0-RTT TCP Convert Protocol
draft-ietf-tcpm-converters-12

Abstract

This document specifies an application proxy, called Transport Converter, to assist the deployment of TCP extensions such as Multipath TCP. This proxy is designed to avoid inducing extra delay when involved in a network-assisted connection (that is, 0-RTT).

This specification assumes an explicit model, where the proxy is explicitly configured on hosts.

-- Editorial Note (To be removed by RFC Editor)

Please update these statements with the RFC number to be assigned to this document: [This-RFC]

Please update TBA statements with the port number to be assigned to the 0-RTT TCP Convert Protocol.

Status of This Memo

This Internet-Draft is submitted in full conformance with the provisions of BCP 78 and BCP 79.

Internet-Drafts are working documents of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). Note that other groups may also distribute working documents as Internet-Drafts. The list of current Internet-Drafts is at https://datatracker.ietf.org/drafts/current/.

Internet-Drafts are draft documents valid for a maximum of six months and may be updated, replaced, or obsoleted by other documents at any time. It is inappropriate to use Internet-Drafts as reference material or to cite them other than as "work in progress."
This Internet-Draft will expire on April 6, 2020.

Copyright Notice

Copyright (c) 2019 IETF Trust and the persons identified as the
document authors. All rights reserved.

This document is subject to BCP 78 and the IETF Trust’s Legal
Provisions Relating to IETF Documents
(https://trustee.ietf.org/license-info) in effect on the date of
publication of this document. Please review these documents
carefully, as they describe your rights and restrictions with respect
to this document. Code Components extracted from this document must
include Simplified BSD License text as described in Section 4.e of
the Trust Legal Provisions and are provided without warranty as
described in the Simplified BSD License.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction .............................................. 3
   1.1. The Problem ............................................ 3
   1.2. Network-Assisted Connections: The Rationale ............. 4
2. Conventions and Definitions ............................... 6
3. Architecture .............................................. 6
   3.1. Functional Elements .................................... 7
   3.2. Theory of Operation .................................... 9
   3.3. Data Processing at the Transport Converter ............. 12
   3.4. Sample Examples of Outgoing Converter-Assisted Multipath
       TCP Connections ........................................ 14
   3.5. Sample Example of Incoming Converter-Assisted Multipath
       TCP Connection ......................................... 16
4. The Convert Protocol (Convert) ............................ 17
   4.1. The Convert Fixed Header ............................... 17
   4.2. Convert TLVs .......................................... 18
       4.2.1. Generic Convert TLV Format .......................... 18
       4.2.2. Summary of Supported Convert TLVs .................. 19
       4.2.3. The Info TLV ...................................... 20
       4.2.4. Supported TCP Extensions TLV ....................... 20
       4.2.5. Connect TLV ....................................... 21
       4.2.6. Extended TCP Header TLV ............................. 23
       4.2.7. The Cookie TLV .................................... 23
       4.2.8. Error TLV ......................................... 24
5. Compatibility of Specific TCP Options with the Conversion
   Service .................................................. 27
   5.1. Base TCP Options ....................................... 27
   5.2. Window Scale (WS) ...................................... 28
   5.3. Selective Acknowledgments .............................. 28
   5.4. Timestamp ............................................. 29
1. Introduction

1.1. The Problem

Transport protocols like TCP evolve regularly [RFC7414]. TCP has been improved in different ways. Some improvements such as changing the initial window size [RFC6928] or modifying the congestion control scheme can be applied independently on clients and servers. Other improvements such as Selective Acknowledgments [RFC2018] or large windows [RFC7323] require a new TCP option or to change the semantics of some fields in the TCP header. These modifications must be deployed on both clients and servers to be actually used on the Internet. Experience with the latter TCP extensions reveals that
their deployment can require many years. Fukuda reports in [Fukuda2011] results of a decade of measurements showing the deployment of Selective Acknowledgments, Window Scale and TCP Timestamps. [ANRW17] describes measurements showing that TCP Fast Open (TFO) [RFC7413] is still not widely deployed.

There are some situations where the transport stack used on clients (or servers) can be upgraded at a faster pace than the transport stack running on servers (or clients). In those situations, clients would typically want to benefit from the features of an improved transport protocol even if the servers have not yet been upgraded and conversely. Some assistance from the network to make use of these features is valuable. For example, Performance Enhancing Proxies [RFC3135], and other service functions have been deployed as solutions to improve TCP performance over links with specific characteristics.

Recent examples of TCP extensions include Multipath TCP [RFC6824] or TCPIPNC [RFC8548]. Those extensions provide features that are interesting for clients such as wireless devices. With Multipath TCP, those devices could seamlessly use WLAN (Wireless Local Area Network) and cellular networks, for bonding purposes, faster handovers, or better resiliency. Unfortunately, deploying those extensions on both a wide range of clients and servers remains difficult.

More recently, 5G bonding experimentation has been conducted into global range of the incumbent 4G (LTE) connectivity using newly devised clients and a Multipath TCP proxy. Even if the 5G and the 4G bonding relying upon Multipath TCP increases the bandwidth, it is as well crucial to minimize latency for all the way between endhosts regardless of whether intermediate nodes are inside or outside of the mobile core. In order to handle URLLC (Ultra Reliable Low Latency Communication) for the next generation mobile network, Multipath TCP and its proxy mechanism such as the one used to provide Access Traffic Steering, Switching, and Splitting (ATSSS) must be optimized to reduce latency [TS23501].

1.2. Network-Assisted Connections: The Rationale

This document specifies an application proxy, called Transport Converter. A Transport Converter is a function that is installed by a network operator to aid the deployment of TCP extensions and to provide the benefits of such extensions to clients. A Transport Converter may provide conversion service for one or more TCP extensions. Which TCP extensions are eligible to the conversion service is deployment-specific. The conversion service is provided by means of the 0-RTT TCP Convert Protocol (Convert), that is an
application-layer protocol which uses TCP port number TBA (Section 8).

The Convert Protocol provides 0-RTT (Zero Round-Trip Time) conversion service since no extra delay is induced by the protocol compared to connections that are not proxied. Particularly, the Convert Protocol does not require extra signaling setup delays before making use of the conversion service. The Convert Protocol does not require any encapsulation (no tunnels, whatsoever).

The Transport Converter adheres to the main principles drawn in [RFC1919]. In particular, a Transport Converter achieves the following:

- Listen for client sessions;
- Receive from a client the address of the final target server;
- Setup a session to the final server;
- Relay control messages and data between the client and the server;
- Perform access controls according to local policies.

The main advantage of network-assisted conversion services is that they enable new TCP extensions to be used on a subset of the path between endpoints, which encourages the deployment of these extensions. Furthermore, the Transport Converter allows the client and the server to directly negotiate TCP extensions for the sake of native support along the full path.

The Convert Protocol is a generic mechanism to provide 0-RTT conversion service. As a sample applicability use case, this document specifies how the Convert Protocol applies for Multipath TCP. It is out of scope of this document to provide a comprehensive list of all potential conversion services. Applicability documents may be defined in the future.

This document does not assume that all the traffic is eligible to the network-assisted conversion service. Only a subset of the traffic will be forwarded to a Transport Converter according to a set of policies. These policies, and how they are communicated to endpoints, are out of scope. Furthermore, it is possible to bypass the Transport Converter to connect directly to the servers that already support the required TCP extension(s).

This document assumes an explicit model in which a client is configured with one or a list of Transport Converters (statically or
The use of a Transport Converter means that there is no end-to-end transport connection between the client and server. This could potentially create problems in some scenarios such as those discussed in Section 4 of [RFC3135]. Some of these problems may not be applicable, for example, a Transport Converter can inform a client by means of Network Failure (65) or Destination Unreachable (97) error messages (Section 4.2.8) that it encounters a failure problem; the client can react accordingly. An endpoint, or its network administrator, can assess the benefit provided by the Transport Converter service versus the risk. This is one reason why the Transport Converter functionality has to be explicitly requested by an endpoint.

This document is organized as follows. First, Section 3 provides a brief explanation of the operation of Transport Converters. Then, Section 4 describes the Convert Protocol. Section 5 discusses how Transport Converters can be used to support different TCP extensions. Section 6 then discusses the interactions with middleboxes, while Section 7 focuses on the security considerations.

Appendix B describes how a TCP stack would need to support the protocol described in this document. Appendix C records some considerations that impacted the design of the protocol. Appendix E provides a comparison with SOCKS proxies that are already used to deploy Multipath TCP in some cellular networks (Section 2.2 of [RFC8041]).

2. Conventions and Definitions

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.

The information shown between brackets in the figures refers to Convert Protocol messages described in Section 4.

