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**A Framework for IP Based Virtual Private Networks**

Status of this Memo

This memo provides information for the Internet community. It does

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IESG Note

This document is not the product of an IETF Working Group. The IETF

currently has no effort underway to standardize a specific VPN

framework.

Abstract

This document describes a framework for Virtual Private Networks

(VPNs) running across IP backbones. It discusses the various

different types of VPNs, their respective requirements, and proposes

specific mechanisms that could be used to implement each type of VPN

using existing or proposed specifications. The objective of this

document is to serve as a framework for related protocol development

in order to develop the full set of specifications required for

widespread deployment of interoperable VPN solutions.

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**[1.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-1.0) Introduction**

This document describes a framework for Virtual Private Networks

(VPNs) running across IP backbones. It discusses the various

different types of VPNs, their respective requirements, and proposes

specific mechanisms that could be used to implement each type of VPN

using existing or proposed specifications. The objective of this

document is to serve as a framework for related protocol development

in order to develop the full set of specifications required for

widespread deployment of interoperable VPN solutions.

There is currently significant interest in the deployment of virtual

private networks across IP backbone facilities. The widespread

deployment of VPNs has been hampered, however, by the lack of

interoperable implementations, which, in turn, derives from the lack

of general agreement on the definition and scope of VPNs and

confusion over the wide variety of solutions that are all described

by the term VPN. In the context of this document, a VPN is simply

defined as the 'emulation of a private Wide Area Network (WAN)

facility using IP facilities' (including the public Internet, or

private IP backbones). As such, there are as many types of VPNs as

there are types of WANs, hence the confusion over what exactly

constitutes a VPN.

In this document a VPN is modeled as a connectivity object. Hosts

may be attached to a VPN, and VPNs may be interconnected together, in

the same manner as hosts today attach to physical networks, and

physical networks are interconnected together (e.g., via bridges or

routers). Many aspects of networking, such as addressing, forwarding

mechanism, learning and advertising reachability, quality of service

(QoS), security, and firewalling, have common solutions across both

physical and virtual networks, and many issues that arise in the

discussion of VPNs have direct analogues with those issues as

implemented in physical networks. The introduction of VPNs does not

create the need to reinvent networking, or to introduce entirely new

paradigms that have no direct analogue with existing physical

networks. Instead it is often useful to first examine how a

particular issue is handled in a physical network environment, and

then apply the same principle to an environment which contains

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virtual as well as physical networks, and to develop appropriate

extensions and enhancements when necessary. Clearly having

mechanisms that are common across both physical and virtual networks

facilitates the introduction of VPNs into existing networks, and also

reduces the effort needed for both standards and product development,

since existing solutions can be leveraged.

This framework document proposes a taxonomy of a specific set of VPN

types, showing the specific applications of each, their specific

requirements, and the specific types of mechanisms that may be most

appropriate for their implementation. The intent of this document is

to serve as a framework to guide a coherent discussion of the

specific modifications that may be needed to existing IP mechanisms

in order to develop a full range of interoperable VPN solutions.

The document first discusses the likely expectations customers have

of any type of VPN, and the implications of these for the ways in

which VPNs can be implemented. It also discusses the distinctions

between Customer Premises Equipment (CPE) based solutions, and

network based solutions. Thereafter it presents a taxonomy of the

various VPN types and their respective requirements. It also

outlines suggested approaches to their implementation, hence also

pointing to areas for future standardization.

Note also that this document only discusses implementations of VPNs

across IP backbones, be they private IP networks, or the public

Internet. The models and mechanisms described here are intended to

apply to both IPV4 and IPV6 backbones. This document specifically

does not discuss means of constructing VPNs using native mappings

onto switched backbones - e.g., VPNs constructed using the LAN

Emulation over ATM (LANE) [[1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-1)] or Multiprotocol over ATM (MPOA) [[2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-2)]

protocols operating over ATM backbones. Where IP backbones are

constructed using such protocols, by interconnecting routers over the

switched backbone, the VPNs discussed operate on top of this IP

network, and hence do not directly utilize the native mechanisms of

the underlying backbone. Native VPNs are restricted to the scope of

the underlying backbone, whereas IP based VPNs can extend to the

extent of IP reachability. Native VPN protocols are clearly outside

the scope of the IETF, and may be tackled by such bodies as the ATM

Forum.

**[2.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-2.0) VPN Application and Implementation Requirements**

**[2.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-2.1) General VPN Requirements**

There is growing interest in the use of IP VPNs as a more cost

effective means of building and deploying private communication

networks for multi-site communication than with existing approaches.

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Existing private networks can be generally categorized into two types

- dedicated WANs that permanently connect together multiple sites,

and dial networks, that allow on-demand connections through the

Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) to one or more sites in the

private network.

WANs are typically implemented using leased lines or dedicated

circuits - for instance, Frame Relay or ATM connections - between the

multiple sites. CPE routers or switches at the various sites connect

these dedicated facilities together and allow for connectivity across

the network. Given the cost and complexity of such dedicated

facilities and the complexity of CPE device configuration, such

networks are generally not fully meshed, but instead have some form

of hierarchical topology. For example remote offices could be

connected directly to the nearest regional office, with the regional

offices connected together in some form of full or partial mesh.

Private dial networks are used to allow remote users to connect into

an enterprise network using PSTN or Integrated Services Digital

Network (ISDN) links. Typically, this is done through the deployment

of Network Access Servers (NASs) at one or more central sites. Users

dial into such NASs, which interact with Authentication,

Authorization, and Accounting (AAA) servers to verify the identity of

the user, and the set of services that the user is authorized to

receive.

In recent times, as more businesses have found the need for high

speed Internet connections to their private corporate networks, there

has been significant interest in the deployment of CPE based VPNs

running across the Internet. This has been driven typically by the

ubiquity and distance insensitive pricing of current Internet

services, that can result in significantly lower costs than typical

dedicated or leased line services.

The notion of using the Internet for private communications is not

new, and many techniques, such as controlled route leaking, have been

used for this purpose [[3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-3)]. Only in recent times, however, have the

appropriate IP mechanisms needed to meet customer requirements for

VPNs all come together. These requirements include the following:

**[2.1.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-2.1.1) Opaque Packet Transport:**

The traffic carried within a VPN may have no relation to the traffic

on the IP backbone, either because the traffic is multiprotocol, or

because the customer's IP network may use IP addressing unrelated to

that of the IP backbone on which the traffic is transported. In

particular, the customer's IP network may use non-unique, private IP

addressing [[4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-4)].

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**[2.1.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-2.1.2) Data Security**

In general customers using VPNs require some form of data security.

There are different trust models applicable to the use of VPNs. One

such model is where the customer does not trust the service provider

to provide any form of security, and instead implements a VPN using

CPE devices that implement firewall functionality and that are

connected together using secure tunnels. In this case the service

provider is used solely for IP packet transport.

An alternative model is where the customer trusts the service

provider to provide a secure managed VPN service. This is similar to

the trust involved when a customer utilizes a public switched Frame

Relay or ATM service, in that the customer trusts that packets will

not be misdirected, injected into the network in an unauthorized

manner, snooped on, modified in transit, or subjected to traffic

analysis by unauthorized parties.

With this model providing firewall functionality and secure packet

transport services is the responsibility of the service provider.

Different levels of security may be needed within the provider

backbone, depending on the deployment scenario used. If the VPN

traffic is contained within a single provider's IP backbone then

strong security mechanisms, such as those provided by the IP Security

protocol suite (IPSec) [[5](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-5)], may not be necessary for tunnels between

backbone nodes. If the VPN traffic traverses networks or equipment

owned by multiple administrations then strong security mechanisms may

be appropriate. Also a strong level of security may be applied by a

provider to customer traffic to address a customer perception that IP

networks, and particularly the Internet, are insecure. Whether or

not this perception is correct it is one that must be addressed by

the VPN implementation.

**[2.1.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-2.1.3) Quality of Service Guarantees**

In addition to ensuring communication privacy, existing private

networking techniques, building upon physical or link layer

mechanisms, also offer various types of quality of service

guarantees. In particular, leased and dial up lines offer both

bandwidth and latency guarantees, while dedicated connection

technologies like ATM and Frame Relay have extensive mechanisms for

similar guarantees. As IP based VPNs become more widely deployed,

there will be market demand for similar guarantees, in order to

ensure end to end application transparency. While the ability of IP

based VPNs to offer such guarantees will depend greatly upon the

commensurate capabilities of the underlying IP backbones, a VPN

framework must also address the means by which VPN systems can

utilize such capabilities, as they evolve.

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**[2.1.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-2.1.4) Tunneling Mechanism**

Together, the first two of the requirements listed above imply that

VPNs must be implemented through some form of IP tunneling mechanism,

where the packet formats and/or the addressing used within the VPN

can be unrelated to that used to route the tunneled packets across

the IP backbone. Such tunnels, depending upon their form, can

provide some level of intrinsic data security, or this can also be

enhanced using other mechanisms (e.g., IPSec).

Furthermore, as discussed later, such tunneling mechanisms can also

be mapped into evolving IP traffic management mechanisms. There are

already defined a large number of IP tunneling mechanisms. Some of

these are well suited to VPN applications, as discussed in [section](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-3.0)

[3.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-3.0).

**[2.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-2.2) CPE and Network Based VPNs**

Most current VPN implementations are based on CPE equipment. VPN

capabilities are being integrated into a wide variety of CPE devices,

ranging from firewalls to WAN edge routers and specialized VPN

termination devices. Such equipment may be bought and deployed by

customers, or may be deployed (and often remotely managed) by service

providers in an outsourcing service.

There is also significant interest in 'network based VPNs', where the

operation of the VPN is outsourced to an Internet Service Provider

(ISP), and is implemented on network as opposed to CPE equipment.

There is significant interest in such solutions both by customers

seeking to reduce support costs and by ISPs seeking new revenue

sources. Supporting VPNs in the network allows the use of particular

mechanisms which may lead to highly efficient and cost effective VPN

solutions, with common equipment and operations support amortized

across large numbers of customers.

Most of the mechanisms discussed below can apply to either CPE based

or network based VPNs. However particular mechanisms are likely to

prove applicable only to the latter, since they leverage tools (e.g.,

piggybacking on routing protocols) which are accessible only to ISPs

and which are unlikely to be made available to any customer, or even

hosted on ISP owned and operated CPE, due to the problems of

coordinating joint management of the CPE gear by both the ISP and the

customer. This document will indicate which techniques are likely to

apply only to network based VPNs.

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**[2.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-2.3) VPNs and Extranets**

The term 'extranet' is commonly used to refer to a scenario whereby

two or more companies have networked access to a limited amount of

each other's corporate data. For example a manufacturing company

might use an extranet for its suppliers to allow it to query

databases for the pricing and availability of components, and then to

order and track the status of outstanding orders. Another example is

joint software development, for instance, company A allows one

development group within company B to access its operating system

source code, and company B allows one development group in company A

to access its security software. Note that the access policies can

get arbitrarily complex. For example company B may internally

restrict access to its security software to groups in certain

geographic locations to comply with export control laws, for example.

A key feature of an extranet is thus the control of who can access

what data, and this is essentially a policy decision. Policy

decisions are typically enforced today at the interconnection points

between different domains, for example between a private network and

the Internet, or between a software test lab and the rest of the

company network. The enforcement may be done via a firewall, router

with access list functionality, application gateway, or any similar

device capable of applying policy to transit traffic. Policy

controls may be implemented within a corporate network, in addition

to between corporate networks. Also the interconnections between

networks could be a set of bilateral links, or could be a separate

network, perhaps maintained by an industry consortium. This separate

network could itself be a VPN or a physical network.

Introducing VPNs into a network does not require any change to this

model. Policy can be enforced between two VPNs, or between a VPN and

the Internet, in exactly the same manner as is done today without

VPNs. For example two VPNs could be interconnected, which each

administration locally imposing its own policy controls, via a

firewall, on all traffic that enters its VPN from the outside,

whether from another VPN or from the Internet.

This model of a VPN provides for a separation of policy from the

underlying mode of packet transport used. For example, a router may

direct voice traffic to ATM Virtual Channel Connections (VCCs) for

guaranteed QoS, non-local internal company traffic to secure tunnels,

and other traffic to a link to the Internet. In the past the secure

tunnels may have been frame relay circuits, now they may also be

secure IP tunnels or MPLS Label Switched Paths (LSPs)

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Other models of a VPN are also possible. For example there is a

model whereby a set of application flows is mapped into a VPN. As

the policy rules imposed by a network administrator can get quite

complex, the number of distinct sets of application flows that are

used in the policy rulebase, and hence the number of VPNs, can thus

grow quite large, and there can be multiple overlapping VPNs.

However there is little to be gained by introducing such new

complexity into a network. Instead a VPN should be viewed as a

direct analogue to a physical network, as this allows the leveraging

of existing protocols and procedures, and the current expertise and

skill sets of network administrators and customers.

**[3.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.0) VPN Tunneling**

As noted above in [section 2.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-2.1), VPNs must be implemented using some

form of tunneling mechanism. This section looks at the generic

requirements for such VPN tunneling mechanisms. A number of

characteristics and aspects common to any link layer protocol are

taken and compared with the features offered by existing tunneling

protocols. This provides a basis for comparing different protocols

and is also useful to highlight areas where existing tunneling

protocols could benefit from extensions to better support their

operation in a VPN environment.

