

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization

International Bureau



(10) International Publication Number

WO 2014/074290 A1

(43) International Publication Date

15 May 2014 (15.05.2014)

WIPO | PCT

(51) International Patent Classification:

H03K 5/1532 (2006.01) G01R 19/165 (2006.01)
G01R 19/04 (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:

PCT/US2013/065935

(22) International Filing Date:

21 October 2013 (21.10.2013)

(25) Filing Language:

English

(26) Publication Language:

English

(30) Priority Data:

61/723,246 6 November 2012 (06.11.2012) US

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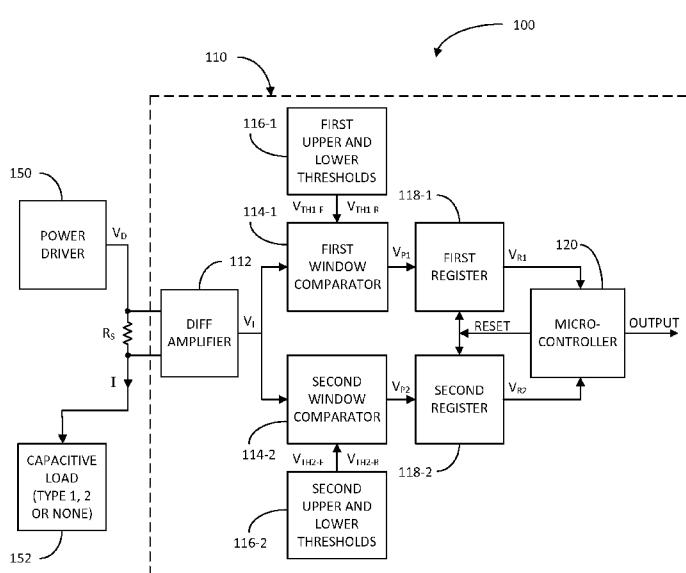
(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IR, IS, JP,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

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

Published:

— with international search report (Art. 21(3))

(54) Title: CAPACITIVE LOADS PRESENCE AND TYPE DETECTING SYSTEM



(57) Abstract: System and method for detecting the presence and type of capacitive load that may be coupled to a power driver are disclosed. The system includes a detection circuit to determine the presence and type of load based on a measured characteristic of the load in response to a drive voltage. The characteristic maybe the load capacitance as measured by the current flow between the driver and load. The circuit may include a differential amplifier to generate a current related voltage, comparators to generate pulses when the voltage exceeds respective thresholds, registers to output logic levels in response to the comparators, and a microcontroller to make the determination based on the logic levels.

CAPACITIVE LOADS PRESENCE AND TYPE DETECTING SYSTEM

FIELD

[0001] This disclosure relates generally to capacitive loads, such as piezoelectric actuators including picomotors, and in particular, to a system and method for detecting the presence and type of capacitive loads connected to a power driver.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Piezoelectric actuators are typically employed in motion control systems that require very high resolution and controllable movements of objects. For example, these devices are often employed in optical measurement systems to perform very precise and controllable rotational movements of stages, mounts, and other components. New Focus™, which is part of Newport Corporation, manufactures and markets a piezoelectric actuator called Picomotor™, often used in various optical applications. Hereinafter piezoelectric actuators will be referred to as Picomotors™. In use, Picomotors™ may achieve rotational movements as small as or smaller than 0.6 milliradian (mrad). Another benefit of Picomotors™ is that they are able to retain their last position when they are powered off and subsequently turned on again.

[0003] Generally, Picomotors™ and similar piezoelectric actuators are driven with relatively high voltage sources. For example, some piezoelectric actuators are driven with a drive voltage having peak value of around 120 Volts. The drive voltage actuates a piezoelectric material and causes the material to expand in a linear direction. A rotor or wheel is frictionally coupled to the piezoelectric material. For example, a Picomotor™ uses the principle of dynamic and static friction in order to rotate the rotor or wheel in a specified direction. The drive voltage waveform, which usually takes the form of a defined pulse, is typically configured to rotate the rotor or wheel in the desired clockwise or counter-clockwise direction.

[0004] For example, if the drive voltage waveform has a relatively slow rising edge and a relatively fast falling edge, the rotor or wheel will rotate during the rising edge due to significant friction, and not substantially rotate during the falling edge due to slippage. Conversely, if the drive voltage waveform has a relatively fast rising edge and a relatively slow falling edge, the rotor or wheel will substantially not rotate during the rising edge due to slippage, and rotate during the falling edge.

[0005] Often, in such motion control systems, it would be desirable to determine whether a Picomotor™ is connected to a drive voltage source or power driver. For many reasons, a Picomotor™ may become disconnected from the power driver, such as by faulty wiring or disconnection of connectors. Because of the relatively high voltages involved in driving these types of piezoelectric actuators, faulty wiring and disconnected connectors may possess an inherent danger to users. Thus, it would be desirable for such motion control systems to alert a user and/or perform some other safety operation when a Picomotor™ is not connected to the power driver.

[0006] Additionally, in such motion control systems, it would desirable to determine the type of Picomotor™ connected to the power driver. Certain types of Picomotors™ have certain limitations, and should be operated in a particular manner. For example, a first type or standard Picomotor™ may be driven with a pulse rate that is much higher than the maximum pulse rate for a second type or tiny Picomotor™. If the pulse rate applied to the second type or tiny Picomotor™ significantly exceeds its maximum pulse rate, irreversible damage to the Picomotor™ may occur.

[0007] Thus, there is a need to detect the presence and type of capacitive loads, such as piezoelectric actuators and Picomotors™, which may be coupled to a power driver.

SUMMARY

[0008] An aspect of the disclosure relates to a system for determining whether a capacitive load is connected to a power driver, and if connected, the type of capacitive load. Examples of capacitive loads include piezoelectric actuators and Picomotors™. Examples of different types of Picomotors™ include a standard Picomotor™ and a tiny Picomotor™. However, it shall be understood that other types of capacitive loads may be detected by the techniques described herein.

[0009] In summary, the system comprises a detection apparatus or circuit configured to measure a characteristic of the capacitive load in response to a drive voltage generated by the power driver. By measuring the characteristic of the capacitive load, the detection apparatus or circuit is able to determine whether the capacitive load is connected to the power driver, and if connected, the type of capacitive load.

[0010] In a more specific example, the detection apparatus is configured to measure the current, if any, flowing between the power driver and the capacitive load in response to a drive voltage generated by the power driver. Based on the measured current, the detection apparatus is able to determine whether a capacitive load is connected to the power driver, and if connected, the type of capacitive load.

[0011] In one embodiment, the detection circuit comprises a differential amplifier, a first window comparator, a second window comparator, a first register, a second register, and a microcontroller. In this embodiment, the detection circuit is able to determine two types of capacitive loads connected to the power driver by measuring a capacitance of the capacitive load. For example, the capacitance of the first type of capacitive load is greater than the capacitance of the second type of capacitive load.

[0012] The differential amplifier generates a current-related voltage based on current flowing between the power driver and the capacitive load in response to a drive voltage generated by the power driver. The differential amplifier

generates the current-related voltage by sensing a voltage drop across a resistor coupled in series between the power driver and the capacitive load. The drive voltage may be configured as a pulse having a leading edge and a trailing edge, wherein one of the edges has a gradual slope and the other edge has a steep slope. Based on this drive voltage, the current-related voltage will exhibit a spike that is substantially coincidental with the steep edge of the drive voltage. The peak or magnitude of the spike depends on the capacitance of the capacitive load, and is used to determine what type of capacitive load is present, if any.

[0013] The first window comparator compares the peak of the current-related voltage to first upper and lower thresholds. The first upper threshold corresponds to when the steep slope pertains to the leading edge of the drive voltage, and the first lower threshold corresponds to when the steep slope pertains to the trailing edge of the drive voltage. If the peak of the current-related voltage exceeds the first upper threshold in the positive direction or exceeds the first lower threshold in the negative direction, the first window comparator generates a signal that causes the first register to output a high logic level signal; otherwise, the first register outputs a low logic level signal.

[0014] Similarly, the second window comparator compares the peak of the current-related voltage to second upper and lower thresholds. The second upper and lower thresholds have magnitudes or absolute values that are less than the first upper and lower thresholds. Similarly, the second upper threshold corresponds to when the steep slope pertains to the leading edge of the drive voltage, and the second lower threshold corresponds to when the steep slope pertains to the trailing edge of the drive voltage. If the peak of the current-related voltage exceeds the second upper threshold in the positive direction or exceeds the second negative threshold in the negative direction, the second window comparator generates a signal that causes the second register to output a high logic level signal; otherwise, the second register outputs a low logic level signal.

[0015] The microcontroller reads the outputs of the first and second registers to determine whether a capacitive load is connected to the power driver,

and if connected, the type of capacitive load. For instance, if both registers output low logic levels, the microcontroller interprets this as no capacitive load connected to the power driver because the current failed to exceed any of the thresholds. If the first register outputs a low logic level and the second register outputs a high logic level, the microcontroller interprets this as the second type of capacitive load (e.g., the capacitive load with a lower capacitance) connected to the power driver because the current exceeds one of the second thresholds, but does not exceed one of the first thresholds. If both registers output high logic levels, the microcontroller interprets this as the first type of capacitive load (e.g., the capacitive load with a higher capacitance) connected to the power driver because the current exceeds one set of the first and second thresholds. The microcontroller may perform any number of operations based on the result of the measurement.

