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Authors: B. Decraene    L. Ginsberg    T. Li  
          Orange            Cisco Systems    Juniper Networks, Inc.  
          G. Solignac    M. Karasek      G. Van de Velde  
                          Cisco Systems    Nokia  
          T. Przygienda  
          Juniper

## IS-IS Fast Flooding

### Abstract

Current Link State Protocol Data Unit (PDU) flooding rates are much slower than what modern networks can support. The use of IS-IS at larger scale requires faster flooding rates to achieve desired convergence goals. This document discusses the need for faster flooding, the issues around faster flooding, and some example approaches to achieve faster flooding. It also defines protocol extensions relevant to faster flooding.

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## 1. Introduction

Link state IGPs such as Intermediate-System-to-Intermediate-System (IS-IS) depend upon having consistent Link State Databases (LSDB) on all Intermediate Systems (ISs) in the network in order to provide correct forwarding of data packets. When topology changes occur, new/updated Link State PDUs (LSPs) are propagated network-wide. The speed of propagation is a key contributor to convergence time.

Historically, flooding rates have been conservative - on the order of 10s of LSPs/second. This is the result of guidance in the base specification [[ISO10589](#)] and early deployments when the CPU and interface speeds were much slower and the area scale much smaller than they are today.

As IS-IS is deployed in greater scale both in the number of nodes in an area and in the number of neighbors per node, the impact of the historic flooding rates becomes more significant. Consider the bringup or failure of a node with 1000 neighbors. This will result in a minimum of 1000 LSP updates. At typical LSP flooding rates used today (33 LSPs/second), it would take more than 30 seconds simply to send the updated LSPs to a given neighbor. Depending on the diameter of the network, achieving a consistent LSDB on all nodes in the network could easily take a minute or more.

Increasing the LSP flooding rate therefore becomes an essential element of supporting greater network scale.

Improving the LSP flooding rate is complementary to protocol extensions that reduce LSP flooding traffic by reducing the flooding topology such as Mesh Groups [[RFC2973](#)] or Dynamic Flooding [[I-D.ietf-lsr-dynamic-flooding](#)]. Reduction of the flooding topology does not alter the number of LSPs required to be exchanged between two nodes, so increasing the overall flooding speed is still beneficial when such extensions are in use. It is also possible that the flooding topology can be reduced in ways that prefer the use of neighbors that support improved flooding performance.

## 2. Requirements Language

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in BCP 14 [[RFC2119](#)] [[RFC8174](#)] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

## 3. Historical Behavior

The base specification for IS-IS [[ISO10589](#)] was first published in 1992 and updated in 2002. The update made no changes in regards to suggested timer values. Convergence targets at the time were on the order of seconds and the specified timer values reflect that. Here are some examples:

`minimumLSPGenerationInterval` - This is the minimum time interval between generation of Link State PDUs. A source Intermediate system shall wait at least this long before re-generating one of its own Link State PDUs.

The recommended value is 30 seconds.

`minimumLSPTransmissionInterval` - This is the amount of time an Intermediate system shall wait before further propagating another Link State PDU from the same source system.

The recommended value is 5 seconds.

`partialSNPInterval` - This is the amount of time between periodic action for transmission of Partial Sequence Number PDUs. It shall be less than `minimumLSPTransmissionInterval`.

The recommended value is 2 seconds.

Most relevant to a discussion of the LSP flooding rate is the recommended interval between the transmission of two different LSPs on a given interface.

For broadcast interfaces, [[IS010589](#)] defined:

`minimumBroadcastLSPTransmissionInterval` - the minimum interval between PDU arrivals which can be processed by the slowest Intermediate System on the LAN.

The default value was defined as 33 milliseconds. It is permitted to send multiple LSPs "back-to-back" as a burst, but this was limited to 10 LSPs in a one second period.

Although this value was specific to LAN interfaces, this has commonly been applied by implementations to all interfaces though that was not the original intent of the base specification. In fact Section 12.1.2.4.3 states:

On point-to-point links the peak rate of arrival is limited only by the speed of the data link and the other traffic flowing on that link.

Although modern implementations have not strictly adhered to the 33 millisecond interval, it is commonplace for implementations to limit the flooding rate to the same order of magnitude similar as the 33 ms value.

