

Study on a Fast OSPF Route Reconstruction Method Under Network Failures

Hiroki Doi(✉)

System Engineering Research Laboratory,
Central Research Institute of Electric Power Industry,
Iwado kita 2-11-1, Komae-shi, Tokyo, Japan
`doi@criepi.denken.or.jp`

Abstract. OSPF (Open Shortest Path First), which is used widely on networks, has a *Router Dead Interval* problem. If a (backup) designated router has stopped operation due to failure, the OSPF routers await a hello packet acknowledgment for the router dead interval to recognize that the designated router has ceased the operation. The Router Dead Interval is 40 sec. This interval time is not only long for many real-time applications but also involves huge buffering of data and a burst of traffic after the router reconstruction. To avoid the Router Dead Interval, we propose a fast method of designated router detection by enhanced OSPF. In this report, we show how our method reduces the route reconstruction time from 45 sec to 10 or less on OSPF networks.

Keywords: OSPF · Router dead interval · Delay time · Route · Designated router

1 Introduction

In Japan, many Japanese people and Japanese companies were damaged by the Great East Japan Earthquake. Following this disaster, Japanese commercial ISPs and the government reexamined the plan for disaster estimation and protection against disasters. According to this protection plan, commercial ISPs must reconstruct robust networks against disasters. Networks require high reliability and fast recovery. One of the important problems for these requirements is that of routing, since considerable time is required to reroute paths on IP networks, when multiple routers have ceased operation due to failures. To study this problem, we focus on OSPF (Open Shortest Past First) [1, 2] behavior, which is one of the major routing protocols used worldwide, and presume a large company network, namely a broadcast multi-access network with 400 OSPF routers.

OSPF works with 2 kinds of router, namely, the Designated Router (DR) and its neighboring routers (neighbors) on broadcast multi-access networks. An adjacency should be formed with the DR and its neighbor. The DR also has a list of all other routers attached to the network. In this case, when the DR has ceased the routing operation, neighbors attempt to cast hello packets

to the DR. If the DR does not respond to 4 hello packets from a neighbor, a neighbor detects DR failure and all neighbors start to elect new DR among their own neighbors. The hello packet interval is 10sec (*Hello Interval*, default value), hence it takes 40sec (*Router Dead Interval*) for neighbors to detect the DR failure. After the DR failure, it takes more than 40sec to reroute all paths by original OSPF. General speaking, this time length of communication failure is very long for many applications on networks. Thus, when the DR has ceased the routing operation on OSPF networks by the network failure, it takes long time to recover the network operation.

There is a simple method to reduce *Router Dead Interval*. We can set the value of the hello packet interval under 10sec on an OSPF router. However, paper [3] reports that any *Hello Interval* value less than 10sec leads to unacceptable number of false alarms, meaning neighbors mistakenly DR failure due to the successive discards of hello packets.

There are another methods to detect OSPF failures. When the links fail, OSPF multicasts LSA (Link State Advertisement) packets. The Paper [4] proposed a method of OSPF failure identification based on LSA flooding analysis taking these aspects into account. However, if the OSPF on a router ceases the operation or the Layer-2 (L2) link fails (in this case, network topology contains L2-network), the other OSPF routers cannot detect this failure and send LSA packets. Thus, this proposed method cannot detect OSPF failure in these cases by monitoring LSA packets and avoid *Router Dead Interval*.

To avoid this *Router Dead Interval*, we propose an enhanced OSPF with a new DR failure detection mechanism added without the hello packet. Our method uses user IP packets to detect the DR failure and monitors user IP packets from the DR. When the DR has ceased the operation, it no longer sends user IP packets. Our method can detect DR failure faster than the original OSPF by monitoring the behavior of those IP packets.

This paper is organized as follows. In Sect. 2, we first indicate our objective for original OSPF. In Sect. 3, we describe the mechanism of original OSPF and its *Router Dead interval* problem and show our proposed method to solve this problem. In Sect. 4, we show the behavior examples of our proposed method for several network facility failures. In Sect. 5, we evaluate path reroute processing time of our proposed method and original OSPF in typical network model. Finally, in Sect. 6, the effect of our proposal method is summarized and future works mentioned.

