

Mechanism of Pd/Senphos-Catalyzed *trans*-Hydroboration of 1,3-Enynes: Experimental and Computational Evidence in Support of the Unusual Outer-Sphere Oxidative Addition Pathway

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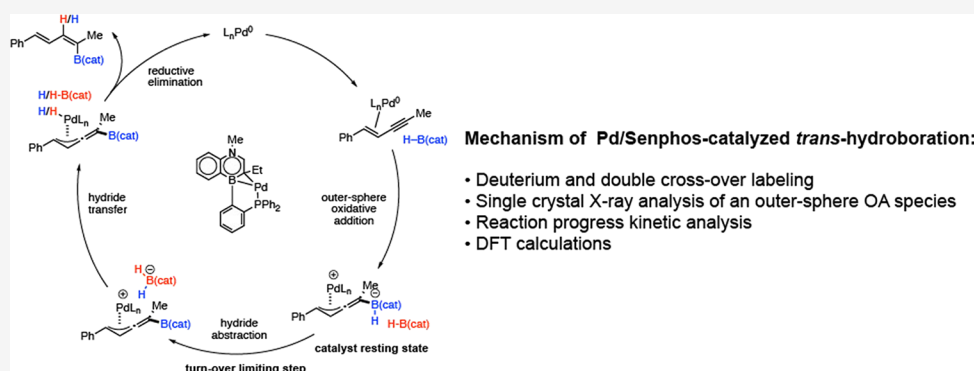
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ABSTRACT: The reaction mechanism of the Pd/Senphos-catalyzed *trans*-hydroboration reaction of 1,3-enynes was investigated using various experimental techniques, including deuterium and double crossover labeling experiments, X-ray crystallographic characterization of model reaction intermediates, and reaction progress kinetic analysis. Our experimental data are in support of an unusual outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism where the catecholborane serves as a suitable electrophile to activate the Pd⁰-bound 1,3-enyne substrate to form a Pd- η^3 - π -allyl species, which has been determined to be the likely resting state of the catalytic cycle. Double crossover labeling of the catecholborane points toward a second role played by the borane as a hydride delivery shuttle. Density functional theory calculations reveal that the rate-limiting transition state of the reaction is the hydride abstraction by the catecholborane shuttle, which is consistent with the experimentally determined rate law: rate = $k[\text{enyne}]^0[\text{borane}]^1[\text{catalyst}]^1$. The computed activation free energy $\Delta G^\ddagger = 17.7$ kcal/mol and KIE ($k_H/k_D = 1.3$) are also in line with experimental observations. Overall, this work experimentally establishes Lewis acids such as catecholborane as viable electrophilic activators to engage in an outer-sphere oxidative addition reaction and points toward this underutilized mechanism as a general approach to activate unsaturated substrates.

INTRODUCTION

Pd-catalyzed allylic substitution has established itself as a powerful synthetic transformation for carbon–carbon and carbon–heteroatom bond formation.¹ The key organometallic intermediate is the η^3 -Pd- π -allyl complex, and well-established approaches to catalytically access this species include (1) oxidative addition of allylic-type substrates in the presence of a preinstalled leaving group² or a stoichiometric oxidant with Pd(0) complexes,³ (2) migratory insertion into allenes with Pd(II) complexes,⁴ and (3) migratory⁵ or Wacker-type⁶ insertion into dienes and 1,3-enynes with Pd(II) complexes (Scheme 1).

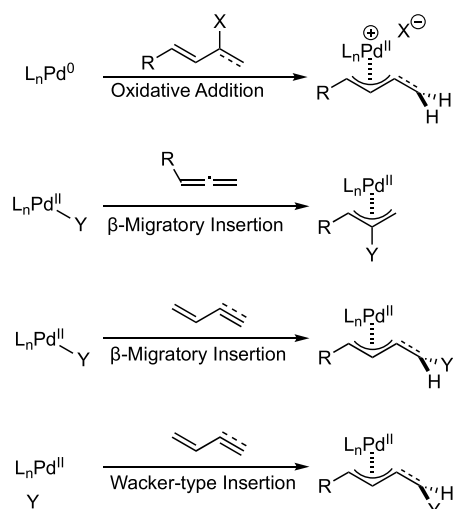
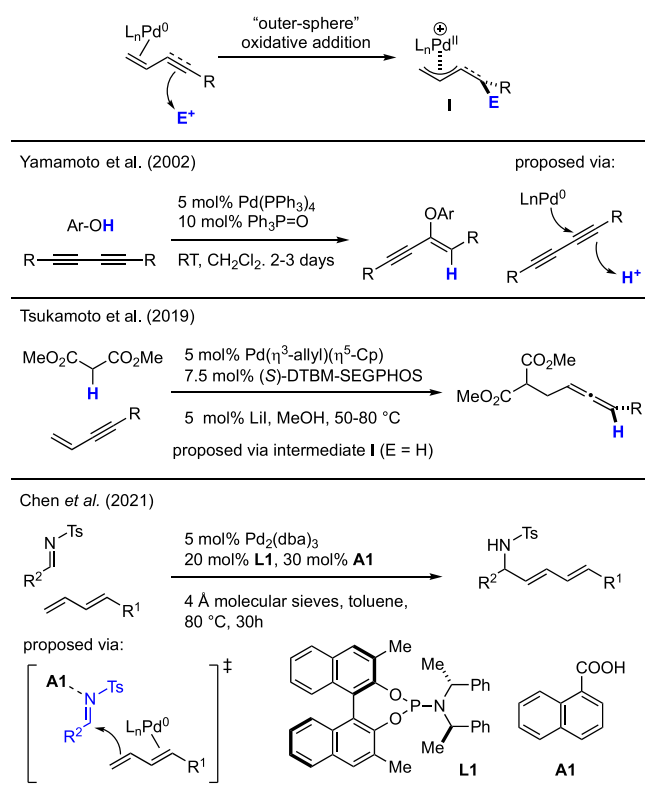
An underexplored strategy to catalytically access the versatile η^3 -Pd- π -allyl intermediate involves the activation of 1,3-dienes and 1,3-enynes by Pd(0) complexes in the presence of electrophilic activators *via* an “outer-sphere” oxidative addition

