(v) = G(0)$  on the ball  $B$ . Since  $G^n(\partial B) \rightarrow G^\infty(\partial B)$  and  $G^n(0) \rightarrow G(0)$ , uniform convergence of  $G^n$  implies that  $G^n$  must have  $\pm 1$  topological degree at  $G(0)$  for  $n$  large enough. Hence, there exists  $\alpha^n \in B$  such that  $G(w_n + \sum_{i=1}^d \alpha_i^n \phi_i) = G(0)$  for all  $n$  large enough.

Since  $\|\sum_{i=1}^d \alpha_i^n \phi_i\|_\infty \leq \sum_{i=1}^d |\alpha_i^n| \leq Cr$  for some  $C > 0$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned} \|v - (w_n + \sum_{i=1}^d \alpha_i^n \phi_i)\|_{L^2} &\leq \|v - w_n\|_{L^2} + Cr, \\ \|w_n + \sum_{i=1}^d \alpha_i^n \phi_i\|_\infty &\leq \eta + Cr. \end{aligned}$$

Let  $r > 0$  be such that  $Cr \leq \eta$ . Then for  $n$  large enough  $w = w_n + \sum_{i=1}^d \alpha_i^n \phi_i$  is a regular value of  $F$  such that  $\|w\|_\infty \leq 2\eta$  and  $F(w) = F(0)$ .  $\square$

**Corollary 4.3.** *If 0 is a regular value of  $G$  then the pair  $(q, u)$  is strongly pliable.*

*Remark 4.4.* An equivalent formulation of Corollary 4.3, extending [JS17, Section 6] is that if  $(q, u)$  is not strongly pliable, then  $[0, 1] \ni t \mapsto e^{t\hat{X}_u}(0_{\mathbb{G}})$  is an abnormal curve.

*Remark 4.5.* For every sub-Riemannian manifold  $(M, \Delta, g)$ , for all  $q \in M$ , the pair  $(q, 0)$  is strongly pliable. Indeed, the regularity of 0 for  $G$  in the case  $u = 0$  is a consequence of Chow's theorem (see for instance [ABB16]). The proof straightforwardly extends to pairs  $(q, u)$  such that  $X_u(q) = 0$ .

#### 4.1.2 Second order conditions

When 0 is a singular point for  $G$ , we can still give conditions ensuring strong pliability of  $(q, u)$  in terms of classical optimality and rigidity conditions (see for instance [AS96]). The result of this discussion is summarized in Figure 2.

Let us recall some classical conditions for  $G$  to have regular values  $v \in L^\infty([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m)$  arbitrarily close to 0 such that  $G(v) = G(0)$ . Namely, it is sufficient for  $[0, 1] \ni t \mapsto e^{tX_u}$  not to be the projection of a Goh and Legendre singular extremal (see [AS96], [AS04, Section 20.4], [ABB16, Section 12.3]). These conditions summarize as follows.

**Proposition 4.6.** *For  $\lambda \in \text{Im} D_0 F^\perp \subset T_{e^{\hat{X}_u}(0_{\mathbb{G}})}^* \mathbb{G}$ ,  $\lambda \neq 0$ , and for all  $t \in [0, 1]$ , let*

$$\lambda_t = e^{(1-t)\hat{X}_u^*} \lambda.$$

*(In particular  $\lambda_1 = \lambda$ .) Let  $B_G(\lambda, t)$  and  $B_L(\lambda, t)$  be two bilinear forms on  $\mathbb{R}^m$  defined by*

$$B_G(\lambda, t; v_1, v_2) = \lambda_t \cdot \left[ \hat{X}_{v_1}, \hat{X}_{v_2} \right], \quad \forall v_1, v_2 \in \mathbb{R}^m,$$

and

$$B_L(\lambda, t; v_1, v_2) = \lambda_t \cdot \left[ \left[ \widehat{X}_u, \widehat{X}_{v_1} \right], \widehat{X}_{v_2} \right], \quad \forall v_1, v_2 \in \mathbb{R}^m.$$

If for all  $\lambda \in \text{Im}D_0F^\perp$ ,  $\lambda \neq 0$ , there exist some  $t \in [0, 1]$ ,  $v_1, v_2 \in \mathbb{R}^m$  such that either

$$B_G(\lambda, t; v_1, v_2) \neq 0 \tag{G}$$

or

$$B_L(\lambda, t; v_1, v_1) < 0 \tag{L}$$

then  $(q, u)$  is strongly pliable.