2 OSPF Behavior for the DR Failure

OSPF can adapt to many network configurations, peer-to-peer networks, point-to-multipoint networks, broadcast multi-access networks and so on. We focus on the broadcast multi-access network, because it is a major network configuration of company private networks. OSPF works with 2 kinds of OSPF router, DR and neighbors on broadcast multi-access networks. The router will attempt to form adjacencies with some of its newly acquired neighbors. Link-state databases

are synchronized between pairs of adjacent routers. On broadcast multi-access networks, the DR determines which routers should become adjacent. Adjacencies control the distribution of routing information. Routing updates are only sent and received on adjacencies, hence the DR plays an important role in OSPF networks.

If the DR has ceased routing operation due to failure, neighbors cannot detect this failure immediately and cannot receive new link-state information from the DR. Under these circumstances, the OSPF cannot reroute paths to avoid failing routers or links until the successful detection of DR failure. Neighbors send hello packets to the DR to confirm such failure. *Hello interval* is 10 sec as the default value on an OSPF router. If the DR does not respond to 4 hello packets from a neighbor, the neighbor detects DR failure, meaning it takes 40 sec is required for neighbors to detect DR failure. This time interval is called the *Router Dead Interval*.

Of course, the *Hello Interval* is one of the OSPF parameters and there is a simple way for *Hello Interval* to be set to under 10sec to reduce *Router Dead Interval*. However, this is not feasible for commercial ISPs. This method was analyzed by paper [3] by measuring ISPs topologies and it was reported that any *Hello Interval* value under 10sec led to an unacceptable number of false alarms. Thus, we think that the *Hello Interval* should remain 10 sec and need to adapt a different method.

There is also a backup DR in the general OSPF network. When the DR has ceased operation, the backup DR becomes the DR and a new backup DR is elected among other neighbors. In this paper, we assume that a DR and a backup DR have ceased the operation due to simultaneous multiple failure.

3 Enhancement OSPF for the Router Dead Interval

3.1 Outline for Enhancement OSPF

Our objective is to avoid using the hello packet to realize the faster path reroute mechanism. To achieve this objective, we enhance the DR failure detection mechanism part of OSPF.

We have 2 simple key ideas as follows for this enhancement

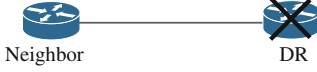
1. When a link or router fails, the flow of IP packets stops or changes immediately.
2. An IP packet which traverses the DR has a hello function.

For key idea 1, if the DR fails, a neighbor does not receive IP packets from the DR. Also, in the case of Fig. 1, if the DR or an L2-link fails, a neighbor does not receive IP packets. In other words, a neighbor can detect DR failure by monitoring IP packets from the DR.

For key idea 2, we can substitute a user IP packet for a hello packet to detect DR failure, because we can use an IP header option within the private network and the IP is at the same layer as the OSPF.

We show the outline of the new DR failure detection mechanism based on the ideas.

Case 1 : OSPF failure on the DR



Case 2 : L2 link failure and OSPF failure on the DR

**Fig. 1.** Typical OSPF network failures.

1. The user IP packet which traverses the DR is marked on an option of the IP header.
2. The neighbor monitors the marked IP packets.
3. If the receiving rate of user IP packets on the DR is less than the threshold value (R_{DR}), the DR sends a marked dummy IP packet to its neighbor.
4. If the local time exceeds the threshold value (R_i) on a neighbor i , this neighbor casts missing message packets to all neighbors.
5. If another neighbor j receives a missing message packet, it monitors the arrival interval time of marked IP packets. If the marked IP packet interval time is under the threshold value (R_j), this neighbor sends an alive message packet.
6. If the neighbor i does not receive an alive message packet, this neighbor detects the DR failure. A new DR is elected among all neighbors and reconstructs the new routing table.

Here, we presume the DR writes 1 as a mark in an option of the IP packet header, which is sent from the DR to a neighbor. When a neighbor receives a marked IP packet, it writes 0 as an unmark in an option and sends the user IP packet.

Next, we define the threshold value R . To calculate R , we borrow the idea of the TCP timeout mechanism [5].

TCP monitors all RTT (Round Trip Time) of TCP packets at the TCP interfaces and calculates the average RTT and its deviation. The time out value is the average RTT + 2×deviation [6]. (In 1990, the paper [7] revised this equation, average RTT + 4×deviation. We select the former equation for the performance of our method.) TCP decides on the packet loss event based on this time out value and retransmits the packet.

