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Convergence of Congestion Control from Retained State
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Abstract

This document specifies a cautious method for IETF transports that enables fast startup of congestion control for a wide range of connections, known as "Careful Resume". It reuses a set of computed congestion control parameters that are based on previously observed path characteristics between the same pair of transport endpoints. These parameters are saved, allowing them to be later used to modify the congestion control behaviour of a subsequent connection.

It describes assumptions and defines requirements for how a sender utilises these parameters to provide opportunities for a connection to more rapidly get up to speed and rapidly utilise available capacity. It discusses how use of this method impacts the capacity at a shared network bottleneck and the safe response that is needed after any indication that the new rate is inappropriate.

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1. Introduction

All Internet transports are required to either use a Congestion Control (CC) algorithm, or to constrain their rate of transmission [RFC8085]. In 2010, a survey of alternative CC algorithms [RFC5783] noted that there are challenges when a CC algorithm operates across an Internet path with a high and/or varying Bandwidth-Delay Product (BDP). The specified method targets a solution for these challenges.

A CC algorithm typically takes time to ramp up the sending rate, called the "Slow-Start Phase", informally known as the time to "Get up to speed". This defines a time in which a sender intentionally uses less capacity than might be available, with the intention to avoid or limit overshoot of the available capacity for the path. This seeks to avoid an increase queuing (latency or jitter) and/or congestion packet loss for the flow. Any overshoot of the bottleneck rate can have a detrimental effect on other flows that share a common bottleneck. A sender can also use a method that observes the rate of acknowledged data to seek to avoid an overshoot of this bottleneck capacity (e.g., Hystart++ [RFC9406]). In the extreme case, an overshoot can result in persistent congestion with unwanted starvation of other flows [RFC8867] (i.e., preventing other flows from successfully sharing the capacity at a common bottleneck).

This document specifies Careful Resume. The method seeks to reduce the time to complete a transfer when the sending rate is limited by the congestion controller. That is, when a transfer seeks to send significantly more data than allowed by the Initial congestion Window (IW) and where the BDP of the path is also significantly more than the product of the IW and path Round Trip Time, RTT.

Careful Resume introduces an alternative method to select initial CC parameters that seeks to more rapidly and safely grow the sending rate controlled by the congestion window (CWND).

Careful Resume is based on temporal sharing (sometimes known as caching) of a saved set of CC parameters that relate to previous observations of the same path. The parameters include: the saved_cwnd for the path, the minimum RTT, and a Lifetime for using these parameters. The parameters are saved and used to modify the CC behaviour of a subsequent connection between the same endpoints.

CC algorithms that are rate-based can make similar adjustments to their target sending rate. When saving the observed capacity, some CC algorithms might save a different parameter that is equivalent to the saved_cwnd. For example, a rate-based CC algorithm, such as BBR [I-D.ietf-ccwg-bbr] can retain the value of the bottleneck bandwidth required to reach the capacity available to the flow (e.g., BBR.max_bw).

1.1. Use of saved CC parameters by a Sender

CC parameters are used by Careful Resume for three functions:

1. Information to confirm whether a saved path corresponds to the current path.
2. Information about the utilised path capacity and observed RTT to set CC parameters for the current connection.
3. Information to check the CC parameters are not too old.

"Generally, implementations are advised to be cautious when using saved CC parameters on a new path", as stated in [RFC9000]. While this statement was in the context of the QUIC transport protocol, this advice is also appropriate for any IETF transport protocol. Care is therefore needed to assure safe use and to be robust to changes in traffic patterns, network routing, and link/node conditions. There are cases where using the saved parameters of a previous connection is not appropriate (see Section 4).

1.2. Receiver Preference

Whilst the sender could take optimisation decisions without considering the receiver's preference, there are cases where a receiver could have information that is not available at the sender, or might benefit from understanding that Careful Resume might be used. In these cases, a receiver could explicitly ask to either enable or inhibit Careful Resume when an application initiates a new connection.

Examples where a receiver might request to inhibit using Careful Resume include:

1. a receiver that can predict the pattern of traffic (e.g., insight into the volume of data to be sent, the expected length of a connection, or the requested maximum transfer rate);
2. a receiver with a local indication that a path/local interface has changed since the CC parameters were saved;
3. knowledge of the current hardware limitations at a receiver;
4. a receiver that can predict additional capacity will be needed for other concurrent or later flows (i.e., it prefers to activate Careful Resume for a different connection).

1.3. Transport Protocol Interaction

The CWND is one factor that limits the sending rate of a transport protocol. Other mechanisms also constrain the maximum sending rate. These include the sender pacing rate and the receiver-advertised window (or flow credit), see Section 4.7.

1.4. Examples of Scenarios of Interest

This section provides a set of examples where Careful Resume is expected to improve performance. Either endpoint can assume the role of a sender or a receiver. Careful Resume also supports a bidirectional data transfer, where both endpoints simultaneously send data (e.g., remote execution of an application, or a bidirectional video conference call).

For example, consider an application that uses a series of connections over a path: Without a new method, each connection would need to individually discover appropriate CC parameters, whereas Careful Resume allows the flow to use a rate based on the previously observed CC parameters.

Another example considers an application that connects after a disruption had temporarily reduced the path capacity: When this endpoint returns to use the path using Careful Resume, the sending rate can be based on the previously observed CC parameters.

There is a particular benefit for any path with an RTT that is much larger than for typical Internet paths. In a specific example, an application connected via a satellite access network [IJSCN] could take 9 seconds to complete a 5.3 MB transfer using standard CC, whereas a sender using Careful Resume could reduce this transfer time to 4 seconds. The time to complete a 1 MB transfer could similarly be reduced by 62 % [MAPRG111]. This benefit is also expected for other sizes of transfer and for different path characteristics when a path has a large BDP.

1.5. Design Principles

Resuming a connection with CC parameters that were observed during a previous connection is inherently a tradeoff between the potential performance gains for the new connection and the risks of degraded performance for other connections that share a common bottleneck. The specified method is designed to obtain good performance when resuming is appropriate, while seeking to minimise the impact on other connections when it is not appropriate.

