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(54) Title: DATA TRANSPORT MODULE

(57) Abstract: A data transport module includes a connector to be received and coupled to a backplane within a modular platform. The data transport module also includes another connector to be received and coupled in a slot resident on a board such that the data transport module is coplanar to the board when received and coupled in the slot. The data transport module further includes one or more data transport interfaces to forward data between the board and the backplane via the connectors.



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DATA TRANSPORT MODULE

BACKGROUND

[0001] Modular platform systems are typically used in communication networks where reliability is increased and cost reduced by the use of interoperable pieces. Such interoperable pieces may include modular platform shelves or chassis. These modular platform shelves include one or more backplanes that receive and couple to other interoperable pieces such as circuit boards or “boards”. These boards may include, but are not limited to blades, carrier boards, processing boards, interconnects, etc. Other interoperable pieces that a backplane may receive and couple to include components such as fans, power equipment modules (PEM), field replaceable units (FRUs), alarm boards, etc.

[0002] Backplanes within a modular platform system may receive and couple boards via one or more data transport and power connectors. Typically, the one or more data transport connectors include communication links to interconnect boards received and coupled to the backplane. These communication links may also couple interconnected boards to components resident on a given board (e.g, mezzanine cards, processing elements, chipsets, media devices, etc.). Data and/or instructions are forwarded on these communication links using various different communication protocols. Typically a data transport interface is used to serve as a bridge between the communication links that use different communication protocols.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is an example illustration of a data transport module to be received and coupled to a slot on a board and to be received and coupled to a backplane;

Fig. 2 is an example illustration of the data transport module received and coupled to the board;

Fig. 3 is an example architectural diagram of the data transport module including data transport interfaces between the backplane and a processing element(s) resident on the board;

Fig. 4 provides a partial view of an example modular platform; and

Fig. 5 is a flow chart of an example method to insert the data transport module into a slot on the board.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0003] Typically, boards designed to couple to a backplane within a modular platform include resident data transport interfaces. Various board designs may be needed to accommodate different types of data transport interfaces. The different types of data transport interfaces may support one or more given communication protocols used to forward data and/or instructions over communication links between a board and a backplane. Multiple designs increase manufacturing costs and may reduce a board's reliability due to uncertainty in the board's compatibility to backplanes with communication links using multiple communication protocols. Additionally, each time a communication protocol is updated or changed, a consequent redesign of a board and a resident data transport interface is likely necessary. Accordingly, data transport interfaces resident on a board are problematic to a cost effective and reliable board for a modular platform in a communication network.

[0004] **Fig. 1** is an example illustration of a data transport module 120 to be received and coupled to a slot 112 on a board 110 and to be received and coupled to a backplane 130.

As depicted in Fig. 1, data transport module 120 includes a board connector 122 to be received and coupled to board 110 via a slot 112 that includes connector 114.

[0005] Data transport module 120 is also depicted to be received and coupled to backplane 130 via data transport connectors 124A-E. Data transport connectors 124A-E, for example, may couple to backplane 130 via backplane 130's connectors 132A-I. As described in more detail below, data transport 120 also includes one or more data transport interfaces 126 to facilitate the forwarding of data and/or instructions between board 110 and backplane 130.

[0006] Board 110 also includes a power connector 116 to couple to backplane 130 (e.g., via connectors 134A-I). In one example, backplane 130 provides power feeds through connector 134A to board 110 and to data transport module 120 when coupled to power connector 116.

[0007] In one example, board 110 may be a board designed to operate in compliance with the PCI Industrial Computer Manufacturers Group (PICMG), Advanced

Telecommunications Computing Architecture (ATCA) Base Specification, PICMG 3.0 Rev. 1.0, published December 30, 2002, and/or later versions of the specification ("the ATCA specification"). Additionally, backplane 130 may also be designed to operate in compliance with the ATCA specification, although this disclosure is not limited to only ATCA compliant boards and backplanes but may also apply to Compact Peripheral Component Interface (cPCI) compliant boards, VersaModular Eurocard (VME) compliant boards, or other types of industry standards governing the design and operation of backplanes and boards. In addition, this disclosure may also apply to proprietary boards and/or backplanes designed to operate in a modular platform system.

