

Network Working Group  
Internet Draft  
Expiration Date: August 2006  
File name: [draft-ietf-idr-bgp-multisession-02.txt](#)

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March 2006

Multisession BGP  
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Abstract

This specification augments "Multiprotocol Extensions for BGP-4" [MP-BGP] by proposing a mechanism to allow multiple sessions to be used between a given pair of BGP speakers. Each session is used to transport routes for one or more AFI/SAFI. This provides an alternative to the current [MP-BGP] approach of multiplexing routes for all AFI/SAFI onto a single connection.

Use of this approach is expected to increase the robustness of the BGP protocol as it is used to support more and more diverse AFI/SAFI.

## 1. Introduction

Most BGP [BGP, BGP-DRAFT] implementations only permit a single ESTABLISHED connection to exist with each peer. More precisely, they only permit a single ESTABLISHED connection for any given pair of IP endpoints.

Multiprotocol BGP [[MP-BGP](#)] extends BGP to allow information for multiple NLRI families and sub-families to be transported in BGP. Routes for different families are distinguished by AFI and SAFI. Routes for different families are commonly multiplexed onto a single BGP session.

A common criticism of BGP is the fact that most malformed messages cause the session to be terminated. While this behavior is necessary for protocol correctness, one may observe that the protocol machinery of a given implementation may only be defective with respect to a given AFI/SAFI. Thus, it would be desirable to allow the session related to that family to be terminated while leaving other AFI/SAFI unaffected. As BGP is commonly deployed, this is not possible.

In this specification, we propose a mechanism by which multiple transport sessions may be established between a pair of peers.

Each transport session can be used for one or more AFI/SAFI.

While AFI/SAFI based sessions is one way to group data being exchanged between BGP peers it is also possible to conceive of sessions being based on other characteristics of the BGP data. In this draft we also propose a scheme for creating multiple BGP sessions between BGP peers based on criteria other than AFI/SAFI. However, the definition of specific criteria for grouping exchanged data into sessions is beyond the scope of this proposal. The goal of this proposal is to provide a mechanism for doing that if such criteria is available. For ease of understandability and readability, AFI/SAFI will be used as an illustrative grouping criteria through out the document.

Each session is distinct from a BGP protocol point of view; an error or other event on one session has no implications for any other session. All protocol modifications proposed by this specification take place during the OPEN exchange phase of the session, there are no modifications to the operation of the protocol once a session reaches ESTABLISHED state.

Routers implementing this specification MUST also implement the base criteria that is used to define sessions. For example if AFI/SAFI based sessions are desired then peers implementing this specification MUST also implement [[MP-BGP](#)].

## 2. Definitions

"MP-BGP capability" refers to the capability [[BGP-CAP](#)] with code 1, specified in [[MP-BGP](#)] [section 10](#).

A BGP speaker is said to "support" some feature or functionality (for example, to support this specification, or to support a particular AFI/SAFI) when the BGP implementation supports the feature AND the feature has not been disabled by configuration.

The Session Identifier is a capability or group of capabilities that will be used to differentiate individual BGP sessions between two IP endpoints. When the AFI/SAFI is used to distinguish sessions, the MP-BGP capability is the session identifier.

In this document the MP-BGP capability is used as a Session Identifier for illustrative and explanatory purpose, i.e as the capability whose values differentiates the multiple session between two IP endpoints. MP-BGP and AFI/SAFI can be replaced by any other capability and the values of that capability to setup multiple sessions, without any modifications to the procedures described.

A pair of session identifiers are said to conflict when considering the two groups as two sets, there is an intersection between the groups either in the capabilities or the values in the capabilities, but neither session group is a subset of the other. For example, a pair of AFI/SAFI is said to "conflict" when considering the two groups as two sets, there is an intersection between the groups but neither group is a subset of the other.

### 3. Use of BGP Capability Advertisement

This specification defines the Multisession capability [[BGP-CAP](#)]:

Capability code (1 octet): TBD

Capability length (1 octet): variable

Capability value (1 octet): Flags followed by the list of capabilities that define a session.

```

  0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2
  +---+---+---+---+
  |G|  Reserved  |
  +---+---+---+---+
  |  One or more list of Capability codes (1 octet each)  |
  +---+---+---+---+

```

The most significant bit is defined as the Grouping Support (G) bit. It can be used to indicate support for the ability to group multiple capability values into one session. When set (value 1) this bit indicates that the BGP speaker supports grouping.

