

US 20100219305A1

(19) United States(12) Patent Application Publication

(10) Pub. No.: US 2010/0219305 A1 (43) Pub. Date: Sep. 2, 2010

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(54) CLIP DESIGN FOR ATTACHING A BRACKET TO AN EXISTING BRACKET OR PANEL

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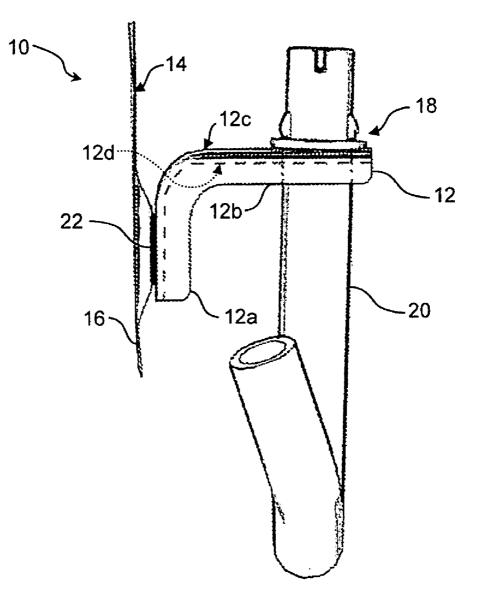
- (21) Appl. No.: 12/395,112
- (22) Filed: Feb. 27, 2009

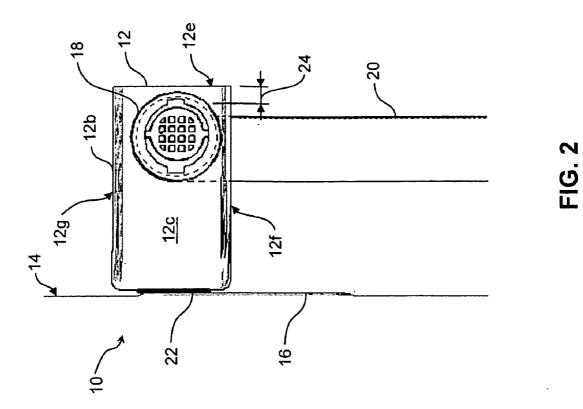
Publication Classification

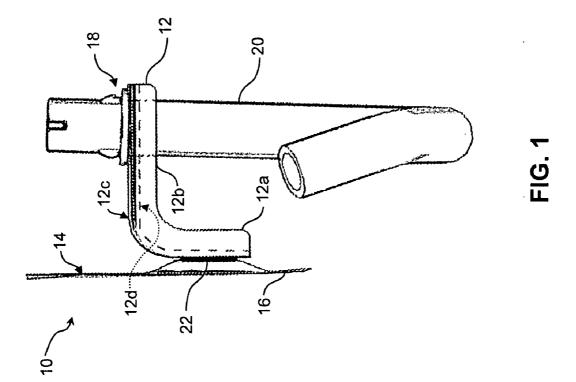
- (51) Int. Cl. *A47B 96/06* (2006.01)
- (52) U.S. Cl. 248/201

