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(54) Title: ULTRASONIC PASSENGER DETECTION

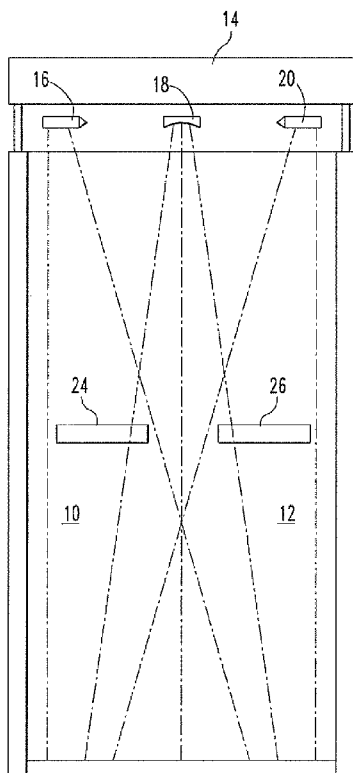


FIG.1

(57) Abstract: A method and apparatus of recognizing the presence of a passenger in front of a door of a transit vehicle comprises directing an ultrasound transmitter/receiver at a volume of space adjacent the door, emitting an ultrasound pulse into the empty volume, recording and integrating intensity of the echoes and storing the integrated value as a standard value, repeatedly emitting an ultrasound pulse into the volume, and comparing the integrated values to the standard value.



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amendments (Rule 48.2(h))

Declarations under Rule 4.17:

ULTRASONIC PASSENGER DETECTION

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] This invention relates to an ultrasonic method and system for detecting passengers at a door of a transit vehicle without the need to define a plurality of dead zones.

Description of Related Art

[0002] Present ultrasonic detection methods used to detect and respond to the presence of passengers in the vicinity of a bus or other transit vehicle doorway are based on first detecting and memorizing a signature table for a "standard" environment, for example, with the doors closed and no passengers or objects in the vicinity other than permanent equipment. The table consists of echo response times that define the echoes from permanent equipment. These times are represented by a one bit digitalization of the echo signal in a memory or register position corresponding to echo return time. The amplitude of the echo is not considered. See, for example, Kuhn U.S. Patent No. 5,148,410 entitled "Sonar Detector for Exiting Passengers." When a passenger or object not previously in the vicinity of the door causes an echo response at a time not previously recorded, the passenger or object is considered detected. If, however, the echo from a passenger or object occurs at the same time (within established tolerances) as previously memorized, the response is ignored. There is no way to discriminate that response from a response due to permanent bus equipment. In effect, the memorized responses with their tolerances represent "dead zones."

[0003] Repeatedly integrating the echoes following shifted multiple echo pluses to discriminate targets that are straight-on from off-axis targets has been suggested in Magori U.S. Patent No. 4,634,947 entitled "Method for Evaluating Echo Signals of an Ultrasonic Sensor on a Robot Arm."

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] Briefly, according to one embodiment of this invention, there is provided a method of recognizing the presence of a passenger in front of a door of a transit vehicle comprising the steps of directing an ultrasound transmitter/receiver at a volume of space adjacent the door and generally directed at the floor in front of the door, emitting an ultrasound pulse via the transmitter/receiver into the volume of space while the space is not occupied by a passenger, recording the ultrasound echoes from objects in the volume of space for a response period, integrating intensity of the echoes during at least a fixed portion of the

response period and storing the integrated value as a standard value, repeatedly emitting an ultrasound pulse via the transmitter/receiver into the volume of space, recording the ultrasound echoes, integrating the intensity of the echoes during the fixed period, repeatedly comparing the integrated values to the standard value such that when the standard value differs by a fixed value, a passenger is deemed to have entered the volume of space adjacent the door such that the door may be opened if appropriate. In a preferred embodiment, multiple ultrasound transmitter/receivers are directed at the volume of space adjacent the door and generally directed at the floor and integrated echoes received at each transmitter/receiver are summed.

