Abstract

The Ad Hoc On-Demand Distance Vector (AODV) routing protocol is intended for use by mobile nodes in an ad hoc network. It offers quick adaptation to dynamic link conditions, low processing and memory overhead, low network utilization, and determines unicast between sources and destinations. It uses destination sequence numbers to ensure loop freedom at all times (even in the face of anomalous delivery of routing control messages), solving problems (such as "counting to infinity") associated with classical distance vector protocols.
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1. Introduction

The Ad Hoc On-Demand Distance Vector (AODV) algorithm enables dynamic, self-starting, multihop routing between participating mobile nodes wishing to establish and maintain an ad hoc network. AODV allows mobile nodes to obtain routes quickly for new destinations, and does not require nodes to maintain routes to destinations that are not in active communication. AODV allows mobile nodes to respond quickly to link breakages and changes in network topology. The operation of AODV is loop-free, and by avoiding the Bellman-Ford “counting to infinity” problem offers quick convergence when the ad hoc network topology changes (typically, when a node moves in the network). When links break, AODV causes the affected set of nodes to be notified so that they are able to invalidate the routes using the broken link.

One distinguishing feature of AODV is its use of a destination sequence number for each route entry. The destination sequence number is created by the destination for any route information it sends to requesting nodes. Using destination sequence numbers ensures loop freedom and is simple to program. Given the choice between two routes to a destination, a requesting node always selects the one with the greatest sequence number.

2. Overview

Route Requests (RREQs), Route Replies (RREPs), and Route Errors (RERRs) are the message types defined by AODV. These message types are received at port 654, over UDP, and normal IP header processing applies. So, for instance, the requesting node is expected to use its IP address as the source IP address for the messages. For broadcast messages, the IP limited broadcast address (255.255.255.255) is used. This means that such messages are not blindly forwarded. However, AODV operation does require that certain messages (e.g., RREQ) have to be disseminated widely, perhaps throughout the ad hoc network. The range of dissemination...
of such flooded RREQs is indicated by the TTL in the IP header. Fragmentation is typically not required.

As long as the endpoints of a communication connection have valid routes to each other, AODV does not play any role. When a route to a new destination is needed, the node uses a broadcast RREQ to find a route to the destination. A route can be determined when the RREQ reaches either the destination itself, or an intermediate node with a ‘fresh enough’ route to the destination. A ‘fresh enough’ route is an unexpired route entry for the destination whose associated sequence number is at least as great as that contained in the RREQ. The route is made available by unicasting a RREP back to the source of the RREQ. Each node receiving the request caches a route back to the originator of the request, so that the the RREP can be unicast from the destination along a path to that originator, or likewise from any intermediate node that is able to satisfy the request.

Nodes monitor the link status of next hops in active routes. When a link break in an active route is detected, a RERR message is used to notify other nodes that the loss of that link has occurred. The RERR message indicates which destinations are now unreachable due to the loss of the link. In order to enable this reporting mechanism, each node keeps a ‘precursor list’, containing the IP address for each its neighbors that are likely to use it as a next hop towards the destination which is now unreachable. The information in the precursor lists is most easily acquired during the processing for generation of a RREP message, which by definition has to be sent to a node in a precursor list (see section 8.6).

A RREQ may also be received for a multicast IP address. In this document, full processing for such messages is not specified. For example, the source of such an RREQ for a multicast IP address may have to follow special rules. However, it is important to enable correct multicast operation by intermediate nodes that are not enabled as source or destination nodes for IP multicast addresses, and likewise are not equipped for any special multicast protocol processing. For such multicast-unaware nodes, processing for a multicast IP address as a destination IP address MUST be carried out in the same way as for any other destination IP address.

AODV is a routing protocol, and it deals with route table management. Route table information must be kept even for ephemeral routes, such as are created to temporarily store reverse paths towards nodes originating RREQs. AODV uses the following fields with each route table entry:

- Destination IP Address
- Destination Sequence Number
- Interface
3. AODV Terminology

This protocol specification uses conventional meanings [2] for capitalized words such as MUST, SHOULD, etc., to indicate requirement levels for various protocol features. This section defines other terminology used with AODV that is not already defined in [3].

active route

A routing table entry with a finite metric in the Hop Count field. A routing table may contain entries that are not active (invalid routes or entries). They have an infinite metric in the Hop Count field. Only active entries can be used to forward data packets. Invalid entries are eventually deleted.

broadcast

Broadcasting means transmitting to the IP Limited Broadcast address, 255.255.255.255. A broadcast packet may not be blindly forwarded, but broadcasting is useful to enable flooding.

flood

Flooding means to send a message to every node of the ad hoc network, or to every node in an region of the ad hoc network. In AODV, a message is flooded by iterated use of broadcast, for which receivers must also rebroadcast after their processing steps have been completed for that message.
forwarding node

A node which agrees to forward packets destined for another destination node, by retransmitting them to a next hop which is closer to the unicast destination along a path which has been set up using routing control messages.

forward route

A route set up to send data packets from a source to a destination.

originating node

A node which initiates an AODV message which is the processed and possibly retransmitted by other nodes in the ad hoc network. For instance, the node initiating a Route Discovery process and flooding the RREQ message is called the originating node of the RREQ message.

reverse route

A route set up to forward a reply (RREP) packet back to the source from the destination or from an intermediate node having a route to the destination.