Only the exchange of control messages is depicted in the figures.

3. Architecture
3.1. Functional Elements

The Convert Protocol considers three functional elements:

- Clients;
- Transport Converters;
- Servers.

A Transport Converter is a network function that proxies all data exchanged over one upstream connection to one downstream connection and vice versa (Figure 1). The Transport Converter, thus, maintains state that associates one upstream connection to a corresponding downstream connection.

A connection can be initiated from both sides of the Transport Converter (Internet-facing interface, customer-facing interface).

```
Client <- upstream -> | Transport | <- downstream -> Server
connection | Converter | connection
```

| customer-facing interface : Internet-facing interface |

Figure 1: A Transport Converter Proxies Data between Pairs of TCP Connections

"Client" refers to a software instance embedded on a host that can reach a Transport Converter via its customer-facing interface. The "Client" can initiate connections via a Transport Converter (referred to as outgoing connections (Section 3.4)). Also, the "Client" can accept incoming connections via a Transport Converter (referred to as incoming connections (Section 3.5)).

Transport Converters can be operated by network operators or third parties. Nevertheless, this document focuses on the single administrative deployment case where the entity offering the connectivity service to a client is also the entity which owns and operates the Transport Converter.
A Transport Converter can be embedded in a standalone device or be activated as a service on a router. How such function is enabled is deployment-specific. A sample deployment is depicted in Figure 2.

```
Client - |R| -- |R| -- |R| -- -- Server
      ++  ++  ++
        ++  ++
          ++
            ++
               +--------+
               |Transport|
               |Converter|
               +--------+

R: Router
```

Figure 2: A Transport Converter Can Be Installed Anywhere in the Network

The architecture assumes that new software will be installed on the Client hosts to interact with one or more Transport Converters. Furthermore, the architecture allows for making use of new TCP extensions even if those are not supported by a given server.

A Client is configured, through means that are outside the scope of this document, with the names and/or the addresses of one or more Transport Converters and the TCP extensions that they support. The procedure for selecting a Transport Converter among a list of configured Transport Converters is outside the scope of this document.

One of the benefits of this design is that different transport protocol extensions can be used on the upstream and the downstream connections. This encourages the deployment of new TCP extensions until they are widely supported by servers, in particular.

The architecture does not mandate anything on the Server side.

Similar to address sharing mechanisms, the architecture does not interfere with end-to-end TLS connections [RFC8446] between the Client and the Server (Figure 3). In other words, end-to-end TLS is supported in the presence of a Converter.
It is out of scope of this document to elaborate on specific considerations related to the use of TLS in the Client-Converter connection leg to exchange Convert messages (in addition to the end-to-end TLS connection).

### 3.2. Theory of Operation

At a high level, the objective of the Transport Converter is to allow the use a specific extension, e.g., Multipath TCP, on a subset of the path even if the peer does not support this extension. This is illustrated in Figure 4 where the Client initiates a Multipath TCP connection with the Transport Converter (packets belonging to the Multipath TCP connection are shown with "===") while the Transport Converter uses a regular TCP connection with the Server.

The packets belonging to the pair of connections between the Client and Server passing through a Transport Converter may follow a different path than the packets directly exchanged between the Client and the Server. Deployments should minimize the possible additional delay by carefully selecting the location of the Transport Converter used to reach a given destination.

When establishing a connection, the Client can, depending on local policies, either contact the Server directly (e.g., by sending a TCP
SYN towards the Server) or create the connection via a Transport Converter. In the latter case (that is, the conversion service is used), the Client initiates a connection towards the Transport Converter and indicates the IP address and port number of the Server within the connection establishment packet. Doing so enables the Transport Converter to immediately initiate a connection towards that Server, without experiencing an extra delay. The Transport Converter waits until the receipt of the confirmation that the Server agrees to establish the connection before confirming it to the Client.

The Client places the destination address and port number of the Server in the payload of the SYN sent to the Transport Converter to minimize connection establishment delays. The Transport Converter maintains two connections that are combined together:

- the upstream connection is the one between the Client and the Transport Converter.
- the downstream connection is between the Transport Converter and the Server.

Any user data received by the Transport Converter over the upstream (or downstream) connection is proxied over the downstream (or upstream) connection. In particular, if the initial SYN message contains data in its payload (e.g., [RFC7413]), that data MUST be placed right after the Convert TLVs when generating the SYN.

The Converter associates a lifetime with state entries used to bind an upstream connection with its downstream connection.

Figure 5 illustrates the establishment of an outgoing TCP connection by a Client through a Transport Converter.

```
Client              Converter              Server
|                   |                      |
SYN [->Server:port]  SYN                  |
------------------>  ------------------->
<-----------------<<---------------------|
SYN+ACK [ ]          SYN+ACK              |
...                  ...                 |
```

Figure 5: Establishment of an Outgoing TCP Connection Through a Transport Converter

The Client sends a SYN destined to the Transport Converter. The payload of this SYN contains the address and port number of the Server. The Transport Converter does not reply immediately to this
SYN. It first tries to create a TCP connection towards the target Server. If this upstream connection succeeds, the Transport Converter confirms the establishment of the connection to the Client by returning a SYN+ACK and the first bytes of the bytestream contain information about the TCP options that were negotiated with the Server. Also, a state entry is instantiated for this connection. This state entry is used by the Converter to handle subsequent messages belonging to the connection.

The connection can also be established from the Internet towards a Client via a Transport Converter (Figure 6). This is typically the case when an application on the Client listens to a specific port (the Client hosts an application server, typically). When the Converter receives an incoming SYN from a remote host, it checks if it can provide the conversion service for the destination IP address and destination port number of that SYN. If the check fails, the packet is silently ignored by the Converter. If the check is successful, the Converter inserts the source IP address and source port number in the SYN packet, rewrites the source IP address to one of its IP addresses and, eventually (i.e., only when the Converter is configured in an address sharing mode), the destination IP address and port number in accordance with any information stored locally. That SYN is then forwarded to the next hop. A transport session entry is created by the Converter for this connection. SYN+ACK and ACK will be then exchanged between the Client, the Converter, and remote host to confirm the establishment of the connection. The Converter uses the transport session entry to proxy packets belonging to the connection.

---

**Figure 6: Establishment of an Incoming TCP Connection Through a Transport Converter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Transport Converter</th>
<th>Remote Host (RH)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SYN [&lt;-RH IP@:port]</td>
<td>SYN+ACK [ ]</td>
<td>SYN+ACK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------- &gt;-------------------</td>
<td>--------------- &gt;-------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard TCP ([RFC0793], Section 3.4) allows a SYN packet to carry data inside its payload but forbids the receiver from delivering it to the application until completion of the three-way-handshake. To enable applications to exchange data in a TCP handshake, this specification follows an approach similar to TCP Fast Open [RFC7413] and thus removes the constraint by allowing data in SYN packets to be delivered to the Transport Converter application.

As discussed in [RFC7413], such change to TCP semantic raises two issues. First, duplicate SYNs can cause problems for some applications that rely on TCP. Second, TCP suffers from SYN flooding attacks [RFC4987]. TFO solves these two problems for applications that can tolerate replays by using the TCP Fast Open option that includes a cookie. However, the utilization of this option consumes space in the limited TCP header. Furthermore, there are situations, as noted in Section 7.3 of [RFC7413] where it is possible to accept the payload of SYN packets without creating additional security risks such as a network where addresses cannot be spoofed and the Transport Converter only serves a set of hosts that are identified by these addresses.

For these reasons, this specification does not mandate the use of the TCP Fast Open option when the Client sends a connection establishment packet towards a Transport Converter. The Convert protocol includes an optional Cookie TLV that provides similar protection as the TCP Fast Open option without consuming space in the extended TCP header. In particular, this design allows for the use of longer cookies.

If the downstream (or upstream) connection fails for some reason (excessive retransmissions, reception of an RST segment, etc.), then the Converter should force the tear-down of the upstream (or downstream) connection.

The same reasoning applies when the upstream connection ends. In this case, the Converter should also terminate the downstream connection by using FIN segments. If the downstream connection terminates with the exchange of FIN segments, the Converter should initiate a graceful termination of the upstream connection.

3.3. Data Processing at the Transport Converter

As mentioned in Section 3.2, the Transport Converter acts as a TCP proxy between the upstream connection (i.e., between the Client and the Transport Converter) and the downstream connection (i.e., between the Transport Converter and the Server).

The control messages, discussed in Section 4, establish state (called, transport session entry) in the Transport Converter that will enable it to proxy between the two TCP connections.