In the past 20 years, significant work on achieving faster convergence, more specifically sub-second convergence, has resulted in implementations modifying a number of the above timers in order to support faster signaling of topology changes. For example, `minimumLSPGenerationInterval` has been modified to support millisecond intervals, often with a backoff algorithm applied to prevent LSP generation storms in the event of rapid successive oscillations.

However, the flooding rate has not been fundamentally altered.

#### **4. Flooding Parameters TLV**

This document defines a new Type-Length-Value tuple (TLV) called the "Flooding Parameters TLV" that may be included in IS to IS Hellos (IIH) or Partial Sequence Number PDUs (PSNPs). It allows IS-IS implementations to advertise flooding-related parameters and capabilities which may be used by the peer to support faster flooding.

Type: 21

Length: variable, the size in octets of the Value field

Value: One or more sub-TLVs

Several sub-TLVs are defined in this document. The support of any sub-TLV is OPTIONAL.

For a given IS-IS adjacency, the Flooding Parameters TLV does not need to be advertised in each IIH or PSNP. An IS uses the latest received value for each parameter until a new value is advertised by the peer. However, as IIHs and PSNPs are not reliably exchanged, and may never be received, parameters SHOULD be sent even if there is no change in value since the last transmission. For a parameter which has never been advertised, an IS SHOULD use its local default value. That value SHOULD be configurable on a per-node basis and MAY be configurable on a per-interface basis.

##### **4.1. LSP Burst Size sub-TLV**

The LSP Burst Size sub-TLV advertises the maximum number of LSPs that the node can receive without an intervening delay between LSP transmissions.

Type: 1

Length: 4 octets

Value: number of LSPs that can be received back-to-back.

##### **4.2. LSP Transmission Interval sub-TLV**

The LSP Transmission Interval sub-TLV advertises the minimum interval, in micro-seconds, between LSPs arrivals which can be sustained on this receiving interface.

Type: 2

Length: 4 octets

Value: minimum interval, in micro-seconds, between two consecutive LSPs received after LSP Burst Size LSPs have been received

The LSP Transmission Interval is an advertisement of the receiver's sustainable LSP reception rate. This rate may be safely used by a sender which do not support the flow control or congestion algorithm. It may also be used as the minimal safe rate by flow control or congestion algorithms in unexpected cases, e.g., when the receiver is not acknowledging LSPs anymore.

#### 4.3. LSPs Per PSNP sub-TLV

The LSP per PSNP (LPP) sub-TLV advertises the number of received LSPs that triggers the immediate sending of a PSNP to acknowledge them.

Type: 3

Length: 2 octets

Value: number of LSPs acknowledged per PSNP

A node advertising this sub-TLV with a value for LPP MUST send a PSNP once LPP LSPs have been received and need to be acknowledged.

#### 4.4. Flags sub-TLV

The sub-TLV Flags advertises a set of flags.

Type: 4

Length: Indicates the length in octets (1-8) of the Value field. The length SHOULD be the minimum required to send all bits that are set.

Value: List of flags.

```
  0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ...  
+--+--+--+--+--+--+...  
|0|           ...  
+--+--+--+--+--+--+...
```

When the 0-flag (Ordered acknowledgement) is set, the LSPs will be acknowledged in the order they are received: a PSNP acknowledging N LSPs is acknowledging the N oldest LSPs received. The order inside the PSNP is meaningless. If the sender keeps track of the order of LSPs sent, this indication allows a fast detection of the loss of an LSP. This MUST NOT be used to alter the retransmission timer for any LSP. This MAY be used to trigger a congestion signal.

#### 4.5. Partial SNP Interval sub-TLV

The Partial SNP Interval sub-TLV advertises the amount of time in milliseconds between periodic action for transmission of Partial Sequence Number PDUs. This time will trigger the sending of a PSNP even if the number of unacknowledged LSPs received on a given interface does not exceed LPP ([Section 4.3](#)). The time is measured from the reception of the first unacknowledged LSP.

Type: 5

Length: 2 octets

Value: partialSNPInterval in milliseconds

A node advertising this sub-TLV SHOULD send a PSNP at least once per Partial SNP Interval if one or more unacknowledged LSPs have been received on a given interface.

#### 4.6. Receive Window sub-TLV

The Receive Window (RWIN) sub-TLV advertises the maximum number of unacknowledged LSPs that the node can receive.

