



US006492949B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Breglia et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 6,492,949 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Dec. 10, 2002**

(54) **SLOT ANTENNA ELEMENT FOR AN ARRAY ANTENNA**

(75) Inventors: **Caroline Breglia**, Methuen, MA (US);
Joseph S. Pleva, Londonderry, NH (US); **Thomas W. French**, Acton, MA (US); **Walter Gordon Woodington**, Lincoln, MA (US); **Michael Joseph Delcheccolo**, Westford, MA (US); **Mark E. Russell**, Westford, MA (US); **H. Barteld Van Rees**, Needham, MA (US)

(73) Assignee: **Raytheon Company**, Lexington, MA (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/931,633**

(22) Filed: **Aug. 16, 2001**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/226,160, filed on Aug. 16, 2000.

(51) Int. Cl.⁷ **H01Q 1/38; H01Q 1/48; H01Q 13/10**

(52) U.S. Cl. **343/700 MS; 343/846; 343/850; 343/767**

(58) Field of Search **343/700 MS, 846, 343/848, 850, 853, 772, 774, 767, 770**

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

5,008,678 A	4/1991	Herman	342/158
5,249,157 A	9/1993	Taylor	340/903
5,325,096 A	6/1994	Pakett	342/70
RE34,773 E	11/1994	Dombrowski	340/904
5,394,292 A	2/1995	Hayashida	361/179
5,396,252 A	3/1995	Kelly	342/94
5,517,196 A	5/1996	Pakett et al.	342/70
5,613,039 A	3/1997	Wang et al.	395/22

5,619,208 A	4/1997	Tamatsu et al.	342/70
5,625,362 A	4/1997	Richardson	342/70
5,633,642 A	5/1997	Hoss et al.	342/70
5,675,345 A	10/1997	Pozgay et al.	343/700 MS
5,757,307 A	5/1998	Nakatani et al.	342/70
5,929,802 A	7/1999	Russell et al.	343/70
5,959,570 A	9/1999	Russel	342/70
5,999,119 A	12/1999	Carnes et al.	342/135
6,011,507 A	1/2000	Curran et al.	342/70
6,026,347 A	2/2000	Schuster	701/301
6,107,956 A	8/2000	Russell et al.	342/70
6,104,336 A	9/2000	Curran et al.	342/70
6,114,985 A	9/2000	Russell et al.	342/169
6,130,607 A	10/2000	McClanahan et al.	340/436
6,320,547 B1 *	11/2001	Fathy et al.	343/700 MS

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

DE	198 50 128 A1	5/1999		G01S/13/44
EP	0 932 052 A2 A3	7/1999		G01S/13/93

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Barnett, Roy I. et al. "A Feasibility Study of Stripline-Fed Slots Arranged as a Planar Array with Circular Grid and Circular Boundary", IEEE, 1989, pp. 1510-1515.
Bhattacharyya, Arum, et al. "Analysis of Stripline-Fed Slot-Coupled Patch Antennas with Vias for Parallel-Plate Mode Suppression", IEEE Transactions on Antennas and Propagation, vol. 46, No. 4, Apr. 1998, pp. 538-545.

(List continued on next page.)

Primary Examiner—Tan Ho

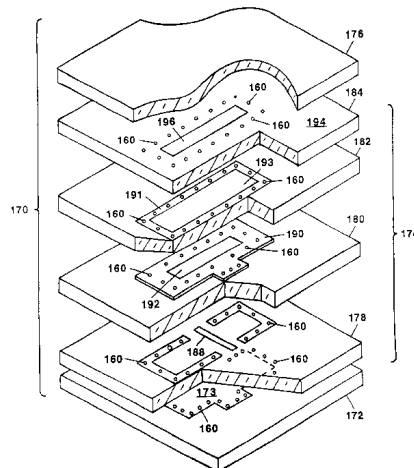
Assistant Examiner—Hoang Nguyen

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Daly, Crowley & Mofford, LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A multiple beam array antenna system comprises a plurality of radiating elements provided from stripline-fed open-ended waveguide coupled to a Butler matrix beam forming network. The Butler matrix beam forming network is coupled to a switched beam combining circuit. The antenna can be fabricated as a single Low Temperature Co-fired Ceramic (LTCC) circuit.

20 Claims, 13 Drawing Sheets



OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Clouston E.N. et al. "A Triplate Stripline Slot Antenna Developed for Time-Domain Measurements on Phased Arrays", 1998, pp. 312-315.

Das, Nirod K. et al. "Multiport Scattering Analysis of General Multilayered Printed Antennas Fed by Multiple Feed Ports: Part II-Applications", IEEE, 1992, pp. 482-491.

Katehi, Pisti B. et al. "Design of a Low Sidelobe Level Stripline Fed Slot Array Covered by a Dielectric Layer", 1989, pp. 978-981.

Kimura, Yuichi et al. "Alternating Phase Single-Layer Slotted Waveguide Arrays at 25GHz Band", IEEE, 1999, pp. 142-145.

Muir, A., "Analysis of Stripline/Slot Transition", Electronics Letter, vol. 26 No. 15, pp. 1160-1161.

Sakaibara, Kunio et al. "A Single Layer Slotted Waveguide Array for 22GHz Band Radio System Between Mobile Base Stations", IEEE, 1994, pp. 356-359.

Sangster, Alan et al. "A Moment Method Analysis of a Transverse Slot Fed by a Boxed Stripline", (No Date) pp. 146-149.

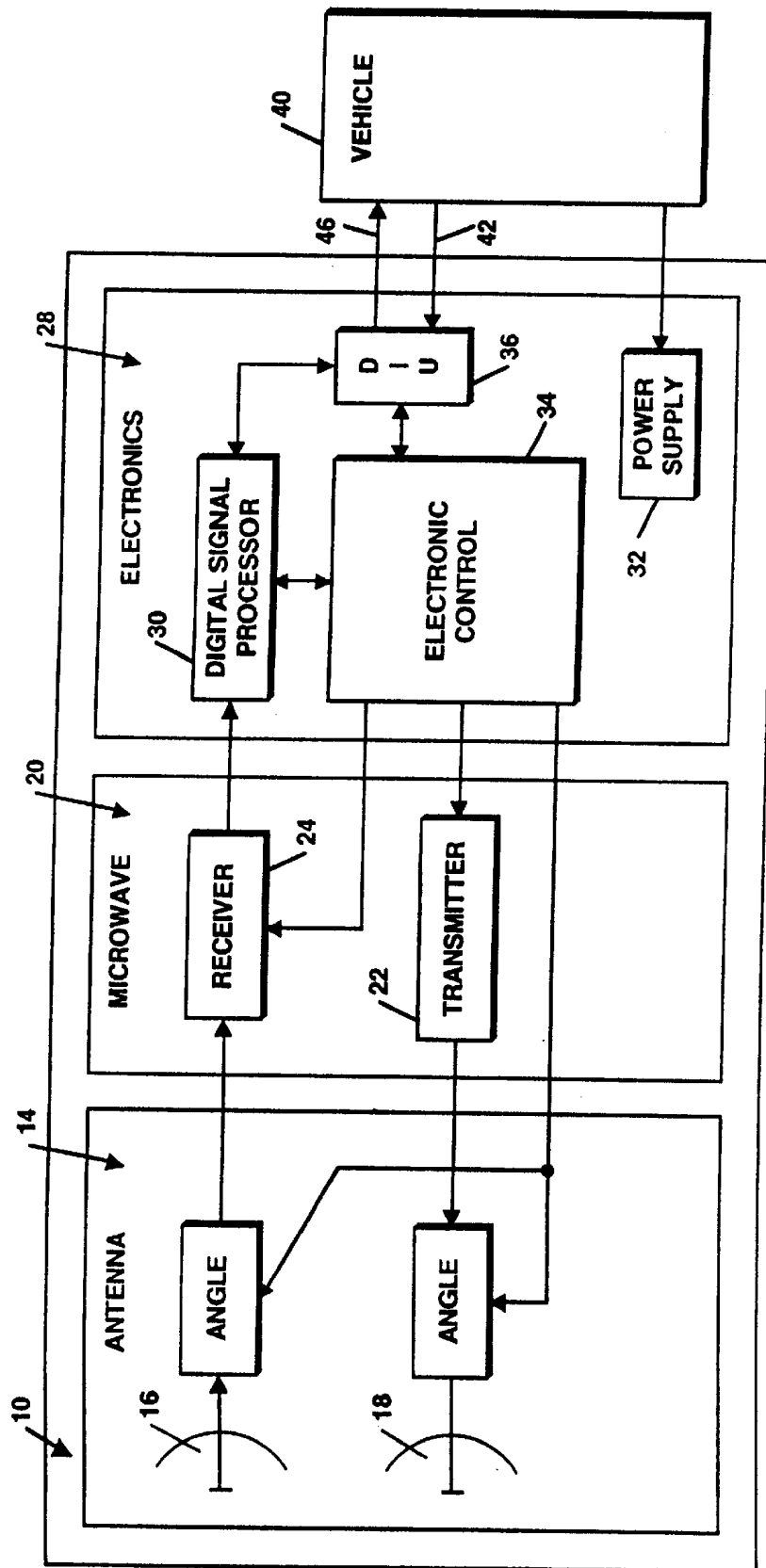
Schaubert, Daniel H. et al. "Moment Method Analysis of Infinite Stripline-Fed Tapered Slot Antenna Arrays with a Ground Plane", IEEE Transactions on Antennas and Propagation, vol. 42, No. 8, Aug. 1994, pp. 1161.

Smith, Peter "Transverse Slot Radiator in the Ground-Plane of Enclosed Stripline", 10th International Conference on Antennas and Propagation 14.17, Apr. 1997, 5 pages.

Theron, Isak Petrus et al. "On Slotted Waveguide Antenna Design at Ka-Band", IEEE Trans. vol. 32, Oct. 1984, pp. 1425-1426.

Partial International Search Report of PCT Application No. PCT/US01/25642 dated May 27, 2002.