mechanism (Scheme 2). In an early work, Yamamoto reported the first catalytic⁷ electrophilic addition to C–C multiple bonds by a low-valent transition metal in a Pd-catalyzed hydroalkoxylation reaction of diynes.⁸ More recently, Tsukamoto *et al.* described a Pd-catalyzed hydroalkylation of 1,3-enynes to furnish allenes *via* a proposed outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism.⁹ In these reports, alternative mechanisms that involve the more classical “inner-sphere” oxidative

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Scheme 1. Established Catalytic Approaches to η^3 -Pd- π -Allyl Complexes**Scheme 2. Catalytically Accessing η^3 -Pd- π -Allyl Complexes via an Uncommon Outer-Sphere Oxidative Addition Mechanism**

addition followed by the β -migratory insertion step have not been completely ruled out by the authors. In 2021, Chen *et al.* reported the coupling between 1,3-dienes with *N*-tosylimines as the electrophilic activator *via* an outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism that is supported by DFT calculation.^{10a} Interestingly, the corresponding coupling with 1,3-enynes as substrates (instead of 1,3-dienes) has been demonstrated to proceed *via* a “ π -Lewis base catalysis” that involves an important *N*-chelation to the Pd during the oxidative addition step.^{10b}

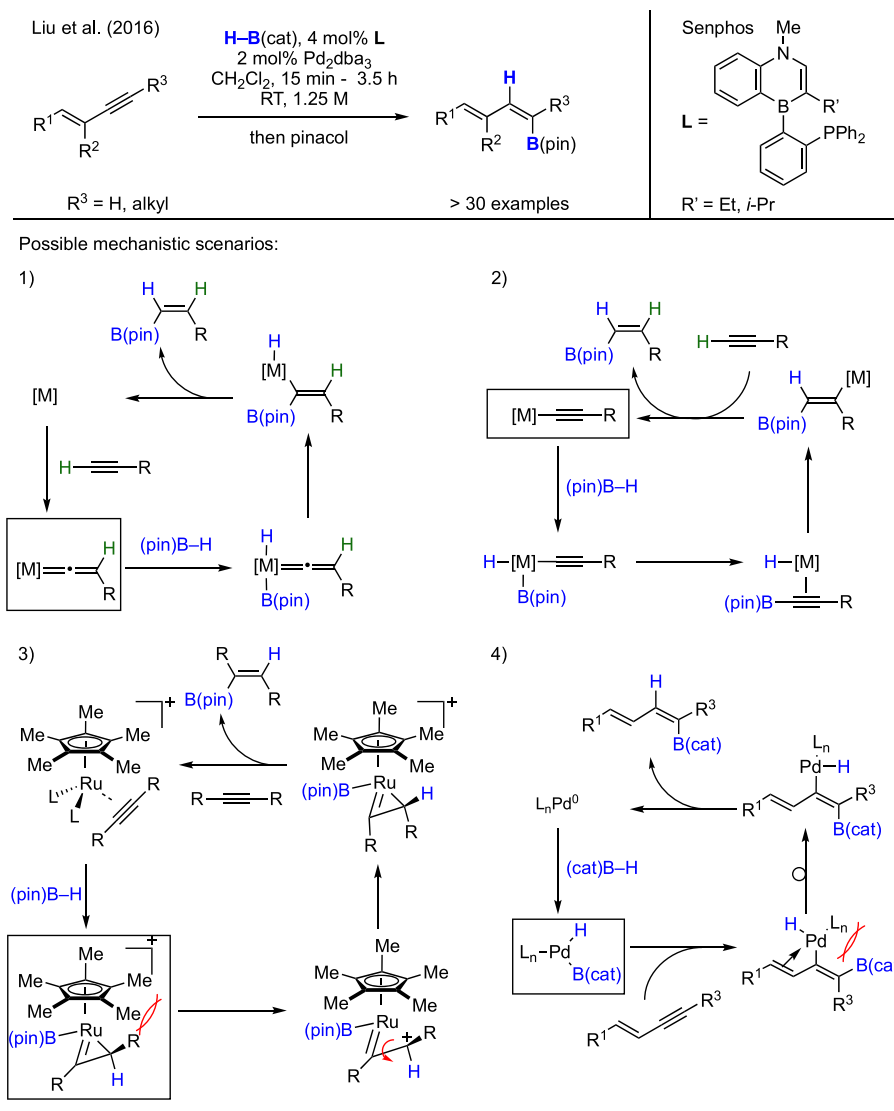
In 2016, we described the first Pd-catalyzed *trans*-selective hydroboration reaction of 1,3-enynes (Scheme 3).¹¹ Essential to the observed catalytic efficiency and diastereoselectivity is the use of Senphos (i.e., a 1,4-azaborine-based biaryl phosphine) as the supporting ligand.¹² Based on previously published literature on the transition-metal catalyzed *trans*-selective hydroboration reaction of alkynes,^{13,14} the following mechanistic scenarios can be proposed (see Scheme 3): (1) generation of the metal vinylidene intermediate as proposed by Miyaura *et al.*¹⁵ and Leitner *et al.*¹⁶ for their Ir-, Rh-, and Ru-based catalysts, (2) generation of a metal acetylide intermediate as proposed by Chirik *et al.* for their Co-pincer system,¹⁷ and (3) generation of a metallacyclopropene intermediate as proposed by Sundararaju and Fürstner for their Ru catalyst system.¹⁸ Additional scenarios include (4) inner-sphere oxidative addition (OA) of the borane to the metal followed by *syn* β -migratory insertion (β -MI) and *cis*/*trans* isomerization and reductive elimination¹⁹ and (5) outer-sphere oxidative addition with the borane serving as the electrophile. In 2018, Shi *et al.* reported a computational mechanistic study of the Pd/Senphos-catalyzed *trans*-hydroboration of 1,3-enynes.²⁰ Key features of the DFT-predicted mechanism (Scheme 3, scenario (5)) include (1) an outer-sphere oxidative addition step where an H-B(cat) cooperatively activates the Pd-bound substrate as a Lewis acid electrophile and (2) the H-B(cat) additionally serves as a hydride shuttle to deliver a hydride to the Pd catalyst in an intermolecular fashion prior to reductive elimination.