The following precautions mitigate the risk of a sender adding excessive congestion to a path:

The first precaution is to recognise whether the conditions have changed so much that the saved values are no longer valid. We describe that as the "Reconnaissance Phase". During that phase, the sender will not send more data than allowed for any new connection, e.g., using the recommended maximum IW for the first RTT of transmitting data [RFC6928] [RFC9002]. The sender will only proceed with the resume process if the reconnaissance succeeds. If it fails, for example if previous packets in a connection experience congestion or the RTT is significantly different, the sender will follow the standard process for a new connection. This provides some protection against aggravating severe congestion and to establish the minimum RTT.

The second precaution is to cautiously use the saved parameters when resuming. This is called the "Unvalidated Phase". For example, the jump in the size of CWND/rate is restricted to a fraction (1/2) of the saved_cwnd, to avoid starving other flows that may have started or increased their capacity after the last capacity measurement. The same principle applies for CC algorithms that use different parameters to classic TCP CC: i.e.,

a sender must not send faster than allowed by a fraction of the saved CC parameters. For example, a connection using a rate-based CC algorithm (e.g., BBR) will set the pacing rate to half the remembered value of the "bottleneck bandwidth". The sender also needs to pace all unvalidated packets, to ensure the rate does not exceed the previously used rate. This is intended to avoid a sudden influx of packets that could result in building a bottleneck queue and disrupting existing flows. Successful validation can allow further increases of the CWND; after first validating that the used rate did not result in congestion.

The third precaution is to enter a "Safe Retreat Phase" if the validation fails, for example if congestion is detected during validation. The risk here is that the trial use of the saved CC parameters could have disrupted existing connections. For example, consider a connection using Reno TCP CC: When exiting "slow start" mode due to loss, Reno would normally update the CWND to a "slow start threshold" set to half the volume of data in flight. However, during this validation the CWND is restored from the saved CC parameters. The resultant sending rate could be much larger than the value that would have been reached by a "standard" slow start process, resulting in an overload of the path that potentially could cause significant congestion to other flows. Instead of continuing with that "too large" value, the retreat process resets the congestion window (rate) to a value no greater than what a standard process would have discovered. For other CC algorithms, such as Cubic [RFC9438] or BBR, the implementation details may differ, but the principle remains: trying and failing should not unduly disadvantage existing connections that share a common bottleneck (e.g., resulting in starving these connections).

2. Language, Notation and Terms

This subsection provides a brief summary of key terms and the requirements language.

2.1. 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.

2.2. The Remote Endpoint

The Remote Endpoint is an implementation-dependent value that identifies the sender's view of the network path being used. This is used to match the current path with a set of CC parameters associated with a previously observed path. It includes:

- * an identifier representing the sending interface (e.g., a globally assigned address/prefix or other local identifier);
- * an identifier representing the destination (e.g., a name or IP address).

The Remote Endpoint could also include information such as the DSCP, the transport ports, etc. If included, such information needs to be set consistently for a resumed connection to the same endpoint. Although additional information could improve the path differentiation, it could reduce the re-usability of saved parameters.

The saved CC parameters can only be used to modify the startup when the Remote Endpoint is not known to have changed (see Section 3.2).

2.3. Logging Support

This document defines triggers to support logging key events. [LOG] provides definitions that enable a Careful Resume implementation to generate qlog events when using QUIC.

2.4. Notation and Terms

The document uses language drawn from a range of IETF RFCs. The following terms are defined:

Beta: A scaling factor between 0.5 and 1, the default value is 0.5.

Careful Resume (CR): The method specified in this document to select initial CC parameters and to more rapidly and safely increase the initial sending rate.

CC parameters: A set of saved congestion control parameters from observing the capacity of an established connection (see Section 1.1).

CWND: The congestion window, or equivalent CC variable limiting the maximum sending rate (see [RFC5681]);

current_rtt: A sample measurement of the current RTT;

flight_size: The current volume of unacknowledged data (see [RFC5681]);

jump_cwnd: The resumed CWND, used in the Unvalidated Phase.

Lifetime: The time after which a set of saved CC parameters can no longer be safely re-used.

max_jump: The configured maximum jump_cwnd;

PipeSize: A measure of the validated available capacity based on the acknowledged data;

Remote Endpoint: The endpoint corresponding to a connection; see Section 2.2;

saved_cwnd: A CC parameter with the preserved capacity derived from observation of a previous connection (see Section 4.1);

saved_remote_endpoint: The Remote Endpoint that was associated with a set of saved CC parameters;

saved_rtt: A CC parameter with the preserved minimum RTT (see Section 4.1).

unvalidated_packet: A packet sent when the CWND has been increased beyond the size normally permitted by the CC algorithm; if such a packet is acknowledged, it contributes to the PipeSize, but if congestion is detected, it triggers entry to the Safe Retreat Phase.

3. The Phases of CC using Careful Resume

This section defines a series of phases that the congestion controller moves through as a connection uses Careful Resume. Each rule is prefixed by the name of the relevant phase.

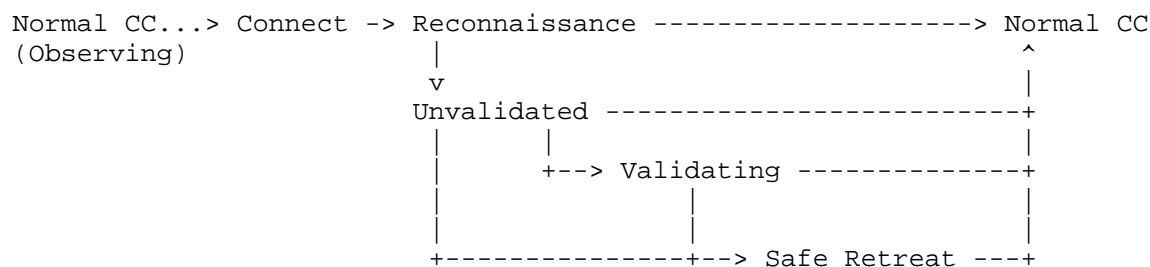


Figure 1: Key transitions between Phases in Careful Resume

The key phases of Careful Resume are illustrated in Figure 1. Examples of transitions between these phases are provided in Appendix A.

3.1. Observing

An established connection can save a set of CC parameters for the specific path to the current endpoint. A set of CC parameters includes the Lifetime (e.g., as a timestamp after which the parameters must not be used), and corresponds to one `saved_remote_endpoint`.

