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Interworking of GMPLS Control and Centralized Controller System

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Abstract

Generalized Multi-Protocol Label Switching (GMPLS) control allows each network element (NE) to perform local resource discovery (e.g., LMP), routing (e.g., OSPF-TE) and signaling (e.g., RSVP-TE) in a distributed manner.

On the other hand, with the development of software-defined transport networking technology, a set of NEs can be controlled via centralized controller hierarchies to address the issue from multi-domain, multi-vendor and multi-technology. An example of such centralized architecture is ACTN controller hierarchy [I-D.ietf-teas-actn-framework].

Instead of competing with each other, both the distributed and the centralized control plane have their own advantage, and should be complementary in the system. This document describes how the GMPLS distributed control plane can interwork with a centralized controller system in a transport network.

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Conventions used in this document

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 [RFC2119].

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1. Introduction

Generalized Multi-Protocol Label Switching (GMPLS) [RFC3945] extends MPLS to support different classes of interfaces and switching capabilities such as Time-Division Multiplex Capable (TDM), Lambda Switch Capable (LSC), and Fiber-Switch Capable (FSC). Each network element (NE) running a GMPLS control plane collects network information from other NEs and supports service provisioning through signaling in a distributed manner.

On the other hand, Software-Defined Networking (SDN) technologies have been introduced to control the transport network in a centralized manner. Central controllers can collect network information from each node and provision services to corresponding nodes. One of the examples is the Abstraction and Control of Traffic Engineered Networks (ACTN) [I-D.ietf-teas-actn-framework], which defines a hierarchical architecture with PNC, MDSC and CNC as central controllers for different network abstraction levels.

In such centralized controller architectures, GMPLS can be applied for the NE-level control. A central controller may support GMPLS enabled domains and may interact with a GMPLS enabled domain where the GMPLS control plane does the service provisioning from ingress to egress. In this case the centralized controller sends the request to the ingress node and does not have to configure all NEs along the path through the domain from ingress to egress thus leveraging the GMPLS control plane. This document describes how GMPLS control interworks with centralized controller system in transport network.

2. Overview

In this section, overviews of GMPLS control plane and centralized controller system are discussed as well as the interactions between the GMPLS control plane and centralized controllers.

2.1. Overview of GMPLS Control Plane

GMPLS separates the control plane and the data plane to support time-division, wavelength, and spatial switching, which are significant in transport networks. For the NE level control in GMPLS, each node runs a GMPLS control plane instance. Functionalities such as service provisioning, protection, and restoration can be performed via GMPLS communication among multiple NEs. At the same time, the controller can also collect node and link resources in the network to construct the network topology and compute routing paths for serving service requests.

Several protocols have been designed for GMPLS control [RFC3945] including link management [RFC4204], signaling [RFC3471], and routing [RFC4202] protocols. The controllers applying these protocols communicate with each other to exchange resource information and establish LSP. In this way, controllers in different nodes in the network have the same network topology and provision services based on local policies.

2.2. Overview of Centralized Controller System

With the development of SDN technologies, a centralized controller architecture has been introduced to transport networks such as ACTN [I-D.ietf-teas-actn-framework]. In centralized controller system, a controller is aware of the network topology and is responsible for provisioning incoming service requests. In ACTN, multiple abstraction levels are designed and controllers at different levels implement different functions. This kind of abstraction enables multi-vendor, multi-domain, and multi-technology control.

For example in ACTN, an MDSC coordinates several PNCs controlling different domains. Each PNC provides a topological view of the domain it controls, which can be abstracted, to the MDSC, so that the MDSC learns the topology of the network encompassing multiple domains. When a multi-domain service request arrives at the MDSC, the MDSC first computes an end-to-end path based on the abstracted topology view provided by the PNCs. Then, the MDSC splits this path to multiple segment according to domain boundaries and allocate each segment to corresponding PNC for detailed path computation and LSP segment setup. When each PNC has reported the establishment of its LSP segment, the multi-domain service is established.

2.3. GMPLS Control Interwork with Centralized Controller System

The ACTN framework [I-D.ietf-teas-actn-framework] defines a hierarchical controller architecture and describes how these controllers communicate with each other in order to control a multi-domain transport network. The controllers at the different levels in the hierarchy typically perform network abstraction of the domain they control and provide an abstracted view of their domain to the controller at the next level in the hierarchy. The controllers at the different hierarchical levels also interact with each other during end-to-end service establishment, which can span multiple domains. Within each domain, GMPLS control can be applied to each NE. The bottom-level central controller like PNC can act as a NE to collect network information and initiate LSP. Following figure shows an example of GMPLS interworking with ACTN.

```
                        +----------+
                        |   MDSC   |
                        +----------+
                          ^      ^
                          |      |
                +---------+      +---------+
                |  RESTConf / YANG models  |
                V                          V
           +---------+                +---------+
           |   PNC   |                |   PNC   |
           +---------+                +---------+
              ^   ^                      ^   ^
              |   |                      |   |
       OSPF-TE|   |PCEP           OSPF-TE|   |PCEP
       Netconf|   |               Netconf|   |
              V   V                      V   V
         .-------------.   Inter-   .-------------.
        /               \  domain  /               \
       |       LMP       |  link  |       LMP       |
      |      OSPF-TE     ==========     OSPF-TE      |
       |     RSVP-TE     |        |     RSVP-TE     |
        \               /          \               /
          `------------`             `------------`
           GMPLS domain               GMPLS domain
```