* cited by examiner

*Figure 1*

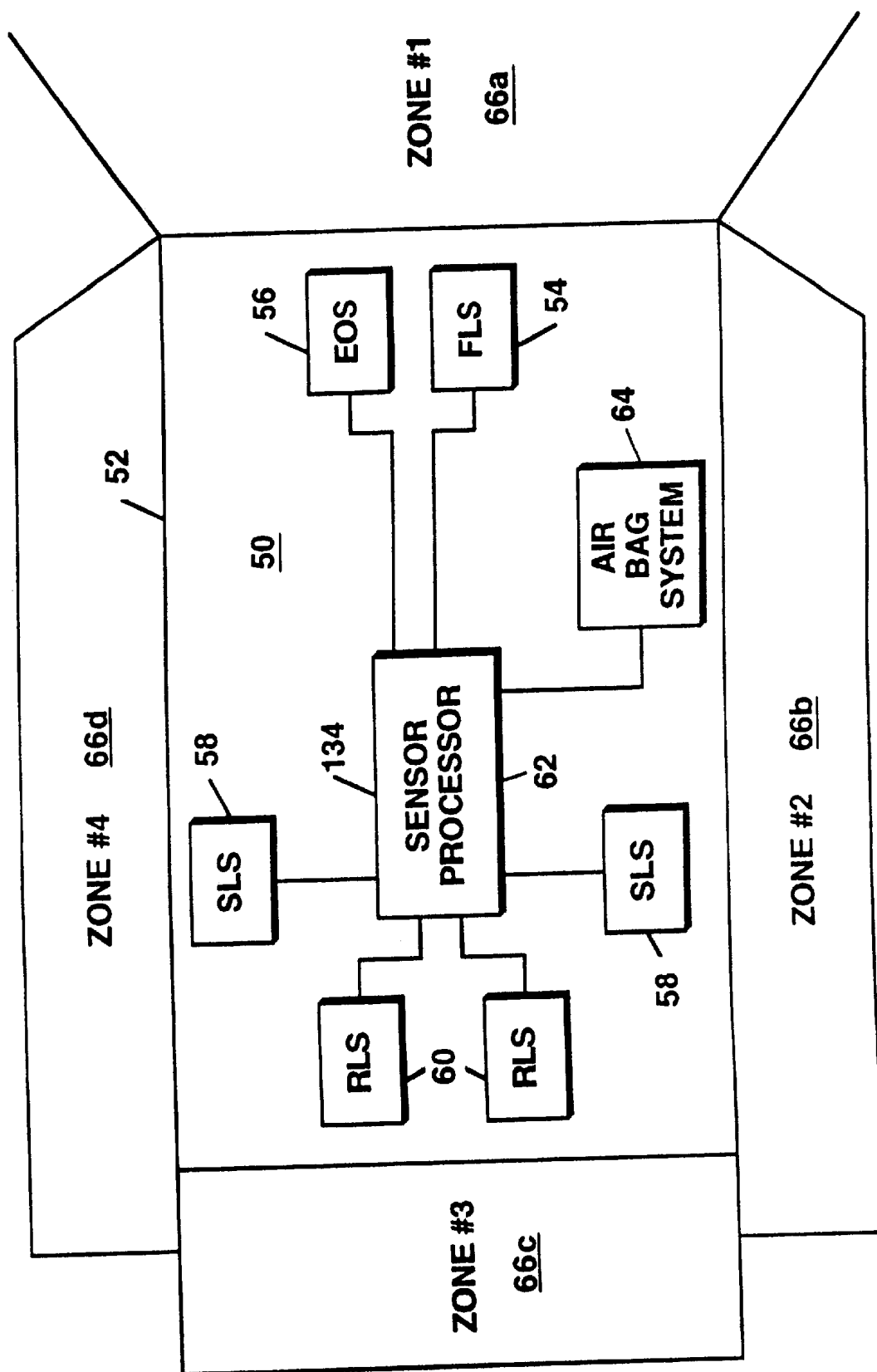


Figure 2

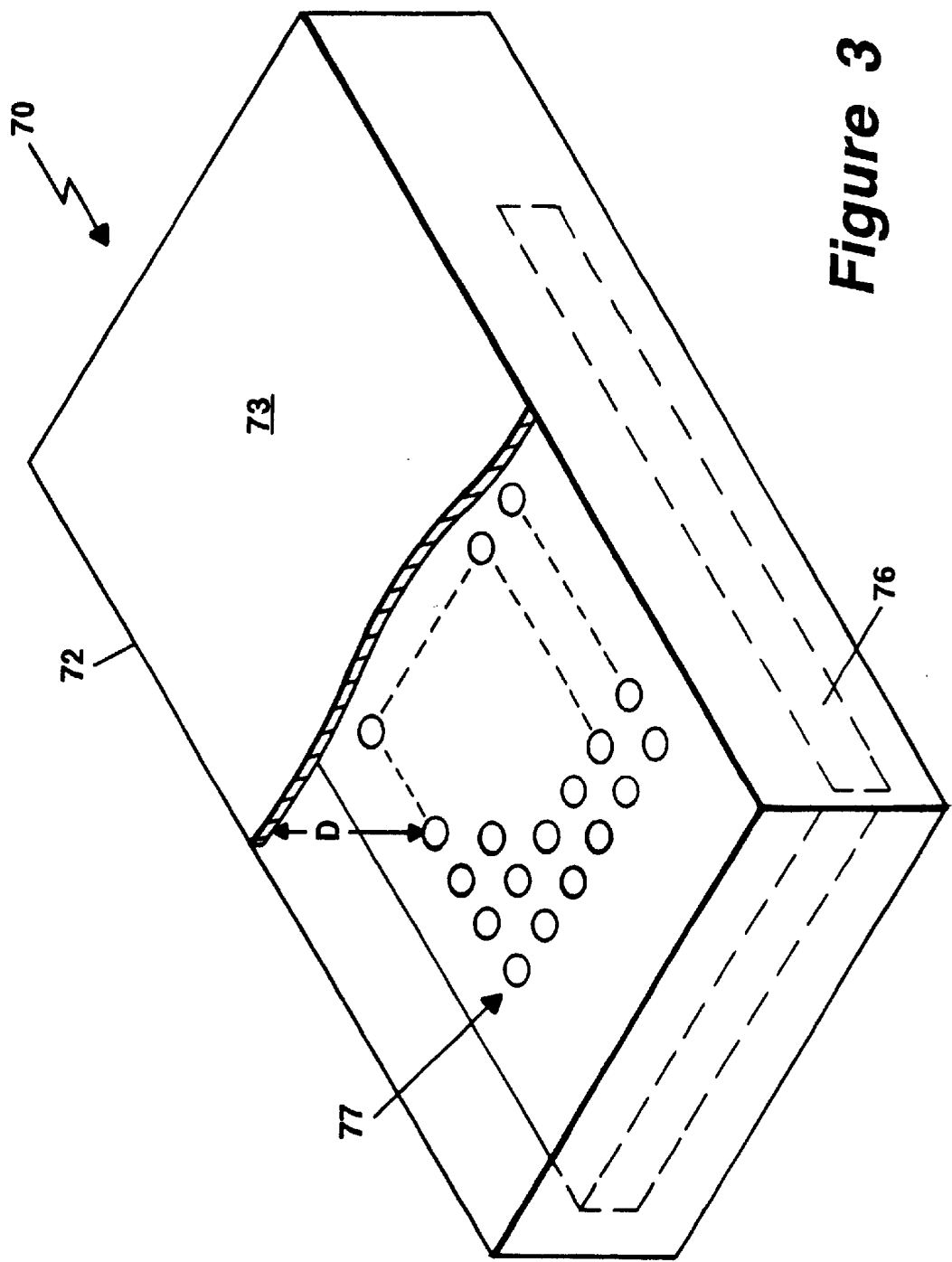


Figure 3

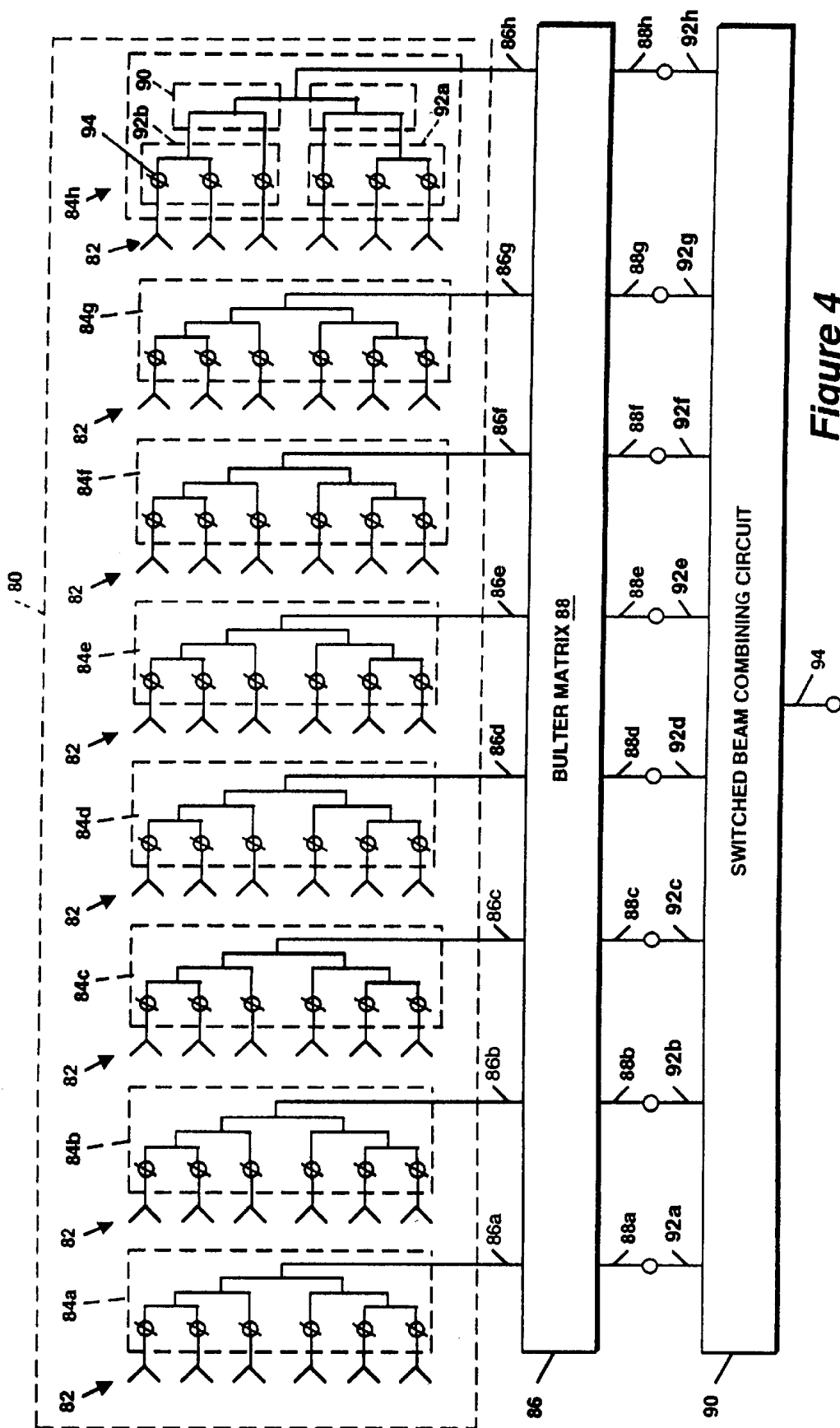


Figure 4

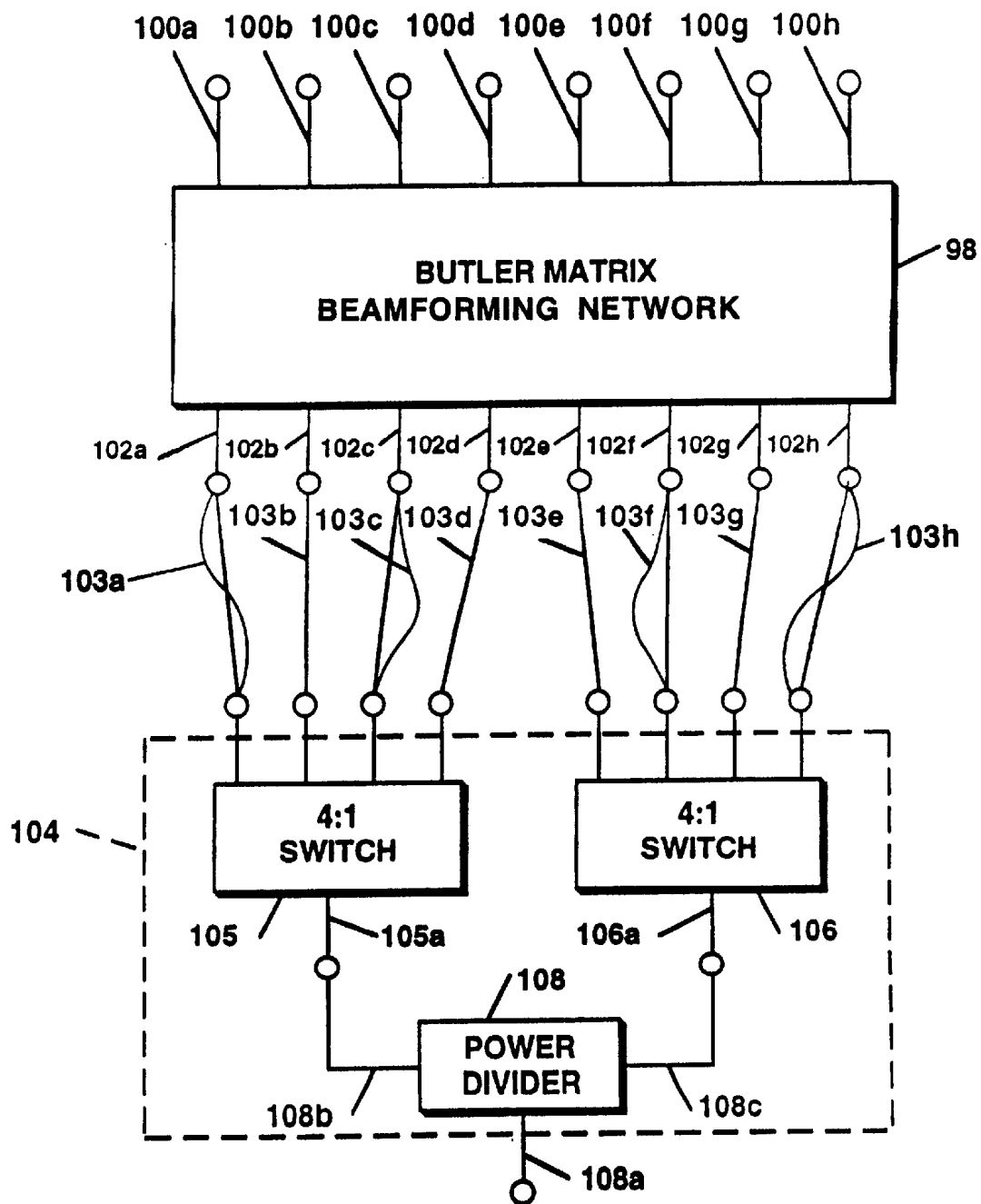
**Figure 5**

Figure 6