Our proposed method decides the DR failure event by comparing the threshold value R with the arrival interval time of the marked IP packets. R is calculated by the following equation

$$\begin{aligned}
 Err &= M - A \\
 A &\rightarrow A + gErr \\
 D &\rightarrow D + h(|Err| - D) \\
 R &= A + 2D
 \end{aligned}$$

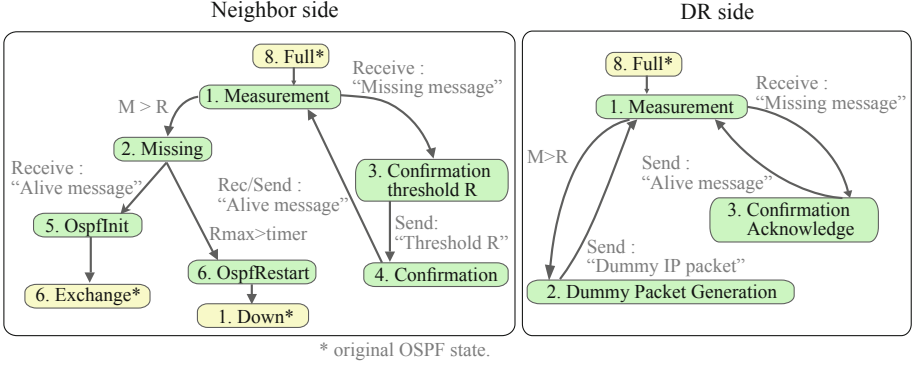


Fig. 2. Proposed state transition diagram.

where M is the arrival interval time of the marked IP packet (measurement value), A is the average of M , g is the coefficient $1/8$, Err is the difference M and A , h is the coefficient $1/4$, D is the mean deviation. The value of coefficients is equal to one of the original TCP timeout mechanism.

3.2 Our Proposal Algorithm

We describe our proposed new DR failure detection mechanism. We show the state transitions diagram of DR and its neighbor in Fig. 2.

Neighbor Side

1. Measurement

The neighbor monitors the marked IP packets and calculates M and R . If the local time exceeds R , this state transits into state 2. If M is less than R , there is no transition of state. If a missing message packet is received, this state transits into state 3.

2. Missing

The neighbor multicasts a missing message packet to all OSPF routers. It corrects the R_i of other neighbors i and calculates the maximum value R_{max} among R_i . If an alive message packet is received by R_{max} , the neighbor knows that the DR is alive and there is path failure on an adjacency path. This state transits into state 5 to reconstruct adjacency with the DR. If an alive message packet is not received by R_{max} , the neighbor detects DR failure and this state transits into state 6.

3. Confirm R

The neighbor i having received the missing message packet confirms R_i and sends it to the sender of the missing message packet, whereupon this state transits into state 4.

4. Confirmation

If a marked IP packet is received by R_i , an alive message packet is multicast. Also, if an alive message packet is received from the other neighbor, this state transits into state 1.

5. Ospf-Init

In this state, the neighbor sends an LSA to the DR.

6. Ospf-Restart

In this state, the neighbor detects DR failure and multicasts an init message packet. The state of all neighbors which receive an init message packet transits into the down state of OSPF.

DR Side

1. Measurement

The DR marks a user IP packet and sends it to a neighbor. Subsequently, the DR measures M and calculate R_{DR} . If the DR does not receive a user IP packet by R_{DR} , this state transits into 2. If the DR receives a missing message packet, this state transits into 3.

2. Dummy Packet Generation

The DR generates a dummy marked IP packet and sends it to a neighbor.

3. Confirmation Acknowledgement

The DR multicasts alive message packets and this state transits into state 1.

3.3 Path Reroute Processing Time

In this section, we mention the path reroute processing flow of our proposed method for various network facility failure. Various network facilities and OSPF network configuration patterns exist. We assume a DR, neighbor, L2 switch and link to comprise the main network facilities for simplicity and show the path reroute processing flow of our proposed method for failure of those facilities in Fig. 3.

The *Path reconstruction* process is the original OSPF process, SPF calculation, SPF Delay and LSA processing and so on, but this process is used by our proposed method. The *DR election* includes hello processing.

