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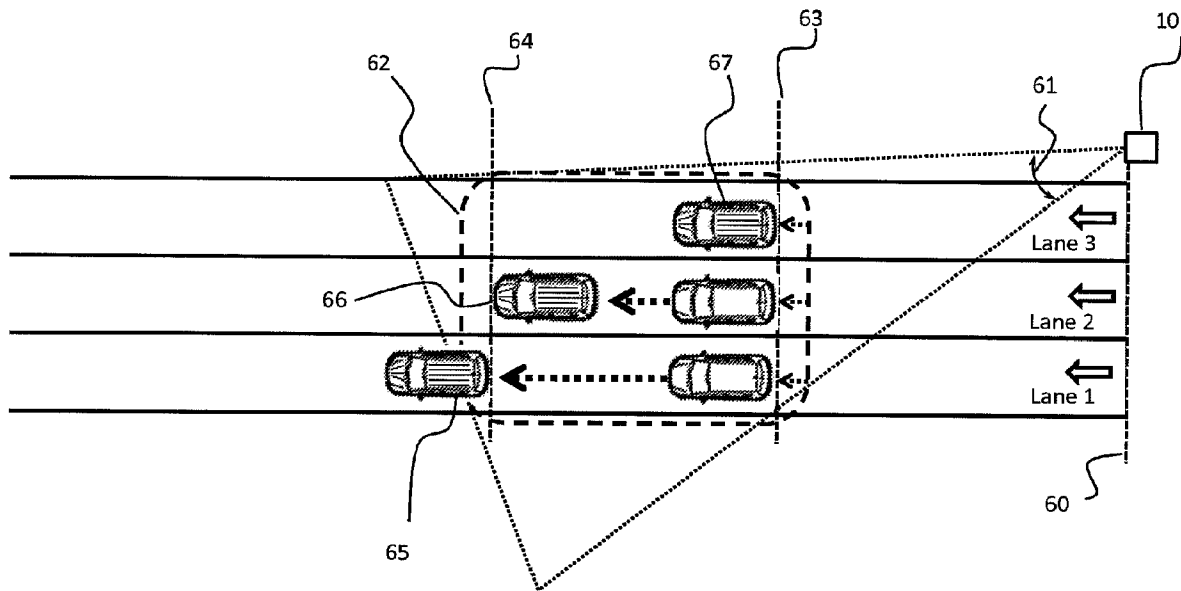
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(54) Titre : SYSTEME ET METHODE DE DETECTION DE VEHICULE

(54) **Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR VEHICLE DETECTION**



Top view

(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A method for tracking and characterizing a plurality of vehicles simultaneously in a traffic control environment, comprising: providing a 3D optical emitter; providing a 3D optical receiver with a wide and deep field of view; driving the 3D optical emitter into emitting short light pulses; receiving a reflection/backscatter of the emitted light, thereby acquiring an individual digital full-waveform L1DAR trace for each detection channel of the 3D optical receiver; using the individual digital full-waveform LIDAR trace and the emitted light waveform, detecting a presence of a plurality of vehicles, a position of at least part of each vehicle and a time at which the position is detected; assigning a unique identifier to each vehicle; repeating the steps of driving, receiving, acquiring and detecting, at a predetermined frequency, tracking and recording an updated position of each vehicle and an updated time at which the updated position is detected.

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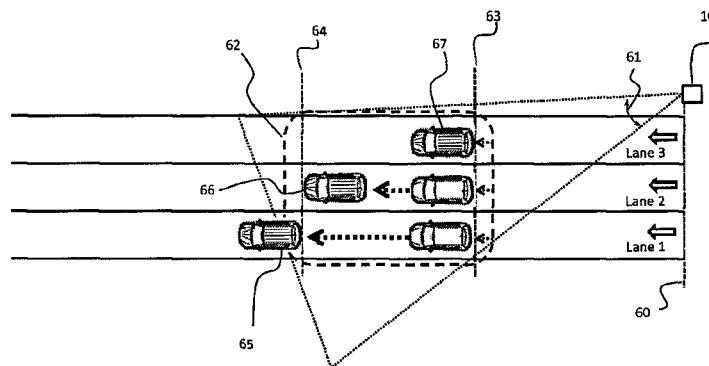


FIG. 6

Top view

(57) Abstract: A method for tracking and characterizing a plurality of vehicles simultaneously in a traffic control environment, comprising: providing a 3D optical emitter; providing a 3D optical receiver with a wide and deep field of view; driving the 3D optical emitter into emitting short light pulses; receiving a reflection/backscatter of the emitted light, thereby acquiring an individual digital full-waveform LIDAR trace for each detection channel of the 3D optical receiver; using the individual digital full-waveform LIDAR trace and the emitted light waveform, detecting a presence of a plurality of vehicles, a position of at least part of each vehicle and a time at which the position is detected; assigning a unique identifier to each vehicle; repeating the steps of driving, receiving, acquiring and detecting, at a predetermined frequency; tracking and recording an updated position of each vehicle and an updated time at which the updated position is detected.

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR VEHICLE DETECTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a system and method for traffic detection and more particularly to an optical system that detects the presence, location, lane position, direction and speed of vehicles in a traffic zone using an active three-dimensional sensor based on the time-of-flight ranging principle and an image sensor.

BACKGROUND OF THE ART

[0002] Growth in transportation demand has a major impact on traffic congestion and safety. To enhance the on-road safety and efficiency, major investments in transport infrastructures, including capital, operation and maintenance, are made all over the world. Intelligent systems collecting and disseminating real time traffic information is a key element for the optimization of traffic management.

[0003] Traffic monitoring can consist in different activities such as detecting the presence of a vehicle in a specific zone, counting the number of vehicles (volume), determining the lane position, classifying each vehicle, determining the direction of travel, estimating the occupancy and determining the speed.

[0004] Other traffic surveillance applications such as electronic toll collection and traffic enforcement require the same kind of information with a very high level of reliability.

[0005] In the United States, the FHWA has defined a vehicle classification based on 13 categories of vehicles from motorcycles, passenger cars, buses, two-axle-six-tire-single unit trucks, and up to a seven or more axle multi-trailer trucks classes. Several alternative classification schemes are possible. Often, the aggregation of the

FHWA 13 classes is split into 3 or 4 classes. Other countries have their own way to define a classification for vehicles.

[0006] In the case of speed infringement, determining the position and the lane, measuring accurately the speed of a specific vehicle in a multi-lane high-density
5 highway, and associating this information without any ambiguity with the vehicle identified using an Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) system is quite challenging.

[0007] A red light enforcement system has comparable requirements. There is a need for an automatic red light enforcement system but the high reliability required for
10 this application is also challenging. It implies the detection of vehicles at specific locations, the tracking of each of these vehicles in dense traffic at the intersection, the identification of each of these vehicles with the ALPR system, the confirmation of a red light violation by a specific vehicle and the collection of all information to support the issuance of a traffic violation ticket to the registered owner of the vehicle without
15 any ambiguity.

[0008] Different kinds of detectors are used to collect data for these applications. Intrusive detectors such as inductive loop detectors are still common for detecting the presence of vehicles but have some disadvantages such as lengthy disruption to the traffic flow during installation and maintenance, inflexibility and inability to track a
20 vehicle. Cameras with video processing have some drawbacks notably for speed measurement.

[0009] Radar technology is known to perform well for speed measurement but has some limitations in terms of lateral resolution making difficult the association between a speed measurement and the identification of a specific vehicle in dense traffic, for
25 example, at an intersection. Radar technology presents difficulties in the correlation of a specific speed measurement to a specific vehicle when two or more vehicles traveling at different speeds simultaneously enter into the measurement beam. This

limitation has an impact for speed enforcement applications. In some countries, legislation requires that ambiguous situations simply be discarded to reduce errors in the process. Installation of radar technology for speed enforcement is demanding because it requires adjusting the angle of the axis of the main lobe of emission in
5 both the horizontal and vertical directions with respect to the axis of the road, with accuracy typically less than one-half degree angle to limit the cosine effect.

[0010] Thus, there is a need for a method and system for reliable multipurpose traffic detection for traffic management and enforcement applications.

SUMMARY

10 [0011] According to one broad aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for tracking and characterizing a plurality of vehicles simultaneously in a traffic control environment. The method comprises providing a 3D optical emitter at an installation height oriented to allow illumination of a 3D detection zone in the environment; providing a 3D optical receiver oriented to have a wide and deep field of
15 view within the 3D detection zone, the 3D optical receiver having a plurality of detection channels in the field of view; driving the 3D optical emitter into emitting short light pulses toward the detection zone, the light pulses having an emitted light waveform; receiving a reflection/backscatter of the emitted light on the vehicles in the 3D detection zone at the 3D optical receiver, thereby acquiring an individual digital
20 full-waveform LIDAR trace for each detection channel of the 3D optical receiver; using the individual digital full-waveform LIDAR trace and the emitted light waveform, detecting a presence of a plurality of vehicles in the 3D detection zone, a position of at least part of each the vehicle in the 3D detection zone and a time at which the position is detected; assigning a unique identifier to each vehicle of the plurality of
25 vehicles detected; repeating the steps of driving, receiving, acquiring and detecting, at a predetermined frequency; at each instance of the repeating step, tracking and recording an updated position of each vehicle of the plurality of vehicles detected and an updated time at which the updated position is detected, with the unique identifier.

[0012] In one embodiment, the traffic control environment is at least one of a traffic management environment and a traffic enforcement environment.

[0013] In one embodiment, detecting the presence includes extracting observations in the individual digital full-waveform LIDAR trace; using the location for
5 the observations to remove observations coming from a surrounding environment; extracting lines using an estimate line and a covariance matrix using polar coordinates; removing observations located on lines parallel to the x axis.

[0014] In one embodiment, detecting the presence includes extracting observations in the individual digital full-waveform LIDAR trace and intensity data for
10 the observations; finding at least one blob in the observations; computing an observation weight depending on the intensity of the observations in the blob; computing a blob gravity center based on the weight and a position of the observations in the blob.

[0015] In one embodiment, the method further comprises setting at least one
15 trigger line location and recording trigger line trespassing data with the unique identifier.

[0016] In one embodiment, the method further comprises setting the trigger line location relative to a visible landmark in the environment.

[0017] In one embodiment, detecting the time at which the position is detected
20 includes assigning a timestamp for the detecting the presence and wherein the timestamp is adapted to be synchronized with an external controller.

[0018] In one embodiment, the method further comprises obtaining a classification for each detected vehicles using a plurality of detections in the 3D detection zone caused by the same vehicle.

[0019] In one embodiment, detecting the presence further comprises detecting a presence of a pedestrian in the environment.

[0020] In one embodiment, the part of the vehicle is one of a front, a side and a rear of the vehicle.

5 [0021] In one embodiment, emitting short light pulses includes emitting short light pulses of a duration of less than 50 ns.

[0022] In one embodiment, the 3D optical emitter is at least one of an infrared LED source, a visible-light LED source and a laser.

10 [0023] In one embodiment, providing the 3D optical receiver to have a wide and deep field of view includes providing the 3D optical receiver to have a horizontal field of view angle of at least 20° and a vertical field of view angle of at least 4°.

[0024] In one embodiment, the method further comprises determining and recording a speed for each the vehicle using the position and the updated position of one of the instances of the repeating step and an elapsed time between the time of
15 the position and the updated time of the updated position, with the unique identifier.

[0025] In one embodiment, the method further comprises using a Kalman filter to determine an accuracy for the speed to validate the speed; comparing the accuracy to a predetermined accuracy threshold; if the accuracy is lower than the predetermined accuracy threshold, rejecting the speed.

20 [0026] In one embodiment, the method further comprises retrieving a speed limit and identifying a speed limit infraction by comparing the speed recorded for each the vehicle to the speed limit.

[0027] In one embodiment, the method further comprises providing a 2D optical receiver, wherein the 2D optical receiver being an image sensor adapted to provide
25 images of the 2D detection zone; driving the 2D optical receiver to capture a 2D

image; using image registration to correlate corresponding locations between the 2D image and the detection channels; extracting vehicle identification data from the 2D image at a location corresponding to the location for the detected vehicle; assigning the vehicle identification data to the unique identifier.

5 [0028] In one embodiment, the vehicle identification data is at least one of a picture of the vehicle and a license plate alphanumeric code present on the vehicle.

[0029] In one embodiment, the vehicle identification data includes the 2D image showing a traffic violation.

10 [0030] In one embodiment, the method further comprises extracting at least one of a size of characters on the license plate and a size of the license plate and comparing one of the size among different instances of the repeating to determine an approximate speed value.

15 [0031] In one embodiment, the method further comprises providing a 2D illumination source oriented to allow illumination of a 2D detection zone in the 3D detection zone and driving the 2D illumination source to emit pulses to illuminate the 2D detection zone and synchronizing the driving the 2D optical receiver to capture images with the driving the 2D illumination source to emit pulses to allow capture of the images during the illumination.

20 [0032] In one embodiment, driving the 2D illumination source includes driving the 2D illumination source to emit pulses of a duration between 10 μ s and 10 ms.

[0033] In one embodiment, the 2D illumination source is at least one of a visible light LED source, an infrared LED light source and laser.

[0034] In one embodiment, the 3D optical emitter and the 2D illumination source are provided by a common infrared LED light source.

[0035] In one embodiment, the vehicle identification data is at least two areas of high retroreflectivity apparent on the images, the detecting a presence includes extracting observations in the individual digital signals and intensity data for the observations, the method further comprising correlating locations for the areas of high retroreflectivity and high intensity data locations in the observations, wherein each the area of high retroreflectivity is created from one of a retroreflective license plate, a retro-reflector affixed on a vehicle and a retro-reflective lighting module provided on a vehicle.

[0036] In one embodiment, the method further comprises combining multiples ones of the captured images into a combined image with the vehicle and the vehicle identification data apparent.

[0037] According to another broad aspect of the present invention, there is provided a system for tracking and characterizing a plurality of vehicles simultaneously in a traffic control environment, the system comprising: a 3D optical emitter provided at an installation height and oriented to allow illumination of a 3D detection zone in the environment; a 3D optical receiver provided and oriented to have a wide and deep field of view within the 3D detection zone, the 3D optical receiver having a plurality of detection channels in the field of view; a controller for driving the 3D optical emitter into emitting short light pulses toward the detection zone, the light pulses having an emitted light waveform; the 3D optical receiver receiving a reflection/backscatter of the emitted light on the vehicles in the 3D detection zone, thereby acquiring an individual digital full-waveform LIDAR trace for each channel of the 3D optical receiver; a processor for detecting a presence of a plurality of vehicles in the 3D detection zone using the individual digital full-waveform LIDAR trace and the emitted light waveform, detecting a position of at least part of each the vehicle in the 3D detection zone, recording a time at which the position is detected, assigning a unique identifier to each vehicle of the plurality of vehicles detected and tracking and recording an updated position of each vehicle of the

plurality of vehicles detected and an updated time at which the updated position is detected, with the unique identifier.

[0038] In one embodiment, the processor is further for determining and recording a speed for each the vehicle using the position and the updated position of one of the instances of the repeating step and an elapsed time between the time of the position and the updated time of the updated position, with the unique identifier.

[0039] In one embodiment, the system further comprises a 2D optical receiver, wherein the 2D optical receiver is an image sensor adapted to provide images of the 2D detection zone; and a driver for driving the 2D optical receiver to capture a 2D image; the processor being further adapted for using image registration to correlate corresponding locations between the 2D image and the detection channels and extracting vehicle identification data from the 2D image at a location corresponding to the location for the detected vehicle; and assigning the vehicle identification data to the unique identifier.

[0040] In one embodiment, the system further comprises a 2D illumination source provided and oriented to allow illumination of a 2D detection zone in the 3D detection zone; a source driver for driving the 2D illumination source to emit pulses; a synchronization module for synchronizing the source driver and the driver to allow capture of the images while the 2D detection zone is illuminated.

[0041] According to another broad aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for tracking and characterizing a plurality of vehicles simultaneously in a traffic control environment, comprising: providing a 3D optical emitter; providing a 3D optical receiver with a wide and deep field of view; driving the 3D optical emitter into emitting short light pulses; receiving a reflection/backscatter of the emitted light, thereby acquiring an individual digital full-waveform LIDAR trace for each detection channel of the 3D optical receiver; using the individual digital full-waveform LIDAR trace and the emitted light waveform, detecting a presence of a

plurality of vehicles, a position of at least part of each vehicle and a time at which the position is detected; assigning a unique identifier to each vehicle; repeating the steps of driving, receiving, acquiring and detecting, at a predetermined frequency; tracking and recording an updated position of each vehicle and an updated time at which the updated position is detected.

5

[0041a] According to another broad aspect of the present invention there is provided a vehicle-mountable LIDAR system, comprising: a vehicle-mountable optical emitter configured to emit an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality
10 target roadway objects; a vehicle-mountable optical receiver configured for detecting an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target roadway objects that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the
15 optical return signal captured by that channel; and a vehicle-mountable processing device configured to: receive as inputs the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels; derive distance and position information of the detected roadway objects at least in part on the basis of the channel return data; simultaneously track, in real-time, updated distance and position information of the detected roadway objects as they move into, within and partly out of a
20 tracking zone.

[0041b] According to another broad aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for implementation in a vehicle-mountable LIDAR system, comprising: emitting an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal configured for
25 illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality target roadway objects; detecting an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target roadway objects that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data
30 representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and receiving the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels; deriving distance and position information of the detected roadway objects at least in part on the basis of the channel return data; simultaneously tracking, in real-time, updated distance and position information of the detected roadway objects as they move into, within and partly out of a tracking zone.

[0041c] According to another broad aspect of the present invention, there is provided a vehicle-mountable LIDAR system mountable to a vehicle occupying a first lane of a roadway, comprising: a vehicle-mountable optical emitter configured to emit an illumination signal including
5 at least one emitted pulse, the at illumination signal configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality target vehicles in multiple lanes including the first lane and one or more other lanes of the roadway; a vehicle-mountable optical receiver configured for detecting an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target vehicles that are simultaneously present in a
10 field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and a vehicle-mountable processing device configured to: receive as inputs the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels; derive distance and position information on each of said
15 multiple ones of the detected vehicles at least in part on the basis of the channel return data; simultaneously track, in real-time, updated distance and position information of the detected vehicles as they change lanes.

[0041d] According to another broad aspect of the present invention, there is provided a
20 method for implementation in a vehicle-mountable LIDAR system mountable to a vehicle occupying a first lane of a roadway, the method comprising: emitting an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality target vehicles in multiple lanes including the first lane and one or more other lanes of the roadway; detecting an optical
25 return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target vehicles that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and receiving as inputs the channel return data output by each
30 channel of the multiple channels; deriving distance and position information on each of said multiple ones of the detected vehicles at least in part on the basis of the channel return data; simultaneously tracking, in real-time, updated distance and position information of the detected vehicles as they change lanes.

[0041e] According to another broad aspect of the present invention, there is provided in combination, a vehicle and a LIDAR system mounted to the vehicle, the ground vehicle being driven on a roadway, the LIDAR system comprising: an optical emitter configured to emit an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal
5 configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality target objects on the roadway; an optical receiver configured for detecting an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target objects that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple
10 channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and a vehicle-mountable processing device configured to: receive as inputs the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels; derive distance and position information of the detected objects on the roadway at least in part on the basis of the channel return data;
15 simultaneously track, in real-time, updated distance and position information of each of the detected objects as the vehicle is driven on the roadway.

[0041f] According to another broad aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for implementation in a LIDAR system mounted to a vehicle being driven on a
20 roadway, the method comprising: emitting an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality target objects on the roadway; detecting an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target objects that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered
25 by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data

representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and receiving as inputs the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels; deriving distance and position information of the detected objects on the roadway at least in part on the basis of the channel return data; simultaneously tracking, in real-time, updated
5 distance and position information of each of the detected objects as the vehicle is driven on the roadway.

[0041g] According to another broad aspect of the present invention, there is provided a vehicle-mountable data processing device for performing real-time LIDAR detection and
10 tracking of a plurality of vehicle lanes in a roadway, the data processing device including: an input configured for receiving an output from an optical receiver, the optical receiver configured for detecting an optical return generated by reflection of an illumination signal including at least one illumination pulse directed at a field of view and configured for simultaneously illuminating at least portions of a plurality of target objects, the optical
15 receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver and including multiple channels, each channel configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel, the output of the optical receiver conveying the output channel return data of the multiple channels; and at least one processor configured to process the output for: i. detecting a position of each target object in the field of view; ii.
20 simultaneously tracking, in real time, the plurality of detected target objects including determining an updated position of each detected target object as the detected target objects move within the field of view.

[0041h] According to another broad aspect of the present invention, there is provided
25 a data processing device for performing real-time LIDAR detection and tracking of a plurality of vehicles in a field of view spanning a plurality of adjacent vehicle lanes in a

roadway where the vehicles are distributed over two or more of the adjacent lanes of the roadway, the data processing device including: an input configured for receiving a return signal conveying an optical return of an illumination signal directed at the field of view and having a horizontal extent sufficient to simultaneously illuminate at least a portion of a
5 vehicle residing in a respective lane of the plurality of adjacent lanes, the optical return conveying individual reflections of the illumination signal generated by respective ones of the plurality of vehicles; and at least one processor configured to process the signal for: i. detecting a position of each vehicle of the plurality of vehicles in the field of view based on a respective reflection in the optical return; ii. simultaneously tracking, in real time, the
10 plurality of vehicles including determining an updated position of each detected vehicle as the detected vehicles move within the field of view.

[0042] Throughout this specification, the term "object" is intended to include a moving object and a stationary object. For example, it can be a vehicle, an environmental particle, a
15 person, a pedestrian, a passenger, an animal, a gas, a liquid, a particle such as dust, a pavement, a wall, a post, a sidewalk, a ground surface, a tree, etc.

[0043] Throughout this specification, the term "vehicle" is intended to include any movable means of transportation for cargo, humans and animals, not necessarily restricted to ground
20 transportation, including wheeled and unwheeled vehicles, such as, for example, a truck, a bus, a boat, a subway car, a train wagon, an aerial tramway car, a ski lift, a plane, a car, a motorcycle, a tricycle, a bicycle, a Segway™, a carriage, a wheelbarrow, a stroller, etc.

[0044] Throughout this specification, the term "environmental particle" is intended to include
25 any particle detectable in the air or on the ground and which can be caused by an

environmental, chemical or natural phenomenon or by human intervention. It includes fog, water, rain, liquid, dust, dirt, vapor, snow, smoke, gas, smog, pollution, black ice, hail, etc.

[0045] Throughout this specification, the term "red light" is intended to mean a traffic light
5 (traffic signal, traffic lamp or signal light) which is currently signaling users of a road, at a road intersection, that they do not have the right of way into the intersection and that they should stop before entering the intersection. Another color and/or symbol could be used to signal the same information to the user depending on the jurisdiction.

[0046] Throughout this specification, the term "green light" is intended to mean a traffic light (traffic signal, traffic lamp or signal light) which is currently signaling users of a road, at a road intersection, that they have the right of way into the intersection and that they should enter the intersection if it is safe to do so. Another color and/or
5 symbol could be used to signal the same information to the user depending on the jurisdiction.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0047] The accompanying drawings, which are included to provide a better understanding of the main aspects of the system and method and are incorporated in
10 and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate different example embodiments. The accompanying drawings are not intended to be drawn to scale. In the drawings:

[0048] FIG. 1 is a functional bloc diagram of an example of the multipurpose traffic detection system showing its main components and the way they are interconnected;

[0049] FIG. 2 is an example installation of the traffic detection system on the side
15 of a 3-lane highway;

[0050] FIG. 3 shows an example installation of the traffic detection system on a gantry;

[0051] FIG. 4 shows the impact on the depth of a detection zone of the height of installation of the system;

20 [0052] FIG. 5 shows an example casing for the multipurpose traffic detector;

[0053] FIG. 6 shows a top view of the detection zone on a 3-lane highway;

[0054] FIG. 7 shows a top view of the detection zone in a red light enforcement application;

[0055] FIG. 8A and 8B are photographs showing example snapshots taken by the image sensor with the overlay of the 3D sensor displaying a vehicle in the detected zone with distance measurements;

5 [0056] FIG. 9A is a photograph showing an example snapshot taken by the image sensor with the overlay of the 3D sensor at an intersection for red light enforcement application and FIG. 9B is a graph of data acquired by the detection system showing the range of detection of vehicles on 3 lanes in Cartesian coordinates;

10 [0057] FIG. 10 is a top view of an example road side installation with the tracking system being installed next to a one-directional three-lane highway and for which the detection zone is apparent and covers, at least partly, each of the lanes, all vehicles traveling in the same direction;

[0058] FIG. 11 is a top view of the example installation of FIG. 10 on which four vehicle detections are visible in some of the 16 separate channels with simultaneous acquisition capability;

15 [0059] FIG. 12 is a top view of the example installation of FIG. 10 on which a detection is visible between two trigger lines;

[0060] FIG. 13 includes FIGS. 13A, 13B, 13C, 13D, 13E and 13F, in which FIGS. 13A, 13C and 13E are photographs which show a few frames of vehicle tracking when vehicles arrive at an intersection with a red light and FIGS. 13B, 13D, 20 and 13F show a graph of data acquired by the detection system for each corresponding frame;

[0061] FIG. 14 includes FIGS. 14A, 14B, 14C, 14D, 14E and 14F, in which FIGS. 14A, 14C and 14E are photographs which show a few frames of vehicle tracking when vehicles depart the intersection of FIG. 13 at the green light and 25 FIGS. 14B, 14D, and 14F show a graph of data acquired by the detection system for each corresponding frame;

[0062] FIG. 15 is a flowchart illustrating an example method for tracking several vehicles based on a space-based tracking disjoint;

[0063] FIG. 16 is a flowchart illustrating an example method for tracking several vehicles for a red-light enforcement application, this algorithm uses a space-based
5 tracking joint;

[0064] FIG. 17 is a flowchart illustrating the selection of appropriate measures among the detections;

[0065] FIG. 18 shows an example segment extraction line for a long vehicle;

[0066] FIG. 19 is a state diagram illustrating the tracking system used without a
10 traffic light state;

[0067] FIG. 20 is a state diagram illustrating the tracking system used with a traffic light state;

[0068] FIG. 21 is a flowchart showing example steps performed to compute the vehicle position;

15 [0069] FIG. 22 is a flowchart showing example steps performed for object tracking without a traffic light state;

[0070] FIG. 23 is a flowchart showing example steps performed for object tracking with a traffic light state;

[0071] FIG. 24 is a flowchart illustrating an example classification process;

20 [0072] FIG. 25 includes FIGS. 25A, 25B and 25C which illustrate the relationship between the detections of a vehicle and its geometric features of width and length;

[0073] FIG. 26 illustrates the direct geometric relationship between height of the vehicle and distance of vehicle detection;

[0074] FIG 27 includes FIGS. 27A, 27B, 27C and 27D which show top view frames of a vehicle detected by the LEDDAR sensor;

[0075] FIG. 28 includes FIGS. 28A, 28B, 28C and 28D which show corresponding side view frames of the vehicle of FIG. 27;

5 [0076] FIG. 29 is a flowchart illustrating an example segmentation algorithm based on a 3D bounding box;

[0077] FIG. 30 is a top view of an example scenario used for the analysis of Posterior Cramer-Rao lower bound;

10 [0078] FIG. 31 is a graph showing theoretical performance of the tracking algorithm given by the PCRB;

[0079] FIG. 32 includes FIG. 32A, 32B, 32C and 32D in which FIG. 32A is a photograph showing an example snapshot taken by the image sensor during the day, FIGS. 32B, 32C and 32D are photographs showing a zoom in on license plates in the snapshot of FIG. 32A;

15 [0080] FIG. 33 includes FIG. 33A, 33B and 33C in which FIG. 33A is a photograph showing an example snapshot taken by the image sensor at night without any light, FIG. 33B is a photograph showing the same scene as FIG. 33A taken by the image sensor at night with an infrared light illumination, FIG. 33C is a photograph showing a zoom in on a license plate extracted from the image of FIG 33B;

20 [0081] FIG. 34 includes FIG. 34A, 34B, 34C and 34D in which FIG. 34A is a photograph showing another example snapshot taken by the image sensor at night with infrared light, FIG. 34B is a photograph showing a zoom in on a license plate extracted from the image of FIG. 34A, FIG. 34C is a photograph showing an example snapshot taken by the image sensor with a shorter integration time at night with

infrared light, FIG. 34D is a photograph showing a zoom in on a license plate extracted from the image of FIG. 34C; and

[0082] FIG. 35 is a photograph showing an example panoramic snapshot taken by the image sensor using infrared illumination in which two vehicles are present in the detection zone and on which the overlay of the 3D sensor is shown with dashed lines.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Description of the multipurpose traffic detection system

[0083] Reference will now be made in detail to example embodiments. The system and method may however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the example embodiments set forth in the following description.

