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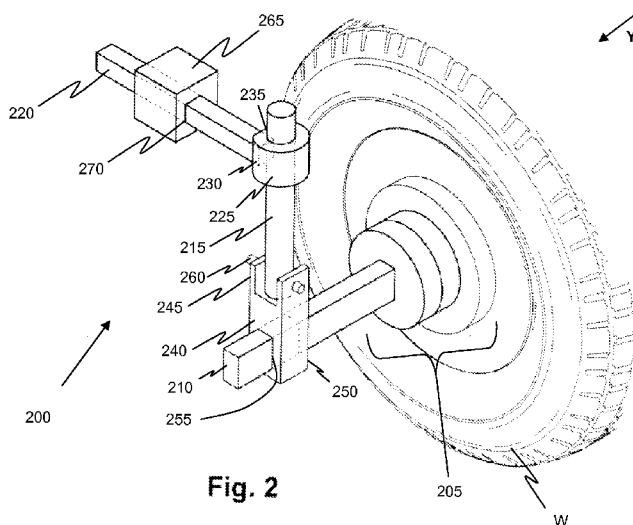


Fig. 2

(57) Abstract: An apparatus is mounted to a vehicle for obtaining a camber angle measurement. The apparatus includes a lower elongated member, a vertical elongated member, and an upper elongated member. The apparatus further includes a lower coupling that connects the lower elongated member to the vertical elongated member. The lower coupling allows the vertical elongated member to rotate about an axis, and prevents the lower elongated member from rotating about its longitudinal axis. The apparatus also includes an upper coupling that connects the vertical elongated member to the upper elongated member. A lower connector is connected to the lower elongated member, and is configured to be connected to a wheel of a vehicle. An upper connector is connected to the upper elongated member, and is configured to be connected to the vehicle.

WHEEL MEASUREMENT APPARATUS

FIELD OF INVENTION

[0001] This disclosure relates to an apparatus for determining the camber of vehicle tires. More particularly, this disclosure relates to such an apparatus that measures the dynamic camber on a vehicle tire in an operating environment.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Various equipment has been developed for measuring camber on a tire. Camber is one of the factors tested to determine tire wear and ride characteristics. Various devices, some of which use lasers, have been used for alignment and for measuring both camber and caster in wheel mechanisms. One known device is attached to a moving vehicle in order to obtain the dynamic angles of camber that the tire experiences as it moves along an actual road surface on a particular moving vehicle.

[0003] Some known devices include a member attached to the wheel of a car, and a sensor pointing downwards towards a driving surface. When a wheel steering axis is tilted from the axis normal to the road, a steer change can also induce a small rotation in the member about the wheel spindle axis. Such a rotation would alter the direction of the sensor, thereby altering the distance reading of the sensor.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] In one embodiment, an apparatus is used for measuring a camber angle of a wheel on a vehicle. The apparatus includes a lower elongated member having a longitudinal axis, a vertical elongated member having a longitudinal axis, and an upper elongated member having a longitudinal axis. A lower coupling connects the lower elongated member to the vertical elongated member. The lower coupling permits the lower elongated member to translate along its longitudinal axis, and permits the vertical elongated member to rotate about at least one axis. An upper coupling connects the vertical elongated member to the upper elongated member. The upper coupling permits the vertical elongated member to rotate about at least one axis. A lower connector connects the lower elongated member to the wheel. An upper connector connects the upper elongated member to the vehicle.

[0005] In another embodiment, an apparatus is mounted to a vehicle for obtaining a camber angle measurement. The apparatus includes a lower elongated member, a vertical elongated member, and an upper elongated member. The apparatus further includes a lower coupling that connects the lower elongated member to the vertical elongated member. The lower coupling allows the vertical elongated member to rotate about an axis, and prevents the lower elongated member from rotating about its longitudinal axis. The apparatus also includes an upper coupling that connects the vertical elongated member to the upper elongated member. A lower connector is connected to the lower elongated member, and is configured to be connected to a wheel of a vehicle. An upper connector is connected to the upper elongated member, and is configured to be connected to the vehicle.

[0006] In an additional embodiment, an apparatus provides a stable platform for taking a measurement of a vehicle. The apparatus has three substantially orthogonal axes, including an X axis defining an X direction, a Y axis defining a Y direction, and a Z axis defining a Z direction. The apparatus includes an upper elongated member, a vertical elongated member, and a lower elongated member. The apparatus also includes means for accommodating rotation of the vertical elongated member about the X axis, means for accommodating translation of the lower elongated member in the Y direction, and means for accommodating rotation of the vertical elongated member about the Z axis. First means are used for securing the apparatus to a body of a vehicle, and second means are used for securing the apparatus to a wheel of the vehicle.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] In the accompanying drawings, structures are illustrated that, together with the detailed description provided below, describe exemplary embodiments of the claimed invention. Like elements are identified with the same reference numerals. It should be understood that elements shown as a single component may be replaced with multiple components, and elements shown as multiple components may be replaced with a single component. The drawings are not to scale and the proportion of certain elements may be exaggerated for the purpose of illustration.

[0008] **Figure 1** is a perspective view of an exemplary test vehicle;

[0009] **Figure 2** is a perspective view of one embodiment of a measurement apparatus;

[0010] **Figure 3** is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of a measurement apparatus;

[0011] **Figure 4** is a perspective view of another alternative embodiment of a measurement apparatus; and

[0012] **Figure 5** is a perspective view of yet another alternative embodiment of a measurement apparatus.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] The following includes definitions of selected terms employed herein. The definitions include various examples and/or forms of components that fall within the scope of a term and that may be used for implementation. The examples are not intended to be limiting. Both singular and plural forms of terms may be within the definitions.

[0014] “X Direction” refers to a direction parallel to a wheel’s direction of travel.

[0015] “X Axis” describes the axis of any movement occurring in the X direction.

[0016] “Y Direction” refers to a direction that is parallel to the axis of rotation of a tire.

[0017] “Y Axis” describes the axis of any movement occurring in the Y direction.

[0018] “Z Direction” refers to a direction that is perpendicular to both the X and Y Directions.

[0019] “Z Axis” describes the axis of any movement occurring in the Z direction.

[0020] **Figure 1** illustrates a perspective view of an exemplary test vehicle **100**. Vehicle **100** sits on tires **110** and is configured to receive a measurement apparatus (not shown) according to this disclosure. The vehicle **100** may be a standard manufactured vehicle, and need not be custom made or modified. **Figure 1** depicts vehicle **100** as a passenger automobile. In alternative embodiments, vehicle **100** may be any type of vehicle including, but not limited to, a bus, truck, van, sport-utility vehicle, sports car, or a racecar.

