

BESS  
Internet-Draft  
Intended status: Standards Track  
Expires: August 10, 2019

Z. Zhang  
Juniper Networks  
R. Raszuk  
Bloomberg LP  
D. Pacella  
Verizon  
A. Gulko  
Thomson Reuters  
February 6, 2019

**Controller Based BGP Multicast Signaling**  
**draft-zzhang-bess-bgp-multicast-controller-01**

Abstract

This document specifies a way that one or more centralized controllers can use BGP to set up a multicast distribution tree in a network. In the case of labeled tree, the labels are assigned by the controllers either from the controllers' local label spaces, or from a common Segment Routing Global Block (SRGB), or from each routers Segment Routing Local Block (SRLB) that the controllers learn. In case of labeled unidirectional tree and label allocation from the common SRGB or from the controllers' local spaces, a single common label can be used for all routers on the tree to send and receive traffic with. Since the controllers calculate the trees, they can use sophisticated algorithms and constraints to achieve traffic engineering.

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.

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## **1. Overview**

### **1.1. Introduction**

[I-D.zzhang-bess-bgp-multicast] describes a way to use BGP as a replacement signaling for PIM [[RFC7761](#)] or mLDP [[RFC6388](#)]. The BGP-based multicast signaling described there provides a mechanism for setting up both (s,g)/(\*,g) multicast trees (as PIM does, but optionally with labels) and labeled (MPLS) multicast tunnels (as mLDP does). Each router on a tree performs essentially the same procedures as it would perform if using PIM or mLDP, but all the inter-router signaling is done using BGP.

These procedures allow the routers to set up a separate tree for each individual multicast (x,g) flow where the 'x' could be either 's' or '\*', but they also allow the routers to set up trees that are used for more than one flow. In the latter case, the trees are often referred to as "multicast tunnels" or "multipoint tunnels", and specifically in this document they are mLDP tunnels (except that they are set up with BGP signaling). While it actually does not have to be restricted to mLDP tunnels, mLDP FEC is conveniently borrowed to identify the tunnel. In the rest of the document, the term tree and tunnel are used interchangeably.

The trees/tunnels are set up using the "receiver-initiated join" technique of PIM/mLDP, hop by hop from downstream routers towards the root. The BGP messages are either sent hop by hop between downstream routers and their upstream neighbors, or can be reflected by Route Reflectors (RRs).

As an alternative to each hop independently determining its upstream router and signaling upstream towards the root (following PIM/mLDP model), the entire tree can be calculated by a centralized controller, and the signaling can be entirely done from the controller, using the same BGP messages as defined in [[I-D.zzhang-bess-bgp-multicast](#)]. For that, some additional procedures and optimizations are specified in this document.

While it is outside the scope of this document, signaling from the controllers could be done via other means as well, like Netconf or any other SDN methods.

### **1.2. Resilience**

Each router could establish direct BGP sessions with one or more controllers, or it could establish BGP sessions with RRs who in turn peer with controllers. For the same tree/tunnel, each controller may independently calculate the tree/tunnel and signal the routers on the



tree/tunnel using MCAST-TREE S-PMSI/Leaf A-D routes [[I-D.zzhang-bess-bgp-multicast](#)]. How the tree/tunnel roots/leaves are discovered and how the calculation is done are outside the scope of this document.

On each router, BGP route selection rules will lead to one controller's route for the tree/tunnel being selected as the active route and used for setting up forwarding state. As long as all the routers on a tree/tunnel consistently pick the same controller's routes for the tree/tunnel, the setup should be consistent. If the tree/tunnel is labeled, different labels will be used from different controllers so there is no traffic loop issue even if the routers do not consistently select the same controller's routes. In the unlabeled case, to ensure the consistency the selection SHOULD be solely based on the identifier of the controller, which could be carried in an Address Specific Extended Community (EC).