[0084] The functionalities of the various components integrated in an example multipurpose traffic detection system 10 can be better understood by referring to the functional block diagram shown in FIG. 1. The 3D Optical Emitter 12 (3DOE) emits short pulses of light, for example of a length less than 50 ns, within a predetermined zone. In the example embodiment, the 3DOE 12 is an IR LED illumination source determining a Field-of-Illumination FOI_{3D} covering the 3D detection zone FOV_{3D}. The optical source of the 3DOE can also be based on Laser technology. The horizontal angles of the FOI_{3D} and FOV_{3D} are wide enough to cover at least one lane. For example, a system with a horizontal FOI / FOV of 35° would be able to cover 3 lanes, each lane having a width of 3.5 m, when installed at 15 m from the side of the detection zone.

[0085] An example mounting configuration of the multipurpose traffic detection system 10 can be seen in FIG. 2, which depicts a schematic view of a roadway with 3 lanes being shown. The traffic detection system 10 is shown mounted on a pole 27 with an orientation towards traffic direction. Pole 27 can be a new dedicated road

infrastructure for the sensor installation or an already existing road infrastructure streetlight assembly or other types of infrastructures like gantries or buildings. This exemplary roadway comprises three adjacent traffic lanes for vehicles. The traffic detection system is intended to detect any type of objects that may be present within
5 the predetermined 3D detection zone.

[0086] The mounting height of the traffic detection system 10 is, for example, between 1 to 10 m with a lateral distance from the nearest traffic lane of, for example, between 1 to 5 m. In FIG. 2, three vehicles travelling in the same direction on the traffic lanes enter in the 3D detection zone. When the vehicles reach the 3D detection
10 zone, the multipurpose traffic detection system is used for detection, localization, classification and measurement of the speed of the vehicles through the zone. The system can also be installed over the roadway on a gantry as shown in FIG. 3. The system can also detect vehicles traveling in opposite directions.

[0087] The detection system can be installed at different heights, from the ground
15 up to 10 m. FIG. 4 shows the impact of the installation height on the longitudinal length of the detection zone. With a fixed starting distance of detection, the longitudinal length of the detection zone will be shorter with a system installed higher. The vertical angles of the FOI_{3D} and FOV_{3D} have to be wide enough to detect and track vehicles over several meters, for example over at least 8 m. For example, a
20 system installed at a height of 3.5 m with a vertical FOI / FOV of 6° and a detection zone beginning at 15 m from the detector will have a detection zone depth of approximately 13 m.

[0088] Referring back to FIG. 1, part of the light diffusively reflected by the vehicles and objects in the FOI_{3D} is directed towards the collecting aperture of the 3D Optical
25 Receiver 14 (3DOR) for its 3D optical detection and subsequent conversion into digital waveforms. To be detected, an object should appear within the FOV_{3D} of the 3DOR, which is defined by its optics as well as by the dimensions of its optically sensitive device. The 3DOR is composed of one or more optical lenses, multichannel

optical detectors, for example photodiode arrays, an analog frontend and analog-to-digital converter. Usually, the channels are digitalized in parallel and the system implements a full-waveform signal processing of the signal waveforms generated by the plurality of optical detection channels.

5 [0089] The multipurpose traffic detection system provides a good accuracy in terms of lateral resolution and is less dependent on the angle of installation than Radar technology.

[0090] In FIG. 1, the 2D Optical Receiver 16 (2DOR) is at least one image sensor, for example a CMOS or CCD (including front end and AD conversion) which provides
10 images of the portion of the roadway area that encompasses or overlaps at least a section of the FOI_{3D} of the 3DOE and the FOV_{3D} of the 3DOR. The 2DOR will be used during installation, to transmit video data, and, for some applications, to help identify vehicles using, for example, Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) techniques. For applications requiring vehicle identification, the requirement for the
15 image sensor in terms of resolution is high. An external image sensor or camera can also be used for this function. The average size of a character on a license plate is between 50 mm to 80 mm. It takes at least 16 pixels per character (height) to obtain good results with an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) processing within an ALPR system. Based on that criterion, the identification of a license plate of a vehicle
20 circulating on a 3-lane highway (3.5 m x 3 m) requires an image sensor with a least 5 Mpixels (2.5K x 2K). High resolution image sensors are expensive. One way to reduce the cost is to use at least two image sensors each with lower resolution and to combine the information coming from both images using image stitching techniques. The synchronization, acquisition and image processing are performed by Control and
25 processing unit 22.

[0091] The 2D Illumination 18 (2DI) is an optical source emitting infrared and/or visible light. The 2DI can be embedded in the sensor enclosure or can be an external module. In one example embodiment, the optical source of 2DI 18 is at least one

LED. LEDs are efficient and the FOI can be optimized with optical collimators and diffusers. The pulse width of 2DOE can be in the range of 10 μ s to 10 ms and can be synchronized with the image capture (integration time) of the image sensor(s). For vehicles traveling at high speed, the integration time can be in the range of 500 μ s and less. A vehicle moving at 150 km/h will travel 21 cm in 500 μ s.

[0092] A single set of infrared LEDs can be used for both the 3DOE and 2DOE. Very high-short intensity pulses (for example < 50 ns) for 3D detection can be mixed with longer pulses (for example 10 μ s to 10 ms) for 2D sensor(s). The LEDs can have a wavelength between 800 and 1000 μ m, for example.

10 [0093] Source Driver Electronics (SDE) 20 uses dedicated electronics for driving the 3DOE 12 with current pulses having peak amplitude and duration suitable for effective implementation of the optical ranging principle on which the operation of the multipurpose traffic detection system is based. A pulsed voltage trig signal forwarded by the Control and Processing Unit 22 commands the generation of each current pulse by the drive electronics. The operating conditions and performance requirements for the multipurpose traffic detection system call for the emission of short optical pulses having a duration in the range of 5 to 50 ns, for example. Depending on the repetition rate at which the pulses are emitted, the duty cycle (relative ON time) of the optical emission can be as low as 0.1 %. In order to get the desired peak optical output power for the radiated light pulses, any lowering of the peak drive level of the LEDs or Laser can be compensated by mounting additional LED or Laser sources in the 3DOE 12 and appropriately duplicating their drive electronics.

25 [0094] The SDE 20 can also drive 2D illumination with current pulses having peak amplitude and duration suitable for effective illumination of the scene for the 2DOR 16. A pulsed voltage trig signal forwarded by the Control and Processing Unit 22 commands the generation of each current pulse by the drive electronics. The operating conditions and performance requirements for the multipurpose traffic

detection system call for the emission of 2D optical pulses having a duration in the range of 10 μ s to 10 ms, for example.

[0095] The SDE 20 can control and receive information from 3DOE and 2D illumination about the intensity of the current pulse, LEDs/Laser temperature, etc.

5 [0096] All of these modules exchange data and receive commands and signals from the control and processing unit 22. The Control and processing unit 22 can include digital logic (for example by a Field-Programmable Gated Array (FPGA)) for pre-processing the 3D raw data and for the synchronization and control, a memory, and a processing unit. The processing unit can be a digital signal processing (DSP)
10 unit, a microcontroller or an embarked personal computer (PC) board as will be readily understood.

[0097] The primary objective of the 3D full-waveform processing is to detect, within a prescribed minimum detection probability, the presence of vehicles in a lane that is mapped to a number of adjacent detection channels. Because of the usual optical
15 reflection characteristics of the vehicle bodies and of various constraints that limit the performances of the modules implemented in a traffic detection system, the optical return signals captured by the 3DOR are optimized by acquisition shifting techniques, accumulation techniques and filtering and correlation technique to enhance the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) of the useful signal echoes and detect a digital replica of
20 the pulse emitted by the 3DPE. The properties (peak amplitude, shape, time/distance location) of the useful features present in the waveforms should remain ideally unchanged during the time period required to capture a complete set of waveforms that will be averaged. This condition may cause issues when attempting to detect vehicles that move rapidly, this situation leading to signal echoes that drift more or
25 less appreciably from waveform to waveform. The detrimental impacts of this situation can be alleviated by designing the traffic detection system so that it radiates light pulses at a high repetition rate (e.g., in the tens to hundreds of kHz range). Such high repetition rates will enable the capture of a very large number of waveforms

during a time interval sufficiently short to keep the optical echoes associated to a moving vehicle stationary. Detection information on each channel can then be upgraded, for example between a few tens to a few hundred times per second. For example, with a multipurpose traffic detection system using a frame rate at 200 Hz, a
5 car at 250 km/h would have moved forward by 35 cm between each frame.

[0098] The Control and processing unit 22 has numerous functions in the operation of the multipurpose traffic detection system, one of these being the calibration of the system. This calibration process can be done by connecting a remote computer to the Control and processing unit 22 and communicating using a Power management and
10 data Interface 24.

[0099] During normal operation of the multipurpose traffic detection system, Power management and data Interface 24 receives information from the external controller (including parameters like a speed limit) and also allows the Control and processing unit 22 to send data. The data sent can be related to the detection of each vehicle
15 and can comprise information such as an accurate timestamp of the detection time synchronized with the external controller, a unique identifier (ID number), the lane and position of the vehicle (lateral and longitudinal) for each trigger event, the position of the vehicle in an image, video streaming, identification by ALPR, speed, classification, weather information, etc., to the external controller.

20 [00100] In another embodiment, part of the process and algorithms can be integrated in the external controller which receives the raw data from the Control and processing unit by the Power Management and Interface.

[00101] Several types of interfaces can be used to communicate with the external controller: Ethernet, RS-485, wireless link, etc. Power over Ethernet (PoE) may be
25 used for its simplicity of connection including power, data and distance (up to 100 m).

[00102] The data information can also be stored in memory and retrieved later.

[00103] Power management and data Interface 24 can also send electrical trigger signals to synchronize events like the detection of the front or the rear of a vehicle at a specific position to other devices like an external camera, an external illuminator or other interface and external controller.

5 [00104] The Power Supply Management and Data Interface 24 can also be useful in transmitting images and videos to an external system or network to allow a remote operator to monitor different traffic events (ex.: accident, congestion, etc.). Video compression (ex.: MPEG) can be done by a processor to limit the bandwidth required for the video transmission.

10 [00105] The four optical modules can be rigidly secured to the attachment surface of an actuator assembly (not shown). The modules can then pivot in a controlled manner about up to three orthogonal axes to allow a precise alignment of their common line of sight after the multipurpose traffic detection unit has been installed in place and aligned in a coarse manner. The fine tuning of the orientation of the line of
15 sight is, for example, performed remotely by an operator via a computer device connected to the multipurpose traffic detection system, for example through PoE or a wireless data link.

[00106] FIG. 1 also shows a functional bloc labeled Sensors 26 for measuring different parameters. The internal temperature in the system enclosure can be
20 monitored with a temperature sensor which can be used to control a heating/cooling device, not shown. The current orientation of the system can be monitored using an inclinometer/compass assembly. Such information may be useful for timely detection of the line of sight that may become misaligned. The sensor suite may also include an accelerometer for monitoring in real-time the vibration level to which the system is
25 submitted to as well as a global positioning system (GPS) unit for real-time tracking of the location of the system and/or for having access to a real-time clock.

[00107] FIG. 5 shows an example casing with a window 28 for the multipurpose traffic detection system. The casing can house a more or less complete suite of monitoring instruments, each of them forwarding its output data signals to the control and processing unit for further processing or relay. In other configurations of the casing, lateral sections can be integrated to protect the window from the road dust.

Use, set-up, basic principles, features and applications

[00108] FIG. 6 shows a top view of an installation of the multipurpose detection system. The multichannel 3DOR detects vehicles present within a two-dimensional detection zone, the active nature of the traffic detection system provides an optical ranging capability that enables measurement of the instantaneous distances of the detected vehicles from the system. This optical ranging capability is implemented via the emission of light in the form of very brief pulses along with the recordal of the time it takes to the pulses to travel from the system to the vehicle and then to return to the system. Those skilled in the art will readily recognize that the optical ranging is performed via the so-called time-of-flight (TOF) principle, of widespread use in optical rangefinder devices. However, most optical rangefinders rely on analog peak detection of the light pulse signal reflected from a remote object followed by its comparison with a predetermined amplitude threshold level. In the present system, the traffic detection system numerically processes the signal waveform acquired for a certain period of time after the emission of a light pulse. The traffic detection system can therefore be categorized as a full-waveform LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) instrument. The system analyses the detection and distance measurements on several 3D channels and is able to track several vehicles at the same time in the detection zone. The system can determine the lane position, the distance from the detector and the speed, for each individual vehicle.

[00109] As can be seen in FIG. 6, the detection system 10 is installed at a reference line 60, has a wide FOV 61, has a large and wide detection and tracking zone 62

covering several lanes and several meters of depth and detects several vehicles on several lanes in a roadway.

[00110] The detection system can be configured with two trigger positions. The first trigger 63 is set in the first section of the detection zone and the second trigger 64 is set a few meters away, in this case close to the end of the detection zone. In this example, a first vehicle 65 was detected when entering the detection zone on lane 1, was tracked, was detected at the position of the first trigger 63, was continuously tracked and is now being detected at the position of the second trigger 64. Information about its lane position, speed, etc., can be constantly sent or can be sent only when the vehicle reaches pre-established trigger positions. A second vehicle 66 was detected when entering the detection zone on lane 2, was tracked, was detected at the position of the first trigger 63, and is continuously tracked until it reaches the position of the second trigger 64. A third vehicle 67 was detected when entering the detection zone on lane 3, was tracked, is detected at the position of the first trigger 63, will continue to be tracked and will reach the position of the second trigger 64.

[00111] The detection system has the capability to identify, track and send information about multiple vehicles at the same time and its multiple receiver channels greatly reduce the cosine effect for speed measurement.

[00112] The system can capture several snapshots using the 2DOR at different levels of illumination using the 2DOE. Information about each vehicle (date/hour of an event, speed, position, photographs and identification based on Automatic License Plate Recognition) can be sent to the external controller. This is useful for applications like traffic management (for vehicle detection, volume, occupancy, speed measurement and classification), speed enforcement, red light enforcement, etc. The system can be permanently or temporarily installed. It can even be a mobile system , for example a system installed on a vehicle.

[00113] An example of configuration for Red Light Enforcement is shown in FIG. 7. The capability of the system to detect, track, determine the lane position, measure the speed and take photographs (or videos) for each vehicle several meters away from the stop bar has great value for this application. Red light enforcement applications
5 require the detection of a vehicle entering an intersection when the traffic light is at the red state and the automatic capture of several images of the vehicle as it crosses the stop bar and runs the red light. The detection system needs to provide evidence that a violation occurred without ambiguity.

[00114] For most applications, detection rates should be high, for example of the
10 order of 95 % and more (without occlusion), and false detections should occur only very rarely. Images and information about the date and time of the infraction will allow the authorities to transmit a traffic infraction ticket. Identification of the driver and/or owner of the vehicle is generally made by the authorities using the information from the license plate of the vehicle. Since speed information is available, speed
15 infractions can also be detected when the traffic light is green. As will be readily understood, the detection system can also be used for other detection applications such as stop line crossing and railway crossing.

[00115] In FIG. 7, the detection system is installed on the side of the road at an example distance of 15 to 25 m from the stop bar 70. The detection and tracking zone
20 71 starts few meters before the stop bar 70 and covers several meters after the bar, allowing a large and deep zone for detecting and tracking any vehicle on several lanes (three lanes in that example), at different speeds (from 0 to more than 100 km/h), at a rate of up to ten vehicles detected per second . The detection system can take several images of a red light infraction including, for example, when the
25 vehicle is located at a predetermined trigger distance, for example at first trigger 72 when the back of the vehicle is close to the stop bar 70 and at second trigger 73 when the back of the vehicle is few meters away from the stop bar 70. Optional

detection of the lane position is useful when a right turn on red is allowed at the intersection.

[00116] Speed enforcement is another application that requires providing evidence that a speed violation occurred. The correlation between the detected speed and the actual vehicle guilty of the infraction needs to be trustworthy. Sufficient information should be provided to allow identification of the vehicle owner, using information from the license plate, for example. The capability of the detection system to measure the speed of several vehicles at the same time with high accuracy and to make the association between each speed measurement and the specific identified vehicle is useful for traffic enforcement applications. This is made possible by, among others, the multiple FOV, the robustness and accuracy of the sensor and the capability to store several images of a violation.

[00117] The detector can store speed limit data (which can be different for each lane) and determine the occurrence of the infraction.

[00118] The detector can be mounted on a permanent installation or can also be temporary, provided on a movable tripod for example. Detectors can also be installed at the entry and at the exit of a point-to-point enforcement system allowing the measurement of the average speed of a vehicle by determining the amount of time it takes to displace the vehicle between the two points. The position of each vehicle and its classification are also information that the detector can transmit to the external controller. In some countries, lane restriction can be determined for specific vehicles, such as trucks for example.

[00119] Moreover, the multipurpose traffic detection system can fulfill more than one application at a time. For example, the system used for traffic management near an intersection can also be used for red light enforcement at that intersection.

Methods for alignment and detection of the traffic detection system

[00120] A method that allows a rapid and simple alignment step for the multipurpose traffic detection system after it has been set in place is provided.

[00121] FIGS. 8A and B show examples images of a roadway captured by the 2DOR during the day. The image is overlaid with the perimeters of a set of 16
5 contiguous detection zones of the 3DOR. In FIG. 8A, a vehicle present in the first lane 32 would be detected by several adjacent channels at a respective detected distance between 17.4 m to 17.6 m (see the numbers at the bottom of the overlay). In FIG. 8B, the vehicle is detected in the second lane 34 between 24.0 m to 24.4 m. Note that the overall detection zone is wide enough to cover more than two lanes. In
10 some situations depending on the context of the installation, some objects or even the ground can be detected by the system but can be filtered out and not be considered as an object of interest.

[00122] FIG. 9A shows a photograph of a red light enforcement application installation. Some channels detect echo back signals from the ground (see the
15 numbers at the bottom of the overlay) but the system is able to discriminate them as static objects. FIG. 9B is a graph showing a top view of the 3D 16 field of view of a road with 3 lanes. In a Cartesian coordinate system, if the detection system represents the origin, the horizontal direction from left to right is taken as the positive x-axis and represents the width of the 3 lanes in meters, and the vertical direction
20 from bottom to top is taken as the positive y-axis and represents the longitudinal distance from the sensor. To facilitation installation, the installation software will indicate the beginning and the end of the detection zone by showing a detection line as seen in FIG. 9B.

Multi-vehicle simultaneous detection and tracking for position determination, speed
25 measurement and classification

[00123] FIG. 10 shows a top view of an example road facility equipped with a multipurpose traffic detection system 10. The system 10 mounted on an existing

traffic infrastructure is used to illuminate a detection zone 42. In this example, the mounting height is between 1 and 10 m with a distance from the road between 1 and 5 m. In FIG. 10, the vehicles 46 travel in lanes 43, 44 and 45 in a direction indicated by arrow A through the detection system illumination zone 42. The detection system
5 10 is used for detecting information of the rear surface of vehicles 46 coming in the illumination zone 42. The detection system 10 is based on IR LED illumination source with a multiple field-of-view detector.

[00124] In FIG. 11, the 16 fields of view 52 covering a section of the road are shown. In a Cartesian coordinate system, if the detection system represents the
10 origin 49, the horizontal direction from left to right is taken as the positive x-axis 50, and the vertical direction from bottom to top is taken as the positive y-axis 51 then, each 3D detection 53 gives the distance between an object and the sensor.

[00125] FIG. 12 shows the system in an example configuration with two trigger lines 56 and 57 located at a distance from the sensor between 10 and 50 m, for example.
15 The two trigger lines 56 and 57 are configured by the user. Blob 55 illustrates a detectable vehicle rear. When the blob reaches the trigger line, the system returns a trigger message.

[00126] FIG. 13 and FIG. 14 show example data for vehicle tracking in the context of traffic light enforcement. Thanks to a projection of the field-of-view of the detection
20 system on the real 2D image, the relationship between the top view (FIGS. 13B, 13D, 13F) and the scene (FIGS. 13A, 13C, 13E) is made apparent. The 3D detections are represented by dots in the top views. In this example, a small diamond in the top views shows the estimated position of the rear of each vehicle based on the 3D detections. In this example, the small diamond represents the middle of the rear of
25 the vehicle. The distance of detection is indicated under each detection channel in the scene image. The amplitude of the detection is also indicated below the distance of detection. On the top view, thin lines define the limits of the tracking area and dotted lines define two trigger lines configured by the user. When entering this area, a

new vehicle is labeled with a unique identifier. In each frame, its estimated position is shown using a small diamond. As shown, the interactions between vehicle detections are managed by the tracking algorithm allowing distinguishing vehicles located in the detection area.

5 [00127] FIG. 15 shows the steps performed during the execution of an example tracking algorithm. At step 80, the tracking algorithm selects the reliable measurements located on the road. At step 81A, the generic Kalman Filter for tracking a variable number of objects is used. At step 82, a road user classification based on geometric features is computed. Finally, step 83 sends to each frame, a
10 message with position, speed, class and trigger if necessary for the vehicles located in the detection zone.

[00128] FIG. 16 shows the steps performed during the execution of the tracking algorithm if the traffic light state 85 is known. Steps 80/800, 82 and 83 are unchanged. However, step 81B is different because the additional information allows
15 working in a space-based tracking joint.

[00129] The selection of relevant measures 80 is described in FIG. 17. At step 100 the tracking algorithm reads the available observations. At step 101, the tracking algorithm removes each detection that is not located on the road. Step 101 is followed by step 102 where the tracking algorithm recognizes lines by a feature-
20 based approach. Step 103 eliminates the points located on lines parallel to the x-axis 50 with the aim of extracting the characteristics relating to the side(s) of vehicles and to keep only the objects having a "vehicle rear signature".

[00130] The estimation of a line based on the covariance matrix using polar coordinate 102 is illustrated in FIG. 18. This estimation is based on feature extraction.
25 The strength of the feature-based approach lies in its abstraction from data type, origin and amount. In this application, line segments will be considered as a basic primitive which later serves to identify and then remove the side of vehicles. Feature

extraction is divided into two sub-problems: (i) segmentation to determine which data points contribute to the line model, and (ii) fitting to give an answer as to how these points contribute.

[00131] The polar form is chosen to represent a line model:

5 [00132] $x \cos \alpha + y \sin \alpha = r$

[00133] where $-\pi < \alpha \leq \pi$ is the angle between the x axis and the normal of the line, $r \geq 0$ is the perpendicular distance of the line to the origin; (x, y) is the Cartesian coordinates of a point on the line. The covariance matrix of line parameters is:

[00134]
$$\text{cov}(r, \alpha) = \begin{bmatrix} \sigma_r^2 & \sigma_{r\alpha} \\ \sigma_{r\alpha} & \sigma_\alpha^2 \end{bmatrix}$$

10 [00135] FIG. 19 shows a state diagram for the 3D real-time detection multi-object tracker. The core of the tracker 91A is based on a Kalman Filter in all weather and lighting conditions. The observation model 90 is illustrated in FIG. 21 which presents an example method to compute the vehicle position by weighting each 3D observation according to its height amplitude. This method permits to improve the
15 accuracy of the estimated position with respect to using only the x and y Cartesian positions.

[00136] Expression 301 computes the blob position as follows:

[00137]
$$P_{blob} = \sum_{n=1}^N \pi^n \cdot P^n$$

[00138] where π^n is the intensity weight for the observation n , $n \in \{1, \dots, N\}$, and N
20 is the number of observation grouped together. Step 301 is followed by computing the observation weight depending on the intensity at step 302.

[00139] The function 300 normalizes the weight π^n according to the amplitude A^n of the observation P^n :

$$[00140] \quad \pi^n = \frac{A^n}{\sum A^n}$$

[00141] The state evolution model 92 is represented by the classical model called speed constant. Kinematics model can be represented in a matrix form by:

$$[00142] \quad p_{k+1} = F \cdot p_k + G \cdot V_k, \quad V_k \sim N(0, Q_k)$$

[00143] where $p_k = (x_{obs}, \dot{x}_{obs}, y_{obs}, \dot{y}_{obs})$ is the target state vector, F the transition matrix which models the evolution of p_k , Q_k the covariance matrix of V_k , and G the noise matrix which is modeled by acceleration.

$$10 \quad [00144] \quad F = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & \Delta T & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & \Delta T \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \quad G = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{\Delta T^2}{2} & 0 \\ \Delta T & 0 \\ 0 & \frac{\Delta T^2}{2} \\ 0 & \Delta T \end{bmatrix} \quad Q_k = \begin{bmatrix} \sigma_x^2 & 0 \\ 0 & \sigma_y^2 \end{bmatrix}$$

[00145] The equation observation can be written as:

$$[00146] \quad Z_k = H \cdot p_k + W_k, \quad W_k \sim N(0, R_k)$$

[00147] Where $Z_k = (x_{obs_k}, y_{obs_k})^t$ is the measurement vector, H the measurement sensitivity matrix, and R_k the covariance matrix of W_k .

$$15 \quad [00148] \quad H = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \quad R_k = \begin{bmatrix} \sigma_{obs_x}^2 & 0 \\ 0 & \sigma_{obs_y}^2 \end{bmatrix}$$

[00149] The state space model 93A is based on probabilistic framework where the evolution model is supposed to be linear and the observation model is supposed to be Gaussian noise. In a 3D image, the system state encodes the information

observed in the scene, e.g. the number of vehicles and their characteristics is $x_k^N = (p_k^N, l_k^N)$ with N as the number of detected vehicles, where p_k^N denotes the 2D position of object N at iteration k , l_k^N gives identification, age, lane and the object classification.

- 5 [00150] FIG. 20 shows a state diagram for 3D real-time detection multi-object joint tracker. The core of 91B is based on a Kalman Filter which addresses the issue of interacting targets, which cause occlusion issues. When an occlusion is present, 3D data alone can be unreliable, and is not sufficient to detect, at each frame, the object of interest. If the algorithm uses the traffic light state 85, occlusions can be modeled
- 10 with a joint state space model 93B. The multi-object joint tracker includes a multi-object interaction distance which is implemented by including an additional interaction factor in the vehicle position. The state space model 93B encodes the observations detected in the scene, e.g. the number of vehicles, the traffic light state and the interaction between the vehicles located in the same lane by concatenating their
- 15 configurations into a single super-state vector such as: $X_k = (O_k, x_k^1, \dots, x_k^N)$ with O_k the size of state space at iteration k and $x_k^N = (p_k^N, l_k^N)$ the state vector associated with the object N , where p_k^N denotes the 2D position of the object N at iteration k , l_k^N gives identification, age, lane, class, traffic light state and the object interaction.

