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SRv6 for Inter-Layer Network Programming  
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Abstract

The Segment Routing over IPv6 (SRv6) Network Programming framework enables a network operator or an application to specify a packet processing program by encoding a sequence of instructions in the IPv6 packet header.

Following the SRv6 Network Programming concept, this document defines SRv6 based mechanisms for inter-layer network programming, which can help to integrate the packet network layer with its underlying layers efficiently. For inter-layer path programming, a new SRv6 behavior is defined for steering packets to underlay network connections. The applicability of this new SRv6 behavior in typical scenarios is illustrated.

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## 1. Introduction

In many network scenarios, the operator owns a multi-layered network. The technology in layer-3 has converged to IP, while there can be different technologies in layer-2 and below. In such networks, the cross-layer planning and optimization is considered more efficient than independent planning and operation of the layer-3 and the underlying networks in terms of resource utilization and SLA assurance, but it is also considered more complicated. Thus a mechanism for flexible and efficient inter-layer network integration is desired.

Segment Routing over IPv6 (SRv6) [RFC8986] enables a network operator or an application to specify a packet processing program by encoding a sequence of instructions in the IPv6 packet header. Currently SRv6

does not consider about the network layers under the IP layer. However, with the capability of SRv6 network programming, it is possible to achieve seamless integration between IP (layer-3) and the underlying (layer-2 and below) networks.

Following the SRv6 network programming concept, this document defines a new SRv6 behavior, which can be used for steering packets to underlay network connections, so that the packet network layer can be integrated with the underlying layers efficiently. The applicability of this new SRv6 behavior in typical inter-layer network programming scenarios is also illustrated. The proposed mechanism is applicable to networks in which the IP layer and its underlay network are under the same administration, and the necessary information of the underlay connections is allowed to be exposed to the IP layer for inter-layer path programming.

### 1.1. Requirements Language

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

## 2. Use Cases of Inter-Layer Network Programming

### 2.1. IP and Optical Inter-layer Path Programming

In many network scenarios, the underlay of the IP network is an optical network. The IP network and optical network are usually managed separately, the optical network works as an underlay which is normally invisible to the IP network. In some cases, the IP layer path and the underlay optical resources may not be one-to-one mapping, which makes the redundant optical paths not fully used by the IP layer. In some other cases, there may be optical paths between non-adjacent IP nodes, thus they are not visible in the L3 topology and can not be used for carrying traffic based on IP routing. However, such optical paths may be used for inter-layer traffic engineering.

### 2.2. IP and MTN Inter-layer Path Programming

The architecture of Metro Transport Network (MTN) is defined in [ITU-T\_G.8310]. In an MTN based network, network nodes can support two forwarding modes: per-hop IP packet forwarding and the MTN Path (MTNP) layer cross-connect. An MTN path is a multi-hop underlay transport path which may be established between any two nodes in the MTN network, and the intermediate nodes on the MTN path will forward

the traffic based on the pre-established MTN cross-connect without IP table lookup. Thus an MTN path is considered as an underlay connection between two remote MTN nodes. Although in some cases it is possible to set up a layer-3 adjacency between the two endpoints of the MTN path, it will make the provisioning of MTN path complicated. Moreover, in some cases the two endpoints may reside in different IGP areas or ASes, which makes a layer-3 adjacency between them more challenging. Last but not the least, an MTN path may be provisioned unidirectionally, which cannot pass the bidirectional connectivity check required for a layer-3 link. Since the MTN paths are usually not visible in the L3 topology, it is difficult to compute and establish an end-to-end inter-layer path which consists of both the layer-3 network segments and the MTN paths.

### 3. SRv6 Behavior for Inter-Layer Path Programming

In this section, a new SRv6 Endpoint Behavior is proposed for SRv6 based inter-layer path programming.

