

# **Uptane Deployment Best Practices V.1.1.0**

**Companion Document to Uptane Standard for Design and Implementation V.1.1.0**

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## Introduction

Uptane is a standard, and does not have an official distribution or implementation. We do provide a reference implementation in Python, and there are a number of open source projects such as aktualizr, rust-tuf, Notary, and OTA Community Edition implementing all or part of the Standard. In addition, commercial Uptane offerings are available in the marketplace from HERE Technologies and Airbiquity.

However, in any serious Uptane installation, a number of deployment decisions will need to be made, and policies and practices for software signing and key management will need to be implemented. Additionally, some OEMs may wish to develop their own Uptane implementation. Here, we provide a set of best practices for how to set up, operate, integrate, and adapt Uptane to work in a variety of situations. We also discuss the human operations required, and describe Uptane-compatible ways to implement some specific features that OEMs have requested guidance or clarification on in the past.

All of these guidelines should be viewed as complementary to the official Uptane Standard: they should be taken as advice, not gospel.

In addition, these guidelines may be used in the creation of POUFs. POUFs contain the Protocols, Operations, Usage, and Formats of an Uptane implementation. These details can be used to design interoperable Uptane implementations.

Uptane is a Joint Development Foundation project of the Linux Foundation, operating under the formal title of Joint Development Foundation Projects, LLC, Uptane Series.

## Changes to the Uptane Standard since V.1.0.0

The changes made to the Uptane Standard since its initial release on July 31, 2019, have principally addressed issues of style, clarity, and the resolution of inconsistencies. As a result, the majority of text edits and additions seek to correct wording in the original text that could potentially be misleading.

The following is a brief summary of those edits:

- Established a style guide to impose consistency in spelling, capitalization of roles and repository names, and use of punctuation.
- Specified a policy for linking to the Standard or any specific portion of it. Any links to the Standard from other documents should point to the latest released version, and should link by section name, not number, as the numbers tend to change more than the names.
- Established a document archive policy to add a stable copy of each version of the Standard to the repository, starting with the initial IEEE/ISTO V.1.0.0 document.
- Added “Compromise of the packaged software, such as malware embedded in a trusted package” to the list of what is “Out of scope” for the Standard.
- Corrected/changed several numbering references in the full verification process and “Step 0” in the procedure for checking Root metadata.
- Presented the option to use a counter (instead of a nonce) in the ECU Version Report, and specified the purpose of the nonce in the step-by-step instructions for preparing this report.
- Specified that the Director SHOULD check that the nonce or counter in each ECU Version Report has not been used before to prevent a replay of the ECU Version Report. If the nonce or counter is reused the Director SHOULD drop the request.
- Changed the way steps were referenced in the ECU process for verifying the latest downloaded metadata.
- Clarified that there is no need to download all metadata from the Image repo if the Director indicates there are no new updates to install.
- Clarified that metadata is required at manufacturing time, and presented a rationale for why preinstalled metadata is needed. This step enables an ECU to authenticate that a remote repository is legitimate when it first downloads metadata in the field, which can serve as a defense against rollback attacks.
- Moved a Targets metadata check for unrecognized ECU IDs to a more logical place in the series of checks.
- Resolved an inconsistency in how checking hashes of images is discussed.
- Clarified the manner in which we identify images by their hash to specify that if the Primary has received multiple hashes for a given image binary via the Targets role, then it SHALL verify every hash for this image. This step is to be performed even if the image is identified by a single hash as part of its filename.

- Improved naming of example hashes to align with NIST policy (<https://csrc.nist.gov/projects/hash-functions/nist-policy-on-hash-functions>) on hash functions. This change was also made to demonstrate that Uptane is not tied to any particular set of algorithms.
- Clarified that full verification **MUST** be performed by Primary ECUs and **MAY** be performed by Secondary ECUs.
- Specified in the procedure for checking hashes that the ECU **SHOULD** check that the length of the image matches the length listed in the metadata.
- Modified wording to make verifying a time message optional if the ECU does not have the capacity to verify a time message.
- Formally changed the name of our deployment considerations document to *Uptane Deployment Best Practices*. This was done to better reflect naming conventions within the community.
- Corrected additional capitalization and punctuation usages for consistency, including imposing the consistent use of the Oxford comma in a series of items within a sentence, and placing a comma after e.g. and i.e.
- Corrected other stylistic/formatting issues that interfered with clarity, such as extraneous commas and use of whitespace.
- Removed the use of the phrase “best practices” when not referring to the *Uptane Deployment Best Practices*.
- Added a missing reference to the Standard pointing to the Time Server description in *Uptane Deployment Best Practices*.
- Changed a **MAY** to a **SHOULD** in the statement “Full verification **MUST** be performed by Primary ECUs and **SHOULD** be performed by Secondary ECUs” to be consistent with references elsewhere in the Standard.
- Removed or changed phrases that were incorrect or could be mistaken for another object or function. These included the phrases *target metadata*, *image metadata*, *ECU version manifest*, and *Uptane Standards* (plural instead of singular).
- Removed words from the opening definition section that are not used in the Standard.
- Changed the document’s author credit from the Uptane Alliance Community to the Uptane Community, and the organization from the Uptane Alliance to Joint Development Foundation Projects, LLC, Uptane Series.
- Removed references to TAP 5 in three places in the Standard. TAP 5 has been more or less replaced by TAP 13, but the latter has not yet been approved.

## A. Setting up Uptane repositories

This section outlines recommended procedures for the one-time operations that an OEM and its suppliers **SHOULD** perform when they set up Uptane for the first time. In particular, they **SHOULD** correctly configure the Director and Image repositories, and, if used, the Time Server, so that the impact of a repository/server compromise is as limited as possible.

### Secure source of time

Without access to a secure source of time, ECUs may be prevented from receiving the most recent updates. If the ECU's time is set too far ahead, it will determine that the current valid metadata is expired and thus be unable to perform an update. If the ECU's time is set too far behind, an attacker can freeze or replay old metadata to the ECU. (ECUs in Uptane will not accept an earlier time than what has been seen before and signed with the same key.)

If an ECU does not have a secure clock, we recommend the use of a Time Server for time attestations. The following subsection describes how a Time Server can be used in an Uptane implementation.

### Time Server

As the name suggests, a Time Server is a dedicated server that is responsible for providing a secure source of current time to ECUs that would not otherwise have access to this information. It informs ECUs in a cryptographically secure way through signed records and an exchange of tokens. The Time Server receives a list of tokens from vehicles, and returns back a list of signed records containing every token from the originally received list and at least one instance of the current time.

If the Time Server is used, it is **CONDITIONALLY REQUIRED** to conform to the following requirements:

- When the Time Server receives a sequence of tokens from a vehicle, it will provide one or more signed responses, containing the time along with these tokens. It **MAY** produce either one signed time attestation containing the current time and all tokens, or multiple time attestations each containing the current time and one or more tokens. All tokens should be included in the response.
- The Time Server will expose a public interface for communicating with Primaries. This communication **MAY** occur over FTP, FTPS, SFTP, HTTP, HTTPS, or any other transport control the implementer may choose.

- The Time Server’s key is rotated in the same manner as other roles’ keys by listing the new key in the Director’s Root metadata. It is also listed in the custom field of the Director repository’s Targets metadata (for partial verification Secondaries).

**Changes to the Director repository** If a Time Server is in use, a representation of its public key is **CONDITIONALLY REQUIRED** in Director repository Root metadata.

If a Time Server is implemented **AND** partial verification Secondaries are used, the following metadata is **CONDITIONALLY REQUIRED** in the Director repository’s Targets metadata:

- A representation of the public key(s) for the Time Server, similar to the representation of public keys in Root metadata.

Listing the public key of the Time Server in Director Targets metadata is necessary to allow partial verification Secondaries to perform Time Server key rotation.

**Changes to a Primary** If the Time Server is implemented, the Primary is **CONDITIONALLY REQUIRED** to use the following procedure to verify the time. This procedure occurs after the vehicle version manifest is sent and will fulfill the Download and check current time step of the Uptane Standard.

1. Gather the tokens from each Secondary ECU’s version report.
2. Send the list of tokens to the Time Server to fetch the current time. The Time Server responds, as described above in the Time Server subsection, by providing a cryptographic attestation of the last known time.
3. If the Time Server’s response meets the criteria below, update the Primary ECU’s clock and retain the Time Server’s response for distribution to Secondary ECUs. If it fails to meet this criteria, discard the response and continue the procedure without an updated time. The criteria for checking the Time Server’s response are:
4. The signature over the Time Server’s response is valid.
5. All the tokens provided to the Time Server are included in the response.
6. The time in the Time Server’s response is later than the last time verified in this manner.

**ECU version report** The ECU version report from each Secondary will contain a token to be sent to the Time Server in whatever manner the implementer chooses. For example, the payload of the ECU version report sent from the Primary to the Director **MAY** contain the tokens sent to the Time Server. In this case, if any token is removed or changed, the signature will not match. To detect a replay attack, each token **SHOULD** be unique per ECU. As we expect



that these updates will be relatively infrequent (e.g., due to a limited number of write cycles), there will be a sufficient number of tokens to make this possible.

**Changes to all ECUs** After the vehicle has been assembled, ECUs MAY receive an attestation of the current time as downloaded from the Time Server.

As the first step to verifying metadata, described in the Standard for both the Primary and Secondaries, the ECU SHOULD load and verify the most recent time from the Time Server using the following procedure:

1. Verify that the signatures on the downloaded time are valid.
2. Verify that the list of tokens in the downloaded time includes the token that the ECU sent in its version report.
3. Verify that the time downloaded is greater than the previous time.

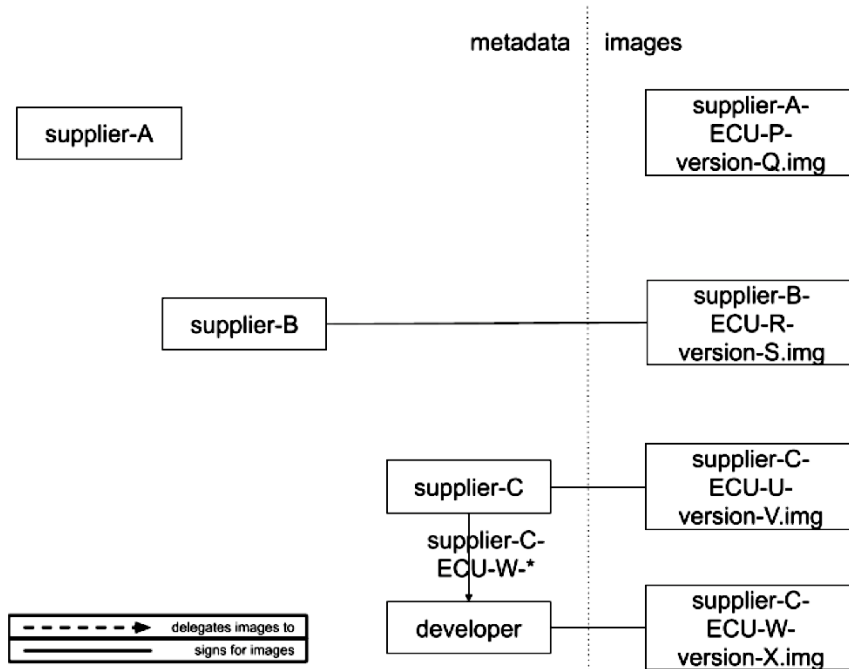
If all three steps are completed without error, the ECU is **CONDITIONALLY REQUIRED** to overwrite its current attested time with the time it has just downloaded, and to generate a new token for the next request to the Time Server.

If any check fails, the ECU is **CONDITIONALLY REQUIRED** to NOT overwrite its current attested time, to jump to the last step (Create and send version report), and to report the error.

**Changes to check Root metadata** In order to prevent a new Time Server from accidentally causing a rollback warning, the clock will be reset when switching to a new Time Server. To do this, check the Time Server key after updating to the most recent Root metadata file. If the Time Server key is listed in the Root metadata and has been rotated, reset the clock used to set the expiration of metadata to a minimal value (e.g., zero, or any time that is guaranteed to not be in the future based on other evidence). It will be updated in the next cycle.

**Changes to partial verification Secondaries** As partial verification Secondaries only check the Targets metadata from the Director repository, the Time Server key on these ECUs will be checked when verifying the Targets metadata. To do this, check the Time Server key after verifying the most recent Targets metadata file. If the Time Server key is listed in the Targets metadata and has been rotated, reset the clock used to determine the expiration of metadata to a minimal value as described above.