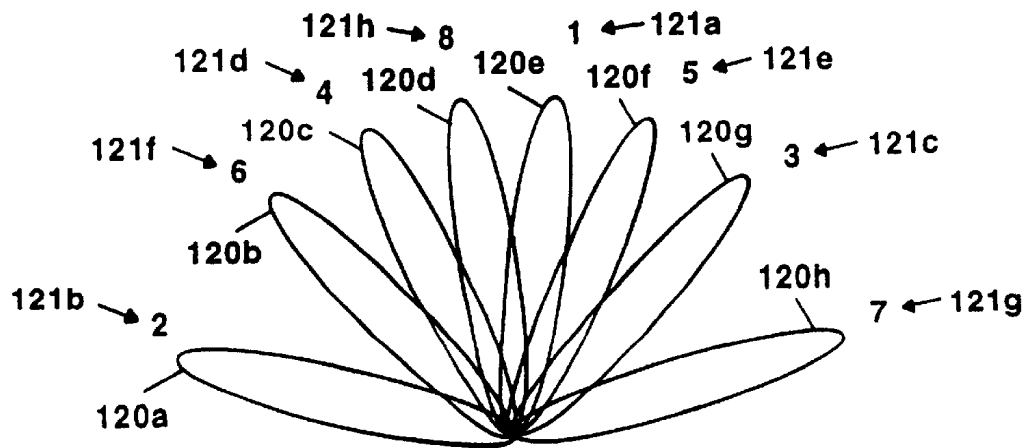


Figure 7

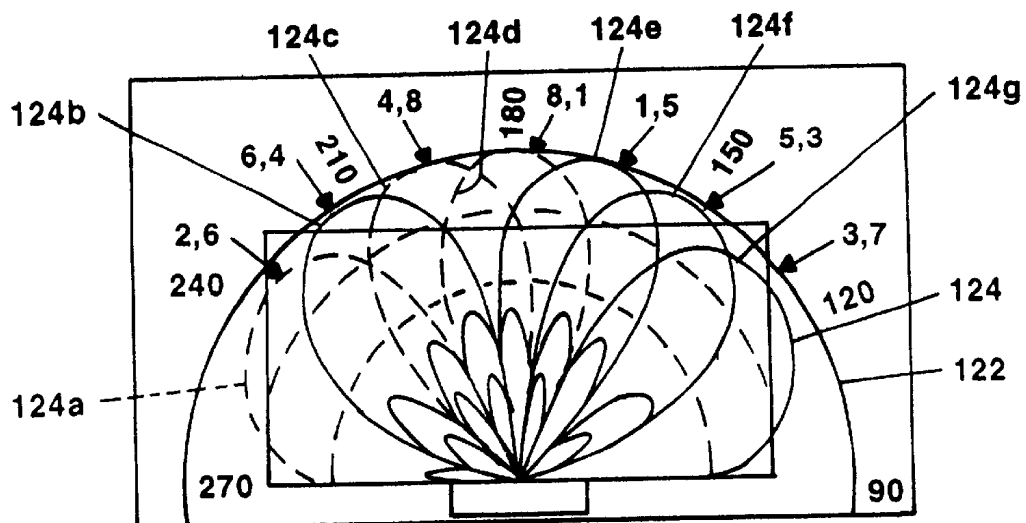


Figure 7A

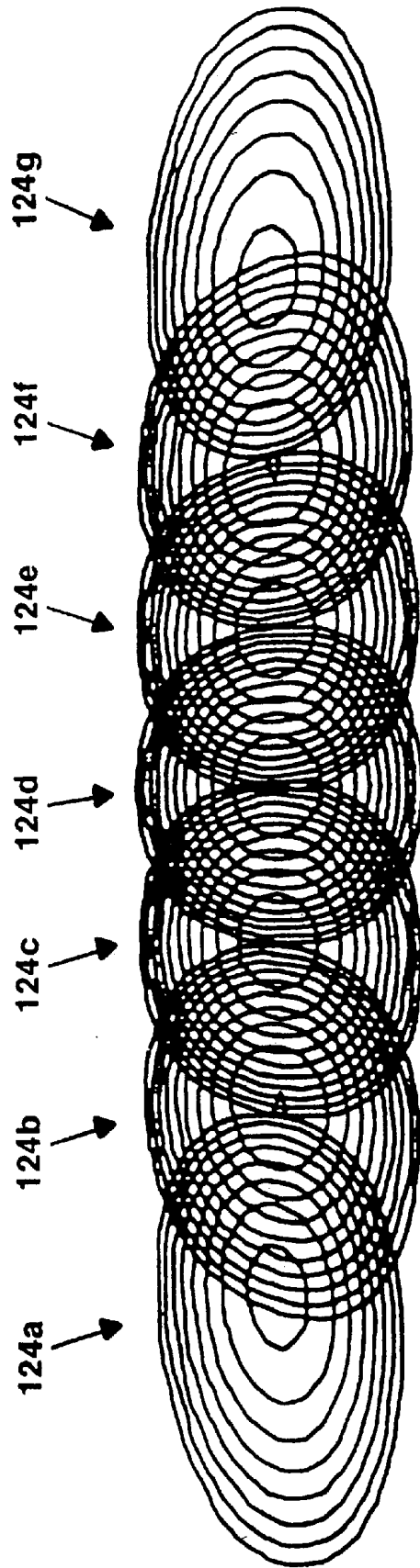
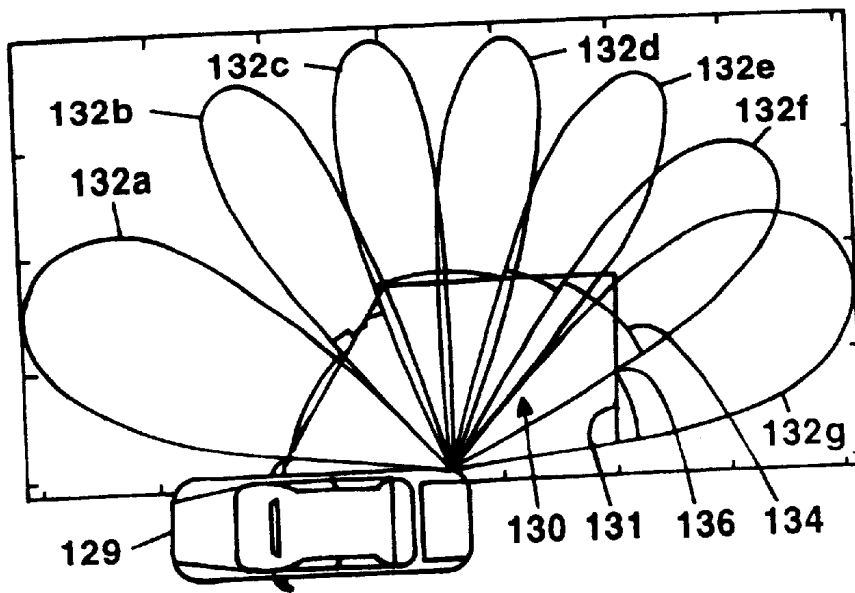
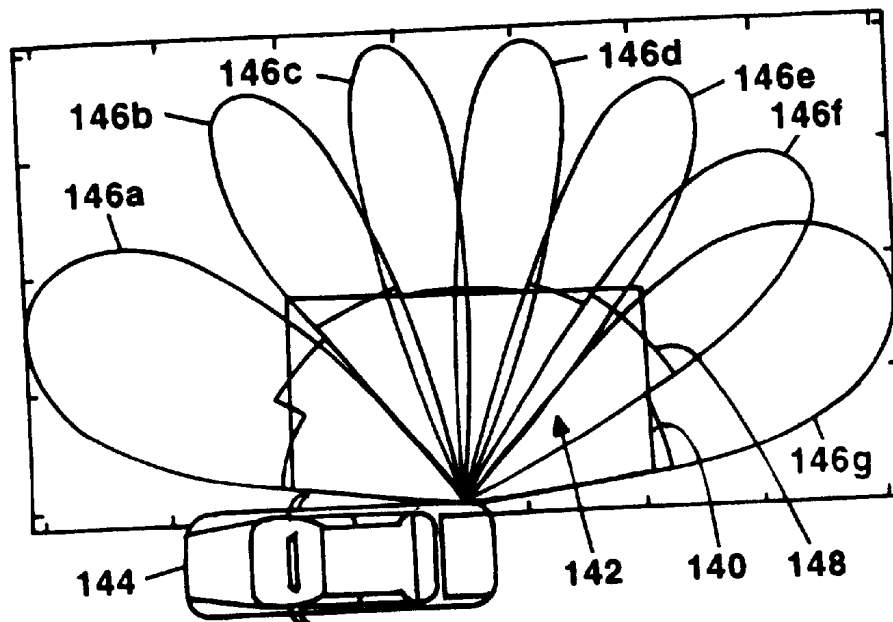
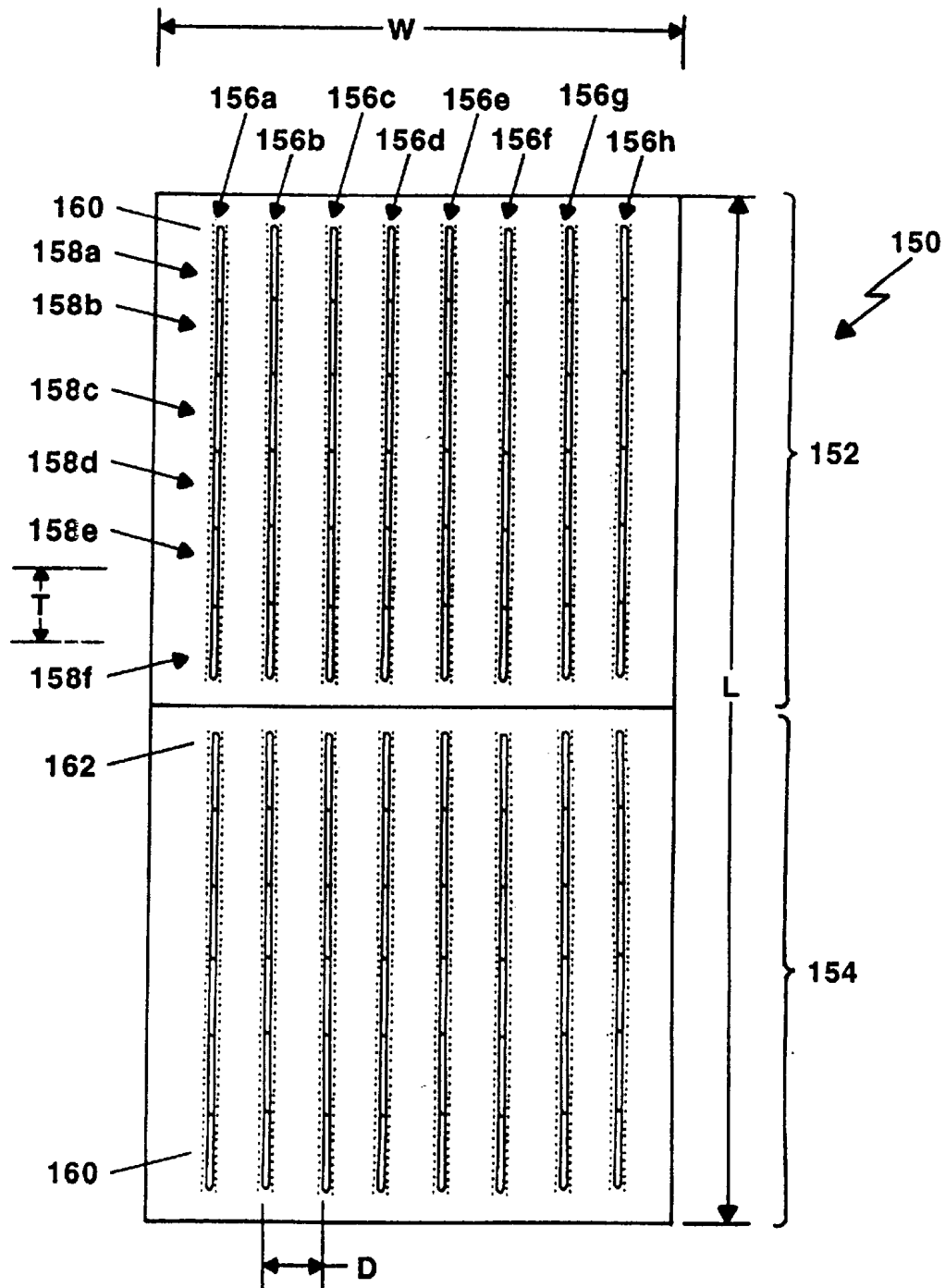