To date, no experimental mechanistic data have been reported to distinguish among the above outlined mechanistic scenarios for the Pd/Senphos-catalyzed *trans*-hydroboration of 1,3-enynes. The possibility of the outer-sphere oxidation is intriguing as our Pd-catalyzed *trans*-hydroboration would represent the first example using boron as the activating electrophile and would point toward the outer-sphere oxidative addition as a general approach for activating unsaturated compounds *via* the versatile η^3 -Pd- π -allyl intermediate with possible catalyst control over site-, regio-, and diastereoselectivity. In this work, we disclose experimental mechanistic data in the form of (1) kinetic data (i.e., determination of the reaction orders and kinetic isotope effect (KIE)), (2) X-ray crystallographic data for the critical outer-sphere oxidative addition intermediate, and (3) double-cross-over labeling experiment, in support of the proposed outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism. Furthermore, we provide more refined computational results that correct a few inconsistencies between Shi *et al.*'s 2018 calculations and the experimental mechanistic observations.

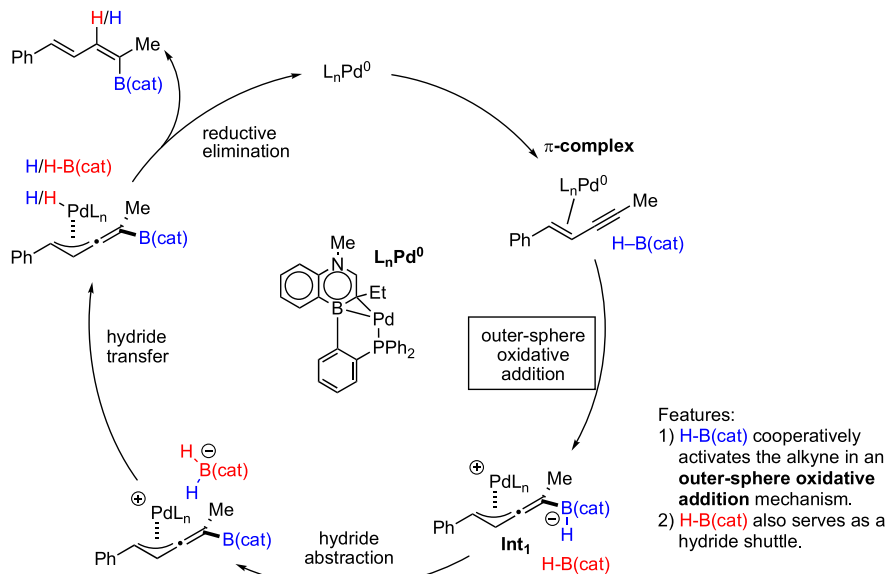
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In our initial work, we determined that a deuterium-labeled substrate **1-D** under our reported optimized conditions gave the product without isomerization of the label (Scheme 4). This observation is inconsistent with the mechanisms involving metal vinylidene and metal acetylide intermediates (Scheme 3, scenarios (1) and (2)). Additionally, the (*E*)-alkene configuration of **1-D** is retained in the hydroboration product, which is inconsistent with an η^3 - η^1 π -allyl walk mechanism to achieve *trans*-hydroboration selectivity after a hypothetical *syn* inner-sphere β -migratory insertion of a Pd-boryl species into the alkyne.