- [00151] Before integrating measures into the filter, a selection is made by a two-step procedure shown in FIGS. 22 and 23 : first at step 400 validation gate, then at step
- 20 401A/B data association. The validation gate is the ellipsoid of size N_z (dimension of vector) defined such as:

$$[00152] \quad \vartheta^t \cdot S^{-1} \cdot \vartheta \leq \gamma$$

- [00153] where $\vartheta^t = Z_k - H\widehat{p}_k$ is the innovation, S the covariance matrix of the
- 25 predicted value of the measurement vector and γ is obtained from the chi-square tables for N_z degree of freedom. This threshold represents the probability that the (true) measurement will fall in the gate. Step 400 is followed by step 401A/B which

makes the matching between a blob and a hypothesis. Then, (i) consider all entries as new blobs; (ii) find the corresponding entries to each blob by considering gating intervals around the predicted position of each hypothesis, (iii) choose the nearest entry of each interval as the corresponding final observation of each blob. At step 5 402, the tracking algorithm uses a track management module in order to change the number of hypothesis. This definition is: (i) if, considering the existing assumption, there occurs an observation that cannot be explained, the track management module proposes a new observation; (ii) if an assumption does not find any observation after 500 ms, the track management module proposes to suppress the assumption. In this 10 case, of course, an evolution model helps to guide state space exploration of the Kalman filter algorithm with a prediction of the state. Finally, step 403 uses a Kalman framework to estimate the final position of the vehicle.

[00154] In a 3D image, the system state encodes the information observed in the scene, the number of vehicles and their characteristics is $X_k = (O_k, x_k^1, \dots, x_k^N)$ with O_k 15 the size of state space (number of detected vehicles) at iteration k and $x_k^N = (p_k^N, l_k^N)$ the state vector associated with object N , where p_k^N denotes the 2D position of object N at iteration k , l_k^N gives identification, age, lane and the object classification. Step 90 and 92 are unchanged.

[00155] FIG. 24 shows the steps performed during the execution of the classification 20 algorithm. At step 500, the algorithm checks if a line is detected in the 3D image. If a line is detected, step 500 is followed by step 501 which computes vehicle length. Vehicle length is defined as the overall length of the vehicle (including attached trailers) from the front to the rear. In order to calculate the length, two different positions are used: X_0 and X_1 . X_0 is given by the position of the first detected line and 25 X_1 is given by the trigger line 1 (for example). Once the speed has been estimated, the vehicle length l can be determined such as:

[00156] $l[m] = s[m/S] * (X_1(t)[s] - X_0(t)[s]) - (X_1(x)[m] - X_0(x)[m]) + Seg[m] + TH[m]$

Where s is the vehicle speed, Seg is the length of the detected line and TH is a calibration threshold determined from a large dataset.

[00157] If the line is not detected at step 500, step 500 is followed by step 502 which
 5 computes the vehicle height. The vehicle height is estimated during the entry into the sensor field of view. As shown in FIG. 26, for a known configuration of the detection system, there is a direct geometric relationship between the height of a vehicle 601 and the detection distance 600. The accuracy 602 is dependent on the half-size of the vertical FOV angle 603. Height measurement is validated if the accuracy is lower
 10 than a threshold.

[00158] Finally, step 502 is followed by step 503 which computes the vehicle width. Over the vehicle blob, let (y_l, x) be leftmost pixel and (y_r, x) be the rightmost pixel in the vehicle blob for a given x . Then the width w of the object is determined from the following formula:

15 [00159] $w = |y_r - y_l|$

[00160] FIGS. 25A, 25B and 25C shows a result of vehicle classification based on the classification algorithm. For example, in FIG. 25A, the classification result is a heavy vehicle; in FIG. 25B, it is a four-wheeled lightweight vehicle and in FIG. 25C, it is a two-wheeled lightweight vehicle. The information from the detection system is
 20 flexible and can be adapted to different schemes of classification. FIG. 25 illustrates graphically the basic elements of the concept of an object-box approach which is detailed below and in FIG 27 and FIG. 28.

[00161] The object-box approach is mainly intended for vehicles because this approach uses the vehicle geometry in a LEDDAR image. The vehicles are
 25 represented by a 3D rectangular box of detected length, width and height. The 3D size of the rectangular box will vary depending on the detections in the FOV. FIGS. 27A, 27B, 27C and 27D show top view frames of a vehicle detected by the

LEDDAR sensor. FIGS. 28A, 28B, 28C and 28D show corresponding side view frames of the vehicle of FIG. 27.

[00162] FIGS. 27A, 27B, 27C, 27D and FIGS. 28A, 28B, 28C, 28D show the changing 3D size of the rectangle 701 for four example positions of a vehicle 702 in the 3D sensor FOV 703. When a vehicle 702 enters the 3D sensor FOV 703, two
 5 detections are made on the side of the vehicle (see FIG. 27A) and one detection is made for the top of the vehicle (see FIG. 28A). The 3D rectangle is initialized with a length equal to 4 m, a width of 1.5 m and a height O_{Hm} given by :

$$[00163] \quad O_{Hm} = H_s - dist * \tan(\theta)$$

10 [00164] Where H_s is the sensor height 704, $dist$ is the distance of the detected vehicle and θ is sensor pitch.

[00165] FIG. 27B and FIG. 28B represent detections when the vehicle is three-fourths of the way in the detection FOV. Eight side detections are apparent on FIG. 27B and one top detection is apparent on FIG. 28B. The dimensions of the 3D
 15 rectangle are calculated as follows:

[00166] The width is not yet adjusted because the vehicle back is not yet detected.

$$[00167] \quad O_l(k) = \max(L_2 - L_1, O_l(k-1))$$

$$[00168] \quad O_h(k) = \max(O_{Hm}, O_h(k-1))$$

[00169] Where the points of a segment are clockwise angle sorted so L_2 is the point with the smallest angle and L_1 is the segment-point with the largest angle. $O_l(k)$ and
 20 $O_h(k)$ are respectively the current length and height value at time k .

[00170] FIG. 27C and FIG. 28C represent detections when the back of the vehicle begins to enter in the detection FOV. Eight side detections and two rear detections

are apparent on FIG. 27C while one detection is apparent on FIG. 28C. The dimensions of the 3D rectangle are calculated as follows:

$$[00171] \quad O_l(k) = \max(L_2 - L_1, O_l(k-1))$$

$$[00172] \quad O_h(k) = \max(O_{Hm}, O_h(k-1))$$

$$5 \quad [00173] \quad O_w(k) = \max(L_4 - L_3, O_w(k-1))$$

[00174] As for the horizontal segment representing the side of the vehicle, the points of the vertical segment representing the rear and/or the top of the vehicle are clockwise angle sorted, so L_4 is the point with the smallest angle and L_3 is the segment-point with the largest angle. $O_l(k)$, $O_h(k)$ and $O_w(k)$ are respectively the
10 current length, height and width value at time k .

[00175] FIG. 27D and FIG. 28D represent detections when the back of the vehicle is fully in the detection FOV. Six side detections and four rear detections are apparent on FIG. 27D while one detection is apparent on FIG. 28D. The width O_{lm} dimension is calculated as follows:

$$15 \quad [00176] \quad O_{lm}(k) = \alpha * (L_4 - L_3) + (1 - \alpha) * O_{lm}(k-1)$$

[00177] Where $O_{lm}(k)$ is the current width at time k and α is the filtering rate.

[00178] The size of the vehicle can then be determined fully.

[00179] The segmentation algorithm 800 based on a 3D bounding box for selection of the relevant measures is illustrated in FIG. 29. The first three steps are identical to that of FIG. 17. If step 120 finds horizontal lines, then step 120 is followed by step
20 121. As explained above, the points of a segment are clockwise angle sorted with L_2 , the smallest angle and L_1 the largest angle. This segment length is given by $L_2 - L_1$. Otherwise, the next step 123 initializes the 3D bounding box with a default vehicle length. Step 121 is followed by step 122 which considers that two segments have a

common corner if there is a point of intersection P_i between the two segments with $|P_i - L_1|$ and $|P_i - L_4|$ less than a distance threshold. If no corner is found, step 123 initializes the 3D bounding box with default values. Otherwise, step 124 computes the 3D bounding box dimensions from equations presented above with respect to

5 FIG. 27C.

[00180] It is of interest to derive minimum variance bounds on estimation errors to have an idea of the maximum knowledge on the speed measurement that can be expected and to assess the quality of the results of the proposed algorithms compared with the bounds. In time-invariant statistical models, a commonly used

10 lower bound is the Cramer-Rao Lower Bound (CRLB), given by the inverse of the Fisher information matrix. The PCRB can be used for estimating kinematic characteristics of the target.

[00181] A simulation was done according to the scenario shown in FIG. 30. The vehicle 130 is moving at a speed of 60 m/s along a straight line in lane 3. The PCRB

15 was applied. As shown in FIG. 31, the tracking algorithm converges at point 903 at about $\sigma_{KF} = 0.48 \text{ km/h}$ after 80 samples. From point 900, it is apparent that after 16 samples, $\sigma_{KF} < 3 \text{ km/h}$, from point 901 that after 28 samples, $\sigma_{KF} < 1.5 \text{ km/h}$ and from point 902 that after 39 samples, $\sigma_{KF} < 1 \text{ km/h}$. Experimental tests confirmed the utility and viability of this approach.

20 Image processing and applications

[00182] The multipurpose traffic detection system uses a high-resolution image sensor or more than one image sensor with lower resolution. In the latter case, the control and processing unit has to process an image stitching by combining multiple images with different FOVs with some overlapping sections in order to produce a

25 high-resolution image. Normally during the calibration process, the system can determine exact overlaps between images sensors and produce seamless results by controlling and synchronizing the integration time of each image sensor and the

illumination timing and analyzing overlap sections. Infrared and color image sensors can be used with optical filters.

[00183] At night, a visible light is required to enhance the color of the image. A NIR flash is not visible to the human eye and does not blind drivers, so it can be used at
5 any time of the day and night.

[00184] Image sensors can use electronic shutters (global or rolling) or mechanical shutters. In the case of rolling shutters, compensation for the distortions of fast-moving objects (skew effect) can be processed based on the information of the position and the speed of the vehicle. Other controls of the image sensor like Gamma
10 and gain control can be used to improve the quality of the image in different contexts of illumination.

[00185] FIG. 32A is a photograph showing an example snapshot taken by a 5 Mpixels image sensor during the day. Vehicles are at a distance of approximately 25 m and the FOV at that distance covers approximately 9 m (almost equivalent to
15 3 lanes). FIGS. 32B, 32C and 32D show the quality of the image and resolution of FIG. 32A by zooming in on the three license plates.

[00186] FIG. 33A is a photograph showing an example snapshot taken by the image sensor at night without any light. This image is completely dark. FIG. 33B shows the same scene with infrared light. Two vehicles can be seen but the license plates are
20 not readable even when zooming in as seen in FIG. 33C. The license plate acts as a retro-reflector and saturates the image sensing. FIGS. 34A and 34B use the same lighting with a lower integration time. The vehicle is less clear but the image shows some part of the license plate becoming less saturated. FIGS. 34C and 34D decrease a little more the integration time and produce a readable license plate.

[00187] One way to get a visible license plate at night and an image of the vehicle is to process several snapshots with different integration times (Ti). For example, when
25 the 3D detection confirms the position of a vehicle in the detection zone, a sequence

of acquisition of several snapshots (ex.: 4 snapshots with $T_{i1}=50\ \mu\text{s}$, $T_{i2}=100\ \mu\text{s}$, $T_{i3}=250\ \mu\text{s}$ and $T_{i4}=500\ \mu\text{s}$), each snapshot taken at a certain frame rate (ex.: each 50 ms), will permit to get the information on a specific vehicle: information from the 3D sensor, a readable license plate of the tracked vehicle and an image from the context including the photo of the vehicle. If the system captures 4 images during 150 ms, a vehicle at 150 km/h would travel during 6.25 m (one snapshot every 1.5 m).

[00188] To enhance the quality of the image, high dynamic range (HDR) imaging techniques can be used to improve the dynamic range between the lightest and darkest areas of an image. HDR notably compensates for loss of information by a saturated section by taking multiple pictures at different integration times and using stitching process to make a better quality image.

[00189] The system can use Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR), based on Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology, to identify vehicle license plates. This information of the vehicle identification and measurements is digitally transmitted to the external controller or by the network to back-office servers, which process the information and can traffic violation alerts.

[00190] The multipurpose traffic detection system can be used day or night, in good or bad weather condition, and also offers the possibility of providing weather information like the presence of fog or snowing conditions. Fog and snow have an impact on the reflection of the radiated light pulses of the protective window. In the presence of fog, the peak amplitude of the first pulse exhibits sizable time fluctuations, by a factor that may reach 2 to 3 when compared to its mean peak amplitude level. Likewise, the width of the first pulse also shows time fluctuations during these adverse weather conditions, but with a reduced factor, for example, by about 10 to 50 %. During snow falls, the peak amplitude of the first pulse visible in the waveforms generally shows faster time fluctuations while the fluctuations of the pulse width are less intense. Finally, it can be noted that a long-lasting change in the peak

amplitude of the first pulse can be simply due to the presence of dirt or snow deposited on the exterior surface of the protective window.

[00191] FIG. 35 shows an example image taken with infrared illumination with the overlay (dashed lines) representing the perimeter of the 16 contiguous detection zones of the 3DOR. Apparent on FIG. 35 are high intensity spots 140 coming from a section of the vehicle having a high retro-reflectivity characteristic. Such sections having a high retro-reflectivity characteristic include the license plate, retro-reflectors installed on the car and lighting modules that can include retro-reflectors. An object with retro-reflectivity characteristic reflects light back to its source with minimum scattering. The return signal can be as much as 100 times stronger than a signal coming from a surface with Lambertian reflectance. This retro-reflectivity characteristic has the same kind of impact on the 3DOR. Each 3D channel detecting a retro-reflector at a certain distance in its FOV will acquire a waveform with high peak amplitude at the distance of the retro-reflector. The numbers at the bottom of the overlay (in dashed lines) represent the distance measured by the multipurpose traffic detection system in each channel which contains a high peak in its waveform. Then, with a good image registration between the 2D image sensor and the 3D sensor, the 2D information (spot with high intensity) can be correlated with the 3D information (high amplitude at a certain distance). This link between 2D images and 3D detection ensures a match between the identification data based on reading license plates and measurements of position and velocity from the 3D sensor.

[00192] The license plate identification process can also be used as a second alternative to determine the speed of the vehicle with lower accuracy but useful as a validation or confirmation. By analyzing the size of the license plate and/or character on successive images, the progression of the vehicle in the detection zone can be estimated and used to confirm the measured displacement.

The embodiments described above are intended to be exemplary only. The scope of the invention is therefore intended to be limited solely by the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A vehicle-mountable LIDAR system, comprising:
 - a vehicle-mountable optical emitter configured to emit an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality of target roadway objects;
 - a vehicle-mountable optical receiver configured for detecting an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target roadway objects that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and
 - a vehicle-mountable processing device configured to:
 - receive as inputs the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels;
 - derive distance and position information of the detected roadway objects at least in part on the basis of the channel return data;
 - simultaneously track, in real-time, updated distance and position information of the detected roadway objects as they move into, within and partly out of a tracking zone.
2. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 1, wherein at least one feature of the tracking zone is related to the field of view of the vehicle-mountable optical receiver.
3. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 1, wherein at least one feature of the tracking zone is at least partly set by a user of the vehicle-mountable LIDAR system.

4. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured for classifying the detected roadway objects.

5. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the detected roadway objects include at least one detected vehicle, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured for determining a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle.

6. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 5, wherein to determine a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle, the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured for eliminating reflected signals from a side of the at least one detected vehicle.

7. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the detected roadway objects include detected vehicles and wherein the distance and position information derived by the vehicle-mountable processing device comprises information of a rear surface of the detected vehicles.

8. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 7, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured to estimate, for each detected vehicle, a position of a rear of the detected vehicle, and to cause display of the estimated position of the rear of the detected vehicle on a screen.

9. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 2, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured to label a newly detected vehicle entering the tracking zone with a unique identifier.

10. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured to implement a tracking algorithm to manage interactions between detections to allow multiple detected roadway objects to be distinguished from one another.

11. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein the system operates while mounted to a vehicle that moves relative to the ground.

12. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 11, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is configured to derive the distance and position information of the detected roadway objects based on the channel return data.

13. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein the target roadway objects include vehicles and/or pedestrians.

14. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 13, wherein the processing device is further configured to estimate a velocity of each of said detected roadway objects.

15. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein the vehicle-mountable processor is further configured to derive a velocity of each of the detected roadway objects, wherein the velocity of a particular detected roadway object is estimated based on channel return data received from each channel of the multiple channels at predetermined intervals of time.

16. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 15, wherein the optical return signal is acquired for a certain period of time after emission of the illumination signal.

17. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 16, wherein the optical return signal conveys a respective location of at least two of the target objects.

18. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 17, wherein the processing device is further configured to cause display of the channel return data.

19. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 18, wherein the processing device is further configured to identify nuisances in the field of illumination based on the channel return data.

20. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 19, wherein the nuisances comprise at least one of fog, water, rain, liquid, dust, dirt, vapor, snow, smoke, gas, smog, pollution, black ice and hail.

21. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 20, wherein the channels of the multi-channel optical receiver have simultaneous acquisition capability.

22. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 21, wherein said illumination signal defines a beam illuminating a vertical field of view defined by vertical angles.

23. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 22, wherein said illumination signal illuminates a horizontal field of view defined by horizontal angles.

24. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 23, wherein said horizontal angles define a width of said tracking zone.

25. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 24, wherein said optical receiver comprises a detector array.

26. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 1 to 25, wherein said optical emitter comprises a plurality of light sources.

27. A method for implementation in a vehicle-mountable LIDAR system, comprising:
emitting an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality of target roadway objects;
detecting, with an optical receiver, an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target roadway objects that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and
receiving the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels;
deriving distance and position information of the detected roadway objects at least in part on the basis of the channel return data;
simultaneously tracking, in real-time, updated distance and position information of the detected roadway objects as they move into, within and partly out of a tracking zone.

28. The method defined in claim 27, wherein at least one feature of the tracking zone is related to the field of view.

29. The method defined in claim 27, wherein at least one feature of the tracking zone is at least partly set by a user.

30. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 29, comprising classifying the detected roadway objects.

31. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 30, wherein the detected roadway objects include at least one detected vehicle, and said method comprises determining a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle.

32. The method defined in claim 31, comprising eliminating reflected signals from a side of the at least one detected vehicle to determine a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle.

33. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 32, wherein the detected roadway objects include detected vehicles and wherein the derived distance and position comprises information of a rear surface of the detected vehicles.

34. The method defined in claim 33, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured to estimate, for each detected vehicle, a position of a rear of the detected vehicle, and to cause display of the estimated position of the rear of the detected vehicle on a screen.

35. The method defined in claim 34, comprising labelling a newly detected vehicle entering the tracking zone with a unique identifier.

36. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 35, comprising implementing a tracking algorithm to manage interactions between detections to allow multiple detected roadway objects to be distinguished from one another.

37. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 36, wherein the emitting, detecting, receiving, deriving and tracking occur on a vehicle that moves relative to the ground.

38. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 37, comprising deriving the distance and position information of the detected roadway objects based on the channel return data.

39. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 38, wherein the target roadway objects include vehicles and/or pedestrians.

40. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 39, wherein the processing device is further configured to estimate a velocity of each of the detected roadway objects.

41. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 40, comprising deriving a velocity of each of the detected roadway objects, wherein the velocity of a particular detected roadway object is estimated based on channel return data received from each channel of the multiple channels at predetermined intervals of time.

42. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 41, wherein the optical return signal is acquired for a certain period of time after emission of the illumination signal.

43. The method defined in claim 42, wherein the optical return signal represents a respective location of at least two of the target objects.

44. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 43, comprising displaying the channel return data.

45. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 44, comprising identifying nuisances in the field of illumination based on the channel return data.

46. The method defined in claim 45, wherein the nuisances comprise at least one of fog, water, rain, liquid, dust, dirt, vapor, snow, smoke, gas, smog, pollution, black ice and hail.

47. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 46, wherein the channels of the multi-channel optical receiver have simultaneous acquisition capability.

48. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 47, wherein said illumination signal defines a beam illuminating a field of view defined by vertical angles.

49. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 48, wherein said illumination signal illuminates a horizontal field of view defined by horizontal angles.

50. The method defined in claim 49, wherein said horizontal angles define a width of said tracking zone.

51. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 50, wherein said optical receiver comprises a receiver array.

52. The method defined in any one of claims 27 to 51, wherein said emitting an illumination signal comprises emitting from a plurality of light sources.

53. A vehicle-mountable LIDAR system mountable to a vehicle occupying a first lane of a roadway, comprising:

a vehicle-mountable optical emitter configured to emit an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality of target vehicles in multiple lanes including the first lane and one or more other lanes of the roadway;

a vehicle-mountable optical receiver configured for detecting an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target vehicles that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and

a vehicle-mountable processing device configured to:

receive as inputs the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels;

derive distance and position information on each of said multiple ones of the detected vehicles at least in part on the basis of the channel return data;

simultaneously track, in real-time, updated distance and position information of the detected vehicles as they change lanes.

54. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 53, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured for classifying the detected roadway objects.

55. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 54, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured for determining a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle.

56. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 55, wherein to determine a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle, the vehicle-mountable

processing device is further configured for eliminating reflected signals from a side of the at least one detected vehicle.

57. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 56, wherein the distance and position information derived by the vehicle-mountable processing device comprises information of a rear surface of the detected vehicles.

58. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 57, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured to estimate, for each detected vehicle, a position of a rear of the detected vehicle, and to cause display of the estimated position of the rear of the detected vehicle on a screen.

59. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 53, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured to label a newly detected vehicle with a unique identifier.

60. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 59, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured to implement a tracking algorithm to manage interactions between detections to allow multiple detected vehicles to be distinguished from one another.

61. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 60, wherein the system operates while mounted to a vehicle that moves relative to the ground.

62. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 61, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is configured to derive the distance and position information of the detected vehicles based on the channel return data.

63. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 62, wherein the processing device is further configured to estimate a velocity of each of said detected vehicles.

64. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 63, wherein the vehicle-mountable processor is further configured to derive a velocity of each of the detected vehicles, wherein the velocity of a particular detected vehicle is estimated based on channel return data received from each channel of the multiple channels at predetermined intervals of time.

65. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any of claims 53 to 64, wherein the optical return signal is acquired for a certain period of time after emission of the illumination signal.

66. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 65, wherein the optical return signal represents a respective location of at least two of the target objects.

67. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 66, wherein the processing device is further configured to cause display of the channel return data.

68. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 67, wherein the processing device is further configured to identify nuisances in the field of illumination based on the channel return data.

69. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 68, wherein the nuisances comprise at least one of fog, water, rain, liquid, dust, dirt, vapor, snow, smoke, gas, smog, pollution, black ice and hail.

70. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 69, wherein the channels of the multi-channel optical receiver have simultaneous acquisition capability.

71. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 70, wherein said illumination signal defines a beam illuminating a vertical field of view defined by vertical angles.

72. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 71, wherein said illumination signal illuminates a horizontal field of view defined by horizontal angles.

73. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in claim 72, wherein said horizontal angles define a width of a tracking zone, wherein said vehicle-mountable processing device is configured to track, in real-time, updated distance and position information of the detected vehicles in said tracking zone.

74. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 73, wherein said optical receiver comprises a detector array.

75. The vehicle-mountable LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 53 to 74, wherein said optical emitter comprises a plurality of light sources.

76. A method for implementation in a vehicle-mountable LIDAR system mountable to a vehicle occupying a first lane of a roadway, the method comprising:

emitting an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality of target vehicles in multiple lanes including the first lane and one or more other lanes of the roadway;

detecting, with an optical receiver, an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target vehicles that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and

receiving as inputs the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels;

deriving distance and position information on each of said multiple ones of the detected vehicles at least in part on the basis of the channel return data;

simultaneously tracking, in real-time, updated distance and position information of the detected vehicles as they change lanes.

77. The method defined in claim 76, comprising classifying the detected vehicles.

78. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 77, wherein the method comprises determining a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle.

79. The method defined in claim 78, comprising eliminating reflected signals from a side of the at least one detected vehicle to determine a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle.

80. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 79, wherein the detected roadway objects include detected vehicles and wherein the derived distance and position comprises information of a rear surface of the detected vehicles.

81. The method defined in claim 80, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured to estimate, for each detected vehicle, a position of a rear of

the detected vehicle, and to cause display of the estimated position of the rear of the detected vehicle on a screen.

82. The method defined in claim 76, comprising labelling a newly detected vehicle entering the tracking zone with a unique identifier.

83. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 82, comprising implementing a tracking algorithm to manage interactions between detections to allow multiple detected vehicles to be distinguished from one another.

84. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 83, wherein the emitting, detecting, receiving, deriving and tracking occur on a vehicle that moves relative to the ground.

85. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 84, comprising deriving the distance and position information of the detected roadway objects based on the channel return data.

86. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 85, wherein the processing device is further configured to estimate a velocity of each of said detected vehicles.

87. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 86, comprising deriving a velocity of each of the detected vehicles, wherein the velocity of a particular detected vehicle is estimated based on channel return data received from each channel of the multiple channels at predetermined intervals of time.

88. The method defined in any of claims 76 to 87, wherein the optical return signal is acquired for a certain period of time after emission of the illumination signal.

89. The method defined in claim 88, wherein the optical return signal represents a respective location of at least two of the target objects.

90. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 89, comprising displaying the channel return data.

91. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 90, comprising identifying nuisances in the field of illumination based on the channel return data.

92. The method defined in claim 91, wherein the nuisances comprise at least one of fog, water, rain, liquid, dust, dirt, vapor, snow, smoke, gas, smog, pollution, black ice and hail.

93. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 92, wherein the channels of the multi-channel optical receiver have simultaneous acquisition capability.

94. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 93, wherein said illumination signal defines a beam illuminating a vertical field of view defined by vertical angles.

95. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 94, wherein said illumination signal illuminates a horizontal field of view defined by horizontal angles.

96. The method defined in claim 95, wherein said horizontal angles define a width of a tracking zone, wherein said simultaneously tracking comprises tracking of detected vehicles in said tracking zone.

97. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 96, wherein said optical receiver comprises a receiver array.

98. The method defined in any one of claims 76 to 97, wherein said emitting an illumination signal comprises emitting from a plurality of light sources.

99. In combination, a vehicle and a LIDAR system mounted to the vehicle, the ground vehicle being driven on a roadway, the LIDAR system comprising:

- an optical emitter configured to emit an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality of target objects on the roadway;

- an optical receiver configured for detecting an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target objects that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and

- a vehicle-mountable processing device configured to:

- receive as inputs the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels;

- derive distance and position information of the detected objects on the roadway at least in part on the basis of the channel return data;

- simultaneously track, in real-time, updated distance and position information of each of the detected objects as the vehicle is driven on the roadway.

100. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in claim 99, wherein the processing device is further configured for classifying the detected objects on the roadway.

101. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 100 wherein the detected objects on the roadway include at least one detected vehicle, wherein the processing device is further configured for determining a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle.

102. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in claim 101, wherein to determine a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle, the processing device is further configured for eliminating reflected signals from a side of the at least one detected vehicle.

103 The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 102, wherein the detected objects on the roadway include detected vehicles and wherein the distance and position information derived by the processing device comprises information of a rear surface of the detected vehicles.

104. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in claim 99, wherein the vehicle-mountable processing device is further configured to estimate, for each detected vehicle, a position of a rear of the detected vehicle, and to cause display of the estimated position of the rear of the detected vehicle on a screen.

105. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in claim 99, wherein the processing device is further configured to label a newly detected vehicle entering the tracking zone with a unique identifier.

106. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 105, wherein the processing device is further configured to implement a tracking algorithm to manage interactions between detections to allow multiple detected objects on the roadway to be distinguished from one another.

107. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 106, wherein the system operates while mounted to a vehicle that moves relative to the ground.

108. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 107, wherein the processing device is configured to derive the distance and position information of the detected roadway objects based on the channel return data.

109. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 108, wherein the target objects on the roadway include vehicles and/or pedestrians.

110. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 109, wherein the processing device is further configured to estimate a velocity of each of said detected objects on the roadway.

111. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 110, wherein the processor is further configured to derive a velocity of each of the detected objects on the roadway, wherein the velocity of a particular detected object on the roadway is estimated based on channel return data received from each channel of the multiple channels at predetermined intervals of time.

112. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any of claims 99 to 114, wherein the optical return signal is acquired for a certain period of time after emission of the illumination signal.

113. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in claim 112, wherein the optical return signal conveys a respective location of at least two of the target objects.

114. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 113, wherein the processing device is further configured to cause display of the channel return data.

115. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 114, wherein the processing device is further configured to identify nuisances in the field of illumination based on the channel return data.

116. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in claim 115, wherein the nuisances comprise at least one of fog, water, rain, liquid, dust, dirt, vapor, snow, smoke, gas, smog, pollution, black ice and hail.

117. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 116, wherein the channels of the multi-channel optical receiver have simultaneous acquisition capability.

118. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 117, wherein said illumination signal defines a beam illuminating a vertical field of view defined by vertical angles.

119. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 118, wherein said illumination signal illuminates a horizontal field of view defined by horizontal angles.

120. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in claim 119, wherein said horizontal angles define a width of a tracking zone, wherein said vehicle-mountable processing device is configured to track, in real-time, updated distance and position information of the detected vehicles in said tracking zone.

121. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 120, wherein said optical receiver comprises a detector array.

122. The vehicle and LIDAR system defined in any one of claims 99 to 121, wherein said optical emitter comprises a plurality of light sources.

123. A method for implementation in a LIDAR system mounted to a vehicle being driven on a roadway, the method comprising:

emitting an illumination signal including at least one emitted pulse, the illumination signal configured for illuminating a three-dimensional field of illumination of an extent sufficient to span a plurality of target objects on the roadway;

detecting, with an optical receiver, an optical return signal generated by reflection of the illumination signal from multiple ones of the target objects that are simultaneously present in a field of view covered by the field of illumination, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel being configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel; and

receiving as inputs the channel return data output by each channel of the multiple channels;

deriving distance and position information of the detected objects on the roadway at least in part on the basis of the channel return data;

simultaneously tracking, in real-time, updated distance and position information of each of the detected objects as the vehicle is driven on the roadway.

124. The method defined in claim 123, comprising classifying the detected roadway objects.

125. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 124 wherein the detected objects on the roadway include at least one detected vehicle, and said method comprises determining a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle.

126. The method defined in claim 125, comprising eliminating reflected signals from a side of the at least one detected vehicle to determine a rear vehicle signature of the at least one detected vehicle.

127. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 126, wherein the detected objects on the roadway include detected vehicles and wherein the derived distance and position comprises information of a rear surface of the detected vehicles.

128. The method defined in claim 127, wherein the processing device is further configured to estimate, for each detected vehicle, a position of a rear of the detected vehicle, and to cause display of the estimated position of the rear of the detected vehicle on a screen.

129. The method defined in claim 123, comprising labelling a newly detected vehicle entering the tracking zone with a unique identifier.

130. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 129, comprising implementing a tracking algorithm to manage interactions between detections to allow multiple detected objects on the roadway to be distinguished from one another.

131. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 130, wherein the emitting, detecting, receiving deriving and tracking occur on a vehicle that moves relative to the ground.

132. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 131, comprising deriving the distance and position information of the detected objects on the roadway based on the channel return data.

133. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 132, wherein the target objects on the roadway include vehicles and/or pedestrians.

134. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 133, wherein the processing device is further configured to estimate a velocity of each of said detected objects on the roadway.

135. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 134, comprising deriving a velocity of each of the detected objects on the roadway, wherein the velocity of a particular detected object on the roadway is estimated based on channel return data received from each channel of the multiple channels at predetermined intervals of time.

136. The method defined in any of claims 123 to 135, wherein the optical return signal is acquired for a certain period of time after emission of the illumination signal.

137. The method defined in claim 136, wherein the optical return signal conveys a respective location of at least two of the target objects.

138. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 137, comprising displaying the channel return data.

139. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 138, comprising identifying nuisances in the field of illumination based on the channel return data.

140. The method defined in claim 139, wherein the nuisances comprise at least one of fog, water, rain, liquid, dust, dirt, vapor, snow, smoke, gas, smog, pollution, black ice and hail.

141. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 140, wherein the channels of the multi-channel optical receiver have simultaneous acquisition capability.

142. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 141, wherein said illumination signal defines a beam illuminating a vertical field of view defined by vertical angles.

143. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 142, wherein said illumination signal illuminates a horizontal field of view defined by horizontal angles.

144. The method defined in claim 143, wherein said horizontal angles define a width of a tracking zone, wherein said simultaneously tracking comprises tracking detected vehicles in said tracking zone.

145. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 144, wherein said optical receiver comprises a receiver array.

146. The method defined in any one of claims 123 to 145, wherein said emitting an illumination signal comprises emitting from a plurality of light sources.

147. A vehicle-mountable data processing device for performing real-time LIDAR detection and tracking of a plurality of vehicles in a field of view spanning a plurality of vehicle lanes in a roadway, the data processing device including:

- an input configured for receiving an output from an optical receiver, the optical receiver configured for detecting an optical return signal generated by reflection of an illumination signal including an illumination pulse directed at a field of view and configured for simultaneously illuminating at least portions of a plurality of vehicles, the optical receiver being a multi-channel optical receiver and including multiple channels, each channel configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return signal captured by that channel, the output of the optical receiver conveying the output channel return data of the multiple channels; and

- at least one processor configured to process the output for:
 - i. detecting a position of each vehicle of the plurality of vehicles in the field of view;
 - ii. simultaneously tracking, in real time, the plurality of vehicles including determining an updated position of each detected vehicle as the detected vehicles move within the field of view.

148. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in claim 147, the at least one processor further configured to process the output for associating an identifier to each detected vehicle.

149. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in any one of claims 147 to 148, the at least one processor further configured to process the output for recording an updated time at which the position of each detected vehicle is updated.

150. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in any one of claims 147 to 149, the at least one processor further configured to process the output for determining the updated position of each detected vehicle at a predetermined frequency.

151. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in any one of claims 147 to 150, wherein the optical receiver is configured such that the multiple channels are arranged to form an array.

152. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in claim 151, wherein a plurality of channels of the array include individual optical sensing elements arranged linearly.

153. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in claim 152, wherein the individual optical sensing elements are arranged generally horizontally.

154. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in any one of claims 151 to 153, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to map at least one of the channels to a particular lane of the roadway.

155. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in claim 154, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to map a plurality of adjacent ones of the channels to a particular vehicle lane of the roadway.

156. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in any one of claims 153 to 155, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to execute a tracking algorithm to perform the simultaneous tracking.

157. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in any one of claims 147 to 156, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to determine a distance to each detected vehicle on a basis of the output from the optical receiver.

158. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in any one of claims 147 to 157, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to detect a position of a particular vehicle in the field of view based on the output channel return data from a sub-set of the channels of the optical receiver that receive the portion of the optical return signal emanating from the particular vehicle.

159. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in any one of claims 147 to 158, further including an output connected to an optical emitter for generating the illumination signal.

160. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in claim 159, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to drive the optical emitter to generate the illumination signal, the illumination signal comprising a plurality of light pulses.

161. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in claim 160, wherein the light pulses are emitted at a repetition rate greater than 10 kHz.

162. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in claim 161, wherein the light pulses are emitted at a repetition rate greater than 100 kHz.

163. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in any one of claims 147 to 160, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to measure a speed of each detected vehicle.

164. A vehicle-mountable data processing device as defined in any one of claims 147 to 163, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to perform classification of each detected vehicle.

165. A data processing device for performing real-time LIDAR detection and tracking of a plurality of vehicles in a field of view spanning a plurality of adjacent vehicle lanes in a roadway where the vehicles are distributed over two or more of the adjacent lanes of the roadway, the data processing device including:

- an input configured for receiving a return signal conveying an optical return of an illumination signal directed at the field of view and having a horizontal extent sufficient to simultaneously illuminate at least a portion of a vehicle residing in a respective lane of the plurality of adjacent lanes, the optical return conveying individual reflections of the illumination signal generated by respective ones of the plurality of vehicles; and

- at least one processor configured to process the signal for:
 - i. detecting a position of each vehicle of the plurality of vehicles in the field of view based on a respective reflection in the optical return;
 - ii. simultaneously tracking, in real time, the plurality of vehicles including determining an updated position of each detected vehicle as the detected vehicles move within the field of view.

166. A data processing device as defined in claim 165, wherein the input is configured for connection to a multi-channel optical receiver outputting the return signal, the multi-channel optical receiver including multiple channels, each channel configured to output channel return data representative of a portion of the optical return captured by that channel, the return signal conveying the output channel return data of the multiple channels.

167. A data processing device as defined in claim 166, wherein the at least one processor is configured to process the return signal for associating an identifier to each detected vehicle.

168. A data processing device as defined in any one of claims 165 to 167, wherein the at least one processor is configured to process the return signal for recording an updated time at which the updated position of each detected vehicle is determined.

169. A data processing device as defined in any one of claims 165 to 168, wherein the at least one processor is configured to process the return signal for determining an updated position of each vehicle at a predetermined frequency.

170. A data processing device as defined in claim 166, wherein the optical receiver is configured such that the multiple channels are arranged to form an array.

171. A data processing device as defined in claim 170, wherein a plurality of channels of the array include individual optical sensing elements arranged linearly.

172. A data processing device as defined in claim 171, wherein the individual optical sensing elements are arranged generally horizontally.

173. A data processing device as defined in any one of claims 165 to 172, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to map at least one of the channels to a particular lane of the roadway.

174. A data processing device as defined in 173, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to map a plurality of adjacent ones of the channels to a particular vehicle lane of the roadway.

175. A data processing device as defined in any one of claims 165 to 174, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to execute a tracking algorithm to perform tracking.

176. A data processing device as defined in any one of claims 165 to 175, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to determine a distance to each detected vehicle on a basis of the return signal.

177. A data processing device as defined in claim 166, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to detect a position of a particular vehicle in the field of view based on the output channel return data from a sub-set of channels of the optical

receiver that receive the individual reflection in the optical return generated by the particular vehicle.

178. A data processing device as defined in any one of claims 165 to 177, further including an output for driving an optical emitter to generate the illumination signal.

179. A data processing device as defined in claim 178, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to drive the optical emitter to generate an illumination signal comprising a plurality of light pulses.

180. A data processing device as defined in claim 179, wherein the light pulses are emitted at a repetition rate greater than 10 kHz.

181. A data processing device as defined in claim 180, wherein the light pulses are emitted at a repetition rate greater than 100 kHz.

182. A data processing device as defined in any one of claims 165 to 181, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to measure a speed of each detected vehicle.

183. A data processing device as defined in any one of claims 165 to 182, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to perform classification of each detected vehicle.

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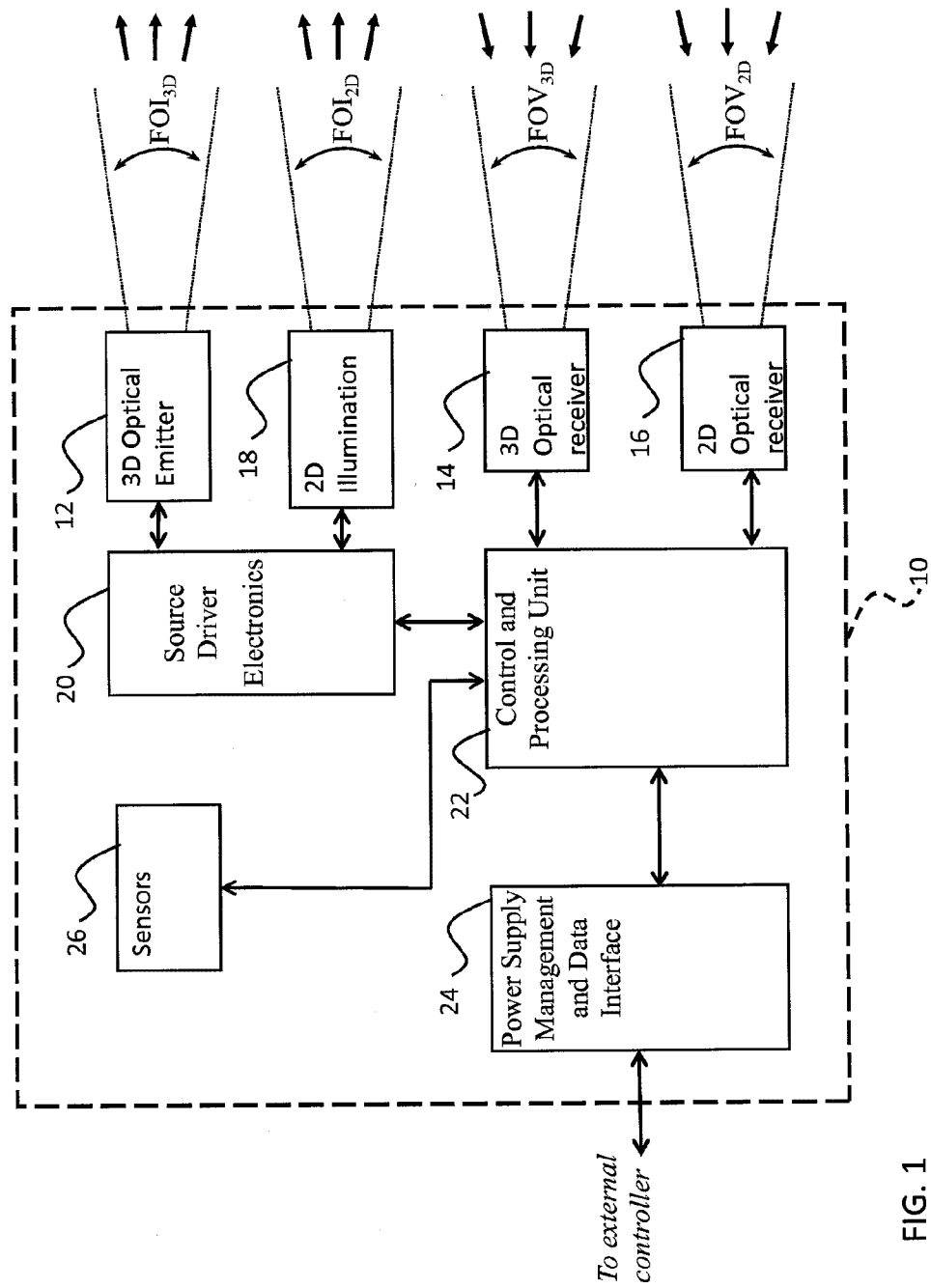


FIG. 1

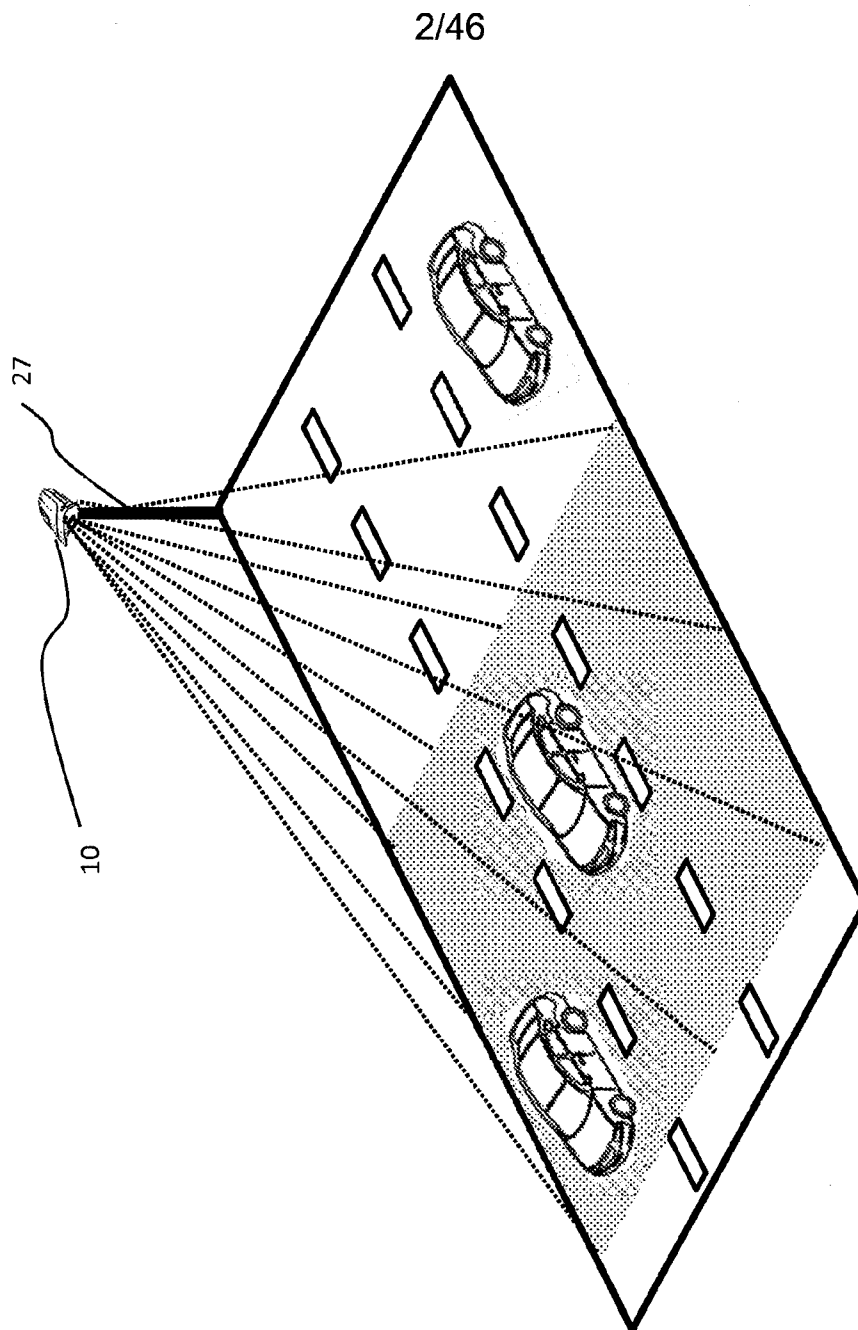


FIG. 2

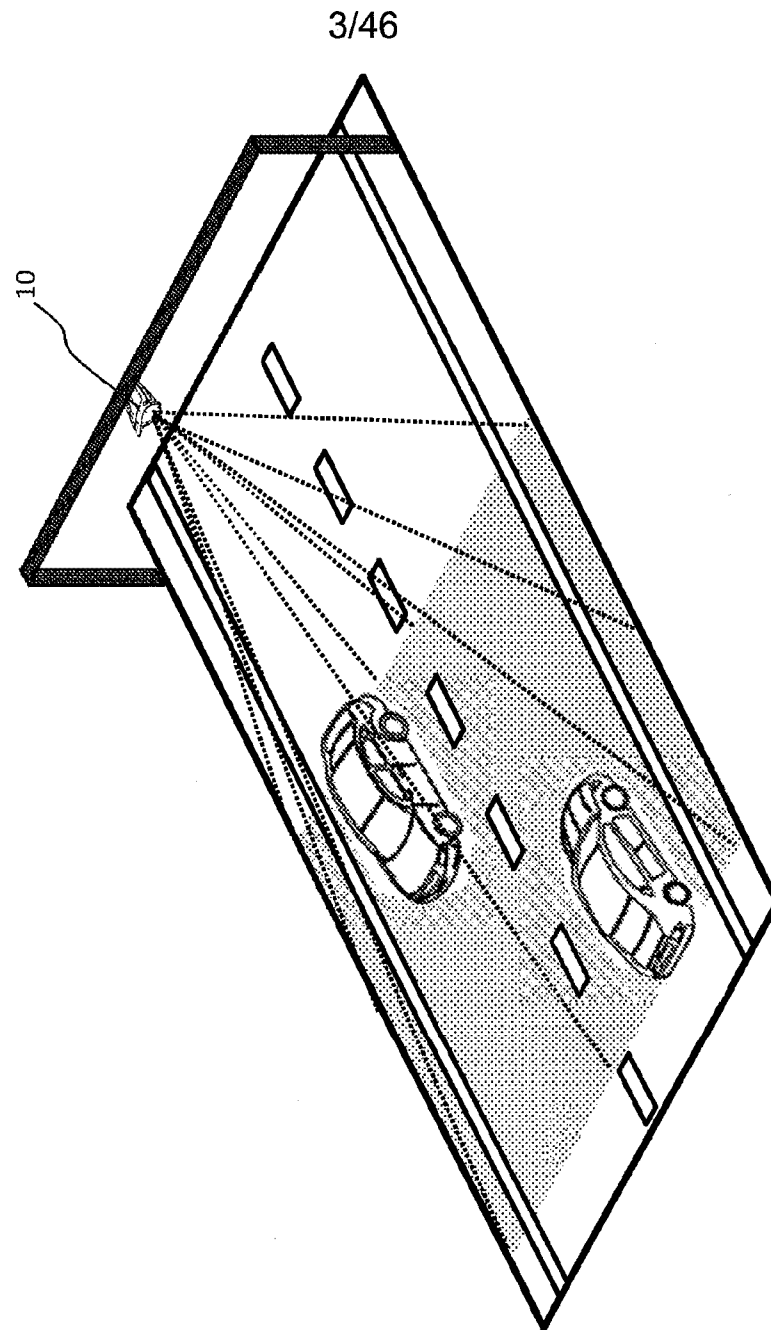


FIG. 3

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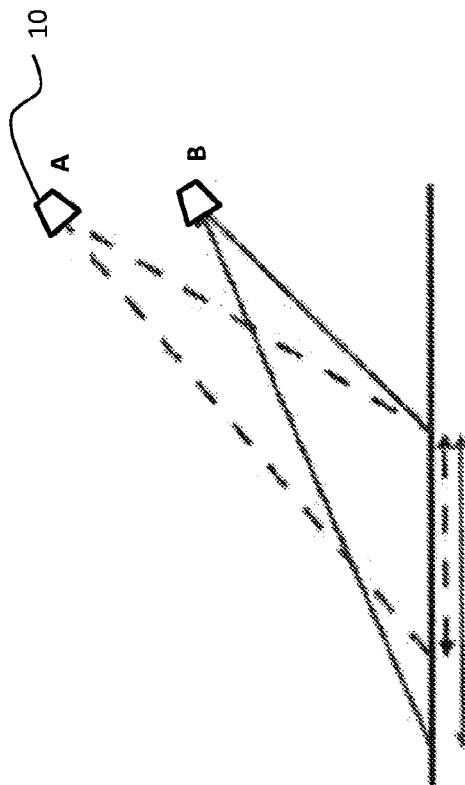


FIG. 4

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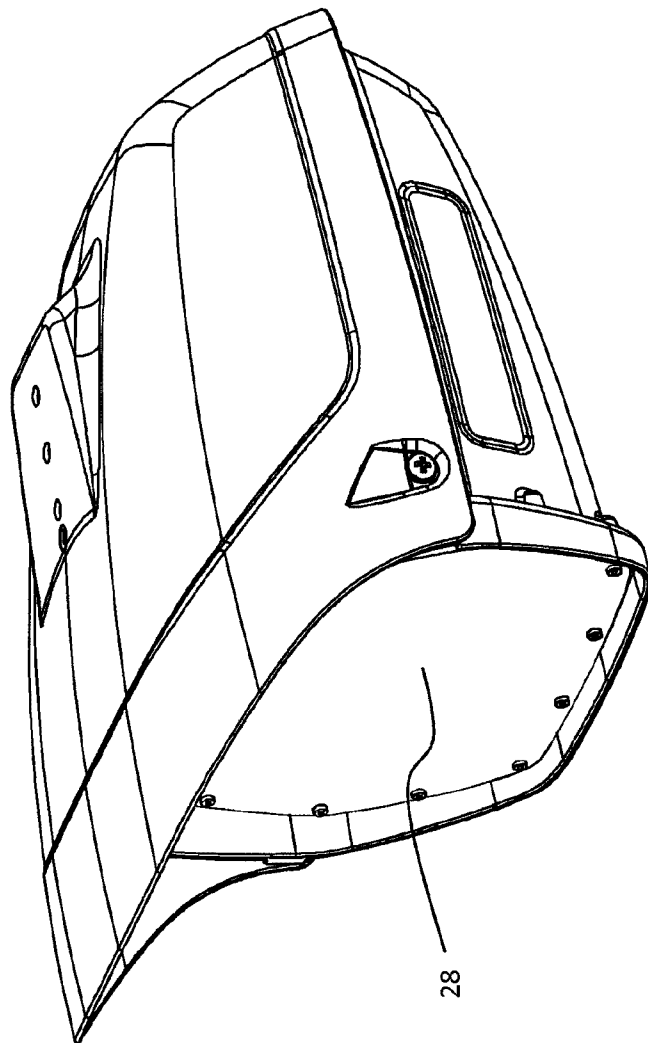


FIG. 5

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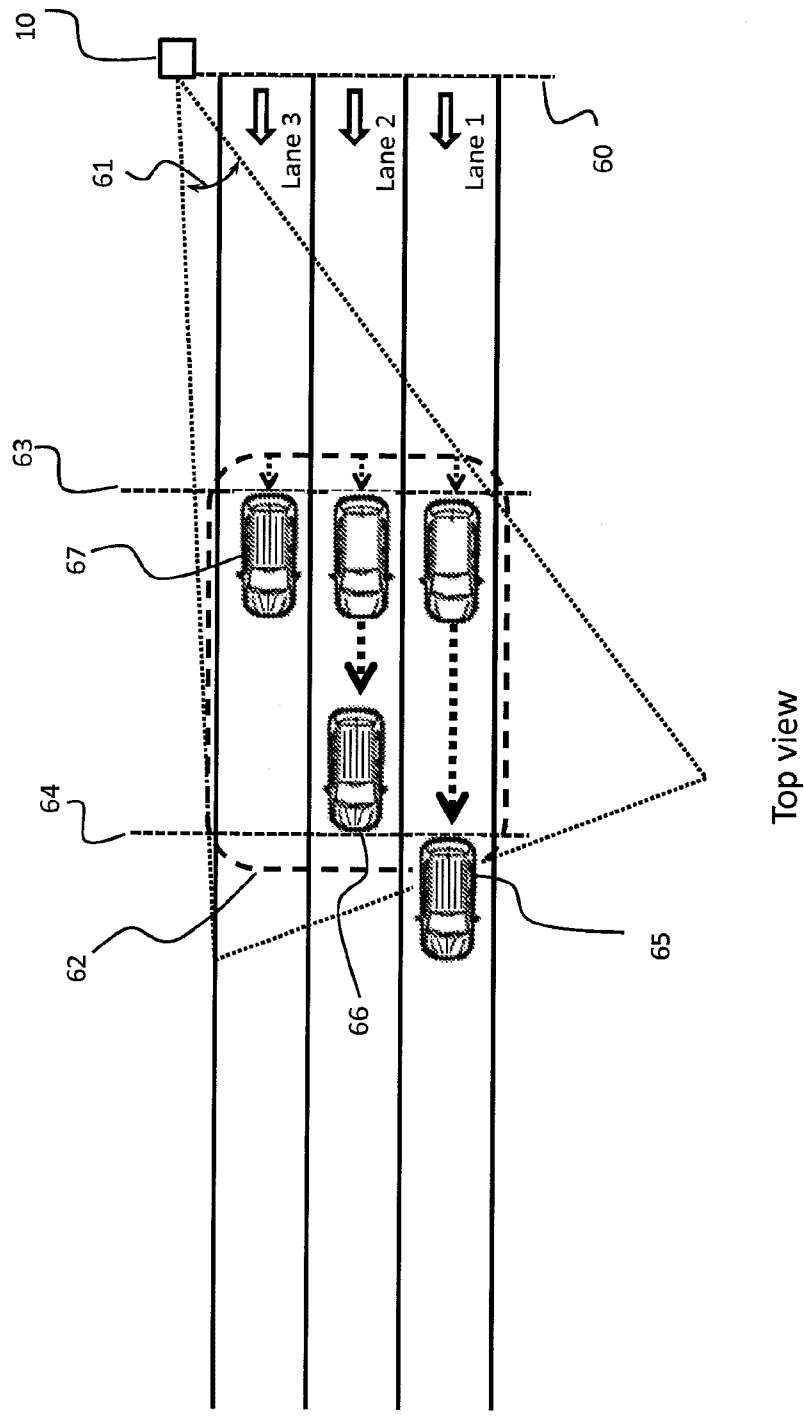