An IP tunnel connecting two VPN endpoints is a basic building block

from which a variety of different VPN services can be constructed.

An IP tunnel operates as an overlay across the IP backbone, and the

traffic sent through the tunnel is opaque to the underlying IP

backbone. In effect the IP backbone is being used as a link layer

technology, and the tunnel forms a point-to-point link.

A VPN device may terminate multiple IP tunnels and forward packets

between these tunnels and other network interfaces in different ways.

In the discussion of different types of VPNs, in later sections of

this document, the primary distinguishing characteristic of these

different types is the manner in which packets are forwarded between

interfaces (e.g., bridged or routed). There is a direct analogy with

how existing networking devices are characterized today. A two-port

repeater just forwards packets between its ports, and does not

examine the contents of the packet. A bridge forwards packets using

Media Access Control (MAC) layer information contained in the packet,

while a router forwards packets using layer 3 addressing information

contained in the packet. Each of these three scenarios has a direct

VPN analogue, as discussed later. Note that an IP tunnel is viewed

as just another sort of link, which can be concatenated with another

link, bound to a bridge forwarding table, or bound to an IP

forwarding table, depending on the type of VPN.

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The following sections look at the requirements for a generic IP

tunneling protocol that can be used as a basic building block to

construct different types of VPNs.

**[3.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1) Tunneling Protocol Requirements for VPNs**

There are numerous IP tunneling mechanisms, including IP/IP [[6](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-6)],

Generic Routing Encapsulation (GRE) tunnels [[7](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-7)], Layer 2 Tunneling

Protocol (L2TP) [[8](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-8)], IPSec [[5](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-5)], and Multiprotocol Label Switching

(MPLS) [[9](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-9)]. Note that while some of these protocols are not often

thought of as tunneling protocols, they do each allow for opaque

transport of frames as packet payload across an IP network, with

forwarding disjoint from the address fields of the encapsulated

packets.

Note, however, that there is one significant distinction between each

of the IP tunneling protocols mentioned above, and MPLS. MPLS can be

viewed as a specific link layer for IP, insofar as MPLS specific

mechanisms apply only within the scope of an MPLS network, whereas IP

based mechanisms extend to the extent of IP reachability. As such,

VPN mechanisms built directly upon MPLS tunneling mechanisms cannot,

by definition, extend outside the scope of MPLS networks, any more so

than, for instance, ATM based mechanisms such as LANE can extend

outside of ATM networks. Note however, that an MPLS network can span

many different link layer technologies, and so, like an IP network,

its scope is not limited by the specific link layers used. A number

of proposals for defining a set of mechanisms to allow for

interoperable VPNs specifically over MPLS networks have also been

produced ([[10](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-10)] [[11](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-11)] [[12](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-12)] [[13](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-13)], [[14](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-14)] and [[15](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-15)]).

There are a number of desirable requirements for a VPN tunneling

mechanism, however, that are not all met by the existing tunneling

mechanisms. These requirements include:

**[3.1.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1.1) Multiplexing**

There are cases where multiple VPN tunnels may be needed between the

same two IP endpoints. This may be needed, for instance, in cases

where the VPNs are network based, and each end point supports

multiple customers. Traffic for different customers travels over

separate tunnels between the same two physical devices. A

multiplexing field is needed to distinguish which packets belong to

which tunnel. Sharing a tunnel in this manner may also reduce the

latency and processing burden of tunnel set up. Of the existing IP

tunneling mechanisms, L2TP (via the tunnel-id and session-id fields),

MPLS (via the label) and IPSec (via the Security Parameter Index

(SPI) field) have a multiplexing mechanism. Strictly speaking GRE

does not have a multiplexing field. However the key field, which was

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intended to be used for authenticating the source of a packet, has

sometimes been used as a multiplexing field. IP/IP does not have a

multiplexing field.

The IETF [[16](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-16)] and the ATM Forum [[17](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-17)] have standardized on a single

format for a globally unique identifier used to identify a VPN (a

VPN-ID). A VPN-ID can be used in the control plane, to bind a tunnel

to a VPN at tunnel establishment time, or in the data plane, to

identify the VPN associated with a packet, on a per-packet basis. In

the data plane a VPN encapsulation header can be used by MPLS, MPOA

and other tunneling mechanisms to aggregate packets for different

VPNs over a single tunnel. In this case an explicit indication of

VPN-ID is included with every packet, and no use is made of any

tunnel specific multiplexing field. In the control plane a VPN-ID

field can be included in any tunnel establishment signalling protocol

to allow for the association of a tunnel (e.g., as identified by the

SPI field) with a VPN. In this case there is no need for a VPN-ID to

be included with every data packet. This is discussed further in

[section 5.3.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-5.3.1).

**[3.1.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1.2) Signalling Protocol**

There is some configuration information that must be known by an end

point in advance of tunnel establishment, such as the IP address of

the remote end point, and any relevant tunnel attributes required,

such as the level of security needed. Once this information is

available, the actual tunnel establishment can be completed in one of

two ways - via a management operation, or via a signalling protocol

that allows tunnels to be established dynamically.

An example of a management operation would be to use an SNMP

Management Information Base (MIB) to configure various tunneling

parameters, e.g., MPLS labels, source addresses to use for IP/IP or

GRE tunnels, L2TP tunnel-ids and session-ids, or security association

parameters for IPSec.

Using a signalling protocol can significantly reduce the management

burden however, and as such, is essential in many deployment

scenarios. It reduces the amount of configuration needed, and also

reduces the management co-ordination needed if a VPN spans multiple

administrative domains. For example, the value of the multiplexing

field, described above, is local to the node assigning the value, and

can be kept local if distributed via a signalling protocol, rather

than being first configured into a management station and then

distributed to the relevant nodes. A signalling protocol also allows

nodes that are mobile or are only intermittently connected to

establish tunnels on demand.

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When used in a VPN environment a signalling protocol should allow for

the transport of a VPN-ID to allow the resulting tunnel to be

associated with a particular VPN. It should also allow tunnel

attributes to be exchanged or negotiated, for example the use of

frame sequencing or the use of multiprotocol transport. Note that

the role of the signalling protocol need only be to negotiate tunnel

attributes, not to carry information about how the tunnel is used,

for example whether the frames carried in the tunnel are to be

forwarded at layer 2 or layer 3. (This is similar to Q.2931 ATM

signalling - the same signalling protocol is used to set up Classical

IP logical subnetworks as well as for LANE emulated LANs.

Of the various IP tunneling protocols, the following ones support a

signalling protocol that could be adapted for this purpose: L2TP (the

L2TP control protocol), IPSec (the Internet Key Exchange (IKE)

protocol [[18](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-18)]), and GRE (as used with mobile-ip tunneling [[19](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-19)]). Also

there are two MPLS signalling protocols that can be used to establish

LSP tunnels. One uses extensions to the MPLS Label Distribution

Protocol (LDP) protocol [[20](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-20)], called Constraint-Based Routing LDP

(CR-LDP) [[21](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-21)], and the other uses extensions to the Resource

Reservation Protocol (RSVP) for LSP tunnels [[22](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-22)].

**[3.1.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1.3) Data Security**

A VPN tunneling protocol must support mechanisms to allow for

whatever level of security may be desired by customers, including

authentication and/or encryption of various strengths. None of the

tunneling mechanisms discussed, other than IPSec, have intrinsic

security mechanisms, but rely upon the security characteristics of

the underlying IP backbone. In particular, MPLS relies upon the

explicit labeling of label switched paths to ensure that packets

cannot be misdirected, while the other tunneling mechanisms can all

be secured through the use of IPSec. For VPNs implemented over non-

IP backbones (e.g., MPOA, Frame Relay or ATM virtual circuits), data

security is implicitly provided by the layer two switch

infrastructure.

Overall VPN security is not just a capability of the tunnels alone,

but has to be viewed in the broader context of how packets are

forwarded onto those tunnels. For example with VPRNs implemented

with virtual routers, the use of separate routing and forwarding

table instances ensures the isolation of traffic between VPNs.

Packets on one VPN cannot be misrouted to a tunnel on a second VPN

since those tunnels are not visible to the forwarding table of the

first VPN.

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If some form of signalling mechanism is used by one VPN end point to

dynamically establish a tunnel with another endpoint, then there is a

requirement to be able to authenticate the party attempting the

tunnel establishment. IPSec has an array of schemes for this

purpose, allowing, for example, authentication to be based on pre-

shared keys, or to use digital signatures and certificates. Other

tunneling schemes have weaker forms of authentication. In some cases

no authentication may be needed, for example if the tunnels are

provisioned, rather than dynamically established, or if the trust

model in use does not require it.

Currently the IPSec Encapsulating Security Payload (ESP) protocol

[[23](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-23)] can be used to establish SAs that support either encryption or

authentication or both. However the protocol specification precludes

the use of an SA where neither encryption or authentication is used.

In a VPN environment this "null/null" option is useful, since other

aspects of the protocol (e.g., that it supports tunneling and

multiplexing) may be all that is required. In effect the "null/null"

option can be viewed as just another level of data security.

**[3.1.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1.4) Multiprotocol Transport**

In many applications of VPNs, the VPN may carry opaque, multiprotocol

traffic. As such, the tunneling protocol used must also support

multiprotocol transport. L2TP is designed to transport Point-to-

Point Protocol (PPP) [[24](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-24)] packets, and thus can be used to carry

multiprotocol traffic since PPP itself is multiprotocol. GRE also

provides for the identification of the protocol being tunneled.

IP/IP and IPSec tunnels have no such protocol identification field,

since the traffic being tunneled is assumed to be IP.

It is possible to extend the IPSec protocol suite to allow for the

transport of multiprotocol packets. This can be achieved, for

example, by extending the signalling component of IPSec - IKE, to

indicate the protocol type of the traffic being tunneled, or to carry

a packet multiplexing header (e.g., an LLC/SNAP header or GRE header)

with each tunneled packet. This approach is similar to that used for

the same purpose in ATM networks, where signalling is used to

indicate the encapsulation used on the VCC, and where packets sent on

the VCC can use either an LLC/SNAP header or be placed directly into

the AAL5 payload, the latter being known as VC-multiplexing (see

[[25](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-25)]).

**[3.1.5](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1.5) Frame Sequencing**

One quality of service attribute required by customers of a VPN may

be frame sequencing, matching the equivalent characteristic of

physical leased lines or dedicated connections. Sequencing may be

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required for the efficient operation of particular end to end

protocols or applications. In order to implement frame sequencing,

the tunneling mechanism must support a sequencing field. Both L2TP

and GRE have such a field. IPSec has a sequence number field, but it

is used by a receiver to perform an anti-replay check, not to

guarantee in-order delivery of packets.

It is possible to extend IPSec to allow the use of the existing

sequence field to guarantee in-order delivery of packets. This can

be achieved, for example, by using IKE to negotiate whether or not

sequencing is to be used, and to define an end point behaviour which

preserves packet sequencing.

**[3.1.6](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1.6) Tunnel Maintenance**

The VPN end points must monitor the operation of the VPN tunnels to

ensure that connectivity has not been lost, and to take appropriate

action (such as route recalculation) if there has been a failure.

There are two approaches possible. One is for the tunneling protocol

itself to periodically check in-band for loss of connectivity, and to

provide an explicit indication of failure. For example L2TP has an

optional keep-alive mechanism to detect non-operational tunnels.

The other approach does not require the tunneling protocol itself to

perform this function, but relies on the operation of some out-of-

band mechanism to determine loss of connectivity. For example if a

routing protocol such as Routing Information Protocol (RIP) [[26](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-26)] or

Open Shortest Path First (OSPF) [[27](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-27)] is run over a tunnel mesh, a

failure to hear from a neighbor within a certain period of time will

result in the routing protocol declaring the tunnel to be down.

Another out-of-band approach is to perform regular ICMP pings with a

peer. This is generally sufficient assurance that the tunnel is

operational, due to the fact the tunnel also runs across the same IP

backbone.

When tunnels are established dynamically a distinction needs to be

drawn between the static and dynamic tunnel information needed.

Before a tunnel can be established some static information is needed

by a node, such as the identify of the remote end point and the

attributes of the tunnel to propose and accept. This is typically

put in place as a result of a configuration operation. As a result

of the signalling exchange to establish a tunnel, some dynamic state

is established in each end point, such as the value of the

multiplexing field or keys to be used. For example with IPSec, the

establishment of a Security Association (SA) puts in place the keys

to be used for the lifetime of that SA.

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Different policies may be used as to when to trigger the

establishment of a dynamic tunnel. One approach is to use a data-

driven approach and to trigger tunnel establishment whenever there is

data to be transferred, and to timeout the tunnel due to inactivity.

This approach is particularly useful if resources for the tunnel are

being allocated in the network for QoS purposes. Another approach is

to trigger tunnel establishment whenever the static tunnel

configuration information is installed, and to attempt to keep the

tunnel up all the time.

**[3.1.7](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1.7) Large MTUs**

An IP tunnel has an associated Maximum Transmission Unit (MTU), just

like a regular link. It is conceivable that this MTU may be larger

than the MTU of one or more individual hops along the path between

tunnel endpoints. If so, some form of frame fragmentation will be

required within the tunnel.

If the frame to be transferred is mapped into one IP datagram, normal

IP fragmentation will occur when the IP datagram reaches a hop with

an MTU smaller than the IP tunnel's MTU. This can have undesirable

performance implications at the router performing such mid-tunnel

fragmentation.