*Proof.* As can be seen in particular Lemmas 20.7 and 20.8 of [AS04], as soon as

$$\text{ind}_- \lambda \text{Hess}_0 G \geq k \quad \forall \lambda \in \text{Im}D_0G^\perp, \lambda \neq 0,$$

with  $k$  the corank of  $G$  at 0,  $G$  has regular values  $v \in L^\infty([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m)$  arbitrarily close to 0 such that  $G(v) = G(0)$ .

We have that for all  $\lambda \in \text{Im}D_0G^\perp$ ,  $\lambda \neq 0$ , if there exist some  $t \in [0, 1]$ ,  $v_1, v_2 \in \mathbb{R}^m$  such that either  $B_G(\lambda, t; v_1, v_2) \neq 0$  or  $B_L(\lambda, t; v_1, v_1) < 0$  then  $\text{ind}_- \lambda \text{Hess}_0 G = +\infty$  ([AS04, Section 20.4]).

By smoothness of  $G$  with respect to the  $L^2$  topology and  $L^2$ -density of  $\mathcal{C}_0$  in  $L^\infty([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m)$ ,  $\text{Im}D_0G = \text{Im}D_0F$ . The conclusion follows from Lemma 4.2.  $\square$

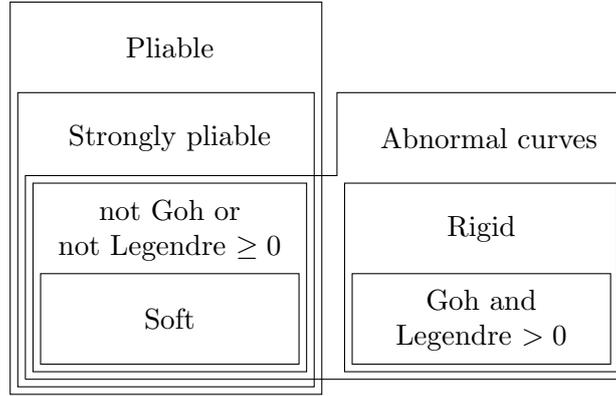


Figure 2: Inclusion diagram of different classes of horizontal curves that have properties related to strong pliability. Here by Legendre  $\geq 0$  and Legendre  $> 0$  we intend the weak and strong Legendre condition in the sense of [AS04]. An example of non-Goh abnormal curves are soft abnormal, as studied in [ABL17].

**Proposition 4.7.** Let  $q \in M$  and  $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{R}^d, (\widehat{X}_1, \dots, \widehat{X}_m))$  be the nilpotent approximation of  $(M, \Delta, g)$  at  $q$ . Let  $\widehat{\Delta}$  be the distribution generated by  $\widehat{X}_1, \dots, \widehat{X}_m$ . Let  $u \in \mathbb{R}^m$  be such that

$$\sum_{k=0}^{+\infty} \left( (\text{ad} \widehat{X}_u)^k \widehat{\Delta}^2 \right)_0 = T_0 \mathbb{G}. \tag{17}$$

Then  $(q, u) \in M \times \mathbb{R}^m$  is strongly pliable.

*Proof.* The proof works by proving that, under condition (17), the curve  $t \mapsto e^{t\widehat{X}_u}(0)$  is not a Goh abnormal. The conclusion then follows from Proposition 4.6.

Assume by contradiction that  $\lambda_t$  is a Goh abnormal lift of the integral curve of  $\widehat{X}_u$ , i.e.,  $B_G(\lambda, t; v_1, v_2) = 0$  for all  $t \in [0, 1]$  and all  $v_1, v_2 \in \mathbb{R}^m$ . Thus by differentiating  $t \mapsto B_G(\lambda, t; v_1, v_2)$   $k$  times and passing to the limit as  $t \rightarrow 1^-$ , we get

$$\lambda \cdot (\text{ad} \widehat{X}_u)^k [\widehat{X}_{v_1}, \widehat{X}_{v_2}] = 0 \quad \forall k \in \mathbb{N}, \forall v_1, v_2 \in \mathbb{R}^m.$$

If (17) is satisfied, then  $\lambda \in \bigcap_{k=0}^{+\infty} ((\text{ad} \widehat{X}_u)^k \widehat{\Delta}^2)_0^\perp = T_0 \mathbb{G}^\perp = \{0\}$ , hence the statement.  $\square$

We show below how Proposition 4.7 can be used to assess strong pliability for step-2 distributions and more generally to medium-fat distributions (see [Rif14]). This result extends [JS17, Theorem 6.4] where it was proved, as an application of [BS90, Corollary 1.2], that for a step-2 Carnot group  $\mathbb{G}$  every vector  $\widehat{X}_u$ ,  $u \in \mathbb{R}^m$ , is pliable.

