

ALEX XLink Audit

BridgeEndpoint, BridgeEndpointWithAxelar & BridgeRegistry

June 2024

By CoinFabrik

ALEX XLink Audit - Bridge Endpoint June 2024



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Executive Summary

Earlier in June 2024, CoinFabrik was asked to audit contracts for the ALEX XLink project implementing a bridge between Stacks and Ethereum (or another EVM-compatible blockchain). The project underwent several redesigns and modifications to its contracts on the Solidity side, in particular segregating data and logic functionality by adding a registry contract. This audit is concerned with some of the changes as described in the scope upcoming section.

During this audit we found no critical issues, two high-severity issues, two medium-severity issues and four minor-severity issues. Also, several enhancements were proposed.

All high and medium severity issues were resolved. Of the four minor issues, two were resolved, one was partially resolved, and one was acknowledged. Additionally, two of the five proposed enhancements were implemented.

Scope

The audited files are from the git repository located at https://github.com/alexgo-io/xlink. The audit is based on the following commit 948fd511c3ed7c15bb965515e63b8df3180e7446. Fixes were checked on commit 0dbfc65362ebf414ba3674d5e2c44b88f4e15be9.

The scope for this audit includes and is limited to the following files:

- contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeEndpoint.sol: Provides an operational interface for peg-in users to initiate wrapping processes to Stacks chain through the transferTo*() function. After deducting a fee for the registry, tokens are transferred from the user to the XLink cold wallet (or burned, if applicable). The contract also serves as an interface for peg-out user operations, where relayers are expected to call the transferToUnwrap() function with validated orders to be then fulfilled by the so-called "fillers". On burnable cases, minted tokens are directly sent to the user or to the TimeLock contract, depending on the amount.
- contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeEndpointWithAxelar.sol: This contract inherits from BridgeEndpoint contract and adds a specific transferToAxelar() function, which is expected to be called by relayers on cross-chain operations.
- contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeRegistry.sol: This contract
 provides the data and access control layer for the bridge operations. With the
 MultisigWallet as the owner, it manages roles, approved tokens, fees, and other
 related functionalities.



No other files in this repository were audited. Its dependencies are assumed to work according to their documentation. Also, no tests were reviewed for this audit.

Project Description

This project is a Stacks - EVM Chains hybrid bridge which allows users to transfer their assets across those blockchains. A wrapping process takes tokens from an EVM chain to Stacks. It starts with a user transferring its tokens to an EVM chain endpoint smart contract (typically <code>BridgeEndpoint</code>), and is followed by a set of validators listening to these on-chain events, and a backend process generating a proof of the peg-in order and storing it in the backend. The proofs are caught by a relayer which then must send proofs to the Stacks blockchain. Finally, a Stacks smart contract validates these proofs and mints/transfers the tokens to the settle address established by the user.

The unwrap process goes in the opposite direction: a user sends tokens to a smart contract in the Stacks blockchain and expects to receive corresponding tokens on the EMV chain to a pre-established settlement address. Again, validators read this order, and generate a proof if the order is validated. The proofs are stored in the backend and after a relayer notices there are enough proofs, it relays the proof to the bridge smart contract on an EVM blockchain. This is done by calling the functions transferToWrap(), transferToLaunchpad(), transferToAxelar(), etc.

When unwrapping, the steps are different between burnable and non-burnable tokens in this new BridgeEndpoint version. For burnable, minted tokens are either sent to the recipient based or to TimeLock contract if an amount threshold is exceeded. TimeLock contract features essentially delay the unwrapping conclusion on the EVM blockchain side by locking the tokens and generating an agreement.

Assumptions

If an assumption fails, the system could be liable to unreported threats.

- The BridgeEndpoint is expected to be used independently from the BridgeEndpointWithAxelar, which is intended to be deployed on a specific EVM blockchain as a hand-off point to/from Axelar.
- All burnable tokens have 18-digit precision.
- The owner of the BridgeRegistry and BridgeEndpoint contracts is an instance of the MultisigWallet contract.