An alternative approach is for the tunneling protocol itself to

incorporate a segmentation and reassembly capability that operates at

the tunnel level, perhaps using the tunnel sequence number and an

end-of-message marker of some sort. (Note that multilink PPP uses a

mechanism similar to this to fragment packets). This avoids IP level

fragmentation within the tunnel itself. None of the existing

tunneling protocols support such a mechanism.

**[3.1.8](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1.8) Minimization of Tunnel Overhead**

There is clearly benefit in minimizing the overhead of any tunneling

mechanisms. This is particularly important for the transport of

jitter and latency sensitive traffic such as packetized voice and

video. On the other hand, the use of security mechanisms, such as

IPSec, do impose their own overhead, hence the objective should be to

minimize overhead over and above that needed for security, and to not

burden those tunnels in which security is not mandatory with

unnecessary overhead.

One area where the amount of overhead may be significant is when

voluntary tunneling is used for dial-up remote clients connecting to

a VPN, due to the typically low bandwidth of dial-up links. This is

discussed further in [section 6.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-6.3).

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**[3.1.9](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1.9) Flow and congestion control**

During the development of the L2TP protocol procedures were developed

for flow and congestion control. These were necessitated primarily

because of the need to provide adequate performance over lossy

networks when PPP compression is used, which, unlike IP Payload

Compression Protocol (IPComp) [[28](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-28)], is stateful across packets.

Another motivation was to accommodate devices with very little

buffering, used for example to terminate low speed dial-up lines.

However the flow and congestion control mechanisms defined in the

final version of the L2TP specification are used only for the control

channels, and not for data traffic.

In general the interactions between multiple layers of flow and

congestion control schemes can be very complex. Given the

predominance of TCP traffic in today's networks and the fact that TCP

has its own end-to-end flow and congestion control mechanisms, it is

not clear that there is much benefit to implementing similar

mechanisms within tunneling protocols. Good flow and congestion

control schemes, that can adapt to a wide variety of network

conditions and deployment scenarios are complex to develop and test,

both in themselves and in understanding the interaction with other

schemes that may be running in parallel. There may be some benefit,

however, in having the capability whereby a sender can shape traffic

to the capacity of a receiver in some manner, and in providing the

protocol mechanisms to allow a receiver to signal its capabilities to

a sender. This is an area that may benefit from further study.

Note also the work of the Performance Implications of Link

Characteristics (PILC) working group of the IETF, which is examining

how the properties of different network links can have an impact on

the performance of Internet protocols operating over those links.

**[3.1.10](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.1.10) QoS / Traffic Management**

As noted above, customers may require that VPNs yield similar

behaviour to physical leased lines or dedicated connections with

respect to such QoS parameters as loss rates, jitter, latency and

bandwidth guarantees. How such guarantees could be delivered will,

in general, be a function of the traffic management characteristics

of the VPN nodes themselves, and the access and backbone networks

across which they are connected.

A full discussion of QoS and VPNs is outside the scope of this

document, however by modeling a VPN tunnel as just another type of

link layer, many of the existing mechanisms developed for ensuring

QoS over physical links can also be applied. For example at a VPN

node, the mechanisms of policing, marking, queuing, shaping and

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scheduling can all be applied to VPN traffic with VPN-specific

parameters, queues and interfaces, just as for non-VPN traffic. The

techniques developed for Diffserv, Intserv and for traffic

engineering in MPLS are also applicable. See also [[29](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-29)] for a

discussion of QoS and VPNs.

It should be noted, however, that this model of tunnel operation is

not necessarily consistent with the way in which specific tunneling

protocols are currently modeled. While a model is an aid to

comprehension, and not part of a protocol specification, having

differing models can complicate discussions, particularly if a model

is misinterpreted as being part of a protocol specification or as

constraining choice of implementation method. For example, IPSec

tunnel processing can be modeled both as an interface and as an

attribute of a particular packet flow.

**[3.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-3.2) Recommendations**

IPSec is needed whenever there is a requirement for strong encryption

or strong authentication. It also supports multiplexing and a

signalling protocol - IKE. However extending the IPSec protocol

suite to also cover the following areas would be beneficial, in order

to better support the tunneling requirements of a VPN environment.

- the transport of a VPN-ID when establishing an SA (3.1.2)

- a null encryption and null authentication option (3.1.3)

- multiprotocol operation (3.1.4)

- frame sequencing (3.1.5)

L2TP provides no data security by itself, and any PPP security

mechanisms used do not apply to the L2TP protocol itself, so that in

order for strong security to be provided L2TP must run over IPSec.

Defining specific modes of operation for IPSec when it is used to

support L2TP traffic will aid interoperability. This is currently a

work item for the proposed L2TP working group.

**[4.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-4.0) VPN Types:**

Virtual Leased Lines

The simplest form of a VPN is a 'Virtual Leased Line' (VLL) service.

In this case a point-to-point link is provided to a customer,

connecting two CPE devices, as illustrated below. The link layer

type used to connect the CPE devices to the ISP nodes can be any link

layer type, for example an ATM VCC or a Frame Relay circuit. The CPE

devices can be either routers bridges or hosts.

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The two ISP nodes are both connected to an IP network, and an IP

tunnel is set up between them. Each ISP node is configured to bind

the stub link and the IP tunnel together at layer 2 (e.g., an ATM VCC

and the IP tunnel). Frames are relayed between the two links. For

example the ATM Adaptation Layer 5 (AAL5) payload is taken and

encapsulated in an IPSec tunnel, and vice versa. The contents of the

AAL5 payload are opaque to the ISP node, and are not examined there.

+--------+ ----------- +--------+

+---+ | ISP | ( IP ) | ISP | +---+

|CPE|-------| edge |-----( backbone ) -----| edge |------|CPE|

+---+ ATM | node | ( ) | node | ATM +---+

VCC +--------+ ----------- +--------+ VCC

<--------- IP Tunnel -------->

10.1.1.5 subnet = 10.1.1.4/30 10.1.1.6

Addressing used by customer (transparent to provider)

Figure 4.1: VLL Example

To a customer it looks the same as if a single ATM VCC or Frame Relay

circuit were used to interconnect the CPE devices, and the customer

could be unaware that part of the circuit was in fact implemented

over an IP backbone. This may be useful, for example, if a provider

wishes to provide a LAN interconnect service using ATM as the network

interface, but does not have an ATM network that directly

interconnects all possible customer sites.

It is not necessary that the two links used to connect the CPE

devices to the ISP nodes be of the same media type, but in this case

the ISP nodes cannot treat the traffic in an opaque manner, as

described above. Instead the ISP nodes must perform the functions of

an interworking device between the two media types (e.g., ATM and

Frame Relay), and perform functions such as LLC/SNAP to NLPID

conversion, mapping between ARP protocol variants and performing any

media specific processing that may be expected by the CPE devices

(e.g., ATM OAM cell handling or Frame Relay XID exchanges).

The IP tunneling protocol used must support multiprotocol operation

and may need to support sequencing, if that characteristic is

important to the customer traffic. If the tunnels are established

using a signalling protocol, they may be set up in a data driven

manner, when a frame is received from a customer link and no tunnel

exists, or the tunnels may be established at provisioning time and

kept up permanently.

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Note that the use of the term 'VLL' in this document is different to

that used in the definition of the Diffserv Expedited Forwarding Per

Hop Behaviour (EF-PHB) [[30](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-30)]. In that document a VLL is used to mean

a low latency, low jitter, assured bandwidth path, which can be

provided using the described PHB. Thus the focus there is primarily

on link characteristics that are temporal in nature. In this document

the term VLL does not imply the use of any specific QoS mechanism,

Diffserv or otherwise. Instead the focus is primarily on link

characteristics that are more topological in nature, (e.g., such as

constructing a link which includes an IP tunnel as one segment of the

link). For a truly complete emulation of a link layer both the

temporal and topological aspects need to be taken into account.

**[5.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.0) VPN Types:**

Virtual Private Routed Networks

**[5.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.1) VPRN Characteristics**

A Virtual Private Routed Network (VPRN) is defined to be the

emulation of a multi-site wide area routed network using IP

facilities. This section looks at how a network-based VPRN service

can be provided. CPE-based VPRNs are also possible, but are not

specifically discussed here. With network-based VPRNs many of the

issues that need to be addressed are concerned with configuration and

operational issues, which must take into account the split in

administrative responsibility between the service provider and the

service user.

The distinguishing characteristic of a VPRN, in comparison to other

types of VPNs, is that packet forwarding is carried out at the

network layer. A VPRN consists of a mesh of IP tunnels between ISP

routers, together with the routing capabilities needed to forward

traffic received at each VPRN node to the appropriate destination

site. Attached to the ISP routers are CPE routers connected via one

or more links, termed 'stub' links. There is a VPRN specific

forwarding table at each ISP router to which members of the VPRN are

connected. Traffic is forwarded between ISP routers, and between ISP

routers and customer sites, using these forwarding tables, which

contain network layer reachability information (in contrast to a

Virtual Private LAN Segment type of VPN (VPLS) where the forwarding

tables contain MAC layer reachability information - see [section 7.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-7.0)).

An example VPRN is illustrated in the following diagram, which shows

3 ISP edge routers connected via a full mesh of IP tunnels, used to

interconnect 4 CPE routers. One of the CPE routers is multihomed to

the ISP network. In the multihomed case, all stub links may be

active, or, as shown, there may be one primary and one or more backup

links to be used in case of failure of the primary. The term '

backdoor' link is used to refer to a link between two customer sites

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that does not traverse the ISP network.

10.1.1.0/30 +--------+ +--------+ 10.2.2.0/30

+---+ | ISP | IP tunnel | ISP | +---+

|CPE|-------| edge |<--------------------->| edge |-------|CPE|

+---+ stub | router | 10.9.9.4/30 | router | stub +---+

link +--------+ +--------+ link :

| ^ | | ^ :

| | | --------------- | | :

| | +----( )----+ | :

| | ( IP BACKBONE ) | :

| | ( ) | :

| | --------------- | :

| | | | :

| |IP tunnel +--------+ IP tunnel| :

| | | ISP | | :

| +---------->| edge |<----------+ :

| 10.9.9.8/30 | router | 10.9.9.12/30 :

backup| +--------+ backdoor:

link | | | link :

| stub link | | stub link :

| | | :

| +---+ +---+ :

+-------------|CPE| |CPE|.......................:

10.3.3.0/30 +---+ +---+ 10.4.4.0/30

Figure 5.1: VPRN Example

The principal benefit of a VPRN is that the complexity and the

configuration of the CPE routers is minimized. To a CPE router, the

ISP edge router appears as a neighbor router in the customer's

network, to which it sends all traffic, using a default route. The

tunnel mesh that is set up to transfer traffic extends between the

ISP edge routers, not the CPE routers. In effect the burden of

tunnel establishment and maintenance and routing configuration is

outsourced to the ISP. In addition other services needed for the

operation of a VPN such as the provision of a firewall and QoS

processing can be handled by a small number of ISP edge routers,

rather than a large number of potentially heterogeneous CPE devices.

The introduction and management of new services can also be more

easily handled, as this can be achieved without the need to upgrade

any CPE equipment. This latter benefit is particularly important

when there may be large numbers of residential subscribers using VPN

services to access private corporate networks. In this respect the

model is somewhat akin to that used for telephony services, whereby

new services (e.g., call waiting) can be introduced with no change in

subscriber equipment.

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The VPRN type of VPN is in contrast to one where the tunnel mesh

extends to the CPE routers, and where the ISP network provides layer

2 connectivity alone. The latter case can be implemented either as a

set of VLLs between CPE routers (see [section 4.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-4.0)), in which case the

ISP network provides a set of layer 2 point-to-point links, or as a

VPLS (see [section 7.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-7.0)), in which case the ISP network is used to

emulate a multiaccess LAN segment. With these scenarios a customer

may have more flexibility (e.g., any IGP or any protocol can be run

across all customer sites) but this usually comes at the expense of a

more complex configuration for the customer. Thus, depending on

customer requirements, a VPRN or a VPLS may be the more appropriate

solution.

Because a VPRN carries out forwarding at the network layer, a single

VPRN only directly supports a single network layer protocol. For

multiprotocol support, a separate VPRN for each network layer

protocol could be used, or one protocol could be tunneled over

another (e.g., non-IP protocols tunneled over an IP VPRN) or

alternatively the ISP network could be used to provide layer 2

connectivity only, such as with a VPLS as mentioned above.

The issues to be addressed for VPRNs include initial configuration,

determination by an ISP edge router of the set of links that are in

each VPRN, the set of other routers that have members in the VPRN,

and the set of IP address prefixes reachable via each stub link,

determination by a CPE router of the set of IP address prefixes to be

forwarded to an ISP edge router, the mechanism used to disseminate

stub reachability information to the correct set of ISP routers, and

the establishment and use of the tunnels used to carry the data

traffic. Note also that, although discussed first for VPRNs, many of

these issues also apply to the VPLS scenario described later, with

the network layer addresses being replaced by link layer addresses.

