                    IS-IS Routing with Reverse Metric

Abstract

   This document describes a mechanism to allow IS-IS routing to quickly
   and accurately shift traffic away from either a point-to-point or
   multi-access LAN interface during network maintenance or other
   operational events. This is accomplished by signaling adjacent IS-IS
   neighbors with a higher reverse metric, i.e., the metric towards the
   signaling IS-IS router.

Status of This Memo

   This is an Internet Standards Track document.

   This document is a product of the Internet Engineering Task Force
   (IETF). It represents the consensus of the IETF community. It has
   received public review and has been approved for publication by the
   Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG). Further information on
   Internet Standards is available in Section 2 of RFC 7841.

   Information about the current status of this document, any errata,
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   https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8500.

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1. Introduction

   The IS-IS [ISO10589] routing protocol has been widely used in
   Internet Service Provider IP/MPLS networks. Operational experience
   with the protocol combined with ever increasing requirements for
   lossless operations have demonstrated some operational issues. This
   document describes the issues and a mechanism for mitigating them.

   This document defines the IS-IS "Reverse Metric" mechanism that
   allows an IS-IS node to send a Reverse Metric TLV through the IS-IS
   Hello (IIH) PDU to the neighbor or pseudonode to adjust the routing
   metric on the inbound direction.

1.1. Node and Link Isolation

   The IS-IS routing mechanism has the overload bit, which can be used
   by operators to perform disruptive maintenance on the router. But in
   many operational maintenance cases, it is not necessary to divert all
   the traffic away from this node. It is necessary to avoid only a
   single link during the maintenance. More detailed descriptions of
   the challenges can be found in Appendices A and B of this document.

1.2. Distributed Forwarding Planes

   In a distributed forwarding platform, different forwarding line cards
   may have interfaces and IS-IS connections to neighbor routers. If
   one of the line card's software resets, it may take some time for the
   forwarding entries to be fully populated on the line card, in
   particular if the router is a PE (Provider Edge) router in an ISP's
   MPLS VPN. An IS-IS adjacency may be established with a neighbor
   router long before the entire BGP VPN prefixes are downloaded to the
   forwarding table. It is important to signal to the adjacent IS-IS
   routers to raise metric values and not to use the corresponding IS-IS
   adjacency inbound to this router if possible. Temporarily signaling
   the 'Reverse Metric' over this link to discourage the traffic via the
   corresponding line card will help to reduce the traffic loss in the
   network. In the meantime, the remote PE routers will select a
   different set of PE routers for the BGP best path calculation or use
   a different link towards the same PE router on which a line card is
   resetting.

1.3. Spine-Leaf Applications

   In the IS-IS Spine-Leaf extension [IS-IS-SL-EXT], the leaf nodes will
   perform equal-cost or unequal-cost load sharing towards all the spine
   nodes. In certain operational cases, for instance, when one of the
   backbone links on a spine node is congested, a spine node can push a
   higher metric towards the connected leaf nodes to reduce the transit
   traffic through the corresponding spine node or link.

1.4. LDP IGP Synchronization

   In [RFC5443], a mechanism is described to achieve LDP IGP
   synchronization by using the maximum link metric value on the
   interface. But in the case of a new IS-IS node joining the broadcast
   network (LAN), it is not optimal to change all the nodes on the LAN
   to the maximum link metric value, as described in [RFC6138]. In this
   case, the Reverse Metric can be used to discourage both outbound and
   inbound traffic without affecting the traffic of other IS-IS nodes on
   the LAN.

1.5. IS-IS Reverse Metric

   This document uses the routing protocol itself as the transport
   mechanism to allow one IS-IS router to advertise a "reverse metric"
   in an IS-IS Hello (IIH) PDU to an adjacent node on a point-to-point
   or multi-access LAN link. This would allow the provisioning to be
   performed only on a single node, setting a "reverse metric" on a link
   and having traffic bidirectionally shift away from that link
   gracefully to alternate viable paths.

This Reverse Metric mechanism is used for both point-to-point and multi-access LAN links. Unlike the point-to-point links, the IS-IS protocol currently does not have a way to influence the traffic towards a particular node on LAN links. This mechanism provides IS-IS routing with the capability of altering traffic in both directions on either a point-to-point link or a multi-access link of an IS-IS node.

The metric value in the Reverse Metric TLV and the Traffic Engineering metric in the sub-TLV being advertised are offsets or relative metrics to be added to the existing local link and Traffic Engineering metric values of the receiver; the accumulated metric value is bounded as described in Section 2.

