## Chemical Science



#### **EDGE ARTICLE**

View Article Online
View Journal | View Issue



Cite this: Chem. Sci., 2023, 14, 13944

dll publication charges for this article have been paid for by the Royal Society of Chemistry

Received 22nd July 2023 Accepted 15th November 2023

DOI: 10.1039/d3sc03806h

rsc li/chemical-science

# Group 13 ion coordination to pyridyl breaks the reduction potential vs. hydricity scaling relationship for dihydropyridinates†

Leo W. T. Parsons, James C. Fettinger D and Louise A. Berben D\*

The relationship  $E_{\rm p}$  vs.  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  correlates the applied potential  $(E_{\rm p})$  needed to drive organohydride formation with the strength of the hydride donor that is formed: in the absence of kinetic effects  $E_{\rm p}$  vs.  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  should be linear but it would be more energy efficient if  $E_{\rm p}$  could be shifted anodically using kinetic effects. Biological hydride transfers (HT) performed by cofactors including NADH and lactate racemase do occur at low potentials and functional modeling of those processes could lead to low energy HT reactions in electrosynthesis and to accurate models for cofactor chemistry. Herein we probe the influence of N-alkylation or N-metallation on  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  for dihydropyridinates (DHP $^-$ ) and on  $E_{\rm p}$  of the DHP $^-$  precursors. We synthesized a series of DHP $^-$  complexes of the form  $({\rm pz_2}^{\rm HP}^{\rm -}){\rm E}$  via hydride transfer from their respective  $[({\rm pz_2P}){\rm E}]^+$  forms where  ${\rm E}={\rm AlCl_2}^+$ ,  ${\rm GaCl_2}^+$  or  ${\rm Me}^+$ . Relative  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  for the  $({\rm pz_2}^{\rm HP}^{\rm -}){\rm E}$  series all fall within 1 kcal mol $^{-1}$ , and  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  for  $({\rm pz_2}^{\rm HP}){\rm CH_3}$  was approximated as 47.5  $\pm$  2.5 kcal mol $^{-1}$  in MeCN solution. Plots of  $E_{\rm p}$  vs.  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  including  $[({\rm pz_2P}){\rm E}]^+$  suggest kinetic effects shift  $E_{\rm p}$  anodically by  $\sim$ 215 mV.

#### Introduction

Reduction reactions involving hydride transfer (HT, formally two electrons and a proton) are important in transformations ranging from CO<sub>2</sub> reduction<sup>1,2</sup> to selective reductions of carbonyls, imines, and alkenes.3-5 In enzymes, tremendous selectivity and efficiency in reduction reactions involving HT is achieved by cofactors such as NAD<sup>+</sup>/NADH and the nickel pincer nucleotide (NPN) cofactor in lactate racemase, in a carefully tailored environment.<sup>6,7</sup> Synthetic chemists have harnessed this control in systems which incorporate enzymes for highly efficient reactions in the presence of catalytic NAD<sup>+</sup>, 8,9 and synthetic chemists aspire to similar reaction control as in the asymmetric co-catalysis of enantioselective organocatalytic hydride reduction. 10,11 Alongside these reaction conditions, a wide array of both metal hydride (M-H) and organohydride (C-H) transfer agents has been developed, and ongoing efforts have various directions: improved selectivity for desired products,12-14 and functional group tolerance,15,16 are just two examples.

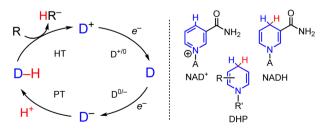
In the growing area of electrosynthesis and electrocatalysis additional considerations need to be made for the design of HT reagents that can be effectively (re)generated electrochemically.

Department of Chemistry, University of California, Davis, CA, 95616, USA. E-mail: laberben@ucdavis.edu

These include choice of proton source for hydride regeneration and catalytic turnover and design of precursors to the hydride which lower the applied potential required for the reduction steps that (re)generate the hydride reagent in the catalytic cycle (Scheme 1).<sup>17-19</sup> The lowered potential is needed to save energy, and minimize side reactions including proton reduction to  $H_2$  and decomposition of catalyst or substrate. It is well-known that the half wave potential,  $E_{1/2}(D^{+/0})$  for the hydride precursor ( $D^+$  in Scheme 1) scales with the free energy change associated with loss of hydride ion from a metal- or organo-hydride as in eqn (1):<sup>20,21</sup>

$$D-H \rightarrow D^+ + H^-$$
 free energy:  $\Delta G_{H-}$  (1)

This free energy change is also called hydricity ( $\Delta G_{\text{H-}}$ ). Experimentally, hydricity is determined using thermochemical



Scheme 1 (Left) Outline of electron and proton steps to generic cationic hydride precursor,  $D^+$ , leading to hydride formation of a general hydride donor D-H and subsequent HT to substrate. (Right) Line drawing of NAD $^+$ , NADH and dihydropyridinate, DHP. A = Adenine dinucleotide.

<sup>†</sup> Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Synthesis and characterization of compounds, <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR, tables of crystallographic data, crystallographic data (CIF). CCDC 2278349 and 2278350. For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: https://doi.org/10.1039/d3sc03806h

cycles that are well described in the literature, <sup>22,23</sup> and cycles relevant to this work are included below (*vide infra*).

