



- (51) **International Patent Classification:** Not classified
- (21) **International Application Number:**
PCT/US2011/059511
- (22) **International Filing Date:**
7 November 2011 (07.11.2011)
- (25) **Filing Language:** English
- (26) **Publication Language:** English
- (30) **Priority Data:**
61/489,830 25 May 2011 (25.05.2011) US
13/174,290 30 June 2011 (30.06.2011) US
- (71) **Applicant** (*for all designated States except US*): **UNITED PARCEL SERVICE OF AMERICA, INC.** [US/US]; 55 Glenlake Parkway, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30328 (US).
- (72) **Inventors:** **MARCUS, Stuart**; 175 Marsh Glen Point, Atlanta, GA 30328 (US). **BOWLING, Russell**; 2960 Creek-tree Lane, Cumming, GA 30041 (US). **SLAYTON, John**; 4078 Ivey Gate, Atlanta, GA 30341 (US). **CAMPBELL, Randy**; 3221 Eagle Watch Drive, Woodstock, GA 30189 (US).
- (74) **Agents:** **BALTICH, Dane A.** et al.; Alston & Bird LLP, Bank Of America Plaza, 101 South Tryon Street, Suite 4000, Charlotte, NC 28280-4000 (US).
- (81) **Designated States** (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available*): AE, AG, AL, AM,

AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

- (84) **Designated States** (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available*): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Declarations under Rule 4.17:

- *as to applicant's entitlement to apply for and be granted a patent (Rule 4.17(ii))*

Published:

- *without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report (Rule 48.2(g))*

(54) **Title:** CUSTOMER CONTROLLED MANAGEMENT OF SHIPMENTS

(57) **Abstract:** Systems, methods, apparatus, and computer program products are provided for customer controlled management of shipments. For example, in various embodiments, a customer can provide information prior to a first delivery attempt of an item by a carrier to receive messages regarding shipment of the item and to have the item delivered in accordance with the provided information.



CUSTOMER CONTROLLED MANAGEMENT OF SHIPMENTS

BACKGROUND

Shipping customers are increasing their expectations regarding various delivery services. Thus, new concepts are needed to enhance customer experience
5 and loyalty by improving the delivery experience.

BRIEF SUMMARY

In general, embodiments of the present invention provide systems, methods, apparatus, and computer program products for customer controlled
10 management of shipments.

In accordance with one aspect, a method for providing information regarding the delivery of at least one item to a customer is provided. In one embodiment, the method comprises storing communication preferences for providing information to a customer regarding an item to be delivered to the
15 customer, wherein the communication preferences (1) identify at least one communication format and at least one corresponding electronic destination address to be used in providing the information to the customer, and (2) define a time period prior to a first delivery attempt of the item in which a message providing the information is to be transmitted to the at least one corresponding
20 electronic destination address; automatically generating a message providing the information regarding the item to be delivered to the customer; and automatically transmitting the message to the at least one corresponding electronic destination address within the defined time period prior to the first delivery attempt of the item to the customer.

25 In accordance with another aspect, a computer program product for providing information regarding the delivery of at least one item to a customer is provided. The computer program product may comprise at least one computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable program code portions stored therein, the computer-readable program code portions comprising executable
30 portions configured to store communication preferences for providing information to a customer regarding an item to be delivered to the customer, wherein the communication preferences (1) identify at least one communication format and at least one corresponding electronic destination address to be used in providing the

information to the customer, and (2) define a time period prior to a first delivery attempt of the item in which a message providing the information is to be transmitted to the at least one corresponding electronic destination address; automatically generate a message providing the information regarding the item to
5 be delivered to the customer; and automatically transmit the message to the at least one corresponding electronic destination address within the defined time period prior to the first delivery attempt of the item to the customer.

In accordance with yet another aspect, an apparatus comprising at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code is provided.
10 In one embodiment, the at least one memory and the computer program code may be configured to, with the processor, cause the apparatus to at least store communication preferences for providing information to a customer regarding an item to be delivered to the customer, wherein the communication preferences (1) identify at least one communication format and at least one corresponding
15 electronic destination address to be used in providing the information to the customer, and (2) define a time period prior to a first delivery attempt of the item in which a message providing the information is to be transmitted to the at least one corresponding electronic destination address; automatically generate a message providing the information regarding the item to be delivered to the
20 customer; and automatically transmit the message to the at least one corresponding electronic destination address within the defined time period prior to the first delivery attempt of the item to the customer.

In accordance with another aspect, a method for receiving authorization to deliver at least one item is provided. In one embodiment, the method comprises
25 receiving shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier, wherein the shipping data indicates that an in-person signature from the customer is requested for delivery of the item; and receiving authorization from the customer to deliver the item without an in-person signature from the customer, wherein the authorization is received (1) after shipment of the item has begun and
30 (2) prior to a first delivery attempt of the item.

In accordance with still another aspect, a computer program product for receiving authorization to deliver at least one item is provided. The computer program product may comprise at least one computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable program code portions stored therein, the computer-

readable program code portions comprising executable portions configured to receive shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier, wherein the shipping data indicates that an in-person signature from the customer is requested for delivery of the item; and receive authorization from the customer to deliver the item without an in-person signature from the customer, wherein the authorization is received (1) after shipment of the item has begun and (2) prior to a first delivery attempt of the item.

In accordance with yet another aspect, an apparatus comprising at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code is provided.

10 In one embodiment, the at least one memory and the computer program code may be configured to, with the processor, cause the apparatus to at least receive shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier, wherein the shipping data indicates that an in-person signature from the customer is requested for delivery of the item; and receive authorization from the customer to deliver the item without an in-person signature from the customer, wherein the authorization is received (1) after shipment of the item has begun and (2) prior to a first delivery attempt of the item.

In accordance with another aspect, a method for identifying a customer profile corresponding to at least one item to be delivered by a carrier is provided.

20 In one embodiment, the method comprises storing a plurality of customer profiles corresponding respectively to a plurality of customers, wherein each customer profile comprises at least one delivery address; receiving shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered by a carrier, wherein the shipping data comprises a delivery address for the item; identifying a delivery address of a first customer profile from the plurality of customer profiles that is substantially similar to the delivery address for the item; and after identifying the delivery address of the first customer profile from the plurality of customer profiles that is substantially similar to the delivery address for the item, associating the shipping data corresponding to the item with the first customer profile.

30 In accordance with yet another aspect, a computer program product for identifying a customer profile corresponding to at least one item to be delivered by a carrier is provided. The computer program product may comprise at least one computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable program code portions stored therein, the computer-readable program code portions comprising

executable portions configured to store a plurality of customer profiles corresponding respectively to a plurality of customers, wherein each customer profile comprises at least one delivery address; receive shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered by a carrier, wherein the shipping data
5 comprises a delivery address for the item; identify a delivery address of a first customer profile from the plurality of customer profiles that is substantially similar to the delivery address for the item; and after identifying the delivery address of the first customer profile from the plurality of customer profiles that is substantially similar to the delivery address for the item, associate the shipping
10 data corresponding to the item with the first customer profile.

In accordance with another aspect, an apparatus comprising at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code is provided. In one embodiment, the at least one memory and the computer program code may be configured to, with the processor, cause the apparatus to at least store a plurality
15 of customer profiles corresponding respectively to a plurality of customers, wherein each customer profile comprises at least one delivery address; receive shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered by a carrier, wherein the shipping data comprises a delivery address for the item; identify a delivery address of a first customer profile from the plurality of customer profiles that is
20 substantially similar to the delivery address for the item; and after identifying the delivery address of the first customer profile from the plurality of customer profiles that is substantially similar to the delivery address for the item, associate the shipping data corresponding to the item with the first customer profile.

In accordance with another aspect, a method for changing delivery options
25 for at least one item to be delivered by a carrier is provided. In one embodiment, the method comprises storing shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier; causing display of at least a portion of the shipping data corresponding to the item to be delivered to the customer; receiving a request to change at least one delivery option for the item, wherein (1) the at least
30 one delivery option is selected from the group consisting of an expected delivery date, a delivery location, and a delivery time, and (2) the request to change the at least one delivery option is received prior to a first delivery attempt of the item; accepting the request to change the at least one delivery option for the item; and updating the shipping data to reflect acceptance of the request to change the at least

one delivery option, wherein the item is subsequently delivered in accordance with the at least one delivery option.

In accordance with yet another aspect, a computer program product for changing delivery options for at least one item to be delivered by a carrier is provided. The computer program product may comprise at least one computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable program code portions stored therein, the computer-readable program code portions comprising executable portions configured to store shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier; cause display of at least a portion of the shipping data corresponding to the item to be delivered to the customer; receive a request to change at least one delivery option for the item, wherein (1) the at least one delivery option is selected from the group consisting of an expected delivery date, a delivery location, and a delivery time, and (2) the request to change the at least one delivery option is received prior to a first delivery attempt of the item; accept the request to change the at least one delivery option for the item; and update the shipping data to reflect acceptance of the request to change the at least one delivery option, wherein the item is subsequently delivered in accordance with the at least one delivery option.

In accordance with yet another aspect, an apparatus comprising at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code is provided. In one embodiment, the at least one memory and the computer program code may be configured to, with the processor, cause the apparatus to at least store shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier; cause display of at least a portion of the shipping data corresponding to the item to be delivered to the customer; receive a request to change at least one delivery option for the item, wherein (1) the at least one delivery option is selected from the group consisting of an expected delivery date, a delivery location, and a delivery time, and (2) the request to change the at least one delivery option is received prior to a first delivery attempt of the item; accept the request to change the at least one delivery option for the item; and update the shipping data to reflect acceptance of the request to change the at least one delivery option, wherein the item is subsequently delivered in accordance with the at least one delivery option.

In accordance with still another aspect, a method for providing at least one instruction for delivering at least one item to a customer by a carrier is provided. In one embodiment, the method comprises storing shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier; receiving at least one instruction for delivering the item, wherein the at least one instruction (1) was provided by the customer and (2) is received prior to a first delivery attempt of the item; updating the shipping data to reflect the at least one instruction; and transmitting at least a portion of the updated shipping data corresponding to the item, the updated shipping data comprising the at least one instruction; and receiving at least a portion of the updated shipping data corresponding to the item, wherein (1) the mobile station is operated by a delivery person of the carrier, and (2) the item is subsequently delivered by the delivery person in accordance with the at least one instruction.

In accordance with yet another aspect, a system for providing at least one instruction for delivering at least one item to a customer is provided. The system may comprise (1) a carrier system comprising one or more processors and one or more memory storage areas and (2) a mobile station comprising one or more processors and one or more memory storage areas. In one embodiment, the carrier system may be configured to store shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier, receive at least one instruction for delivering the item, wherein the at least one instruction (1) was provided by the customer and (2) is received prior to a first delivery attempt of the item, update the shipping data to reflect the at least one instruction, and transmit at least a portion of the updated shipping data corresponding to the item, the updated shipping data comprising the at least one instruction. The mobile station may be configured to receive at least a portion of the updated shipping data corresponding to the item, and wherein (1) the mobile station is operated by a delivery person of the carrier, and (2) the item is subsequently delivered by the delivery person in accordance with the at least one instruction.

30

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING(S)

Having thus described the invention in general terms, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings, which are not necessarily drawn to scale, and wherein:

Fig. 1 is an overview of a system that can be used to practice embodiments of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is an exemplary schematic diagram of a carrier system according to one embodiment of the present invention.

5 Fig. 3 is an exemplary schematic diagram of a mobile station according to one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 4 is a flowchart illustrating operations and processes that can be used in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention.

10 Figs. 5-26 show exemplary input and output of various embodiments of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Various embodiments of the present invention now will be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which some, but
15 not all embodiments of the inventions are shown. Indeed, these inventions may be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will satisfy applicable legal requirements. The term “or” is used herein in both the alternative and conjunctive sense, unless otherwise indicated. The terms
20 “illustrative” and “exemplary” are used to be examples with no indication of quality level. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout.

