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(54) Title: VEHICLE ROUTING AND SCHEDULING SYSTEMS

(57) Abstract: A routing and scheduling computer system that is adapted to define a plurality of geofenced areas and to monitor vehicle activity within each of those areas (e.g., via telematics sensors mounted on vehicles traveling within the areas). The system may be adapted to use information regarding the monitored vehicle activity to estimate: (1) a first amount of time associated with the delivery of a plurality of parcels to one or more respective locations within a first one of the geofenced areas; and (2) a second amount of time associated with the delivery of a plurality of parcels to one or more respective locations within a second one of the geofenced areas. The system may then route a particular vehicle to make one or more pickups or deliveries within the first or second geographic areas based at least in part on the first and second estimates of time.



WO 2010/028251 A2

VEHICLE ROUTING AND SCHEDULING SYSTEMS

BACKGROUND

Delivery vehicle driver efficiency is a key objective for transportation companies. Accordingly, there is an ongoing need to develop new technologies to enhance driver efficiency.

BRIEF SUMMARY

A routing and scheduling computer system comprising at least one processor and memory, the computer system being configured for: (A) defining a geofence surrounding a first geographic area; (B) receiving a first set of information associated with the first geographic area; (C) determining, based at least in part on the first set of information, a first time estimate, the first time estimate being an estimated amount of time associated with the delivery of a plurality of parcels to one or more respective locations within the first geographic area within a particular delivery cycle; (D) defining a geofence surrounding a second geographic area; (E) receiving a second set of information associated with the second geographic area; (F) determining, based at least in part on the second set of information, a second time estimate, the second time estimate being an estimated amount of time associated with the delivery of a plurality of parcels to one or more respective locations within the second geographic area during the particular delivery cycle; and (G) routing a particular delivery vehicle to make one or more pickups or deliveries in at least one of the first or second geographic areas based at least in part on the first and second estimates of time.

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

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

Figure 1 is a block diagram of one type of system for use in various embodiments of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a block diagram of a telematics device which may be used to collect data in association with embodiments of the present invention;

Figure 3 is a schematic block diagram of an entity capable of operating as a server (e.g., a computer server) in accordance with embodiments of the present invention; and

Figures 4 and 5A-5D are flow charts illustrating the process of assigning
5 different parameters to a geofenced area and using the parameters in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Embodiments of the present invention now will be described more fully
10 hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which some, but not all embodiments of the inventions are shown. Indeed, embodiments of the invention 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. Like
15 numbers refer to like elements throughout.

Overall System

Referring to Figure 1, an illustration of one type of system for use in various embodiments of the present invention is provided. As shown in Figure 1,
20 the system may include one or more delivery vehicles **100** responsible for the pickup and/or delivery of a plurality of packages within a particular delivery area. According to one embodiment, a telematics device **102** may be included within, or otherwise associated with, each delivery vehicle **100** for the purpose of collecting, time-stamping and/or storing vehicle sensor data from a plurality of sensors (not
25 shown) also included within, or otherwise associated with, the delivery vehicle **100**. As discussed in more detail below with regard to Figure 2, collected and time-stamped vehicle sensor data may include, for example, information or data associated with the vehicle's door, ignition, oil pressure, temperature, speed, location, and/or the like.

30 In one embodiment, the telematics device **102** may transmit some or all of the telematics data, via any suitable wired or wireless communication network **130**, to a portable data acquisition device **110** (e.g., cellular telephone, personal digital assistant (PDA), laptop, etc.) operated by a driver associated with the delivery vehicle **100**. The portable data acquisition device **110** may, in turn, transmit, via

the same or different communication network **130**, some or all of the received data to a central server **120**, or similar network entity or mainframe computer system. According to one embodiment, the telematics device **102** may further (or alternatively) transmit some or all of the telematics data directly to the central server **120**, via the same or different communication network **130**. As discussed in more detail below with regard to Figures 3 and 4, in response to receiving: (A) the telematics data from the telematics device **102** and/or the portable data acquisition device **110**; and/or (B) data received from other systems or devices operating in connection with the overall system, the central server **120** may use the data received to assign one or more parameters to each of a plurality of geofenced delivery areas. These parameters may thereafter be used to monitor safety within the geofenced area, schedule delivery of a package within the geofenced area, and/or the like.

According to embodiments of the present invention, the communication network **130** may be capable of supporting communication in accordance with any one or more of a number of second-generation (2G), 2.5G and/or third-generation (3G) mobile communication protocols or the like. More particularly, the network **130** may be capable of supporting communication in accordance with 2G wireless communication protocols IS-136 (TDMA), GSM, and IS-95 (CDMA). Also, for example, the network **130** may be capable of supporting communication in accordance with 2.5G wireless communication protocols GPRS, Enhanced Data GSM Environment (EDGE), or the like. In addition, for example, the network **130** can be capable of supporting communication in accordance with 3G wireless communication protocols such as Universal Mobile Telephone System (UMTS) network employing Wideband Code Division Multiple Access (WCDMA) radio access technology. Some narrow-band AMPS (NAMPS), as well as TACS, network(s) may also benefit from embodiments of the present invention, as should dual or higher mode mobile stations (e.g., digital/analog or TDMA/CDMA/analog phones). As yet another example, the telematics device **102** and portable data acquisition device **110** may be configured to communicate with one another in accordance with techniques such as, for example, radio frequency (RF), Bluetooth™, infrared (IrDA), or any of a number of different wireless networking techniques, including Wireless LAN (WLAN) techniques.

Although the telematics device **102**, portable data acquisition device **110**, and central server **120** are illustrated in Figure 1 as communicating with one another over the same network **130**, these devices may likewise communicate over separate networks. For example, while the telematics device **102** may communicate with the portable data acquisition device **110** over a wireless personal area network (WPAN) using, for example, Bluetooth techniques, the telematics device **102** and/or portable data acquisition device **110** may communicate with the central server **120** over a wireless wide area network (WWAN), for example, in accordance with EDGE, or some other 2.5G wireless communication protocol.

According to one embodiment, in addition to receiving telematics data from the telematics device **102**, the portable data acquisition device **110** may be further configured to collect and transmit telematics data on its own. For example, according to one embodiment, the portable data acquisition device **110** may include a location determining device, such as a Global Positioning System (GPS) device, for providing location information in the form of, for example, latitude and longitude values. In particular embodiments, and as is discussed in more detail below, this location determining device may be used to gather information regarding the location of the driver him- or herself, as opposed to location information associated with the delivery vehicle **100**, which may be collected (or determined) by the telematics device **102**.

The portable data acquisition device **110** may be, for example, any device associated with a carrier (e.g., UPS, FedEx, or the United States Postal Service (USPS)). In various embodiments, the portable data acquisition device **110** may be capable of receiving data via one or more input units or devices, such as a keypad, touchpad, barcode scanner, radio frequency identification (RFID) reader, interface card (e.g., modem, etc.) or receiver. The portable data acquisition device **110** may further be capable of storing data to one or more volatile or non-volatile memory modules, and outputting the data via one or more output units or devices, for example, by displaying data to the user operating the device **110**, or by transmitting data, for example over the communication network **130**. One type of portable data acquisition device **110**, which may be used in conjunction with embodiments of the present invention is the Delivery Information Acquisition Device (DIAD) presently utilized by UPS.

Telematics Device

Reference is now made to Figure 2, which provides a more detailed block diagram of a telematics device **102** in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. As noted above and explained in greater detail below, the
5 telematics device **102** may collect vehicle sensor data and transmit the data to the portable data acquisition device **110** and/or central server **120** via one of several communication methods.

In one embodiment, the telematics device **102** may include some or all of the following components: a processor **201**, a location-determining device or
10 sensor **202** (e.g., GPS sensor), a real-time clock **203**, J-Bus protocol architecture **204**, an electronic control module (ECM) **205**, a port **206** for receiving data from discrete sensors in a vehicle **100**, a communication port **207** for receiving instruction data, a radio frequency identification (RFID) tag **305**, a power source **208**, a data radio **209** for communication with a WWAN, a WLAN and/or a
15 WPAN, FLASH, DRAM, and NVRAM memory modules **303**, and a programmable logic controller (PLC) **304**. In an alternative embodiment, the RFID tag **305**, the location sensor **202**, and the PLC **304** may be located in the vehicle **100** external to the telematics device **102**.