Another consistency issue is when a bidirectional tree/tunnel needs to be re-routed. Because this is no longer triggered hop-by-hop from downstream to upstream, it is possible that the upstream change happens before the downstream, causing traffic loop. In the unlabeled case, there is no good solution (other than that the controller issues upstream change only after it gets acknowledgement from downstream). In the labeled case, as long as a new label is used there should be no problem.

Besides the traffic loop issue, there could be transient traffic loss before both the upstream and downstream's forwarding state are updated. This could be mitigated if the upstream keep sending traffic on the old path (in addition to the new path) and the downstream keep accepting traffic on the old path (but not on the new path) for some time. It is a local matter when for the downstream to switch to the new path - it could be data driven (e.g., after traffic arrives on the new path) or timer driven.

For each tree, multiple disjoint instances could be calculated and signaled for live-live protection. Different labels are used for different instances, so that the leaves can differentiate incoming traffic on different instances. As far as transit routers are concerned, the instances are just independent. Note that the two instances are not expected to share common transit routers (it is otherwise outside the scope of this document/revision).

### **1.3. Signaling**

Each router only receives S-PMSI/Leaf A-D routes from the controllers but does not originate or re-advertise those routes. The re-advertisement of a received route can be blocked based on the fact



that a configured import RT matches the RT of the route, which indicates that this router is the target and consumer of the route hence it should not be re-advertised further. The routes includes the outgoing forwarding information in the form of Tunnel Encapsulation Attributes (TEA), with optional enhancements specified in this document. The router infers the incoming forwarding information from the Upstream Router's IP Address field in the NLRI in case of an unlabeled tree.

Suppose that for a particular tree, there are two downstream routers D1 and D2 for a particular upstream router U. A controller C may send two Leaf A-D routes to U, as if the two routes were originated by D1 and D2 but reflected by the controller. As an alternative in case of a labeled tree, C could just send one route to U, with a Composite Tunnel in TEA (in this case, the Originating Router's Address field of the Leaf A-D route is set to the controller's address) and the Composite Tunnel specifies both downstreams. The tunnel in a TEA or Composite Tunnel is of type "MPLS Encapsulation" with a Label Stack Sub-TLV to encode label information.

For comparison, the existing TEA as specified in [\[I-D.ietf-idr-tunnel-encaps\]](#) can include multiple tunnels, but only one of those is used, while with a Composite Tunnel, traffic is sent out of all the enclosed tunnels to reach multiple endpoints.

Note that, in case of labeled trees, the (x,g) or mLDP FEC signaling is actually not needed to transit routers but only needed on tunnel root/leaves. However, for consistency, the same signaling is used to all routers.

#### **1.4. Label Allocation**

In the case of labeled multicast signaled hop by hop towards the root, whether it's (x,g) multicast or "mLDP" tunnel, labels are assigned by a downstream router and advertised to its upstream router (from traffic direction point of view). In the case of controller based signaling, routers do not originate tree join (S-PMSI/Leaf A-D) routes anymore, so the controllers have to assign labels on behalf of routers, and there are three options for label assignment:

- o From each router's SRLB that the controller learns
- o From the common SRGB that the controller learns
- o From the controller's local label space

Assignment from each router's SRLB is no different from each router assigning labels from its own local label space in the hop-by-hop



signaling case. The assignments for a router is independent of assignments for another router, even for the same tree.

Assignment from the controller's local label space is upstream-assigned [[RFC5331](#)]. It is used if the controller does not learn the common SRGB or each router's SRLB. Assignment from the SRGB [[RFC8402](#)] is only meaningful if all SRGBs are the same and a single common label is used for all the routers on a tree in case of unidirectional tree/tunnel ([Section 1.4.1](#)). Otherwise, assignment from SRLB is preferred.

The choice of which of the options to use depends on many factors. An operator may want to use a single common label per tree for ease of monitoring and debugging, but that requires explicit RPF checking and either SRGB or upstream assigned labels, which may not be supported due to either the software or hardware limitations (e.g. label imposition/disposition limits). In an SR network, assignment from the common SRGB if it's required to use a single common label per unidirectional tree, or otherwise assignment from SRLB is a good choice because it does not require support for context label spaces.

