

INTERNET-DRAFT

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IPv6 Performance and Diagnostic Metrics (PDM) Destination Option  
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Abstract

To assess performance problems, measurements based on optional sequence numbers and timing may be embedded in each packet. Such measurements may be interpreted in real-time or after the fact. An implementation of the existing IPv6 Destination Options extension header, the Performance and Diagnostic Metrics (PDM) Destination Options extension header as well as the field limits, calculations, and usage of the PDM in measurement are included in this document.

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## [1](#) Background

To assess performance problems, measurements based on optional sequence numbers and timing may be embedded in each packet. Such measurements may be interpreted in real-time or after the fact.

As defined in [RFC2460](#) [[RFC2460](#)], destination options are carried by the IPv6 Destination Options extension header. Destination options include optional information that need be examined only by the IPv6 node given as the destination address in the IPv6 header, not by routers or other "middle boxes". This document specifies a new destination option, the Performance and Diagnostic Metrics (PDM) destination option. This document specifies the layout, field limits, calculations, and usage of the PDM in measurement.

### [1.1](#) Terminology

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC 2119](#) [[RFC2119](#)].

### [1.2](#) End User Quality of Service (QoS)

The timing values in the PDM embedded in the packet will be used to estimate QoS as experienced by an end user device.

For many applications, the key user performance indicator is response time. When the end user is an individual, he is generally indifferent to what is happening along the network; what he really cares about is how long it takes to get a response back. But this is not just a matter of individuals' personal convenience. In many cases, rapid response is critical to the business being conducted.

When the end user is a device (e.g. with the Internet of Things), what matters is the speed with which requested data can be transferred -- specifically, whether the requested data can be transferred in time to accomplish the desired actions. This can be important when the relevant external conditions are subject to rapid change.

Low, reliable and acceptable responses times are not just "nice to have". On many networks, the impact can be financial hardship or endanger human life. In some cities, the emergency police contact system operates over IP, law enforcement uses TCP/IP networks, transactions on our stock exchanges are settled using IP networks.

The critical nature of such activities to our daily lives and financial well-being demand a simple solution to support response time measurements.

### [1.3](#) Need for a Packet Sequence Number

While performing network diagnostics of an end-to-end connection, it often becomes necessary to isolate the factors along the network path responsible for problems. Diagnostic data may be collected at multiple places along the path (if possible), or at the source and destination. Then, in post-collection processing, the diagnostic data corresponding to each packet at different observation points must be matched for proper measurements. A sequence number in each packet provides sufficient basis for the matching process. If need be, the timing fields may be used along with the sequence number to ensure uniqueness.

This method of data collection along the path is of special use to determine where packet loss or packet corruption is happening.

The packet sequence number needs to be unique in the context of the session (5-tuple). See [section 2](#) for a definition of 5-tuple.

#### 1.4 Rationale for defined solution

The current IPv6 specification does not provide timing nor a similar field in the IPv6 main header or in any extension header. So, we define the IPv6 Performance and Diagnostic Metrics destination option (PDM).

Advantages include:

1. Real measure of actual transactions.
2. Independence from transport layer protocols.
3. Ability to span organizational boundaries with consistent instrumentation
4. No time synchronization needed between session partners
5. Ability to handle all transport protocols (TCP, UDP, SCTP, etc) in a uniform way

The PDM provides the ability to quickly determine if the (latency) problem is in the network or in the server (application). More intermediate measurements may be needed if the host or network discrimination is not sufficient. At the client, TCP/IP stack time vs. applications time may still need to be broken out by client software.

#### 1.5 PDM Works in Collaboration with Other Headers

The purpose of the PDM is not to supplant all the variables present in all other headers but to provide data which is not available or very difficult to get. The way PDM would be used is by a technician (or tool) looking at a packet capture. Within the packet capture, they would have available to them the layer 2 header, IP header (v6 or v4), TCP, UCP, ICMP, SCTP or other headers. All information would be looked at together to make sense of the packet flow. The technician or processing tool could analyze, report or ignore the data from PDM, as necessary.

For an example of how PDM can help with TCP retransmit problems, please look at [section 8](#).

## [1.6](#) IPv6 Transition Technologies

In the path to full implementation of IPv6, transition technologies such as translation or tunneling may be employed. The PDM header is not expected to work in such scenarios. It is likely that an IPv6 packet containing PDM will be dropped if using IPv6 transition technologies.

## [2](#) Measurement Information Derived from PDM

Each packet contains information about the sender and receiver. In IP protocol, the identifying information is called a "5-tuple".

The 5-tuple consists of:

SADDR : IP address of the sender  
SPORT : Port for sender  
DADDR : IP address of the destination  
DPORT : Port for destination  
PROTC : Protocol for upper layer (ex. TCP, UDP, ICMP, etc.)

