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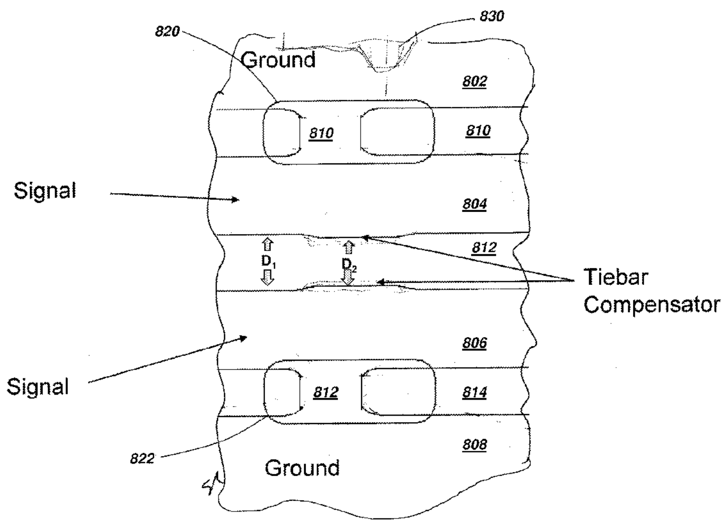


FIG. 8

(57) Abstract: An electrical connector designed for high speed signals. The connector includes one or more features that, when used alone or in combination, extend performance to higher speeds. These features may include compensation for tie bars that are used to hold conductive members in place for molding a housing around the conductive members. Removal of the tie bars during manufacture of the connector may leave artifacts in the conductive members and/or housing, which may degrade electrical performance. However, that degradation may be avoided by features that compensate for the artifacts. The conductive members, for example, may include regions, adjacent tie bar locations, that compensate for portions of the tie bar that are not fully removed.

WO 2014/160338 A1

LEAD FRAME FOR A HIGH SPEED ELECTRICAL CONNECTOR

RELATED APPLICATION

The present application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 61/779,444, filed March 13, 2013, which is hereby incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

This invention relates generally to electrical interconnection systems and more specifically to high density, high speed electrical connectors.

2. Discussion of Related Art

Electrical connectors are used in many electronic systems. It is generally easier and more cost effective to manufacture a system on several printed circuit boards ("PCBs") that are connected to one another by electrical connectors than to manufacture a system as a single assembly. A traditional arrangement for interconnecting several PCBs is to have one PCB serve as a backplane. Other PCBs, which are called daughter boards or daughter cards, are then connected through the backplane by electrical connectors.

Electronic systems have generally become smaller, faster and functionally more complex. These changes mean that the number of circuits in a given area of an electronic system, along with the frequencies at which the circuits operate, have increased significantly in recent years. Current systems pass more data between printed circuit boards and require electrical connectors that are electrically capable of handling more data at higher speeds than connectors of even a few years ago.

One of the difficulties in making a high density, high speed connector is that electrical conductors in the connector can be so close that there can be electrical interference between adjacent signal conductors. To reduce interference, and to otherwise provide desirable electrical properties, shield members are often placed between or around adjacent signal conductors. The shields prevent signals carried on one conductor from creating “crosstalk” on another conductor. The shield also impacts the impedance of each conductor, which can further contribute to desirable electrical properties. Shields can be in the form of grounded metal structures or may be in the form of electrically lossy material.

Other techniques may be used to control the performance of a connector. Transmitting signals differentially can also reduce crosstalk. Differential signals are carried on a pair of conducting paths, called a "differential pair." The voltage difference between the conductive paths represents the signal. In general, a differential pair is designed with preferential coupling between the conducting paths of the pair. For example, the two conducting paths of a differential pair may be arranged to run closer to each other than to adjacent signal paths in the connector. No shielding is desired between the conducting paths of the pair, but shielding may be used between differential pairs. Electrical connectors can be designed for differential signals as well as for single-ended signals.

Maintaining signal integrity can be a particular challenge in the mating interface of the connector. At the mating interface, force must be generated to press conductive elements from the separable connectors together so that a reliable electrical connection is made between the two conductive elements. Frequently, this force is generated by spring characteristics of the mating contact portions in one of the connectors. For example, the mating contact portions of one connector may contain one or more members shaped as beams. As the connectors are pressed together, these beams are deflected by a mating contact portion, shaped as a post or pin, in the other connector. The spring force generated by the beam as it is deflected provides a contact force.

For mechanical reliability, many contacts have multiple beams. In some instances, the beams are opposing, pressing on opposite sides of a mating contact portion of a conductive element from another connector. The beams may alternatively be parallel, pressing on the same side of a mating contact portion.

Regardless of the specific contact structure, the need to generate mechanical force imposes requirements on the shape of the mating contact portions. For example, the mating contact portions must be large enough to generate sufficient force to make a reliable electrical connection.

These mechanical requirements may preclude the use of shielding or may dictate the use of conductive material in places that alters the impedance of the conductive elements in the vicinity of the mating interface. Because abrupt changes in the impedance of a signal conductor can alter the signal integrity of that conductor, the mating contact portions are often accepted as being the noisy portion of the connector.

SUMMARY

In accordance with techniques described herein, improved performance of an electrical connector may be provided with conductive elements configured to electrically compensate for structural artifacts of a manufacturing process.

Accordingly, some embodiments relate to an electrical connector comprising a housing; and a lead frame held within the housing. The lead frame may comprise a plurality of conductive members. The plurality of conductive members may comprise a first conductive member and a second conductive member. The lead frame may comprise an artifact of severing a tie bar between the first conductive member and the second conductive member. The lead frame may also comprise a tie bar compensation portion adjacent the artifact.

In another aspect, a method of manufacturing an electrical connector may be provided. The method may comprise molding a housing around a lead frame, the lead frame comprising a plurality of conductive members, the plurality of conductive members comprising a first conductive member and a second conductive member joined by a tie bar. The method may include, subsequent to the molding, severing the tie bar, leaving an artifact of the severing in the lead frame. The lead frame may comprise a tie bar compensation portion adjacent the artifact.

The foregoing is a non-limiting summary of the invention, which is defined by the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings are not intended to be drawn to scale. In the drawings, each identical or nearly identical component that is illustrated in various figures is represented by a like numeral. For purposes of clarity, not every component may be labeled in every drawing. In the drawings:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an electrical interconnection system illustrating an environment in which embodiments of the invention may be applied;

FIGs. 2A and 2B are views of a first and second side of a wafer forming a portion of the electrical connector of FIG. 1;

FIG. 2C is a cross-sectional representation of the wafer illustrated in FIG. 2B taken along the line 2C-2C;

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional representation of a plurality of wafers stacked together in a connector as in FIG. 1;

FIG. 4A is a plan view of a lead frame used in the manufacture of the connector of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4B is an enlarged detail view of the area encircled by arrow 4B-4B in FIG. 4A;

FIG. 5A is a cross-sectional representation of a backplane connector in the interconnection system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5B is a cross-sectional representation of the backplane connector illustrated in FIG. 5A taken along the line 5B-5B;

FIGs. 6A-6C are enlarged detail views of conductors used in the manufacture of a backplane connector of FIG. 5A;

FIG. 7 is a plan view of a portion of a lead frame with tie bars;

FIG. 8 is an enlarged vies of a portion of the lead frame of FIG. 7, during a stage of manufacture of a wafer for an electrical connector prior to severing of the tie bars;

FIG. 9 is an enlarged view of the portion of the lead frame of FIG. 8, after severing the tie bars; and

FIG. 10 is an enlarged view of a second portion of the lead frame of FIG. 7 after severing the tie bars.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The inventors have recognized and appreciated that performance of an electrical interconnection system may be improved through the use of features in conductive elements in an electrical connector to compensate for artifacts of manufacturing steps . In particular, the inventors have recognized and appreciated that some manufacturing processes for electrical connectors result in artifacts on some conductive elements within a lead frame that impact the spacing between edges of adjacent conductive elements. Severing tie bars in a lead frame, for example, may leave projections from some of the conductive elements because of a needed tolerance in the positioning of a punch to sever the tie bars without removing desired portions of the conductive elements.

Though the projections, or other artifacts, may seem small, the inventors have recognized and appreciated that in some locations within the connector, even small artifacts on a conductive element can change the high frequency impedance of conductive members acting as signal conductors. These changes in impedance may create signal reflections or mode conversions that in turn create cross-talk and/or excite resonances in the connector that degrade signal performance.

Accordingly, in some embodiments, an electrical connector may be manufactured with a lead frame that includes compensation portions in close proximity to locations where the manufacturing operation will be performed. These compensation portions may be shaped to electrically offset the effects of an artifact of the manufacturing operation.

As a specific example, the lead frame may be stamped with tie bars, which may ensure a desired spacing between conductive elements. Before the connector is used, the tie bars may be severed to ensure that the conductive elements are electrically isolated from each other within the connector. The connector housing may be formed with a cavity exposing the tie bar such that a punch, or other tool, used to sever the tie bars can access the tie bar without cutting the housing, which could dull the tool quickly. Though, even if the housing is not formed with a cavity, the punch or other tool may create such a cavity within the housing when severing the tie bar.

The inventors have recognized and appreciated that conventional manufacturing approaches have tolerance in positioning the punch relative to the tie bar such that the punch cannot be precisely aligned with the tie bar and only the tie bar to be sever. To compensate for these tolerances, the punch may be smaller than the tie bar such that, after severing the tie bar, portions of the tie bar will remain as projections from an edge of one or both of the conductive elements previously joined by the tie bar. Other edges of the conductive elements may have offsetting features, such as projections or concavities that tend to equalize the impedance at high frequencies along some or all of the conductive elements.

In some embodiments, an electrical connector may be formed with conductive elements shaped to carry differential signals with edge-to-edge coupling. When an artifact appears on one edge of the conductive element shaped to be a differential signal pair, a compensation portion may be formed on an opposite edge of the signal conductor. As a specific example, a lead frame for a differential connector may have conductive elements that are wider, which may be designated as ground conductors, and conductive elements that are narrower, which may be designated as signal conductors. The conductive elements may be arranged in a repeating pattern of ground, signal, signal, ground. Tie bars may be used between each signal and an adjacent ground and between the adjacent signals. However, these tie bars may be laid out so that there are not tie bars directly opposite each other on a signal conductor. Rather, opposite each tie bar may be a compensation portion. Further details and example of compensation portions are described in the following examples.

Techniques as described herein to improve the high frequency performance of an electrical interconnection system may be applied to connectors of any suitable form. However, an example of a connector that may be improved using techniques as described herein is provided in connection with FIGs. 1-10. Referring to FIG. 1, an electrical interconnection system 100 with two connectors is shown. The electrical interconnection system 100 includes a daughter card connector 120 and a backplane connector 150.

Daughter card connector 120 is designed to mate with backplane connector 150, creating electronically conducting paths between backplane 160 and daughter card 140. Though not expressly shown, interconnection system 100 may interconnect multiple daughter cards having similar daughter card connectors that mate to similar backplane connections on backplane 160. Accordingly, the number and type of subassemblies connected through an interconnection system is not a limitation on the invention.

Backplane connector 150 and daughter connector 120 each contains conductive elements. The conductive elements of daughter card connector 120 are coupled to traces, of which trace 142 is numbered, ground planes or other conductive elements within daughter card 140. The traces carry electrical signals and the ground planes provide reference levels for components on daughter card 140. Ground planes may have voltages that are at earth ground or positive or negative with respect to earth ground, as any voltage level may act as a reference level.

Similarly, conductive elements in backplane connector 150 are coupled to traces, of which trace 162 is numbered, ground planes or other conductive elements within backplane 160. When daughter card connector 120 and backplane connector 150 mate, conductive elements in the two connectors mate to complete electrically conductive paths between the conductive elements within backplane 160 and daughter card 140.

Backplane connector 150 includes a backplane shroud 158 and a plurality of conductive elements (see FIGs. 6A-6C). The conductive elements of backplane connector 150 extend through floor 514 of the backplane shroud 158 with portions both above and below floor 514. Here, the portions of the conductive elements that extend above floor 514 form mating contacts, shown collectively as mating contact portions 154, which are adapted to mate to corresponding conductive elements of daughter card connector 120. In the illustrated embodiment, mating contacts 154 are in the form of blades, although other suitable contact configurations may be employed, as the present invention is not limited in this regard.

Tail portions, shown collectively as contact tails 156, of the conductive elements extend below the shroud floor 514 and are adapted to be attached to backplane 160. Here, the tail portions are in the form of a press fit, "eye of the needle" compliant sections that fit within via holes, shown collectively as via holes 164, on backplane 160. However, other configurations are also suitable, such as surface mount elements, spring contacts, solderable pins, etc., as the present invention is not limited in this regard.

In the embodiment illustrated, backplane shroud 158 is molded from a dielectric material such as plastic or nylon. Examples of suitable materials are liquid crystal polymer (LCP), polyphenyline sulfide (PPS), high temperature nylon or polypropylene (PPO). Other suitable materials may be employed, as the present invention is not limited in this regard. All of these are suitable for use as binder materials in manufacturing connectors according to the invention. One or more fillers may be included in some or all of the binder material used to form backplane shroud 158 to control the electrical or mechanical properties of backplane shroud 150. For example, thermoplastic PPS filled to 30% by volume with glass fiber may be used to form shroud 158.

In the embodiment illustrated, backplane connector 150 is manufactured by molding backplane shroud 158 with openings to receive conductive elements. The conductive elements may be shaped with barbs or other retention features that hold the conductive elements in place when inserted in the opening of backplane shroud 158.

As shown in FIG. 1 and FIG. 5A, the backplane shroud 158 further includes side walls 512 that extend along the length of opposing sides of the backplane shroud 158. The side walls 512 include grooves 172, which run vertically along an inner surface of the side walls 512. Grooves 172 serve to guide front housing 130 of daughter card connector 120 via mating projections 132 into the appropriate position in shroud 158.