#### **[1.4.1](#). Using a Common per-tree Label for All Routers**

MPLS labels only have local significance. For an LSP that goes through a series of routers, each router allocates a label independently and it swaps the incoming label (that it advertised to its upstream) to an outgoing label (that it received from its downstream) when it forwards a labeled packet. Even if the incoming and outgoing labels happen to be the same on a particular router, that is just incidental.

With Segment Routing, it is becoming a common practice that all routers use the same SRGB so that a SID maps to the same label on all routers. This makes it easier for operators to monitor and debug their network. The same concept applies to multicast trees as well - a common per-tree label is used for a router to receive traffic from its upstream neighbor and replicate traffic to all its downstream neighbor.

However, a common per-tree label can only be used for unidirectional trees. Additionally, it requires each router to do explicit RPF check, so that only packets from its expected upstream neighbor are accepted. Otherwise, traffic loop may form during topology changes, because the forwarding state update is no longer ordered.

Traditionally, p2mp mpls forwarding does not require explicit RPF check as a downstream router advertises a label only to its upstream router and all traffic with that incoming label is presumed to be



from the upstream router and accepted. When a downstream router switches to a different upstream router a different label will be advertised, so it can determine if traffic is from its expected upstream neighbor purely based on the label. Now with a single common label used for all routers on a tree to send and receive traffic with, a router can no longer determine if the traffic is from its expected neighbor just based on that common tree label. Therefore, explicit RPF check is needed. Instead of interface based RPF checking as in PIM case, neighbor based RPF checking is used - a label identifying the upstream neighbor precedes the tree label and the receiving router checks if that preceding neighbor label matches its expected upstream neighbor. Notice that this is similar to what's described in Section "9.1.1 Discarding Packets from Wrong PE" of [RFC 6513](#) (an egress PE discards traffic sent from a wrong ingress PE). The only difference is one is used for label based forwarding and the other is used for (s,g) based forwarding. [note: for bidirectional trees, we may be able to use two labels per tree - one for upstream traffic and one for downstream traffic. This needs further verification].

Both the common per-tree label and the neighbor label are allocated either from the common SRGB or from the controller's local label space. In the latter case, an additional label identifying the controller's label space is needed, as described in the following section.

#### **1.4.2. Upstream-assignment from Controller's Local Label Space**

In this case in the multicast packet's label stack the tree label and upstream neighbor label (if used in case of single common-label per tree) are preceded by a downstream-assigned "context label". The context label identifies a context-specific label space (the controller's local label space), and the upstream-assigned label that follows it is looked up in that space.

This specification requires that, in case of upstream-assignment from a controller's local label space, each router D to assign, corresponding to each controller C, a context label that identifies the upstream-assigned label space used by that controller. This label, call it Lc-D, is communicated by D to C.

Suppose a controller is setting up unidirectional tree T. It assigns that tree the label Lt, and assigns label Lu to identify router U which is the upstream of router D on tree T. C needs to tell U: "to send a packet on the given tree/tunnel, one of the things you have to do is push Lt onto the packet's label stack, then push Lu, then push Lc-D onto the packet's label stack, then unicast the packet to D".



Controller C also needs to inform router D of the correspondence between <Lc-D, Lu, Lt> and tree T.

To achieve that, when C sends an S-PMSI/Leaf A-D route, for each tunnel in the TEA or in the Composite Tunnel TLV, it includes a label stack Sub-TLV [[I-D.ietf-idr-tunnel-encaps](#)], with the outer label being the context label Lc-D (received by the controller from the corresponding downstream), the next label being the upstream neighbor label Lu, and the inner label being the label Lt assigned by the controller for the tree. The router receiving the route will use the label stacks to send traffic to its downstreams.