The PDM contains the following base fields:

PSNTP : Packet Sequence Number This Packet  
PSNLR : Packet Sequence Number Last Received  
DELTATLR : Delta Time Last Received  
DELTATLS : Delta Time Last Sent

Other fields for scaling and time base are also in the PDM and will be described in [section 3](#).

This information, combined with the 5-tuple, allows the measurement of the following metrics:

1. Round-trip delay
2. Server delay

### [2.1](#) Round-Trip Delay

Round-trip \*Network\* delay is the delay for packet transfer from a source host to a destination host and then back to the source host. This measurement has been defined, and the advantages and disadvantages discussed in "A Round-trip Delay Metric for IPPM" [[RFC2681](#)].

## [2.2](#) Server Delay

Server delay is the interval between when a packet is received by a device and the first corresponding packet is sent back in response. This may be "Server Processing Time". It may also be a delay caused by acknowledgements. Server processing time includes the time taken by the combination of the stack and application to return the response. The stack delay may be related to network performance. If this aggregate time is seen as a problem, and there is a need to make a clear distinction between application processing time and stack delay, including that caused by the network, then more client based measurements are needed.

## [3](#) Performance and Diagnostic Metrics Destination Option Layout

### [3.1](#) Destination Options Header

The IPv6 Destination Options Header is used to carry optional information that needs to be examined only by a packet's destination node(s). The Destination Options Header is identified by a Next Header value of 60 in the immediately preceding header and is defined in [RFC2460](#) [[RFC2460](#)]. The IPv6 Performance and Diagnostic Metrics Destination Option (PDM) is an implementation of the Destination Options Header. The PDM does not require time synchronization.

### [3.2](#) Performance and Diagnostic Metrics Destination Option

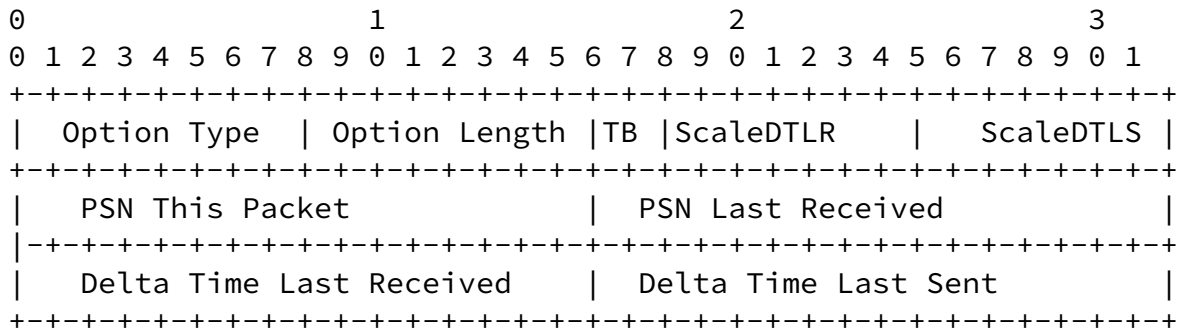
The IPv6 Performance and Diagnostic Metrics Destination Option (PDM) contains the following fields:

TIMEBASE : Base timer unit  
SCALEDTLR: Scale for Delta Time Last Received  
SCALEDTLS: Scale for Delta Time Last Sent  
PSNTP : Packet Sequence Number This Packet



DELTATLR : Delta Time Last Received  
 DELTATLS : Delta Time Last Sent

The PDM destination option is encoded in type-length-value (TLV) format as follows:



Option Type

TBD = 0xXX (TBD) [To be assigned by IANA] [[RFC2780](#)]

Option Length

8-bit unsigned integer. Length of the option, in octets, excluding the Option Type and Option Length fields. This field MUST be set to 16.

Time Base

2-bit unsigned integer. It will indicate the lowest granularity possible for this device. That is, for a value of 00 in the Time Base field, a value of 1 in the DELTA fields indicates 1 microsecond.

This field is being included so that a device may choose the granularity which most suits its timer ticks. That is, so that it does not have to do more work than needed to convert values required for the PDM.

The possible values of Time Base are as follows:

- 00 - milliseconds
- 01 - microseconds
- 10 - nanoseconds
- 11 - picoseconds

#### Scale Delta Time Last Received (SCALEDTLR)

7-bit signed integer. This is the scaling value for the Delta Time Last Received (DELTATLR) field. The possible values are from -128 to +127. See [Section 4](#) for further discussion on Timing Considerations and formatting of the scaling values.

#### Scale Delta Time Last Sent (SCALEDTLS)

7-bit signed integer. This is the scaling value for the Delta Time Last Sent (DELTATLS) field. The possible values are from -128 to +127.

#### Packet Sequence Number This Packet (PSNTP)

16-bit unsigned integer. This field will wrap. It is intended for use while analyzing packet traces.

Initialized at a random number and incremented monotonically for each packet of the session flow of the 5-tuple. The 5-tuple consists of the source and destination IP addresses, the source and destination ports, and the upper layer protocol (ex. TCP, ICMP, etc). The random number initialization is intended to make it harder to spoof and insert such packets.