Daughter card connector 120 includes a plurality of wafers $122_1 \ldots 122_6$ coupled together, with each of the plurality of wafers $122_1 \ldots 122_6$ having a housing 260 (see FIGs. 2A-2C) and a column of conductive elements. In the illustrated embodiment, each column has a plurality of signal conductors 420 (see FIG. 4A) and a plurality of ground conductors 430 (see FIG. 4A). The ground conductors may be employed within each wafer $122_1 \ldots 122_6$ to minimize crosstalk between signal conductors or to otherwise control the electrical properties of the connector.

Wafers $122_1 \ldots 122_6$ may be formed by molding housing 260 around conductive elements that form signal and ground conductors. As with shroud 158 of backplane connector 150, housing 260 may be formed of any suitable material and may include portions that have conductive filler or are otherwise made lossy.

In the illustrated embodiment, daughter card connector 120 is a right angle connector and has conductive elements that traverse a right angle. As a result, opposing ends of the conductive elements extend from perpendicular edges of the wafers $122_1 \ldots 122_6$.

Each conductive element of wafers $122_1 \ldots 122_6$ has at least one contact tail, shown collectively as contact tails 126, that can be connected to daughter card 140. Each conductive element in daughter card connector 120 also has a mating contact portion, shown collectively as mating contacts 124, which can be connected to a corresponding conductive element in backplane connector 150. Each conductive element also has an intermediate portion between the mating contact portion and the contact tail, which may be enclosed by or embedded within a wafer housing 260 (see FIG. 2).

The contact tails 126 extend through a surface of daughter card connector 120 adapted to be mounted to daughter card 140. The contact tails 126 electrically connect the conductive elements within daughter card 140 and connector 120 to conductive elements, such as traces 142 in daughter card 140. In the embodiment illustrated, contact tails 126 are press fit “eye of the needle” contacts that make an electrical connection through via holes in daughter card 140. However, any suitable attachment mechanism may be used instead of or in addition to via holes and press fit contact tails.

In the illustrated embodiment, each of the mating contacts 124 has a dual beam structure configured to mate to a corresponding mating contact 154 of backplane connector 150. Though, conductive elements with other shapes may be substituted for some or all of the conductive elements illustrated in FIG. 1 that have dual beam mating contact portions as a way to reduce spacing between mating contact portions.

In some embodiments, the conductive elements acting as signal conductors may be grouped in pairs, separated by ground conductors in a configuration suitable for use as a differential electrical connector. However, embodiments are possible for single-ended use in which the conductive elements are evenly spaced without designated ground conductors separating signal conductors or with a ground conductor between each signal conductor.

In the embodiments illustrated, some conductive elements are designated as forming a differential pair of conductors and some conductive elements are designated as ground conductors. These designations refer to the intended use of the conductive elements in an interconnection system as they would be understood by one of skill in the art. For example, though other uses of the conductive elements may be possible, differential pairs may be identified based on preferential coupling between the conductive elements that make up the pair. Electrical characteristics of the pair, such as its impedance, that make it suitable for carrying a differential signal may provide an alternative or additional method of identifying a differential pair. As another example, in a connector with differential pairs, ground conductors may be identified by their positioning relative to the differential pairs. In other instances, ground conductors may be identified by their shape or electrical characteristics. For example, ground conductors may be relatively wide to provide low inductance, which is desirable for providing a stable reference potential, but provides an impedance that is undesirable for carrying a high speed signal.

FIG. 1 illustrates that conductive elements with the connectors are arranged in arrays. Here the arrays include multiple parallel columns of conductive elements, with the columns running in the direction indicated C. In the illustrated embodiment, each column as an equal number of conductive elements designated as signal conductors. However, adjacent columns have different configurations of signal and ground conductors. Though, every other column has the same configuration in the embodiment illustrated.

A connector as shown in FIG. 1 may be assembled for multiple wafers held in parallel. Each of the wafers may carry at least one column of conductive elements and may include a housing that provides mechanical support for the conductive elements and/or provides material in the vicinity of the conductive elements to impact electrical properties.

For exemplary purposes only, daughter card connector 120 is illustrated with six wafers $122_1...122_6$, with each wafer having a plurality of pairs of signal conductors and adjacent ground conductors. As pictured, each of the wafers $122_1...122_6$ includes one column of conductive elements. However, the present invention is not limited in this regard, as the number of wafers and the number of signal conductors and ground conductors in each wafer may be varied as desired.

As shown, each wafer $122_1...122_6$ is inserted into front housing 130 such that mating contacts 124 are inserted into and held within openings in front housing 130. The openings in front housing 130 are positioned so as to allow mating contacts 154 of the backplane connector 150 to enter the openings in front housing 130 and allow electrical connection with mating contacts 124 when daughter card connector 120 is mated to backplane connector 150.

Daughter card connector 120 may include a support member instead of or in addition to front housing 130 to hold wafers $122_1 \ldots 122_6$. In the pictured embodiment, stiffener 128 supports the plurality of wafers $122_1 \ldots 122_6$. Stiffener 128 is, in the embodiment illustrated, a stamped metal member. Though, stiffener 128 may be formed from any suitable material. Stiffener 128 may be stamped with slots, holes, grooves or other features that can engage a plurality of wafers to support the wafers in the desired orientation.

Each wafer $122_1 \ldots 122_6$ may include attachment features 242, 244 (see FIGs. 2A-2B) that engage stiffener 128 to locate each wafer 122 with respect to another and further to prevent rotation of the wafer 122. Of course, the present invention is not limited in this regard, and no stiffener need be employed. Further, although the stiffener is shown attached to an upper and side portion of the plurality of wafers, the present invention is not limited in this respect, as other suitable locations may be employed.

FIGs. 2A-2B illustrate opposing side views of an exemplary wafer 220A. Wafer 220A may be formed in whole or in part by injection molding of material to form housing 260 around a wafer strip assembly such as 410A or 410B (FIG. 4). In the pictured embodiment, wafer 220A is formed with a two shot molding operation, allowing housing 260 to be formed of two types of material having different material properties. Insulative portion 240 is formed in a first shot and lossy portion 250 is formed in a second shot. However, any suitable number and types of material may be used in housing 260. In one embodiment, the housing 260 is formed around a column of conductive elements by injection molding plastic.

In some embodiments, housing 260 may be provided with openings, such as windows or slots $264_1 \ldots 264_6$, and holes, of which hole 262 is numbered, adjacent the signal conductors 420. These openings may serve multiple purposes, including to: (i) ensure during an injection molding process that the conductive elements are properly positioned, and (ii) facilitate insertion of materials that have different electrical properties, if so desired.

To obtain the desired performance characteristics, some embodiments may employ regions of different dielectric constant selectively located adjacent signal conductors 310_1B, 310_2B...310_4B of a wafer. For example, in the embodiment illustrated in FIGs. 2A-2C, the housing 260 includes slots 264_1...264_6 in housing 260 that position air adjacent signal conductors 310_1B, 310_2B...310_4B.

The ability to place air, or other material that has a dielectric constant lower than the dielectric constant of material used to form other portions of housing 260, in close proximity to one half of a differential pair provides a mechanism to de-skew a differential pair of signal conductors. The time it takes an electrical signal to propagate from one end of the signal conductor to the other end is known as the propagation delay. In some embodiments, it is desirable that both signal conductors within a pair have the same propagation delay, which is commonly referred to as having zero skew within the pair. The propagation delay within a conductor is influenced by the dielectric constant of material near the conductor, where a lower dielectric constant means a lower propagation delay. The dielectric constant is also sometimes referred to as the relative permittivity. A vacuum has the lowest possible dielectric constant with a value of 1. Air has a similarly low dielectric constant, whereas dielectric materials, such as LCP, have higher dielectric constants. For example, LCP has a dielectric constant of between about 2.5 and about 4.5.

Each signal conductor of the signal pair may have a different physical length, particularly in a right-angle connector. According to one aspect of the invention, to equalize the propagation delay in the signal conductors of a differential pair even though they have physically different lengths, the relative proportion of materials of different dielectric constants around the conductors may be adjusted. In some embodiments, more air is positioned in close proximity to the physically longer signal conductor of the pair than for the shorter signal conductor of the pair, thus lowering the effective dielectric constant around the signal conductor and decreasing its propagation delay.

However, as the dielectric constant is lowered, the impedance of the signal conductor rises. To maintain balanced impedance within the pair, the size of the signal conductor in closer proximity to the air may be increased in thickness or width. This results in two signal conductors with different physical geometry, but a more equal propagation delay and more inform impedance profile along the pair.

FIG. 2C shows a wafer 220 in cross section taken along the line 2C-2C in FIG. 2B. As shown, a plurality of differential pairs $340_1...340_4$ are held in an array within insulative portion 240 of housing 260. In the illustrated embodiment, the array, in cross-section, is a linear array, forming a column of conductive elements.

Slots $264_1...264_4$ are intersected by the cross section and are therefore visible in FIG. 2C. As can be seen, slots $264_1...264_4$ create regions of air adjacent the longer conductor in each differential pair 340_1, $340_2...340_4$. Though, air is only one example of a material with a low dielectric constant that may be used for de-skewing a connector. Regions comparable to those occupied by slots $264_1...264_4$ as shown in FIG. 2C could be formed with a plastic with a lower dielectric constant than the plastic used to form other portions of housing 260. As another example, regions of lower dielectric constant could be formed using different types or amounts of fillers. For example, lower dielectric constant regions could be molded from plastic having less glass fiber reinforcement than in other regions.

FIG. 2C also illustrates positioning and relative dimensions of signal and ground conductors that may be used in some embodiments. As shown in FIG. 2C, intermediate portions of the signal conductors 310_1A...310_4A and 310_1B...310_4B are embedded within housing 260 to form a column. Intermediate portions of ground conductors $330_1...330_4$ may also be held within housing 260 in the same column.

Ground conductors 330_1, 330_2 and 330_3 are positioned between two adjacent differential pairs 340_1, $340_2...340_4$ within the column. Additional ground conductors may be included at either or both ends of the column. In wafer 220A, as illustrated in FIG. 2C, a ground conductor 330_4 is positioned at one end of the column. As shown in FIG. 2C, in some embodiments, each ground conductor $330_1...330_4$ is preferably wider than the signal conductors of differential pairs $340_1...340_4$. In the cross-section illustrated, the intermediate portion of each ground conductor has a width that is equal to or greater than three times the width of the intermediate portion of a signal conductor. In the pictured embodiment, the width of each ground conductor is sufficient to span at least the same distance along the column as a differential pair.

In the pictured embodiment, each ground conductor has a width approximately five times the width of a signal conductor such that in excess of 50% of the column width occupied by the conductive elements is occupied by the ground conductors. In the illustrated embodiment, approximately 70% of the column width occupied by conductive elements is occupied by the ground conductors $330_1 \ldots 330_4$. Increasing the percentage of each column occupied by a ground conductor can decrease cross talk within the connector. However, one approach to increasing the number of signal conductors per unit length in the column direction (illustrated by dimension C in FIG. 1) is to decrease the width of each ground conductor. Accordingly, though FIG. 2C shows the ratio of widths between ground and signal conductors to be approximately 3:1, lower ratios may be used to improve density. In some embodiments, the ratio may be 2:1 or less.

Other techniques can also be used to manufacture wafer 220A to reduce crosstalk or otherwise have desirable electrical properties. In some embodiments, one or more portions of the housing 260 are formed from a material that selectively alters the electrical and/or electromagnetic properties of that portion of the housing, thereby suppressing noise and/or crosstalk, altering the impedance of the signal conductors or otherwise imparting desirable electrical properties to the signal conductors of the wafer.

In the embodiment illustrated in FIGs. 2A-2C, housing 260 includes an insulative portion 240 and a lossy portion 250. In one embodiment, the lossy portion 250 may include a thermoplastic material filled with conducting particles. The fillers make the portion “electrically lossy.” In one embodiment, the lossy regions of the housing are configured to reduce crosstalk between at least two adjacent differential pairs $340_1 \ldots 340_4$. The insulative regions of the housing may be configured so that the lossy regions do not attenuate signals carried by the differential pairs $340_1 \ldots 340_4$ an undesirable amount.

Materials that conduct, but with some loss, over the frequency range of interest are referred to herein generally as “lossy” materials. Electrically lossy materials can be formed from lossy dielectric and/or lossy conductive materials. The frequency range of interest depends on the operating parameters of the system in which such a connector is used, but will generally be between about 1 GHz and 25 GHz, though higher frequencies or lower frequencies may be of interest in some applications. Some connector designs may have frequency ranges of interest that span only a portion of this range, such as 1 to 10 GHz or 3 to 15 GHz or 3 to 6 GHz.

Electrically lossy material can be formed from material traditionally regarded as dielectric materials, such as those that have an electric loss tangent greater than approximately 0.003 in the frequency range of interest. The “electric loss tangent” is the ratio of the imaginary part to the real part of the complex electrical permittivity of the material.

Electrically lossy materials can also be formed from materials that are generally thought of as conductors, but are either relatively poor conductors over the frequency range of interest, contain particles or regions that are sufficiently dispersed that they do not provide high conductivity or otherwise are prepared with properties that lead to a relatively weak bulk conductivity over the frequency range of interest. Electrically lossy materials typically have a conductivity of about 1 siemans/meter to about 6.1 x 10^7 siemans/meter, preferably about 1 siemans/meter to about 1 x 10^7 siemans/meter and most preferably about 1 siemans/meter to about 30,000 siemans/meter.

Electrically lossy materials may be partially conductive materials, such as those that have a surface resistivity between 1 Ω/square and 10^6 Ω/square. In some embodiments, the electrically lossy material has a surface resistivity between 1 Ω/square and 10^3 Ω/square. In some embodiments, the electrically lossy material has a surface resistivity between 10 Ω/square and 100 Ω/square. As a specific example, the material may have a surface resistivity of between about 20 Ω/square and 40 Ω/square.