[0016] Another embodiment disclosed herein is similar to the aforementioned embodiment except that it is not limited to detecting two types of capacitive loads, but is configured for detecting N types of capacitive loads. Accordingly, this embodiment comprises a differential amplifier to generate a current-related voltage, N window comparators to compare the peak of the current-related voltage to N sets of upper and lower thresholds, N registers, and a microcontroller. Based on the word generated at the combined outputs of the registers, the microprocessor determines whether a capacitive load is connected to the power driver, and if connected, the type of capacitive load out of N types.

[0017] In yet another embodiment disclosed herein, the detection apparatus comprises a device to rectify or take the absolute value of the current-related voltage generated by a differential amplifier. A peak and hold amplifier is provided to hold the peak of the rectified current-related voltage until a reset signal is issued by a microcontroller. An analog-to-digital converter (ADC) is provided to generate a digital word indicative of the peak value held by the peak and hold amplifier. The microprocessor reads the digital word from the ADC, and determines whether a capacitive load is connected to the power driver, and if connected, the type of capacitive load based on the digital word. The

microprocessor may employ a table to map the digital word to the type of capacitive load or to an entry indicating no capacitive load.

[0018] Other aspects, advantages and novel features of the disclosure will become apparent from the following detailed description of the invention when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] FIG. 1 illustrates a block diagram of an exemplary system for detecting the presence and type of capacitive load that may be connected to a power driver in accordance with an aspect of the disclosure.

[0020] FIGs. 2A-2B illustrate timing diagrams associated with exemplary operation of the system of FIG. 1 in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure.

[0021] FIG. 3 illustrates a block diagram of another exemplary system for detecting the presence and type of capacitive load that may be connected to a power driver in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure.

[0022] FIGs. 4A-4B illustrate timing diagrams associated with exemplary operation of the system of FIG. 3 in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure.

[0023] FIG. 5A illustrates a block diagram of yet another exemplary system for detecting the presence and type of capacitive load that may be connected to a power driver in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure.

[0024] FIG. 5B illustrates a timing diagram associated with exemplary operation of the system of FIG. 5A in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure.

[0025] FIG. 6 illustrates a block diagram of still another exemplary system for detecting the presence and type of capacitive load that may be connected to a power driver in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

[0026] FIG. 1 illustrates a block diagram of an exemplary system 100 for detecting the presence and type of capacitive load 152 that may be connected to a power driver 150 in accordance with an aspect of the disclosure. The capacitive load 152 may comprise any type of capacitive loads including different types of piezoelectric actuators and different types of Picomotors™. In summary, the system 100 comprises a detection circuit 110 configured to sense the current I flowing between the power driver 150 and the capacitive load 152 by way of a resistor R_S in response to a drive voltage V_D generated by the power driver 150, and determine the type of capacitive load 152 or whether the capacitive load 152 is connected to the power driver 150 based on that measured current I .

[0027] In this example, there are two possible types of capacitive loads. For example, the two types of capacitive load may include a standard Picomotor™ and a tiny Picomotor™. More generically, the two types of capacitive loads may include a higher-capacitive load and a lower-capacitive load. However, it shall be understood that the detection circuit may be able to detect more than two types of capacitive loads, as will be discussed with reference to another exemplary embodiment described herein.

[0028] In particular, the detection circuit 110 comprises a differential amplifier 112, a first window comparator 114-1, a first upper and lower threshold generator 116-1, a second window comparator 114-2, and a second upper and lower threshold generator 116-2. Additionally, the detection circuit 110 comprises a first register 118-1, a second register 118-2, and a microcontroller 120.

[0029] The detection of the type or the presence of the capacitive load 152 operates as follows. The power driver 150 is operated to generate a drive voltage V_D . For example, the drive voltage V_D may be in the form of a defined pulse or waveform. In response to the drive voltage V_D , a current I may be produced that flows between the power driver 150 and the capacitive load 152. If, for example, the capacitive load 152 is not present or is disconnected from the power driver 150 due to faulty wiring or other causes, no or little current I may be produced.

[0030] If, on the other hand, a capacitive load 152 is present, the current I generated may have a magnitude or a peak that is related to the capacitance of the capacitive load 152. For example, assuming that the capacitance of the first type of capacitive load (e.g., a standard PicomotorTM) is greater than the capacitance of the second type of capacitive load (e.g., a tiny PicomotorTM), the magnitude or peak of the current I produced will be greater for the first type of capacitive load than for the second type of capacitive load.

[0031] Additionally, the drive voltage V_D may be configured to operate the capacitive load 152 in a certain manner, which results in a positive peak current I (e.g., a current flowing from the power driver 150 to the capacitive load 152), or operate the capacitive load 152 in another manner, which results in a negative peak current I (e.g., a current flowing from the capacitive load 152 to the power driver 150). This may be the case where the capacitive load 152 comprises a piezoelectric actuator or PicomotorTM that is operated to move in one direction (e.g., a forward or clockwise direction), which results in a negative peak current I, or operated to move in the opposite direction (e.g., a reverse or counter-clockwise direction), which results in a positive peak current I.

[0032] The differential amplifier 112 generates a voltage V_I that is proportional or related to the current I by sensing the voltage drop across the current-sensing resistor R_S . The first window comparator 114-1 compares the current-related voltage V_I to lower and upper thresholds V_{TH1-F} and V_{TH1-R} . The lower threshold V_{TH1-F} applies to when the capacitive load 152 is operated in a particular manner (e.g., moved in a forward or clockwise direction) that produces a negative peak current I, and the upper threshold V_{TH1-R} applies to when the capacitive load 152 is operated in another manner (e.g., moved in a reverse or counter-clockwise direction) that produces a positive peak current I.

[0033] For instance, if the peak of the current-related voltage V_I exceeds the lower threshold V_{TH1-F} in the negative direction or exceeds the upper threshold V_{TH1-R} in the positive direction, the first window comparator 114-1 generates a voltage V_{P1} that causes the register 118-1 to produce an output signal V_{R1} at a high logic level. Otherwise, if the peak of the current-related

voltage V_I does not exceed the lower threshold V_{TH1-F} in the negative direction or does not exceed the upper threshold V_{TH1-R} in the positive direction, the first window comparator 114-1 generates a voltage V_{P1} that does not cause the register 118-1 to output V_{R1} at the high logic level; and thus, the output signal V_{R1} of the register 118-1 remains at a low logic level.

[0034] Similarly, the second window comparator 114-2 compares the current-related voltage V_I to lower and upper thresholds V_{TH2-F} and V_{TH2-R} . The lower threshold V_{TH2-F} applies to when the capacitive load 152 is operated in a particular manner (e.g., moved in a forward or clockwise direction) that produces a negative peak current I , and the upper threshold V_{TH2-R} applies to when the capacitive load 152 is operated in another manner (e.g., moved in a reverse or counter-clockwise direction) that produces a positive peak current I . The lower and upper thresholds V_{TH2-F} and V_{TH2-R} of the second window comparator 114-2 are smaller in magnitude than the lower and upper thresholds V_{TH1-F} and V_{TH1-R} of the first window comparator 114-1. This is because the thresholds V_{TH2-F} and V_{TH2-R} are used for detecting a type 2 capacitive load that has a smaller capacitance than the type 1 capacitive load.

[0035] Similarly, if the peak of the current-related voltage V_I exceeds the lower threshold V_{TH2-F} in the negative direction or exceeds the upper threshold V_{TH2-R} in the positive direction, the second window comparator 114-2 generates a voltage V_{P2} that causes the second register 118-2 to produce an output signal V_{R2} at a high logic level. Otherwise, if the peak of the current-related voltage V_I does not exceed the lower threshold V_{TH2-F} in the negative direction or does not exceed the upper threshold V_{TH2-R} in the positive direction, the second window comparator 114-2 generates a voltage V_{P2} that does not cause the second register 118-2 to output V_{R2} at a high logic level; and thus, the output signal V_{R2} of the register 118-2 remains at a low logic level.

[0036] The respective output signals V_{R1} and V_{R2} of the registers 118-1 and registers 118-2 indicate whether a capacitive load is connected to the power driver 150 and if connected, the type of capacitive load 152. For instance, if the output signals V_{R1} and V_{R2} are both at low logic levels, this indicates that there

is no capacitive load connected to the power driver 150. This is because the current I , as measured by the current-related voltage V_I , does not exceed either both thresholds V_{TH1-F} and V_{TH2-F} in the negative direction or both thresholds V_{TH1-R} and V_{TH2-R} in the positive direction. In other words, the current I is below what is expected for type 1 and type 2 capacitive loads; and thus, this implies the absence of a capacitive load connected to the power driver 150.

[0037] Considering another case, if the output signal V_{R1} of the first register 118-1 is at a low logic level, and the output signal V_{R2} of the second register 118-2 is at a high logic level, this indicates that a type 2 capacitive load (i.e., the load with lesser capacitance) is connected to the power driver 150. This is because the current I , as measured by the current-related voltage V_I , exceeds the threshold V_{TH2-F} in the negative direction or the threshold V_{TH2-R} in the positive direction, but does not exceed the threshold V_{TH1-F} in the negative direction or the threshold V_{TH1-R} in the positive direction. In other words, the current I is at or above what is expected for a type 2 capacitive load, but below what is expected for a type 1 capacitive load; and thus, this implies that a type 2 capacitive load is connected to the power driver 150.