**Corollary 4.8.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be a sub-Riemannian manifold and assume that  $\Delta$  is medium-fat, i.e., for every  $q \in M$  and every  $u \in \mathbb{R}^m$  such that  $X_u(q) \neq 0$ ,*

$$\Delta_q^2 + [X_u, \Delta^2]_q = T_q M. \quad (18)$$

*Then every pair  $(q, u) \in M \times \mathbb{R}^m$  is strongly pliable.*

*Proof.* The case where  $X_u(q) = 0$  follows from Remark 4.5. Let now  $q \in M$  and  $u \in \mathbb{R}^m$  be such that  $X_u(q) \neq 0$ . Let  $\Phi$  be a system of privileged coordinates at  $q$ . Recall that for all positive integer  $k > 0$   $\widehat{\Delta}_0^k = \Phi_* \Delta_q^k$  and that

$$\left[ \widehat{X}_u, \left[ \widehat{X}_i, \widehat{X}_j \right] \right] (0) \in \Phi_* [X_u, [X_i, X_j]](q) + \widehat{\Delta}_0^2, \quad \text{for every } 1 \leq i, j \leq m. \quad (19)$$

Assumption (18) then implies that  $\widehat{\Delta}_0^2 + [\widehat{X}_u, \widehat{\Delta}^2]_0 = T_0 \mathbb{G}$ . The conclusion follows from Proposition 4.7.  $\square$

Another consequence of Proposition 4.6 is the following.

**Corollary 4.9.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be a step-3 sub-Riemannian manifold. Let  $q \in M$  and  $u \in \mathbb{R}^m$  be such that the convex positive cone*

$$C_u = \text{conv} \{ W(q) + [[X_u, V], V](q) \mid V \in \Delta, W \in \Delta^2 \} \quad (20)$$

*is equal to  $T_q M$ . Then  $(q, u)$  is strongly pliable.*

*Proof.* Let  $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{R}^d, (\widehat{X}_1, \dots, \widehat{X}_m))$  be the nilpotent approximation of  $(M, \Delta, g)$  at  $q$  and  $\widehat{\Delta}$  be the distribution generated by  $\widehat{X}_1, \dots, \widehat{X}_m$ . Then  $\mathbb{G}$  is of step 3 and

$$\widehat{C}_u = \text{conv} \left\{ W(0) + [[\widehat{X}_u, V], V](0) \mid V \in \widehat{\Delta}, W \in \widehat{\Delta}^2 \right\} \quad (21)$$

is equal to  $T_0 \mathbb{G}$  (see (19)).

Following Proposition 4.6, we assume by contradiction that there exists  $\lambda \in \text{Im} D_0 F^\perp \setminus \{0\}$  such that  $\lambda \in (\widehat{\Delta}_0^2)^\perp$  and

$$\lambda \cdot [[\widehat{X}_u, V], V](0) \geq 0$$

for every  $V \in \widehat{\Delta}$ . It then follows from the equality  $\widehat{C}_u = T_0 \mathbb{G}$  that  $\lambda \cdot Z \geq 0$  for every  $Z \in T_0 \mathbb{G}$ . This leads to a contradiction since  $\lambda \neq 0$ .  $\square$

*Example 4.10.* Consider the following Carnot group. Let  $(x_1, x_2, x_3, y_1, y_2, w)$  be the canonical coordinates on  $\mathbb{R}^6$  and let

$$\begin{cases} X_1 = \partial_{x_1}, \\ X_2 = \partial_{x_2}, \\ X_3 = \partial_{x_3} + x_1 \partial_{y_1} + x_2 \partial_{y_2} + \frac{1}{2} (x_1^2 + \alpha x_2^2) \partial_w, \end{cases}$$

where  $\alpha < 0$ . We set

$$\begin{aligned} Y_1 &= [X_1, X_3] = \partial_{y_1} + x_1 \partial_w, \\ Y_2 &= [X_2, X_3] = \partial_{y_2} + \alpha x_2 \partial_w, \\ W &= \partial_w, \end{aligned}$$

and we notice that

$$\begin{aligned} [X_1, X_2] &= [X_1, Y_2] = [X_2, Y_1] = 0, \\ [X_1, Y_1] &= W, \\ [X_2, Y_2] &= \alpha W. \end{aligned}$$

Take  $u \in \mathbb{R}^3$  and let us prove the strong pliability of  $(0, u)$ . If  $u = 0$ , this is a consequence of Remark 4.5. If either  $u_1$  or  $u_2$  is non-zero, the strong pliability of  $(0, u)$  is a consequence of Proposition 4.7 since

$$[X_u, [X_1, X_3]] = u_1 W, \quad [X_u, [X_2, X_3]] = \alpha u_2 W.$$

Finally, if  $u_1 = 0$ ,  $u_2 = 0$  and  $u_3 \neq 0$ ,

$$[[X_u, X_1], X_1] = u_3 W, \quad [[X_u, X_2], X_2] = \alpha u_3 W,$$

and the strong pliability of  $(0, u)$  follows from Corollary 4.9.