Type: 6

Length: 2 octets

Value: maximum number of unacknowledged LSPs

#### 4.7. Operation on a LAN interface

On a LAN interface, all LSPs are link-level multicasts. Each LSP sent will be received by all ISs on the LAN and each IS will receive LSPs from all transmitters. In this section, we clarify how the flooding parameters should be interpreted in the context of a LAN.

An LSP receiver on a LAN will communicate its desired flooding parameters using a single Flooding Parameters TLV, which will be received by all LSP transmitters. The flooding parameters sent by the LSP receiver MUST be understood as instructions from the LSP receiver to each LSP transmitter about the desired maximum transmit characteristics of each transmitter. The receiver is aware that there are multiple transmitters that can send LSPs to the receiver LAN interface. The receiver might want to take that into account by advertising more conservative values, e.g., a higher LSP Transmission Interval. When the transmitters receive the LSP Transmission Interval value advertised by an LSP receiver, the transmitters should rate-limit LSPs according to the advertised flooding parameters. They should not apply any further

interpretation to the flooding parameters advertised by the receiver.

A given LSP transmitter will receive multiple flooding parameter advertisements from different receivers that may include different flooding parameter values. A given transmitter SHOULD use the most conservative value on a per-parameter basis. For example, if the transmitter receives multiple LSP Burst Size values, it should use the smallest value.

The Designated Intermediate System (DIS) plays a special role in the operation of flooding on the LAN as it is responsible for responding to PSNPs sent on the LAN circuit which are used to request LSPs that the sender of the PSNP does not have. If the DIS does not support faster flooding, this will impact the maximum flooding speed which could occur on a LAN. Use of LAN priority to prefer a node which supports faster flooding in the DIS election may be useful.

NOTE: The focus of work used to develop the example algorithms discussed later in this document focused on operation over point-to-point interfaces. A full discussion of how best to do faster flooding on a LAN interface is therefore out of scope for this document.

## **5. Performance improvement on the receiver**

This section defines two behaviors that SHOULD be implemented on the receiver.

### **5.1. Rate of LSP Acknowledgments**

On point-to-point networks, PSNPs provide acknowledgments for received LSPs. [[ISO10589](#)] suggests that some delay be used when sending PSNPs. This provides some optimization as multiple LSPs can be acknowledged by a single PSNP.

Faster LSP flooding benefits from a faster feedback loop. This requires a reduction in the delay in sending PSNPs.

For the generation of PSNPs, the receiver SHOULD use a `partialSNPInterval` smaller than the one defined in [[ISO10589](#)]. The choice of this lower value is a local choice. It may depend on the available processing power of the node, the number of adjacencies, and the requirement to synchronize the LSDB more quickly. 200 ms seems to be a reasonable value.

In addition to the timer-based `partialSNPInterval`, the receiver SHOULD keep track of the number of unacknowledged LSPs per circuit and level. When this number exceeds a preset threshold of LSPs Per PSNP (LPP), the receiver SHOULD immediately send a PSNP without



waiting for the PSNP timer to expire. In the case of a burst of LSPs, this allows for more frequent PSNPs, giving faster feedback to the sender. Outside of the burst case, the usual time-based PSNP approach comes into effect.

The smaller the LPP, the faster the feedback to the sender and possibly the higher the rate if the rate is limited by the end to end RTT (link RTT + time to acknowledge). This may result in an increase in the number of PSNPs sent which may increase CPU and IO load on both the sender and receiver. The LPP should be less than or equal to 90 as this is the maximum number of LSPs that can be acknowledged in a PSNP at common MTU sizes, hence waiting longer would not reduce the number of PSNPs sent but would delay the acknowledgements. LPP should not be chosen too high as the congestion control starts with a congestion window of LPP+1. Based on experimental evidence, 15 unacknowledged LSPs is a good value assuming that the Receive Window is at least 30. More frequent PSNPs gives the transmitter more feedback on receiver progress, allowing the transmitter to continue transmitting while not burdening the receiver with undue overhead.

By deploying both the time-based and the threshold-based PSNP approaches, the receiver can be adaptive to both LSP bursts and infrequent LSP updates.

As PSNPs also consume link bandwidth, packet-queue space, and protocol-processing time on receipt, the increased sending of PSNPs should be taken into account when considering the rate at which LSPs can be sent on an interface.