The Fig. 3 shows that there are 3 cases of processing flow, namely, (1) *Path reconstruction*, (2) *Path reconstruction + DR failure detection* and (3) *Path reconstruction + DR failure detection + DR election*. But there are only 2 processing time cases (2) and (3) for the failure of those facilities to evaluate our proposed method. We will evaluate the case (2) in Sect. 5.2 and the case (3) in Sect. 5.1.

4 Examples of Enhancement of OSPF Behavior

In this section, we show some examples of working mechanisms of our proposed method in the event of failure of various network facilities.

4.1 Example 1: The DR Failure

We assume that the DR is connected to a neighbor, whereupon the DR has ceased operation due to OSPF function failure but not link failure. For the original OSPF, *Router Dead Interval* occurs in this case. We explain our method with Fig. 4 in this case.

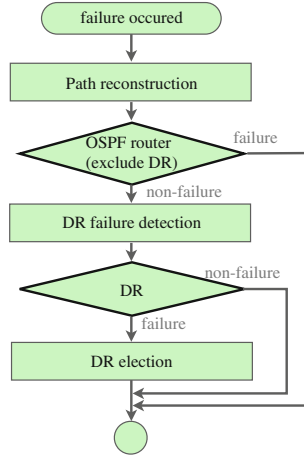


Fig. 3. Processing flow for network facilities failure.

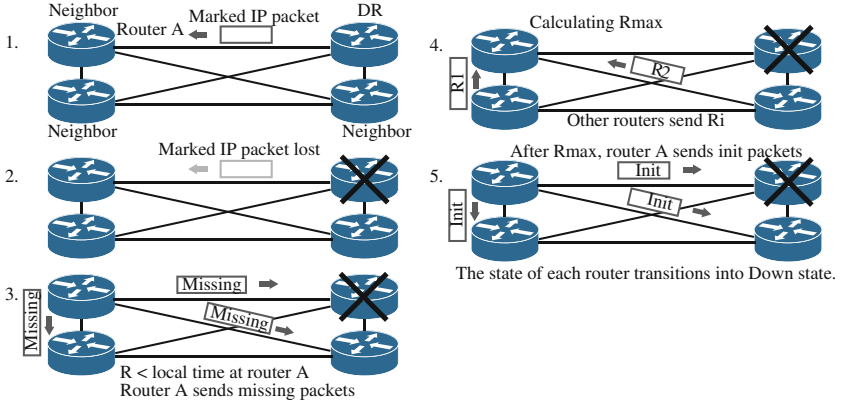


Fig. 4. Example 1: the DR failure.

1. In a stable state, router A receives marked IP packets from the DR. Each router calculates R_{DR} and R .
2. The OSPF function on the DR stops due to failure, but the link state is ready.
3. Router A cannot receive a marked IP packet by R and multicasts missing message packets.
4. The other routers multicast their R . Router A calculates R_{max} .
5. The other routers cannot receive a marked IP packet from the DR by R and does not send an alive message packet. Router A cannot receive an alive message packet by R_{max} and multicast init message packets. Subsequently, the state of all routers transits into the down state of OSPF.

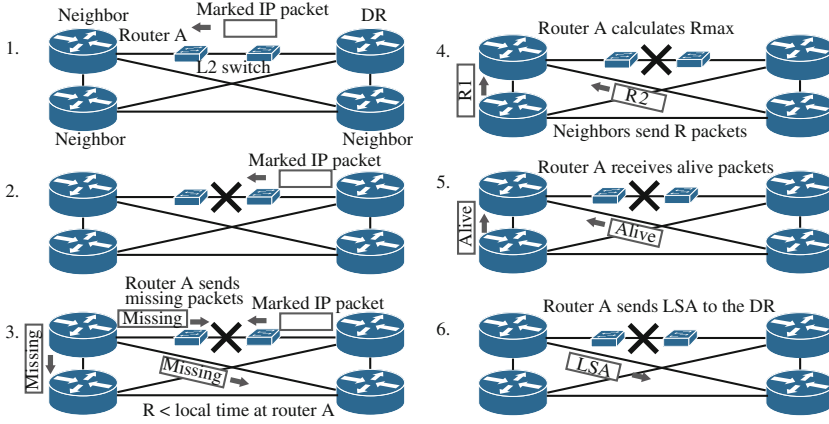


Fig. 5. Example 2: L2 link failure.