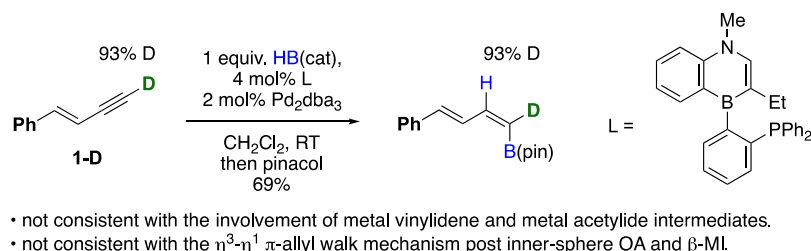
A key distinguishing feature of the outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism is the proposed hydride shuttle

Scheme 3. Pd-Catalyzed *trans*-Hydroboration of 1,3-Enynes: Possible Mechanistic Scenarios

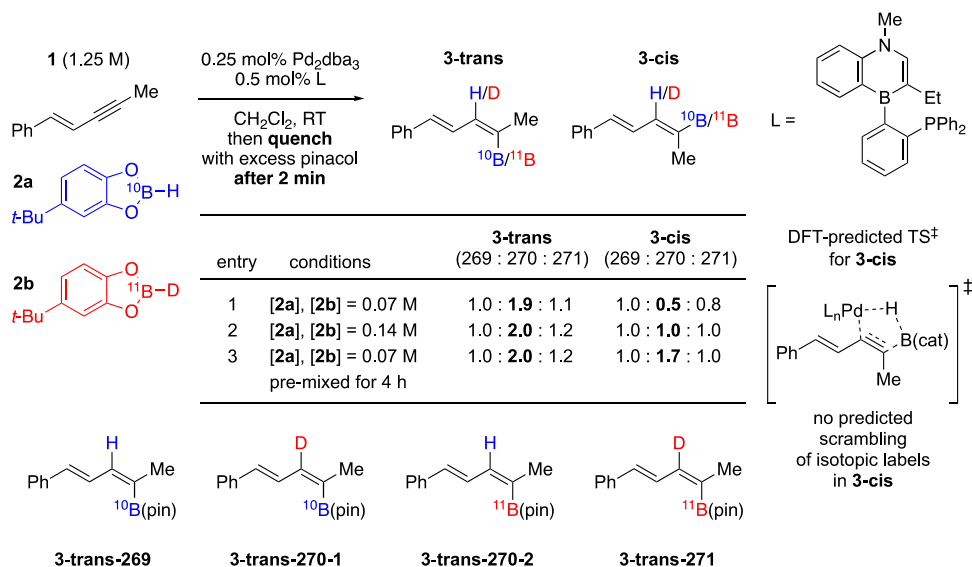
5) Shi et al. (2018): IEF-PCM(CH₂Cl₂)-B3LYP-D3/SDD-f(Pd), 6-311G** (other atoms)



Scheme 4. Initial Deuterium Labeling Experiment



Scheme 5. Double-Crossover Labeling Experiment is Consistent with the Hydride Shuttle Mechanism Proposed in the Outer-Sphere Oxidative Addition Scenario



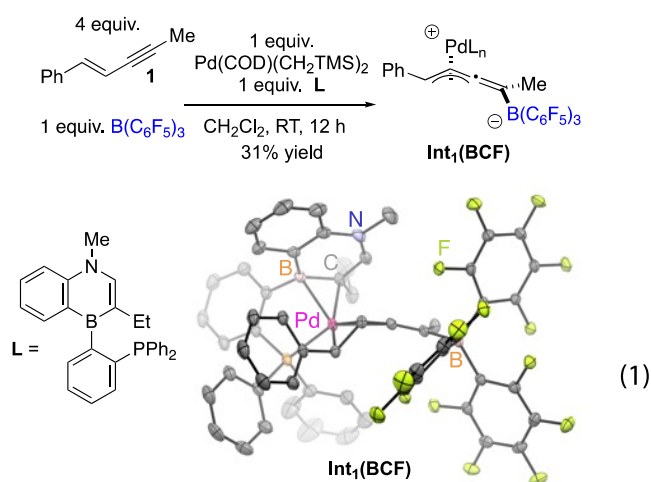
mechanism where a second H-B(cat) molecule (red color in Scheme 3, scenario (5)) first abstracts a hydride from the B(cat) group (blue color) in the outer-sphere oxidative addition intermediate and then transfers it to the Pd metal prior to reductive elimination. This intermolecular hydride transfer mechanistically allows for scrambling of labels of doubly labeled (H vs D and ¹⁰B vs ¹¹B) H-B(cat). To this end, we prepared the isotopically labeled²¹ light ¹H-¹⁰B(cat) (2a) and heavy D-¹¹B(cat) (2b) derivatives.²² A double-crossover experiment was performed where the reaction was quenched at very early stages to evaluate the extent of the scrambling of the labels in the products 3-trans and 3-cis (Scheme 5). GC-MS was applied to detect the ratio of different isotopically labeled products based on their molecular weight. For 3-trans, the isotopologues are 3-trans-269, 3-trans-270-1, 3-trans-270-2, and 3-trans-271, of which 3-trans-270-1 and 3-trans-270-2 are indistinguishable by MS. The corresponding isotopologues exist for the 3-cis product, which can be detected independently by GC-MS.²³ Assuming no background scrambling, mechanistic scenarios that do not provide a mechanism for scrambling of labels such as scenario (3) (in Scheme 3), the inner-sphere oxidative addition (scenario (4) in Scheme 3), or the DFT-predicted lowest-energy transition state for the formation of 3-cis (see Scheme 5)²⁰ would be predicted to produce products with Mw 269 and 271 only and none of the scrambled products with Mw 270. On the other hand, the outer-sphere oxidative mechanism (scenario (5) in Scheme 3) with the proposed hydride shuttle is predicted to

give 3-trans-269, 3-trans-270, and 3-trans-271 in a 1.0:2.0:1.0 ratio.

