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            Transmission of IPv6 Packets over BLUETOOTH(R) Low Energy
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Abstract

   Bluetooth Smart is the brand name for the low energy feature in the
   Bluetooth specification defined by the Bluetooth Special Interest
   Group. The standard Bluetooth radio has been widely implemented and
   available in mobile phones, notebook computers, audio headsets and
   many other devices. The low power version of Bluetooth is a
   specification that enables the use of this air interface with devices
   such as sensors, smart meters, appliances, etc. The low power
   variant of Bluetooth is standardized since the revision 4.0 of the
   Bluetooth specifications, although version 4.1 or newer is required
   for IPv6. This document describes how IPv6 is transported over
   Bluetooth Low Energy using 6LoWPAN techniques.

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1. Introduction

Bluetooth low energy (LE) is a radio technology targeted for devices that operate with coin cell batteries or minimalistic power sources, which means that low power consumption is essential. Bluetooth LE is an especially attractive technology for Internet of Things

applications, such as health monitors, environmental sensing,
proximity applications and many others.

Considering the potential for the exponential growth in the number of
sensors and Internet connected devices and things, IPv6 is an ideal
protocol due to the large address space it provides. In addition,
IPv6 provides tools for stateless address autoconfiguration, which is
particularly suitable for sensor network applications and nodes which
have very limited processing power or lack a full-fledged operating
system.

RFC 4944 [RFC4944] specifies the transmission of IPv6 over IEEE
802.15.4. The Bluetooth LE link in many respects has similar
characteristics to that of IEEE 802.15.4. Many of the mechanisms
defined in the RFC 4944 can be applied to the transmission of IPv6 on
Bluetooth LE links. This document specifies the details of IPv6
transmission over Bluetooth LE links.

1.1. Terminology and Requirements Language

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT",
"SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this
document are to be interpreted as described in RFC 2119 [RFC2119].

The terms 6LN, 6LR and 6LBR are defined as in [RFC6775], with an
addition that Bluetooth LE central and Bluetooth LE peripheral can
both be either 6LN or 6LBR.

2. Bluetooth Low Energy

Bluetooth LE is designed for transferring small amounts of data
infrequently at modest data rates at a very low cost per bit.
Bluetooth Special Interest Group (Bluetooth SIG) has introduced two
trademarks, Bluetooth Smart for single-mode devices (a device that
only supports Bluetooth LE) and Bluetooth Smart Ready for dual-mode
devices. In the rest of the document, the term Bluetooth LE refers
to both types of devices.

Bluetooth LE was introduced in Bluetooth 4.0 and further enhanced in
Bluetooth 4.1 [BTCorev4.1]. Bluetooth SIG will also publish Internet
Protocol Support Profile (IPSP) [IPSP], which includes Internet
Protocol Support Service (IPSS) and that enables discovery of IP-
enabled devices and establishment of link-layer connection for
transporting IPv6 packets. IPv6 over Bluetooth LE is dependent on
both Bluetooth 4.1 and IPSP.

Devices such as mobile phones, notebooks, tablets and other handheld
computing devices which will include Bluetooth 4.1 chipsets will also

have the low-energy functionality of Bluetooth. Bluetooth LE will
also be included in many different types of accessories that
collaborate with mobile devices such as phones, tablets and notebook
computers. An example of a use case for a Bluetooth LE accessory is
a heart rate monitor that sends data via the mobile phone to a server
on the Internet.