**Edge Article** 

Hydricity can be a useful predictor for the overall driving force for an HT reaction and influence reaction selectivity, where a smaller  $\Delta G_{H-}$  value indicates a stronger thermodynamic driving force for HT, i.e. a stronger hydride donor. For example, electrocatalytic reduction of CO2 to HCOO is optimized when the hydride donor is sufficiently hydridic to make CO2 reduction thermodynamically favorable but not so strong as to undergo competitive H2 evolution via reaction of the hydride with protons. <sup>24–27</sup> Both  $E_{1/2}$  and  $\Delta G_{\mathrm{H-}}$  are intrinsic thermodynamic properties of the hydride donor reagent.<sup>28,29</sup> In practice, reduction of D<sup>+</sup> is often coupled with proton transfer (PT) reactions and then the CV waveform manifests as an irreversible redox event where both thermodynamic and kinetic contributions to the D<sup>+/0</sup> and D<sup>0/</sup> redox couples and PT influence the necessary applied potential  $(E_{\rm p})$  that is required to generate D-H.<sup>30</sup> Metal ion coordination is known qualitatively to lower  $E_p$  for organic molecules including DHP's but not enough data has been reported to draw any correlations between structure and function.31,32

In this report, we investigate structural tuning of dihydropyridinates (DHP<sup>-</sup>) and their precursors via metal ion effects. To assess the results of metal ion coordination we considered the scaling relationship between  $E_p$  vs.  $\Delta G_{H^-}$  using extensive data reported in the literature, and as discussed below.21,33,36 The dipyrazolylpyridine ligand platform (pz2P) supports complexes with the form  $[(pz_2P)E]^+$  where  $E = GaCl_2^+$ , CH<sub>3</sub><sup>+</sup> and AlCl<sub>2</sub><sup>+</sup>, and those compounds are denoted herein as 1<sup>+</sup>, 2<sup>+</sup> and 4<sup>+</sup> respectively.<sup>30,36</sup> In this report the syntheses of organohydrides (pz<sub>2</sub><sup>H</sup>P<sup>-</sup>)E, are reported for E = GaCl<sub>2</sub><sup>+</sup> and CH<sub>3</sub><sup>+</sup>, via a formal addition of hydride (two electrons and one proton) to  $[(pz_2P)E]^+$  (Scheme 2). Characterization of the geometric and electronic structures of 1H, 2H and 4H was performed and the hydride donor ability for each compound benchmarked. A comparison of the properties of 1H and 2H with those of previously reported organohydride reagents reveals reduction potential is lowered by + 215 mV for 1H and does not deviate within error for 2H relative to  $E_p$  expected according to the  $E_p$  vs.  $\Delta G_{H-}$  scaling relationship. The origin of this effect is discussed.

#### Results and discussion

#### Preparation of compounds

We targeted the 1,4-DHP<sup>-</sup>'s derived from  $[(pz_2P)GaCl_2]^+(1^+)$  and  $[(pz_2P)CH_3]^+(2^+)$  (Scheme 3). In an attempt to generate

$$\begin{array}{c|c} & & & & \\ & &$$

Scheme 2 Interconversion of  $(pz_2P)E^+$  with  $(pz_2HP^-)E$  via HT, where  $E = AlCl_2^+$ ,  $GaCl_2^+$ , and  $CH_3^+$ .

[(pz<sub>2</sub><sup>H</sup>P<sup>-</sup>)]GaCl<sub>2</sub> (1H), two equivalents of Na were added to a solution of one equivalent pz<sub>2</sub>P in THF at room temperature and the clear solution turned deep red following consumption of the Na metal over 24 h.35 Addition of one equivalent of GaCl3 resulted in a further colour change to dark purple. The <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of the isolated product showed no resonances corresponding to protons on an aromatic pyridine ring but instead resonances at 5.21 and 3.57 ppm were observed. These resonances are consistent with a 1,4-DHP ligand form coordinated to GaCl<sub>2</sub><sup>+</sup>, and consistent with our previous report of [(pz<sub>2</sub><sup>H</sup>P<sup>-</sup>)] AlCl<sub>2</sub>, 4H, 36 where the resonances were observed at 4.99 and 3.50 ppm. However, integration of the resonance at 3.57 ppm gives a value of 1H atom for the C<sub>p</sub>-H proton (see Fig. 1 for carbon atom labelling scheme), but integration of 2H atoms is expected for formation of 1H. A multiplet at 1.76 and doublet at 1.12 ppm corresponding to integrations of 1H atom and 6H atoms, respectively, suggest substitution of an iPr group at the C<sub>p</sub> carbon (Fig. S1†), and this was confirmed by single crystal Xray diffraction which identified [(pz<sub>2</sub><sup>iPr</sup>HP<sup>-</sup>)]GaCl<sub>2</sub> (3H), (vide infra). Presumably, a reductive cleavage of N-isopropyl generates isopropylsodium, which, in turn, reacts with the pyridine ring to form 3H.37

### Synthesis of 1H was also attempted *via* several additional routes

Reduction of [(pz<sub>2</sub>P)GaCl<sub>2</sub>]GaCl<sub>4</sub> (1-GaCl<sub>4</sub>) was attempted *via* reactions with sodium metal, sodium napthalenide, and decamethylcobaltocene, but these reactions did not yield clean isolable products. Reactions of 1-GaCl<sub>4</sub> with hydride donors NaBH<sub>4</sub>, LiAlH<sub>4</sub>, and LiEt<sub>3</sub>BH also did not yield 1H. Ultimately, we obtained 1H in 55% yield as crystals formed from a concentrated solution of 1-GaCl<sub>4</sub> and 2H in MeCN (the

Scheme 3 Syntheses of 1H, 2H and 3H.

