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Z. Ali
C. Filsfils
K. Talaulikar
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Siva Sivabalan
Ciena Corporation
M. Horneffer
Deutsche Telekom
R. Raszuk
NTT Network Innovations
S. Litkowski
Orange Business Services
D. Voyer
R. Morton
Bell Canada
G. Dawra
LinkedIn

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Traffic Accounting in Segment Routing Networks
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Abstract

Capacity planning is the continuous art of forecasting traffic load and failures to evolve the network topology, its capacity, and its routing to meet a defined Service-Level Agreement (SLA). This document takes a holistic view of network capacity planning and identifies the role of traffic accounting in network operation and capacity planning, without creating any additional states in the SR fabric.

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1 Introduction

Capacity planning is the continuous art of forecasting traffic load and failures to evolve the network topology, its capacity, and its routing to meet a defined Service-Level Agreement (SLA).

This document takes a holistic view of traffic accounting and its role in operation and capacity planning in Segment Routing (SR) networks.

One of the main architecture principles of Segment Routing (SR) is that it maintains per-flow states only at the ingress nodes

to the SR domain. The approach taken in this document respects the architecture principles of SR, i.e., this draft does not create any additional control and data plane states at the ingress, transit or egress node for traffic accounting. Only the ingress node of an SR policy maintains per-flow counters for traffic accounting, which are also needed for other use-cases like billing.

The Traffic Matrix (TM) is one of the main components of the holistic approach to traffic accounting taken in this document. A network's traffic matrix is the volume of aggregated traffic flows that enter, traverse and leave an arbitrarily defined boundary in the network over a given time interval. The TM border defines the arbitrary boundary nodes of a contiguous portion of the network across which service providers wish to measure traffic flows. The TM border defined for traffic matrix collection does not have to be at the edge of the network, e.g., it can also be placed at the aggregation layer. Knowledge of the traffic matrix is essential to efficient and effective planning, design, engineering, and operation of any IP or MPLS network.

[I-D.draft-ietf-spring-segment-routing-policy] defines the traffic matrix counters for accounting at the router. This draft describes how these counters simplify traffic matrix collection process. [I-D.draft-ietf-spring-segment-routing-policy] also specifies policy, prefix-SID and interface counters for accounting in an SR network. This document along with the traffic counters defined in [I-D.draft-filsfils-spring-segment-routing-policy] constitute the holistic view of traffic accounting in an SR network.

This document assumes that the routers export the traffic counters defined in [I-D.draft-filsfils-spring-segment-routing-policy] to an external controller. It is also assumed that the controller also collects the following information in order to get the visibility required for traffic accounting:

- Network topology information indicates all the nodes and their inter-connecting links (e.g. via BGP-LS [RFC7752]).
- SR Policies instantiated at various node and their BSID (e.g. using PCEP as in RFC8231 or BGP-LS as in draft-ietf-idr-te-lsp-distribution).
- Aggregate traffic counters and statistics for links that include link utilization, per TC statistics, drop counters, etc.
- IPFIX data and the flow accounting information derived from it from an IPFIX collector.

The methods for collection of this information by the controller is beyond the scope of the document.

2 SR Traffic Counters

[I-D.draft-ietf-spring-segment-routing-policy] specifies SR counters that form building blocks on accounting in SR networks. Listing all counters in this document is not the goal of this draft. Some of those counters are outlined below:

- Per-prefix SID egress traffic counter (PSID.E)

For a remote prefix SID M, this counter accounts for the aggregate traffic forwarded towards M.

- Per-prefix SID per-TC egress traffic counter (PSID.E.TC)

This counter provides per Traffic Class (TC) breakdown of PSID.E.

- Per-SR Policy Aggregate traffic counter (POL)

This counter accounts for both labelled and unlabeled traffic steered on an SR policy (P). This counter is only maintained by the head-end node.

Traffic matrix counters are outlined in the traffic matrix section.