2.1. Bluetooth Low Energy stack

The lower layer of the Bluetooth LE stack consists of the Physical
(PHY) and the Link Layer (LL). The Physical Layer transmits and
receives the actual packets. The Link Layer is responsible for
providing medium access, connection establishment, error control and
flow control. The upper layer consists of the Logical Link Control
and Adaptation Protocol (L2CAP), Attribute Protocol (ATT), Generic
Attribute Profile (GATT) and Generic Access Profile (GAP) as shown in
Figure 1. The device internal Host Controller Interface (HCI)
separates the lower layers, often implemented in the Bluetooth
controller, from higher layers, often implemented in the host stack.
GATT and Bluetooth LE profiles together enable the creation of
applications in a standardized way without using IP. L2CAP provides
multiplexing capability by multiplexing the data channels from the
above layers. L2CAP also provides fragmentation and reassembly for
large data packets.

```
        +----------------------------------------------------+
        |                     Applications                   |
        +-----------------------------------------+----------+
        |         Generic Attribute Profile       | Generic  |
        +--------------------+--------------------+ Access   |
        | Attribute Protocol | Security Manager   | Profile  |
        +--------------------+--------------------+----------+
        |    Logical Link Control and Adaptation Protocol    |
- - -+-----------------------+------------------------+- - - HCI
        |      Link Layer       |    Direct Test Mode     |
        +----------------------------------------------------+
        |                   Physical Layer                   |
        +----------------------------------------------------+
```
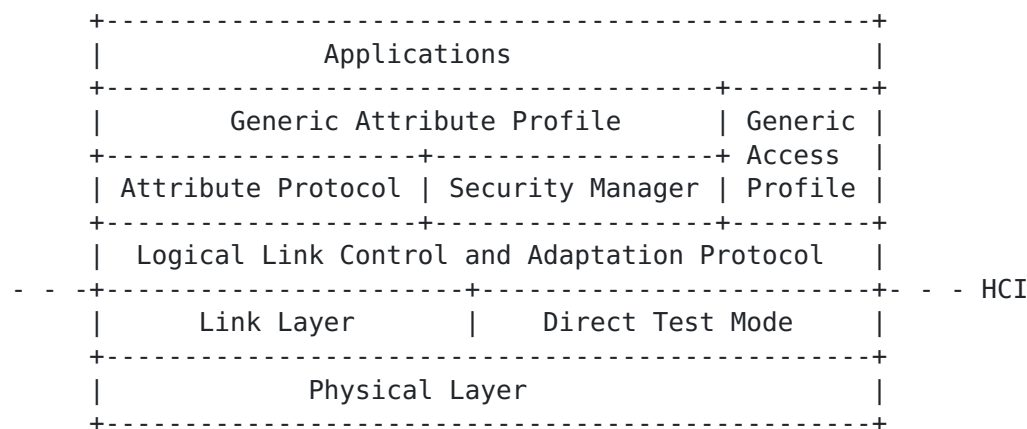
Figure 1: Bluetooth LE Protocol Stack

2.2. Link layer roles and topology

Bluetooth LE defines two Link Layer roles: the Bluetooth LE central
role and the Bluetooth LE peripheral role. A device in the central
role, which is called central from now on, has traditionally been

able to manage multiple simultaneous connections with a number of
devices in the peripheral role, called peripherals from now on. A
peripheral is commonly connected to a single central, but since
Bluetooth 4.1 can also connect to multiple centrals. In this
document for IPv6 networking purposes the Bluetooth LE network (i.e.
a Bluetooth LE piconet) follows a star topology shown in the
Figure 2, where the router typically implements the Bluetooth LE
central role and nodes Bluetooth LE peripheral roles. In the future
mesh networking may be defined for IPv6 over Bluetooth LE.

```
        Node --.       .-- Node
                \     /
       Node ---- Router ---- Node
                /     \
         Node --'       '-- Node
```
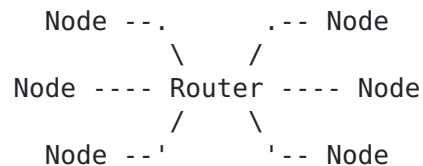
                Figure 2: Bluetooth LE Star Topology

In Bluetooth LE a central is assumed to be less constrained than a
peripheral. Hence, in the primary deployment scenario central and
peripheral will act as 6LoWPAN Border Router (6LBR) and a 6LoWPAN
Node (6LN), respectively.

In Bluetooth LE, direct communication only takes place between a
central and a peripheral. Hence, in a Bluetooth LE network using
IPv6, a radio hop is equivalent to an IPv6 link and vice versa.

2.3. Bluetooth LE device addressing

Every Bluetooth LE device is identified by a 48-bit device address.
The Bluetooth specification describes the device address of a
Bluetooth LE device as:"Devices are identified using a device
address. Device addresses may be either a public device address or a
random device address." [BTCorev4.1]. The public device addresses
are based on the IEEE 802-2001 standard [IEEE802-2001]. The random
device addresses are generated as defined in the Bluetooth
specification. The device addresses are always unique within a
Bluetooth LE piconet, but the random addresses are not guaranteed to
be globally unique.