[0038] Considering the last case, if the respective output signals V_{R1} and V_{R2} of the first and second registers 118-1 and 118-2 are both at high logic levels, this indicates that a type 1 capacitive load (i.e., the load with a greater capacitance) is connected to the power driver 150. This is because the current I , as measured by the current-related voltage V_I , exceeds either both thresholds V_{TH1-F} and V_{TH2-F} in the negative direction or both thresholds V_{TH1-R} and V_{TH2-R} in the positive direction. In other words, the current I is at or above what is expected for a type 1 capacitive load; and thus, this implies that a type 1 capacitive load is connected to the power driver 150.

[0039] The microcontroller 120 may read the outputs of the registers 118-1 and 118-2 at any time to ascertain whether there is a capacitive load 152 connected to the power driver 150, and if connected, the type of capacitive load. After reading the outputs of the registers 118-1 and 118-2, the microcontroller 120 may generate a reset signal to clear the first and second registers 118-1 and

118-2; or more specifically, to cause the outputs V_{R1} and V_{R2} of the registers 118-1 and 118-2 to be at low logic levels.

[0040] Based on the outcome of the aforementioned measurement, the microcontroller 120 may perform any defined operation. For example, in the case where the measurement indicates an absence of a capacitive load, the microcontroller 120 may inform a user by way of a user interface device (e.g., display, speaker, etc.) of the absence of the capacitive load. Alternatively, or in addition to, the microcontroller 120 may inhibit certain operations like, for example, the generation of the drive voltage V_D by the power driver 150. Similarly, in response to the measurement indicating that a type 2 capacitive load is connected to the power driver 150, the microcontroller 120 may inhibit and/or allow certain operations. For example, if the type 2 capacitive load is a tiny Picomotor™ that can only be driven with a certain maximum pulse rate (e.g., a rate below the specified pulse rate for the standard picomotor), the microcontroller 120 may limit the pulse rate to the maximum pulse rate for the tiny Picomotor™. It shall be understood that the microcontroller 120 may perform any operation based on the results of the measurement. The microcontroller 120 may reset the registers 118-1 and 118-1 after each measurement by generating a reset signal. The reset signal causes the output signals V_{R1} and V_{R2} of the registers 118-1 and 118-2 to be at low logic levels.

[0041] As noted in FIG. 1, the detection circuit 110 may be separate from the power driver 150 and capacitive load 152. This facilitates the implementation of the detection circuit 110 in existing systems that include a power driver 150 and a capacitive load 152. Often, in such systems, a resistor is coupled in series between the power driver 150 and the capacitive load 152 for current-limiting purpose or other purposes. Thus, in such cases, the differential amplifier 112 of the detection circuit 110 may be easily connected across such resistor in order to effectuate the measurement of the current and perform the detection of the presence and/or type of capacitive load.

[0042] FIG. 2A illustrates a timing diagram associated with exemplary operation of the system 100 in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure.

The timing diagram is used to summarize the operation discussed above when the capacitive load 152 is operated in a manner (e.g., moved in a forward or clockwise direction) that produces a negative peak current I. Additionally, the timing diagram addresses three cases: case I where a type 1 capacitive load is connected to the power driver; case II where a type 2 capacitive load is connected to the power driver; and case III where no capacitive load is connected to the power driver.

[0043] The x- or horizontal axis for each case represents time, and the y- or vertical axis represents the different voltages or signals associated with the operation of the detection circuit 110. These voltages or signals include, from ascending to descending order, the drive voltage V_D generated by the power driver 150, the current-related voltage V_I generated by the differential amplifier 112, the voltage V_{P1} generated by the first window comparator 114-1, the voltage V_{P2} generated by the second window comparator 114-2, the signal V_{R1} generated by the first register 118-1, the signal V_{R2} generated by the second register 118-2, and the reset signal generated by the microcontroller 120.

[0044] Considering case I where a type 1 capacitive load is connected to the power driver 150, the drive voltage V_D shown may be configured to drive a Picomotor™ in a first direction (e.g., in a forward or clockwise direction) using the principle of stick and slip or static or dynamic friction. The leading edge of the drive voltage V_D has a gradual rising slope in order to expand a piezoelectric material in a slow manner, which allows the piezoelectric material to rotate a wheel in contact therewith in one direction due to greater static friction. The trailing edge of the drive voltage V_D has a fast falling slope in order to contract the piezoelectric material in a fast manner to cause slippage of the piezoelectric material along the wheel due to the lesser dynamic friction. Thus, using this waveform V_D , the wheel turns in one direction and does not turn in the opposite direction.

[0045] The current I produced in response to this drive voltage V_D , as indicated by the current-related voltage V_I , has a small positive rise/fall substantially coincidental with the leading edge of the drive voltage V_D , and a

large negative spike substantially coincidental with the trailing edge of the drive voltage V_D . In the example of case I, the negative peak V_{PK} exceeds both lower thresholds V_{TH1-F} and V_{TH2-F} of the first and second window comparators 114-1 and 114-2, respectively. This causes both the first and second window comparators 114-1 and 114-2 to generate voltages V_{P1} and V_{P2} in the form of positive pulses substantially coincidental with the negative peak V_{PK} of the current-related voltage V_I .

[0046] The pulses generated by the first and second window comparators 114-1 and 114-2 cause the first and second registers 118-1 and 118-2 to generate voltages V_{R1} and V_{R2} at high logic levels. As previously discussed, the outputs of the registers 118-1 and 118-2 at high logic levels indicate that a type 1 capacitive load (e.g., a standard PicomotorTM) is connected to the power driver 150. The microcontroller 120 then reads the outputs of the registers 118-1 and 118-2 and then issues a reset (e.g., an inverted pulse) to both registers to bring their outputs to low logic levels. The microcontroller 120 may then perform one or more functions based on the detection of the type 1 capacitive load connected to the power driver 150.

[0047] Considering case II where a type 2 capacitive load is connected to the power driver 150, the same or similar drive voltage V_D is generated by the power driver 150. In response to the drive voltage V_D , the current-related voltage V_I generated has a positive rise/fall substantially coincidental with the leading edge of the drive voltage V_D , and a negative peak V_{PK} substantially coincidental with the trailing edge of the drive voltage V_D . In this case, the negative peak V_{PK} does not exceed the threshold V_{TH1-F} in the negative direction, but exceeds the threshold V_{TH2-F} in the negative direction. As a result, the first window comparator 118-1 does not generate a signal V_{P1} with a pulse, but the second window comparator 118-2 does generate a signal V_{P2} with a pulse substantially coincidental with the negative peak V_{PK} of the current-related voltage V_I .

[0048] Because of the absence of a pulse in the signal V_{P1} , the first register 118-1 continues to generate the signal V_{R1} at a low logic level. However, due to a

pulse in the signal V_{P2} , the second register 118-2 generates the signal V_{R2} at a high logic level. As previously discussed, the outputs of the registers 118-1 and 118-2 being at low and high logic levels, respectively, indicate that a type 2 capacitive load (e.g., a tiny PicomotorTM) is connected to the power driver 150. The microcontroller 120 then reads the outputs of the registers 118-1 and 118-2 and issues a reset (e.g., an inverted pulse) to both registers to ensure that their outputs are both at low logic levels. The microcontroller 120 may then perform one or more functions based on the detection of a type 2 capacitive load connected to the power driver 150.

[0049] Finally, considering case III where there is no capacitive load connected to the power driver 150, the same or similar drive voltage V_D is generated by the power driver 150. Since there is no load, no current I is generated in response to the drive voltage V_D . As a result, the current-related voltage V_I remains at substantially zero (0) Volt, and accordingly, does not exceed both thresholds V_{TH1-F} and V_{TH2-F} . As a result, the first and second window comparators 118-1 and 118-2 do not generate signals V_{P1} and V_{P2} with pulses. Because of an absence of pulses in the signals V_{P1} and V_{P2} , the first and second register 118-1 and 118-2 continue to generate signals V_{R1} and V_{R2} at low logic levels. As previously discussed, the outputs of the registers 118-1 and 118-2 being at low logic levels indicate the absence of a capacitive load connected to the power driver 150. The microcontroller 120 then reads the outputs of the registers 118-1 and 118-2 and issues a reset (e.g., an inverted pulse) to both registers to ensure that their outputs are at low logic levels. The microcontroller 120 may then perform one or more functions based on the detection of no capacitive load connected to the power driver 150.

[0050] FIG. 2B illustrates another timing diagram associated with exemplary operation of the system 100 in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure. The timing diagram is similar to the timing diagram of FIG. 2A, except that the capacitive load 152 (e.g., a piezoelectric actuator or PicomotorTM) is driven in the opposite direction (e.g., in the reverse or counter-clockwise direction). In particular, the waveform of the drive voltage V_D has a leading edge that rises relatively fast and a trailing edge that falls relatively slow. Thus, in

the case of a Picomotor™ as the capacitive load 152, the Picomotor™ does not rotate during the leading edge due to slippage or lower dynamic friction, but rotates during the trailing edge due to the higher static friction. Nonetheless, the operation of the detection circuit 110 operates in a similar manner.