[0005] Briefly, according to another embodiment of this invention, there is provided a system for recognizing the presence of a passenger adjacent to a door of a transit vehicle comprising an ultrasound transmitter/receiver directed at a volume of space adjacent the door and generally directed at the floor near the door, a controller for triggering an ultrasound pulse via the transmitter/receiver into the volume of space while the space is not occupied by a passenger, recording the ultrasound echoes from objects in the volume of space for a response period, integrating the intensity of the echoes during at least a fixed portion of the response period and storing the integrated signals. The controller is programmed to repeatedly emit an ultrasound pulse via the transmitter/receiver into the volume of space adjacent the door, to record the ultrasound echoes, and to integrate the intensity of the echoes during the fixed period. The controller is further programmed to repeatedly compare the integrated values to a standard. According to a preferred embodiment, multiple ultrasound transmitter/receivers are directed at the volume of space adjacent the door generally directed at the floor and the integrated echoes of all transmitter/receivers are summed.

[0006] According to a preferred embodiment, the response period is insufficiently long for an echo to be received from the floor.

[0007] According to yet another embodiment, multiple, separate response periods are recorded and integrated to establish standard values for each response period.

[0008] According to yet another embodiment, multiple response periods, at least one sufficiently long enough to receive an echo from the floor and one insufficiently long to receive an echo from the floor, are recorded and integrated to establish standard values for each response period.

[0009] In yet another embodiment, at preset multiple positions of the door as it is being opened and/or closed, the controller triggers an ultrasound pulse into the volume of space and records ultrasound echo signals for a short fixed response period, integrates the intensity of

the echo signals, and stores the integrated echo signals as standards for an unobstructed doorway. The controller is further programmed for during door opening and/or closing to trigger an ultrasound pulse at the preset positions, record the echo signals during the short fixed response period, integrate the intensity of the signals and compare the integrated signals to the standard for each door position.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] Fig. 1 illustrates the placement of ultrasound sensors relative to a transit doorway according to one embodiment of this invention;

[0011] Fig. 2 is a diagram of a circuit for practice of one embodiment of this invention;

[0012] Fig. 3A is a flow diagram illustrating the programming of the microcontroller according to one embodiment of this invention during the setup mode; and

[0013] Fig. 3B is a flow diagram illustrating the programming of the microcontroller according to one embodiment of this invention during the monitoring mode.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0014] According to one embodiment of this invention, the entire echo signal is recorded and digitized for a given period of time. Multi-bit digitalization of the echo signal may be stored in multiple memory locations corresponding to echo return times. The entries in each location are summed or integrated. At the time of setup when no passenger or object is in the vicinity of the doorway, the sum total of the echo signal is stored as a standard or reference. This summing or integration takes into account amplitude as well as time. Since most real world targets cause multiple reflections instead of a single echo pulse at a single time after the output pulse, taking full account of amplitude verses time allows increased likelihood of detection. Appropriate algorithms may be used to repeat the setup to accommodate slow, environmentally-caused changes in the standard or reference. Such changes might be brought about by changes in temperature or humidity. Rapid changes would be considered indicative of a passenger.

[0015] Referring to Fig. 1, the inside face of a doorway is illustrated. The door has two sections 10, 12 that swing by reason of the well-known actuating assembly illustrated as a box 14. The doors may be any of swing doors, bifold doors, slide-glide doors or parallelogram plug doors, for example. The door is illustrated with protruding handles 24, 26 for purposes of illustrating permanent objects that will reflect an ultrasound pulse. Mounted under the actuator assembly are three spaced ultrasound transmitter/receivers 16, 18, 20

directed downwardly toward the floor 22. Ultrasound pulses emitted from the transmitter/receivers are directed in overlapping cones illustrated by lines on Fig. 1.

[0016] Referring now to Fig. 2, the three ultrasound transmitter/receivers (sensors) 16, 18 and 20 are connected to an electronic control unit 30. The electronic control unit comprises a microcontroller 32, three analog-to-digital converters 34, 35, 36, a power supply 39 for the electric control unit 30 and for the transmitter/receivers.