In some embodiments, electrically lossy material is formed by adding to a binder a filler that contains conductive particles. Examples of conductive particles that may be used as a filler to form an electrically lossy material include carbon or graphite formed as fibers, flakes or other particles. Metal in the form of powder, flakes, fibers or other particles may also be used to provide suitable electrically lossy properties. Alternatively, combinations of fillers may be used. For example, metal plated carbon particles may be used. Silver and nickel are suitable metal plating for fibers. Coated particles may be used alone or in combination with other fillers, such as carbon flake. In some embodiments, the conductive particles disposed in the lossy portion 250 of the housing may be disposed generally evenly throughout, rendering a conductivity of the lossy portion generally constant. In other embodiments, a first region of the lossy portion 250 may be more conductive than a second region of the lossy portion 250 so that the conductivity, and therefore amount of loss within the lossy portion 250 may vary.

The binder or matrix may be any material that will set, cure or can otherwise be used to position the filler material. In some embodiments, the binder may be a thermoplastic material such as is traditionally used in the manufacture of electrical connectors to facilitate the molding of the electrically lossy material into the desired shapes and locations as part of the manufacture of the electrical connector. However, many alternative forms of binder materials may be used. Curable materials, such as epoxies, can serve as a binder. Alternatively, materials such as thermosetting resins or adhesives may be used. Also, while the above described binder materials may be used to create an electrically lossy material by forming a binder around conducting particle fillers, the invention is not so limited. For example, conducting particles may be impregnated into a formed matrix material or may be coated onto a formed matrix material, such as by applying a conductive coating to a plastic housing. As used herein, the term “binder” encompasses a material that encapsulates the filler, is impregnated with the filler or otherwise serves as a substrate to hold the filler.

Preferably, the fillers will be present in a sufficient volume percentage to allow conducting paths to be created from particle to particle. For example, when metal fiber is used, the fiber may be present in about 3% to 40% by volume. The amount of filler may impact the conducting properties of the material.

Filled materials may be purchased commercially, such as materials sold under the trade name Celestran® by Ticona. A lossy material, such as lossy conductive carbon filled adhesive preform, such as those sold by Techfilm of Billerica, Massachusetts, US may also be used. This preform can include an epoxy binder filled with carbon particles. The binder surrounds carbon particles, which acts as a reinforcement for the preform. Such a preform may be inserted in a wafer 220A to form all or part of the housing and may be positioned to adhere to ground conductors in the wafer. In some embodiments, the preform may adhere through the adhesive in the preform, which may be cured in a heat treating process. Various forms of reinforcing fiber, in woven or non-woven form, coated or non-coated may be used. Non-woven carbon fiber is one suitable material. Other suitable materials, such as custom blends as sold by RTP Company, can be employed, as the present invention is not limited in this respect.

In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 2C, the wafer housing 260 is molded with two types of material. In the pictured embodiment, lossy portion 250 is formed of a material having a conductive filler, whereas the insulative portion 240 is formed from an insulative material having little or no conductive fillers, though insulative portions may have fillers, such as glass fiber, that alter mechanical properties of the binder material or impacts other electrical properties, such as dielectric constant, of the binder. In one embodiment, the insulative portion 240 is formed of molded plastic and the lossy portion is formed of molded plastic with conductive fillers. In some embodiments, the lossy portion 250 is sufficiently lossy that it attenuates radiation between differential pairs to a sufficient amount that crosstalk is reduced to a level that a separate metal plate is not required.

To prevent signal conductors 310_1A, 310_1B...310_4A, and 310_4B from being shorted together and/or from being shorted to ground by lossy portion 250, insulative portion 240, formed of a suitable dielectric material, may be used to insulate the signal conductors. The insulative materials may be, for example, a thermoplastic binder into which non-conducting fibers are introduced for added strength, dimensional stability and to reduce the amount of higher priced binder used. Glass fibers, as in a conventional electrical connector, may have a loading of about 30% by volume. It should be appreciated that in other embodiments, other materials may be used, as the invention is not so limited.

In the embodiment of FIG. 2C, the lossy portion 250 includes a parallel region 336 and perpendicular regions 334_1...334_4. In one embodiment, perpendicular regions 334_1...334_4 are disposed between adjacent conductive elements that form separate differential pairs 340_1...340_4.

In some embodiments, the lossy regions 336 and 334_1...334_4 of the housing 260 and the ground conductors 330_1...330_4 cooperate to shield the differential pairs 340_1...340_4 to reduce crosstalk. The lossy regions 336 and 334_1...334_4 may be grounded by being electrically coupled to one or more ground conductors. Such coupling may be the result of direct contact between the electrically lossy material and a ground conductor or may be indirect, such as through capacitive coupling. This configuration of lossy material in combination with ground conductors $330_1...330_4$ reduces crosstalk between differential pairs within a column.

As shown in FIG. 2C, portions of the ground conductors $330_1...330_4$, may be electrically connected to regions 336 and $334_1...334_4$ by molding portion 250 around ground conductors $340_1...340_4$. In some embodiments, ground conductors may include openings through which the material forming the housing can flow during molding. For example, the cross section illustrated in FIG. 2C is taken through an opening 332 in ground conductor 330_1. Though not visible in the cross section of FIG. 2C, other openings in other ground conductors such as $330_2...330_4$ may be included.

Material that flows through openings in the ground conductors allows perpendicular portions $334_1...334_4$ to extend through ground conductors even though a mold cavity used to form a wafer 220A has inlets on only one side of the ground conductors. Additionally, flowing material through openings in ground conductors as part of a molding operation may aid in securing the ground conductors in housing 260 and may enhance the electrical connection between the lossy portion 250 and the ground conductors. However, other suitable methods of forming perpendicular portions $334_1...334_4$ may also be used, including molding wafer 320A in a cavity that has inlets on two sides of ground conductors $330_1...330_4$. Likewise, other suitable methods for securing the ground contacts 330 may be employed, as the present invention is not limited in this respect.

Forming the lossy portion 250 of the housing from a moldable material can provide additional benefits. For example, the lossy material at one or more locations can be configured to set the performance of the connector at that location. For example, changing the thickness of a lossy portion to space signal conductors closer to or further away from the lossy portion 250 can alter the performance of the connector. As such, electromagnetic coupling between one differential pair and ground and another differential pair and ground can be altered, thereby configuring the amount of loss for radiation between adjacent differential pairs and the amount of loss to signals carried by those differential pairs. As a result, a connector according to embodiments of the invention may be capable of use at higher frequencies than conventional connectors, such as for example at frequencies between 10-25 GHz.

As shown in the embodiment of FIG. 2C, wafer 220A is designed to carry differential signals. Thus, each signal is carried by a pair of signal conductors 310_1A and 310_1B, ...310_4A, and 310_4B. Preferably, each signal conductor is closer to the other conductor in its pair than it is to a conductor in an adjacent pair. For example, a pair 340_1 carries one differential signal, and pair 340_2 carries another differential signal. As can be seen in the cross section of FIG. 2C, signal conductor 310_1B is closer to signal conductor 310_1A than to signal conductor 310_2A. Perpendicular lossy regions 334_1...334_4 may be positioned between pairs to provide shielding between the adjacent differential pairs in the same column.

Lossy material may also be positioned to reduce the crosstalk between adjacent pairs in different columns. FIG. 3 illustrates a cross-sectional view similar to FIG. 2C but with a plurality of subassemblies or wafers 320A, 320B aligned side to side to form multiple parallel columns.

As illustrated in FIG. 3, the plurality of signal conductors 340 may be arranged in differential pairs in a plurality of columns formed by positioning wafers side by side. It is not necessary that each wafer be the same and different types of wafers may be used.

It may be desirable for all types of wafers used to construct a daughter card connector to have an outer envelope of approximately the same dimensions so that all wafers fit within the same enclosure or can be attached to the same support member, such as stiffener 128 (FIG. 1). However, by providing different placement of the signal conductors, ground conductors and lossy portions in different wafers, the amount that the lossy material reduces crosstalk relative to the amount that it attenuates signals may be more readily configured. In one embodiment, two types of wafers are used, which are illustrated in FIG. 3 as subassemblies or wafers 320A and 320B.

Each of the wafers 320B may include structures similar to those in wafer 320A as illustrated in FIGs. 2A, 2B and 2C. As shown in FIG. 3, wafers 320B include multiple differential pairs, such as pairs 340_5, 340_6, 340_7 and 340_8. The signal pairs may be held within an insulative portion, such as 240B of a housing. Slots or other structures, not numbered) may be formed within the housing for skew equalization in the same way that slots 264_1...264_6 are formed in a wafer 220A.

The housing for a wafer 320B may also include lossy portions, such as lossy portions 250B. As with lossy portions 250 described in connection with wafer 320A in FIG. 2C, lossy portions 250B may be positioned to reduce crosstalk between adjacent differential pairs. The lossy portions 250B may be shaped to provide a desirable level of crosstalk suppression without causing an undesired amount of signal attenuation.

In the embodiment illustrated, lossy portion 250B may have a substantially parallel region 336B that is parallel to the columns of differential pairs $340_5...340_8$. Each lossy portion 250B may further include a plurality of perpendicular regions $334_1B...334_5B$, which extend from the parallel region 336B. The perpendicular regions $334_1B...334_5B$ may be spaced apart and disposed between adjacent differential pairs within a column.

Wafers 320B also include ground conductors, such as ground conductors $330_5...330_9$. As with wafers 320A, the ground conductors are positioned adjacent differential pairs $340_5...340_8$. Also, as in wafers 320A, the ground conductors generally have a width greater than the width of the signal conductors. In the embodiment pictured in FIG. 3, ground conductors $330_5...330_8$ have generally the same shape as ground conductors $330_1...330_4$ in a wafer 320A. However, in the embodiment illustrated, ground conductor 330_9 has a width that is less than the ground conductors $330_5...330_8$ in wafer 320B.

Ground conductor 330_9 is narrower to provide desired electrical properties without requiring the wafer 320B to be undesirably wide. Ground conductor 330_9 has an edge facing differential pair 340_8. Accordingly, differential pair 340_8 is positioned relative to a ground conductor similarly to adjacent differential pairs, such as differential pair 330_8 in wafer 320B or pair 340_4 in a wafer 320A. As a result, the electrical properties of differential pair 340_8 are similar to those of other differential pairs. By making ground conductor 330_9 narrower than ground conductors 330_8 or 330_4, wafer 320B may be made with a smaller size.

A similar small ground conductor could be included in wafer 320A adjacent pair 340_1. However, in the embodiment illustrated, pair 340_1 is the shortest of all differential pairs within daughter card connector 120. Though including a narrow ground conductor in wafer 320A could make the ground configuration of differential pair 340_1 more similar to the configuration of adjacent differential pairs in wafers 320A and 320B, the net effect of differences in ground configuration may be proportional to the length of the conductor over which those differences exist. Because differential pair 340_1 is relatively short, in the embodiment of FIG. 3, a second ground conductor adjacent to differential pair 340_1, though it would change the electrical characteristics of that pair, may have relatively little net effect. However, in other embodiments, a further ground conductor may be included in wafers 320A. FIG. 3 illustrates in narrow ground conductor 330_9, a possible approach for providing a grounding structure adjacent pair 350B. However, the invention is not limited to this specific ground structure.

FIG. 3 illustrates a further feature possible when using multiple types of wafers to form a daughter card connector. Because the columns of contacts in wafers 320A and 320B have different configurations, when wafer 320A is placed side by side with wafer 320B, the differential pairs in wafer 320A are more closely aligned with ground conductors in wafer 320B than with adjacent pairs of signal conductors in wafer 320B. Conversely, the differential pairs of wafer 320B are more closely aligned with ground conductors than adjacent differential pairs in the wafer 320A.

For example, differential pair 340_6 is proximate ground conductor 330_2 in wafer 320A. Similarly, differential pair 340_3 in wafer 320A is proximate ground conductor 330_7 in wafer 320B. In this way, radiation from a differential pair in one column couples more strongly to a ground conductor in an adjacent column than to a signal conductor in that column. This configuration reduces crosstalk between differential pairs in adjacent columns.

Wafers with different configurations may be formed in any suitable way. FIG. 4A illustrates a step in the manufacture of wafers 320A and 320B according to one embodiment. In the illustrated embodiment, wafer strip assemblies, each containing conductive elements in a configuration desired for one column of a daughter card connector, are formed. A housing is then molded around the conductive elements in each wafer strip assembly in an insert molding operation to form a wafer.

To facilitate the manufacture of wafers, signal conductors, of which signal conductor 420 is numbered and ground conductors, of which ground conductor 430 is numbered, may be held together to form a lead frame 400 as shown in FIG. 4A. As shown, the signal conductors 420 and the ground conductors 430 are attached to one or more carrier strips 402. In some embodiments, the signal conductors and ground conductors are stamped for many wafers on a single sheet. The sheet may be metal or may be any other material that is conductive and provides suitable mechanical properties for making a conductive element in an electrical connector. Phosphor-bronze, beryllium copper and other copper alloys are example of materials that may be used.

FIG. 4A illustrates a portion of a sheet of metal in which wafer strip assemblies 410A, 410B have been stamped. Wafer strip assemblies 410A, 410B may be used to form wafers 320A and 320B, respectively. Conductive elements may be retained in a desired position on carrier strips 402. The conductive elements may then be more readily handled during manufacture of wafers. Once material is molded around the conductive elements of the lead frame, the carrier strips may be severed to separate the conductive elements. The wafers may then be assembled into daughter board connectors of any suitable size.

FIG. 4A also provides a more detailed view of features of the conductive elements of the daughter card wafers. The width of a ground conductor, such as ground conductor 430, relative to a signal conductor, such as signal conductor 420, is apparent. Also, openings in ground conductors, such as opening 332, are visible.