## What suppliers should do



**Figure 1.** Diagram showing supplier signing arrangements. Suppliers are free to ask the OEM to sign images on its behalf (supplier A), or can sign them itself (supplier B). In the latter case, it MAY also delegate some or all of this responsibility to others (supplier C).

Either the OEM or a tier-1 supplier SHOULD sign for images for any ECUs produced by that supplier, so unsigned images are never installed. This provides security against arbitrary software attacks. An OEM will decide whether or not a tier-1 supplier SHOULD sign its own images. Otherwise, the OEM will sign images on behalf of the supplier, and the supplier SHOULD only deliver update images to the OEM as outlined under the Guidelines for routine maintenance operations section of this document. If the supplier signs its own images, it MUST first set up roles and metadata using the following steps:

1. Generate a number of offline keys used to sign its metadata. In order to provide compromise resilience, these keys SHOULD NOT be accessible

from the Image repository. The supplier **SHOULD** take great care to secure these keys, so a compromise affects only some, but not all, of its ECUs. The supplier **SHOULD** use the threshold number of keys chosen by the OEM.

2. Optionally, delegate images to members of its organization (such as its developers), or to tier-2 suppliers (who **MAY** further delegate to tier-3 suppliers). Delegates **SHOULD** recursively follow these same steps.
3. Set an expiration timestamp on its metadata using a duration prescribed by the OEM.
4. Register its public keys with the OEM using some out-of-band mechanism (e.g., telephone calls or certified mail).
5. Sign its metadata using the digital signature scheme chosen by the OEM.
6. Send all metadata, including delegations, and associated images to the OEM.

A tier-1 supplier and its delegates **MAY** use the Uptane repository and supplier tools to produce these signed metadata.

## **What the OEM should do**

The OEM sets up and configures the Director and Image repositories. To host these backend services, the OEM **MAY** use its own private infrastructure, or cloud computing.

### **Director repository**

*Note that all information about setting up signing keys for this repository can be found on the Managing signing keys and metadata operations section of this document.*

In order to provide on-demand customization of vehicles, the OEM **MUST** also set up the Director repository following the guidance in the Uptane Standard. In addition, an OEM must keep in mind the following factors. Unlike the Image repository, the Director repository: (1) is managed by automated processes, (2) uses online keys to sign Targets metadata, (3) does not delegate images, (4) generally provides different metadata to different Primaries, (5) **MAY** encrypt images per ECU, and (6) produces new metadata on every request from Primaries.

### **Steps to initialize the repository**

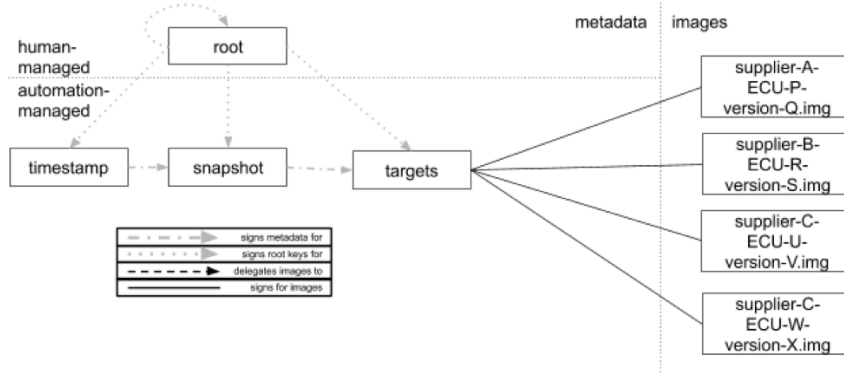
In order to initialize the repository, an OEM **SHOULD** perform the following steps:

1. Set up the storage mechanism according to the directions for the chosen protocol. For example, the OEM might need to set up a ZFS filesystem.

2. Set up the transport protocol, following the details of the chosen systems. For example, the OEM may need to set up an HTTP server with SSL/TLS enabled.
3. Set up the private and public APIs to interact over the chosen transport protocol.
4. Set up the Root, Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets roles.
5. If the Director will be serving per-device encrypted images, copy all relevant images from the Image repository.
6. Initialize the inventory database with the information necessary for the Director repository to perform dependency resolution, or encrypt images per ECU. This information includes: (1) metadata about all available images for all ECUs on all vehicles, (2) dependencies and conflicts between images, and (3) ECU keys.
7. Set up and run the automated process that communicates with Primaries.

The automated process MAY use the repository tools from our Reference Implementation to generate new metadata.

## Roles



**Figure 2.** A proposed configuration of roles on the Director repository.

Unlike the Image repository, the Director repository does not delegate images. Therefore, the Director repository **SHOULD** contain only the Root, Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets roles, as illustrated in Figure 2. In the following subsections, we will discuss how metadata for each of these roles is produced.

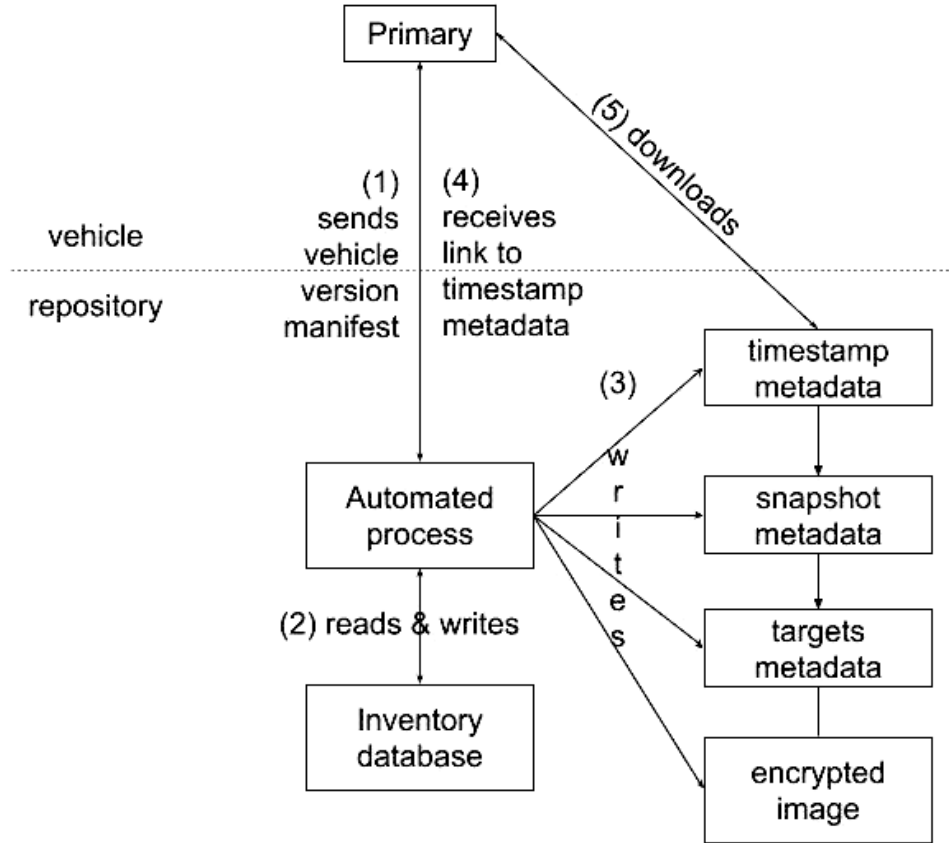
**Private API to update images and the inventory database** An OEM **SHOULD** define a private API for the Director repository that is able to: (1)

upload images, and (2) update the inventory database. This API is private in the sense that only the OEM should be able to perform these actions.

This API SHOULD require authentication, so that each user is allowed to access only certain information. The OEM is free to use any authentication method as long as it is suitably strong. Examples include client certificates, a password, or an API key encrypted over TLS. For additional security, the OEM may use multi-factor authentication that utilizes more than one authentication method.

In order to allow automated processes on the Director repository to perform their respective functions, without also allowing any attackers who might compromise the repository to tamper with the inventory database, it is strongly RECOMMENDED that these processes should have some boundaries. That is, the automated processes SHOULD be able to read any record in the database and write new records, but SHOULD NOT be able to update or delete existing records.

### Public API to send updates



**Figure 3.** *How Primaries would interact with the Director repository.*

An OEM SHOULD define a public API to the Director repository so that it is able to send updates to vehicles. This API can be designed to the wishes of the OEM, and can use either a push or pull model to send updates updates to Primaries. The difference between the models lies in whether or not a running vehicle can be told to immediately download an update (via a push), or can wait until a pull occurs.

Either way, the OEM can control how often updates are released to vehicles. In the push model, the OEM can send an update to a vehicle whenever it likes, as long as the vehicle is online. In the pull model, the OEM can configure the frequency at which Primaries pull updates. In most realistic cases, there will be little practical difference between the two models.

There is also no significant difference between these methods when it comes to resistance to denial-of-service (DoS) attacks or flash crowds. In the push model, a vehicle can control how often updates are pushed to it, so that vehicles can withstand DoS attacks, even if the repository has been compromised. In the pull model, the repository can similarly stipulate when vehicles SHOULD download updates, and how often.

Regardless of what model is used to send updates, as illustrated in Figure 4, the API SHOULD allow a Primary to: \* send a vehicle version manifest (step 1) \* receive a link to a Timestamp metadata file in return (step 4) \* download associated files (step 5).

The API MAY require authentication, depending on the OEM's requirements.

**Sending an update** Sending an update from the Director repository to a Primary requires the following five steps, as shown in Figure 3.

1. The Primary sends its latest vehicle version manifest to the Director repository via an automated process.
2. The automated process performs a dependency resolution. It reads associated information about this vehicle, such as ECU identifiers and keys, from the inventory database. It checks that the signatures on the manifest are correct, and adds the manifest to the inventory database. Then, using the given manifest, it computes which images SHOULD be installed next by these ECUs. It SHOULD record the results of this computation on the inventory database so there is a record of what was chosen for installation. If there is an error at any point of this step, due to incorrect signatures, or anything unusual about the set of updates installed on the vehicle, then the Director repository SHOULD also record it, so the OEM can be alerted to a potential risk. Repository administrators MAY then take manual steps to correct the problem, such as instructing the vehicle owner to visit the nearest dealership.
3. Using the results of the dependency resolution, the automated process signs fresh Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets metadata about the images that SHOULD be installed next by these ECUs. Optionally, if the OEM requires it, it MAY encrypt images per ECU, and write them to its storage mechanism. If there are no images to be installed or updated, then the Targets metadata SHOULD contain an empty set of targets.
4. The automated process returns a link to the Timestamp metadata file to the Primary.
5. The Primary downloads metadata and images using the link to this Timestamp metadata file.

Since the automated process is continually producing new metadata files (and, possibly, encrypted images), these files SHOULD be deleted as soon as Primaries have consumed them, so that storage space can be reclaimed. This MAY be

done by simply tracking whether Primaries have successfully downloaded these files within a reasonable amount of time.

### **Image repository**

*Note that all information about setting up signing keys for this repository can be found in the Managing signing keys and metadata operations section of this document.*

Finally, in order to provide compromise resilience, the OEM **MUST** set up the Image repository following the guidance in the Uptane Standard. The Image repository differs from the Director repository in a number of ways. First, it is managed by human administrators who use offline keys to sign Targets metadata. It also **MAY** delegate images to suppliers, and it provides the same metadata to all Primaries. Lastly, it does not encrypt images per ECU, and it updates its metadata and images relatively infrequently (e.g., every two weeks or monthly).