Catecholboranes are known to undergo background scrambling of the B-H atoms.²⁴ Thus, the analysis of the isotopic ratios of the product of interest, 3-trans, needs to be calibrated against a control compound *in situ* (i.e., 3-cis) that informs about the extent of background scrambling. We determined that 3-cis forms in substantial amount when the concentration of catecholborane is low relative to the optimized ([catecholborane] > 1.25 M) conditions.²⁵ We performed the double crossover experiments under low-borane concentrations to minimize borane background scrambling. As can be seen from Scheme 5, entry 1 ([borane] = 0.07 M), the isotopic distribution (Mw 269, 270, and 271) for 3-trans is 1.0:1.9:1.1 while the corresponding isotopic distribution for the control 3-cis is 1.0:0.5:0.8. This observation indicates that background borane scrambling occurs to a relatively small extent under the reaction conditions and that the observed complete scrambling of the labels in 3-trans is induced by the reaction mechanism. Furthermore, when the borane concentration is doubled (Scheme 5, entry 2 vs entry 1), the background scrambling is accelerated as indicated by the isotopic distribution for 3-cis (1.0:1.0:1.0) while the corresponding distribution for 3-trans (1.0:2.0:1.2) remains essentially independent of the borane concentration. Finally, we conducted a positive control experiment where the isotopically labeled boranes 2a and 2b are pre-mixed prior to being subjected to the reaction mixture. As expected, the observed isotopic ratios for both 3-

trans (1.0:2.0:1.2) and **3-cis** (1.0:1.7:1.0) show substantial scrambling of the labels as a result of the background exchange. Overall, we conclude that the observed isotopic ratios of products **3-trans** and **3-cis** under the conditions shown in Scheme 5 are more consistent with the outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism for the formation of **3-trans** (scenario (5) in Scheme 3) and not consistent with any of the other proposed scenarios illustrated in Scheme 3.

Another distinguishing feature for the outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism is the formation of the outer-sphere oxidative addition adduct **Int₁** (see Scheme 3, scenario (5)). In our effort to provide credence to the intermediacy of the outer-sphere oxidative addition intermediate **Int₁**, we employed B(C₆F₅)₃ as the Lewis acid activator²⁶ instead of the catecholborane. The hypothesis is that in the absence of a reactive hydride, the intermediate would be less reactive and therefore isolable. We are pleased to determine that the treatment of 1 equiv of LPd⁰ with 4 equiv of 1,3-enyne and 1 equiv of B(C₆F₅)₃ produced the model outer-sphere oxidative addition intermediate **Int₁(BCF)** in 31% isolated yield (eq 1).



Single crystals of **Int₁(BCF)** suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis were obtained from a pentane/CH₂Cl₂ mixture at −35 °C (thermal ellipsoids in eq 2 are drawn at the 50% probability level). The structure of **Int₁(BCF)** unambiguously reveals (1) the formation of a Pd-π-allyl complex and (2) the geometrical *anti* relationship between the electrophile B(C₆F₅)₃ and the Pd, which are consistent with the proposed outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism. Furthermore, the structure shows that the Senphos ligand is bound to the Pd^{II} in a κ²-η²-BC-coordination mode. Overall, the successful isolation and crystallographic characterization of **Int₁(BCF)** provide support for the ability of a Lewis acid to activate a Pd⁰/1,3-enyne complex in an outer-sphere oxidative addition fashion. As a result, we conclude that among the mechanistic scenarios listed in Scheme 3, scenario (5) is the only mechanism that is fully consistent with the experimental observations presented thus far.

Next, we performed reaction progress kinetic analysis²⁷ to probe the kinetic features of the working reaction mechanism with the specific aim to gain insight into the possible resting state and the rate-limiting step of the catalytic cycle. We chose to employ (cod)Pd(CH₂TMS)₂²⁸ as the Pd precursor (vs Pd₂dba₃) to avoid potential complications with the dba serving as a competing ligand.²⁹ First, a same-excess experiment was conducted with enyne **1** as the limiting reagent. Plotting [1] vs

time and applying a time adjustment, the adjusted trace (red triangle) and the initial trace (black dot) show overlay (Figure 1a), indicating that there is no catalyst deactivation or product inhibition during the reaction.³⁰ Then, different-“excess” experiments were conducted and analyzed using the Burés variable time normalization method³¹ to determine the reaction orders of the reactants and the catalyst. As can be seen from the overlay plots, the reaction is zero order in enyne **1** (Figure 1b), first order in catecholborane **2** (Figure 1c), and first order in the Pd/Senphos catalyst (Figure 1d), resulting in the following rate expression:

$$\text{rate} = k_{\text{H}}[\mathbf{1}]^0[\mathbf{2}]^1[\text{Pd/Senphos}]^1 \quad (2)$$