Fig. 1 Solid state structures of 1H (top left) and 3H (top right) and  $pz_2P$  atom naming convention used throughout (bottom). Blue, light blue, green, gray ellipsoids, and white circles represent N, Ga, Cl, C, and H atoms, respectively. H atoms except  $C_p-H$  omitted for clarity. The thermal ellipsoids are shown at 30% probability.

synthesis of 2H is described in the next paragraph). The  $^1H$  NMR spectrum of 1H showed no aromatic resonances, but the  $C_p$ –H resonance is observed as a triplet at 3.48 ppm, and this is consistent with DHP $^-$  formation as observed in 4H, 2H, and 3H which have  $C_p$ –H resonances at 3.50, 3.62 and 3.57 ppm, respectively. The pyrazole ring proton resonance is a singlet, shifted upfield, from 7.01 in 1 $^+$  to 5.92 ppm in 1H (Fig. S2 $^+$ ). The composition of 1H was further confirmed by X-ray diffraction and combustion analysis.

The synthesis of 1,4-DHP<sup>-</sup>s from *N*-alkylated pyridinium salts has been reported, using sodium dithionate,<sup>38</sup> or a metal hydride donor as reductant.<sup>39</sup> For the preparation of 2H we found that addition of 1.3 equivalents of lithium triethyl borohydride, LiEt<sub>3</sub>BH, to a colourless solution of 2-OTf in THF resulted in an instant colour change to a yellow solution. After stirring for 5 minutes the solution was concentrated to a residue which was dissolved in hexane and filtered. The yellow oily filtrate yielded pz<sub>2</sub>(*N*-Me<sup>H</sup>P), 2H, in 27% yield following workup. The proton NMR spectrum of 2H is consistent with the 1,4-DHP<sup>-</sup> structure and with NMR resonances at 5.62 and 3.24 ppm (Fig. S3†). The composition of 2H was confirmed using HRMS.

#### Solid state structures

Crystals suitable for single crystal X-ray diffraction of the 1,4-DHP $^-$  ligand compounds, 1H and 3H, were obtained from saturated solutions of MeCN and hexane respectively over a period of three days, and were obtained as purple, and colorless block shaped crystals, respectively (Tables S1 and S2,† Fig. 1). We were not able to obtain crystals of 2H despite many attempts. For 1H, the average bond lengths of the  $\rm N_{py}\text{-}C_{o}$ ,  $\rm C_{o}\text{-}$ 

C<sub>m</sub> and C<sub>p</sub>-C<sub>m</sub> bonds are 1.387(6), 1.343(7) and 1.507(7) Å, respectively, and for 3H these are 1.433(6), 1.33(2) and 1.507(8) Å, respectively (see Fig. 1 for pz<sub>2</sub>P atom naming). The increased bond lengths for C<sub>p</sub>-C<sub>m</sub> in both 1H and 3H relative to 1<sup>+</sup>, are characteristic of 1,4-DHP structures. Upon formation of the 1,4-DHP<sup>-</sup>, the geometry around the Ga(III) center becomes closer to trigonal bipyramidal with a  $\tau_5$  value of 0.76 for both 1H and 3H.40 There is also an increase in the N<sub>pz</sub>-Ga-N<sub>pz</sub>, bond angle from 154.9(1)° in 1<sup>+</sup> to 156.47(3)° and 156.51(8)° in 1H and 3H respectively.30 The ligand twists to accommodate the distorted trigonal bipyramidal geometry as indicated by the torsion angle between the two coordinating pyrazine arms Cpz N<sub>pz</sub>C<sub>pz</sub>=N<sub>pz</sub>, which increase by 2.89° and 1.91° for 1H and 3H respectively relative to 1+. There is no significant difference in the bond distances within the pyrazole rings between all compounds discussed (Tables S3 and S4†).

#### Hydride transfer reactions of 1H, 2H and 4H

There are several possible experiments that can be used to obtain  $\Delta G_{\mathrm{H}}$ . <sup>22</sup> We found hydride transfer best suited for **1H**, **2H** and **4H** where chemical equilibria were established between **1H**, **2H** and **4H**, and organohydride molecules of known  $\Delta G_{\mathrm{H}}$ . Using this method, direct HT from a donor (D–H) to acceptor (A<sup>+</sup>) is observed and then an equilibrium constant can be determined which establishes the difference in  $\Delta G_{\mathrm{H}}$ . between the donor and acceptor. The relationship between the hydride donor ability of D–H and A–H, and the hydride transfer between D<sup>+</sup> and A<sup>+</sup> is described by eqn (2)–(5):<sup>22</sup>

$$D-H + A^+ \rightleftharpoons D^+ + A-H K_{(2)}$$
 (2)

$$A-H \rightleftharpoons A^{+} + H^{-} \Delta G_{H-}(A-H)$$
 (3)

$$D-H \rightleftharpoons D^{+} + H^{-} \Delta G_{H-}(D-H)$$
 (4)

where  $\Delta G_{\text{H-(4)}} = \Delta G_{\text{H-(2)}} - \Delta G_{\text{H-(3)}}$ and