## 4.2 Strong pliability implies the $C^1_H$ extension property

**Theorem 4.11.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be an equiregular sub-Riemannian manifold. If every pair  $(q, u) \in M \times \mathbb{R}^m$  is strongly pliable then the  $C^1_H$  extension property holds for  $(M, \Delta, g)$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $(f, L)$  satisfy the Whitney condition on a closed set  $K$ . Without loss of generality,  $K$  is compact and there exists a global frame  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  of  $\Delta$  on  $M$ . In particular, we can rewrite  $L = X_u$  with  $u : K \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$  continuous. Let us define  $\bar{f}$  on  $K^c$ , which is a countable and disjoint union of open intervals.

Let  $(a, b) \subset K^c$  be such that  $a, b \in K$ . For any  $\eta > 0$ , we define the set  $\mathcal{P}_\eta([a, b]) \subset C^0([a, b], \mathbb{R}^m)$  of controls  $v \in C^0([a, b], \mathbb{R}^m)$  such that the integral curve of  $X_{u(a)+v}$  is a  $C^1_H([a, b])$  extension of  $f$  on  $[a, b]$ . In other words for  $v \in \mathcal{P}_\eta([a, b])$  we have

$$\begin{aligned} v(a) &= 0, \\ v(b) &= u(b) - u(a), \\ \|v\|_\infty &< \eta, \\ f(b) &= \left( \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_a^b X_{u(a)+v(s)} ds \right) f(a). \end{aligned}$$

Notice that  $\mathcal{P}_\eta([a, b]) \subset \mathcal{P}_{\eta'}([a, b])$  if  $0 < \eta \leq \eta'$  and define

$$\eta([a, b]) = |b - a| + \inf \{ \eta > 0 \mid \mathcal{P}_\eta([a, b]) \neq \emptyset \}.$$

We claim that  $\inf \{ \eta > 0 \mid \mathcal{P}_\eta([a, b]) \neq \emptyset \} < +\infty$ , that is, there exists  $w \in C^0([a, b], \mathbb{R}^m)$  such that  $w(a) = u(a)$ ,  $w(b) = u(b)$  and

$$f(b) = \left( \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_a^b X_{w(s)} ds \right) f(a).$$

This can be seen by recalling that Chow's theorem implies controllability by piecewise constant controls and by applying a density argument (in the  $L^1$ -topology) of continuous controls with prescribed boundary conditions, as in Lemma 4.2.

Denoting by  $(-\infty, \bar{b})$  and  $(\bar{a}, +\infty)$  the two unbounded components of  $\mathbb{R} \setminus K$ , we set  $\bar{f}$  to be such that

$$\bar{f}(t) = \begin{cases} \exp \left( (t - \bar{b}) X_{u(\bar{b})} \right) (f(\bar{b})) & \text{if } t < \bar{b}, \\ \exp \left( (t - \bar{a}) X_{u(\bar{a})} \right) (f(\bar{a})) & \text{if } t > \bar{a}. \end{cases}$$

We complete the extension  $(\bar{f}, \bar{u})$  of  $(f, u)$  on  $\mathbb{R}$  by taking for each  $(a, b) \subset K^c$  with  $a, b \in K$  some  $v \in \mathcal{P}_{\eta([a, b])}([a, b])$  and setting

$$\bar{u}(t) = u(a) + v(t), \quad \bar{f}(t) = \left( \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_a^t X_{u(a)+v(s)} ds \right) f(a), \quad \forall t \in [a, b].$$

By construction,  $\bar{f} : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow M$  is an extension of  $f$  such that  $\dot{\bar{f}}(t)$  exists and is equal to  $X_{u(t)}(\bar{f}(t))$  for every  $t \in \mathbb{R}$  such that  $u$  is continuous at  $t$ . We are left to prove that  $u$  is continuous on  $\mathbb{R}$ . Notice that by construction  $u|_K$  and  $u|_{K^c}$  are continuous. We then focus on the continuity of  $u$  at points of  $\partial K$ .