With the experimental reaction orders established, the rate constant k_{H} in eq 2 can then be determined as $k_{\text{H}} = 0.90 \pm 0.042 \text{ M}^{-1}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ (see the Supporting Information). The corresponding rate constant for the reaction with a deuterated borane **2-D** is $k_{\text{D}} = 0.79 \pm 0.016 \text{ M}^{-1}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$, resulting in a kinetic isotope effect (KIE = $k_{\text{H}}/k_{\text{D}}$) value of 1.1. It is worth noting that the primary KIE values involving breaking of B–H bonds are typically small in magnitude (<2.0).³²

The obtained kinetic information is consistent with the proposed outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism (Scheme 3, scenario (5)) where the resting state is the outer-sphere oxidative addition intermediate **Int₁** and the rate-limiting step being either the hydride abstraction or the hydride transfer step. The zero-order dependence in enyne **1** is the result of saturation kinetics due to the catalyst resting state, and the first-order dependence in borane **2** is due to the requirement of an additional borane as a hydride shuttle starting from the catalyst resting state.

The rate expression also explains the dependence of the *trans/cis* diastereoselectivity of the hydroboration on the borane concentration. As described in the double-crossover experiment section, a higher borane concentration favors the *trans*-hydroboration vs *cis*-hydroboration (see Figures S1 and S2). It is important to note that the resting state of the catalyst remains the outer-sphere oxidative addition intermediate **Int₁** for both the formation of the *trans*- and *cis*-hydroboration products. We already established that the *trans*-hydroboration reaction is first order in borane (eq 2). On the other hand, the *cis*-hydroboration reaction is expected to be zero order in borane; the transition state²⁰ (see Scheme 5) involves only one borane molecule, resulting in an “apparent saturation kinetics” with respect to the borane due to the catalyst resting state structure.³³ Thus, the first-order borane dependence for *trans* hydroboration vs predicted zero-order borane dependence for *cis* hydroboration is consistent with higher borane concentrations favoring the formation of the *trans* product.

Although our experimental data support in general the outer-sphere oxidative mechanism outlined by Shi *et al.* (Scheme 3, scenario (5)),²⁰ we do note several discrepancies between our experimental observations and Shi *et al.*’s computed reaction pathway. First, Shi *et al.*’s calculations predict product inhibition, but product inhibition is not observed in our reaction progress kinetic analysis. Second, Shi *et al.*’s calculations predict the Pd⁰-bound product to be the resting state of the catalytic cycle, which is inconsistent with our kinetic analysis that rather assigns the outer-sphere oxidative addition adduct as the resting state. Shi *et al.*’s computed energy profile for the *trans*-hydroboration would predict a rate law that is first order in enyne and second order in borane (due to the resting state being the Pd⁰-bound