The Transport Converter uses the transport session entry to proxy packets belonging to the connection. An implementation example of a transport session entry for TCP connections is shown in Figure 7.
Where:
* C and c are the source IP address and source port number used by the Client for the upstream connection.
* S and s are the Server’s IP address and port number.
* T and t are the source IP address and source port number used by the Transport Converter to proxy the connection.
* Lifetime is the validity lifetime of the entry as assigned by the Converter.

Figure 7: An Example of Transport Session Entry (TCP)

Note that for the Multipath TCP case, the Transport Converter identifies an MPTCP connection by means, e.g., of the token assigned to the MPTCP connection. Subflows can be added or deleted during the lifetime of an MPTCP connection between a Client and a Transport Converter. The identification of each subflow that belongs to an MPTCP connection are also part of the transport session entry. An implementation example of a transport session entry maintained by a Transport Converter for Multipath TCP connections is shown in Figure 7. As a reminder, the Convert TLVs are only exchanged during the establishment of the initial subflow.

token, {(C1,c1), .., (Cn, cn)} <---> (T,t), (S,s), Lifetime

Where:
* Token is a locally unique identifier given to a (upstream) multipath connection by the Transport Converter.
* Ci and ci are the source IP address and source port number used by the Client for a subflow of a (upstream) Multipath TCP connection.
* S and s are the Server’s IP address and port number.
* T and t are the source IP address and source port number used by the Transport Converter to proxy the connection.
* Lifetime is the validity lifetime of the entry as assigned by the Converter.

Figure 8: An Example of Transport Session Entry (Multipath TCP)

Clients send packets bound to connections eligible to the conversion service to the provisioned Transport Converter using TBA as destination port number. This applies for both control messages and data. Additional information is supplied by Clients to the Transport Converter by means of Convert messages as detailed in Section 4. User data can be included in SYN or non-SYN messages. User data is unambiguously distinguished from Convert TLVs by a Transport Converter owing to the Total Length field in the Convert messages.
(Section 4.1). These Convert TLVs are destined to the Transport Convert and are, thus, removed by the Transport Converter when proxying between the two connections.

Upon receipt of a Non-SYN (or a secondary subflow for Multipath TCP) on port number TBA by the Transport Converter from a Client, the Converter checks if the packet matches an active transport session entry. If no entry is found, the Transport Converter MUST silently ignore the packet. If an entry is found, the user data is proxied to the Server using the information stored in the corresponding transport session entry. For example,

- In reference to Figure 7, the Transport Converter proxies the data received from (C, c) downstream using (T, t) as source transport address and (S, s) as destination transport address.

- In reference to Figure 8, the Transport Converter proxies the data received from a new subflow of an existing Multipath TCP connection (Cn, cn) downstream using (T, t) as source transport address and (S, s) as destination transport address.

A similar process happens for data sent from the Server. The Converter acts as a TCP proxy and sends the data to the Client relying upon the information stored in a transport session entry.

A Transport Converter may operate in address preservation mode (that is, the Converter does not rewrite the source IP address (i.e., C!=T)) or address sharing mode (that is, an address pool is shared among all Clients serviced by the Converter (i.e., C!=T)); refer to Appendix D for more details. Which behavior to use by a Transport Converter is deployment-specific. If address sharing mode is enabled, the Transport Converter MUST adhere to REQ-2 of [RFC6888] which implies a default "IP address pooling" behavior of "Paired" (as defined in Section 4.1 of [RFC4787]) must be supported. This behavior is meant to avoid breaking applications that depend on the source address remaining constant.

3.4. Sample Examples of Outgoing Converter-Assisted Multipath TCP Connections

As an example, let us consider how the Convert protocol can help the deployment of Multipath TCP. We assume that both the Client and the Transport Converter support Multipath TCP, but consider two different cases depending on whether the Server supports Multipath TCP or not.

As a reminder, a Multipath TCP connection is created by placing the MP_CAPABLE (MPC) option in the SYN sent by the Client.
Figure 9 describes the operation of the Transport Converter if the Server does not support Multipath TCP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Transport Converter</th>
<th>Server</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SYN, MPC [\rightarrow\text{Server:port}]</td>
<td>SYN, MPC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\text{\rightarrow}</td>
<td>\text{\rightarrow}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYN+ACK, MPC [.]</td>
<td>SYN+ACK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\text{\rightarrow}</td>
<td>\text{\rightarrow}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACK, MPC</td>
<td>ACK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\text{...}</td>
<td>\text{...}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: Establishment of a Multipath TCP Connection Through a Transport Converter towards a Server that Does Not Support Multipath TCP

The Client tries to initiate a Multipath TCP connection by sending a SYN with the MP_CAPABLE option (MPC in Figure 9). The SYN includes the address and port number of the target Server, that are extracted and used by the Transport Converter to initiate a Multipath TCP connection towards this Server. Since the Server does not support Multipath TCP, it replies with a SYN+ACK that does not contain the MP_CAPABLE option. The Transport Converter notes that the connection with the Server does not support Multipath TCP and returns the extended TCP header received from the Server to the Client.

Note that, if the TCP connection fails for some reason, the Converter tears down the Multipath TCP connection by transmitting a MP_FASTCLOSE. Likewise, if the Multipath TCP connection ends with the transmission of DATA_FINS, the Converter terminates the TCP connection by using FIN segments. As a side note, given that with Multipath TCP, RST only has the scope of the subflow and will only close the concerned subflow but not affect the remaining subflows, the Converter does not terminate the TCP connection upon receipt of an RST over a Multipath subflow.

Figure 10 considers a Server that supports Multipath TCP. In this case, it replies to the SYN sent by the Transport Converter with the MP_CAPABLE option. Upon reception of this SYN+ACK, the Transport Converter confirms the establishment of the connection to the Client and indicates to the Client that the Server supports Multipath TCP. With this information, the Client has discovered that the Server supports Multipath TCP natively. This will enable the Client to bypass the Transport Converter for the subsequent Multipath TCP connections that it will initiate towards this Server.
3.5. Sample Example of Incoming Converter-Assisted Multipath TCP Connection

An example of an incoming Converter-assisted Multipath TCP connection is depicted in Figure 11. In order to support incoming connections from remote hosts, the Client may use PCP [RFC6887] to instruct the Transport Converter to create dynamic mappings. Those mappings will be used by the Transport Converter to intercept an incoming TCP connection destined to the Client and convert it into a Multipath TCP connection.

Typically, the Client sends a PCP request to the Converter asking to create an explicit TCP mapping for (internal IP address, internal port number). The Converter accepts the request by creating a TCP mapping (internal IP address, internal port number, external IP address, external port number). The external IP address and external port number will be then advertised using an out-of-band mechanism so that remote hosts can initiate TCP connections to the Client via the Converter. Note that the external and internal information may be the same.

Then, when the Converter receives an incoming SYN, it checks its mapping table to verify if there is an active mapping matching the destination IP address and destination port of that SYN. If no entry is found, the Converter silently ignores the message. If an entry is found, the Converter inserts an MP_CAPABLE option and Connect TLV in the SYN packet, rewrites the source IP address to one of its IP addresses and, eventually, the destination IP address and port number in accordance with the information stored in the mapping. SYN+ACK and ACK will be then exchanged between the Client and the Converter to confirm the establishment of the initial subflow. The Client can add new subflows following normal Multipath TCP procedures.

Figure 10: Establishment of a Multipath TCP Connection Through a Converter Towards an MPTCP-capable Server
It is out of scope of this document to define specific Convert TLVs to manage incoming connections. These TLVs can be defined in a separate document.

4. The Convert Protocol (Convert)

This section defines the Convert protocol (Convert, for short) messages that are exchanged between a Client and a Transport Converter.

By default, the Transport Converter listens on TCP port number TBA for Convert messages from Clients.

Convert messages may appear only in a SYN, SYN+ACK, or ACK.

Convert messages MUST be included as the first bytes of the bytestream. All Convert messages starts with a 32 bits long fixed header (Section 4.1) followed by one or more Convert TLVs (Type, Length, Value) (Section 4.2).

4.1. The Convert Fixed Header

The Convert Protocol uses a 32 bits long fixed header that is sent by both the Client and the Transport Converter over each established connection. This header indicates both the version of the protocol used and the length of the Convert message.

The Client and the Transport Converter MUST send the fixed-sized header, shown in Figure 12, as the first four bytes of the bytestream.

The Version is encoded as an 8 bits unsigned integer value. This document specifies version 1. Version 0 is reserved by this document and MUST NOT be used.

The Total Length is the number of 32 bits word, including the header, of the bytestream that are consumed by the Convert messages. Since Total Length is also an 8 bits unsigned integer, those messages cannot consume more than 1020 bytes of data. This limits the number of bytes that a Transport Converter needs to process. A Total Length of zero is invalid and the connection MUST be reset upon reception of a header with such total length.