[0021] **Figure 2** illustrates a perspective view of a measurement apparatus **200**. The measurement apparatus **200** is attached to a wheel **W** of a vehicle. The measurement apparatus **200** includes a lower elongated member **210**, a vertical elongated member **215**, and an upper elongated member **220**. The lower elongated member **210**, vertical elongated member **215**, and upper elongated member **220** all have longitudinal axes that are approximately orthogonal to each other, but change relative orientations with vehicle steering. Here, the lower elongated member **210** extends in the Y direction, the vertical member **215** extends in the Z direction, and the upper elongated member **220** extends in the X direction. However, each of the lower

elongated member **210**, vertical elongated member **215**, and upper elongated member **220** may rotate or translate such that they do not retain a fixed relative orientation.

[0022] The lower elongated member **210**, vertical elongated member **215**, and upper elongated member **220** all have a fixed length. However, in alternative embodiments, at least one of the lower elongated member **210**, vertical elongated member **215**, and upper elongated member **220** is configured to expand telescopically.

[0023] An upper coupling **225** joins the upper elongated member **220** to the vertical elongated member **215**. The upper coupling **225** is rigidly connected to one end of the upper elongated member **220**. In the illustrated embodiment, the upper coupling **225** has a first aperture **230** that receives an end of the upper elongated member **220**. The end of the upper elongated member **220** is fixed in place via a press fit or with the use of welding, adhesive, tape, a screw, a joint, or other fasteners. The upper elongated member **220** has a rectangular cross section and the first aperture **230** in the upper coupling **225** has a corresponding rectangular cross section. Accordingly, the upper elongated member **220** is restricted from rotating about its longitudinal axis. It should be understood that other geometric cross sections may be employed.

[0024] In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper elongated member has a circular cross section and the first aperture **230** of the upper coupling **225** has a corresponding circular cross section, allowing the upper elongated member to rotate about its longitudinal axis. In another alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper elongated member and the upper coupling **225** are a single, unitary component.

[0025] The upper coupling **225** also includes a second aperture **235** that receives the vertical elongated member **215**, and allows the vertical elongated member **215** to translate upward and downward in the Z direction relative to the upper coupling **225**. In other words, upper coupling **225** and vertical elongated member **215** slide vis-à-vis each other through a range of motion. As shown, the second aperture **235** and the cross section of the vertical elongated member **215** are circular. Because the second aperture **235** extends entirely through the upper coupling **225**, the vertical elongated member **215** may translate through the upper coupling **225** through a range of motion. The circular shape also allows the vertical elongated member **215** to rotate about its longitudinal axis (*i.e.*, the Z axis). Allowing the vertical elongated member **215** to translate and rotate helps prevent the lower elongated member **210** from rotating about its longitudinal axis. It

should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother translation or rotation.

[0026] In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper coupling **225** rests on top of the vertical elongated member **215** and does not allow the vertical elongated member **215** to pass through it. In this embodiment, the vertical elongated member **215** is free to rotate about its longitudinal axis, but its ability to translate is limited to the depth of the second aperture **235**. In another alternative embodiment (not shown), the vertical elongated member **215** can translate when it is configured to expand telescopically. The second aperture **235** may be secured to an end of the vertical elongated member **215** while allowing it to expand telescopically. In an additional alternative embodiment, the upper coupling **225**, regardless of configuration, is an integrated component of the upper elongated member **220**.

[0027] A lower coupling **240** joins the lower elongated member **210** to the vertical elongated member **215**. The lower coupling **240** contains an upper section **245** and a lower section **250**. Lower section **250** includes a third aperture **255** that receives the lower elongated member **210** and permits the lower coupling **240** to translate in the Y direction. Thus, third aperture **255** permits the lower coupling **240** to slide through a range of motion with respect to the lower elongated member **210**. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother translation in both couplings **225** and **240**.

[0028] As shown, the third aperture **255** and the lower elongated member **210** have rectangular cross sections. The rectangular cross sections help prevent the lower elongated member **210** from rotating about its longitudinal axis, thus providing a stable measurement platform. In alternative embodiments, the third aperture **255** and the lower elongated member **210** have polygonal or non-circular cross sections in order to prevent the lower elongated member **210** from rotating about its longitudinal axis.

[0029] The upper section **245** includes a slot configured to receive an end of the vertical elongated member **215**. A pin **260** runs through the upper section **245** and the vertical elongated member **215**, effectively joining the lower elongated member **210** and the vertical elongated member **215**. The lower coupling **240** and pin **260** allow the vertical elongated member **215** to rotate about the pin's longitudinal axis. This permits the vertical elongated member **215** to rotate about an X axis. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother rotation. In alternative embodiments, the pin **260** is replaced by a hinge joint, ball

joint, or heim joint, allowing the vertical elongated member **215** to rotate about at least the Z axis.

[0030] The pin **260** restricts rotation of the bottom of the vertical elongated member **215** about the Z axis, relative to arm **210** and coupling **250**. However, the top of the vertical elongated member **215** is free to rotate about the Z axis, relative to coupling **225**, as described above. Therefore, a relative twisting motion about the Z axis may occur between the vertical elongated member **215** and the coupling **225**. In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper section of the lower coupling may include slots that receive the pin, and allow the bottom of the vertical elongated member to rotate about the Z axis.

[0031] An upper receiver **265** receives the upper elongated member **220** through a fourth aperture **270**. The fourth aperture **270** permits the upper elongated member **220** to translate forward and rearward in the X direction relative to the upper receiver **265**. In other words, upper elongated member **220** slides through a range of motion with respect to the upper receiver **265**. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother translation.

[0032] As shown, the fourth aperture **270** and the upper elongated member **220** have square cross sections. The square cross sections help prevent the upper elongated member **220** from rotating about its longitudinal axis. In alternative embodiments the fourth aperture **270** and the upper elongated member **220** have polygonal or non-circular cross sections to prevent the upper elongated member **220** from rotating about its longitudinal axis.

[0033] In an alternative embodiment, the upper receiver **265** does not allow the upper elongated member **220** to pass through it. In other words, the upper elongated member **220** does not translate through the upper receiver **265** in this particular embodiment. Instead, the upper elongated member **220** is secured to the upper receiver **265**. Although the upper elongated member **220** does not translate through the receiver **265** in this particular embodiment, the upper elongated member **220** allows movement in the X direction if it is configured to expand telescopically. In either embodiment, an upper connector (not shown) connects the upper receiver to the vehicle. In these embodiments the upper connector is selected from the group consisting of a screw, a joint, a suction cup, glue, tape, solder, a magnetic connection, and a weld.