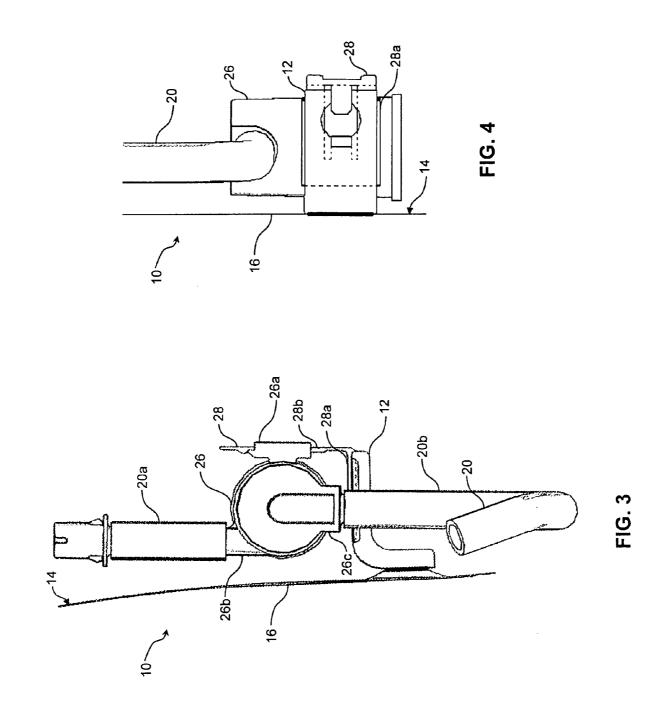
(57) **ABSTRACT**

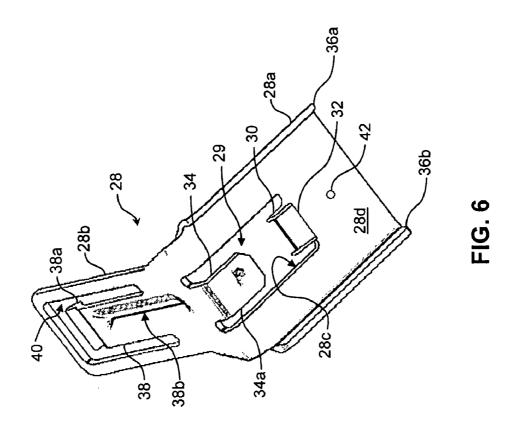
A bracket for coupling a component to a vehicle including a mounting structure defining an aperture is disclosed. The bracket has a first portion including at least one mounting structure clip configured to engage the mounting structure about a periphery of the aperture. The bracket also has a second portion including a component clip configured to engage the component.

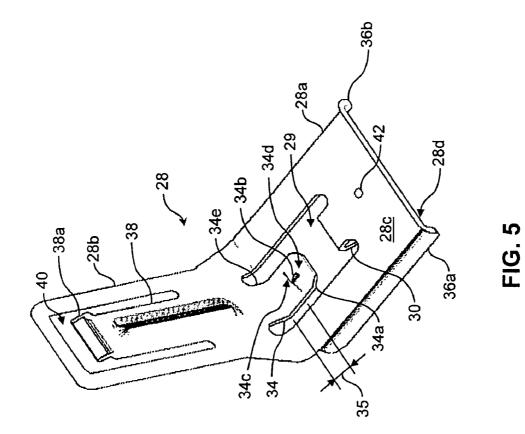












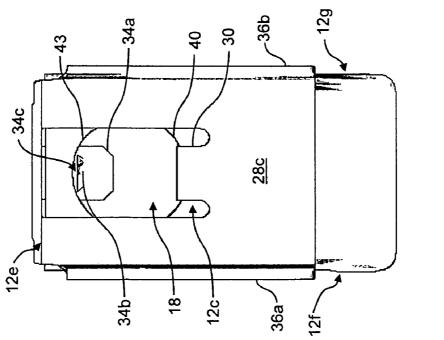
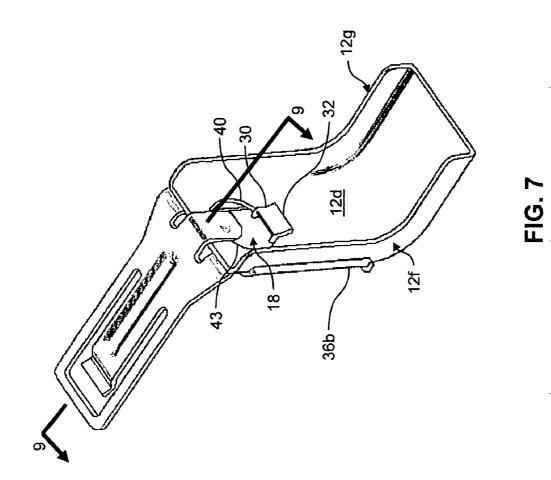
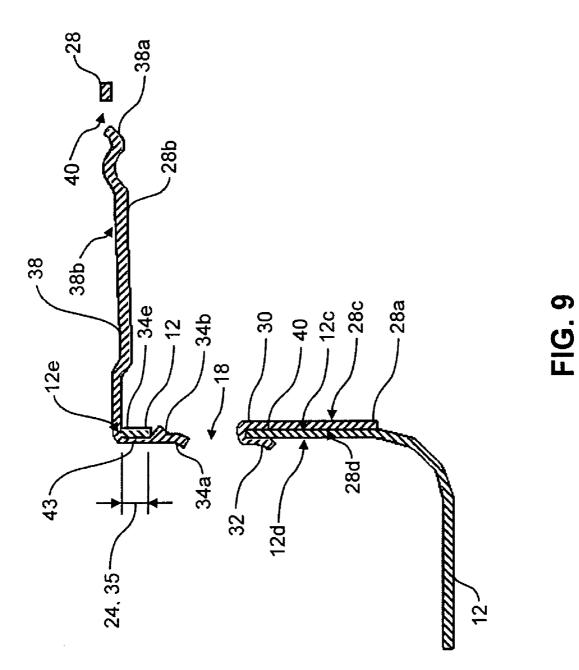
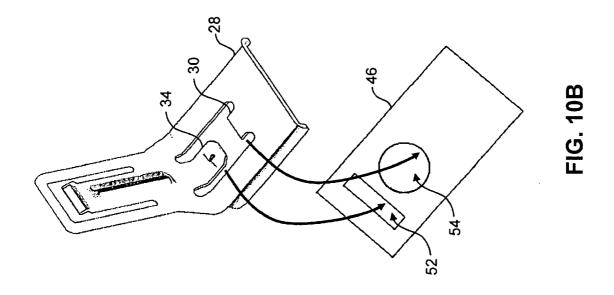
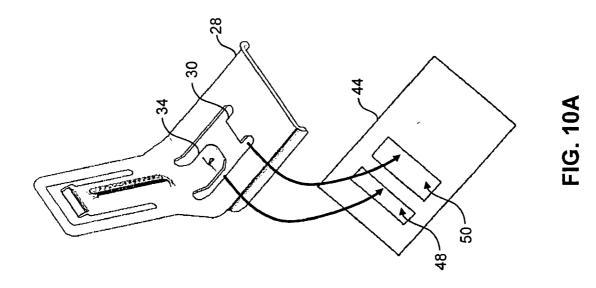