The Unassigned field MUST be set to zero in this version of the protocol. These bits are available for future use [RFC8126].

Data added by the Convert protocol to the TCP bytestream is unambiguously distinguished from payload data by the Total Length field in the Convert messages.

4.2. Convert TLVs

4.2.1. Generic Convert TLV Format

The Convert protocol uses variable length messages that are encoded using the generic TLV format depicted in Figure 13.

The length of all TLVs used by the Convert protocol is always a multiple of four bytes. All TLVs are aligned on 32 bits boundaries. All TLV fields are encoded using the network byte order.
The Length field covers Type, Length, and Value fields. It is expressed in units of 32 bits words. If necessary, Value MUST be padded with zeroes so that the length of the TLV is a multiple of 32 bits.

A given TLV MUST only appear once on a connection. If two or more instances of the same TLV are exchanged over a Convert connection, the associated TCP connections MUST be closed.

4.2.2. Summary of Supported Convert TLVs

This document specifies the following Convert TLVs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Hex</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0x1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Info TLV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0xA</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Connect TLV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>0x14</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Extended TCP Header TLV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>0x15</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Supported TCP Extensions TLV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>0x16</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Cookie TLV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>0x1E</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Error TLV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14: The TLVs used by the Convert Protocol

Type 0x0 is a reserved valued. Implementations MUST discard messages with such TLV.

The Client typically sends in the first connection it established with a Transport Converter the Info TLV (Section 4.2.3) to learn its capabilities. Assuming the Client is authorized to invoke the Transport Converter, the latter replies with the Supported TCP Extensions TLV (Section 4.2.4).

The Client can request the establishment of connections to servers by using the Connect TLV (Section 4.2.5). If the connection can be established with the final server, the Transport Converter replies with the Extended TCP Header TLV (Section 4.2.6). If not, the Transport Converter returns an Error TLV (Section 4.2.8) and then closes the connection.

When an error is encountered an Error TLV with the appropriate error code MUST be returned by the Transport Converter.
4.2.3. The Info TLV

The Info TLV (Figure 15) is an optional TLV which can be sent by a Client to request the TCP extensions that are supported by a Transport Converter. It is typically sent on the first connection that a Client establishes with a Transport Converter to learn its capabilities. Assuming a Client is entitled to invoke the Transport Converter, the latter replies with the Supported TCP Extensions TLV described in Section 4.2.4.

```
+---------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
|     Type=0x1  |     Length    |             Zero              |
+---------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
```

Figure 15: The Info TLV

4.2.4. Supported TCP Extensions TLV

The Supported TCP Extensions TLV (Figure 16) is used by a Transport Converter to announce the TCP options for which it provides a conversion service. A Transport Converter SHOULD include in this list the TCP options that it accepts from Clients; these options are included by the Transport Converter in the SYN packets that it sends to initiate connections.

Each supported TCP option is encoded with its TCP option Kind listed in the "TCP Parameters" registry maintained by IANA.

```
+---------------------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
|     Type=0x15 |     Length    |           Unassigned          |
+---------------------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
|     Kind #1   |     Kind #2   |           ...                 |
+---------------------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
```

Figure 16: The Supported TCP Extensions TLV

TCP option Kinds 0, 1, and 2 defined in [RFC0793] are supported by all TCP implementations and thus MUST NOT appear in this list.
The list of Supported TCP Extensions is padded with 0 to end on a 32 bits boundary.

For example, if the Transport Converter supports Multipath TCP, Kind=30 will be present in the Supported TCP Extensions TLV that it returns in response to Info TLV.

4.2.5. Connect TLV

The Connect TLV (Figure 17) is used to request the establishment of a connection via a Transport Converter. This connection can be from or to a Client.

The ‘Remote Peer Port’ and ‘Remote Peer IP Address’ fields contain the destination port number and IP address of the Server, for outgoing connections. For incoming connections destined to a Client serviced via a Transport Converter, these fields convey the source port number and IP address.

The Remote Peer IP Address MUST be encoded as an IPv6 address. IPv4 addresses MUST be encoded using the IPv4-Mapped IPv6 Address format defined in [RFC4291]. Further, Remote Peer IP address field MUST NOT include multicast, broadcast, and host loopback addresses [RFC6890]. Connect TLVs with such messages MUST be discarded by the Transport Converter.

We distinguish two types of Connect TLV based on their length: (1) the base Connect TLV has a length of 20 bytes and contains a remote address and a remote port, (2) the extended Connect TLV spans more than 20 bytes and also includes the optional ‘TCP Options’ field. This field is used to specify how specific TCP options should be advertised by the Transport Converter to the server.

```
1  2  3
+---------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
|     Type=0xA   |     Length    |      Remote Peer Port         |
+---------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
|                                                               |
|         Remote Peer IP Address (128 bits)                      |
|                                                               |
+---------------------------------------------------------------+
/                               TCP Options (Variable)             /
/                                                                 /
+----------------------------------------------------------------+
```

Figure 17: The Connect TLV
The ‘TCP Options’ field is a variable length field that carries a list of TCP option fields (Figure 18). Each TCP option field is encoded as a block of 2+n bytes where the first byte is the TCP option Kind and the second byte is the length of the TCP option as specified in [RFC0793]. The minimum value for the TCP option Length is 2. The TCP options that do not include a length sub-field, i.e., option types 0 (EOL) and 1 (NOP) defined in [RFC0793] MUST NOT be placed inside the TCP options field of the Connect TLV. The optional Value field contains the variable-length part of the TCP option. A length of two indicates the absence of the Value field. The TCP options field always ends on a 32 bits boundary after being padded with zeros.

```
+---------------+---------------+---------------+---------------+
|  TCPOpt kind  | TCPOpt Length | Value (opt)   | ....          |
+---------------+---------------+---------------+---------------+
|                             ....                              |
+---------------------------------------------------------------+
|                              ...                              |
+---------------------------------------------------------------+
```

Figure 18: The TCP Options Field

Upon reception of a Connect TLV, and absent any policy (e.g., rate-limit) or resource exhaustion conditions, a Transport Converter attempts to establish a connection to the address and port that it contains. The Transport Converter MUST use by default the TCP options that correspond to its local policy to establish this connection. These are the options that it advertises in the Supported TCP Extensions TLV.

Upon reception of an extended Connect TLV, and absent any rate limit policy or resource exhaustion conditions, a Transport Converter MUST attempt to establish a connection to the address and port that it contains. It MUST include the options of the ’TCP Options’ sub-field in the SYN sent to the Server in addition to the TCP options that it would have used according to its local policies. For the TCP options that are listed without an optional value, the Transport Converter MUST generate its own value. For the TCP options that are included in the ’TCP Options’ field with an optional value, it MUST copy the entire option for use in the connection with the destination peer. This feature is required to support TCP Fast Open.

The Transport Converter may discard a Connect TLV request for various reasons (e.g., authorization failed, out of resources, invalid address type). An error message indicating the encountered error is
returned to the requesting Client (Section 4.2.8). In order to prevent denial-of-service attacks, error messages sent to a Client SHOULD be rate-limited.

4.2.6. Extended TCP Header TLV

The Extended TCP Header TLV (Figure 19) is used by the Transport Converter to send to the Client the extended TCP header that was returned by the Server in the SYN+ACK packet. This TLV is only sent if the Client sent a Connect TLV to request the establishment of a connection.

```
+---------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
|     Type=0x14  |     Length    |           Unassigned          |
+---------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
/               Returned Extended TCP header                    /
/                             ...                             /  
+---------------------------------------------------------------+
```

Figure 19: The Extended TCP Header TLV

The Returned Extended TCP header field is a copy of the extended header that was received in the SYN+ACK by the Transport Converter.

The Unassigned field MUST be set to zero by the sender and ignored by the receiver. These bits are available for future use [RFC8126].

4.2.7. The Cookie TLV

The Cookie TLV (Figure 20 is an optional TLV which use is similar to the TCP Fast Open Cookie [RFC7413]. A Transport Converter may want to verify that a Client can receive the packets that it sends to prevent attacks from spoofed addresses. This verification can be done by using a Cookie that is bound to, for example, the IP address(es) of the Client. This Cookie can be configured on the Client by means that are outside of this document or provided by the Transport Converter as follows.

