

Capabilities Advertisement with BGP-4

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2. Abstract

Currently BGP-4 [[BGP-4](#)] requires that when a BGP speaker receives an OPEN message with one or more unrecognized Optional Parameters, the speaker must terminate BGP peering. This complicates introduction of new capabilities in BGP.

This document defines new Optional Parameter, called Capabilities, that is expected to facilitate introduction of new capabilities in BGP by providing graceful capability advertisement without requiring that BGP peering be terminated.

3. Overview of Operations

When a BGP speaker that supports capabilities advertisement sends an OPEN message to its BGP peer, the message may include an Optional Parameter, called Capabilities. The parameter lists the capabilities supported by the speaker.

A BGP speaker determines the capabilities supported by its peer by examining the list of capabilities present in the Capabilities Optional Parameter carried by the OPEN message that the speaker receives from the peer.

A BGP speaker that supports a particular capability may use this capability with its peer after the speaker determines (as described above) that the peer supports this capability.

A BGP speaker determines that its peer doesn't support capabilities advertisement, if in response to an OPEN message that carries the Capabilities Optional Parameter, the speaker receives a NOTIFICATION message with the Error Subcode set to Unsupported Optional Parameter. In this case the speaker should attempt to re-establish a BGP connection with the peer without sending to the peer the Capabilities Optional Parameter.

If a BGP speaker that supports a certain capability determines that its peer doesn't support this capability, the speaker may send a NOTIFICATION message to the peer, and terminate peering. The Error Subcode in the message is set to Unsupported Capability. The message should contain the capability (capabilities) that causes the speaker to send the message. The decision to send the message and terminate peering is local to the speaker. Such peering should not be re-established automatically.

4. Capabilities Optional Parameter (Parameter Type 2):

This is an Optional Parameter that is used by a BGP speaker to convey to its BGP peer the list of capabilities supported by the speaker.

The parameter contains one or more triples <Capability Code, Capability Length, Capability Value>, where each triple is encoded as shown below:


```
+-----+
| Capability Code (1 octet)  |
+-----+
| Capability Length (1 octet) |
+-----+
| Capability Value (variable) |
+-----+
```

The use and meaning of these fields are as follows:

Capability Code:

Capability Code is a one octet field that unambiguously identifies individual capabilities.

Capability Length:

Capability Length is a one octet field that contains the length of the Capability Value field in octets.

Capability Value:

Capability Value is a variable length field that is interpreted according to the value of the Capability Code field.

A particular capability, as identified by its Capability Code, may occur more than once within the Optional Parameter.

5. Extensions to Error Handling

This document defines new Error Subcode - Unsupported Capability. The value of this Subcode is 7. The Data field in the NOTIFICATION message SHOULD list the set of capabilities that cause the speaker to send the message. Each such capability is encoded the same way as it was encoded in the received OPEN message.

6. IANA Considerations

[Section 4](#) defines a Capability Optional Parameter along with an Capability Code field. IANA is expected to create and maintain the registry for Capability Code values. Capability Code value 0 is reserved. Capability Code values 1 through 63 are to be assigned by IANA using the "IETF Consensus" policy defined in [RFC2434](#). Capability Code values 64 through 127 are to be assigned by IANA, using the "First Come First Served" policy defined in [RFC2434](#). Capability Code values 128 through 255 are for "Private Use" as defined in [RFC2434](#).

7. Security Considerations

This extension to BGP does not change the underlying security issues inherent in the existing BGP [[Heffernan](#)].

8. Acknowledgements

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9. References

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

[Heffernan] Heffernan, A., "Protection of BGP Sessions via the TCP MD5 Signature Option", [RFC2385](#), August 1998.

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