[0017] The electric control unit 30 triggers ultrasound pulses via sensor control 38 and the transmitter/receivers 16, 18, 20 and then permits the transmitter/receivers to listen for echoes for a preset response period which may be established insufficiently long for an echo to be received from the floor. The received echoes are returned via the analog-to-digital converters 34, 35, 36 and the microcontroller 32 integrates the intensity of the echoes during at least a fixed portion of the response period and stores the integrated signal.

[0018] The microcontroller 32 is programmed to repeatedly trigger the transmitter/receivers to emit an ultrasound pulse into the volume of space adjacent the door. The controller is further programmed to repeatedly compare the integrated values to a standard.

[0019] Referring to Fig. 3A, the microprocessor is programmed to operate in the setup mode to emit a trigger pulse or a plurality of trigger pulses at 40, to receive echo signals caused from each pulse during a period of time which may be established insufficient to receive an echo from the floor at 42, to integrate the echo signals at 44, and store the integrated results as a standard at 46. During the setup, it is necessary to adjust the length of time following a pulse that echoes will be received. This may be accomplished by measuring the distance from the transmitter/receiver to the floor and dividing by the speed of sound. As the speed of sound can vary slightly with ambient conditions, the time period should be somewhat longer or shorter than calculated from the measurement. This may be a first step 48 in the setup mode. According to a preferred embodiment, the setup is run for both the door closed condition and the door open condition enabling the determination of a passenger waiting to exit as well as whether a passenger has cleared the doorway.

[0020] Referring to Fig. 3B, the microprocessor is programmed to operate in the monitoring mode to emit a trigger pulse or a plurality of trigger pulses at 50, to receive echo signals caused from each pulse during a period of time insufficient to receive an echo from the floor at 52, to integrate the echo signals at 54, and compare the integrated results to a standard at 56. If the integrated result is sufficiently close to the stored standard, control

returns to emitting a new trigger pulse at 50. If the integrated result is not sufficiently close to the stored standard, a signal indicative of a passenger present at the door is output at 58.

[0021] Of course, the microprocessor may be programmed with additional tasks such as keeping track of whether the door is open or shut and for how long a period of time based upon additional inputs.

[0022] Having thus described our invention in the detail and particularity required by the Patent Laws, what is desired protected by Letters Patent is set forth in the following claims.

THE INVENTION CLAIMED IS

1. A method of recognizing the presence of a passenger in front of a door of a transit vehicle comprising the steps of:

directing an ultrasound transmitter/receiver at a volume of space adjacent the door and generally directed at the floor in front of the door;

emitting an ultrasound pulse via the transmitter/receiver into said volume of space while the space is not occupied by a passenger;

recording the ultrasound echoes from objects in the volume of space for at least one response period;

integrating intensity of said echoes during at least a fixed portion of the at least one response period and storing the integrated value as a standard value;

repeatedly emitting an ultrasound pulse via the transmitter/receiver into said volume of space, recording the ultrasound echoes, and integrating the intensity of said echoes during said fixed period; and

repeatedly comparing the integrated values to a standard value such that when the integrated value differs from the standard value by a given amount, a passenger is deemed to have entered the volume of space adjacent the door.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein multiple ultrasound transmitter/receivers are directed at the volume of space adjacent the door and generally directed at the floor, and summing the integrated echoes received at each transmitter/receiver.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the at least one response period is insufficiently long for an echo to be received from the floor.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein multiple separate response periods are recorded and integrated to establish standard values for each response period.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein multiple response periods, at least one sufficiently long enough to receive an echo from the floor and one insufficiently long to receive an echo from the floor are recorded and integrated to establish standard values for each response period.