4.2 Example 2: L2 Link Failure

In this case, we assume that there is a L2 link between router A and the DR. When an L2 link fails, neither router A nor the DR can detect it. Hence, *Router Dead Interval* occurs in the case of the original OSPF. We explain our method with Fig. 5 in this case.

1. In this stable state, router A receives marked IP packets from the DR. Each router calculates R_{DR} and R .
2. The L2 link fails, but OSPF routers and other links are ready.
3. Router A cannot receive a marked IP packet by R and multicasts missing message packets. The DR sends marked IP packets to router A and cannot detect the failure on an L2 link.
4. The other routers receive a missing message packet from router A and multicast R .
5. The other routers receive marked IP packets from the DR and multicast alive message packets.
6. Router A receives an alive message packets and sends LSA to the DR.

4.3 Example 3: Few User IP Packets

In this example, there is no network failure. However, few user IP packets traverse the DR. The detection time of our proposed method depends on the average packet arrival interval time. If the amount of user IP packets declines further, the packet arrival interval time increases to an ever greater extent, and hence the detection time of our proposed method follows suit. We confirm the mechanism of our proposal in this situation with Fig. 6.

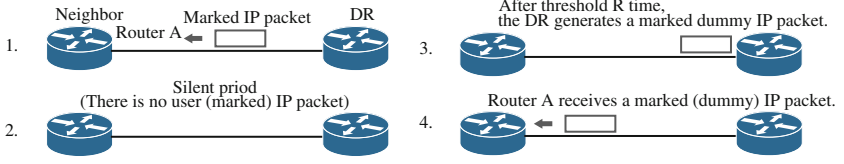


Fig. 6. Example 3: few user IP packets.

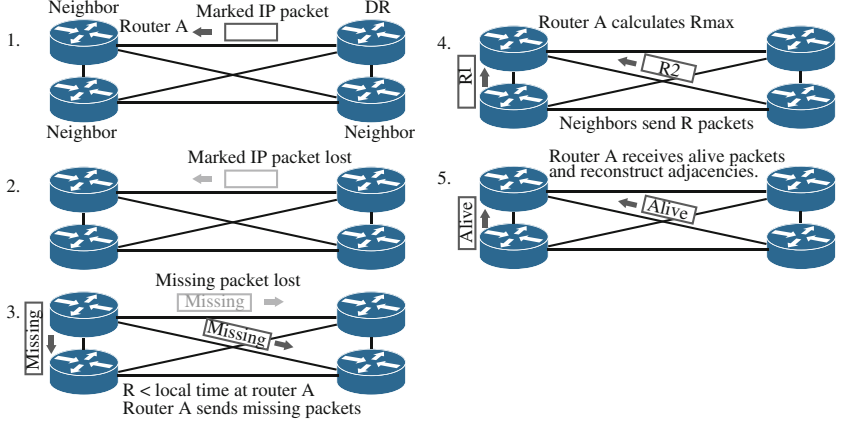


Fig. 7. Example 4: message packets lost.

1. In this stable state, router A receives marked IP packets from the DR. Each router calculates R_{DR} and R .
2. The user applications temporarily stop communications.
3. When the DR does not receive a user IP packet by R , it generates a marked dummy IP packet and sends it to the router A.
4. Router A receives a marked dummy IP packet and can confirm that the DR is alive.

4.4 Example 4: Loss of Message Packets

In this example, we assume that some of the marked IP packets, missing message packets and alive message packets are lost. We confirm the mechanism of our proposal in this situation with Fig. 7.

1. In a stable state, router A receives marked IP packets from the DR. Each router calculates R_{DR} and R .
2. Marked IP packets are lost due to some failures.
3. Router A cannot receive a marked IP packet by R and multicasts missing message packets. However, we assume that certain missing message packets are lost due to some failures.

4. Some neighbors receive missing message packets and send R to router A. Here, we also assume that some of those missing message packets are lost. However router A can receive R from some neighbors, because there are many neighbors and we assume that some of their packets can reach router A. Router A calculates R_{max} and awaits an alive message packet.
5. Some neighbors can multicast alive message packets, because the DR is alive, some of which can be received by router A. Subsequently, router A sends LSA to the DR.