## 5.2. Packet Prioritization on Receive

There are three classes of PDUs sent by IS-IS:

- \*Hellos

- \*LSPs

- \*Complete Sequence Number PDUs (CSNPs) and PSNPs

Implementations today may prioritize the reception of Hellos over LSPs and Sequence Number PDUs (SNPs) in order to prevent a burst of LSP updates from triggering an adjacency timeout which in turn would require additional LSPs to be updated.

CSNPs and PSNPs serve to trigger or acknowledge the transmission of specified LSPs. On a point-to-point link, PSNPs acknowledge the receipt of one or more LSPs. For this reason, [[ISO10589](#)] specifies a delay (partialSNPInterval) before sending a PSNP so that the number of PSNPs required to be sent is reduced. On receipt of a PSNP, the

set of LSPs acknowledged by that PSNP can be marked so that they do not need to be retransmitted.

If a PSNP is dropped on reception, the set of LSPs advertised in the PSNP cannot be marked as acknowledged and this results in needless retransmissions that will further delay transmission of other LSPs that are yet to be transmitted. It may also make it more likely that a receiver becomes overwhelmed by LSP transmissions.

Therefore implementations SHOULD prioritize IS-IS PDUs on the way from the incoming interface to the IS-IS process. The relative priority of packets in decreasing order SHOULD be: Hellos, SNPs, LSPs. Implementations MAY also prioritize IS-IS packets over other protocols which are less critical for the router or network, less sensitive to delay or more bursty (e.g., BGP).

## **6. Congestion and Flow Control**

### **6.1. Overview**

Ensuring the goodput between two entities is a layer-4 responsibility as per the OSI model. A typical example is the TCP protocol defined in [[RFC9293](#)] that provides flow control, congestion control, and reliability.

Flow control creates a control loop between a transmitter and a receiver so that the transmitter does not overwhelm the receiver. TCP provides a means for the receiver to govern the amount of data sent by the sender through the use of a sliding window.

Congestion control prevents the set of transmitters from overwhelming the path of the packets between two IS-IS implementations. This path typically includes a point-to-point link between two IS-IS neighbors which is usually over-sized compared to the capability of the IS-IS speakers, but potentially some internal elements inside each neighbor such as switching fabric, line card CPU, and forwarding plane buffers that may experience congestion. These resources may be shared across multiple IS-IS adjacencies for the system and it is the responsibility of congestion control to ensure that these are shared reasonably.

Reliability provides loss detection and recovery. IS-IS already has mechanisms to ensure the reliable transmission of LSPs. This is not changed by this document.

The following two sections provide two Flow and/or Congestion control algorithms that may be implemented by taking advantage of the extensions defined in this document. The signal that these IS-IS extensions defined in [Section 4](#) and [Section 5](#) provide are generic

and are designed to support different sender-side algorithms. A sender can unilaterally choose a different algorithm to use.

## **6.2. Congestion and Flow Control algorithm 1**

### **6.2.1. Flow control**

A flow control mechanism creates a control loop between a single instance of a transmitter and a single receiver. This section uses a mechanism similar to the TCP receive window to allow the receiver to govern the amount of data sent by the sender. This receive window ('rwin') indicates an allowed number of LSPs that the sender may transmit before waiting for an acknowledgment. The size of the receive window, in units of LSPs, is initialized with the value advertised by the receiver in the Receive Window sub-TLV. If no value is advertised, the transmitter should initialize rwin with its locally configured value for this neighbor.

When the transmitter sends a set of LSPs to the receiver, it subtracts the number of LSPs sent from rwin. If the transmitter receives a PSNP, then rwin is incremented for each acknowledged LSP. The transmitter must ensure that the value of rwin never goes negative.

The RWIN value is of importance when the RTT is the limiting factor for the throughput. In this case the optimal size is the desired LSP rate multiplied by the RTT. The RTT being the addition of the link RTT plus the time taken by the receiver to acknowledge the first received LSP in its PSNP. 50 or 100 may be reasonable default numbers. As an example, a RWIN of 100 requires a control plane input buffer of 150 ko per neighbor assuming an IS-IS MTU of 1500 octets and limits the throughput to 10000 LSPs per second and per neighbor for a link RTT of 10 ms. With the same RWIN, the throughput limitation is 2000 LSP per second when the RTT is 50ms. That's the maximum throughput assuming no other limitations such as CPU limitations.