In one embodiment, the location sensor **202**, which may be one of several
20 components available in the telematics device **102**, may be compatible with a low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite system or a Department of Defense (DOD) satellite system. Alternatively, triangulation may be used in connection with a cellular device associated with a particular vehicle and/or the vehicle's driver and with various cellular towers positioned at various locations throughout a geographic
25 area in order to determine the location of the delivery vehicle **100** and/or its driver. The location sensor **202** may be used to receive position, time, and speed data. The sensor **202** may also allow the telematics device **102** to communicate to the central server **120**, or similar network entity or mainframe computer system, via a WWAN. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that more than one
30 location sensor **202** may be utilized, and that other similar techniques may likewise be used to collect geo-location information associated with the delivery vehicle **100** and/or its driver.

In one embodiment, the ECM **205** with J-Bus protocol **204** may be one of several components available in the telematics device **102**. The ECM **205**, which may be a scalable and subservient device to the telematics device **102**, may have data processor capability to decode and store analog and digital inputs and ECM
5 data streams from vehicle systems and sensors **410**, **420**. The ECM **205** may further have data processing capability to collect and present vehicle data to the J-Bus **204** (which may allow transmittal to the telematics device **102**), and output standard vehicle diagnostic codes when received from a vehicle's J-Bus-compatible on-board controllers **420** or sensors **410**.

10 In one embodiment, on/off sensors, which register a voltage amount that corresponds with an on/off condition of the sensor, may be disposed within the vehicle **100** for collecting data. For example, one or more door position sensors may be connected, for example, to the driver side, passenger side, and bulkhead doors, and may register 0V when the door with which the sensor is associated is in
15 an open position, and 12V when the door is closed. As another example, an ignition sensor may register 0V when the vehicle **100** is turned off and 12V when the vehicle **100** is turned on. As yet another example, a backing light sensor may register 0V when the vehicles' backing lights are off and 12V when the vehicle's backing lights are on.

20 In one embodiment, variable voltage sensors, which may be used to register variations in voltage, may also be disposed within a vehicle **100** for collecting data. For example, oil pressure sensors may detect the vehicle's oil pressure by registering a particular voltage that corresponds to a particular oil pressure. The voltage of the sensor may increase or decrease proportionately with increases or
25 decreases in oil pressure. Other examples of variable voltage sensors may include vehicle temperature and/or vehicle speed sensors.

In one embodiment, an instruction data receiving port **207** may be one of several components available in the telematics device **102**. Embodiments of the instruction data receiving port **207** may include an Infrared Data Association
30 (IrDA) communication port, a data radio, and/or a serial port. The instruction receiving data port **207** may receive instructions for the telematics device **102**. These instructions may be specific to the vehicle **100** in which the telematics device **102** is installed, specific to the geographical area in which the vehicle **100** will be traveling, or specific to the function the vehicle **100** serves within the fleet.

In one embodiment, a radio frequency identification (RFID) tag **305** may be one of several components available for use with the telematics device **102**. One embodiment of the RFID tag **305** may include an active RFID tag, which comprises at least one of the following: (1) an internal clock; (2) a memory; (3) a microprocessor; and (4) at least one input interface for connecting with sensors located in the vehicle **100** or the telematics device **102**. Another embodiment of the RFID tag **305** may be a passive RFID tag.

One or more RFID tags **305** may be internal to the telematics device **102**, wired to the telematics device **102**, and/or proximate to the telematics device **102**. Each RFID tag **305** may communicate wirelessly with RFID interrogators within a certain geographical range of each other. RFID interrogators may be located external to the vehicle **100** and/or within the portable data acquisition device **110** that can be carried in and out of the vehicle **100** by the vehicle's operator.

In one embodiment, the data radio **209** may be one of several components available in the telematics device **102**. The data radio **209** may be configured to communicate with a WWAN, WLAN, or WPAN, or any combination thereof. In one embodiment, a WPAN data radio provides connectivity between the telematics device **102** and peripheral devices used in close proximity to the vehicle **100**, such as the portable data acquisition device **110**, a local computer, and/or a cellular telephone. As mentioned above, in one embodiment of the invention, a WPAN, such as, for example, a Bluetooth™ network (IEEE 802.15.1 standard compatible) may be used to transfer information between the telematics device **102** and the portable data acquisition device **110**. In other embodiments, WPANs compatible with the IEEE 802 family of standards may be used. In one embodiment, the data radio **209** may be a Bluetooth™ serial port adapter that communicates wirelessly via WPAN to a Bluetooth™ chipset located in the portable data acquisition device **110**, or other peripheral device. As discussed above with regard to Figure 1, and as one of ordinary skill in the art will readily recognize, other wireless protocols exist and can likewise be used in association with embodiments of the present invention.

As discussed above with regard to Figure 1, in one embodiment, vehicle performance and tracking data collected by the telematics device **102** (i.e., telematics data) may be transmitted via a WPAN to, and stored by, the portable data acquisition device **110** until a communication link can be established between the portable data acquisition device **110** and the central server **120**, or similar

network entity or mainframe computer system. In one embodiment, the portable data acquisition device **110** may display telematics data for the driver's viewing, which may be helpful in troubleshooting vehicle performance problems and showing delivery route progress and instructions. In an alternative embodiment, the portable data acquisition device **110** may be a hand-held data acquisition device, such as an iPAQ. The Media Access Control (MAC) address, which is a code unique to each Bluetooth™-enabled device that identifies the device, similar to an Internet protocol address identifying a computer in communication with the Internet, can be communicated to other devices in communication with the WPAN, which may assist in identifying and allowing communication among vehicles, cargo, and portable data acquisition devices equipped with Bluetooth™ devices.

Central Server

Referring now to Figure 3, a block diagram of an entity capable of operating as the central server **120**, or similar network entity, is shown in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The entity capable of operating as the central server **120** includes various means for performing one or more functions in accordance with embodiments of the present invention, including those more particularly shown and described herein. It should be understood, however, that one or more of the entities may include alternative means for performing one or more like functions, without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

As shown, the entity capable of operating as the central server **120** can generally include means, such as a processor **310** for performing or controlling the various functions of the entity. For example, according to one embodiment of the present invention, the processor **310** may be configured to perform the operations discussed in more detail below with regard to Figure 4 for assigning various parameters to a geofenced area, wherein the parameters may thereafter be used to monitor performance, assist in providing a delivery route, more accurately price the pick-up and delivery of a package within the geofenced area, and/or the like. In particular, according to one embodiment, the processor **310** may be configured to first define one or more geographic areas within which a package may be picked up or delivered, and then define a geofence surrounding each geographic area. The processor **310** may further be configured to gather information associated with

each geofenced area (e.g., by receiving and analyzing the telematics data collected and transmitted by the telematics device **102** and/or the portable data acquisition device **110** while pick-ups and deliveries were being made in that geofenced area), and to assign one or more parameters to each geofenced area. While the foregoing
5 describes a single processor **310**, as one of ordinary skill in the art will recognize, the central server **120** may comprise multiple processors operating in conjunction with one another to perform the functionality described herein.

In one embodiment, the processor **310** is in communication with and/or includes memory **320**, such as volatile and/or non-volatile memory that stores
10 content, data or the like. For example, the memory **320** typically stores content transmitted from, and/or received by, the entity. Also for example, the memory **320** typically stores software applications, instructions or the like for the processor **310** to perform steps associated with operation of the entity in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. For example, the memory **320** may store
15 applications, instructions, or the like for the processor **310** to perform the steps discussed below with regard to Figure 4 for assigning various parameters to each of one or more geofenced areas.

In addition to the memory **320**, the processor **310** can also be connected to at least one interface or other means for displaying, transmitting and/or receiving
20 data, content or the like. In this regard, the interface(s) can include at least one communication interface **330** or other means for transmitting and/or receiving data, content or the like, as well as at least one user interface that can include a display **340** and/or a user input interface **350**. The user input interface, in turn, can comprise any of a number of devices allowing the entity to receive data from a
25 user, such as a keypad, a touch display, a joystick or other input device.

While reference is made to a central "server" **120**, as one of ordinary skill in the art will recognize, embodiments of the present invention are not limited to a client-server architecture. The system of various embodiments of the present invention is further not limited to a single server, or similar network entity or
30 mainframe computer system. Other similar architectures including one or more network entities operating in conjunction with one another to provide the functionality described herein may likewise be used without departing from the spirit and scope of embodiments of the present invention. For example, a mesh network of two or more personal computers (PCs), or similar electronic devices,

collaborating with one another to provide the functionality described herein in association with the central server **120** may likewise be used without departing from the spirit and scope of embodiments of the present invention.