5 Evaluation of the Path Rerouting Time

In the previous Sect. 3.3, we explained that there are 2 cases of the path reroute processing time of our proposed method for network facility failure. We evaluate the path reroute processing time for our proposed method in those 2 cases.

We show the network configuration in Fig. 8 as the typical network model. There are 2 types of network, a backbone network and many local networks. All local networks are connected to a backbone network. OSPF manages the network *area*. The backbone is *area 0* and local networks are *area i* ($i = 1, 2, \dots, N$) on typical OSPF networks. But we set only *area 0* on all networks for simplicity. Because we focus on the effect of our proposal method on the path reroute processing time. If the OSPF networks have many *areas*, the path reroute processing time needs to include path information propagation time from a area to the other area.

We assume that each local and backbone network has a DR, a backup DR and 18 OSPF neighbor routers. In this network configuration, we evaluate the processing time for path rerouting from router A to router B. We assume that backup DR and DR fail at the same time in this evaluation.

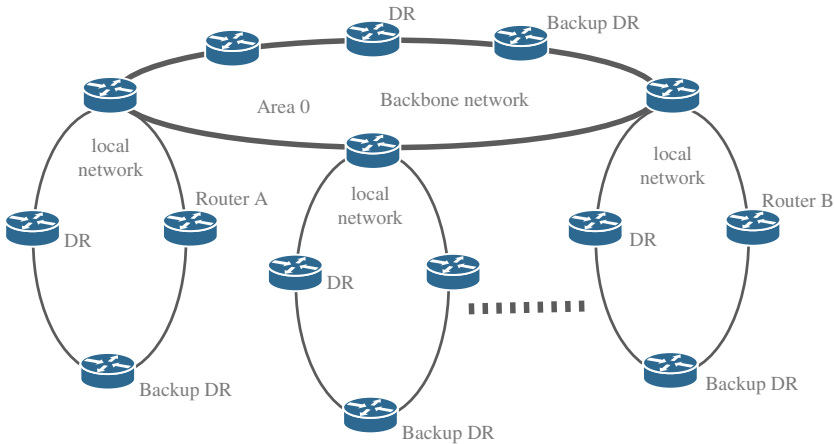


Fig. 8. Evaluation network model.

Table 1. Various delays affecting the operation of OSPF protocol [3, 8].

Name	Processing time and description
Hello interval	The time delay between successive Hello packets. Usually 10 sec
Router dead interval	The time delay since the last Hello before a neighbor is declared to be down. Usually 4 times the <i>Hello Interval</i> .
SPF delay	The delay between the shortest path calculation and the first topology change that triggered the calculation. Used to avoid frequent shortest path calculations. Usually 5 sec
SPF calculation delay	$0.00000247 \times x^2 + 0.000978$ sec (Cisco 3600 series)
Route install delay	The delay between shortest path calculation and update of forwarding table. Observed to be 0.2 sec
LSA processing delay	<0.001 sec
Hello processing delay	<0.001 sec ^a

^a In [8], CISCO Systems, Inc. showed the OSPF processing log with time stamp. The time resolution of this log is 0.001 sec. and we can see that hello processing delay is less than 0.001 sec. Thus, we set that hello processing delay is less than 0.001 sec)

Next, we set the evaluation parameters. The paper [3] lists different standards and vendor introduced delays that affect the OSPF operation in networks of popular commercial routers. We show those delays which are used in our evaluation in Table 1.

Also, the DR failure detection time of our proposal methods depends on the arrival interval time of user IP packets. In this evaluation, we set the following constant arrival interval time of user IP packets on each link for simplicity.

- Arrival interval: 1, 0.5, 0.1 sec

5.1 Case 1: DR Failure

Initially, we evaluate the path reroute processing time for both our proposed method and the original OSPF in the case of DR failure on the backbone network as a typical case.

In the case of the original OSPF, new DR and backup DR are elected among neighbors after *Router Dead Interval*, whereupon OSPF routers reconstruct the path table.

In the case of our proposed method, new DR and backup DR are elected without *Router Dead Interval* by a new failure detection mechanism using marked IP packets.

We sum up the overall processing delay time of the path rerouting according to the original OSPF algorithm and our proposed method. The Fig. 9 shows the path reroute processing time for the original OSPF and proposed method. When the number of OSPF routers increases, so does the SPF calculation delay.

