

Automotive Multiplex Wiring

National Semiconductor
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INTRODUCTION

The evolutionary development of vehicle electronic systems has rapidly increased the number of individual wires in the vehicle. The conventional wiring harness will not provide solutions to the problems such as reducing size and weight in addition to meeting cost and reliability objectives. Several approaches have been taken to provide long term solutions. None has succeeded. Miniaturization of cables and wires is one example of a temporary solution.

Multiplexing on the other hand has been regarded as a technique which allows considerable savings to be made in the size and cost of the harness. It can also enhance reliability by reducing the number of electrical connections.

In a multiplex system the control functions will be distributed around the vehicle and complex interconnections between diagnostic terminals, sensors, instruments and switches will not add to the harness complexity. With all its advantages it has not been implemented on a production car yet. The reason has been economical feasibility and lack of suitable semiconductor components for power switching. But, with the rapid technology advances in power FETs and introduction of low cost microcomputers, multiplex wiring can be regarded as a logical successor to conventional wiring systems. Extended development efforts are necessary to introduce a reliable system at reasonable cost.

The Microcontroller Applications Group at National Semiconductor has taken a step towards this goal. A low end multiplex wiring system focusing on asynchronous serial communication in a multi node network has been developed. This paper describes the development of this system on an abstract model which forms the basis for analysis of communication protocol and various node functions.

SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

Figure 1 presents a general view of the system. The system is a centralized single master multiple slave-node scheme. All units are connected together by a balanced twisted pair. The expandable interconnection of different subsystems is achieved with 9600 Baud communication over a standard UART bus. The bus handles the interface between a master controller and the intelligent nodes.

The approach to have a centralized control system offers several advantages as compared against a non-centralized system. It prevents the problem of bus monopolization by a faulty node and is potentially cheaper due to the need for only one complex node (master). The master-slave architecture also prevents bus contention problems.

The master is a COP420L. The COP420L is a 4-bit microcontroller with a software UART that handles asynchronous communication with other processors at speeds up to 9600 Baud.

The use of 4-bit 49¢ microcontrollers (COP413L) at the nodes not only provides intelligence which reduces the required bus bandwidth, it also reduces the incremental cost associated with automotive multiplexing. All standard nodes

are identical. One standard program is used. This uniformity contributes to the system flexibility and expandability. External standard nodes may be added to the system to control additional functions. Node types and addresses are selected via external wire jumpers or switches. The slave nodes consist of four remote units to handle functions such as headlamps, tail lamps, etc. These nodes are the front right, front left, rear right and rear left nodes. Incorporated into the system are also a keyboard node, a EIC node and a display node.

The keyboard node may call for a control action at any time. This node is being continuously monitored by the master controller which receives status and processes the command or information.

Overall system intelligence and flexibility is increased by dedicating a node to NS455 the Terminal Management Processor. This node takes the responsibility to display information on a 4" flat CRT display.

An Electronic Instrument Cluster (EIC) system is a completely independent system. It typically performs all functions associated with the automobile dashboard such as vehicle speed, odometers to accumulate mileage, gauges to display engine temperature, fuel level and so on. It also indicates error conditions such as high engine temperatures, low fuel level etc. The multiplex wiring system uses a standard slave node as a bridge between the two independent systems. The slave node monitors error conditions from the EIC system and passes them to the master node upon request. It becomes relatively simple to allow the master to access all activity in the EIC system via additional commands to the slave node serving the EIC system:

THE COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

The master unit addresses the remote units sequentially and receives a status reply from each individual node. Data communication is via the standard UART format. It has a start bit, eight data bits, an even parity bit and one stop bit.

Information to be transmitted from the master to a slave node is organized as a frame. Each frame contains the address of destination and command or data. The information in a frame is transmitted as byte format. Address/data differentiation is done by means of a flag. The byte is an address byte if the MSB is set ("1"), otherwise it is a data byte.

Two different types of addressing schemes have been incorporated into the communication protocol; node addressing and class addressing. A class of nodes is formed by grouping together slave nodes with common functions. Commands may be executed either by specific individual nodes or by slave classes. All nodes of the same class execute the command simultaneously. The system implementation at National involved four classes with seven slave nodes per class. So, the total number of nodes possible in this system is 28.