Methodology

CoinFabrik was provided with the source code, including automated tests that define the expected behavior, and general documentation about the project. Our auditors spent one week auditing the source code provided, which includes understanding the context of use, analyzing the boundaries of the expected behavior of each contract and function, understanding the implementation by the development team (including dependencies beyond the scope to be audited) and identifying possible situations in which the code allows the caller to reach a state that exposes some vulnerability. Without being limited to them, the audit process included the following analyses.

- Arithmetic errors
- Outdated version of Solidity compiler
- Race conditions
- Reentrancy attacks
- Misuse of block timestamps
- Denial of service attacks
- Excessive gas usage
- Missing or misused function qualifiers
- Needlessly complex code and contract interactions
- Poor or nonexistent error handling
- Insufficient validation of the input parameters
- Incorrect handling of cryptographic signatures
- Centralization and upgradeability

After delivering a report with our findings, the development team had the opportunity to comment on every finding and fix the issues they considered convenient. Once fixed and/or commented, our team ran a second review process to verify that the changes to the code effectively solve the issues found and do not unintentionally add new ones. This report includes the final status after the second review.

Findings

In the following table we summarize the security issues we found in this audit. The severity classification criteria and the status meaning are explained below. This table does not include the enhancements we suggest to implement, which are described in a specific section after the security issues.

ID	Title	Severity	Status
HI-01	Tokens Are Not Minted to Recipient	High	Resolved



ID	Title	Severity	Status
HI-02	Incorrect Token Transfer on Unwrapping Operation	High	Resolved
ME-01	Required Validators Can Be Zero	Medium	Resolved
ME-02	Excessive Permission for Changing Order Status	Medium	Resolved
MI-01	Unvalidated Owner Address at Constructor	Minor	Resolved
MI-02	Set Maximum Fee for Transfers	Minor	Acknowledged
MI-03	Non Approved Tokens Funds Are Locked	Minor	Resolved
MI-04	Floating Pragma	Minor	Resolved

Severity Classification

Security risks are classified as follows:

- **Critical:** These are issues that we manage to exploit. They compromise the system seriously. Blocking bugs are also included in this category. They must be fixed **immediately**.
- **High:** These refer to a vulnerability that, if exploited, could have a substantial impact, but requires a more extensive setup or effort compared to critical issues. These pose a significant risk and **demand immediate attention**.
- **Medium:** These are potentially exploitable issues. Even though we did not manage to exploit them or their impact is not clear, they might represent a security risk in the near future. We suggest fixing them **as soon as possible**.
- Minor: These issues represent problems that are relatively small or difficult to take advantage of, but might be exploited in combination with other issues. These kinds of issues do not block deployments in production environments. They should be taken into account and be fixed when possible.



Issues Status

An issue detected by this audit has one of the following statuses:

- Unresolved: The issue has not been resolved.
- **Acknowledged**: The issue remains in the code, but is a result of an intentional decision. The reported risk is accepted by the development team.
- Resolved: Adjusted program implementation to eliminate the risk.
- **Partially resolved**: Adjusted program implementation to eliminate part of the risk. The other part remains in the code, but is a result of an intentional decision.
- Mitigated: Implemented actions to minimize the impact or likelihood of the risk.

Critical Severity Issues

No issues found.

High Severity Issues

HI-01 Tokens Are Not Minted to Recipient

Location:

• contracts/bridge-stacks/contracts/BridgeEndpoint.sol: 322

Classification:

CWE-670: Always-Incorrect Control Flow Implementation¹

In the case of burnable unwrapping operations, tokens are minted to the BridgeEndpoint contract using address(this) instead of being minted to the recipient. This means that users do not receive their unwrapped funds; on the contrary, they are held by the endpoint.

Recommendation

Implement the correct flow on transferToUnwrap() for the burnable token scenario.

Status

Resolved. The time lock functionality was implemented on BridgeEndpoint to handle burnable tokens on unwrapping operations. Tokens are minted to the user if the amount is less than timeLockThreshold; if not, there is a delay on the release managed by the TimeLock contract.

