



Case Study: AIA Life WAN Acceleration Solution Project

Productivity and customer service has improved steadily with Cisco 'WAAS' solution
“Email and File Server Access Speed Remarkably Improved”



AIA Life Korea introduced a WAN application acceleration solution to improve the environment for data center access from its branches nationwide. As a result, it immediately addressed complaints about the low-speed access environment, improving the speed of email and file servers four to eight times and two to three times, respectively. In addition, it has achieved satisfactory results since the introduction, such as reduction in budget allocation and management efforts required for exclusive line upgrades. AIA Life's WAN acceleration solution project is expected to expand next year across all its branches nationwide following the deployment of Cisco's WAAS solution, which has proven to be excellent in terms of safety and performance.

AIA Life Korea proudly maintains a robust financial structure as a branch of the largest multinational life insurance company in the Asia Pacific region. Among 13 AIA

branches in Asia Pacific, the company is in the spotlight because of its innovative products and services. It is aggressively reinforcing services utilizing IT resources and increasing investment in advanced IT systems implementation for better customer services. The introduction of the WAN application acceleration solution was carried out as part of its service upgrade policy, and it continues to expand the introduction to all branch offices.

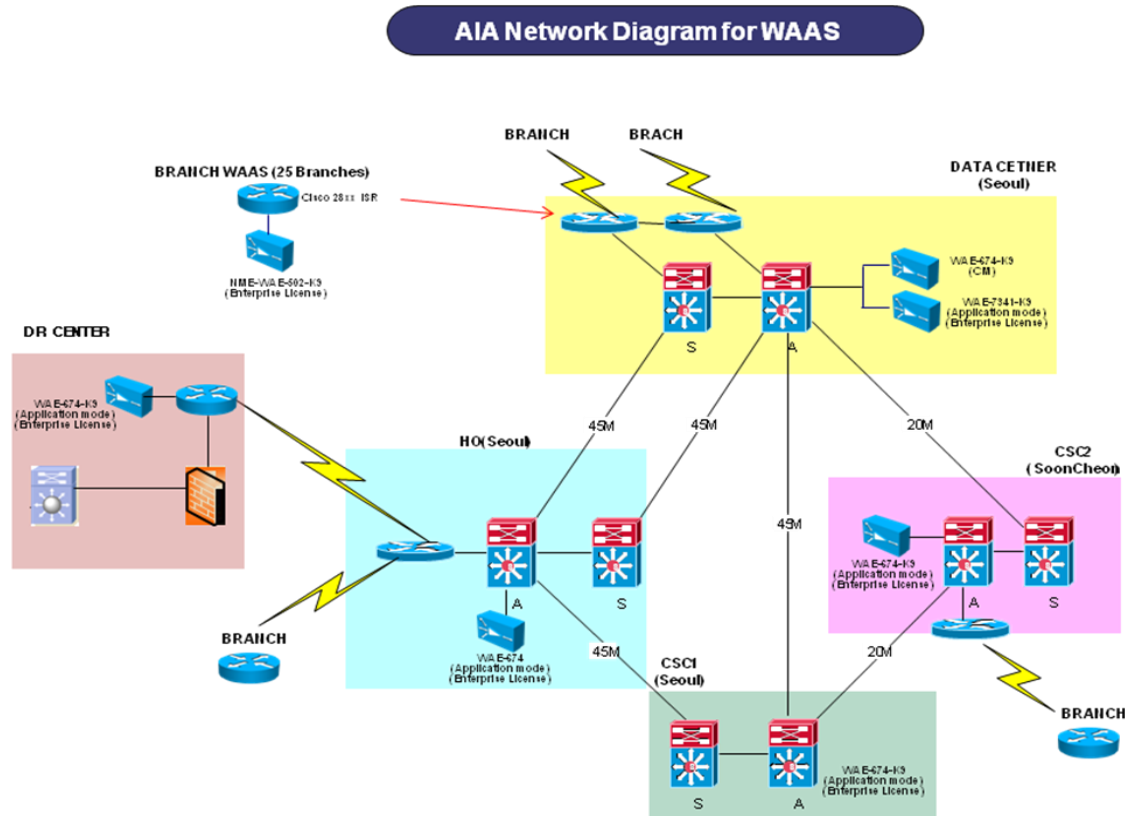
WAN acceleration solution enhances low-speed access at branches

AIA Life launched a WAN application acceleration solution project to improve data center accessibility of its branches sparsely located across the nation. Low-speed frame-relay connections with bandwidth of between 128k and 512k for Internet access would not allow smooth access to email servers, file servers, etc. In addition, as the data volume is growing quickly along with the diversifying business applications, more efficient solutions rather than simply increasing the line bandwidth had become necessary.

“Although routers also support QoS functionality in the frame-relay connection environment, because of the difficult configuration and application issues, we made the decision to introduce the WAN application acceleration solution after deep consideration. The solution has been deployed seamlessly in concert with our phased upgrade plan for computing environments,” explained Young-joon Seo, supervisor, AIA Life Information System.

AIA Life selected the Cisco WAAS (Wide Area Application Services) solution after reviewing the pros and cons of various appliance and module solutions. Of course, the fact that AIA Group’s WAN acceleration solution standard has designated Cisco products, and the network environment of its branches as well as backbones are implemented with Cisco equipment influenced the selection; however, above all, the solution’s performance and safety, which is proven as excellent, was the most critical factor in the decision. AIA Life tested the Cisco WAAS solution for two month starting in June 2008, and, in February completed phase 1 introduction of the solution, which began in September last year.

To relieve its initial investment burden, among the 80 local branch offices, it introduced the solution at 25 major locations, where scan centers, which require stable bandwidth are to be installed. In addition, replacement of low-speed frame-relay-type exclusive lines in line with the launch of WAAS and scan centers has achieve stable access environments.