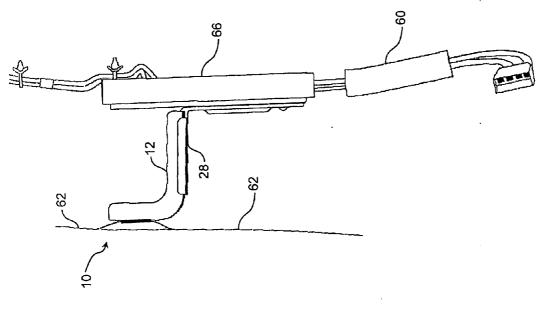
FIG. 8

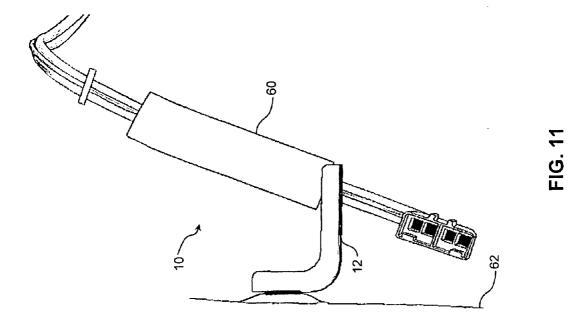












CLIP DESIGN FOR ATTACHING A BRACKET TO AN EXISTING BRACKET OR PANEL

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention pertains to a clip design for attaching a component to a mounting structure in a vehicle.

BACKGROUND

[0002] A vehicle may be initially designed for use with an original component. For example, a bracket defining an aperture can be attached to the vehicle, such as by welding the bracket to an interior of a vehicle body panel. The aperture can be sized to receive the original component, which can be, as examples, an air intake hose or a wire harness. The original component can be inserted into the aperture for attachment to the vehicle.

[0003] However, as a result of a technological advance, a design change, or updated vehicle standards, as examples, it may be desirable to modify the vehicle for use with a second component in addition to or instead of the original component. For example, even though a vehicle can include a bracket having an aperture originally designed to receive an air intake hose, it may become desirable to install an air intake hose having an air filter in the vehicle.

SUMMARY

[0004] Examples of a bracket for coupling a component to a vehicle including a mounting structure defining an aperture are described herein. In one example, the bracket has a first portion including at least one mounting structure clip configured to engage the mounting structure about a periphery of the aperture, and the bracket also has a second portion including a component clip configured to engage the component.

[0005] In an example of a method for coupling a component to a vehicle including a primary mounting structure defining an aperture, the method includes attaching the component to a secondary mounting structure including a first clip. The method also includes attaching the secondary mounting structure to the primary mounting structure by engaging the first clip of the secondary mounting structure to the primary mounting structure about a periphery of the aperture.