¹ https://cwe.mitre.org/data/definitions/670.html



HI-02 Incorrect Token Transfer on Unwrapping Operation

Location:

• contracts/bridge-stacks/contracts/BridgeEndpoint.sol: 431

Classification:

• CWE-669: Incorrect Resource Transfer Between Spheres²

Once a relayer has called transferToUnwrap() for a non-burnable token, the order is queued in the unwrapSent map. These orders, which act as "requests", are then filled by others who send their own tokens to the recipient and finalize the request. This is done through the finalizeUnwrap() public function, which receives an array of order hashes. For each order, the internal function _finalizeUnwrap() is called. If checks are passed (order not sent, etc.) the BridgeEndpoint transfers the amount to the recipient. However, this is not the expected behavior, as tokens must be sent from the filler (msg.sender). This can lead to incorrect behaviors, potentially exhausting bridge funds and preventing the finalization of user's peg-outs.

Recommendation

Replace transferFixed() with transferFromFixed() and add msg.sender as the address _from argument. This way, the code correctly implements the intended hot wallet logic.

Status

Resolved. Fixed according to the recommendation.

Medium Severity Issues

ME-01 Required Validators Can Be Zero

Location:

 packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeRegistry.sol: 73, 101

Classification:

• CWE-754: Improper Check for Unusual or Exceptional Conditions³

The public variable requiredValidators can be set to zero. The function setRequiredValidators(uint256 _requiredValidators) only checks for an upper bound. This issue also appears at deployment time, where requiredValidators is given its initial value on the constructor function. Although this is an only-owner action and an

² https://cwe.mitre.org/data/definitions/669.html

³ https://cwe.mitre.org/data/definitions/754.html



unlikely scenario, the risk associated is very high since orders can be executed without proofs.

Recommendation

Add checks to ensure requiredValidators is always greater than zero. Additionally, it is advisable to add a MIN_REQUIRED_VALIDATORS constant, similar to the upper bound. In constructor, it might even be prudent to set requiredValidators as MAX_REQUIRED_VALIDATORS.

Status

Resolved. Fixed according to the recommendation.

ME-02 Excessive Permission for Changing Order Status

Location:

 packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeRegistry.sol: 178-180

Classification:

CWE-285: Improper Authorization⁴

Approved addresses from the MultisigWallet contract can change the status of a sent order from true to false by calling setOrderSent(bytes32 orderHash, bool sent) function. While switching the status from false to true is essential within the protocol, allowing the inverse change is highly permissive and can have significant unexpected consequences.

A similar issue exists with the setOrderValidatedBy(bytes32 orderHash, address signer, bool validated) function. Permitting changes in both directions for these statuses can lead to unauthorized modifications and potential security risks.

Recommendation

Restrict these functions to only allow status changes from false to true. If necessary, add an additional feature specifically to reset an order status under strict permissions and conditions. See related enhancement EN-04 Least Privilege Principle In Registry Functions.

Status

Resolved. Fixed according to the recommendation; if the boolean status is to be changed from true to false, only the owner can perform it.

⁴ https://cwe.mitre.org/data/definitions/285.html



Minor Severity Issues

MI-01 Unvalidated Owner Address at Constructor

Location:

- packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeEndpoint.sol: 134-146
- packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeRegistry.sol:
 66-74

The constructor for the BridgeEndpoint contract accepts three addresses as input. While _registry and _pegInAddress are checked to be nonzero, the owner is not checked. Same issue occurs in the BridgeRegistry contract. An owner set to the zero address would result in an unusable contract that needs to be redeployed.

Recommendation

Require the owner to be non-zero in the constructor function. Also, refer to the related <u>EN-01 Constructor Improvements</u> which provides an overall enhancement for constructors.

Status

Resolved. Fixed according to the recommendation. A zero address check was added to the BridgeEndpoint and BridgeRegistry constructors.

MI-02 Set Maximum Fee for Transfers

Location:

packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeEndpoint.sol

When calling the internal _transfer() during wrapping operations, it is advisable to ensure that fees are not excessive. Since the BridgeRegistry::setMinFeePerToken() function is not capped, users could be made to pay fees in excess to their expectations. In fact, even if users check fees before initiating a transaction, they could still be frontrun and face higher fees.