[0034] The measurement apparatus **200** is connected to wheel **W** by a lower connector **205**. In one embodiment, lower connector **205** connects the lower elongated member to the wheel **W** while inhibiting the rotation of the lower elongated member about its longitudinal axis. As shown, lower connector **205** is a ring bearing having two concentric disks connected to the hub of wheel **W**. In alternative embodiments, the lower connector **205** may be any mount that provides a non-rotating option for connection to a wheel, such as a four-point ring bearing, a thrust roller ring bearing, or a multiple row ring bearing. Such bearings and mounts may be commercially available through companies such as Corrsys-Datron.

[0035] As shown, the measurement apparatus **200** has the ability to translate in the X, Y, and Z directions relative to the vehicle body. Additionally, the measurement apparatus also has the ability to rotate about the X axis and the Z axis as necessary for steering and camber angle changes of the wheel.

[0036] In the above-described embodiment, rotation of the lower elongated member **210** about the Y axis is restricted during steering angle changes, even when the steer axis of the wheel is not normal to the road. Accordingly, if a sensor were mounted to the measurement apparatus **200** in a downward facing position, it would not be rotated about the Y axis out of the downward facing position.

[0037] **Figure 3** illustrates a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of a measurement apparatus **300**. The measurement apparatus **300** includes a lower elongated member **310**, a vertical elongated member **315**, and an upper elongated member **320**. The lower elongated member **310**, vertical elongated member **315**, and upper elongated member **320** all have longitudinal axes that are generally orthogonal to each other. Here, the lower elongated member **310** extends in the Y direction, the vertical member **315** extends in the Z direction, and the upper elongated member **320** extends in the X direction. However, each of the lower elongated member **310**, vertical elongated member **315**, and upper elongated member **320** may rotate or translate such that they are no longer orthogonal to each other.

[0038] The lower elongated member **310**, vertical elongated member **315**, and upper elongated member **320** all have a fixed length. However, in alternative embodiments, at least one of the lower elongated member **310**, vertical elongated member **315**, and upper elongated member **320** is configured to expand telescopically.

[0039] An upper coupling **325** joins the upper elongated member **320** to the vertical elongated member **315**. The upper coupling **325** is rigidly connected to one end of the upper elongated member **320**. In the illustrated embodiment, the upper coupling **325** has a first aperture **330** that receives an end of the upper elongated member **320**. The end of the upper elongated member **320** is fixed in place via a press fit or with the use of welding, adhesive, tape, a screw, or joint, or other fasteners. The upper elongated member **320** has a rectangular cross section and the first aperture **330** in the upper coupling **325** has a corresponding rectangular cross section. Accordingly, the upper elongated member **320** is restricted from rotating about its longitudinal axis. It should be understood that other geometric cross sections may be employed.

[0040] In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper elongated member **320** has a circular cross section and the first aperture **330** of the upper coupling **325** has a corresponding circular cross section, allowing the upper elongated member **320** to rotate about its longitudinal axis (*i.e.*, the X axis). In another alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper elongated member **320** and the upper coupling **325** are a single, unitary component.

[0041] The upper coupling **325** also includes a second aperture **335** that receives the vertical elongated member **315**. As shown, the upper coupling **325** rests on top of the vertical elongated member **315** and does not allow the vertical elongated member **315** to pass through it. In this embodiment, the vertical elongated member **315** and the second aperture **335** both have circular cross sections. As shown, no interference fit or press fit exists between vertical elongated member **315** and the second aperture **335**. Therefore, the vertical elongated member **315** is free to rotate about its longitudinal axis (*i.e.*, the Z axis). Similarly, its ability to translate is limited to the depth of the second aperture **335**. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother rotation.

[0042] In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the second aperture **335** permits the vertical elongated member **315** to pass through the upper coupling **325**, thus permitting the vertical elongated member **315** to translate upward and downward in the Z direction relation to the upper coupling **325**. In another alternative embodiment (not shown), the vertical elongated member **315** can translate when it is configured to expand telescopically. The second aperture **335** may be configured to secure an end of the vertical elongated member **315** while allowing it to expand telescopically. In still another alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper

coupling **325**, regardless of configuration, is an integrated component of the upper elongated member **320**.

[0043] A lower coupling **340** joins the lower elongated member **310** to the vertical elongated member **315**. The lower coupling **340** contains an upper section **345** and a lower section **350**. Lower section **350** includes a third aperture **355** that receives the lower elongated member **310** and permits the lower coupling **340** to translate in the Y direction. In other words, lower coupling **340** and lower elongated member **310** are permitted to slide vis-à-vis each other through a range of motion. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother translation in both linkages **325** and **340**.

[0044] The third aperture **355** and the lower elongated member **310** have rectangular cross sections. The rectangular cross sections help prevent the lower elongated member **310** from rotating about its longitudinal axis (*i.e.*, the Y axis), thus providing a stable measurement platform. In alternative embodiments the third aperture **355** and the lower elongated member **310** have polygonal or non-circular cross sections in order to prevent the lower elongated member **310** from rotating about its longitudinal axis.

[0045] The upper section **345** includes a slot configured to receive an end of the vertical elongated member **315**. A pin **360** runs through the upper section **345** and the vertical elongated member **315**, effectively joining the lower elongated member **310** and the vertical elongated member **315**. The lower coupling **340** and pin **360** allow the vertical elongated member **315** to rotate about the pin's longitudinal axis. This permits the vertical elongated member **315** to rotate about an X axis. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother rotation. In alternative embodiments, the pin **360** is replaced by a hinge joint, ball joint, or heim joint, allowing the vertical elongated member **315** to rotate about at least the Z axis.

[0046] The pin **360** restricts rotation of the bottom of the vertical elongated member **315** about the Z axis. However, the top of the vertical elongated member **315** is free to rotate about the Z axis, as described above. Therefore, a twisting motion may occur. In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper section of the lower coupling may include slots that receive the pin, and allow the bottom of the vertical elongated member to rotate about the Z axis.

[0047] An upper receiver **365** receives the upper elongated member **320** through a fourth aperture **370**. The fourth aperture **370** permits the upper elongated member **320** to translate

forward and rearward relative to the upper receiver **365** in the X direction. In other words, upper elongated member **320** slides through a range of motion with respect to the upper receiver **365**. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother translation.

[0048] As shown, the fourth aperture **370** and the upper elongated member **320** have square cross sections. The square cross sections help prevent the upper elongated member **320** from rotating about its longitudinal axis. In alternative embodiments the fourth aperture **370** and the upper elongated member **320** have polygonal or non-circular cross sections in order to prevent the upper elongated member **320** from rotating about its longitudinal axis.

[0049] In an alternative embodiment, the upper receiver **365** does not allow the upper elongated member **320** to pass through it. In other words, the upper elongated member **320** does not translate through the upper receiver **365** in this particular embodiment. Instead, the upper elongated member **320** is secured to the upper receiver **365**. Although the upper elongated member **320** does not translate through the receiver **365** in this particular embodiment, the upper elongated member **320** allows movement in the X direction if it is configured to expand telescopically.