The "Endpoint with inter-layer connection" behavior ("End.IL" for short) is a variant of the SRv6 End behavior as defined in [RFC8986]. Its main use is for SRv6 based inter-layer path programming and traffic engineering. The End.IL behavior steers packets to a remote network node via underlay network connections.

The underlay network connections may be realized using Metro Transport Network (MTN) paths [ITU-T\_G.8310], ODUk or DWDM connections, or other technologies which work as the underlay of the IP network. Usually the underlay connections are invisible in the L3 topology and are not considered in IP based distributed route computation (e.g. SPF). However, this is just the expected behavior in some inter-layer programming scenarios, where the underlay connections are provisioned for traffic engineering of specific types of services. The SRv6 End.IL SIDs can be used together with other types of SRv6 SIDs to build SRv6 SID lists for inter-layer path programming.

Any SID instance of this behavior is associated with an underlay network connection, which connects to a remote network node.

When node N receives a packet destined to S and S is a local End.IL SID, N does the following:

```
S01. When an SRH is processed {
S02.   If (Segments Left == 0) {
S03.     Stop processing the SRH, and proceed to process the next
        header in the packet, whose type is identified by
        the Next Header field in the routing header.
S04.   }
S05.   If (IPv6 Hop Limit <= 1) {
S06.     Send an ICMP Time Exceeded message to the Source Address
        with Code 0 (Hop limit exceeded in transit),
        interrupt packet processing, and discard the packet.
S07.   }
S08.   max_LE = (Hdr Ext Len / 2) - 1
S09.   If ((Last Entry > max_LE) or (Segments Left > Last Entry+1)) {
S10.     Send an ICMP Parameter Problem to the Source Address
        with Code 0 (Erroneous header field encountered)
        and Pointer set to the Segments Left field,
        interrupt packet processing, and discard the packet.
S11.   }
S12.   Decrement IPv6 Hop Limit by 1
S13.   Decrement Segments Left by 1
S14.   Update IPv6 DA with Segment List[Segments Left]
S15.   Send the packet through the underlay network connection
        identified by S using the corresponding encapsulation.
S16. }
```

Note that the underlay network connection in step 15 SHOULD be established before the associated End.IL SID is announced into the network.

Similar to other variants of the SRv6 End behavior, End.IL can have different flavors as described in [RFC8986]. The modified behavior for these flavors aligns with the changes as described in section 4.16 of [RFC8986].

When forwarding packets through the underlay network connection towards the remote endpoint node, depending on the type of connection, layer-2 encapsulation may be required. The information needed for layer-2 encapsulation may be provisioned via mechanisms such as using a special MAC address. In some network scenarios where there is only one underlay network connection between two layer-3 nodes, the use of End.IL SID could be optional. In some implementations, the End.IL SID may optionally contain the arguments field, which can be used to encode the type and identifier information of the underlay connection. The details are out of the scope of this document.

End.IL SIDs MAY be allocated by the network nodes and announced to the network controller with the information of the underlay connections using IGP [RFC1195] [RFC2328] or BGP-LS [RFC9552]. Alternatively, End.IL SIDs MAY be assigned by a centralized network controller and advertised to the network nodes through Netconf/YANG [RFC6241] [RFC6020], BGP [RFC4271], or PCEP [RFC5440]. The detailed protocol extensions are out of the scope of this document, and will be described in separate documents. With the information of End.IL SIDs, the network controller or headend nodes could use End.IL SIDs together with other types of SRv6 SIDs to build SRv6 SID lists for inter-layer TE path programming.

#### 4. Application of SRv6 Inter-Layer Programming

##### 4.1. IP and Optical Integration

Assuming that an operator owns both the IP and optical network, and the operator needs to deploy E2E service across IP and optical network, with traditional approaches the planning and service provisioning would be complex and time consuming due of the manual synergy needed between the operator's IP team and optical team. With the introduction of SRv6 and the new SRv6 behaviors defined in this document, one simplified approach for IP and optical integration is to build a SRv6 SID list that integrates the path in both the IP layer and the optical layer.