2.4. Bluetooth LE packets sizes and MTU

Optimal MTU defined for L2CAP fixed channels over Bluetooth LE is 27
bytes including the L2CAP header of four bytes. Default MTU for
Bluetooth LE is hence defined to be 27 bytes. Therefore, excluding
L2CAP header of four bytes, protocol data unit (PDU) size of 23 bytes
is available for upper layers. In order to be able to transmit IPv6
packets of 1280 bytes or larger, link layer fragmentation and

reassembly solution is provided by the L2CAP layer. The IPSP defines
means for negotiating up a link-layer connection that provides MTU of
1280 bytes or higher for the IPv6 layer [IPSP].

3. Specification of IPv6 over Bluetooth Low Energy

Before any IP-layer communications can take place over Bluetooth LE,
Bluetooth LE enabled nodes such as 6LNs and 6LBRs have to find each
other and establish a suitable link-layer connection. The discovery
and Bluetooth LE connection setup procedures are documented by
Bluetooth SIG in the IPSP specification [IPSP], and hence are out of
scope of this document. The IPSP depends on Bluetooth version 4.1,
and hence both Bluetooth version 4.1 or newer and IPSP are required
for IPv6 communications.

Bluetooth LE technology sets strict requirements for low power
consumption and thus limits the allowed protocol overhead. 6LoWPAN
standards [RFC6775], and [RFC6282] provide useful functionality for
reducing overhead which can be applied to Bluetooth LE. This
functionality comprises of link-local IPv6 addresses and stateless
IPv6 address autoconfiguration (see Section 3.2.1), Neighbor
Discovery (see Section 3.2.2) and header compression (see
Section 3.2.3).

A significant difference between IEEE 802.15.4 and Bluetooth LE is
that the former supports both star and mesh topology (and requires a
routing protocol), whereas Bluetooth LE does not currently support
the formation of multihop networks at the link layer.

3.1. Protocol stack

Figure 3 illustrates IPv6 over Bluetooth LE stack including the
Internet Protocol Support Service. UDP and TCP are provided as
examples of transport protocols, but the stack can be used by any
other upper layer protocol capable of running atop of IPv6. The
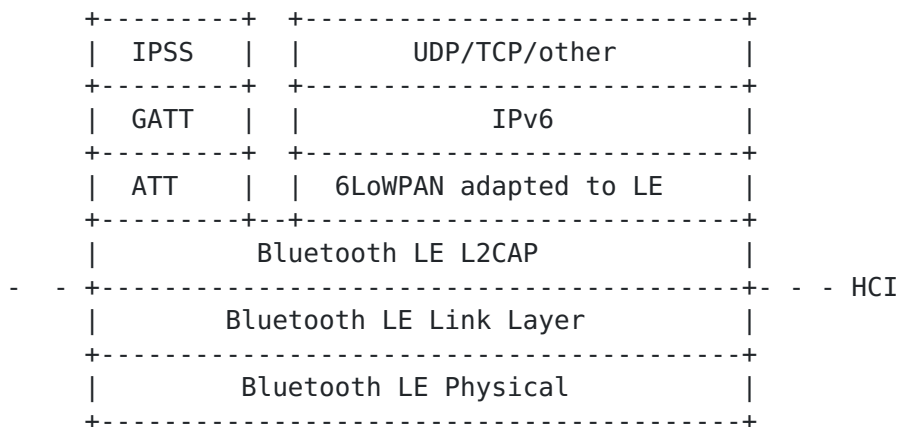6LoWPAN runs on top of Bluetooth LE L2CAP layer.

```
      +---------+  +----------------------------+
      |  IPSS   |  |        UDP/TCP/other       |
      +---------+  +----------------------------+
      |  GATT   |  |            IPv6            |
      +---------+  +----------------------------+
      |  ATT    |  |  6LoWPAN adapted to LE     |
      +---------+--+----------------------------+
      |            Bluetooth LE L2CAP           |
   -  - +----------------------------------------+- - - HCI
      |         Bluetooth LE Link Layer         |
      +----------------------------------------+
      |         Bluetooth LE Physical          |
      +----------------------------------------+
```

              Figure 3: IPv6 over Bluetooth LE Stack

3.2. Link model

   The concept of IPv6 link (layer 3) and the physical link (combination
   of PHY and MAC) needs to be clear and the relationship has to be well
   understood in order to specify the addressing scheme for transmitting
   IPv6 packets over the Bluetooth LE link. RFC 4861 [RFC4861] defines
   a link as "a communication facility or medium over which nodes can
   communicate at the link layer, i.e., the layer immediately below
   IPv6."