I. Methods, Apparatus, Systems, and Computer Program Products

As should be appreciated, various embodiments may be implemented in
25 various ways, including as methods, apparatus, systems, or computer program products. Accordingly, various embodiments may take the form of an entirely hardware embodiment or an embodiment in which a processor is programmed to perform certain steps. Furthermore, various implementations may take the form of a computer program product on a computer-readable storage medium having
30 computer-readable program instructions embodied in the storage medium. Any suitable computer-readable storage medium may be utilized including hard disks, CD-ROMs, optical storage devices, or magnetic storage devices.

Various embodiments are described below with reference to block diagrams and flowchart illustrations of methods, apparatus, systems, and computer program products. It should be understood that each block of the block diagrams and flowchart illustrations, respectively, may be implemented in part by computer program instructions, e.g., as logical steps or operations executing on a processor in a computing system. These computer program instructions may be loaded onto a computer, such as a special purpose computer or other programmable data processing apparatus to produce a specifically-configured machine, such that the instructions which execute on the computer or other programmable data processing apparatus implement the functions specified in the flowchart block or blocks.

These computer program instructions may also be stored in a computer-readable memory that can direct a computer or other programmable data processing apparatus to function in a particular manner, such that the instructions stored in the computer-readable memory produce an article of manufacture including computer-readable instructions for implementing the functionality specified in the flowchart block or blocks. The computer program instructions may also be loaded onto a computer or other programmable data processing apparatus to cause a series of operational steps to be performed on the computer or other programmable apparatus to produce a computer-implemented process such that the instructions that execute on the computer or other programmable apparatus provide operations for implementing the functions specified in the flowchart block or blocks.

Accordingly, blocks of the block diagrams and flowchart illustrations support various combinations for performing the specified functions, combinations of operations for performing the specified functions, and program instructions for performing the specified functions. It should also be understood that each block of the block diagrams and flowchart illustrations, and combinations of blocks in the block diagrams and flowchart illustrations, can be implemented by special purpose hardware-based computer systems that perform the specified functions or operations, or combinations of special purpose hardware and computer instructions.

II. Exemplary System Architecture

Fig. 1 provides an illustration of a system that can be used in conjunction with various embodiments of the present invention. As shown in Fig. 1, the system may include one or more carrier systems **100**, one or more mobile stations **105**, one or more customer computing devices **110**, and one or more networks **115**. Each of the components of the system may be in electronic communication with, for example, one another over the same or different wireless or wired networks including, for example, a wired or wireless Personal Area Network (PAN), Local Area Network (LAN), Metropolitan Area Network (MAN), Wide Area Network (WAN), or the like. Additionally, while Fig. 1 illustrates certain communication system entities as separate, standalone entities, the various embodiments are not limited to this particular architecture.

1. Exemplary Carrier System

Fig. 2 provides an exemplary schematic of a carrier system **100** according to one embodiment of the present invention. In general, the term “system” may refer to, for example, one or more computers, computing devices, mobile phones, desktops, notebooks or laptops, distributed systems, servers, blades, gateways, switches, processing devices, or combination of processing devices adapted to perform the functions described herein. However, the carrier system **100** may also comprise various other systems, such as an Address Matching System (AMS), an Internet Membership System (IMS), a Customer Profile System (CPS), a Package Center Information System (PCIS), a Customized Pickup and Delivery System (CPAD), a Web Content Management System (WCMS), a Notification Email System (NES), a Fraud Prevention System (FPS), and a variety of other systems and their corresponding components.

As will be understood from Fig. 1, in one embodiment, the carrier system **100** includes one or more processor **205** that communicates with other elements within the carrier system **100** via a system interface or bus **261**. The processor **205** may be embodied in a number of different ways. For example, the processor **205** may be embodied as a processing element, processing circuitry, a coprocessor, a controller or various other processing devices including integrated circuits such as, for example, an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a field programmable gate array (FPGA), a hardware accelerator, or the like.

In an exemplary embodiment, the processor **205** may be configured to execute instructions stored in memory or otherwise accessible to the processor **205**. As such, whether configured by hardware or software methods, or by a combination thereof, the processor **205** may represent an entity capable of performing operations according to embodiments of the present invention when configured accordingly. A display device/input device **264** for receiving and displaying data may also be included in the carrier system **100**. This display device/input device **264** may be, for example, a keyboard or pointing device that is used in combination with a monitor. The carrier system **100** may further include transitory and non-transitory memory **263**, which may include both random access memory (RAM) **267** and read only memory (ROM) **265**. The carrier system's ROM **265** may be used to store a basic input/output system (BIOS) **226** containing the basic routines that help to transfer information to the different elements within the carrier system **100**.

In addition, in one embodiment, the carrier system **100** may include at least one storage device **268**, such as a hard disk drive, a CD drive, and/or an optical disk drive for storing information on various computer-readable media. The storage device(s) **268** and its associated computer-readable media may provide nonvolatile storage. The computer-readable media described above could be replaced by any other type of computer-readable media, such as embedded or removable multimedia memory cards (MMCs), secure digital (SD) memory cards, Memory Sticks, electrically erasable programmable read-only memory (EEPROM), flash memory, hard disk, or the like. Additionally, each of these storage devices **268** may be connected to the system bus **261** by an appropriate interface.

Furthermore, a number of executable instructions, applications, program modules, and/or the like may be stored by the various storage devices **268** and/or within RAM **267**. Such executable instructions, applications, program modules, and/or the like may include an operating system **280**, a registration module **270**, an alert module **260**, a delivery options module **250**, and identification module **245**. As discussed in more detail below, these executable instructions, applications, program modules, and/or the like may control certain aspects of the operation of the carrier system **100** with the assistance of the processor **205** and operating system **280**—although their functionality need not be modularized. In addition to

the program modules, the carrier system **100** may store or be in communication with one or more databases, such as database **240**.

Also located within the carrier system **100**, in one embodiment, is a network interface **274** for interfacing with various computing entities (e.g., with one or more mobile stations **105**). For example, the carrier system **100** may be able to receive data and/or messages from and transmit data and/or messages to the mobile station **105**. This communication may be via the same or different wired or wireless networks (or a combination of wired and wireless networks). For instance, the communication may be executed using a wired data transmission protocol, such as fiber distributed data interface (FDDI), digital subscriber line (DSL), Ethernet, asynchronous transfer mode (ATM), frame relay, data over cable service interface specification (DOCSIS), or any other wired transmission protocol. Similarly, the carrier system **100** may be configured to communicate via wireless external communication networks using any of a variety of protocols, such as 802.11, general packet radio service (GPRS), Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (UMTS), Code Division Multiple Access 2000 (CDMA2000), CDMA2000 1X (1xRTT), Wideband Code Division Multiple Access (WCDMA), Time Division-Synchronous Code Division Multiple Access (TD-SCDMA), Long Term Evolution (LTE), Evolved Universal Terrestrial Radio Access Network (E-UTRAN), Evolution-Data Optimized (EVDO), High Speed Packet Access (HSPA), High-Speed Downlink Packet Access (HSDPA), IEEE 802.11 (Wi-Fi), 802.16 (WiMAX), ultra wideband (UWB), infrared (IR) protocols, BluetoothTM protocols, wireless universal serial bus (USB) protocols, and/or any other wireless protocol.

It will be appreciated that one or more of the carrier system's **100** components may be located remotely from other carrier system **100** components. Furthermore, one or more of the components may be combined and additional components performing functions described herein may be included in the carrier system **100**.

2. Exemplary Mobile Station

Fig. 3 provides an illustrative schematic representative of a mobile station **105** that can be used in conjunction with the embodiments of the present invention. Mobile stations **105** can be operated by various parties, including carrier personnel

(e.g., delivery drivers, sorters, and/or the like). As shown in Fig. 3, the mobile station **105** can include an antenna **312**, a transmitter **304** (e.g., radio), a receiver **306** (e.g., radio), and a processing device **308** (e.g., a processor, controller, and/or the like) that provides signals to and receives signals from the transmitter **304** and receiver **306**, respectively.

The signals provided to and received from the transmitter **304** and the receiver **306**, respectively, may include signaling information in accordance with an air interface standard of applicable wireless systems. In this regard, the mobile station **105** may be capable of operating with one or more air interface standards, communication protocols, modulation types, and access types. More particularly, the mobile station **105** may operate in accordance with any of a number of wireless communication standards and protocols, such as those described above with regard to the carrier system **100**. In a particular embodiment, the mobile station **105** may operate in accordance with multiple wireless communication standards and protocols (e.g., using a Gobi radio), such as GSM, UMTS, 1xRTT, and EVDO, and use multiple wireless carriers. To do so, the mobile station **105** may include integrated mobile reception diversity and integrated power management. Such a configuration can provide for global connectivity to the user.

Via these communication standards and protocols, the mobile station **105** can communicate with various other entities using concepts such as Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD), Short Message Service (SMS), Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS), Dual-Tone Multi-Frequency Signaling (DTMF), and/or Subscriber Identity Module Dialer (SIM dialer). The mobile station **105** can also download changes, add-ons, and updates, for instance, to its firmware, software (e.g., including executable instructions, applications, program modules), and operating system.

According to one embodiment, the mobile station **105** may include a location determining device and/or functionality. For example, the mobile station **105** may include a Global Positioning System (GPS) module adapted to acquire, for example, latitude, longitude, altitude, geocode, course, and/or speed data. In one embodiment, the GPS module acquires data, sometimes known as ephemeris data, by identifying the number of satellites in view and the relative positions of those satellites.

The mobile station **105** may also comprise a user interface (that can include a display **316** coupled to a processing device **308**) and/or a user input interface (coupled to the processing device **308**). The user input interface can comprise any of a number of devices allowing the mobile station **105** to receive data, such as a keypad **318**, a touch display, voice or motion interfaces, or other input device. In embodiments including a keypad **318**, the keypad **318** can include the conventional numeric (0-9) and related keys (#, *), and other keys used for operating the mobile station **105** and may include a full set of alphabetic keys or set of keys that may be activated to provide a full set of alphanumeric keys. In addition to providing input, the user input interface can be used, for example, to activate or deactivate certain functions, such as screen savers and/or sleep modes.

The mobile station **105** can also include volatile memory **322** and/or non-volatile memory **324**, which can be embedded and/or may be removable. For example, the non-volatile memory may be embedded or removable MMCs, secure digital SD memory cards, Memory Sticks, EEPROM, flash memory, hard disk, or the like. The memory can store any of a number of pieces or amount of information and data used by the mobile station **105** to implement the functions of the mobile station **105**. The memory can also store content, such as computer program code for an application and/or other computer programs.

20

3. Exemplary Customer Computing Device

The customer computing devices **110** may each include one or more components that are functionally similar to those of the carrier system **100**. For example, in one embodiment, each of the customer computing devices may include: (1) a processor that communicates with other elements via a system interface or bus; (2) a display device/input device; (3) transitory and non-transitory memory; and (4) a communications interface. These architectures are provided for exemplary purposes only and are not limiting to the various embodiments. The term “computing device” is used generically to refer to any computer, computing device, desktop, notebook or laptop, distributed system, carrier system, gateway, switch, or other processing device adapted to perform the functions described herein.

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III. Exemplary System Operation

Reference will now be made to Figs. 4-26. Fig. 4 is a flowchart illustrating operations and processes that may be performed for customer controlled management of shipments. Figs. 5-26 show exemplary input and output for customer controlled management of shipments.

1. Registration

In one embodiment, as indicated in Block **400** of Fig. 4, the process may begin with the enrollment/registration of one or more customers for a customer delivery program. A customer may be an individual, a family, a company, an organization, an entity, a department within an organization, a representative of an organization and/or person, and/or the like. To register, a customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may access a webpage or portal of a carrier, such as United Parcel Service of America, Inc. (UPS). For instance, as shown in Figs. 5 and 6, the carrier system **100** may transmit a webpage that provides the customer with an option of logging into a customer account or enrolling/registering for a customer delivery program.