6. A system for recognizing the presence of a passenger adjacent a door of a transit vehicle comprising:

an ultrasound transmitter/receiver directed at a volume of space adjacent said door and generally directed at the floor near the door;

a controller for triggering an ultrasound pulse via the transmitter/receiver into said volume of space while the space is not occupied by a passenger and recording the ultrasound echoes from objects in the volume of space for at least one response period and integrating the intensity of the echoes during at least a fixed portion of the at least one response period and storing the integrated values;

said controller programmed to repeatedly emit an ultrasound pulse via the transmitter/receiver into said volume of space adjacent the door, to record the ultrasound echoes, and to integrate the intensity of said echoes during said fixed period; and

said controller further programmed to repeatedly compare the integrated values to a standard.

7. A system according to claim 6 comprising multiple ultrasound transmitter/receivers directed at the volume of space adjacent the door generally directed at the floor and wherein the integrated echoes of all transmitter/receivers are summed.

8. The system according to claim 6, wherein the at least one response period is insufficiently long for an echo to be received from the floor.

9. The system according to claim 6, wherein multiple separate response periods are recorded and integrated to establish standard values for each response period.

10. The system according to claim 6, wherein multiple response periods, at least one sufficiently long enough to receive an echo from the floor and one insufficiently long to receive an echo from the floor, are recorded and integrated to establish standard values for each response period.

11. A method of recognizing the presence of a passenger or obstruction in front of a door of a transit vehicle comprising the steps of:

at preset multiple positions of the door as it is opening and/or closing directing an ultrasound transmitter/receiver at a volume of space adjacent the door and generally directed at the floor in front of the door;

emitting an ultrasound pulse via the transmitter/receiver into said volume of space while the space is not occupied or obstructed;

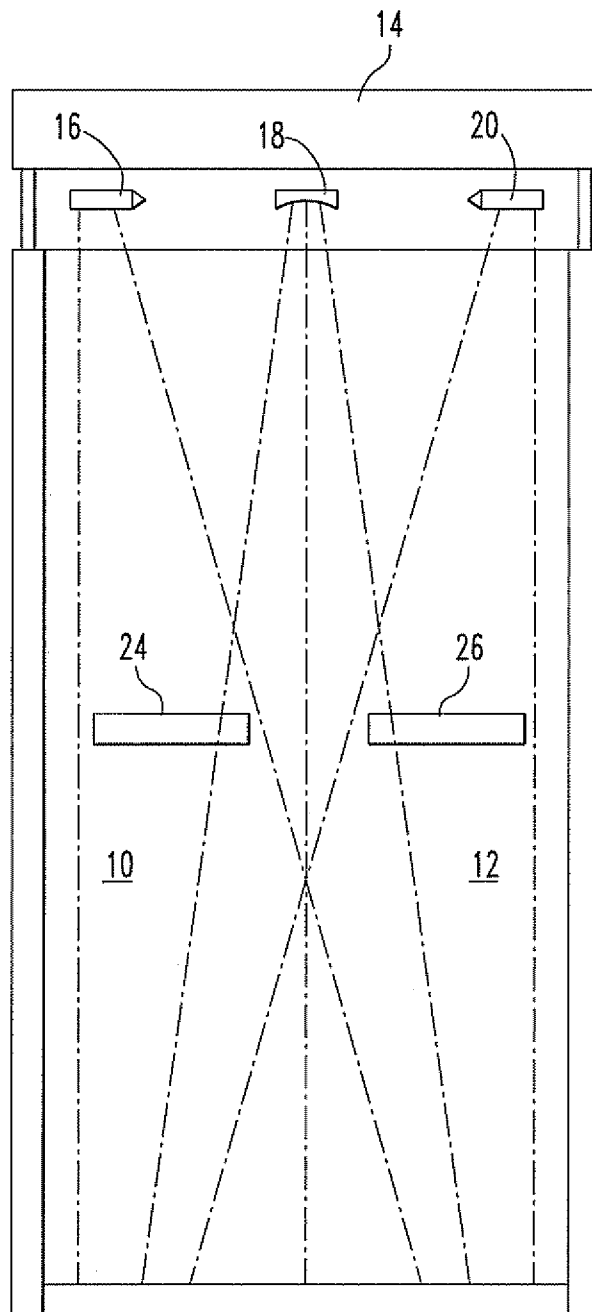
recording the ultrasound echoes from objects in the volume of space for a short fixed response period;