The following rules apply to observing a flow:

- * Observing (`saved_cwnd`): The currently utilised capacity for the connection is measured as the volume of bytes sent during an RTT and is recorded in the `saved_cwnd`. This could be computed by measuring the volume of data acknowledged in one RTT. If the measured CWND is less than four times the Initial Window (IW) the sender can choose to not save the CC parameters, because the additional actions associated with performing Careful Resume for a small CWND would not justify its use.
- * Observing (`saved_rtt`): The minimum RTT at the time of observation is saved as the `saved_rtt`.
- * Observing (Updating saved CC parameters): A sender MUST NOT retain more than one set of CC parameters for a Remote Endpoint, but the set of CC parameters SHOULD be updated (or replaced) after a later observation of a path to the same Remote Endpoint.

Implementation notes are provided in Section 4.1.

3.2. Reconnaissance Phase

During this phase, the sender attempts to retrieve congestion control parameters that were previously saved, then determine whether the path is consistent with a previously observed path (i.e, match the `saved_remote_endpoint` in a set of saved CC parameters).

The sender enters the Reconnaissance Phase after connection setup (using normal CC). In this phase, the CWND is initialised to the IW, and the sender transmits any initial data.

In the Reconnaissance Phase, the sender performs the following actions:

- * Reconnaissance Phase (Received acknowledgment): The CWND is increased using normal CC as each ACK confirms delivery of previously unacknowledged data (i.e., the base congestion control algorithm continues to operate normally).

The sender exits the Reconnaissance Phase and stops using Careful Resume when one of the following events occurs:

- * Reconnaissance Phase (Detected congestion): If the sender detects congestion (e.g., packet loss or ECN-CE marking), this indicates that use of the saved CC parameters is inappropriate. The sender stops using Careful Resume and MUST continue using normal CC to respond to the detected congestion.
- * Reconnaissance Phase (Using saved_cwnd): Only one connection can use a specific set of saved CC parameters. If another connection has already started to use the saved_cwnd, the sender MUST exit Careful Resume and return to use normal CC.
- * Reconnaissance Phase (Path change): If the Remote Endpoint is not the same as any `saved_remote_endpoint`, or the sender receives a signal from the local stack indicating that the path is now different to the observed path, the sender MUST stop using Careful Resume and returns to use normal CC.
- * Reconnaissance Phase (Lifetime of saved CC parameters): The CC parameters are temporal. If the Lifetime of the observed CC parameters is exceeded, this set of CC parameters are not used, the saved CC parameters are deleted and MUST stop using Careful Resume and returns to use normal CC.
- * Reconnaissance Phase (Minimum RTT too small): If the minimum RTT recorded in the Reconnaissance Phase is less than or equal to $(\text{saved_rtt} / 2)$ (see Section 4.2.1), the sender MUST enter stop

using Careful Resume (logged as `rtt_not_validated` in [LOG]) and returns to use normal CC. This is because the calculation of a sending rate from a `saved_cwnd` is directly impacted by the RTT, therefore a significant change in the RTT is a strong indication that the previously observed CC parameters are not valid for the current path.

Note: When a path is not confirmed, Careful Resume does not modify the CWND before it exits to use normal CC.

The sender is permitted to enter the Unvalidated Phase as described below:

- * **Reconnaissance Phase (Path confirmed):** When the sender has received an acknowledgement for all the initial data (usually the IW) without reported congestion, it MAY then enter the Unvalidated Phase. Although a sender can immediately transition to the Unvalidated Phase, this transition MAY be deferred to the time at which more data is sent than would have normally permitted by the CC algorithm.

Implementation notes are provided in Section 4.2.

3.3. Unvalidated Phase

The Unvalidated Phase is designed to enable the CWND to more rapidly get up to speed by using paced transmission of a tentatively increased CWND.

On entry to the Unvalidated Phase, the following actions are performed:

- * **Unvalidated Phase (Initialising PipeSize):** The variable `PipeSize` is initialised to the `flight_size` on entry to the Unvalidated Phase. This records the used portion of the CWND before a jump is applied.
- * **Unvalidated Phase (Setting the `jump_cwnd`):** To avoid starving other flows that could have either started or increased their use of capacity since observing the capacity of a path, the `jump_cwnd` MUST be no more than half of the `saved_cwnd`. Hence, `jump_cwnd` is less than or equal to $\text{Min}(\text{max_jump}, (\text{saved_cwnd}/2))$. `CWND = jump_cwnd`.

In the Validating Phase, the sender performs the following actions:

- * **Unvalidated Phase (Pacing transmission):** All packets sent in the Unvalidated Phase MUST use pacing based on the current `rtt`.

- * Unvalidated Phase (Tracking PipeSize): The variable PipeSize is increased by the volume of data acknowledged by each received ACK. (This indicates a previously unvalidated packet has been successfully sent over the path.)

The sender exits the Unvalidated Phase and enters the Safe Retreat Phase when one of the following events occurs:

- * Unvalidated Phase (Confirming the path during transmission): If the sender determines that it is not valid to use the previous CC parameters due to a detected path change (e.g., a change in the RTT or an explicit signal indicating a path change), the Safe Retreat Phase MUST be entered (logged as path_changed in [LOG]).
- * Unvalidated Phase (Detected congestion): If the sender detects congestion (e.g., packet loss or ECN-CE marking), the Safe Retreat Phase MUST be entered (logged as packet_loss or ECN_CE in [LOG]). (Note that insufficient time has passed in the Unvalidated Phase for a sender to receive any feedback validating the jump in CWND. Therefore, any detected congestion must have resulted from packets sent before the Unvalidated Phase.)

The sender exits the Unvalidated Phase and evaluates whether to enter the Validating Phase when one of the following events occurs:

- * Unvalidated Phase (Completed sending all unvalidated packets): The sender enters the Validating Phase when the flight_size equals the CWND (logged as last_unvalidated_packet_sent in [LOG]).
- * Unvalidated Phase (Receiving acknowledgement for an unvalidated packet): The sender enters the Validating Phase when an acknowledgement is received for the first packet number (or higher) that was sent in the Unvalidated Phase (logged as first_unvalidated_packet_acknowledged, see Section 2.3).
- * Unvalidated Phase (Limiting time in the Unvalidated Phase): The sender enters the Validating Phase if more than one RTT has elapsed while in the Unvalidated Phase (logged as rtt_exceeded, see Section 2.3).