3 SR Traffic Matrix (TM)

A traffic matrix T(N, M) is the amount of traffic entering the network at node N and leaving the network at node M, where N and M are border nodes at an arbitrarily defined boundary in the network. The TM border defines the arbitrary boundary nodes of a contiguous portion of the network across which service providers wish to measure traffic flows. The traffic matrix (also called demand matrix) contains all the demands crossing the TM border. It has as many rows as ingress edge nodes and as many columns as egress edge nodes at the TM border. The demand D(N, M) is the cell of the matrix at row N and column M.

3.1 TM Border

The service provider needs to establish Traffic Matrix (TM) border to collect traffic matrix. The TM border defines the boundary nodes of a contiguous portion of the network across

which the service provider wishes to measure traffic flows. The TM border divides the network into two parts:

- Internal part: a contiguous part of the network that is located within the TM border.
- External part: anything outside of the TM border

The TM border cuts through nodes, resulting in two types of interfaces: internal and external interfaces. Interfaces are internal if they are located inside the TM border, they are external if they are found outside the TM border.

How a node marks it interfaces as external or internal is an implementation matter and beyond the scope of this document.

3.1 Choosing TM Border

An operator can choose where the TM border is located. Typically, this will be at the edge of the network, but it can also be placed at the aggregation layer. Or an operator can use multiple TM borders for each of their network domains, with each TM border cutting through different nodes; different TM borders cannot cut through the same nodes.

3.2 Deriving Demand Matrix

The goal is to measure the volume of traffic that enters a TM border node n through an external interface and leaves through an external interface of another TM border node m. This traffic volume yields the traffic matrix entry $T_{n,m}$. Measuring this for every pair of TM border nodes (n,m) results in the complete traffic matrix.

Service providers use various techniques to compute traffic matrix, including a combination of collecting link utilization, gathering IPFIX data, collect MPLS forwarding statistics, etc. A service provider may also use traffic matrix counters defined in [I-D.draft-ietf-spring-segment-routing-policy] for this purpose. The usefulness and applicability of the Traffic Matrix do not depend on the TM collection mechanism.

3.1 Traffic Matrix Counters

Traffic Matrix counters are defined in [I-D.draft-filsfils-spring-segment-routing-policy]. The TM counters are summarized in the following for completeness.

When Node N receives a packet, N maintains the following counters.

- Per-Prefix SID Traffic Matrix counter (PSID.E.TM)

For a given remote prefix SID M, this counter accounts for all the traffic received on any external interfaces and forwarded towards M.

- Per-Prefix, Per TC SID Traffic Matrix counter (PSID.E.TM.TC)

This counter provides per Traffic Class (TC) breakdown of PSID.E.TM.

4 Internet Protocol Flow Information Export (IPFIX)

Internet Protocol Flow Information Export (IPFIX) [RFC 7011]-[RFC7015] is a standard of export for Internet Protocol flow information. IPFIX is extensively deployed and used by network management systems to facilitate services such as measurement, security, accounting and billing. IPFIX also plays a vital role in traffic accounting in SR network. For example, IPFIX can be used for traffic accounting on an SR policy, without requiring any change to the SR-MPLS or IPFIX protocols.

5 Segment Routing Traffic Accounting

The SR counters, IPFIX data, Traffic Matrix, network topology information, node, and link statistics, SR policies configuration and various SR counters described in [I-D.draft-ietf-spring-segment-routing-policy], etc. constitute components of SR traffic accounting. This section describes some potential use of this information, but other mechanisms also exists.

One of the possible uses is centered around the traffic matrix. An external controller collects the traffic counters, including the traffic matrix, defined in [I-D.draft-filsfils-spring-segment-routing-policy] from the routers. Using the Traffic Matrix TM(N, M), the controller knows the exact traffic is entering node N and leaving node M, where node N and M are edge node on an arbitrary TM border. The controller also collects network topology and SR policies configuration from the network.