[0050] An upper connector **380** secures the apparatus **300** to the body of a vehicle. As shown, the upper connector **380** is welded to the body of the vehicle. In this embodiment, the upper connector **380** includes pin **375**, which permits the upper receiver **365** to rotate about the pin **375**. In other words, the pin permits the upper receiver **365** to rotate relative to the upper connector **380**. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother translation. In alternative embodiments, the upper connector **380** is selected from the group consisting of a screw, a joint, a suction cup, glue, tape, and solder.

[0051] The measurement apparatus **300** is connected to a wheel (not shown) by a lower connector **305**. In one embodiment, lower connector **305** connects the lower elongated member **310** to the wheel while inhibiting the rotation of the lower elongated member **310** about its longitudinal axis. As shown, lower connector **305** is a ring bearing. In alternative embodiments, the lower connector **305** may be a four-point ring bearing, a thrust roller ring bearing, or a multiple row ring bearing.

[0052] As shown, the measurement apparatus **300** has the ability to translate in the X and Y directions. Additionally, the measurement apparatus also has the ability to rotate about the X axis at two different locations.

[0053] In the above-described embodiment, rotation of the lower elongated member **310** about the Y axis is restricted during steering angle changes, even when the steer axis of the wheel is not normal to the road. Accordingly, if a sensor were mounted to the measurement apparatus **300** in a downward facing position, it would not be rotated about the Y axis out of the downward facing position.

[0054] **Figure 4** illustrates a perspective view of another alternative embodiment of a measurement apparatus **400**. The measurement apparatus **400** includes a lower elongated member **410**, a vertical elongated member **415**, and an upper elongated member **420**. The lower elongated member **410**, and vertical elongated member **415** have longitudinal axes that are generally orthogonal to each other. Here, the lower elongated member **410** extends in the Y direction, the vertical member **415** extends in the Z direction, and the upper elongated member **420** lies in the X-Y plane. Each of the lower elongated member **410**, vertical elongated member **415**, and upper elongated member **420** may rotate or translate such that they are no longer orthogonal to each other.

[0055] The lower elongated member **410**, vertical elongated member **415**, and upper elongated member **420** all have a fixed length. However, in alternative embodiments, at least one of the lower elongated member **410**, vertical elongated member **415**, and upper elongated member **420** is configured to expand telescopically.

[0056] An upper coupling **425** joins the upper elongated member **420** to the vertical elongated member **415**. The upper coupling **425** may translate along upper elongated member **420** by sliding along the upper elongated member **420**. The upper coupling **425** is connected to one end of the vertical elongated member **415**. In the illustrated embodiment, the upper coupling **425** has an upper section **425a** and a lower section **425b** that are connected to each other. The upper section **425a** may be affixed to the lower section **425b** by an adhesive, welding, or by fasteners such as bolts, screws, pegs, or other fasteners. Alternatively, the upper coupling **425** may be a unitary component.

[0057] The upper section **425a** has a first aperture **430** that allows the upper coupling **425** to translate along the upper elongated member **420**. As shown, the upper elongated member **420**

has curved and straight segments. The upper elongated member **420** has a circular cross section and the first aperture **430** in the upper section **425a** of the upper coupling **425** has a corresponding circular cross section. As shown, no interference fit or press fit exists between upper elongated member **420** and the upper coupling **425**. Accordingly, the upper coupling **425** may rotate about the upper elongated member **420** (*i.e.*, about the X axis). It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother translation or rotation. In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper elongated member has a polygonal cross section and the first aperture **430** of the upper section **425a** of the upper coupling **425** has a corresponding polygonal cross section.

[0058] The lower section **425b** of the upper coupling **425** includes a second aperture **435** that receives the vertical elongated member **415**. As shown, the lower section **425b** of the upper coupling **425** rests on top of the vertical elongated member **415** and does not allow the vertical elongated member **415** to pass through it. In this embodiment, the vertical elongated member **415** and the second aperture **435** both have circular cross sections. Therefore, the vertical elongated member **415** is free to rotate about its longitudinal axis (*i.e.*, the Z axis), but its ability to translate is limited to the depth of the second aperture **435**. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother rotation. In an alternative embodiment, the second aperture **435** permits the vertical elongated member **415** to pass through the upper coupling **425**. In another alternative embodiment, the vertical elongated member **415** can translate when it is configured to expand telescopically. The second aperture **435** may be configured to secure an end of the vertical elongated member **415** while allowing it to expand telescopically.

[0059] A lower coupling **440** joins the lower elongated member **410** to the vertical elongated member **415**. The lower coupling **440** contains an upper section **445** and a lower section **450**. Lower section **450** includes a third aperture **455** that receives the lower elongated member **410** and permits the lower coupling **440** to translate in the Y direction. In other words, lower coupling **440** and lower elongated member **410** are permitted to slide vis-à-vis each other through a range of motion. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother translation.

[0060] The third aperture **455** and the lower elongated member **410** have rectangular cross sections. The rectangular cross sections help prevent the lower elongated member **410** from

rotating about its longitudinal axis, thus providing a stable measurement platform. In alternative embodiments, the third aperture **455** and the lower elongated member **410** have polygonal or non-circular cross sections in order to prevent the lower elongated member **410** from rotating about its longitudinal axis.

[0061] The upper section **445** includes a slot configured to receive an end of the vertical elongated member **415**. A pin **460** runs through the upper section **445** and the vertical elongated member **415**, effectively joining the lower elongated member **410** and the vertical elongated member **415**. The lower coupling **440** and pin **460** allow the vertical elongated member **415** to rotate about the pin's longitudinal axis. This permits the vertical elongated member **415** to rotate about the X axis. It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother rotation. In alternative embodiments, the pin **460** is replaced by a hinge joint, ball joint, or heim joint, allowing the vertical elongated member **415** to rotate about at least the Z axis.

[0062] The pin **460** restricts rotation of the bottom of the vertical elongated member **415** about the Z axis. However, the top of the vertical elongated member **415** is free to rotate about the Z axis, as described above. Therefore, a twisting motion may occur. In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper section of the lower coupling may include slots that receive the pin, and allow the bottom of the vertical elongated member to rotate about the Z axis.

[0063] An upper connector **465** connects the upper elongated member **420** to the vehicle. In the illustrated embodiment, the upper connector **465** is a pair of hinges that allow the upper elongated member **420** to rotate about the X axis. In alternative embodiments, the upper connector **465** is selected from the group consisting of a screw, a joint, a suction cup, glue, tape, solder, a weld, and combinations thereof. The upper connector **465** may include single or multiple components in alternative embodiments.