5 Defining Geographic and/or Geofenced Areas

Referring now to Figure 4, the operations are illustrated that may be taken in order to assign one or more parameters to each of a plurality of geofenced areas, wherein the parameters may be used, for example, to monitor the performance of a delivery vehicle driver operating within the corresponding geofenced area, assist in
10 providing a delivery route for the delivery vehicle driver, more accurately charge for pick-up and/or delivery of a package within the geofenced area, and/or the like. As shown, the process may be begin at Block **401** when a central system, such as the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, a processor **310** or similar means operating on the central server **120**, defines one or more geographic areas or
15 regions within which one or more packages may be picked up and/or delivered. Each geographic area may, for example, represent an area in which a single driver may be capable of handling all package pick ups and deliveries within a given delivery cycle (e.g., one eight-hour day). In one embodiment, the geographic areas may be defined based on a predefined size requirement (e.g., a new geographic
20 area may occur every 100,000 square feet). Alternatively, the geographic area may be defined based on zoning classifications associated with different geographic areas (e.g., an office park may make up an individual geographic area). In this embodiment, the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the central server
25 **120**) may first download information regarding zoning classifications, for example, from a website operated by a government entity, or some other third-party source.

In another embodiment, the central system may review historic data gathered in association with the deliveries and pickups made within a particular geographic area to determine the area's zoning classification. For example, the
30 package information associated with packages picked up or delivered within a particular geographic area may indicate that the delivery/pickup was "residential" or "commercial," indicating that the geographic area itself should be classified as residential or commercial, respectively.

In another embodiment, one or more of the geographic areas may be defined based on the existence of one or more housing subdivisions, office parks, and/or the like. For example, each housing subdivision, or a combination of two or more abutting housing subdivisions, may make up a defined geographic area. This
5 may depend, for example, on the square footage of each subdivision and/or the number of houses (and, therefore, potential stops) within each subdivision.

In yet another alternative embodiment, one or more of the geographic areas may be defined based on the average number of stops and/or the frequency of stops within certain geographic areas, as determined, for example, based on information
10 gathered regarding past pick ups and deliveries within that geographic area. For example, each geographic area may be limited to a certain number of regular stops.

According to various embodiments of the present invention, a geographic area may overlap or reside wholly within another geographic area. Geographic areas may, for example, be as small as a single delivery/pickup stop or a suite
15 within a commercial building, or as large as an entire town. According to various embodiments, the geographic areas need not be continuous. In other words, a geographic area may specifically exclude an area that would otherwise fall within the geographic area (e.g., such that the geographic area forms a donut or similar shape around the excluded area).

20 As one of ordinary skill in the art will recognize in light of this disclosure, the geographic areas may be defined based on any number and combination of factors including, but not limited to, those described above. The foregoing examples are, therefore, provided for exemplary purposes only and should not be taken in any way as limiting embodiments of the present invention to the examples
25 provided.

Once the geographic areas have been defined, the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, a processor **310** or similar means operating on the central server **120**) may, at Block **402**, define a geofence surrounding each of the defined geographic areas, such as a neighborhood. The
30 geofence may be defined, for example, by the latitude and longitude coordinates associated with various points along the perimeter of the geographic area. Alternatively, the geofence may be defined based on latitude and longitude coordinates of the center, as well as the radius, of the geographic area. The geographic area, and therefore the geofence, may be any shape including, but not

limited to, a circle, square, rectangle, an irregular shape, or the like. In addition, it is not necessary that the geofenced areas be the same shape or size. Alternatively, any combination of shapes and sizes may be used in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

- 5 Once the geofence has been defined for a geographic area, the coordinates (or similar means for defining the geofenced areas) may be stored in a database associated with the central system. In addition, the coordinates (or similar means for defining the geofenced area) may be (a) uploaded to the data acquisition device and/or telematics device **102** associated with the driver and delivery vehicle **100**,
10 respectively, and (b) assigned to pick up and deliver packages for that area.

Gathering Information about Geographic and/or Geofenced Areas

- Next, the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the central server
15 **120**) may gather information in association with each geographic area (Block **403**). For example, as discussed above, according to one embodiment, the central system may receive telematics data that has been collected, in real-time, by the telematics device **102** and/or the portable data acquisition device **110**, while a driver was operating a delivery vehicle **100** within the corresponding geographic area. The
20 telematics data may include, for example: (1) time data; (2) geographic position data associated with the vehicle **100** and/or the driver (e.g., based on a GPS, or similar, receiver associated with: (A) the vehicle and/or (B) the portable data acquisition device **110** operated by the driver); (3) speed data; (4) distance data (e.g., mileage data); (5) ignition data; (6) data associated with one or more of the
25 doors of the vehicle **100** being opened and/or closed; and/or (7) other data.

- The telematics data received may indicate, or be used to calculate, among other things, the time the vehicle entered and/or exited the geofenced area (e.g., based on time and location information associated with the vehicle). This information, along with additional telematics data indicating when the vehicle
30 ignition is turned on and off and/or when a vehicle door is opened and closed, may further indicate the number of stops performed while the vehicle was operated within the geofenced area.

For example, location information received by the location sensor (e.g., GPS sensor) included in the telematics device (or the vehicle itself) may indicate that the delivery vehicle has entered the geofenced area. Once inside the geofenced area, the telematics device may monitor the ignition sensor to determine
5 when the ignition is turned on and off and/or the vehicle's door position sensors to determine when the driver side, passenger side and/or bulkhead door is opened and closed. The collection of this information may be used to determine how many times the delivery vehicle was stopped to make a delivery or pickup (e.g., how many times the ignition was turned off and/or how many times the door(s) were
10 opened) within the geofenced area. If the delivery vehicle enters and exits the geofenced area more than once within a given delivery cycle (e.g., one eight-hour shift), the number of stops made during each visit into the geofenced area may be considered individually and/or combined to determine a total number of stops within the geofenced area during the delivery cycle.

15 The telematics data received may further indicate, with regard to each stop made within the geofenced area, the amount of time spent and the distance traversed by a delivery vehicle itself and/or the delivery vehicle driver (e.g., the time/distance associated with having the driver walk from the vehicle to a particular dropoff location). In one embodiment, the time spent making a
20 particular delivery may be determined, for example, by taking the difference between the time at which the vehicle's ignition sensor indicates that the vehicle ignition is turned off at the particular stop and the time at which the ignition sensor indicates that the vehicle's ignition is turned back on at the stop. The distance traversed (e.g., walked) by a delivery vehicle driver in association with a
25 delivery/pickup stop may be determined, for example, in one of at least three ways.

First, according to one embodiment of the present invention, the distance traversed by a delivery vehicle driver in association with a delivery/pickup stop may be determined by tracking the driver's location (e.g., using a GPS device associated with the driver or the driver's handheld device) as the driver moves
30 between: (1) the driver's location at the moment the vehicle's ignition is turned off at the particular stop, and (2) his or her location up to the moment when the delivery vehicle's ignition is turned back on at the particular stop.

In a second embodiment, the distance traversed by a delivery vehicle driver in association with a delivery/pickup stop may be determined based, at least in part, on: (1) the location of the vehicle at the moment the vehicle's ignition is turned off (e.g., as determined by the GPS, or similar device in the vehicle); and
5 (2) the location of (e.g., latitude and longitude coordinates associated with) a drop-off location (e.g., a particular door) at that particular stop (e.g., the front door of a particular house). For example, the system may simply calculate the distance between the location of the vehicle and the drop-off location at the particular stop (e.g., along a straight path, or along a particular path of travel). In various
10 embodiments, the latitude and longitude coordinates of a drop off location associated with each of various stops (e.g., the front or side door of a residential home) may have been obtained and stored in memory over time as deliveries/pickups are made to those stops. For example, the location of an electronic device associated with the delivery vehicle driver or the delivery vehicle
15 (e.g., DIAD) may have been captured at the moment the driver indicated that the package was delivered to the recipient or picked up from the shipper. Once gathered, this information may thereafter be used to, among other things, identify the pickup/delivery location for the particular stop and, therefore, the distance traversed by the driver in order to make future pickups/deliveries at that stop.

20 According to a third embodiment, the distance traversed by a delivery vehicle driver in association with a delivery/pickup stop may be determined based, at least in part, on: (1) the latitude and longitude coordinates associated with the pickup location at a particular stop; and (2) the point on the street segment that is the shortest distance from those latitude and longitude coordinates. This may be
25 done, for example, using the techniques described above.