FIG. 6

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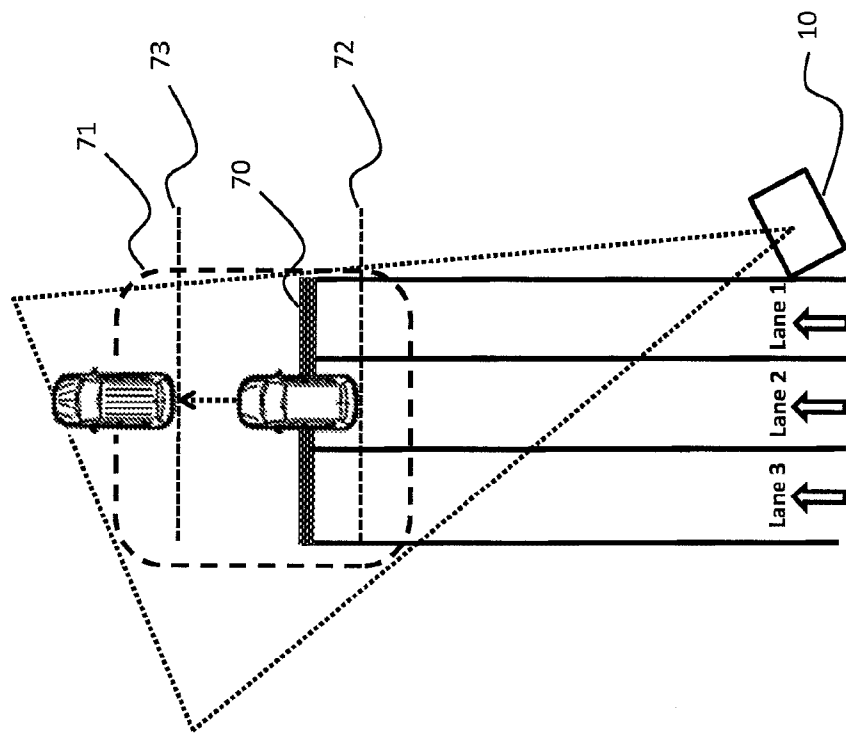


FIG. 7

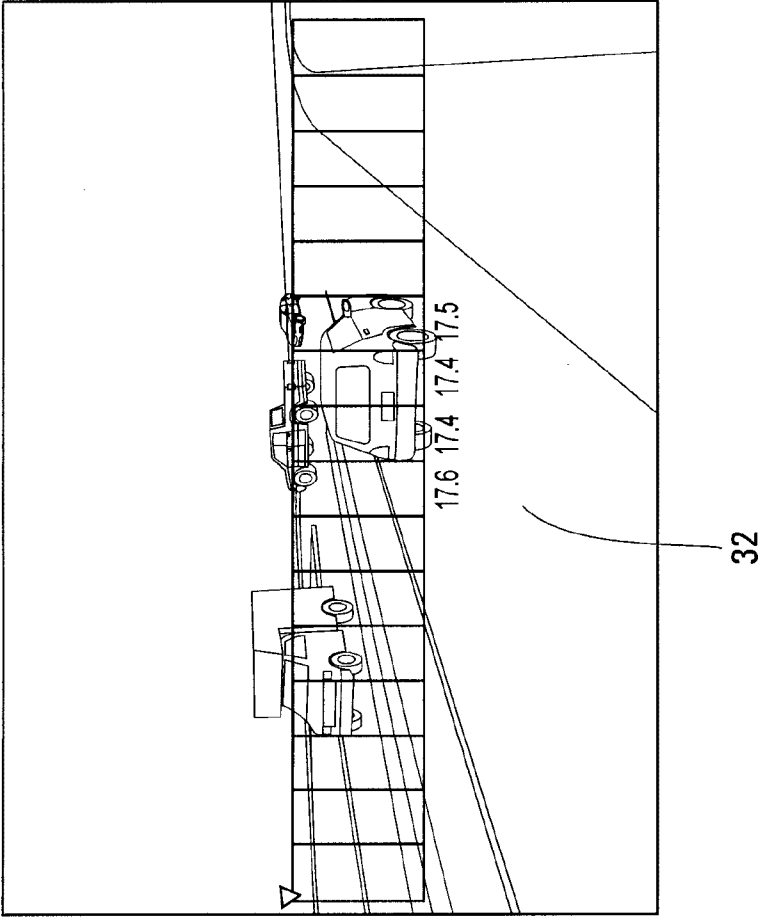


FIG. 8A

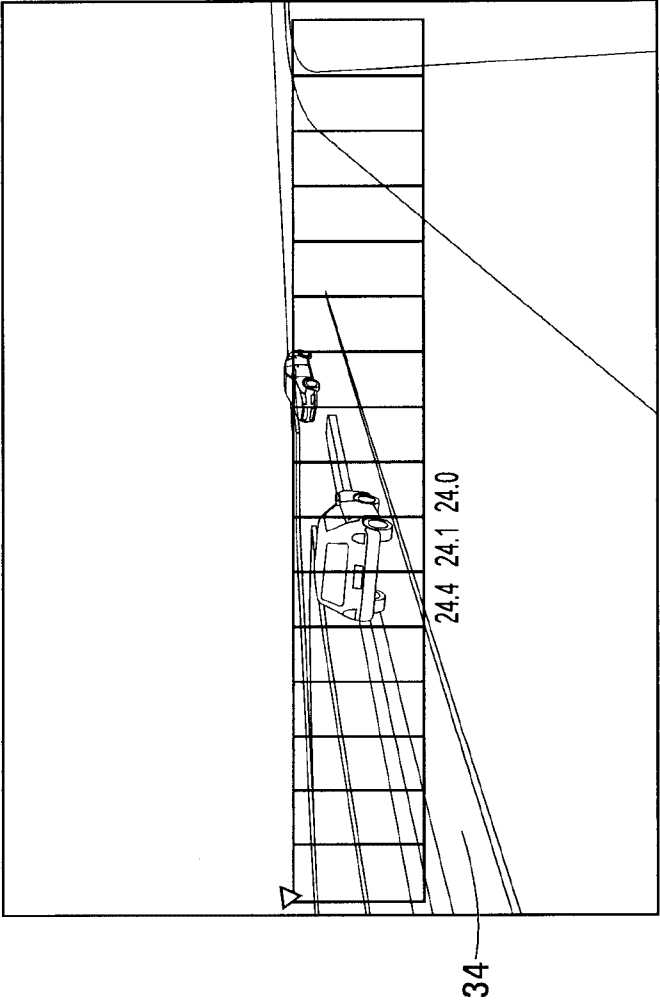


FIG. 8B

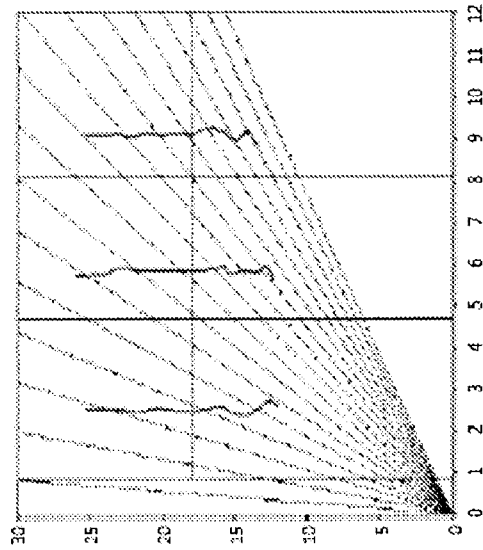


FIG. 9B

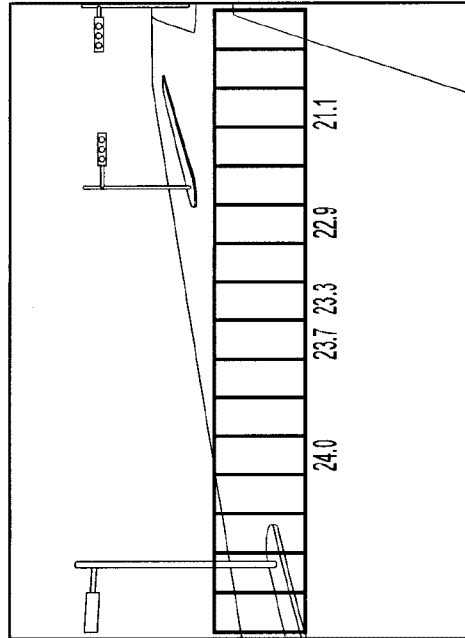


FIG. 9A

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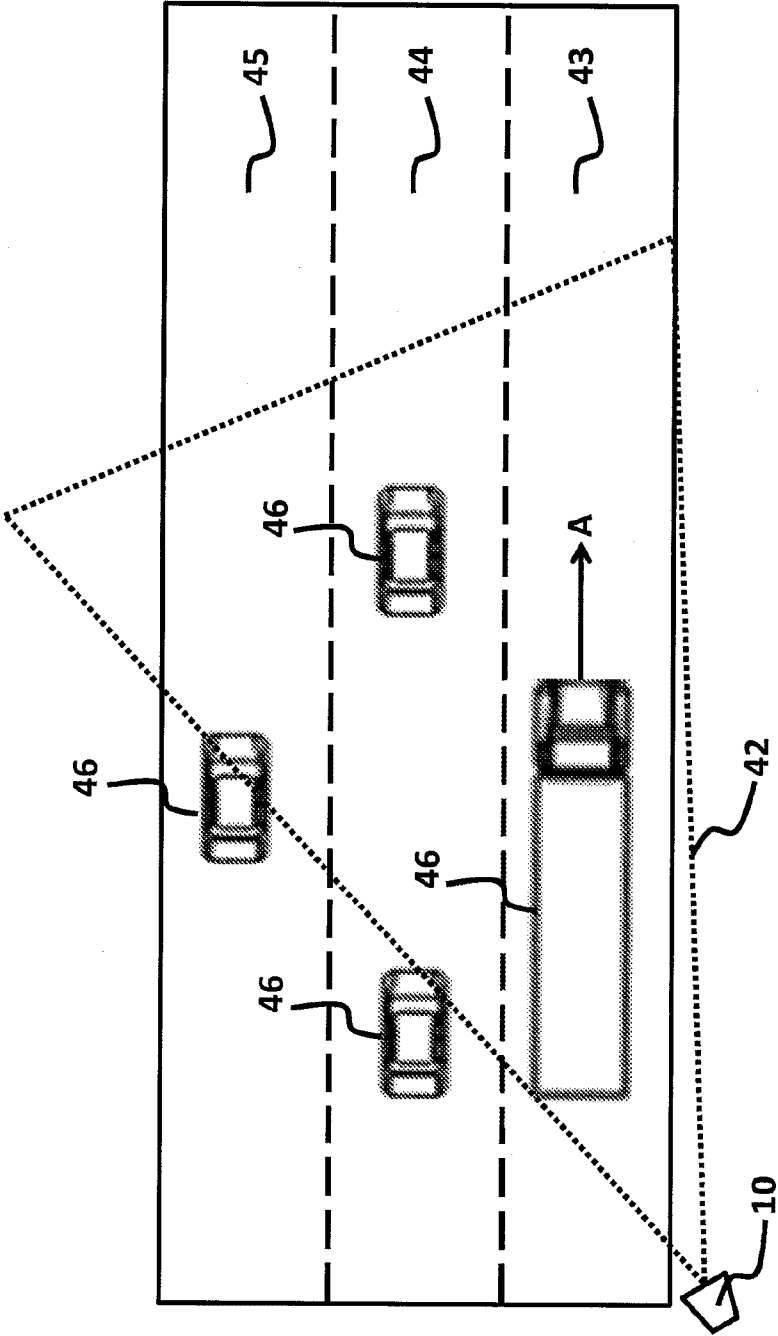


FIG. 10

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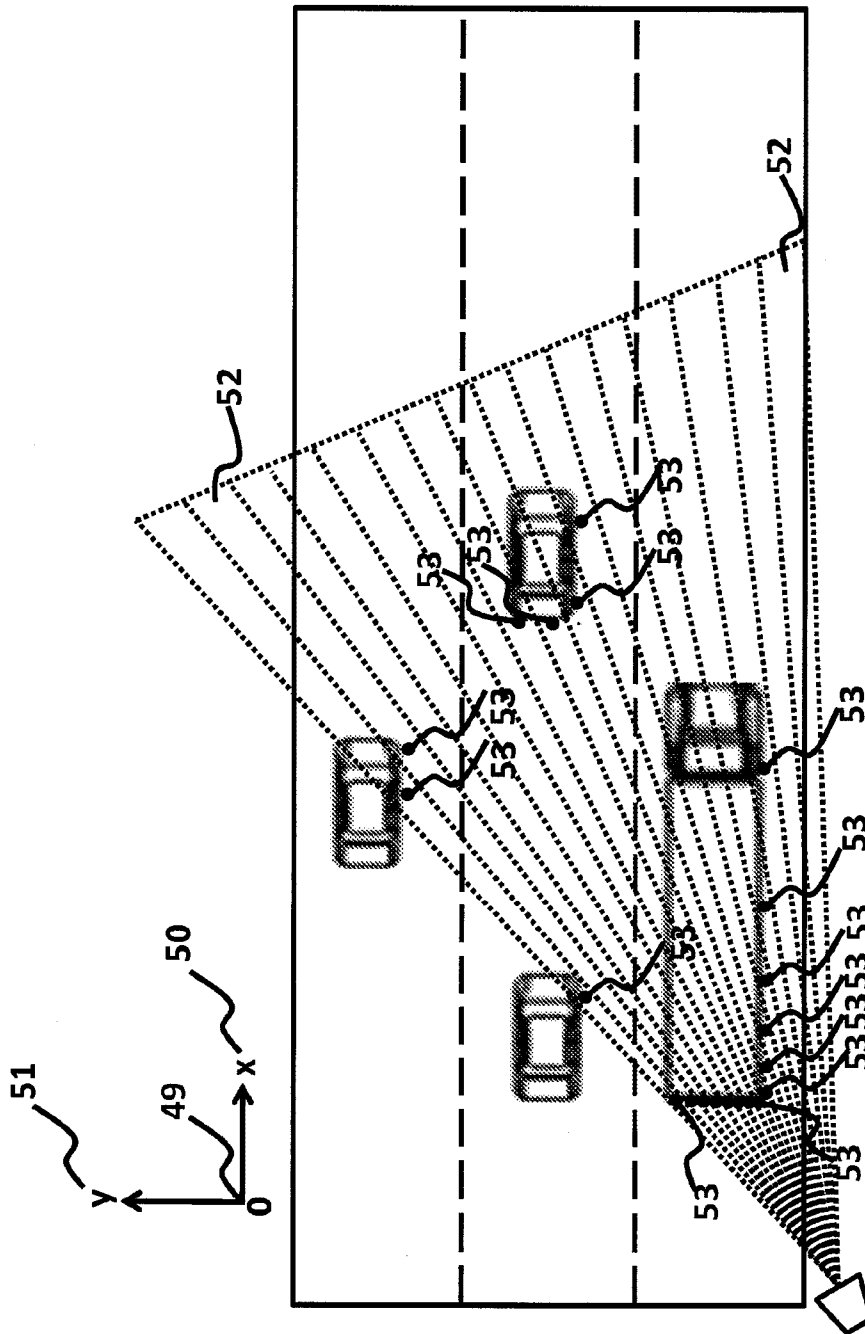


FIG. 11

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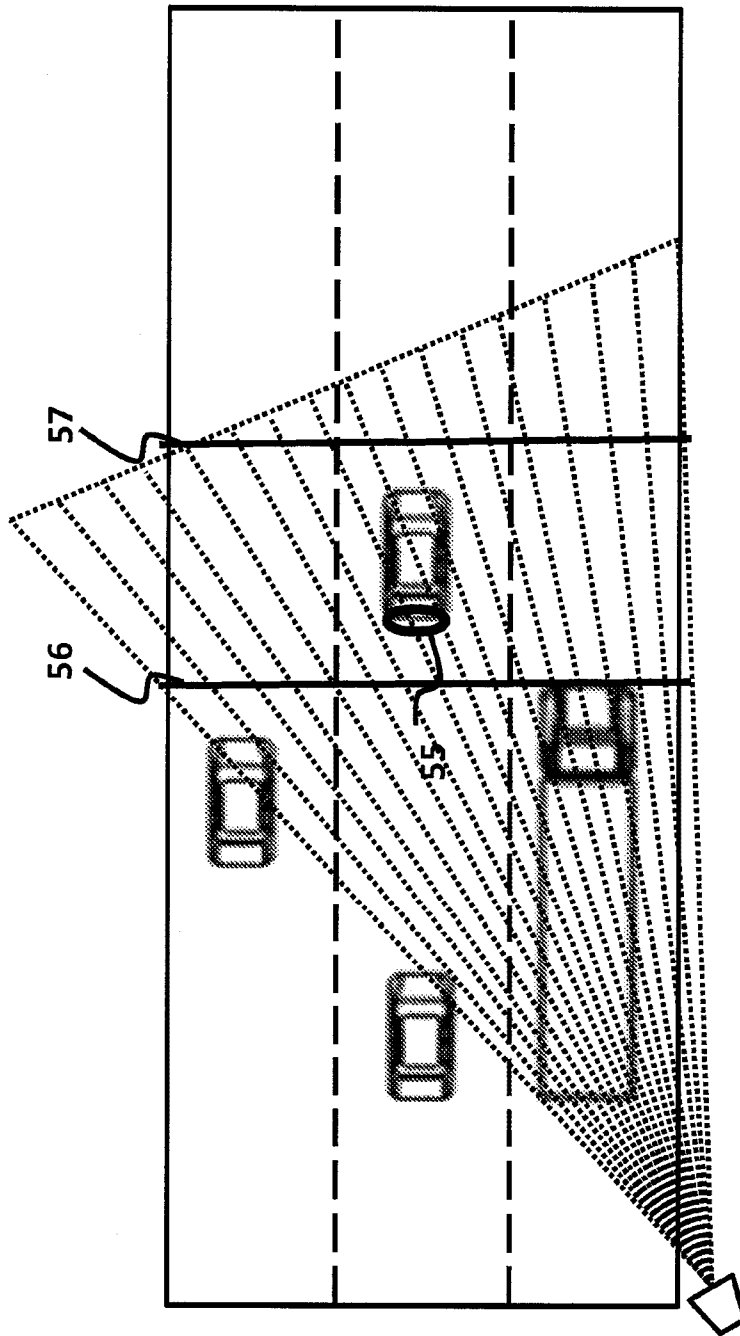