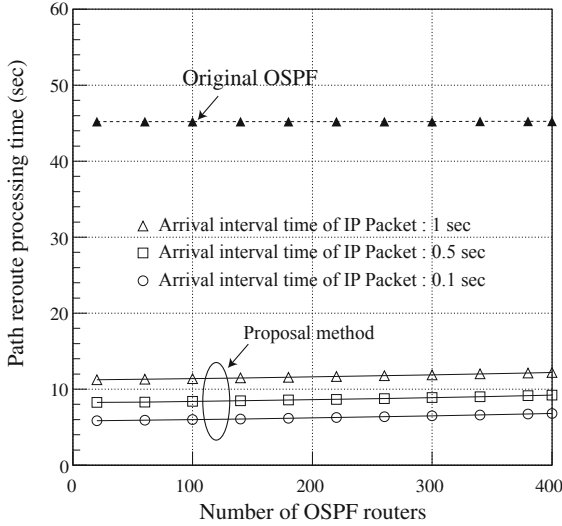


Fig. 9. Path reroute processing time for case 1.

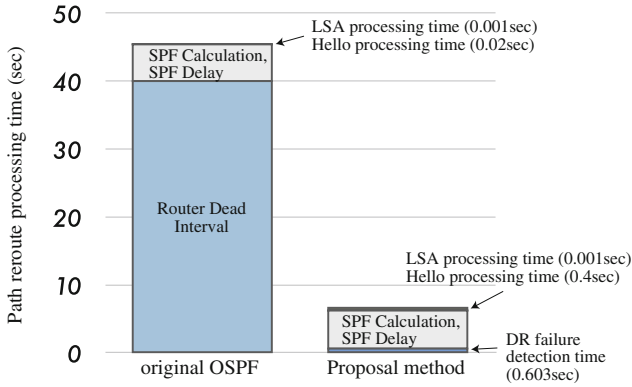


Fig. 10. The details of path reroute processing time for case 1. (Number of OSPF routers is 400).

However, this increase is minor in terms of total processing delay. The Fig. 10 shows the details of processing time in the case of 400 routers. The major contribution to path reroute processing time is SPF delay and *Router Dead Interval*. Thus, we can say that our proposed method reduces this processing time very effectively, because it avoids *Router Dead Interval*.

Also, if the arrival interval time of the marked IP packets exceeds 0.1 sec, our proposed method can send dummy marked IP packets every 0.1 sec. In this case, the bandwidth consumed is 5.12 kbps (The size of a dummy packet is 64 bytes). This bandwidth consumption can be considered negligible.

5.2 Case 2: Marked Packet Loss

In this case, we assume that certain marked IP packets, missing message packets and alive message packets are lost in the network. This case is similar to example 4 in Sect. 4.4.

Both the DR and backup DR are operating normally. However, the original OSPF and proposed method determine that the DR and backup DR have stopped the OSPF operation, because hello packets and marked IP packets are lost.

In the case of the original OSPF, both the DR and backup DR are elected among OSPF routers after *Router Dead Interval* and the path table is reconstructed.

In the case of the proposed method, some neighbors cannot detect either the DR or backup DR. However, there are many OSPF routers (neighbors) and all routers monitoring the marked IP packets. We cannot assume that all marked IP packets are lost. Thus, neighbors can receive some marked IP packets and multicast alive message packets. Also, we assume that some alive message packets can reach neighbors, if some alive message packets are lost. Neighbors which receive alive message packets send the LSA packets to the DR and reconstruct the routing table. In the case of the proposed method, the DR election process is omitted, because the neighbor can confirm that the DR is alive.

The Fig. 11 shows the results of the path reroute processing time for the original OSPF and proposed method in this case and Fig. 12 shows the detail of results. We confirm that our proposed method can reduce the path reroute processing time, because it avoids *Router Dead Interval*.