Alternatively, or in addition, the telematics data may indicate the vehicle's speed at various times and locations within the geofenced area, and/or the number of miles traversed when the vehicle was operated within the geofenced area during, for example, a given delivery cycle (e.g., one eight-hour shift). With regard to the
30 latter, as above, if the delivery vehicle makes multiple visits into the geofenced area during a particular delivery cycle, the mileage driven within the geofenced area during the delivery cycle may be calculated by summing the mileage accumulated during the multiple visits.

Using the aforementioned data received and/or calculated in association with a plurality of delivery vehicles operating within the geofenced area over a certain period of time, the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the central server **120**) may calculate, for example, for a given delivery cycle (e.g., one, eight-hour shift), the average time spent and/or miles traversed within the geofenced area, the average number of stops performed, the average amount of time spent and distance traversed per stop, the average speed conducted, and/or the like. The data received may further be used, for example, to calculate an average speed associated with various segments within different geofenced areas, as well as the average speed of those segments at different times of the day. As one of ordinary skill in the art will recognize, the foregoing examples of types of telematics data collected, as well as calculations which may be preformed based on the data received, are provided for exemplary purposes only and should not be taken in any way as limiting the scope of embodiments of the present invention to the examples provided. In contrast, other types of telematics data may be gathered and other types of calculations may be performed without departing from the spirit and scope of embodiments of the present invention.

Alternatively, or in addition, in order to gather information associated with the geofenced area, the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) may receive zoning information associated with each geofenced area. As noted above, this information may be received, for example, by downloading the information to the central system from a suitable source, such as a government-operated website, or some other third-party source.

In one embodiment, the zoning information received may include, for example, a designation of whether the geographic area as a whole, or sub-areas within the geographic area, are zoned for open space, residential, agricultural, commercial or industrial activities. The zoning information may further indicate, for example, whether a residential area is for single family homes, multi-tenant homes, high-rise apartment buildings, or the like. As also noted above, the zoning information may be determined based on a historical analysis of the information associated with packages picked up and/or delivered within the geofenced areas.

According to one embodiment, the zoning information, either received from a government-operated website or some other third-party source, or determined based on a historical analysis of previous pickups/deliveries made within the area, may be used by the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) to define a zoning classification for the geofenced area. In one embodiment, the zoning classification may have a direct correlation to the government-specified zoning designation (e.g., a geofenced area including only land that has been zoned commercial, may be classified as commercial by the central server **120**).

Alternatively, where, for example, the zoning information associated with a particular geofenced area includes multiple different designations, the central system may define a zoning classification that corresponds to the most predominate zoning designation (e.g., a geofenced area including a small area zoned commercial, but a larger area zoned residential, may be classified residential by the central system). The zoning classification defined by the central system may have more or less detail than the government-specified zoning designation (e.g., the government may zone an area residential – single family homes, while the central server **120** may define the zoning classification as merely residential, and vice versa) and/or the zone identification included in the package information provided by the customer.

In yet another embodiment, in order to gather information associated with the geofenced area, the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) may further be configured to receive an indication of the government-assigned speed limit(s) associated with the geofenced area. As above, in various embodiments, this information may be downloaded from a suitable source, such as a government-operated website. As one of ordinary skill in the art will recognize, each geofenced area may have only one, or alternatively multiple, government-assigned speed limit(s) associated therewith.

30

Entry of Speed Limit Information and Other Information

In one embodiment, information regarding the government-assigned speed limit associated with various street segments within a geofenced area may be continuously gathered and updated by delivery vehicle drivers themselves as they
5 traverse the geofenced area. For example, according to one embodiment, a driver may, as he or she is driving within a particular area, upload the current speed limit each time the speed limit changes in a particular geographical area (including, for example, when the speed limit changes due to a construction zone). This may be done, for example, by having the driver stop his vehicle when he sees a particular
10 speed limit sign, and then having the driver manually enter the speed limit information posted on the sign into a handheld device (e.g., a DIAD), or other computing device, such as an on-board computing device associated with the vehicle.

In other embodiments, the driver's vehicle or handheld device may be
15 equipped with voice recognition software. In such embodiments, the driver may, for example, press a "speed limit input" button on the vehicle's console, or on the driver's handheld device, and then simply say the current speed limit out loud. The speech recognition software then converts the speed limit information that is conveyed verbally by the driver into corresponding digital data and saves the
20 information to memory.

In particular embodiments, rather than pressing a "speed limit input" button to verbally enter speed limit data, the user may issue a specific voice command, such as "enter speed limit information," which is recognized by an on-board computer associated with the vehicle or the user's handheld device. The user may
25 then convey the speed limit information verbally as discussed above.

In particular embodiments, as (or after) the speed limit information is received from the driver, the information is uploaded to a central server. This may be done either substantially in real time (e.g., as the information is being received from the driver), or at a particular time after the information is received from the
30 driver (e.g., after the vehicle returns to a particular location where information stored in the vehicle's on-board computer is to be uploaded to a central server for processing). In particular embodiments, the speed limit information may be linked (e.g., automatically) to the vehicle's location at at least approximately the moment (e.g., at the moment) that the speed limit information was captured by the system

or uploaded. For example, if the driver stops the vehicle and inputs a speed limit of “45 mph” into the system at 4:45 pm on August 12, 2009, the system may: (1) retrieve information from GPS sensors on the vehicle or in the driver’s handheld device to determine the location of the driver when the driver entered the speed limit information; and (2) save, in memory, an indication that the speed limit at that particular location is 45 mph.

In particular embodiments, the system may be adapted to use the driver’s location information to identify the closest street segment to the driver. In various embodiments, the system assumes that the speed limit entered by the driver corresponds to that particular street segment. The system then saves, in the system’s memory, data indicating that the speed limit on the particular street segment is the speed limit entered by the driver when the driver was close to, or on, that particular street segment.

As noted above, the vehicle’s location at a particular time may be determined using a location sensor, such as a GPS sensor, on the delivery vehicle **100**. This may serve to provide accurate, up-to-date speed limit information associated with each segment of each street within a particular geofenced area (or other area).

In yet another embodiment, an average of the actual speed of the driver may be used to estimate the government-assigned speed limit within a particular geographical area. In particular, the speed that the delivery vehicle **100** is being operated within the geofenced area throughout a given period of time may be detected and accumulated. For example, the system may track the average speed of fleet vehicles traveling within a particular geofenced area over a predetermined number of days and use this average speed to estimate the speed limit within the area. In particular embodiments, one or more of the fastest and the slowest times accumulated may be thrown out, and an average may be taken of the remaining speeds in order to provide an estimate of the speed limit within the area.

In various embodiments, the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the central server **120**) may further be configured to gather information associated with the packages picked up and/or delivered within the geofenced area. This information may include, for example, the cost, size, classification (e.g., “residential” or “commercial”), sender, recipient, and/or the like, associated with

individual shipments, the overall number of items shipped within a given period of time, and/or the like.

Assigning Parameters to Geographic and/or Geofenced Areas

5 Turning again to Figure 4, using the information received, the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) may, at Block **404**, assign one or more parameters to each of the geofenced areas. Once assigned, these parameters may be stored in a suitable database, such as the database associated with the central
10 system. In particular embodiments, the parameters may be stored in the central system's database in conjunction with the previously stored geofence coordinates corresponding to the geofenced area. These parameters may thereafter be used, for example, to monitor the performance of a delivery vehicle driver operating within the geofenced area, to assist in providing a delivery route to the delivery vehicle
15 driver, to provide more accurate pricing for the pickup and delivery of packages within the geofenced area, and/or the like. In one embodiment, the parameters may include, for example, a backup limit, speed limit (which may be, for example, a legally binding speed limit or a target maximum speed limit assigned by a non-government entity, such as the owner of a fleet of vehicles operating within the
20 geofenced area), plan time, cost per package and/or the like. These parameters are discussed in greater detail below. Depending upon the parameter assigned, a different set of operations may be performed by the central system. Examples of these operations are illustrated in Figures 5A through 5D.

 For example, according to one embodiment, a "backup limit," which may
25 refer to the maximum number of times a driver is permitted to back up his or her vehicle **100** while operating the vehicle **100** within the corresponding geofenced area, may be assigned to a particular geofenced area. The maximum number of backups may refer, for example, to the number of backups made within a given delivery cycle (e.g., one, eight-hour shift), a given day, or within each visit to the
30 geofenced area. For the latter, the system may be configured to reset the count of backups for a particular driver each time the driver exits and reenters the geofenced area.