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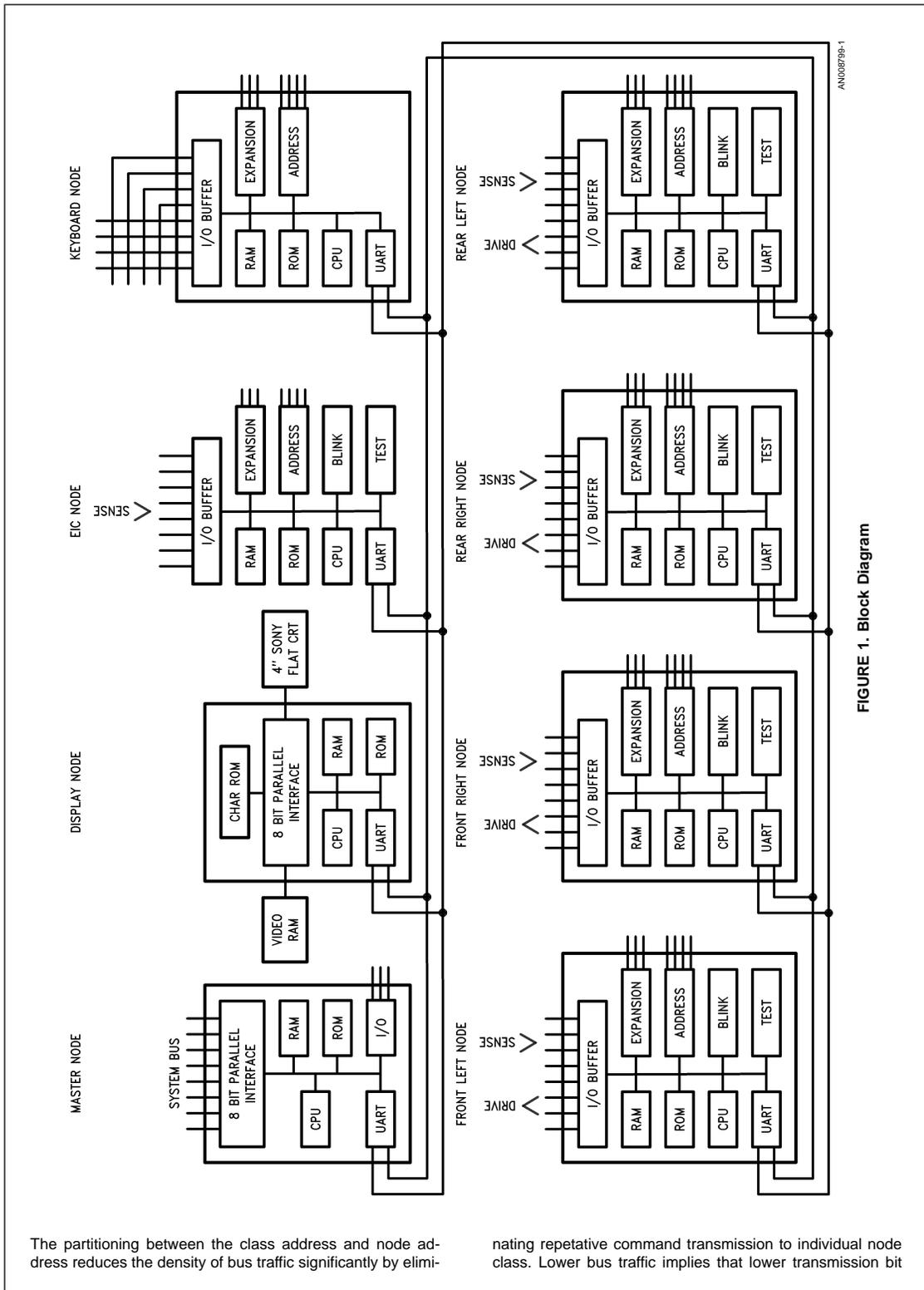


FIGURE 1. Block Diagram

The partitioning between the class address and node address reduces the density of bus traffic significantly by elimi-

nating repetitive command transmission to individual node class. Lower bus traffic implies that lower transmission bit

rate can be used, allowing additional noise immunity. Another advantage of the class addressing is the provision of synchronization for control signals such as HAZARD, LEFT/RIGHT turns.