[0006] In another example, a component mounting assembly for a vehicle is described. The component mounting assembly includes a conduit. A primary mounting bracket is attached to the vehicle. The primary mounting bracket has a primary bearing surface defined by at least three lateral sides, and a first aperture through the primary bearing surface. The first aperture is sized to permit insertion of the conduit there-through. A secondary mounting bracket has a secondary bearing surface engaging the primary bearing surface of the primary mounting bracket, and the secondary mounting bracket also has a first clip depending from the secondary bearing surface and engaging the primary bearing surface. The first clip protrudes through the first aperture of the primary mounting bracket.

A component is attached to the secondary mounting bracket and to the conduit.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] The description herein makes reference to the accompanying drawings wherein like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views, and wherein:

[0008] FIG. **1** is a front elevation view of a conduit extending through an aperture in a primary mounting structure attached to a vehicle;

[0009] FIG. **2** is a top plan view of the conduit, primary mounting structure, and vehicle of FIG. **1**;

[0010] FIG. **3** is a front elevation view of a component attached to the primary mounting structure of FIG. **1** by engaging a secondary mounting structure with the primary mounting structure;

[0011] FIG. **4** is a bottom plan view of the component attached to the primary mounting structure of FIG. **1** by engaging the secondary mounting structure to the primary mounting structure including a portion of the secondary mounting structure in phantom;

[0012] FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the secondary mounting structure of FIGS. 3 and 4;

[0013] FIG. 6 is another perspective view of the secondary mounting structure of FIGS. 3 and 4;

[0014] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of the secondary mounting structure engaged with the primary mounting structure;

[0015] FIG. **8** is a top plan view of the secondary mounting structure engaged with the primary mounting structure;

[0016] FIG. 9 is a cross section of FIG. 7 along line 9-9;

[0017] FIGS. 10A and 10B are exploded perspective views of the secondary mounting structure of FIGS. 5 and 6 and two alternative primary mounting structures;

[0018] FIG. **11** is a front elevation view of a wire harness coupled to a vehicle instrument panel; and

[0019] FIG. **12** is a front elevation of the assembly of FIG. **11** retrofitted to include an additional component.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0020] As shown in a FIGS. **1** and **2**, a vehicle **10** can include a primary mounting structure, here an original bracket **12**, attached to an interior side **14** of a vehicle body panel **16**. The bracket **12** can be used for attaching a conduit, such as an air intake hose **20** as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**, a wire harness **60** as shown in FIG. **11**, or a liquid carrying conduit, to the vehicle **10**. The vehicle **10** can be any type of vehicle, such as a sedan, SUV, or semi-truck.

[0021] Still referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, the original bracket 12 can define an aperture 18, and the air intake hose 20 or other conduit can be attached to the bracket 12 by being inserted through the aperture 18. The bracket 12 can be permanently attached to the vehicle 10 by forming a weld 22 between the bracket 12 and body panel 16, by adhering the bracket 12 to the body panel 16, or by other means. The bracket 12 can also be attached to the vehicle 10 using one or more clips or bolts, and/or other attachment structures. Also, the bracket 12 can be attached to an interior portion of the vehicle 10 other than the interior 14 of the body panel 16 shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, such as a portion inside the space defined by the body panels of the vehicle 10. Examples of other possible interior portions of the vehicle 10 to which the bracket 12 can be attached include an interior of an instrument panel 62 as shown in FIG. 11 and a chassis of the vehicle 10. Instead of the illustrated bracket 12, a different primary mounting structure can be used to attach the hose 20 to the vehicle 10, such as another type of bracket, a panel, a flange, a clamp, or another structure, each of which can define the aperture 18.

[0022] The original bracket 12 can be generally L-shaped, with the bracket 12 including a first portion 12a attached to the vehicle 10 and a second portion 12b angled generally

perpendicularly to the first portion 12a as shown in FIG. 1. Alternatively, the first and second portions 12a and 12b can be angled non-orthogonally relative to one another. The second portion 12b can include a primary bearing surface 12c and a secondary bearing surface 12d opposite the primary bearing surface 12c. The primary and secondary bearing surfaces 12cand 12d, respectively, can share three lateral sides 12e, 12fand 12g, and the lateral side 12e of the bracket 12 can be spaced from the aperture 18 by a distance 24 as shown in FIG. 2.