Note that VPRN operation is decoupled from the mechanisms used by the

customer sites to access the Internet. A typical scenario would be

for the ISP edge router to be used to provide both VPRN and Internet

connectivity to a customer site. In this case the CPE router just

has a default route pointing to the ISP edge router, with the latter

being responsible for steering private traffic to the VPRN and other

traffic to the Internet, and providing firewall functionality between

the two domains. Alternatively a customer site could have Internet

connectivity via an ISP router not involved in the VPRN, or even via

a different ISP. In this case the CPE device is responsible for

splitting the traffic into the two domains and providing firewall

functionality.

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**[5.1.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.1.1) Topology**

The topology of a VPRN may consist of a full mesh of tunnels between

each VPRN node, or may be an arbitrary topology, such as a set of

remote offices connected to the nearest regional site, with these

regional sites connected together via a full or partial mesh. With

VPRNs using IP tunnels there is much less cost assumed with full

meshing than in cases where physical resources (e.g., a leased line)

must be allocated for each connected pair of sites, or where the

tunneling method requires resources to be allocated in the devices

used to interconnect the edge routers (e.g., Frame Relay DLCIs). A

full mesh topology yields optimal routing, since it precludes the

need for traffic between two sites to traverse a third. Another

attraction of a full mesh is that there is no need to configure

topology information for the VPRN. Instead, given the member routers

of a VPRN, the topology is implicit. If the number of ISP edge

routers in a VPRN is very large, however, a full mesh topology may

not be appropriate, due to the scaling issues involved, for example,

the growth in the number of tunnels needed between sites, (which for

n sites is n(n-1)/2), or the number of routing peers per router.

Network policy may also lead to non full mesh topologies, for example

an administrator may wish to set up the topology so that traffic

between two remote sites passes through a central site, rather than

go directly between the remote sites. It is also necessary to deal

with the scenario where there is only partial connectivity across the

IP backbone under certain error conditions (e.g. A can reach B, and B

can reach C, but A cannot reach C directly), which can occur if

policy routing is being used.

For a network-based VPRN, it is assumed that each customer site CPE

router connects to an ISP edge router through one or more point-to-

point stub links (e.g. leased lines, ATM or Frame Relay connections).

The ISP routers are responsible for learning and disseminating

reachability information amongst themselves. The CPE routers must

learn the set of destinations reachable via each stub link, though

this may be as simple as a default route.

The stub links may either be dedicated links, set up via

provisioning, or may be dynamic links set up on demand, for example

using PPP, voluntary tunneling (see [section 6.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-6.3)), or ATM signalling.

With dynamic links it is necessary to authenticate the subscriber,

and determine the authorized resources that the subscriber can access

(e.g. which VPRNs the subscriber may join). Other than the way the

subscriber is initially bound to the VPRN, (and this process may

involve extra considerations such as dynamic IP address assignment),

the subsequent VPRN mechanisms and services can be used for both

types of subscribers in the same way.

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**[5.1.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.1.2) Addressing**

The addressing used within a VPRN may have no relation to the

addressing used on the IP backbone over which the VPRN is

instantiated. In particular non-unique private IP addressing may be

used [[4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-4)]. Multiple VPRNs may be instantiated over the same set of

physical devices, and they may use the same or overlapping address

spaces.

**[5.1.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.1.3) Forwarding**

For a VPRN the tunnel mesh forms an overlay network operating over an

IP backbone. Within each of the ISP edge routers there must be VPN

specific forwarding state to forward packets received from stub links

('ingress traffic') to the appropriate next hop router, and to

forward packets received from the core ('egress traffic') to the

appropriate stub link. For cases where an ISP edge router supports

multiple stub links belonging to the same VPRN, the tunnels can, as a

local matter, either terminate on the edge router, or on a stub link.

In the former case a VPN specific forwarding table is needed for

egress traffic, in the latter case it is not. A VPN specific

forwarding table is generally needed in the ingress direction, in

order to direct traffic received on a stub link onto the correct IP

tunnel towards the core.

Also since a VPRN operates at the internetwork layer, the IP packets

sent over a tunnel will have their Time to Live (TTL) field

decremented in the normal manner, preventing packets circulating

indefinitely in the event of a routing loop within the VPRN.

**[5.1.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.1.4) Multiple concurrent VPRN connectivity**

Note also that a single customer site may belong concurrently to

multiple VPRNs and may want to transmit traffic both onto one or more

VPRNs and to the default Internet, over the same stub link. There

are a number of possible approaches to this problem, but these are

outside the scope of this document.

**[5.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.2) VPRN Related Work**

VPRN requirements and mechanisms have been discussed previously in a

number of different documents. One of the first was [[10](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-10)], which

showed how the same VPN functionality can be implemented over both

MPLS and non-MPLS networks. Some others are briefly discussed below.

There are two main variants as regards the mechanisms used to provide

VPRN membership and reachability functionality, - overlay and

piggybacking. These are discussed in greater detail in sections

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5.3.2, 5.3.3 and 5.3.4 below. An example of the overlay model is

described in [[14](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-14)], which discusses the provision of VPRN

functionality by means of a separate per-VPN routing protocol

instance and route and forwarding table instantiation, otherwise

known as virtual routing. Each VPN routing instance is isolated from

any other VPN routing instance, and from the routing used across the

backbone. As a result any routing protocol (e.g. OSPF, RIP2, IS-IS)

can be run with any VPRN, independently of the routing protocols used

in other VPRNs, or in the backbone itself. The VPN model described

in [[12](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-12)] is also an overlay VPRN model using virtual routing. That

document is specifically geared towards the provision of VPRN

functionality over MPLS backbones, and it describes how VPRN

membership dissemination can be automated over an MPLS backbone, by

performing VPN neighbor discovery over the base MPLS tunnel mesh.

[[31](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-31)] extends the virtual routing model to include VPN areas, and VPN

border routers which route between VPN areas. VPN areas may be

defined for administrative or technical reasons, such as different

underlying network infrastructures (e.g. ATM, MPLS, IP).

In contrast [[15](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-15)] describes the provision of VPN functionality using a

piggybacking approach for membership and reachability dissemination,

with this information being piggybacked in Border Gateway Protocol 4

(BGP) [[32](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-32)] packets. VPNs are constructed using BGP policies, which

are used to control which sites can communicate with each other. [[13](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-13)]

also uses BGP for piggybacking membership information, and piggybacks

reachability information on the protocol used to establish MPLS LSPs

(CR-LDP or extended RSVP). Unlike the other proposals, however, this

proposal requires the participation on the CPE router to implement

the VPN functionality.

**[5.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3) VPRN Generic Requirements**

There are a number of common requirements which any network-based

VPRN solution must address, and there are a number of different

mechanisms that can be used to meet these requirements. These

generic issues are

1) The use of a globally unique VPN identifier in order to be able to

refer to a particular VPN.

2) VPRN membership determination. An edge router must learn of the

local stub links that are in each VPRN, and must learn of the set

of other routers that have members in that VPRN.

3) Stub link reachability information. An edge router must learn the

set of addresses and address prefixes reachable via each stub

link.

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4) Intra-VPRN reachability information. Once an edge router has

determined the set of address prefixes associated with each of its

stub links, then this information must be disseminated to each

other edge router in the VPRN.

5) Tunneling mechanism. An edge router must construct the necessary

tunnels to other routers that have members in the VPRN, and must

perform the encapsulation and decapsulation necessary to send and

receive packets over the tunnels.

**[5.3.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.1) VPN Identifier**

The IETF [[16](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-16)] and the ATM Forum [[17](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-17)] have standardized on a single

format for a globally unique identifier used to identify a VPN - a

VPN-ID. Only the format of the VPN-ID has been defined, not its

semantics or usage. The aim is to allow its use for a wide variety

of purposes, and to allow the same identifier to used with different

technologies and mechanisms. For example a VPN-ID can be included in

a MIB to identify a VPN for management purposes. A VPN-ID can be

used in a control plane protocol, for example to bind a tunnel to a

VPN at tunnel establishment time. All packets that traverse the

tunnel are then implicitly associated with the identified VPN. A

VPN-ID can be used in a data plane encapsulation, to allow for an

explicit per-packet identification of the VPN associated with the

packet. If a VPN is implemented using different technologies (e.g.,

IP and ATM) in a network, the same identifier can be used to identify

the VPN across the different technologies. Also if a VPN spans

multiple administrative domains the same identifier can be used

everywhere.

Most of the VPN schemes developed (e.g. [[11](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-11)], [[12](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-12)], [[13](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-13)], [[14](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-14)])

require the use of a VPN-ID that is carried in control and/or data

packets, which is used to associate the packet with a particular VPN.

Although the use of a VPN-ID in this manner is very common, it is not

universal. [[15](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-15)] describes a scheme where there is no protocol field

used to identify a VPN in this manner. In this scheme the VPNs as

understood by a user, are administrative constructs, built using BGP

policies. There are a number of attributes associated with VPN

routes, such as a route distinguisher, and origin and target "VPN",

that are used by the underlying protocol mechanisms for

disambiguation and scoping, and these are also used by the BGP policy

mechanism in the construction of VPNs, but there is nothing

corresponding with the VPN-ID as used in the other documents.

Note also that [[33](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-33)] defines a multiprotocol encapsulation for use

over ATM AAL5 that uses the standard VPN-ID format.

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**[5.3.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.2) VPN Membership Information Configuration and Dissemination**

In order to establish a VPRN, or to insert new customer sites into an

established VPRN, an ISP edge router must determine which stub links

are associated with which VPRN. For static links (e.g. an ATM VCC)

this information must be configured into the edge router, since the

edge router cannot infer such bindings by itself. An SNMP MIB

allowing for bindings between local stub links and VPN identities is

one solution.

For subscribers that attach to the network dynamically (e.g. using

PPP or voluntary tunneling) it is possible to make the association

between stub link and VPRN as part of the end user authentication

processing that must occur with such dynamic links. For example the

VPRN to which a user is to be bound may be derived from the domain

name the used as part of PPP authentication. If the user is

successfully authenticated (e.g. using a Radius server), then the

newly created dynamic link can be bound to the correct VPRN. Note

that static configuration information is still needed, for example to

maintain the list of authorized subscribers for each VPRN, but the

location of this static information could be an external

authentication server rather than on an ISP edge router. Whether the

link was statically or dynamically created, a VPN-ID can be

associated with that link to signify to which VPRN it is bound.

After learning which stub links are bound to which VPRN, each edge

router must learn either the identity of, or, at least, the route to,

each other edge router supporting other stub links in that particular

VPRN. Implicit in the latter is the notion that there exists some

mechanism by which the configured edge routers can then use this edge

router and/or stub link identity information to subsequently set up

the appropriate tunnels between them. The problem of VPRN member

dissemination between participating edge routers, can be solved in a

variety of ways, discussed below.

**[5.3.2.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.2.1) Directory Lookup**

The members of a particular VPRN, that is, the identity of the edge

routers supporting stub links in the VPRN, and the set of static stub

links bound to the VPRN per edge router, could be configured into a

directory, which edge routers could query, using some defined

mechanism (e.g. Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) [[34](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-34)]),

upon startup.

Using a directory allows either a full mesh topology or an arbitrary

topology to be configured. For a full mesh, the full list of member

routers in a VPRN is distributed everywhere. For an arbitrary

topology, different routers may receive different member lists.

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Using a directory allows for authorization checking prior to

disseminating VPRN membership information, which may be desirable

where VPRNs span multiple administrative domains. In such a case,

directory to directory protocol mechanisms could also be used to

propagate authorized VPRN membership information between the

directory systems of the multiple administrative domains.

There also needs to be some form of database synchronization

mechanism (e.g. triggered or regular polling of the directory by edge

routers, or active pushing of update information to the edge routers

by the directory) in order for all edge routers to learn the identity

of newly configured sites inserted into an active VPRN, and also to

learn of sites removed from a VPRN.

**[5.3.2.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.2.2) Explicit Management Configuration**

A VPRN MIB could be defined which would allow a central management

system to configure each edge router with the identities of each

other participating edge router and the identity of each of the

static stub links bound to the VPRN. Like the use of a directory,

this mechanism allows both full mesh and arbitrary topologies to be

configured. Another mechanism using a centralized management system

is to use a policy server and use the Common Open Policy Service

(COPS) protocol [[35](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-35)] to distribute VPRN membership and policy

information, such as the tunnel attributes to use when establishing a

tunnel, as described in [[36](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-36)].

Note that this mechanism allows the management station to impose

strict authorization control; on the other hand, it may be more

difficult to configure edge routers outside the scope of the

management system. The management configuration model can also be

considered a subset of the directory method, in that the management

directories could use MIBs to push VPRN membership information to the

participating edge routers, either subsequent to, or as part of, the

local stub link configuration process.

**[5.3.2.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.2.3) Piggybacking in Routing Protocols**

VPRN membership information could be piggybacked into the routing

protocols run by each edge router across the IP backbone, since this

is an efficient means of automatically propagating information

throughout the network to other participating edge routers.

Specifically, each route advertisement by each edge router could

include, at a minimum, the set of VPN identifiers associated with

each edge router, and adequate information to allow other edge

routers to determine the identity of, and/or, the route to, the

particular edge router. Other edge routers would examine received

route advertisements to determine if any contained information was

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relevant to a supported (i.e., configured) VPRN; this determination

could be done by looking for a VPN identifier matching a locally

configured VPN. The nature of the piggybacked information, and

related issues, such as scoping, and the means by which the nodes

advertising particular VPN memberships will be identified, will

generally be a function both of the routing protocol and of the

nature of the underlying transport.