   In the case of Bluetooth LE, 6LoWPAN layer is adapted to support
   transmission of IPv6 packets over Bluetooth LE. The IPSP defines all
   steps required for setting up the Bluetooth LE connection over which
   6LoWPAN can function [IPSP], including handling the link-layer
   fragmentation required on Bluetooth LE, as described in Section 2.4.

   This specification also assumes the IPv6 header compression format
   specified in RFC 6282 is used [RFC6282]. It is also assumed that the
   IPv6 payload length can be inferred from the L2CAP header length and
   the IID value inferred from the link-layer address with help of
   Neighbor Cache, if elided from compressed packet.

   The Bluetooth LE link between two communicating nodes can be
   considered to be a point-to-point or point-to-multipoint link. When
   one of the communicating nodes is simultaneously connected to
   multiple nodes, the link can be viewed as a point-to-multipoint link
   from the particular node point of view. However, due to Bluetooth LE
   star topology, each branch of the star is considered to be an
   individual link and thus only two nodes can directly talk to each
   other. Node-to-node communications, e.g. using link-local addresses,
   need to be bridged by the 6LBR. The 6LBR ensures address collisions
   do not occur (see Section 3.2.2).

   After the peripheral and central have connected at the Bluetooth LE
   level, the link can be considered up and IPv6 address configuration
   and transmission can begin.

3.2.1. Stateless address autoconfiguration

   A Bluetooth LE 6LN performs stateless address autoconfiguration as
   per RFC 4862 [RFC4862]. A 64-bit Interface identifier (IID) for a
   Bluetooth LE interface MAY be formed by utilizing the 48-bit
   Bluetooth device address (see Section 2.3) as defined in RFC 2464
   "IPv6 over Ethernet" specification [RFC2464]. Alternatively, a
   randomly generated IID (see Section 3.2.2) can be used instead, for
   example, as discussed in [I-D.ietf-6man-default-iids]. In the case
   of randomly generated IID or randomly generated Bluetooth device
   address, the "Universal/Local" bit MUST be set to 0 [RFC4291]. Only
   if the Bluetooth device address is known to be a public address the
   "Universal/Local" bit can be set to 1.

   As defined in RFC 4291 [RFC4291], the IPv6 link-local address for a
   Bluetooth LE node is formed by appending the IID, to the prefix
   FE80::/64, as depicted in Figure 4.

```
        10 bits         54 bits              64 bits
      +----------+----------------+----------------------+
      |1111111010|     zeros      | Interface Identifier |
      +----------+----------------+----------------------+
```
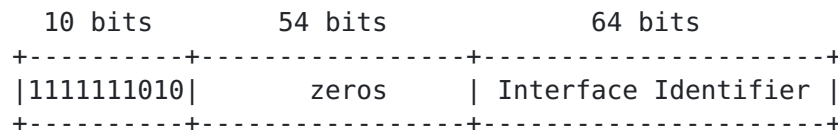
            Figure 4: IPv6 link-local address in Bluetooth LE

   The tool for a 6LBR to obtain an IPv6 prefix for numbering the
   Bluetooth LE network is out of scope of this document, but can be,
   for example, accomplished via DHCPv6 Prefix Delegation [RFC3633] or
   by using Unique Local IPv6 Unicast Addresses (ULA) [RFC4193]. Due to
   the link model of the Bluetooth LE (see Section 2.2) the 6LBR MUST
   set the "on-link" flag (L) to zero in the Prefix Information Option
   [RFC4861]. This will cause 6LNs to always send packets to the 6LBR,
   including the case when the destination is another 6LN using the same
   prefix.

3.2.2. Neighbor discovery

   'Neighbor Discovery Optimization for IPv6 over Low-Power Wireless
   Personal Area Networks (6LoWPANs)' [RFC6775] describes the neighbor
   discovery approach as adapted for use in several 6LoWPAN topologies,
   including the mesh topology. Bluetooth LE does not support mesh

networks and hence only those aspects that apply to a star topology
are considered.

The following aspects of the Neighbor Discovery optimizations
[RFC6775] are applicable to Bluetooth LE 6LNs:

1. A Bluetooth LE 6LN MUST register its addresses with the 6LBR by
sending a Neighbor Solicitation (NS) message with the Address
Registration Option (ARO) and process the Neighbor Advertisement (NA)
accordingly. The NS with the ARO option SHOULD be sent irrespective
of the method used to generate the IID. The 6LN MUST register only
one IPv6 address per IPv6 prefix available on a link.