[0051] Considering case I where a type 1 capacitive load 152 is connected to the power driver 150, the current I, as measured by the current-related voltage V_I , has a positive peak V_{PK} substantially coincidental with the leading edge of the drive voltage V_D , and a small negative fall/rise substantially coincidental with the trailing edge of the drive voltage V_D . Since the positive peak V_{PK} of the current-related voltage V_I is above both thresholds V_{TH1-R} and V_{TH2-R} , both first and second window comparators 114-1 and 114-2 generate signals V_{P1} and V_{P2} with pulses substantially coincidental with the peak V_{PK} of the current-related voltage V_I . In response to the pulses generated by the first and second comparators 114-1 and 114-2, the first and second registers 118-1 and 118-2 generate signals V_{R1} and V_{R2} at high logic levels, respectively. As previously discussed, the output signals V_{R1} and V_{R2} of the registers being at high logic levels indicate that a type 1 capacitive load 152 is connected to the power driver 150. The microcontroller 120 reads the outputs of the registers, and performs any number of operations based on a type 1 capacitive load being detected. The microcontroller 120 also issues a reset signal (e.g., an inverted pulse) to reset the registers 118-1 and 118-2 to ensure that they output low logic levels.

[0052] Considering case II where a type 2 capacitive load 152 is connected to the power driver 150, the current I, as measured by the current-related voltage V_I , has a positive peak V_{PK} substantially coincidental with the leading edge of the drive voltage V_D , and a small negative fall/rise substantially coincidental with the trailing edge of the drive voltage V_D . In this case, the positive peak V_{PK} of the current-related voltage V_I is above threshold V_{TH2-R} , but below threshold V_{TH1-R} . Accordingly, the first window comparator 114-1 does not generate a signal V_{P1} with a pulse, but the second window comparator generates a signal V_{P2} with a pulse substantially coincidental with the peak V_{PK} of the current-related voltage V_I . In response to the pulse generated by the second

window comparator 114-2, the second register 118-2 generates the signal V_{R2} at a high logic level. However, the output signal V_{R1} of the first register 118-1 remains at a low logic level due to a lack of pulse from the first window comparator 114-1. As previously discussed, the output signals V_{R1} and V_{R2} of the registers being at low and high logic levels respectively, indicate that a type 2 capacitive load 152 is connected to the power driver 150. The microcontroller 120 reads the outputs of the registers, and performs any number of operations based on a type 2 capacitive load being detected. The microcontroller 120 also issues a reset signal (e.g., an inverted pulse) to reset the registers 118-1 and 118-2 to ensure that they output low logic levels.

[0053] Considering case III where no capacitive load 152 is connected to the power driver 150, the current I , as measured by the current-related voltage V_I , is substantially zero (0), and accordingly, does not exceed both thresholds V_{TH1-R} and V_{TH2-R} . Thus, the first and second window comparators 114-1 and 114-2 generate signals V_{P1} and V_{P2} without pulses. As a result, the signals V_{R1} and V_{R2} of the first and second registers 118-1 and 118-2 remain at low logic levels. As previously discussed, the output signals V_{R1} and V_{R2} of the registers being at low logic levels indicate that no capacitive load 152 is connected to the power driver 150. The microcontroller 120 reads the outputs of the registers, and performs any number of operations based on detecting no capacitive load. The microcontroller 120 then issues a reset signal (e.g., an inverted pulse) to reset the registers 118-1 and 118-2 to ensure that they output low logic levels.

[0054] FIG. 3 illustrates a block diagram of another exemplary system 300 for detecting the presence and type of capacitive load 352 that may be connected to a power driver 350 in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure. The system 300 is similar to the system 100, except that it comprises a detection circuit 310 that is able to detect N types of capacitive loads, instead of being limited to detecting two types of capacitive loads as in detection circuit 110. However, as discussed below, the principle of operations of detection circuit 310 is essentially the same as that of detection circuit 110.

[0055] In particular, the detection circuit 310 comprises a differential amplifier 312, N window comparators 314-1, 314-2 to 314-N, N threshold generators 316-1, 316-2 to 316-N, N registers 318-1, 318-2 to 318-N, and a microcontroller 320. The differential amplifier 312 generates a current-related voltage V_I that is proportional or related to the current I produced in response to a drive voltage V_D generated by the power driver 350 by sensing the voltage drop across a current sensing resistor R_s . The window comparators 314-1 to 314-N generate signals V_{P1} to V_{PN} with pulses in response to the current-related voltage V_I exceeding the upper thresholds V_{TH1-R} to V_{THN-R} in the positive direction, or the lower thresholds V_{TH1-F} to V_{THN-F} in the negative direction, respectively.

[0056] In response to the signals V_{P1} and V_{PN} having pulses or lack of pulses, the registers 318-1 to 318-N generates signals V_{R1} to V_{RN} at high logic levels or low logic levels, respectively. The combined digital word generated by the registers 318-1 to 318-N indicates the type of capacitive load 352 connected to the power driver 350 or whether a capacitive load 152 is connected to the power driver 350.

[0057] Considering some examples, if the signals V_{R1} to V_{RN} are all at high logic levels, then a type 1 capacitive load 352 is connected to the power driver 350. If signal V_{R1} is at a low logic level and the remaining signals V_{R2} to V_{RN} are at high logic levels, then a type 2 capacitive load 352 is connected to the power driver 350. If the signals V_{R1} to V_{RN-1} are all at high logic levels and signal V_{RN} is at a low logic level, then a type N capacitive load 352 is connected to the power driver 350. If the signals V_{R1} to V_{RN} are all at low logic levels, then no capacitive load is connected to the power driver 350. The microcontroller 320 reads the outputs of the registers 318-1 to 318-N, and performs any number of operations based on which type of capacitive load 352 is connected to the power driver 350 or an absence of a capacitive load connected to the power driver 350.

[0058] FIGs. 4A-4B illustrate timing diagrams associated with exemplary operation of the system 300 in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure. The timing diagrams are similar to the timing diagrams of FIGs. 2A-2B, respectively, except that the instant timing diagrams are for N+1 cases, rather

than three (3) cases. Similar to FIGs. 2A-2B, the timing diagram of FIG. 4A deals with the capacitive load 352 operated in a first manner (e.g., moving it in a forward or clockwise direction), and the timing diagram of FIG. 4B deals with the capacitive load 352 operated in a second manner (e.g., moving it in a reverse or counter-clockwise direction).

[0059] Summarizing the timing diagrams of FIG. 4A-4B, case 1 deals with a type 1 capacitive load 352 (the load with the highest capacitance) connected to the power driver 350. In such a case, the current-related voltage V_I has a negative peak coincidental with the trailing edge of the driving voltage V_D and that exceeds all of the thresholds V_{TH1-F} to V_{THN-F} in the negative direction. This results in all of the window comparators 314-1 to 314-N generating signals V_{P1} to V_{PN} with pulses. The pulses cause the registers 318-1 to 318-N to produce signals V_{R1} to V_{RN} at high logic levels, respectively. The microprocessor 320 interprets the high logic levels at the outputs of the registers 318-1 to 318-N as a type 1 capacitive load 352 connected to the power driver 350. Once the outputs of the registers 318-1 to 318-N are read, the microprocessor 320 issues a reset (e.g., an inverted pulse) to reset the registers to ensure that they output signals V_{R1} to V_{RN} at low logic levels. The microcontroller 320 then performs any number of operations based on detecting that the type 1 capacitive load 352 is connected to the power driver 350. The other cases operate in a similar manner as indicated in the timing diagrams.

[0060] FIG. 5A illustrates a block diagram of yet another exemplary system 500 for detecting the presence and type of capacitive load 552 connected to a power driver 550 in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure. In summary, the system 500 comprises a detection circuit 510 that rectifies or generates the absolute value of the current-related threshold V_I to eliminate having two values for consideration. The detection circuit 510 includes a peak and hold device to generate an output indicative of the peak current, and an analog-to-digital converter (ADC) to generate a digital word indicative of the peak current. Based on the digital word, a microprocessor determine whether a capacitive load is connected to the power driver and, if connected, the type of capacitive load.

[0061] In particular, the detection circuit 510 comprises a differential amplifier 512, an absolute value amplifier 514, a peak and hold amplifier 516, an analog-to-digital converter (ADC) 518, and a microcontroller 520. The differential amplifier 512 generates a current-related voltage V_I based on the current I flowing between the power driver 550 and the capacitive load 552 by sensing the voltage across the current-sensing resistor R_s . The absolute value amplifier 514 rectifies the current-related voltage V_I in order to generate an absolute-value or rectified current-related voltage V_A .

[0062] The peak and hold amplifier 516 detects the peak of the rectified current-related voltage V_A and generates a signal V_H with a constant amplitude at the peak value. The ADC 518 generates a digital word W_H indicative of the amplitude of the signal V_H from the peak and hold amplifier 516. The microcontroller 520 receives the digital word W_H from the ADC 518, and determines the presence and the type of capacitive load 552 based on the digital word W_H . Once the microcontroller 520 has performed the measurement, it sends a reset signal to the peak and hold amplifier 516 to cause the signal V_H to be at substantially zero (0) Volt. The magnitude of the digital word W_H is a function of the current I . The microcontroller 520 may use a table to map the digital word W_H to the type of capacitive load 552 or to an entry indicating an absence of the capacitive load 552.