Figure 1: Example of GMPLS interworks with ACTN

In Figure 1, each domain has the GMPLS control plane enabled at the physical network level. The PNC can listen to the IGP routing protocol messages (OSPF LSAs for example) that the GMPLS control plane instances are disseminating into the network and thus learn the network topology. For path computation in the domain with PNC implementing a PCE, PCCs (e.g. NEs, other controller/PCE) use PCEP to ask the PNC for a path and get replies. The MDSC communicates with PNCs using for example REST/RESTConf based on YANG data models. As a PNC has learned its domain topology, it can report the topology to the MDSC. When a service arrives, the MDSC computes the path and coordinates PNCs to establish the corresponding LSP segment.

Alternatively, the NETCONF protocol can be used to retrieve topology information utilizing the [TE-TOPO] Yang model and the technology-specific YANG model augmentations required for the specific network technology. The PNC can retrieve topology information from any NE (the GMPLS control plane instance of each NE in the domain has the same topological view), construct the topology of the domain and export an abstracted view to the MDSC. Based on the topology retrieved from multiple PNCs, the MDSC can create topology graph of the multi-domain network, and can use it for path computation. To setup a service, the MDSC can exploit Yang tunnel model together with the technology-specific YANG model augmentations.

3. Link Management Protocol

Link management protocol (LMP) [RFC4204] runs between a pair of nodes and is used to manage TE links. In addition to setup and maintain control channels, LMP can be used to verify the data link connectivity and correlate the link property. In this way, link resources, which are fundamental resources in the network, are discovered by both ends of the link.

4. Routing Options

In GMPLS control, link state information is flooded within the network as defined in [RFC4202]. Each node in the network can build the network topology according to the flooded link state information. Routing protocols such as OSPF-TE [RFC4203] and ISIS-TE [RFC5307] have been extended to support different interfaces in GMPLS.

In centralized controller system, central controller can be placed at the GMPLS network and passively receive the information flooded in the network. In this way, the central controller can construct and update the network topology.

4.1. OSPF-TE

OSPF-TE is introduced for TE networks in [RFC3630]. OSPF extensions have been defined in [RFC4203] to enable the capability of link

state information for GMPLS network. Based on this work, OSPF protocol has been extended to support technology-specific routing. The routing protocol for OTN, WSON and optical flexi-grid network are defined in [RFC7138], [RFC7688] and [I-D.ietf-ccamp-flexible-grid-ospf-ext], respectively.

4.2. ISIS-TE

ISIS-TE is introduced for TE networks in [RFC5305] and is extended to support GMPLS routing functions [RFC5307], and has been updated to [RFC7074] to support the latest GMPLS switching capability and Types fields.

4.3. Netconf/RESTconf

Netconf [RFC6241] and RESTconf [RFC8040] protocols are originally used for network configuration. Besides, these protocols can also be used for topology retrieval by using topology-related YANG models, such as [RFC8345] and [TE-topo]. These protocols provide a powerful mechanism for notification that permits to notify the client about topology changes.

5. Path Computation

Once a controller learn the network topology, it can utilize the available resources to serve service requests by performing path computation. Due to abstraction, the MDSC may not have sufficient information to compute the optimal path. In this case, the MDSC can interact with different domain controllers by sending Yang Path Computation requests [PAT-COMP] to compute a set of potential optimal paths and then, based on its own constraints, policy and specific knowledge (e.g. cost of access link) can choose the more feasible path for service e2e path setup.

Path computation is one of the key objectives in various types of controllers. In the given architecture, it is possible for different components that have the capability to compute the path.

5.1. Constraint-based Path Computing in GMPLS Control

In GMPLS control, a routing path is computed by the ingress node [RFC3473] and is based on the ingress node TED. Constraint-based path computation is performed according to the local policy of the ingress node.

5.2. Path Computation Element (PCE)

PCE has been introduced in [RFC4655] as a functional component that provides services to compute path in a network. In [RFC5440], the

path computation is accomplished by using the Traffic Engineering Database (TED), which maintains the link resources in the network. The emergence of PCE efficiently improve the quality of network planning and offline computation, but there is a risk that the computed path may be infeasible if there is a diversity requirement, because stateless PCE has no knowledge about the former computed paths.