1.6. Specification of Requirements

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

2. IS-IS Reverse Metric TLV

The Reverse Metric TLV is a new TLV to be used inside an IS-IS Hello PDU. This TLV is used to support the IS-IS Reverse Metric mechanism that allows a "reverse metric" to be sent to the IS-IS neighbor.

```
 0                   1                   2                   3
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1
+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+
|      Type      |     Length    |     Flags     |    Metric
+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+
     Metric  (Continued)         | sub-TLV Len   |Optional sub-TLV
+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+
```
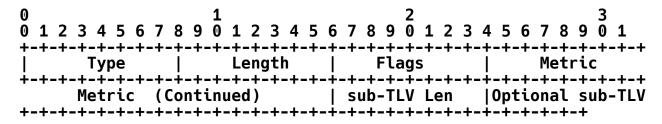
Figure 1: Reverse Metric TLV

The Value part of the Reverse Metric TLV is composed of a 3 octet field containing an IS-IS Metric value, a 1 octet field of Flags, and a 1 octet Reverse Metric sub-TLV length field representing the length of a variable number of sub-TLVs. If the "sub-TLV Len" is non-zero, then the Value field MUST also contain one or more sub-TLVs.

The Reverse Metric TLV MAY be present in any IS-IS Hello PDU. A sender MUST only transmit a single Reverse Metric TLV in an IS-IS Hello PDU. If a received IS-IS Hello PDU contains more than one

Reverse Metric TLV, an implementation MUST ignore all the Reverse
Metric TLVs.

     TYPE: 16
     LENGTH: variable (5 - 255 octets)
     VALUE:

        Flags (1 octet)
        Metric (3 octets)
        sub-TLV length (1 octet)
        sub-TLV data (0 - 250 octets)

         0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
        +-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+
        | Reserved |U|W|
        +-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+

                         Figure 2: Flags

   The Metric field contains a 24-bit unsigned integer. This value is a
   metric offset that a neighbor SHOULD add to the existing configured
   Default Metric for the IS-IS link [ISO10589]. Refer to "Elements of
   Procedure" in Section 3 of this document for details on how an IS-IS
   router should process the Metric field in a Reverse Metric TLV.

   The Metric field, in the Reverse Metric TLV, is a "reverse offset
   metric" that will either be in the range of 0 - 63 when a "narrow"
   IS-IS metric is used (IS Neighbors TLV / Pseudonode LSP) [RFC1195] or
   in the range of 0 - (2^24 - 2) when a "wide" Traffic Engineering
   metric value is used (Extended IS Reachability TLV) [RFC5305]
   [RFC5817]. As described below, when the U bit is set, the
   accumulated value of the wide metric is in the range of
   0 - (2^24 - 1), with the (2^24 - 1) metric value as non-reachable in
   IS-IS routing. The IS-IS metric value of (2^24 - 2) serves as the
   link of last resort.

   There are currently only two Flag bits defined.

   W bit (0x01): The "Whole LAN" bit is only used in the context of
   multi-access LANs. When a Reverse Metric TLV is transmitted from a
   node to the Designated Intermediate System (DIS), if the "Whole LAN"
   bit is set (1), then a DIS SHOULD add the received Metric value in
   the Reverse Metric TLV to each node's existing Default Metric in the
   Pseudonode LSP. If the "Whole LAN" bit is not set (0), then a DIS
   SHOULD add the received Metric value in the Reverse Metric TLV to the
   existing "default metric" in the Pseudonode LSP for the single node
   from whom the Reverse Metric TLV was received. Please refer to
   "Multi-access LAN Procedures", in Section 3.3, for additional

details. The W bit MUST be clear when a Reverse Metric TLV is
transmitted in an IIH PDU on a point-to-point link and MUST be
ignored when received on a point-to-point link.

U bit (0x02): The "Unreachable" bit specifies that the metric
calculated by the addition of the reverse metric to the "default
metric" is limited to the maximum value of (2^24-1). This "U" bit
applies to both the default metric in the Extended IS Reachability
TLV and the Traffic Engineering Default Metric sub-TLV of the link.
This is only relevant to the IS-IS "wide" metric mode.

The Reserved bits of Flags field MUST be set to zero and MUST be
ignored when received.