The wafer strip assemblies shown in FIG. 4A provide just one example of a component that may be used in the manufacture of wafers. For example, in the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 4A, the lead frame 400 includes tie bars 452, 454 and 456 that connect various portions of the signal conductors 420 and/or ground strips 430 to the lead frame 400. These tie bars may be severed during subsequent manufacturing processes to provide electronically separate conductive elements. A sheet of metal may be stamped such that one or more additional carrier strips are formed at other locations and/or bridging members between conductive elements may be employed for positioning and support of the conductive elements during manufacture. Accordingly, the details shown in FIG. 4A are illustrative and not a limitation on the invention.

Although the lead frame 400 is shown as including both ground conductors 430 and the signal conductors 420, the present invention is not limited in this respect. For example, the respective conductors may be formed in two separate lead frames. Indeed, no lead frame need be used and individual conductive elements may be employed during manufacture. It should be appreciated that molding over one or both lead frames or the individual conductive elements need not be performed at all, as the wafer may be assembled by inserting ground conductors and signal conductors into preformed housing portions, which may then be secured together with various features including snap fit features.

FIG. 4B illustrates a detailed view of the mating contact end of a differential pair 424_1 positioned between two ground mating contacts 434_1 and 434_2. As illustrated, the ground conductors may include mating contacts of different sizes. The embodiment pictured has a large mating contact 434_2 and a small mating contact 434_1. To reduce the size of each wafer, small mating contacts 434_1 may be positioned on one or both ends of the wafer. Though, in embodiments in which it is desirable to increase the overall density of the connector, all of the ground conductors may have dimensions comparable to small mating contact 434_1, which is slightly wider than the signal conductors of differential pair 424_1. In yet other embodiments, the mating contact portions of both signal and ground conductors may be of approximately the same width.

FIG. 4B illustrates features of the mating contact portions of the conductive elements within the wafers forming daughter board connector 120. FIG. 4B illustrates a portion of the mating contacts of a wafer configured as wafer 320B. The portion shown illustrates a mating contact 434_1 such as may be used at the end of a ground conductor 330_9 (FIG. 3). Mating contacts 424_1 may form the mating contact portions of signal conductors, such as those in differential pair 340_8 (FIG. 3). Likewise, mating contact 434_2 may form the mating contact portion of a ground conductor, such as ground conductor 330_8 (FIG. 3).

In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 4B, each of the mating contacts on a conductive element in a daughter card wafer is a dual beam contact. Mating contact 434_1 includes beams 460_1 and 460_2. Mating contacts 424_1 includes four beams, two for each of the signal conductors of the differential pair terminated by mating contact 424_1. In the illustration of FIG. 4B, beams 460_3 and 460_4 provide two beams for a contact for one signal conductor of the pair and beams 460_5 and 460_6 provide two beams for a contact for a second signal conductor of the pair. Likewise, mating contact 434_2 includes two beams 460_7 and 460_8.

Each of the beams includes a mating surface, of which mating surface 462 on beam 460_1 is numbered. To form a reliable electrical connection between a conductive element in the daughter card connector 120 and a corresponding conductive element in backplane connector 150, each of the beams 460_1...460_8 may be shaped to press against a corresponding mating contact in the backplane connector 150 with sufficient mechanical force to create a reliable electrical connection. Having two beams per contact increases the likelihood that an electrical connection will be formed even if one beam is damaged, contaminated or otherwise precluded from making an effective connection.

Each of beams 460_1...460_8 has a shape that generates mechanical force for making an electrical connection to a corresponding contact. In the embodiment of FIG. 4B, the signal conductors terminating at mating contact 424_1 may have relatively narrow intermediate portions 484_1 and 484_2 within the housing of wafer 320D. However, to form an effective electrical connection, the mating contact portions 424_1 for the signal conductors may be wider than the intermediate portions 484_1 and 484_2. Accordingly, FIG. 4B shows broadening portions 480_1 and 480_2 associated with each of the signal conductors.

In the illustrated embodiment, the ground conductors adjacent broadening portions 480_1 and 480_2 are shaped to conform to the adjacent edge of the signal conductors. Accordingly, mating contact 434_1 for a ground conductor has a complementary portion 482_1 with a shape that conforms to broadening portion 480_1. Likewise, mating contact 434_2 has a complementary portion 482_2 that conforms to broadening portion 480_2. By incorporating complementary portions in the ground conductors, the edge-to-edge spacing between the signal conductors and adjacent ground conductors remains relatively constant, even as the width of the signal conductors change at the mating contact region to provide desired mechanical properties to the beams. Maintaining a uniform spacing may further contribute to desirable electrical properties for an interconnection system according to an embodiment of the invention.

Some or all of the construction techniques employed within daughter card connector 120 for providing desirable characteristics may be employed in backplane connector 150. In the illustrated embodiment, backplane connector 150, like daughter card connector 120, includes features for providing desirable signal transmission properties. Signal conductors in backplane connector 150 are arranged in columns, each containing differential pairs interspersed with ground conductors. The ground conductors are wide relative to the signal conductors. Also, adjacent columns have different configurations. Some of the columns may have narrow ground conductors at the end to save space while providing a desired ground configuration around signal conductors at the ends of the columns. Additionally, ground conductors in one column may be positioned adjacent to differential pairs in an adjacent column as a way to reduce crosstalk from one column to the next. Further, lossy material may be selectively placed within the shroud of backplane connector 150 to reduce crosstalk, without providing an undesirable level of attenuation to signals. Further, adjacent signals and grounds may have conforming portions so that in locations where the profile of either a signal conductor or a ground conductor changes, the signal-to-ground spacing may be maintained.

FIGs. 5A-5B illustrate an embodiment of a backplane connector 150 in greater detail. In the illustrated embodiment, backplane connector 150 includes a shroud 510 with walls 512 and floor 514. Conductive elements are inserted into shroud 510. In the embodiment shown, each conductive element has a portion extending above floor 514. These portions form the mating contact portions of the conductive elements, collectively numbered 154. Each conductive element has a portion extending below floor 514. These portions form the contact tails and are collectively numbered 156.

The conductive elements of backplane connector 150 are positioned to align with the conductive elements in daughter card connector 120. Accordingly, FIG. 5A shows conductive elements in backplane connector 150 arranged in multiple parallel columns. In the embodiment illustrated, each of the parallel columns includes multiple differential pairs of signal conductors, of which differential pairs 540_1, 540_2...540_4 are numbered. Each column also includes multiple ground conductors. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 5A, ground conductors 530_1, 530_2...530_5 are numbered.

Ground conductors 530_1...530_5 and differential pairs 540_1...540_4 are positioned to form one column of conductive elements within backplane connector 150. That column has conductive elements positioned to align with a column of conductive elements as in a wafer 320B (FIG. 3). An adjacent column of conductive elements within backplane connector 150 may have conductive elements positioned to align with mating contact portions of a wafer 320A. The columns in backplane connector 150 may alternate configurations from column to column to match the alternating pattern of wafers 320A, 320B shown in FIG. 3.

Ground conductors 530_2, 530_3 and 530_4 are shown to be wide relative to the signal conductors that make up the differential pairs by 540_1...540_4. Narrower ground conductive elements, which are narrower relative to ground conductors 530_2, 530_3 and 530_4, are included at each end of the column. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 5A, narrower ground conductors 530_1 and 530_5 are including at the ends of the column containing differential pairs 540_1...540_4 and may, for example, mate with a ground conductor from daughter card 120 with a mating contact portion shaped as mating contact 434_1 (FIG. 4B)..

FIG. 5B shows a view of backplane connector 150 taken along the line labeled B-B in FIG. 5A. In the illustration of FIG. 5B, an alternating pattern of columns of 560A-560B is visible. A column containing differential pairs 540_1...540_4 is shown as column 560B.

FIG. 5B shows that shroud 510 may contain both insulative and lossy regions. In the illustrated embodiment, each of the conductive elements of a differential pair, such as differential pairs 540_1...540_4, is held within an insulative region 522. Lossy regions 520 may be positioned between adjacent differential pairs within the same column and between adjacent differential pairs in adjacent columns. Lossy regions 520 may connect to the ground contacts such as 530_1...530_5. Sidewalls 512 may be made of either insulative or lossy material.

FIGs. 6A, 6B and 6C illustrate in greater detail conductive elements that may be used in forming backplane connector 150. FIG. 6A shows multiple wide ground contacts 530_2, 530_3 and 530_4. In the configuration shown in FIG. 6A, the ground contacts are attached to a carrier strip 620. The ground contacts may be stamped from a long sheet of metal or other conductive material, including a carrier strip 620. The individual contacts may be severed from carrier strip 620 at any suitable time during the manufacturing operation.

As can be seen, each of the ground contacts has a mating contact portion shaped as a blade. For additional stiffness, one or more stiffening structures may be formed in each contact. In the embodiment of FIG. 6A, a rib, such as 610 is formed in each of the wide ground conductors.

Each of the wide ground conductors, such as $530_2 \ldots 530_4$ includes two contact tails. For ground conductor 530_2 contact tails 656_1 and 656_2 are numbered. Providing two contact tails per wide ground conductor provides for a more even distribution of grounding structures throughout the entire interconnection system, including within backplane 160, because each of contact tails 656_1 and 656_2 will engage a ground via within backplane 160 that will be parallel and adjacent a via carrying a signal. FIG. 4A illustrates that two ground contact tails may also be used for each ground conductor in a daughter card connector.

FIG. 6B shows a stamping containing narrower ground conductors, such as ground conductors 530_1 and 530_5. As with the wider ground conductors shown in FIG. 6A, the narrower ground conductors of FIG. 6B have a mating contact portion shaped like a blade.

As with the stamping of FIG. 6A, the stamping of FIG. 6B containing narrower grounds includes a carrier strip 630 to facilitate handling of the conductive elements. The individual ground conductors may be severed from carrier strip 630 at any suitable time, either before or after insertion into backplane connector shroud 510.

In the embodiment illustrated, each of the narrower ground conductors, such as 530_1 and 530_2, contains a single contact tail such as 656_3 on ground conductor 530_1 or contact tail 656_4 on ground conductor 530_5. Even though only one ground contact tail is included, the relationship between number of signal contacts is maintained because narrow ground conductors as shown in FIG. 6B are used at the ends of columns where they are adjacent a single signal conductor. As can be seen from the illustration in FIG. 6B, each of the contact tails for a narrower ground conductor is offset from the center line of the mating contact in the same way that contact tails 656_1 and 656_2 are displaced from the center line of wide contacts. This configuration may be used to preserve the spacing between a ground contact tail and an adjacent signal contact tail.

As can be seen in FIG. 5A, in the pictured embodiment of backplane connector 150, the narrower ground conductors, such as 530_1 and 530_5, are also shorter than the wider ground conductors such as $530_2 \ldots 530_4$. The narrower ground conductors shown in FIG. 6B do not include a stiffening structure, such as ribs 610 (FIG. 6A). However, embodiments of narrower ground conductors may be formed with stiffening structures.

FIG. 6C shows signal conductors that may be used to form backplane connector 150. The signal conductors in FIG. 6C, like the ground conductors of FIGs. 6A and 6B, may be stamped from a sheet of metal. In the embodiment of FIG. 6C, the signal conductors are stamped in pairs, such as pairs 540_1 and 540_2. The stamping of FIG. 6C includes a carrier strip 640 to facilitate handling of the conductive elements. The pairs, such as 540_1 and 540_2, may be severed from carrier strip 640 at any suitable point during manufacture.

As can be seen from FIGS. 5A, 6A, 6B and 6C, the signal conductors and ground conductors for backplane connector 150 may be shaped to conform to each other to maintain a consistent spacing between the signal conductors and ground conductors. For example, ground conductors have projections, such as projection 660, that position the ground conductor relative to floor 514 of shroud 510. The signal conductors have complimentary portions, such as complimentary portion 662 (FIG. 6C) so that when a signal conductor is inserted into shroud 510 next to a ground conductor, the spacing between the edges of the signal conductor and the ground conductor stays relatively uniform, even in the vicinity of projections 660.

Likewise, signal conductors have projections, such as projections 664 (FIG. 6C). Projection 664 may act as a retention feature that holds the signal conductor within the floor 514 of backplane connector shroud 510 (FIG. 5A). Ground conductors may have complimentary portions, such as complementary portion 666 (FIG. 6A). When a signal conductor is placed adjacent a ground conductor, complimentary portion 666 maintains a relatively uniform spacing between the edges of the signal conductor and the ground conductor, even in the vicinity of projection 664. Though, it should be appreciated that the illustrated configuration is exemplary rather than limiting.

FIGs. 6A, 6B and 6C illustrate examples of projections in the edges of signal and ground conductors and corresponding complimentary portions formed in an adjacent signal or ground conductor. Other types of projections may be formed and other shapes of complementary portions may likewise be formed.

To facilitate use of signal and ground conductors with complementary portions, backplane connector 150 may be manufactured by inserting signal conductors and ground conductors into shroud 510 from opposite sides. As can be seen in FIG. 5A, projections such as 660 (FIG. 6A) of ground conductors press against the bottom surface of floor 514. Backplane connector 150 may be assembled by inserting the ground conductors into shroud 510 from the bottom until projections 660 engage the underside of floor 514. Because signal conductors in backplane connector 150 are generally complementary to the ground conductors, the signal conductors have narrow portions adjacent the lower surface of floor 514. The wider portions of the signal conductors are adjacent the top surface of floor 514. Because manufacture of a backplane connector may be simplified if the conductive elements are inserted into shroud 510 narrow end first, backplane connector 150 may be assembled by inserting signal conductors into shroud 510 from the upper surface of floor 514. The signal conductors may be inserted until projections, such as projection 664, engage the upper surface of the floor. Two-sided insertion of conductive elements into shroud 510 facilitates manufacture of connector portions with conforming signal and ground conductors.

Regardless of the specific shape and size of the components and the techniques used to manufacture components of an electrical connector, may be selected to provide desired electrical properties, including a relatively uniform impedance along portions of the conductive elements serving as signal conductors. For example, techniques as described herein may be used to provide an impedance that varies by less than +/- 10% or 5%, even at relatively high frequencies, for example up to 25GHz, over the intermediate portions of the signal conductors within the housing. Though, even more precise impedance control may be provided in some embodiments, such as +/-1% or less or +/- 0.5%.