[0064] The measurement apparatus **400** is connected to wheel (not shown) by a lower connector **405**. In one embodiment, lower connector **405** connects the lower elongated member to the wheel while inhibiting the rotation of the lower elongated member about its longitudinal axis. As shown, lower connector **405** is a ring bearing. In alternative embodiments, the lower connector **405** may be a four-point ring bearing, a thrust roller ring bearing, or a multiple row ring bearing.

[0065] In the above-described embodiment, rotation of the lower elongated member **410** about the Y axis is restricted during steering angle changes, even when the steer axis of the wheel is not normal to the road. Accordingly, if a sensor were mounted to the measurement apparatus **400** in a downward facing position, it would not be rotated about the Y axis out of the downward facing position.

[0066] **Figure 5** illustrates a perspective view of still another embodiment of a measurement apparatus **500**. The measurement apparatus **500** is substantially the same as the measurement apparatus **400** of **Figure 4**, except for the differences described herein. Like reference numerals are used to indicate like components. It should be understood that the alternative embodiments discussed above regarding the measurement apparatus **400** may also be employed with the measurement apparatus **500**.

[0067] The measurement apparatus **500** includes an upper elongated member **505** that lies in the X-Y plane and is generally orthogonal to the Z axis. As shown, the upper elongated member **505** is not curved, but instead has three straight segments. The first straight segment **510** extends in the X direction. The second straight segment **515** and third straight segment **520** extend from the ends of the first straight segment **510** in the Y direction towards the vehicle.

[0068] An upper coupling **525** joins the upper elongated member **505** to the vertical elongated member **415**. The upper coupling **525** is a unitary component. The upper coupling **525** may translate along upper elongated member **520** by sliding along the upper elongated member **520**. The upper coupling **425** is connected to one end of the vertical elongated member **415**. In an alternative embodiment, the upper coupling **525** may include an upper section and a lower section, like the upper coupling **425** shown in **Figure 4**.

[0069] The upper coupling **525** is connected to one end of the vertical elongated member **415**. In the illustrated embodiment, the upper coupling **525** has a first aperture **530** that allows the upper coupling **525** to translate in the X direction along the first straight segment **510** of upper elongated member **505**.

[0070] The upper elongated member **505** has a circular cross section and the first aperture **530** in the upper coupling **525** has a corresponding circular cross section. Accordingly, the upper coupling **525** may rotate about the upper elongated member **505** (*i.e.*, about the X axis). It should be understood that lubricant or bearings may be utilized to provide for smoother translation or rotation.

[0071] In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the upper elongated member **505** has a polygonal cross section and the first aperture **530** of the upper coupling **525** has a corresponding polygonal cross section. In such an embodiment, upper coupling **525** contains a joint permitting the vertical elongated member **515** to rotate about the X axis.

[0072] The upper coupling **525** also includes a second aperture **535** that receives the vertical elongated member **415**. As shown, the upper coupling **525** rests on top of the vertical elongated member **415** and does not allow the vertical elongated member **415** to pass through it. In this embodiment, the vertical elongated member **415** and the second aperture **535** both have circular cross sections. Therefore, the vertical elongated member **415** is free to rotate about its longitudinal axis, but its ability to translate is limited to the depth of the second aperture **535**. In an alternative embodiment, the second aperture **535** permits the vertical elongated member **415** to pass through the upper coupling. In another alternative embodiment, the vertical elongated member **415** can translate when it is configured to expand telescopically. The second aperture **535** may be configured to secure an end of the vertical elongated member **415** while allowing it to expand telescopically.

[0073] In the above-described embodiment, rotation of the lower elongated member **510** about the Y axis is restricted during steering angle changes, even when the steer axis of the wheel is not normal to the road. Accordingly, if a sensor were mounted to the measurement apparatus **500** in a downward facing position, it would not be rotated about the Y axis out of the downward facing position.

[0074] In each of the above described embodiments, the components of the measurement apparatus may be sized such that, when the measurement apparatus is mounted to a selected vehicle, the width of the vehicle and the measurement apparatus is less than the width of a standard highway lane. For example, the lower elongated member may be between 0.1 and 0.5 meter in length, the vertical elongated member may be between 0.1 and 1 meter in length, and the upper elongated member may be between 0.1 and 1 meter in length.

[0075] To the extent that the term “includes” or “including” is used in the specification or the claims, it is intended to be inclusive in a manner similar to the term “comprising” as that term is interpreted when employed as a transitional word in a claim. Furthermore, to the extent that the term “or” is employed (e.g., A or B) it is intended to mean “A or B or both.” When the applicants intend to indicate “only A or B but not both” then the term “only A or B but not both”

will be employed. Thus, use of the term “or” herein is the inclusive, and not the exclusive use. See, Bryan A. Garner, *A Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage* 624 (2d. Ed. 1995). Also, to the extent that the terms “in” or “into” are used in the specification or the claims, it is intended to additionally mean “on” or “onto.” Furthermore, to the extent the term “connect” is used in the specification or claims, it is intended to mean not only “directly connected to,” but also “indirectly connected to” such as connected through another component or components.

[0076] While the present disclosure has been illustrated by the description of embodiments thereof, and while the embodiments have been described in considerable detail, it is not the intention of the applicants to restrict or in any way limit the scope of the appended claims to such detail. Additional advantages and modifications will readily appear to those skilled in the art. Therefore, the disclosure, in its broader aspects, is not limited to the specific details, the representative apparatus and method, and illustrative examples shown and described. Accordingly, departures may be made from such details without departing from the spirit or scope of the applicant’s general inventive concept.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus (200, 300, 400, 500) for use in measuring camber angle of a wheel (W) on a vehicle (100), comprising:
 - a lower elongated member (210, 310, 410) having a longitudinal axis;
 - a vertical elongated member (215, 315, 415) having a longitudinal axis;
 - an upper elongated member (220, 320, 420, 520) having a longitudinal axis;
 - a lower coupling (240, 340, 440) that connects the lower elongated member to the vertical elongated member, wherein the lower coupling permits the lower elongated member to translate along its longitudinal axis, and wherein the lower coupling permits the vertical elongated member to rotate about at least one axis;
 - an upper coupling (225, 325, 425, 525) that connects the vertical elongated member to the upper elongated member, wherein the upper coupling permits the vertical elongated member to rotate about at least one axis;
 - a lower connector (205, 305, 405) configured to connect the lower elongated member to the wheel, and;
 - an upper connector (380, 465) configured to connect the upper elongated member to the vehicle.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the upper coupling permits the vertical elongated member to translate along its longitudinal axis.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an upper receiver (265, 365) that connects the upper elongated member to the upper connector, wherein the upper receiver permits the upper elongated member to translate along its longitudinal axis.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the upper coupling is configured to translate along the upper elongated member.
5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the lower coupling includes a lower section (250, 350, 450) configured to receive the lower elongated member and an upper section (245, 345, 445) configured to receive a pin (260, 360, 460).