[0008] In one implementation, data transport connectors 124A-E are to couple to ATCA backplane 110 in an ATCA backplane region called "Zone 2" via connectors 132A-I. The

ATCA specification refers to connectors that couple in Zone 2 as “data transport” connectors. These connectors include communications links to route data and/or instructions between board 110 (e.g., via data transport module 120) and other boards coupled to backplane 130. The communication links include, but are not limited to,
5 “switch fabric” or “base fabric” communication links.

[0009] In one example, data transport connectors 124A-E, may also include connectors to couple to “Zone 3” data transport connectors in an ATCA modular platform. Zone 3 data transport connectors, for example, may couple to input/output devices such as rear transition modules (RTMs). These Zone 3 connectors may include switch and/or base
10 fabric communication links.

[0010] A base fabric interface on an ATCA compliant board is designed to support 10/100/1000 BASE-T Ethernet communication protocols (“Ethernet”) over a base fabric. Ethernet associated communication protocols, for example, are described in the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) standard 802.3ah-2004 Information
15 technology – Telecommunications and information exchange between systems – Local and metropolitan networks – Specific requirements – Part 3: Carrier Sense Multiple Access with Collision Detection Access Method and Physical Layer Specifications, published September 7, 2004, and/or later versions of the standard (the “Ethernet standard”).

[0011] In one example, base fabrics may facilitate the routing of data and/or instructions
20 between a board coupled to a backplane and a management and/or control board described in the ATCA specification as a “shelf manager controller” (ShMC). Data and/or instructions which may include, but are limited to, management and/or control instructions may be forwarded between a ShMC and a board over a base fabric in a backplane using
25 Ethernet communication protocols. These management and/or control instructions may

facilitate, for example, remote management, real time monitoring of operating parameters (e.g., temperatures and voltages), distributed processing, fault tolerance, etc. of a modular platform and the boards coupled to the modular platform.

[0012] Typically, a switch fabric interface for an ATCA compliant board may be designed to support one or more communication protocols. These protocols are associated with and/or described by sub-set specifications to the ATCA specification and are typically referred to as the "PICMG 3.x specifications." The PICMG 3.x specifications include, but are not limited to, Ethernet/Fibre Channel (PICMG 3.1), Infiniband (PICMG 3.2), StarFabric (PICMG 3.3), PCI-Express/Advanced Switching (PICMG 3.4) and Advanced Fabric Interconnect/S-RapidIO (PICMG 3.5). In one example, one or more switch fabric interfaces designed to support a communication protocol associated with a PICMG 3.x specification may facilitate the forwarding of data and/or instructions between boards coupled to an ATCA backplane via a switch fabric.

[0013] In one example, connectors (e.g., data transport connectors 124A-E, connector 114, and/or connectors 134A-I) may be high density, impedance controlled connectors. In another example, these connectors may include high speed and dense interfaces that do not require a mechanical contact. These connectors may couple via other methods such as through optical, inductive or capacitive interfaces. These methods, for example, may incorporate the use of micro electromechanical systems (MEMS) which may be fabricated using silicon manufacturing technologies.

[0014] One example of an optical interface may be a two-dimensional MEMS-controllable microlens array that has been integrated with a Vertical-Cavity-Surface-Emitting-Laser (VCSEL) array using a flip-chip assembly. An example of an inductive interface may be an out-of-plane, three-turn spiral with micro (very small) coil dimensions. An example of a capacitive interface may be a parallel plate, area-tunable,

MEMS capacitor. Although the disclosure is not limited to only the above mentioned interfaces.

[0015] In one implementation when data transport module 120 is received and coupled to board 110 it is coplanar with side 118 of board 110. This coplanar orientation, for
5 example, may give board 110 the same profile as an ATCA compliant board that couples to a backplane via resident data transport connectors.