One technique for providing a relatively constant impedance is to incorporate compensation portions into the lead frame to compensate for artifacts in the lead frame created during manufacturing operations. FIG. 7 illustrates a scenario is which manufacturing artifacts can arise in a connector manufactured with a lead frame using tie bars. The artifacts may be particularly impactful of high speed, high density connectors in which there are multiple closely spaced conductive elements for which accurate edge-to-edge spacing is desired. For example, in contrast to conventional connectors with approximately 30 tie bars per lead frame, some connectors may have more than 40 tie bars, 50, tie bars, 60 tie bars, 70 tie bars or even 80 tie bars per lead frame. The inventors have recognized and appreciated that compensation for artifacts from severing tie bars may be particularly advantageous when there are numerous tie bars.

FIG. 7 illustrates, in plan view, a lead frame 700. In this example, lead frame 700 is a lead frame for a right angle connector and may be insert molded into a wafer as described above. Though the specific configuration of lead frame 700 is not critical to the invention, lead frame 700 in this example has four pairs of signal conductors each of which is positioned between a wider conductor serving as a ground. In FIG. 7, ground conductor 702 and signal conductor 706 are numbered.

FIG. 7 illustrates lead frame 700 in a state before it is molded into a wafer. Accordingly, tie bars hold the conductive elements together with a desired spacing. In this example, tie bar 704 holds ground conductor 702 to signal conductor 706 with a desired spacing. Other tie bars hold others of the conductive elements together. For example, tie bar 710 joins two signal conductors (not numbered) of a pair. It should be appreciated that FIG. 7 illustrates a limited number of tie bars for simplicity, and that a connector may have more tie bars than illustrated.

In some embodiments, each conductive element of the lead frame is held to each adjacent conductive element by at least one tie bar, and in some instances multiple tie bars. In the view of FIG. 7, a plan view of the lead frame is show such that the tie bars are joining edges of the conductive elements. In the configuration illustrated, with co-planar signal conductors and ground elements, signal energy may propagate between the adjacent edges of conductive elements. Accordingly, changes in edge to edge spacing may have a significant impact on the electrical properties of the conductive elements acting as signal conductors.

FIG. 8 illustrates the manner in which a manufacturing operation can give rise to an artifact that impacts impedance. FIG. 8 illustrates a portion of a lead frame after the conductive elements of the lead frame are secured to the housing. Such a state may be created by insert molding an insulative housing around intermediate portions of the conductive elements in the lead frame.

For simplicity of illustration, the housing is not shown in detail in FIG. 8. However, an opening 820, which may be formed in the housing as part of the molding operation, is shown in FIG. 8. In this example, opening 820 is formed to expose tie bar 810. Opening 820 may allow a tool to access tie bar 810 even after the housing is molded. The tool may be a punch 830, which, in operation may be positioned to enter opening 820 and, with sufficient pressure, sever tie bar 810. Though not shown in this example, an additional tool may be positioned on an opposite side of the wafer, and serve as a die against which or into which the punch may press so the wafer is supported during the manufacturing operation that severs tie bar 810.

In the example illustrated, tie bar 810 joins conductive elements 802 and 804. A similar tie bar 812 joins conductive elements 806 and 808. This tie bar is exposed in window 822 of the housing. Tie bar 812 may also be severed, in the same or different step in the manufacturing operation as tie bar 810. If in the same operation, the tool used to sever the tie bars may have multiple punches. If a different operation, the tool and or the wafer may be moved between operations.

In the example illustrated, the conductive elements are elongated in a dimension that runs in the plane of the lead frame. The tie bars 810 and 812 are aligned in a direction transverse to this elongated dimension. However, there is no requirement that the tie bars be aligned.

In this example, conductive elements 802 and 808 may be wider than the pair of conductive elements 804 and 806. Accordingly, conductive elements 802 and 808 may be designated as ground conductors and conductive elements 804 and 806 may be signal conductors.

In this example, the signal to ground tie bars may be aligned. In embodiments in which the interior conductive elements 804 and 806 are intended to form a balanced pair, it may be desirable for the structures adjacent conductive element 804 mirror those adjacent conductive element 806 as close as possible,. Though, it is not a requirement of the invention that the tie bars be aligned.

In this example, there is no tie bar between the signal conductors aligned with those signal to ground tie bars. Rather a compensation portion may be provided in the adjacent region between the conductive elements 804 and 806. In the example illustrated in FIG. 8, the compensation portion may be provided by stamping one or both of conductive elements 804 and 806 to have a changed edge-to-edge spacing. In this example, both conductive elements 804 and 806 have projections that reduce the edge-to-edge spacing. As shown, the edge-to-edge spacing is D_1 outside of the compensation portion, which establishes the nominal edge-to-edge spacing. In the compensation portion, the edge-to-edge spacing is D_2.

The manner in which this changed edge-to-edge spacing compensates for the tie bar is illustrated in FIG. 9. FIG. 9 illustrates the portion of the lead frame after a manufacturing operation to remove the tie bars 810 and 812. As shown, because of tolerances in the operation, more or less than all of the tie bar is removed which creates an artifact that changes the edge-to-edge spacing where the tie bar was. In this example, the artifact is in the form of projections 910 and 912 from the edges of conductive elements 802 and 804. Similar projections 914 and 916 exist with respect to conductive elements 806 and 808.

These projections, changing the edge-to-edge spacing between a signal conductor and a ground conductor may alter the impedance of the signal conductor. For example, they may increase the impedance in the region of the artifact. Though, other artifacts may decrease the impedance.

Accordingly, a signal propagating along the signal conductor will encounter a first impedance while propagating in sections of the signal conductor with a uniform, nominal width. Upon reaching the section containing the artifact, the signal may encounter a different impedance, which may create undesirable electrical properties, such as insertion loss or cross talk.

To compensate for the change in impedance, a compensation portion may be positioned adjacent the tie bar artifact. The compensation portion may be shaped to offset the change of impedance that would otherwise be caused by the artifacts of severing the tie bar. For example, FIG. 9 illustrates that the compensation portion may be formed by projections from facing edges of the signal conductors of a pair. The projections decrease the edge-to-edge spacing form a dimension of D_1 to D_2.

If the tie bar artifacts would tend to increase the impedance of the signal conductors, the compensation portions may tend to decreases the impedance. Though, the compensation portion may increase the impedance to offset for a decrease caused by an artifact. For example, the compensation portion may be concave, to increase edge-to-edge spacing as a way to change impedance.

It should be appreciated that the compensation portion is adjacent to the tie bar artifact so that the combined effect of these portions cancel out, rather than create different segments that vary the impedance up and down. The specific dimensions required for the portions to average out may depend on frequency of operation and other parameters. The compensation portion may be aligned with the artifact in a direction perpendicular to the edges, for example as illustrated in FIG. 9. Though an adjacent compensation portion may deviate by a distance that may be on the order of 0.1mm, 0.2mm, 0.5mm, 1.0mm or higher, depending on operating frequency.

Further, the shape and position of the tie bar compensation portion may vary depending on the shape and position of the tie bar artifacts. FIG. 10 illustrates a tie bar compensation portion adjacent a tie bar artifact from removing a tie bar between two narrower conductors 1012 and 1014 that may be designated as signal conductors. In this example, the signal conductors are positioned between wider conductive elements, of which conductive element 1016 is numbered. the wider conductive elements may be designated as ground conductors.

As in the example of FIG. 9, severing the tie bar leaves projections from an edge of some of the conductive elements. Here projections 1010 and 1012 are shown. In adjacent portions, projections from the opposing edges of the signal conductors are formed to compensate. Projections 1014 and 1016 are shown. Though, it should be appreciated that other techniques for forming a compensation portion may be used. For example, projections for the edges of the ground conductors may alternatively or additionally be used to create an effect on impedance that compensates for the tie bar artifacts between the signal conductors.

FIG. 10 provides examples of representative dimensions of features of the lead frame. In this example, the conductive elements designated as signal conductors have a width of approximately 0.5mm. Though, it should be appreciated that the invention is operative with signal conductors of any suitable width, such as between 0.1 mm and 1mm or between 0.3mm and 0.7mm.

In this example, the edge-to-edge spacing between signal conductors and adjacent grounds is approximately 0.3 mm. Though, the nominal spacing may have any suitable value, including between about 0.1mm and 0.7 mm or between about 0.2mm and 0.5mm.

In the illustrated example, the edge-to-edge spacing between signal conductors is approximately 0.35 mm. Though, the nominal spacing may have any suitable value, including between about 0.1mm and 0.7 mm or between about 0.2mm and 0.5mm.

In this example, the punch used to sever tie bars is approximately 0.2 mm wide. Such a dimension leaves projections of average length of 0.075mm. Though, the projections may be of any suitable dimension, such as between about 0.01mm and 0.15mm or greater. Moreover, it is not a requirement that the tie bar artifacts have equal-sized projections for opposing edges joined by the tie bar.

In the embodiment illustrated, the compensation portions are projections of about 0.1 mm. Though, the projections may be of any suitable dimensions, such as between 0.05mm and 0.5mm. or between 0.07mm and 0.3mm. These projections may, in some embodiments may be between 10% and 30% of the nominal width of the signal conductors.

Moreover, it is not a requirement that the compensation portions be the same for all tie bar artifacts. The compensation portions may be of different sizes or shapes.

Having thus described several aspects of at least one embodiment of this invention, it is to be appreciated various alterations, modifications, and improvements will readily occur to those skilled in the art.

As one example, examples are illustrated of embodiments in which the artifacts of manufacturing operations severing a tie bar are projections from one or more conductive elements. Other types of artifacts may arise during manufacturing operations, and may similarly be compensated for by compensation portions appropriately sized and positioned. As a specific example, punch a tie bar may, because of tolerances in the manufacturing operation, remove some of one or more of the conductive elements joined by the tie bar as part of a step of removing the tie bar. In such an embodiment, the compensation portion may be an offsetting projection along an edge of the conductive element in proximity to the edge containing the artifact.

Also, embodiments were described in which the intermediate portions of conductive members were fully encapsulated within one housing portion. In other embodiments, the intermediate portions of the conductive elements may be partially held within the insulative housing.

As another example, frequencies in the range of 10-25GHz was provided as an example of an operating range. However, it should be appreciated that other ranges may be used and that those ranges may span higher or lower frequencies, such as up to 30, 35 or 40 GHz, or may end at lower frequencies, such as 20, or 15 GHz.

Further, in some embodiments, to further ensure a uniform impedance along the length of a signal conductor, the holes in the housing through which a punch or other tool passes to sever the tie bar may be filled with an insulative member.

As for other possible variations, examples of techniques for modifying characteristics of an electrical connector were described. These techniques may be used alone or in any suitable combination.

Further, although inventive aspects are shown and described with reference to a daughter board connector, it should be appreciated that the present invention is not limited in this regard, as the inventive concepts may be included in other types of electrical connectors, such as backplane connectors, cable connectors, stacking connectors, mezzanine connectors, or chip sockets.

As a further example of possible variations, connectors with four differential signal pairs in a column were described. However, connectors with any desired number of signal conductors may be used.

This invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and the arrangement of components set forth in the above description or illustrated in the drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced or of being carried out in various ways. Also, the phraseology and terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting. The use of "including," "comprising," "having," "containing," or "involving," and variations thereof herein, is meant to encompass the items listed thereafter and equivalents thereof as well as additional items.

Such alterations, modifications, and improvements are intended to be part of this disclosure, and are intended to be within the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the foregoing description and drawings are by way of example only.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An electrical connector, comprising:

a housing; and

a lead frame held within the housing, the lead frame comprising a plurality of conductive members, the plurality of conductive members comprising a first conductive member and a second conductive member;

wherein the lead frame comprises:

an artifact of severing a tie bar between the first conductive member and the second conductive member; and

a tie bar compensation portion adjacent the artifact.

2. The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein:

the second conductive member comprises a first edge, facing the first conductive member, and a second edge, opposite the first edge;

the artifact comprises a projecting portion of the first edge; and

the compensation portion comprises a projection on the second edge.

3. The electrical connector of claim 2, wherein:

the second conductive member has a nominal width; and

the compensation portion comprises a projection on the second edge that is between 10% and 30% of the nominal width.

4. The electrical connector of claim 2, wherein:

the second conductive member has a nominal width; and

the second conductive member has a width greater than the nominal width in the compensation portion.

5. The electrical connector of claim 2, wherein:

the first conductive member comprises a ground conductor; and

the second conductive member comprises a signal conductor of a signal conductor pair.

6. The electrical connector of claim 2, wherein:

the first conductive member comprises a first signal conductor of a signal conductor pair; and

the second conductive member comprises a second signal conductor of the signal conductor pair.

7. The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein the housing has a hole passing through the artifact.

8. The electrical connector of claim 7, further comprising:

an insulative member in the hole.

9. The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein:

the plurality of conductive members further comprises a third conductive member and a fourth conductive member,

the plurality of conductive members are disposed in a column with the second and third conductive members between the first and fourth conductive members;

the first and fourth conductive members are wider than the second and third conductive members.

10. The electrical connector of claim 9, wherein:

the artifact of severing the tie bar is a first artifact of severing a first tie bar;

the tie bar compensation portion comprises a first tie bar compensation portion;

the lead frame further comprises:

a second artifact of severing a second tie bar between the second conductive member and the third conductive member;

a second tie bar compensation portion adjacent the second artifact;

a third artifact of severing a third tie bar between the third conductive member and the fourth conductive members; and

a third tie bar compensation portion adjacent the third artifact.

11. The electrical connector of claim 10, wherein:

the first and third compensation portions comprise portions of an edge of a conductive member of the plurality of conductive members profiled with the same first shape; and

the second compensation portion comprises a portion of an edge of a conductive member of the plurality of conductive members profiled with a second shape, the second shape being different than the first shape.