A Transport Converter that has been configured to use the optional Cookie TLV MUST verify the presence of this TLV in the payload of the received SYN. If this TLV is present, the Transport Converter MUST validate the Cookie by means similar to those in Section 4.1.2 of [RFC7413] (i.e., IsCookieValid). If the Cookie is valid, the connection establishment procedure can continue. Otherwise, the Transport Converter MUST return an Error TLV set to "Not Authorized" and close the connection.
If the received SYN did not contain a Cookie TLV, and cookie validation is required, the Transport Converter should compute a Cookie bound to this Client address and return a Convert message containing the fixed header, an Error TLV set to "Missing Cookie" and the computed Cookie and close the connection. The Client will react to this error by storing the received Cookie in its cache and attempt to reestablish a new connection to the Transport Converter that includes the Cookie TLV.

The format of the Cookie TLV is shown in Figure 20.

```
+---------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
|     Type=0x16 |     Length    |             Zero              |
+---------------+---------------+-------------------------------+
          /                        Opaque  Cookie                         /
          /                              ...                              /
+---------------------------------------------------------------+
```

Figure 20: The Cookie TLV

4.2.8. Error TLV

The Error TLV (Figure 21) is meant to provide information about some errors that occurred during the processing of a Convert message. This TLV has a variable length. Upon reception of an Error TLV, a Client MUST close the associated connection.

```
+---------------+---------------+----------------+--------------+
|     Type=0x1E |     Length    |    Error Code  |  Value       |
+---------------+---------------+----------------+--------------+
          //              ...   (optional) Value                         //
+---------------------------------------------------------------+
```

Figure 21: The Error TLV

Different types of errors can occur while processing Convert messages. Each error is identified by an Error Code represented as an unsigned integer. Four classes of error codes are defined:

- Message validation and processing errors (0-31 range): returned upon reception of an invalid message (including valid messages but with invalid or unknown TLVs).
Client-side errors (32-63 range): the Client sent a request that could not be accepted by the Transport Converter (e.g., unsupported operation).

Converter-side errors (64-95 range): problems encountered on the Transport Converter (e.g., lack of resources) which prevent it from fulfilling the Client's request.

Errors caused by the destination server (96-127 range): the final destination could not be reached or it replied with a reset.

The following error codes are defined in this document:

Unsupported Version (0): The version number indicated in the fixed header of a message received from a peer is not supported.

This error code MUST be generated by a Transport Converter (or Client) when it receives a request having a version number that it does not support.

The value field MUST be set to the version supported by the Transport Converter (or Client). When multiple versions are supported by the Transport Converter (or Client), it includes the list of supported version in the value field; each version is encoded in 8 bits. The list of supported versions should be padded with zeros to end on a 32 bits boundary.

Upon receipt of this error code, the Client (or Transport Converter) checks whether it supports one of the versions returned by the Transport Converter (or Client). The highest common supported version MUST be used by the Client (or Transport Converter) in subsequent exchanges with the Transport Converter (or Client).

Malformed Message (1): This error code is sent to indicate that a message received from a peer is can not be successfully parsed and validated.

Typically, this error code is sent by the Transport Converter if it receives a Connect TLV enclosing a multicast, broadcast, or loopback IP address.

To ease troubleshooting, the value field MUST echo the received message shifted by one byte to keep to original alignment of the message.

Unsupported Message (2): This error code is sent to indicate that a message type received from a peer is not supported.
To ease troubleshooting, the value field MUST echo the received message shifted by one byte to keep to original alignment of the message.

- **Missing Cookie (3):** If a Transport Converter requires the utilization of Cookies to prevent spoofing attacks and a Cookie TLV was not included in the Convert message, the Transport Converter MUST return this error to the requesting client. The first byte of the value field MUST be set to zero and the remaining bytes of the Error TLV contain the Cookie computed by the Transport Converter for this Client.

  A Client which receives this error code MUST cache the received Cookie and include it in subsequent Convert messages sent to that Transport Converter.

- **Not Authorized (32):** This error code indicates that the Transport Converter refused to create a connection because of a lack of authorization (e.g., administratively prohibited, authorization failure, invalid Cookie TLV, etc.). The Value field MUST be set to zero.

  This error code MUST be sent by the Transport Converter when a request cannot be successfully processed because the authorization failed.

- **Unsupported TCP Option (33):** A TCP option that the Client requested to advertise to the final Server cannot be safely used.

  The Value field is set to the type of the unsupported TCP option. If several unsupported TCP options were specified in the Connect TLV, then the list of unsupported TCP options is returned. The list of unsupported TCP options MUST be padded with zeros to end on a 32 bits boundary.

- **Resource Exceeded (64):** This error indicates that the Transport Converter does not have enough resources to perform the request.

  This error MUST be sent by the Transport Converter when it does not have sufficient resources to handle a new connection. The Transport Converter may indicate in the Value field the suggested delay (in seconds) that the Client SHOULD wait before soliciting the Transport Converter for a new proxied connection. A Value of zero corresponds to a default delay of at least 30 seconds.

- **Network Failure (65):** This error indicates that the Transport Converter is experiencing a network failure to proxy the request.
The Transport Converter MUST send this error code when it experiences forwarding issues to proxy a connection. The Transport Converter may indicate in the Value field the suggested delay (in seconds) that the Client SHOULD wait before soliciting the Transport Converter for a new proxied connection. A Value of zero corresponds to a default delay of at least 30 seconds.

- Connection Reset (96): This error indicates that the final destination responded with an RST packet. The Value field MUST be set to zero.

- Destination Unreachable (97): This error indicates that an ICMP destination unreachable, port unreachable, or network unreachable was received by the Transport Converter. The Value field MUST echo the Code field of the received ICMP message.

Figure 22 summarizes the different error codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Hex</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0x00</td>
<td>Unsupported Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0x01</td>
<td>Malformed Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0x02</td>
<td>Unsupported Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0x03</td>
<td>Missing Cookie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>0x20</td>
<td>Not Authorized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>0x21</td>
<td>Unsupported TCP Option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>0x40</td>
<td>Resource Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>0x41</td>
<td>Network Failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>0x60</td>
<td>Connection Reset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>0x61</td>
<td>Destination Unreachable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 22: Convert Error Values

5. Compatibility of Specific TCP Options with the Conversion Service

In this section, we discuss how several standard track TCP options can be supported through the Convert protocol. The non-standard track options and the experimental options will be discussed in other documents.

5.1. Base TCP Options

Three TCP options were initially defined in [RFC0793]: End-of-Option List (Kind=0), No-Operation (Kind=1) and Maximum Segment Size (Kind=2). The first two options are mainly used to pad the TCP header. There is no reason for a client to request a Transport
Converter to specifically send these options towards the final destination.

The Maximum Segment Size option (Kind=2) is used by a host to indicate the largest segment that it can receive over each connection. This value is function of the stack that terminates the TCP connection. There is no reason for a Client to request a Transport Converter to advertise a specific MSS value to a remote server.

A Transport Converter MUST ignore options with Kind=0, 1 or 2 if they appear in a Connect TLV. It MUST NOT announce them in a Supported TCP Extensions TLV.

5.2. Window Scale (WS)

The Window Scale (WS) option (Kind=3) is defined in [RFC7323]. As for the MSS option, the window scale factor that is used for a connection strongly depends on the TCP stack that handles the connection. When a Transport Converter opens a TCP connection towards a remote server on behalf of a Client, it SHOULD use a WS option with a scaling factor that corresponds to the configuration of its stack. A local configuration MAY allow for WS option in the proxied message to be function of the scaling factor of the incoming connection.

There is no benefit from a deployment viewpoint in enabling a Client of a Transport Converter to specifically request the utilization of the WS option (Kind=3) with a specific scaling factor towards a remote Server. For this reason, a Transport Converter MUST ignore option Kind=3 if it appears in a Connect TLV. It MUST NOT announce it in a Supported TCP Extensions TLV.

5.3. Selective Acknowledgments

Two distinct TCP options were defined to support selective acknowledgments in [RFC2018]. This first one, SACK Permitted (Kind=4), is used to negotiate the utilization of selective acknowledgments during the three-way handshake. The second one, SACK (Kind=5), carries the selective acknowledgments inside regular segments.

The SACK Permitted option (Kind=4) MAY be advertised by a Transport Converter in the Supported TCP Extensions TLV. Clients connected to this Transport Converter MAY include the SACK Permitted option in the Connect TLV.
The SACK option (Kind=5) cannot be used during the three-way handshake. For this reason, a Transport Converter MUST ignore option Kind=5 if it appears in a Connect TLV. It MUST NOT announce it in a TCP Supported Extensions TLV.

5.4. Timestamp

The Timestamp option was initially defined in [RFC1323] and later refined in [RFC7323]. It can be used during the three-way handshake to negotiate the utilization of timestamps during the TCP connection. It is notably used to improve round-trip-time estimations and to provide protection against wrapped sequence numbers (PAWS). As for the WS option, the timestamps are a property of a connection and there is limited benefit in enabling a client to request a Transport Converter to use the timestamp option when establishing a connection to a remote server. Furthermore, the timestamps that are used by TCP stacks are specific to each stack and there is no benefit in enabling a client to specify the timestamp value that a Transport Converter could use to establish a connection to a remote server.