Operating systems MUST implement a separate packet sequence number counter per 5-tuple. Operating systems MUST NOT implement a single counter for all connections.

#### Packet Sequence Number Last Received (PSNLR)

16-bit unsigned integer. This is the PSNTP of the packet last received on the 5-tuple.

#### Delta Time Last Received (DELTATLR)

A 16-bit unsigned integer field. The value is set according to the scale in SCALEDTLR.

Delta Time Last Received = (Send time packet 2 - Receive time packet 1)

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#### Delta Time Last Sent (DELTATLS)

A 16-bit unsigned integer field. The value is set according to the scale in SCALEDTLS.

Delta Time Last Sent = (Receive time packet 2 - Send time packet 1)

#### Option Type

The two highest-order bits of the Option Type field are encoded to indicate specific processing of the option; for the PDM destination option, these two bits **MUST** be set to 00. This indicates the following processing requirements:

00 - skip over this option and continue processing the header.

[RFC2460](#) [[RFC2460](#)] defines other values for the Option Type field. These **MUST NOT** be used in the PDM.

In keeping with [RFC2460](#) [[RFC2460](#)], the third-highest-order bit of the Option Type specifies whether or not the Option Data of that option can change en-route to the packet's final destination.

In the PDM, the value of the third-highest-order bit **MUST** be 0. The possible values are as follows:

0 - Option Data does not change en-route

1 - Option Data may change en-route

The three high-order bits described above are to be treated as part of the Option Type, not independent of the Option Type. That is, a particular option is identified by a full 8-bit Option Type, not just the low-order 5 bits of an Option Type.

### [3.3](#) Header Placement

The PDM destination option **MUST** be placed as follows:

- Before the upper-layer header or the ESP header.

This follows the order defined in [RFC2460](#) [[RFC2460](#)]

IPv6 header

Hop-by-Hop Options header

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Destination Options header <-----

Routing header

Fragment header

Authentication header

Encapsulating Security Payload header

Destination Options header <-----

upper-layer header

Note that there is a choice of where to place the Destination Options header. If using ESP mode, please see [section 3.4](#) of this document for placement of the PDM Destination Options header.

For each IPv6 packet header, the PDM MUST NOT appear more than once. However, an encapsulated packet MAY contain a separate PDM associated with each encapsulated IPv6 header.

### [3.4](#) Header Placement Using IPsec ESP Mode

IP Encapsulating Security Payload (ESP) is defined in [[RFC4303](#)] and is widely used. [Section 3.1.1 of \[RFC4303\]](#) discusses placement of Destination Options Headers. Below is the diagram from [[RFC4303](#)] discussing placement. PDM MUST be placed before the ESP header in order to work. If placed before the ESP header, the PDM header will flow in the clear over the network thus allowing gathering of performance and diagnostic data without sacrificing security.

## BEFORE APPLYING ESP

```
-----  
IPv6 |           | ext hdrs |           |  
    | orig IP hdr | if present | TCP | Data |  
-----
```

## AFTER APPLYING ESP

```
-----  
IPv6 | orig | hop-by-hop, dest*, | | dest | | | ESP | ESP |  
    | IP hdr | routing, fragment. | ESP | opt* | TCP | Data | Trailer | ICV |  
-----  
                                     |<--- encryption ---->|  
                                     |<----- integrity ----->|
```

\* = if present, could be before ESP, after ESP, or both

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### [3.5](#) Implementation Considerations

The PDM destination options extension header SHOULD be turned on by each stack on a host node. It MAY also be turned on only in case of diagnostics needed for problem resolution.

### [3.6](#) Dynamic Configuration Options

If implemented, each operating system MUST have a default configuration parameter, e.g. `diag_header_sys_default_value=yes/no`. The operating system MAY also have a dynamic configuration option to change the configuration setting as needed.

If the PDM destination options extension header is used, then it MAY be turned on for all packets flowing through the host, applied to an upper-layer protocol (TCP, UDP, SCTP, etc), a local port, or IP address only. These are at the discretion of the implementation.

As with all other destination options extension headers, the PDM is for destination nodes only. As specified above, intermediate devices MUST neither set nor modify this field.

### [3.6](#) 5-tuple Aging

Within the operating system, metrics must be kept on a 5-tuple basis.

The 5-tuple is:

SADDR : IP address of the sender SPORT : Port for sender DADDR : IP address of the destination DPORT : Port for destination PROTC : Protocol for upper layer (ex. TCP, UDP, ICMP)

The question comes of when to stop keeping data or restarting the numbering for a 5-tuple. For example, in the case of TCP, at some point, the connection will terminate. Keeping data in control blocks forever, will have unfortunate consequences for the operating system.

So, the recommendation is to use a known aging parameter such as Max Segment Lifetime (MSL) as defined in Transmission Control Protocol [[RFC0793](#)] to reuse or drop the control block. The choice of aging parameter is left up to the implementation.