In one embodiment, as part of the enrollment/registration process, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may be requested to provide biographic and/or geographic information by the carrier system **100** (e.g., via the registration module **270**). For instance, the customer may provide the customer's name, such as a first name, a last name, a company name, an entity name, and/or an organization name. The customer may also provide any aliases associated with the customer. For instance, if the customer were an individual named Joseph Brown, the customer may provide Joe Brown or Joey Brown as aliases. The customer may also provide one or more addresses associated with the customer (e.g., street address, city, state, postal code, and/or country). For instance, Joseph Brown's address may be 105 Main Street, Atlanta, Georgia 30309, USA. As indicated, the customer may have multiple addresses associated with the account. For instance, Joseph Brown may have a home address and a business address associated with his account. Similarly, an organization may have multiple locations (e.g., addresses) associated with its account. When multiple addresses are provided, the customer may indicate which address should be used as the primary address. As will be recognized, the customer

may provide other biographic and/or geographic information to adapt to various needs and circumstances.

In one embodiment, once the carrier system **100** receives the necessary biographic and/or geographic information from the customer, the carrier system **100** may perform one or more validation operations. For example, the carrier system **100** may determine whether the primary address (and/or other addresses) in the specified country or postal code is eligible for a customer delivery program. The carrier system **100** may also determine whether the primary address (and/or other addresses) is valid, e.g., by passing the primary address through one or more address cleansing or standardization systems. The carrier system **100** may perform a variety of fraud prevention measures as well, such as determining whether the customer or one of the customer's addresses has been "blacklisted" from customer delivery programs. As will be recognized, a variety of other approaches and techniques can be used to adapt to various needs and circumstances.

In one embodiment, the carrier system **100** may create a customer profile for the customer via the enrollment/registration process. Accordingly, the carrier system **100** may create and store various customer profiles (e.g., via database **240**). In addition to at least the information described above, a customer profile may include one or more corresponding usernames and passwords. Additionally, the carrier system **100** may also create and store a customer identifier in association with the customer profile. In one embodiment, a customer identifier may be used to uniquely identify a customer profile. In another embodiment, a customer identifier may be used to uniquely identify a given address associated with a customer profile. In such an embodiment, if a customer profile is associated with four addresses, the carrier system **100** may create and store four customer identifiers in association with the customer profile. The customer identifier may also be stored in association with shipping data for an item to associate the item (and its shipping data) with the (a) correct customer (e.g., customer profile) and/or (b) correct address for a customer.

In one embodiment, a customer profile may correspond to one or more customer delivery programs. For instance, a customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may subscribe to a specific customer delivery program. In one embodiment, there may be several customer delivery programs from which to choose, such as a free customer

delivery program and a premium customer delivery program. Each customer delivery program may have different benefits, such as those shown in Fig. 7 and Table 1 below.

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Table 1

Membership Options		
Services	Member (Free Enrollment)	Premium Member (\$49 Annual Subscription)
Delivery Alerts	1 - Unlimited	1 - Unlimited
Approximate Delivery Time	1 - Unlimited	1 - Unlimited
Delivery Options	1 - Unlimited	1 - Unlimited
Authorize Shipment Release	1 - Unlimited	1 - Unlimited
Will Call (hold for pickup at a UPS facility)	1 - Unlimited	1 - Unlimited
Printable Information	1 - Unlimited	1 - Unlimited
Deliver to a Retail Location (UPS Store)	1 - \$5.00 Fee	1 - Unlimited
Reschedule Delivery	1 - \$5.00 Fee	1 - Unlimited
Deliver to Another Address	1 - \$5.00 Fee	1 - Unlimited
"Leave At" Instructions	X	1 - Unlimited
Leave With Neighbor	X	1 - Unlimited
Confirmed Delivery Window	X	1 - \$5.00 Additional Fee
Delivery Planner	X	1

As shown in Table 1 above and in Fig. 7 for illustrative purposes, the free customer delivery program and the premium customer delivery program may have different benefits. For example, the free customer delivery program may allow customers to have access to certain features, e.g., delivery alerts, approximate delivery times, change delivery options, electronically authorize the release of an item, and/or route items to will call. Similarly, the premium customer delivery program (e.g., requiring a fee) may allow customers to have access to certain features in addition to those provided via the free customer delivery program, e.g., route items to other retail locations, reschedule deliveries, request that items be delivered to another address, and/or provide instructions for delivery. As will be recognized, these features are provided for illustrative purposes and are not limiting to embodiments of the present invention. Moreover, a variety of other approaches and techniques can be used to adapt to various needs and circumstances.

In one embodiment, once a customer profile has been created by the carrier system **100**, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) can provide various preferences associated with the customer delivery program to the carrier system **100** via a webpage (Block **405** of Fig. 4), for example. For instance, as shown in Figs. 8 and 9, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) can provide a variety of preferences, such communication preferences, delivery preferences, delivery options, and/or delivery instructions.

10 2. Customer and Item Matching

In one embodiment, once a customer profile has been created by the carrier system **100**, one or more items to be delivered to the customer by the carrier may need to be identified. By identifying items to be delivered to the customer, the carrier system **100** can provide the customer with access to various features of a customer delivery program for the item. As will be recognized, an item may be a parcel or group of parcels, a package or group of packages, scrap metal banded together, a vehicle part, a box, a crate, a drum, a box strapped to a pallet, and/or the like. In one embodiment, each item may include an item/shipment identifier, such as a barcode, a MaxiCode, electronic representation, and/or text. The item/shipment identifier (e.g., 123456789) may be used by the carrier to identify and track the item as it moves through the carrier's transportation network. Such item/shipment identifiers can be affixed to items by, for example, using a sticker (e.g., label) with the item/shipment identifier printed thereon (in human and/or machine readable form) or an RFID tag with the item/shipment identifier stored therein.

In one embodiment, the carrier system **100** may store an item/shipment identifier in association with shipping data for the item. The shipping data may include information about the item, such as delivery service level. For example, the delivery service level may be Next Day Air, Next Day Air Early AM, Next Day Air Saver, 2nd Day Air, 2nd Day Air Early AM, 3 Day Select, and/or Ground. The shipping data may include information about the party shipping the item (e.g., consignor), such as the party's address, the party's phone number, the party's return address, the party's name, and/or the like. The shipping data may also include information about the customer to whom the item is to be delivered (e.g.,

consignee), such as the customer's address (e.g., delivery location), the customer's phone number, the customer's name, and/or the like.

In one embodiment, the shipping data may include information about the item itself and any tracking information. The tracking information may reflect the item's movement in the carrier's transportation network, including expected
5 delivery date and time. To reflect the item's movement, an item/shipment identifier associated with the item may be scanned or otherwise electronically read at various points as the item is transported through the carrier's transportation network. For example, the item/shipment identifier may be automatically scanned by a barcode
10 or MaxiCode device, an RFID interrogator, by a camera controller, or by a carrier employee using a handheld device (e.g., mobile station **105**). In one embodiment, each time the item/shipment identifier is scanned or read, an appropriate device can transmit the item/shipment identifier and other appropriate information (e.g., location and time of the scan or reading) to the carrier system **100**. The carrier
15 system **100** can then receive and use the information to track the item as it is transported through the carrier's transportation network and update the shipping data accordingly.

In one embodiment, the carrier system **100** can use the shipping data to identify one or more customer profiles corresponding to the item (e.g., via the
20 identification module **245**). As described, each customer profile may include one or more addresses associated with the customer. Thus, when the carrier system **100** receives shipping data (or a portion of shipping data) for an item (Block **410** of Fig. 4), the carrier system **100** can determine whether the item corresponds to any customers enrolled/registered for a customer delivery program. In particular, the
25 carrier system **100** can use the delivery address of the intended recipient (e.g., consignee or customer) in the shipping data for an item to identify any customer profiles with a substantially similar delivery address (Block **415** of Fig. 4). For example, if the shipping data of an item indicates that the delivery address of the intended recipient is 105 Main St., Atlanta, Georgia 30309, the carrier system **100**
30 may identify Joseph Brown's customer profile as corresponding to the item even though the address in Joseph Brown's profile is 105 Main Street, Atlanta, Georgia 30309, USA. In other words, in making such determinations, the carrier system **100** can accommodate variations for a given address. As will be recognized, the carrier system **100** may be configured to compensate for various discrepancies.

In one embodiment, as a secondary measure, the carrier system **100** can use the delivery name of the intended recipient (e.g., consignee or customer) in the shipping data to confirm that the identified customer profile is correct. To do so, the carrier system **100** may compare the delivery name of the intended recipient in the shipping data to the primary name and/or any aliases in the identified customer profile. If the names are substantially similar, the carrier system **100** can confirm that the identified customer profile is correct. By way of example, if the shipping data indicates that the delivery name of the intended recipient is Joe Brown and Joseph Brown listed Joe as a first name alias, the carrier system **100** could confirm Joseph Brown's customer profile as corresponding to the item. As will be recognized, a variety of other approaches and techniques can be used to identify a customer profile corresponding to at least one item to be delivered by the carrier.

In one embodiment, after identifying the appropriate customer profile, the carrier system **100** can associate the shipping data with the customer profile (Block **420** of Fig. 4). This may include appending the shipping data with the appropriate customer identifier (or other identifier corresponding to the customer profile). For instance, the shipping data for all shipments corresponding to Joseph Brown's customer profile may be appended with the customer identifier (or other identifier) created for Joseph Brown. In various embodiments, using this approach allows items (and their shipping data) to be linked to appropriate customer profiles. Thus, when Joseph Brown accesses his account, he can view all of his shipments (e.g., those shipments with shipping data appended with his customer identifier (or other identifier)). Similarly, any actions selected by the customer for an item can be passed to the shipping data for the item.

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3. Item Tracking

In one embodiment, by appending the shipping data with the appropriate customer identifier, the corresponding customer can view tracking information for any shipments associated with the customer profile. For instance, as shown in Figs. 10-12, the carrier system **100** can be used to identify (e.g., retrieve the shipping data with the appropriate customer identifier) all shipments associated with a customer (e.g., customer profile) using the customer identifier and provide them to the customer for viewing in a customer-friendly format, such as via a dashboard/webpage. For example, Fig. 10 shows a dashboard/webpage with a list

of all inbound shipments to a customer. Fig. 11 shows dashboard/webpage with a calendar (which may have a day view, a week view, a multiple week view, and/or a month view) having a list of all inbound shipments to a customer. In Fig. 11, the calendar is sorted by delivery address, indicating that the customer has more than one delivery address associated with the customer profile. Fig. 12 shows another dashboard/webpage with a list of all inbound shipments to a customer.

In various embodiments, these concepts can provide customers with ongoing visibility of all inbound packages, as well as preferences. For instance, for each item, the dashboard/webpage can be used to show the item/shipment identifier, a delivery indicator, last activity scan date, a non-confirmed delivery window, a confirmed delivery window a commit time, whether an in-person signature is requested for delivery, a delivery service level, and/or various other information. As will be recognized, though, a variety of other approaches and techniques can be used to provide tracking information to a customer.

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4. Messages

In one embodiment, the dashboard/webpage (or other mechanism) provided by the carrier system **100** can be used to customize and/or provide communication preferences regarding items to be delivered to customers (shown in Fig. 13). For example, the communication preferences may provide customers with the ability to request messages for items before the carrier attempts to deliver the items (e.g., prior to the first delivery attempt by the carrier) and/or after items have been delivered.

In one embodiment, as shown in Fig. 14, a customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) can identify one or more communication formats for communicating with the customer. The communication formats may include text messages (e.g., Short Message Service (SMS) and/or Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS), email messages, voice messages, and/or a variety of other messages in various communication formats. In addition to identifying one or more communication formats, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) can identify the corresponding electronic destination addresses to be used in providing information regarding items to be delivered to the customer. For instance, for text messages, the customer may provide one or more cellular phone

numbers. For email messages, the customer may provide one or more email addresses. And for voice messages, the customer may provide one or more cellular or landline phone numbers. Additionally, in one embodiment, validation operations can be performed with respect to each input destination address—to ensure their
5 accuracy.