The Reverse Metric TLV MAY include sub-TLVs when an IS-IS router
wishes to signal additional information to its neighbor. In this
document, the Reverse Metric Traffic Engineering Metric sub-TLV, with
Type 18, is defined. This Traffic Engineering Metric contains a
24-bit unsigned integer. This sub-TLV is optional; if it appears
more than once, then the entire Reverse Metric TLV MUST be ignored.
Upon receiving this Traffic Engineering METRIC sub-TLV in a Reverse
Metric TLV, a node SHOULD add the received Traffic Engineering Metric
offset value to its existing configured Traffic Engineering Default
Metric within its Extended IS Reachability TLV. The use of other
sub-TLVs is outside the scope of this document. The "sub-TLV Len"
value MUST be set to zero when an IS-IS router does not have Traffic
Engineering sub-TLVs that it wishes to send to its IS-IS neighbor.

3. Elements of Procedure

3.1. Processing Changes to Default Metric

It is important to use the same IS-IS metric type on both ends of the
link and in the entire IS-IS area or level. On the receiving side of
the 'reverse-metric' TLV, the accumulated value of the configured
metric and the reverse-metric needs to be limited to 63 in "narrow"
metric mode and to (2^24 - 2) in "wide" metric mode. This applies to
both the Default Metric of Extended IS Reachability TLV and the
Traffic Engineering Default Metric sub-TLV in LSP or Pseudonode LSP
for the "wide" metric mode case. If the "U" bit is present in the
flags, the accumulated metric value is to be limited to (2^24 - 1)
for both the normal link metric and Traffic Engineering metric in
IS-IS "wide" metric mode.

If an IS-IS router is configured to originate a Traffic Engineering
Default Metric sub-TLV for a link but receives a Reverse Metric TLV
from its neighbor that does not contain a Traffic Engineering Default

Metric sub-TLV, then the IS-IS router MUST NOT change the value of
its Traffic Engineering Default Metric sub-TLV for that link.

3.2. Multi-Topology IS-IS Support on Point-to-Point Links

The Reverse Metric TLV is applicable to Multi-topology IS-IS (M-ISIS)
[RFC5120]. On point-to-point links, if an IS-IS router is configured
for M-ISIS, it MUST send only a single Reverse Metric TLV in IIH PDUs
toward its neighbor(s) on the designated link. When an M-ISIS router
receives a Reverse Metric TLV, it MUST add the received Metric value
to its Default Metric of the link in all Extended IS Reachability
TLVs for all topologies. If an M-ISIS router receives a Reverse
Metric TLV with a Traffic Engineering Default Metric sub-TLV, then
the M-ISIS router MUST add the received Traffic Engineering Default
Metric value to each of its Default Metric sub-TLVs in all of its MT
Intermediate Systems TLVs. If an M-ISIS router is configured to
advertise Traffic Engineering Default Metric sub-TLVs for one or more
topologies but does not receive a Traffic Engineering Default Metric
sub-TLV in a Reverse Metric TLV, then the M-ISIS router MUST NOT
change the value in each of the Traffic Engineering Default Metric
sub-TLVs for all topologies.

3.3. Multi-access LAN Procedures

On a Multi-access LAN, only the DIS SHOULD act upon information
contained in a received Reverse Metric TLV. All non-DIS nodes MUST
silently ignore a received Reverse Metric TLV. The decision process
of the routers on the LAN MUST follow the procedure in
Section 7.2.8.2 of [ISO10589], and use the "Two-way connectivity
check" during the topology and route calculation.

The Reverse Metric Traffic Engineering sub-TLV also applies to the
DIS. If a DIS is configured to apply Traffic Engineering over a link
and it receives Traffic Engineering Metric sub-TLV in a Reverse
Metric TLV, it should update the Traffic Engineering Default Metric
sub-TLV value of the corresponding Extended IS Reachability TLV or
insert a new one if not present.

In the case of multi-access LANs, the "W" Flags bit is used to signal
from a non-DIS to the DIS whether or not to change the metric and,
optionally, Traffic Engineering parameters for all nodes in the
Pseudonode LSP or solely the node on the LAN originating the Reverse
Metric TLV.

A non-DIS node, e.g., Router B, attached to a multi-access LAN will
send the DIS a Reverse Metric TLV with the W bit clear when Router B
wishes the DIS to add the Metric value to the Default Metric
contained in the Pseudonode LSP specific to just Router B. Other

non-DIS nodes, e.g., Routers C and D, may simultaneously send a
Reverse Metric TLV with the W bit clear to request the DIS to add
their own Metric value to their Default Metric contained in the
Pseudonode LSP.