Using this method all the routers in the network will have the same

view of the VPRN membership information, and so a full mesh topology

is easily supported. Supporting an arbitrary topology is more

difficult, however, since some form of pruning would seem to be

needed.

The advantage of the piggybacking scheme is that it allows for

efficient information dissemination, but it does require that all

nodes in the path, and not just the participating edge routers, be

able to accept such modified route advertisements. A disadvantage is

that significant administrative complexity may be required to

configure scoping mechanisms so as to both permit and constrain the

dissemination of the piggybacked advertisements, and in itself this

may be quite a configuration burden, particularly if the VPRN spans

multiple routing domains (e.g. different autonomous systems / ISPs).

Furthermore, unless some security mechanism is used for routing

updates so as to permit only all relevant edge routers to read the

piggybacked advertisements, this scheme generally implies a trust

model where all routers in the path must perforce be authorized to

know this information. Depending upon the nature of the routing

protocol, piggybacking may also require intermediate routers,

particularly autonomous system (AS) border routers, to cache such

advertisements and potentially also re-distribute them between

multiple routing protocols.

Each of the schemes described above have merit in particular

situations. Note that, in practice, there will almost always be some

centralized directory or management system which will maintain VPRN

membership information, such as the set of edge routers that are

allowed to support a certain VPRN, the bindings of static stub links

to VPRNs, or authentication and authorization information for users

that access the network via dynamics links. This information needs

to be configured and stored in some form of database, so that the

additional steps needed to facilitate the configuration of such

information into edge routers, and/or, facilitate edge router access

to such information, may not be excessively onerous.

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**[5.3.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.3) Stub Link Reachability Information**

There are two aspects to stub site reachability - the means by which

VPRN edge routers determine the set of VPRN addresses and address

prefixes reachable at each stub site, and the means by which the CPE

routers learn the destinations reachable via each stub link. A

number of common scenarios are outlined below. In each case the

information needed by the ISP edge router is the same - the set of

VPRN addresses reachable at the customer site, but the information

needed by the CPE router differs.

[**5.3.3.1**](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-5.3.3.1) **Stub Link Connectivity Scenarios**

**[5.3.3.1.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.3.1.1) Dual VPRN and Internet Connectivity**

The CPE router is connected via one link to an ISP edge router, which

provides both VPRN and Internet connectivity.

This is the simplest case for the CPE router, as it just needs a

default route pointing to the ISP edge router.

**[5.3.3.1.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.3.1.2) VPRN Connectivity Only**

The CPE router is connected via one link to an ISP edge router, which

provides VPRN, but not Internet, connectivity.

The CPE router must know the set of non-local VPRN destinations

reachable via that link. This may be a single prefix, or may be a

number of disjoint prefixes. The CPE router may be either statically

configured with this information, or may learn it dynamically by

running an instance of an Interior Gateway Protocol (IGP). For

simplicity it is assumed that the IGP used for this purpose is RIP,

though it could be any IGP. The ISP edge router will inject into

this instance of RIP the VRPN routes which it learns by means of one

of the intra-VPRN reachability mechanisms described in [section 5.3.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-5.3.4).

Note that the instance of RIP run to the CPE, and any instance of a

routing protocol used to learn intra-VPRN reachability (even if also

RIP) are separate, with the ISP edge router redistributing the routes

from one instance to another.

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**[5.3.3.1.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.3.1.3) Multihomed Connectivity**

The CPE router is multihomed to the ISP network, which provides VPRN

connectivity.

In this case all the ISP edge routers could advertise the same VPRN

routes to the CPE router, which then sees all VPRN prefixes equally

reachable via all links. More specific route redistribution is also

possible, whereby each ISP edge router advertises a different set of

prefixes to the CPE router.

**[5.3.3.1.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.3.1.4) Backdoor Links**

The CPE router is connected to the ISP network, which provides VPRN

connectivity, but also has a backdoor link to another customer site

In this case the ISP edge router will advertise VPRN routes as in

case 2 to the CPE device. However now the same destination is

reachable via both the ISP edge router and via the backdoor link. If

the CPE routers connected to the backdoor link are running the

customer's IGP, then the backdoor link may always be the favored link

as it will appear an an 'internal' path, whereas the destination as

injected via the ISP edge router will appear as an 'external' path

(to the customer's IGP). To avoid this problem, assuming that the

customer wants the traffic to traverse the ISP network, then a

separate instance of RIP should be run between the CPE routers at

both ends of the backdoor link, in the same manner as an instance of

RIP is run on a stub or backup link between a CPE router and an ISP

edge router. This will then also make the backdoor link appear as an

external path, and by adjusting the link costs appropriately, the ISP

path can always be favored, unless it goes down, when the backdoor

link is then used.

The description of the above scenarios covers what reachability

information is needed by the ISP edge routers and the CPE routers,

and discusses some of the mechanisms used to convey this information.

The sections below look at these mechanisms in more detail.

**[5.3.3.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.3.1) Routing Protocol Instance**

A routing protocol can be run between the CPE edge router and the ISP

edge router to exchange reachability information. This allows an ISP

edge router to learn the VPRN prefixes reachable at a customer site,

and also allows a CPE router to learn the destinations reachable via

the provider network.

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The extent of the routing domain for this protocol instance is

generally just the ISP edge router and the CPE router although if the

customer site is also running the same protocol as its IGP, then the

domain may extend into customer site. If the customer site is

running a different routing protocol then the CPE router

redistributes the routes between the instance running to the ISP edge

router, and the instance running into the customer site.

Given the typically restricted scope of this routing instance, a

simple protocol will generally suffice. RIP is likely to be the most

common protocol used, though any routing protocol, such as OSPF, or

BGP run in internal mode (IBGP), could also be used.

Note that the instance of the stub link routing protocol is different

from any instance of a routing protocol used for intra-VPRN

reachability. For example, if the ISP edge router uses routing

protocol piggybacking to disseminate VPRN membership and reachability

information across the core, then it may redistribute suitably

labeled routes from the CPE routing instance to the core routing

instance. The routing protocols used for each instance are

decoupled, and any suitable protocol can be used in each case. There

is no requirement that the same protocol, or even the same stub link

reachability information gathering mechanism, be run between each CPE

router and associated ISP edge router in a particular VPRN, since

this is a purely local matter.

This decoupling allows ISPs to deploy a common (across all VPRNs)

intra-VPRN reachability mechanism, and a common stub link

reachability mechanism, with these mechanisms isolated both from each

other, and from the particular IGP used in a customer network. In

the first case, due to the IGP-IGP boundary implemented on the ISP

edge router, the ISP can insulate the intra-VPRN reachability

mechanism from misbehaving stub link protocol instances. In the

second case the ISP is not required to be aware of the particular IGP

running in a customer site. Other scenarios are possible, where the

ISP edge routers are running a routing protocol in the same instance

as the customer's IGP, but are unlikely to be practical, since it

defeats the purpose of a VPRN simplifying CPE router configuration.

In cases where a customer wishes to run an IGP across multiple sites,

a VPLS solution is more suitable.

Note that if a particular customer site concurrently belongs to

multiple VPRNs (or wishes to concurrently communicate with both a

VPRN and the Internet), then the ISP edge router must have some means

of unambiguously mapping stub link address prefixes to particular

VPRNs. A simple way is to have multiple stub links, one per VPRN.

It is also possible to run multiple VPRNs over one stub link. This

could be done either by ensuring (and appropriately configuring the

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ISP edge router to know) that particular disjoint address prefixes

are mapped into separate VPRNs, or by tagging the routing

advertisements from the CPE router with the appropriate VPN

identifier. For example if MPLS was being used to convey stub link

reachability information, different MPLS labels would be used to

differentiate the disjoint prefixes assigned to particular VPRNs. In

any case, some administrative procedure would be required for this

coordination.

**[5.3.3.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.3.2) Configuration**

The reachability information across each stub link could be manually

configured, which may be appropriate if the set of addresses or

prefixes is small and static.

**[5.3.3.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.3.3) ISP Administered Addresses**

The set of addresses used by each stub site could be administered and

allocated via the VPRN edge router, which may be appropriate for

small customer sites, typically containing either a single host, or a

single subnet. Address allocation can be carried out using protocols

such as PPP or DHCP [[37](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-37)], with, for example, the edge router acting

as a Radius client and retrieving the customer's IP address to use

from a Radius server, or acting as a DHCP relay and examining the

DHCP reply message as it is relayed to the customer site. In this

manner the edge router can build up a table of stub link reachability

information. Although these address assignment mechanisms are

typically used to assign an address to a single host, some vendors

have added extensions whereby an address prefix can be assigned,

with, in some cases, the CPE device acting as a "mini-DHCP" server

and assigning addresses for the hosts in the customer site.

Note that with these schemes it is the responsibility of the address

allocation server to ensure that each site in the VPN received a

disjoint address space. Note also that an ISP would typically only

use this mechanism for small stub sites, which are unlikely to have

backdoor links.

**[5.3.3.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.3.4) MPLS Label Distribution Protocol**

In cases where the CPE router runs MPLS, LDP can be used to convey

the set of prefixes at a stub site to a VPRN edge router. Using the

downstream unsolicited mode of label distribution the CPE router can

distribute a label for each route in the stub site. Note however

that the processing carried out by the edge router in this case is

more than just the normal LDP processing, since it is learning new

routes via LDP, rather than the usual case of learning labels for

existing routes that it has learned via standard routing mechanisms.

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**[5.3.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.4) Intra-VPN Reachability Information**

Once an edge router has determined the set of prefixes associated

with each of its stub links, then this information must be

disseminated to each other edge router in the VPRN. Note also that

there is an implicit requirement that the set of reachable addresses

within the VPRN be locally unique that is, each VPRN stub link (not

performing load sharing) maintain an address space disjoint from any

other, so as to permit unambiguous routing. In practical terms, it

is also generally desirable, though not required, that this address

space be well partitioned i.e., specific, disjoint address prefixes

per edge router, so as to preclude the need to maintain and

disseminate large numbers of host routes.

The problem of intra-VPN reachability information dissemination can

be solved in a number of ways, some of which include the following:

**[5.3.4.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.4.1) Directory Lookup**

Along with VPRN membership information, a central directory could

maintain a listing of the address prefixes associated with each

customer site. Such information could be obtained by the server

through protocol interactions with each edge router. Note that the

same directory synchronization issues discussed above in [section](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-5.3.2)

[5.3.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-5.3.2) also apply in this case.

**[5.3.4.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.4.2) Explicit Configuration**

The address spaces associated with each edge router could be

explicitly configured into each other router. This is clearly a

non-scalable solution, particularly when arbitrary topologies are

used, and also raises the question of how the management system

learns such information in the first place.

**[5.3.4.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.4.3) Local Intra-VPRN Routing Instantiations**

In this approach, each edge router runs an instance of a routing

protocol (a 'virtual router') per VPRN, running across the VPRN

tunnels to each peer edge router, to disseminate intra-VPRN

reachability information. Both full-mesh and arbitrary VPRN

topologies can be easily supported, since the routing protocol itself

can run over any topology. The intra-VPRN routing advertisements

could be distinguished from normal tunnel data packets either by

being addressed directly to the peer edge router, or by a tunnel

specific mechanism.

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Note that this intra-VPRN routing protocol need have no relationship

either with the IGP of any customer site or with the routing

protocols operated by the ISPs in the IP backbone. Depending on the

size and scale of the VPRNs to be supported either a simple protocol

like RIP or a more sophisticated protocol like OSPF could be used.

Because the intra-VPRN routing protocol operates as an overlay over

the IP backbone it is wholly transparent to any intermediate routers,

and to any edge routers not within the VPRN. This also implies that

such routing information can remain opaque to such routers, which may

be a necessary security requirements in some cases. Also note that

if the routing protocol runs directly over the same tunnels as the

data traffic, then it will inherit the same level of security as that

afforded the data traffic, for example strong encryption and

authentication.

If the tunnels over which an intra-VPRN routing protocol runs are

dedicated to a specific VPN (e.g. a different multiplexing field is

used for each VPN) then no changes are needed to the routing protocol

itself. On the other hand if shared tunnels are used, then it is

necessary to extend the routing protocol to allow a VPN-ID field to

be included in routing update packets, to allow sets of prefixes to

be associated with a particular VPN.

**[5.3.4.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.4.4) Link Reachability Protocol**

By link reachability protocol is meant a protocol that allows two

nodes, connected via a point-to-point link, to exchange reachability

information. Given a full mesh topology, each edge router could run

a link reachability protocol, for instance some variation of MPLS

CR-LDP, across the tunnel to each peer edge router in the VPRN,

carrying the VPN-ID and the reachability information of each VPRN

running across the tunnel between the two edge routers. If VPRN

membership information has already been distributed to an edge

router, then the neighbor discovery aspects of a traditional routing

protocol are not needed, as the set of neighbors is already known.

TCP connections can be used to interconnect the neighbors, to provide

reliability. This approach may reduce the processing burden of

running routing protocol instances per VPRN, and may be of particular

benefit where a shared tunnel mechanism is used to connect a set of

edge routers supporting multiple VPRNs.

Another approach to developing a link reachability protocol would be

to base it on IBGP. The problem that needs to be solved by a link

reachability protocol is very similar to that solved by IBGP -

conveying address prefixes reliably between edge routers.