In one embodiment, customers (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may indicate the type of messages they want to receive (e.g., the content). For example, a customer may indicate that he only wants to receive messages when the shipping data for an item indicates
10 that an in-person signature from the customer is requested for delivery of the item. In another example, a customer may indicate that he wants to receive messages for all items to be delivered to the customer with expected delivery dates and delivery times. As will be recognized, customers may indicate that they want to receive messages regarding items in a variety of other circumstances.

15 In one embodiment, customers (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may identify/define time periods in which the messages providing information regarding items to be delivered should be transmitted to the customer. For instance, the time periods may include (a) after shipment and the day before an item is delivered and (b) after shipment and the
20 morning of the day of delivery. In such cases, the messages can serve as a reminder to the customer that an item is being delivered. Similarly the time periods may be after delivery for confirmation of delivery. The carrier system **100** can store communication preferences for providing information in association with the customer profiles. Moreover, the communication preferences may apply to the
25 customer profile globally, to selected customer addresses, to groups of items, and/or an item-by-item basis.

In one embodiment, the carrier system **100** may impose time constraints for placing, generating, and/or transmitting messages within the time periods identified by the customers. For example, the carrier system **100** may only transmit text
30 messages to customers between 6:00am-11:00pm (based on time zones). Similarly, the carrier system **100** may place calls and transmit automated voice messages between 8:00am-9:00pm (based on time zones). And for email messages, the carrier system **100** may generate and transmit them without time constraints.

In one embodiment, the carrier system **100** can automatically generate (e.g., via the message module **260**) one or more messages providing information regarding an item to be delivered to the customer (Block **425** of Fig. 4) in compliance with the customer's communication preferences and the carrier's time constraints. Similarly, the carrier system **100** can automatically transmit the one or more messages to the electronic destination addresses in compliance with the customer's communication preferences and the carrier's time constraints. For example, the carrier system **100** may generate (including select) and transmit an email message to Joseph Brown's email address and a text message to Joseph's cellular phone the day before an item is to be delivered to Joseph's home address. The messages may indicate the expected delivery date and/or delivery time, such as shown in Figs. 15A and 15B, and a variety of other information. As will be recognized, a variety of other operations and processes may be used with embodiments of the present invention. These operations and processes can be customized to adapt to various needs and circumstances.

5. Delivery Times

In one embodiment, the dashboard/webpage (or other mechanism) can be used to view expected delivery times (estimate delivery windows and/or confirmed delivery windows). In one embodiment, estimated time windows may indicate an estimated delivery time of an item based on historical delivery times to the area. Such information may be included in messages to customers prior to the first delivery attempt. As shown in Fig. 13, the dashboard/webpage may also be used by the customer (e.g., operating a customer computing device **110**) to request that items be delivered within a delivery window. That is, the customer may want an item delivered within a specific time window. The carrier may provide such services as part of a customer delivery program or on a fee basis, as shown in Figs. 16 and 17. Table 2 below provides illustrative estimated delivery windows and confirmed delivery windows from which the customer can select to have an item delivered.

Table 2

Estimated Delivery Windows	Confirmed Delivery Windows
11:45am – 3:45pm	11:45am – 1:45pm 12:45pm – 2:45pm 1:45pm – 3:45pm
11:30am – 3:30pm	11:30am – 1:30pm 12:30pm – 2:30pm 1:30pm – 3:30pm
2:00pm – 5:45pm	2:00pm – 4:00pm 3:45PM – 5:45pm
1:00pm – 4:15pm	1:00pm – 3:00pm 2:15pm – 4:15pm
8:00am – 11:00pm	8:00am – 10:00am 9:00am – 11:00am
3:00pm – 6:00pm	3:00pm – 5:00pm 4:00pm – 6:00pm
3:00pm – 5:45pm	3:00pm – 5:00pm 3:45pm – 5:45pm
4:00pm – 6:00pm	4:00pm – 6:00pm

Additional information regarding estimated delivery windows and confirmed delivery windows can be found in U.S. Patent No. 6,701,299, U.S. Patent No. 7,233,907, and U.S. Patent No. 7,925,524, all of which are incorporated herein in their entireties by reference. As will be recognized, a variety of other operations and processes may be used with embodiments of the present invention. These operations and processes can be customized to adapt to various needs and circumstances.

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6. Electronic Authorization for Item Release

In one embodiment, consignors, consignees, and/or the carrier may request that a recipient's signature be obtained at the point of delivery for certain items. In-person signature requests may be for high-value and/or high-risk items, such as cellular phones, computers, narcotic medications, and/or a variety of other items. Similarly, in-person signature requests may be designated by the carrier for items being delivered in non-driver release areas. A non-driver release area may be an area in which items have been stolen after being left at the delivery location (e.g., not delivered to a person) and/or for various other reasons.

In one embodiment, items that are shipped with a request for an in-person signature at the point of delivery may have a non-driver release status. The non-driver release status may be indicated in the shipping data. For example, the shipping data for an item may indicate that an in-person signature from a recipient

(e.g., customer or representative of the customer) is requested for delivery of the item. Such information may be displayed via the dashboard/webpage (shown in Fig. 13). For instance, the shipping data for the item represented in Fig. 13 indicates that an in-person signature is requested for delivery of the item. In addition to an in-person signature, in this example, payment of \$25.00 is also needed for delivery.

In one embodiment, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may electronically authorize delivery of the item without an in-person signature. To do so, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may electronically authorize release of the item without an in-person signature through the dashboard/webpage provided by the carrier system **100**, for example. Operatively, in one embodiment, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may select a hyperlink (e.g., shown in Fig. 13) that reads "Authorize Shipment Release." After (e.g., in response to) the carrier system **100** receives the request to authorize shipment release, the carrier system **100** can provide the appropriate webpage and information to the customer. For instance, as shown in Fig. 18, the carrier system **100** may provide a dashboard/webpage to the customer (e.g., displayed via a customer computing device **110**) that provides a disclaimer for delivering the item without an in-person signature (e.g., delivering the item by leaving it at a front door of a house). The dashboard/webpage may require the customer to check a box, type in his name, and/or to perform other affirmative steps. The customer computing device **110** can then transmit the input authorization to the carrier system **100**. The carrier system **100** can then receive the input authorization to deliver the item without an in-person signature (Block **430** of Fig. 4). After (e.g., in response to) receiving the authorization, the carrier system **100** can update the shipping data to reflect that the item can now be delivered without an in-person signature at the point of delivery.

In certain embodiments, an electronic authorization may have the same effect as an in-person signature at the point of the delivery. Such electronic signatures may apply to the customer profile globally (e.g., allowing all items for a particular address to be delivered without in-person signatures), to selected customer addresses, to groups of items, and/or an item-by-item basis. Such

authorizations may be provided prior to the first delivery attempt by the carrier, further streamlining carrier operations and increasing customer satisfaction.

In addition to providing for electronic authorization to release items, the carrier system **100** can provide for payment of items so that cash-on-delivery items do not require an in-person transaction for delivery. As will be recognized, a variety of other operations and processes may be used with embodiments of the present invention. These operations and processes can be customized to adapt to various needs and circumstances.

10 7. Instructions for Delivery

In one embodiment, delivery persons working for a carrier (and other carrier personnel) may carry and operate mobile stations **105** to assist in the delivery of items. For example, shipping data (or at least a portion of shipping data) corresponding to items to be delivered can be regularly, periodically, and/or continuously transmitted to the appropriate mobile stations **105**. Thus, for instance, carrier personnel can scan an item/shipment identifier on an item (e.g., using a mobile station **105**) to view information about the delivery of the item. The mobile station **105** may also be used to provide instructions for delivery to a delivery person. The instructions may include information, such as where an item should be left at a delivery location and/or access codes needed to deliver an item. The delivery person can also use the mobile station **105** to record information about the delivery of the item, such as where and at what time the item was delivered.

As will be recognized, in one embodiment, a dashboard/webpage (or other mechanism) provided by the carrier system **100** (e.g., via the delivery options module **250**) can be used to provide instructions regarding items to be delivered to customers (e.g., prior to a delivery attempt by the carrier). For example, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may access the dashboard/webpage to view items to be delivered to the customer. The dashboard/webpage may also provide the customer with the option of providing instructions for delivering one or more items.

In one embodiment, to provide such instructions, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may select a button (e.g., shown in Fig. 13) that reads "Provide Delivery Instructions." After (e.g., in response to) the carrier system **100** receives the

request to provide instructions, the carrier system **100** can provide the appropriate dashboard/webpage and information to the customer. For instance, as shown in Figs. 19A, 19B, and 20, the carrier system **100** may provide a dashboard/webpage to the customer (e.g., displayed via a customer computing device **110**) that provides the ability to input (e.g., via an input form) one or more instructions for using a code to enter an area proximate the delivery address, such as building code(s), door code(s), and/or gate code(s). The carrier system **100** may also provide a dashboard/webpage to the customer (e.g., displayed via a customer computing device **110**) that provides the ability to input (e.g., via a drop-down menu) one or more instructions that identify a location at the delivery address at which the item should be left. Table 3 below provides illustrative instructions and corresponding codes.

Table 3

Leave-At Instructions	Optional
Leave at – Front Door	Security Code to Access Front Door
Leave at – Rear Door	Security Code to Access Rear Door
Leave at – Side Door	Security Code to Access Side Door
Leave at – Garage	Security Code to Access Garage
Leave at – Porch	Security Code to Access Porch
Leave at – Deck	Security Code to Access Deck
Leave at – Patio	Security Code to Access Patio
Leave at – Reception	Security Code to Access Reception
Leave at – Management Office	Security Code to Access Office
Leave at – Door Person	Security Code to Reach Door Person
Leave at – Neighbor	Security Code for Neighbor

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In one embodiment, as indicated in Block **435** of Fig. 4, the carrier system **100** can receive the one or more instructions for delivery (e.g., before a first delivery attempt). After (e.g., in response to) receiving the one or more instructions for delivery, the carrier system **100** can update the shipping data to reflect that the item should be delivered in accordance with the one or more instructions. The updated shipping data (or at least a portion of update shipping data) can be regularly, periodically, and/or continuously transmitted by the carrier system **100** to the appropriate mobile stations **105**. The appropriate mobile station **105** can

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receive the updated shipping data (or at least a portion of update shipping data). Then, a delivery person can scan an item/shipment identifier on an item (e.g., using a mobile station **105**) to view information about the delivery of the item, and the updated shipping data (or at least a portion of update shipping data) can be displayed, including the one or more instructions for delivery. The delivery person can then delivery the item in accordance with the one or more instructions for delivery. For instance, as shown in Fig. 21. The instructions may be to leave an item at a rear door at a delivery location and further provide a gate code needed to access the rear door. A variety of other instructions for delivery can be provided as well.

As will be recognized, the one or more instructions for delivery may apply to the customer profile globally (e.g., providing that all items be delivered in accordance with the instructions), to selected customer addresses, to groups of items, and/or an item-by-item basis. As indicated, such instructions may be provided prior to the first delivery attempt by the carrier. Moreover, a variety of other operations and processes may be used with embodiments of the present invention. These operations and processes can be customized to adapt to various needs and circumstances. For instance, the carrier may include such services as part of a customer delivery program and/or require a fee.

8. Delivery Options

In one embodiment, as described, shipping data (or at least a portion of shipping data) corresponding to items to be delivered can be regularly, periodically, and/or continuously transmitted by the carrier system **100** to the appropriate mobile stations **105**. Thus, for instance, carrier personnel can scan an item/shipment identifier on an item (e.g., using a mobile station **105**) to view information about the delivery of the item. In one embodiment, shipping data can be updated to change delivery options, such as changing the delivery location, the delivery date, and/or the delivery time.