4. Route Request (RREQ) Message Format

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve</td>
<td>Hop Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flooding ID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination IP Address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Sequence Number</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source IP Address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Sequence Number</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

The format of the Route Request message is illustrated above, and contains the following fields:

Type 1
J  Join flag; reserved for multicast.
R  Repair flag; reserved for multicast.
G  Gratuitous RREP flag; indicates whether a 
gratuitous RREP should be unicast to the node 
specified in the Destination IP Address field (see 
sections 8.3, 8.6.3)
Reserved  Sent as 0; ignored on reception.
Hop Count  The number of hops from the Source IP Address to 
the node handling the request.
Flooding ID  A sequence number uniquely identifying the 
particular RREQ when taken in conjunction with the 
source node’s IP address.
Destination IP Address  
The IP address of destination for which a route is 
desired.
Destination Sequence Number  
The last sequence number received in the past by 
the source for any route towards the destination.
Source IP Address  
The IP address of the node which originated the 
Route Request.
Source Sequence Number  
The current sequence number to be used for route 
entries pointing to (and generated by) the source 
of the route request.
5. Route Reply (RREP) Message Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Reserved</th>
<th>Prefix Sz</th>
<th>Hop Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The format of the Route Reply message is illustrated above, and contains the following fields:

- **Type**: 2
  - Repair flag; used for multicast.

- **R**: Acknowledgment required; see sections 7 and 8.7.

- **Reserved**: Sent as 0; ignored on reception.

- **Prefix Size**: If nonzero, the 5-bit Prefix Size specifies that the indicated next hop may be used for any nodes with the same routing prefix (as defined by the Prefix Size) as the requested destination.

- **Hop Count**: The number of hops from the Source IP Address to the Destination IP Address. For multicast route requests this indicates the number of hops to the multicast tree member sending the RREP.

- **Destination IP Address**: The IP address of the destination for which a route is supplied.

- **Destination Sequence Number**: The destination sequence number associated to the route.

- **Source IP Address**: The IP address of the source node which issued the RREQ for which the route is supplied.
Lifetime      The time for which nodes receiving the RREP consider
the route to be valid.

Note that the Prefix Size allows a Subnet Leader to supply a route
for every host in the subnet defined by the routing prefix, which
is determined by the IP address of the Subnet Leader and the Prefix
Size. In order to make use of this feature, the Subnet Leader has to
guarantee reachability to all the hosts sharing the indicated subnet
prefix. The Subnet Leader is also responsible for maintaining the
Destination Sequence Number for the whole subnet.

6. Route Error (RERR) Message Format

```
+---+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+
|     Type      |N|          Reserved           |   DestCount   |
+---+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+
|            Unreachable Destination IP Address (1)             |
+---+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+
|         Unreachable Destination Sequence Number (1)           |
+---+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-|
|  Additional Unreachable Destination IP Addresses (if needed)  |
+---+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-|
|Additional Unreachable Destination Sequence Numbers (if needed) |
+---+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+-+
```

The format of the Route Error message is illustrated above, and
contains the following fields:

**Type**
3

**N**
No delete flag; set when a node has performed a local
repair of a link, and upstream nodes should not delete
the route.

**Reserved**
Sent as 0; ignored on reception.

**DestCount**
The number of unreachable destinations included in the
message; MUST be at least 1.

**Unreachable Destination IP Address**
The IP address of the destination which has become
unreachable due to a link break.

**Unreachable Destination Sequence Number**
The last known sequence number, incremented by one,
of the destination listed in the previous Unreachable Destination IP Address field.

The RERR message is sent whenever a link break causes one or more destinations to become unreachable. The unreachable destination addresses included are those of all lost destinations which are now unreachable due to the loss of that link.

7. Route Reply Acknowledgment (RREP-ACK) Message Format

```
+-------------+-----------------+
|     Type    |   Reserved      |
+-------------+-----------------+
```

Type 4

Reserved Sent as 0; ignored on reception.

The RREP-ACK message may be used to acknowledge receipt of a RREP message. It is used in cases where the link over which the RREP message is sent may be unreliable.

8. AODV Operation

This section describes the scenarios under which nodes generate Route Request (RREQ), Route Replie (RREP) and Route Error (RERR) messages for unicast communication towards a destination, and how the message data are handled. In order to process the messages correctly, certain state information has to be maintained for the route table entries for the destinations of interest.

All AODV messages are sent to port 654 using UDP.

8.1. Maintaining Sequence Numbers

AODV depends on each node in the network to own and maintain a sequence number to guarantee the loop-freedom of all routes towards that node. A node increments its own sequence number in two circumstances:

- Immediately before a node originates a RREQ flood, it MUST increment its own sequence number. This prevents problems with deleted reverse routes to the originator of a RREQ.
- Immediately before a destination node originates a RREP in response to a RREQ, it MUST update its own sequence number to the maximum of its current sequence number and the destination sequence number in the RREQ packet.

Every route table entry at every node MUST include the latest information available about the sequence number for the IP address of the destination node for which the route table entry is maintained. This sequence number is called the "destination sequence number". It is updated whenever a node receives new information about the sequence number from RREQ, RREP, or RERR messages that may be received related to that destination.

The only other circumstance in which a node may change the destination sequence number in one of its route table entries is in response to a broken or expired link to the next hop towards that destination. The node can easily determine which destinations use a broken next hop by consulting its precursor lists for the next hop. In this case, for each destination which uses the next hop, the node increments the sequence number and puts the Hop Count to be "infinity" (for the case of broken links, see also see sections 8.11, 8.12).

In summary, a node may change the sequence number for a particular destination only if:

- it is itself the destination node, and offers a new route to itself
- it receives an AODV message with new information about the sequence number for some other destination node
- the path towards the destination node expires or breaks.

8.2. Maintaining Route Table Entries and Route Utilization Records

For each valid route maintained by a node (containing a finite Hop Count metric) as a routing table entry, the node also maintains a list of precursors that may be forwarding packets on this route. These precursors will receive notifications from the node in the event of detection of the loss of the next hop link. The list of precursors in a routing table entry contains those neighboring nodes to which a route reply was generated or forwarded.