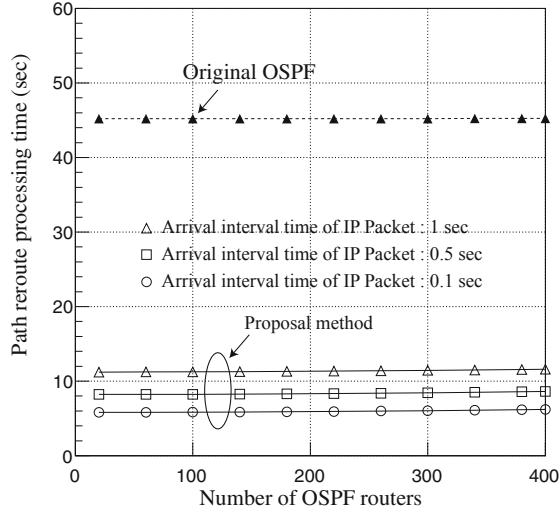


Fig. 11. Path reroute processing time for case 2.

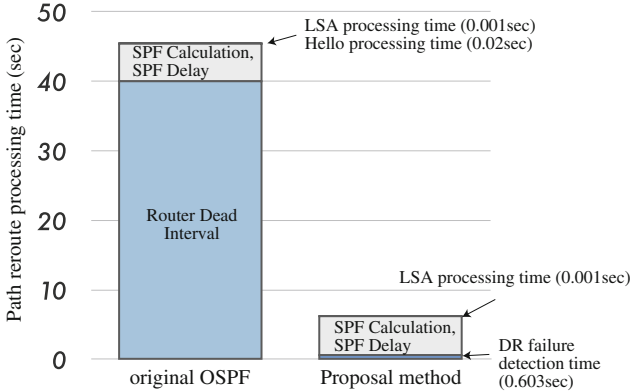


Fig. 12. The details of path reroute processing time for case 2. (Number of OSPF routers is 400).

6 Related Work

There have been several approaches and proposals for the network failure detection method on OSPF networks. OSPF has the complex processing algorithms and many factors of processing delay to recover the link failure. There are mainly 2 kinds of delay type. One is compute part, such as generation of routing and forwarding tables, processing hello packets or link state packets (LSP) and so on. The other is wait or time out part, such as SPF hold delay, *Router Dead Interval* and so on. The main cause of former type is CPU load. But the newest OSPF routers are equipped high performance CPU and this case should be neglected [3]. The latter comes from OSPF algorithms and parameters. Thus, OSPF algorithms and parameters should be modified to achieve the fast failure recovery. First, the simple way is that the value of wait timer is reduced. In paper [9], authors analyzed the effect of *Hello Interval* parameter reduction and reported 275 ms to be an optimal value for providing fast failure detection while not resulting in too many route flaps due to frequent timeouts. However, this paper did not consider the network congestion and topology characteristics.

The paper [3] examined the *Hello Interval* considered the network congestion and topology characteristics. The authors claimed that the optimal value for *Hello Interval* is strongly influenced by the expected congestion levels and the number of links in the topology. The simulation results indicated that *Hello Interval* under 10 sec leads to increase the frequency of false alarms which are generated if the *Hello* message gets queued behind a huge burst of LSAs and can not be processed in time. Although the false alarms can be suppressed by the RED mechanism which can suppress the network congestion, it is difficult to set the suitable parameters of RED mechanism for the network traffic characteristics in general.

The Paper [4] proposed a method of OSPF failure identification based on LSA flooding analysis taking these aspects into account. This approach works suitable on OSPF networks. Also, the paper [10] proposed the failure insensitive

routing (FIR). This proposal method is proactive routing approach and computes interface - specific forwarding and backwarding tables for link failures. When this method detects link failures, it can avoid link failures and reroute effectively. However, if the OSPF on a router ceases the operation or the L2 link failures (in this case, network topology contains L2-network), these proposed method cannot detect those failures and avoid *Router Dead Interval*.

7 Conclusions

We proposed a fast DR failure detection mechanism for OSPF to reroute paths when the DR has ceased operation. The original OSPF uses hello packets to detect DR failure, but it takes *Router Dead Interval*. Our new DR failure detection mechanism substitutes user IP packets for the hello packets to avoid *Router Dead Interval*.

Our proposed method involves the 2 processing procedures for network facility failures. We evaluated it in each case on the typical OSPF network models and results showed that our proposed method can reduce the path reroute processing time, due to avoiding *Router Dead Interval*. Our proposed method is very effective in rerouting paths when the DR and backup DR fails.

In this paper, we showed the results by the calculating the sum of processing the time according to the original algorithms and the proposed method. We will install our proposed method on a test OSPF router and evaluate the performance in the event of network failure.

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