#### **6.2.1.1. Operation on a point to point interface**

By sending the Receive Window sub-TLV, a node advertises to its neighbor its ability to receive that many un-acknowledged LSPs from the neighbor. This is akin to a receive window or sliding window in flow control. In some implementations, this value should reflect the IS-IS socket buffer size. Special care must be taken to leave space for CSNPs and PSNPs and IIHs if they share the same input queue. In this case, this document suggests advertising an LSP Receive Window corresponding to half the size of the IS-IS input queue.

By advertising an LSP Transmission Interval sub-TLV, a node advertises its ability to receive LSPs separated by at least the advertised value, outside of LSP bursts.

By advertising an LSP Burst Size sub-TLV, a node advertises its ability to receive that number of LSPs back-to-back.

The LSP transmitter MUST NOT exceed these parameters. After having sent a full burst of LSPs, it MUST send the subsequent LSPs with a minimum of LSP Transmission Interval between LSP transmissions. For CPU scheduling reasons, this rate MAY be averaged over a small period, e.g., 10-30ms.

If either the LSP transmitter or receiver does not adhere to these parameters, for example because of transient conditions, this doesn't result in a fatal condition for IS-IS operation. In the worst case, an LSP is lost at the receiver and this situation is already remedied by mechanisms in [[ISO10589](#)]. After a few seconds, neighbors will exchange PSNPs (for point-to-point interfaces) or CSNPs (for broadcast interfaces) and recover from the lost LSPs. This worst case should be avoided as those additional seconds impact convergence time since the LSDB is not fully synchronized. Hence it is better to err on the conservative side and to under-run the receiver rather than over-run it.

#### **6.2.1.2. Operation on a broadcast LAN interface**

Flow and congestion control on a LAN interface is out of scope for this document.

#### **6.2.2. Congestion Control**

Whereas flow control prevents the sender from overwhelming the receiver, congestion control prevents senders from overwhelming the network. For an IS-IS adjacency, the network between two IS-IS neighbors is relatively limited in scope and includes a single link which is typically over-sized compared to the capability of the IS-IS speakers.

This section describes one sender-side congestion control algorithm largely inspired by the TCP congestion control algorithm [[RFC5681](#)].

The proposed algorithm uses a variable congestion window 'cwin'. It plays a role similar to the receive window described above. The main difference is that cwin is adjusted dynamically according to various events described below.

### 6.2.2.1. Core algorithm

In its simplest form, the congestion control algorithm looks like the following:

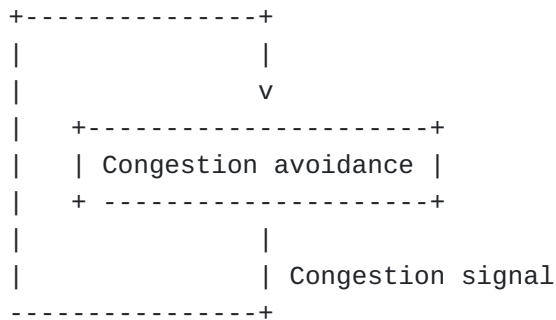


Figure 1

The algorithm starts with  $cwin = cwin_0 = LPP + 1$ . In the congestion avoidance phase,  $cwin$  increases as LSPs are acked: for every acked LSP,  $cwin += 1 / cwin$  without exceeding  $RWIN$ . When LSPs are exchanged,  $cwin$  LSPs will be acknowledged in 1 RTT, meaning  $cwin(t) = t/RTT + cwin_0$ . Since the RTT is low in many IS-IS deployments, the sending rate can reach fast rates in short periods of time.

When updating  $cwin$ , it must not become higher than the number of LSPs waiting to be sent, otherwise the sending will not be paced by the receiving of acks. Said differently, tx pressure is needed to maintain and increase  $cwin$ .

When the congestion signal is triggered,  $cwin$  is set back to its initial value and the congestion avoidance phase starts again.

### 6.2.2.2. Congestion signals

The congestion signal can take various forms. The more reactive the congestion signals, the fewer LSPs will be lost due to congestion. However, overly aggressive congestion signals will cause a sender to keep a very low sending rate even without actual congestion on the path.

Two practical signals are given below.

Delay: When receiving acknowledgements, a sender estimates the acknowledgement time of the receiver. Based on this estimation, it can infer that a packet was lost, and infer congestion on the path.