Error correction is incorporated into the communication protocol. The UART error flags such as PARITY and FRAMING ERRORS protect the system at the physical layer. At the system level, the nodes simply avoid sending an acknowledgement to the master when an error is detected. The master times out and sends the command again.

THE MASTER NODE

The master controller is the heart of the system. Its responsibility is to generate the controlling commands and synchronize the system. It transmits to the remote units and listens to them to get the vehicle status and acts accordingly. Circuit complexity is reduced by implementing extensive software programming in the master controller. This means that the burden is essentially on the master and must be engineered to very high standards of reliability. The device used in the implementation as the master is the COP1430. It is a cost effective 4-bit single chip microcontroller. It features on chip UART which handles asynchronous communications at speeds up to 9600 Baud.

THE SLAVE NODES

The standard slave nodes are based upon the COP413L. The COP413L is a low cost 4-bit microcontroller which may be customized in production. A system such as multiplex wiring requires power consumption to be absolutely minimal. Another basic requirement is that the system should be cost effective. These two facts directed us to use the COP413L at the standard slave node. The COP413L is a low cost (49¢!) low power microcontroller from NSC drawing less than 7 mA at 4.5V to 5.5V. The device contains an 8-bit bidirectional I/O port and a serial expansion port. The CMOS version of COP413L will also be available.

THE DISPLAY NODE

This node can serve as a condition monitoring unit for the vehicle. A considerable quantity of diagnostic information collected from transducers, switches, sensors and various loads are fed to this unit to be displayed on a CRT display. The node is based on a Terminal Management Processor the NS455. The NS455 is a CRT controller on chip. The messages are updated over the serial I/O line by the master controller. The communication format is:

1. The node receives the address.
2. If address matches the local node address, send the copy command
3. Receive new address and execute.

OUTPUT STAGES

The power FETs used for local switching throughout the system are IRF541₍₄₎. These N-channel FETs provide much better drive circuit specification as compared to bipolar output stages. They also feature all of the well established advantages of MOSFET such as voltage control, very fast switching, and very low on state resistance. Another advantage is the lower cost as compared to comparably rated p-channel devices.

TRANSMISSION MEDIUM

A balanced twisted pair is used for bus medium which provides high noise immunity. The transceiver selected for the bus is DS3695 (Figure 2). This device is a high speed differential TRI-STATE® Bus/line transceiver designed to meet EIA standard for multipoint bus transmission. Bus contention or fault situations that cause excessive power dissipation within the device are handled by a standard thermal shutdown circuit, which forces the driver outputs into the high impedance state.

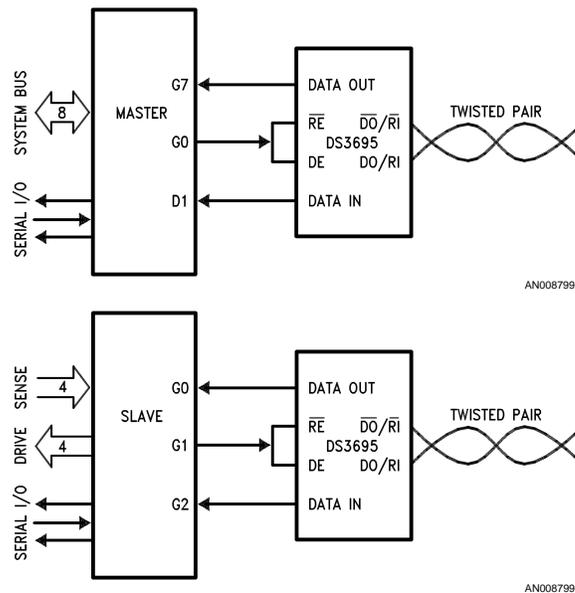


FIGURE 2. Bus Interface

CONCLUSIONS

Multiplex wiring system potentially seems to be a good replacement for conventional wiring system. Reduced complexity, increased flexibility and diagnostic capability could be achieved by incorporating microcontroller devices at nodes within the wiring system. The 4-bit microcontrollers selected are available in a price range, as low as 49¢, that will allow multiplex wiring to compare favorably on a cost-performance basis with the conventional harness.

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