Cisco WAAS - outstanding performance and stability

What AIA Life emphasized the most in introducing a WAN acceleration solution was performance and stability. Unlike other L2/3-level network equipment, WAN acceleration solutions operate in conjunction with applications. Therefore, thorough interoperability testing and validation is critical. Seo said, “Based on the results of the two-month long pilot test, we finally selected the Cisco WAAS solution, which demonstrated satisfactory results in terms of stability and performance. This solution is currently in use effectively in conjunction

with our infrastructures, like email servers, file servers, Internet and intranet web services, that are mainly used inside our organization.”

Cisco WAAS solutions deployed at AIA Life consist of three different models: NME-WAE, which is installed on Cisco ISR routers of AIA branch offices, WAE-674 installed for DR Center’s file backup and batch process, and WAE-7341 appliance installed in the company’s data centers to effectively supplement insufficient bandwidth.

The unique strengths of the Cisco WAAS solution, which offers various portfolios of appliances and modules for routers, are TCP flow optimization, WAN bandwidth reduction, highly reliable, flexible configuration, etc. using WCCP (Web Cache Communication Protocol) as well as inline, which allows excellent network application capability and flexibility. AIA Life installed the WAAS system embedded in Cisco ISR 2800 routers – two for the main system at the current data center and one each at three major branch offices and 25 regular branch offices. The data center and major branches are connected with 20M-24M lines in a partial-mesh configuration, and the network of the remaining branches is configured with a variety of exclusive lines, ranging from 512K to E1.

Seo said, “To reduce the burden of initial investment, the WAAS solution was deployed mainly at branches that are scheduled to install scan centers. In line with the upgrade of Cisco ISR router, the ISR WAAS bundle model has been deployed at the remaining branches. By next year, all our branches will be equipped with the Cisco WAAS solution, which has resulted in satisfactory ROI backed by improvement in user satisfaction, cost reduction for exclusive lines, etc.”

Complaints about slow access environment have been fully addressed

Since the deployment of the Cisco WAAS solution, AIA Life has achieved satisfactory outcomes: seamless interoperation with existing Cisco equipment and the immediate resolution of complaints about low-speed accessibility at branches. Consequently, our branches are now experiencing performance increases of 4-8 times and 2-3 time for email and file servers, respectively. In the meantime, they are expecting about a 15% reduction in budget required for exclusive line upgrade and much easier maintenance. In particular, it sees a dramatic improvement in access speed such that email users now can access email without any problems even though the company’s email server has been recently relocated to a data center in Malaysia. Seo said, “A user survey conducted after the introduction of the Cisco WAAS solution showed that, compared to the past, users were no longer complaining about network access speed and were quite satisfied with the response speed that is similar to that of our main office. The data reduction rate and exclusive line usage rate on the WAAS main system have clearly demonstrated huge improvements. The network usage rate, which used to be 80% to 100% with the traditional bandwidth, now is maintained at around 50%, despite the digital archiving of image files and insurance contracts.”

AIA Life is making efficient investments in IT systems focusing on system stability, maintenance and upgrade. In addition to its enabled IP telephony system currently under implementation to provide better and differentiated services to current customers through ‘one-call service,’ the company plans to integrate the system into FMC and UC environments.

Since the Cisco WAAS solution supports stable access to various applications, the company plans to expand its investment to reinforce business productivity and customer service. The Cisco WAAS solution is anticipated to help ensure a certain level of voice grade bandwidth, although the system has transformed into the IPT environment, since the solution supports stable access for various applications.

[Interview: Young-joon Seo, supervisor, AIA Life Information System]



“We will expand the Cisco WAAS across all branches by next year”

■ What's the background for the WAN acceleration solution deployment?

AIA Life launched a WAN application acceleration solution project to improve data center accessibility of its branches. For the company, a WAN acceleration solution is more effective than increasing the line bandwidth because its frame-relay connections with bandwidth of between 128k and 512k for Internet access would not allow smooth access to email servers, file servers, etc. and the data volume is growing quickly along with the diversifying business applications.

■ What are the considerations for the deployment?

What we emphasized the most in introducing a WAN acceleration solution was performance and stability. Although the Cisco WAAS had been designated as a standard equipment of AIA Group, we selected the solution based on thorough interoperability testing and validation to identify any potential issues or incidents that could happen while operating in conjunction with various applications. It tested the Cisco WAAS solution for two month starting in June 2008, and completed phase 1 introduction of the solution in February, which began in September last year to introduce the solution at 25 major locations, where scan centers are to be installed. It is expanding the introduction at the remaining branches.

■ Achievements after Cisco WAAS solution deployment

The Cisco WAAS solution is currently in use effectively in conjunction with our infrastructures, like email servers, file servers, Internet and intranet web services, that are mainly used inside our organization, and fully addressed complaints about low-speed accessibility at our branches. Of particular note, we are now experiencing performance increases of 4-8 times and 2-3 time for email and file servers, respectively, and are expecting about a 15% reduction in budget annually required for exclusive line upgrade. A user survey conducted after the introduction of the Cisco WAAS solution showed that, compared to the past, users were no longer complaining about network access speed and were quite satisfied with the response speed that is similar to that of our main office.

■ Future expansion plan

To relieve its initial investment burden, the solution was initially introduced at 25 major locations, where scan centers are to be installed. In line with the upgrade of Cisco ISR router, the ISR WAAS bundle model has been deployed at the remaining branches. We will deploy the Cisco WAAS solution at around 90% of our local branches, and, by next year, all our branches will be equipped with the solution. We plan to continue to expand our investment to reinforce business productivity and customer service, proactively securing system stability and security with through testing and profitability analysis.