To address this issue, stateful PCE has been proposed in [RFC8231]. Besides the TED, an additional LSP Database (LSP-DB) is introduced to archive each LSP computed by the PCE. In this way, PCE can easily figure out the relationship between the computing path and former computed paths. In this approach, PCE provides computed paths to PCC, and then PCC decides which path is deployed and when to be established.

In PCE Initiation [I-D.ietf-pce-pce-initiated-lsp], PCE is allowed to trigger the PCC to setup, maintenance, and teardown of the PCE-initiated LSP under the stateful PCE model. This would allow a dynamic network that is centrally controlled and deployed.

In centralized controller system, the PCE can be implement in a central controller, and the central controller performs path computation according to its local policies. On the other hand, the PCE can also be placed outside of the central controller. In this case, the central controller acts as a PCC to request path computation to the PCE through PCEP.

6. Signaling Options

Signaling mechanism is used to setup LSPs in GMPLS control. Messages are sent hop by hop between the ingress node and the egress node of the LSP to allocate labels. Once the labels are allocated along the path, the LSP setup is accomplished. Signaling protocols such as RSVP-TE [RFC3473] and CR-LDP [RFC3472] have been extended to support different interfaces in GMPLS.

6.1. RSVP-TE

RSVP-TE is introduced in [RFC3209] and extended to support GMPLS signaling in [RFC3473]. Several label formats are defined for a generalized label request, a generalized label, suggested label and label sets. Based on [RFC3473], RSVP-TE has been extended to support technology-specific signaling. The RSVP-TE extensions for OTN, WSON, optical flexi-grid network are defined in [RFC7139], [RFC7689], and [RFC7792], respectively.

6.2. CR-LDP

In order to support the label formats and signaling mechanism defined in [RFC3471], CR-LDP is extended in [RFC3472]. Several label formats are defined and bidirectional LSPs are supported.

7. Interworking Scenarios

7.1. Topology Collection & Synchronization

Topology information is necessary on both network elements and controllers. The topology on network element is usually raw information, while the topology on the controller can be either raw or abstracted. Three different abstraction method has been described in [I-D.ietf-teas-actn-framework], and different controllers can select the corresponding method depending on application.

When there are changes in the network topology, the impacted network element(s) need to report changes to all the other network elements, together with the controller, to sync up the topology information. The inter-NE synchronization can be achieved via protocols mentioned in section 3 and 4. The topology synchronization between NEs and controllers can either be achieved by routing protocols OSPF-TE/PCEP-LS in [PCEP-LS] or Netconf protocol with YANG model.

7.2. Multi-domain/layer Service Provisioning

Based on the topology information on controllers and network elements, service provisioning can be deployed. Plenty of methods have been specified for single domain service provisioning, such as using PCEP and RSVP-TE.

Multi-domain/layer service provisioning would request coordination among the controller hierarchies. Given the service request, the end-to-end delivery procedure may include interactions on MPI and SBI. The computation for a cross-domain/layer path is usually completed by MDSC, who has a global view of the topologies. Then the configuration is decomposed into lower layer controllers, including both MDSC and PNCs, to configure the network elements to set up the path.

A combination of the centralized and distributed protocols may be necessary for the interaction between network elements and controller. A typical example would be the PCE Initiation scenario, in which a PCE message (PCInitiate) is sent from the controller to the first-end node, and then trigger a RSVP procedure along the path. Similarly, the interaction between the controller and the ingress node of a domain can be achieved by Netconf protocol with

corresponding YANG models, and then completed by running RSVP among the network elements.

7.3. Recovery

The GMPLS recovery functions are described in [RFC4426]. Two models, span protection and end-to-end protection and restoration, are discussed with different protection schemes and message exchange requirements. Related RSVP-TE extensions to support end-to-end recovery is described in [RFC4872]. The extensions in [RFC4872] include protection, restoration, preemption, and rerouting mechanisms for an end-to-end LSP. Besides end-to-end recovery, a GMPLS segment recovery mechanism is defined in [RFC4873]. By introducing secondary record route objects, LSP segment can be switched to another path like fast reroute [RFC4090].

For the recovery with controllers, timely interaction between controller and network elements are required. Usually the re-routing can be decomposed into path computation and delivery, the controller can take some advantage in the path computation due to the global topology view. And the delivery can be achieved by the procedure described in section 7.2.

7.4. Controller Reliability

Given the important role in the network, the reliability of controller is critical. Once a controller is shut down, the network should operate as well. It can be either achieved by controller back up or functionality back up. There are several of controller backup or federation mechanisms in the literature. It is also more reliable to have some function back up in the network element, to guarantee the performance in the network.

8. Network Management

TBD.

9. Security Considerations

TBD.

10. IANA Considerations

This document requires no IANA actions.

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