[0023] The aperture 18 can extend between the primary and secondary bearing surfaces 12c and 12d, respectively, and the aperture 18 can be sized to permit insertion of the hose 20. For example, the diameter of the aperture 18 can depend on the flexibility of the hose 20, and the aperture 18 can have a diameter at least as large as the hose 20 if the hose 20 is not sufficiently flexible to be deformed for insertion through a smaller aperture. As another example, the aperture 18 can be sized such that friction is generated during insertion of the hose 20 in order to require the friction between the aperture 18 and hose 20 to be overcome to remove the hose 20 from the aperture 18. Also, the aperture 18 can be circular as shown, or can alternatively be shaped like an oval, octagon, or another shape corresponding to the shape of the hose 20. A spacer or other structure can be attached to a perimeter of the aperture 18 or hose 20 to secure the hose 20 to the bracket 12.

[0024] However, the vehicle 10 may not be originally designed for use with another component, such as an air filter 26 that is shown in FIG. 3, an electric component 66 for connection to a wire carried by the wiring harness 60 shown in FIG. 12, or some other component. For example, the air filter 26 may need to be mounted at some location along the hose 20; however, the air filter 26 may have too large a diameter for insertion into the aperture 18 defined by the bracket 12. As another example of the vehicle 10 not being specifically designed for use with the air filter 26, the vehicle 10 may not have any structure for attaching the air filter 26 to the vehicle 10 that is located in a portion of the vehicle 10 in which the air filter 26 should be installed.

[0025] Referring to FIG. 3, a secondary mounting structure, such as a second bracket 28, can be provided (e.g., manufactured, purchased, or otherwise obtained) to enable the air filter 26 or other component that the vehicle 10 was not originally designed to receive to be attached to the vehicle 10 as shown in FIGS. 3 and 4. As a result, the vehicle 10 can be retrofitted to include the air filter 26 or other component. The vehicle 10 can be retrofitted to include the air filter 26 even if the hose 20 has not been attached to the vehicle 10 prior to engagement of the second bracket 28 with the vehicle 10. For example, the vehicle 10 can be considered to have been retrofitted even if the air filter 26 is installed during initial manufacturing of the vehicle 10.

[0026] As shown in FIGS. 3 and 4, the second bracket 28 can have a first portion 28a for engagement with the original bracket 12 and a second portion 28b for engagement with the air filter 26. The first and second portions 28a and 28b can be perpendicular to one another as shown, though the second bracket 28 can have an alternative shape. While shown as being discrete from the air filter 26, the second bracket 28 can alternatively be formed integrally with the air filter 26 (e.g., by forming a housing portion of air filter 26 to include the second bracket 28).

[0027] Referring now to FIGS. 5 and 6, the first portion 28*a* of the second bracket 28 can include a first bearing surface

28c and a second bearing surface 28d opposite the first bearing surface 28c. The first portion 28a of the second bracket 28 can include an H-shaped cutout 29 partially defining a first clip 30 and a second clip 34. The first clip 30 can be generally U- or hook-shaped, and it can include a clasp portion 32 that is spaced from the second bearing surface 28d by a distance equal to or slightly greater than a thickness of a portion of the original bracket 12 which the first clip 30 engages, such as a peripheral portion 40 of the original bracket 12 that borders the aperture 18, as discussed below in greater detail in reference to FIGS. 7 and 8. The distal end of the clasp portion 32 can be angled away from the second bearing surface 28d of the second bracket 28 to ease engagement of the first clip 30 to the original bracket 12. However, the clip 30 can alternatively have another shape depending on the geometry of the original bracket 12.

[0028] While the second clip 34 is shown as depending from the second portion 28b of the second bracket 28, the second clip 34 can alternatively depend from the portion of the second bracket 28 at the junction of the first and second portions 28a and 28b, or from the first portion 28a of the second bracket 28, depending on, for example, the geometries of the original and second brackets 12 and 28, respectively. The second clip 34 can include an offset portion 34a spaced from the second bearing surface 28d by a distance equal to or slightly greater than the thickness of a portion of the original bracket 12 which the second clip 34 engages, such as a peripheral portion 43 of the original bracket 12 that borders the aperture 18 of the original bracket 12 opposite the peripheral portion 40 (the peripheral portion 43 is discussed below in greater detail in reference to FIGS. 7 and 8). The distal end of the offset portion 34a can be angled away from the second bearing surface 28d of the second bracket 28 to ease engagement of the second clip 34 to the original bracket 12.