Note: This issue corresponds to MI-03 from the previous ALEX XLink Bridge Stacks & EVM Chain audit report.

Recommendation

Introduce a maximumFeeToPay parameter to the transfer function. This parameter will enable users to set the maximum fee they are willing to pay. If the fee exceeds this value, the function should revert.



Status

Acknowledged.

MI-03 Non Approved Tokens Funds Are Locked

Location:

• packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeRegistry.sol

There are two functions within the contract to withdraw the registry's token balance: collectAccruedFee() and transferFixed(). However, both functions use the onlyApprovedToken modifier. This restriction means that funds of a non-approved token cannot be withdrawn from the registry. The only way to withdraw such funds is by approving the token again, which might not be desirable if the token disapproval was triggered due to a security issue.

Recommendation

Add a mechanism to withdraw non-approved token funds. This can be archived by either:

- Removing onlyApprovedToken modifier from the transferFixed() function.
- Adding a specific only-owner function to facilitate this purpose.

Note: There is no setAccruedFee() function, so any token transfer movement should consider this limitation, such as setting the accrued fee to zero when withdrawing all funds. See related <u>EN-05 Collect Accrued Fee Improvement</u>.

Status

Resolved. Fixed according to the recommendation. The transferFixed() function was restricted to only-owner access and now allows transfers of any token held by the registry.

MI-04 Floating Pragma

Contracts should be deployed with the same compiler version that they have been thoroughly tested with. Locking the pragma helps to ensure that contracts do not accidentally get deployed using, for example, an outdated compiler version that might introduce bugs that negatively affect the contract system.

Recommendation

Lock the pragma version, replacing pragma solidity ^0.8.17; with a specific patch, preferring the most updated version. For example, pragma solidity 0.8.26.

Status

Resolved. The pragma version was locked to version 0.8.17.



Enhancements

These items do not represent a security risk. They are best practices that we suggest implementing.

ID	Title	Status
EN-01	Constructor Improvements	Not implemented
EN-02	Group Modifiers To Avoid Code Repetition	Not implemented
EN-03	Set Approved Token Improvements	Implemented
EN-04	Least Privilege Principle In Registry Functions	Implemented
EN-05	Collect Accrued Fee Improvement	Not implemented

EN-01 Constructor Improvements

Location:

- packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeEndpoint.sol: 134-146
- packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeRegistry.sol:
 66-74

The constructor parameter owner is unnecessarily typed as MultisigWallet. It is only used to be cast to an address type and passed as a function argument. In BridgeEndpoint, it is only used to define the owner at line 145. In BridgeRegistry, it is used to define the owner and to set the default admin role of the AccessControl contract at lines 71 and 72.

Furthermore, executing _transferOwnership(address(owner)) can actually be replaced by invoking the Ownable contract constructor⁵ directly. This can be achieved by using Ownable(address(owner)) between the function parameters and body. If the former observation is implemented, it may also be simplified to Ownable(owner).

Status

Not implemented.

⁵



EN-02 Group Modifiers To Avoid Code Repetition

Location:

- packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeEndpoint.sol
- packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeEndpointWithAxela r.sol

In all public transfer functions, the following four modifiers are consistently used in the same order: nonReentrant, whenNotPaused, onlyAllowlisted, onlyApprovedToken(token), notContract.

Similarly, for privileged transfer functions transferToUwrap() and transferToAxelar(), six modifiers are uniformly applied in the same order: onlyApprovedRelayer, nonReentrant, whenNotPaused, onlyApprovedToken(token), notContract, notWatchlist(recipient).

Recommendation

Consider grouping these modifiers into composite modifiers to reduce code repetition and minimize potential mistakes. Say, publicTransfers is the modifier for the public transfers, and priviledgedTransfers for unwrap privileged operations.

Status

Not implemented.