#### [4](#) Considerations of Timing Representation

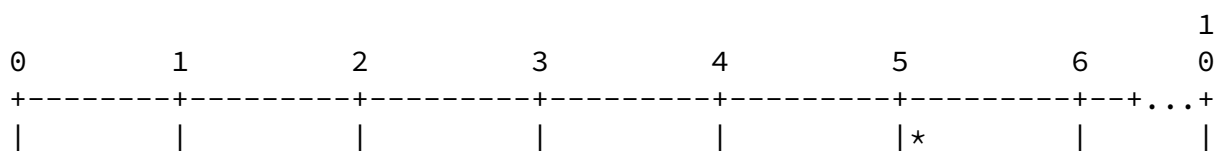
##### [4.1](#) Encoding the Delta-Time Values

This section makes reference to and expands on the document "Encoding of Time Intervals for the TCP Timestamp Option" [[TRAM-TCPM](#)].

##### [4.2](#) Timer registers are different on different hardware

One of the problems with timestamp recording is the variety of hardware that generates the time value to be used. Different CPUs track the time in registers of different sizes, and the most-frequently-iterated bit could be the first on the left or the first on the right. In order to generate some examples here it is necessary to indicate the type of timer register being used.

As described in the "IBM z/Architecture Principles of Operation" [[IBM-POPS](#)], the Time-Of-Day clock in a zSeries CPU is a 104-bit register, where bit 51 is incremented approximately every microsecond:



```

+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+...+
^                                     ^                                     ^
0                                     51 = 1 usec                       103

```

To represent these values concisely a hexadecimal representation will be used, where each digit represents 4 binary bits. Thus:

```

0000 0000 0000 0001 = 1 timer unit (2**(-12) usec, or about 244 psec)
0000 0000 0000 1000 = 1 microsecond
0000 0000 003E 8000 = 1 millisecond
0000 0000 F424 0000 = 1 second
0000 0039 3870 0000 = 1 minute
0000 0D69 3A40 0000 = 1 hour
0001 41DD 7600 0000 = 1 day

```

Note that only the first 64 bits of the register are commonly represented, as that represents a count of timer units on this hardware. Commonly the first 52 bits are all that are displayed, as that represents a count of microseconds.

### [4.3](#) Timer Units on Other Systems

This encoding method works the same with other hardware clock formats. The method uses a microsecond as the basic value and allows for large time differentials.

### [4.4](#) Time Base

This specification allows for the fact that different CPU TOD clocks use different binary points. For some clocks, a value of 1 could indicate 1 microsecond, whereas other clocks could use the value 1 to indicate 1 millisecond. In the former case, the binary digits to the right of that binary point measure  $2^{(-n)}$  microseconds, and in the latter case,  $2^{(-n)}$  milliseconds.

The Time Base allows us to ensure we have a common reference, at the very least, common knowledge of what the binary point is for the

transmitted values.

We define a base unit for the time. This is a 2-bit integer indicating the lowest granularity possible for this device. That is, for a value of 00 in the Time Base field, a value of 1 in the DELTA fields indicates 1 picosecond.

The possible values of Time Base are as follows:

- 00 - milliseconds
- 01 - microseconds
- 10 - nanoseconds
- 11 - picoseconds

Time base is not necessarily equivalent to length of one timer tick. That is, on many, if not all, systems, the timer tick value will not be in complete units of nanoseconds, milliseconds, etc. For example, on an IBM zSeries machine, one timer tick (or clock unit) is 2 to the -12th microseconds.

Therefore, some amount of conversion may be needed to approximate Time Base units.

#### [4.5](#) Timer-value scaling

As discussed in [\[TRAM-TCPM\]](#) we define storing not an entire time-interval value, but just the most significant bits of that value, along with a scaling factor to indicate the magnitude of the time-interval value. In our case, we will use the high-order 16 bits. The scaling value will be the number of bits in the timer register to the right of the 16th significant bit. That is, if the timer register contains this binary value:

```
1110100011010100101001010001000000000000
<-16 bits      -><-24 bits      ->
```

then, the values stored would be 1110 1000 1101 0100 in binary (E8D4

hexadecimal) for the time value and 24 for the scaling value. Note that the displayed value is the binary equivalent of 1 second expressed in picoseconds.





```

          |<Count of zeroes is the Scale value>|
11 1111 1111 1000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 (binary)
3  F   F   8   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0 (hexadecimal)

```

and

```

11 1111 1111 1111 1111 1111 1111 1111 1111 1111 1111 (binary)
3  F   F   F   F   F   F   F   F   F   F   F   F   F   F (hexadecimal)

```

This time value, 3FFFFFFFFF, converts to 50 days, 21 hours, 40 minutes and 46.511103 seconds. A time differential 1 microsecond longer won't fit into 16 bits using this encoding method.