[0029] Still referring to FIGS. 5 and 6, a nub or tooth 34b can project toward the second bearing surface 28d from near a distal end of the offset portion 34a. The tooth 34b can have a first surface 34c angled perpendicularly to the offset portion 34a of the second clip 34, and a second surface 34d of the tooth 34b can be angled obliquely to the offset portion 34a of the second clip 34. The angle of the second surface 34d can ease engagement of the second clip 34 with the original bracket 12, while the angle of the first surface 34c can enhance the engagement between the second clip 34 and the original bracket 12. A distance 35 between the first surface 34c and a backwall 34e of the second clip 34 that is generally parallel with the first surface 34c can be equal to or slightly greater than the distance 24 between the lateral edge 12e and the aperture 18 of the original bracket 12.

[0030] The second portion 28*b* of the second bracket 28 can include a third clip 38. The third clip 38 can be defined by a U-shaped cut-out 40 in the second portion 28*b* of the second bracket 28. The third clip 38 can be shaped like a prong, with a free distal end and a proximal end fixed to the second portion 28*b* of the second bracket 28. The distal end of the third clip 38 can include a lateral ridge forming bend 38*a*, while a side of the third clip 38 facing away from the first portion 28*a* of the second bracket 28 can define a recessed groove 38*b* extending from adjacent the bend 38*a* to past the fixed end of the clip 38.

[0031] The second bracket 28 can also have other features. For example, the first portion 28*a* of the second bracket 28 can define an aperture 42. As another example, the second bracket 28 can also include a pair of flanges 36*a* and 36*b* running the length of two opposing side edges of the first portion 28a and extending away from the second bearing surface 28d. The flanges 36a and 36b can be spaced such that the original bracket 12 can fit snuggly therebetween. As a result, the flanges 36a and 36b can help stabilize the second bracket 28 when it is engaged with the original bracket 12.

[0032] When the hose 20 is detached from the aperture 20, the second bracket 28 can be engaged with the original bracket 12. The first clip 30 can be inserted into the aperture 18, and the second bracket 28 can be moved into an engagement position shown in FIGS. 7-9. In the engagement position, the first clip 30 can engage the peripheral portion 40 of the original bracket 12 bordering the aperture 18. Since the clasp portion 32 can be spaced from the second bearing surface 28d by the thickness of the peripheral portion 40 of the original bracket 12, the clasp portion 32 can engage the secondary bearing surface 12d of the original bracket 12. The clip 30 can thus sandwich the peripheral portion 40 of the original bracket 12 (i.e., in addition to the clasp portion 32 engaging the secondary bearing surface 12d, a proximate end of the first clip 30 can engage the primary bearing surface 12cof the original bracket 12).

[0033] Also in the engagement position shown in FIGS. 7-9, a portion of the original bracket 12 between the lateral side 12e and the aperture 18 can be engaged by the second clip 34. Since the distance 35 between the tooth 34b and the backwall 34e can be equal to or slightly greater than the distance 24 between the lateral side 12e and aperture 18 of the original bracket 12, the portion of the original bracket 12 between the lateral side 12e and the aperture 18 can be positioned between the tooth 34b and the backwall 34e of the second clip 34. As a result, the tooth 34b can engage the peripheral portion 43 of the original bracket 12, which can be on the opposite side of the aperture 12 from the peripheral portion 40 as shown in FIG. 9. Also, with the original bracket 12 in the engagement position, the offset portion 34a of the second clip 34 can engage the secondary bearing surface 12dof the original bracket, and the lateral side 12e of the original bracket 12 can engage the backwall 34e.

[0034] With the first and second clips 30 and 34, respectively, of the second bracket 28 engaging the original bracket 12 as shown in FIGS. 7-9, the second bearing surface 28d of the second bracket 28 can be held against the primary bearing surface 12c of the original bracket 12, thereby engaging the primary bearing surface 12c. Further, the flanges 36a and 36b can engage the lateral sides 12 f and 12 g of the original bracket 12. As a result of the engagements between the second bracket 28 and the original bracket 12, the second bracket 28 can be secured to the vehicle 10. However, the second bracket 28 can be engaged to the original bracket 12 using a different structure. For example, the second bracket 28 can include different shaped clips 30 and 34 that engage first and second engagement portions, respectively, of the original bracket 12 other than the peripheral portions 40 and 43 bordering opposite sides of the aperture 18. Such alternative first and second engagement portions can include, as examples, the lateral sides 12f and 12g of original bracket 12. As additional examples of different structures that the second bracket 28 can include to engage the original bracket 12, the second bracket 28 can define apertures to receive bolts or screws for bolting or screwing the second bracket 28 to the original bracket 12, or the second bracket 28 can include a solid, planar first portion to enhance a weld or adherence between the second bracket 28 and the original bracket 12.