[0016] In one example, slot 112 in board 110 includes a cutout portion that has dimensions to accommodate the full length of data transport module 120 on the side that couples to connector 114. In addition, slot 112 accommodates at least a portion of data
10 transport module 120's width. For example, the portion of width may be such that data transport connectors 124A-E when data transport module 120 is coupled to board 110 in a coplanar orientation, data transport connectors 124A-E will extrude from the edge of board 110 the same or similar distance as the resident data transport connectors on the edge of an ATCA compliant board.

15 [0017] In one example, data transport module 120 by itself is not "hot-swappable." However, once board 110 is received and coupled to backplane 130 via data transport module 120 and connector 116, board 110 with data transport module 120 functions as a hot-swappable board like any other board coupled to an ATCA compliant backplane.

[0018] Although not shown in Fig. 1, board 110 may include a rail mechanism to help
20 guide and hold data transport module 120 in place. For example, a structure similar to a miniature "H" beam could be mounted to board 110 to function as a slide to guide the receiving and coupling of data transport module 120 within slot 112 to connector 114.

[0019] **Fig. 2** is an example illustration of data transport module 120 received and coupled to board 110. As depicted in Fig. 2, data transport module 120 may be fastened to board
25 110 using fasteners 220.

[0020] In one implementation, fasteners 220 may mechanically fasten data transport module 120 to board 110. Additionally, fasteners 220 may facilitate the routing of power feeds to power converter 205 via power circuitry 210, the power may be received through power connector 116 when coupled to a backplane (e.g., backplane 130). For example, fasteners 220 couple together portions of power circuitry 210 which includes lower power feeds 212, middle power feeds 214 and upper power feeds 216. As shown in Fig. 2, the lower and upper power feeds 212 and 216 are resident on board 110, while middle power feed 214 is resident on data transport module 120.

[0021] In one example, board 110 is an ATCA compliant board that receives primary and redundant -48 volts direct current (VDC) through power connector 116 when coupled to backplane 130. The -48 VDC is then routed through power circuitry 210 to power converter 205. Since, the air flow in a typical ATCA compliant modular platform shelf and/or rack flows from the bottom (where power connector 116 is located) to the top (where power converter 205 is located), this routing may facilitate the dissipation of heat generated by power converter 205. Power converter 205's location at the top may also reduce the thermal impact of power converter 205's waste heat on other devices on board 110. The thermal impact may be reduced since most of these devices will be downstream of the airflow in an ATCA complaint board.

[0022] In one example, board 110 may include a guide 128 as depicted in Fig. 2. Guide 128, for example, is resident on board 110 and may serve to help guide board 110, with data transport module 120 in place, as it is received and coupled to a backplane (e.g., backplane 130). In another example, guide 128 may be resident on data transport module 120. In this other example, guide 128 may also serve to help guide board 110's receipt and coupling to the backplane. In yet another example, a guide 128 may be on both board 110 and data transport module 120.

[0023] Fig. 3 is an example architectural diagram of data transport module 120 including data transport interfaces 126 between backplane 130 and processing element(s) 300 resident on board 110. As depicted in Fig. 3, data transport interfaces 126 includes data transport interfaces 322 and 324. In one implementation, data transport interface 322 (base fabric interface) is coupled to base fabric 332 and data transport interface 324 (switch fabric interface) is coupled to switch fabric 334. Communication links 310 and 312, respectively are also depicted in Fig. 3 as coupling data transport interfaces 322 and 324, respectively, to processing element(s) 300.

[0024] In one example, processing element(s) 300 include, but are not limited to, network processors (NP), digital signal processors (DSP), microprocessors, microcontrollers, field programmable gate arrays (FPGA), or application specific integrated chips (ASIC).

Processing element(s) 300 may be resident on board 110 and/or may be resident on modules and/or components coupled to connectors resident on board 110 (e.g., mezzanine and/or advanced mezzanine cards, chipset controllers, management controllers, etc.).