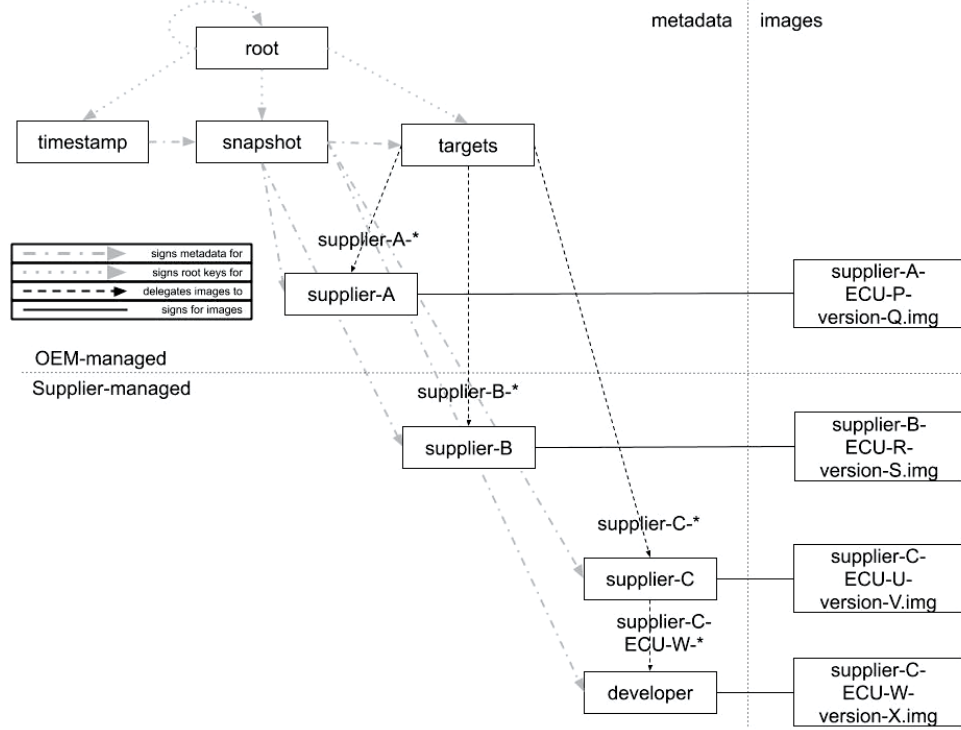
### **Steps to initialize the repository**

In order to initialize the repository, an OEM **SHOULD** perform the following steps. Note that, as with the Director repository, all users are expected to follow basic set up instructions, as well as the specific set up instructions mandated by the users' choices of storage mechanisms and protocols. 1. Set up the storage mechanism. 2. Set up the transport protocol. 3. Set up the private and public APIs to interact over the chosen transport protocol. 4. Set up the Root, Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets roles. 5. Sign delegations from the Targets role to all tier-1 supplier roles. The public keys of tier-1 suppliers **SHOULD** be verified using some out-of-band mechanism (e.g., telephone calls or certified mail), so that the OEM can double-check their authenticity and integrity. 6. Upload metadata and images from all delegated Targets roles (including tier-1 suppliers). Verify the metadata and images, and add them to the storage mechanism.

An OEM and its suppliers **MAY** use the repository and supplier tools from the Reference Implementation to produce new metadata.



## Roles



**Figure 4.** A proposed configuration of roles on the Image repository.

Using delegations allows the OEM to: (1) control which roles sign for which images, (2) control precisely which Targets metadata vehicles need to download, and (3) distribute, revoke, and replace public keys used to verify Targets metadata, and hence, images. In order to set up delegations, an OEM and its suppliers MAY use the configuration of roles illustrated in Figure 4. There are two important points.

- The OEM maintains the Root, Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets roles, with the Targets role delegating images to their respective tier-1 suppliers.
- There SHOULD be a delegated Targets role for every tier-1 supplier, so that the OEM can:
  - limit the impact of a key compromise.
  - precisely control which Targets metadata vehicles need to download.

The metadata for each tier-1 supplier MAY be signed by the OEM (e.g., supplier A), or the supplier itself (e.g., suppliers B and C). In turn, a tier-1 supplier MAY delegate images to members of its organization, such as supplier C who has delegated a subset of its images to one of its developers, or its tier-2 suppliers who MAY delegate further to tier-3 suppliers.

Every delegation SHOULD be prefixed with the unique name of a tier-1 supplier, so that the filenames of images do not conflict with each other. Other than this constraint, a tier-1 supplier is free to name its images however it likes. For example, it MAY use the convention “supplier-X-ECU-Y-version-Z.img” to denote an image produced by supplier X, for ECU model Y, and with a version number Z.

**Public API to download files** An OEM SHOULD define a public API for Primaries to use when downloading metadata and images to the Image repository. This API can be defined in whatever manner the OEM wishes.

Depending on the OEM’s requirements, this API MAY require authentication before Primaries are allowed to download updates. Such a choice affects only how certain the OEM can be that it is communicating with authentic Primaries, and not how resilient ECUs are to a repository compromise. The OEM is free to use any authentication method.

**Using images from multiple locations** Uptane implementations may sometimes need to accommodate update systems where existing software comes from several different locations. Implementers may assume that this would mandate the use of multiple different Image repositories in any equivalent Uptane implementation. However, this is rarely necessary, and using multiple Image repositories (implemented via repository mapping metadata as described in TAP-4) would require a significantly larger effort.

In almost all cases, it is preferable to have a single Image repository containing all of the Uptane metadata, and redirect clients to download the actual images from other locations. This can be implemented via an API on the Image repository, or via a custom field in the Targets metadata directing the clients to one or more alternate URL where the images are available.

An API solution could be as simple as an HTTP 3xx redirect to the appropriate download location. More complex schemes, e.g., cases where existing legacy repositories have a custom authentication scheme, can usually be implemented by adding custom metadata. See the relevant section of the Standard for more information on how custom metadata can be added.

## Specifying wireline formats

In setting up an Uptane system, an implementer will need to specify how information, such as metadata files and vehicle version manifests, should be encoded. As a guiding principle of the Uptane framework is to give each implementer as much design flexibility as possible, the Uptane Standard does not specify particular data binding formats. Instead, OEMs and suppliers can

continue to use the protocols and formats of existing update systems, or they can select formats that best ensure interoperability with other essential technologies.

To facilitate coordination between implementations, an Uptane adopter can choose to write a POUF, an added layer to the Standard in which an implementer can specify choices of Protocols, Operations, Usage and Formats. A POUF provides an easy way for an implementer to specify the elements that can ensure interoperability. It can also be customized for the special needs of fleet owners in a particular industry, such as taxis, car sharing networks, police forces, or the military.

Information on writing a POUF can be found on the POUF Purpose and Guidelines page of the Uptane website. A sample POUF, written for the Uptane Reference Implementation, offers sample metadata written in ASN.1/DER.

## B. Preparing an ECU for Uptane

At the highest level, the basic requirement for an ECU to be capable of supporting Uptane is that it must be able to perform either full or partial verification, and access a secure source of time. (See the Uptane Standard for official requirements.)

To bootstrap an Uptane-capable ECU, a few things need to be provisioned into the unit:

- **A current set of Uptane metadata**, so that the ECU is able to verify the first set of metadata it gets from the server. The exact metadata files required depend on whether the ECU performs full or partial verification. Full verification ECUs need a complete set of metadata from both repositories, while partial verification ECUs only need the Targets metadata from the Director repository.
- **A secure way to know what time it is**, so the ECU cannot be tricked into accepting expired metadata. If a time server is in use, each ECU would need a recent time downloaded from this, and the public key of the time server to verify it. If another source of time is being used, the ECU must receive a fairly recent time as soon as it is powered on (or reset to factory settings) to prevent the possibility of freeze attacks.
- **ECU key(s)**, to sign the ECU's version reports, and optionally to decrypt images. These keys should be unique to the ECU, and the public keys will need to be stored in the Director repository's inventory database.
- **Information about repository locations**, generally in the form of a repository mapping file. This is a metadata file that tells the ECU the URIs of the repositories (if it is a Primary ECU), as well as which images should be fetched from which repository. (Images that are encrypted or customized per-device would generally come from the Director repository, and all others from the Image repository.)

## ECU implementation choices

There are three big decisions to make about each Uptane ECU: first, whether it will perform full or partial verification, second, whether it will use an asymmetric or symmetric ECU key, and third, whether it will use encrypted or unencrypted update images. Here, we offer some advice on making those choices.

### Full vs. Partial verification

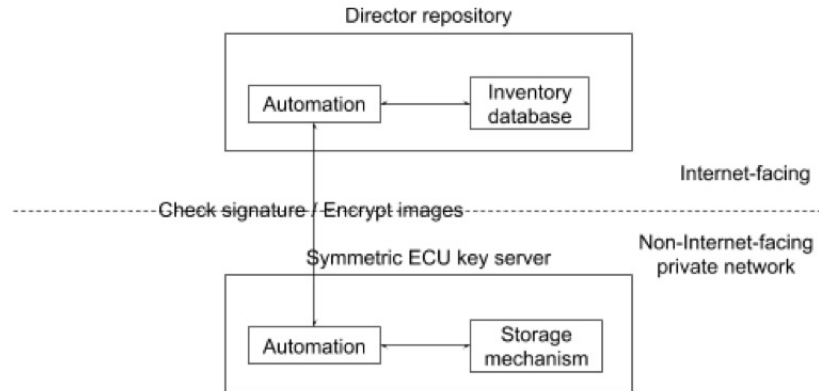
Uptane is designed with automotive requirements in mind, and one of the difficulties in that space is that ECUs requiring OTA updates might have very slow and or memory-limited microcontrollers. To accommodate those ECUs, Uptane includes the option of partial verification. So, how do you choose between full and partial verification for a particular ECU?

Firstly, if the ECU is a Primary ECU, partial verification is not an option. Primaries need to perform full verification. For other ECUs, full verification is preferable when possible, for at least two reasons:

1. Full verification is more secure. Because they do not check Image repository metadata, partial verification ECUs could be instructed to install malicious software by an attacker in possession of the Director repository's Targets key (and, of course, a way to send traffic on the relevant in-vehicle bus).
2. Full verification ECUs can rotate keys. Because partial verification is designed for ECUs that can only reasonably check a single signature, they do not download or process Root metadata. Since the Root metadata is the mechanism for revoking and rotating signing keys for all other metadata, a partial verification ECU has no truly secure way to invalidate a signing key.

Partial verification ECUs are expected to have the Root and Targets metadata present at the time of manufacturing or installation in the vehicle. To update the Root metadata, the ECU SHOULD install a new image containing the metadata. To update the Targets metadata, the ECU SHOULD follow the steps described in the Uptane Standard. Partial verification Secondaries MAY additionally fetch and check metadata from other roles or the Image repository if the ECU is powerful enough to process them and you wish to take advantage of their respective security benefits.

## Symmetric vs. asymmetric ECU keys



**Figure 1.** *An arrangement that an OEM SHOULD use when using symmetric ECU keys.*

ECUs are permitted to use either symmetric or asymmetric keys. This choice is effectively a performance vs. security trade-off. Symmetric keys allow for faster cryptographic operations, but expose a larger attack surface because the Director will need online access to the key. Asymmetric ECU keys are not affected by this problem, because the Director only needs access to the ECU’s public key.

Basically, choosing symmetric keys increases the performance of the common case (checking signatures and decrypting images), but makes disaster recovery harder, because a compromised key server could require updating ECU keys on every vehicle.

**Symmetric key server** If you choose to use symmetric ECU keys, it would be a good idea to store the keys on an isolated, separate key server, rather than in the inventory database. This separate key server can then expose only two very simple operations to the Director:

1. Check the signature on an ECU version report.
2. Given an ECU identifier and an image identifier, encrypt the image for that ECU.

Unencrypted images should be loaded onto the symmetric key server by some

out-of-band physical channel (for example, via USB stick).

### **Encryption of images on ECUs**

The Director repository may encrypt images if required (see Section 5.3.2 of the Uptane Standard). However, no Uptane implementation should support interactive requests from an ECU for encryption. Allowing the Target ECU to explicitly request an encrypted image at download time would not only increase the attack surface, but could also be used to turn off encryption. This would make it easy for attackers to reverse engineer unencrypted firmware and steal intellectual property. Only the OEM and its suppliers should determine policy on encrypting particular binaries, and this policy should be configured for use by the Director repository, rather than being toggled by the Target ECU.

## **C. Guidelines for routine maintenance operations**

In this section, we discuss how to perform regular maintenance operations. Since these operations are carried out on a regular basis, it is important to ensure they are performed in a systematic manner so that software updates are delivered securely to ECUs.

### **Updating metadata and images**

An OEM SHOULD perform the following steps whenever a new update is delivered. First, the OEM verifies the authenticity and integrity of new images delivered by its suppliers. Second, the OEM tests whether the images work as intended, before releasing them to end-user vehicles.

### **Receiving updates from tier-1 suppliers**

In order to prevent updates from being tampered with by man-in-the-middle attackers, images SHOULD be delivered from the tier-1 supplier to the OEM in a manner that provides an extremely high degree of confidence in the timeliness and authenticity of the files provided. This may entail any manner of technical, physical, and/or personnel controls.

An OEM and its suppliers MAY use any transport mechanism to deliver these files. For example, an OEM MAY maintain a private web portal where metadata and/or images from suppliers can be uploaded. This private server MAY be managed by either the OEM or the tier-1 supplier, and SHOULD require authentication to restrict which users are allowed to read and/or write certain files. Alternatively, the OEM and its suppliers MAY use email or courier mail.