There can be a timer per LSP, but this can become costly for implementations. It is possible to use only a single timer  $t_1$  for all LSPs: during  $t_1$ , sent LSPs are recorded in a list  $list_1$ . Once the RTT is over,  $list_1$  is kept and another list  $list_2$  is used to



Figure 2

#### 6.2.2.4. Remarks

This algorithm's performance is dependent on the LPP value. Indeed, the smaller LPP is, the more information is available for the congestion control algorithm to perform well. However, it also increases the resources spent on sending PSNPs, so a trade-off must be made. This document recommends to use an LPP of 15 or less. If a Receive Window is advertised, LPP SHOULD be lower and the best performance is achieved when LPP is an integer fraction of the Receive Window.

Note that this congestion control algorithm benefits from the extensions proposed in this document. The advertisement of a receive window from the receiver ([Section 6.2.1](#)) avoids the use of an arbitrary maximum value by the sender. The faster acknowledgment of LSPs ([Section 5.1](#)) allows for a faster control loop and hence a faster increase of the congestion window in the absence of congestion.

#### 6.2.3. Pacing

As discussed in [[RFC9002](#)], [Section 7.7](#) a sender SHOULD pace sending of all in-flight LSPs based on input from the congestion controller.

Sending multiple packets without any delay between them creates a packet burst that might cause short-term congestion and losses. Senders MUST either use pacing or limit such bursts. Senders SHOULD limit bursts to LSP Burst Size.

Senders can implement pacing as they choose. A perfectly paced sender spreads packets evenly over time. For a window-based congestion controller, such as the one in this section, that rate can be computed by averaging the congestion window over the RTT. Expressed as an inter-packet interval in units of time:

$$\text{interval} = (\text{SRTT} / \text{cwin}) / N$$

SRTT is the smoothed round-trip time [[RFC6298](#)]

Using a value for N that is small, but at least 1 (for example, 1.25) ensures that variations in RTT do not result in underutilization of the congestion window.

Practical considerations, such as scheduling delays and computational efficiency, can cause a sender to deviate from this rate over time periods that are much shorter than an RTT.

One possible implementation strategy for pacing uses a leaky bucket algorithm, where the capacity of the "bucket" is limited to the maximum burst size and the rate that the "bucket" fills is determined by the above function.

#### **6.2.4. Determining values to be advertised in the Flooding Parameters TLV**

The values that a receiver advertises do not need to be perfect. If the values are too low then the transmitter will not use the full bandwidth or available CPU resources. If the values are too high then the receiver may drop some LSPs during the first RTT and this loss will reduce the usable receive window and the protocol mechanisms will allow the adjacency to recover. Flooding slower than both nodes can support will hurt performance, as will consistently overloading the receiver.

The values advertised need not be dynamic as feedback is provided by the acknowledgment of LSPs in SNP messages. Acknowledgments provide a feedback loop on how fast the LSPs are processed by the receiver. They also signal that the LSPs can be removed from receive window, explicitly signaling to the sender that more LSPs may be sent. By advertising relatively static parameters, we expect to produce overall flooding behavior similar to what might be achieved by manually configuring per-interface LSP rate-limiting on all interfaces in the network. The advertised values could be based, for example, on offline tests of the overall LSP-processing speed for a particular set of hardware and the number of interfaces configured for IS-IS. With such a formula, the values advertised in the Flooding Parameters TLV would only change when additional IS-IS interfaces are configured.

The values may be updated dynamically, to reflect the relative change of load on the receiver, by improving the values when the receiver load is getting lower and degrading the values when the receiver load is getting higher. For example, if LSPs are regularly dropped, or if the queue regularly comes close to being filled, then the values may be too high. On the other hand, if the queue is barely used (by IS-IS), then the values may be too low.

The values may also be absolute value reflecting relevant average hardware resources that are monitored, typically the amount of buffer space used by incoming LSPs. In this case, care must be taken when choosing the parameters influencing the values in order to avoid undesirable or unstable feedback loops. It would be undesirable to use a formula that depends, for example, on an active measurement of the instantaneous CPU load to modify the values advertised in the Flooding Parameters TLV. This could introduce



feedback into the IGP flooding process that could produce unexpected behavior.

#### **6.2.5. Operation considerations**

As discussed in [Section 4.7](#), the solution is more effective on point-to-point adjacencies. Hence a broadcast interface (e.g., Ethernet) only shared by two IS-IS neighbors should be configured as point-to-point in order to have more effective flooding.