[0035] The third clip 38 can be engaged with a first attachment of the air filter 26. For example, the third clip 38 and the remainder of the second portion 28b of the second bracket 28 can engage a flange 26a shown in FIG. 3 or a similar structure defined by the air filter 26, and the flange 26a of the air filter 26 can include a boss or other projection for engagement with the bend 38a of the third clip 38. By engaging the second bracket 28 to both the air filter 26 and the original bracket 12, the second bracket 28 can attach the air filter 26 to the original bracket 12. Additionally, the hose 20 can be spliced into a first section 20a and a second section 20b as shown in FIG. 3., and the first and second sections 20a and 20b can be coupled to second attachments (e.g., input and output ports 26b and 26c, respectively) of the air filter 26 using, for example, clamps or friction fits. Alternatively, the air filter 26 can include an integral hose, or a new hose can be used, and hose 20 can be discarded (if it was ever installed).

[0036] By attaching the air filter 26 to the vehicle 10 by engaging the air filter 26 with the second bracket 28 and the second bracket 28 with the original bracket 12, the air filter 26 can be inexpensively and conveniently attached to the vehicle 10. For example, the first and second clips 30 and 34, respectively, of second bracket 28 can enable the air filter 26 to be attached to the vehicle 10 without performing a welding or bolting operation (though, as mentioned above, the second bracket 28 can be attached in an alternative manner). Further, the first and second clips 30 and 34 can be unclipped from the original bracket 12, allowing the second bracket 28 to be removably attached to the original bracket 12. Removably attaching the second bracket 28 can enable a later retrofit (e.g., a second retrofit if it becomes desirable to attach a second component to the vehicle 10 instead of the air filter 26).

[0037] Depending on whether the air filter 26 is being installed in the vehicle 10 after the hose 20 has been engaged with the original bracket 12, the steps taken to retrofit the vehicle 10 to include the air filter 26 can differ. For example, if the hose 20 has been installed, the hose 20 can be removed by detaching at least one end of the hose 20, and then pulling the detached end of the hose 20 until it is disengaged from the aperture 18. The other end of the hose 20, if still attached to a portion of the vehicle 10, can also be removed. Since the hose 20 is removed following this step, the remaining steps can be the same regardless of whether the hose 20 has been attached to the original bracket 12. The remaining steps to retrofit the vehicle 10 can include engaging the second bracket 28 to the air filter 26 as described above, engaging the second bracket 28 to the original bracket 12 also as described above, and engaging the hose 20 with the air filter 26 as described above. These three steps need not necessarily be performed in the above order.

[0038] While second bracket 28 is described above as being attached to the original bracket 12 defining a single aperture 18, the second bracket 28 can alternatively be attached to other structures, such as different brackets, a panel, a flange, or another primary mounting structure. As examples, the second bracket 28 can be attached to each of brackets 44 and 46 shown in FIGS. 10A and 10B, respectively. The bracket 44 of FIG. 10A can include two slots 48 and 50, and the first clip 30 of the second bracket 28 can be engaged with the slot 50 by inserting the clasp 32 into the slot 50. The tooth 34*b* of the second clip 34 can be engaged with this engagement, the backwall 34*e* of the second clip 34 engages a periphery of

the slot 48. Similarly, the second bracket 28 can engage the bracket 46 of FIG. 10B by inserting the offset portion 34a of the second clip 34 through a slot 52 defined by the bracket 46 and engaging the first and second clips 30 and 34, respectively, of the second bracket 28 with a circular aperture 54 defined by the bracket 46. With this engagement, the backwall 34e of the second clip 34 engages a periphery of-the slot 52. [0039] Also, while the second bracket 28 is described as being used to attach the air filter 26 to the vehicle 10, it can alternatively be used to attach a different component (e.g., another component that the vehicle 10 was not designed to receive) to the vehicle 10. As shown in FIG. 11, the original bracket 12 may be used to secure the wire harness 60 to the interior of the instrument panel 62. The wire harness 60 can be removed from the original bracket 12, if attached, and the second bracket 28 can be coupled to the original bracket 12. An electrical component 66 that cannot be attached to the aperture 18 of the original bracket 12 can be attached to second bracket 28, and thus attached to the vehicle 10 as shown in FIG. 12.