If the supplier signs its own images, then it delivers all of its metadata, including delegations, and associated images. Otherwise, if the OEM signs images on behalf of the supplier, then the supplier needs to update only images, leaving the OEM responsible for producing signed metadata. Regardless of which party produces signed metadata, the release counters associated with images SHOULD be incremented, so that attackers who may compromise the Director repository can not rollback to obsolete images (see the Enhanced Security Practices section of this document for more on this attack.)

Regardless of the transport mechanism used to deliver them, the OEM needs to ensure that the images received are authentic and have not been altered. The OEM SHOULD verify these images using some out-of-band mechanism so that their authenticity and integrity can be double-checked. For example, to obtain a higher degree of assurance, and for additional validation, the OEM MAY also require the supplier's update team to send a PGP/GPG signed email to the OEM's security team listing the cryptographic hashes of the new files.

Alternatively, the OEM MAY require that updates be transmitted via a digital medium that is delivered by a bonded and insured courier. To validate the provided files, the OEM and a known contact at the supplier MAY have a video call in which the supplier provides the cryptographic hashes of the metadata and/or images, and the OEM confirms that the hashes match.

An OEM SHOULD perform this verification even if a trusted transport mechanism is used to ensure the mechanism has not been compromised. If the suppliers have signed metadata, then the OEM SHOULD verify metadata and images by checking version numbers, expiration timestamps, delegations, signatures, and hashes, so that it can be sure that the metadata matches the images.

## **Testing metadata and images**

After the OEM has somehow verified the authenticity and integrity of new metadata and images received from the tier-1 supplier, the OEM SHOULD test both before releasing them to ensure that the images work as intended on end-user vehicles. To do so, It SHOULD use the following steps.

First, the OEM SHOULD add these metadata and images to the Image repository. It SHOULD also add information about these images to the inventory database, including any dependencies and conflicts between images for different ECUs. Both of these steps are done to make the new metadata and images available to vehicles.

Optionally, if images are encrypted on demand per ECU, then the OEM SHOULD ensure that the Director repository has access to the original, unencrypted images, so that automated processes running the Director repository are able to encrypt them in the first place. It does not matter how the original, unencrypted images are stored on the Director repository. For example, they MAY be stored

unencrypted, or they MAY be encrypted using a master key that is known by the automated processes. See the Preparing an ECU for Uptane section of this document for more details.

Second, the OEM SHOULD test the updated metadata and images on reserved vehicles, before releasing them to all vehicles in circulation. This step is done to verify whether these images work as intended. If testing is done, the OEM MAY instruct the Director repository to first install the updated images on these reserved vehicles.

Finally, the OEM SHOULD update the inventory database, so that the Director repository is able to instruct appropriate ECUs on all affected vehicles on how to install these updated images.

## **Backup and garbage collection for the Image repository**

The OEM SHOULD regularly perform backup and garbage collection of the metadata and images on the Image repository. This is done to ensure the OEM is able to safely recover from a repository compromise, and that the repository continues to have sufficient storage space. To do so, an OEM MAY use either the following steps, or its own corporate backup and garbage collection policy.

First, an automated process SHOULD store every file on the Image repository, as well as its cryptographic hash on a separate, offline system. A copy of the inventory database from the Director repository SHOULD also be stored on this offline system. This allows administrators to detect and recover from a repository compromise.

Second, the automated process SHOULD remove expired metadata from the Image repository to reclaim storage space. If the OEM is interested in supporting delta updates for vehicles that have not been updated for a long time, then the automated process SHOULD NOT remove images associated with expired metadata, because these images MAY be needed in order to compute delta images. (See the Delta update strategies subsection of the Customizing Uptane section of this document).

## **D. Managing signing keys and metadata expiration**

This section addresses both setup and maintenance issues for the signing keys used by Uptane. These include understanding the function of online vs. offline keys, the use of signing thresholds to improve security, and the management of metadata expiration dates.



## Normative references

There is much prior work on securely managing cryptographic key material. Implementers of Uptane **SHOULD** follow best practices outlined in IETF RFC 4107 / BCP 107 - Guidelines for Cryptographic Key Management.

## Repository keys

On both the Director and the Image repository, the OEM maintains the keys to the Root, Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets roles. However, for any delegated Targets roles on the Image repository, the corresponding keys are expected to be maintained by the supplier to which the corresponding images have been delegated. For example, if a tier-1 supplier signs its own images, then the supplier would maintain its own (ideally offline) keys.

### Online vs. offline keys

Repository administrators **SHOULD** use offline keys to sign the Root metadata on the Director repository, so attackers cannot tamper with this file after a repository compromise. The Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets metadata **SHOULD** be signed using online keys, so that an automated process can instantly generate fresh metadata.

On the Image repository, there are two options for signing the Timestamp and Snapshot metadata, each with the opposite trade-off from the other. In the first option, the OEM uses online keys, meaning automated processes for renewing the Timestamp and Snapshot metadata indicate when new Targets metadata and/or images are available. With this option, fresh metadata can be instantly generated by the automated process. However, in this scenario, attackers who have compromised a supplier's key as well as the Image repository could now instantly publish malicious images. If these attackers also compromise the Director repository, then they can execute arbitrary software attacks by selecting these malicious images on the Image repository for installation. Such an attack could also facilitate mix-and-match attacks.

In the second option, the OEM uses offline keys to sign Timestamp and Snapshot metadata, which reduces the risk of attackers immediately publishing malicious images. Here again, though, there is a trade-off, in this case related to the metadata expiration dates. If the Timestamp and Snapshot metadata expire relatively quickly, then it may be cumbersome to use offline keys to renew their signatures. However, if a longer expiration time is used, then a man-in-the-middle attacker would have more time with which to execute freeze attacks, hence defeating the purpose of the Timestamp role.

For most use cases, the online option may be best, but if stronger security guarantees are desired, consider using the offline option instead for the Timestamp and Snapshot roles.

The keys to all other roles (Root, Targets, and all delegations, which includes suppliers' keys) on the Image repository **SHOULD** be kept offline. This prevents a repository compromise from immediately affecting full verification ECUs. It is also a practical decision as these metadata are infrequently updated. It does not matter where an offline key is stored (e.g., in a Hardware Security Module, YubiKey, or a USB stick in a safe deposit box), as long as the key is not accessible from the repository. Each key **SHOULD** be kept separate from others, so that a compromise of one does not affect them all.

## Key thresholds

**Director repository** Since a compromise of the Root role keys would have the greatest impact on the Director repository, it **SHOULD** use a sufficiently large threshold number of keys, so that a single key compromise is insufficient to sign its metadata file. Each key **MAY** belong to a repository administrator. For example, if there are 8 administrators, then at least 5 keys **SHOULD** be required to sign the Root metadata file, so that a quorum is required to trust the metadata.

The Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets roles **MAY** each use a single key, because using more keys does not provide any additional security. If these keys are online, then attackers who compromise the repository can always use these online keys, regardless of their number.

**Metadata expiration times** Since the Root role keys on the Director repository are not expected to be revoked and replaced often, its metadata file **MAY** expire after a relatively long time, such as one year.

The Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets metadata files **SHOULD** expire relatively quickly, such as in a day, because they are used to indicate whether updated images are available.

Table 1 lists an example of expiration times for metadata files on the Director repository.

**Table 1.** *An example of the duration of time until the metadata for a role expires.*

**Image repository** For the Image repository, each role **MAY** use as many keys as is desired. However, the greater the impact of key compromise for a given role, then the greater the number of keys that it **SHOULD** use. Also, a threshold number of keys **SHOULD** be used, so that a single key compromise is generally

insufficient to sign new metadata. To further increase compromise resilience, each key SHOULD be unique across all roles.

Since the Root role has the highest impact when its keys are compromised, it SHOULD use a sufficiently large threshold number of keys. Each key MAY belong to a repository administrator. For example, if there are 8 administrators, then at least 5 keys SHOULD be required to sign the Root metadata file, so that a quorum is required trust the metadata.

Since the Targets role also has a high impact when its keys are compromised, it SHOULD also use a sufficiently large threshold number of keys. For example, 3 out of 4 keys MAY be required to sign the Targets metadata file.

Since the Timestamp and Snapshot roles have a relatively low impact when its keys are compromised, each role MAY use a small threshold number of keys. For example, each role MAY use 1 out of 2 keys to sign its metadata file.

Finally, each delegated Targets role SHOULD use at least 1 out of 2 keys to sign its metadata file, so that one key is available in case the other is lost. It is RECOMMENDED that the higher the number of ECUs that can be compromised if a delegated Targets role is compromised, then the higher the threshold number of keys that SHOULD be used to sign the role metadata.

**Metadata expiration times** The Uptane Standard requires all metadata files to have expiration times in order to prevent or limit freeze attacks. If ECUs know the time, then attackers cannot indefinitely replay outdated metadata, and hence, images. In general, the expiration date for a metadata file depends on how often it is updated. The more often that it is updated, then the faster it SHOULD expire, so that man-in-the-middle attackers are unable to execute freeze attacks for too long. Even if it is not updated frequently, it SHOULD expire after a bounded period of time, so that stolen or lost keys can be revoked and replaced.

Since the Root role keys are expected to be revoked and replaced relatively rarely, its metadata file MAY expire after a relatively long time, such as one year.

Table 2 lists an example of expiration times for metadata files on the Image repository.

**Table 2.** *An example number of keys that MAY be used by each role. Each role uses a threshold of  $(n, m)$  keys, where  $n$  out of  $m$  signatures are required to trust the signed metadata.*

## What to do in case of key compromise

An OEM and its suppliers SHOULD be prepared to handle a key compromise. If the recommended number and type of keys are used, this should be a rare

event. Nevertheless, when it happens OEMs and suppliers could use the following recovery procedures.

### **Director repository**

Since the Director repository **MUST** keep at least some software signing keys online, a compromise of this repository can lead to some security threats, such as mix-and-match attacks. Thus, the OEM **SHOULD** take great care to protect this repository and reduce its attack surface as much as possible. This **MAY** be done, in part, by using a firewall. However, if the repository has been compromised, then the following procedure **SHOULD** be performed in order to recover ECUs from the compromise. Following the type and placement of keys prescribed for the Director repository, we assume that attackers have compromised the online keys to the Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets roles, but not the offline keys to the Root role.

First, the OEM **SHOULD** use the Root role to revoke and replace the keys to the Timestamp, Snapshot, and Targets roles, because only the Root role can replace these keys.

Second, the OEM **SHOULD** consider a manual update of all vehicles in order to replace these keys, particularly if the vehicle has partial verification Secondaries. This update **MAY** be done by requiring vehicle owners to visit the nearest dealership. Although an OEM could replace these keys on a full verification ECU by using over-the-air broadcasts, a manual update is recommended because: 1. the OEM **SHOULD** perform a safety inspection of the vehicles, in case of security attacks, and 2. partial verification Secondaries are not designed to handle key revocation and replacement over-the-air. In order to update keys for partial verification Secondaries, the OEM **SHOULD** overwrite their copies of the Root metadata file, perhaps using new images.

After inspecting the vehicle, the OEM **SHOULD** replace and update metadata and images on all ECUs to ensure that the images are known to be safe and that partial verification Secondaries have replaced the keys for the Director repository.

### **Image repository**

If the recommendations for the type and placement of keys described above for the Image repository are followed, then a key compromise of this repository should be an unlikely event. However, should one occur, it is a much more serious affair. A compromise of the Image repository would allow attackers to tamper with images without being detected, and thus execute arbitrary software attacks. There are two cases for handling a key compromise, depending on whether the key is managed by a delegated supplier or by the OEM.

**Supplier-managed keys** In the first case, where a tier-1 supplier or one of its delegates has had one or more of its keys compromised, the supplier and its affected delegates (if any) **SHOULD** revoke and replace keys. They **SHOULD** update metadata, including delegations and images, and send them to the OEM.

The OEM **SHOULD** then manually update only affected vehicles that run software maintained by this supplier in order to replace metadata and images. This **MAY** be done by requiring vehicle owners to visit the nearest dealership. A manual update **SHOULD** be done because, without trusted hardware (such as a TPM), it is difficult to ensure that compromised ECUs can be remotely and securely updated. After inspecting the vehicle, the OEM **SHOULD** replace and update metadata and images on all ECUs so that these images are known to be safe.

**OEM-managed keys** The second case, where the OEM has had a key compromised, can be far more serious than the first case. An attacker in such a position may be able to execute attacks on all vehicles, depending on which keys have been compromised. If the keys are for the Timestamp and Snapshot roles, or the Targets or Root roles, then the OEM **SHOULD** use the following recovery procedure.