In one embodiment, the backup limit may be defined by the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) based on the zoning classification defined for the geofenced area at Block **403**. For example, the backup limit associated with a geofenced area that has been classified “residential” may be less than the backup limit associated with a geofenced area that has been classified “commercial” or “industrial.” Accordingly, in one embodiment of the present invention, the central system may access a look-up table that includes various zoning classifications and corresponding permitted numbers of backups in order to assign the appropriate backup limit in a particular situation. Alternatively, or in addition, the backup limit may further be correlated, to some extent, with the average number of stops the driver makes within the geofenced area (e.g., based on the telematics data received and analyzed at Block **403**). For example, a first area classified as residential having a higher average number of stops than a second area also classified as residential may have a higher backup limit than the second residential area.

Where, for example, the parameter assigned to the geofenced area is a backup limit (as determined at Block **405**), the number of times a driver backs up his or her vehicle **100** while operating within the geofenced area may be monitored (Block **501a**), and if it is determined, at Block **502a**, that the driver has exceeded the backup limit assigned to the geofenced area within a particular delivery cycle or entry into the geofenced area (depending on how the backup limit is defined, as described above), the central system may generate an alert (Block **503a**). In particular, as discussed above, according to one embodiment, part of the telematics data received by the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) from the telematics device **102** may include an indication of when the backing light(s) of the delivery vehicle **100** is turned on and off (e.g., using an on/off sensor). The central system may use this information to determine when the delivery vehicle **100** is backing up and calculate, and/or keep track of, the number of times this is performed within a given delivery cycle (e.g., a single day). If the number of times the user backs up exceeds the backup limit associated with the geofenced area within a particular delivery cycle, a particular visit or entry into the geofenced area, and/or the like, the central system may generate an alert, which may, for example,

be transmitted to the portable data acquisition device **110** operated by the driver and output to the driver of the vehicle **100**. The portable data acquisition device **110** may output the alert, for example, in the form of an audio and/or visual output (e.g., an audio alarm or a message on a display screen associated with the portable data acquisition device **110**). Alternatively, or in addition, the alert may be used to generate a report associated with the driver and stored, for example, on a database associated with the central system.

In an alternative embodiment, the portable data acquisition device **110**, instead of the central system, may receive the telematics data indicating when the delivery vehicle **100** is being backed up, and generate an alert when the number of times the delivery vehicle **100** is backed up within a given delivery cycle exceeds the backup limit. In this embodiment, the portable data acquisition device **110** may bypass the central system altogether. In addition, however, the portable data acquisition device **110** may communicate the alert to the central system, so that the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) may store an indication of the alert in the driver's record.

Another example of a parameter that may be assigned to a geofenced area may be a speed limit, or the maximum speed a driver is permitted to reach (e.g., according to an established set of driver performance guidelines) while operating his or her delivery vehicle **100** within the corresponding geofenced area. According to one embodiment, the speed limit assigned to the geofenced area may be defined based on a government-assigned speed limit(s) associated with that geofenced area. For example, where more than one government-assigned speed limit exists within the geofenced area, the speed limit assigned by the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) to the geofenced area may correspond to the lowest government-assigned speed limit, the highest government-assigned speed limit, and/or an average government-assigned speed limit for the area. Where, for example, there is no government-assigned speed limit (e.g., in a parking lot), the central system may assign a default speed limit to the geofenced area (e.g., 10 miles per hour).

Where, for example, the parameter assigned to the geofenced area is a speed limit, the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) may monitor the speed of a delivery vehicle **100** being operated within the geofenced area (Block **501b**). In various embodiments, if it is determined, at Block **501b**, that the vehicle **100** has exceeded a speed limit associated with the geofenced area (e.g., the speed limit assigned to the geofenced area by the central system, as described above), the central system may generate an appropriate alert (Block **503b**). In particular, as above with regard to the backup limit, according to one embodiment, part of the telematics data received by the central system from the telematics device **102** may include an indication of the speed of the delivery vehicle **100**. The central system may use this information to monitor whether the delivery vehicle's speed exceeds the speed limit assigned to the geofenced area. If the speed of the delivery vehicle **100** exceeds the speed limit associated with the geofenced area, the central system may generate an alert, which may, for example, be transmitted to the portable data acquisition device **110** operated by the driver of the vehicle **100** and output to the driver, for example, in the form of an audio and/or visual output. Alternatively, or in addition, the alert may be communicated to a report associated with the driver and stored, for example, on a database associated with the central system.

In an alternative embodiment, the portable data acquisition device **110**, instead of the central system, may receive the telematics data indicating the speed of the delivery vehicle **100**, and generate an alert when the speed exceeds the speed limit. In fact, in one embodiment, the portable data acquisition device **110**, and not the telematics device **102**, may include a speed sensor (e.g., a GPS unit) for monitoring the speed of the driver and, in effect the delivery vehicle **100**. In either embodiment, the portable data acquisition device **110** may bypass the central system altogether. In addition, however, the portable data acquisition device **110** may communicate the alert to the central system, so that the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) may store an indication of the alert in the driver's record.

Plan Times

According to another embodiment, a “plan time” may be assigned to each geofenced area. In one embodiment, the plan time associated with a geofenced area may refer to the overall amount of time it is anticipated, or planned, that a delivery vehicle driver will spend within the corresponding geofenced area during a given pick-up/delivery cycle (e.g., within a single day). Alternatively, or in addition, the plan time may refer to the amount of time it is expected that a delivery vehicle driver will spend per package picked up or delivered within the geofenced area. According to one embodiment, this parameter (e.g., plan time per package) may be combined with the average or actual number of packages picked up or delivered within the geofenced area within a given pick-up/delivery cycle to determine the overall plan time associated with the geofenced area.

In either case, the plan time (e.g., the overall plan time or the plan time per package) may be calculated, for example, based, at least in part, on the telematics data received (at Block **403**) from the telematics device **102** and/or portable data acquisition device **110** including, for example, the time spent and distance (e.g., mile or kilometers) traversed within the geofenced area by a plurality of delivery vehicles **100** over a period of time, the average time spent and distance traversed (e.g., walked) by the delivery vehicle driver per stop within the geofenced area, the average speed at which the vehicle **100** was operated within the geofenced area and, more specifically, at certain segments within the geofenced area and at certain times of the day.

If a plan time parameter is assigned to the geofenced area (as determined at Block **405**), the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one embodiment, the processor **310** or similar means operating on the server) may use the plan time in at least one of two ways, as determined at Block **501c**.

In particular, according to one embodiment, the plan time associated with a geofenced area (e.g., the plan time per package picked up or delivered within the geofenced area) may be used to monitor the performance of a delivery vehicle driver operating within the geofenced area (Block **502c**). For example, using the schedule of deliveries and pickups to occur within the geofenced area assigned to a particular delivery vehicle driver for a given delivery cycle (e.g., one eight-hour shift) and the plan time associated with the geofenced area (e.g., the amount of time per package), the central system (e.g., the central server **120** and, in one

embodiment, the processor **310** operating on the central server **120**) may generate a “plan time schedule” associated with the delivery vehicle driver. This plan time schedule may indicate what number of packages the delivery vehicle driver should have picked up or delivered at any given time of day.

5 For example, assuming the plan time for a particular geofenced area is five minutes per package (or other predetermined time per package), and the driver has been operating within the geofenced area for approximately 25 minutes (or other predetermined time), according to the plan time schedule, the delivery vehicle driver should have picked up or delivered five separate shipments or packages
10 (e.g., 25 minutes divided by five minutes/package). Deviations from the plan time schedule may illustrate how well the delivery vehicle driver is performing. For example, if the delivery vehicle driver has only delivered or picked up three shipments at that point in time, this may indicate that the delivery vehicle driver is not operating as quickly or as efficiently as he or she should. Alternatively, if the
15 delivery vehicle driver has already picked up or delivered six shipments, this may indicate that the delivery vehicle driver is operating more quickly or efficiently than expected. According to one embodiment, the delivery vehicle driver’s performance may be reviewed at various times throughout his or her shift and/or at the end of the shift. In the latter instance, the delivery vehicle driver may have
20 been able to make up for lost time and/or waste banked time, such that his or her overall performance is on par with what would be expected given the plan time for that geofenced area.