[0040] While the invention has been described in connection with what is presently considered to be the most practical and preferred embodiment, it is to be understood that the invention is not to be limited to the disclosed embodiments but, on the contrary, is intended to cover various modifications and equivalent arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the appended claims, which scope is to be accorded the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all such modifications and equivalent structures as is permitted under the law.

What is claimed:

1. A bracket for coupling a component to a vehicle including a mounting structure defining an aperture, the bracket comprising:

- a first portion including at least one mounting structure clip configured to engage the mounting structure about a periphery of the aperture; and
- a second portion including a component clip configured to engage the component.

2. The bracket of claim 1, wherein the at least one mounting structure clip includes a first clip and a second clip.

3. The bracket of claim **2**, wherein the first and second clips are configured to engage diametrically opposing portions of the periphery of the aperture.

4. The bracket of claim **2**, wherein the first clip is hookshaped and includes two hook portions spaced apart by a thickness of the mounting structure about the periphery.

5. The bracket of claim 4, wherein the second clip includes a tooth that projects into the aperture and a backwall that engages an edge of the mounting structure spaced from the aperture when the bracket is engaged with the mounting structure.

6. The bracket of claim 2, wherein a proximal end of the first clip is configured to engage a first side of the mounting structure and a distal end of the first clip and the second clip are configured to engage a second side of the mounting structure opposing the first side.

7. The bracket of claim 1, wherein the first portion includes a pair of flanges spaced approximately equal to a width of the mounting structure such that the flanges contact respective side surfaces of the mounting structure.

8. A method for coupling a component to a vehicle including a primary mounting structure defining an aperture, the method comprising:

- attaching the component to a secondary mounting structure including a first clip; and
- attaching the secondary mounting structure to the primary mounting structure by engaging the first clip of the: secondary mounting structure to the primary mounting structure about a periphery of the aperture.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the secondary mounting structure includes a second clip, and wherein attaching the secondary mounting structure to the primary mounting structure further comprises engaging the second clip to the primary mounting structure.

10. The method of claim **9**, wherein the primary mounting structure defines at least one lateral edge spaced apart from the aperture, and wherein engaging the second clip to the primary mounting structure includes engaging the second clip with the lateral edge.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein engaging the second clip to the primary mounting structure includes engaging the second clip to the primary mounting structure about the periphery of the aperture diametrically opposite the first clip.

12. The method of claim **8**, further comprising attaching a conduit to the component.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the conduit is one of a wire harness and a hose.

14. The method of claim **8**, wherein the primary mounting structure is attached to an interior of a vehicle panel.

15. The method of claim **14**, wherein the vehicle panel is one of an instrument panel and a body panel.

16. A component mounting assembly for a vehicle comprising:

a conduit;

a primary mounting bracket attached to the vehicle;

- the primary mounting bracket having a primary bearing surface defined by at least three lateral sides, a first aperture through the primary bearing surface, the first aperture sized to permit insertion of the conduit therethrough;
- a secondary mounting bracket having a secondary bearing surface engaging the primary bearing surface of the primary mounting bracket, the secondary mounting bracket having a first clip depending from the secondary bearing surface and engaging the primary bearing surface, wherein the first clip protrudes through the first aperture of the primary mounting bracket; and
- a component attached to the secondary mounting bracket and to the conduit.

17. The component mounting assembly of claim 16, wherein the secondary mounting bracket further comprises a second clip spaced apart from the secondary bearing surface by a distance approximately equal to a thickness of the primary mounting bracket about the first aperture, the second clip including a tooth projecting into the first aperture toward the primary bearing surface that engages a periphery of the primary mounting bracket about the first aperture, and the second clip having a backwall engaging at least one of the lateral sides of the primary mounting structure.

18. The component mounting assembly of claim **16**, wherein the primary bearing surface has a second aperture spaced from the first aperture; and

wherein the secondary mounting bracket further comprises a second clip spaced apart from the secondary bearing surface by a distance approximately equal to a thickness of the primary mounting bracket about the second aperture, the second clip including a tooth projecting into the first aperture toward the primary bearing surface that engages a first periphery of the primary mounting bracket about the first aperture, and the second clip having a backwall engaging a second periphery of the primary mounting bracket about the second aperture. **19**. The component mounting assembly of claim **16**, wherein the first clip defines a clasp portion spaced from the secondary bearing surface by a distance approximately equal to a thickness of the primary mounting bracket about the first aperture.

20. The component mounting assembly of claim 16, wherein the secondary mounting bracket includes a portion angled relative to the secondary bearing surface and including a third clip engaged with the component.

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