Figure 7B

**Figure 8****Figure 8A**

**Figure 9**

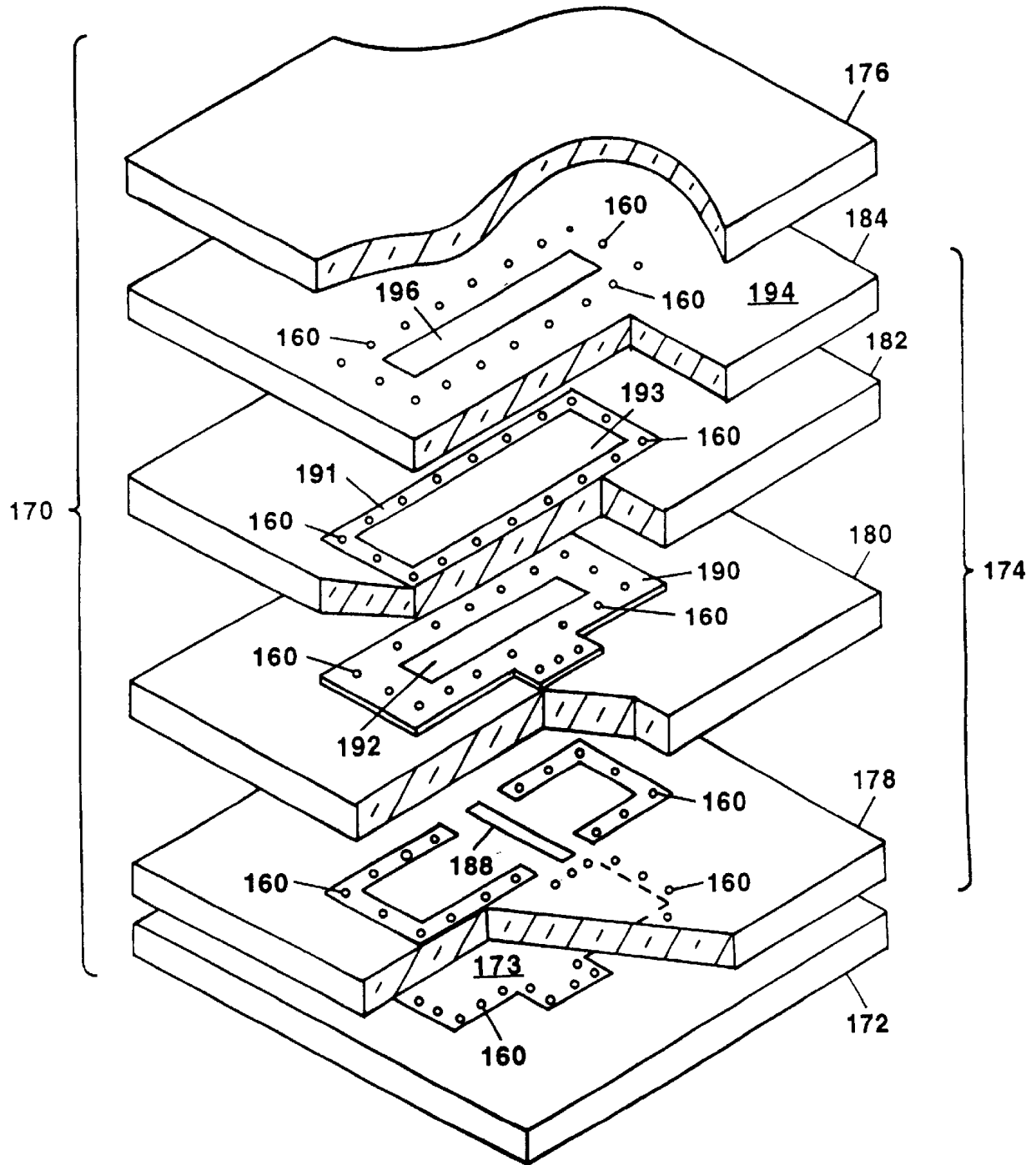


Figure 10

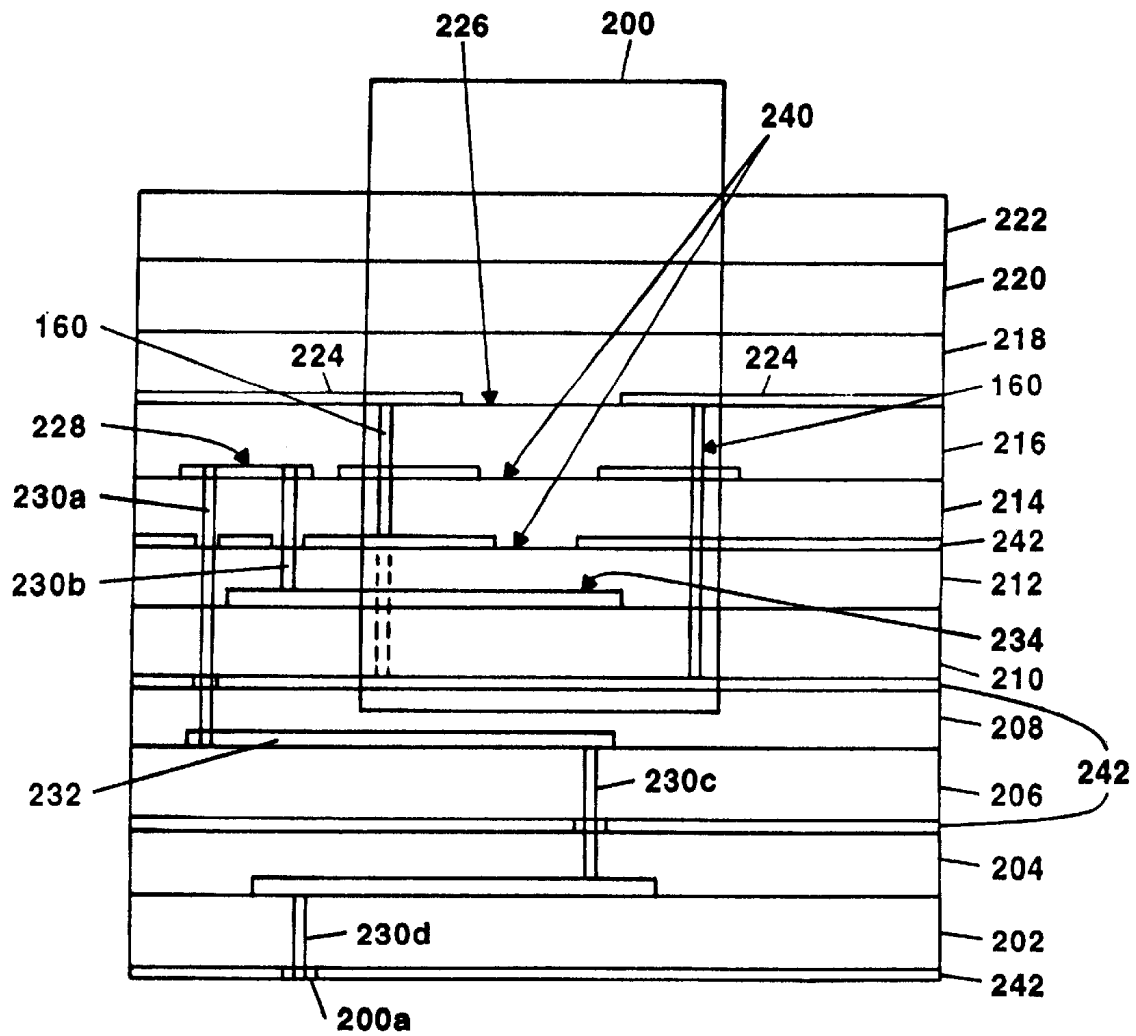


Figure 11

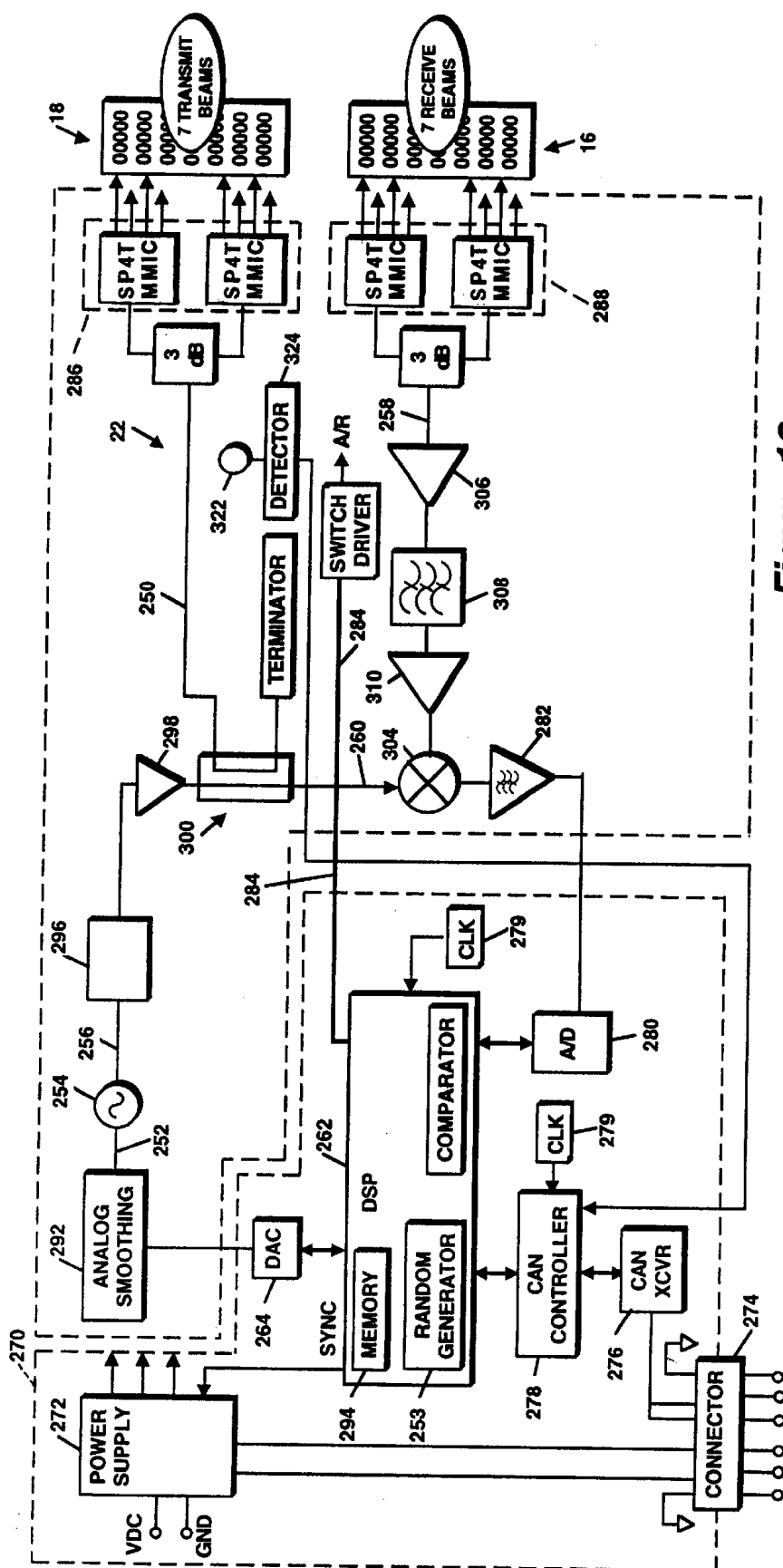


Figure 12

1

SLOT ANTENNA ELEMENT FOR AN ARRAY ANTENNA

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/226,160, filed on Aug. 16, 2000 and is hereby incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

STATEMENTS REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH

Not applicable.

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to antenna elements and more particularly to an antenna element for use in an array antenna.

2. Background of the Invention

As is known in the art, there is an increasing trend to include radar systems in commercially available products. For example, it is desirable to include radar systems in automobiles, trucks boats, airplanes and other vehicles. Such radar systems must be compact and relatively low cost.

Furthermore, some applications have relatively difficult design parameters including restrictions on the physical size of the structure in addition to minimum operational performance requirements. Such competing design requirements (e.g. low cost, small size, high performance parameters) make the design of such radar systems relatively challenging. Among, the design challenges is a challenge to provide an antenna system which meets the design goals of being low cost, compact and high performance.

In automotive radar systems, for example, cost and size considerations are of considerable importance. Furthermore, in order to meet the performance requirements of automotive radar applications, (e.g. coverage area) an array antenna is required. Some antenna elements which have been proposed for use in antenna arrays manufactured for automotive radar applications include patch antenna elements, printed dipole antenna elements and cavity backed patch antenna elements. Each of these antenna elements have one or more drawbacks when used in an automotive radar application.

For example, patch antenna elements and cavity backed patch antenna elements each require a relatively large amount of substrate area and thickness. Array antennas for automotive applications, however, have only a limited amount of area for reasons of compactness and cost. Thus, antenna elements which can operate in a high density circuit are required. Printed dipole antennas can operate in a high density circuit environment, however, array antennas provided from printed dipole antenna elements give rise to "blind spots" in the antenna radiation pattern.