For C to signal the expected label stack for D to receive traffic with, we overload a tunnel TLV in either the TEA or the Composite Tunnel in the Leaf A-D route sent to D - if the remote endpoint of that tunnel TLV matches the Upstream Router field in the Leaf A-D route, then it indicates that this is actually for receiving traffic from the upstream. If a common tree label is used, then the TLV contains a variant of the Label Stack Sub-TLV because the D needs to treat the second inner most label as the upstream neighbor label and set up forwarding state accordingly for explicit RPF check. This variant is referred to as RPF Label Stack Sub-TLV ([Section 2.2](#)).

Note that the use of TEA to specify downstream and upstream forwarding information also apply to label assignment from the common SRGB or each router's SRLB, with the differences that the context label is not needed in the SRGB/SRLB case, and that in SRLB case only a Label Stack Sub-TLV with a single SRLB label is used for upstream and downstream forwarding information (no RPF Label Stack Sub-TLV is needed) in the SRLB case.

## **2. Specification**

### **[2.1.](#) Additional Tunnel Type for TEA**

This document specifies a Composite Tunnel TLV and a TEA Tunnel TLV. The type codes will be assigned by IANA.

A Tunnel Encapsulation Attribute includes Tunnel TLVs and a router receiving the TEA (associated with a route) selects one of the Tunnel TLVs to set up forwarding state - a packet is sent out of only one of the tunnels. To specify that traffic needs to be sent out of multiple tunnels, a Composite Tunnel TLV is used. The value part of the TLV includes a list of sub-TLVs, each being a Tunnel TLV. Obviously, a Composite Tunnel TLV MUST not be a sub-TLV of a Composite Tunnel TLV.



Consider that a Composite Tunnel TLV that includes a bunch of sub-TLVs specifying a bunch of tunnels used to send traffic to a bunch of endpoints. For a particular endpoint, there are multiple ways to reach it - any one but only one should be used. For that purpose, a TEA Tunnel TLV (for lack of a better name) is used for that endpoint. The TEA Tunnel TLV includes a bunch of sub-TLVs, each being a Tunnel TLV that specifies one way to reach the same endpoint. This is similar to a Tunnel Encapsulation Attribute, hence the name TEA Tunnel TLV.

## **2.2. RPF Label Stack Sub-TLV**

This is almost identical to Label Stack Sub-TLV. The only difference is that the second inner most label in the stack identifies the expected upstream neighbor and explicit RPF checking needs to be set up for the tree label accordingly.

## **2.3. Context Label Wide Community**

For a router to signal the context label that it assigns for a controller (or any label allocator that assigns labels that will be seen by this router), it attaches a Context Label Wide Community [[I-D.ietf-idr-wide-bgp-communities](#)] to the host route for its own address used in its BGP session towards the controllers (directly or via RRs). This is a new wide community that specifies the (Label Allocator, Context Label) tuple, and the exactly format will be specified in a future revision.

## **2.4. Procedures**

Details to be added. The general idea is described in the introduction section.

## **3. Security Considerations**

This document does not introduce new security risks?

## **4. IANA Considerations**

To be added.

## **5. Acknowledgements**

The authors Eric Rosen for his questions, suggestions, and help finding solutions to some issues like the neighbor based explicit RPF checking. The authors also thank Lenny Giuliano and IJsbrand Wijnands for their review and comments.



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#### Authors' Addresses

Zhaohui Zhang  
Juniper Networks

EMail: [zzhang@juniper.net](mailto:zzhang@juniper.net)

Robert Raszuk  
Bloomberg LP

EMail: [robert@raszuk.net](mailto:robert@raszuk.net)

Dante Pacella  
Verizon

EMail: [dante.j.pacella@verizon.com](mailto:dante.j.pacella@verizon.com)

Arkadiy Gulko  
Thomson Reuters

EMail: [arkadiy.gulko@thomsonreuters.com](mailto:arkadiy.gulko@thomsonreuters.com)