[0063] FIG. 5B illustrates a timing diagram associated with exemplary operation of the system 500 in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure. In this example, the capacitive load 552 may comprise a Picomotor™ configured to rotate in a clockwise (CW) manner or a counter-clockwise (CCW) manner. However, as frequently mentioned herein, the capacitive load 552 may comprise any type of capacitive load including other types of piezoelectric actuators and other types of devices. The timing diagram is similar to the previously-discussed timing diagrams, and depicts two cases: (1) the CW case where the Picomotor™ is operated to rotate in a clockwise manner; and (2) the CCW case where the Picomotor™ is operated to rotate in a counter-clockwise manner.

[0064] Considering the CW case, a drive voltage V_D is generated by the power driver 550. The drive voltage V_D has a relatively slow rising leading edge to cause the Picomotor™ to rotate in a clockwise manner, and has a relatively fast falling trailing edge to prevent the rotation of the Picomotor™ in a counter-clockwise manner. In response to the drive voltage V_D , the current I , as indicated by the current-related voltage V_I generated by the differential amplifier 512, has a small positive rise/fall substantially coincidental with the leading edge of the drive voltage V_D , and a negative peak substantially coincidental with the trailing edge of the drive voltage V_D .

[0065] The absolute value amplifier 514 rectifies the current-related voltage V_I to generate a rectified voltage V_A to invert the negative peak into a positive peak V_{PK} . The peak and hold amplifier 516 detects the positive peak V_{PK} of the rectified voltage V_A and generates a constant amplitude signal V_H at the peak value. The ADC 518 generates a digital word W_H with a value W_{PK} related to the amplitude V_{PK} of the signal V_H . The microcontroller 520 reads the value W_{PK} to determine the type of Picomotor™, or more generally, the type of capacitive load 552 connected to the power driver 550 or whether there is a Picomotor™ or capacitive load connected to the power driver 550. The microcontroller 520 then generates a reset signal (e.g., an inverted pulse) to reset the peak and hold amplifier 516 so that it generates an inactive output (e.g., zero (0) Volt). Based on the determination, the microcontroller 520 may perform any number of operations.

[0066] Considering the CCW case, a drive voltage V_D is generated by the power driver 550. The drive voltage V_D has a relatively fast rising leading edge to prevent the Picomotor™ from rotating in a clockwise manner, and has a relatively slow falling trailing edge to cause the Picomotor™ to rotate in a counter-clockwise manner. In response to the drive voltage V_D , the current I , as indicated by the current-related voltage V_I generated by the differential amplifier 512, has a positive peak substantially coincidental with the leading edge of the drive voltage V_D , and a small negative fall/rise substantially coincidental with the trailing edge of the drive voltage V_D .

[0067] The absolute value amplifier 514 rectifies the current-related voltage V_I to generate a rectified voltage V_A . In this case, the signal of interest, the positive peak voltage, is already positive. The peak and hold amplifier 516 detects the peak V_{PK} of the rectified voltage V_A and generates a constant amplitude signal V_H at the peak value. The ADC 518 generates a digital word W_H with a value W_{PK} related to the amplitude V_{PK} of the signal V_H . The microcontroller 520 reads the value W_{PK} to determine the type of PicomotorTM or more generally, the type of capacitive load 552 connected to the power driver 550 or whether there is PicomotorTM or capacitive load is connected to the power driver 550. The microcontroller 520 then generates a reset signal (e.g., an inverted pulse) to reset the peak and hold amplifier 516 so that it generates an inactive output (e.g., zero (0) Volt). Based on the determination, the microcontroller 520 may perform any number of operations.

[0068] FIG. 6 illustrates a block diagram of still another exemplary system 600 for detecting the presence and type of load 652 that may be connected to a power driver 650 in accordance with another aspect of the disclosure. The discussion of the system 600 summarizes the principles upon which all the previous embodiments operate. The system 600 comprises a power driver 650, a load 652 (if any) coupled to the power driver 650, and a detection apparatus 610.

[0069] The detection principle operates as follows. The power driver 650 is operated to generate a drive signal S_D , which could be a current or a voltage. In response to the drive signal S_D , the detection apparatus 610 measures a characteristic of the load 652 in response to the drive signal S_D by sensing a parameter responsive to the drive signal S_D . The characteristic of the load 652 may relate to the capacitance of the load. Based on the sensed parameter or characteristic of the load 652, the detection apparatus 610 determines whether a load is in fact connected to the power driver 650, and if connected, the type of load connected to the power driver 650. The detection apparatus 610 may then perform any number of operations based on its determination.

[0070] While the invention has been described in connection with various embodiments, it will be understood that the invention is capable of further

modifications. This application is intended to cover any variations, uses or adaptation of the invention following, in general, the principles of the invention, and including such departures from the present disclosure as come within the known and customary practice within the art to which the invention pertains.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for determining a type of load connected to a power driver or whether the load is connected to the power driver, comprising:

a detection circuit configured to determine the type of load connected to the power driver or whether the load is connected to the power driver based on a measured characteristic of the load in response to a drive voltage generated by the power driver.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the measured characteristic comprises a capacitance of the load.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein the detection circuit is configured to measure the capacitance of the load by sensing a current flow between the power driver and the load.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein the detection circuit is configured to determine the type of load connected to the power driver or whether the load is connected to the power driver based on a positive or negative peak of the sensed current flow between the power driver and the load.