$$\Delta G_{\mathrm{H}-(2)} = -RT\ln(K_{(2)}) \tag{5}$$

We first set out to determine the hydricity of 2H, because 2H is the easiest of the hydrides to make, with a series of hydride acceptors of known hydricity. Reaction of 2-OTf with one equivalent of 1,3-dimethyl-2-phenyl-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-benzo[d] imidazole, BnHPh ( $\Delta G_{H-} = 50$  kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> in MeCN, (Chart 1))<sup>19</sup> resulted in HT which was observed by <sup>1</sup>H NMR in CD<sub>3</sub>CN after 2 days and approached equilibrium after two weeks, as in eqn (6):

$$BnHPh + 2^+ \rightleftharpoons BnPh^+ + 2H \tag{6}$$

$$Bn^{+} + 2H \rightleftharpoons BnH + 2^{+} \tag{7}$$

HT from 2H to one equivalent of 1,3-dimethyl-1*H*-benzimidazolium, Bn $^+$  ( $\Delta G_{H^-}=45~{\rm kcal~mol}^{-1}$  in MeCN (Chart 1)) $^{29}$  was also observed by  $^1$ H NMR after 3 days and approached equilibrium after two weeks (eqn (7), Fig. S4 and S5 $^+$ ). The equilibria were heavily reactant favoured suggesting that the hydricity of 2H lies close to the middle of the range from 45–50 kcal mol $^{-1}$ 

Edge Article Chemical Science

Chart 1 1,4-DHPs and benzimidazoles discussed in the text and their reported hydricities in MeCN.<sup>21</sup>

in MeCN solution. Control experiments run in parallel consisting of the starting materials 2-OTf, 2H, 1,3-dimethyl-2phenyl-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole and 1,3-dimethyl-1*H*benzimidazolium iodide in CD<sub>3</sub>CN with trimethoxybenzene as an internal standard show no changes after 2 weeks (Fig. S6-S9†). We, therefore, estimate for 2H that  $\Delta G_{\text{H-}} = 47.5 \pm$ 2.5 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>. These measurements put the  $\Delta G_{H-}$  of 2H on the lower side (stronger hydride donor) of values reported for 1,4-DHPs which have been reported from 73-43 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>.21 As a reference point to commonly employed DHPs, the Hantsch ester (HEH) has  $\Delta G_{H-} = 61.5$  kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> and BNAH (1-benzyl-1,4-dihydronicotinamide) has  $\Delta G_{H^-} = 59 \text{ kcal mol}^{-1}$ . An established trend is that DHP's are more hydridic when they are functionalized with electron donating groups. Both the Hantzsch ester and BNAH feature electron withdrawing groups (Chart 1), whereas 2H has two moderately electron donating pyrazole groups. The hydricity of 2H is similar to methyl substituted N-alkylated DHP-s.21

Having established the hydricity of 2H, we endeavoured to determine if HT from 2H would be observed to either  $\mathbf{1}^+$  or  $\mathbf{4}^+$ . Reactions of a 1:1 molar ratio of  $\mathbf{1}\text{-GaCl}_4$  with 2H, and of  $[(pz_2P)\text{-AlCl}_2]\text{AlCl}_4$ ,  $\mathbf{4}\text{-AlCl}_4$ , with 2H were monitored by  $^1\text{H}$  NMR in  $(\mathbf{6}\text{-D6})$  in order to determine the reaction equilibria (Scheme 4).  $^{1,41}$  The back reaction in these equilibria corresponds to eqn (2) and were used in calculations of  $\Delta G_{\text{H--}}$ . Integration of  $^{1}\text{H}$  NMR signals  $(C_p\text{-}H\text{ of }\mathbf{4}^+/4\text{H} \text{ and }\mathbf{1}^+/1\text{H} \text{ and N}_{py}\text{-}CH_3 \text{ of }\mathbf{2}^+/2\text{H})$  relative to the internal standard trimethoxybenzene showed equilibria were established after 4 days for reaction of  $\mathbf{1}^+$  and  $\mathbf{2}$ H and after 3 days for the reaction of  $\mathbf{4}^+$  and  $\mathbf{2}$ H (see ESI for full experimental details  $^+$ ). We recognize that solvents such as DMSO, MeCN or  $\mathbf{H}_2\mathbf{O}$ , which have higher dielectric constants and a wealth of reported hydricity data, would be a better choice for monitoring these equilibria,  $^{23}$  but  $\mathbf{1}$ -GaCl $_4$  is insoluble in DMSO,  $\mathbf{1}$ H is

Scheme 4 HT equilibria between 1-GaCl $_4$  and 2H, and 4-AlCl $_4$  and 2H. Counter ions omitted for clarity.

sparingly soluble in MeCN, and both  $4^+$  and  $1^+$  are unstable in protic solvents. Equilibrium constants (K) were calculated as 0.83 for the back reaction of  $1\text{-}\mathrm{GaCl_4}$  with  $2\mathrm{H}$  and 0.24 for the back reaction of  $4\text{-}\mathrm{AlCl_4}$  with  $2\mathrm{H}$ . These values correspond to a difference in  $\Delta G_{\mathrm{H}}$ . between  $1\mathrm{H}$  and  $2\mathrm{H}$  of  $0.1\pm0.1$  kcal  $\mathrm{mol^{-1}}$  and a difference in  $\Delta G_{\mathrm{H}}$ . between  $4\mathrm{H}$  and  $2\mathrm{H}$  of  $0.8\pm0.1$  kcal  $\mathrm{mol^{-1}}$ . Given that the values of  $1\mathrm{H}$ ,  $2\mathrm{H}$  and  $4\mathrm{H}$  were all found to be within 1 kcal  $\mathrm{mol^{-1}}$  in benzene, which has a dielectric constant over 15 times lower than MeCN, we estimate that the hydricity values of  $1\mathrm{H}$  and  $4\mathrm{H}$  in MeCN would differ from  $2\mathrm{H}$  by no more than 1 kcal  $\mathrm{mol^{-1}}$ .  $^{25,28,42}$  Minor differences in  $\Delta G_{\mathrm{H}}$  might arise from the varied Lewis acidity of the cations.