A Transport Converter MAY advertise the Timestamp option (Kind=8) in the TCP Supported Extensions TLV. The clients connected to this Transport Converter MAY include the Timestamp option in the Connect TLV but without any timestamp.

5.5. Multipath TCP

The Multipath TCP options are defined in [RFC6824]. [RFC6824] defines one variable length TCP option (Kind=30) that includes a sub-type field to support several Multipath TCP options. There are several operational use cases where clients would like to use Multipath TCP through a Transport Converter [IETFJ16]. However, none of these use cases require the Client to specify the content of the Multipath TCP option that the Transport Converter should send to a remote server.

A Transport Converter which supports Multipath TCP conversion service MUST advertise the Multipath TCP option (Kind=30) in the Supported TCP Extensions TLV. Clients serviced by this Transport Converter may include the Multipath TCP option in the Connect TLV but without any content.

5.6. TCP Fast Open

The TCP Fast Open cookie option (Kind=34) is defined in [RFC7413]. There are two different usages of this option that need to be supported by Transport Converters. The first utilization of the TCP Fast Open cookie option is to request a cookie from the server. In
this case, the option is sent with an empty cookie by the client and
the server returns the cookie. The second utilization of the TCP
Fast Open cookie option is to send a cookie to the server. In this
case, the option contains a cookie.

A Transport Converter MAY advertise the TCP Fast Open cookie option
(Kind=34) in the Supported TCP Extensions TLV. If a Transport
Converter has advertised the support for TCP Fast Open in its
Supported TCP Extensions TLV, it needs to be able to process two
types of Connect TLV. If such a Transport Converter receives a
Connect TLV with the TCP Fast Open cookie option that does not
contain a cookie, it MUST add an empty TCP Fast Open cookie option in
the SYN sent to the remote server. If such a Transport Converter
receives a Connect TLV with the TCP Fast Open cookie option that
contains a cookie, it MUST copy the TCP Fast Open cookie option in
the SYN sent to the remote server.

5.7. TCP User Timeout

The TCP User Timeout option is defined in [RFC5482]. The associated
TCP option (Kind=28) does not appear to be widely deployed.

5.8. TCP-AO

TCP-AO [RFC5925] provides a technique to authenticate all the packets
exchanged over a TCP connection. Given the nature of this extension,
it is unlikely that the applications that require their packets to be
authenticated end-to-end would want their connections to pass through
a converter. For this reason, we do not recommend the support of the
TCP-AO option by Transport Converters. The only use cases where it
could make sense to combine TCP-AO and the solution in this document
are those where the TCP-AO-NAT extension [RFC6978] is in use.

A Transport Converter MUST NOT advertise the TCP-AO option (Kind=29)
in the Supported TCP Extensions TLV. If a Transport Converter
receives a Connect TLV that contains the TCP-AO option, it MUST
reject the establishment of the connection with error code set to
"Unsupported TCP Option", except if the TCP-AO-NAT option is used.

5.9. TCP Experimental Options

The TCP Experimental options are defined in [RFC4727]. Given the
variety of semantics for these options and their experimental nature,
it is impossible to discuss them in details in this document.
6. Interactions with Middleboxes

The Convert Protocol is designed to be used in networks that do not contain middleboxes that interfere with TCP. Under such conditions, it is assumed that the network provider ensures that all involved on-path nodes are not breaking TCP signals (e.g., strip TCP options, discard some SYNs, etc.).

Nevertheless, and in order to allow for a robust service, this section describes how a Client can detect middlebox interference and stop using the Transport Converter affected by this interference.

Internet measurements [IMC11] have shown that middleboxes can affect the deployment of TCP extensions. In this section, we only discuss the middleboxes that modify SYN and SYN+ACK packets since the Convert Protocol places its messages in such packets.

Consider a middlebox that removes the SYN payload. The Client can detect this problem by looking at the acknowledgment number field of the SYN+ACK returned by the Transport Converter. The Client MUST stop to use this Transport Converter given the middlebox interference.

Consider now a middlebox that drops SYN/ACKs with a payload. The Client won’t be able to establish a connection via the Transport Converter.

The case of a middlebox that removes the payload of SYN+ACKs (but not the payload of SYN) can be detected by a Client. This is hinted by the absence of an Error or Extended TCP Header TLV in a response. If an Error was returned by the Transport Converter, a message to close the connection would normally follow from the Converter. If no such message is received, the Client may continue to use this Converter.

As explained in [RFC7413], some CGNs (Carrier Grade NATs) can affect the operation of TFO if they assign different IP addresses to the same end host. Such CGNs could affect the operation of the cookie validation used by the Convert Protocol. As a reminder CGNs, enabled on the path between a Client and a Transport Converter, must adhere to the address preservation defined in [RFC6888]. See also the discussion in Section 7.1 of [RFC7413].

7. Security Considerations
7.1. Privacy & Ingress Filtering

The Transport Converter may have access to privacy-related information (e.g., subscriber credentials). The Transport Converter is designed to not leak such sensitive information outside a local domain.

Given its function and its location in the network, a Transport Converter has access to the payload of all the packets that it processes. As such, it MUST be protected as a core IP router (e.g., [RFC1812]).

Furthermore, ingress filtering policies MUST be enforced at the network boundaries [RFC2827].

This document assumes that all network attachments are managed by the same administrative entity. Therefore, enforcing anti-spoofing filters at these network ensures that hosts are not sending traffic with spoofed source IP addresses.

7.2. Authorization

The Convert Protocol is intended to be used in managed networks where end hosts can be identified by their IP address.

Stronger mutual authentication schemes MUST be defined to use the Convert Protocol in more open network environments. One possibility is to use TLS to perform mutual authentication between the client and the Converter. That is, use TLS when a Client retrieves a Cookie from the Converter and rely on certificate-based client authentication, pre-shared key based [RFC4279] or raw public key based client authentication [RFC7250] to secure this connection.

If the authentication succeeds, the Converter returns a cookie to the Client. Subsequent Connect messages will be authorized as a function of the content of the Cookie TLV.

In deployments where network-assisted connections are not allowed between hosts of a domain (i.e., hairpinning), the Converter may be instructed to discard such connections. Hairpinned connections are thus rejected by the Transport Converter by returning an Error TLV set to "Not Authorized". Absent explicit configuration otherwise, hairpinning is enabled by the Converter (see Figure 23.)
See below for authorization considerations that are specific for Multipath TCP.

7.3. Denial of Service

Another possible risk is the amplification attacks since a Transport Converter sends a SYN towards a remote Server upon reception of a SYN from a Client. This could lead to amplification attacks if the SYN sent by the Transport Converter were larger than the SYN received from the Client or if the Transport Converter retransmits the SYN. To mitigate such attacks, the Transport Converter SHOULD rate limit the number of pending requests for a given Client. It SHOULD also avoid sending to remote Servers SYNs that are significantly longer than the SYN received from the Client. Finally, the Transport Converter SHOULD only retransmit a SYN to a Server after having received a retransmitted SYN from the corresponding Client. Means to protect against SYN flooding attacks MUST also be enabled [RFC4987].

7.4. Traffic Theft

Traffic theft is a risk if an illegitimate Converter is inserted in the path. Indeed, inserting an illegitimate Converter in the forwarding path allows traffic interception and can therefore provide access to sensitive data issued by or destined to a host. Converter discovery and configuration are out of scope of this document.
7.5. Multipath TCP-specific Considerations

Multipath TCP-related security threats are discussed in [RFC6181] and [RFC6824].

The operator that manages the various network attachments (including the Transport Converters) can enforce authentication and authorization policies using appropriate mechanisms. For example, a non-exhaustive list of methods to achieve authorization is provided hereafter:

- The network provider may enforce a policy based on the International Mobile Subscriber Identity (IMSI) to verify that a user is allowed to benefit from the Multipath TCP converter service. If that authorization fails, the Packet Data Protocol (PDP) context/bearer will not be mounted. This method does not require any interaction with the Transport Converter for authorization matters.

- The network provider may enforce a policy based upon Access Control Lists (ACLs), e.g., at a Broadband Network Gateway (BNG) to control the hosts that are authorized to communicate with a Transport Converter. These ACLs may be installed as a result of RADIUS exchanges, e.g., [I-D.boucadair-radext-tcpm-converter]. This method does not require any interaction with the Transport Converter for authorization matters.