When a node receives an AODV control packet from a neighbor, it checks its route table for an entry for that neighbor. In the event that there is no corresponding entry for that neighbor, an entry is created. The sequence number is either determined from
the information contained in the control packet (i.e., the neighbor is the source of a RREQ), or else it is initialized to zero if the sequence number for that node cannot be determined. The lifetime for the routing table entry is either determined from the control packet (i.e., the neighbor is the originator of a RREP for itself), or it is initialized to MY_ROUTE_TIMEOUT. The hopcount to the neighbor is set to one.

Each time a route is used to forward a data packet, its Lifetime field is updated to be no less than the current time plus ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT. Since the route between each source and destination pair are expected to be symmetric, the Lifetime for the previous hop, along the reverse path back to the IP source, is also updated to be no less than the current time plus ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT.

### 8.3. Generating Route Requests

A node floods a RREQ when it determines that it needs a route to a destination and does not have one available. This can happen if the destination is previously unknown to the node, or if a previously valid route to the destination expires or is broken (i.e., an infinite metric is associated with the route). The Destination Sequence Number field in the RREQ message is the last known destination sequence number for this destination and is copied from the Destination Sequence Number field in the routing table. If no sequence number is known, a sequence number of zero is used. The Source Sequence Number in the RREQ message is the node’s own sequence number. The Flooding ID field is incremented by one from the last Flooding ID used by the current node. Each node maintains only one Flooding ID. The Hop Count field is set to zero.

Before flooding the RREQ, the source node buffers the Flooding ID and the Source IP address (its own address) of the RREQ for FLOOD_RECORD_TIME milliseconds. In this way, when the node receives the packet again as it is flooded by its neighbors, it will not reprocess and re-forward the packet.

A source node often expects to have bidirectional communications with a destination node. In such cases, it is not sufficient for the source node to have a route to the destination node; the destination must also have a route back to the source node. In order for this to happen as efficiently as possible, any generation of an RREP by an intermediate node (as in section 8.6) for delivery to the source node, should be accompanied by some action which notifies the destination about a route back to the source node. The source node selects this mode of operation in the intermediate nodes by setting
the 'G' flag. See section 8.6.3 for details about actions taken by the intermediate node in response to a RREQ with the 'G' flag set.

After broadcasting a RREQ, a node waits for a RREP. If the RREP is not received within NET_TRAVERSAL_TIME milliseconds, the node MAY try again to flood the RREQ, up to a maximum of RREQ_RETRIES times. Each new attempt MUST increment the Flooding ID field.

Data packets waiting for a route (i.e., waiting for a RREP after RREQ has been sent) SHOULD be buffered. The buffering SHOULD be FIFO. If a RREQ has been flooded RREQ_RETRIES times without receiving any RREP, all data packets destined for the corresponding destination SHOULD be dropped from the buffer and a Destination Unreachable message delivered to the application.

8.4. Controlling Dissemination of Route Request Messages

To prevent unnecessary network-wide floods of RREQs, the source node SHOULD use an expanding ring search technique as an optimization. In an expanding ring search, the source node initially uses a TTL = TTL_START in the RREQ packet IP header and sets the timeout for receiving a RREP to 2 * TTL * NODE_TRAVERSAL_TIME milliseconds. If the RREQ times out without a corresponding RREP, the source floods the RREQ again with the TTL incremented by TTL_INCREMENT. This continues until the TTL set in the RREQ reaches TTL_THRESHOLD, beyond which a TTL = NET_DIAMETER is used for each flood. Each time, the timeout for receiving a RREP is calculated as before. Each attempt increments the Flooding ID field in the RREQ packet. The RREQ can be flooded with TTL = NET_DIAMETER up to a maximum of RREQ_RETRIES times.

When a RREP is received, the Hop Count used in the RREP packet is stored as the Last Hop Count in the routing table. When a new route to the same destination is required at a later time (e.g., upon route loss), the TTL in the RREQ IP header is initially set to this Last Hop Count plus TTL_INCREMENT. Thereafter, following each timeout the TTL is incremented by TTL_INCREMENT until TTL = TTL_THRESHOLD is reached. Beyond this TTL = NET_DIAMETER is used as before.

Timeouts MAY be more accurately determined dynamically via measurements, instead of using a statically configured value related to NODE_TRAVERSAL_TIME. To accomplish this, the RREQ may carry the timestamp via an extension field as defined in Section 11 to be carried back by the RREP packet (again via an extension field). The difference between the current time and this timestamp will determine the route discovery latency. The timeout may be set to be a small factor times the average of the last few route discovery latencies.
for the concerned destination. These latencies may be recorded as additional fields in the routing table.

An expired routing table entry SHOULD NOT be expunged before \((current\_time + DELETE\_PERIOD)\) (see section 8.13). Otherwise, the soft state corresponding to the route (e.g., Last Hop Count) will be lost. Furthermore, a longer routing table entry expunge time MAY be configured. Any routing table entry waiting for a RREP SHOULD NOT be expunged before \((current\_time + RREP\_WAIT\_TIME)\).

### 8.5. Processing and Forwarding Route Requests

When a node receives a flooded RREQ, it first checks to determine whether it has received a RREQ with the same Source IP Address and Flooding ID within at least the last FLOOD\_RECORD\_TIME milliseconds. If such a RREQ has been received, the node silently discards the newly received RREQ. The rest of this subsection describes actions taken for RREQs that are not discarded.

The node always creates or updates a reverse route to the Source IP Address in its routing table. If a route to the Source IP Address already exists, it is updated only if either

(i) the Source Sequence Number in the RREQ is higher than the destination sequence number of the Source IP Address in the route table, or

(ii) the sequence numbers are equal, but the hop count as specified by the RREQ, plus one, is now smaller than the existing hop count in the routing table.