Unvalidated Phase (Check flight_size): Upon any of these events, if the flight_size is less than or equal to the PipeSize, the CWND is reset to the PipeSize (logged as rate_limited in [LOG]) and the sender stops using Careful Resume and returns to use normal CC. (The PipeSize does not include the part of the jump_cwnd that was not utilised.) Otherwise, the CWND MUST be set to the flight_size and the sender progresses to the Validating Phase.

Implementation notes are provided in Section 4.3.

Notes for BBR are provided in Appendix B.1.

3.4. Validating Phase

The Validating Phase checks whether all packets sent in the Unvalidated Phase were received without inducing congestion. The CWND remains unvalidated and the sender typically remains in this phase for one RTT.

In the Validating Phase, the sender performs the following actions:

- * Validating Phase (Tracking PipeSize): The PipeSize is increased by the volume of acknowledged data for each received ACK that indicates a packet was successfully sent over the path.
- * Validating Phase (Updating CWND): The CWND is updated using the normal rules for the current congestion controller, this typically will use "slow start", which allows CWND to be increased for each received acknowledgement that indicates a packet has been successfully sent across the path.

The sender exits the Validating Phase when one of the following events occurs:

Validating Phase (Detected congestion): If the sender determines that congestion was detected (e.g., packet loss or ECN-CE marking), Careful Resume enters the Safe Retreat Phase (logged as `packet_loss` or `ECN_CE`, see Section 2.3).

Validating Phase (Receiving acknowledgement of the unvalidated packets): The sender enters stops using Careful Resume when an acknowledgement is received for the last packet number (or higher) that was sent in the Unvalidated Phase (logged as `last_unvalidated_packet_acknowledged`, see Section 2.3). This means that the packets sent in the Unvalidated Phase were acknowledged without congestion.

Notes for BBR are provided in Appendix B.2.

3.5. Safe Retreat Phase

This phase is entered when congestion is detected for an unvalidated packet. It drains the path of other unvalidated packets.

On entry to the Safe Retreat Phase, the following actions are performed:

- * Safe Retreat Phase (Removing saved information): The set of saved CC parameters for the path are deleted, to prevent these from being used again by later flows.
- * Safe Retreat Phase (Re-initializing CWND): The CWND MUST be reduced to no more than $(\text{PipeSize}/2)$. This avoids persistent starvation by allowing capacity for other flows to regain their share of the total capacity. (Note: The minimum CWND in QUIC is 2 packets, see: [RFC9002] section 4.8).
- * Safe Retreat Phase (Loss Recovery): Loss recovery commences using the newly reduced CWND that was set on entry to the Safe Retreat Phase. When the CWND is reduced, a QUIC sender can immediately send a single packet prior to the reduction [RFC9002] to speed up loss recovery. A similar method for TCP is described in Section 5 of [RFC6675]. The loss recovery continues until acknowledgment of the last packet number (or a later packet) sent in the Unvalidated or Validating Phase. Note: If the last unvalidated packet is not cumulatively acknowledged, then additional packets might also need to be retransmitted.

In the Safe Retreat Phase, the sender performs the following actions:

- * Safe Retreat Phase (Tracking PipeSize): The sender continues to update the PipeSize after processing each acknowledgement. (The PipeSize will be used to update ssthresh when leaving this phase, but does not affect the CWND.)
- * Safe Retreat Phase (Maintaining CWND): The CWND MUST NOT be increased in the Safe Retreat Phase.
- * Safe Retreat Phase (Acknowledgement of unvalidated packets): When the last packet (or a later packet) sent during the Unvalidated Phase has been acknowledged, the sender stops using Careful Resume and returns to use normal CC.

On leaving the Safe Retreat Phase, the ssthresh MUST be set to no larger than the most recently measured $\text{PipeSize} * \text{Beta}$, where Beta is a scaling factor between 0.5 and 1. The default value is 0.5, chosen to reduce the probability of inducing a second round of congestion. Cubic defines a Beta_cubic of 0.7 [RFC9438] (logged as `exit_recovery` in [LOG]).

Implementation notes are provided in Section 4.5.

Notes for BBR are described in Appendix B.3.

3.6. Detecting Persistent Congestion while using Careful Resume

A sender that experiences persistent congestion (e.g., a Retransmission Time Out, RTO, expiry in TCP) ceases to use Careful Resume. The sender stops using Careful Resume and returns to use normal CC. If using BBR, the normal processing of packet losses will cause it to enter the Drain state while the "carefully-resuming" flag is set to True, see Appendix B.3.

As in loss recovery, data sent in the Unvalidated Phase could be later acknowledged after an RTO event.

3.7. Returning to use normal CC

After exiting Careful Resume, the sender returns to using the normal CC algorithm (e.g., in congestion avoidance when CWND is more than ssthresh, or slow start when less than or equal to ssthresh).

Implementation notes are provided in Section 4.6.

4. Implementation Notes and Guidelines

This section provides guidance for implementation and use.

4.1. Observing the Path Capacity

There are various approaches to measuring the capacity used by a connection. Congestion controllers, such as Reno [RFC5681] or Cubic [RFC9438], could estimate the capacity based on the CWND, flight_size, acknowledged rate, etc. A different approach could estimate the same parameters for a rate-based congestion controller, such as BBR [I-D.ietf-ccwg-bbr], or by observing the rate at which data is acknowledged by the Remote Endpoint.

Implementations are required to calculate a saved_rtt, measuring the minimum RTT while observing the capacity. For example, this could be the minimum of a set RTT of measurements measured over the previous 5 minutes.

- * There are cases where the current CWND does not reflect the path capacity. At the end of slow start, the CWND can be significantly larger than needed to fully utilise the path (i.e., a CWND overshoot). It is inappropriate to use an overshoot in the CWND as a basis for estimating the capacity. In most cases, the CWND will converge to a stable value after several more RTTs. One mitigation when a connection is in Slow Start could be to set the saved_cwnd based on the validated pipe size (i.e., CWND / 2).