First, the OEM **SHOULD** use the Root role to revoke and replace keys for all affected roles. Second, it **SHOULD** restore all metadata and images on the Image repository to a known good state using an offline backup. Third, the OEM **SHOULD** manually update all vehicles in order to replace metadata and images. A manual update **SHOULD** be done, because without trusted hardware (such as a TPM), it is difficult to ensure that compromised ECUs can be remotely and securely updated.

## **ECU keys**

If ECU keys are compromised, then the OEM **SHOULD** manually update vehicles to replace these keys. This is the safest course of action, because after a key compromise, an OEM cannot be sure whether it is remotely replacing keys controlled by attackers or the intended ECUs.

An OEM **MAY** use the Director repository and its inventory database to infer whether ECU keys have been compromised. This database is used to record vehicle version manifests that list what images an ECU has installed over time. Therefore, an OEM **MAY** check for any abnormal patterns of installation that could have been caused by an ECU key compromise. Note, however, that this method is not perfect, because if attackers control ECU keys, then they can also use these keys to send fraudulent ECU version reports.

## E. Recommendations for secure customized Uptane implementations

In this section, we discuss how OEMs and suppliers may customize Uptane to meet special requirements.

### Scope of an update

An OEM and its suppliers MAY use an image to arbitrarily update some code and data on an ECU, but not all. In addition, an image can be used to update code only, data only, or any other combination of the two elements.

Examples of code updates delivered via an image include the bootloader, shared libraries, or the application that provides the actual functions of the ECU. Examples of data updates include setup or initialization data, such as engine parameters, application data, such as maps, and user data, such as an address book or system logs.

code	Boot-loader	Shared libraries	Application (e.g., infotainment)	
	Setup / initialization data (e.g., engine parameters)		Application data (e.g., maps)	User data (e.g., address book, system logs)
data				

**Figure 1.** *An example of how code and/or data may constitute an image.*

### Delta update strategies

In order to save bandwidth costs, Uptane allows an OEM to deliver updates as delta images. A delta image update contains only the code and/or data that

differs from the image currently installed on the ECU. In order to use delta images, the OEM SHOULD make the following changes.

The OEM SHOULD add two types of information used by the Director repository to the custom Targets metadata: (1) the algorithm used to apply a delta image, and (2) the Targets metadata about the delta image. This is done so that ECUs know how to apply and verify the delta image. The Director repository SHOULD also be modified to produce delta images, because Uptane does not require it to compute deltas by default. The Director repository can use the vehicle version manifest and dependency resolution to determine the differences between the previous and latest images. If desired, the Director repository MAY encrypt the delta image.

As these images are produced on demand by the Director repository, Primaries SHOULD download all delta and/or encrypted images only from that source. After full verification of metadata, Primaries SHOULD also check whether delta images match the Targets metadata from the Director repository in the same manner in which they check such metadata from the Director repository when using non-delta images.

Finally, in order to install a delta image, an ECU SHOULD take one of the actions described in Table 1, depending on whether or not the delta image has been encrypted, and if the ECU has additional storage. Note that the OEM MAY use stream ciphers in order to enable on-the-fly decryption on ECUs that do not have additional storage. In this case, the ECU would decrypt the delta image as it is downloaded, then follow the remainder of the steps in the third box.

Is the delta image encrypted?	Is there additional storage?	Action
No	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Download the delta image from the Primary.</li> <li>• Build the latest image by applying the delta image directly to the previous working image.</li> <li>• If the latest image does not match the metadata about the full unencrypted image stored on the Director repository: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Abort the update</li> <li>◦ Take the necessary steps to recover or reinstall the previous working image (e.g., by downloading a backup of the previous working image from the Primary).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the previous working image.</li> <li>• Build the latest image by copying the previous image, and applying the delta image.</li> <li>• If the latest image does not match the metadata about the full, unencrypted image stored on the Director repository: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Recover the previous working image from additional storage.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Yes	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Download the delta image from the Primary, and keep it on volatile memory.</li> <li>• Decrypt the delta image in-place on volatile memory.</li> <li>• Build the latest image by applying the delta image on volatile memory onto the previous working image on non-volatile memory.</li> <li>• If the latest image does not match the metadata about the full, unencrypted image stored on the Director repository: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Abort the update</li> <li>◦ Take the necessary steps to recover or reinstall the previous working image (e.g., by downloading a backup of the previous working image from the Primary).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the previous working image.</li> <li>• Decrypt the delta image in-place.</li> <li>• Build the latest image by copying the previous image, and applying the delta image.</li> <li>• If the latest image does not match the metadata about the full, unencrypted image stored on the Director repository, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Recover the previous working image from additional storage.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Table 1.** *The actions an ECU SHOULD take to install a delta image as determined by its access to additional storage and whether or not the image is encrypted*



## Dynamic delta updates vs. precomputed delta updates

Delta updates can be computed two different ways: dynamically for each ECU during the installation process (dynamic delta updates), or in advance of installation by precomputing likely possible delta images (precomputed delta updates). Both types of updates appear below in the subsection on custom installation instructions.

Dynamic delta updates reduce the amount of data sent in each update, while allowing for fine-grained control of what version is installed on each ECU. By using the custom field of the Targets metadata, the Director can be configured to specify a particular version of software for every ECU. Dynamic delta updates allow the Director to track resources at file granularity, which can save bandwidth.

A drawback of dynamic delta updates is that, if many ECUs are updating from the same version, computing the delta of each can result in duplicate computation that could be time consuming or use up a lot of memory. A possible solution to this is to use precomputed delta updates.

To send precomputed delta updates, the Director precomputes various probable diffs and makes these available as images. The Director then specifies which precomputed image to send to each ECU by using the custom field of Targets metadata, as described below in the Adding dynamic directions subsection. Precomputing the delta images has the added advantage of allowing these images to be stored on the Image repository, which offers additional security against a Director compromise.

## Uptane in conjunction with other protocols

Implementers MAY use Uptane in conjunction with existing protocols for sending updates to the vehicle, such as in the following scenarios:

Implementers MAY use TLS to encrypt the connection between Primaries and the Image and Director repositories, as well to the source used to provide the current time.

Implementers MAY use OMA Device Management (OMA-DM) to send Uptane metadata, images, and other messages to Primaries.

Implementers MAY use Unified Diagnostic Services (UDS) to transport Uptane metadata, images, and other messages between Primaries and Secondaries.

Any system being used to transport images to ECUs will need to be modified only to permit transport of Uptane metadata and other messages. Note that Uptane does not require authentication of network traffic between the Director and Image repositories and Primaries, or between Primaries and Secondaries.

However, in order for an implementation to be Uptane-compliant, no ECU can cause another to install an image without performing either full or partial

verification of metadata. This is done in order to prevent attackers from being able to bypass Uptane and execute arbitrary software attacks. Thus, in an Uptane-compliant implementation, an ECU performs either full or partial verification of metadata and images before installing any image, regardless of how the metadata and images were transmitted to the ECU.

## Using Uptane with transport security

Uptane is designed to retain strong security guarantees even in the face of a network attacker. This includes situations where there either is no transport security or where the transport security is compromised by an attacker. Should this occur, Uptane may not be able to prevent an attacker from disrupting communication between the vehicle and the OEM (e.g., by jamming the signal or dropping packets). However, it does prevent malicious packages from being installed or mix-and-match attacks from being launched, and a number of other threat scenarios from being realized. This is similar to how a network attacker who has not compromised a key may be able to cause a TLS connection to fail to connect or disconnect (e.g., by dropping network packets), but cannot compromise the integrity or confidentiality of the connection.

Uptane's security is orthogonal to security systems at other network layers, such as transport security or data link security. However, there are several reasons why a party may wish to use a security system at the transport layer in coordination with Uptane:

- If a security system at the transport layer is already deployed for other services or is effectively free to deploy, there is little reason not to use it. For example, it may be beneficial to have a common system provide authentication for all services in a vehicle.
- Regulations may require or recommend that security be provided at the transport layer. Hence, a secure transport system may be required for non-technical reasons.
- Using Uptane over a transport layer security system does not weaken its own security properties. If the cost is low, then this may be viewed as adding defense-in-depth, especially if the security system can improve detection, mitigation, or reporting of network disruptions.
- Security at the transport layer provides forensic proof of origin and destination when strong mutual authentication is used. This may be necessary for compliance with OTA update standards and various current draft regulations.

## Multiple Primaries

We expect that the most common deployment configuration of Uptane on vehicles would feature one Primary per vehicle. However, there may be cases where having multiple, active Primaries in a vehicle would be useful. One such case would be providing redundancy if some, but not all, Primaries fail permanently. The OEM MAY use this setup to design a failover system in which one Primary takes over when another fails. If so, then the OEM SHOULD take note of the following considerations in order to prevent safety issues.

It is highly RECOMMENDED that, in any given vehicle, there be a single, active Primary. This is because using multiple, active Primaries to update Secondaries can lead to problems in consistency, especially when different Primaries try to update the same Secondaries. If an implementation is not careful, race conditions could cause Secondaries to install an inconsistent set of updates, with some ECUs installing updates from one Primary, while others take their updates from the second Primary. This can cause ECUs to fail to interoperate.

If multiple Primaries are active in the vehicle at the same time, then each Primary SHOULD control a mutually exclusive set of Secondaries, so that each Secondary is controlled only by one Primary.

## Atomic installation of a bundle of images

An OEM may wish to require atomic installation of a bundle of images, which means that if one or more update in the bundle fails, none of them will be installed. Uptane does not provide a way to guarantee such atomic installation because the problem is out of its scope. It is challenging for ECUs to atomically install a bundle in the face of arbitrary failure. If just one ECU fails to install its update for any reason, such as a hardware failure, then the guarantee is lost. Furthermore, different OEMs and suppliers already have established ways of solving this problem. Nevertheless, we discuss several different solutions for those who require guidance on this technique.

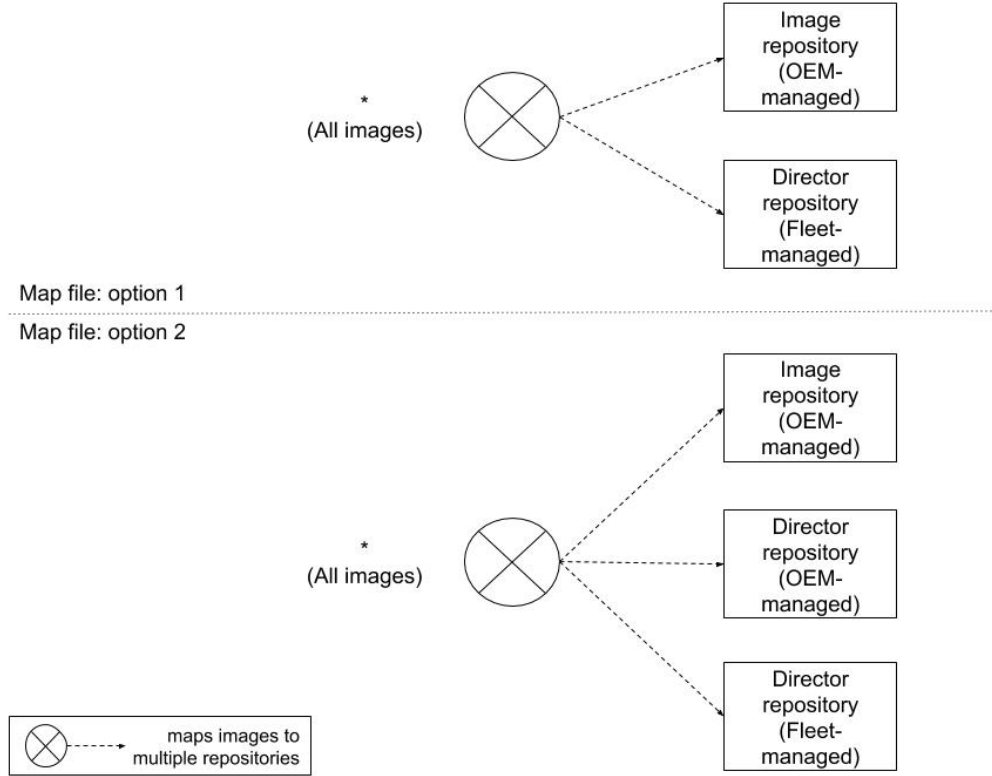
The simplest solution is to use the vehicle version manifest to report any atomic installation failures to the Director repository, and then not retry installation. After receiving the report, it is up to the OEM to decide how to respond. For example, the OEM MAY require the owner of the vehicle to diagnose the failure at the nearest dealership or authorized mechanic.