This reverse route would be needed in case the node receives an eventual RREP back to the node which originated the RREQ (identified by the Source IP Address). When the reverse route is created or updated, the following actions are carried out:

1. the Source Sequence Number from the RREQ is copied to the corresponding destination sequence number;

2. the next hop in the routing table becomes the node transmitting the RREQ (it is obtained from the source IP address in the IP header and is often not equal to the Source IP Address field in the RREQ message);

3. the hop count is copied from the Hop Count in the RREQ message and incremented by one;
Under all circumstances whenever a RREQ message is received, the Lifetime of the reverse route entry for the source IP address is set to be the maximum of (ExistingLifetime, MinimalLifetime), where

\[
\text{MinimalLifetime} = \text{(current time} + \text{REV}_\text{ROUTE}_\text{LIFE} - \text{HopCount}\times\text{NODE}_\text{TRAVERSAL}_\text{TIME}).
\]

After updating the reverse route, the node checks to determine whether it has an active route to the destination. If the node does not have an active route, and the incoming IP header has TTL larger than 1, it broadcasts the RREQ from all of its configured interface(s) (see section 8.15). The Destination Sequence Number in the RREQ is updated to the maximum of the existing Destination Sequence Number in the RREQ and the destination sequence number in the routing table (if an entry exists) of the current node. The TTL or hop limit field in the outgoing IP header is decreased by one. The Hop Count field in the broadcast RREQ message is incremented by one, to account for the new hop through the intermediate node.

If the node, on the other hand, does have an active route for the destination, it compares the destination sequence number for that route with the Destination Sequence Number field of the incoming RREQ. If the existing destination sequence number is smaller than the Destination Sequence Number field of the RREQ, the node again retransmits the RREQ just as if it did not have an active route to the destination.

The node generates a RREP (as discussed further in section 8.6) if either:

(i) it has an active route to the destination, and the node’s existing destination sequence number is greater than or equal to the Destination Sequence Number of the RREQ, or

(ii) it is itself the destination.

When either of these conditions are satisfied, the node does not rebroadcast the RREQ.

8.6. Generating Route Replies

If a node receives a route request for a destination, and either has a fresh enough route to satisfy the request or is itself the destination, the node generates a RREP message. This node copies the Source and Destination IP Addresses in RREQ message into the corresponding fields in the RREP message which is to be sent back toward the source of the RREQ. Additional operations are slightly
different, depending on whether the node is itself the requested destination, or instead if it is an intermediate node with an admissible route to the destination. These scenarios are described below. In either case, the RREP is unicast to the node’s next hop en route to the originating node.

As the RREP is forwarded to the source, the Hop Count field is incremented by one at each hop. Thus, when the RREP reaches the source, the Hop Count represents the distance, in hops, of the destination from the source.

8.6.1. Route Reply Generation by the Destination

If the generating node is the destination itself, it MUST update its own sequence number to the maximum of its current sequence number and the destination sequence number in the RREQ packet. The destination node places the value zero in the Hop Count field of the RREP.

The destination node copies the value MY_ROUTE_TIMEOUT (see section 12) into the Lifetime field of the RREP. Each node MAY reconfigure its value for MY_ROUTE_TIMEOUT, within mild constraints (see section 12).

8.6.2. Route Reply Generation by an Intermediate Node

If node generating the RREP is not the destination node, but instead is an intermediate hop along the path from the source to the destination, it copies the last known destination sequence number in the Destination Sequence Number field in the RREP message.

When the intermediate node updates its route table for the source of the RREQ, it puts the last hop node (from which it received the RREQ, as indicated by the source IP address field in the IP header) into the precursor list for the forward path route entry -- i.e., the entry for the Destination IP Address. Furthermore, the intermediate node puts the next hop towards the destination in the precursor list for the reverse route entry -- i.e., the entry for the Source IP Address field of the RREQ message data.

The intermediate node places its distance in hops from the destination (indicated by the hop count in the routing table) in the Hop Count field in the RREP. The Lifetime field of the RREP is calculated by subtracting the current time from the expiration time in its route table entry.
8.6.3. Generating Gratuitous RREPs

After a node receives a RREQ and responds with a RREP, it discards the RREQ. If all incarnations of a single RREQ are replied to by intermediate nodes, the destination does not receive any copies of the RREQ. Hence, it does not learn of a route to the source node. This would cause the destination to initiate a route discovery flood, if for example the source is attempting to establish a TCP session. In order that the destination learn of routes to the originating node, the originating node SHOULD set the 'gratuitous RREP' ('G') flag in the RREQ if the session is going to be run over TCP, or if the destination should receive the gratuitous RREP for any other reason. If an intermediate node returns a RREP in response to a RREQ with the 'G' flag set, it MUST also unicast a gratuitous RREP to the destination node.

The RREP that is sent to the source of the RREQ is the same as before. The gratuitous RREP that is to be sent to the desired destination contains the following values in the RREP message fields:

- **Hop Count**: The Hop Count as received in the RREQ
- **Destination IP Address**: The IP address of the node that originated the RREQ
- **Destination Sequence Number**: The Source Sequence Number from the RREQ
- **Source IP Address**: The IP address of the destination node in the RREQ
- **Lifetime**: The remaining lifetime of the route towards the destination node, as known by the intermediate node.

The gratuitous RREP is then sent to the next hop along the path to the destination node.

8.7. Forwarding Route Replies

When a node receives a RREP message, it first increments the hop count value in the RREP by one, to account for the new hop through the intermediate node. It then compares the Destination Sequence Number in the message with its own copy of destination sequence number for the Destination IP Address in the RREP message. The forward route for this destination is created or updated only if (i) the Destination Sequence Number in the RREP is greater than the node's copy of the destination sequence number, or (ii) the sequence numbers are the same, but the route is no longer active or the
incremented Hop Count in RREP is smaller than the hop count in route table entry. If a new route is created or the old route is updated, the next hop is the node from which the RREP is received, which is indicated by the source IP address field in the IP header; the hop count is the Hop Count in the RREP message plus one; the expiry time is the current time plus the Lifetime in the RREP message; the destination sequence number is the Destination Sequence Number in the RREP message.