#### [4.7](#) Lack of precision induced by timer value truncation

When the bit values following the first 11 significant bits are truncated, obviously loss of precision in the value. The range of values that will be truncated to the same encoded value is  $2^{*(Scale)-1}$  microseconds.

The smallest time differential value that will be truncated is

```
1000 0000 0000 = 2.048 msec
```

The value

```
1000 0000 0001 = 2.049 msec
```

will be truncated to the same encoded value, which is 400 in hex, with a scale value of 1. With the scale value of 1, the value range is calculated as  $2^{*1} - 1$ , or 1 usec, which you can see is the difference between these minimum and maximum values.

With that in mind, let's look at that table of delta time values again, where the Precision is the range from the smallest value corresponding to this encoded value to the largest:

Delta time	Time value in microseconds	Encoded value	Scale	Precision
1 microsecond	1	1	0	0:00.000000
1 millisecond	38E	38E	0	0:00.000000
1 second	F4240	7A1	9	0:00.000511
1 minute	3938700	727	15	0:00.032767
1 hour	D693A400	6B4	21	0:02.097151
1 day	141DD76000	507	26	1:07.108863
Maximum value	3FFFFFFFFF	7FF	31	35:47.483647

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So, when measuring the delay between transmission of two packets, or between the reception of two packets, any delay shorter than 50 days 21 hours and change can be stored in this encoded fashion within 16 bits. When you encode, for example, a DTN response time delay of 50 days, 21 hours and 40 minutes, you can be assured of accuracy within 35 minutes.

## [5](#) PDM Flow - Simple Client Server

Following is a sample simple flow for the PDM with one packet sent from Host A and one packet received by Host B. The PDM does not require time synchronization between Host A and Host B. The calculations to derive meaningful metrics for network diagnostics are shown below each packet sent or received.

Each packet, in addition to the PDM contains information on the sender and receiver. As discussed before, a 5-tuple consists of:

SADDR : IP address of the sender  
SPORT : Port for sender  
DADDR : IP address of the destination  
DPORT : Port for destination  
PROTC : Protocol for upper layer (ex. TCP, UDP, ICMP)

It should be understood that the packet identification information is in each packet. We will not repeat that in each of the following steps.

### [5.1](#) Step 1

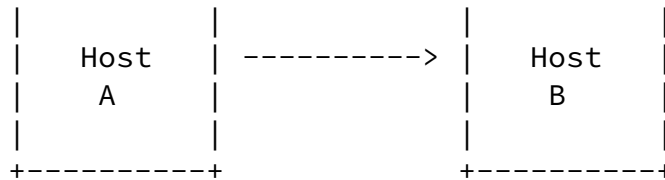
Packet 1 is sent from Host A to Host B. The time for Host A is set initially to 10:00AM.

The time and packet sequence number are saved by the sender internally. The packet sequence number and delta times are sent in the packet.

Packet 1

+-----+

+-----+



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PDM Contents:

```

PSNTP      : Packet Sequence Number This Packet:      25
PSNLR      : Packet Sequence Number Last Received:    -
DELTATLR   : Delta Time Last Received:                -
SCALEDTLR  : Scale of Delta Time Last Received:       0
DELTATLS   : Delta Time Last Sent:                   -
SCALEDTLS  : Scale of Delta Time Last Sent:           0
TIMEBASE   : Granularity of Time:                     00 (Milliseconds)
  
```

Internally, within the sender, Host A, it must keep:

```

Packet Sequence Number of the last packet sent:      25
Time the last packet was sent:                       10:00:00
  
```

Note, the initial PSNTP from Host A starts at a random number. In this case, 25. The time in these examples is shown in seconds for the sake of simplicity.

[5.2](#) Step 2

Packet 1 is received at Host B. Its time is set to one hour later than Host A. In this case, 11:00AM

Internally, within the receiver, Host B, it must note:

```

Packet Sequence Number of the last packet received:  25
Time the last packet was received                    :   11:00:03
  
```

Note, this timestamp is in Host B time. It has nothing whatsoever to do with Host A time. The Packet Sequence Number of the last packet received will become PSNLR which will be sent out in the packet sent

by Host B in the next step. The time last received will be used to calculate the DELTALR value to be sent out in the packet sent by Host B in the next step.

### [5.3](#) Step 3

Packet 2 is sent by Host B to Host A. Note, the initial packet sequence number (PSNTP) from Host B starts at a random number. In this case, 12. Before sending the packet, Host B does a calculation of deltas. Since Host B knows when it is sending the packet, and it knows when it received the previous packet, it can do the following calculation:

Sending time : packet 2 - receive time : packet 1

We will call the result of this calculation: Delta Time Last Received (DELTATLR)

That is:

Delta Time Last Received = (Sending time: packet 2 - receive time: packet 1)

Note, both sending time and receive time are saved internally in Host B. They do not travel in the packet. Only the Delta is in the packet.