Using this information, the controller runs local path calculation algorithm to map these demands onto the individual SR paths. This enables a controller to determine the path that would be taken through the network (including ECMP paths) for any prefix at any node. Specifically, the controller starts with distributing the TM(N, M) equally among all ECMP from node N to node M. By repeating the process for all entry and exit nodes in the network, the controller predicts how the demands are distributed among SR paths in the network. The equal distribution of the traffic demand assumption is validated by correlating the projected load with the link and node statistics and other traffic counters described in [I-D.draft-filsfils-spring-segment-routing-policy]. Specifically, the various SR counters described in [I-D.draft-filsfils-spring-segment-routing-policy] provide the view of each segment's ingress and egress statistics at every node and link in the network, which is further supplemented by SR Policies' statistics that are available at all head-end nodes. The uses this information to adjust the predicted load, accordingly. How such adjustments are performed is beyond the scope of this document. The predicted traffic mapping to the individual SR path may be used for serval purposes. That includes simulating what-if scenarios, develop contingency and maintenance plans, manage network latency and to anticipate and prevent congestion, etc. For example, if there is congestion on the link between two nodes, the controller can identify the SR path causing the congestion and how to re-route it to relieve it.

Another possible use is built around the IPFIX data. IPFIX can be used for traffic account on an SR policy, without requiring any change to the SR-MPLS or IPFIX protocols. It provides a more granular visibility of network flows (including SR Policy flows) at any point in the network that can be correlated. For example, IPFIX may be enabled on the nodes and links at the traffic matrix border nodes to analyze the flows entering and leaving a specific network region. Additionally, it can be also enabled at any node or a specific link within the network for analyzing flows through it either on demand or continuously basis. IPFIX can also be enabled on the head-end nodes and endpoints of SR Policies in the network to analyze flows steered through various policies. When traffic is steered on an SR policy, the steering is based on a match of the fields of the incoming packet. A controller can replicate the matching criteria to account for the traffic received at the egress for the given SR policy. The policy counters, other traffic counters defined in [I-D.draft-ietf-spring-segment-routing-policy], and information of packet loss over policy can further supplement the IPFIX based

accounting for measuring, accounting, and billing on per policy basis. Since IPFIX sampling also includes the MPLS label stack on the packet and the underlying payload, the traffic flows for a specific SR policy can also be determined at any intermediate link or node in the network, if necessary.

Link level statistics information, derived using the ingress and egress counters (including the QoS counters on a per TC basis), provides the view of link utilization including for a specific class of service at any point. This helps detect congestion for the link as a whole or for specific class of service.

In summary, a controller can use the holistic view of traffic accounting provided in this document to predicted traffic mapping to the individual SR paths. The aggregate demands on the network and their paths can be determined and correlated with link utilization to identify the flows causing congestion for specific links. Further visibility into all the flows on a link can be achieved using the SR counters and supplemented by IPIX data.

6 Security Considerations

This document does not define any new protocol extensions and does not impose any additional security challenges.

7 IANA Considerations

This document does not define any new protocol or any extension to an existing protocol.

8 References

8.1 Normative References

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10 Contributors

Francois Clad
Cisco Systems, Inc.
fclad@cisco.com

Faisal Iqbal
Cisco Systems, Inc.
faiqbal@cisco.com

Authors' Addresses

Zafar Ali
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Email: zali@cisco.com

Clarence Filsfils
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Email: cfilsfil@cisco.com

Ketan Talaulikar
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Email: kketant.ietf@gmail.com

Siva Sivabalan
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Email: msiva@cisco.com

Martin Horneffer
Deutsche Telekom
Email: martin.horneffer@telekom.de

Robert Raszuk
Bloomberg LP
Email: robert@raszuk.net

Stephane Litkowski
Orange Business Services
Email: stephane.litkowski@orange.com

Daniel Voyer
Bell Canada
Email: daniel.voyer@bell.ca

Rick Morton
Bell Canada
Email: rick.morton@bell.ca
Gaurav Dawra
LinkedIn
Email: gdawra.ietf@gmail.com