In another embodiment, the plan time associated with a geofenced area may be used to assign a delivery route to each of a plurality of delivery vehicle drivers
25 (Block **503c**). In particular, according to various embodiments, each delivery vehicle driver may be allocated to a single geofenced area, or some combination of two or more geofenced areas, for performing package pickups and deliveries within the allocated area(s). The determination of which and what number of geofenced areas to allocate or assign to the delivery vehicle driver may depend, for
30 example, on the overall plan time associated with the respective geofenced areas (e.g., the amount of time it is expected that the driver will spend within the geofenced area) and/or the plan time per package associated with each geofenced area (e.g., the amount of time it is expected that the driver will spend per package

within the geofenced area) in combination with either an average or the actual number of shipments (pickup or delivery) associated with the geofenced area.

For example, where the overall plan time associated with a geofenced area is relatively short, and the overall plan time associated with a nearby geofenced area is similarly short, a single delivery vehicle driver may be allocated to both
5 geofenced areas (e.g., he or she may be responsible for picking up and delivering all shipments associated with the two geofenced areas). Alternatively, where the plan time associated with a geofenced area is relatively large, a delivery vehicle driver may only be allocated this single geofenced area.

10 In addition to considering the plan time (e.g., overall or per package) associated with a geofenced area, according to various embodiments of the present invention, the distance between each geofenced area, and, in one embodiment, the average speed used to traverse that distance, may likewise be taken into consideration when allocating geofenced areas to delivery vehicle drivers.

15 Finally, according to yet another embodiment a “cost per package” may be assigned to each geofenced area. In one embodiment, the cost per package may refer to the amount in dollars that is associated with the pickup or delivery of a package within the geofenced area. This parameter, like those discussed above, may be calculated, for example, based at least in part on the telematics data
20 received (at Block 403) from the telematics device 102 and/or portable data acquisition device 110, in combination with other information gathered. For example, according to one embodiment, the cost associated with the pickup or delivery of a package within a geofenced area may be based, at least in part, on: (1) the time spent by the delivery vehicle driver at each stop; (2) the delivery vehicle
25 driver’s compensation (e.g., per-hour wage or a portion of the annual salary); (3) the distance traversed in association with each stop; (4) the average distance traversed per unit (e.g., liter or gallon) of fuel (e.g., gasoline) used by the delivery vehicle 100; and/or (5) the average cost per unit of gasoline. Using this information, the central system (e.g., the central server 120 and, in one
30 embodiment, the processor 310 operating on the central server 120) may calculate the average cost (e.g., in Dollars, Euros, or Yen) per stop made to pick up or deliver a package within the geofenced area.

If a cost per package parameter is assigned to the geofenced area (as determined at Block **405**), the central system may, upon receipt of a request to ship a package from or to a location within the geofenced area (Block **501d**), use the assigned cost per package to calculate a fee to charge for the shipment that more accurately reflects the cost to the carrier for the shipment (Block **502d**).

While, in some embodiments, only one of the backup limit, speed limit or plan time may be defined for a particular geofenced area, in other embodiments any number and combination of parameters may be assigned to the geofenced area in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. These parameters may include any parameter which may be used, for example, to monitor safety within a geofenced area and/or assist in scheduling delivery of an item within the geofenced area. As a result, the foregoing examples are provided for exemplary purposes only and should not be taken in any way as limiting the scope of embodiments of the present invention to the examples provided.

15

Conclusion

As should be appreciated, the embodiments may be implemented in various ways, including as methods, apparatus, systems, or computer program products. Accordingly, the embodiments may take the form of an entirely hardware embodiment or an embodiment in which a processor is programmed to perform certain steps. Furthermore, the various implementations may take the form of a computer program product on a computer-readable storage medium having 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.

The 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.

Many modifications and other embodiments of the inventions set forth herein will come to mind to one skilled in the art to which these embodiments of the invention pertain having the benefit of the teachings presented in the foregoing descriptions and the associated drawings. Therefore, it is to be understood that the embodiments of the invention 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.

CLAIMS

We claim:

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1. A routing and scheduling computer system comprising:

at least one processor; and

memory, wherein said computer system is configured for:

defining a geofence surrounding a first geographic area;

10

receiving a first set of information associated with said first geographic area;

determining, based at least in part on said first set of information, a first time estimate, said first time estimate being an estimated amount of time associated with the delivery of a plurality of parcels to one or more respective locations within said first geographic area within a particular delivery cycle;

15

defining a geofence surrounding a second geographic area;

receiving a second set of information associated with said second geographic area;

20

determining, based at least in part on said second set of information, a second time estimate, said second time estimate being an estimated amount of time associated with the delivery of a plurality of parcels to one or more respective locations within said second geographic area during said particular delivery cycle; and

25

routing a particular delivery vehicle to make one or more pickups or deliveries in at least one of said first or second geographic areas based at least in part on said first and second estimates of time.

2. The computer system of Claim 1, wherein:

(A) said computer system is further configured for:

determining, based at least in part on said first set of information, a third estimate of time, said third estimate of time being a period of time that is associated with the pickup of a plurality of parcels from one or more respective locations within said first geographic area within said delivery cycle; and

determining, based at least in part on said second set of information, a fourth estimate of time, said fourth estimate of time being a period of time that is associated with the pickup of a plurality of parcels from one or more respective locations within said second geographic area within said delivery cycle; and

(B) said routing step is based, at least in part, on the determined third and fourth estimates of time.

3. The computer system of Claim 1, wherein, in order to gather information associated with said first and second areas, the computer system is further configured for:

receiving data collected in association with a delivery vehicle or a delivery vehicle driver, said data collected in real time while the delivery vehicle or delivery vehicle driver is operating within said first and second geofenced areas.

4. The computer system of Claim 3, wherein the data collected comprises at least one of time data, geographic position data associated with the delivery vehicle, geographic position data associated with the delivery vehicle driver, speed data, mileage data, or ignition data.

5. The computer system of Claim 4, wherein the computer system is further configured for:

calculating, based at least in part on the data collected, an average number of miles traversed within each of the geofenced areas, wherein the first, second, third, or fourth estimates are determined based at least in part on the calculated average number of miles traversed.

6. The computer system of Claim 4, wherein the computer system is further configured for:

calculating, based at least in part on the data collected, an average time spent within each of the geofenced areas, wherein the first, second, third, or fourth estimates are determined based at least in part on the calculated average time spent.

7. The computer system of Claim 4, wherein the computer system is further configured for:

calculating, based at least in part on the data collected, an average speed conducted within each of the geofenced areas, wherein the first, second, third, or fourth estimates are determined based at least in part on the calculated average speed conducted.

8. The computer system of Claim 4, wherein the computer system is further configured for:

calculating, based at least in part on the data collected, an average number of stops made within each of the geofenced areas, wherein the first, second, third, or fourth estimates are determined based at least in part on the calculated average number of stops made.

9. The computer system of Claim 4, wherein the computer system is further configured for:

5 calculating, based at least in part on the data collected, an average distance walked at each location within each of the geofenced areas in association with a shipment of a package to or from the location, wherein the first, second, third, or fourth estimates are determined based at least in part on the calculated average distance walked.

10 10. The computer system of Claim 1, wherein in order to allocate one or more geofenced areas to a delivery vehicle driver, the computer system is further configured to allocate the one or more geofenced areas based at least in part on a distance between respective geofenced areas.

15 11. A package delivery system comprising:
a fleet of delivery vehicles; and
a routing and scheduling computer system that comprises at least one computer processor and memory, said routing and scheduling computer system being adapted for:

20 defining a first geofence surrounding a first geographic area;
receiving a first set of information associated with said first geographic area;

25 determining, based at least in part on said first set of information, a first time estimate, said first time estimate being an estimated amount of time associated with the delivery of a plurality of parcels to one or more respective locations within said first geographic area within a particular delivery cycle;

defining a second geofence surrounding a second geographic area;

30 receiving a second set of information associated with said second geographic area;

determining, based at least in part on said second set of information, a second time estimate, said second time estimate being an estimated amount of time associated with the delivery of a

plurality of parcels to one or more respective locations within said second geographic area during said particular delivery cycle; and

routing a particular delivery vehicle to handle pickups or deliveries in said first geofenced area based at least in part on said first and second estimates of time.