Another simple solution is for the Primary and/or Director to retry a bundle installation until it either succeeds or reaches a set maximum number of retries. This solution has the advantage of not requiring ECUs to perform a rollback if a bundle is not fully installed, a step ECUs without additional storage cannot perform.

If all ECUs do have additional storage, and can perform a rollback, then the

OEM may use a two-phase commit protocol. We assume that a gateway ECU would act as the coordinator, which ensures that updates are installed atomically. This technique should ensure atomic installation as long as: (1) the gateway ECU behaves correctly and has not been compromised, and (2) the gateway ECU does not fail permanently. It is considerably less complicated than Byzantine-fault tolerant protocols, which may have a higher computation/communication overhead. However, this technique does not provide other security guarantees. For example, the gateway ECU may show different bundles to different Secondaries at the same time.

## 2nd-party fleet management



**Figure 2.** *Two options for fleet management with Uptane.*

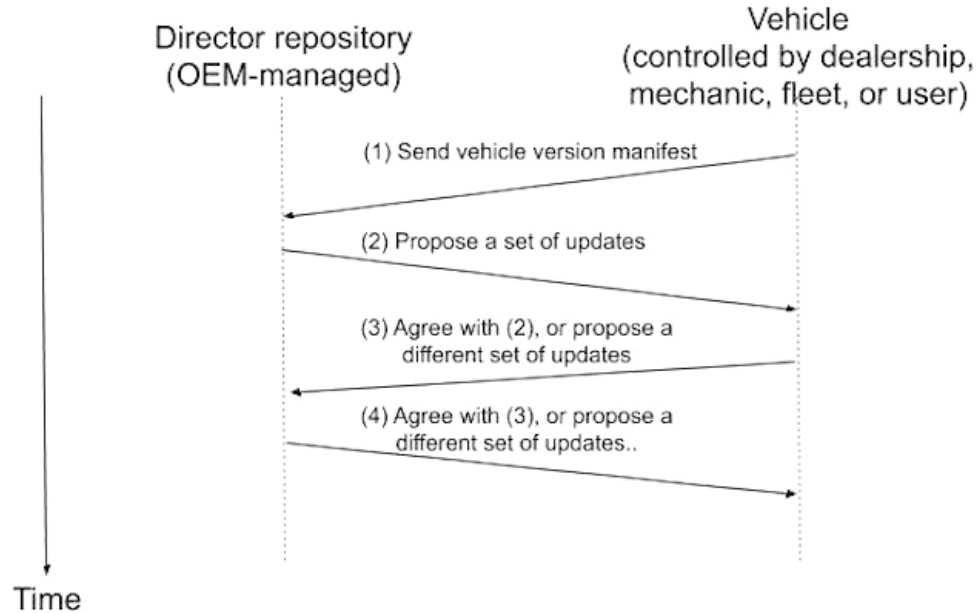
Some parties, such as vehicle rental companies or the military, may wish to

exercise control on how their own fleet of vehicles are updated. Uptane offers two options for serving these users, as illustrated in Figure 2. Choosing between them depends on whether the fleet manager wishes to have either complete control, or better compromise-resilience.

In the first option, which we expect to be the common case, a fleet manager would configure the mapping metadata on ECUs such that Primaries and full verification Secondaries would only trust an image that has been signed by *both* the OEM-managed Image repository and the fleet-managed Director repository. Partial verification Secondaries would only trust an image if it has been signed by the fleet-managed Director repository. The upside of this option is that the fleet manager, instead of the OEM, has complete control over which updates are installed on its vehicles. The downside of this option is that if the fleet-managed Directory repository is compromised, attackers can execute mix-and-match attacks.

In the second option, a fleet manager would configure the mapping metadata on ECUs such that Primaries and full verification Secondaries would trust an image that has been signed by *three* repositories: the OEM-managed Image repository, the OEM-managed Director repository, and the fleet-managed Director repository. The upside of this option is that attackers cannot execute mix-and-match attacks if they have compromised only one of the Director repositories. The downside of this option is that updates cannot be installed on vehicles unless both the OEM and fleet agree on which images should be installed. This agreement may require both Director repositories to communicate using an out-of-band channel. Using this option also means that partial verification Secondaries should be configured to trust the Director repository managed by either the OEM or the fleet, but not both, since these Secondaries may only be able to check for one signature.

## User-customized updates



**Figure 3.** *An OEM MAY allow a third party to negotiate which updates are installed.*

In its default implementation, Uptane allows only the OEM to fully control which updates are installed on which ECUs on which vehicles. Thus, there is no third party input about updates from a dealership, mechanic, fleet manager, or the end-user. There are very good reasons, such as legal considerations, for enforcing this constraint. However, sharing this capability exists to the extent that the OEM wishes to make it available. We discuss two options for doing so.

In the first option, an OEM MAY elect to receive input from a third party as to which updates should be installed. The process is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Step 1:** The vehicle submits its vehicle version manifest to the Director repository controlled by the OEM. The manifest lists which updates are currently installed.

**Step 2:** The Director repository performs dependency resolution using the manifest, and proposes a set of updates.

**Step 3:** The third party either agrees with the OEM, or proposes a different set of updates. This step SHOULD be authenticated (e.g., using client certificates, or username and password encrypted over TLS), so that only authorized third

parties are allowed to negotiate with the OEM.

**Step 4:** The OEM either agrees with the third party, or proposes a different set of updates.

The third and fourth steps MAY be repeated up to a maximum number of retries, until both the OEM and the third party agree as to which updates should be installed.

In the second option, the third party MAY choose to override the root of trust for ECUs, provided that the OEM makes this possible. Specifically, the third party may overwrite the map and Root metadata file on ECUs, so that updates are trusted and installed from repositories managed by the third party instead of the OEM. The OEM may infer whether a vehicle has done so by using its inventory database to see if the vehicle has recently been updated from its repositories. The OEM MAY choose not to make this option available to third parties by, for example, using a Hardware Security Module (HSM) to store Uptane code and data, so that third parties cannot override the root of trust.

## ECUs without filesystems

Currently, implementation instructions are written with the implicit assumptions that: (1) ECUs are able to parse the string filenames of metadata and images, and that (2) ECUs may have filesystems to read and write these files. However, not all ECUs, especially partial verification Secondaries, may fit these assumptions. There are two important observations:

First, filenames need not be strings. Even if there is no explicit notion of “files” on an ECU, it is important for distinct pieces of metadata and images to have distinct names. This is needed for Primaries to perform full verification on behalf of Secondaries, which entails comparing the metadata for different images for different Secondaries. Either strings or numbers may be used to refer to distinct metadata and images, as long as different *files* have different *file* names or numbers. The Image and Director repositories can continue to use file systems, and may also use either strings or numbers to represent *file* names.

Second, ECUs need not have a filesystem in order to use Uptane. It is only important that ECUs are able to recognize distinct metadata and images by using either strings or numbers as *file* names or numbers, and that they can allocate different parts of storage to different *files*.

## Custom installation instructions for ECUs

Most inputs to ECUs are delivered as signed Targets files, stored on the Image directory, and then sent to the ECU by the Director. However, there may be some cases where the inputs required for a particular customization cannot be

configured to follow this standard signing process. Variations in input may be due to not knowing the input in advance, or a need to customize instructions for each vehicle. Examples of such inputs could be a command line option that turns on a feature in certain ECUs, a configuration sent by a Director repository to an ECU, or a Director doing a dynamic customization for an ECU. We can collectively call all these non-standard inputs “dynamic directions.” Uptane allows ECUs to access dynamic directions in two different ways, each having particular advantages for different use cases.

### **Accessing dynamic directions through signed images from the Director repository**

The first option for providing dynamic directions is to slightly modify the standard delivery procedure described above. The Director repository would still send a signed image to the ECU, but this file would not be stored on – or validated by – the Image repository. As the Image repository is controlled by offline keys, it cannot validate a file created dynamically by the Director.

Even though the Image repository cannot sign the file, this modification still provides some security protections. The ECU would continue to have rollback protection for a file sent this way, as a release counter will still be included in the metadata and incremented for each new version. If additional validation is needed, the file could be put on multiple repositories created for this purpose. These repositories could behave similar to the Director repository, but would all have separate keys to allow for additional security. The Primary ECU will be aware of these extra repositories so it can check for consistency by downloading and comparing the image from all repositories.

### **Adding dynamic directions to the custom field of Targets metadata**

Another way to provide dynamic directions is to use the custom field of the Targets metadata file. This field provides the option to include custom inputs to individual ECUs. Using the custom field is an especially good option for managing small variations in the existing image. For example, a compilation flag to enable a navigation feature might be set on some ECUs, but not on others. The custom field could contain dynamic directions, and additional subfields would help determine for which ECUs the direction is intended. In this flag example, the Director can put the ECU ID and the flag into the custom field so the flag will be used during the installation process only on that particular ECU. This custom field can then be included in the Targets metadata received by all ECUs. The intended ECU would be able to check for this flag and use it during an installation or update to enable the navigation system.

However, note that using this method of providing dynamic directions means that a compromise of the Director repository might be able to cause ECUs to



misconfigure their images. One way to mitigate this risk would be to require the Image repository to sign off on exactly the same directions using its own custom Targets metadata. However, this is difficult to achieve considering that such directions are supposed to be dynamic in the first place. Therefore, proceed, if necessary, with caution.

### **Picking an option: security tradeoff**

In choosing whether to send dynamic directions through the custom field of the Targets metadata from either the Director or the Image repository, one needs to consider how security-sensitive the receiving ECU may be.

Using the Director repository to encode dynamic directions provides more flexibility, as directions can be made or changed on demand. However, there is a significant trade off in terms of security. Should the Directory repository be compromised, attackers would have this same power. This has important ramifications for ECUs that perform partial, or even full, verification. On the other hand, using the Image repository provides the opposite tradeoff. Dynamic directions are more secure, but offer less flexibility to make changes.

It is important to consider this tradeoff when deciding how to send dynamic directions. If the ECU is security critical, these directions should be sent using the custom field of Targets metadata and stored on the Image repository. In any case, using either repository should not result in significant bandwidth costs for ECUs, as ECUs that perform partial verification should continue to receive only directions for itself from the Director repository.

### **Location-based updates**

Certain types of updates, like maps, rules-of-the-road, or traffic notifications, are only relevant to vehicles within a specific location. These location-based updates require that a device be able to report its location in some way. For example, the device could obtain its location by using a GPS sensor and report it as custom metadata in the vehicle version manifest using the “geo:” UI scheme defined in RFC 5870.

Such a system would require a way to reference location for all applicable targets in the custom section of the Targets metadata for the Image repository. The Director would then be responsible for identifying devices whose locations match those of targets on the Image repository. If a match is found, the Director SHOULD update its Targets metadata to instruct the relevant devices to install the location-based updates appropriate for their positions.

It is possible that the vehicle’s position may have changed by the time the vehicle receives a location-based update. The device MAY check that its current position

matches that of the target before installation, and the implementer MAY decide to abort the update if the location no longer matches.

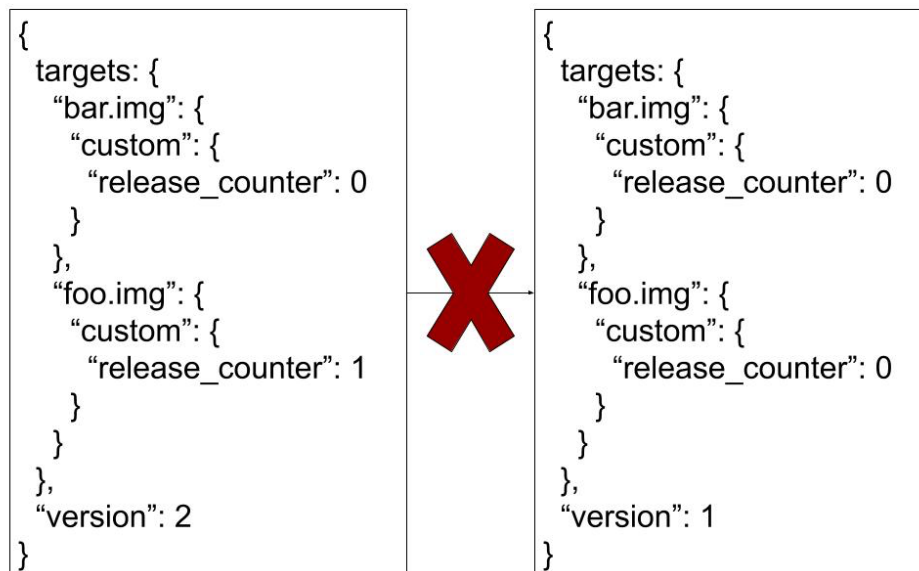
## **F. Performing exceptional operations**

In this section, we discuss operations that are generally performed only in exceptional cases. As performing these operations may have security implications for software updates, they should be carried out with great care.