12. The electrical connector of claim 10, wherein:

the plurality of conductive members each has an elongated dimension;

the first, second and third tie bar artifacts are disposed in a region of the lead frame without other tie bar artifacts; and

the first and third tie bar artifacts are aligned in the elongated dimension and the second tie bar artifact is offset in the elongated dimension from the first and third tie bar artifacts.

13. The electrical connector of claim 10, wherein:

the second tie bar compensation portion comprises a projection on an edge of the second conductive member facing the first conductive member and a projection on an edge of the third conductive member facing the fourth conductive member.

14. A method of manufacturing an electrical connector, the method comprising:

molding a housing around a lead frame, the lead frame comprising a plurality of conductive members, the plurality of conductive members comprising a first conductive member and a second conductive member joined by a tie bar; and

subsequent to the molding, severing the tie bar, leaving an artifact of the severing in the lead frame;

wherein:

the lead frame comprises a tie bar compensation portion adjacent the artifact.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising:

prior to the molding, stamping the lead frame with the tie bar and the tie bar compensation portion.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein:

the lead frame comprises at least a first conductive element, a second conductive element, a third conductive element and a fourth conductive element;

the second conductive element and the third conductive element are disposed in pair between the first conductive element and the fourth conductive element; and

the first conductive element and the fourth conductive element are wider than each of the second and third conductive elements.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein:

the artifact comprises a narrowing of an edge to edge spacing along facing edges of a first region of the first conductive element and the second conductive element; and

the compensation portion comprises a narrowing of the edge-to-edge spacing along facing edges of a second region of the second conductive element and the third conductive element.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the first region is adjacent the second region on the second conductive element.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein:

the artifact comprises a narrowing of an edge to edge spacing along facing edges of a first region of the second conductive element and the third conductive element; and

the compensation portion comprises a narrowing of the edge-to-edge spacing along facing edges of a second region of the first conductive element and the first conductive element and along facing edges in a third region of the third conductive element and the fourth conductive element.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the first region, the second region and the third region are adjacent.

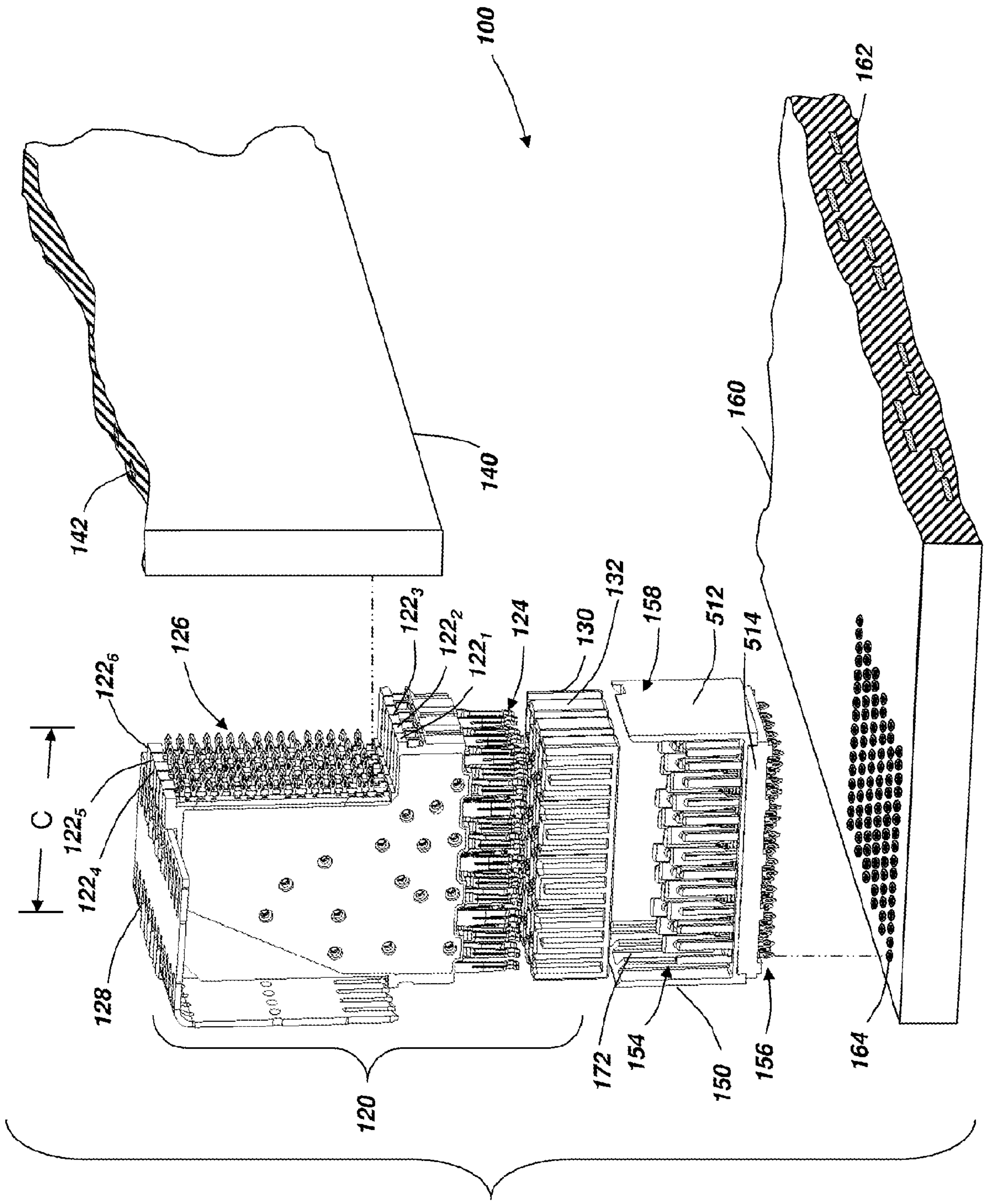

100
162
142
140
160
126
122_6
C
122_5
122_4
128
122_3
122_2
122_1
124
130
132
158
512
514
120
172
154
150
156
164

FIG. 1

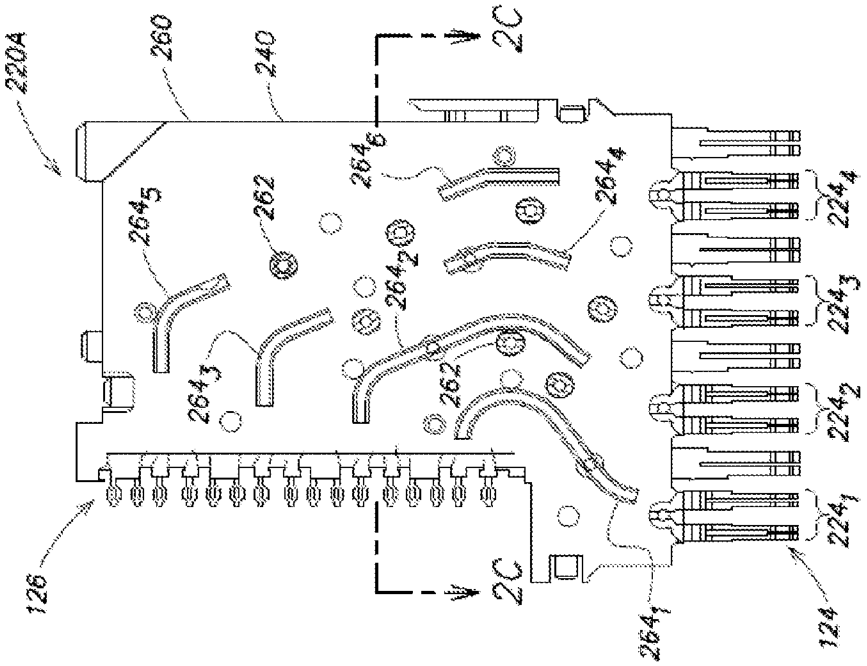
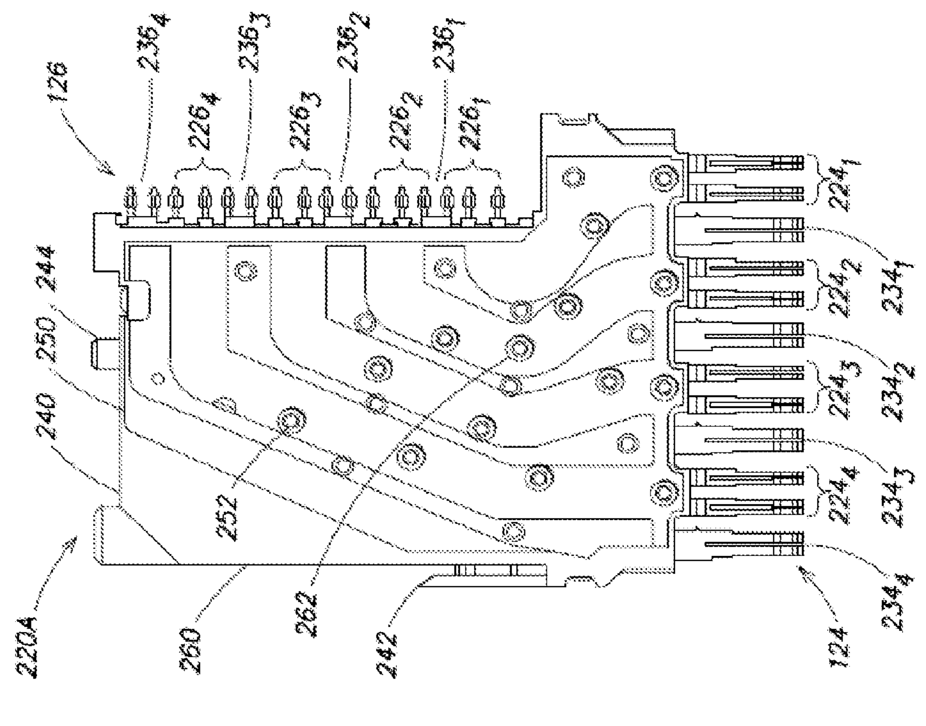

220A
260
240
2C
126
262
224
124

FIG. 2B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220A
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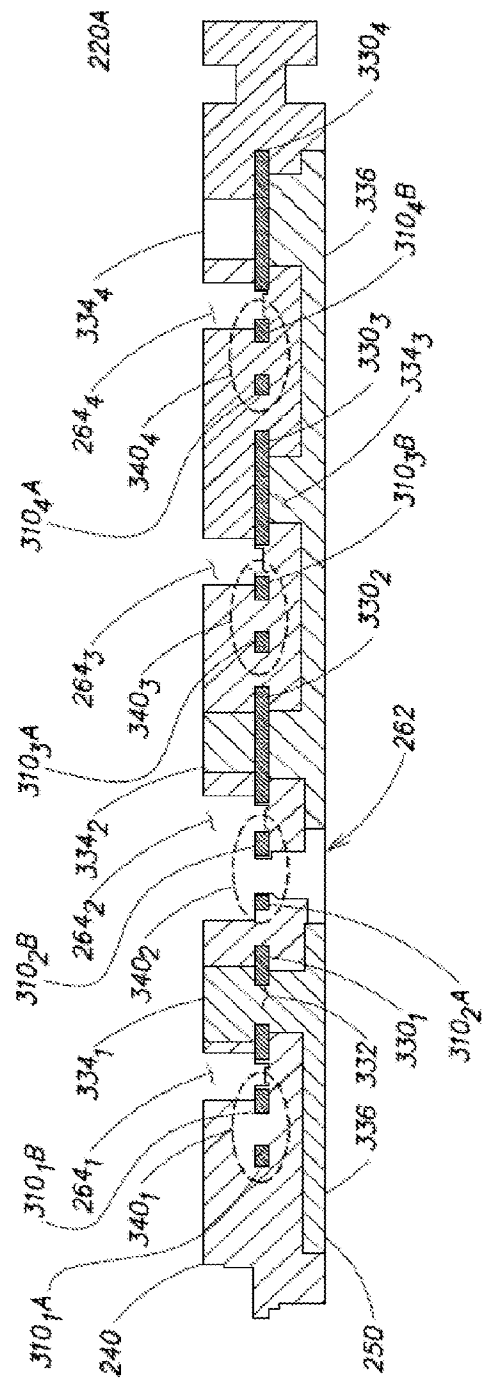
124