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Using a link reachability protocol it is straightforward to support a

full mesh topology - each edge router conveys its own local

reachability information to all other routers, but does not

redistribute information received from any other router. However

once an arbitrary topology needs to be supported, the link

reachability protocol needs to develop into a full routing protocol,

due to the need to implement mechanisms to avoid loops, and there

would seem little benefit in reinventing another routing protocol to

deal with this. Some reasons why partially connected meshes may be

needed even in a tunneled environment are discussed in [section 5.1.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-5.1.1).

**[5.3.4.5](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.4.5) Piggybacking in IP Backbone Routing Protocols**

As with VPRN membership, the set of address prefixes associated with

each stub interface could also be piggybacked into the routing

advertisements from each edge router and propagated through the

network. Other edge routers extract this information from received

route advertisements in the same way as they obtain the VPRN

membership information (which, in this case, is implicit in the

identification of the source of each route advertisement). Note that

this scheme may require, depending upon the nature of the routing

protocols involved, that intermediate routers, e.g. border routers,

cache intra-VPRN routing information in order to propagate it

further. This also has implications for the trust model, and for the

level of security possible for intra-VPRN routing information.

Note that in any of the cases discussed above, an edge router has the

option of disseminating its stub link prefixes in a manner so as to

permit tunneling from remote edge routers directly to the egress stub

links. Alternatively, it could disseminate the information so as to

associate all such prefixes with the edge router, rather than with

specific stub links. In this case, the edge router would need to

implement a VPN specific forwarding mechanism for egress traffic, to

determine the correct egress stub link. The advantage of this is

that it may significantly reduce the number of distinct tunnels or

tunnel label information which need to be constructed and maintained.

Note that this choice is purely a local manner and is not visible to

remote edge routers.

**[5.3.5](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.3.5) Tunneling Mechanisms**

Once VPRN membership information has been disseminated, the tunnels

comprising the VPRN core can be constructed.

One approach to setting up the tunnel mesh is to use point-to-point

IP tunnels, and the requirements and issues for such tunnels have

been discussed in [section 3.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-3.0). For example while tunnel

establishment can be done through manual configuration, this is

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clearly not likely to be a scalable solution, given the O(n^2)

problem of meshed links. As such, tunnel set up should use some form

of signalling protocol to allow two nodes to construct a tunnel to

each other knowing only each other's identity.

Another approach is to use the multipoint to point 'tunnels' provided

by MPLS. As noted in [[38](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-38)], MPLS can be considered to be a form of IP

tunneling, since the labels of MPLS packets allow for routing

decisions to be decoupled from the addressing information of the

packets themselves. MPLS label distribution mechanisms can be used

to associate specific sets of MPLS labels with particular VPRN

address prefixes supported on particular egress points (i.e., stub

links of edge routers) and hence allow other edge routers to

explicitly label and route traffic to particular VPRN stub links.

One attraction of MPLS as a tunneling mechanism is that it may

require less processing within each edge router than alternative

tunneling mechanisms. This is a function of the fact that data

security within a MPLS network is implicit in the explicit label

binding, much as with a connection oriented network, such as Frame

Relay. This may hence lessen customer concerns about data security

and hence require less processor intensive security mechanisms (e.g.,

IPSec). However there are other potential security concerns with

MPLS. There is no direct support for security features such as

authentication, confidentiality, and non-repudiation and the trust

model for MPLS means that intermediate routers, (which may belong to

different administrative domains), through which membership and

prefix reachability information is conveyed, must be trusted, not

just the edge routers themselves.

**[5.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.4) Multihomed Stub Routers**

The discussion thus far has implicitly assumed that stub routers are

connected to one and only one VPRN edge router. In general, this

restriction should be capable of being relaxed without any change to

VPRN operation, given general market interest in multihoming for

reliability and other reasons. In particular, in cases where the

stub router supports multiple redundant links, with only one

operational at any given time, with the links connected either to the

same VPRN edge router, or to two or more different VPRN edge routers,

then the stub link reachability mechanisms will both discover the

loss of an active link, and the activation of a backup link. In the

former situation, the previously connected VPRN edge router will

cease advertising reachability to the stub node, while the VPRN edge

router with the now active link will begin advertising reachability,

hence restoring connectivity.

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An alternative scenario is where the stub node supports multiple

active links, using some form of load sharing algorithm. In such a

case, multiple VPRN edge routers may have active paths to the stub

node, and may so advertise across the VPRN. This scenario should not

cause any problem with reachability across the VPRN providing that

the intra-VPRN reachability mechanism can accommodate multiple paths

to the same prefix, and has the appropriate mechanisms to preclude

looping - for instance, distance vector metrics associated with each

advertised prefix.

**[5.5](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.5) Multicast Support**

Multicast and broadcast traffic can be supported across VPRNs either

by edge replication or by native multicast support in the backbone.

These two cases are discussed below.

**[5.5.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.5.1) Edge Replication**

This is where each VPRN edge router replicates multicast traffic for

transmission across each link in the VPRN. Note that this is the

same operation that would be performed by CPE routers terminating

actual physical links or dedicated connections. As with CPE routers,

multicast routing protocols could also be run on each VPRN edge

router to determine the distribution tree for multicast traffic and

hence reduce unnecessary flood traffic. This could be done by

running instances of standard multicast routing protocols, e.g.

Protocol Independent Multicast (PIM) [[39](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-39)] or Distance Vector

Multicast Routing Protocol (DVMRP) [[40](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-40)], on and between each VPRN

edge router, through the VPRN tunnels, in the same way that unicast

routing protocols might be run at each VPRN edge router to determine

intra-VPN unicast reachability, as discussed in [section 5.3.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-5.3.4).

Alternatively, if a link reachability protocol was run across the

VPRN tunnels for intra-VPRN reachability, then this could also be

augmented to allow VPRN edge routers to indicate both the particular

multicast groups requested for reception at each edge node, and also

the multicast sources at each edge site.

In either case, there would need to be some mechanism to allow for

the VPRN edge routers to determine which particular multicast groups

were requested at each site and which sources were present at each

site. How this could be done would, in general, be a function of the

capabilities of the CPE stub routers at each site. If these run

multicast routing protocols, then they can interact directly with the

equivalent protocols at each VPRN edge router. If the CPE device

does not run a multicast routing protocol, then in the absence of

Internet Group Management Protocol (IGMP) proxying [[41](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-41)] the customer

site would be limited to a single subnet connected to the VPRN edge

router via a bridging device, as the scope of an IGMP message is

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limited to a single subnet. However using IGMP-proxying the CPE

router can engage in multicast forwarding without running a multicast

routing protocol, in constrained topologies. On its interfaces into

the customer site the CPE router performs the router functions of

IGMP, and on its interface to the VPRN edge router it performs the

host functions of IGMP.

**[5.5.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.5.2) Native Multicast Support**

This is where VPRN edge routers map intra-VPRN multicast traffic onto

a native IP multicast distribution mechanism across the backbone.

Note that intra-VPRN multicast has the same requirements for

isolation from general backbone traffic as intra-VPRN unicast

traffic. Currently the only IP tunneling mechanism that has native

support for multicast is MPLS. On the other hand, while MPLS

supports native transport of IP multicast packets, additional

mechanisms would be needed to leverage these mechanisms for the

support of intra-VPRN multicast.

For instance, each VPRN router could prefix multicast group addresses

within each VPRN with the VPN-ID of that VPRN and then redistribute

these, essentially treating this VPN-ID/intra-VPRN multicast address

tuple as a normal multicast address, within the backbone multicast

routing protocols, as with the case of unicast reachability, as

discussed previously. The MPLS multicast label distribution

mechanisms could then be used to set up the appropriate multicast

LSPs to interconnect those sites within each VPRN supporting

particular multicast group addresses. Note, however, that this would

require each of the intermediate LSRs to not only be aware of each

intra-VPRN multicast group, but also to have the capability of

interpreting these modified advertisements. Alternatively,

mechanisms could be defined to map intra-VPRN multicast groups into

backbone multicast groups.

Other IP tunneling mechanisms do not have native multicast support.

It may prove feasible to extend such tunneling mechanisms by

allocating IP multicast group addresses to the VPRN as a whole and

hence distributing intra-VPRN multicast traffic encapsulated within

backbone multicast packets. Edge VPRN routers could filter out

unwanted multicast groups. Alternatively, mechanisms could also be

defined to allow for allocation of backbone multicast group addresses

for particular intra-VPRN multicast groups, and to then utilize

these, through backbone multicast protocols, as discussed above, to

limit forwarding of intra-VPRN multicast traffic only to those nodes

within the group.

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A particular issue with the use of native multicast support is the

provision of security for such multicast traffic. Unlike the case of

edge replication, which inherits the security characteristics of the

underlying tunnel, native multicast mechanisms will need to use some

form of secure multicast mechanism. The development of architectures

and solutions for secure multicast is an active research area, for

example see [[42](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-42)] and [[43](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-43)]. The Secure Multicast Group (SMuG) of the

IRTF has been set up to develop prototype solutions, which would then

be passed to the IETF IPSec working group for standardization.

However considerably more development is needed before scalable

secure native multicast mechanisms can be generally deployed.

**[5.6](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-5.6) Recommendations**

The various proposals that have been developed to support some form

of VPRN functionality can be broadly classified into two groups -

those that utilize the router piggybacking approach for distributing

VPN membership and/or reachability information ([[13](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-13)],[[15](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-15)]) and those

that use the virtual routing approach ([[12](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-12)],[[14](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-14)]). In some cases the

mechanisms described rely on the characteristics of a particular

infrastructure (e.g. MPLS) rather than just IP.

Within the context of the virtual routing approach it may be useful

to develop a membership distribution protocol based on a directory or

MIB. When combined with the protocol extensions for IP tunneling

protocols outlined in [section 3.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-3.2), this would then provide the basis

for a complete set of protocols and mechanisms that support

interoperable VPRNs that span multiple administrations over an IP

backbone. Note that the other major pieces of functionality needed -

the learning and distribution of customer reachability information,

can be performed by instances of standard routing protocols, without

the need for any protocol extensions.

Also for the constrained case of a full mesh topology, the usefulness

of developing a link reachability protocol could be examined, however

the limitations and scalability issues associated with this topology

may not make it worthwhile to develop something specific for this

case, as standard routing will just work.

Extending routing protocols to allow a VPN-ID to carried in routing

update packets could also be examined, but is not necessary if VPN

specific tunnels are used.

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**[6.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.0) VPN Types:**

Virtual Private Dial Networks

A Virtual Private Dial Network (VPDN) allows for a remote user to

connect on demand through an ad hoc tunnel into another site. The

user is connected to a public IP network via a dial-up PSTN or ISDN

link, and user packets are tunneled across the public network to the

desired site, giving the impression to the user of being 'directly'

connected into that site. A key characteristic of such ad hoc

connections is the need for user authentication as a prime

requirement, since anyone could potentially attempt to gain access to

such a site using a switched dial network.

Today many corporate networks allow access to remote users through

dial connections made through the PSTN, with users setting up PPP

connections across an access network to a network access server, at

which point the PPP sessions are authenticated using AAA systems

running such standard protocols as Radius [[44](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-44)]. Given the pervasive

deployment of such systems, any VPDN system must in practice allow

for the near transparent re-use of such existing systems.

The IETF have developed the Layer 2 Tunneling Protocol (L2TP) [[8](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-8)]

which allows for the extension of of user PPP sessions from an L2TP

Access Concentrator (LAC) to a remote L2TP Network Server (LNS). The

L2TP protocol itself was based on two earlier protocols, the Layer 2

Forwarding protocol (L2F) [[45](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-45)], and the Point-to-Point Tunneling

Protocol (PPTP) [[46](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-46)], and this is reflected in the two quite

different scenarios for which L2TP can be used - compulsory tunneling

and voluntary tunneling, discussed further below in sections [6.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-6.2) and

6.3.

This document focuses on the use of L2TP over an IP network (using

UDP), but L2TP may also be run directly over other protocols such as

ATM or Frame Relay. Issues specifically related to running L2TP over

non-IP networks, such as how to secure such tunnels, are not

addressed here.

**[6.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1) L2TP protocol characteristics**

This section looks at the characteristics of the L2TP tunneling

protocol using the categories outlined in [section 3.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-3.0).

**[6.1.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.1) Multiplexing**

L2TP has inherent support for the multiplexing of multiple calls from

different users over a single link. Between the same two IP

endpoints, there can be multiple L2TP tunnels, as identified by a

tunnel-id, and multiple sessions within a tunnel, as identified by a

session-id.

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**[6.1.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.2) Signalling**

This is supported via the inbuilt control connection protocol,

allowing both tunnels and sessions to be established dynamically.

**[6.1.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.3) Data Security**

By allowing for the transparent extension of PPP from the user,

through the LAC to the LNS, L2TP allows for the use of whatever

security mechanisms, with respect to both connection set up, and data

transfer, may be used with normal PPP connections. However this does

not provide security for the L2TP control protocol itself. In this

case L2TP could be further secured by running it in combination with

IPSec through IP backbones [[47](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-47)], [[48](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-48)], or related mechanisms on non-

IP backbones [[49](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-49)].

The interaction of L2TP with AAA systems for user authentication and

authorization is a function of the specific means by which L2TP is

used, and the nature of the devices supporting the LAC and the LNS.

These issues are discussed in depth in [[50](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-50)].