Take  $\tau_\infty \in \partial K$  and a sequence  $(\tau_n)_n \subset \mathbb{R} \setminus K$  such that  $\tau_n \rightarrow \tau_\infty$ . For every  $n$ , let  $(a_n, b_n) \subset K^c$  be such that  $a_n, b_n \in K$  and  $\tau_n \in (a_n, b_n)$ . If there exists a constant subsequence  $((a_{n_k}, b_{n_k}))_{k \in \mathbb{N}}$  of  $((a_n, b_n))_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  then  $\lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} u(\tau_{n_k}) = u(\tau_\infty)$  by the continuity of  $u|_{[a_{n_k}, b_{n_k}]}$ . Assume then, without loss of generality, that  $\lim a_n = \lim b_n = \tau_\infty$ .

Since

$$|u(\tau_n) - u(a_n)| \leq \eta([a_n, b_n]) \text{ and } u(a_n) \rightarrow u(\tau_\infty),$$

the proof of the theorem is concluded by Lemma 4.12 below.  $\square$

**Lemma 4.12.** *Let  $(a_n)_n$  and  $(b_n)_n$  be two sequences in  $\partial K$  such that  $(a_n, b_n) \subset \mathbb{R} \setminus K$ . If  $\lim a_n = \lim b_n = \tau_\infty \in \mathbb{R}$  then  $\eta([a_n, b_n]) \rightarrow 0$ .*

*Proof.* To prove the lemma, we show that if  $\lim a_n = \lim b_n < \infty$  then

$$\inf \{ \eta > 0 \mid \mathcal{P}_\eta([a_n, b_n]) \neq \emptyset \} \rightarrow 0, \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty.$$

Equivalently, given  $\eta > 0$ , we prove that there exists  $N(\eta)$  such that if  $n > N(\eta)$  then there exists  $v_n \in C^0([a_n, b_n], \mathbb{R}^d)$  such that

$$\begin{cases} v_n(a_n) = 0, \\ v_n(b_n) = u(b_n) - u(a_n), \\ \|v_n\|_\infty < \eta, \\ f(b_n) = \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_{a_n}^{b_n} X_{u(a_n)+v_n(s)} ds (f(a_n)). \end{cases} \quad (22)$$

By applying Theorem 2.5 at  $f(\tau_\infty)$ , we pick a neighborhood  $\Omega$  of  $f(\tau_\infty)$  and a continuously varying system of privileged coordinates

$$\begin{aligned} \Phi : \Omega \times \Omega &\longrightarrow \mathbb{R}^d \\ (x, y) &\longmapsto \Phi_x(y). \end{aligned}$$

For  $x \in \Omega$  and  $\lambda > 0$ , we associate with  $\Phi$  the quasi-homogeneous dilation  $\delta_\lambda^x$ .

There exists a neighborhood  $\mathcal{V}$  of 0 in  $\mathcal{C}_0 = \{w \in C^0([0, 1], \mathbb{R}^m) \mid w(0) = 0\}$  such that

$$\overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^t (b_n - a_n) X_{u(a_n)+w(s)} ds (f(a_n)) \in \Omega$$

for all  $t \in [0, 1]$ ,  $w \in \mathcal{V}$  and  $n$  large enough. Hence, setting  $t_n = b_n - a_n$ , we define the endpoint map

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{F}^n : \mathcal{V} &\longrightarrow \mathbb{R}^d \times \mathbb{R}^m \\ w &\longmapsto \left( \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} \left( \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^1 t_n X_{u(a_n)+w(s)} ds (f(a_n)) \right), u(a_n) + w(1) \right). \end{aligned}$$

If  $\mathcal{F}^n(w) = (0, u(b_n))$  and  $\|w\|_\infty < \eta$  then  $[a_n, b_n] \ni s \mapsto w\left(\frac{s-a_n}{b_n-a_n}\right)$  satisfies (22) (recall that  $\delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)}(f(b_n)) = 0$ ). Then we are left to prove that there exists  $N(\eta)$  such that if  $n > N(\eta)$ , there exists  $w_n \in \mathcal{V}$  such that  $\|w_n\|_\infty < \eta$  and

$$\mathcal{F}^n(w_n) = (0, u(b_n)).$$

Distributing the dilation we get

$$\mathcal{F}^n(w) = \left( \overrightarrow{\text{exp}} \int_0^1 \left( t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} X_{u(a_n)+w(s)} \right) ds \left( \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)}(f(a_n)) \right), u(a_n) + w(1) \right).$$