FIG. 2A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330_4
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310_4B
334_4
330_3
334_3
264_4
340_4
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310_4A
330_2
264_3
340_3
310_3A
262
334_2
264_2
340_2
310_2B
334_1
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330_1
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336
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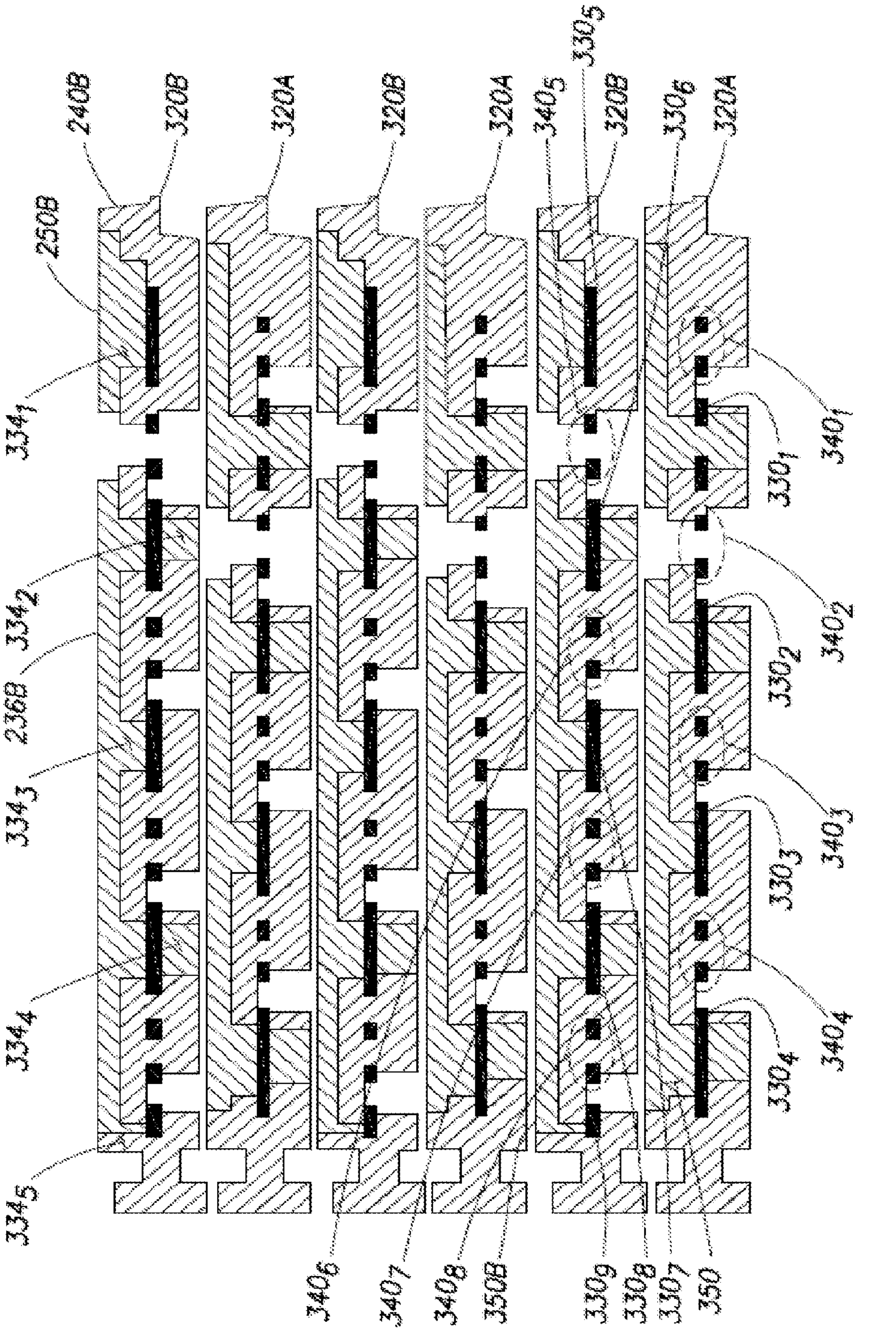
340_1
310_1A
240
250

FIG. 2C


250B
240B
320B
320A
320B
320A
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330$_5$
320B
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320A
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236B
334$_3$
334$_4$
334$_5$
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340$_2$
330$_2$
340$_3$
330$_3$
340$_4$
330$_4$
340$_6$
340$_7$
340$_8$
350B
330$_9$
330$_8$
330$_7$
350

FIG. 3

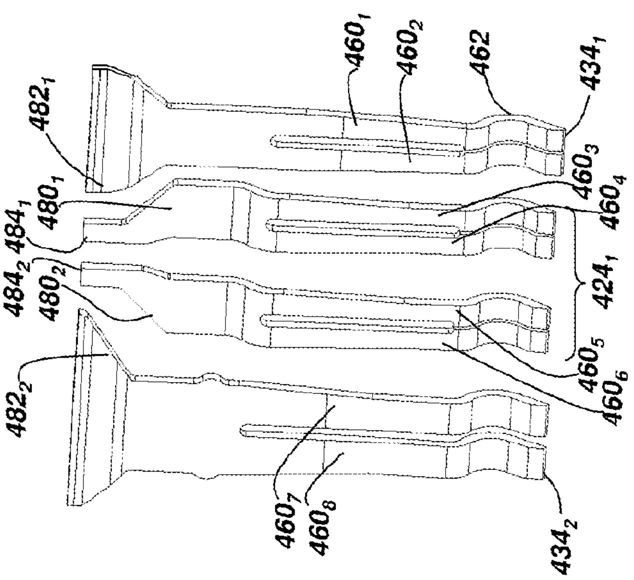
482_1
460_1
460_2
462
434_1
480_1
484_1
484_2
480_2
460_3
460_4
424_1
460_5
460_6
482_2
460_7
460_8
434_2

FIG. 4B

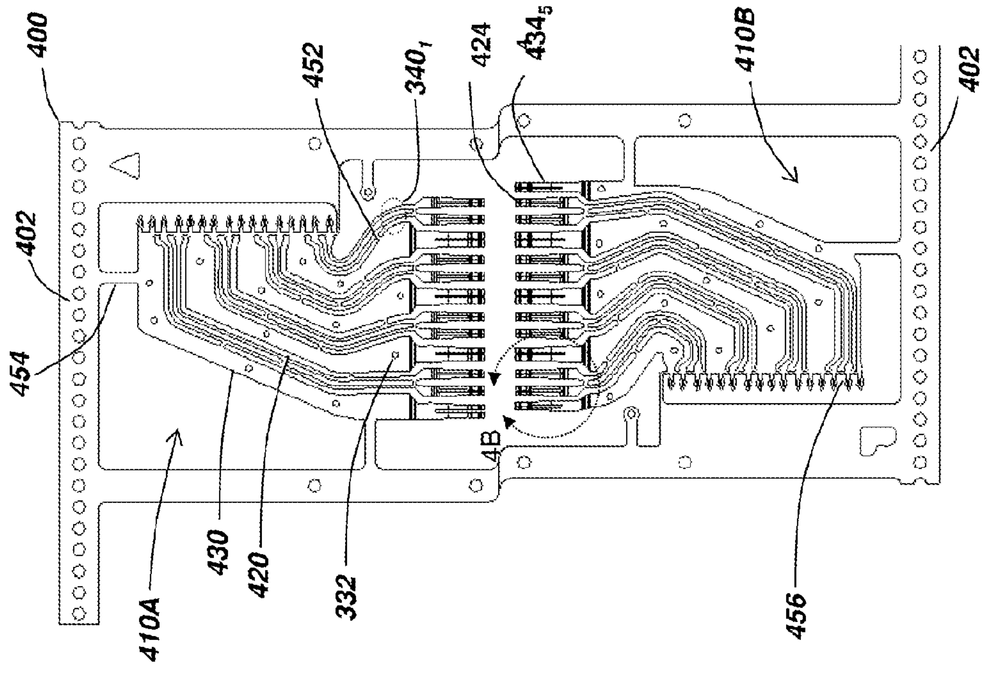
400
402
454
452
340_1
424
434_5
410B
402
410A
430
420
332
4B
456

FIG. 4A

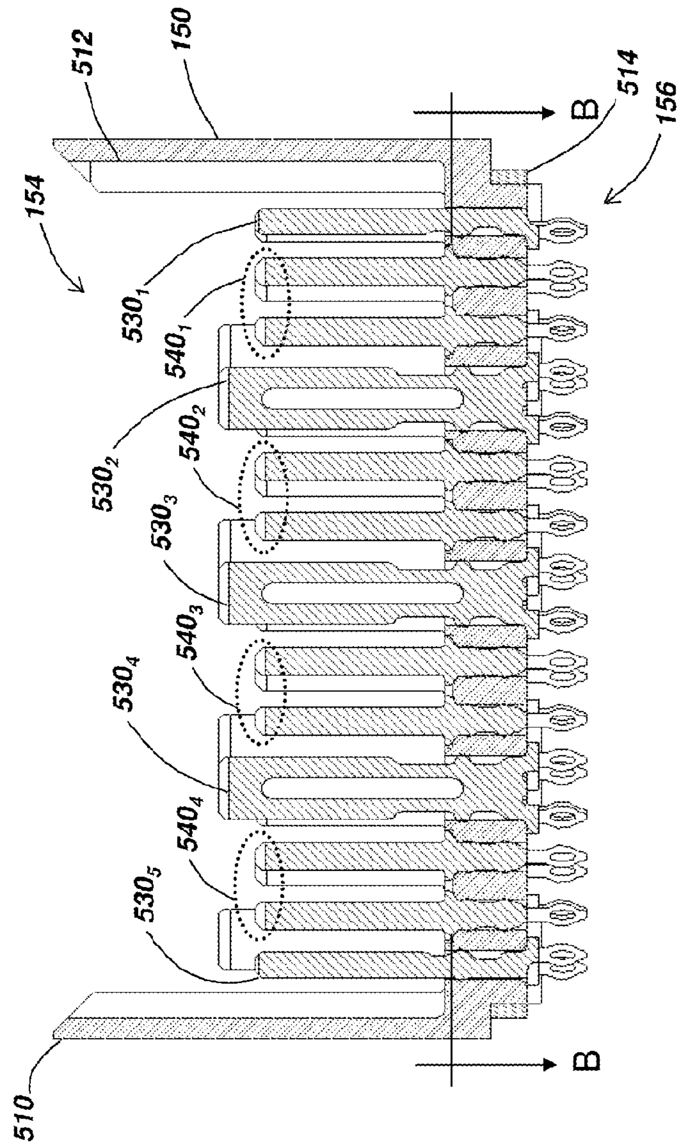
512
150
154
514
156
B
530₁
540₁
530₂
540₂
530₃
540₃
530₄
540₄
530₅
B
510

FIG. 5A

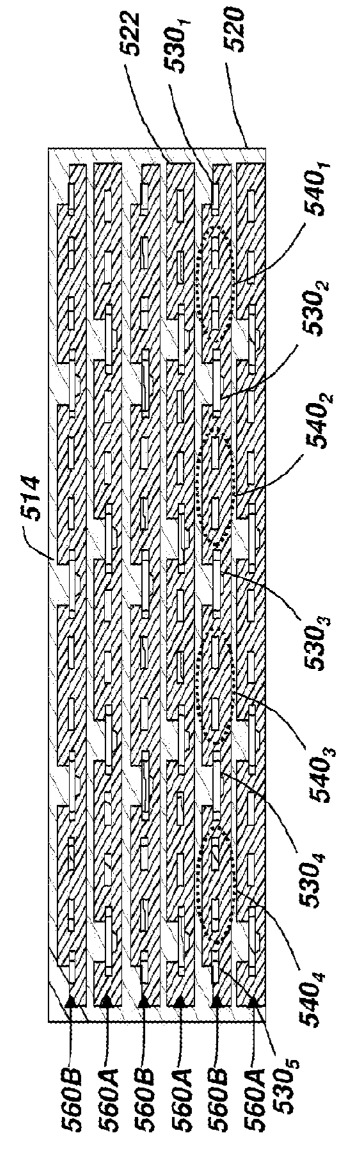
522
530_1
520
540_1
530_2
540_2
514
530_3
540_3
530_4
540_4
530_5
560B
560A
560B
560A
560B
560A