- A device that embeds a Transport Converter may also host a RADIUS client that will solicit an AAA server to check whether connections received from a given source IP address are authorized or not [I-D.boucadair-radext-tcpm-converter].

A first safeguard against the misuse of Transport Converter resources by illegitimate users (e.g., users with access networks that are not managed by the same provider that operates the Transport Converter) is the Transport Converter to reject Multipath TCP connections received on its Internet-facing interfaces. Only Multipath TCP connections received on the customer-facing interfaces of a Transport Converter will be accepted.

8. IANA Considerations

8.1. Convert Service Port Number

IANA is requested to assign a TCP port number (TBA) for the Convert Protocol from the "Service Name and Transport Protocol Port Number Registry" available at https://www.iana.org/assignments/service-names-port-numbers/service-names-port-numbers.xhtml.
8.2. The Convert Protocol (Convert) Parameters

IANA is requested to create a new "The Convert Protocol (Convert) Parameters" registry.

The following subsections detail new registries within "The Convert Protocol (Convert) Parameters" registry.

8.2.1. Convert Versions

IANA is requested to create the "Convert versions" sub-registry. New values are assigned via IETF Review (Section 4.8 of [RFC8126]).

The initial values to be assigned at the creation of the registry are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Reserved by this document</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Assigned by this document</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2.2. Convert TLVs

IANA is requested to create the "Convert TLVs" sub-registry. The procedure for assigning values from this registry is as follows:

- The values in the range 1-127 can be assigned via IETF Review.
- The values in the range 128-191 can be assigned via Specification Required.
- The values in the range 192-255 can be assigned for Private Use.

The initial values to be assigned at the creation of the registry are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Reserved</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Info TLV</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Connect TLV</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Extended TCP Header TLV</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Supported TCP Extension TLV</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Cookie TLV</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Error TLV</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8.2.3. Convert Error Messages

IANA is requested to create the "Convert Errors" sub-registry. Codes in this registry are assigned as a function of the error type. Four types are defined; the following ranges are reserved for each of these types:

- Message validation and processing errors: 0-31
- Client-side errors: 32-63
- Transport Converter-side errors: 64-95
- Errors caused by destination server: 96-127

The procedure for assigning values from this sub-registry is as follows:

- 0-127: Values in this range are assigned via IETF Review.
- 128-191: Values in this range are assigned via Specification Required.
- 192-255: Values in this range are assigned for Private Use.

The initial values to be assigned at the creation of the registry are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Hex</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0x00</td>
<td>Unsupported Version</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0x01</td>
<td>Malformed Message</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0x02</td>
<td>Unsupported Message</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0x03</td>
<td>Missing Cookie</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>0x20</td>
<td>Not Authorized</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>0x21</td>
<td>Unsupported TCP Option</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>0x40</td>
<td>Resource Exceeded</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>0x41</td>
<td>Network Failure</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>0x60</td>
<td>Connection Reset</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>0x61</td>
<td>Destination Unreachable</td>
<td>[This-RFC]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 24: The Convert Error Codes

9. References

9.1. Normative References


9.2. Informative References


[I-D.olteanu-intarea-socks-6]
Olteanu, V. and D. Niculescu, "SOCKS Protocol Version 6",
draft-olteanu-intarea-socks-6-07 (work in progress), July
2019.

[I-D.peirens-mptcp-transparent]
Peirens, B., Detal, G., Barre, S., and O. Bonaventure,
"Link bonding with transparent Multipath TCP",
draft-peirens-mptcp-transparent-00 (work in progress), July
2016.

[IETFJ16] Bonaventure, O. and S. Seo, "Multipath TCP Deployment",
IETF Journal, Fall 2016 , n.d..

[IMC11] Honda, K., Nishida, Y., Raiciu, C., Greenhalgh, A.,
Handley, M., and T. Hideyuki, "Is it still possible to
extend TCP?", Proceedings of the 2011 ACM SIGCOMM
conference on Internet measurement conference , 2011.

for High Performance", RFC 1323, DOI 10.17487/RFC1323, May

RFC 1812, DOI 10.17487/RFC1812, June 1995,

RFC 1919, DOI 10.17487/RFC1919, March 1996,

[RFC1928] Leech, M., Ganis, M., Lee, Y., Kuris, R., Koblas, D., and
L. Jones, "SOCKS Protocol Version 5", RFC 1928,
DOI 10.17487/RFC1928, March 1996,

Selective Acknowledgment Options", RFC 2018,
DOI 10.17487/RFC2018, October 1996,

[RFC2827] Ferguson, P. and D. Senie, "Network Ingress Filtering:
Defeating Denial of Service Attacks which employ IP Source
Address Spoofing", BCP 38, RFC 2827, DOI 10.17487/RFC2827,


Appendix A. Change Log

This section to be removed before publication.

- 00 : initial version, designed to support Multipath TCP and TFO only
- 00 to -01 : added section Section 5 describing the support of different standard tracks TCP options by Transport Converters, clarification of the IANA section, moved the SOCKS comparison to the appendix and various minor modifications
- 01 to -02: Minor modifications
- 02 to -03: Minor modifications
- 03 to -04: Minor modifications
- 04 to -05: Integrate a lot of feedback from implementors who have worked on client and server side implementations. The main modifications are the following:
* TCP Fast Open is not strictly required anymore. Several implementors expressed concerns about this requirement. The TFO Cookie protects from some attack scenarios that affect open servers like web servers. The Convert protocol is different and as discussed in RFC7413, there are different ways to protect from such attacks. Instead of using a TFO cookie inside the TCP options, which consumes precious space in the extended TCP header, this version supports the utilization of a Cookie that is placed in the SYN payload. This provides the same level of protection as a TFO Cookie in environments where such protection is required.

* the Bootstrap procedure has been simplified based on feedback from implementors

* Error messages are not included in RST segments anymore but sent in the bytestream. Implementors have indicated that processing such segments on clients was difficult on some platforms. This change simplifies client implementations.

* Many minor editorial changes to clarify the text based on implementors feedback.

- 05 to -06: Many clarifications to integrate the comments from the chairs in preparation to the WGLC:
  * Updated IANA policy to require "IETF Review" instead of "Standard Action"
  * Call out explicitly that data in SYNs are relayed by the Converter
  * Reiterate the scope
  * Hairpinning behavior can be disabled (policy-based)
  * Fix nits

- 07:
  * Update the text about supplying data in SYNs to make it clear that a constraint defined in RFC793 is relaxed following the same rationale as in RFC7413.
  * Nits
  * Added Appendix A on example Socket API changes
Appendix B. Example Socket API Changes to Support the 0-RTT Convert Protocol

B.1. Active Open (Client Side)

On the client side, the support of the 0-RTT Converter protocol does not require any other changes than those identified in Appendix A of [RFC7413]. Those modifications are already supported by multiple TCP stacks.

As an example, on Linux, a client can send the 0-RTT Convert message inside a SYN by using sendto with the MSG_FASTOPEN flag as shown in the example below:

```
s = socket(AF_INET, SOCK_STREAM, 0);

sendto(s, buffer, buffer_len, MSG_FASTOPEN,
       (struct sockaddr *) &server_addr, addr_len);
```

The client side of the Linux TCP TFO can be used in two different modes depending on the host configuration (sysctl tcp_fastopen variable):

- 0x1: (client) enables sending data in the opening SYN on the client.
- 0x4: (client) send data in the opening SYN regardless of cookie availability and without a cookie option.

By setting this configuration variable to 0x5, a Linux client using the above code would send data inside the SYN without using a TFO option.

B.2. Passive Open (Converter Side)

The Converter needs to enable the reception of data inside the SYN independently of the utilization of the TFO option. This implies that the Transport Converter application cannot rely on the TFO cookies to validate the reachability of the IP address that sent the
SYN. It must rely on other techniques, such as the Cookie TLV described in this document, to verify this reachability.

[RFC7413] suggested the utilization of a TCP_FASTOPEN socket option to enable the reception of SYNs containing data. Later, Appendix A of [RFC7413], mentioned:

Traditionally, accept() returns only after a socket is connected. But, for a Fast Open connection, accept() returns upon receiving SYN with a valid Fast Open cookie and data, and the data is available to be read through, e.g., recvmsg(), read().

To support the 0-RTT Convert protocol, this behavior should be modified as follows:

Traditionally, accept() returns only after a socket is connected. But, for a Fast Open connection, accept() returns upon receiving a SYN with data, and the data is available to be read through, e.g., recvmsg(), read(). The application that receives such SYNs with data must be able to validate the reachability of the source of the SYN and also deal with replayed SYNs.