12. The package delivery system of Claim 11, wherein:

(A) said routing and scheduling computer system is further configured for:

determining, based at least in part on said first set of information, a third estimate of time, said third estimate of time being a period of time that is associated with the pickup of a plurality of parcels from one or more respective locations within said first geographic area within said delivery cycle; and

determining, based at least in part on said second set of information, a fourth estimate of time, said fourth estimate of time being a period of time that is associated with the pickup of a plurality of parcels from one or more respective locations within said second geographic area within said delivery cycle; and

(B) said routing step is based, at least in part, on the determined third and fourth estimates of time.

13. The package delivery system of Claim 11, wherein, in order to gather information associated with said first and second areas, the routing and scheduling computer system is further configured for:

receiving data collected in association with a delivery vehicle or a delivery vehicle driver, said data collected in real time while the delivery vehicle or delivery vehicle driver is operating within said first and second geofenced areas.

14. The package delivery system of Claim 13, wherein the data collected comprises at least one of time data, geographic position data associated with the delivery vehicle, geographic position data associated with the delivery vehicle driver, speed data, mileage data, or ignition data.

5

15. The package delivery system of Claim 14, wherein the routing and scheduling computer system is further configured for:

calculating, based at least in part on the data collected, an average number of miles traversed within each of the geofenced areas, wherein the first, second, third, or fourth estimates are determined based at least in part on the calculated average number of miles traversed.

10

16. The package delivery system of Claim 14, wherein the routing and scheduling computer system is further configured for:

calculating, based at least in part on the data collected, an average time spent within each of the geofenced areas, wherein the first, second, third, or fourth estimates are determined based at least in part on the calculated average time spent.

15

17. The package delivery system of Claim 14, wherein the routing and scheduling computer system is further configured for:

20

calculating, based at least in part on the data collected, an average speed conducted within each of the geofenced areas, wherein the first, second, third, or fourth estimates are determined based at least in part on the calculated average speed conducted.

25

18. The package delivery system of Claim 14, wherein the routing and scheduling computer system is further configured for:

calculating, based at least in part on the data collected, an average number of stops made within each of the geofenced areas, wherein the first, second, third, or fourth estimates are determined based at least in part on the calculated average number of stops made.

30

19. The package delivery system of Claim 14, wherein the routing and scheduling computer system is further configured for:

5 calculating, based at least in part on the data collected, an average distance walked at each location within each of the geofenced areas in association with a shipment of a package to or from the location, wherein the first, second, third, or fourth estimates are determined based at least in part on the calculated average distance walked.

10 20. The package delivery system of Claim 11, wherein in order to allocate one or more geofenced areas to a delivery vehicle driver, the routing and scheduling computer system is further configured to allocate the one or more geofenced areas based at least in part on a distance between respective geofenced areas.