integrating the intensity of said echoes during at least a portion of the short fixed response periods and storing the integrated values as standard values;

repeatedly at said preset multiple positions of the door as it is opening and/or closing, emitting an ultrasound pulse via the transmitter/receiver into said volume of space, recording the ultrasound echoes, and integrating the intensity of said echoes during said short fixed response periods; and

repeatedly comparing the integrated values to a standard value for each door position such that when the integrated value differs from the standard value by a given amount, a passenger or obstruction is deemed to have entered the volume of space adjacent the door.

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*FIG. 1*

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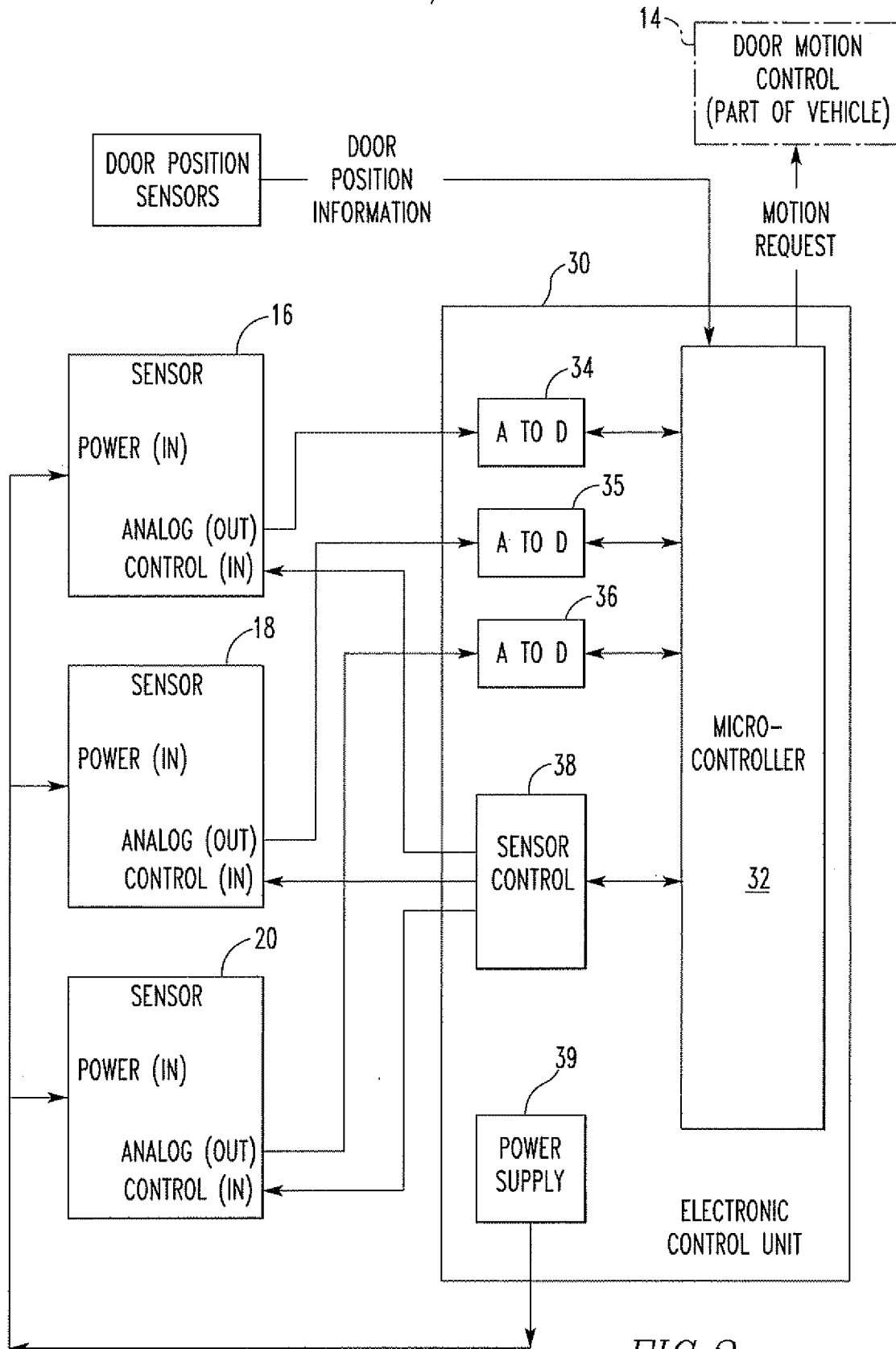