As the optical layer is not packet based, source routing mechanism can not be directly used in the optical network. However, the abstracted optical paths (e.g., with ODUk or DWDM) could be exposed to the control system of the IP network using the SRv6 End.IL SIDs, and some of the attributes of the optical paths may also be provided. Based on this information, IP-optical inter-layer paths can be computed and programmed using SRv6 SID lists to meet some specific service requirements, such as low latency.

Figure 1. IP and Optical Layered Network Topology

There is also another case of IP and Optical integration. Assume there are two optical paths between P1 and P2. One is {P1, O1, O2, P2} , and the other is {P1, O1, O4, O5, O2, P2}. With SRv6 inter-layer programming, two separate SRv6 inter-layer SIDs can be allocated for these two underlay connections respectively. One is P1::C2 for the underlay path {P1, O1, O2, P2}, and the other is

P1::C45 for the path {P1, O1, O4, O5, O2, P2}. The headend P7 or the IP network controller will be informed about these two SRv6 SIDs and the associated path attributes, so that the headend or the controller can program different end-to-end inter-layer paths using SRv6 SID lists with different SRv6 inter-layer SIDs for services with different SLA requirements.

#### 4.2. IP and MTN Integration

Assuming that an operator owns both an MTN network domain and an IP network domain. In the MTN network, each MTN node has both the layer-3 functionality and the MTN Path layer functionality. In layer-3, all the MTN nodes are in a layer-3 network topology, which connects to the IP network domain. In the MTN Path Layer, a set of MTN paths are provisioned between the selected pairs of MTN nodes for traffic engineering. In the MTN network, different types of services may be carried using either a layer-3 path, an end-to-end MTN path, or an inter-layer path comprising of both the layer-3 links and the MTN paths as segments. In addition, For some type of services, end-to-end paths across the IP domain and the MTN domain are needed, which is comprised of both the layer-3 paths and the MTN path as different segments.