### **Rolling back software**

Sometimes an OEM may determine that the latest updates are less reliable than previous ones. In that case, it may be necessary to roll back to a previous update.

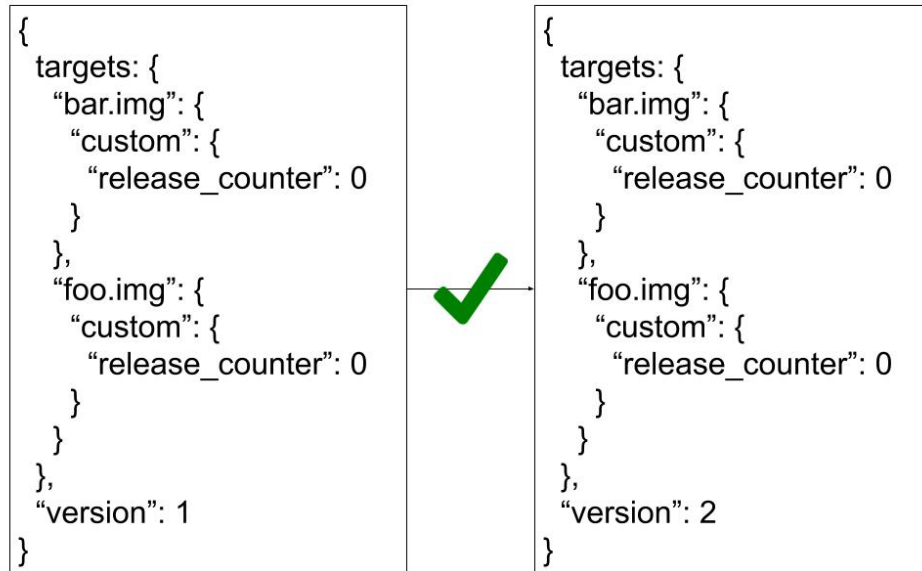
By default, Uptane does not allow updates to be rolled back and enforces this action with two mechanisms. First, Uptane rejects any new metadata file with a version number lower than the one contained in the previous metadata file. Second, Uptane will reject any new image associated with a release counter that is lower than the release counter of the previous image in the previous Targets metadata file. The first mechanism prevents an attacker from replaying an old metadata file. The second mechanism prevents an attacker who compromises the Director repository from being able to choose old versions of images, despite being able to sign new metadata. See Figure 1 for an example.



**Figure 1.** *Uptane prevents rollback attacks by rejecting older: (1) metadata files, and/or (2) images.*

There are at least two ways to allow rollbacks, each with different advantages and disadvantages.

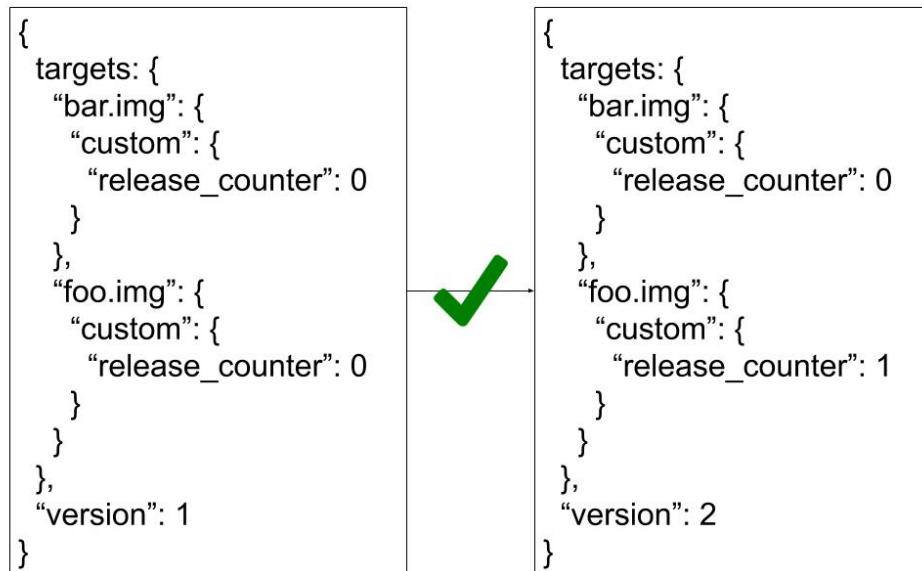
In the first option, an OEM MAY choose to never increment the release counters of images (see Figure 2). Uptane will accept any new image associated with a release counter, as long as it is equal to the release counter of the previous image in the previous Targets metadata file. If release counters are never incremented, then all images would have the same release counters. In this situation, an ECU would accept the installation of any compatible image referred to in the new Targets metadata. (See the Enhanced Security Practices section of this document for more details.)



**Figure 2.** *Uptane allows the installation of images that have the same release counter as what is currently installed.*

The advantage to this method is that it is simple. It allows the OEM to easily install interchangeable versions of the same image. In the example shown in Figure 2, “foo.img” may simply be a version of “bar.img” containing diagnostic functions. Therefore, the OEM may install either “bar.img” or “foo.img” on the same ECU. The disadvantage of this method is that it allows attackers who compromise the Director repository to install obsolete images they can use to execute rollback attacks. Therefore, this method **SHOULD NOT** be used.

In the second option, an OEM increments the release counter of an image whenever it is critical that an ECU not install images with lower release counters. In the example in Figure 3, if an ECU installs “foo.img,” then it cannot install “bar.img.” This is done to prevent the installation of compatible images with lower release counters that have known security vulnerabilities, rather than newer images in which these vulnerabilities have been fixed.



**Figure 3.** *Uptane forbids the installation of images with lower release counters than what is currently installed.*

The advantage to this method is that it prevents rollback attacks in a situation where attackers compromise only the Director repository. However, there are two disadvantages. First, the release counters for images have to be maintained, even if role B now signs for images previously signed by role A. This is because release counters are always compared to previous Targets metadata files. Second, it is more cumbersome to roll back updates, or deliberately cause ECUs to install older images, because the release counters of these older images are incremented in the new Targets metadata for the Image repository with offline keys. However, this method **SHOULD** be preferred, because it is more secure. See the Enhanced Security Practices section of this document for more techniques that can be used to limit rollback attacks when the Director repository is compromised.

## Adding, removing, or replacing ECUs

Sometimes, it may be necessary for a dealership or mechanic to replace a particular ECU in a vehicle, or even add or remove one. This will mean that the vehicle version manifest will change – even if the replacement ECU is an

identical model, it will have a different ECU key. The Director may detect this as an attack, as an ECU suddenly using a new signing key could be indicative of a compromised ECU.

We recommend dealing with this use case by establishing an out-of-band process that allows authorized mechanics to report a change to the OEM. By doing so, the change in ECU configuration is recorded in the inventory database. Exactly what that process looks like will depend on the size of the manufacturer and the relative frequency of ECU replacements.

- A small luxury automaker might simply choose to allow authorized mechanics to send an email or make a phone call to an aftersales support person with the details of the new ECU, and have that person manually enter the details.
- A larger automaker might choose to deploy a dealer portal (i.e., a private, authenticated website) to allow authorized service centers to enter the details of the new ECU configuration themselves.

Another option for updating the ECU configuration is to have a process that temporarily “unlocks” an ECU configuration, allowing the vehicle’s Primary to directly report its new configuration (as opposed to having the mechanic enter the details of the replaced ECU). There is a tradeoff here. While it streamlines the repair process, automating this step increases the risk that a real attack could go unnoticed.

Note, however, that these are only recommendations. Uptane does not prescribe a protocol for this use case, because it is an orthogonal problem to software *update* security. The advantage of this approach is that an OEM is free to solve this problem using existing solutions that it may already have in place.

### **Aftermarket ECUs**

A slightly more difficult use case to deal with are aftermarket ECUs – for example, 3rd-party replacement parts, or add-on ECUs that add functionality for commercial fleet management. One approach is to work with the ECU manufacturer and treat them like any other tier-1 supplier. (The addition of the aftermarket ECU would be managed in one of the ways recommended in the previous subsection.) However, this may not be economically feasible in many cases. The easiest alternative is to simply exclude the aftermarket ECU from receiving OTA updates.

Some aftermarket ECUs, such as those designed for fleet management or monitoring, may have their own independent internet connection, and thus do not need to be integrated into the OEM’s update system at all.

## Adding or removing a supplier

Due to changes in business relationships, an OEM may need to add or remove a tier-1 supplier from its repositories.

To add a tier-1 supplier, OEMs SHOULD use the following steps. All three steps should be performed using the guidelines in the Normal Operating Procedures section of this document. First, if the supplier signs its own images, then the OEM SHOULD add a delegation to the supplier on the Image repository. Second, the supplier SHOULD deliver metadata and/or images to the OEM. Finally, the OEM SHOULD add the metadata and images to its repositories, possibly test them, and then release them to the affected vehicles.

To safely remove a tier-1 supplier, the OEM SHOULD use the following steps. First, it SHOULD delete the corresponding delegation from the Targets role on the Image repository, as well as all metadata and images belonging to that supplier, so that their metadata and images are no longer trusted. Second, it SHOULD also delete information about the supplier from the Director repository, such as its images, as well as its dependencies and conflicts, so that the Director repository no longer chooses these images for installation. In order to continue to update vehicles with ECUs originally maintained by this supplier, the OEM SHOULD replace this supplier with another delegation, either maintained by itself or by another tier-1 supplier.

Note that to comply with the Standard, the Snapshot metadata must continue to list the removed delegation in order to prevent a rollback attack. However, if the OEM rotates the Timestamp and Snapshot keys (and pushes new Root metadata with the new keys), the delegation may be safely removed from the Snapshot metadata. As the ECU will need to clear out any existing Snapshot metadata due to the rotation, the check that each Targets metadata filename listed in the previous Snapshot metadata is also listed in the new Snapshot metadata will (trivially) not apply.

Tier-1 suppliers are free to manage delegations to members within its own organizations, or tier-2 suppliers (who may delegate, in turn, to tier-3 suppliers, and so on), without involving the OEM.

## Key compromise

See Key Management.

## G. Enhanced security practices

Uptane is a flexible system and therefore can be adapted for increased security if an OEM or supplier deems it necessary. In this section, we discuss several of

these techniques.

### **Restricting image installation with custom hardware IDs**

Before an ECU installs a new image, it SHOULD always check the hardware type of the image. This can prevent attackers from causing an ECU to install arbitrary images it was not intended to have. Furthermore, an OEM and/or its suppliers SHOULD include certain information about images in the Targets metadata to prevent the installation of these arbitrary images if the Director repository should be compromised.

Consider the following example in which attackers have compromised the Director repository. If certain mitigating steps have been taken, such as using release counters, they cannot rollback software updates. Furthermore, without an additional key compromise, attackers cannot cause arbitrary software attacks on Primaries and full verification Secondaries. However, attackers can cause the ECUs of one hardware type to install images intended for another hardware type. To use an analogy, this is similar to causing Linkedsys routers to install images intended for NetGear routers.

Simply having ECU identifiers (e.g., serial numbers) specified in the Targets metadata signed by the Director repository does not solve this problem, because: (1) they are used by the Director repository only to instruct which ECU should install which image, and (2) they are not specified in the Targets metadata signed on the Image repository because it is impractical to list all ECU identifiers that pertain to an image.

In order to avoid this problem, the custom Targets metadata about unencrypted images on the Image repository SHOULD always include hardware identifiers. A hardware identifier allows an OEM and/or its suppliers to succinctly capture an entire class of ECUs without listing each of their identifiers. Note that the OEM and/or its suppliers SHOULD ensure that hardware identifiers are unique across different hardware types of ECUs, so that attackers who compromise the Director repository cannot cause ECUs of one type to install images intended for another type.

### **Preventing rollback attacks in case of Director compromise**

In the Performing Exceptional Operations section of this document, we discuss how an OEM and/or its suppliers SHOULD use release counters in order to prevent rollback attacks in case of a Director repository compromise. To further limit the impact of such an attack scenario, the OEM and/or its suppliers SHOULD also use the following recommendations.