- * When the sender is rate-limited, or in the RTT following a burst of transmission, a sender typically transmits less data than allowed by the CWND. Such observations could be discounted when estimating the saved_cwnd (e.g., when a previous observation recorded a higher value.)

4.2. Confirming the Path in the Reconnaissance Phase

In the Reconnaissance Phase, the sender initiates a connection and starts sending initial data, while measuring the current rtt. The CC is not modified. A sender therefore needs to limit the initial data, sent in the first RTT of transmitted data, to not more than the IW [RFC9002]. This transmission using the IW is assumed to be a safe starting point for any path to avoid adding excessive load to a potentially congested path.

Careful Resume does not permit multiple concurrent reuse of the saved CC parameters. When multiple new concurrent connections are made to a server, each can have a valid saved_remote_endpoint, but the saved_cwnd can only be used for one connection at a time. This is to prevent the sender from performing multiple jumps in the CWND, each individually based on the same saved_cwnd, and hence creating an excessive aggregate load at the bottleneck.

The method that is used to prevent re-use of the saved CC parameters will depend upon the design of the server (e.g., if all connections from a given client IP arrive at the same server process, then the server process could use a hash table, whereas when using some types of load balancing, a distributed system might be needed to ensure this invariant when the load balancing hashes connections by 4-tuple and hence multiple connections from the same client device are served by different server processes.)

A sender that is rate-limited [RFC7661], sends insufficient data to be able to validate transmission at a higher rate. Such as sender is allowed to remain in the Reconnaissance Phase and to not transition to the Unvalidated Phase until there is more data in the transmission buffer than would normally be permitted by the CC algorithm.

4.2.1. Confirming the Path

Path characteristics can change over time for many reasons. This can result in the previously observed CC parameters becoming irrelevant.

To help confirm the path, the sender compares the saved_rrt with each current rtt sample.

If the current rtt is less than a half of the saved_rtt, this is regarded as too small. This is an indicator of a path change. This factor of two arises, because the jump_cwnd is calculated as half the measured saved_cwnd and sending rate ought not to exceed the observed rate when the saved_cwnd was measured.

If the current RTT is larger than the saved_rtt, this would result in a proportionally lower rate for the unvalidated packets, because the transmission is paced based on the current rtt. Hence this rate is still safe. If the current rtt has been incorrectly measured as larger than the actual path RTT, the sender will receive an ACK for an unvalidated packet before it has completed the Unvalidated Phase, this ACK resets the CWND to reflect the flight_size, and the sender then enters the Validating Phase. The flight_size reflects the amount of outstanding data in the network rather than the maximum that is permitted by the CWND.

A current rtt that is more than ten times the saved_rtt is indicative of a path change. The value of ten accommodates both increases in latency from buffering on a path and any variation between RTT samples.

Note 1: In the Reconnaissance Phase, the sender calculates a minimum RTT over the phase and checks this on entry to the Unvalidated Phase. This avoids needing to check after each current rtt sample.

Note 2: During the Unvalidated Phase, the minimum RTT cannot increase, and hence the minimum RTT can never be larger than $(\text{saved_rtt} \times 10)$ during the Unvalidated Phase.

The sender also verifies that the initial data was acknowledged. Any loss could be indicative of persistent congestion. If a sender in Reconnaissance Phase detects congestion, it stops using Careful Resume and returns to using normal CC. Some transport protocols implement CC mechanisms that infer potential congestion from an increase in the current rtt. Designs need to consider if such an indication is a suitable trigger to revert to stop using Careful Resume.

4.3. Safety in the Unvalidated Phase

This section considers the safety for using saved CC parameters to tentatively update the CWND. This seek to avoid starving other flows that could have either started or increased their use of capacity since observing the capacity of a path

To avoid inducing significant congestion to any connections that have started to use a shared bottleneck, a sender must not directly use the previously saved_cwnd to directly initialise a new flow causing it to resume sending at the same rate. The jump_cwnd is therefore limited to half the previously saved_cwnd.

4.3.1. Lifetime of CC Parameters

The long-term use of the previously observed parameters is not appropriate, a Lifetime needs to define the duration during which a set of saved CC parameters can be safely re-used.

[RFC9040] provides guidance on the implementation of TCP Control Block Interdependence, but does not specify how long a saved parameter can safely be reused. [RFC7661] specifies a method for managing an unvalidated CWND. This states: "After a fixed period of time (the non-validated period (NVP)), the sender adjusts the CWND (Section 4.4.3). The NVP SHOULD NOT exceed five minutes." Section 5 of [RFC7661] discusses the rationale for choosing that period. However, RFC 7661 targets rate-limited connections using normal CC. Careful Resume includes additional mechanisms to avoid and mitigate the effects of overshoot, and therefore a longer period can be justified when using a saved_cwnd with Careful Resume.

When the path characteristics are known to be dynamic, or the path varies, a small Lifetime is desirable (e.g., measured in minutes). For stable paths, and where the sender does not expect the path to be shared by many senders, a longer Lifetime (e.g., measured in hours) could be used. A bottleneck that is shared by a large number of senders brings greater risk that CR connections could contribute congestion that leads to prolonged overload with starvation, this can be mitigated by setting a small Lifetime.

4.3.2. Pacing in the Unvalidated Phase

The sender needs to avoid sending a burst of packets greater than IW as a result of a step-increase in the CWND. This is consistent with [RFC8085], [RFC9000].

Pacing packets as a function of the current rtt, rather than the saved_rtt provides additional safety during the Unvalidated Phase, because it avoids a smaller saved_rtt inflating the sending rate. The lower bound to the minimum acceptable current RTT avoids sending unvalidated packets at a rate that would be higher than was previously observed.

The following example provides a relevant pacing rhythm: An Inter-packet Transmission Time (ITT) is determined by using the current Maximum Packet Size (MPS), including headers, the saved_cwnd and the current RTT. A safety margin can be configured to avoid sending more than a maximum (max_jump):

$$\text{jump_cwnd} = \text{Min}(\text{max_jump}, \text{saved_cwnd}/2)$$
$$\text{ITT} = (\text{current RTT} \times \text{MPS}) / \text{jump_cwnd}$$

This follows the idea presented in [RFC4782], [I-D.irtf-iccrs-sallantin-initial-spreading] and [CONEXT15]. Other sender mitigations have also been suggested to avoid line-rate bursts (e.g., [I-D.hughes-restart]).