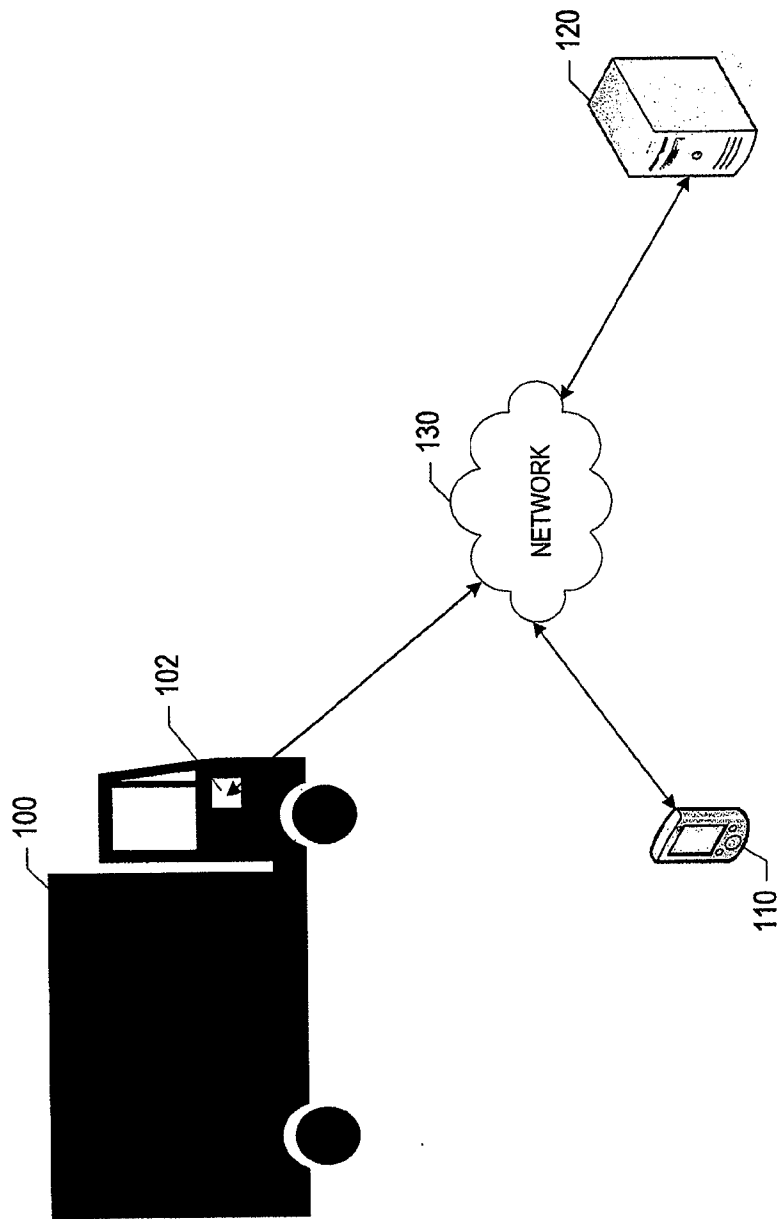


FIG. 1

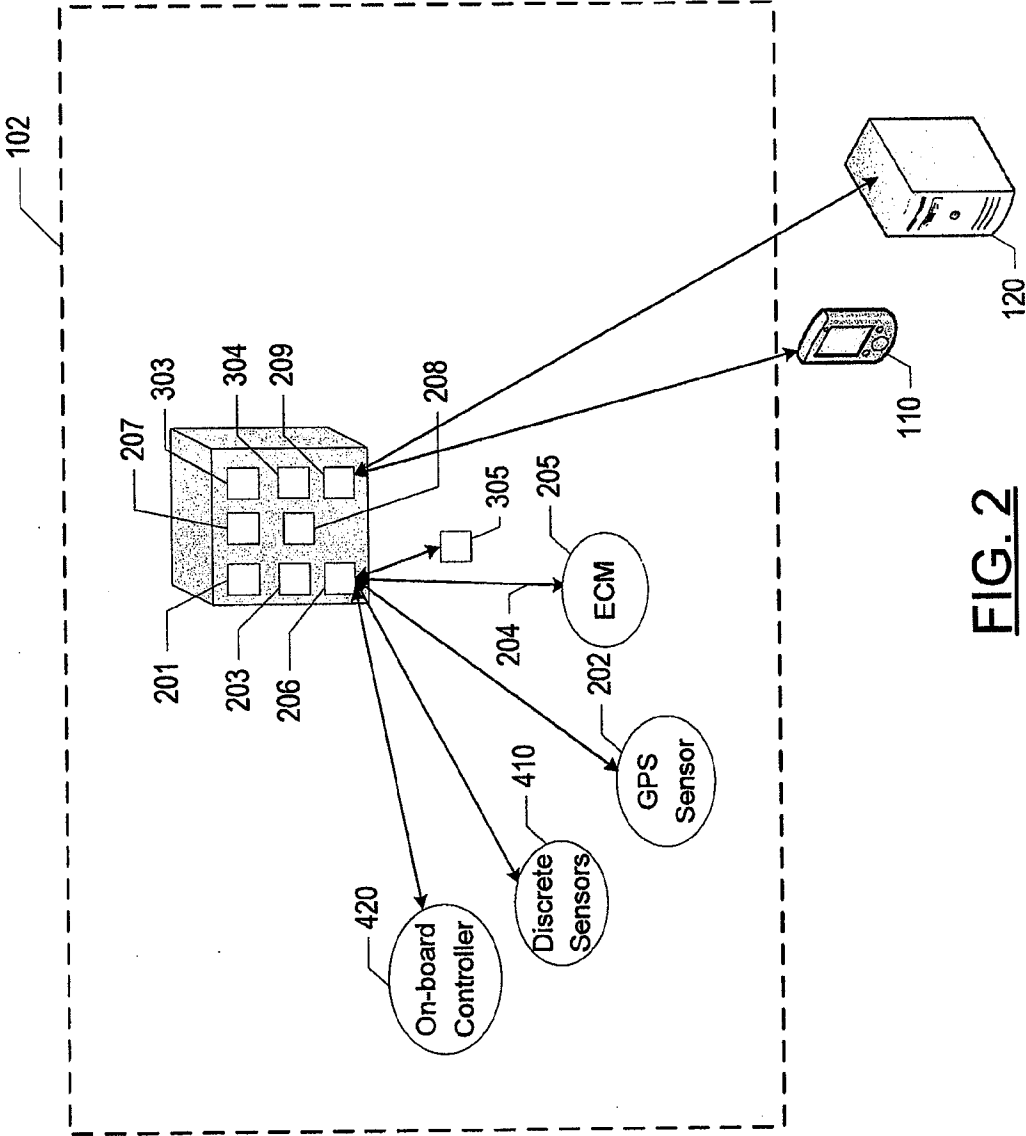
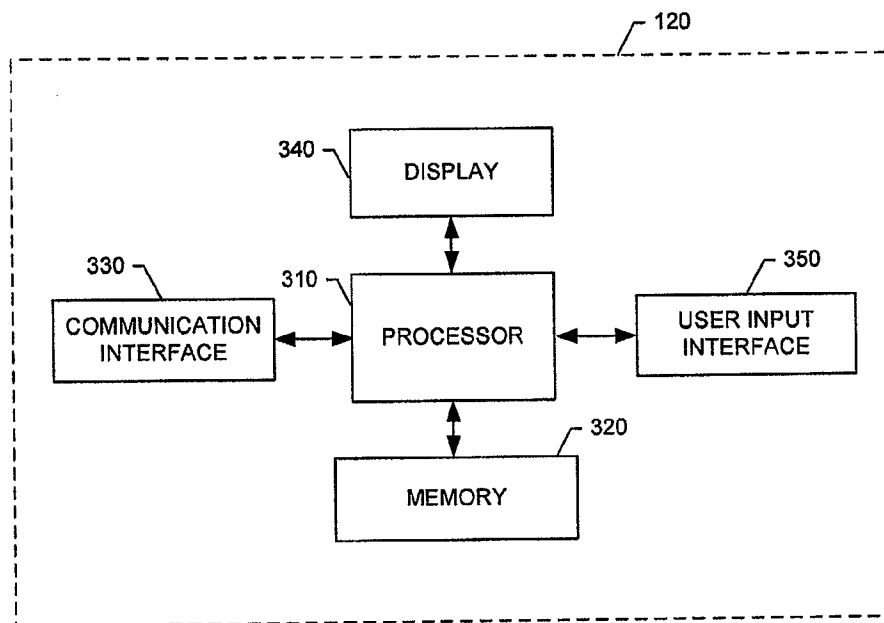
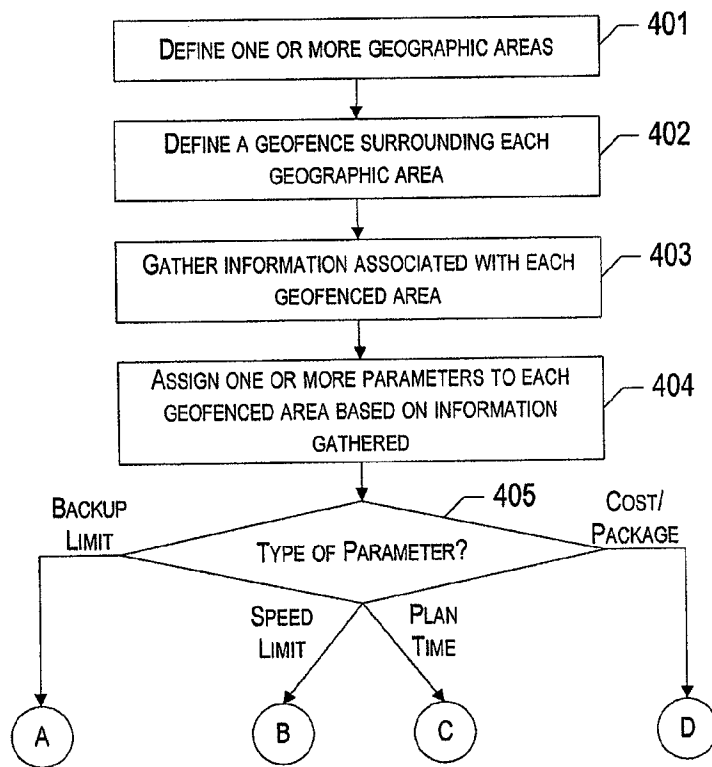


FIG. 2

**FIG. 3**

**FIG. 4**

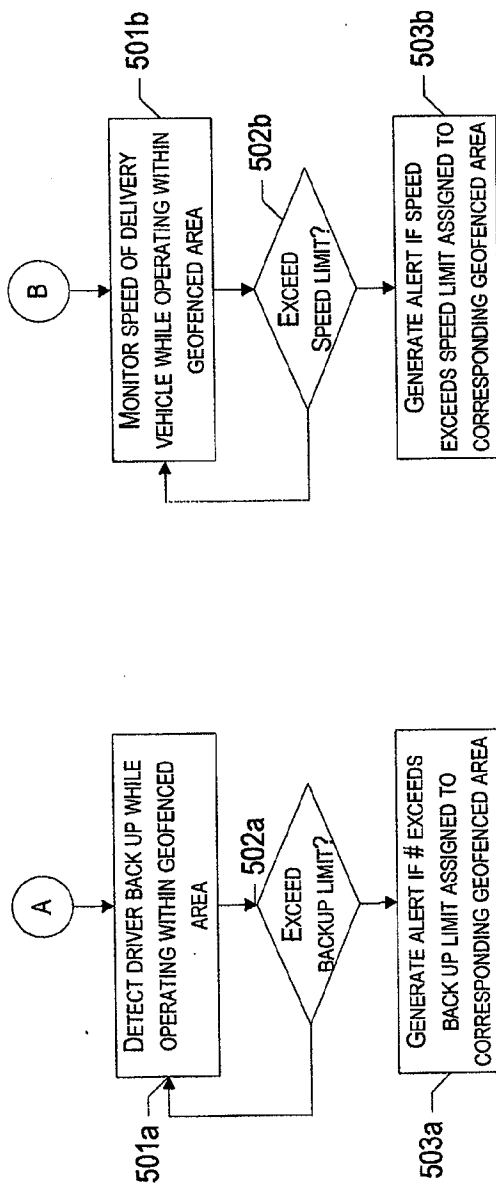


FIG. 5B

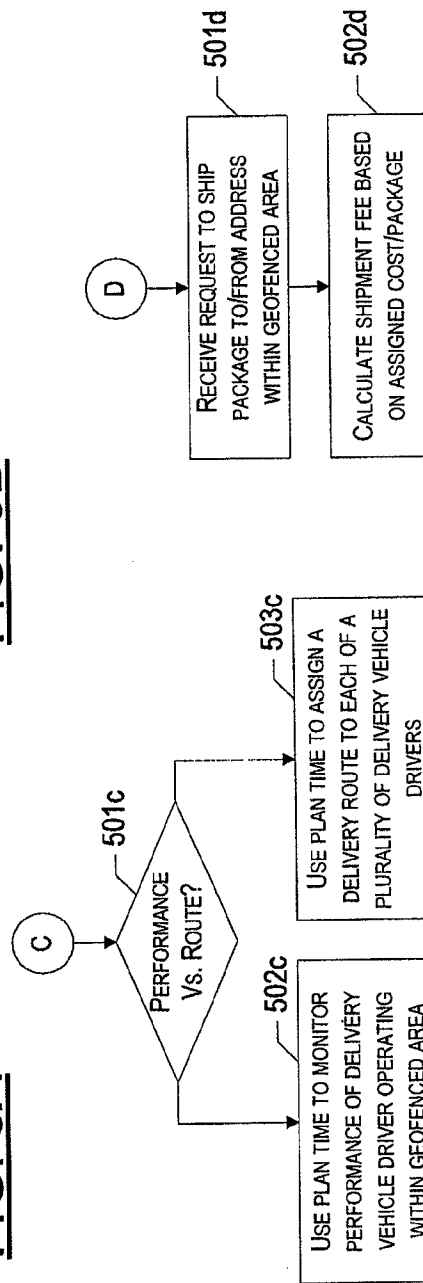


FIG. 5D