## Metal ion effects on the scaling relationship between $E_{\rm p}$ and $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$ for organohydrides

Linear correlations between hydricity ( $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$ ) of a transition metal hydride and the first reversible redox couple,  $E_{1/2}({\rm D}^{+/0})$  in Scheme 1, of a parent transition metal complex are well established within several classes of metal complexes.<sup>24,43,44</sup> Concomitant reports by the groups of Kubiak,<sup>20</sup> and Glusac,<sup>21</sup> showed that a more general correlation exists across several classes of transition metal and ligand sets, and across structurally diverse organohydrides.

It is known that many oxidized organohydride precursors display irreversible reduction events,  $E_p$ , in CV experiments and we wondered if there is any correlation between a plot of  $E_p$  vs.  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  for those compounds and whether the plot might highlight a variation in kinetic contributions to reduction that are causing the irreversibility. To construct a plot of  $E_p$  vs.  $\Delta G_{H^-}$  we used reported, computationally obtained  $\Delta G_{H-}$  values for Ncontaining heterocyclic organohydrides in MeCN solution,21 with their reported irreversible cathodic peak potentials  $(E_p)$ obtained using CV in MeCN solution. 33,36 We compiled  $E_p$  values for various imidazoles, 33 and substituted 1,4-DHPs; 36 and all  $E_p$ values were converted to V vs. SCE. Linear regression provides a linear relationship (Fig. 2). We notice that when fit independently, predicted  $E_p$  values for 1,4-DHPs are at more positive potentials than benzimidazoles with comparable  $\Delta G_{\mathrm{H-}}$  within the reported  $\Delta G_{\mathrm{H-}}$  range. Furthermore, another anodic shift in predicted  $E_{\rm p}$  values is observed from fits of experimental  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$ values of 1,4-DHPs,45-48 compared to those reported from computational methods. Experimentally measured values of  $\Delta G_{\text{H-}}$  (for 1H and 2H) and of  $E_{\text{p}}$  (for 1<sup>+</sup> and 2<sup>+</sup>) were added to the plot of  $E_p$  vs.  $\Delta G_{H-}$  for comparison (red symbols, Fig. 2). Relative to the correlation line,  $\mathbf{1}^+$  is more easily reduced:  $E_{\rm p}(\mathbf{1}^+)$  is +215 mV more anodic than predicted. The Al-supported DHP compound 4H has a similar  $E_p$  to 2H when both are measured in THF, and this suggests that both AlCl<sub>2</sub><sup>+</sup> and GaCl<sub>2</sub><sup>+</sup> similarly break the  $E_{\rm p}$  vs.  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  scaling relationship, but there is not enough data available in THF to illustrate this point on a plot as we do for MeCN in Fig. 2. All the organohydrides plotted have cationic oxidized forms so the overall charge on the molecules should not be a factor contributing to  $E_p$ .

The combined data for **1H**, **2H** (and **1**<sup>+</sup>, **2**<sup>+</sup>) and the deviation of **1**<sup>+</sup> from the  $E_p$  vs.  $\Delta G_{H^-}$  correlation lines are consistent with differences in reorganization energy that can be rationalized by

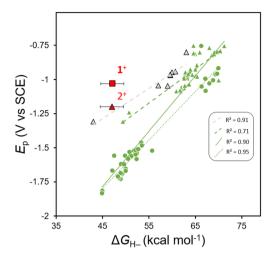


Fig. 2 Plot of  $E_{\rm p}$  vs.  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  for benzimidazoles (circles), 1,4-DHPs (triangles)  ${\bf 2}^+$  and those previously published and complexe  ${\bf 1}^+$ . Black outlines around markers represent experimentally determined  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  values, green markers indicate computational  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  values and red markers corresponds to compounds reported herein. The figure key displays  $R^2$  values for linear fits to: 1,4-DHPs with experimentally determined  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  values (dashed grey line). S6,45-48 1,4-DHPs with computationally determined  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  values (dashed green line), 21,36 1,4-DHPs and benzimidazoles with computationally determined  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  values (solid green line), 21,33,36 and benzimidazoles with computationally determined  $\Delta G_{\rm H-}$  values (dotted green line), 21,33 4+ is not included on the plot since it is not stable in MeCN.