The Whitney condition ensures that  $\delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)}(f(a_n)) \rightarrow e^{-\widehat{X}_{u(\tau_\infty)}(0)}$  (see Propositions 3.7 and 3.9), and  $t_n \delta_{1/t_n}^{f(b_n)} X_{u(a_n)+w(s)}$  is bounded and locally uniformly converges towards  $\widehat{X}_{u(\tau_\infty)+w(s)}$ . Hence  $\mathcal{F}^n$  locally uniformly converges towards

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{F}^\infty : \mathcal{V} &\longrightarrow \mathbb{R}^d \times \mathbb{R}^m \\ w &\longmapsto \left( \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_0^1 \widehat{X}_{u(\tau_\infty)+w(s)} ds \left( e^{-\widehat{X}_{u(\tau_\infty)}(0)} \right), u(\tau_\infty) + w(1) \right). \end{aligned}$$

Denote by  $*$  the group operation of the sub-Riemannian tangent at  $\tau_\infty$ . Then

$$\mathcal{F}^\infty(w) = \left( \left( e^{-\widehat{X}_{u(\tau_\infty)}(0)} \right) * \overrightarrow{\exp} \int_0^1 \widehat{X}_{u(\tau_\infty)+w(s)} ds(0), u(\tau_\infty) + w(1) \right).$$

With  $\psi(g, u) = \left( \left( e^{-\widehat{X}_{u(\tau_\infty)}(0)} \right) * g, u(\tau_\infty) + u \right)$ , which is a diffeomorphism from  $\mathbb{R}^d \times \mathbb{R}^m$  onto itself, we have that

$$\mathcal{F}^\infty = \psi \circ \mathcal{F}^{u(\tau_\infty)}.$$

By the strong pliability hypothesis, there exists a finite-dimensional subspace  $E \subset \mathcal{C}_0$  such that  $\mathcal{F}^{u(\tau_\infty)}|_E$  has a regular zero  $w_\eta$  in  $\mathcal{V}$  with  $\|w_\eta\| < \eta/2$ . Hence  $\mathcal{F}^{u(\tau_\infty)}|_E$  is a local diffeomorphism at  $w_\eta$  and  $\mathcal{F}^{u(\tau_\infty)}|_B$  has topological degree equal to  $\pm 1$  at  $w_\eta$  for some ball  $B \subset E$  of radius smaller than  $\eta/2$  and center  $w_\eta$ . The same then goes for  $\mathcal{F}^\infty|_B$ .

Since  $(\mathcal{F}^n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  locally uniformly converges to  $\mathcal{F}^\infty$ ,  $\mathcal{F}^n|_E(\partial B) \rightarrow \mathcal{F}^\infty|_E(\partial B)$  and  $\mathcal{F}^n|_E$  has  $\pm 1$  topological degree at  $\mathcal{F}^n(w_\eta)$  on  $B$  for  $n$  large enough. As  $n \rightarrow +\infty$ ,  $\mathcal{F}^n(w_\eta) \rightarrow (0, u(\tau_\infty))$  and  $u(b_n) \rightarrow u(\tau_\infty)$ . This implies that given  $\eta > 0$ , there exists  $N(\eta) > 0$  such that for all  $n > N(\eta)$ , there exists at least one  $w \in B \subset B_\eta(0)$  such that  $\mathcal{F}^n(w) = (0, u(b_n))$ , which proves the statement.  $\square$

**Corollary 4.13.** *All step-2 sub-Riemannian manifolds have the  $C_H^1$  extension property.*

*Proof.* If the manifold  $(M, \Delta, g)$  is equiregular, all pairs  $(q, u) \in M \times \mathbb{R}^m$  are strongly pliable (see section 4.1.1, Corollary 4.8), hence the result by Theorem 4.11.

If the manifold  $(M, \Delta, g)$  is not equiregular, it can be locally lifted to a step-2 equiregular manifold (see e.g. [Jea14, Section 2.4]). By Corollary 3.12, since equiregular step-2 sub-Riemannian manifolds have the  $C_H^1$  extension property, so does  $(M, \Delta, g)$ .  $\square$

## 5 Lusin approximation of horizontal curves

Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be a sub-Riemannian manifold, and let  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  be a frame of the distribution. As a consequence of [VP06, Theorem 2], we have the following Rademacher-type theorem.