It would, therefore, be desirable to provide an antenna element which is compact, which can operate in a high density circuit environment, which is relatively low cost and which can be used to provide an array antenna having relatively high performance characteristics.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the present invention, an antenna element includes a cover layer disposed over a radiator layer having a first ground plane disposed thereon with the ground plane having an aperture therein. The radiator layer is disposed over a feed circuit layer which has a second ground plane disposed thereon. A cavity is provided in the radiator

2

and feed circuit layers by disposing a plurality of via holes between the first and second ground plane layers. An antenna element feed couples energy between the feed circuit and the antenna element. A feed circuit couples energy between the antenna element feed and a butler matrix and is provided as an elevation feed which is interlaced between each of the antenna elements. With this particular arrangement, a compact slotted antenna element which utilizes a stripline-fed open ended dielectric filled cavity is provided. In one embodiment, the antenna element is provided from Low Temperature Co-fired Ceramic (LTCC) circuit substrates on which the multiple antenna elements can be disposed to provide a compact array antenna capable of switching between multiple antenna beams. The antenna element of the present invention requires only five layers and thus can be provided as a relatively low cost antenna. The radiator layers can be provided having capacitive windows formed therein for tuning the antenna element. By providing the feed circuit as an elevation feed which is interlaced between each of the antenna elements, a compact antenna which can operate in a densely packed environment is provided. A multiple beam array antenna was designed to radiate at 24 GHz. The entire antenna was fabricated in a single Low Temperature Co-fired Ceramic (LTCC) circuit. The design of the antenna included the radiating element (stripline-fed open-ended waveguide), the beam farming network (Butler Matrix), radiator feed circuit, quadrature hybrid, power dividers, and interlayer transitions.

In accordance with a further aspect of the present invention, an array antenna comprises a plurality of slotted antenna elements, each of which utilizes a stripline-fed open ended dielectric filled cavity. With this particular arrangement, a compact array antenna which can provide multiple beams is provided. The antenna can be used in a sensor utilized in an automotive radar application. In a preferred embodiment, the sensor includes a transmit and a receive antenna. In a preferred embodiment, the transmit and receive antennas are provided as a bi-static antenna pair disposed on a single substrate. In other embodiments, however, a monostatic arrangement can be used.

In accordance with a still further aspect of the present invention, a switched beam antenna system includes a plurality of antenna elements, a butler matrix having a plurality of antenna ports and a plurality of switch ports with each of the antenna ports coupled to a respective one of the plurality of antenna elements and a switch circuit having an input port and a plurality of output ports each of the switch output ports coupled to a respective one of the plurality of switch ports of the butler matrix. With this particular arrangement, a multiple beam switched beam antenna system is provided. By providing the antenna elements from a single Low Temperature Co-fired Ceramic (LTCC) substrate, the antenna system can be provided as a compact antenna system. In a preferred embodiment the radiating element are provided from stripline-fed open-ended waveguide fabricated in the LTCC substrate and the Butler matrix, radiator feed circuit, quadrature hybrid, power dividers, and interlayer transitions are also provided in the LTCC substrate.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing features of this invention, as well as the invention itself, may be more fully understood from the following description of the drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a radar system;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of an automotive near object detection (NOD) system including a plurality of radar systems;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of a side object detection (SOD) system;

FIG. 4 is block diagram of a switched beam antenna system;

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of a switched beam forming circuit;

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of a Butler matrix beam forming circuit coupled to a plurality of antenna elements;

FIG. 7 is a plot of a Butler matrix beams;

FIG. 7A is a plot of antenna system beams provided by combining predetermined ones of the Butler matrix beams;

FIG. 7B is a plot of antenna system beams provided by combining predetermined ones of the Butler matrix beams;

FIG. 8 is a diagrammatic view of a detection zone which can be provided by the SOD system of FIGS. 2A and 11;

FIG. 8A is a diagrammatic view of a second detection zone which can be provided by the SOD system of FIGS. 3 and 11;

FIG. 9 is a top view of an array aperture formed by a plurality of antenna elements;

FIG. 10 is an exploded perspective view of an antenna element;

FIG. 11 is a cross-sectional view of taken across lines 11—11 of the antenna element of FIG. 10; and

FIG. 12 is a detailed block diagram of a SOD system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to FIG. 1, a radar system 10 includes an antenna portion 14, a microwave portion 20 having both a transmitter 22 and a receiver 24, and an electronics portion 28 containing a digital signal processor (DSP) 30, a power supply 32, control circuits 34 and a digital interface unit (DIU) 36. The transmitter 22 includes a digital ramp signal generator for generating a control signal for a voltage controlled oscillator (VCO), as will be described.

The radar system 10 utilizes radar technology to detect one or more objects, or targets in the field of view of the system 10 and may be used in various applications. In the illustrative embodiment, the radar system 10 is a module of an automotive radar system (FIG. 2) and, in particular, is a side object detection (SOD) module or system adapted for mounting on an automobile or other vehicle 40 for the purpose of detecting objects, including but not limited to other vehicles, trees, signs, pedestrians, and other objects which can be located proximate a path on which the vehicle is located. As will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art, the radar system 10 is also suitable for use in many different types of applications including but not limited to marine applications in which radar system 10 can be disposed on a boat, ship or other sea vessel.

The transmitter 22 operates as a Frequency Modulated Continuous Wave (FMCW) radar, in which the frequency of the transmitted signal linearly increases from a first predetermined frequency to a second predetermined frequency. (FMCW) radar has the advantages of high sensitivity, relatively low transmitter power and good range resolution. However, it will be appreciated that other types of transmitters may be used.

Control signals are provided by the vehicle 40 to the radar system 10 via a control signal bus 42 and may include a yaw rate signal corresponding to a yaw rate associated with the vehicle 40 and a velocity signal corresponding to the velocity of the vehicle. The DSP 30 processes these control

signals and radar return signals received by the radar system 10, in order to detect objects within the field of view of the radar system, as will be described in conjunction with FIGS. 10–16. The radar system 10 provides to the vehicle one or more output signals characterizing an object within its field of view via an output signal bus 46 to the vehicle. These output signals may include a range signal indicative of a range associated with the target, a range rate signal indicative of a range rate associated with the target and an azimuth signal indicative of the azimuth associated with the target relative to the vehicle 40. The output signals may be coupled to a control unit of the vehicle 40 for various uses such as in an intelligent cruise control system or a collision avoidance system.

The antenna assembly 14 includes a receive antenna 16 for receiving RF signals and a transmit antenna 18 for transmitting RF signals. The radar system 10 may be characterized as a bistatic radar system since it includes separate transmit and receive antennas positioned proximate one another. The antennas 16, 18 provide multiple beams at steering angles that are controlled in parallel as to point a transmit and a receive beam in the same direction. Various circuitry for selecting the angle of the respective antennas 16, 18 is suitable, including a multi-position switch.

Referring now to FIG. 2, an illustrative application for the radar system 10 of FIG. 1 is shown in the form of an automotive near object detection (NOD) system 50. The NOD system 50 is disposed on a vehicle 52 which may be provided for example, as an automotive vehicle such as car, motorcycle, or truck, or a marine vehicle such as a boat or an underwater vehicle or as an agricultural vehicle such as a harvester. In this particular embodiment, the NOD system 50 includes a forward-looking sensor (FLS) system 54 which may be of the type described in U.S. Patent, an electro-optic sensor (EOS) system 56, a plurality of side-looking sensor (SLS) systems 58 or equivalently side object detection (SOD) systems 58 and a plurality of rear-looking sensor (RLS) systems 60. In the illustrative embodiment, the radar system 10 of FIG. 1 is a SOD system 58.

Each of the FLS, EOS, SLS, and RLS systems is coupled to a sensor processor 62. In this particular embodiment, the sensor processor 62 is shown as a central processor to which each of the FLS, EOS, SLS, and RLS systems is coupled via a bus or other means. It should be appreciated that in an alternate embodiment, one or more of the FLS, EOS, SLS, and RLS systems may include its own processors, such as the DSP 30 of FIG. 1, to perform the processing described below. In this case, the NOD system 100 would be provided as a distributed processor system.

Regardless of whether the NOD system 50 includes a single or multiple processors, the information collected by each of the sensor systems 54, 56, 58 60 is shared and the processor 62 (or processors in the case of a distributed system) implements a decision or rule tree. The NOD system 50 may be used for a number of functions including but not limited to blind spot detection, lane change detection, pre-arming of vehicle air bags and to perform a lane stay function. For example, the sensor processor 62 may be coupled to the airbag system 64 of the vehicle 52. In response to signals from one or more of the FLS, EOS, SLS, and RLS systems, the sensor processor 62 determines whether it is appropriate to “pre-arm” the airbag of the vehicle. Other examples are also possible.

The EOS system 56 includes an optical or IR sensor or any other sensor which provides relatively high resolution in the azimuth plane of the sensor. The pair of RLS systems 60

can utilize a triangulation scheme to detect objects in the rear portion of the vehicle. The FLS system **54** may be of the type described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,929,802 entitled Automotive Forward Looking Sensor Architecture, issued Jul. 27, 1999, assigned to the assignee of the present invention, and incorporated herein by reference. It should be appreciated that each of the SLS and RLS sensors **58**, **60** may be provided having the same antenna system.

Each of the sensor systems is disposed on the vehicle **52** such that a plurality of coverage zones exist around the vehicle. Thus, the vehicle is enclosed in a cocoon-like web or wrap of sensor zones. With the particular configuration shown in FIG. 2, four coverage zones **66a–66d** are used. Each of the coverage zones **66a–66d** utilizes one or more RF detection systems. The RF detection system utilizes an antenna system which provides multiple beams in each of the coverage zones **66a–66d**. In this manner, the particular direction from which another object approaches the vehicle or vice-versa can be found.

It should be appreciated that the SLS, RLS, and the FLS systems may be removably deployed on the vehicle. That is, in some embodiments the SLS, RLS, and FLS sensors may be disposed external to the body of the vehicle (i.e. on an exposed surface of the vehicle body), while in other systems the SLS, RLS, and FLS systems may be embedded into bumpers or other portions of vehicle (e.g. doors, panels, quarter panels, vehicle front ends, and vehicle rear ends). It is also possible to provide a system which is both mounted inside the vehicle (e.g., in the bumper or other location) and which is also removable. The system for mounting can be of a type described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/931,276, entitled Portable Object Detection System and System filed Aug. 16, 2001 or in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/930/868, entitled System and Technique for Mounting a Radar System on a Vehicle filed Aug. 16, 2001. Each of the above-identified patent applications assigned to the assignee of the present invention, and each incorporated herein by reference.

Referring now to FIG. 3, a side object detection (SOD) system **70** includes a housing **72** in which the SOD electronics are disposed. A portion of the housing has here been removed to reveal a single substrate **76** on which a plurality of antenna elements **77** are disposed. A preferred antenna array and antenna element will be described in conjunction with FIGS. 9–11 below. In this particular embodiment, the substrate **76** is provided as Low Temperature Co-fired Ceramic (LTCC) substrate **7b**. As will be described in detail below in conjunction with FIGS. 10 and 11, the single substrate **76** can be provided from a plurality of LTCC layers.

Also provided in the LTCC substrate **76** is a Butler matrix beam forming circuit, a radiator feed circuit coupled to the antenna elements **75**, a plurality of quadrature hybrid and power divider circuits as well as interlayer transition circuits.

In one embodiment, the housing **72** for the antenna is provided from an injection molded plastic PBT (polybutylene terephthalate) having a relative dielectric constant (ϵ_r) of about 3.7. The housing **72** includes a cover **73**. One characteristic of cover **73** that affects antenna performance is the cover thickness. In a preferred embodiment, the cover thickness is set to one-half wavelength (0.5λ) as measured in the dielectric. At an operating frequency of about 24 GHz, this corresponds to a cover thickness of about 0.125 inch. The antenna aperture is preferably spaced from the cover **73** by a distance D (measure from the antenna

aperture to an inner surface of the cover **73**) which corresponds to a distance slightly less than about 0.5λ as measured in air. At an operating frequency of about 24 GHz, this corresponds to about 0.2 inch. Other dimensions of the cover **73** are selected based on structure and manufacturing. The housing **72** is provided having a recess region in which the substrate **76** is disposed. The housing may be of the type described in co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/931,227, entitled Highly Integrated Single Substrate MMW Multi-Beam Sensor, filed Aug. 16, 2001, assigned to the assignee of the present invention and incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

In one embodiment, the antenna is built using Ferro's A6-M LTCC tape. The tape is provided having a thickness of about 0.010 inch pre-fired and 0.0074 inch post-fired and a dielectric constant of about 5.9. The LTCC tape has a loss characteristic at 24 GHz of 1.0 dB (more like 1.1 dB) per inch for a 0.0148 inch ground plane spacing.

