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Using MSDP to create Logical RPs

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2. Abstract

This document describes a mechanism to allow for an arbitrary number of RPs per group in a single share-tree PIM-SM domain.

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4. Introduction

PIM-SM as currently defined allows for only a single active RP per group, and as such the decision of optimal RP placement can become problematic for a multi-regional network deploying PIM-SM.

The single active RP, or flat RP space design of PIM-SM has several implications, including traffic concentration, lack of scalable load balancing and redundancy between RPs, sub-optimal forwarding of multicast packets, and distant RP dependencies. These properties of PIM-SM have been demonstrated in recent native continental or inter-continental scale multicast deployments. As a result, it became clear that ISP backbones require a mechanism that allows definition of multiple active RPs per group in single PIM-SM domain. Further, any such mechanism should also addresses the issues addressed above.

The mechanism described here is intended to address the need for redundancy and load sharing among RPs in a domain. It is primarily intended for application within those networks which are using MBGP, MSDP and PIM-SM protocols for native multicast deployment, although it not limited to those protocols. In particular, the logical RP solution is applicable in any PIM-SM network that also supports MSDP (MSDP is required so that the various RPs in the domain maintain a consistent view of the sources that are active). Note however, a domain deploying this logical RP solution is not required to run MBGP.

5. Problem Definition

The logical RP solution described here provides a solution for both redundancy and load balancing among any number of active RPs in a domain.

5.1. Traffic Concentration and Load Balancing Between RPs

While PIM-SM allows for multiple RPs to be defined for a given group, only one group to RP mapping can active at a given time. A traditional deployment mechanism for load balancing between multiple RPs covering the multicast group space is to split up the 224.0.0.0/4 space between multiple defined RPs. This is an acceptable solution as long as multicast traffic remains low, but has problems as multicast traffic increases, especially because the network operator defining group space split between RPs does not alway have a priori knowledge of traffic distribution between groups. This can be overcome via periodic reconfigurations, but operational considerations cause this type of solution to scale poorly. The other alternative to periodic reconfiguration is to split 224.0.0.0/4 space more finely between more RPs, but this solution can have the disadvantage of creating more complex RP configurations, along with the attendant operational problems when RPs are configured [CLUSTERS].

5.2. Sub-optimal Forwarding of Multicast Packets

When a single RP serves a given multicast group, all joins to that group will be sent to that RP regardless of the topological distance between the RP and the sources and receivers. Initial data will be sent towards the RP also until configured shortest path tree switch threshold is is reached, or the data will always be sent towards the RP if the network is configured to always use RP rooted shared tree. This holds true even if all the sources and the receivers are in any given single region, and RP is topologically distant from the sources and the receivers. This is an artifact of the dynamic nature of multicast group members, and of the fact that operators may not always have a priori knowledge of the topological placement of the group members.

Taken together, these effects can mean that (for example) although all the sources and receivers of a given group are in Europe, they are joining towards the RP in USA and the data will be traversing relatively expensive pipe(s) twice, once to get to RP, and back down the RP rooted tree again, creating inefficient use of expensive resources.

5.3. Distant RP Dependencies

As outlined above, single active RP per group may cause local sources and receivers to become dependent on a topologically distant RP. In case of a scenario where there are backup RPs configured, distant RP dependence can be created due to the failure of the primary RP, which is topologically closer, and may become exacerbated by switching to the backup RP, which may be even more distant topologically, which may lead to inferior performance, if not outright loss of connectivity to an RP serving the group, depending on the network condition at the given moment.

6. Solution

Given the problem set outlined above, a good solution would allow an operator to define multiple RPs per group, and distribute those RPs in a topologically significant manner to the sources and receivers.

6.1. Mechanisms

All the RPs serving a given group or set of groups are configured with identical unicast address, using a numbered interface on the RPs (frequently a logical interface such as a loopback is used). RPs then advertise group to RP mappings using this interface address. This will cause group members (senders) to join (register) towards the topologically closest RP. RPs MSDP peer with each other using the unique shared addresses. Note that if the router implementation chooses the shared address for the BGP router ID, then BGP peerings will not be established. As a result, care should be taken to avoid the ambiguity of the BGP router ID with the RP address(for example, if the logical address chosen is the highest IP address configured on the router, and the router implementation that automatically chooses a router ID based upon highest IP address assigned to interfaces). Finally, the solution described here can be implemented without any modification to existing protocols or their implementations.

6.2. Further Applications of the Logical RP mechanism

The solution described above can also be applied to external MSDP peers that are used to join two PIM-SM domains together. This can provide redundancy to the MSDP peering session, ease operational complexity as well as simplify configuration management. A side effect to be aware of with this design is that which of the configured MSDP sessions comes up will be determined via the unicast

topology between two providers, and can be some what unpredictable. If any of the backup peering sessions resets, the active session will also reset.

7. Multicast State Scaling

```
Let  k = m + r, where

r = resistering to an RP
m = number internal sources learned through MSDP
p = number of internal MSDP peers

For p = 1, m = 0

 0 receivers              ==> 1 (*,G) + 0 SAs
 Greater than 1 receiver  ==> k (S,G) + 0 SAs

For p > 1, m != 0

 0 receivers              ==> 1 (*,G) + m SAs
```

```
Greater than 1 receiver  ==> k (S,G) + m SAs
```

Importantly, the multicast state growth is O(k), where k is not a function of p, the number of internal (logical) RP peers.

8. Security considerations

Since the solution described here makes heavy use of logical addressing, care must be taken to avoid spoofing. In particular unicast routing and PIM RPs must be protected.

8.1. Unicast Routing

Both internal and external unicast routing can be weakly protected with keyed MD5 [RFC1828], as implemented in an internal protocol such as OSPF [RFC2382] or in BGP [RFC2385]. More generally, IPSEC [RFC1825] could be used to provide protocol integrity for the unicast routing system.

8.2. Multicast Protocol Integrity

The mechanisms described in [PIMAUTH] should be used to provide protocol message integrity protection and group-wise message origin authentication.

9. Acknowledgments

John Meylor, Dave Thaler and Tom Pusateri provided insightful comments on earlier versions for this idea.

10. References

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