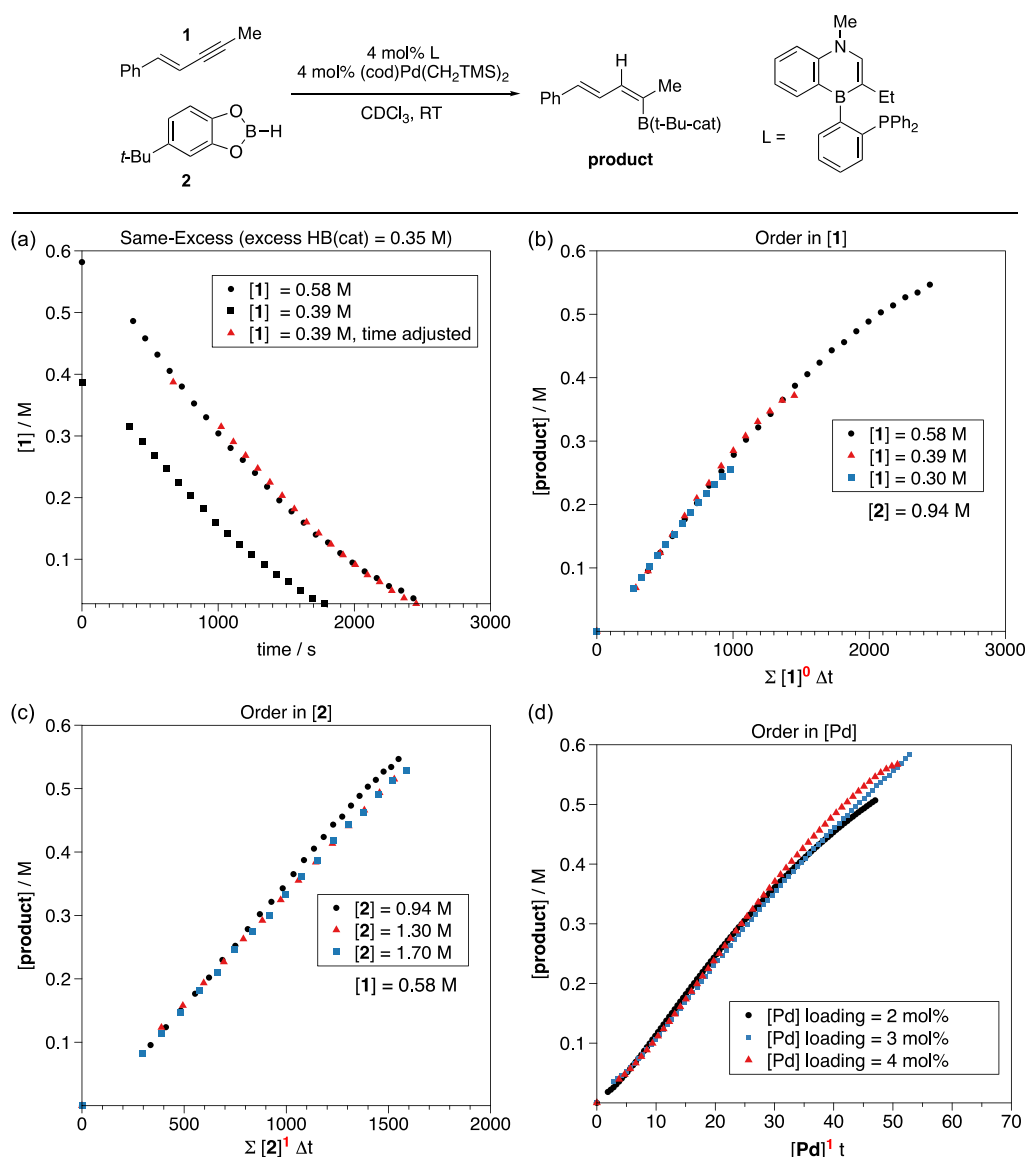


Figure 1. Reaction progress kinetic analysis: (a) same-excess experiment, (b) different-excess experiment to determine the reaction order in [1], (c) different-excess experiment to determine the reaction order in [2], and (d) varying [Pd] to determine the reaction order in [Pd] via variable time normalization.

product), which is not experimentally observed. Additionally, no transition state corresponding to a hydride transfer between boron and Pd has been located on the potential energy surface. In view of these discrepancies/shortcomings, we optimized the computational methods, accurately scrutinizing the potential energy surface (PES), and present here a refined reaction coordinate energy diagram for the Pd/Senphos catalyzed *trans*-hydroboration of 1,3-enyne **1**.

Density functional theory (DFT)³⁴ calculations were carried out at the SMD(CH₂Cl₂)^{35,36}-TPSS³⁷-D3(BJ)³⁸/SDD+f-(Pd),³⁹ 6-31G** (other atoms) level of theory. The geometrical parameters of intermediates and transition states are available in the [Supporting Information](#). Consistent with experimental data and previous calculations, this reaction occurs via an outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism, where the Lewis acidic catecholborane (H-B(cat), blue color) activates the π -complex (i.e., enyne substrate bound to the Pd⁰; the alkene-bound Pd⁰ complex is determined to be more stable than the alkyne bound Pd complex by 7.0 kcal/mol),

affording the outer-sphere oxidative addition adduct **Int**₁ (Figure 2). In the next step, the borohydride is then transferred to a second H-B(cat) (red color). In contrast to Shi *et al.*'s calculations²⁰ where no transition state was attributed to this hydride transfer, we successfully located the associated transition states. Our calculations reveal that the hydride transfer process occurs in two steps, step 1: B-H bond activation (blue) by the shuttle borane (red) via **TS**₂ (H(blue)⋯B(blue): 1.263 Å and H(blue)⋯B(red): 1.694 Å) to form hydride bridged diborane complex **Int**₂ (H(blue)⋯B(blue): 1.344 Å, H(blue)⋯B(red): 1.387 Å, and ∠B(blue)-H(blue)-B(red): 180°) and step 2: hydride abstraction by the shuttle borane (red) via the rate-limiting **TS**₃ to form **Int**₃, where the H₂B(cat)[−] anion is completely released from the cationic Pd complex. Then, the H₂B(cat)[−] anion shifts toward the Pd^{II} metal in a barrierless process to form a precomplex **Int**₄ with a hydride bridging the Pd and borane (Pd⋯H: 1.631 Å and B⋯H: 1.580 Å). In **Int**₄, we also note a change from a Pd- η^3 - π -allyl coordination to a Pd- η^1 -alkenyl coordination to