4.3.3. Exit from the Unvalidated Phase because of Variable Network Conditions

- * Careful Resume has been designed to be robust to changes in network conditions due to variations in the forwarding path, such as reconfiguration of equipment, or changes in the link conditions. This is mitigated by path confirmation.
- * Careful Resume has been designed to be robust to changes in network traffic, including the arrival of new flows that compete for capacity at a shared bottleneck. This is mitigated by jumping to no more than a half of the saved_cwnd and by pacing.
- * Careful Resume has been designed to avoid unduly suppressing flows that have used the capacity since the capacity was observed. This is further mitigated by bounding the duration of the Unvalidated Phase and the following Validating Phase, and the conservative design of the Safe Retreat Phase.

4.4. The Validating Phase

The purpose of the Validating Phase is to trigger an entry to the Safe Retreat Phase if the capacity is not validated.

When the sender completes the Unvalidated Phase, either by sending a jump_cwnd of data or after one RTT or an acknowledgment for an unvalidated packet, it ceases to use the unvalidated CWND.

If the flight_size was less than or equal to the PipeSize, the sender resets the CWND to the PipeSize, and stops using Careful Resume.

Otherwise, if the CWND is larger than the flight_size, the CWND is reset to the flight_size. The sender then awaits reception of ACKs to validate the use of this capacity.

New packets are sent when previously sent data is newly acknowledged. The CWND is increased during the Validating Phase, based on received ACKs. This allows new data to be sent, but this does not have any final impact on the CWND if congestion is subsequently detected.

4.5. Safety in the Safe Retreat Phase

This section considers the safety after congestion has been detected for unvalidated packets.

The Safe Retreat Phase sets a safe CWND value to drain any unvalidated packets from the path after a packet loss has been detected or when ACKs that indicate sent packets were marked as ECN-CE. The CC parameters that were used are invalid, and are removed.

The Safe Retreat reaction differs from a traditional reaction to detected congestion, because a jump_cwnd can result in a significantly higher rate than would be allowed by Slow-Start. Such a jump could aggressively feed a congested bottleneck, resulting in overshoot where a disproportionate number of packets from existing flows are displaced from the buffer at the congested bottleneck. For this reason, a sender in the Safe Retreat Phase needs to react to detected congestion by reducing CWND significantly below the saved_cwnd.

During loss recovery, a receiver can cumulatively acknowledge data that was previously sent in the Unvalidated Phase in addition to acknowledging the successful retransmission of data. [RFC3465] describes how to appropriately account for such ACKs. ACKs received for unvalidated packets are tracked to measure the maximum available capacity, called the "PipeSize" (The first unvalidated packet can be determined by recording the sequence number of the first packet sent in the Unvalidated Phase.) This calculated PipeSize is later used to reset the ssthresh. However, note that this is not a safe measure of the currently available share of the capacity whenever there was also a significant overshoot at the bottleneck, and must not be used to reinitialise the CWND.

Proportional Rate Reduction (PRR) [I-D.ietf-tcpm-prr-rfc6937bis] assumes that it is safe to reduce the rate gradually when in congestion avoidance. PRR is therefore not appropriate when there might be significant overshoot in the use of the capacity, which can be the case when the Safe Retreat Phase is entered.

The recovery from loss depends on the design of a transport protocol. A TCP or SCTP sender is required to retransmit all lost data [RFC5681]. For some transports (e.g., QUIC and DCCP), the need for loss recovery depends on the sender policy for retransmission. On entry to the Safe Retreat Phase, the CWND can be significantly reduced. When there was multiple loss, a sender recovering all lost data could then take multiple RTTs to complete.

4.6. Returning to Normal Congestion Control

After using Careful Resume, the CC controller returns to using normal CC.

The CWND at entry to the phase will have been increased when a sender has passed through the Unvalidated Phase. However, note that in some cases the value of the CWND could be significantly lower than the `jump_cwnd` (e.g., when a sender did not utilise the entire CWND in the Unvalidated Phase).

The implementation details for different CC algorithms depend on the design of the algorithm:

Once a sender is no longer using Careful Resume, the sender is permitted to start observing the capacity of the path.

4.7. Limitations from Transport Protocols

The CWND is one factor that limits the sending rate of the sender. Other mechanisms can also constrain the maximum sending rate of a transport protocol. A transport protocol might need to update these mechanisms to fully utilise the CWND made available by Careful Resume:

A TCP sender is limited by the receiver window (`rwnd`). Unless configured at a receiver, the `rwnd` constrains the rate of increase for a connection and reduces the benefit of Careful Resume.

QUIC includes flow control mechanisms and mechanisms to prevent amplification attacks. In particular, a QUIC receiver might need to issue proactive `MAX_DATA` frames to increase the flow control limits of a connection that is started when using Careful Resume to gain the expected benefit.

5. Acknowledgments

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The authors would like to thank Tom Jones for co-authoring several previous versions of this document.

6. IANA Considerations

No current parameters are required to be registered by IANA.

7. Security Considerations

This document does not exhibit specific security considerations.

8. References

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Appendix A. Notes on the Careful Resume Phases

The table below is provided to illustrate the operation of Careful Resume. This table is informative, please refer to the body of the document for the normative specification. The description is based on a normal CC that uses Reno. The PipeSize tracks the validated CWND.

Phase	Normal	Recon.	Unvalidated	Validating	Safe Retreat
	Observing CC params	Confirm path	Send faster using saved_cwnd	Validate new CWND; Update PS	Drain path; Update PS
On entry:	-	CWND=IW	PS=FS jump_cwnd =saved_cwnd /2; CWND =jump_cwnd	If (FS>PS) {CWND=FS} else {CWND=PS; use Normal CC}	CWND=(PS/2)
CWND:	When in observe, measure saved _cwnd	CWND increases using SS	CWND is not increased	CWND can increase using normal CC	CWND is not increased
PS:	-	-	PS+=ACKed		
RTT:	Measure saved_rtt	Measure current _rtt	-	-	-
If loss or ECNCE:	Normal CC	Normal CC; CR is not allowed	Enter Safe Retreat		-
Next Phase:	Observing (as needed)	If (FS=CWND, Lifetime, and RTT confirmed) , enter Unvalidat ed else use Normal CC	If (FS=CWND or >1 RTT has passed or ACK >= first unvalidated packet), enter Validating	If (ACK >= last unvalidated packet), use Normal CC	If (ACK >= last unvalidated packet), ssthresh = PS x Beta; and use Normal CC

Figure 2: Illustration of the operation of Careful Resume

The following abbreviations are used SS = Slow-Start FS = flight_size; PS = PipeSize; ACK = highest acknowledged packet. The PipeSize tracks the validated portion of the CWND. It is set to the CWND on entry to the Unvalidated Phase and is updated as each additional packet is acknowledged. The default value of Beta is 0.5.