The current node can now begin using this route to forward data packets to the destination.

If the current node is not the source node as indicated by the Source IP Address in the RREP message AND a forward route has been created or updated as described before, the node consults its route table entry for the source node to determine the next hop for the RREP packet, and then forwards the RREP towards the source with its Hop Count incremented by one.

When any node generates or forwards a RREP, the precursor list for the corresponding destination node is updated by adding to it the next hop node to which the RREP is forwarded. Also, at each node the (reverse) route used to forward a RREP has its lifetime changed to current time plus ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT.

If a node forwards a RREP over a link that is likely to have errors or be unidirectional, the node SHOULD set the 'A' flag to require that the recipient of the RREP acknowledge receipt of the RREP by sending a RREP-ACK message back (see section 8.8).

8.8. Operation over Unidirectional Links

It is possible that a RREP transmission may fail if a RREQ transmission may occur over a unidirectional link. If no other RREP generated from the same RREQ flood reaches the source, the source will attempt to flood the RREQ after a timeout (see section 8.3). However, the same scenario might well be repeated, and no route would be discovered even after repeated retries. Unless corrective action is taken, this can happen even when bidirectional routes between source and destination do exist. In AODV, any node acts on only the first RREQ with the same Flooding ID and ignores any subsequent RREQs. Suppose, for example, that the first RREQ arrives along a path that has one or more unidirectional link(s). A subsequent RREQ may arrive via a bidirectional path (assuming such paths exist), but it will be ignored.

To prevent this problem, when a node detects that its transmission of an RREP message has failed, it remembers the next-hop of the failed
RREP in a ‘‘blacklist’’ set. A node ignores all RREQs received from any node in its blacklist set. Nodes are removed from the blacklist set after a BLACKLIST_TIMEOUT period. This period should be set to the upper bound of the time it takes to perform the allowed number of route request retry attempts as described in section 8.3.

Link layers using broadcast transmissions for RREQ will not be able to detect the presence of such unidirectional links. Such failure can be detected via the absence of a link-layer or network-layer acknowledgment (e.g., RREP-ACK).

8.9. Hello Messages

A node MAY offer connectivity information by broadcasting local Hello messages as follows. Every HELLO_INTERVAL milliseconds, the node checks whether it has sent a broadcast (e.g., a RREQ or an appropriate layer 2 message) within the last HELLO_INTERVAL. If it has not, it MAY broadcast a RREP with TTL = 1, called a Hello message, with the RREP message fields set as follows:

- **Destination IP Address**: The node’s IP address.
- **Destination Sequence Number**: The node’s latest sequence number.
- **Hop Count**: 0
- **Lifetime**: ALLOWED_HELLO_LOSS * HELLO_INTERVAL

A node MAY determine connectivity by listening for packets from its set of neighbors. If it receives no packets for more than ALLOWED_HELLO_LOSS * HELLO_INTERVAL milliseconds, the node SHOULD assume that the link to this neighbor is currently broken. When this happens, the node SHOULD proceed as in Section 8.11.

Whenever a node receives a HELLO packet from a neighbor, the node SHOULD make sure that it has an active route to the neighbor, and create one if necessary. If a route already exists, then the Lifetime for the route should be increased if necessary to be at least ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT. In any case, the route to the neighbor should be updated to contain the latest Destination Sequence Number from the HELLO message. Routes which are newly created from the reception of HELLO messages have empty precursor lists, and so typically do not trigger RERR messages when the neighbor moves away and the neighbor route expires.
8.10. Maintaining Local Connectivity

Each forwarding node SHOULD keep track of its continued connectivity to its active next hops (i.e., which next hops have forwarded, or used to forward packets, within the last ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT milliseconds, as well as neighbors that have transmitted HELLO messages within the last (ALLOWED_HELLO_LOSS * HELLO_INTERVAL)). A node can maintain accurate information about its continued connectivity to these active next hops, using one or more of the available link or network layer mechanisms, as described below.

- Any suitable link layer notification, such as those provided by IEEE 802.11, can be used to determine connectivity, each time a packet is transmitted to an active next hop. For example, absence of a link layer ACK or failure to get a CTS after sending RTS, even after the maximum number of retransmission attempts, indicates loss of the link to this active next hop.

- If possible, passive acknowledgment SHOULD be used when the next hop is expected to forward the packet, by listening to the channel for a transmission attempt made by the next hop. If transmission is not detected within NEXT_HOP_WAIT milliseconds or the next hop is the destination (and thus is never supposed to transmit the packet) one of the following methods should be used to determine connectivity.

  * Receiving any packet (including a HELLO message) from the next hop.
  * A RREQ unicast to the next hop, asking for a route to the next hop.
  * An ICMP Echo Request message unicast to the next hop.

If a link to the next hop cannot be detected by any of these methods, the forwarding node SHOULD assume that the link is broken, and take corrective action by following the methods specified in Section 8.11.

8.11. Route Error Messages

A node initiates a RERR message in three situations:

(i) if it detects a link break for the next hop of an active route in its routing table (also see section 8.1), or

(ii) if it gets a data packet destined to a node for which it does not have an active route, and has already made an attempt at local repair, or
(iii) if it receives a RERR from a neighbor for one or more active routes.

For cases (i) and (ii), for each unreachable destination the node copies the value in the Hop Count route table field into the Last Hop Count field, and marks the Hop Count for this destination as infinity, and thus invalidates the route.

For case (i), the node first makes a list of destinations which use the next hop which has been detected to be broken. For case (iii), the node instead makes the list of affected destinations which use the transmitter of the received RERR as the next hop, from among those destinations listed in the received RERR message. Then, in either case (i) or (iii), the the node uses the constructed list of affected destinations to disseminate information about the broken route to the appropriate other nodes; if there are no affected destinations, the node does not disseminate the RERR message.