Assume that within Host B is the following:

Packet Sequence Number of the last packet received:	25
Time the last packet was received:	11:00:03
Packet Sequence Number of this packet:	12
Time this packet is being sent:	11:00:07

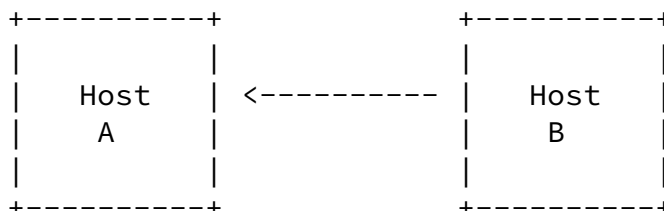
We can now calculate a delta value to be sent out in the packet. DELTATLR becomes:

4 seconds = 11:00:07 - 11:00:03

This is the derived metric: Server Delay. The time and scaling factor must be calculated. Then, this value, along with the packet

sequence numbers will be sent to Host A as follows:

Packet 2



PDM Contents:

```
PSNTP      : Packet Sequence Number This Packet:    12
PSNLR      : Packet Sequence Number Last Received:  25
DELTATLR   : Delta Time Last Received:              3A35 (4 seconds)
SCALEDTLR  : Scale of Delta Time Last Received:     25
DELTATLS   : Delta Time Last Sent:                  -
SCALEDTLS  : Scale of Delta Time Last Sent:         0
TIMEBASE   : Granularity of Time:                   00 (Milliseconds)
```

The metric left to be calculated is the Round-Trip Delay. This will

be calculated by Host A when it receives Packet 2.

#### [5.4](#) Step 4

Packet 2 is received at Host A. Remember, its time is set to one hour earlier than Host B. Internally, it must note:

```
Packet Sequence Number of the last packet received:    12
Time the last packet was received                      :    10:00:12
```

Note, this timestamp is in Host A time. It has nothing whatsoever to do with Host B time.

So, now, Host A can calculate total end-to-end time. That is:

End-to-End Time = Time Last Received - Time Last Sent

For example, packet 25 was sent by Host A at 10:00:00. Packet 12 was received by Host A at 10:00:12 so:

End-to-End time = 10:00:12 - 10:00:00 or 12 (Server and Network RT delay combined). This time may also be called total Overall Round-trip time (which includes Network RTT and Host Response Time).

This derived metric we will call Delta Time Last Sent (DELTA\_TLS)

We can now also calculate round trip delay. The formula is:

Round trip delay = (Delta Time Last Sent - Delta Time Last Received)

Or:

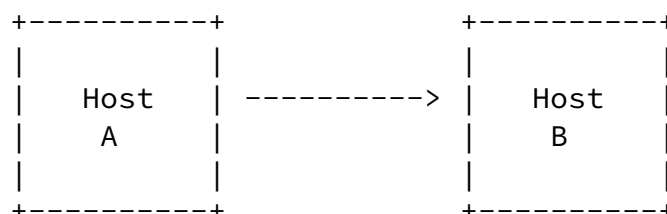
Round trip delay = 12 - 4 or 8

Now, the only problem is that at this point all metrics are in Host A only and not exposed in a packet. To do that, we need a third packet.

Note: this simple example assumes one send and one receive. That is done only for purposes of explaining the function of the PDM. In cases where there are multiple packets returned, one would take the time in the last packet in the sequence. The calculations of such timings and intelligent processing is the function of post-processing of the data.

### [5.5](#) Step 5

Packet 3 is sent from Host A to Host B.



PDM Contents:

```

PSNTP      : Packet Sequence Number This Packet:    26
PSNLR      : Packet Sequence Number Last Received:  12
DELTATLR   : Delta Time Last Received:              0
SCALEDTLS  : Scale of Delta Time Last Received     0
DELTATLS   : Delta Time Last Sent:                  105e (12 seconds)
SCALEDTLR  : Scale of Delta Time Last Received:    26
TIMEBASE   : Granularity of Time:                  00 (Milliseconds)

```

To calculate Two-Way Delay, any packet capture device may look at these packets and do what is necessary.

## 6 Other Flows

What we have discussed so far is a simple flow with one packet sent and one returned. Let's look at how PDM may be useful in other types of flows.

### 6.1 PDM Flow - One Way Traffic

The flow on a particular session may not be a send-receive paradigm. Let us consider some other situations. In the case of a one-way flow, one might see the following:

Packet	Sender	PSN This Packet	PSN Last Recvd	Delta Time Last Recvd	Delta Time Last Sent
1	Server	1	0	0	0
2	Server	2	0	0	5
3	Server	3	0	0	12
4	Server	4	0	0	20

What does this mean and how is it useful?

In a one-way flow, only the Delta Time Last Sent will be seen as used. Recall, Delta Time Last Sent is the difference between the send of one packet from a device and the next. This is a measure of throughput for the sender - according to the sender's point of view. That is, it is a measure of how fast is the application itself (with



stack time included) able to send packets.