Note: For an implementation that keeps track of transmitted data in terms of packets: In the Unvalidated Phase, the first unvalidated packet corresponds to the highest sent packet recorded on entry to this phase. In the Validating Phase and Safe Retreat Phase, the sender tracks the last unvalidated packet (this is also the highest sent packet number recorded on entry to this phase).

The remaining subsections provide informative examples of use.

Note: To simplify the description, these examples are described using packet numbers (whereas QLOG variables are expressed in bytes).

A.1. Example with No Loss

In the first example of using Careful Resume, the sender starts by sending IW packets, assumed to be 10 packets, in the Reconnaissance Phase, and then continues in a subsequent RTT to send more packets until the sender becomes CWND-limited (i.e., flight_size = CWND).

The sender in the Reconnaissance Phase then confirms the RTT and other conditions for using Careful Resume. In this example, this is confirmed when the sender has 29 packets in flight.

The sender then enters the Unvalidated Phase. (This path confirmation could have happened earlier if data had been available to send.) The sender initialises the PipeSize to the flight_size (in this case, 29 packets) and then sets the CWND to 150 packets (based upon half of the previously observed saved_cwnd of 300 packets).

The sender now sends 121 unvalidated packets (the unused portion of the current CWND). Each time a packet is sent, the sender checks whether 1 RTT has passed since entering the Unvalidated Phase (otherwise, the Validating Phase is entered). This check triggers only for cases where the sender is rate-limited, see the following example.

The PipeSize increases after each ACK is received.

When the first unvalidated packet is acknowledged (packet number 30) the sender enters the Validating Phase. (This transition would also occur if the `flight_size` increased to equal `CWND`.) During this phase, the `CWND` can be increased for each ACK that acknowledges an unvalidated packet, because this indicates that the packet was validated.

When an ACK is received for the last packet that was sent in the Unvalidated Phase, the sender has completed using Careful Resume. It then stops using Careful Resume. For example, if the `CWND` is less than `ssthresh`, a Reno or Cubic sender using normal CC is permitted to use Slow-Start to grow the `CWND` towards the `ssthresh`, and will then enter congestion avoidance.

A.2. Example with No Loss, Rate-Limited

A rate-limited sender will not fully utilise the available `CWND` when using Careful Resume, and `CWND` is therefore reset on entry to the Validating Phase, as described below.

The sender starts by sending up to `IW` packets (10) in the Reconnaissance Phase. It commences as described in the first example, transitioning to the Unvalidated Phase, where the `CWND` is set to 150 packets, and the `PipeSize` is set to the `flight_size` (i.e., 29 packets).

The sender then becomes rate-limited, because the example only sends 50 unvalidated packets.

After about one RTT (e.g., by comparing the current time with local timestamps for each sent packet or by receiving an ACK for the first unvalidated packet), the sender will still not have fully-used the `CWND`. It then enters the Validating Phase and resets the `CWND` to the current `flight_size`, (i.e., 50 packets). During this phase, the `CWND` can be increased for each received ACK that validates reception of an unvalidated packet. The `PipeSize` also increases with each ACK received, to reflect the discovered capacity.

The sender completes using Careful Resume, when an ACK is received for the last packet that was sent in the Unvalidated Phase. It then stops using Careful Resume, as in the example with no loss.

A.3. Example with Loss detected in the Reconnaissance Phase

When a packet is lost in the Reconnaissance Phase, the sender will stop using Careful Resume and recover the loss using the normal algorithm. It is considered that the sender has discovered a potential capacity limit and is not allowed to continue to use Careful Resume, therefore there is no change to the CC algorithm and the CWND is the same as if Careful Resume had not been attempted.

A.4. Example with Loss detected in the Validating Phase

As in the first example, the sender enters the Unvalidated Phase with a CWND of 150 packets and with the PipeSize initialised to the flight_size (i.e., 29 packets).

The sender now sends 121 unvalidated packets (consuming the remaining unused CWND). This example considers the case when one of the unvalidated packets is lost. We assume in the example, that the lost packet is 64 (the 35th packet sent in the Unvalidated Phase).

ACKs confirm reception of the first 34 unvalidated packets. The PipeSize at this time is equal to 63 (29 + 34) packets.

A loss is then detected (by a timer or by receiving three ACKs that do not cover packet number 35). The sender then enters the Safe Retreat Phase because the CWND was not validated. The PipeSize at this point is equal to 66 (29 + 34) packets. Assuming that the IW was 10 packets, the CWND is reset to $\text{Max}(10, \text{PS}/2) = \text{Max}(10, 66/2) = 33$ packets. This CWND is used during the Safe Retreat Phase, because congestion was detected and the sender still does not yet know if the remaining unvalidated packets will be successfully acknowledged. This conservative CWND calculation ensures the sender drains the path after this potentially severe congestion event. There is no further increase in CWND in this phase.

The sender continues to receive ACKs for the remaining 86 (121-35) unvalidated packets. Recall that the 35th unvalidated packet was lost and had packet number 64 (29+35). The PipeSize tracks the capacity discovered by acknowledgments for the unvalidated packets (i.e., the PipeSize is increased for each received ACK that acknowledges new data). Although this PipeSize cannot be used to safely initialise the CWND (because it was measured when the sender had aggressively created overload), the estimated PipeSize (which, in this case, is $121-1 = 120$ packets) can be used to set the ssthresh on exit from Safe Retreat, since it does indicate a measured upper limit to the current capacity.