For each one of the affected destinations, the node takes the following actions:

(a) updates the corresponding destination sequence number(s) with the Destination Sequence Number(s) in the packet.

(b) copies the old value of Hop Count into the Last Hop Count field.

(c) marks the Hop Count for this destination as infinity, and thus invalidates the route.

(d) checks the precursor list for each destination for emptiness. If the list is empty, don’t follow steps (e) -- (g)

(e) Otherwise, the node creates or updates the data in a RERR message to be transmitted. Each destination with a non-empty precursor list is included as unreachable along with its destination sequence numbers.

(f) transmit the RERR message. If there is only one previous hop that needs to receive the RERR, the node SHOULD unicast the RERR to the previous hop. Otherwise, the node SHOULD transmit the RERR message to the IP broadcast address.

(g) delete the precursor list of each unreachable destination.
The RERR is locally broadcast (Destination IP == 255.255.255.255, TTL == 1) with the unreachable destination(s) and the destination sequence number for each one included in the packet. For case (i), the unreachable destinations are the broken next hop, and any additional destinations which are now unreachable due to the loss of this next hop link. For case (ii), there is only one unreachable destination, which is the destination of the data packet that cannot be delivered. The DestCount field of the RERR packet indicates the number of unreachable destinations included in the packet.

When a node invalidates a route to a neighboring node, it MUST also delete that neighbor from any precursor lists for routes to other nodes. This prevents precursor lists from containing stale entries of neighbors with which the node is no longer able to communicate. The node does this by inspecting the precursor list of each destination entry in its routing table, and deleting the lost neighbor from any list in which it appears.

8.12. Local Repair

When a link break in an active route occurs, the node upstream of that break MAY choose to repair the link locally if the destination is no farther than MAX_REPAIR_TTL hops away. To repair the link break itself, it increments the sequence number for the destination and then floods a RREQ for that destination. The TTL of the broadcast RREQ should initially be set to the following value:

max(MIN_REPAIR_TTL, 0.5 distance to source) + LOCAL_ADD_TTL.

Thus, local repair attempts should never be visible to the source node, and will always have minimum TTL equal to MIN_REPAIR_TTL + LOCAL_ADD_TTL. The node initiating the repair then waits the discovery period to receive RREPs in response to the RREQ. If, at the end of the discovery period, it has not received a RREP for that destination, it proceeds as described in Section 8.11 by transmitting a RERR message for that destination.

On the other hand, if the node receives one or more RREPs during the discovery period, the node proceeds as described in Section 8.7, updating its route table entry for that destination. It then compares the hop count of the new route with the value in the last hop count route table entry for that destination. If the hop count of the newly determined route to the destination is greater than the hop count of the previously known route, as recorded in the last hop count field, the node SHOULD create a RERR message for the destination, with the ‘N’ bit set.

A node which receives a RERR message with the ‘N’ flag set MUST NOT delete the route to that destination. The only action taken should be the retransmission of the message, if the RERR arrived
from the next hop along that route, and if there are one or more precursor nodes for that route to the destination. When the source node receives a RERR message with the ‘N’ flag set, if this message came from its next hop along its route to the destination then the source node MAY choose to reinitiate route discovery, as described in Section 8.3.

Local repair of link breaks in active routes sometimes results in increased path lengths to those destinations. Repairing the link locally is likely to increase the number of data packets which are able to be delivered to the destinations, since data packets will not be dropped as the RERR travels to the source node. Sending a RERR to the source node after locally repairing the link break may allow the source to find a fresh route to the destination which is better based on current node positions. However, it does not require the source node to rebuild the route, as the source may be done, or nearly done, with the data session.

When a link breaks along an active route, there are often multiple destinations which become unreachable. The node which is upstream of the broken link tries an immediate local repair for only the one destination towards which the packet was traveling. Other routes using the same link MUST be marked as broken, but the node handling the local repair MAY flag each such newly broken route as locally repairable; this local repair flag in the route table MUST be reset when the route times out (i.e., after the route has been not been active for ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT). Before the timeout occurs, these other routes will be repaired as needed when packets arrive for the other destinations. Alternatively, depending upon local congestion, the node MAY begin the process of establishing local repairs for the other routes, without waiting for new packets to arrive.

8.13. Route Expiry and Deletion

If the Lifetime of an active routing entry expires, the following actions are taken.

1. The entry is invalidated by copying the Hop Count to the Last Hop Count field and then making the Hop Count infinity.

2. The destination sequence number of this routing entry is incremented by one.

3. The Lifetime field is updated to current time plus DELETE_PERIOD. Before this time, the entry MUST NOT be deleted.
Note that the Lifetime field plays dual role -- for an active route it is the expiry time, and for an invalid route it is the deletion time.

These actions are also taken whenever a route entry is invalidated for any reason, for example, for link breakage or receiving a RERR.

If a data packet is received for an invalid route, the Lifetime field is always updated to current time plus DELETE_PERIOD. The determination of DELETE_PERIOD is discussed in Section 12.

8.14. Actions After Reboot

A node participating in the ad hoc network must take certain actions after reboot as it might lose all sequence number records for all destinations, including its own sequence number. However, there may be neighboring nodes which are using this node as an active next hop. This can potentially create routing loops. To prevent this possibility, each node on reboot waits for DELETE_PERIOD. During this time, the node does not transmit any RREP messages. If the node receives a RREQ, RREP, or RERR control packets, it SHOULD create route entries as appropriate given the sequence number information in the control packets. If the node receives a data packet for some other destination, it MUST broadcast a RERR as described in subsection 8.11 and reset the waiting timer to expire after current time plus DELETE_PERIOD.

It can be shown \([1]\) that by the time the rebooted node comes out of the waiting phase and becomes an active router again, none of its neighbors will be using it as an active next hop any more. Its own sequence number gets updated once it receives a RREQ from any other node, as the RREQ always carries the maximum destination sequence number seen en route.