The remaining bits are reserved, and should be set to zero by the sender and ignored by the receiver.

Following the reserved bits is a list of one or more Capability codes defined in BGP. The capabilities listed here represent the session identifier for sessions between the BGP speakers.

For example peers wishing to establish sessions based on AFI/SAFI would exchange the Multiprotocol Extensions capability code (1) only in the list. In this case the Multisession capability would have a length of 2 octets.

### 4. New NOTIFICATION Subcodes

[BGP, BGP-DRAFT] [Section 4.5](#) provides a number of subcodes to the NOTIFICATION message, and [Section 6.2](#) elaborates on the use of those subcodes.

This specification introduces two new subcodes:

OPEN Message Error subcodes:

7 - No Supported Capability Value.

8 - Grouping Conflict

9 - Grouping Required

The No Supported Capability Value code MAY be used when an OPEN message contains one or more capabilities, none of which list an capability supported by the local BGP speaker. It is observed that this subcode may be useful for BGP speakers in general, even if they do not (otherwise) implement this specification.

The Grouping Conflict code MAY be used when an OPEN message contains several capabilities whose values conflict with one or more capability groups configured on the local BGP speaker. The Data field SHOULD indicate one of the conflicting locally-configured capability groups, encoded as the appropriate capabilities.

The Grouping Required code MAY be used when a BGP speaker which is configured to require grouping attempts to establish a connection with a BGP speaker which does not support grouping. (While it is true that it might be possible to communicate much the same information using the Unsupported Capability NOTIFICATION message, this more explicit method is felt to be more transparent.)

If MP-BGP capability is used as the session identifier, the notification codes could be used as follows:

The No Supported Capability Value code MAY be used when an OPEN message contains one or more MP-BGP capabilities, none of which list an AFI/SAFI supported by the local BGP speaker. It is observed that this subcode may be useful for MP-BGP speakers in general, even if they do not (otherwise) implement this specification.

The Grouping Conflict code MAY be used when an OPEN message contains

several MP-BGP capabilities whose AFI/SAFI conflict with one or more AFI/SAFI groups configured on the local BGP speaker. The Data field SHOULD indicate one of the conflicting locally-configured AFI/SAFI groups, encoded as MP-BGP capabilities.

The Grouping Required code MAY be used when a BGP speaker which is configured to require grouping attempts to establish a connection with a BGP speaker which does not support grouping. (While it is true that it might be possible to communicate much the same information using the Unsupported Capability NOTIFICATION message, this more explicit method is felt to be more transparent.)

The use of these subcodes is further elaborated below.

## [5.](#) Overview of Operation

The operation section is divided into two main subsections.

The "Using Multisession" sections below discuss the BGP speaker's behavior when the peer does support this specification or is assumed to. The "Backward Compatibility" section discusses the BGP speaker's behavior when the peer does not support this specification, or is assumed not to. Both sections also discuss how to switch to the other mode.

A BGP speaker which supports this specification SHOULD always advertise the Multisession capability, regardless of its peer's known or presumed capability set.

In all cases until a BGP speaker has initiated or accepted one connection from a given peer, it is unknown whether the peer supports this specification or not. Two strategies can be considered for making this initial determination -- either the BGP speaker can initially assume that the peer does not support this specification, and switch modes if it is discovered that it does, or vice-versa. Either approach is acceptable.

Again for illustration, [section 5.0](#) describes the operation from the point of view of the MP-BGP capability and the associated AFI/SAFI values as the session identifier. It can be replaced with any other capability or groups of capabilities without any changes to the behaviour described below.

Note that if a BGP speaker only wishes to support a single AFI/SAFI in its communications with a given peer only one session is needed in any case, and so the "multisession" feature is moot. In such a case the behavior required would be indistinguishable from that given in the "backward compatibility" section below. In the illustrative examples in the following sections, it is generally assumed that a BGP speaker does wish to support multiple AFI/SAFI in its communications with a given peer.

## [5.1.](#) Using Multisession:

The following subsections discuss a BGP speaker's behavior towards a peer which is known or assumed to support this specification.

### [5.1.1.](#) Initiating Connections:

When a BGP speaker attempts BGP communication with its peer, it initiates one connection per group of AFI/SAFI it wishes to support. (This implies that a new local TCP port will be allocated for each new connection.) The OPEN sent on each connection MUST include the Multisession capability and one or more MP-BGP capabilities indicating the AFI/SAFI to be supported on that session. If a non-trivial group of AFI/SAFI (i.e., a group of two or more) is proposed, the BGP speaker MUST also set the G bit of the Multisession capability. Even if a trivial group of AFI/SAFI is proposed, the G bit SHOULD be set if grouping is supported.