the structural changes between the  $\mathbf{1}^+$  and  $\mathbf{1}H$  pair. We expect no large structural changes upon conversion to  $\mathbf{1}H$  and so it is reasonable to expect that kinetic contributions to  $E_p$  might be relatively low. In contrast, there are obvious structural differences between the  $\mathbf{2}^+/\mathbf{2}H$  pair. For  $\mathbf{2}^+$  we know that the flanking pyrazolyl rings of pz<sub>2</sub>P have *N*-donor atoms oriented in toward the cationic *N*-Me-pyridyl group, and in  $\mathbf{2}H$  those *N*-donor atoms of the pyrazolyl rings rotate away since the py ring is no longer cationic, as in the known structure of pz<sub>2</sub>P where the pyrazolyl N atoms rotate out. An additional effect of the Group 13 cation may be to stabilize the DHP $^-$  *via* bonding interactions between the N<sub>py</sub>  $\pi$ -electrons and  $p_z$  orbital of the metal: electron donation from N<sub>py</sub> to group 13 3+ cations have been observed in other complexes of tridentate pyridyl-centered ligands, and may stabilize the DHP $^-$ . On

#### Conclusion

New compounds 1H and 2H were prepared by a direct reaction of a hydride donor with the neutral ligand complexes  $\mathbf{1}^+$ , and  $\mathbf{2}^+$ , respectively: this hydride transfer reaction is a formal two-electron reduction and single protonation. Measurements of the  $E_{\rm p}$  and  $\Delta G_{\rm H^-}$  for  $\mathbf{1}^+$ ,  $\mathbf{2}^+$ , and  $\mathbf{4}^+$ , show that  $\mathbf{1}^+$  and  $\mathbf{4}^+$  do not follow the  $E_{\rm p}$  vs.  $\Delta G_{\rm H^-}$  scaling relationship. Both  $\mathbf{1}^+$  and  $\mathbf{4}^+$  have N-pyridyl coordination to Group 13 3+ cations, whereas  $\mathbf{2}^+$  is N-alkylated. These data were collected in THF and MeCN where possible, and the work in MeCN additionally permitted some quantification of this effect, where  $\mathbf{2}^+$  is shifted anodically from the  $E_{\rm p}$  vs.  $\Delta G_{\rm H^-}$  relationship by 215 mV (Fig. 2). Some of the

observed anodic shift may arise from the cationic nature of  $[(pz_2P)E]^+$  but it is unlikely that the full 215 mV anodic shift can be attributed to a single positive charge given that all of the model organohydrides on the plot have equivalent cationic charge. Based on these results, we propose that *N*-coordination of a Group 13 3+ cation to pyridyl offers a strategy for kinetic lowering of  $E_p$ . Future work on well-designed *N*-metallated DHP<sup>-</sup>s will target electrochemically-driven HT reaction chemistry.

#### Author contributions

Leo Parsons collected and analyzed the data, and was involved in writing the manuscript. James Fettinger was involved in refinement of solid state structural X-ray data. Louise Berben was responsible for project design and management, and writing the manuscript.

#### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

#### Acknowledgements

This manuscript is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation with award CHE-2054529.

#### Notes and references

- 1 R. B. Weerasooriya, J. L. Gesiorski, A. Alherz, S. Ilic, G. N. Hargenrader, C. B. Musgrave and K. D. Glusac, Kinetics of Hydride Transfer from Catalytic Metal-Free Hydride Donors to CO<sub>2</sub>, *J. Phys. Chem. Lett.*, 2021, 12, 2306–2311.
- 2 D. Ghosh, K. Kobayashi, T. Kajiwara, S. Kitagawa and K. Tanaka, Catalytic Hydride Transfer to CO<sub>2</sub> Using Ru-NAD-Type Complexes under Electrochemical Conditions, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2017, 56, 11066–11073.
- 3 C. Zheng and S.-L. You, Transfer Hydrogenation with Hantzsch Esters and Related Organic Hydride Donors, *Chem. Soc. Rev.*, 2012, **41**, 2498–2518.
- 4 Q.-X. Xie, L.-X. Liu, Z.-H. Zhu, C. Yu and Y.-G. Zhou, Asymmetric Transfer Hydrogenation of 2,3-Disubstituted Flavanones through Dynamic Kinetic Resolution Enabled by RetroOxa-Michael Addition: Construction of Three Contiguous Stereogenic Centers, *J. Org. Chem.*, 2022, 87, 7521–7530.
- 5 B. Gao, W. Meng, X. Feng and H. Du, Regenerable Dihydrophenanthridine via Borane-Catalyzed Hydrogenation for the Asymmetric Transfer Hydrogenation of Benzoxazinones, *Org. Lett.*, 2022, 24, 3955–3959.
- 6 F. Hollmann, D. J. Opperman and C. E. Paul, Biocatalytic Reduction Reactions from a Chemist's Perspective, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2021, **60**, 5644–5665.
- 7 B. Desguin, J. Urdiain-Arraiza, M. Da Costa, M. Fellner, J. Hu, R. P. Hausinger, T. Desmet, P. Hols and P. Soumillion,