First, they SHOULD diligently remove obsolete images from new versions of Targets metadata files uploaded to the Image repository. This can prevent



attackers who compromise the Director repository from being able to choose these obsolete images for installation. This method has a downside in that it complicates the update process for vehicles that require an intermediate update step. For example, an ECU has previously installed image A, and C is the latest image it should install. However, the ECU should install image B before it installs C, and B has already been removed from the Targets metadata on the Image repository in order to prevent or limit rollback attacks. Thus, the OEM and/or its suppliers needs to carefully balance these requirements in making the decision to remove obsolete images from the Targets metadata.

Second, they SHOULD decrease the expiration timestamps on all Targets metadata uploaded to the Image repository so they expire more quickly. This can prevent attackers who compromise the Director repository from being able to choose these obsolete images. Unfortunately, Targets metadata that expires quickly needs to be updated more frequently. This may make it harder to prevent accidental freeze attacks, as an ECU needs to be able to update both the time from the Time Server and metadata from the Image repository. In the event that the ECU is able to update metadata, but not the time, it can continue working with the previously installed image, but would be unable to update to the latest image. The Director repository can detect this unlikely event using the vehicle version manifest. In this case, the OEM MAY require the owner of the vehicle to diagnose the problem at the nearest dealership or authorized mechanic.

### **Broadcasting vs. unicasting metadata inside the vehicle**

An implementation of Uptane MAY have a Primary unicast metadata to Secondaries. In this scenario, the Primary would send metadata separately to each Secondary. However, this method is vulnerable to network disruptions and can cause ECUs to see different versions of metadata released by repositories at different times.

In order to mitigate this problem, it is RECOMMENDED that a Primary use a broadcast network, such as CAN, CAN FD, or Ethernet to transmit metadata to all of its Secondaries at the same time. Note that this still does not guarantee that ECUs will always see the same versions of metadata at any time. This is because network traffic between Primaries and Secondaries may still get disrupted, especially if they are connected through intermediaries, such as gateways. Nevertheless, it should still be better than unicasting.

If an update is intended to be applied to a gateway itself, it should be updated either before or after (but not during) update operations to ECUs on the other side of the gateway. This can help to avoid the disruption described above.

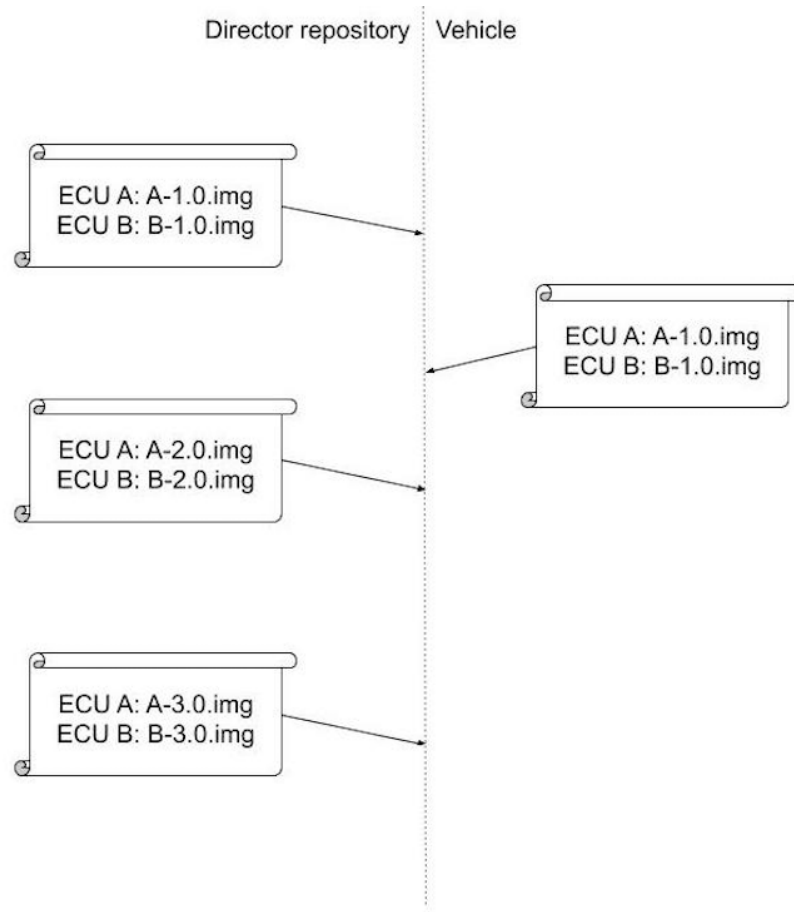
## Dependencies and conflicts between ECUs

When installing an image on any given ECU, there may be *dependencies*, or a set of other images that SHOULD also be installed on other ECUs in order for the image to work. Likewise, the same image and ECU may have *conflicts*, or a set of other images that SHOULD NOT be installed on other ECUs. *Dependency resolution* is the process of determining which versions of the latest images and their dependencies can be installed without conflicts.

**Checking dependencies and conflicts** There are three options for checking dependencies and conflicts:

1. **Only ECUs check dependencies and conflicts.** This information should be included in the Targets metadata on the Image repository, and should not add substantially to bandwidth costs. The upside is that, without offline keys, attackers cannot cause ECUs to fail to satisfy dependencies and prevent conflicts. The downside is that it can add to computational costs, because dependency resolution is generally an NP-hard problem. However, it is possible to control the computational costs if some constraints are imposed.
2. **Only the Director repository checks dependencies and conflicts.** This is currently the default on Uptane. The upside is that the computational costs are pushed to a powerful server. The downside is that attackers who compromise the Director repository can tamper with dependency resolution.
3. **Both ECUs and the Director repository check dependencies and conflicts.** To save computational costs, and avoid having each ECU perform dependency resolutions, only the Primaries and full verification Secondaries may be required to double-check the dependency resolution performed by the Director repository. Note that this is not an NP-hard problem because these ECUs simply need to check that there is no conflict between the Director and Image repositories. The trade-off is that when Primaries are compromised, Secondaries have to depend on the Director repository.

**Managing dependencies and conflicts** Generally speaking, the Director repository SHOULD NOT issue a new bundle that may conflict with images listed on the last vehicle version manifest, and therefore known with complete certainty to have been installed on the vehicle. This is because a partial bundle installation attack could mean the ECUs have only partly installed any images sent after the last vehicle version manifest. If the Director repository is not careful in handling this issue, the vehicle may end up installing conflicting images that will cause ECUs to fail to interoperate.



**Figure 1.** *A series of hypothetical exchanges between a Director repository and a vehicle.*

Consider the series of messages exchanged between a Director repository and a vehicle in Figure 1.

- In the first bundle of updates, the Director repository instructs ECUs A and B to install the images A-1.0.img and B-1.0.img, respectively. Later, the vehicle sends a vehicle version manifest stating that these ECUs have now installed these images.
- In the second bundle, the Director repository instructs these ECUs to install the images A-2.0.img and B-2.0.img, respectively. However, for some unknown reason, the vehicle does not send a new vehicle version manifest in response.
- In the third bundle of updates, the Director repository instructs these

ECUs to install the images A-3.0.img and B-3.0.img. However, it has not received a new vehicle version manifest from the vehicle stating that both ECUs have installed the second bundle. Furthermore, the Director repository knows that B-1.0 and C-3.0 conflict with each other. The only thing the Director repository can be certain of is that B has installed either B-1.0 or B-2.0, and C has installed either C-1.0 or C-2.0. Thus, the Director repository **SHOULD NOT** send the third bundle to the vehicle, because B-1.0 from the first bundle may still be installed, which would conflict with C-3.0 from the third bundle.

- Therefore, the Director repository **SHOULD NOT** issue the third bundle until it has received a vehicle version manifest from the vehicle that confirms that ECUs B and C have installed the second bundle, which is known to contain images that do not conflict with the third bundle.
- In conclusion, the Director repository **SHOULD NOT** issue a new bundle until it has received confirmation via the vehicle version manifest that no image known to have been installed conflicts with the new images in the new bundle.

If the Director repository is not able to update a vehicle for any reason, then it **SHOULD** raise the issue to the OEM.

### **ASN.1 decoding**

If an OEM chooses to use ASN.1 to encode and decode metadata and other messages, then it **SHOULD** take great care in decoding the ASN.1 messages. Improper decoding of ASN.1 messages may lead to arbitrary code execution or denial-of-service attacks. For example, see CVE-2016-2108 and attacks on a well-known ASN.1 compiler.

In order to avoid these problems, whenever possible OEMs and suppliers **SHOULD** use ASN.1 decoders that have been comprehensively tested via unit tests and fuzzing.

Furthermore, following best practices, we recommend that DER encoding is used instead of BER and CER, because DER provides a unique encoding of values.

### **Balancing EEPROM performance and security**

Many ECUs use EEPROM which, practically speaking, can be written to only a limited number of times. This in turn can impose limits on how often these ECUs can be updated.

In order to analyze this problem, let us recap what new information should be downloaded in every software update cycle:

1. The Primary writes and sends the latest vehicle version manifest to the Director repository.
2. If a Time Server is used, all Secondaries write and send fresh tokens to the Primary.
3. All ECUs download, verify, and write the latest downloaded time from the Time Server, or whatever source is used to provide the current accurate time.
4. All ECUs download, verify, and write metadata from the Director and/or Image repositories.
5. At some point, ECUs download, verify, and write images.
6. At some point, ECUs install new images. Then, they sign, and write the latest ECU version reports.

Let us make two important observations.

First, it is not necessary to continually refresh the time apart from a software update cycle. This is because: (1) the time may not be successfully updated, (2) an ECU **SHOULD** be able to boot to a valid image, even if its metadata has expired, and (3) it is necessary to check only that the metadata for the latest downloaded updates has not expired.

Indeed, there is a risk to implementers updating time information too frequently. For example, if time information is made once per day, it can cause flash devices with 10K write lifetime to wear out within roughly 27 years. If valid time metadata is always written to the same block, an admittedly unlikely scenario since the old metadata is likely to be retained before the new metadata is validated, this may cause unacceptable wear. Implementers should seriously consider both the lifetime usage of their devices and their likely update patterns if using technologies with limited writes.

However, there is a trade-off between frequently updating the current time (and thus, exhausting EEPROM), and the efficacy of the system to prevent freeze attacks from a compromised Director repository. If it is essential to frequently update the time to prevent freeze attacks, and EEPROM must be used, there are ways to make that use more efficient. For example, the ECU may write data to EEPROM in a circular fashion that can expand its lifetime of wear.

Second, it is not necessary for ECUs to write and sign an ECU version report upon every boot or reboot cycle. At a minimum, an ECU should write and sign a new ECU version report only upon the successful verification and installation of a new image.

## **Balancing security and bandwidth**

When deploying any system, it is important to think about the costs involved. Those can roughly be partitioned into computational, network (bandwidth), and storage. This subsection gives a rough sense of how those costs may vary

depending upon the deployment scenario employed. The numbers quoted are not authoritative, but do express order of magnitude costs.

A Primary will end up retrieving and verifying any updated metadata from the repositories it communicates with, which usually means an Image repository and a Director repository will be contacted. Whenever an image is added to the Image repository, a Primary will download a new Targets, Snapshot, and Timestamp metadata file. The Root file is updated less frequently, but when this is done, it may also need to be verified. Verifying these repositories and roles entails checking a signature on each of the files. Whenever the vehicle is requested to install an update, the Primary also receives a new piece of metadata for the Targets, Snapshot, and Timestamp roles, and on rare occasions, from the Root file. As noted above, this verification requires a signature check. A Primary must also compute the secure hash of all images it will serve to ECUs. The previous known good version of all metadata files must be retained. It is also wise to retain any images until Secondaries have confirmed installation.

A full verification Secondary is nearly identical in cost to a Primary. The biggest difference is that it has no need to store, retrieve, or verify an image that it is not destined to receive. However, other costs are fundamentally the same.

A partial verification Secondary merely retrieves Targets metadata when it changes, and any images it will install. This requires one signature check and one secure hash operation per software installation.

Note also that, if used, Time Server costs are typically one signature verification per ECU per time period of update (e.g., daily). This cost varies based upon the algorithm and thus its measurement can only be estimated based upon the algorithm.

### **Using encrypted images on the Image repository**

Images stored on the Image repository may have previously been encrypted or not, at the discretion of the implementer. The Standard does not explicitly mention using encrypted images on the Image repository because Uptane treats these blobs exactly the same as unencrypted blobs. It only imposes special requirements on images that are per-ECU encrypted on the Director repository. Therefore, there is no reason that encrypted images cannot be on the Image repository should an implementer wish to use them.