A. Non-Vacation Delivery Options

In one embodiment, a dashboard/webpage (or other mechanism) provided by the carrier system **100** (e.g., via the delivery options module **250**) can be used to change delivery options regarding items to be delivered to customers (e.g., prior to
5 a delivery attempt by the carrier). For example, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may access the dashboard/webpage provided by the carrier system **100** to view items to be delivered to the customer. The dashboard/webpage may provide the customer with the option of changing delivery options for one or more items.

10 In one embodiment, to change delivery options, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may select a button (e.g., shown in Fig. 13) that reads "Change Delivery." After (e.g., in response to) the carrier system **100** receives the request to change delivery options, the carrier system **100** can provide the appropriate dashboard/webpage and
15 information to the customer. For instance, as shown in Fig. 22, the carrier system **100** may provide a dashboard/webpage to the customer (e.g., displayed via a customer computing device **110**) that provides the ability to change delivery options. The delivery options may allow the customer to request to have the item held at a carrier facility for pick up (e.g., will call or same day will call). The
20 delivery options may allow the customer to request to reschedule delivery of the item for another date and/or time (e.g., a future date and time). The delivery options may allow the customer to change the delivery service level of the item (e.g., change the delivery service level from Ground to 2nd Day Air) after the item has been shipped. In one embodiment, this may allow for the item to be delivered
25 earlier than initially indicated (e.g., both day and time). The delivery options may allow the customer request to change the delivery location to a carrier facility (or other location), such as a UPS Store. And the delivery options may allow the customer to request to return the item to the consignor. As will be recognized, embodiments of the present invention may also allow a customer to change a
30 variety of other delivery options.

In one embodiment, as indicated in Block **435** of Fig. 4, the carrier system **100** can receive the changed delivery options as input from the customer. After (e.g., in response to) the changed delivery options, the carrier system **100** can accept the requested changes (e.g. including validating the changes). The carrier system **100** can then update the shipping data to reflect that the item should be delivered in accordance with the changed delivery options. In one embodiment, the change in delivery options may require applying a new item/shipment identifier and/or label. For example, as described, the updated shipping data (or at least a portion of update shipping data) corresponding to items to be delivered can be regularly, periodically, and/or continuously transmitted by the carrier system **100** to the appropriate mobile stations **105** (and/or other computing entities).

In one embodiment, the appropriate mobile stations **105** (and/or other computing entities) can receive the updated shipping data (or at least a portion of update shipping data) corresponding to items to be delivered. Thus, carrier personnel sorting items or loading delivery vehicles can scan an item/shipment identifier (e.g., using a mobile station **105**) on an item to view information about the delivery of the item, and the updated shipping data (or at least a portion of update shipping data) can be displayed. The updated shipping information may indicate that a new label (and/or item/shipment identifier) be affixed to the item (e.g., the new label may indicate the new delivery address). The item can then be delivered in accordance with the changed delivery options.

In various embodiments, the carrier may include such services as part of a customer delivery program and/or require a fee. As indicated, in one embodiment, the delivery options may be changed prior to the first delivery attempt by the carrier. Moreover, a variety of other operations and processes may be used with embodiments of the present invention. These operations and processes can be customized to adapt to various needs and circumstances.

B. Vacation Delivery Options

In one embodiment, a dashboard/webpage (or other mechanism) provided by the carrier system **100** (e.g., via the delivery options module **250**) can be used to change delivery options regarding items to be delivered to customers while the customers are on vacation (or otherwise away from the delivery location, such as being out of town on a business trip). For example, a customer (e.g., a customer or

customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may access the dashboard/webpage provided by the carrier system **100** to input delivery options while the customer is on vacation.

5 In one embodiment, to input such delivery options, the customer (e.g., a customer or customer representative operating a customer computing device **110**) may select a button (e.g., shown in Fig. 23) that reads “Add a Vacation.” After (e.g., in response to) the carrier system **100** receives the request to add a vacation, the carrier system **100** can provide the appropriate dashboard/webpage and information to the customer. For instance, as shown in Figs. 24, 25, 26A, and 26B,
10 the carrier system **100** may provide a dashboard/webpage to the customer (e.g., displayed via a customer computing device **110**) that provides the ability to input vacation dates and/or delivery options (e.g., the delivery location, the delivery date, and/or the delivery time). During the vacation time period, the delivery options may allow the customer to request to have items held at a carrier facility for will
15 call or to be rescheduled for delivery on another date. Similarly, during the vacation time period, the delivery options may allow the customer to request to have all items delivered to a carrier facility, such as a UPS Store.

In one embodiment, as indicated in Block **435** of Fig. 4, the carrier system **100** can receive the input vacation dates and/or delivery options. After (e.g., in
20 response to) receiving the input vacation dates and/or delivery options, the carrier system **100** can apply the vacation delivery options to all items to be delivered to the customer (and/or one of the customer’s addresses in his customer profile) during the vacation time period. For instance, as shown in Fig. 26A, all items to be delivered to a customer between 07/05/2011 and 07/11/2011 can be rescheduled
25 for delivery on 07/12/2011. Similarly, as shown in Fig. 26B, all items to be delivered to a customer between 07/05/2011 and 07/11/2011 can be delivered to a carrier facility (such as a UPS Store) for later pickup by the customer. In one embodiment, vacation options may require applying a new label (and/or item/shipment identifier) to items to be delivered during the vacation time period.

30 In various embodiments, the carrier may include such services as part of a customer delivery program and/or require a fee. As will be recognized, a variety of other operations and processes may be used with embodiments of the present invention. These operations and processes can be customized to adapt to various needs and circumstances.

IV. Conclusion

Many modifications and other embodiments of the inventions set forth herein will come to mind to one skilled in the art to which these inventions pertain having the benefit of the teachings presented in the foregoing descriptions and the associated drawings. Therefore, it is to be understood that the inventions are not to be limited to the specific embodiments disclosed and that modifications and other embodiments are intended to be included within the scope of the appended claims. Although specific terms are employed herein, they are used in a generic and descriptive sense only and not for purposes of limitation.

10

CLAIMS

1. A method for receiving authorization to deliver at least one item, the method comprising:
 - 5 electronically receiving shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier, wherein the shipping data indicates that an in-person signature from the customer is requested for delivery of the item; and
 - electronically receiving authorization from the customer to deliver the item without an in-person signature from the customer, wherein the authorization is received (1) after shipment of the item has begun and (2) prior to a first delivery attempt of the item.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising generating and transmitting a message to an electronic destination address associated with the customer, the message indicating that the item will be delivered without an in-person signature from the customer.
3. The method of claim 2 further comprising causing display of at least a portion of the shipping data corresponding to the item to be delivered to the customer.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the at least a portion of the shipping data is displayed via a dashboard.
5. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - 25 automatically generating a message comprising at least a portion of the shipping data regarding the item to be delivered to the customer, wherein the message indicates an expected delivery date of the item; and
 - automatically transmitting the message to an electronic destination address associated with the customer prior to the first delivery attempt of the item.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein the message further indicates (1) an expected delivery time of the item and (2) that an in-person signature from the customer is requested for delivery of the item.

7. An apparatus comprising at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code, the at least one memory and the computer program code configured to, with the processor, cause the apparatus to at least:

5 receive shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier, wherein the shipping data indicates that an in-person signature from the customer is requested for delivery of the item; and
receive authorization from the customer to deliver the item without an in-person signature from the customer, wherein the authorization is received (1) after
10 shipment of the item has begun and (2) prior to a first delivery attempt of the item.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the memory and computer program code are further configured to, with the processor, cause the apparatus to
15 generate and transmit a message to an electronic destination address associated with the customer, the message indicating that the item will be delivered without an in-person signature from the customer.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the memory and computer
20 program code are further configured to, with the processor, cause the apparatus to cause display of at least a portion of the shipping data corresponding to the item to be delivered to the customer.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the at least a portion of the
25 shipping data is displayed via a dashboard.

11. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the memory and computer program code are further configured to, with the processor, cause the apparatus to:
automatically generate a message comprising at least a portion of the
30 shipping data regarding the item to be delivered to the customer, wherein the message indicates an expected delivery date of the item; and
automatically transmit the message to an electronic destination address associated with the customer prior to the first delivery attempt of the item.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the message further indicates (1) an expected delivery time of the item and (2) that an in-person signature from the customer is requested for delivery of the item.
- 5 13. A computer program product for receiving authorization to deliver at least one item, the computer program product comprising at least one computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable program code portions stored therein, the computer-readable program code portions comprising:
- 10 an executable portion configured to receive shipping data corresponding to an item to be delivered to a customer by a carrier, wherein the shipping data indicates that an in-person signature from the customer is requested for delivery of the item; and
- an executable portion configured to receive authorization from the customer to deliver the item without an in-person signature from the customer,
- 15 wherein the authorization is received (1) after shipment of the item has begun and (2) prior to a first delivery attempt of the item.
14. The computer program product of claim 13 further comprising an executable portion configured to generate and transmit a message to an electronic
- 20 destination address associated with the customer, the message indicating that the item will be delivered without an in-person signature from the customer.
15. The computer program product of claim 14 further comprising an executable portion configured to cause display of at least a portion of the shipping
- 25 data corresponding to the item to be delivered to the customer.
16. The computer program product of claim 15, wherein the at least a portion of the shipping data is displayed via a dashboard.
- 30 17. The computer program product of claim 13 further comprising:
- an executable portion configured to automatically generate a message comprising at least a portion of the shipping data regarding the item to be delivered to the customer, wherein the message indicates an expected delivery date of the item; and

an executable portion configured to automatically transmit the message to an electronic destination address associated with the customer prior to the first delivery attempt of the item.

- 5 18. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein the message further indicates (1) an expected delivery time of the item and (2) that an in-person signature from the customer is requested for delivery of the item.