**Theorem 5.1.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be an equiregular sub-Riemannian manifold and  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$  be a frame of the distribution. Let  $\gamma : [a, b] \rightarrow M$  be an absolutely continuous and horizontal curve on  $M$ .*

*Let  $\Phi$  be a continuously varying system of privileged coordinates. For almost every  $t \in [a, b]$  there exists  $u \in \mathbb{R}^m$ , such that*

$$\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{h} \widehat{d}_{\text{SR}} \left( \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(\gamma(t+h)), e^{h\widehat{X}_u}(0) \right) = 0,$$

where  $\widehat{d}_{\text{SR}}$  is the Carnot-Carathéodory distance associated with the sub-Riemannian tangent  $\mathbb{G} = (\mathbb{R}^d, (\widehat{X}_1, \dots, \widehat{X}_d))$  to  $M$  at  $\gamma(t)$ .

We will use the following corollary.

**Corollary 5.2.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be a sub-Riemannian manifold. Let  $[a, b] \subset \mathbb{R}$  and  $\gamma : [a, b] \rightarrow M$  be an horizontal absolutely continuous curve. Then for almost every  $t \in [a, b]$  there exists  $u \in \mathbb{R}^m$  such that*

$$\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{h} d_{\text{SR}} \left( \gamma(t+h), e^{hX_u}\gamma(t) \right) = 0. \quad (23)$$

*Proof.* Let us first consider the equiregular case. Let  $t \in [a, b]$  be such that there exists  $u(t) \in \mathbb{R}^m$  such that

$$\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{h} \widehat{d}_{\text{SR}} \left( \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(\gamma(t+h)), e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0) \right) = 0.$$

Applying [Bel96, Theorem 7.32] at  $\gamma(t)$ , there exist  $\varepsilon > 0$ ,  $C > 0$  such that, as soon as

$$\max(d_{\text{SR}}(\gamma(t), q), d_{\text{SR}}(\gamma(t), q')) \leq \varepsilon,$$

we have

$$d_{\text{SR}}(q, q') \leq \widehat{d}_{\text{SR}}(\Phi_{\gamma(t)}(q), \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(q')) + C \widehat{d}_{\text{SR}}(0, \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(q')) \widehat{d}_{\text{SR}}(\Phi_{\gamma(t)}(q), \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(q'))^{1/r} \quad (24)$$

where  $r$  is the step of  $(M, \Delta, g)$ .

For  $|h|$  sufficiently small,  $\Phi_{\gamma(t)}^{-1}(e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0))$  is well defined and the triangular inequality yields

$$\begin{aligned} d_{\text{SR}}(\gamma(t+h), e^{hX_{u(t)}}\gamma(t)) &\leq d_{\text{SR}}(\gamma(t+h), \Phi_{\gamma(t)}^{-1}(e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0))) \\ &\quad + d_{\text{SR}}(e^{hX_{u(t)}}\gamma(t), \Phi_{\gamma(t)}^{-1}(e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0))). \end{aligned}$$

As a consequence of (24), since  $\widehat{d}_{\text{SR}}(0, e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0)) \leq |h||u(t)|$ , in order to prove (23) it is sufficient to have both

$$\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{h} \widehat{d}_{\text{SR}} \left( \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(\gamma(t+h)), e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0) \right) = 0$$

and

$$\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{h} \widehat{d}_{\text{SR}} \left( \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(e^{hX_{u(t)}}\gamma(t)), e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0) \right) = 0.$$

The first limit coincides with our assumption on  $t$ , and the second one is a consequence of two distance estimates for  $h$  small enough. First, from [Bel96, Proposition 7.26, Equation (50)],

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{C} \widehat{d}_{\text{SR}} \left( \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(e^{hX_{u(t)}}\gamma(t)), e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0) \right) &\leq \left\| \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(e^{hX_{u(t)}}\gamma(t)) - e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0) \right\|_{\gamma(t)} \\ &\quad + \left\| e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0) \right\|_{\gamma(t)}^{1-1/r} \left\| \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(e^{hX_{u(t)}}\gamma(t)) - e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0) \right\|_{\gamma(t)}^{1/r}. \end{aligned}$$

Second, from [Jea14, Theorem 2.3, Equation (2.14)],

$$\left\| \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(e^{hX_{u(t)}}\gamma(t)) - e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0) \right\|_{\gamma(t)} \leq C|u(t)|^{1+1/r}|h|^{1+1/r}.$$

Combining the two,

$$\widehat{d}_{\text{SR}} \left( \Phi_{\gamma(t)}(e^{hX_{u(t)}}\gamma(t)), e^{h\widehat{X}_{u(t)}}(0) \right) \leq C|u(t)||h| \left( |u(t)|^{1/r}|h|^{1/r} + |u(t)|^{1/r^2}|h|^{1/r^2} \right),$$

hence the result in the equiregular case.