How might this be useful? If one is having a performance issue at the client and sees that packet 2, for example, is sent after 5 microseconds from the server but takes 3 minutes to arrive at the destination, then one may safely conclude that there are delays in the path other than at the server which may be causing the delivery issue of that packet. Such delays may include the network links, middle-boxes, etc.

Now, true one-way traffic is quite rare. What people often mean by "one-way" traffic is an application such as FTP where a group of packets (for example, a TCP window size worth) is sent, then the sender waits for acknowledgment. This type of flow would actually fall into the "multiple-send" traffic model.

## [6.2](#) PDM Flow - Multiple Send Traffic

Assume that two packets are sent for each ACK from the server. For example, a TCP flow will do this, per [RFC1122](#) [[RFC1122](#)] Section-4.2.3.

Packet	Sender	PSN This Packet	PSN Last Recvd	Delta Time Last Recvd	Delta Time Last Sent
1	Server	1	0	0	0
2	Server	2	0	0	5
3	Client	1	2	20	0
4	Server	3	1	10	15

How might this be used?

Notice that in packet 3, the client has a value of Delta Time Last received of 20. Recall that Delta Time Last Received is the Send time of packet 3 - receive time of packet 2. So, what does one know now? In this case, Delta Time Last Received is the processing time for the Client to send the next packet.

How to interpret this depends on what is actually being sent. Remember, PDM is not being used in isolation, but to supplement the fields found in other headers. Let's take some examples:

1. Client is sending a standalone TCP ACK. One would find this by

looking at the payload length in the IPv6 header and the TCP Acknowledgement field in the TCP header. So, in this case, the client is taking 20 units to send back the ACK. This may or may not be interesting.

2. Client is sending data with the packet. Again, one would find this by looking at the payload length in the IPv6 header and the TCP Acknowledgement field in the TCP header. So, in this case, the client is taking 20 units to send back data. This may represent "User Think Time". Again, this may or may not be interesting, in isolation. But, if there is a performance problem receiving data at the server, then taken in conjunction with RTT or other packet timing information, this information may be quite interesting.

Of course, one also needs to look at the PSN Last Received field to make sure of the interpretation of this data. That is, to make sure that the Delta Last Received corresponds to the packet of interest.

The benefits of PDM are that we have such information available in a uniform manner for all applications and all protocols without extensive changes required to applications.

### 6.3 PDM Flow - Multiple Send with Errors

Let us now look at a case of how PDM may be able to help in a case of TCP retransmission and add to the information that is sent in the TCP header.

Assume that three packets are sent with each send from the server.

From the server, this is what is seen.

Pkt	Sender	PSN This Pkt	PSN LastRecvd	Delta Time LastRecvd	Delta Time LastSent	TCP SEQ	Data Bytes
1	Server	1	0	0	0	123	100
2	Server	2	0	0	5	223	100
3	Server	3	0	0	5	333	100

The client, however, does not receive all the packets. From the client, this is what is seen for the packets sent from the server.

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Pkt	Sender	PSN This Pkt	PSN LastRecvd	Delta Time LastRecvd	Delta Time LastSent	TCP SEQ	Data Bytes
1	Server	1	0	0	0	123	100
2	Server	3	0	0	5	333	100

Let's assume that the server now retransmits the packet. (Obviously, a duplicate acknowledgment sequence for fast retransmit or a retransmit timeout would occur. To illustrate the point, these packets are being left out.)

So, then if a TCP retransmission is done, then from the client, this is what is seen for the packets sent from the server.

Pkt	Sender	PSN This Pkt	PSN LastRecvd	Delta Time LastRecvd	Delta Time LastSent	TCP SEQ	Data Bytes
1	Server	4	0	0	30	223	100

The server has resent the old packet 2 with TCP sequence number of 223. The retransmitted packet now has a PSN This Packet value of 4. The Delta Last Sent is 30 - the time between sending the packet with PSN of 3 and this current packet.

Let's say that packet 4 is lost again. Then, after some amount of time (RT0) then the packet with TCP sequence number of 223 is resent.

From the client, this is what is seen for the packets sent from the server.

Pkt	Sender	PSN This Pkt	PSN LastRecvd	Delta Time LastRecvd	Delta Time LastSent	TCP SEQ	Data Bytes
1	Server	5	0	0	60	223	100

If now, this packet arrives at the destination, one has a very good idea that packets exist which are being sent from the server as retransmissions and not arriving at the client. This is because the PSN of the resent packet from the server is 5 rather than 4. If we had used TCP sequence number alone, we would never have seen this situation. The TCP sequence number in all situations is 223.

This situation would be experienced by the user of the application (the human being actually sitting somewhere) as a "hangs" or long delay between packets. On large networks, to diagnose problems such as these where packets are lost somewhere on the network, one has to take multiple traces to find out exactly where.