FIG. 12

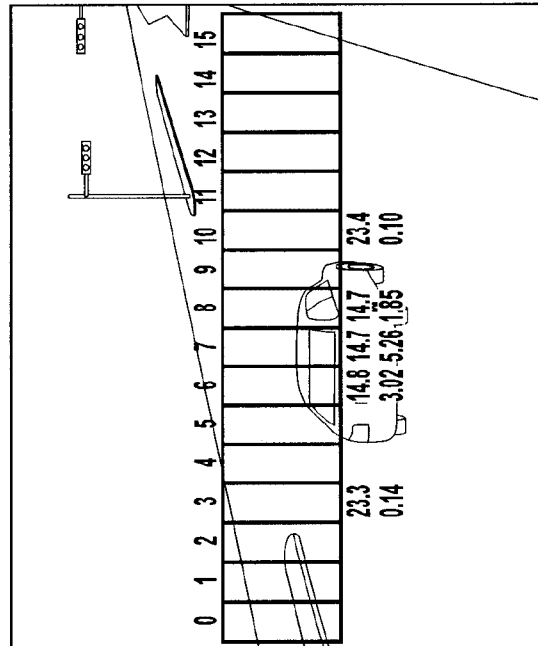


FIG. 13A

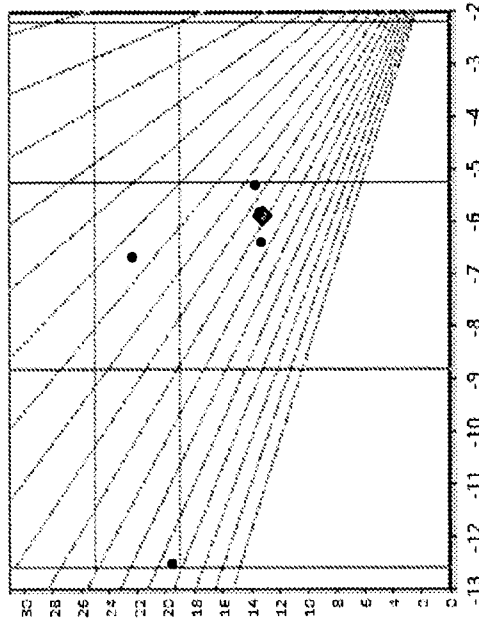


FIG. 13B

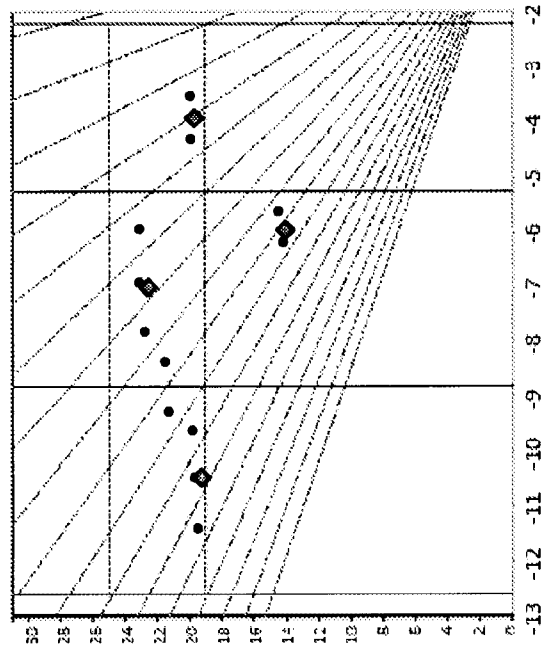


FIG. 13D

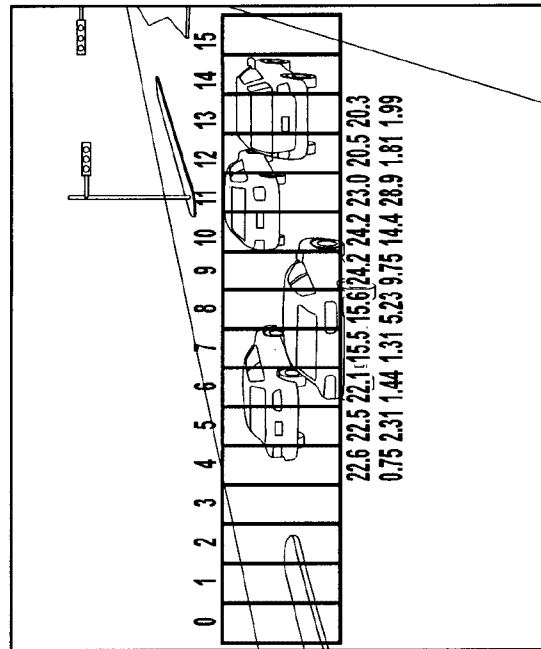


FIG. 13C

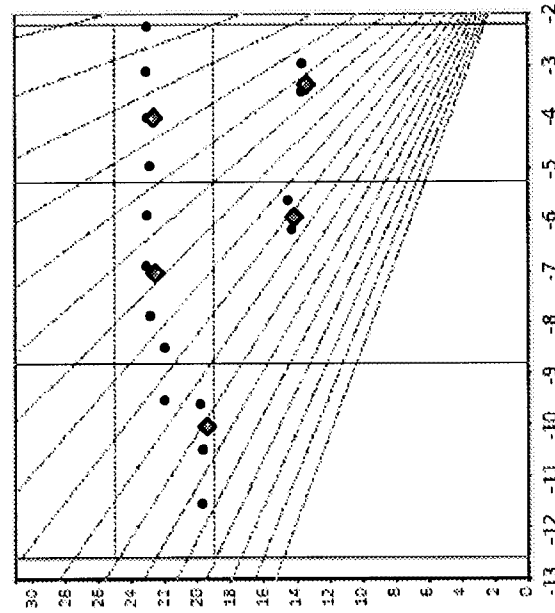


FIG. 13F

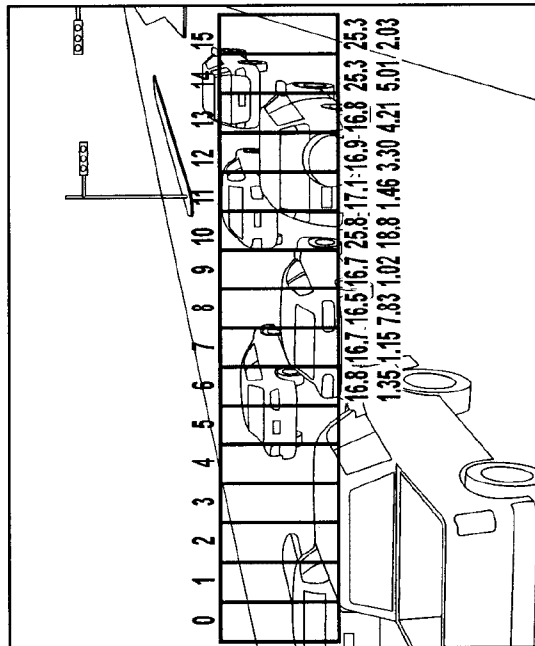


FIG. 13E

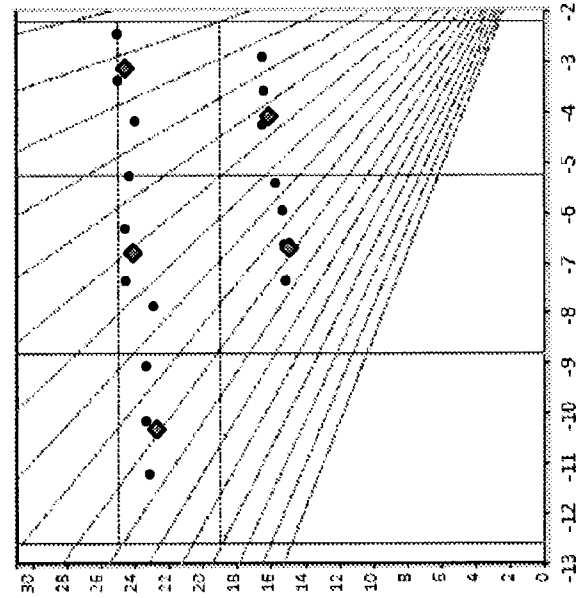


FIG. 14B

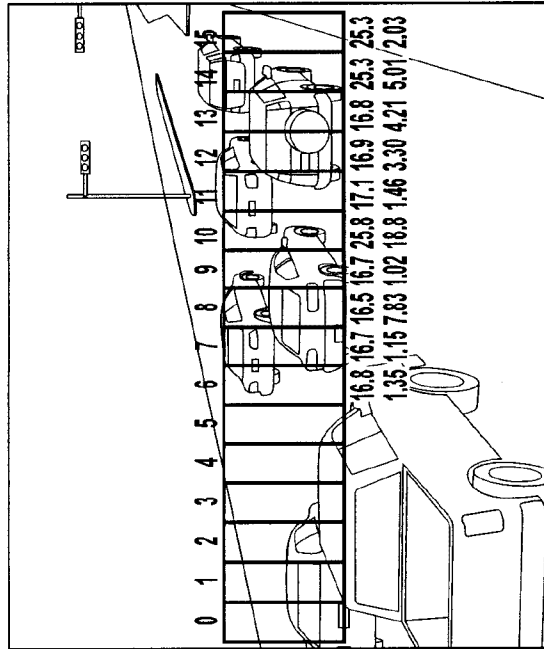


FIG. 14A

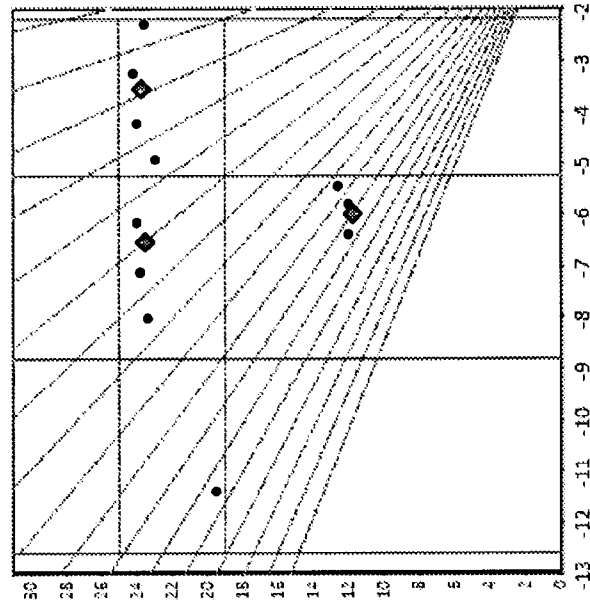


FIG. 14D

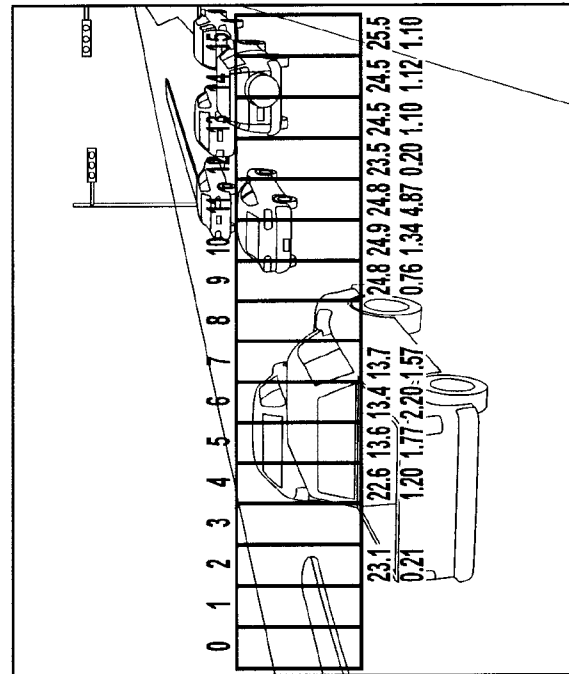


FIG. 14C

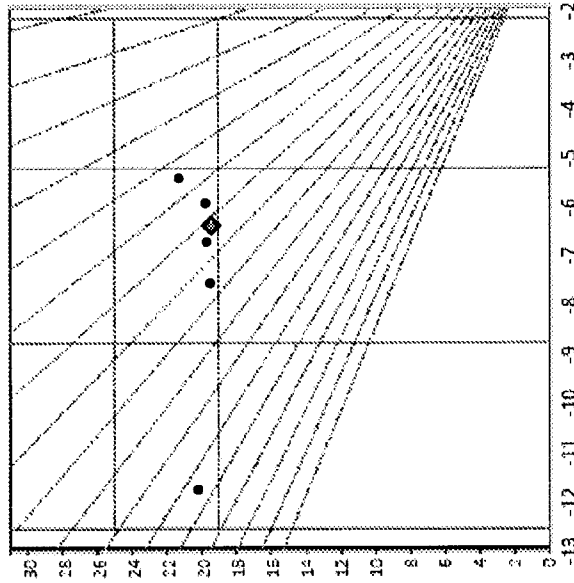


FIG. 14F

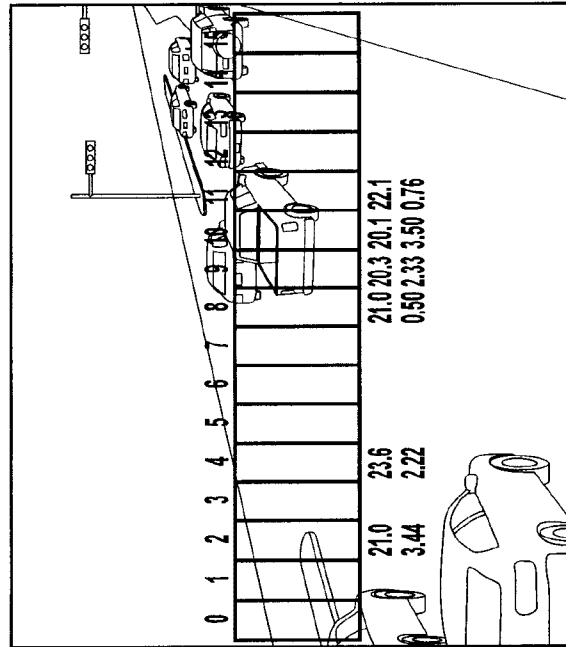


FIG. 14E

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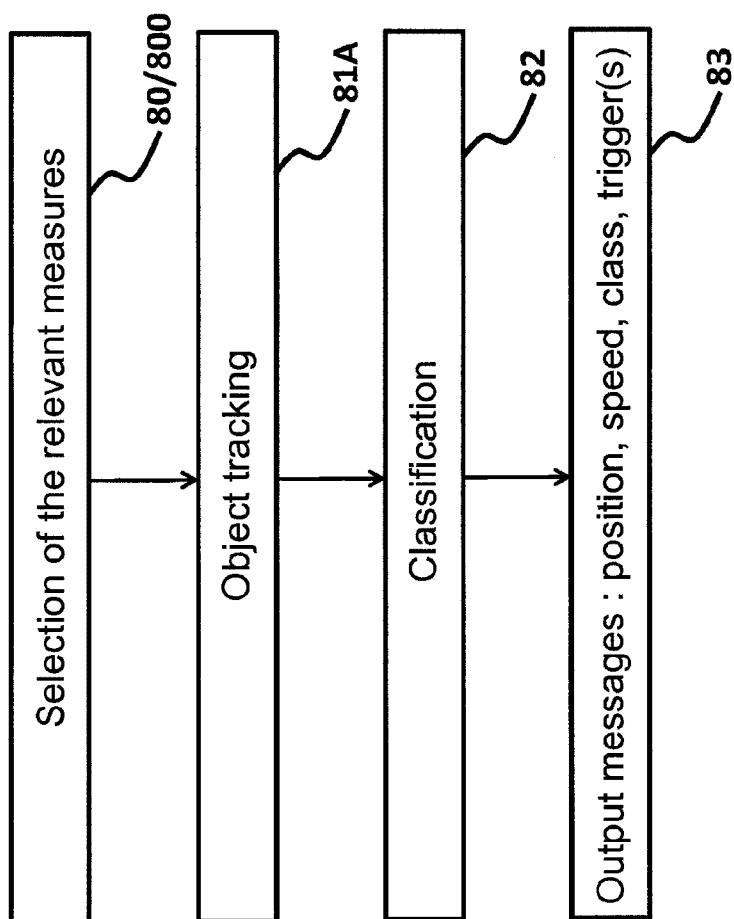


FIG. 15

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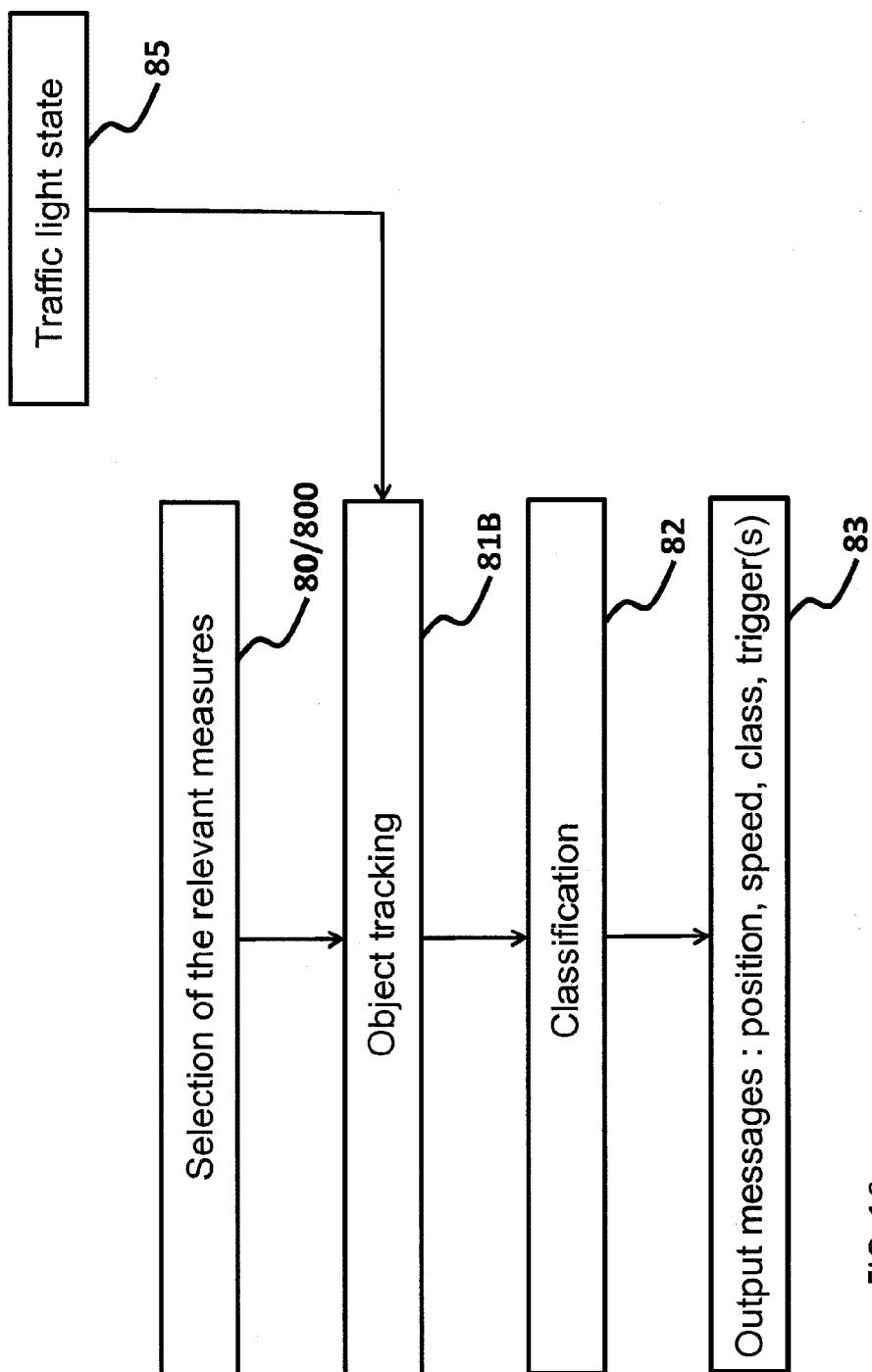


FIG. 16

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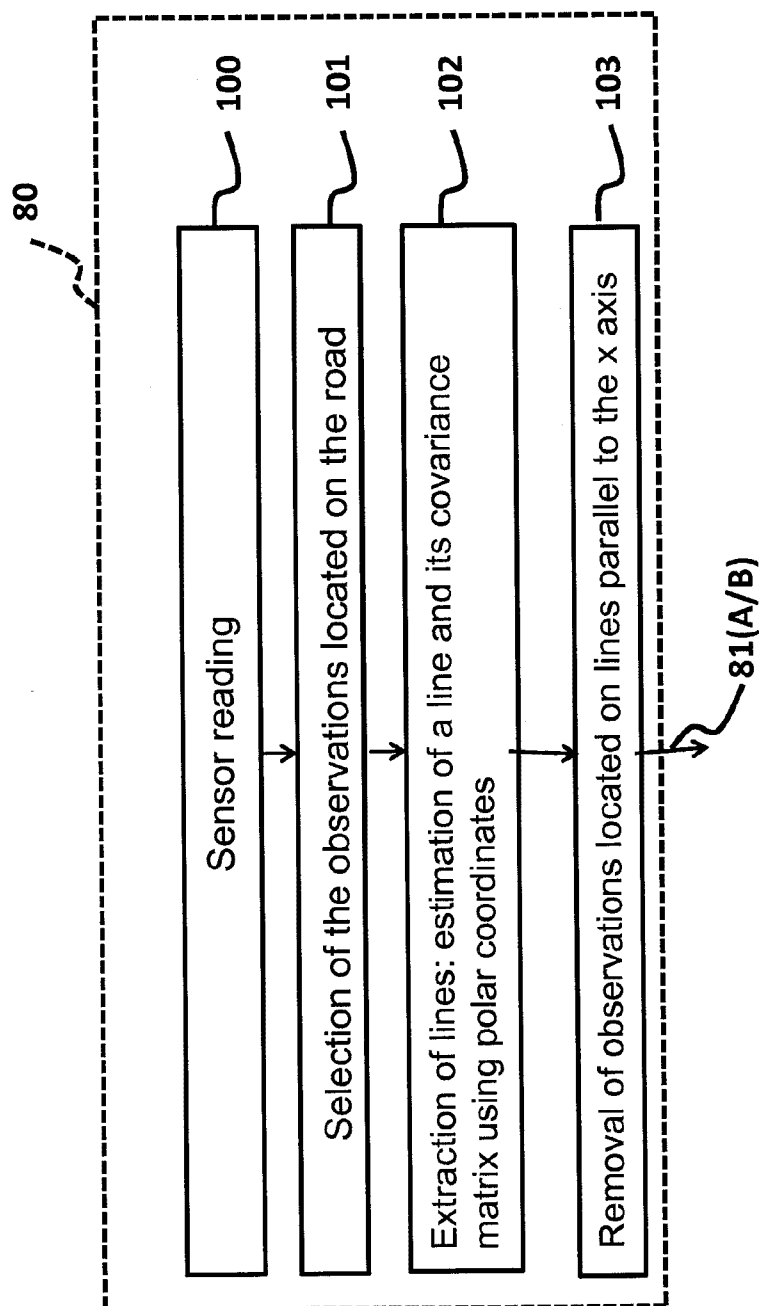


FIG. 17

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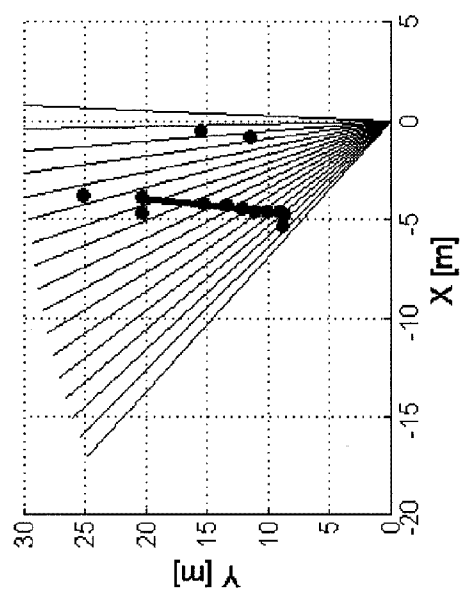


FIG. 18

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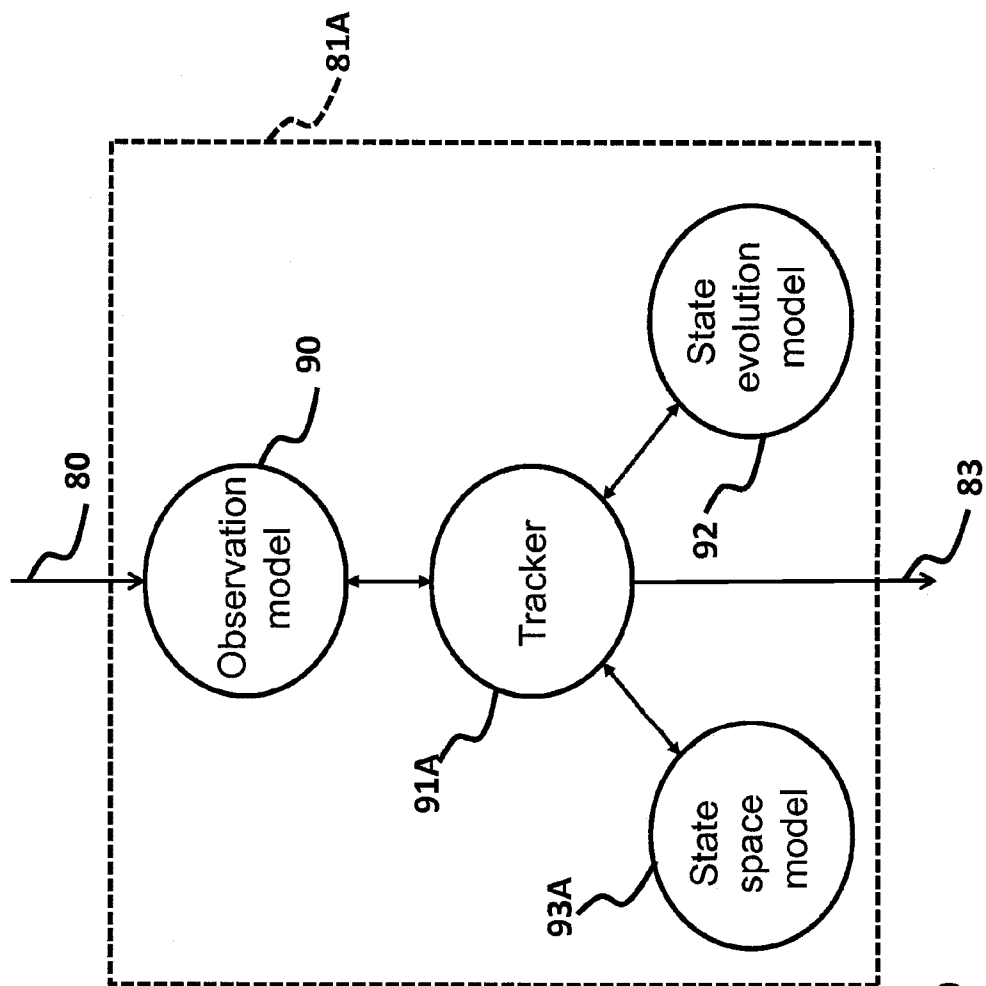
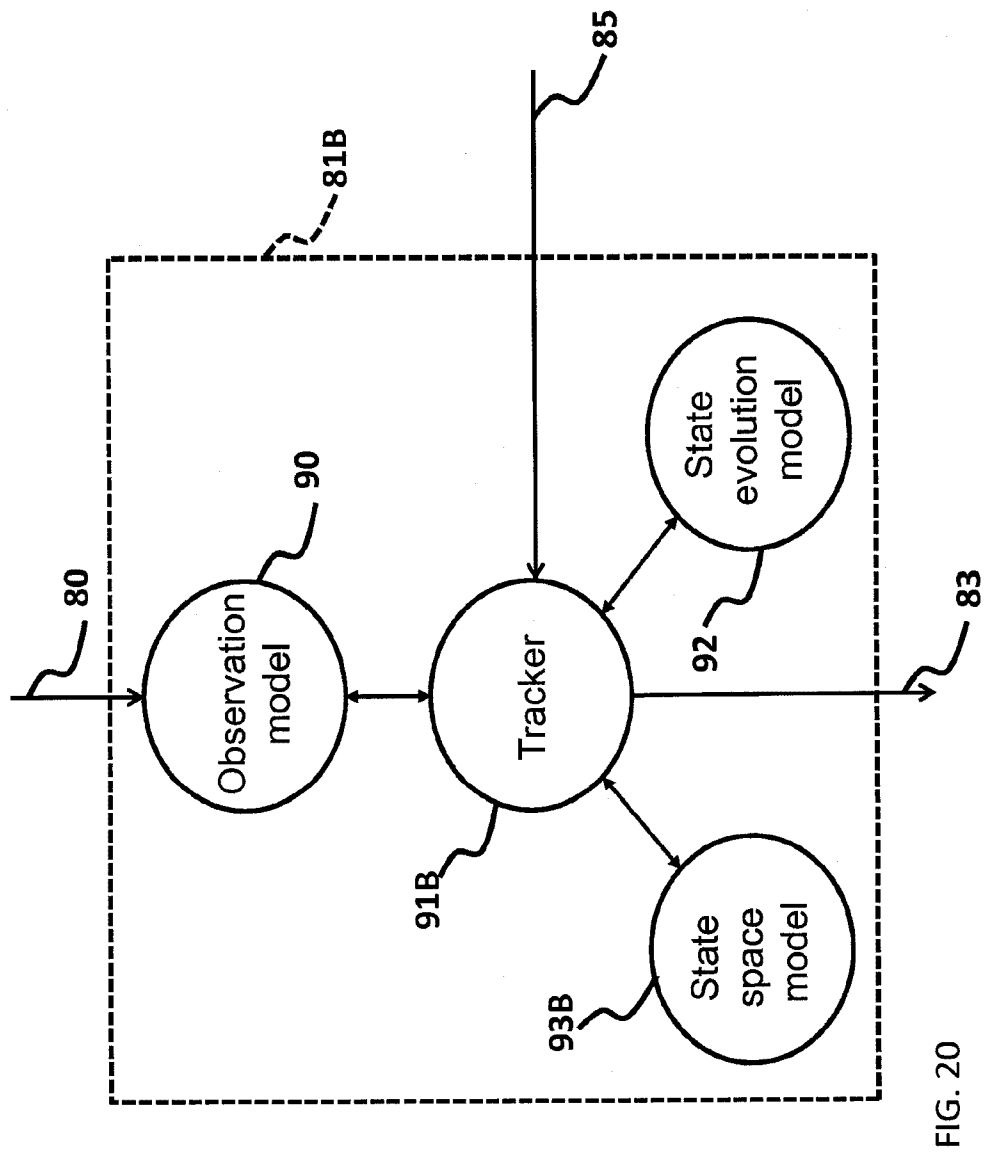


FIG. 19

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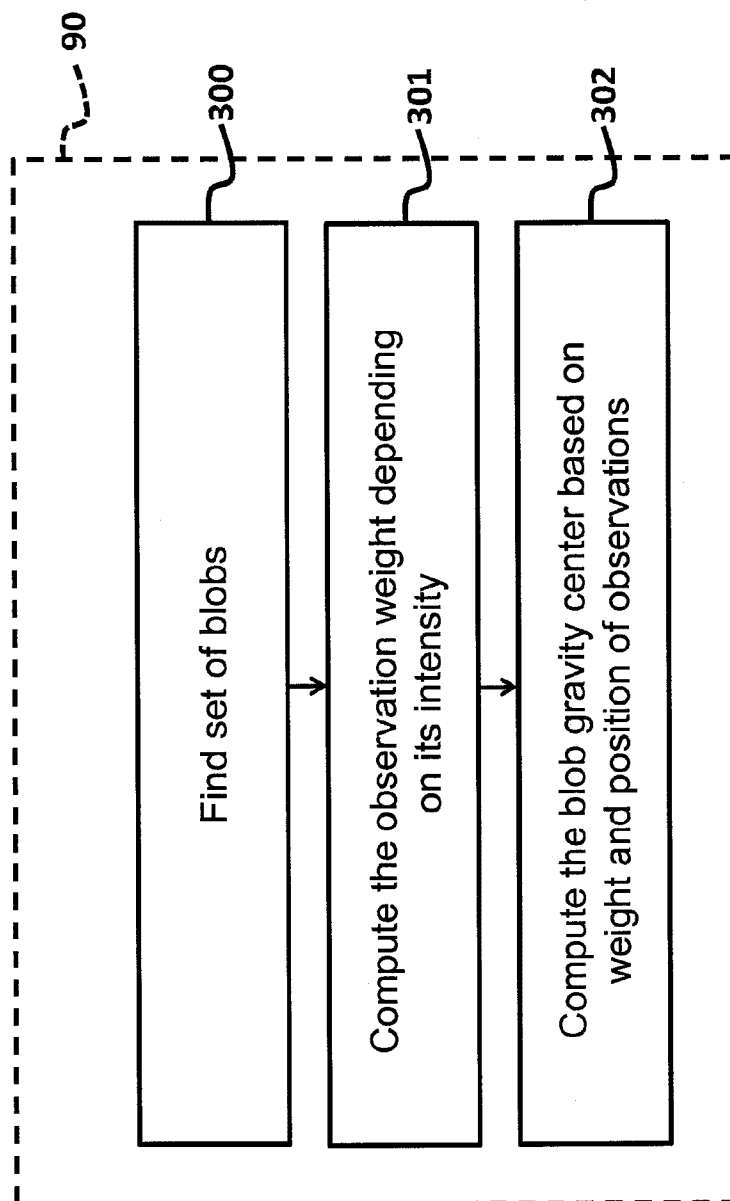