If the manifold is not equiregular, as in the proofs of Propositions 3.1 and Corollary 4.13, we exploit the existence of local lifts of the sub-Riemannian structure that are equiregular. Consider an horizontal lift  $\widetilde{\gamma}$  of  $\gamma$ . By the first part of the proof, we deduce that for almost every  $t \in [a, b]$  there exists  $u \in \mathbb{R}^m$  such that

$$\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{h} \widetilde{d}_{\text{SR}} \left( \widetilde{\gamma}(t+h), e^{h\widetilde{X}_u}\widetilde{\gamma}(t) \right) = 0,$$

where  $\widetilde{X}_i$  is the lift of  $X_i$  for every  $1 \leq i \leq m$ . Using (1), we deduce (23).  $\square$

Following the classical scheme of proof for Lusin approximation theorems (see [LDS16, Spe16, JS17] for the case of Carnot groups), we give a version for general sub-Riemannian manifolds.

In the following we denote by  $\mathcal{L}$  the Lebesgue measure on  $\mathbb{R}$ .

**Proposition 5.3** (Lusin approximation of an horizontal curve). *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be a sub-Riemannian manifold having the  $C_H^1$ -extension property and let  $\gamma : [a, b] \rightarrow M$  absolutely continuous be an horizontal curve. Then for any  $\varepsilon > 0$  there exists  $K \subset [a, b]$  with  $\mathcal{L}([a, b] \setminus K) < \varepsilon$  and a curve  $\gamma_1 : [a, b] \rightarrow M$  of class  $C_H^1$  such that  $\gamma$  and  $\gamma_1$  coincide on  $K$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $\varepsilon > 0$ . We want to prove that there exists a compact set  $K \subset [a, b]$  with  $\mathcal{L}([a, b] \setminus K) < \varepsilon$  such that the  $C_H^1$ -Whitney condition holds for  $(\gamma, \dot{\gamma})$  on  $K$ . The proposition then follows from the  $C_H^1$ -extension property.

By Corollary 5.2, there exists  $A \subset [a, b]$  of full measure such that, for any  $t \in A$ , the curve  $\gamma$  admits an horizontal derivative at  $t$ , denoted by  $X_{u(t)}(\gamma(t))$  using the local frame  $(X_1, \dots, X_m)$ . Moreover, the family of functions over  $A$ ,  $(f_h)_{h \in (0,1)}$ , defined by

$$f_h(t) = \frac{1}{h} d_{\text{SR}} \left( \gamma(t+h), e^{hX_{u(t)}} \gamma(t) \right)$$

pointwise converges to 0 as  $h \rightarrow 0$ . Applying the classical Lusin Theorem to the map  $u : A \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$ , there exists a compact set  $K \subset A$  such that  $\dot{\gamma}$  is uniformly continuous on  $K$  and  $\mathcal{L}(A \setminus K) < \varepsilon/2$ . Furthermore, by Egorov's Theorem, we have the uniform convergence of  $(f_h)_h$  towards 0 on a compact subset  $K' \subset K$  such that  $\mathcal{L}(K \setminus K') < \varepsilon/2$ .

This implies that there exist  $\omega : \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$  and  $K'$  such that  $\omega(t) = o(t)$  at  $0^+$ ,  $\mathcal{L}([a, b] \setminus K') < \varepsilon$ , and

$$d_{\text{SR}} \left( \gamma(t), e^{(t-s)X_{u(s)}} \gamma(s) \right) \leq \omega(|t-s|), \quad \forall t, s \in K'.$$

□

The above result finds its application in the study of 1-countably rectifiable sets (see [LDS16]). A set  $E \subset M$  is said to be 1-countably rectifiable if there exists a countable family of Lipschitz curves  $f_k : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow M$  such that  $\mathcal{H}^1(E \setminus \cup_k f_k(\mathbb{R})) = 0$ , where  $\mathcal{H}^1$  denotes the 1-dimensional Hausdorff measure.

**Corollary 5.4.** *Let  $(M, \Delta, g)$  be a sub-Riemannian manifold having the  $C_H^1$ -Whitney extension property and let  $E$  be a 1-countably rectifiable subset of  $M$ . Then there exists a countable family of  $C_H^1$ -curves  $f_k : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow M$  such that  $\mathcal{H}^1(E \setminus \cup_k f_k(\mathbb{R})) = 0$ .*

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