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the lower connector is a ring bearing.
7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one of the lower elongated member, the vertical elongated member, and the upper elongated member is configured to expand telescopically.
8. An apparatus (200, 300, 400, 500) configured to be mounted to a vehicle for obtaining a camber angle measurement, comprising:
 - a lower elongated member (210, 310, 410);
 - a vertical elongated member (215, 315, 415);
 - an upper elongated member (220, 320, 420, 520);
 - a lower coupling (240, 340, 440) that connects the lower elongated member to the vertical elongated member, wherein the lower coupling allows the vertical elongated member to rotate about an axis, and wherein the lower coupling prevents the lower elongated member from rotating about its longitudinal axis;
 - an upper coupling (225, 325, 425, 525) that connects the vertical elongated member to the upper elongated member;
 - a lower connector (205, 305, 405) connected to the lower elongated member, and configured to be connected to a wheel (W) of a vehicle (100); and
 - an upper connector (380, 465) connected to the upper elongated member, and configured to be connected to the vehicle.
9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the lower elongated member is between 0.1 and 0.5 meter in length, the vertical elongated member is between 0.1 and 1 meter in length, and the upper elongated member is between 0.1 and 1 meter in length.
10. The apparatus of claim 8, further comprising an upper receiver (265, 365) that connects the upper elongated member to the upper connector.
11. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the lower coupling further comprises a hinge joint, ball joint, or heim joint.
12. An apparatus (200, 300, 400, 500) for providing a stable platform for taking a measurement of a vehicle (100), the apparatus having three substantially orthogonal axes,

including an X axis defining an X direction, a Y axis defining a Y direction, and a Z axis defining a Z direction, the apparatus comprising:

an upper elongated member (220, 320, 420, 520);

a vertical elongated member (215, 315, 415);

a lower elongated member (210, 310, 410);

means (260, 360, 460, 430, 530) for accommodating rotation of the vertical elongated member about the X axis;

means (240, 340, 440, 255, 355, 455) for accommodating translation of the lower elongated member in the Y direction;

means (225, 325, 425, 525, 235, 335, 435, 535) for accommodating rotation of the vertical elongated member about the Z axis;

means (380, 465) for securing the apparatus to a body of a vehicle (100); and

means (205, 305, 405) for securing the apparatus to a wheel of the vehicle.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, further comprising means (270, 370, 430, 530, 265, 365, 425, 525) for accommodating translation of the upper elongated member in the X direction.

14. The apparatus of claim 12, further comprising means (225, 235, 325, 335, 375, 425, 435, 465, 525, 535) for accommodating translation of the vertical elongated member in the Z direction.

15. The apparatus of claim 12, further comprising means (375, 380, 430, 465, 530) for accommodating rotation of the upper elongated member about the X axis.

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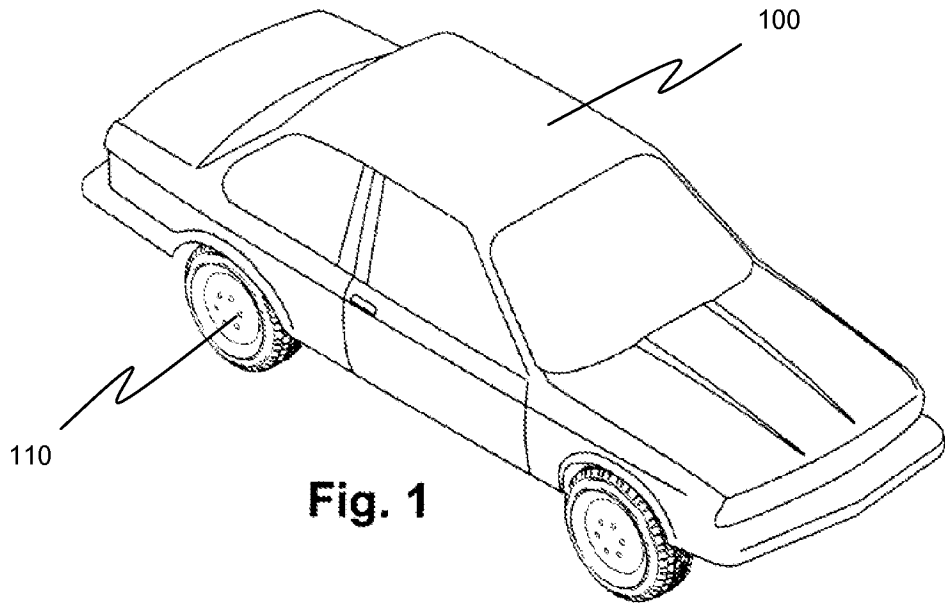