The means by which the host determines the correct LAC to connect to,

and the means by which the LAC determines which users to further

tunnel, and the LNS parameters associated with each user, are outside

the scope of the operation of a VPDN, but may be addressed, for

instance, by evolving Internet roaming specifications [[51](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-51)].

**[6.1.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.4) Multiprotocol Transport**

L2TP transports PPP packets (and only PPP packets) and thus can be

used to carry multiprotocol traffic since PPP itself is

multiprotocol.

**[6.1.5](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.5) Sequencing**

L2TP supports sequenced delivery of packets. This is a capability

that can be negotiated at session establishment, and that can be

turned on and off by an LNS during a session. The sequence number

field in L2TP can also be used to provide an indication of dropped

packets, which is needed by various PPP compression algorithms to

operate correctly. If no compression is in use, and the LNS

determines that the protocols in use (as evidenced by the PPP NCP

negotiations) can deal with out of sequence packets (e.g. IP), then

it may disable the use of sequencing.

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**[6.1.6](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.6) Tunnel Maintenance**

A keepalive protocol is used by L2TP in order to allow it to

distinguish between a tunnel outage and prolonged periods of tunnel

inactivity.

**[6.1.7](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.7) Large MTUs**

L2TP itself has no inbuilt support for a segmentation and reassembly

capability, but when run over UDP/IP IP fragmentation will take place

if necessary. Note that a LAC or LNS may adjust the Maximum Receive

Unit (MRU) negotiated via PPP in order to preclude fragmentation, if

it has knowledge of the MTU used on the path between LAC and LNS. To

this end, there is a proposal to allow the use of MTU discovery for

cases where the L2TP tunnel transports IP frames [[52](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-52)].

**[6.1.8](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.8) Tunnel Overhead**

L2TP as used over IP networks runs over UDP and must be used to carry

PPP traffic. This results in a significant amount of overhead, both

in the data plane with UDP, L2TP and PPP headers, and also in the

control plane, with the L2TP and PPP control protocols. This is

discussed further in [section 6.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-6.3)

**[6.1.9](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.9) Flow and Congestion Control**

L2TP supports flow and congestion control mechanisms for the control

protocol, but not for data traffic. See [section 3.1.9](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-3.1.9) for more

details.

**[6.1.10](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.10) QoS / Traffic Management**

An L2TP header contains a 1-bit priority field, which can be set for

packets that may need preferential treatment (e.g. keepalives) during

local queuing and transmission. Also by transparently extending PPP,

L2TP has inherent support for such PPP mechanisms as multi-link PPP

[[53](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-53)] and its associated control protocols [[54](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-54)], which allow for

bandwidth on demand to meet user requirements.

In addition L2TP calls can be mapped into whatever underlying traffic

management mechanisms may exist in the network, and there are

proposals to allow for requests through L2TP signalling for specific

differentiated services behaviors [[55](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-55)].

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**[6.1.11](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.1.11) Miscellaneous**

Since L2TP is designed to transparently extend PPP, it does not

attempt to supplant the normal address assignment mechanisms

associated with PPP. Hence, in general terms the host initiating the

PPP session will be assigned an address by the LNS using PPP

procedures. This addressing may have no relation to the addressing

used for communication between the LAC and LNS. The LNS will also

need to support whatever forwarding mechanisms are needed to route

traffic to and from the remote host.

**[6.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.2) Compulsory Tunneling**

Compulsory tunneling refers to the scenario in which a network node -

a dial or network access server, for instance - acting as a LAC,

extends a PPP session across a backbone using L2TP to a remote LNS,

as illustrated below. This operation is transparent to the user

initiating the PPP session to the LAC. This allows for the

decoupling of the location and/or ownership of the modem pools used

to terminate dial calls, from the site to which users are provided

access. Support for this scenario was the original intent of the L2F

specification, upon which the L2TP specification was based.

There are a number of different deployment scenarios possible. One

example, shown in the diagram below, is where a subscriber host dials

into a NAS acting as a LAC, and is tunneled across an IP network

(e.g. the Internet) to a gateway acting as an LNS. The gateway

provides access to a corporate network, and could either be a device

in the corporate network itself, or could be an ISP edge router, in

the case where a customer has outsourced the maintenance of LNS

functionality to an ISP. Another scenario is where an ISP uses L2TP

to provide a subscriber with access to the Internet. The subscriber

host dials into a NAS acting as a LAC, and is tunneled across an

access network to an ISP edge router acting as an LNS. This ISP edge

router then feeds the subscriber traffic into the Internet. Yet

other scenarios are where an ISP uses L2TP to provide a subscriber

with access to a VPRN, or with concurrent access to both a VPRN and

the Internet.

A VPDN, whether using compulsory or voluntary tunneling, can be

viewed as just another type of access method for subscriber traffic,

and as such can be used to provide connectivity to different types of

networks, e.g. a corporate network, the Internet, or a VPRN. The last

scenario is also an example of how a VPN service as provided to a

customer may be implemented using a combination of different types of

VPN.

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10.0.0.1

+----+

|Host|----- LAC ------------- LNS 10.0.0.0/8

+----+ / +-----+ ( ) +-----+ ---------

/----| NAS |---( IP Backbone )---| GW |----( Corp. )

dial +-----+ ( ) +-----+ ( Network )

connection ------------- ---------

<------- L2TP Tunnel ------->

<--------------------- PPP Session ------->

Figure 6.1: Compulsory Tunneling Example

Compulsory tunneling was originally intended for deployment on

network access servers supporting wholesale dial services, allowing

for remote dial access through common facilities to an enterprise

site, while precluding the need for the enterprise to deploy its own

dial servers. Another example of this is where an ISP outsources its

own dial connectivity to an access network provider (such as a Local

Exchange Carrier (LEC) in the USA) removing the need for an ISP to

maintain its own dial servers and allowing the LEC to serve multiple

ISPs. More recently, compulsory tunneling mechanisms have also been

proposed for evolving Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) services [[56](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-56)],

[[57](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-57)], which also seek to leverage the existing AAA infrastructure.

Call routing for compulsory tunnels requires that some aspect of the

initial PPP call set up can be used to allow the LAC to determine the

identity of the LNS. As noted in [[50](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-50)], these aspects can include the

user identity, as determined through some aspect of the access

network, including calling party number, or some attribute of the

called party, such as the Fully Qualified Domain Name (FQDN) of the

identity claimed during PPP authentication.

It is also possible to chain two L2TP tunnels together, whereby a LAC

initiates a tunnel to an intermediate relay device, which acts as an

LNS to this first LAC, and acts as a LAC to the final LNS. This may

be needed in some cases due to administrative, organizational or

regulatory issues pertaining to the split between access network

provider, IP backbone provider and enterprise customer.

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**[6.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.3) Voluntary Tunnels**

Voluntary tunneling refers to the case where an individual host

connects to a remote site using a tunnel originating on the host,

with no involvement from intermediate network nodes, as illustrated

below. The PPTP specification, parts of which have been incorporated

into L2TP, was based upon a voluntary tunneling model.

As with compulsory tunneling there are different deployment scenarios

possible. The diagram below shows a subscriber host accessing a

corporate network with either L2TP or IPSec being used as the

voluntary tunneling mechanism. Another scenario is where voluntary

tunneling is used to provide a subscriber with access to a VPRN.

**[6.3.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.3.1) Issues with Use of L2TP for Voluntary Tunnels**

The L2TP specification has support for voluntary tunneling, insofar

as the LAC can be located on a host, not only on a network node.

Note that such a host has two IP addresses - one for the LAC-LNS IP

tunnel, and another, typically allocated via PPP, for the network to

which the host is connecting. The benefits of using L2TP for

voluntary tunneling are that the existing authentication and address

assignment mechanisms used by PPP can be reused without modification.

For example an LNS could also include a Radius client, and

communicate with a Radius server to authenticate a PPP PAP or CHAP

exchange, and to retrieve configuration information for the host such

as its IP address and a list of DNS servers to use. This information

can then be passed to the host via the PPP IPCP protocol.

10.0.0.1

+----+

|Host|----- ------------- 10.0.0.0/8

+----+ / +-----+ ( ) +-----+ ---------

/----| NAS |---( IP Backbone )---| GW |----( Corp. )

dial +-----+ ( ) +-----+ ( Network )

connection ------------- ---------

<-------------- L2TP Tunnel -------------->

with LAC on host

<-------------- PPP Session --------------> LNS on gateway

or

<-------------- IPSEC Tunnel -------------->

Figure 6.2: Voluntary Tunneling Example

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The above procedure is not without its costs, however. There is

considerable overhead with such a protocol stack, particularly when

IPSec is also needed for security purposes, and given that the host

may be connected via a low-bandwidth dial up link. The overhead

consists of both extra headers in the data plane and extra control

protocols needed in the control plane. Using L2TP for voluntary

tunneling, secured with IPSec, means a web application, for example,

would run over the following stack

HTTP/TCP/IP/PPP/L2TP/UDP/ESP/IP/PPP/AHDLC

It is proposed in [[58](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-58)] that IPSec alone be used for voluntary tunnels

reducing overhead, using the following stack.

HTTP/TCP/IP/ESP/IP/PPP/AHDLC

In this case IPSec is used in tunnel mode, with the tunnel

terminating either on an IPSec edge device at the enterprise site, or

on the provider edge router connected to the enterprise site. There

are two possibilities for the IP addressing of the host. Two IP

addresses could be used, in a similar manner to the L2TP case.

Alternatively the host can use a single public IP address as the

source IP address in both inner and outer IP headers, with the

gateway performing Network Address Translation (NAT) before

forwarding the traffic to the enterprise network. To other hosts in

the enterprise network the host appears to have an 'internal' IP

address. Using NAT has some limitations and restrictions, also

pointed out in [[58](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-58)].

Another area of potential problems with PPP is due to the fact that

the characteristics of a link layer implemented via an L2TP tunnel

over an IP backbone are quite different to a link layer run over a

serial line, as discussed in the L2TP specification itself. For

example, poorly chosen PPP parameters may lead to frequent resets and

timeouts, particularly if compression is in use. This is because an

L2TP tunnel may misorder packets, and may silently drop packets,

neither of which normally occurs on serial lines. The general packet

loss rate could also be significantly higher due to network

congestion. Using the sequence number field in an L2TP header

addresses the misordering issue, and for cases where the LAC and LNS

are coincident with the PPP endpoints, as in voluntary tunneling, the

sequence number field can also be used to detect a dropped packet,

and to pass a suitable indication to any compression entity in use,

which typically requires such knowledge in order to keep the

compression histories in synchronization at both ends. (In fact this

is more of an issue with compulsory tunneling since the LAC may have

to deliberately issue a corrupted frame to the PPP host, to give an

indication of packet loss, and some hardware may not allow this).

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**[6.3.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.3.2) Issues with Use of IPSec for Voluntary Tunnels**

If IPSec is used for voluntary tunneling, the functions of user

authentication and host configuration, achieved by means of PPP when

using L2TP, still need to be carried out. A distinction needs to be

drawn here between machine authentication and user authentication. '

Two factor' authentication is carried out on the basis of both

something the user has, such as a machine or smartcard with a digital

certificate, and something the user knows, such as a password.

(Another example is getting money from an bank ATM machine - you need

a card and a PIN number). Many of the existing legacy schemes

currently in use to perform user authentication are asymmetric in

nature, and are not supported by IKE. For remote access the most

common existing user authentication mechanism is to use PPP between

the user and access server, and Radius between the access server and

authentication server. The authentication exchanges that occur in

this case, e.g. a PAP or CHAP exchange, are asymmetric. Also CHAP

supports the ability for the network to reauthenticate the user at

any time after the initial session has been established, to ensure

that the current user is the same person that initiated the session.

While IKE provides strong support for machine authentication, it has

only limited support for any form of user authentication and has no

support for asymmetric user authentication. While a user password

can be used to derive a key used as a preshared key, this cannot be

used with IKE Main Mode in a remote access environment, as the user

will not have a fixed IP address, and while Aggressive Mode can be

used instead, this affords no identity protection. To this end there

have been a number of proposals to allow for support of legacy

asymmetric user level authentication schemes with IPSec. [[59](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-59)]

defines a new IKE message exchange - the transaction exchange - which

allows for both Request/Reply and Set/Acknowledge message sequences,

and it also defines attributes that can be used for client IP stack

configuration. [[60](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-60)] and [[61](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-61)] describe mechanisms that use the

transaction message exchange, or a series of such exchanges, carried

out between the IKE Phase 1 and Phase 2 exchanges, to perform user

authentication. A different approach, that does not extend the IKE

protocol itself, is described in [[62](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-62)]. With this approach a user

establishes a Phase 1 SA with a security gateway and then sets up a

Phase 2 SA to the gateway, over which an existing authentication

protocol is run. The gateway acts as a proxy and relays the protocol

messages to an authentication server.

In addition there have also been proposals to allow the remote host

to be configured with an IP address and other configuration

information over IPSec. For example [[63](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-63)] describes a method whereby

a remote host first establishes a Phase 1 SA with a security gateway

and then sets up a Phase 2 SA to the gateway, over which the DHCP

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protocol is run. The gateway acts as a proxy and relays the protocol

messages to the DHCP server. Again, like [[62](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-62)], this proposal does

not involve extensions to the IKE protocol itself.