FIG. 2

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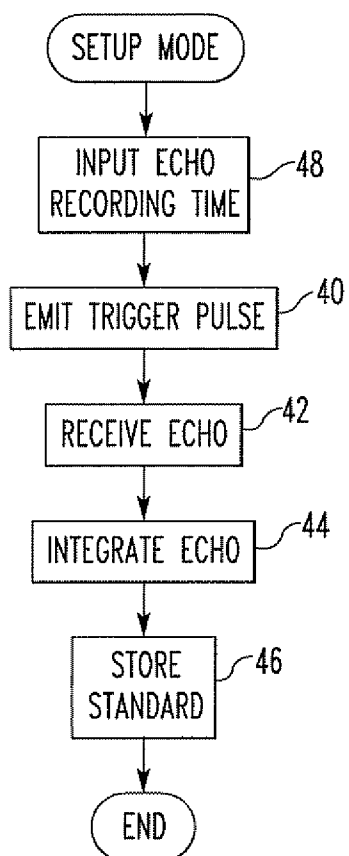


FIG. 3A

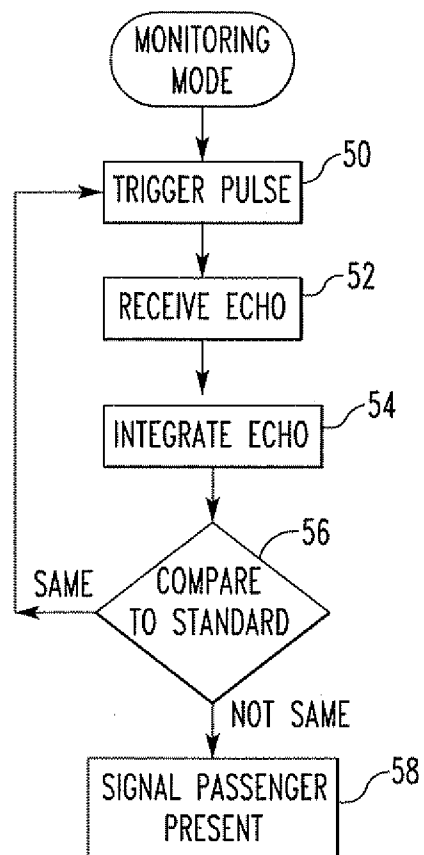


FIG. 3B

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2009/043724**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER*****B60R 21/01(2006.01)i, B60R 21/00(2006.01)i, B60K 28/12(2006.01)i***

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 8 B60R 21/01, 21/32

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Korean utility models and applications for utility models since 1975

Japanese utility models and applications for utility models since 1975

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

eKIPASS(KIPO internal) & keyword: "detection", "passenger", "door", "method", "sensor", "echoes", "pulse", "object"

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5,943,295 A (ANDREW J. VARGA, DAVID S. BREED) 24 August 1999 See abstract, claims and figure 1-9	1 - 11
A	JP 2002-513358 A (AUTOMOBILE SYSTEM LABORATORY INCORPORATION) 8 May 2002 See abstract, claims and figure 1-6	1 - 11
A	KR 10-2005-0067237 A (SIEMENS AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT) 30 June 2002 See abstract, claims and figure 1-7	1 - 11

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.☒ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/US2009/043724

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