The Linux server side can be configured with the following sysctls:

- 0x2: (server) enables the server support, i.e., allowing data in a SYN packet to be accepted and passed to the application before 3-way handshake finishes.
- 0x200: (server) accept data-in-SYN w/o any cookie option present.

However, this configuration is system-wide. This is convenient for typical Transport Converter deployments where no other applications relying on TFO are collocated on the same device.

Recently, the TCP_FASTOPEN_NO_COOKIE socket option has been added to provide the same behavior on a per socket basis. This enables a single host to support both servers that require the TFO cookie and servers that do not use it.

Appendix C. Some Design Considerations

Several implementors expressed concerns about the use of TFO. As a reminder, the TFO Cookie protects from some attack scenarios that affect open servers like web servers. The Convert protocol is different and, as discussed in RFC7413, there are different ways to protect from such attacks. Instead of using a TFO cookie inside the TCP options, which consumes precious space in the extended TCP header, the Convert protocol supports the utilization of a Cookie
that is placed in the SYN payload. This provides the same level of protection as a TFO Cookie in environments where such protection is required.

Error messages are not included in RST segments but sent in the bytestream. Implementors have indicated that processing such segments on clients was difficult on some platforms. This change simplifies client implementations.

Appendix D. Address Preservation vs. Address Sharing

The Transport Converter is provided with instructions about the behavior to adopt with regards to the processing of source addresses of outgoing packets. The following sub-sections discuss two deployment models for illustration purposes. It is out of the scope of this document to make a recommendation.

D.1. Address Preservation

In this model, the visible source IP address of a packet proxied by a Transport Converter to a Server is an IP address of the end host (Client). No dedicated IP address pool is provisioned to the Transport Converter.

For Multipath TCP, the Transport Converter preserves the source IP address used by the Client when establishing the initial subflow. Data conveyed in secondary subflows will be proxied by the Transport Converter using the source IP address of the initial subflow. An example of a proxied Multipath TCP connection with address preservation is shown in Figure 25.
The Transport Converter must be on the forwarding path of incoming traffic. Because the same (destination) IP address is used for both proxied and non-proxied connections, the Transport Converter should not drop incoming packets it intercepts if no matching entry is found for the packets. Unless explicitly configured otherwise, such packets are forwarded according to the instructions of a local forwarding table.

D.2. IPv4 Address Sharing

A pool of global IPv4 addresses is provisioned to the Transport Converter along with possible instructions about the address sharing ratio to apply (see Appendix B of [RFC6269]). An address is thus shared among multiple clients.

Likewise, rewriting the source IPv6 prefix [RFC6296] may be used to ease redirection of incoming IPv6 traffic towards the appropriate Transport Converter. A pool of IPv6 prefixes is then provisioned to the Transport Converter for this purpose.

Adequate forwarding policies are enforced so that traffic destined to an address of such pool is intercepted by the appropriate Transport

Legend:

Tc: IP address used by the Transport Converter on its customer-facing interface.

Figure 25: Example of Address Preservation
Converter. Unlike Appendix D.1, the Transport Converter drops incoming packets which do match an active transport session entry.

An example is shown in Figure 26.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Transport Converter</th>
<th>Server</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>@:C</td>
<td>@:Tc</td>
<td>Te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>src:C</td>
<td>dst:Tc</td>
<td>src:Te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------SYN [-&gt;S:port]-------&gt;</td>
<td>------SYN-------&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dst:C</td>
<td>src:Tc</td>
<td>dst:Te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;---------SYN/ACK------------</td>
<td>&lt;-------SYN/ACK-----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>src:C</td>
<td>dst:Tc</td>
<td>src:Te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------ACK-----------------&gt;</td>
<td>-------ACK-------&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:

Tc: IP address used by the Transport Converter for its customer-facing interface.
Te: IP address used by the Transport Converter for its Internet-facing interface.

Figure 26: Address Sharing

Appendix E. Differences with SOCKSv5

At a first glance, the solution proposed in this document could seem similar to the SOCKS v5 protocol [RFC1928] which is used to proxy TCP connections. The Client creates a connection to a SOCKS proxy, exchanges authentication information and indicates the destination address and port of the final server. At this point, the SOCKS proxy creates a connection towards the final server and relays all data between the two proxied connections. The operation of an implementation based on SOCKSv5 is illustrated in Figure 27.
Figure 27: Establishment of a TCP connection through a SOCKS proxy without authentication

The Convert protocol also relays data between an upstream and a downstream connection, but there are important differences with SOCKSv5.

A first difference is that the Convert protocol exchanges all control information during the three-way handshake. This reduces the connection establishment delay compared to SOCKS that requires two or more round-trip-times before the establishment of the downstream connection towards the final destination. In today’s Internet, latency is a important metric and various protocols have been tuned
to reduce their latency [I-D.arkko-arch-low-latency]. A recently proposed extension to SOCKS leverages the TFO option [I-D.olteanu-intarea-socks-6].

A second difference is that the Convert protocol explicitly takes the TCP extensions into account. By using the Convert protocol, the Client can learn whether a given TCP extension is supported by the destination Server. This enables the Client to bypass the Transport Converter when the destination supports the required TCP extension. Neither SOCKS v5 [RFC1928] nor the proposed SOCKS v6 [I-D.olteanu-intarea-socks-6] provide such a feature.

A third difference is that a Transport Converter will only accept the connection initiated by the Client provided that the downstream connection is accepted by the Server. If the Server refuses the connection establishment attempt from the Transport Converter, then the upstream connection from the Client is rejected as well. This feature is important for applications that check the availability of a Server or use the time to connect as a hint on the selection of a Server [RFC8305].

A fourth difference is that the Convert protocol only allows the client to specify the address/port of the destination server and not a DNS name. We evaluated an alternate design for the Connect TLV that included the DNS name of the remote peer instead of its IP address as in SOCKS [RFC1928]. However, that design was not adopted because it induces both an extra load and increased delays on the Transport Converter to handle and manage DNS resolution requests.

Acknowledgments

Although they could disagree with the contents of the document, we would like to thank Joe Touch and Juliusz Chroboczek whose comments on the MPTCP mailing list have forced us to reconsider the design of the solution several times.

We would like to thank Raphael Bauduin, Stefano Secci, Anandatirtha Nandugudi and Gregory Vander Schueren for their help in preparing this document. Nandini Ganesh provided valuable feedback about the handling of TFO and the error codes. Yuchung Cheng and Praveen Balasubramanian helped to clarify the discussion on supplying data in SYNs. Phil Eardley and Michael Scharf’s helped to clarify different parts of the text.

This document builds upon earlier documents that proposed various forms of Multipath TCP proxies [I-D.boucadair-mptcp-plain-mode], [I-D.peirens-mptcp-transparent] and [HotMiddlebox13b].
From [I-D.boucadair-mptcp-plain-mode]:

Many thanks to Chi Dung Phung, Mingui Zhang, Rao Shoaib, Yoshifumi Nishida, and Christoph Paasch for their valuable comments.

Thanks to Ian Farrer, Mikael Abrahamsson, Alan Ford, Dan Wing, and Sri Gundavelli for the fruitful discussions in IETF#95 (Buenos Aires).

Special thanks to Pierrick Seite, Yannick Le Goff, Fred Klamm, and Xavier Grall for their inputs.

Thanks also to Olaf Schleusing, Martin Gysi, Thomas Zasowski, Andreas Burkhard, Silka Simmen, Sandro Berger, Michael Melloul, Jean-Yves Flahaut, Adrien Desportes, Gregory Detal, Benjamin David, Arun Srinivasan, and Raghavendra Mallya for the discussion.

Contributors

Bart Peirens contributed to an early version of the document.

As noted above, this document builds on two previous documents.

The authors of [I-D.boucadair-mptcp-plain-mode] were:

- Mohamed Boucadair
- Christian Jacquenet
- Olivier Bonaventure
- Denis Behaghel
- Stefano Secci
- Wim Henderickx
- Robert Skog
- Suresh Vinapamula
- SungHoon Seo
- Wouter Cloetens
- Ullrich Meyer
- Luis M. Contreras
The authors of [I-D.peirens-mptcp-transparent] were:

- Bart Peirens
- Gregory Detal
- Sebastien Barre
- Olivier Bonaventure

Authors’ Addresses

Olivier Bonaventure (editor)
Tessares
Email: Olivier.Bonaventure@tessares.net

Mohamed Boucadair (editor)
Orange
Clos Courtel
Rennes 35000
France
Email: mohamed.boucadair@orange.com

Sri Gundavelli
Cisco
Email: sgundave@cisco.com

SungHoon Seo
Korea Telecom
Email: sh.seo@kt.com

Benjamin Hesmans
Tessares
Email: Benjamin.Hesmans@tessares.net