As long as at least one IS-IS node on the LAN sending the signal to
DIS with the W bit set, the DIS would add the metric value in the
Reverse Metric TLV to all neighbor adjacencies in the Pseudonode LSP,
regardless if some of the nodes on the LAN advertise the Reverse
Metric TLV without the W bit set. The DIS MUST use the reverse
metric of the highest source MAC address Non-DIS advertising the
Reverse Metric TLV with the W bit set.

Local provisioning on the DIS to adjust the Default Metric(s) is
another way to insert Reverse Metric in the Pseudonode LSP towards an
IS-IS node on a LAN. In the case where a Reverse Metric TLV is also
used in the IS-IS Hello PDU of the node, the local provisioning MUST
take precedence over received Reverse Metric TLVs. For instance,
local policy on the DIS may be provisioned to ignore the W bit
signaling on a LAN.

Multi-topology IS-IS [RFC5120] specifies there is no change to
construction of the Pseudonode LSP regardless of the Multi-topology
(MT) capabilities of a multi-access LAN. If any MT capable node on
the LAN advertises the Reverse Metric TLV to the DIS, the DIS should
update, as appropriate, the Default Metric contained in the
Pseudonode LSP. If the DIS updates the Default Metric and floods a
new Pseudonode LSP, those default metric values will be applied to
all topologies during Multi-topology Shortest Path First
calculations.

3.4. LDP/IGP Synchronization on LANs

As described in [RFC6138], when a new IS-IS node joins a broadcast
network, it is unnecessary and sometimes even harmful for all IS-IS
nodes on the LAN to advertise the maximum link metric. [RFC6138]
proposes a solution to have the new node not advertise its adjacency
towards the pseudonode when it is not in a "cut-edge" position.

With the introduction of Reverse Metric in this document, a simpler
alternative solution to the above mentioned problem can be used. The
Reverse Metric allows the new node on the LAN to advertise its
inbound metric value to be the maximum, and this puts the link of
this new node in the last resort position without impacting the other
IS-IS nodes on the same LAN.

   Specifically, when IS-IS adjacencies are being established by the new
   node on the LAN, besides setting the maximum link metric value
   (2^24 - 2) on the interface of the LAN for LDP IGP synchronization as
   described in [RFC5443], it SHOULD advertise the maximum metric offset
   value in the Reverse Metric TLV in its IIH PDU sent on the LAN. It
   SHOULD continue this advertisement until it completes all the LDP
   label binding exchanges with all the neighbors over this LAN, either
   by receiving the LDP End-of-LIB [RFC5919] for all the sessions or by
   exceeding the provisioned timeout value for the node LDP/IGP
   synchronization.

3.5. Operational Guidelines

   For the use case in Section 1.1, a router SHOULD limit the period of
   advertising a Reverse Metric TLV towards a neighbor only for the
   duration of a network maintenance window.

   The use of a Reverse Metric does not alter IS-IS metric parameters
   stored in a router's persistent provisioning database.

   If routers that receive a Reverse Metric TLV send a syslog message or
   SNMP trap, this will assist in rapidly identifying the node in the
   network that is advertising an IS-IS metric or Traffic Engineering
   parameters different from that which is configured locally on the
   device.

   When the link Traffic Engineering metric is raised to (2^24 - 1)
   [RFC5817], either due to the Reverse Metric mechanism or by explicit
   user configuration, this SHOULD immediately trigger the CSPF
   (Constrained Shortest Path First) recalculation to move the Traffic
   Engineering traffic away from that link. It is RECOMMENDED also that
   the CSPF does the immediate CSPF recalculation when the Traffic
   Engineering metric is raised to (2^24 - 2) to be the last resort
   link.

   It is advisable that implementations provide a configuration
   capability to disable any IS-IS metric changes by a Reverse Metric
   mechanism through neighbors' Hello PDUs.

   If an implementation enables this mechanism by default, it is
   RECOMMENDED that it be disabled by the operators when not explicitly
   using it.

4. Security Considerations

   Security concerns for IS-IS are addressed in [ISO10589], [RFC5304],
   [RFC5310], and with various deployment and operational security
   considerations in [RFC7645]. The enhancement in this document makes
   it possible for one IS-IS router to manipulate the IS-IS Default
   Metric and, optionally, Traffic Engineering parameters of adjacent
   IS-IS neighbors on point-to-point or LAN interfaces. Although IS-IS
   routers within a single Autonomous System nearly always are under the
   control of a single administrative authority, it is highly
   recommended that operators configure authentication of IS-IS PDUs to
   mitigate use of the Reverse Metric TLV as a potential attack vector.