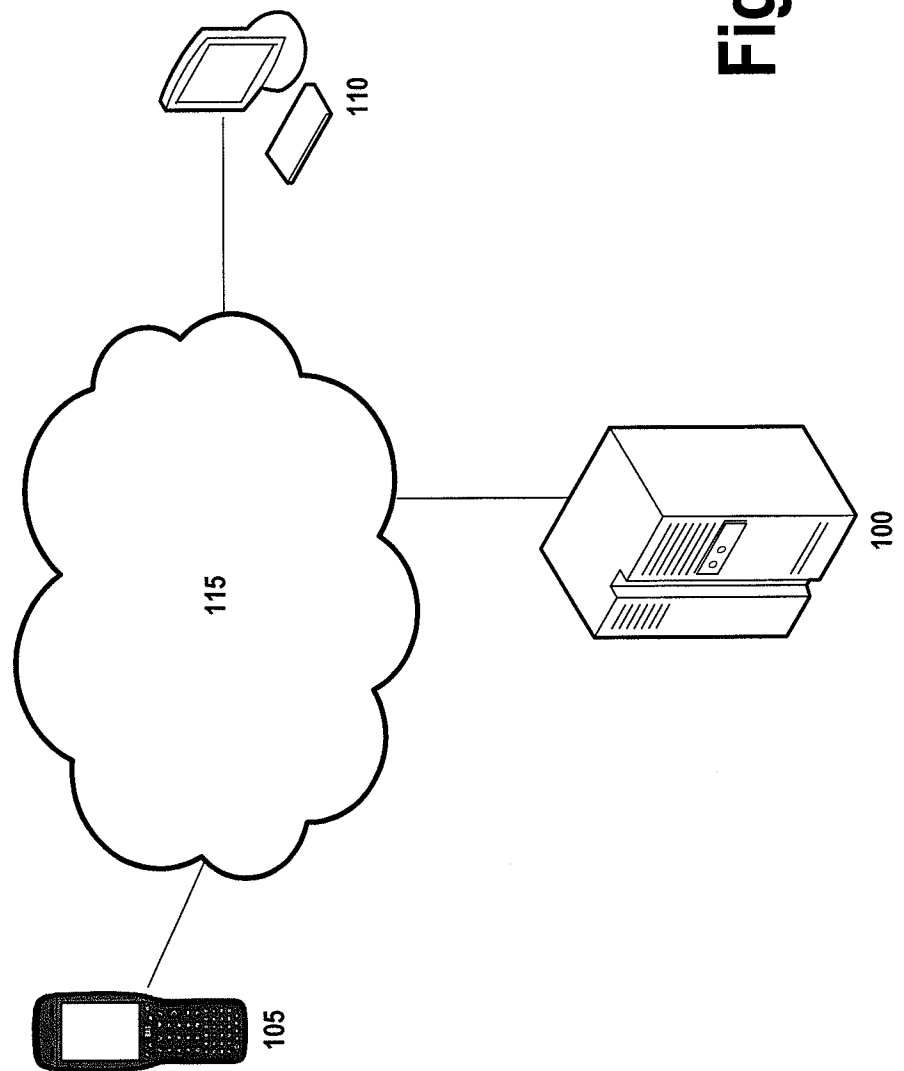
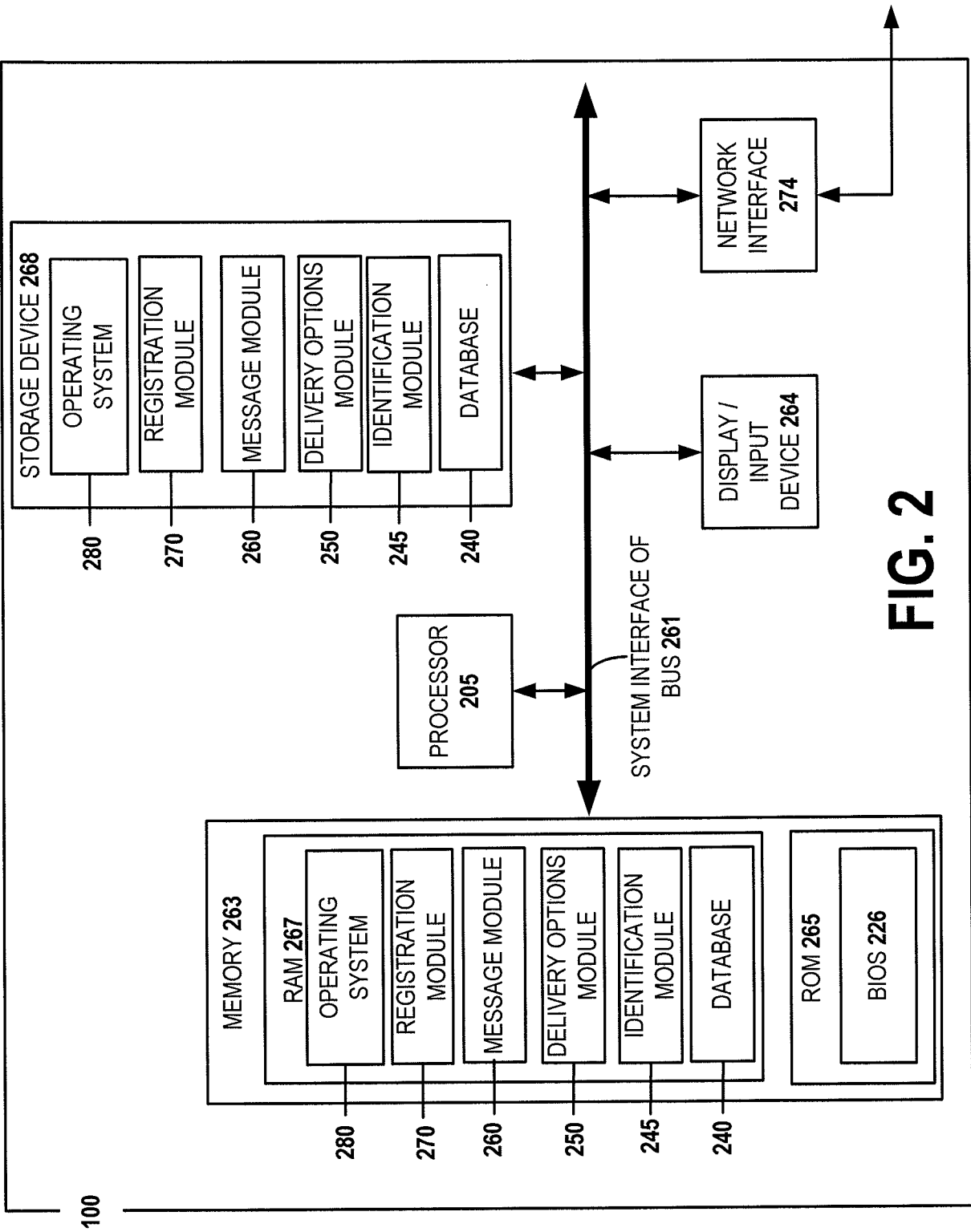


Fig. 1



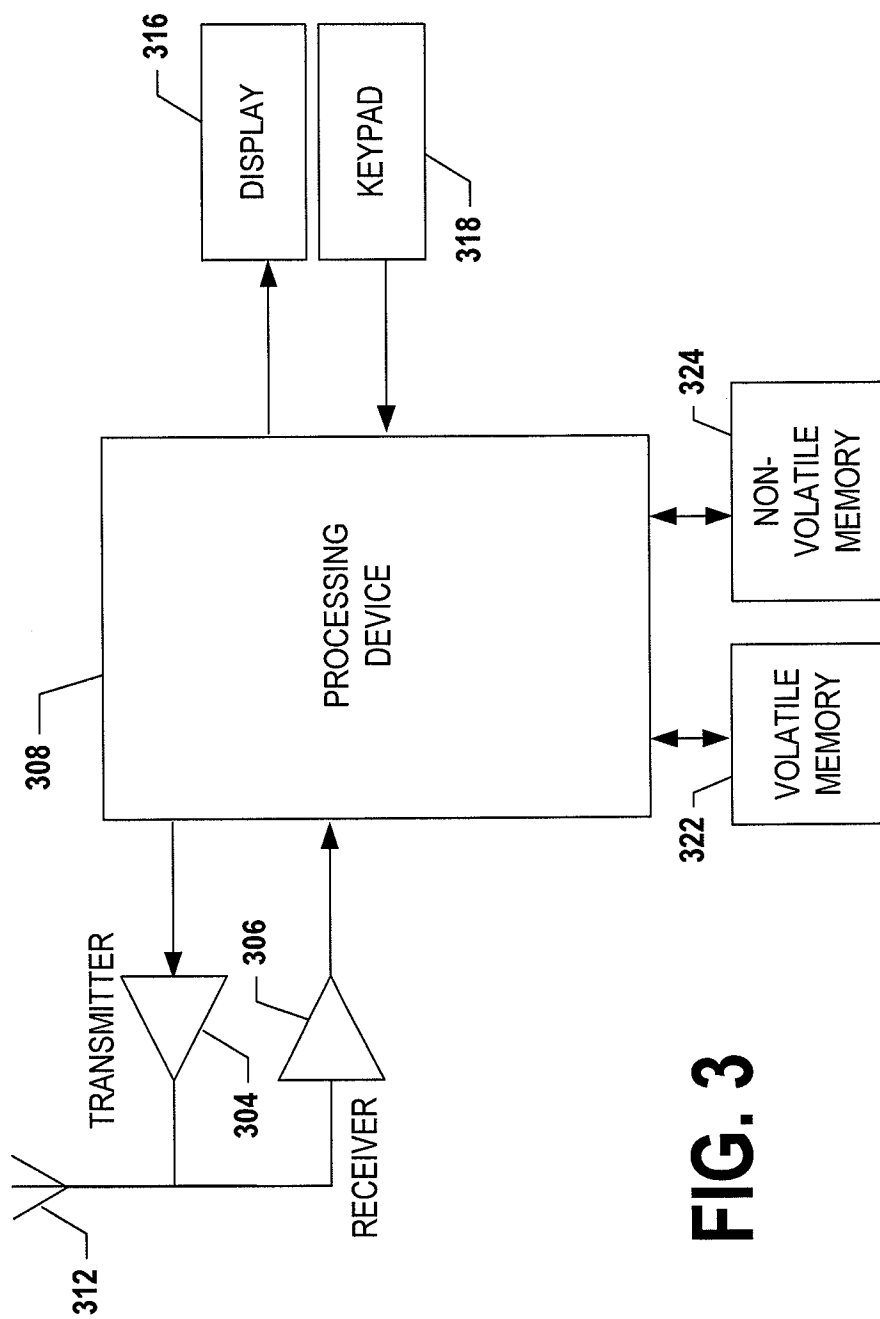
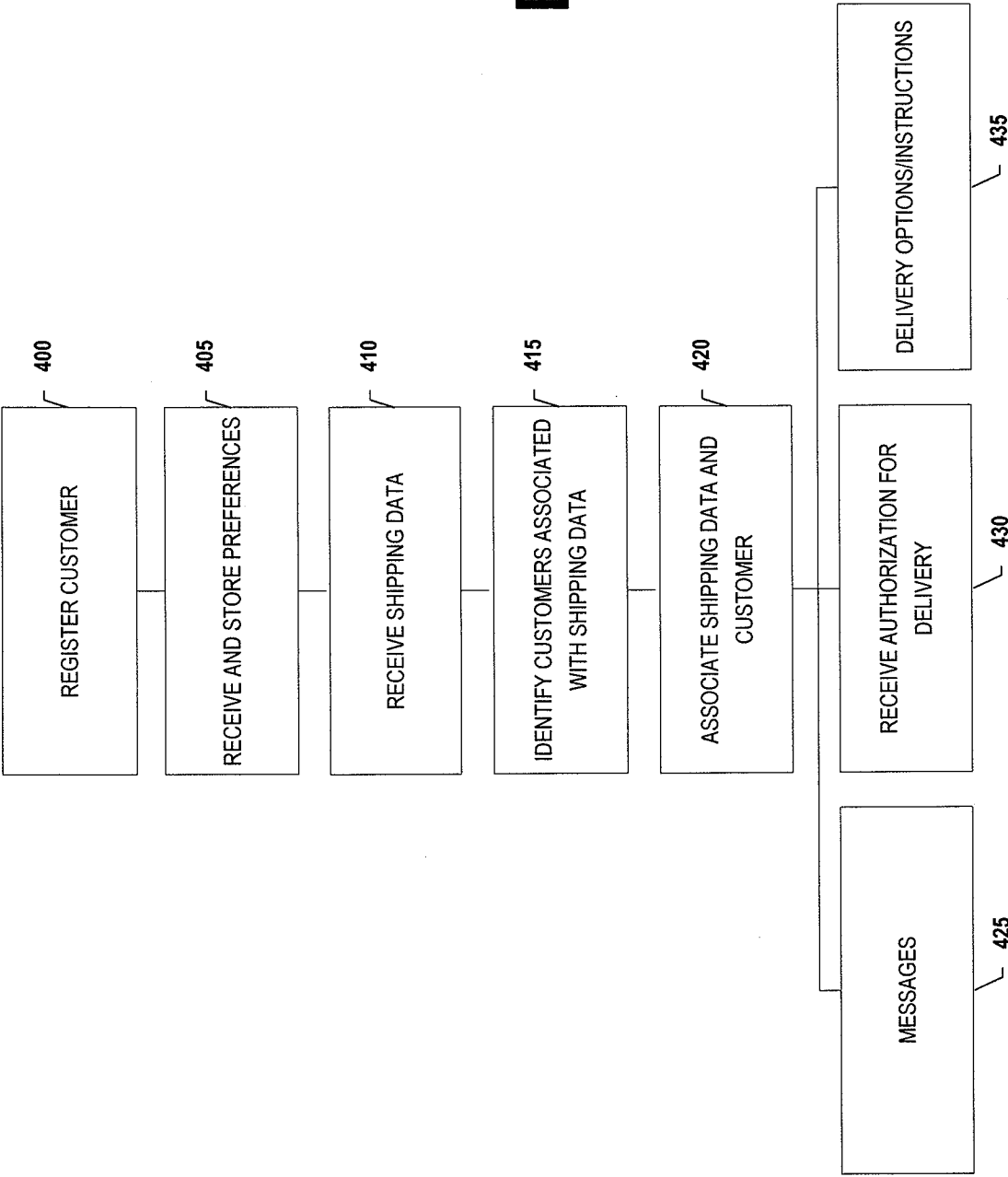
**FIG. 3**