The first thing is to start with doing a trace at the client and the server. So, we can see if the server sent a particular packet and the client received it. If the client did not receive it, then we start tracking back to trace points at the router right after the server and the router right before the client. Did they get these packets which the server has sent? This is a time consuming activity.

With PDM, we can speed up the diagnostic time because we may be able to use only the trace taken at the client to see what the server is sending.

### 7 Potential Overhead Considerations

Questions have been posed as to the potential overhead of PDM. First, PDM is entirely optional. That is, a site may choose to implement PDM or not as they wish. If they are happy with the costs of PDM vs. the benefits, then the choice should be theirs.

Below is a table outlining the potential overhead in terms of additional time to deliver the response to the end user for various assumed RTTs.

Bytes in Packet	RTT	Bytes Per Milli	Bytes in PDM	New RTT	Overhead
1000	1000 milli	1	16	1016.000	16.000 milli
1000	100 milli	10	16	101.600	1.600 milli
1000	10 milli	100	16	10.160	.160 milli
1000	1 milli	1000	16	1.016	.016 milli

Below are some examples of actual RTTs for packets traversing large enterprise networks. The first example is for packets going to multiple business partners.

Bytes in Packet	RTT	Bytes Per Milli	Bytes in PDM	New RTT	Overhead
1000	17 milli	58	16	17.360	.360 milli

The second example is for packets at a large enterprise customer within a data center. Notice that the scale is now in microseconds rather than milliseconds.

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Bytes in Packet	RTT	Bytes Per Micro	Bytes in PDM	New RTT	Overhead
1000	20 micro	50	16	20.320	.320 micro

## [8](#) Security Considerations

PDM does not introduce any new security weakness.

### [8.1](#). SYN Flood and Resource Consumption Attacks

PDM needs to calculate the deltas for time and keep track of the sequence numbers. This means that control blocks must be kept at the end hosts per 5-tuple. Any time a control block is kept, an attacker can try to mis-use the control blocks such that there is a compromise of the end host.

PDM is used only at the end hosts and the control blocks are only kept at the end host and not at routers or middle boxes. Remember, PDM is an implementation of the Destination Option extension header.

A "SYN flood" type of attack succeeds because a TCP SYN packet is small but it causes the end host to start creating a place holder for the session such that quite a bit of control block and other storage is used. This is an asynchronous type of attack in that a small

amount of work by the attacker creates a large amount of work by the resource attacked.

For PDM, the amount of data to be kept is quite small. That is, the control block is quite lightweight. Concerns about SYN Flood and other type of resource consumption attacks (memory, processing power, etc) can be alleviated by having a limit on the size of the control block.

We recommend that implementation of PDM SHOULD have a limit on the size of the control blocks used.

## [8.2](#) Pervasive monitoring

Since PDM passes in the clear, a concern arises as to whether the data can be used to fingerprint the system or somehow obtain information about the contents of the payload.

Let us discuss fingerprinting of the end host first. It is possible that seeing the pattern of deltas or the absolute values could give

some information as to the speed of the end host - that is, if it is a very fast system or an older, slow device. This may be useful to the attacker. However, if the attacker has access to PDM, the attacker also has access to the entire packet and could make such a deduction based merely on the time frames elapsed between packets WITHOUT PDM.

As far as deducing the content of the payload, it appears to us that PDM is quite unhelpful in this regard.

## [8.3](#) PDM as a Covert Channel

PDM provides a set of fields in the packet which could be used to leak data. But, there is no real reason to suspect that PDM would be chosen rather than another part of the payload or another Extension Header.

A firewall or another device could sanity check the fields within the PDM but randomly assigned sequence numbers and delta times might be expected to vary widely. The biggest problem though is how an attacker would get access to PDM in the first place to leak data.

The attacker would have to either compromise the end host or have Man in the Middle (MitM). It is possible that either one could change the fields. But, then the other end host would get sequence numbers and deltas that don't make any sense. Presumably, one is using PDM and doing packet tracing for diagnostic purposes, so the changes would be obvious. It is conceivable that someone could compromise an end host and make it start sending packets with PDM without the knowledge of the host. But, again, the bigger problem is the compromise of the end host. Once that is done, the attacker probably has better ways to leak data.

Having said that, an implementation SHOULD stop using PDM if it gets some number of "nonsensical" sequence numbers.

## 9 IANA Considerations

This draft requests an Option Type assignment in the Destination Options and Hop-by-Hop Options sub-registry of Internet Protocol Version 6 (IPv6) Parameters [ref to RFCs and URL below].

<http://www.iana.org/assignments/ipv6-parameters/ipv6-parameters.xhtml#ipv6-parameters-2>

Hex Value	Binary Value act chg rest	Description	Reference
TBD	TBD	Performance and	[This draft]

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Diagnostic Metrics  
(PDM)

## 10 References

### 10.1 Normative References

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## [10.2](#) Informative References

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## [11](#) Acknowledgments

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