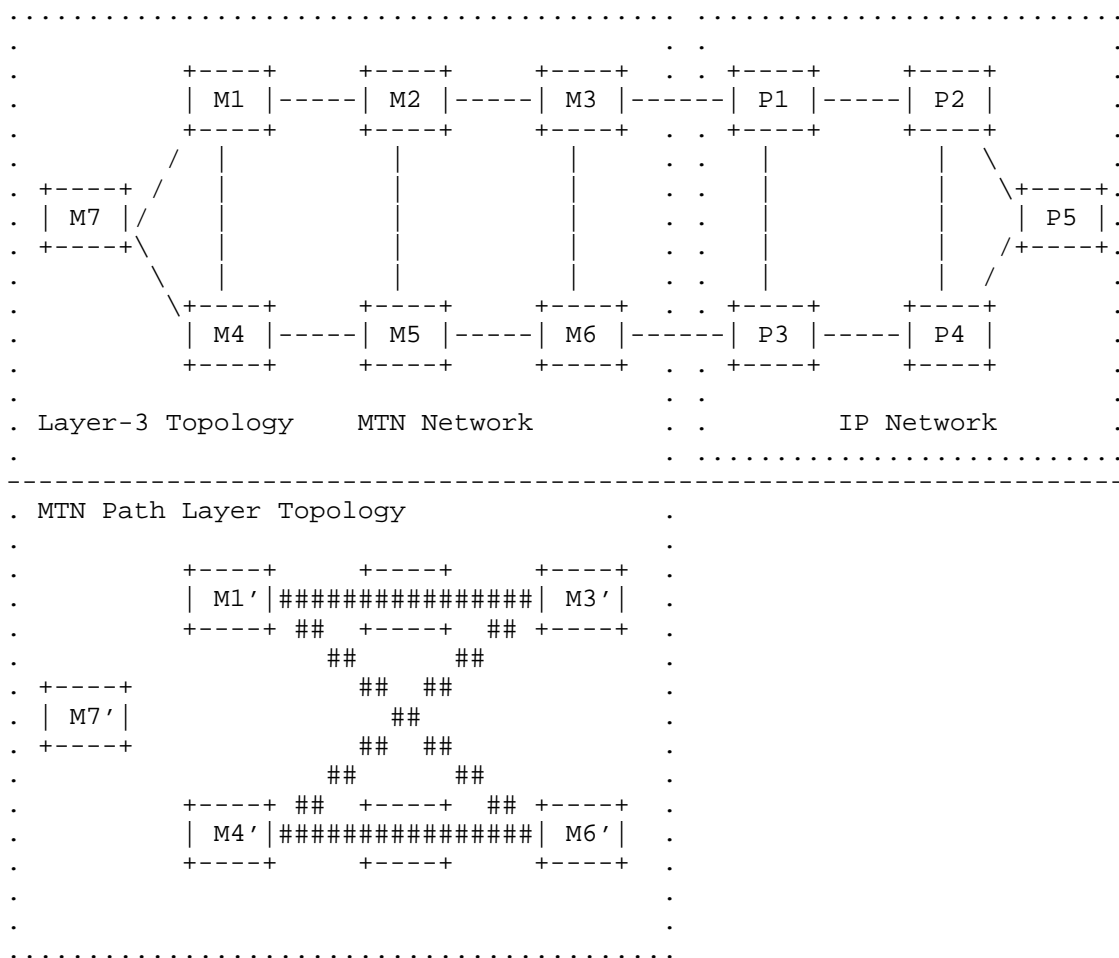


Figure 2. A network with MTN Domain and IP Domain

Figure 2 gives an example of a network with a MTN domain and an IP domain. M1 to M7 are MTN nodes, and P1 to P4 are IP nodes. The same set of MTN nodes builds two separate network layers. The topology in the IP layer shows the layer-3 connectivity between the MTN nodes and the connectivity with the IP network domain, while the topology in the MTN Path layer shows the MTN paths between the selected pair of MTN nodes. An end-to-end path from M7 to P5 can be established in layer-3 using an SRv6 SID list representing the layer-3 path {M7, M1, M2, M3, P1, P2, P5}. While for services which require low latency, with SRv6 inter-layer programming, an end-to-end path consisting of both the layer-3 segments and MTN paths could be established using an SRv6 SID list representing the inter-layer path {M7, M1::C3, P1, P2, P5}, where the SRv6 SID M1::C3 represents the underlay MTN path M1'-M3'.

This shows that it is convenient to use integrated SRv6 SID lists to program inter-layer TE paths both within the MTN domain, and across the IP and MTN domain using the combination of SRv6 L3 SIDs and the SRv6 inter-layer SID.

## 5. Security Considerations

The security considerations of SRv6 in [RFC8754] [RFC8986] apply to this document. As the information of underlay network connection is considered sensitive, operators need to make sure such information exposure only happen under the same administration, and proper policy is applied to ensure that only the exposure of necessary information is allowed.

## 6. IANA Considerations

This document defines a new SRv6 Endpoint behavior called END.IL.

IANA has allocated the following code points for different flavors of End.IL from the "SRv6 Endpoint Behaviors" sub-registry in the "Segment-routing with IPv6 data plane (SRv6) Parameters" registry:

Value	Hex	Endpoint Behavior	Reference
150	0x0096	End.IL	[This ID]
151	0x0097	End.IL with PSP	[This ID]
152	0x0098	End.IL with USP	[This ID]
153	0x0099	End.IL with USD	[This ID]
154	0x009A	End.IL with PSP, USP & USD	[This ID]
155	0x009B	End.IL with REPLACE-CSID	[This ID]
156	0x009C	End.IL with REPLACE-CSID & PSP	[This ID]
157	0x009D	End.IL with REPLACE-CSID, PSP, USP & USD	[This ID]

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