LTCC was chosen for this antenna for a variety of reasons including but not limited to its potential for low cost in high volume production. Furthermore, LTCC allows compact circuit design and is compatible technology (at this frequency) for multi-layer circuits having relatively large quantities of reliable, embedded vias (approximately 1200 vias in one particular embodiment of this antenna). Surface-mount devices can also be integrated with LTCC.

Referring now to FIG. 4, a switched beam antenna system includes an antenna **80** having a plurality of antenna elements **82**. Each of the antenna elements **82** are coupled through a respective one of a plurality of elevation distribution networks **84a–84h** to a respective one of a plurality of output ports **86a–86h** of a Butler matrix beam forming network **88**. As will be described in conjunction with FIGS. 5–7 below, a signal fed to predetermined ones of the input or beam port **88a–88h** results in the antenna forming a beam which appears in a different beam location in an azimuth plane. Each of the elevation distribution networks **84** is comprised of a first two-to-one (2:1) power divider **90**, which splits the power equally to two radiator feed circuits **92a**, **92b**.

In one embodiment, the radiator feed circuit is provided from a corporate feed that provides half of the amplitude distribution in elevation. Each feed circuit **92a**, **92b** is coupled, respectively, to three “radiating elements” or more simply “radiators” through signal paths having differential line lengths. These differential line lengths provide the appropriate phase shift for the elevation beam steer.

The Butler matrix input ports are coupled to output ports of a switched beam combining circuit. The input ports of the Butler represent different antenna beam locations. These beams are independent and are simultaneously available. The location of the beams with respect to Butler port location is given in FIG. 7 where **120a–120h** represent the relative location of the beams in space, and the beam numbers **1–8** (designated by reference numerals **102a–102h**) refer to the Butler input beam port numbers as given in FIG. 6 and similarly in FIG. 5, designated with reference numbers **102a–102h**. It should be noted that adjacent beams (in space) are always located on opposite halves of the Butler input beam ports (left half of beam ports, **1,2,3** and **4** and right half of beam ports **5,6,7** and **8**). The combination of adjacent orthogonal beams will give a resulting beam having a cosine aperture distribution, and therefore lower sidelobe levels. By placing a 4-way switch (designated with reference numbers **105**, **106** in FIG. 5) each half of the Butler input beam parts access to any adjacent pair of beams is realized. The inputs

7

of the two 4-way switches **105a** and **106a** (FIG. 5) are then combined through an equal power divider **108**. In this way, the single input to the power divider **108a** is connected to one of seven combined beams (designated as **124a–124g** in FIG. 7A). The beam combinations in FIG. 7A, are represented by the numbered pairs (2,6), (6,4), (4,8), (8,1), (1,5), (5,3), (3,7). That is, beam **124a** (FIG. 7A) is provided from the combination of beams 2 and 6 represented as (2, 6). Similarly, beam **124b** (FIG. 7A) is provided from the combination of beams 6 and 4 represented as (6, 4); beam **124c** (FIG. 7A) is provided from the combination of beams 4 and 8 represented as (4, 8); beam **124d** (FIG. 7A) is provided from the combination of beams 8 and 1 represented as (8, 1); beam **124e** (FIG. 7A) is provided from the combination of beams 1 and 5 represented as (1, 5); beam **124f** (FIG. 7A) is provided from the combination of beams 5 and 3 represented as (5, 3); and beam **124g** (FIG. 7A) is provided from the combination of beams 3 and 7 represented as (3, 7).

These numbered pairs also represent the switch location for left and right switches **105**, **106** (FIG. 5), respectively. For example, if switch **105** is set to select port 1 designated as reference number **102a** in FIG. 5 (i.e. provide a low impedance signal path between port 1 and switch port **105a**) and switch **106** is set to select port 8 designated by reference number **102h** in FIG. 5. The resulting combined beam at power divider port **108a** is beam **8,1** which is the center beam.

Referring now to FIG. 5, a Butler matrix beam forming network **98** is shown having a plurality of antenna element ports **100a–100h** (which may correspond, for example, to ports **86a–86h** of FIG. 4) and a plurality of switch ports **102a–102h** (which may correspond, for example, to ports **88a–88h** of FIG. 4). The switch ports **102a–102h** are coupled through transmission lines **103a–103h** to a switched beam combining circuit **104**. As is known, the port phasing for Butlers have 180° phase difference and the curved signal paths **103a,103c** represent 180° differential line lengths required to bring all of the ports in phase with each other. The switched beam combining circuit **104** is here provided from a pair of single pole four throw switches **105**, **106**, each of the switches **105**, **106** having a common port **105a**, **106a** coupled to the output port of a power divider circuit **108**. The power divider circuit **108** is provided such that a signal fed to an input port **108a** has an equal phase equal power level at the output ports **108b**, **108c**.

Referring now to FIG. 6, a plurality of antenna elements **110a–110h** are coupled to ports **100a–100h** of a Butler matrix beam forming network **112**. The Butler matrix beam forming network **112** is here shown provided from a plurality of power divider circuits **114**. The circuits **114** are provided as quadrature, or 90°, stripline ring hybrids which are coupled as shown to provide the Butler Matrix Circuit. These hybrids have a 3 dB power split with a 90° phase difference in the outputs of the through and coupled arms.

The Butler matrix is a lossless beam forming network that forms orthogonal beams at fixed locations. The beam locations are a function of the spacing of the antenna elements in an antenna array (referred to as an array lattice spacing). In this particular embodiment, the Butler matrix **112** uses quadrature hybrid circuits **114** and fixed phase shifts to form the multiple beams. As will be explained in further detail below, the fixed phase shifts are provided from differential line lengths **115** where the path lengths are indicated by the 2n's, 3n's and 1n's in FIG. 6, where $n=\pi/8$ radians. Other techniques for providing the fixed phase shifts can also be used.

Typically, for narrow bandwidths, the fixed phase shifts are simply differential line lengths. The unit of phase shift is

8

$\pi/8$ radians or $\lambda/16$. There are 2^N beams. Butler gives the following equation to calculate the beam locations:

$$\text{beamloc}(M) := \text{asin}\left[\frac{\lambda}{N \cdot d} \cdot \left(M - \frac{1}{2}\right)\right] \cdot \frac{180}{\pi}$$

where;

λ is the wavelength of the center frequency;
N is the number of elements;
d is the element spacing; and
M is the beam number.

Referring now to FIG. 7, in this particular embodiment, the Butler matrix forms eight beams **120a–120h**. That is, by providing an input signal to one of the Butler matrix input ports **112a–112h**, the antenna **110** produces a corresponding one of the beams **120a–120h**. The calculations for determining the beam locations can be found using the equations below:

$$\text{Wavelength (inches): } \lambda := \frac{11.81}{24}$$

$$\text{Number of Elements } N := 8$$

$$\text{Elements Spacing (Azimuth): } d := .223$$

$$\text{Beam Location (Degrees): } \text{beamloc}(M) := \text{asin}\left[\frac{\lambda}{N \cdot d} \cdot \left(M - \frac{1}{2}\right)\right] \cdot \frac{180}{\pi}$$

$$\text{Beam Number: } M := 1 \dots \frac{N}{2}$$

If the array is provided having an array lattice spacing of 0.223" in azimuth, the beam locations shown in FIG. 7 are provided. In one embodiment the differential line length value, n is selected to be $\frac{1}{16}\lambda$ which corresponds to 0.0127 inch at a frequency of 24 GHz. FIG. 7 also illustrates which beam-ports in FIG. 6 produce which beams.

Referring now to FIG. 7A, a calculated antenna radiation pattern **122** includes seven beams **124a–124g** which can be used in a radar system. The seven beams are provided by combining predetermined ones of the eight beams formed by the Butler Matrix as discussed above. Adjacent beams (e.g. beams **120a**, **120b** from FIG. 7) can be combined to produce beam **124a** as illustrated in FIG. 7A. Since beams out of a Butler Matrix by definition are orthogonal, combining beams in azimuth produces a $\cos(\theta)$ taper with a peak sidelobe level of 23 dB (with respect to the beam maximum).

The locations of the combined beams are listed in the Table below.

TABLE

Combined Beam	Beam Location
8,1	0
4,8 & 1,5	+/-16
6,4 & 5,3	+/-34
2,6 & 3,7	+/-57

In elevation, there is also a 25 dB Chebyshev taper and a 15° beam steer.

Referring now to FIG. 7B, the resultant combined beam array factor is shown. The combined beams are errorless contours in U-V space with a 20 dB floor. They assume a $\cos(\theta)$ element factor. The plots are a representation of the seven combined beams in azimuth with the 15° beam steer in elevation.

It should be appreciated that producing the $\cos(\theta)$ taper in azimuth with the adjacent beam combining was a cost driven design choice. Instead, the taper could have been produced using attenuators. However, these would have required the use of embedded resistors in the LTCC circuit. Using embedded resistors on an LTCC tape layer would add another processing Step in the manufacture of the LTCC circuit. Therefore, using attenuators to produce the azimuth distribution would have increased the cost of the antenna. Moreover, the technique of the present invention simplifies the switch network by eliminating a 2-way switch.

Referring now to FIGS. 8 and 8A, two different examples of side detection zones are shown. In FIG. 8, a vehicle 129 has a maximum detection zone 130 disposed thereabout. The maximum detection zone 130 is defined by a detection zone boundary 131. In this example, the maximum detection zone boundary 130 is provided having a trapezoidal shape. An exemplary SOD system provides seven azimuthal beams 132a–132g each with a different maximum detection range, as indicated by the shaded region, and as determined by a detection algorithm that operates upon the beam echoes. The algorithmic control of the maximum detection range of each of the eight beams defines the shape of an actual maximum detection zone boundary 134 versus a specified nominal detection zone boundary 136. The manner in which an object is detected is described in co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/930,869, entitled Radar Detection Method and Apparatus, filed Aug. 16, 2001 assigned to the assignee of the present invention and incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

The exemplary SOD system of FIGS. 8 and 8A, has seven beams, each with a beam width of approximately fifteen degrees and with a total azimuth scan of about one hundred fifty degrees. It will be recognized by one of ordinary skill in the art that other numbers of beams (e.g. fewer or more than seven) and scan angles are possible without departing from the present invention. The particular number of antenna beams to use in a particular application is selected in accordance with a variety of factors including but not limited to shape of coverage zone, size of coverage zone, required Azimuth resolution, complexity and cost.

Referring now to FIG. 8A, a boundary 140 having a substantially rectangular shape defines a detection zone 142 about a vehicle 144. Again, an exemplary system provides seven azimuthal antenna beams 146a–146g each of the antenna beams 146a–146g having a different maximum detection range 148 as indicated by shading. The maximum detection ranges 148 being different from beams 132a–132g (FIG. 8) so as to form a different actual maximum detection zone.

Referring now to FIG. 9, an array antenna 150 having a length L and width W includes a transmit array 152 and a receive array 154. Each of the arrays 152, 154 includes eight rows 156a–156g and six columns 158a–158f. Thus each of the transmit and receive arrays 152, 154 have forty-eight radiating elements (or more simply “radiators” or “elements”), generally denoted 162, with eight elements in azimuth and six elements in elevation.

As will be described in detail in conjunction with FIGS. 10 and 11; each radiating element 162 is a stripline-fed open-ended cavity in LTCC. The cavity is formed in the LTCC using embedded vias, generally denoted 160, that create the “cavity walls.” Each of the arrays 152, 154 have a rectangular lattice spacing: 0.223" (azimuth) × 0.295" (elevation). The azimuth spacing is driven by the Butler matrix to yield desired beam locations which provided desired detection zones. The elevation spacing is driven by an elevation

beamwidth requirement and the maximum spacing needed to avoid a cover induced scan blindness.

In an automotive radar application, the antenna is enclosed in a plastic housing and will radiate through the housing cover (e.g. as shown in FIG. 3). In one embodiment, the housing cover can be incorporated into the radiator design. In a preferred embodiment, however, the antenna radiates through a housing cover spaced about one-half wavelength from the antenna aperture as shown in FIG. 3. In this approach, the antenna, can have an antenna cover disposed thereover, but the cover can be made of additional layer of LTCC (e.g. as represented by layer 176 in FIG. 10).

Referring now to FIG. 10, in which like elements of FIG. 9 are provided having like reference designations, a radiating element 170 which may be used for example in the antennas described in conjunction with FIGS. 2A, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 11 includes a ground plane layer 172 having first and second opposing surfaces with a ground plane 173 disposed over the second surface thereof. A plurality of radiating layers 174 are disposed over the second surface of the ground plane layer 172. Each of the radiating layers 174 has an antenna structure included thereon as will be described below in detail below. Suffice it here to say that structures on each of the radiating layers 174 are appropriately aligned relative to the ground plane 173.