Another aspect of PPP functionality that may need to supported is

multiprotocol operation, as there may be a need to carry network

layer protocols other than IP, and even to carry link layer protocols

(e.g. ethernet) as would be needed to support bridging over IPSec.

This is discussed in [section 3.1.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-3.1.4).

The methods of supporting legacy user authentication and host

configuration capabilities in a remote access environment are

currently being discussed in the IPSec working group.

**[6.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.4) Networked Host Support**

The current PPP based dial model assumes a host directly connected to

a connection oriented dial access network. Recent work on new access

technologies such as DSL have attempted to replicate this model [[57](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-57)],

so as to allow for the re-use of existing AAA systems. The

proliferation of personal computers, printers and other network

appliances in homes and small businesses, and the ever lowering costs

of networks, however, are increasingly challenging the directly

connected host model. Increasingly, most hosts will access the

Internet through small, typically Ethernet, local area networks.

There is hence interest in means of accommodating the existing AAA

infrastructure within service providers, whilst also supporting

multiple networked hosts at each customer site. The principal

complication with this scenario is the need to support the login

dialogue, through which the appropriate AAA information is exchanged.

A number of proposals have been made to address this scenario:

**[6.4.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.4.1) Extension of PPP to Hosts Through L2TP**

A number of proposals (e.g. [[56](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-56)]) have been made to extend L2TP over

Ethernet so that PPP sessions can run from networked hosts out to the

network, in much the same manner as a directly attached host.

**[6.4.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.4.2) Extension of PPP Directly to Hosts:**

There is also a specification for mapping PPP directly onto Ethernet

(PPPOE) [[64](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-64)] which uses a broadcast mechanism to allow hosts to find

appropriate access servers with which to connect. Such servers could

then further tunnel, if needed, the PPP sessions using L2TP or a

similar mechanism.

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**[6.4.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.4.3) Use of IPSec**

The IPSec based voluntary tunneling mechanisms discussed above can be

used either with networked or directly connected hosts.

Note that all of these methods require additional host software to be

used, which implements either LAC, PPPOE client or IPSec client

functionality.

**[6.5](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-6.5) Recommendations**

The L2TP specification has been finalized and will be widely used for

compulsory tunneling. As discussed in [section 3.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#section-3.2), defining specific

modes of operation for IPSec when used to secure L2TP would be

beneficial.

Also, for voluntary tunneling using IPSec, completing the work needed

to provide support for the following areas would be useful

- asymmetric / legacy user authentication (6.3)

- host address assignment and configuration (6.3)

along with any other issues specifically related to the support of

remote hosts. Currently as there are many different non-interoperable

proprietary solutions in this area.

**[7.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.0) VPN Types:**

Virtual Private LAN Segment

A Virtual Private LAN Segment (VPLS) is the emulation of a LAN

segment using Internet facilities. A VPLS can be used to provide

what is sometimes known also as a Transparent LAN Service (TLS),

which can be used to interconnect multiple stub CPE nodes, either

bridges or routers, in a protocol transparent manner. A VPLS

emulates a LAN segment over IP, in the same way as protocols such as

LANE emulate a LAN segment over ATM. The primary benefits of a VPLS

are complete protocol transparency, which may be important both for

multiprotocol transport and for regulatory reasons in particular

service provider contexts.

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10.1.1.1 +--------+ +--------+ 10.1.1.2

+---+ | ISP | IP tunnel | ISP | +---+

|CPE|-------| edge |-----------------------| edge |-------|CPE|

+---+ stub | node | | node | stub +---+

link +--------+ +--------+ link

^ | | ^

| | --------------- | |

| | ( ) | |

| +----( IP BACKBONE )----+ |

| ( ) |

| --------------- |

| | |

|IP tunnel +--------+ IP tunnel|

| | ISP | |

+-----------| edge |-----------+

| node |

+--------+ subnet = 10.1.1.0/24

|

stub link |

|

+---+

|CPE| 10.1.1.3

+---+

Figure 7.1: VPLS Example

**[7.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1) VPLS Requirements**

Topologically and operationally a VPLS can be most easily modeled as

being essentially equivalent to a VPRN, except that each VPLS edge

node implements link layer bridging rather than network layer

forwarding. As such, most of the VPRN tunneling and configuration

mechanisms discussed previously can also be used for a VPLS, with the

appropriate changes to accommodate link layer, rather than network

layer, packets and addressing information. The following sections

discuss the primary changes needed in VPRN operation to support

VPLSs.

**[7.1.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.1) Tunneling Protocols**

The tunneling protocols employed within a VPLS can be exactly the

same as those used within a VPRN, if the tunneling protocol permits

the transport of multiprotocol traffic, and this is assumed below.

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**[7.1.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.2) Multicast and Broadcast Support**

A VPLS needs to have a broadcast capability. This is needed both for

broadcast frames, and for link layer packet flooding, where a unicast

frame is flooded because the path to the destination link layer

address is unknown. The address resolution protocols that run over a

bridged network typically use broadcast frames (e.g. ARP). The same

set of possible multicast tunneling mechanisms discussed earlier for

VPRNs apply also to a VPLS, though the generally more frequent use of

broadcast in VPLSs may increase the pressure for native multicast

support that reduces, for instance, the burden of replication on VPLS

edge nodes.

**[7.1.3](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.3) VPLS Membership Configuration and Topology**

The configuration of VPLS membership is analogous to that of VPRNs

since this generally requires only knowledge of the local VPN link

assignments at any given VPLS edge node, and the identity of, or

route to, the other edge nodes in the VPLS; in particular, such

configuration is independent of the nature of the forwarding at each

VPN edge node. As such, any of the mechanisms for VPN member

configuration and dissemination discussed for VPRN configuration can

also be applied to VPLS configuration. Also as with VPRNs, the

topology of the VPLS could be easily manipulated by controlling the

configuration of peer nodes at each VPLS edge node, assuming that the

membership dissemination mechanism was such as to permit this. It is

likely that typical VPLSs will be fully meshed, however, in order to

preclude the need for traffic between two VPLS nodes to transit

through another VPLS node, which would then require the use of the

Spanning Tree protocol [[65](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-65)] for loop prevention.

**[7.1.4](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.4) CPE Stub Node Types**

A VPLS can support either bridges or routers as a CPE device.

CPE routers would peer transparently across a VPLS with each other

without requiring any router peering with any nodes within the VPLS.

The same scalability issues that apply to a full mesh topology for

VPRNs, apply also in this case, only that now the number of peering

routers is potentially greater, since the ISP edge device is no

longer acting as an aggregation point.

With CPE bridge devices the broadcast domain encompasses all the CPE

sites as well as the VPLS itself. There are significant scalability

constraints in this case, due to the need for packet flooding, and

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the fact that any topology change in the bridged domain is not

localized, but is visible throughout the domain. As such this

scenario is generally only suited for support of non-routable

protocols.

The nature of the CPE impacts the nature of the encapsulation,

addressing, forwarding and reachability protocols within the VPLS,

and are discussed separately below.

**[7.1.5](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.5) Stub Link Packet Encapsulation**

**[7.1.5.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.5.1) Bridge CPE**

In this case, packets sent to and from the VPLS across stub links are

link layer frames, with a suitable access link encapsulation. The

most common case is likely to be ethernet frames, using an

encapsulation appropriate to the particular access technology, such

as ATM, connecting the CPE bridges to the VPLS edge nodes. Such

frames are then forwarded at layer 2 onto a tunnel used in the VPLS.

As noted previously, this does mandate the use of an IP tunneling

protocol which can transport such link layer frames. Note that this

does not necessarily mandate, however, the use of a protocol

identification field in each tunnel packet, since the nature of the

encapsulated traffic (e.g. ethernet frames) could be indicated at

tunnel setup.

**[7.1.5.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.5.2) Router CPE**

In this case, typically, CPE routers send link layer packets to and

from the VPLS across stub links, destined to the link layer addresses

of their peer CPE routers. Other types of encapsulations may also

prove feasible in such a case, however, since the relatively

constrained addressing space needed for a VPLS to which only router

CPE are connected, could allow for alternative encapsulations, as

discussed further below.

**[7.1.6](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.6) CPE Addressing and Address Resolution**

**[7.1.6.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.6.1) Bridge CPE**

Since a VPLS operates at the link layer, all hosts within all stub

sites, in the case of bridge CPE, will typically be in the same

network layer subnet. (Multinetting, whereby multiple subnets

operate over the same LAN segment, is possible, but much less

common). Frames are forwarded across and within the VPLS based upon

the link layer addresses - e.g. IEEE MAC addresses - associated with

the individual hosts. The VPLS needs to support broadcast traffic,

such as that typically used for the address resolution mechanism used

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to map the host network addresses to their respective link addresses.

The VPLS forwarding and reachability algorithms also need to be able

to accommodate flooded traffic.

**[7.1.6.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.6.2) Router CPE**

A single network layer subnet is generally used to interconnect

router CPE devices, across a VPLS. Behind each CPE router are hosts

in different network layer subnets. CPE routers transfer packets

across the VPLS by mapping next hop network layer addresses to the

link layer addresses of a router peer. A link layer encapsulation is

used, most commonly ethernet, as for the bridge case.

As noted above, however, in cases where all of the CPE nodes

connected to the VPLS are routers, then it may be possible, due to

the constrained addressing space of the VPLS, to use encapsulations

that use a different address space than normal MAC addressing. See,

for instance, [[11](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-11)], for a proposed mechanism for VPLSs over MPLS

networks, leveraging earlier work on VPRN support over MPLS [[38](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-38)],

which proposes MPLS as the tunneling mechanism, and locally assigned

MPLS labels as the link layer addressing scheme to identify the CPE

LSR routers connected to the VPLS.

**[7.1.7](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.7) VPLS Edge Node Forwarding and Reachability Mechanisms**

**[7.1.7.1](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.7.1) Bridge CPE**

The only practical VPLS edge node forwarding mechanism in this case

is likely to be standard link layer packet flooding and MAC address

learning, as per [[65](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-65)]. As such, no explicit intra-VPLS reachability

protocol will be needed, though there will be a need for broadcast

mechanisms to flood traffic, as discussed above. In general, it may

not prove necessary to also implement the Spanning Tree protocol

between VPLS edge nodes, if the VPLS topology is such that no VPLS

edge node is used for transit traffic between any other VPLS edge

nodes - in other words, where there is both full mesh connectivity

and transit is explicitly precluded. On the other hand, the CPE

bridges may well implement the spanning tree protocol in order to

safeguard against 'backdoor' paths that bypass connectivity through

the VPLS.

**[7.1.7.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.1.7.2) Router CPE**

Standard bridging techniques can also be used in this case. In

addition, the smaller link layer address space of such a VPLS may

also permit other techniques, with explicit link layer routes between

CPE routers. [[11](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764#ref-11)], for instance, proposes that MPLS LSPs be set up,

at the insertion of any new CPE router into the VPLS, between all CPE

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LSRs. This then precludes the need for packet flooding. In the more

general case, if stub link reachability mechanisms were used to

configure VPLS edge nodes with the link layer addresses of the CPE

routers connected to them, then modifications of any of the intra-VPN

reachability mechanisms discussed for VPRNs could be used to

propagate this information to each other VPLS edge node. This would

then allow for packet forwarding across the VPLS without flooding.

Mechanisms could also be developed to further propagate the link

layer addresses of peer CPE routers and their corresponding network

layer addresses across the stub links to the CPE routers, where such

information could be inserted into the CPE router's address

resolution tables. This would then also preclude the need for

broadcast address resolution protocols across the VPLS.

Clearly there would be no need for the support of spanning tree

protocols if explicit link layer routes were determined across the

VPLS. If normal flooding mechanisms were used then spanning tree

would only be required if full mesh connectivity was not available

and hence VPLS nodes had to carry transit traffic.

**[7.2](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-7.2) Recommendations**

There is significant commonality between VPRNs and VPLSs, and, where

possible, this similarity should be exploited in order to reduce

development and configuration complexity. In particular, VPLSs

should utilize the same tunneling and membership configuration

mechanisms, with changes only to reflect the specific characteristics

of VPLSs.

**[8.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-8.0) Summary of Recommendations**

In this document different types of VPNs have been discussed

individually, but there are many common requirements and mechanisms

that apply to all types of VPNs, and many networks will contain a mix

of different types of VPNs. It is useful to have as much commonality

as possible across these different VPN types. In particular, by

standardizing a relatively small number of mechanisms, it is possible

to allow a wide variety of VPNs to be implemented.

The benefits of adding support for the following mechanisms should be

carefully examined.

For IKE/IPSec:

- the transport of a VPN-ID when establishing an SA (3.1.2)

- a null encryption and null authentication option (3.1.3)

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- multiprotocol operation (3.1.4)

- frame sequencing (3.1.5)

- asymmetric / legacy user authentication (6.3)

- host address assignment and configuration (6.3)

For L2TP:

- defining modes of operation of IPSec when used to support L2TP

(3.2)

For VPNs generally:

- defining a VPN membership information configuration and

dissemination mechanism, that uses some form of directory or MIB

(5.3.2)

- ensure that solutions developed, as far as possible, are

applicable to different types of VPNs, rather than being specific

to a single type of VPN.

**[9.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-9.0) Security Considerations**

Security considerations are an integral part of any VPN mechanisms,

and these are discussed in the sections describing those mechanisms.

**[10.0](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2764" \l "section-10.0) Acknowledgements**

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