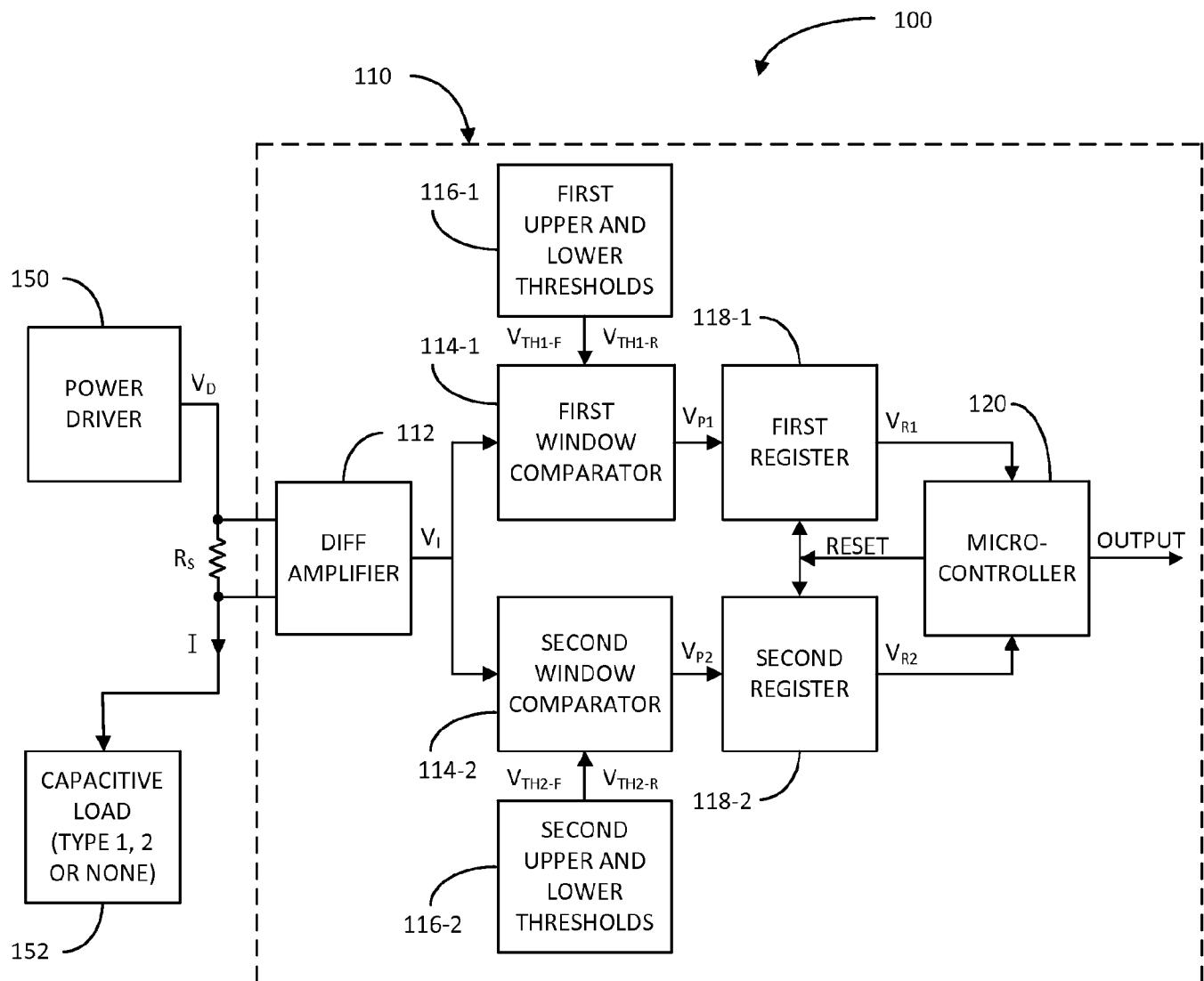


FIG. 1

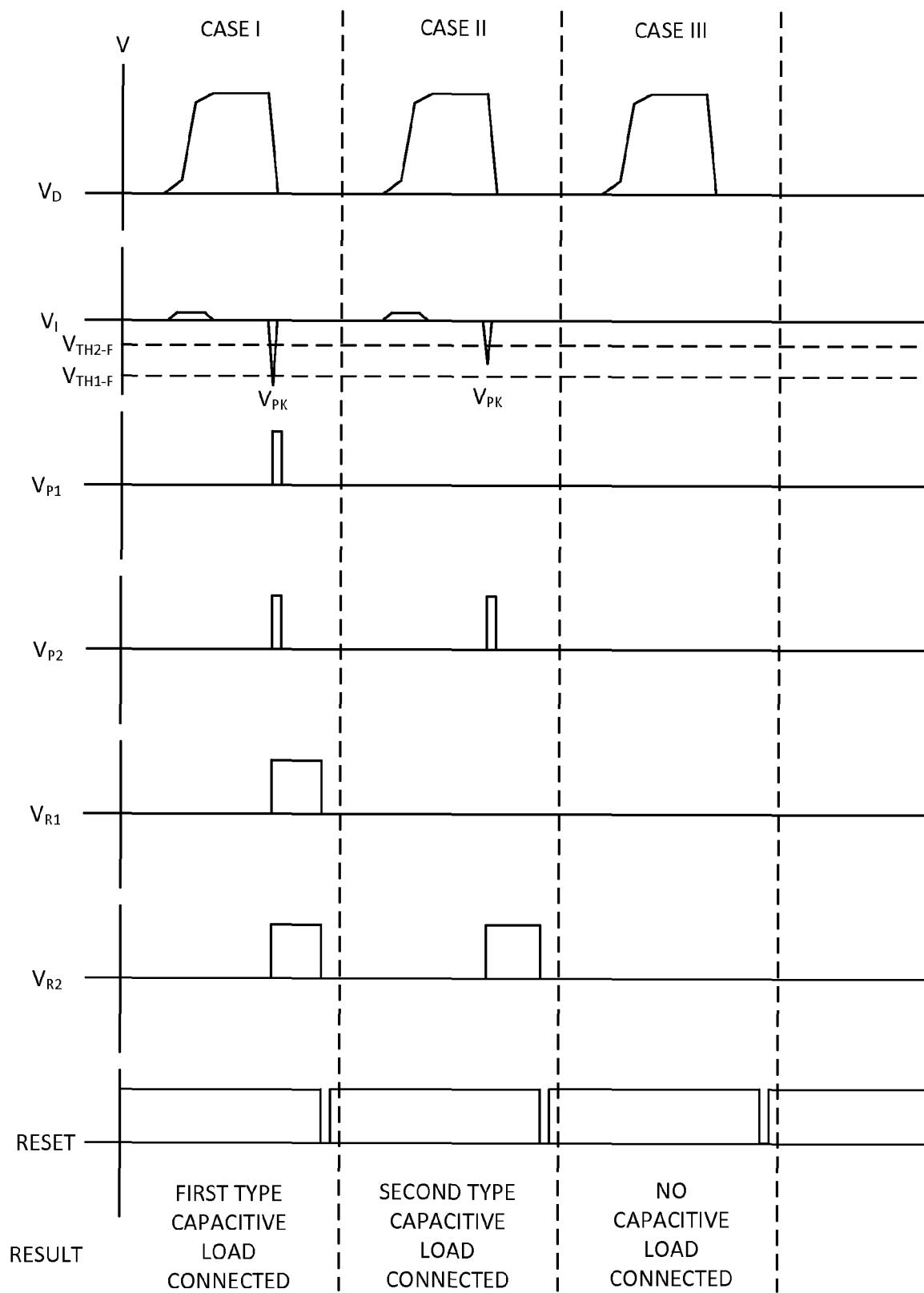


FIG. 2A

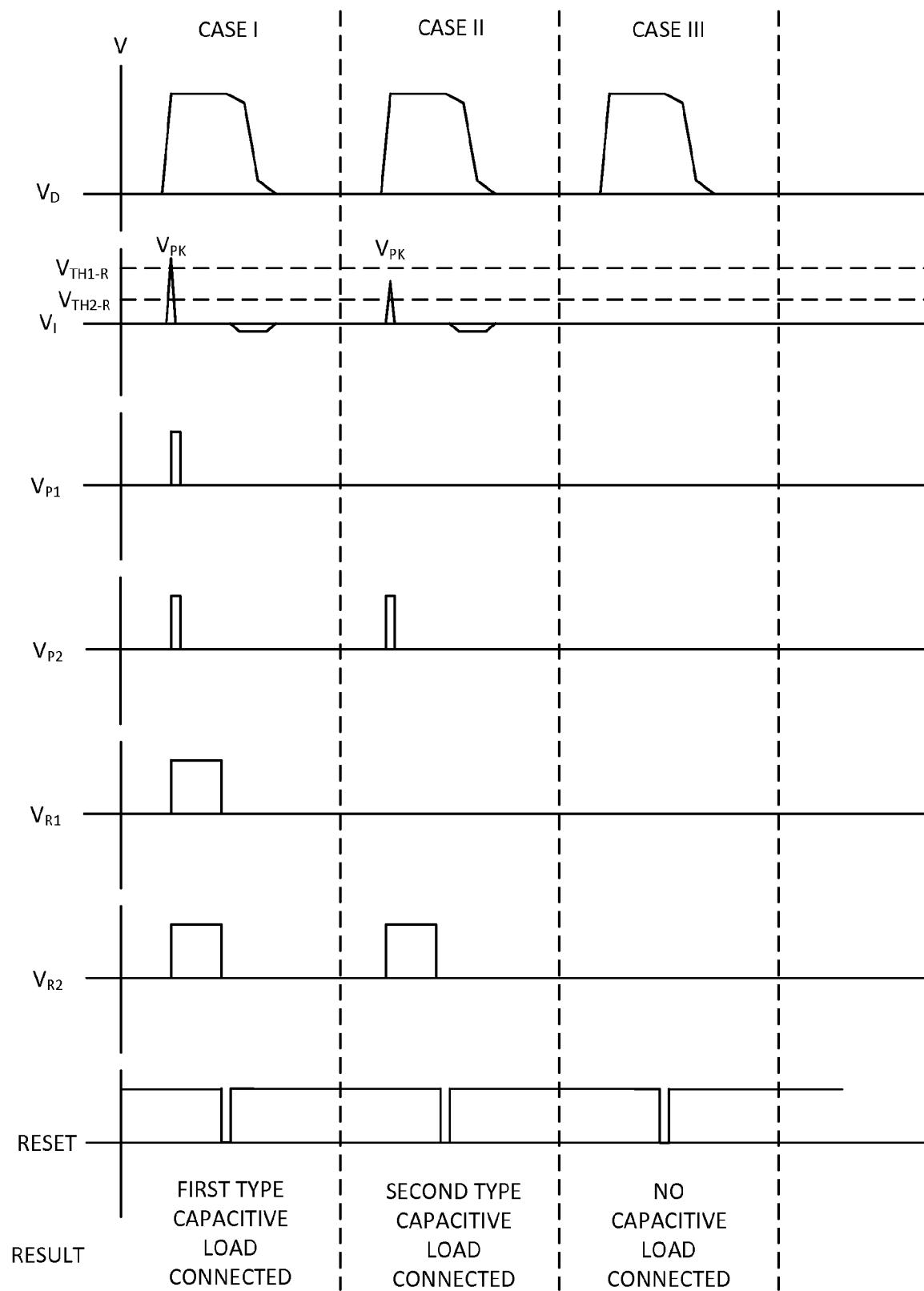


FIG. 2B

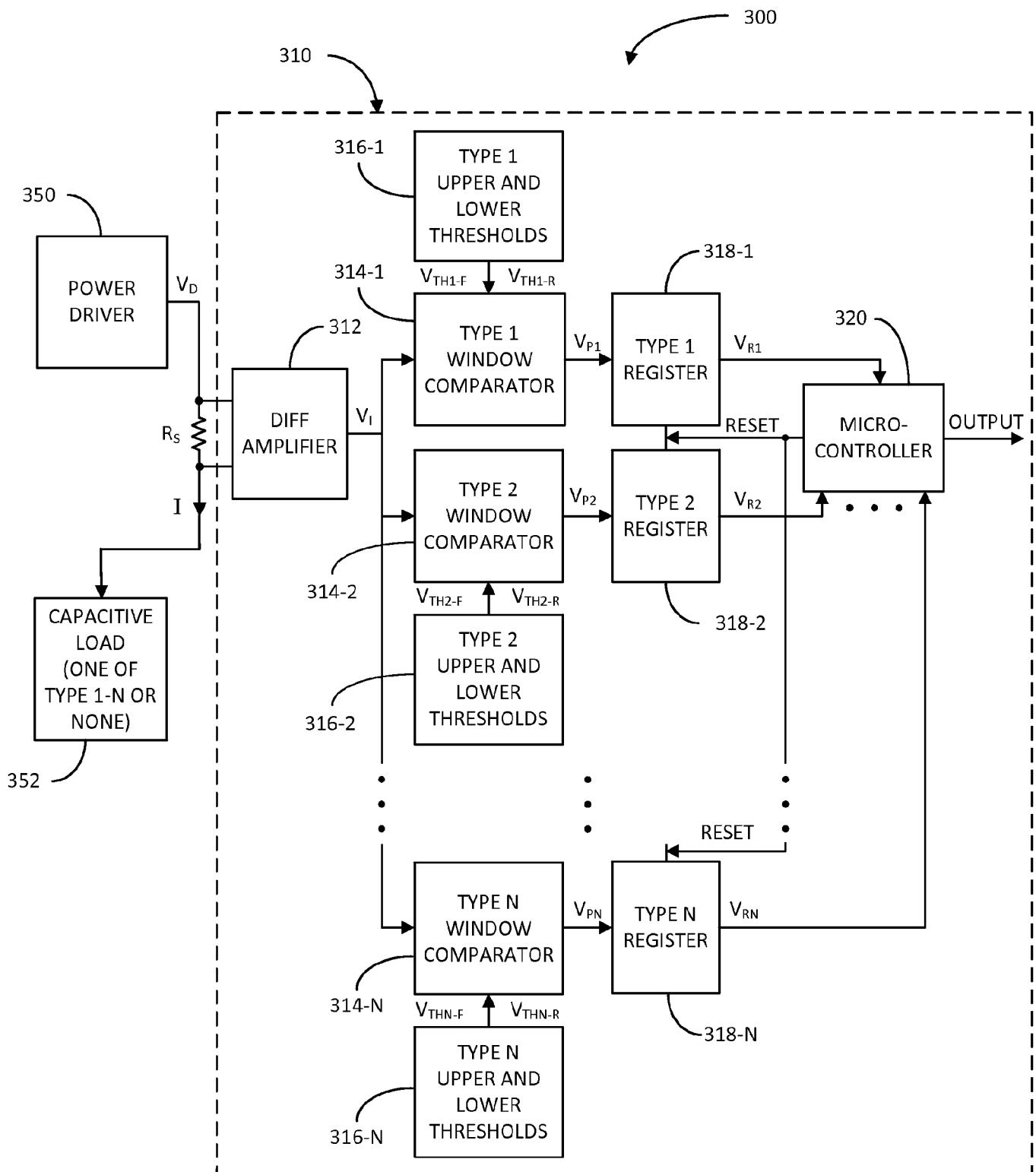


FIG. 3

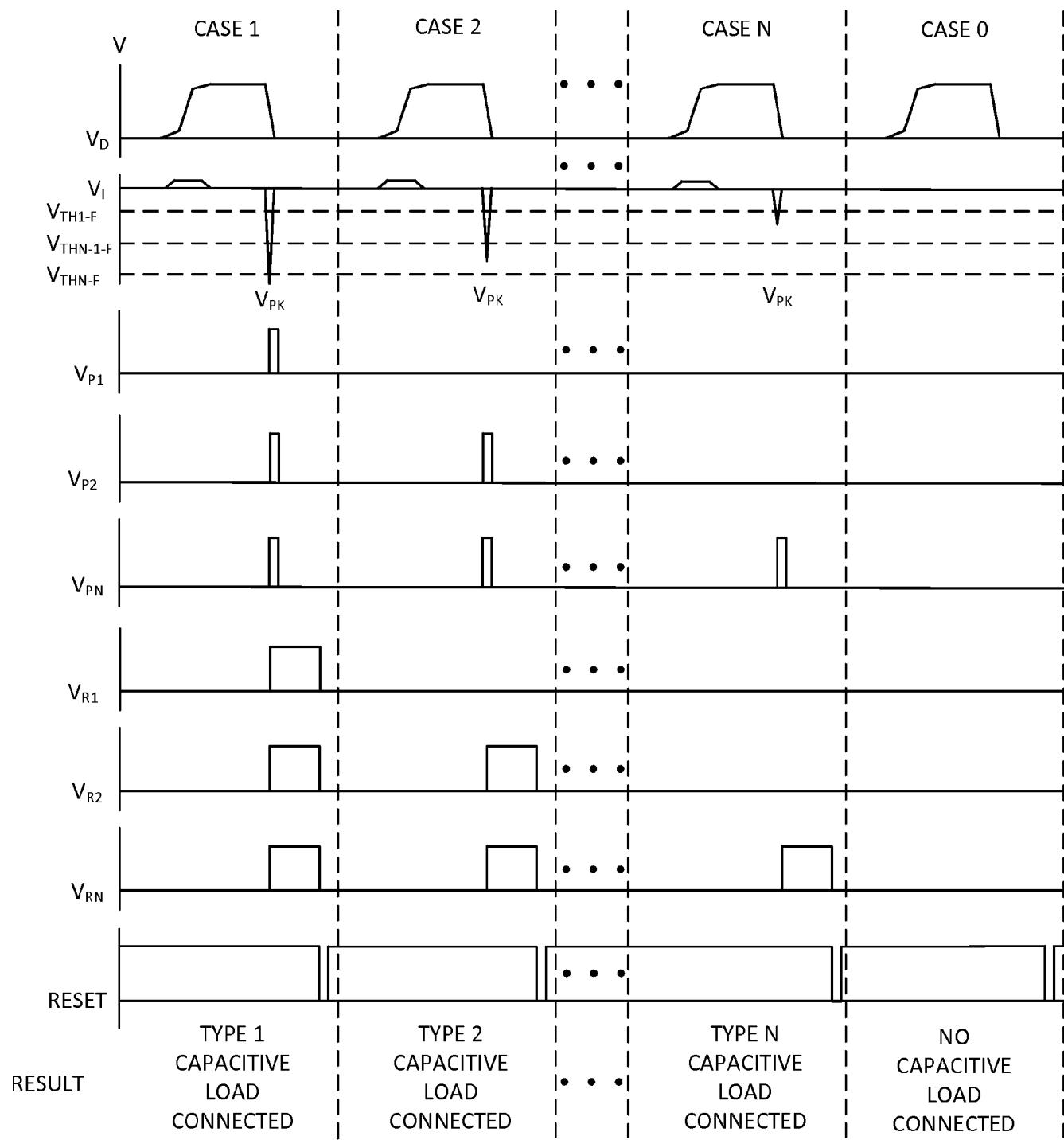


FIG. 4A

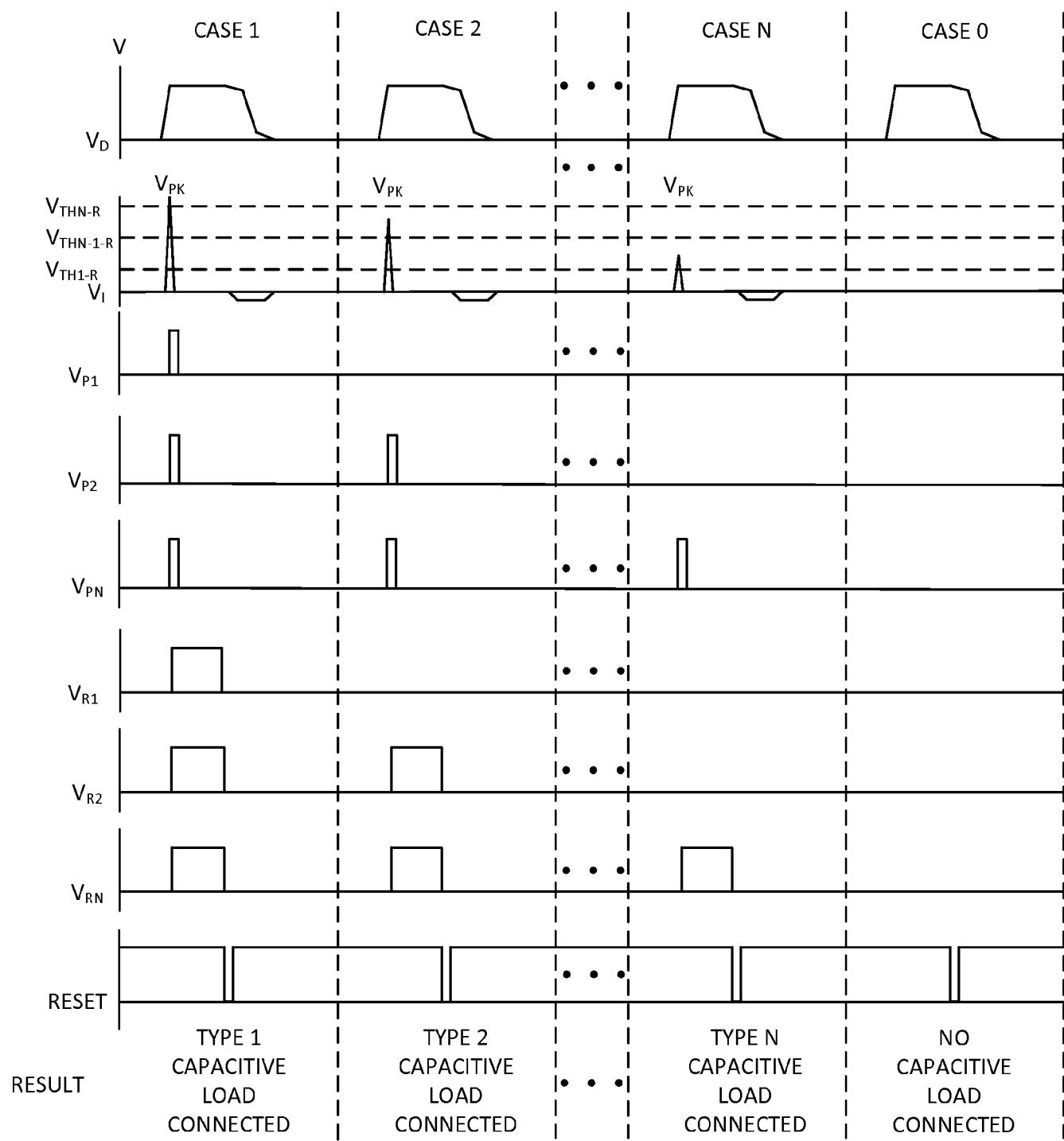


FIG. 4B

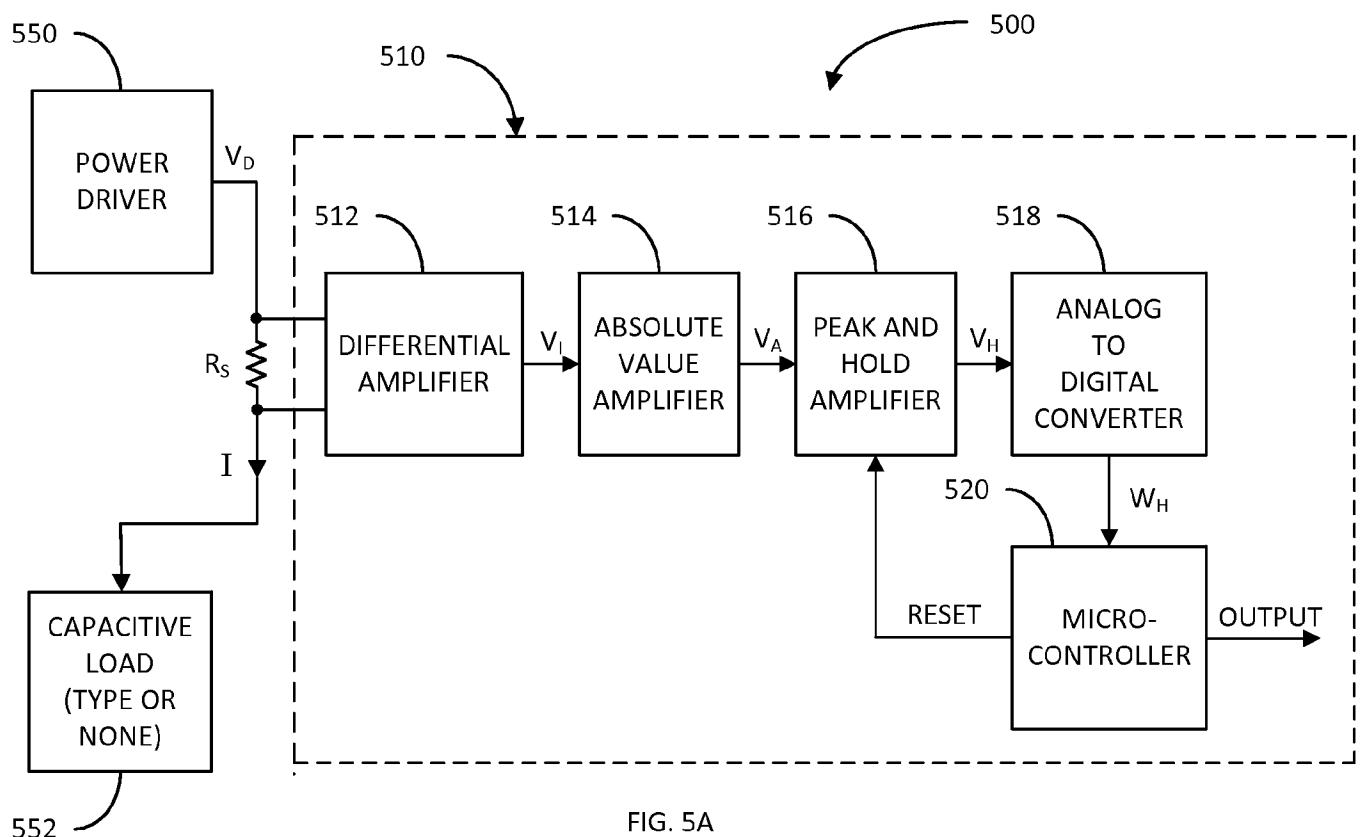


FIG. 5A

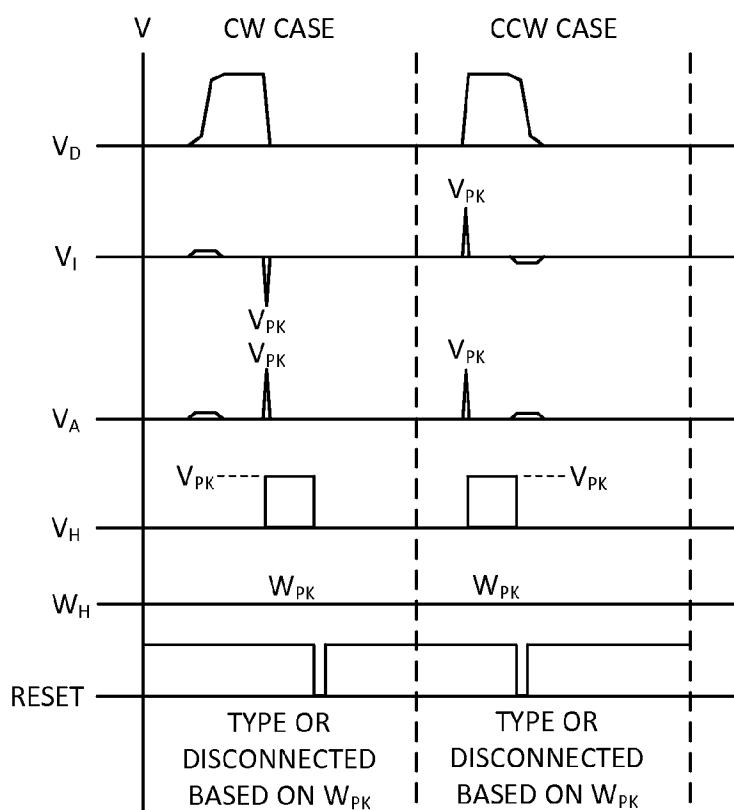


FIG. 5B

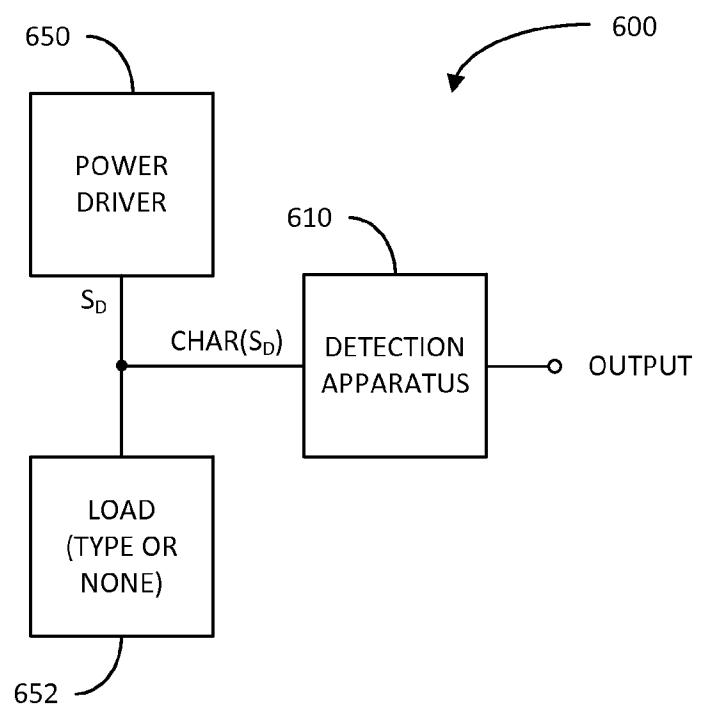


FIG. 6

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - H03K 5/1532; G01R 19/04, 19/165 (2014.01)

USPC - 327/81; 377/2, 51

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

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC (8): H03K 3/023, 3/78, 5/1532; G01R 19/04, 19/25, 19/165, 19/175; A61N 1/08; H01J 7/42 (2014.01)

USPC: 315/129; 327/80, 81; 377/2, 28, 51

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

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

MicroPatent (US-G, US-A, EP-A, EP-B, WO, JP-bib, DE-C, B, DE-A, DE-T, DE-U, GB-A, FR-A), ProQuest, IEEE, Google Scholar; KEYWORDS: load, type, connect, power driver, driver, voltage, waveform, signal, detect, protect, circuit, capacit

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2011/0234104 A1 (MISHIMA, M et al.) September 29, 2011; abstract; figures 1-4; paragraphs [0005-0010], [0028-0032], [0050-0060]	1-4
A	US 2008/0186339 A1 (KONDOH, Y) August 7, 2008; entire document	1-4
A	US 2011/0316578 A1 (MIZUTANI, Y et al.) December 29, 2011; entire document	1-4

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

* 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

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"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 13 February 2014 (13.02.2014)	Date of mailing of the international search report 27 FEB 2014
Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450 Facsimile No. 571-273-3201	Authorized officer: Shane Thomas PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300 PCT OSP: 571-272-7774