Application-Aware Routing

Application-aware routing tracks network and path characteristics of the data plane tunnels between vEdge routers and uses the collected information to compute optimal paths for data traffic. These characteristics include packet loss, latency, and jitter, and the load, cost and bandwidth of a link. The ability to consider factors in path selection other than those used by standard routing protocols—such as route prefixes, metrics, link-state information, and route removal on the edge router—offers a number of advantages to an enterprise:

- In normal network operation, the path taken by application data traffic through the network can be optimized, by directing it to WAN links that support the required levels of packet loss, latency, and jitter defined in an application’s SLA.

- In the face of network brownouts or soft failures, performance degradation can be minimized. The tracking of network and path conditions by application-aware routing in real time can quickly reveal performance issues, and it automatically activates strategies that redirect data traffic to the best available path. As the network recovers from the brownout or soft failure conditions, application-aware routing automatically readjusts the data traffic paths.

- Network costs can be reduced because data traffic can be more efficiently load-balanced.

- Application performance can be increased without the need for WAN upgrades.
Each vEdge router supports up to eight TLOCs, allowing a single vEdge router to connect to up to eight different WAN networks. This capability allows path customization for application traffic that has different needs in terms of packet loss and latency.

## Components of Application-Aware Routing

The Viptela Application-Aware Routing solution consists of three elements:

- **Identification**—You define the application of interest, and then you create a centralized data policy that maps the application to specific SLA requirements. You single out data traffic of interest by matching on the Layer 3 and Layer 4 headers in the packets, including source and destination prefixes and ports, protocol, and DSCP field. As with all centralized data policies, you configure them on a vSmart controller, which then passes them to the appropriate vEdge routers.

- **Monitoring and measuring**—The Viptela software uses BFD packets to continuously monitor the data traffic on the data plane tunnels between vEdge routers, and periodically measures the performance characteristics of the tunnel. To gauge performance, the Viptela software looks for traffic loss on the tunnel, and it measures latency by looking at the one-way and round-trip times of traffic traveling over the tunnel. These measurements might indicate a blackout or brownout condition.
Mapping application traffic to a specific transport tunnel—The final step is to map an application’s data traffic to the data plane tunnel that provides the desired performance for the application. The mapping decision is based on two criteria: the best-path criteria computed from measurements performed on the WAN connections and on the constraints specified in a policy specific to application-aware routing.

To create data policy based on the Layer 7 application itself, use configure deep packet inspection with a centralized data policy. With deep packet inspection, you can direct traffic to a specific tunnel, based on the remote TLOC, the remote TLOC, or both. You cannot direct traffic to tunnels based on SLA classes.

Classification of Tunnels into SLA Classes

The process of classifying tunnels into one or more SLA classes for application-aware routing has three parts:

- Measure loss, latency, and jitter information for the tunnel.
- Calculate the average loss, latency, and jitter for the tunnel.
- Determine the SLA classification of the tunnel.
Measure Loss, Latency, and Jitter

When a data plane tunnel in the overlay network is established, a BFD session automatically starts on the tunnel. In the overlay network, each tunnel is identified with a color that identifies a specific link between a local TLOC and a remote TLOC. The BFD session monitors the liveness of the tunnel by periodically sending Hello packets to detect whether the link is operational. Application-aware routing uses the BFD Hello packets to measure the loss, latency, and jitter on the links.

By default, the BFD Hello packet interval is 1 second. This interval is user-configurable (with the `bfd color interval` command). Note that the BFD Hello packet interval is configurable per tunnel.

Calculate Average Loss, Latency, and Jitter

BFD periodically polls all the tunnels on the vEdge router to collect packet latency, loss, jitter, and other statistics for use by application-aware routing. At each poll interval, application-aware routing calculates the average loss, latency, and jitter for each tunnel, and then calculates or recalculates each tunnel's SLA. Each poll interval is also called a "bucket."

By default, the poll interval is 10 minutes. With the default BFD Hello packet interval at 1 second, this means that information from about 600 BFD Hello packets is used in one poll interval to calculate loss, latency, and jitter for the tunnel. The poll interval is user-configurable (with the `bfd app-route poll-interval` command). Note that the application-aware routing poll interval is configurable per vEdge router; that is, it applies to all tunnels originating on a router.

Reducing the poll interval without reducing the BFD Hello packet interval may affect the quality of the loss, latency, and jitter calculation. For example, setting the poll interval to 10 seconds when the BFD Hello packet interval is 1 second means that only 10 Hello packets are used to calculate the loss, latency, and jitter for the tunnel.

The loss, latency, and jitter information from each poll interval is preserved for six poll intervals. At the seventh poll interval, the information from the earliest polling interval is discarded to make way for the latest information. In this way, application-aware routing maintains a sliding window of tunnel loss, latency, and jitter information.

The number of poll intervals (6) is not user-configurable. Each poll interval is identified by an index number (0 through 5) in the output of the `show app-route statistics` command.

Determine the SLA Classification

To determine the SLA classification of a tunnel, application-aware routing uses the loss, latency, and jitter information from the latest poll intervals. The number of poll intervals used is determined by a multiplier. By default, the multiplier is 6, so the information from all the poll intervals (specifically, from the last six poll intervals) is used to determine the classification. For the default poll interval of 10 minutes and the default multiplier of 6, the loss, latency, and jitter information collected over the last hour is considered when classifying the SLA of each tunnel. These default values have to be chosen to provide damping of sorts, as a way to prevent frequent reclassification (flapping) of the tunnel.

The multiplier is user-configurable (with the `bfd app-route multiplier` command). Note that the application-aware routing multiplier is configurable per vEdge router; that is, it applies to all tunnels originating on a router.

If there is a need to react quickly to changes in tunnel characteristics, you can reduce the multiplier all the way down to 1. With a multiplier of 1, only the latest poll interval loss and latency values are used to determine whether this tunnel
can satisfy one or more SLA criteria.

Based on the measurement and calculation of tunnel loss and latency, each tunnel may satisfy one or more user-configured SLA classes. For example, a tunnel with a mean loss of 0 packets and mean latency of 10 milliseconds would satisfy a class that has been defined with a maximum packet loss of 5 and a minimum latency of 20 milliseconds, and it would also satisfy a class that has been defined with a maximum packet loss of 0 and minimum latency of 15 milliseconds.

Regardless of how quickly a tunnel is reclassified, the loss, latency, and jitter information is measured and calculated continuously. You can configure how quickly application-aware routing reacts to changes by modifying the poll interval and multiplier.

**Additional Information**

- Application-Aware Routing Policy Configuration Example
- Configuring Application-Aware Routing
- Configuring Centralized Data Policy
- Configuring Split DNS