An antenna element cover layer 176 is disposed over the radiating layers 174. In one embodiment, the element cover layer 176 for the antenna 170 is incorporated into the radiator 170. In one particular embodiment in which the element operates at a frequency of about 24 GHz, the element cover layer 176 is provided having a thickness of about 0.038 inches and a dielectric constant of about 3.5 and is used to “tune” the radiator 170 (i.e. the cover 176 is utilized to help provide the antenna element 170 having an appropriate response to signals in a desired frequency range).

In another embodiment, to be described below in conjunction with FIG. 10, the cover layer 176 is provided from LTCC having a thickness of about 22.2 mils. In this embodiment the cover layer can be provided from three 10 mil (prefired) tape layers (e.g. layers 218–222 in FIG. 11).

In the embodiment of FIG. 9, the radiating layers are provided from four layers 178–184. Each of the radiating layers 178–184 are provided as LTCC tape layers. The layers are provided having a thickness of about 10 mil (prefired) and about 7.4 mil (post fired) with a nominal ϵ_r of about 5.9 and a loss tangent typically of about 0.002.

Layer 178 is provided having a conductive strip 188 disposed thereon which corresponds to an antenna element feed circuit 188. The layer 180 is provided having a conductive material 190 disposed thereon which corresponds to a ground plane 190. Thus, feed circuit 188 is disposed between upper and lower ground planes and thus layer 178 corresponds to a stripline feed layer 178.

The ground plane 190 is provided having an aperture 192 therein and thus layer 180 corresponds to both a ground plane layer and a capacitive layer 180. Layer 182 is provided having a conductive trace 191 disposed thereon through which vias 160 are disposed. The conductive trace 191 forms an aperture 193. Disposed over the layer 182 is the layer 184 which is provided having a ground plane 194 disposed on a top or second surface thereof. The ground plane has a portion thereof removed to form an aperture 196.

Conductive vias 160 pass through each of the layers 172 and 178–184 to form a cavity. Thus, the ground plane layer 172, radiating layers 174 (and associated structures disposed on the radiating layers 174) and cover layer 176 form the radiating element 170 as a stripline-fed open-ended cavity

formed in LTCC. The cavity is formed in the LTCC by the embedded vias **160** which provide a continuous conductive path from a first or top surface of aperture layer **184** to a second or top surface of the ground plane layer **172** and is fed by the stripline probe **188**.

In one particular embodiment the cavity is provided having a length of 0.295 inches, a width of 0.050 inches and a height of 0.0296 inches (0.295"x0.050"x0.0296"). The capacitive windows **192** were used on the aperture and as internal circuit layers far tuning the radiator.

In this particular embodiment, the design of the radiator **170** was driven by the desire to reduce the number of LTCC layers, and here the cost. Due to the low cost requirement of the antenna, the antenna itself was specified to have a maximum number of eight LTCC tape layers. As described above in conjunction with FIG. 5, the Butler Matrix circuit is comprised of four LTCC tape layers or two stripline circuit layers. Due to the size and circuit layout of the Butler Matrix, it was necessary to split the beam forming network between two stripline circuit layers or four LTCC tape layers. Therefore, there were four LTCC tape layers available for the radiator. In addition, these remaining four LTCC circuit layers also needed to include the elevation distribution network. This resulted in an RF circuit having a relatively high density of circuits on those layers.

In this particular embodiment, the antenna element **170** includes the reactive apertures or windows **192**, **193** and **196** which are used to provide the radiating element **170** having a desired impedance match to free space impedance. The reactive apertures **192**, **193**, **196** as well as the element cover **176** are used to match the impedance of the feed line **188** to free space impedance. Thus, the radiating element **170** includes tuning structures on a plurality of different layers, here three different layers of the radiator, which can be used to provide the antenna element **170** having a desired impedance.

The cover **176** was provided from LTCC and was utilized as a tuning structure as well. However, dielectric covers are often associated with scan blindness phenomena in arrays. An analysis of the scan reflection coefficient for different cover thicknesses was performed to ensure that scan blindness effects would not hinder the performance of the antenna.

The results of the scan blindness analysis for a variety of cover thicknesses for scan reflection coefficient (due to the cover **176**) vs. the scan angle in degrees revealed that a preferred range of cover thicknesses is 0.0020 inch to 0.030 inch. At these cover thicknesses, the scan reflection coefficient is relatively small in the azimuth scan at the farthest scan angle of 75°. Therefore, this range of covers should not produce any scan blindnesses in the array in the azimuth scan to 75°.

In one embodiment, a 0.022 inch thick cover, the closest multiple of 7.4 mils to the optimum thickness using analytic techniques was used in the design of the radiator. An elevation scan analysis indicated that there would be no scan blindness effects with any of the covers at an elevation beam steer of 15°.

Referring now to FIG. 11 in which like elements of FIG. 10 are provided having like reference designations, a radiating element **200** and associated feed circuits are provided from eleven LTCC tape layers **202–222**, each of the layers having a post-fired thickness typically of about 0.0074 inch and having a (stripline) ground plane spacing of 0.0148 inch. The element **200** has an element signal port **200a** provided in layer **202**.

The radiating element **200** is provided from the structures to be described below provided in the layers **210–222** as

shown. It should be noted that cover layers **218–222** (which may correspond to cover layer **176** in FIG. 10) are integral to the radiating element **200**. Layer **216** has a ground plane **224** disposed thereon. Portions of the ground plane are removed to form an aperture **226**.

A power divider circuit **228** is coupled through conductive vias **230a**, **230b** to a conductive trace **232** and a strip line feed circuit **234**, respectively. Thus, an elevation feed circuit is interlaced with the element **200**.

Capacitive windows **240** are formed on layers **214**, **216** via by disposing ground plane material on the layers **214**, **216** and providing openings in the ground planes. Layers **202**, **204** and **208** are also provided having ground planes **242** disposed thereon. Layers **202–208** are dedicated to a Butler Matrix circuit while layers **210–216** are dedicated to the radiator and feed circuit.

The embedded vias **160** in the LTCC are used for forming the waveguide structure of the radiator in the LTCC while vias **230a**, **230b**, **230c**, **230d** are used for transitioning between the circuits on the different layers **202–216**. As can be seen in FIGS. 9 and 10, the embedded vias **160** form a waveguide structure and share the same layers as the power divider circuit **228** and the radiator feed circuit **234**.

The LTCC manufacturing flow comprises eight operations which are defined as: tape blanking, via formation, via filling, conductor deposition, lamination, wafer firing, continuity test, and dicing. The following is a brief description of each of the eight operations.

Raw LTCC is supplied in tape form on spools having a standard width of either seven or ten inches. Typical tape area per roll ranges from 4200 to 6000 sq. in. and is also predetermined at time of order. The blanking of LTCC tape is performed manually with the use of an arbor blanking die. Tape is blanked to either a 5" or a 7" manufacturing format size. An orientation hole is also introduced during the blanking operation which references the LTCC tape's as-cast machine and transverse directions. This orientation hole will ultimately allow for layers to be identified and cross-plyed in order to optimize total product shrinkage at firing.

The creation of Z-axis via holes is performed through the use of a high speed rapid punch system. The system is driven by punch CAD/CAM data which is electronically down loaded via ethernet directly to the manufacturing work cell. The supplied punch files contain X- Y-coordinate locations for via formation. Individual tape layers, in either a 5' or 7' format, are mounted into single layer tape holders/frames. These framed layers are subsequently loaded into a handling cassette which can house a maximum of 25 LTCC tape layers. The cassette is loaded and is handled automatically at the work center when respective punch programs are activated. The high speed punch processes via holes in tape layers individually and ultimately indexes through the entire cassette. Via holes are formed at typical rates of 8 to 10 holes per second. At the completion of via formation for a particular tape layer the cassette is unloaded from the work center, processed tape layers removed, and the cassette is reloaded for continue processing.

LTCC tape layers which have completed respective via formation operations require the insertion of Z-axis conductors in order to ultimately establish electrical interface with upper and lower product layers. The via filling operation requires the use of positive pressure displacement techniques to force conductive pastes into via formed holes in the dielectric tape. Mirror image stencils are manufactured for respective tape layers which feature all punched via hole locations; these stencils are fixtured on a screen printing

work cell. LTCC tape layers are soft fixtured onto a porous vacuum stone. The stone is indexed under the stencil where a preset pressure head travels over the stencil forcing deposited conductor paste through the stencil and into the dielectric tape. Each tape layer is processed in a similar fashion; all layers are dried, driving off solvents, prior to follow on operations.

Via filled dielectric tape layers require further processing to establish X- and Y-axis conductor paths. The deposition of these conductor mediums provides "from-to" paths on any one LTCC layer surface and originate from and terminate at filled via locations. The conductor deposition operation employs the same work center as described in the via filling operation with the exception that wire mesh, emulsion patterned screens are substituted for through hole stencils. The technique for fixturing both the screen and the tape product is also the same. All product layers are serially processed in this fashion until deposition is complete, again, all layers are dried prior to follow on operations.

Prior to lamination all previous tape processing operations occur in parallel with yield fallout limited to respective layer types. The lamination operation requires the collation and marriage of parallel processed layers into series of independent wafers. Individual layers, (layers 1,2,3, . . . n), are sequentially placed upon a lamination caul plate; registration is maintained through common tooling which resides in all product layers. The collated wafer stack is vacuum packaged and placed in an isostatic work cell which provides time, temperature, and pressure to yield a leathery wafer structure.

Laminated wafers are placed on firing setters and are loaded onto a belt furnace for product densification. Firing is performed in a single work cell which performs two independent tasks. The primary operation calls for the burning off of solvents and binders which had allowed the tape to remain pliable during the via formation, filling, conductor deposition, and lamination operations. This binder burnout occurs in the 350–450° C. range. The wafer continues to travel down the belt furnace and enters the peak firing zone where crystallization, and product densification occurs; temperatures ranging to 850–860° C. are typical. Upon cool down the wafers exit the furnace as a homogeneous structure exhibiting as-fired conditions. All product firing occurs in an air environment. Post firing operations would not require wafers to be processed through an additional binder burnout steps but would only require exposure to the 850° C. densification temperatures.

Continuity net list testing is performed on individual circuits in wafer form. Net list data files are ethernet downloaded to the net probe work center and are exercised against respective wafer designs. Opens and shorts testing of embedded nets, and capacitance and resistive load material measurements defines the bulk work center output. Failures are root caused to specific net paths.

Net list tested wafers typically exhibit individual circuit step/repeat patterns which can range from one to fifty or more on any one particular wafer. Conventional diamond saw dicing techniques are employed to singulate and dice circuits out of the net list tested wafers. Common fixturing is in place to handle both 5" and 7" fired wafer formats.

Referring now to FIG. 12, a radar system which may be similar to the radar systems described above in conjunction with FIGS. 1 and 2 respectively for use as a SOD system is shown in greater detail. In general overview of the operation of the transmitter 22 (FIG. 1), the (FMCW) radar transmits a signal 250 having a frequency which changes in a predetermined manner over time. The transmit signal 250 is generally provided by feeding a VCO control or ramp signal

252 to a voltage controlled oscillator (VCO) 254. In response to the ramp signal 252, the VCO 254 generates a chirp signal 256.

A measure of transmit time of the RF signal can be determined by comparing the frequency of a received or return signal 258 with the frequency of a sample 260 of the transmit signal. The range determination is thus provided by measuring the beat frequency between the frequencies of the sample 260 of the transmit signal and the return signal 258 with the beat frequency being equal to the slope of the ramp signal 252 multiplied by the time delay of the return signal 258.

The measured frequency further contains the Doppler frequency due to the relative velocity between the target and the radar system. In order to permit the two contributions to the measured frequency shift to be separated and identified, the time-varying frequency of the transmit signal 250 is achieved by providing the control signal 252 to the VCO 254 in the form of a linear ramp signal.

In one embodiment, the VCO control signal 252 is generated with digital circuitry and techniques. In a preferred embodiment, the ramp signal 252 is generated by a DSP 262 and a digital-to-analog converter (DAC) 264. Use of the DSP 262 and DAC 264 to generate the ramp signal 252 is possible in the SOD system of FIG. 12 since, it has been determined that by proper selection of the detection zone characteristics including but not limited to detection zone size, shape and resolution, precise linearity of the chirp signal 256 is not necessary. With this arrangement, the frequency of the transmit signal 250 is accurately and easily controllable which facilitates implementation of several advantageous and further inventive features. As one example, one or more characteristics of successive ramps in the ramp signal 252 are randomly varied (via random number generator 253, for example) in order to reduce interference between similar, proximate radar systems. As another example, temperature compensation is implemented by appropriately adjusting the ramp signal 252. Yet another example is compensation for non-linearity in the VCO operation. Further, changes to the SOD system which would otherwise require hardware changes or adjustments can be made easily, simply by downloading software to the DSP. For example, the frequency band of operation of the SOD system can be readily varied, as may be desirable when the SOD is used in different countries with different operating frequency requirements.