FIG. 21

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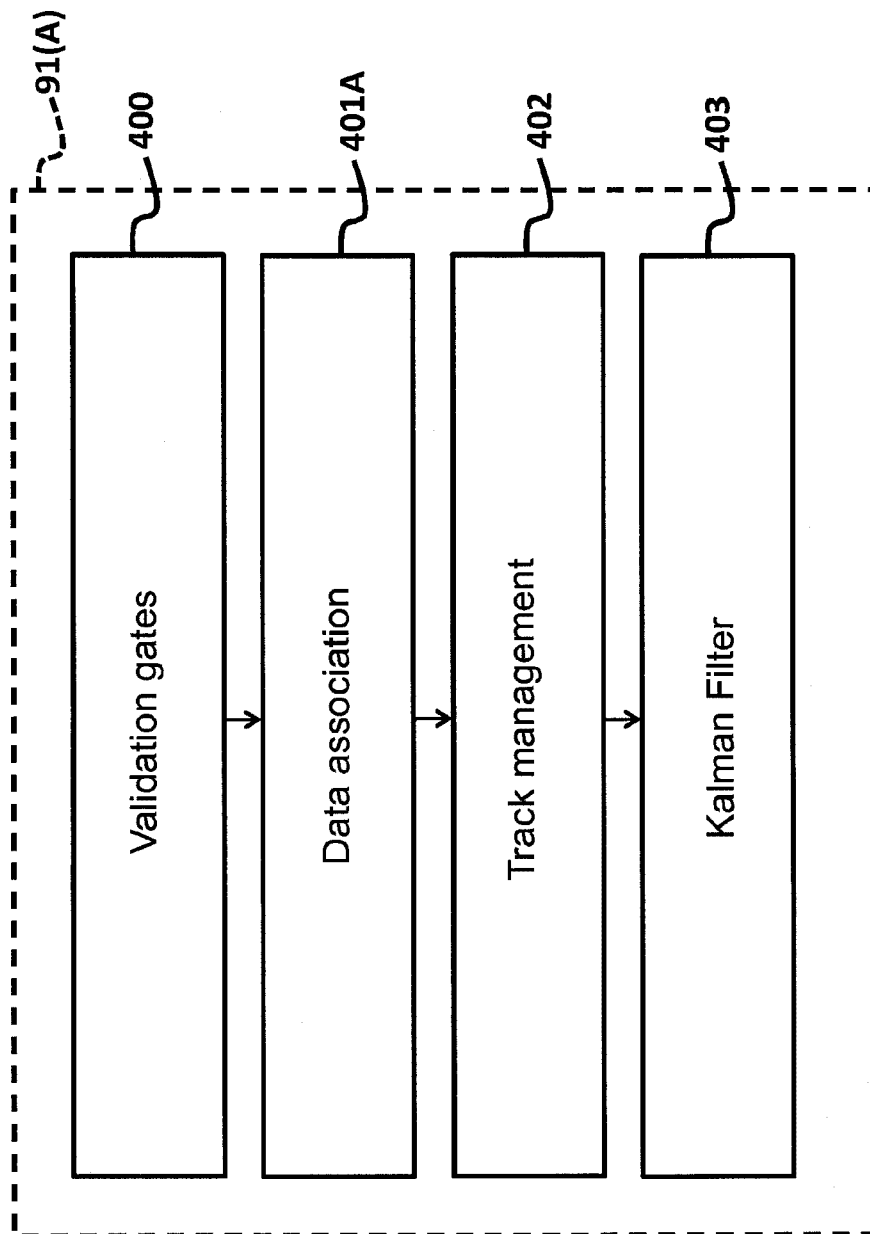


FIG. 22

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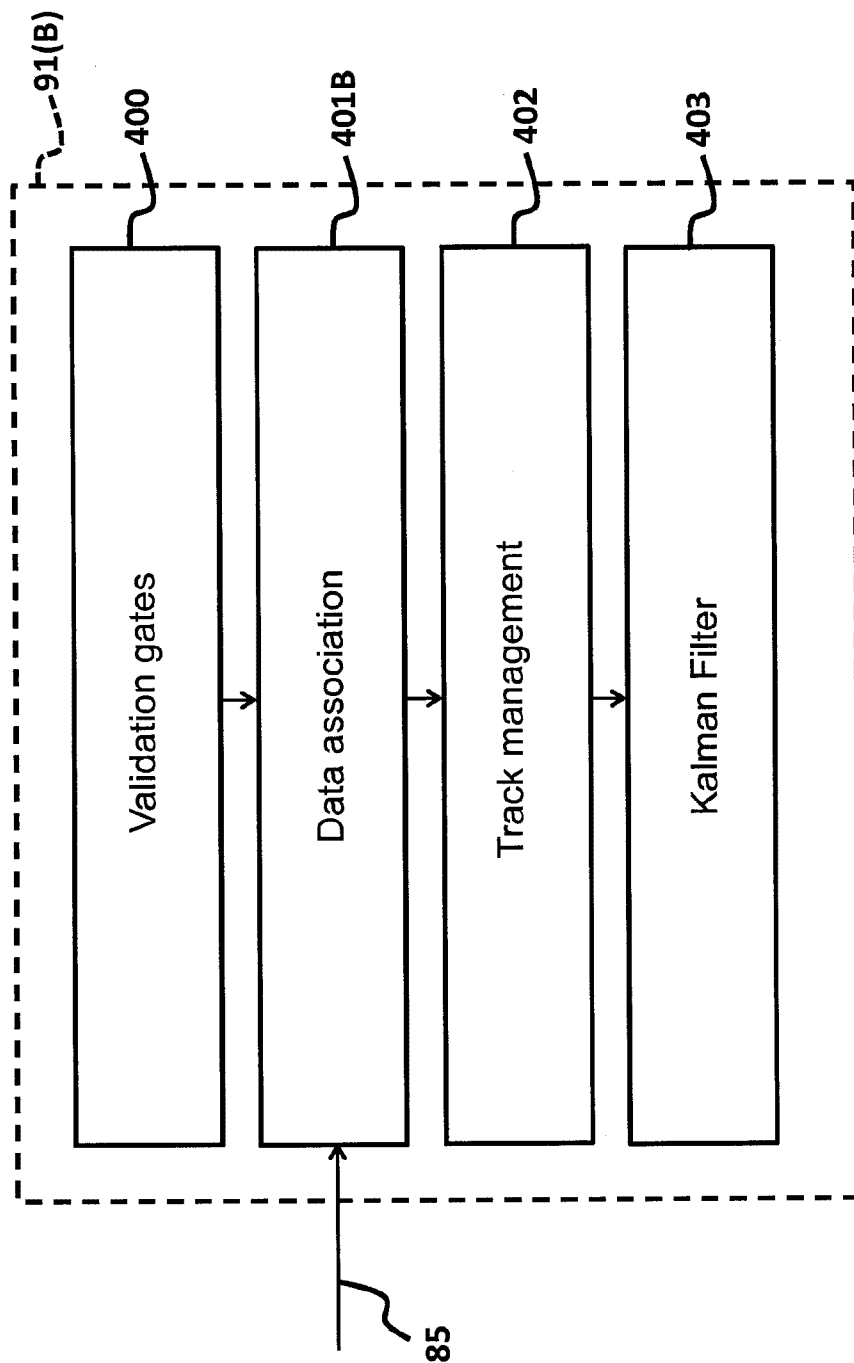


FIG. 23

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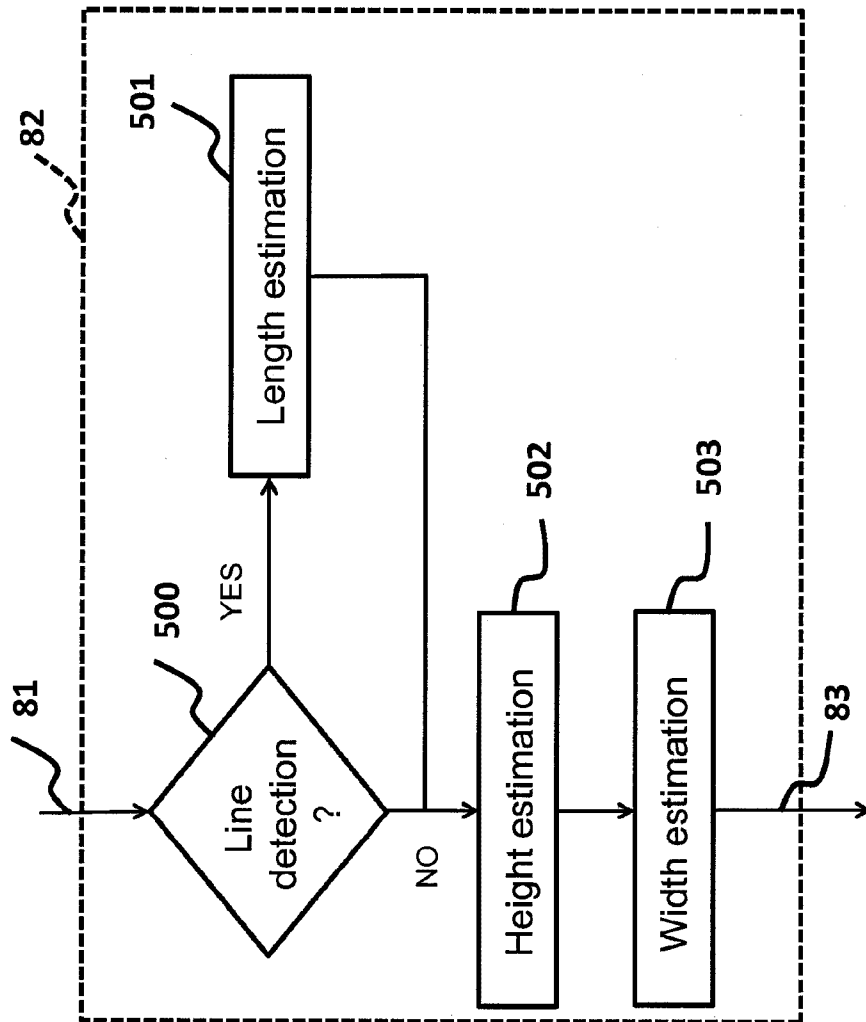


FIG. 24

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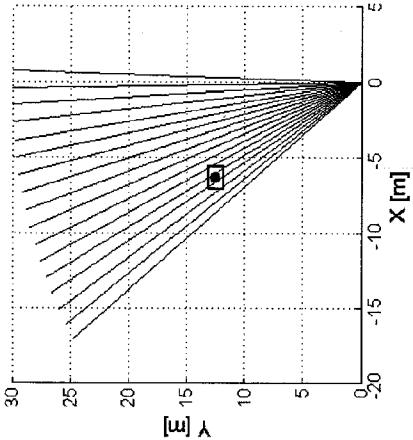


FIG. 25C

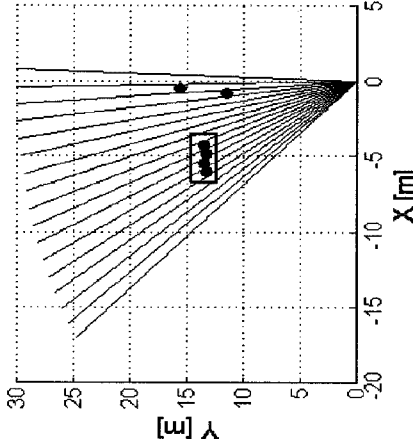


FIG. 25B

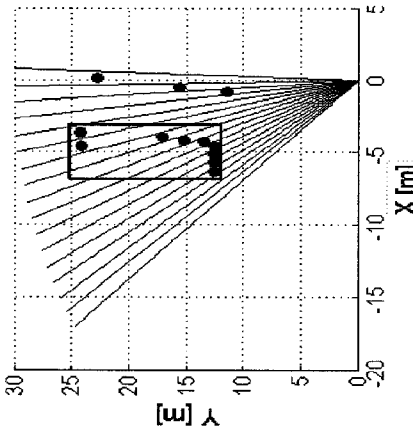


FIG. 25A

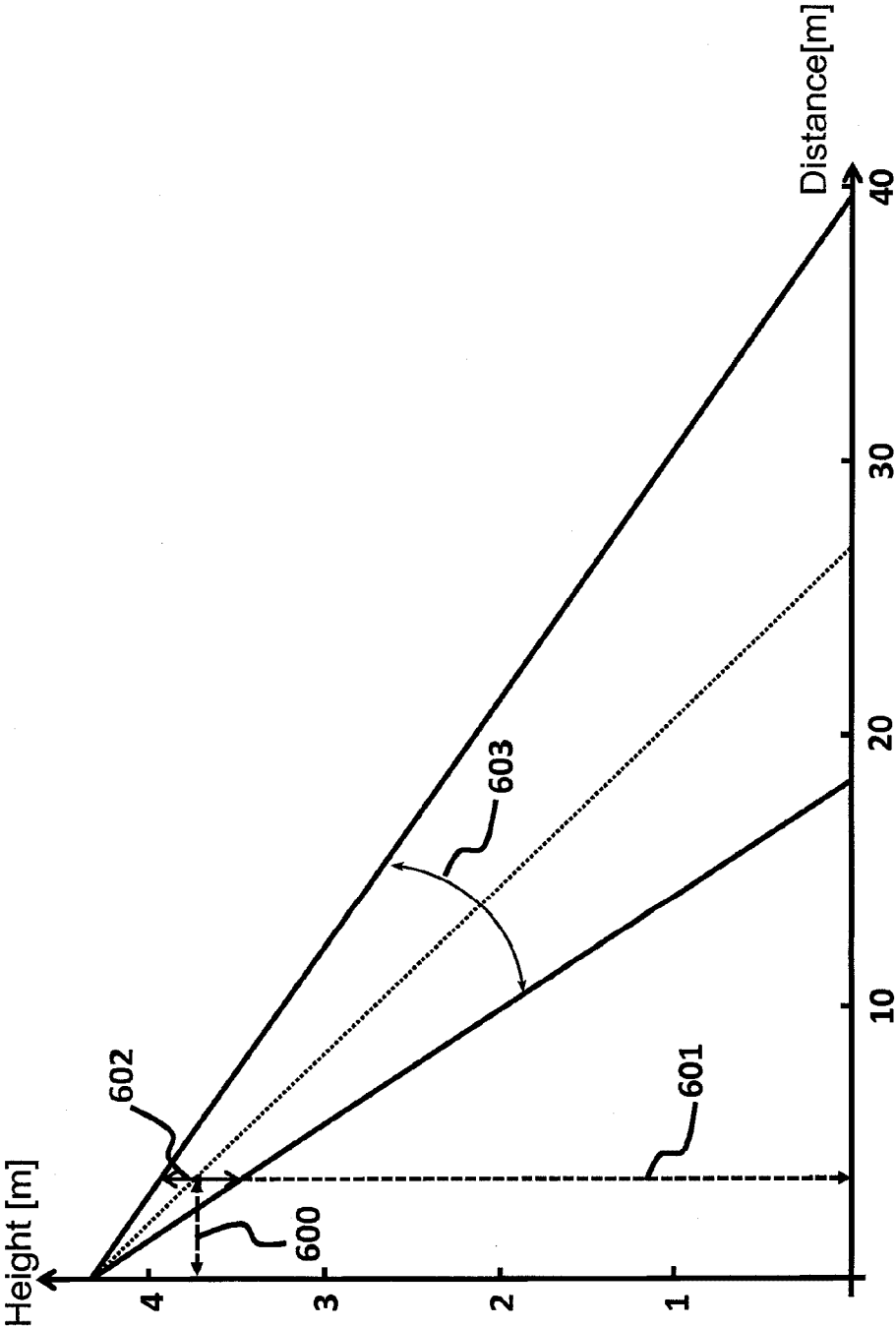


FIG. 26

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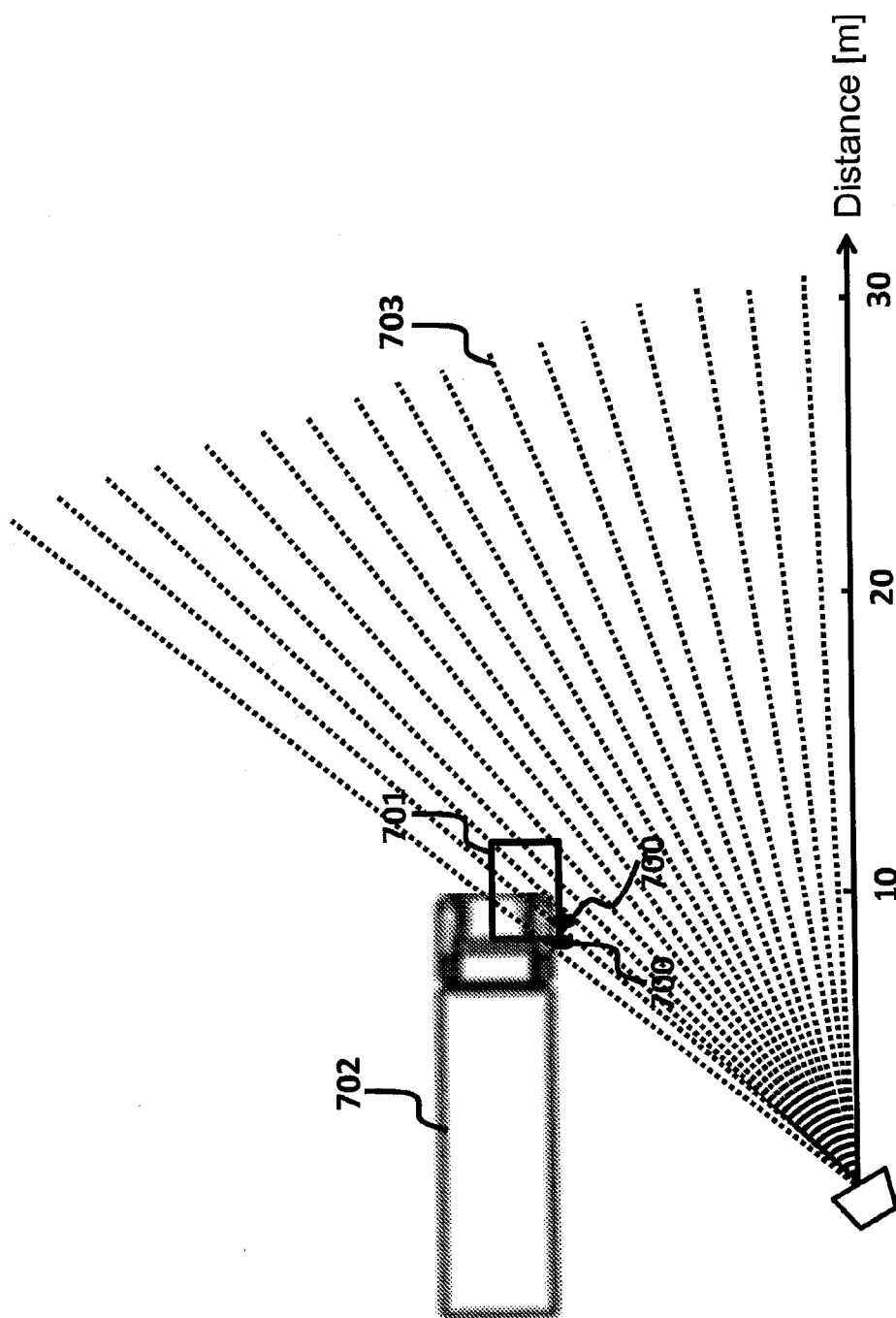


FIG. 27A

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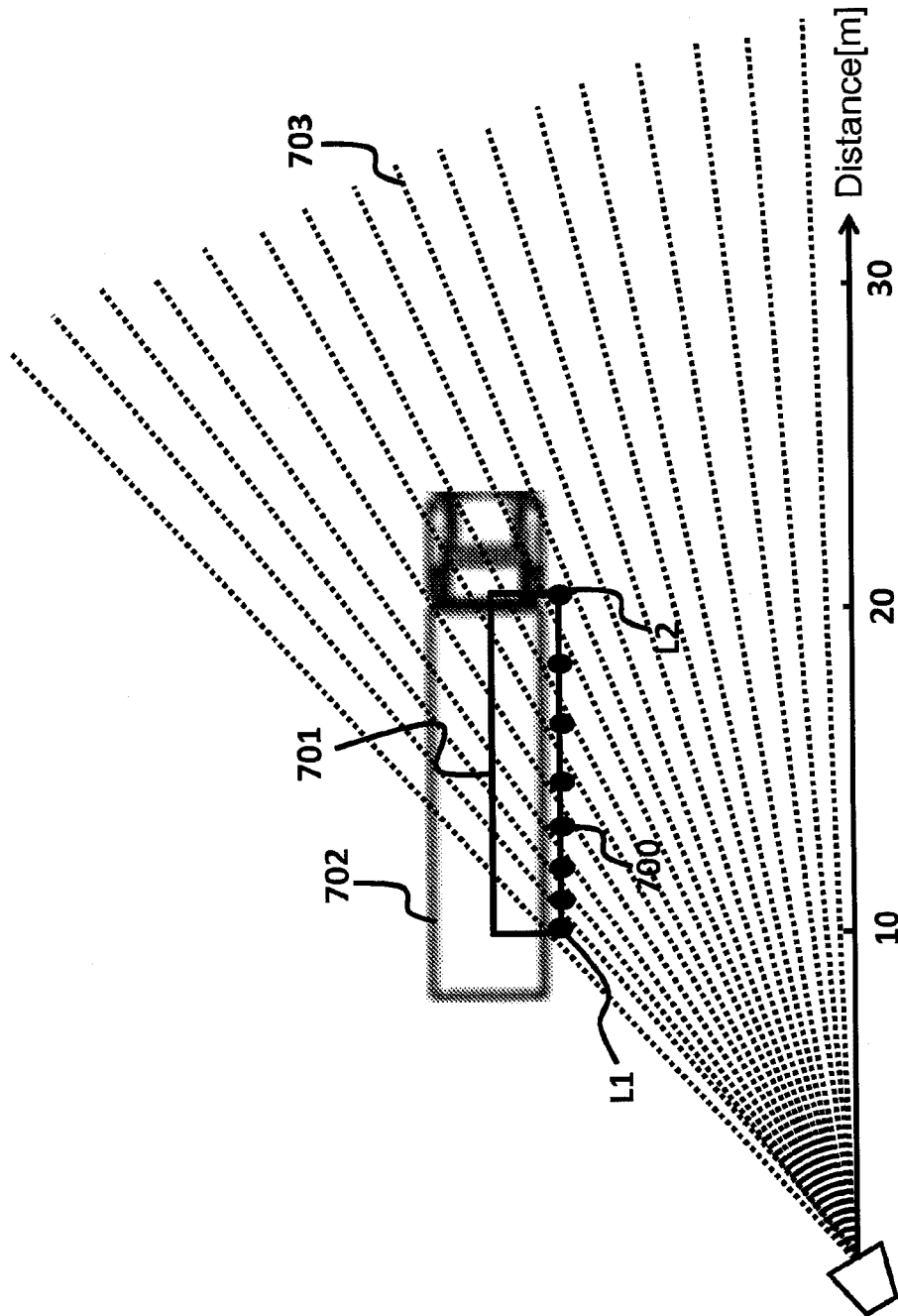
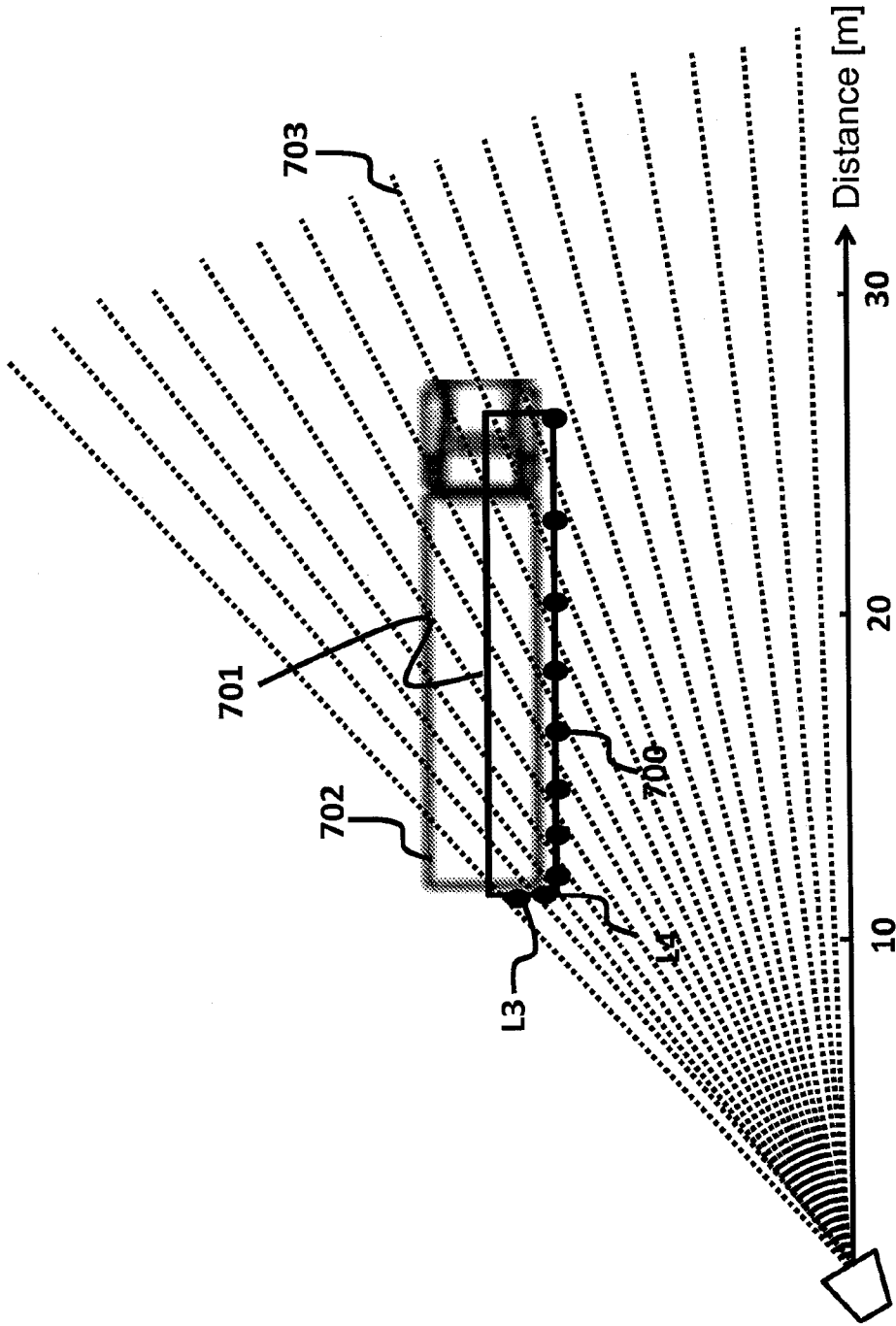


FIG. 27B



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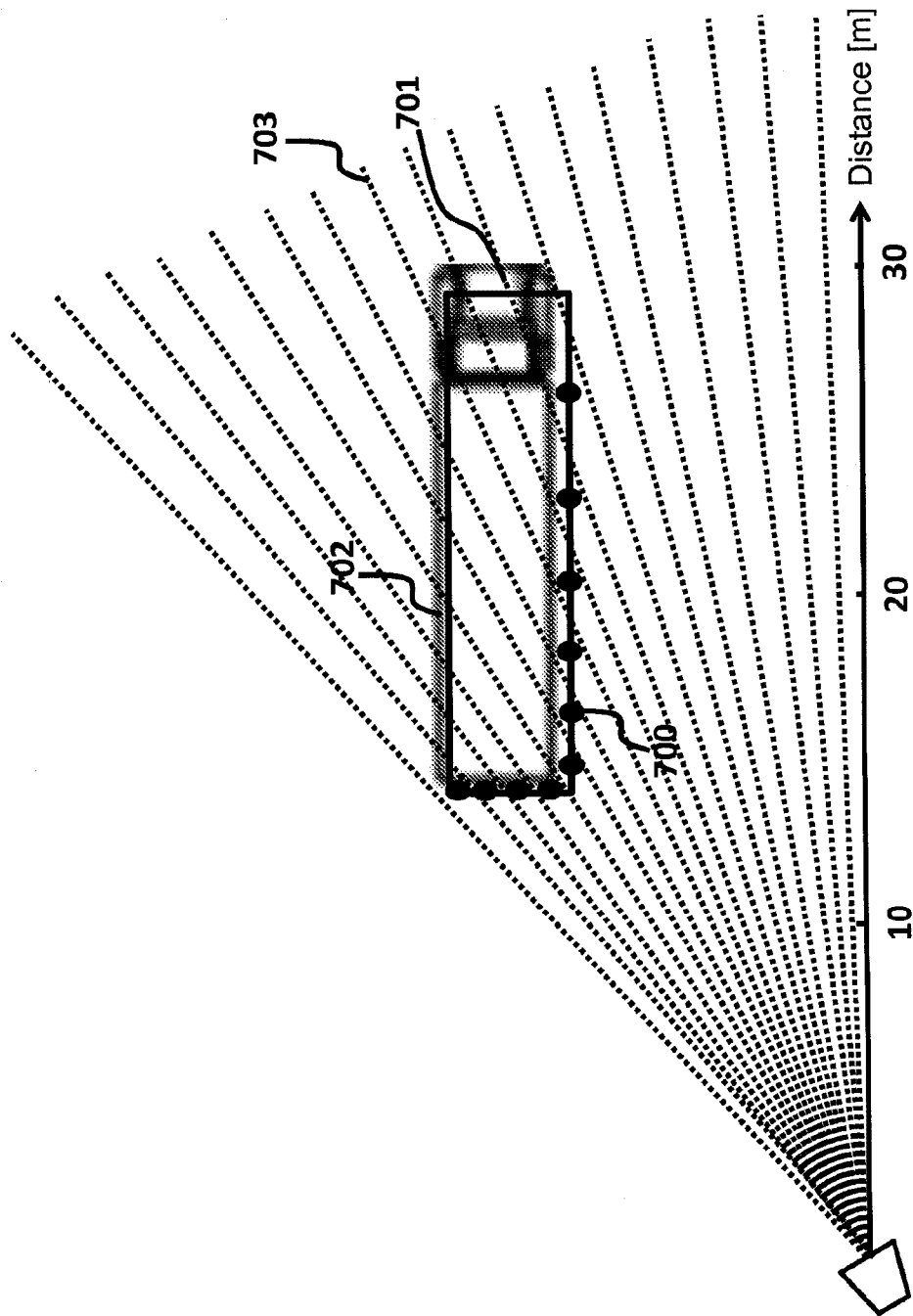