2. For sending Router Solicitations and processing Router
Advertisements the Bluetooth LE 6LNs MUST, respectively, follow
Sections 5.3 and 5.4 of the [RFC6775].

3.2.3. Header compression

Header compression as defined in RFC 6282 [RFC6282], which specifies
the compression format for IPv6 datagrams on top of IEEE 802.15.4, is
REQUIRED in this document as the basis for IPv6 header compression on
top of Bluetooth LE. All headers MUST be compressed according to RFC
6282 [RFC6282] encoding formats.

The Bluetooth LE's star topology structure and ARO can be exploited
in order to provide a mechanism for IID compression. The following
text describes the principles of IPv6 address compression on top of
Bluetooth LE.

The ARO option requires use of EUI-64 identifier [RFC6775]. In the
case of Bluetooth LE, the field SHALL be filled with the 48-bit
device address used by the Bluetooth LE node converted into 64-bit
Modified EUI-64 format [RFC4291].

When a 6LN is sending a packet to or through a 6LBR, it MUST fully
elide the source address if the source IPv6 address is currently
registed with ARO to the 6LBR and the 6LN has registered only one
address for the indicated prefix. That is, if SAC=0 and SAM=11 the
6LN MUST have registered the source link-local IPv6 address it is
using using ARO, and if SAC=1 and SAM=11 the 6LN MUST have registered
the source IPv6 address with the prefix related to compression
context identified with Context Identifier Extension. The
destination IPv6 address MUST be fully elided if the destination
address is the same address to which the 6LN has succesfully
registered its source IPv6 address with ARO (set DAC=0, DAM=11). The
destination IPv6 address MUST be fully or partially elided if the
destination address has prefix for which context has been set up, for

example, DAC=0 and DAM=01 when destination is link-local, and DAC=1
and DAM=01 with Context Identifier Extension if compression context
has been configured for the used destination.

When a 6LBR is transmitting packets to 6LN, it MUST fully elide the
source IID if the source IPv6 address is the one 6LN has used to
register its address with ARO (set SAC=0, SAM=11), and it MUST elide
the source prefix or address if a compression context related to the
IPv6 source address has been set up. The 6LBR also MUST elide the
destination IPv6 address if it is currently registered by the 6LN
with ARO and thus 6LN can determine it based on indication of link-
local prefix (DAC=0) or indication of other prefix (DAC=1 with
Context Identifier Extension).

3.2.3.1. Remote destination example

When a 6LN transmits an IPv6 packet to a remote destination using
global Unicast IPv6 addresses, if a context is defined for the prefix
of the 6LNs global IPv6 address, the 6LN has to indicate this context
in the corresponding source fields of the compressed IPv6 header as
per Section 3.1 of RFC 6282 [RFC6282], and has to elide the IPv6
source address previously registered with ARO. For this, the 6LN
MUST use the following settings in the IPv6 compressed header: CID=1,
SAC=1, SAM=11. In this case, the 6LBR can infer the elided IPv6
source address since 1) the 6LBR has previously assigned the prefix
to the 6LNs; and 2) the 6LBR maintains a Neighbor Cache that relates
the Device Address and the IID the device has registered with ARO.
If a context is defined for the IPv6 destination address, the 6LN has
to also indicate this context in the corresponding destination fields
of the compressed IPv6 header, and elide the prefix of the
destination IPv6 address. For this, the 6LN MUST set the DAM field
of the compressed IPv6 header as DAM=01 (if the context covers a
64-bit prefix) or as DAM=11 (if the context covers a full, 128-bit
address). CID and DAC MUST be set to CID=1 and DAC=1. Note that
when a context is defined for the IPv6 destination address, the 6LBR
can infer the elided destination prefix by using the context.

When a 6LBR receives an IPv6 packet sent by a remote node outside the
Bluetooth LE network, and the destination of the packet is a 6LN, if
a context is defined for the prefix of the 6LN's global IPv6 address,
the 6LBR has to indicate this context in the corresponding
destination fields of the compressed IPv6 header. The 6LBR has to
elide the IPv6 destination address of the packet before forwarding
it, if the IPv6 destination address is inferable by the 6LN. For
this, the 6LBR will set the DAM field of the IPv6 compressed header
as DAM=11. CID and DAC needs to be set to CID=1 and DAC=1. If a
context is defined for the prefix of the IPv6 source address, the
6LBR needs to indicate this context in the source fields of the

compressed IPv6 header, and elide that prefix as well. For this, the
6LBR needs to set the SAM field of the IPv6 compressed header as
SAM=01 (if the context covers a 64-bit prefix) or SAM=11 (if the
context covers a full, 128-bit address). CID and SAC are to be set
to CID=1 and SAC=1.