**Edge Article Chemical Science** 

- Uncovering a superfamily of nickel-dependent hydroxyacid racemases and epimerases, Sci. Rep., 2020, 10, 18123.
- 8 F. G. Mutti, T. Knaus, N. S. Scruttion, M. Breuer and N. J. Turner, Conversion of Alcohols to Enantiopure Dual-Enzyme Hydrogen-Borrowing Through Cascades, Science, 2015, 349, 1525-1529.
- 9 S. L. Montgomer, J. Magnas-Sanchez, M. P. Thompson, G. A. Aleku, B. Dominguez and N. J. Turner, Direct Alkylation of Amines with Primary and Secondary Alcohols through Biocatalytic Hydrogen Borrowing, Angew. Chem., Int. Ed., 2017, 56, 10491-10494.
- 10 S. G. Ouellet, J. B. Tuttle and D. W. C. MacMillan, Enantioselective Organocatalytic Hydride Reduction, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2005, 127, 32-33.
- 11 A. M. F. Phillips and A. J. L. Pomberio, Recent Advances in Organocatalytic Enantioselectrive Transfer Hydrogenation, Org. Biomol. Chem., 2017, 15, 2307-2340.
- 12 Z.-H. Zhu, Y.-X. Ding and Y.-G. Zhou, Transfer-Catalyst-Free Biomimetic Asymmetric Reduction of 3-Sulfonyl Coumarins with a Regenerable NAD(P)H Model, Chem. Commun., 2022, 58, 3973-3976.
- 13 Y. Gu, J. R. Norton, F. Salahi, V. G. Lisnyak, Z. Zhou and S. A. Snyder, Highly Selective Hydrogenation of C-C Bonds Catalyzed by a Rhodium Hydride, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2021, 143, 9657-9663.
- 14 J. Wang, Z.-H. Zhu, M.-W. Chen, Q.-A. Chen and Y.-G. Zhou, Catalytic Biomimetic Asymmetric Reduction of Alkenes and Imines Enabled by Chiral and Regenerable NAD(P)H Models, Angew. Chem., Int. Ed., 2019, 58, 1813-1817.
- 15 A. B. Shabade, D. M. Sharma, P. Bajpai, R. G. Gonnade, K. Vanka and B. Punji, Room Temperature Chemoselective Hydrogenation Of C=C, C=O and C=N Bonds by Using a Well-defined Mixed Donor Mn(I) Pincer Catalyst, Chem. Sci., 2022, 13, 13764-13773.
- 16 A. Marrone and R. H. Fish, Bioorganometallic Chemistry at the Interface with Biocatalysis: Chemoselective Reduction of Biomimetic NAD<sup>+</sup> Cofactors with [Cp\*Rh(bpy)H]<sup>+</sup>, Tandem Catalysis with 1,4-NADH-Dependent Enzymes, Chiral Synthesis, Organotin Metabolites, and DFT Mechanism Studies, Organometallics, 2023, 42, 288-306.
- 17 P. Karak, S. Kumar, K. Mandal and J. Choudhury, Bis-Imidazolium-Embedded Heterohelicene: A Regenerable Cofactor Analogue for Electrocatalytic CO2 Reduction, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2023, 145, 7230-7241.
- 18 S. Ilic, A. Alherz, C. B. Musgrave and K. D. Glusac, Importance of Proton-Coupled Electron Transfer in Cathodic Regeneration of Organic Hydrides, Chem. Commun., 2019, 55, 5583-5586.
- 19 S. Ilic, U. P. Kadel, Y. Basdogan, J. A. Keith and K. D. Glusac, Thermodynamic Hydricities of Biomimetic Organic Hydride Donors, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2018, 140, 4569-4579.
- 20 K. M. Waldie, A. L. Ostericher, M. H. Reineke, A. F. Sasayama and C. P. Kubiak, Hydricity of Tansition-Metal Hydrides: Thermodynamic Considerations for CO2 Reduction, ACS Catal., 2018, 8, 1313-1324.

- 21 S. Ilic, A. Alherz, C. B. Musgrave and K. D. Glusac, Thermodynamic and Kinetic Hydricities of Metal-Free Hydrides, Chem. Soc. Rev., 2018, 47, 2809-2836.
- 22 E. S. Wiedner, M. B. Chambers, C. L. Pitman, M. R. Bullock, A. J. M. Miller and A. M. Appel, Thermodynamic hydricity of transition metal hydrides, Chem. Rev., 2016, 116, 8655-8692.
- 23 K. R. Brereton, N. E. Smith, N. Hazari and A. Miller, Thermodynamic and kinetic hydricity of transition metal hydrides, Chem. Soc. Rev., 2020, 49, 7929-7984.
- 24 N. D. Loewen, T. V. Neelakantan and L. A. Berben, Renewable Formate from C-H Bond Formation with CO2: Using Iron Carbonyl Clusters as Electrocatalysts, Acc. Chem. Res., 2017, 50, 2362-2370.
- 25 A. Taheri and L. A. Berben, Tailoring Electrocatalysts for Selective CO2 or H+ Reduction: Iron Carbonyl Clusters as a Case Study, Inorg. Chem., 2016, 55, 378-385.
- 26 B. M. Caballos and J. Y. Yang, Directing the Reactivity of Metal Hydrides for Selective CO<sub>2</sub> Reduction, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A., 2018, 115, 12686-12691.
- 27 J. M. Barlow and J. Y. Yang, Thermodynamic Considerations for Optimizing Selective CO2 Reduction by Molecular Catalysts, ACS Cent. Sci., 2019, 5, 580-588.
- 28 Y. Matsubara, E. Fujita, M. D. Doherty, J. T. Muckerman and C. Creutz, Thermodynamic and Kinetic Hydricity of Ruthenium(II) Hydride Complexes, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2012, 134, 15743-15757.
- 29 W. W. Ellis, J. W. Raebiger, C. J. Curtis, J. W. Bruno and D. DuBois, Hydricities of BzNADH,  $C_5H_5Mo(PMe_3)(CO)_2H$ , and  $C_5Me_5Mo(PMe_3)(CO)_2H$  in Acetonitrile, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2004, 126, 2738-2743.
- 30 L. W. T. Parsons, J. C. Fettinger and L. A. Berben, Group 13 ion coordination to pyridyl models NAD+ reduction potentials, Chem. Commun., 2023, 59, 9110-9113.
- 31 E. J. Thompson and L. A. Berben, Electrocatalytic Hydrogen Production by an Aluminum(III) Complex: Ligand-Based Proton and Electron Transfer, Angew. Chem., Int. Ed., 2015, 54, 11642-11646.
- 32 K. T. Horak, D. G. VanderVelde and T. Agapie, Tuning of Metal Complex Electronics and Reactivity by Remote Lewis Acid Binding to  $\pi$ -Coordinated Pyridine Diphosphine Ligands, Organometallics, 2015, 34, 4753-4765.
- 33 X.-Q. Zhu, M.-T. Zhang, A. Yu, C.-H. Wang and J. P. Cheng, Hydride, Hydrogen Atom, Proton, and Electron Transfer Driving Forces of Various Five-Membered Heterocyclic Organic Hydrides and Their Reaction Intermediates in Acetonitrile, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2008, 130, 2501-2516.
- 34 X.-Q. Zhu, Y. Tan and C.-T. Cao, Thermodynamic Diagnosis of the Properties and Mechanism of Dihydropyridine-Type Compounds as Hydride Source in Acetonitrile with "Molecule ID Card", J. Phys. Chem. B, 2010, 114, 2058-2075.
- 35 T. W. Myers and L. A. Berben, A sterically demanding iminopyridine ligand affords redox-active complexes of aluminum(III) and gallium(III), Inorg. Chem., 2012, 51, 1480-1488.
- 36 T. J. Sherbow, J. C. Fettinger and L. A. Berben, Control of Ligand pKa Values Tunes the Electrocatalytic Dihydrogen