[0025] In one example, a control unit 305 may be responsive to and/or resident on one or more processing element(s) 300. Control unit 305 may contain control logic to facilitate control and/or management of processing element(s) 300 coupled to backplane 130 via the base fabric 332.

[0026] In one example, board 110 is compliant with the ATCA specification and is coupled to backplane 130 which is also ATCA compliant. As mentioned above, the base fabric in an ATCA compliant backplane uses an Ethernet communication protocol to forward data and/or instructions, however, processing element(s) 300 may respond to and/or operate (e.g., through control unit 305) using communication protocols that are different than Ethernet. For example, processing element(s) 300 may operate using communication protocols such as those described in the PCI-Express Base Specification,

Rev. 1.1, published March 28, 2005, and/or later versions of the specification (“the PCI-Express specification”). Data transport interface 322 may serve as a bridge to facilitate the forwarding of data and/or instructions received over base fabric 332. Data transport interface 322 may translate Ethernet communication protocols associated with the data and/or instruction to PCI-Express communication protocols. Data transport interface 322 may then forward the data and/or instructions via communication link 310 to control unit 305 and/or processing element(s) 300 using the PCI-Express communication protocol.

[0027] In one example, an ATCA ShMC may forward management and/or control instructions on base fabric 132 in backplane 130 to processing element(s) 300. Once the instructions reach data transport interface 322, the Ethernet communication protocol associated with these instructions is translated to a PCI-Express communication protocol. The instructions are then forwarded to control unit 305 and/or processing element(s) 300 using the PCI-Express communication protocol. Processing element(s) 300 and/or control unit 305 may transmit responses to the management and/or control instructions using PCI-Express communication protocols. Therefore, for example, data transport interface 322 may translate PCI-Express to Ethernet and then use Ethernet communication protocols to forward the response data on base fabric 332 to the ATCA ShMC.

[0028] In one implementation, switch fabric 334 may facilitate the forwarding of data to/from board 110 utilizing one or more of the communication protocols referenced in a PICMG 3.x specification, although switch fabric communication protocols are not limited to only those mentioned in a PICMG 3.x specification. In one example, switch fabric 334 may associate data and/or instructions with a communication protocol referenced in the PICMG 3.4 specification as the Advanced Switching Interconnect (ASI) communication protocol. The ASI communication protocol is described in detail in the Advanced

Switching Core Architecture Specification, Rev. 1.1, published November 2004, and/or later versions of the specification (“the AS specification”).

[0029] In one example, switch fabric 334 may use the ASI communication protocol to forward data and/or instructions to processing element(s) 300. However, processing element(s) 300 may operate and/or forward data using a communication protocol that is different than the ASI communication protocol. For example, processing element(s) 300 may forward data using a communication protocol associated with system packet interfaces (SPI) over communication link 312. One such SPI communication protocol is SPI-4 as described in the SPI-4 Implementation Agreement, Phase 2 Revision 1: OC-192 System Interface for Physical and Link Layer Devices, published October 15, 2003 and available through the Optical Internetworking Forum (OIF).

[0030] In one implementation, data transport interface 324 may serve as a bridge to facilitate the forwarding of data received via switch fabric 334. This data may be forwarded, for example, using the ASI communication protocol and may be destined for processing element(s) 300 on board 110 that operate using the SPI-4 communication protocol. In this implementation, the ASI communication protocol associated with the data is translated by data transport interface 324 to the SPI-4 communication protocol and the data is then forwarded to processing element(s) 300 via communication link 312 using the SPI-4 communication protocol.

[0031] In one example, data transport module 120 includes only data transport interface 324. In this example, base fabric 332 may be routed through data transport module 120 to a base interface on board 110. In another example, data transport module 120 includes only data transport interface 322. In this example, the switch fabric is routed through data transport module 120 to a switch fabric interface on board 110.

[0032] Fig. 4 provides a partial view of an example modular platform 400. Modular platform 400 may be a telecommunications server designed to be compliant with the ATCA specification. As mentioned above for boards and backplanes, modular platforms are not limited to only ATCA compliant modular platforms. Fig. 4 shows a partial view of modular platform 400 having selected portions removed for clarity.