Fig. 1

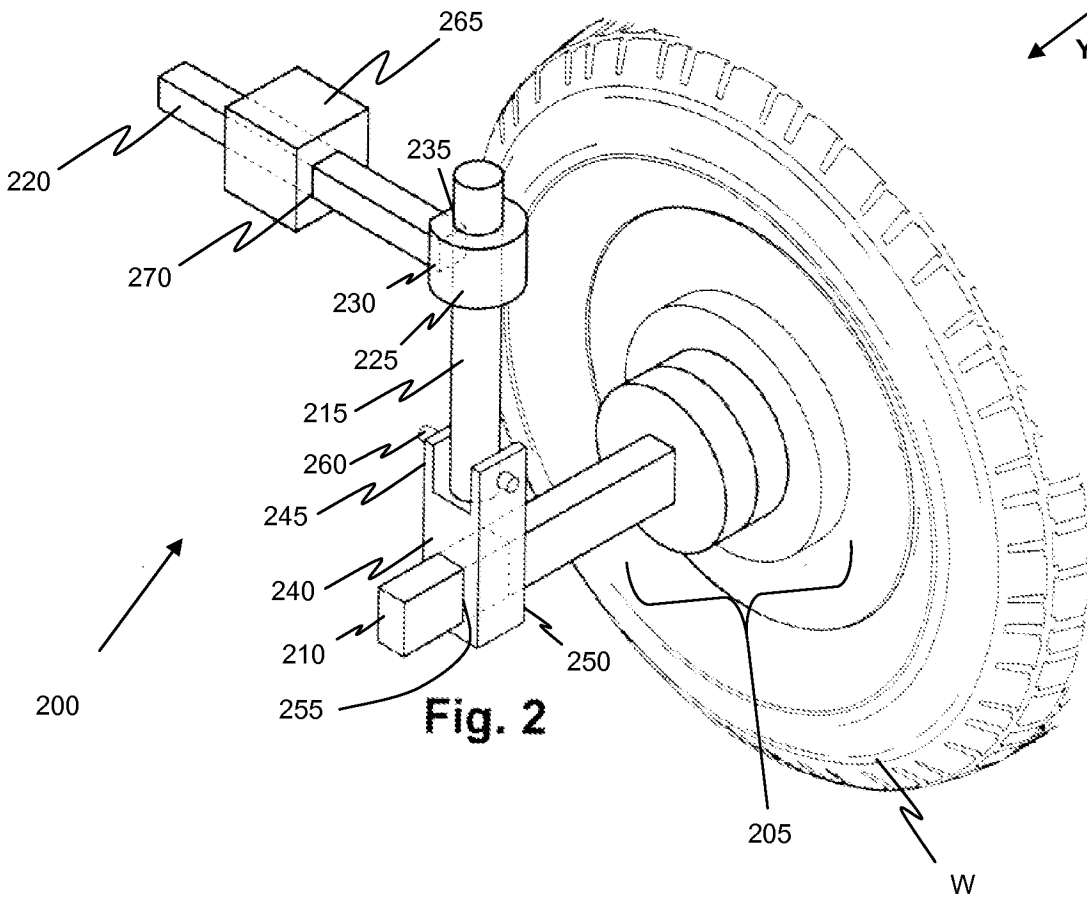
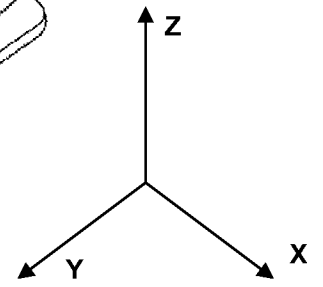
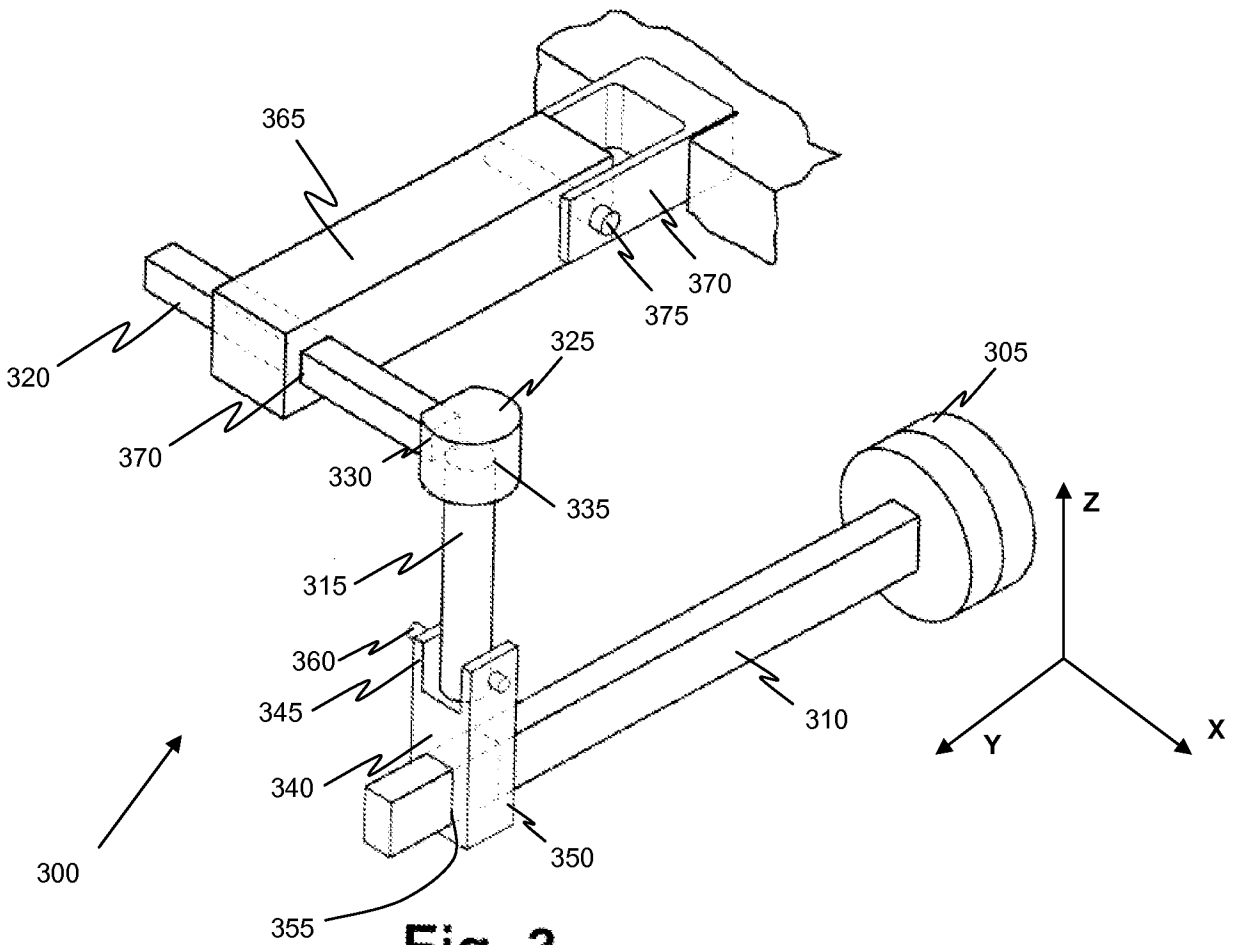
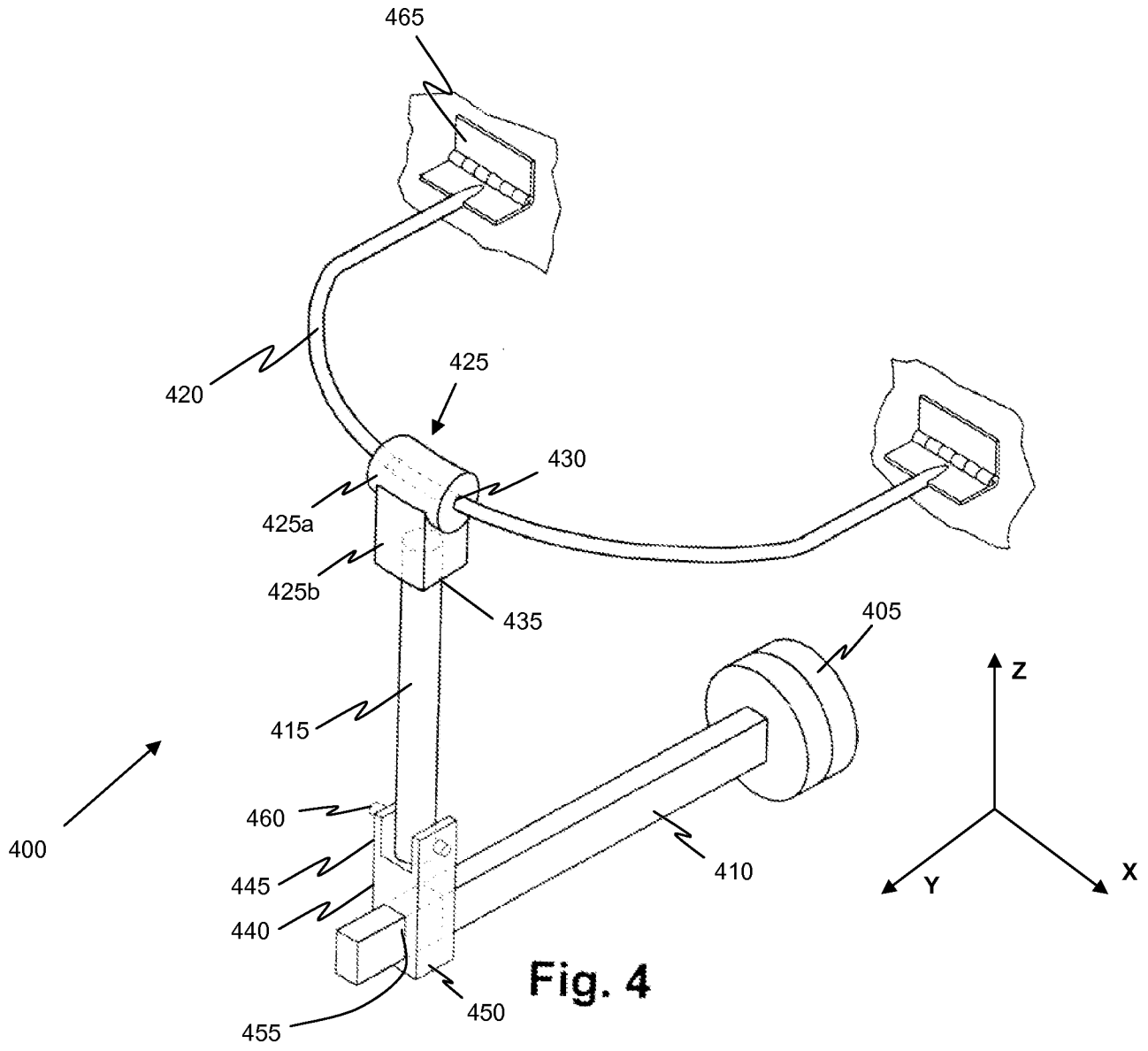