Evolution Mechanism in a Redox-Active Aluminum(III) Complex, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2017, **56**, 8651–8660.

Chemical Science

- 37 G. Zhang, J. Wu, S. Zheng, M. C. Neary, J. Mao, M. Flores, R. J. Trovitch and P. A. Dub, Redox-noninnocent ligand-supported vanadium catalysts for the chemoselective reduction of C=X (X = O, N) functionalities, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2019, **141**, 15230–15239.
- 38 D. Mauzerall and F. H. Westheimer, 1-Benzyldihydronicotinamide a model for reduced DPN, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1955, 77, 2261–2264.
- 39 J. Zhang, J.-D. Yang and J.-P. Cheng, A Nucleophilicity scale for the reactivity of diazaphospholenium hydrides: structural insights and synthetic applications, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2019, **58**, 5983–5987.
- 40 A. W. Addison, T. N. Rao, J. Reedijk, J. van Rijin and G. C. Verschoor, Synthesis, Structure, and spectroscopic properties of copper(II) compounds containing nitrogensulphur donor ligands; the crystal and molecular structure of aqua[1,7-bis(N-methylbenzimidazol-2'-yl)-2,6dithiaheptane]copper(II) perchlorate, *J. Chem. Soc., Dalton Trans.*, 1984, 7, 1349–1356.
- 41 A. Kobayashi, H. Konno, K. Sakamoto, A. Sekine, Y. Ohashi, M. Iida and O. Isitani, Transition metal complexes coordinated by an NAD(P)H model compound and their enhanced hydride-donating abilities in the presence of a base, *Chem. Eur. J.*, 2005, **11**, 4219–4226.

- 42 C. Creutz and M. H. Chou, Rapid transfer of hydride ion from a ruthenium complex to C1 species in water, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2007, **129**, 10108–10109.
- 43 D. E. Berning, B. C. Noll and D. L. DuBois, Relative Hydride, Proton, and Hydrogen Atom Transfer Abilities of [HM(diphosphine)<sub>2</sub>]PF<sub>6</sub> Complexes (M = Pt, Ni), *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1999, **121**, 11432–11447.
- 44 N. Sarker and J. W. Bruno, Thermodynamic and Kinetic Studies of Hydride Transfer for a Series of Molybdenum and Tungsten Hydrides, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1999, **121**, 2174–2180.
- 45 Y. Matsubara, F. Etsuko, M. D. Doherty, J. T. Muckerman and C. Creutz, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2012, **134**, 15743–15757.
- 46 S. Ilic, U. P. Kadel, Y. Basdogan, J. A. Keith and K. D. Glusac, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2018, 140, 4569–4579.
- 47 W. W. Ellis, J. W. Raebiger, C. J. Curtis, J. W. Bruno and D. L. DuBois, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2004, **126**, 2738–2743.
- 48 T.-Y. Cheng, B. S. Brunschwig and R. M. Bullock, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1998, **120**, 13121–13137.
- 49 T. M. Bass, C. R. Carr, T. J. Sherbow, J. C. Fettinger and L. A. Berben, Syntheses of Square Planar Gallium Complexes and a Proton NMR Correlation Probing Metalloaromaticity, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2020, 59, 13517–13523.
- 50 E. Radcliffe, J. J. Dunsford, J. Cid, V. Fasano and M. J. Ingleson, N-Heterocycle-Ligated Borocations as Highly Tunable Carbon Lewis Acids, *Organometallics*, 2017, 36, 4952–4960.