FIG. 5B

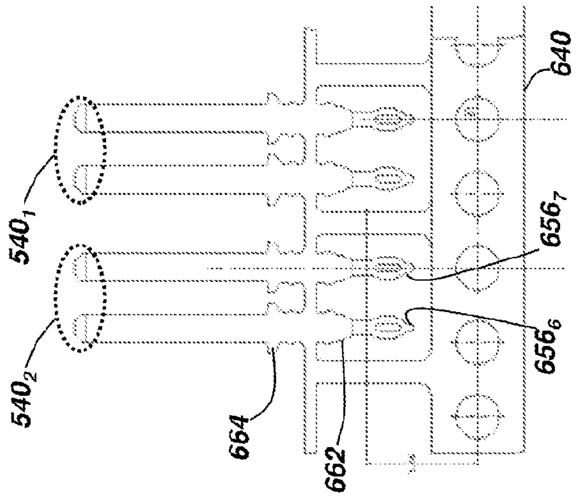

FIG. 6C

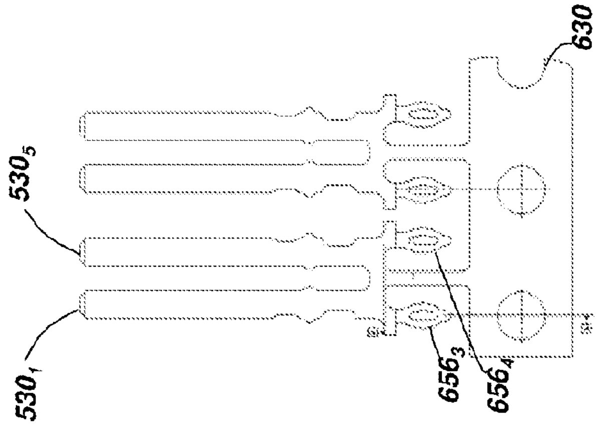

FIG. 6B

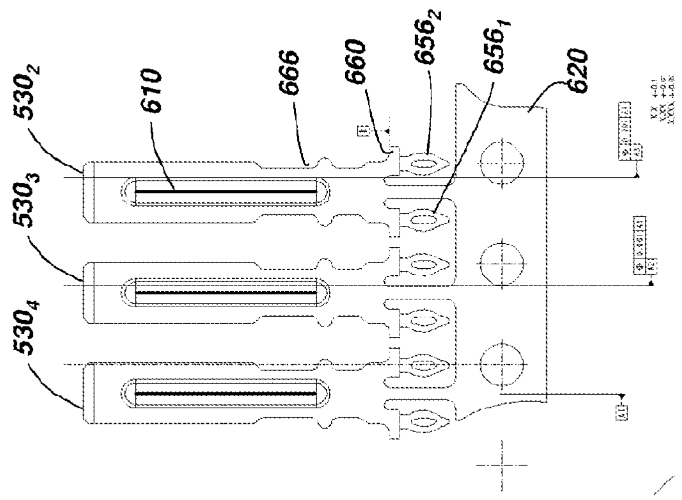

FIG. 6A

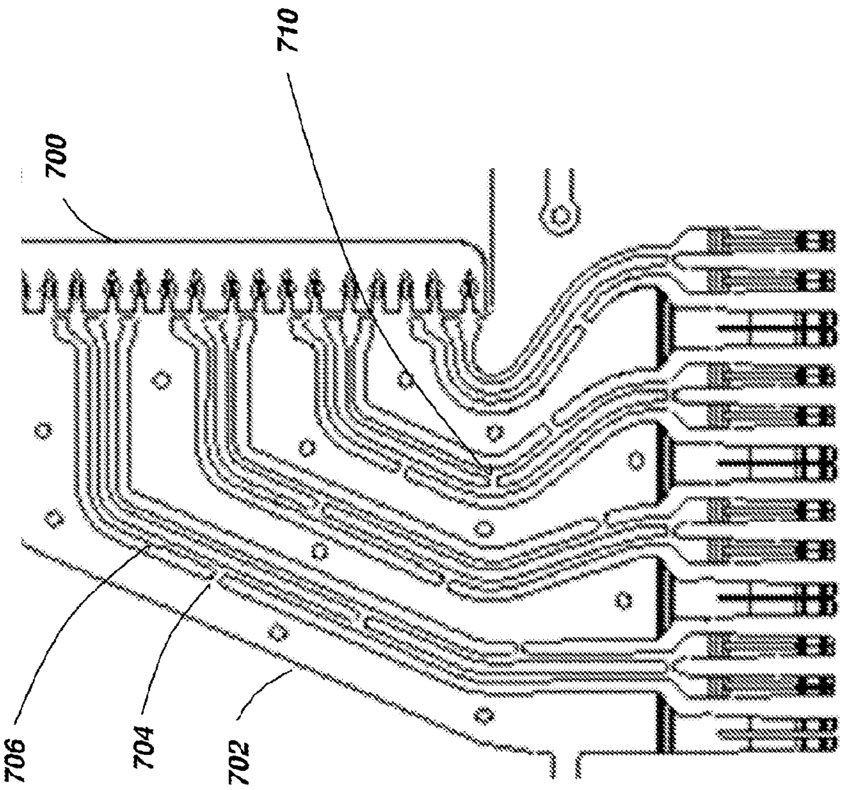

FIG. 7

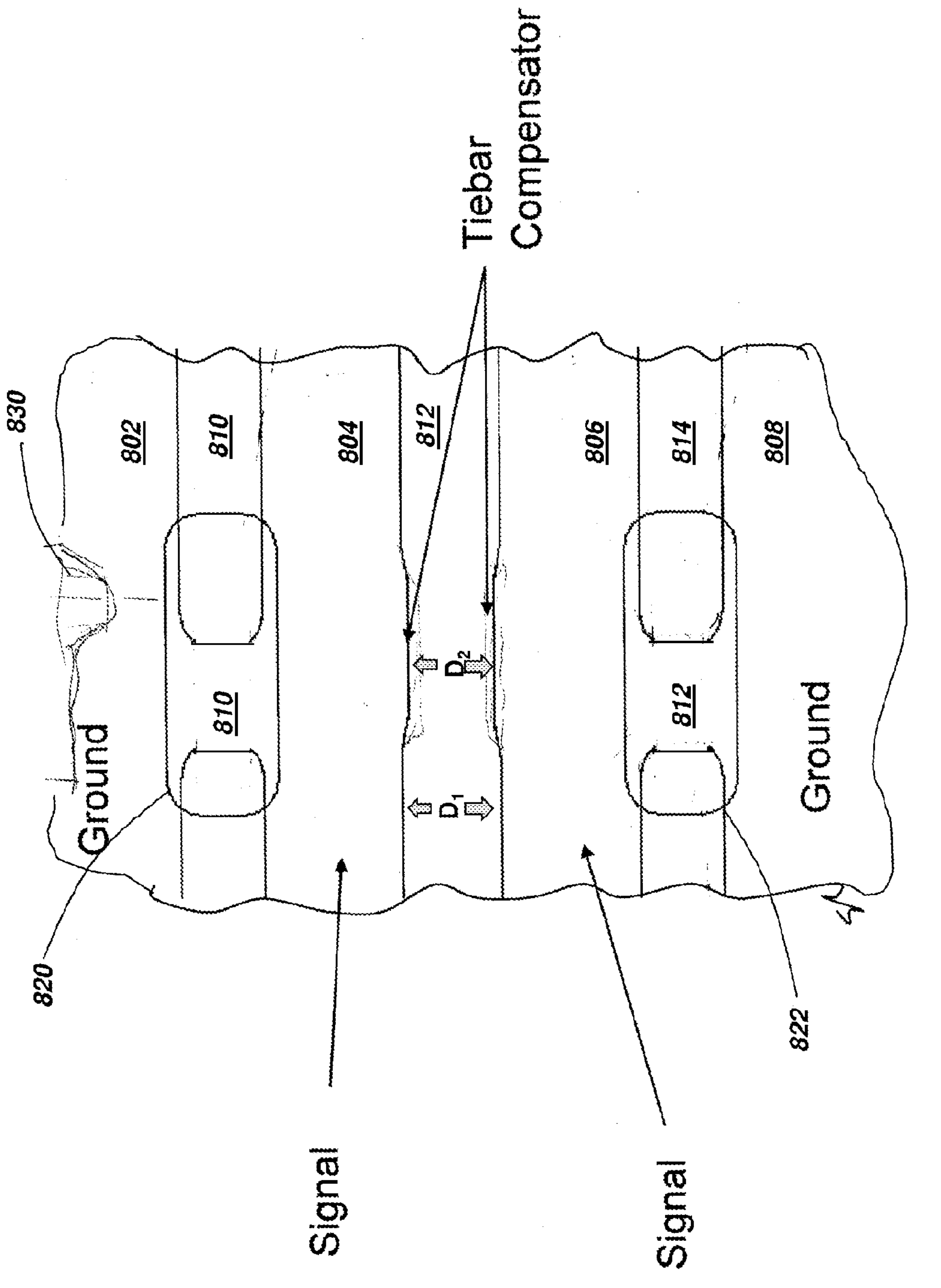
Tiebar Compensator
830
802
810
804
812
806
814
808
810
812
D_2
D_1
812
Ground
Ground
820
822
Signal
Signal

FIG. 8

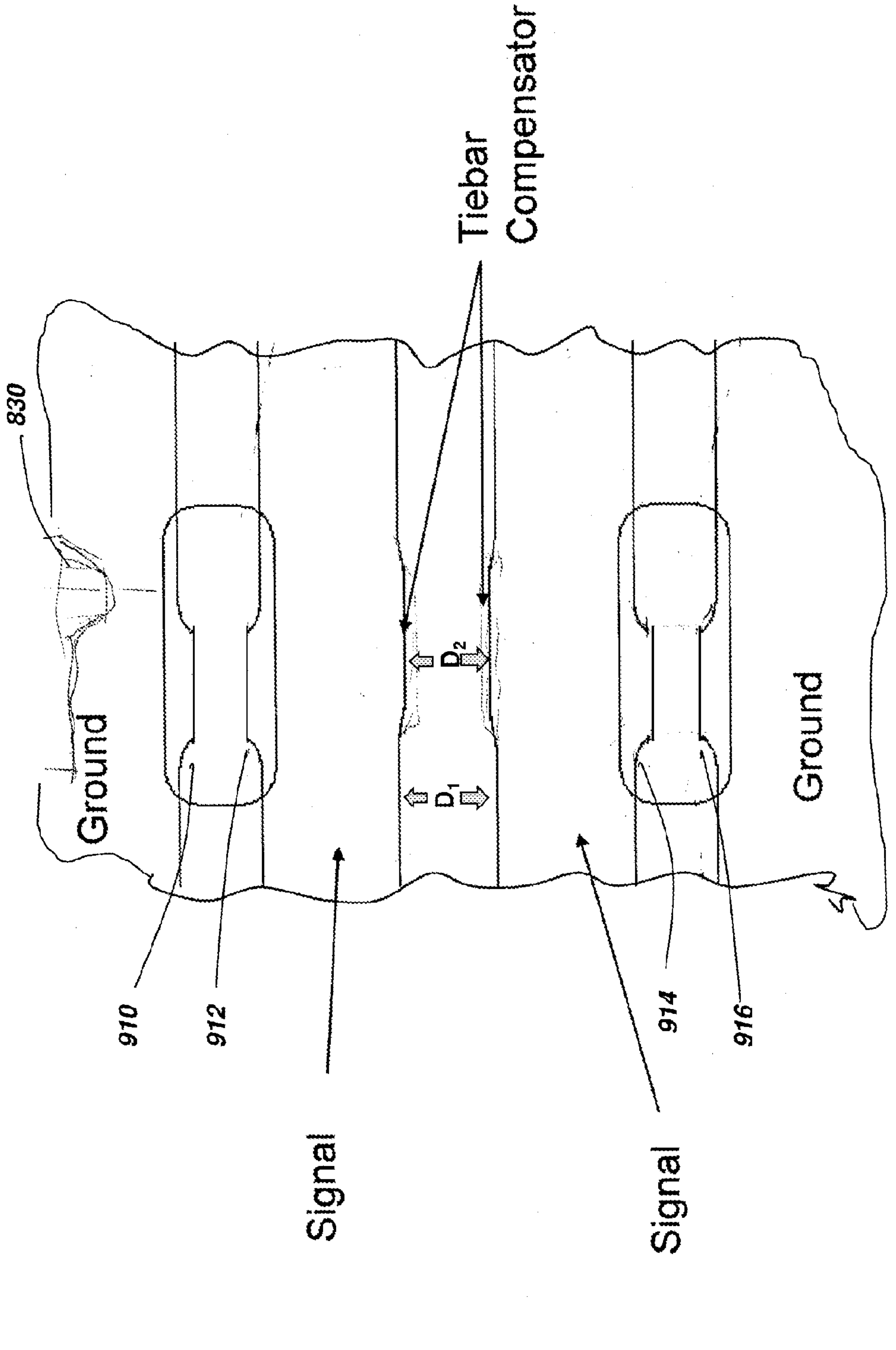
Tiebar
Compensator
830
Ground
D2
D1
Ground
910
912
914
916
Signal
Signal

FIG. 9

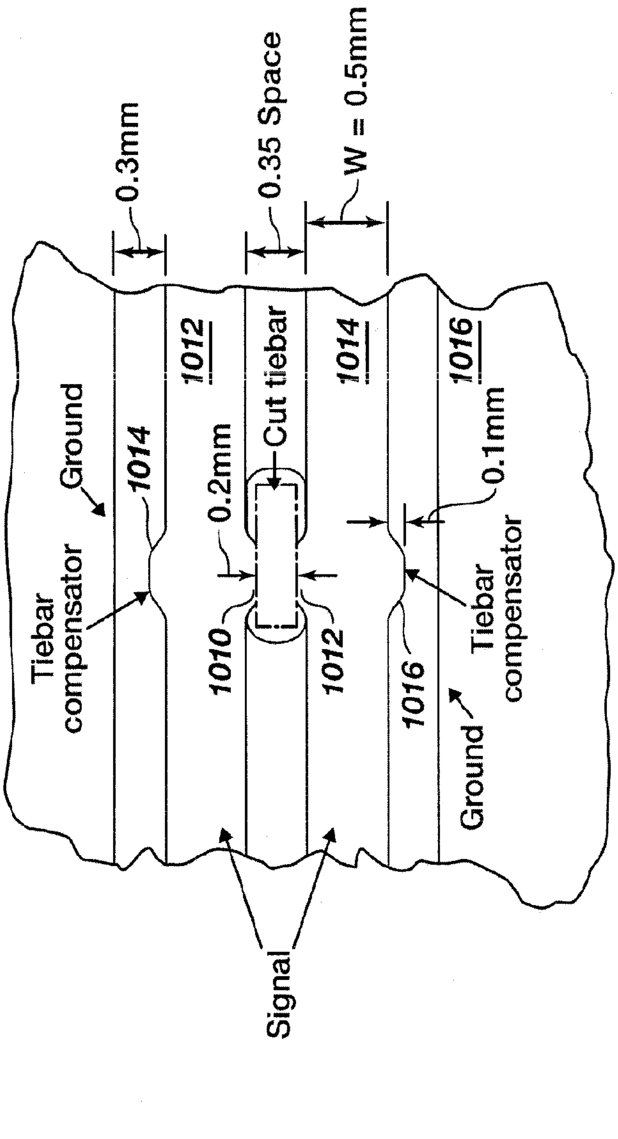
0.3mm
0.35 Space
W = 0.5mm
Tiebar compensator
Ground
1014
1012
0.2mm
Cut tiebar
1014
1016
0.1mm
1010
1012
1016
Tiebar compensator
Ground
Signal

FIG. 10

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2014/026342

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

H01R 12/72(2011.01)i, H01R 13/04(2006.01)i

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

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
H01R 12/72; H01R 13/66; H01R 13/648; H01R 13/658; H01R 24/66; H01R 13/04

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
Korean utility models and applications for utility models
Japanese utility models and applications for utility models

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
eKOMPASS(KIPO internal) & Keywords: connector, lead frame, severing, tie bar, compensation, conductive member

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 2002-0098738 A1 (ALLAN L. ASTBURY JR. et al.) 25 July 2002 See paragraphs [0032]-[0033], [0040]-[0044], [0052]-[0055], claim 1 and figures 1, 3, 5.	1-20
Y	US 2009-0011643 A1 (PEEROUZ AMLESHI et al.) 08 January 2009 See abstract, paragraphs [0052], [0067]-[0068] and figures 5B-7B.	1-20
A	JP 2010-182623 A (HOSIDEN CORP.) 19 August 2010 See paragraphs [0091]-[0110] and figure 15.	1-20
A	US 2012-0094536 A1 (LEON KHILCHENKO et al.) 19 April 2012 See paragraphs [0050]-[0077], claims 1-26 and figures 4-12.	1-20
A	US 2012-0289095 A1 (BRIAN KIRK) 15 November 2012 See paragraphs [0149]-[0178], claims 31-35, 40-51 and figures 8-12.	1-20

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

* Special categories of cited documents:
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed
"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents,such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
18 August 2014 (18.08.2014)	**19 August 2014 (19.08.2014)**

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/US2014/026342

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/US2014/026342

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