Note that any "group of AFI/SAFI" may be a singleton group, i.e. the speaker may wish to use a separate BGP connection for each AFI/SAFI.

If the peer also supports this specification and also wishes to support the AFI/SAFI in question, it will respond with an OPEN which includes the Multisession capability and the AFI/SAFI included in the active speaker's OPEN. If the active speaker's OPEN included a non-trivial group of AFI/SAFI which the peer supports, then the peer's Multisession capability will have the G bit set.

If the peer also supports this specification and wishes to support some but not all of the AFI/SAFI in question, it will respond with an OPEN which includes the Multisession capability and a subset of

AFI/SAFI included in the active speaker's OPEN. The reason for listing only a subset may be because some of the AFI/SAFI are simply not supported, or because the peer does not wish to support the AFI/SAFI as a group (i.e. it may be configured to use a smaller group). In this case, the BGP speaker MAY consider the set of AFI/SAFI which were not included in the peer's OPEN to form a new group, and MAY try to initiate a new session using that group.

If the peer also supports this specification but does not support grouping, and a non-trivial group of AFI/SAFI has been proposed, then it will respond as given in the previous paragraph but with the additional proviso that the G bit will be clear. In this case, the BGP speaker MAY accept the connection as given in the previous paragraph, or it MAY reply with a NOTIFICATION message with ERROR Code OPEN Message Error and Error Subcode Grouping Required, and the connection will be closed.

If the peer does not wish to support the AFI/SAFI in question, it will reply with a NOTIFICATION message with Error Code OPEN Message Error, and Error Subcode No Supported Capability value, and the connection will be closed.

A BGP speaker SHOULD NOT attempt to initiate connections for any AFI/SAFI for which a connection already exists.

If the peer does not support this specification, it will respond with an OPEN which does not include the Multisession capability. In this case the connection SHOULD be terminated, and future connections to the peer should be attempted in the "backward compatibility" mode discussed below.

#### 5.1.2. Accepting Connections:

When processing a connection attempt, the BGP speaker MUST wait until the peer's OPEN message has been received before proceeding. This is at variance with the behavior specified in the finite state machine (FSM) of [[BGP-DRAFT](#)], but is interoperable with that FSM. The FSM changes are specified in a later section.

Once the peer's OPEN message has been received, if it includes the Multisession capability and one or more MP-BGP capabilities indicating a group of AFI/SAFI which the BGP speaker wishes to

support, then the BGP speaker responds with an OPEN message which includes the Multisession capability and one or more MP-BGP capabilities indicating the same AFI/SAFI.

If the OPEN includes the Multisession capability and one or more MP-BGP capabilities indicating a group of AFI/SAFI which conflicts with an AFI/SAFI grouping that has been configured on the BGP speaker then the BGP speaker MAY reply with an OPEN listing a set of AFI/SAFI which intersect with those proposed by the peer (in effect overriding the locally configured set) or it MAY close the connection with a NOTIFICATION message with Error Code OPEN Message Error and Error Subcode Grouping Conflict. The former behavior is suggested as the default if grouping is supported.

If the BGP speaker does not support AFI/SAFI grouping it MAY reply with an OPEN listing one of the AFI/SAFI out of those proposed by the peer. It SHOULD also set the G bit in the Multisession capability to zero.

If the received OPEN message does not include any MP-BGP capability indicating an AFI/SAFI the BGP speaker wishes to support, it should close the connection with a NOTIFICATION message with Error Code OPEN Message Error and Error Subcode No Supported Capability Value.

If the received OPEN message does not include the Multisession capability, then the peer does not support this specification. The connection MAY be continued in the "backward compatibility" mode discussed below, or it MAY be terminated and future connections to the peer attempted in the "backward compatibility" mode.

### 5.1.3. Collision Detection, Graceful Restart:

[BGP, BGP-DRAFT] [Section 6.8](#) (BGP connection collision detection) considers a pair of connections to have collided if the source and destination IP addresses of both connections match. With respect to peers which support this specification, the AFI/SAFI groups associated with the connections must also intersect for them to be considered to have collided.