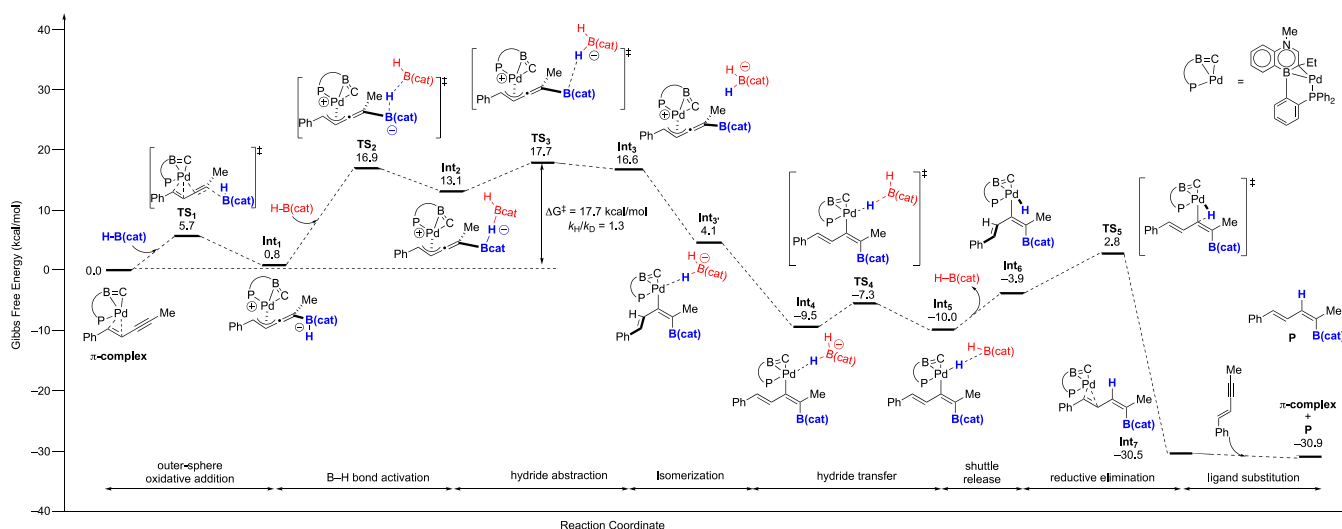


Figure 2. Energy profile (ΔG in kcal/mol) for the Pd/Senphos catalyzed *trans*-hydroboration process computed at the SMD(CH_2Cl_2)-TPSS-D3(BJ)BJ/SDD+ $f(\text{Pd})$, 6-31G** (other atoms) level of theory.

maintain a $16e \text{ Pd}^{\text{II}}$ configuration. A hydride is then transferred to Pd *via* transition state TS_4 , affording the η^1 -alkenyl-Pd-hydride intermediate Int_5 that might be very weakly coordinated to the leaving H-B(cat). In TS_4 , the Pd...H bond distance is 1.608 Å and the B...H distance is 1.711 Å, with a sum of bond angles around the boron atom $\Sigma_{\angle B}$: 354.2°. In Int_5 , the Pd...H bond distance is 1.583 Å and the B...H distance is 1.984 Å, with $\Sigma_{\angle B}$: 358.3°. It is worth noting that in Shi *et al.*'s calculations, the hydride transfer from boron to Pd was predicted to be the rate-limiting step. However, the corresponding transition state was located with a Pd...H bond distance of 5.087 Å, which is inconsistent with a hydride transfer. Rather, the located transition state more likely corresponds to the breaking of the Pd cation–arene (catecholborate) interaction. From Int_5 , the shuttle borane is released in a barrierless manner to form Int_6 , which then undergoes a three-centered reductive elimination *via* TS_5 to furnish the product that is η^2 -coordinated to the Pd catalyst (Int_7). Ligand substitution with a new 1,3-enyne substrate starts a new catalytic cycle.

The present calculation formally identifies the Pd-enyne π -complex as the resting state of the catalyst with the caveat that the outer-sphere oxidative addition adduct Int_1 can, within reasonable computational error range, be considered as the resting state as well.^{40,41} With a predicted energy difference of less than 1.0 kcal/mol between the π -complex and Int_1 , it is possible that the equilibrium, and as a consequence the resting state, may be influenced by reaction stoichiometry (e.g., concentration of H-B(cat)) under the reaction conditions. The rate-limiting transition state TS_3 involves the hydride abstraction step by the borane shuttle and is 17.7 kcal/mol above the resting state. This relatively small rate-limiting barrier ($\Delta G^\ddagger$) is consistent with the fast reaction times (15 min to 3.5 h) observed at room temperature. Finally, we calculated a KIE ($k_{\text{H}}/k_{\text{D}} = 1.3$) based on the illustrated reaction profile in Figure 2, which is in line with the observed experimental data ($k_{\text{H}}/k_{\text{D}} = 1.1$).

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, we investigated the reaction mechanism of the Pd/Senphos-catalyzed *trans*-hydroboration reaction of 1,3-

enynes using various experimental techniques, including reaction progress kinetic analysis, X-ray crystallographic characterization of a model outer-sphere oxidative addition species, and double crossover labeling experiment.⁴² Our experimental data establish catecholborane as a suitable electrophile to cooperatively activate the Pd^0 -bound 1,3-enyne substrate *via* the unusual outer-sphere oxidative addition mechanism. The resulting outer-sphere oxidative addition adduct is proposed to be the resting state of the catalytic cycle and features the versatile $\text{Pd}-\eta^3$ - π -allyl motif and the characteristic κ^2 - η^2 -BC-coordination by the Senphos ligand as evidenced by single-crystal structure analysis of the model compound. The results of the double crossover labeling of the catecholborane are consistent with the borane serving an additional role as a hydride shuttle. We also refined a previously reported computational mechanistic study and determined that the rate-limiting transition state of the reaction is the hydride abstraction by the catecholborane shuttle, which is consistent with the experimentally determined rate law. The computed activation free energy $\Delta G^\ddagger = 17.7$ kcal/mol and KIE ($k_{\text{H}}/k_{\text{D}} = 1.3$) are also in line with experimental observations. Overall, this work experimentally establishes Lewis acids such as catecholborane as viable electrophilic activators to engage in an outer-sphere oxidative addition reaction and points toward outer-sphere oxidative addition as a likely general approach to activate unsaturated substrates.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Data Availability Statement

The data underlying this study are available in the published article and its Supporting Information.

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.joc.2c02841>.

Experimental procedures, compound characterization data, and computational and crystallographic information (PDF)

Optimized Cartesian coordinates (XYZ)

Accession Codes

CCDC 2211462 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif, or by emailing data_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk, or by contacting The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, UK; fax: +44 1223 336033.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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