### **6.3. Congestion Control algorithm 2**

This section describes a congestion control algorithm based on performance measured by the transmitter without dependance on signaling from the receiver.

#### **6.3.1. Router Architecture Discussion**

(The following description is an abstraction - implementation details vary.)

Existing router architectures may utilize multiple input queues. On a given line card, IS-IS PDUs from multiple interfaces may be placed in a rate-limited input queue. This queue may be dedicated to IS-IS PDUs or may be shared with other routing related packets.

The input queue may then pass IS-IS PDUs to a "punt queue" which is used to pass PDUs from the data plane to the control plane. The punt queue typically also has controls on its size and the rate at which packets will be punted.

An input queue in the control plane may then be used to assemble PDUs from multiple linecards, separate the IS-IS PDUs from other types of packets, and place the IS-IS PDUs on an input queue dedicated to the IS-IS protocol.

The IS-IS input queue then separates the IS-IS PDUs and directs them to an instance-specific processing queue. The instance-specific processing queue may then further separate the IS-IS PDUs by type (IIHs, SNPs, and LSPs) so that separate processing threads with varying priorities may be employed to process the incoming PDUs.

In such an architecture, it may be difficult for IS-IS in the control plane to accurately track the state of the various input queues and determine what value should be advertised as a current receive window.

The following section describes a congestion control algorithm based on performance measured by the transmitter without dependance on signaling from the receiver.

### 6.3.2. Transmitter Based Congestion Control

The congestion control algorithm described in this section does not depend upon direct signaling from the receiver. Instead it adapts the transmission rate based on measurement of the actual rate of acknowledgments received.

When congestion control is necessary, it can be implemented based on knowledge of the current flooding rate and the current acknowledgement rate. Such an algorithm is a local matter and there is no requirement or intent to standardize an algorithm. There are a number of aspects which serve as guidelines which can be described.

A maximum LSP transmission rate (LSPTxMax) SHOULD be configurable. This represents the fastest LSP transmission rate which will be attempted. This value SHOULD be applicable to all interfaces and SHOULD be consistent network wide.

When the current rate of LSP transmission (LSPTxRate) exceeds the capabilities of the receiver, the congestion control algorithm needs to quickly and aggressively reduce the LSPTxRate. Slower responsiveness is likely to result in a larger number of retransmissions which can introduce much longer delays in convergence.

Dynamic increase of the rate of LSP transmission (LSPTxRate) (i.e., faster) SHOULD be done less aggressively and only be done when the neighbor has demonstrated its ability to sustain the current LSPTxRate.

The congestion control algorithm MUST NOT assume the receive performance of a neighbor is static, i.e., it MUST handle transient conditions which result in a slower or faster receive rate on the part of a neighbor.

The congestion control algorithm SHOULD consider the expected delay time in receiving an acknowledgment. It therefore incorporates the neighbor partialSNPInterval ([Section 4.5](#)) to help determine whether acknowledgments are keeping pace with the rate of LSPs transmitted. In the absence of an advertisement of partialSNPInterval, a locally configured value can be used.

## 7. IANA Considerations

### 7.1. Flooding Parameters TLV

IANA has made the following temporary allocation from the IS-IS TLV codepoint registry. This document requests the allocation be made permanent.

Type	Description	IIH	LSP	SNP	Purge
----	-----	---	---	---	---
21	Flooding Parameters TLV	y	n	y	n

Figure 3

### 7.2. Registry: IS-IS Sub-TLV for Flooding Parameters TLV

This document creates the following sub-TLV Registry under the "IS-IS TLV Codepoints" grouping:

Name: IS-IS Sub-TLVs for Flooding Parameters TLV.

Registration Procedure(s): Expert Review

Expert(s): TBD

Description: This registry defines sub-TLVs for the Flooding Parameters TLV(21).

Reference: This document.

Type	Description
0	Reserved
1	LSP Burst Size
2	LSP Transmission Interval
3	LSPs Per PSNP
4	Flags
5	Partial SNP Interval
6	Receive Window
7-255	Unassigned

Table 1: Initial Sub-TLV allocations for Flooding Parameters TLV

### 7.3. Registry: IS-IS Bit Values for Flooding Parameters Flags Sub-TLV

This document requests IANA to create a new registry, under the "IS-IS TLV Codepoints" grouping, for assigning Flag bits advertised in the Flags sub- TLV.