EN-03 Set Approved Token Improvements

Location:

packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeRegistry.sol: 66-74

The BridgeRegistry::setApprovedToken() setter function is very powerful since it has the ability to change every field of a bridge's token and simultaneously approve or disapprove it for operation on the bridge. Adding more granularity to these features is advisable to reduce potential errors. For instance, since AccessControl::grantRole() and AccessControl::revokeRole() can be used for approving purposes, an hypothetical BridgeRegistry::setTokenDetails() can replace the current implementation just for setting the remaining fields.

Additionally, there are no boundaries for the uint256 parameters of the setApprovedToken() function. The suggested checks are as follows.

- feePctPerToken must be less than 1e18 since it is a percentage. Setting this higher leads to SUB_OVERFLOW error in BridgeEndpoint::_transfer(), as the fee will be greater than the amount.
- 2. minAmount should be less than or equal to maxAmount for correctness.



3. minFeePerToken should be less than or equal to minAmount for consistency.

Status

Implemented.

EN-04 Least Privilege Principle In Registry Functions

Location:

• packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeRegistry.sol

Some registry functions that have the onlyApproved modifier are solely called by the BridgeEndpoint contract within the audited scope. These functions are addAccruedFee(), setOrderSent() and setOrderValidatedBy(). Then remains transferFixed() which is not called by contracts within the scope and allows the transfer of arbitrary amounts of an approved token from the registry to the caller.

Evaluate whether it makes sense to make the approved role more granular by adding, for example, an endpoint role. This enhancement is related to <u>ME-02 Excessive Permission for Changing Order Status</u>.

Status

Implemented. The enhancement has been implemented as a result of fixes for issues ME-02 Excessive Permission for Changing Order Status and MI-03 Non Approved Tokens Funds Are Locked.

EN-05 Collect Accrued Fee Improvement

Location:

packages/contracts/bridge-solidity/contracts/BridgeRegistry.sol

Currently there is an addAccuredFee() function which is called by the BridgeEndpoint when receiving peg-in orders. These fees can be collected with collectAccruedFee() by the owner. However, bridge funds can vary due to the possibility of approved addresses calling transferFixed(). As a result, the registry's token balance may be less than collectAmount (line 149), causing ERC20Fixed::transferFixed() to fail due to insufficient funds.

Recommendation

It might be useful to make collectAccruedFee() flexible for the case where the total balance is less than collectAmount by transferring all balance in such cases. Note CollectAccruedFeeEvent should be updated accordingly.

Status

Not implemented.



Other Considerations

The considerations stated in this section are not right or wrong. We do not suggest any action to fix them. But we consider that they may be of interest to other stakeholders of the project, including users of the audited contracts, token holders or project investors.

Centralization

BridgeEndpoint

The whole BridgeEndpoint functionality can be paused by the owner. The owner is also responsible for managing Allowlistable functionalities and adding or removing users for the list. It is notable that onlyAllowlisted modifier is present in all the public transfer functions to initiate a wrapping process.

Furthermore, the owner is capable of managing TimeLock configurations, such as setting the TimeLock contract instance address to be used as the timeLock variable. In particular, TimeLock's releaseDelay storage variable is not bounded.

BridgeRegistry

The owner of this contract is initially set to the MultisigWallet contract. Additionally, the DEFAULT_ADMIN_ROLE is also initially assigned to it. Therefore, the MultisigWallet can perform all only-owner operations and manage access control as well.

Upgrades

Contracts are not upgradable.

Privileged Roles

All the contracts are children of OpenZeppelin's Ownable contract, so the owner can perform all inherited functions⁶.

BridgeEndpoint

Owner

The owner of the contract can call the following functions.

⁶ https://docs.openzeppelin.com/contracts/4.x/access-control#ownership-and-ownable



- pause(), unpause(). Allows pausing and unpausing the entire endpoint functionality. Note the whenNotPaused modifier is present in all transferTo*() functions and in the finalizeUnwrap() function.
- onAllowList(), offAllowList(). Turns on and off the Allowlistable functionality. When on, only listed address can call the functions guarded by the onlyAllowlisted modifier.
- addAllowlist(), removeAllowlist(). Adds and removes addresses from the allowlisted map.
- setTimeLock(). Sets the TimeLock contract instance address.
- setTimeLockThreshold(), setTimeLockThresholdByToken(). Sets the threshold amount for using the TimeLock contract. There is a general threshold and a specific threshold for each token. The maximum of both is used.