FIG. 27D

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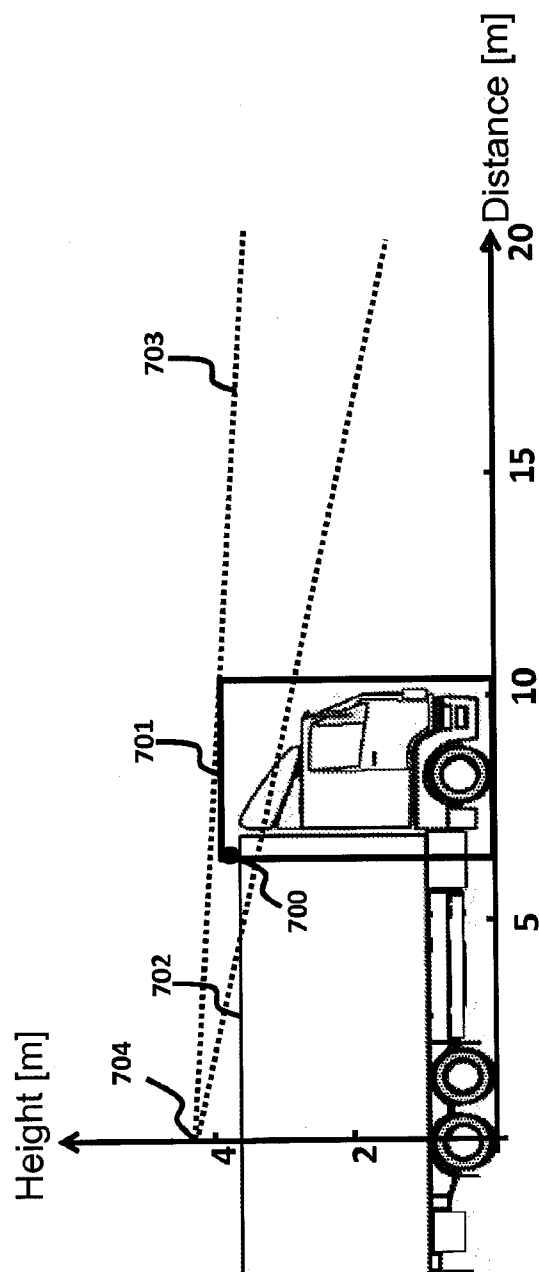


FIG. 28A

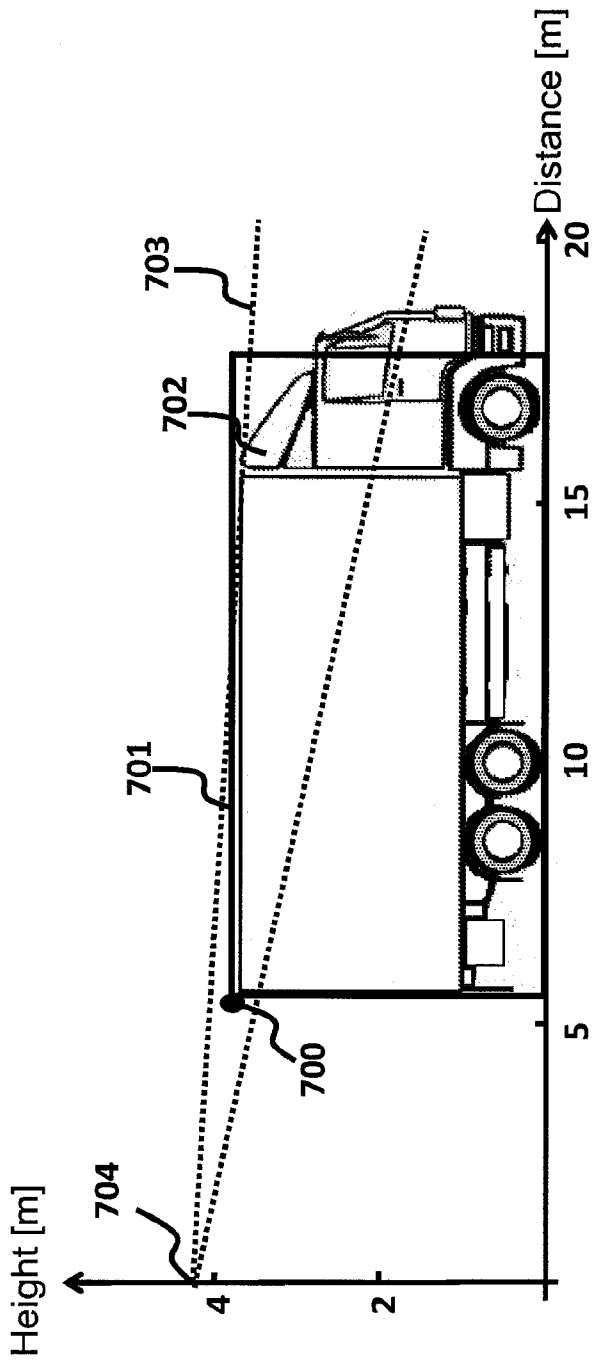


FIG. 28B

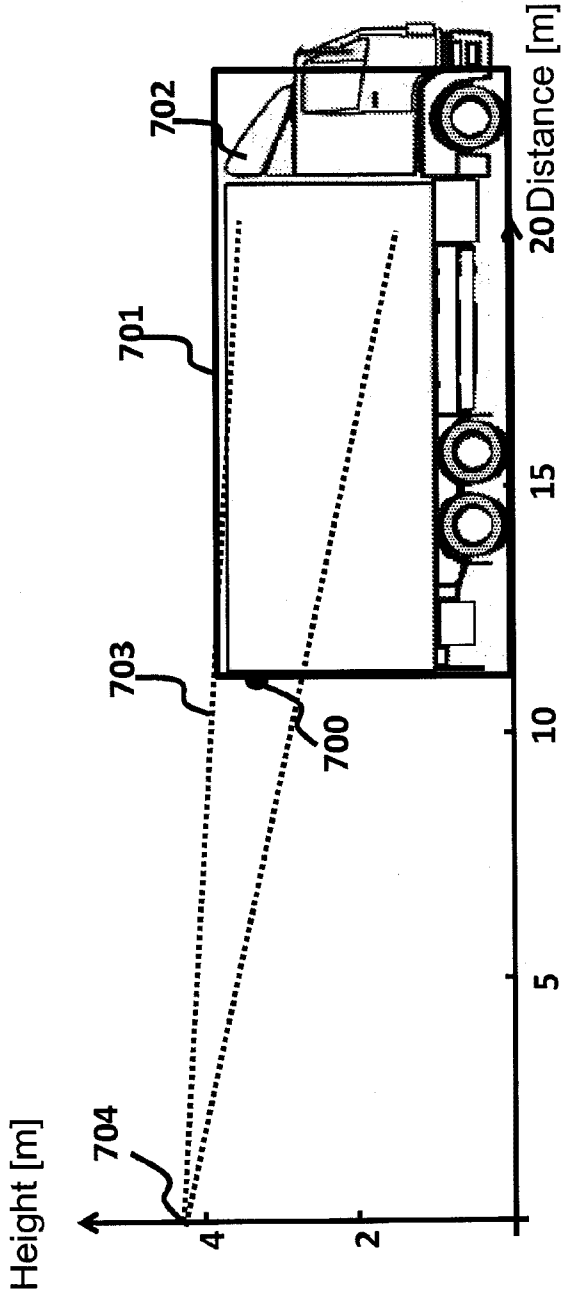


FIG. 28C

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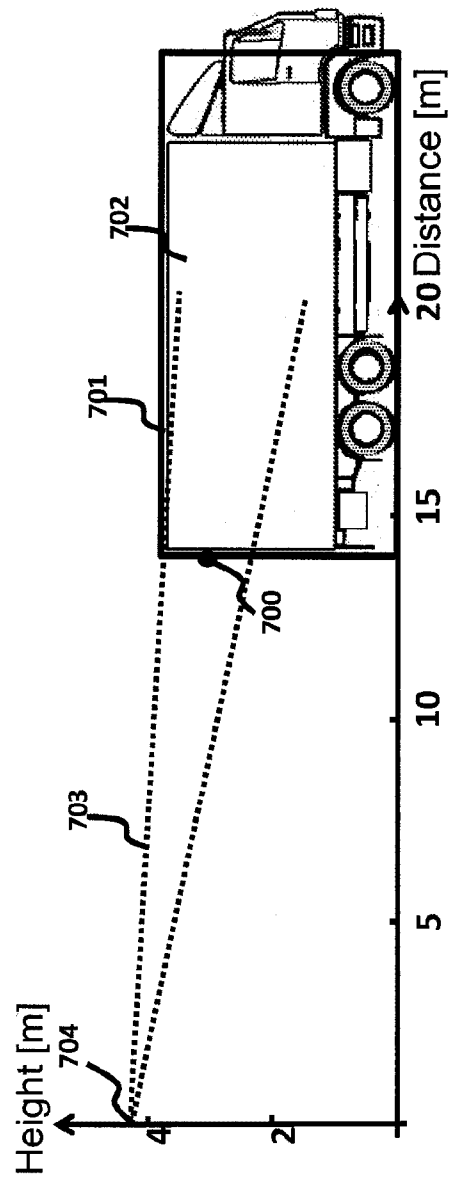
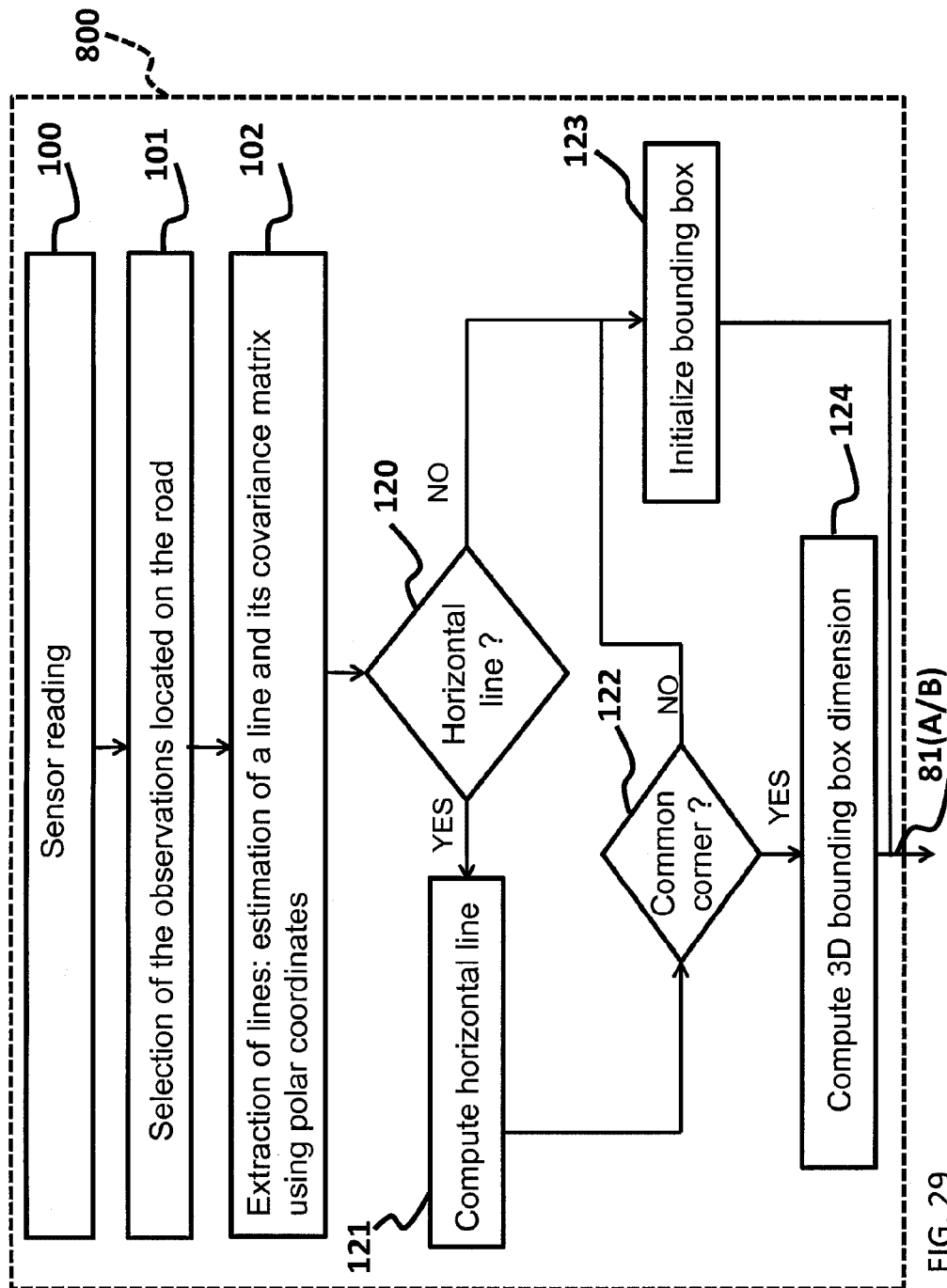


FIG. 28D

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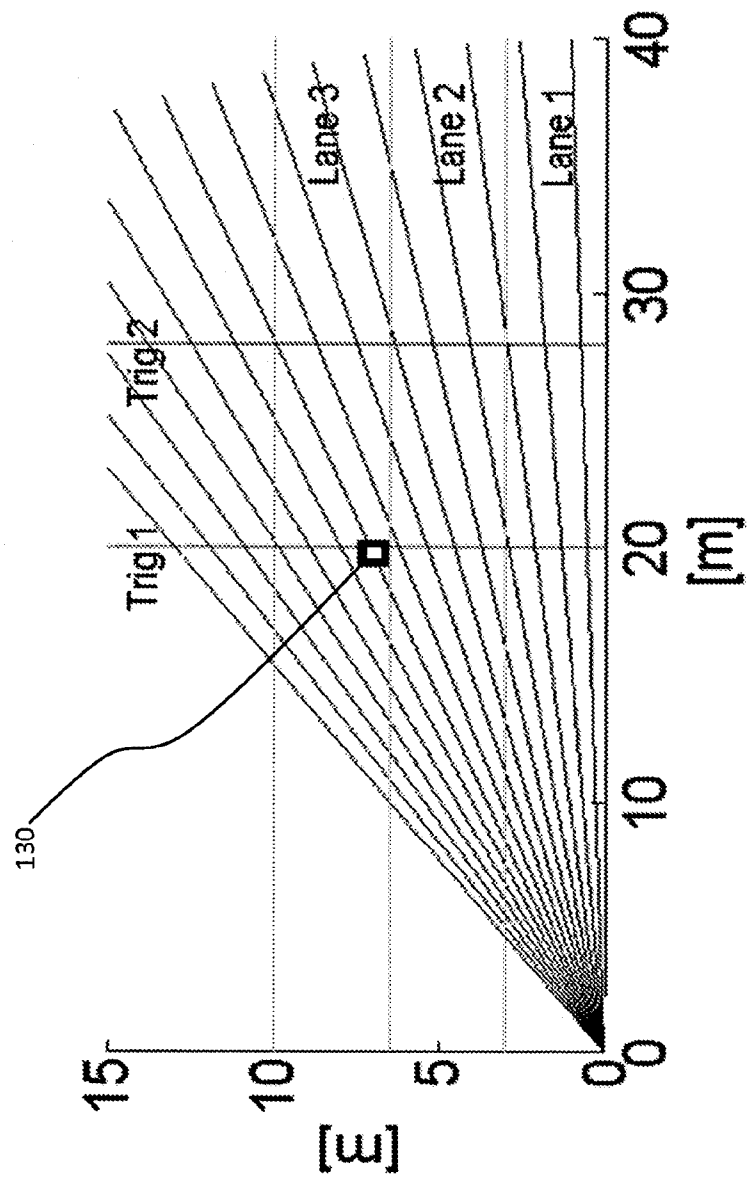


FIG. 30

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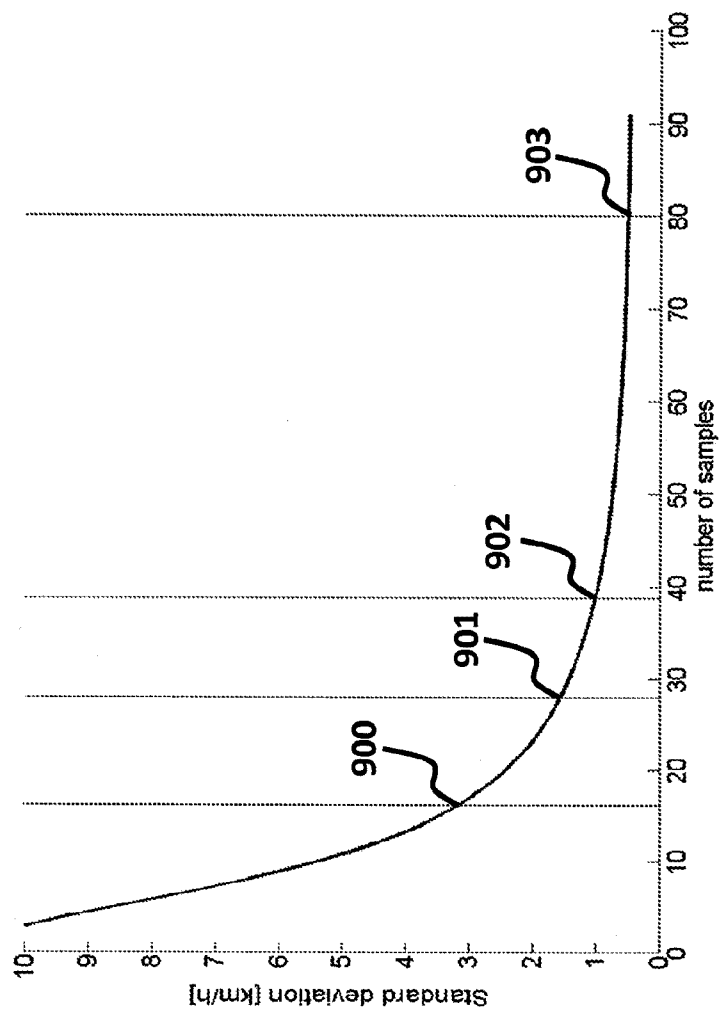


FIG. 31

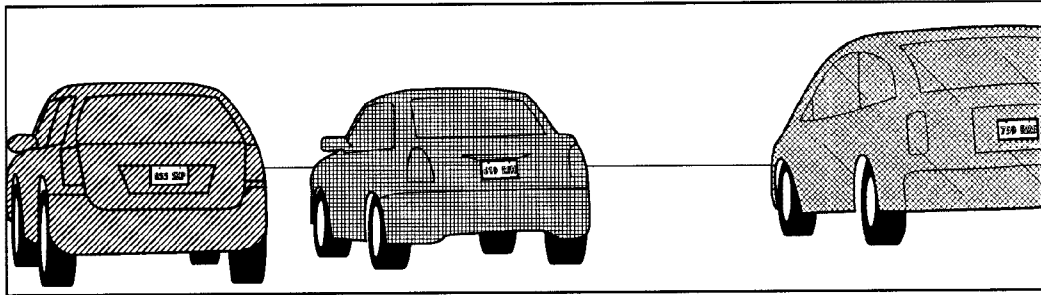


FIG. 32A



FIG. 32B



FIG. 32C



FIG. 32D

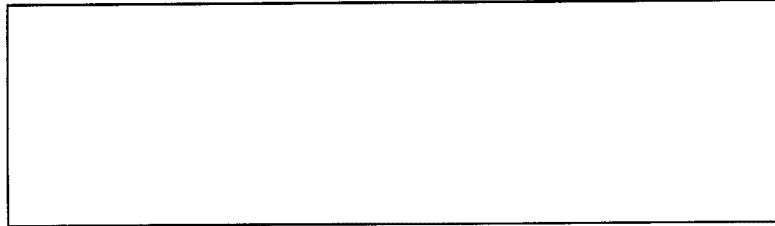


FIG. 33A

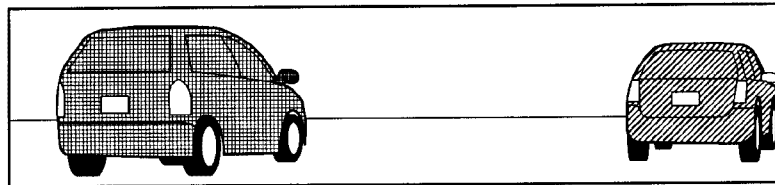


FIG. 33B

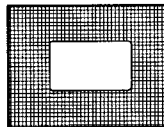


FIG. 33C

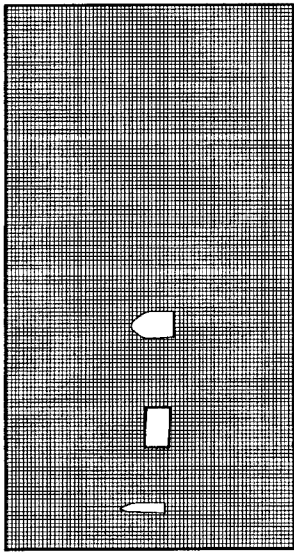


FIG. 34A

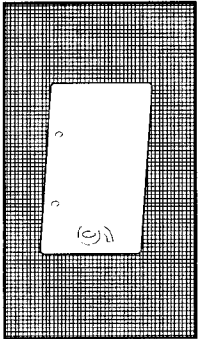


FIG. 34B

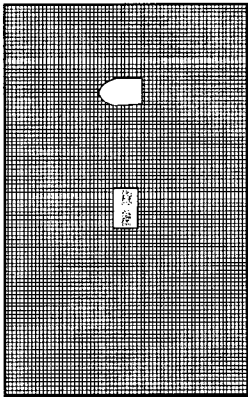


FIG. 34C

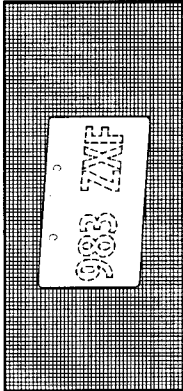


FIG. 34D

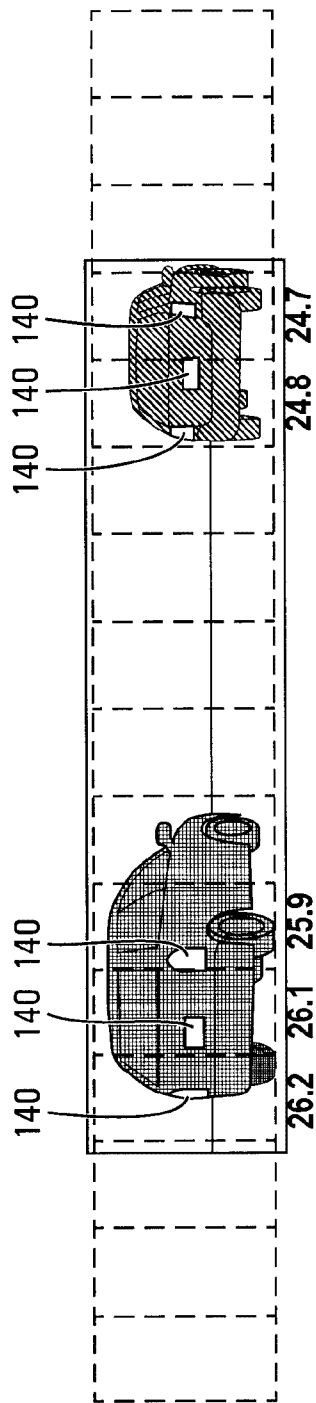
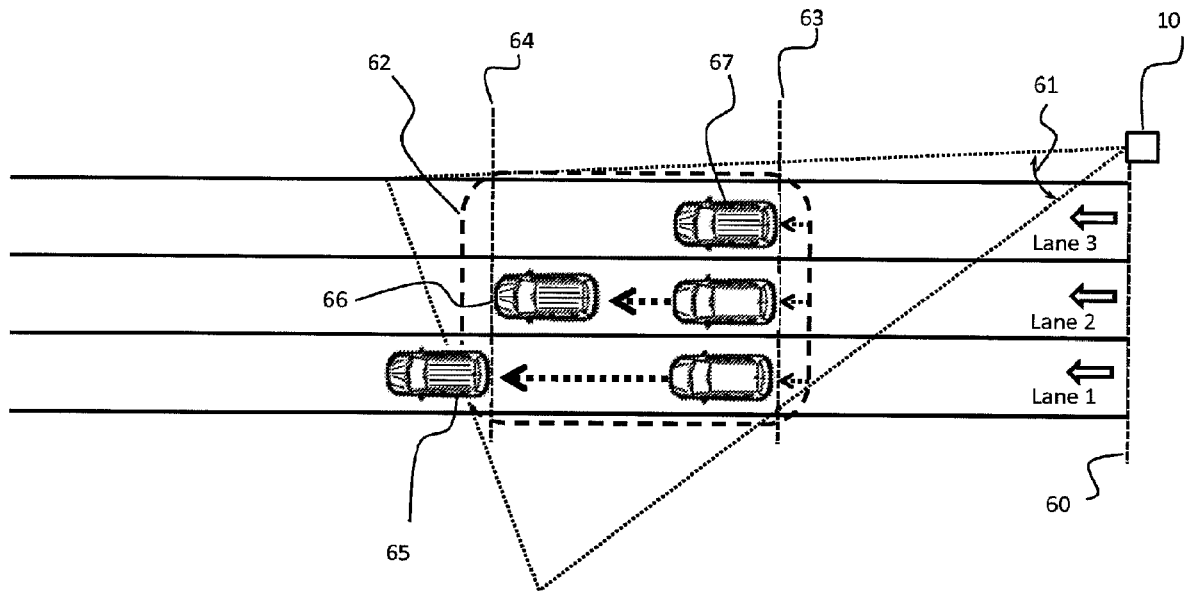


FIG. 35



Top view