Fig. 4



Login or Register	
My UPS My UPS ID: ☐ Remember Me  (Do not check this for shared computer) Password: By logging in to ups.com you agree to the following UPS Technology Agreement  → Forgot User ID or Password Log In >	New User? Register with My UPS to Activate Your UPS My Choice Membership Register with My UPS to access additional features on UPS.com, including UPS My Choice delivery features. UPS My Choice makes it easier than ever to keep track of and control shipments delivered to your home address. If you receive four or more home shipments each month, UPS My Choice is the right choice for you. UPS My Choice includes powerful features like: • Delivery Windows • Flexible Delivery Options • Delivery Planner • Delivery Alerts Register with My UPS >

Fig. 5


UPS United States

[My UPS](#)
[Shipping](#)
[Tracking](#)
[Freight](#)
[Locations](#)
[Support](#)
[Business Solutions](#)

[Login](#)

Tracking

[Track](#)
[UPS My Choice](#)
[Quantum View](#)
[Flex Global View](#)

UPS My ChoiceSM

UPS My Choice makes it easier than ever to keep track of and control shipments delivered to your home address. If you receive four or more home shipments each month, UPS My Choice is the right choice for you. UPS My Choice includes powerful features like:

- Delivery Windows**
 Plan your day more efficiently with an estimated four-hour delivery window.
- Even Better - Confirmed Delivery Windows**
 Busy schedule? No problem! Choose a more specific two-hour delivery window within those four hours that's convenient to you.
- Flexible Delivery Options**
 On vacation or away from home? Re-route shipments to a neighbor or nearby location of The UPS Store®. Plus other routing and scheduling options.
- Delivery Planner**
 We know those tracking numbers are way too long. We'll do the work for you and find the status of all your homebound shipments. From one convenient dashboard, you'll have control to make any necessary delivery changes.
- Delivery Alerts**
 Out and about? Convenient automated alerts and reminders about your package via e-mail, phone, or text.

Membership Features

- Four-Hour Delivery Windows
- Delivery Options (Some fees apply)
- Delivery Alerts

For a small subscription fee, you can add these premium features:

- Confirmed Two-Hour Delivery Windows
- Additional Delivery Options (Most are included, some fees apply)
- Delivery Planner

Note: You will be asked to log in with your My UPS ID to continue. If you do not have a My UPS ID, you will be able to register with My UPS before activating your UPS My Choice membership.

1
[Activate Your Membership Now >](#)

Fig. 6

Membership Options		
Services	Member (Free Enrollment)	Premium Member (\$40 Annual Subscription)
Delivery Alerts	I - Unlimited	I - Unlimited
Approximate Delivery Time	I - Unlimited	I - Unlimited
Delivery Options	I - Unlimited	I - Unlimited
Authorize Shipment Release	I - Unlimited	I - Unlimited
Will Call (hold for pickup at a UPS facility)	I - Unlimited	I - Unlimited
Printable InfoNotice	I - Unlimited	I - Unlimited
Deliver to a Retail Location (UPS Store)	I - \$5.00 Fee	I - Unlimited
Reschedule Delivery	I - \$5.00 Fee	I - Unlimited
Deliver to Another Address	I - \$5.00 Fee	I - Unlimited
"Leave At" Instructions	X	I - Unlimited
Leave With Neighbor	X	I - Unlimited
Confirmed Delivery Window	X	I - \$5.00 Additional Fee
Delivery Planner	X	I
Close		

Fig. 7

UPS My Choice Premium Membership Registration Confirmation	
You have completed the UPS My Choice Premium registration process. John Smith 1234 Apple Blossom Lane Roswell, GA 30076 Renewal Date: 12/31/2011 (Note: We'll send you a renewal reminder a month before your subscription ends.) Now you can: - Get notified about incoming shipments - Sign for packages online with digital signature - Print paper InfoNotices prior to first delivery attempt And - See all homebound shipments on a calendar or in a list view with Delivery Planner - Plan your day around confirmed delivery windows - Instruct driver on preferred location to leave packages - Enjoy unlimited delivery changes (Will Call, Reschedule, Deliver to Another Address)	
Next Steps: Within an hour, you'll be able to view your shipment information from the UPS My Choice Delivery Planner. Go To My Delivery Planner > Update Your UPS My Choice Preferences Update Your Delivery Alert Settings Add Other Household Members Update Your Delivery Instructions Set Your Vacation Options Add Another Delivery Address	

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

UPS My Choice Preferences	
You can update your application settings below. Required fields are indicated with *	
Show Preferences for: My House 	
Membership Information	 Edit
Delivery Address: John Smith 1234 Apple Blossom Lane Roswell, GA 30076	
Delivery Address Description: My House	
Membership Expiration Date: 12/20	
Other Household Members (Optional)	 Edit
To view, set alerts, and specify delivery instructions for packages addressed to other members of your household, select Edit to add other household members to your UPS My Choice membership.	
Delivery Alert Options	 Edit
You have not specified your <u>delivery alert</u> ^[2] preferences. Select Edit to update your alert settings.	
Delivery Instructions	 Edit
You have not specified any delivery instructions. Select Edit to update your delivery instructions.	
Payment Card Options	 Edit
You can enter your payment card information each time you make a UPS My Choice transaction or add it to your My UPS Profile for any transaction made on ups.com. Select Edit to add or select a payment card.	
Vacation Options	
Upcoming Vacation: 07/05 - 07/11	Vacation Settings: Reschedule delivery for 07/12
Edit Vacation Settings >	

Shipment Information					Shipment Actions [?]			
Scheduled Delivery Date	Delivery Time	Ship From	Tracking #	Status	Delivery Alerts	Provide Delivery Instructions	Select a 2-Hour Delivery Window	Change Delivery
04/02/2011	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	ABC Corporation Saddlebrook, NJ, US	1Z1234567890123456	In Transit [?]	View/Edit	View/Edit	Select	Request
04/04/2011 (Updated)	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Amazon Chicago, IL, US	1Z1234567890123465	In Transit [?]	View/Edit	Add	Select	Request
04/06/2011	12:00 PM - 2:00 PM Confirmed	Buy.com Aliso Viejo, CA, US	1Z1234567890122343	In Transit [?]	View/Edit	View/Edit	Change	Request
04/06/2011	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Amazon Chicago, IL, US	1Z1234567890123460	In Transit [?] C.O.D. - 25.00 USD, Check	View/Edit	View/Edit	Select	Request
04/06/2011	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Amazon Chicago, IL, US	1Z1234567890123460	In Transit [?] Adult Signature Required C.O.D. - 25.00 USD, Money Order	View/Edit		Select	Request
Not Available	Not Available	BLC Inc. London, UK	1Z1234567890123473	Exception [?] Will Call				Change
Not Available	Not Available	Amazon Chicago, IL, US	1Z1234567890123454	Exception [?] Same Day Will Call Pickup By: 04/06/2010				Change
04/07/2011 Updated	By End of Day	Amazon Chicago, IL, US	1Z1234567890123455	Exception [?] Deliver to Another Address 5532 Main Street Roswell, GA, US 30076	View/Edit			Change
04/08/2011 Updated	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Amazon Chicago, IL, US	1Z1234567890123446	Exception [?] Reschedule Delivery	View/Edit	View/Edit	Select	Change
04/08/2011	Not Available	Amazon Chicago, IL, US	1Z1234567890123437	Exception [?] Return to Sender				
04/09/2011	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Amazon Chicago, IL, US	1Z1234567890123426	Exception [?] Leave With Neighbor 1234 Elm Street Roswell, GA, US 30076	View/Edit	Add		Change
04/10/2011 Updated	By End of Day	Amazon Chicago, IL, US	1Z1234567890123419	Exception [?] Deliver to a UPS Retail Location The UPS Store 1010 Mansell Rd. Roswell, GA, US 30076 Tel: 555-123-4567	View/Edit			Change
04/11/2011	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Amazon Chicago, IL, US	1Z1234567890123123	Exception [?] Signature Required Authorize Shipment Release	View/Edit	Add		Change

Fig. 10

UPS My ChoiceSM Delivery Planner

To view tracking details, place your cursor over the shipment. Or select the shipment to update the delivery instructions.

MESSAGING MODULE COMMENT... For example: Your subscription will expire on mm/dd/yyyy. [Renew Your Subscription >](#)

Show Shipments Sent To:
 1234 Main Street

Last updated 10:30 A.M. [Calendar View](#) | [Table View](#)

2 WEEKS DAY MONTH

March 28 - April 17

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29 ABC Corporation Delivered	30 Amazon Delivered	31	1 ABC Corporation 10:00AM - 2:00PM BLC Inc. 10:00AM - 2:00PM	2	3
4	5	6	7 QVC 10:00AM - 2:00PM Amazon 10:00AM - 2:00PM Amazon 10:00AM - 2:00PM Show All (5 total)	8	9 Amazon 10:00AM - 2:00PM	10
11	12 Amazon 10:00AM - 2:00PM	13	14	15 VACATION	16 VACATION Amazon 10:00AM - 2:00PM	17 VACATION

Fig. 11

Show Shipments Sent To:		Last updated: 10:30 AM		Calendar View Exit View	
My Route		2 WEEKS		DAY MONTH	
Package 1: 1Z1234567890123456 Status: ☐ In Transit ☐ Thursday, 04/01 Scheduled Delivery: 10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M. From: ABC Corporation, Saddlebrook, NJ, US To: My House Special Instructions: C.O.D. - \$5.00 USD, Check					
Package 2: 1Z1234567890123456 Status: ☐ In Transit ☐ Thursday, 04/01 Scheduled Delivery: 12:00 P.M. - 2:00 P.M. From: Amazon, Chicago, IL, US To: My House					
Package 3: 1Z1234567890123456 Status: ☐ In Transit ☐ Thursday, 04/01 Scheduled Delivery: 12:00 P.M. - 2:00 P.M. From: Amazon, Chicago, IL, US To: My House					
Package 4: 1Z1234567890123456 Status: ☐ In Transit ☐ Thursday, 04/01 Scheduled Delivery: 12:00 P.M. - 2:00 P.M. From: Amazon, Chicago, IL, US To: My House					

Fig. 12

Shipment Details

1Z1234567890123456

Status:

In Transit 

Scheduled Delivery:

Thursday, 04/01/2011

Approximate Delivery Time:

10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

From:

ABC Corporation
Saddlebrook, NJ, US

To:

My House

Special Instructions:

C.O.D. - 25.00 USD, Check
Signature Required
[Authorize Shipment Release](#)

Leave At:

Back Door

[View Full Tracking Details >](#)

Change Delivery

Delivery Alerts

Select a 2-Hour Delivery Window

Provide Delivery Instructions

Close

Fig. 13

UPS My Choice Delivery Alerts

You can change the delivery alerts[?] settings for this shipment below.

Note: Alerts will be sent based on your local time zone.

Alert Type	Send By	Send To
☐ Day Before Delivery Reminder	Select One	
☒ Morning of Delivery Alert	SMS Text Message	Select one
☒ Delivery Confirmation	E-mail	jsmith@email.com

☐ Apply these changes to all packages in this multi-piece shipment.