Relayer

A relayer may call the following functions.

• transferToUnwrap(). Initiates a peg-out order on the EVM chain by sending order validators' proofs.

BridgeEndpointWithAxelar

As this contract inherits from BridgeEndpoint, only changes or additional roles are documented here.

Owner

The owner of the contract can call the following functions.

• setTimeLock(). Sets the TimeLockWithAxelar contract instance address.

Relayer

A relayer can call the following functions.

• transferToAxelar(). Initiates a cross-chain peg-out order on the EVM chain by sending order validators' proofs.

BridgeRegistry

Owner

The owner of the contract can call the following functions.

- transferFixed(). Transfers an arbitrary amount of a token from the registry's balance to the owner.
- setMinFeePerToken(). Sets the minimum fee for a token.
- setRequiredValidators(). Sets the minimum required validators' proofs to consider an order valid.



- setWatchlist(). Sets an address as whitelisted or not by modifying the watchlist map. This functionality is currently unused but might be used by other contracts outside of this audit scope.
- setApprovedToken(). Adds or modifies a bridge token, including the ability to approve or disapprove it.
- collectAccruedFee(). Collects accrued fee of a certain token and sends it to the owner.
- grantValidators(), revokeValidators(). Grants or revokes addresses their VALIDATOR_ROLE.
- Since the owner is an instance of the MultisigWallet contract, the owner can also call the functions in the section below (Approved), with the caveats for two functions.
 - setOrderSent(). Allows setting an order, identified by its orderHash, as sent or unsent by modifying the orderSent map.
 - setOrderValidatedBy(). Allows setting an order as validated (or unvalidated) by a certain signer (validator) by modifying the orderValidatedBy map.

Approved

The approved role is managed by an instance of the MultisigWallet contract. The privileged calls related to this role are guarded by the onlyApproved modifier, which ensures that the caller has the APPROVED_ROLE on the MultisigWallet or that the caller is the MultisigWallet itself (essentially the owner of the contract, see <u>Assumptions</u> section). Approved addresses have the following privileges.

- addAccruedFee(). Adds accrued fee per token when performing a peg-in operation.
- setOrderSent(). Allows setting an order, identified by its orderHash, as sent by modifying the orderSent map. Changing the status from true to false is not permitted (it is an only-owner action).
- setOrderValidatedBy(). Allows setting an order as validated by a certain signer (validator) by modifying the orderValidatedBy map. Changing the status from true to false is not permitted (it is an only-owner action).

DEFAULT ADMIN ROLE

This role is initially the same as the contract owner, which is the MultisigWallet contract. AccessControl includes a special role called DEFAULT_ADMIN_ROLE, which acts as the default admin role for all roles. This role is also its own admin: it has permission to grant and revoke its own role⁷.



VALIDATOR_ROLE

Addresses with the VALIDATOR_ROLE are responsible for signing orders. This role is used in the BridgeEndpoint to validate orders.

RELAYER ROLE

TAddresses with the RELAYER_ROLE are responsible for submitting peg-out orders. The role is used in the BridgeEndpoint and BridgeEndpointWithAxelar to perform privilege transferToUnwrap() and transferToAxelar() calls.

Audit Process

A previous audit was conducted by CoinFabrik in early June, titled ALEX XLink Bridge Stacks & EVM Chain Audit 2024-06 which included the files in scope. Afterward, design changes to the protocol required a re-audit to the bridge endpoint and registry. Some of the issues from the previous audit still remain and are reported here with a corresponding note.

Changelog

- 2024-06-21 Initial report based on commit 948fd511c3ed7c15bb965515e63b8df3180e7446.
- 2024-07-08 Final report based on commit
 0dbfc65362ebf414ba3674d5e2c44b88f4e15be9.

Disclaimer: This audit report is not a security warranty, investment advice, or an approval of the ALEX XLink project since CoinFabrik has not reviewed its platform. Moreover, it does not provide a smart contract code faultlessness guarantee.