Fig. 2





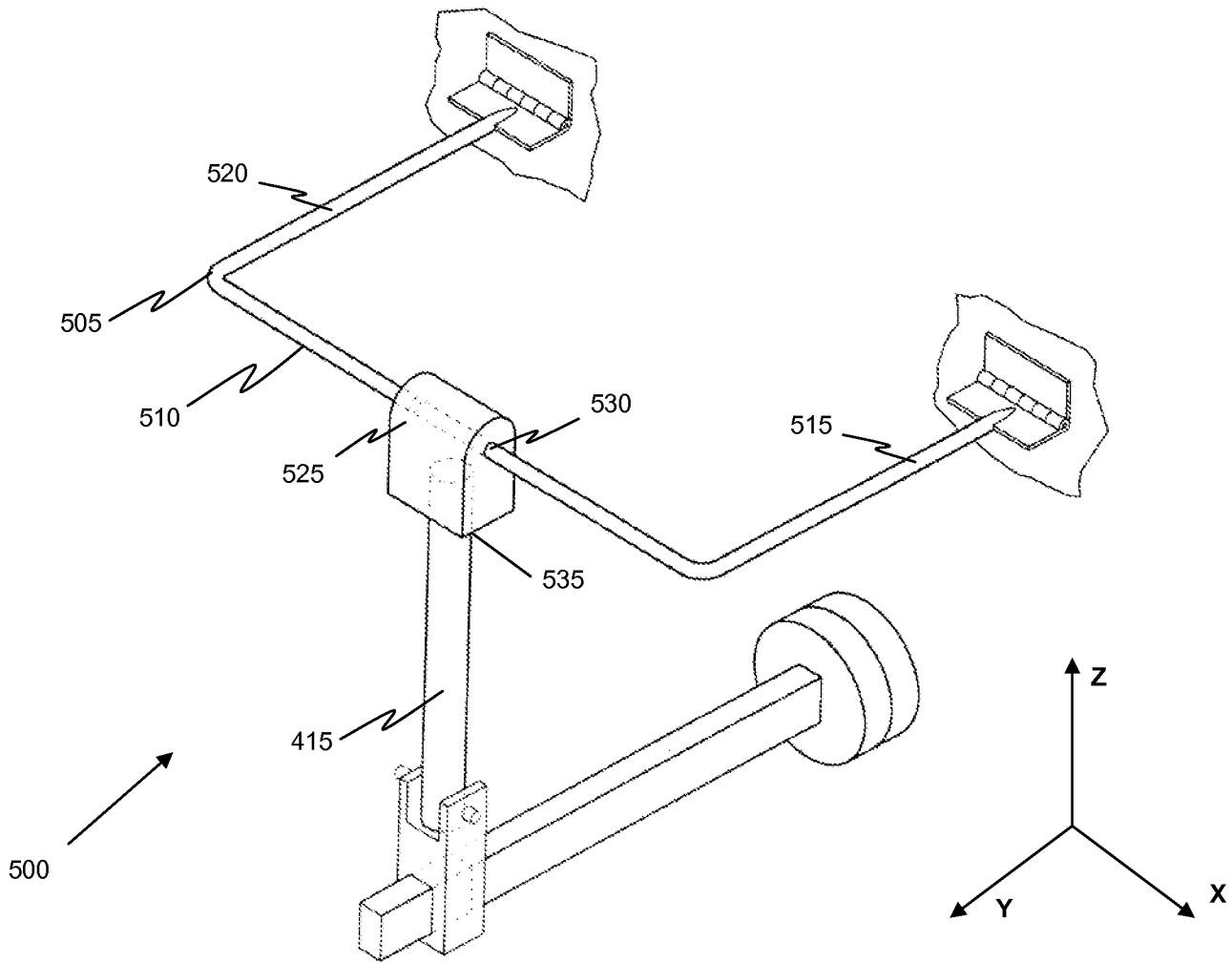


Fig. 5