Cancel

OK

Fig. 14

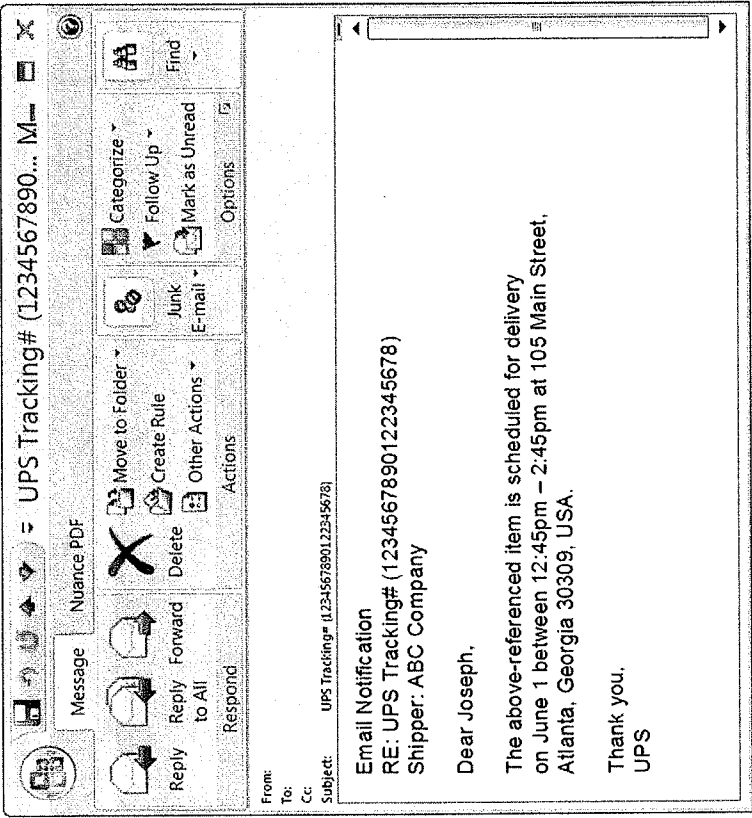


Fig. 15A

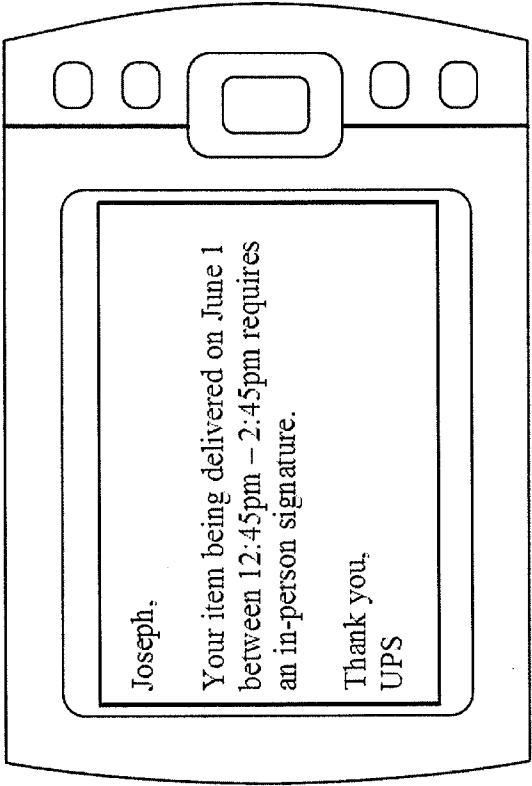


Fig. 15B

Fig. 16

UPS My Choice Select a Confirmed Delivery Window

Select your confirmed delivery window.

Note: The confirmed delivery window must fall within the normal approximate delivery time window displayed for this shipment.

Note: If you have already selected a confirmed delivery window, this new window will be applied to all other shipments with a confirmed delivery window on the same date.

Tracking Number: 1Z1234567890123456 - Description

Approximate Delivery Time: 10:00 A.M - 2:00 P.M., mm/dd/yyyy

Confirmed Delivery Window:

Select One

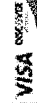
Cancel This Delivery Window

Fee: n.nn USD

Please enter your payment card information below. You can save this card to your My UPS Profile by selecting **Save this card to My UPS Profile**.

Card Type:

Select One

Card Number:

Expiration:

MM

YYYY

Verification Code:

☐ Save this card to My UPS Profile

Billing Address:

☒ Same As Delivery Address

☐ Enter A Different Billing Address

Cancel

Finish >

UPS My Choice - Confirmed Delivery Window Confirmation

Print

Your confirmed delivery window is displayed below. Please print this page for your records.

Note: If you have already selected a confirmed delivery window, this new window will be applied to all other shipments with a confirmed delivery window on the same date.

Note: This shipment is part of a multi-piece small package shipment. The confirmed delivery window you select will be applied to all of the other packages automatically.

Tracking Number:	1Z1234567890123456 - Description
Approximate Delivery Time:	10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M., mm/dd/yyyy
Confirmed Delivery Window:	12:00 P.M. - 2:00 P.M., mm/dd/yyyy
Fee:	n.nn USD
Bill Charges To:	VISA xxxxxxxxxxxx1234

Close

Fig. 17

Authorize Shipment Release:

By selecting I authorize shipment release, I authorize UPS to deliver packages addressed to me at this address without obtaining a signature. I understand that the UPS driver retains discretion not to deliver a package depending on delivery conditions (such as adverse weather or safety).

Note: The Leave At instructions will only be applied if you authorize shipment release.

☐ I authorize shipment release

Fig. 18

Enter a New Gate or Building Security Code

Gate or Building Security Code:

Re-Enter Your Gate or Building Security Code:

Cancel

Update

Fig. 19A

Security Code Entered: NO

Leave At:

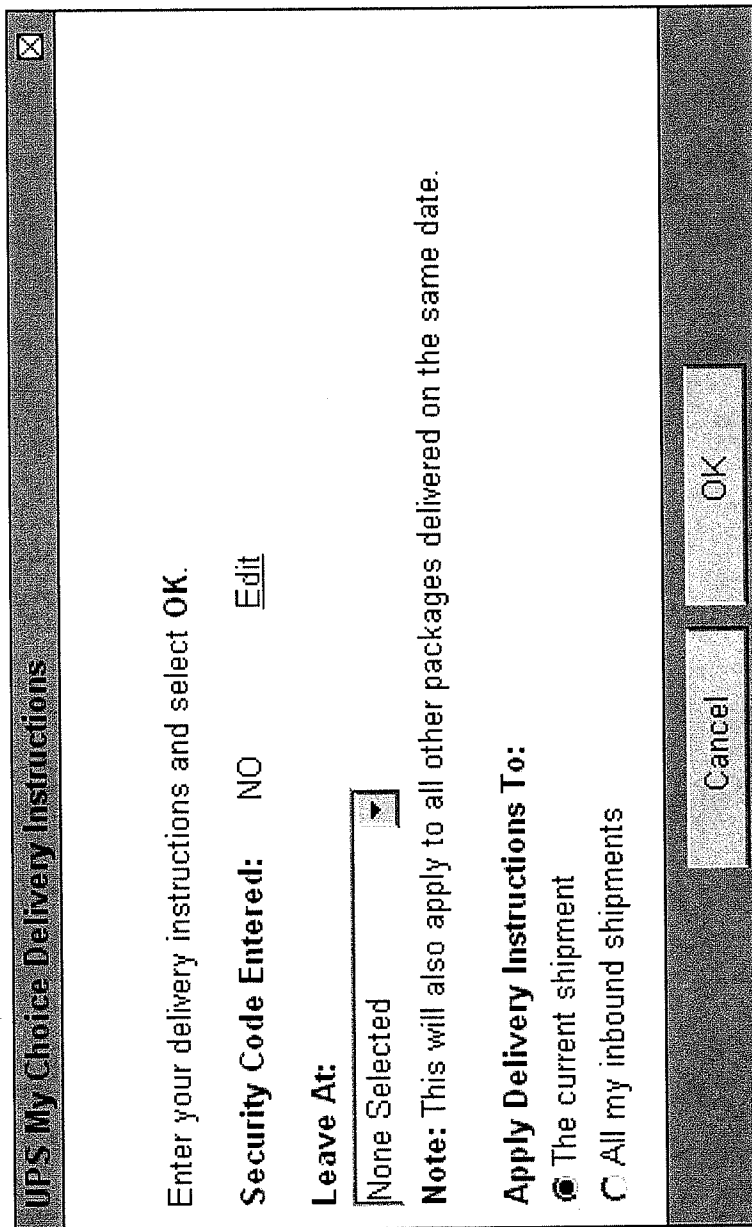
None Selected

Cancel

Save Changes

Edit

Fig. 19B



UPS My Choice Delivery Instructions

Enter your delivery instructions and select **OK**.

Security Code Entered: NO Edit

Leave At:
None Selected ▼

Note: This will also apply to all other packages delivered on the same date.

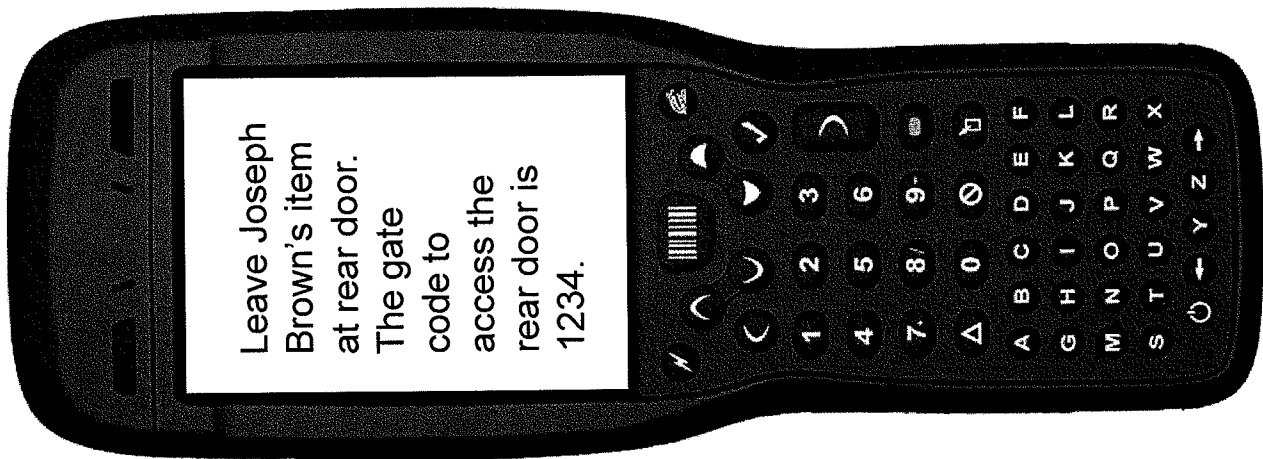
Apply Delivery Instructions To:

☒ The current shipment

☐ All my inbound shipments

Cancel OK

Fig. 20

**Fig. 21**

Delivery Options:

What would you like UPS to do with shipments scheduled for delivery?

☒ Reschedule Delivery for
mm/dd/yyyy

☐ Deliver to a UPS Retail Location

Show Locations Near Me

Show Locations Near Another Address

Fig. 22

Upcoming Vacations:

You have no upcoming vacations saved. If you want to add a vacation, select **Add a Vacation**.

 [Add a Vacation](#)

Fig. 23

1

Vacation Dates

04/01/2011

to

04/01/2011

Show Delivery Options

2

Vacation Delivery Options

Enter your vacation dates above and select **Show Delivery Options** to see the available options.

Cancel

Update Vacation Settings >

Fig. 24

Based on your vacation dates, you can reschedule the delivery of your shipments for a later date or deliver them to a participating UPS Retail Location so you can pick them up when you get back from vacation.

Vacation Delivery Options:
What would you like UPS to do with shipments scheduled for delivery during your vacation?

☒ **Reschedule Delivery for**
mm/dd/yyyy

☐ **Deliver to a UPS Retail Location**

Show Locations Near Me

Show Locations Near Another Address

Fig. 25

Upcoming Vacation:	Vacation Settings:	Edit:	Remove:
07/05/2011 - 07/11/2011	Reschedule delivery for 07/12/2011	Edit	✖

Fig. 26A

Upcoming Vacation:	Vacation Settings:	Edit:	Remove:
07/05/2011 - 07/11/2011	Deliver to a UPS Retail Location: The UPS Store 4321 Hill Street Suite A Roswell, GA, US 30076 Telephone: 555-123-4567 store1422@theupsstore.com	Edit	✖

Fig. 26B