8.15. Interfaces

Because AODV should operate smoothly over wired, as well as wireless, networks, and because it is likely that AODV will also be used with multi-homed radios, the interface over which packets arrive must be known to AODV whenever a packet is received. This includes the reception of RREQ, RREP, and RERR messages. Whenever a packet is received from a new neighbor, the interface on which that packet was received is recorded into the route table entry for that neighbor, along with all the other appropriate routing information. Similarly, whenever a route to a new destination is learned, the interface through which the destination can be reached is also recorded into the destination’s route table entry.
When multiple interfaces are available, a node retransmitting a RREQ message rebroadcasts that message on all interfaces which have been configured for operation in the ad-hoc network. When a node needs to transmit a RERR, it should only transmit it on those interfaces which have precursor nodes for that route.

9. AODV and Aggregated Networks

AODV has been designed for use by mobile nodes with IP addresses that are not necessarily related to each other, to create an ad hoc network. However, in some cases a collection of mobile nodes MAY operate in a fixed relationship to each other and share a common subnet prefix, moving together within an area where an ad hoc network has formed. Call such a collection of nodes a ”subnet”. In this case, it is possible for a single node within the subnet to advertise reachability for all other nodes on the subnet, by responding with a RREP message to any RREQ message requesting a route to any node with the subnet routing prefix. Call the single node the ”subnet router”. In order for a subnet router to operate the AODV protocol for the whole subnet, it has to maintain a destination sequence number for the entire subnet. In any such RREP message sent by the subnet router, the Prefix Size field of the RREP message MUST be set to the length of the subnet prefix. Other nodes sharing the subnet prefix SHOULD NOT issue RREP messages, and SHOULD forward RREQ messages to the subnet leader.

10. Using AODV with Other Networks

In some configurations, an ad hoc network may be able to provide connectivity between external routing domains that do not use AODV. If the points of contact to the other networks can act as subnet routers (see Section 9) for any relevant networks within the external routing domains, then the ad hoc network can maintain connectivity to the external routing domains. Indeed, the external routing networks can use the ad hoc network defined by AODV as a transit network.

In order to provide this feature, a point of contact to an external network (call it an Infrastructure Router) has to act as the subnet router for every subnet of interest within the external network for which the Infrastructure Router can provide reachability. This includes the need for maintaining a destination sequence number for that external subnet.

If multiple Infrastructure Routers offer reachability to the same external subnet, those Infrastructure Routers have to cooperate (by means outside the scope of this specification) to provide consistent AODV semantics for ad hoc access to those subnets.
11. Extensions

RREQ and RREP messages have extensions defined in the following format:

```
+-----------+-------------------+----------------------------------------+
|     Type  |    Length       |     type-specific data ...            |
+-----------+-------------------+----------------------------------------+
```

where:

- **Type** 1
- **Length** The length of the type-specific data, not including the Type and Length fields of the extension.

Extensions with types between 128 and 255 may NOT be skipped. The rules for extensions will be spelled out more fully, and conform with the rules for handling IPv6 options.

11.1. Hello Interval Extension Format

```
+-----------+-------------------+----------------------------------------+
|     Type  |    Length       |         Hello Interval ...             |
+-----------+-------------------+----------------------------------------+
```

- **Type** 2
- **Length** 4
- **Hello Interval** The number of milliseconds between successive transmissions of a Hello message.

The Hello Interval extension MAY be appended to a RREP message with TTL == 1, to be used by a neighboring receiver in determine how long to wait for subsequent such RREP messages (i.e., Hello messages; see section 8.9).
12. Configuration Parameters

This section gives default values for some important values associated with AODV protocol operations. A particular mobile node may wish to change certain of the parameters, in particular the NET_DIAMETER, NODE_TRAVERSAL_TIME, MY_ROUTE_TIMEOUT, ALLOWED_HELLO_LOSS, RREQ_RETRIES, and possibly the HELLO_INTERVAL. In the latter case, the node should advertise the HELLO_INTERVAL in its Hello messages, by appending a Hello Interval Extension to the RREP message. Choice of these parameters may affect the performance of the protocol. The configured value for MY_ROUTE_TIMEOUT MUST be at least 2 * REV_ROUTE_LIFE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter Name</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT</td>
<td>3,000 Milliseconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALLOWED_HELLO_LOSS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACKLIST_TIMEOUT</td>
<td>RREQ_RETRIES * NET_TRAVERSAL_TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD_RECORD_TIME</td>
<td>2 * NET_TRAVERSAL_TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELETE_PERIOD</td>
<td>see note below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELLO_INTERVAL</td>
<td>1,000 Milliseconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL_ADD_TTL</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAX_REPAIR_TTL</td>
<td>0.3 * NET_DIAMETER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIN_REPAIR_TTL</td>
<td>see note below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MY_ROUTE_TIMEOUT</td>
<td>2 * ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET_DIAMETER</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEXT_HOP_WAIT</td>
<td>NODE_TRAVERSAL_TIME + 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NODE_TRAVERSAL_TIME</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV_ROUTE_LIFE</td>
<td>NET_TRAVERSAL_TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET_TRAVERSAL_TIME</td>
<td>3 * NODE_TRAVERSAL_TIME * NET_DIAMETER / 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RREQ_RETRIES</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTL_START</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTL_INCREMENT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTL_THRESHOLD</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MIN_REPAIR_TTL should be the last known hop count to the destination.