5. IANA Considerations

   IANA has allocated IS-IS TLV Codepoint 16 for the Reverse Metric TLV.
   This new TLV has the following attributes: IIH = y, LSP = n, SNP = n,
   Purge = n.

   This document also introduces a new registry for sub-TLVs of the
   Reverse Metric TLV. The registration policy is Expert Review as
   defined in [RFC8126]. This registry is part of the "IS-IS TLV
   Codepoints" registry. The name of the registry is "Sub-TLVs for TLV
   16 (Reverse Metric TLV)". The defined values are:

      0:         Reserved
      1-17:   Unassigned
      18:        Traffic Engineering Metric as specified in this document
                 (Section 2)
      19-255:   Unassigned

6. References

6.1. Normative References

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Appendix A. Node Isolation Challenges

On rare occasions, it is necessary for an operator to perform
disruptive network maintenance on an entire IS-IS router node, i.e.,
major software upgrades, power/cooling augments, etc. In these
cases, an operator will set the IS-IS Overload Bit (OL bit) within
the Link State Protocol Data Units (LSPs) of the IS-IS router about
to undergo maintenance. The IS-IS router immediately floods its
updated LSPs to all IS-IS routers in the IS-IS domain. Upon receipt
of the updated LSPs, all IS-IS routers recalculate their Shortest
Path First (SPF) tree excluding IS-IS routers whose LSPs have the OL
bit set. This effectively removes the IS-IS router about to undergo
maintenance from the topology, thus preventing it from receiving any
transit traffic during the maintenance period.

After the maintenance activity has completed, the operator resets the
IS-IS Overload Bit within the LSPs of the original IS-IS router
causing it to flood updated IS-IS LSPs throughout the IS-IS domain.
All IS-IS routers recalculate their SPF tree and now include the
original IS-IS router in their topology calculations, allowing it to
be used for transit traffic again.

Isolating an entire IS-IS router from the topology can be especially
disruptive due to the displacement of a large volume of traffic
through an entire IS-IS router to other suboptimal paths (e.g., those
with significantly larger delay). Thus, in the majority of network
maintenance scenarios, where only a single link or LAN needs to be
augmented to increase its physical capacity, or is experiencing an
intermittent failure, it is much more common and desirable to
gracefully remove just the targeted link or LAN from service
temporarily, so that the least amount of user-data traffic is
affected during the link-specific network maintenance.

Appendix B. Link Isolation Challenges

Before network maintenance events are performed on individual
physical links or LANs, operators substantially increase the IS-IS
metric simultaneously on both devices attached to the same link or
LAN. In doing so, the devices generate new Link State Protocol Data
Units (LSPs) that are flooded throughout the network and cause all
routers to gradually shift traffic onto alternate paths with very
little or no disruption to in-flight communications by applications
or end users. When performed successfully, this allows the operator
to confidently perform disruptive augmentation, fault diagnosis, or
repairs on a link without disturbing ongoing communications in the
network.

There are a number of challenges with the above solution. First, it is quite common to have routers with several hundred interfaces and individual interfaces that move anywhere from several hundred gigabits/second to terabits/second of traffic. Thus, it is imperative that operators accurately identify the same point-to-point link on two separate devices in order to increase (and afterward decrease) the IS-IS metric appropriately. Second, the aforementioned solution is very time-consuming and even more error-prone to perform when it's necessary to temporarily remove a multi-access LAN from the network topology. Specifically, the operator needs to configure ALL devices that have interfaces attached to the multi-access LAN with an appropriately high IS-IS metric (and then decrease the IS-IS metric to its original value afterward). Finally, with respect to multi-access LANs, there is currently no method to bidirectionally isolate only a single node's interface on the LAN when performing more fine-grained diagnoses and repairs to the multi-access LAN.

In theory, use of a Network Management System (NMS) could improve the accuracy of identifying the appropriate subset of routers attached to either a point-to-point link or a multi-access LAN. It could also signal to those devices, using a network management protocol, to adjust the IS-IS metrics on the pertinent set of interfaces. The reality is that NMSs are, to a very large extent, not used within Service Provider's networks for a variety of reasons. In particular, NMSs do not interoperate very well across different vendors or even separate platform families within the same vendor.

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