3.2.4. Unicast and Multicast address mapping

The Bluetooth LE link layer does not support multicast. Hence
traffic is always unicast between two Bluetooth LE nodes. Even in
the case where a 6LBR is attached to multiple 6LNs, the 6LBR cannot
do a multicast to all the connected 6LNs. If the 6LBR needs to send
a multicast packet to all its 6LNs, it has to replicate the packet
and unicast it on each link. However, this may not be energy-
efficient and particular care must be taken if the master is battery-
powered. In the opposite direction, a 6LN can only transmit data to
a single destination (i.e. the 6LBR). Hence, when a 6LN needs to
transmit an IPv6 multicast packet, the 6LN will unicast the
corresponding Bluetooth LE packet to the 6LBR. The 6LBR will then
forward the multicast packet to other 6LNs. To avoid excess unwanted
multicast traffic being sent to 6LNs, the 6LBR SHOULD implement MLD
Snooping feature [RFC4541].

3.3. Internet connectivity scenarios

In a typical scenario, the Bluetooth LE network is connected to the
Internet as shown in the Figure 5.

```
           6LN
            \                _____
             \             /               \
        6LN ---- 6LBR ----- |   Internet    |
             /             _____/
            /
           6LN

          <-- Bluetooth LE -->
```
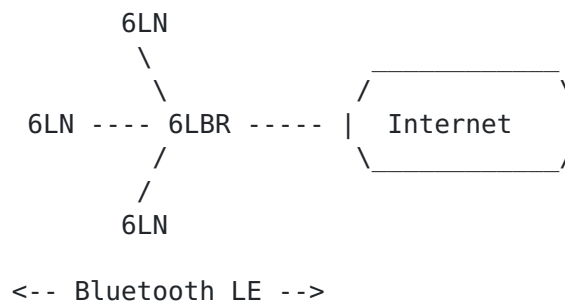
Figure 5: Bluetooth LE network connected to the Internet

In some scenarios, the Bluetooth LE network may transiently or
permanently be an isolated network as shown in the Figure 6.

```
                 6LN       6LN
                  \        /
                   \      /
             6LN --- 6LBR --- 6LN
                   /      \
                  /        \
                6LN        6LN


             <--- Bluetooth LE --->
```
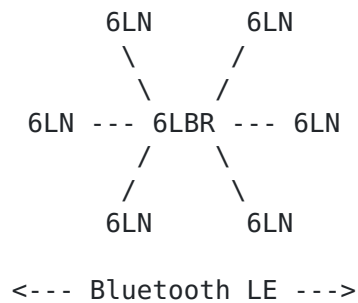
Figure 6: Isolated Bluetooth LE network

It is also possible to have point-to-point connection between two
6LNs, one of which being central and another being peripheral.
Similarly, it is possible to have point-to-point connections between
two 6LBRs, one of which being central and another being peripheral.

At this point in time mesh networking with Bluetooth LE is not
specified.

In the isolated network scenario communications between 6LN and 6LBR
can use IPv6 link-local methodology, but for communications between
different 6LNs, the 6LBR has to number the network with ULA prefix
[RFC4193], and route packets between 6LNs.

4. IANA Considerations

There are no IANA considerations related to this document.

5. Security Considerations

The transmission of IPv6 over Bluetooth LE links has similar
requirements and concerns for security as for IEEE 802.15.4.
Bluetooth LE Link Layer security considerations are covered by the
IPSP [IPSP].

Bluetooth LE Link Layer supports encryption and authentication by
using the Counter with CBC-MAC (CCM) mechanism [RFC3610] and a
128-bit AES block cipher. Upper layer security mechanisms may
exploit this functionality when it is available. (Note: CCM does not
consume bytes from the maximum per-packet L2CAP data size, since the
link layer data unit has a specific field for them when they are
used.)

Key management in Bluetooth LE is provided by the Security Manager
Protocol (SMP), as defined in [BTCorev4.1].

6. Additional contributors

   Kanji Kerai, Jari Mutikainen, David Canfeng-Chen and Minjun Xi from
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   document.

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