DELETE_PERIOD should be an upper bound on the time for which an upstream node A can have a neighbor B as an active next hop for destination D, while B has invalidated the route to D. Beyond this time B can delete the route to D. The determination of the upper bound somewhat depends on the characteristics of the underlying link layer. For example, if the link layer feedback is used to detect loss of link DELETE_PERIOD must be at least ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT. If there is no feedback and hello messages must be used, DELETE_PERIOD must be at least maximum of ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT and ALLOWED_HELLO_LOSS * HELLO_INTERVAL. If hello messages are
received from a neighbor but data packets to that neighbor are lost, (due to temporary link asymmetry, e.g.) we have to make more concrete assumptions about the underlying link layer. We assume that such asymmetry cannot persist beyond a certain certain time, say, a multiple K of ALLOWED_HELLO_LOSS * HELLO_INTERVAL. In other words, it cannot not be the case that a node receives K subsequent hello messages from a neighbor, while that same neighbor fails to receive any data packet from the node in this period. Covering all possibilities,

\[
\text{DELETE\_PERIOD} = K \times \max (\text{ACTIVE\_ROUTE\_TIMEOUT}, \text{ALLOWED\_HELLO\_LOSS} \times \text{HELLO\_INTERVAL}) \quad (K = 5 \text{ is recommended}).
\]

NET_DIAMETER measures the maximum possible number of hops between two nodes in the network. NODE_TRAVERSAL_TIME is a conservative estimate of the average one hop traversal time for packets and should include queueing delays, interrupt processing times and transfer times. ACTIVE_ROUTE_TIMEOUT SHOULD be set to a longer value (at least 10,000 milliseconds) if link-layer indications are used to detect link breakages such as in IEEE 802.11 standard. TTL\_START should be set to at least 2 if Hello messages are used for local connectivity information. Performance of the AODV protocol is sensitive to the chosen values of these constants, which often depend on the characteristics of the underlying link layer protocol, radio technologies etc. BLACKLIST\_TIMEOUT should be suitably increased if expanding ring search is used. In such cases, it should be \((\text{TTL\_THRESHOLD} - \text{TTL\_START}) / \text{TTL\_INCREMENT} + 1 + \text{RREQ\_RETRIES}\). This is to account for possible additional route discovery attempts.

13. Security Considerations

Currently, AODV does not specify any special security measures. Route protocols, however, are prime targets for impersonation attacks. If there is danger of such attacks, AODV control messages must be protected by use of authentication techniques, such as those involving generation of unforgeable and cryptographically strong message digests or digital signatures. In particular, RREP messages SHOULD be authenticated to avoid creation of spurious routes to a desired destination. Otherwise, an attacker could masquerade as the desired destination, and maliciously deny service to the destination and/or maliciously inspect and consume traffic intended for delivery to the destination. RERR messages, while less dangerous, SHOULD be authenticated in order to prevent malicious nodes from disrupting valid routes between nodes which are communication partners.

Since AODV does not make any assumption about the nature of the address assignment to the mobile nodes except that they are presumed to have unique IP addresses, no definite statements can be made about
the applicability of IPsec authentication headers or key exchange mechanisms. However, if the mobile nodes in the ad hoc network have pre-established security associations, they should be able to use the same authentication mechanisms based on their IP addresses as they would have used otherwise.

14. Acknowledgments

We acknowledge with gratitude the work done at University of Pennsylvania within Carl Gunter’s group, as well as at Stanford and CMU, to determine some conditions (especially involving reboots and lost RERRs) under which previous versions of AODV could suffer from routing loops. Contributors to those efforts include Karthikeyan Bhargavan, Joshua Broch, Dave Maltz, Madanlal Musuvathi, and Davor Obradovic. The idea of a DELETE_PERIOD, for which expired routes (and, in particular, the sequence numbers) to a particular destination must be maintained, was also suggested by them.

We also acknowledge the comments and improvements suggested by SJ Lee (especially regarding local repair), Mahesh Marina, Yves Prelot, Manel Guerrero Zapata, and Philippe Jacquet.

References


A. Draft Modifications

The following are major changes between this version (09) of the AODV draft and the previous version (08):

- Added section specifically about sequence number management.

- Added the port number 654 to the specification, since it has already been allocated.

- Rewrote the Security Considerations section to include more details about the specific exposures relevant to AODV instead of only for routing protocols in general.

- Clarified that nodes increment the sequence number for a destination on the other side of a broken link at the time the link breaks, and not as part of any later message processing.

- Clarified that "broadcast" means transmission to 255.255.255.255, and "flooding" means iterated broadcast by each node in turn until every node in the network has received the message.

- Promoted former section 8.2.1 ("Controlling Route Request broadcasts") to be its own major section.

- Fine-tuned specification for lifetime for reverse routes.

- Removed references to unused, nonexistent, and unspecified ICMP ACK message.

- Added paragraph about creating/updating routes to neighbors when receive control packets from them (section 8.3).

- Added action for a source initiating a RREQ - it records the Flooding ID and source IP address of the RREQ so that it will not reprocess the packet as it receives it from its neighbors (section 8.5).

- Clarified when to increment the sequence number in a RREQ in section 8.6.1.

- Reordered the paragraphs in section 8.6.1 so that they follow temporal order.

- Clarified that RREPs are unicast to the next hop en route to the source, not to the actual source node, so that the intermediate nodes can process the RREP (section 8.7)
- Made terminology changes so that routes to neighbors advertising HELLO messages are considered active routes (section 8.9).

Author’s Addresses

Questions about this memo can be directed to:

Charles E. Perkins
Communications Systems Laboratory
Nokia Research Center
313 Fairchild Drive
Mountain View, CA 94303
USA
+1 650 625 2986
+1 650 691 2170 (fax)
charliep@iprg.nokia.com

Elizabeth M. Belding-Royer
Dept. of Computer Science
University of California, Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, CA 93106
+1 805 893 3411
+1 805 893 8553 (fax)
ebling@cs.ucsb.edu

Samir R. Das
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering & Computer Science
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0030
+1 513 556 2594
+1 513 556 7326 (fax)
sdas@ececs.uc.edu