This consideration also applies to Section 6.2 of [[BGP-GR](#)], when determining whether a new connection should be considered equivalent to a reset of a previous TCP session.

## [5.2](#). Backward Compatibility:

This subsection discusses a BGP speaker's behavior towards a peer which is known or assumed not to support this specification. In short, the BGP speaker's behavior towards such a peer should be as otherwise defined for the BGP protocol, according to [BGP, BGP-DRAFT] and any other extension supported by the BGP speaker.

As previously mentioned, the BGP speaker SHOULD always advertise the Multisession capability in its OPEN message, even towards "backward compatibility" peers.

If, in opening a BGP connection with such a peer, an OPEN which includes the Multisession capability is received from the peer, then the peer SHOULD be changed to "multisession" mode. How this is done depends on whether the BGP speaker has already sent an OPEN or not --

If the BGP speaker has not yet sent an OPEN to the peer, then the connection MAY be continued in the "multisession" mode discussed above, or it MAY be terminated and future connections to the peer attempted in "multisession" mode.

If the BGP speaker has sent an OPEN to the peer, then the current session SHOULD be terminated and future connections to the peer attempted in "multisession" mode.

Use of techniques such as [[BGP-DYN-CAP](#)] for on-the-fly switching of session modes are beyond the scope of this document.

## [6](#). State Machine

As mentioned under "accepting connections" above, this specification modifies the BGP finite state machine, albeit in a backward-compatible fashion.

In addition, note that one state machine is considered to exist for each of the connections which may exist to a given peer. This implies that, for example, any session flap dampening that may exist is performed per session identifier.

The specific state machine modifications to [[BGP-DRAFT](#)] [Section 8.2.2](#) are as follows.

### 6.1. Modifications to Connect State and Active State

In the actions in response to the events Open Delay timer expires [Event 12] and TCP connection succeeds [Event 16 or Event 17], an OPEN is not sent and the state changes to WaitForOpen and not to OpenSent.

### 6.2. Addition of WaitForOpen State, Deletion of OpenSent State

The WaitForOpen state is the same in all respects to OpenSent, except for the action in response to reception of a valid OPEN message [Event 19]. In that event, the local system sends an OPEN message prior to sending a KEEPALIVE message.

The OpenSent state is deleted. All references to OpenSent are replaced by references to WaitForOpen.

## 7. Discussion

Note that many BGP implementations already permit multiple sessions to be used between a given pair of routers, typically by configuring multiple IP addresses on each router and configuring each session to be bound to a different IP address. The principal contribution of this specification is to allow multiple sessions to be created automatically, without additional configuration overhead or address consumption.

The specification supports the simple case of one capability being used as the session identifier and one connection per session identifier value. It also permits connections be established based on the multiple capabilities as a session identifier with multiple values per capability grouped together per connection.

In the context of MP-BGP based connections, which we believe may be the most prevalent use of this specification it permits supporting one AFI/SAFI per connection, and also permits arbitrary grouping of AFI/SAFI onto BGP connections. For such grouping to function pleasingly, both peers participating in a connection need to agree on what AFI/SAFI groupings will be used. If conflicting groupings are configured, the connections may not establish, or more connections may be established than were expected (in the degenerate case, one connection per AFI/SAFI

could be established despite configured groupings). We observe that the potential for misbehavior in the presence of conflicting configuration is not unusual in BGP, and that support for, and configuration of grouping is purely optional.

## 8. Acknowledgements

To be supplied.

## 9. References

### [BGP4]

Rekhter, Y. and T. Li, "A Border Gateway Protocol 4 (BGP-4)," [RFC 1771](#), March 1995.

### [BGP-DRAFT]

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### [MP-BGP]

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### [BGP-GR]

Sangli, S., Y. Rekhter, R. Fernando, J. Scudder, E. Chen, "Graceful Restart Mechanism for BGP," Work in Progress ([draft-ietf-idr-restart-06](#)), January 2003.

### [BGP-CAP]

Chandra, R., J. Scudder, "Capabilities Advertisement with BGP-4," [RFC 2842](#), May 2000.

### [BGP-DYN-CAP]

Chen, E. and S. Sangli, "Dynamic Capability for BGP-4," Work in Progress ([draft-ietf-idr-dynamic-cap-03](#)), December 2002.

## 10. Security Considerations

This document introduces no new security vulnerabilities to BGP or other specifications referenced in this document.

## 11. IANA Considerations

TBD

## 12. Authors' Addresses

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