Name: IS-IS Bit Values for Flooding Parameters Flags Sub-TLV.

Registration Procedure: Expert Review

Expert Review Expert(s): TBD

Description: This registry defines bit values for the Flags sub-TLV(4) advertised in the Flooding Parameters TLV(21).

Note: In order to minimize encoding space, a new allocation should pick the smallest available value.

Reference: This document.

Bit #	Description
0	Ordered acknowledgement (O-flag)
1-63	Unassigned

Table 2: Initial bit allocations for  
Flags Sub-TLV

## 8. Security Considerations

Security concerns for IS-IS are addressed in [[ISO10589](#)] , [[RFC5304](#)] , and [[RFC5310](#)] . These documents describe mechanisms that provide for the authentication and integrity of IS-IS PDUs, including SNPs and IIHs. These authentication mechanisms are not altered by this document.

With the cryptographic mechanisms described in [[RFC5304](#)] and [[RFC5310](#)] , an attacker wanting to advertise an incorrect Flooding Parameters TLV would have to first defeat these mechanisms.

In the absence of cryptographic authentication, as IS-IS does not run over IP but directly over the link layer, it's considered difficult to inject false SNP/IIH without having access to the link layer.

If a false SNP/IIH is sent with a Flooding Parameters TLV set to conservative values, the attacker can reduce the flooding speed between the two adjacent neighbors which can result in LSDB inconsistencies and transient forwarding loops. However, it is not significantly different than filtering or altering LSPs which would also be possible with access to the link layer. In addition, if the downstream flooding neighbor has multiple IGP neighbors, which is typically the case for reliability or topological reasons, it would receive LSPs at a regular speed from its other neighbors and hence would maintain LSDB consistency.

If a false SNP/IIH is sent with a Flooding Parameters TLV set to aggressive values, the attacker can increase the flooding speed which can either overload a node or more likely generate loss of LSPs. However, it is not significantly different than sending many LSPs which would also be possible with access to the link layer, even with cryptographic authentication enabled. In addition, IS-IS has procedures to detect the loss of LSPs and recover.

This TLV advertisement is not flooded across the network but only sent between adjacent IS-IS neighbors. This would limit the consequences in case of forged messages, and also limits the dissemination of such information.

## 9. Contributors

The following people gave a substantial contribution to the content of this document and should be considered as coauthors:

\*Jayesh J, Ciena, jayesh.ietf@gmail.com

\*Chris Bowers, Juniper Networks, cbowers@juniper.net

\*Peter Psenak, Cisco Systems, ppsenak@cisco.com

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## Appendix A. Changes / Author Notes

[RFC Editor: Please remove this section before publication]

IND 00: Initial version.

WG 00: No change.

WG 01: IANA allocated code point.

WG 02: No change.

WG 03:

\*Pacing section added (taken from RFC 9002).

\*Some text borrowed from RFC 9002 (QUIC Loss Detection and Congestion Control).

\*Considerations on the special role of the DIS.

\*Editorial changes.

WG 04: Update IANA section as per IANA editor comments (2023-03-23).

WG 06: AD review.

## Authors' Addresses

Bruno Decraene  
Orange

Email: [bruno.decraene@orange.com](mailto:bruno.decraene@orange.com)

Les Ginsberg  
Cisco Systems  
821 Alder Drive  
Milpitas, CA 95035  
United States of America

Email: [ginsberg@cisco.com](mailto:ginsberg@cisco.com)

Tony Li  
Juniper Networks, Inc.

Email: [tony.li@tony.li](mailto:tony.li@tony.li)

Guillaume Solignac

Email: [gsoligna@protonmail.com](mailto:gsoligna@protonmail.com)

Marek Karasek  
Cisco Systems  
Pujmanove 1753/10a, Prague 4 - Nusle  
10 14000 Prague  
Czech Republic

Email: [mkarasek@cisco.com](mailto:mkarasek@cisco.com)

Gunter Van de Velde  
Nokia  
Copernicuslaan 50  
2018 Antwerp  
Belgium

Email: [gunter.van\\_de\\_velde@nokia.com](mailto:gunter.van_de_velde@nokia.com)

Tony Przygienda  
Juniper  
1137 Innovation Way  
Sunnyvale, Ca  
United States of America

Email: [prz@juniper.net](mailto:prz@juniper.net)