An electronics portion 270 of the SOD system includes the DSP 262, a power supply 272 and a connector 274 through which signal buses 42, 46 (FIG. 1) are coupled between the SOD system and the vehicle 40 (FIG. 1). The digital interface unit 36 (FIG. 1) is provided in the form of a controller area network (CAN) transceiver (XCVR) 276 which is coupled to the DSP via a CAN microcontroller 278. The CAN controller 278 has a system clock 279 coupled thereto to provide frequency stability. In one embodiment, the system clock is provided as a crystal controlled oscillator. An analog-to-digital (A/D) converter 280 receives the output of a video amplifier 282 and converts the signal to digital form for coupling to the DSP 30 for detection processing. In one embodiment, the A/D converter is provided as a twelve bit A/D converter. Those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate, however, that any A/D converter having sufficient resolution for the particular application may be used. A signal bus 284 is coupled to antenna switch circuits 286, 288 in order to provide control signals to drive the switches which comprise the switch circuits. Also provided in the electronics portion 270 of the SOD system is a

15

memory **190** in which software instructions, or code and data are stored. In the illustrative embodiment of FIG. **12**, the memory **190** is provided as a flash memory **190**.

The DSP provides output signals, or words to the DAC which converts the DSP output words into respective analog signals. An analog smoothing circuit **292** is coupled to the output of the DAC in order to smooth the stepped DAC output to provide the ramp control signal to the VCO. The DSP includes a memory device **294** in which is stored a look-up table containing a set of DSP output signals, or words in association with the frequency of the transmit signal generated by the respective DSP output signal.

The VCO **254** receives ramp signal **252** from the analog smoothing circuit. The VCO operates in the transmit frequency range of between 24.01 to 24.24 GHz and provides an output signal to bandpass filter **296**, as shown.

The output of the VCO **254** is filtered by the bandpass filter **296** and amplified by an amplifier **298**. A portion of the output signal from amplifier **298**, is coupled via coupler **300** to provide the transmit signal **250** to the transmit antenna **18**. Another portion of the output signal from the amplifier **298** corresponds to a local oscillator (LO) signal fed to an LO input port of a mixer **304** in the receive signal path.

The switch circuits **286**, **288** are coupled to the receive and transmit antennas **16**, **18** through a Butler matrix. The antennas **16**, **18** and switch circuits **286**, **288**, and Butler matrix can be of the type described above in conjunction with FIGS. 1–11. Suffice it here to say that the switch circuits and Butler matrix operate to provide the antenna having a switched antenna beam with antenna beam characteristics which enhance the ability of the SOD system to detect targets.

The received signal **258** is processed by an RF low noise amplifier (LNA) **306**, a bandpass filter **308**, and another LNA **310**, as shown. The output signal of the RF amplifier **310** is down-converted by mixer **304** which receives the local oscillator signal coupled from the transmitter, as shown. Illustrative frequencies for the RF signals from the amplifier **310** and the local oscillator signal are on the order of 24 GHz. Although the illustrated receiver is a direct conversion, homodyne receiver, other receiver topologies may be used in the SOD radar system.

A video amplifier **282** amplifies and filters the down-converted signals which, in the illustrative embodiment have a frequency between 1 KHz and 40 KHz. The video amplifier **64** may incorporate features, including temperature compensation, filtering of leakage signals, and sensitivity control based on frequency, as described in a co-pending U.S. Patent Application entitled Video Amplifier for a Radar Receiver, application Ser. No. 09/931,593, filed on Aug. 16, 2001, and incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

The A/D converter **280** converts the analog output of the video amplifier **320** into digital signal samples for further processing. In particular, the digital signal samples are processed by a fast Fourier transform (FFT) within the DSP in order to determine the content of the return signal within various frequency ranges (i.e., frequency bins). The (FFT) outputs serve as data for the rest of the signal processor **262** in which one or more algorithms are implemented to detect objects within the field of view, as described in co-pending U.S. Patent Application entitled Radar Transmitter Circuitry and Techniques, application Ser. No. 09/931,636, filed on Aug. 16, 2001, and incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

The radar system includes a temperature compensation feature with which temperature induced variations in the frequency of the transmit signal are compensated by adjust-

16

ing the ramp signal accordingly. For this purpose, the transmitter **22** includes a DRO **322** coupled to a microwave signal detector **324**. The output of the microwave detector is coupled to an analog-to-digital converter of the CAN controller for processing by the DSP. The details of such processing are described in the aforementioned U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/931,636, entitled Radar Transmitter Circuitry and Techniques.

Having described the preferred embodiments of the invention, it will now become apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art that other embodiments incorporating their concepts may be used. It is felt therefore that these embodiments should not be limited to disclosed embodiments but rather should be limited only by the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

All publications and references cited herein are expressly incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

What is claimed is:

1. An antenna element comprising:

a feed circuit layer having first and second opposing surfaces with a first one of the first and second surfaces having a first ground plane disposed thereon and second one of the first and second surfaces having a feed circuit disposed thereon;

a first radiator layer having first and second opposing surfaces with a first one of the first and second opposing surfaces disposed over the second one of the first and second opposing surfaces of said feed circuit layer and a second one of the first and second opposing surfaces of said first radiator layer having a second ground plane disposed thereon with the second ground plane having an aperture therein; and

at least one conductive path coupling the first and second ground plane layers to provide a cavity in said first radiator layer and feed circuit layer.

2. The antenna element of claim 1 wherein the conductive path comprises a plurality of via holes between said first and second ground plane layers.

3. The antenna element of claim 1 wherein each of said layers is provided from a low temperature co-fired ceramic (LTCC) substrate.

4. The antenna element of claim 1 wherein said first radiator layer further comprises a tuning structure far matching an impedance of the antenna element to a predetermined impedance.

5. The antenna element of claim 1 wherein said first radiator layer is a first one of a plurality of radiator layers, each of the plurality of radiator layers comprising:

a conductive strip; and

a plurality of vial disposed on said conductive strip forming a cavity disposed in said plurality of radiator layers.

6. The antenna element of claim 5 wherein at least one of the plurality of radiator layers comprises a low temperature co-fired ceramic (LTCC) substrate.

7. The antenna element of claim 5 wherein at least one of the plurality of radiator layers comprises a tuning structure far matching an impedance of the antenna element to a predetermined impedance.

8. The antenna element of claim 7 wherein said tuning structure is provide as an aperture in the at least one radiator layer.

9. The antenna element of claim 5 wherein the feed circuit comprises a stripline transmission line.

10. The antenna element of claim 5 further comprising a cover disposed on the cavity.

17

11. The antenna element of claim 10 wherein the cover comprises at least one low temperature co-fired ceramic (LTCC) substrate layer and provides a tuning structure for matching an impedance of the antenna element to a predetermined impedance.

12. The antenna element of claim 10 wherein the cover comprises at least one low temperature co-fired ceramic (LTCC) substrate layer and provides a tuning structure for matching an impedance of the feed circuit to a free space impedance.

13. An antenna element comprising:

a first plurality of dielectric layers, each of the plurality of dielectric layers having a conductive material disposed on selected portions thereof to provide one or more tuning structures;

a plurality of vias embedded in the plurality of dielectric layers to provide a cavity structure in the first plurality of dielectric layers; and

a feed circuit disposed in at least one of the plurality of dielectric layers electromagnetically coupled to said cavity structure.

14. The antenna element of claim 13 wherein the tuning structures correspond to windows provided in the conductive material disposed on selected portions of the plurality of dielectric layers.

15. The antenna element of claim 13 wherein one or more cover layers disposed over the first plurality of dielectric layers.

16. The antenna element of claim 13 wherein said feed circuit comprises:

an element signal port:

a first conductive via having a first end coupled to the element signal port and having a second end;

a first stripline transmission line having a first end coupled to the second end of said first conductive via and having a second end;

a second conductive via having a first end coupled to the second end of said first stripline transmission line and having a second end;

a second stripline transmission line having a first end coupled to the second end of said second conductive via and having a second end;

18

a third conductive via having a first end coupled to the second end of said second stripline transmission line and having a second end;

a power divider circuit having a first end coupled to the second end of said third conductive via and having a second end;

a fourth conductive via having a first end coupled to the second end of said power divider circuit and having a second end; and

a third stripline transmission line having a first end coupled to the second end of said fourth conductive via.

17. An antenna comprising:

an array of antenna elements, each of said antenna elements comprising:

a feed circuit layer having first and second opposing surfaces with a first one of the first and second surfaces having a first ground plane disposed thereon and a second one of the first and second surfaces having a feed circuit disposed thereon;

a radiator layer having first and second opposing surfaces with a first one of the first and second opposing surfaces disposed over the second one of the first and second opposing surfaces of said feed circuit layer and with a second one of the first and second opposing surfaces of said radiator layer having a second ground plane disposed thereon with the second ground plane having an aperture therein; and

at least one conductive path coupling the first and second ground plane layers to provide a cavity in said radiator and feed circuit layers.

18. The antenna of claim 17 wherein the conductive path comprises a plurality of via holes coupling the first and second ground plane layers.

19. The antenna of claim 17 wherein each of said layers is provided from a low temperature co-fired ceramic (LTCC) substrate.

20. The antenna of claim 17 wherein said radiator layer, further comprises a tuning structure for matching an impedance of the antenna element to a predetermined impedance.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 6,492,949 B1
DATED : December 10, 2002
INVENTOR(S) : Caroline Breglia et al.

Page 1 of 3

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Column 1,

Line 9, delete "entirely" and replace with -- entirety --.
Line 16, delete "far" and replace with -- for --.
Line 23, delete "trucks boats," and replace with -- trucks, boats, --.
Line 38, delete "an a" and replace with -- on a --.

Column 2,

Line 25, delete "beam farming" and replace with -- beam forming --.
Line 54, delete "are provided" and replace with -- is provided --.
Line 54, delete "from stripline-fed" and replace with -- from a stripline-fed --.
Line 65, delete "a black" and replace with -- a block --.
Line 65, delete "abject" and replace with -- object --.

Column 3,

Line 3, delete "is block" and replace with -- is a block --.
Line 25, delete "view of taken" and replace with -- view taken --.
Line 44, delete "side abject" and replace with -- side object --.

Column 4,

Line 5, delete "abject" and replace with -- object --.
Line 32, delete "or as an" and replace with -- or an --.
Lines 33-34, delete "system 54 which may be of the type described in U.S. Patent" and replace with -- system 54 --.
Line 46, delete "SIS" and replace with -- SLS --.
Line 57, delete "Limited" and replace with -- limited --.

Column 5,

Line 26, delete "portions of vehicle" and replace with -- portions of the vehicle --.
Line 32, delete "System and System" and replace with -- System --.
Line 53, delete "farming" and replace with -- forming --.

Column 6,

Line 48, delete "far" and replace with -- for --.
Line 51, delete "Butler represent" and replace with -- Butler matrix represent --.
Line 59, delete "be notes" and replace with -- be noted --.

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 6,492,949 B1
DATED : December 10, 2002
INVENTOR(S) : Caroline Breglia et al.

Page 2 of 3

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Column 7,

Line 35, delete "for Bulters have" and replace with -- for a Butler Matrix can have --.

Line 36-37, delete "lengths required" and replace with -- lengths --.

Line 47, delete "Butter" and replace with -- Butler --.

Column 8,

Line 17, delete "far" and replace with -- for --.

Line 18, delete "can he" and replace with -- can be --.

Line 30, delete $1 \dots \frac{N}{2}$ and replace with $1 \dots \frac{N}{2}$.

Column 9,

Line 7, delete "Step" and replace with -- step --.

Line 35, delete "mare" and replace with -- more --.

Line 66, delete "which provided" and replace with -- which provide --.

Column 10,

Line 23, delete "below in detail below" and replace with -- in detail below --.

Line 59, delete "aver" and replace with -- over --.

Line 63, delete "vial" and replace with -- vias --.

Column 11,

Line 10, delete "far tuning" and replace with -- for tuning --.

Line 21, delete "far the" and replace with -- for the --.

Column 12,

Line 34, delete "5" or a 7" and replace with -- 5" or 7" --.

Line 46, delete "5' or 7'" and replace with -- 5" or 7" --.

Column 13,

Line 13, delete "ac described" and replace with -- as described --.

Line 59, delete "7'" and replace with -- 7" --.

Column 14,

Line 60, delete "AID" and replace with -- A/D --.

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 6,492,949 B1
DATED : December 10, 2002
INVENTOR(S) : Caroline Breglia et al.

Page 3 of 3

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Column 15,

Line 57, delete "The (FFT)" and replace with -- The FFT --.

Column 16,

Line 41, delete "law" and replace with -- low --.

Line 51, delete "vial" and replace with -- vias --.

Line 62, delete "is provide" and replace with -- is provided --.

Signed and Sealed this

Thirteenth Day of May, 2003

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James E. Rogan", with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

JAMES E. ROGAN

Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office