At the point where all the unvalidated packets that were sent in the Unvalidated Phase have been either acknowledged or have been declared lost, the sender updates the `ssthresh` to be no larger than the recently measured `PipeSize` multiplied by `Beta` (the final action of the Safe Retreat Phase), and the sender stops using Careful Resume. Because `CWND` will now be less than `ssthresh`, a sender using normal CC is permitted to use Slow-Start to grow the `CWND` towards the `ssthresh`, after which it will enter congestion avoidance.

Appendix B. Implementation Notes for using BBR

Bottleneck Bandwidth and Round-trip propagation time (BBR) uses recent measurements of a transport connection's delivery rate, round-trip time, and packet loss rate to build an explicit model of the network path. BBR then uses this model to control both how fast it sends data and the maximum volume of data it allows in flight in the network at any time[I-D.ietf-ccwg-bbr].

When the flow is controlled using BBR Appendix B, Careful Resume is implemented by setting the pacing rate from the saved CC parameters, with the following precautions:

- * The flag "carefully-resuming" is added to the BBR state to indicate that the sender is allowed to send unvalidated packets. This is initialised to "False" when a BBR flow starts;
- * Prerequisites for using Careful Resume are described in Section 3.2.

B.1. Sending unvalidated packets using BBR

Careful Resume is allowed to transmit unvalidated packets only when the BBR flow is in the Startup state.

The probing rate is configured to 1/2 of the bottleneck bandwidth, derived from the `CWND` calculation specified in the saved CC parameters according to the requirements in Section 3.3.

The sender starts the Unvalidated Phase at the beginning of a BBR round, and sets the "carefully-resuming" flags to "True". When this "carefully-resuming" flag is set, the BBR congestion controller sets the BBR pacing rate to the larger of the nominal pacing rate (`BBR.bw` multiplied by `BBRStartupPacingGain`) or the calculated probing rate. Then, `CWND` is set to the larger of `BBR.bw` and the probing rate, multiplied by `BBR.rtt_min` times `BBRStartupCwndGain`.

The "carefully-resuming" flag is reset to False two rounds after it is set, i.e., after all the packets sent in the first round of "carefully resuming" have been received and acknowledged by the peer. At that stage (after the capacity has been validated), the measured delivery rate is expected to reflect the probing rate.

If congestion is detected while the "carefully-resuming" flag is True, BBR exits the Startup state and enters the Drain state (implementing the Safe Retreat Phase).

B.2. Validation for BBR

When using BBR, the Validation Phase is realised using the BBR rules for exiting Startup. Upon exiting Startup, the connection estimates that the measured delivery rate will reflect the flow's share of the actual bottleneck bandwidth. If congestion is detected while using Careful Resume (i.e, the "carefully-resuming" flag is True), BBR then exits the Startup state and enters the Drain state.

B.3. Safe Retreat for BBR

When using BBR, the Safe Retreat Phase is entered if the Drain state is entered while the "carefully-resuming" flag (see Appendix B) is still True, i.e., if less than 2 full rounds have elapsed after the sender entered the Unvalidated Phase. The delivery rates measured in these conditions are tainted, because packets sent during the attempt are still queued at the bottleneck and could have "pushed out" competing traffic. Therefore any delivery rates measured in the Drain state MUST be discarded if the "carefully-resuming" flag is set to True. This flag is cleared upon exiting the Drain state.

Appendix C. Internet Draft Revision details

RFC Editor -- please remove this section prior to publication.

Previous individual submissions were discussed in TSVWG and QUIC.

WG -00 included clarifications and restructuring to form the 1st WG draft.

WG -01 included review comments and suggestions from John Border, and follows the setting of the TSVWG milestone with an intended status of "Proposed Standard".

WG -02 includes steps to complete the spec. In particular, consideration of rate-limited senders; selection of reasoned parameters; specification of the Safe Retreat Phase; and improvements to the consistency throughout. Added the Validating Phase.

WG -03, explain entry to Validating Phase, editorial tidy.

WG -04, update based on review comments from Kazuho Oku.

WG-05, update based on review comments from Neal Cardwell. WG feedback from IETF-118. Reviewed the requirements v. guidelines; clarified that CC is not changed in recon., but the recon. info is used to steer the next phase; clarified saved_cwnd can be computed from ACK rate; use jump once; that real server platforms are complex. Clarified lifetime for saved CC params. Incorporates comments from Tong.

WG-06, SR updated following Hackathon comments from Kazuho Oku, and rework of use of PipeSize. Added an informative summary of actions, on suggestion by Tong. Added examples based on text by Ana Custura.

WG-07, Use "rate-limited" uniformly instead of application and data limited.

Updated to exit early when the unvalidated CWND not utilised, detected in tests by Q Misell. Change pipe_size to be PipeSize.

WG-08, Updated CDDL, and made constraints to Observing into guidance, they say what makes sense - but do not need to be followed for conformance. Updated table in the appendix to align with text.

WG-09, Cleaning text to separate guidelines and specification and adjust wording to improve clarity based on questions received during implementation.

WG-10, CH developed text to explain expected operation with BBR. This also fixed some typos introduced in previous edits. Fix XML and fix CDDL bugs for submission.

Changed the ssthresh value used after an exit of Safe Retreat to be (PipeSize/2).

WG-11, JD fixed mistakes. GF clarified text. RS added that after SR, ssthresh ought to match the behaviour of Cubic/Reno. updated the text to be allow for an implementation to update CWND ahead of

entering the Unvalidated Phase, and to clarify that the Unvalidated Phase starts when the first unvalidated packet is actually sent.

WG-12, JD, MH and GF clarified text, and checked for typos.

WG-13, After WGLC including NC and MK's review comments.

WG-14, removed qlog to a separate ID (LP), made relevant to other transports (MK).

WG-15, fixes typos and aligns with new rev of the Qlog spec.

WG-16, updated after review by Kazuho, Nicolai Fischer and aligns with latest rev of the CR Qlog I-D.

WG-17, updated comments from Joerg Deutschman, harmonised use of "congestion detected" and mentions of ECN. Updated reference to PRR.bis.

WG-18, NiTs fixed to reconcile with logging in qlog. Removed "current_remote_endpoint" as requested by Doc Shepherd.

WG-19, after WG Shepherd review.

WG-20, after AD review. Requested renaming Normal Phase to normal CC; restructured each phase to have a consistent classification of events (with no intended change of algorithm).

WG-21, fixed typos.

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