[0033] Modular platform 400 is shown including boards 110, 420 and 430 coupled to backplane 130. In one example, as described above and depicted in Fig. 1, board 110 may couple to connectors 132A-I on backplane 130 via data transport module 120.

Additionally, power connector 116 may couple to backplane 130 to provide power feeds to both board 110 and to data transport module 120.

[0034] In one example, boards 420 and 430 may also couple to backplane 130 via a data transport module and a power connector (not shown). Boards 420 and 430 may also couple directly to backplane 130 without a data transport module. Instead, boards 420 and 430 may couple via data transport connectors resident on these boards.

[0035] In one implementation, board 420 may serve as an ATCA ShMC for modular platform 400 and may transmit management and/or control instructions via base fabric 332 to processing element(s) 300 on board 110 using the Ethernet communication protocol. The Ethernet communication protocol may be translated to a different communication protocol by data transport interface 322 and the data and/or instructions forwarded to control unit 305 and/or processing element(s) 300 via communication link 310 using the different communication protocol.

[0036] In one implementation, data and/or instructions may be forwarded from processing element(s) 300 on board 110 to board 430. For example, the data and/or instructions may require further processing by processing elements on board 430. Data transport interface 324 may translate the communication protocol used to forward data and/or instructions

(e.g., SPI-4) to a different communication protocol used by switch fabric 334 (e.g., ASI). The data and/or instructions are then forwarded through switch fabric 334 in backplane 130 to board 430 using the different communication protocol.

[0037] Fig. 5 is a flow chart of an example method to insert data transport module 120 in slot 112 on board 110. In block 510, data transport module 120 is inserted in slot 112 on board 110. When inserted, for example, board connector 122 is received and coupled in slot 112 so that data transport module 120 fits within slot 112 such that data transport module 120 is coplanar to board 110 (see Fig. 1). As described above, data transport module includes data transport connectors 124A-E to couple to, for example, backplane 130 in modular platform 400 (see Fig. 4).

[0038] In block 520, board 110, is inserted in backplane 130. For example, data transport connectors 124A-E on data transport module 120 are received and coupled to connectors 132A on backplane 130. Additionally, power connector 116 is received and coupled to connector 134A.

[0039] In block 530, once board 110 is coupled to backplane 130, data and/or instructions are forwarded to/from board 110 via one or more data transport interfaces 126 (e.g., data transport interfaces 332 or 324) on data transport module 120. The data and/or instructions may be routed from backplane 130 via base fabric 332 and/or switch fabric 334. As described above, the data transport interfaces may facilitate the forwarding of data and/or instructions to/from processing element(s) 300 on board 110.

[0040] The process then starts over, for example, when another data transport module is inserted in a board that is to be inserted in backplane 130 in modular platform 400.

[0041] In the previous descriptions, for the purpose of explanation, numerous specific details were set forth in order to provide an understanding of this disclosure. It will be apparent that the disclosure can be practiced without these specific details. In other

instances, structures and devices were shown in block diagram form in order to avoid obscuring the disclosure.

[0042] References made in the specification to the term “responsive to” are not limited to responsiveness to only a particular feature and/or structure. A feature may also be

5 “responsive to” another feature and/or structure and also be located within that feature and/or structure. Additionally, the term “responsive to” may also be synonymous with other terms such as “communicatively coupled to” or “operatively coupled to,” although the term is not limited in this regard.

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

inserting a module including one or more data transport interfaces in a slot resident
5 on a board such that the module is coplanar to the board, the module also including one or
more data transport connectors to couple to a backplane within a modular platform;
coupling the one or more data transport connectors to the backplane; and
forwarding data between the board and the backplane via the one or more data
transport interfaces.

10 2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the one or more data transport interfaces
includes a switch fabric interface to translate a communication protocol to another
communication protocol, the communication protocol used to forward the data from the
board to the switch fabric interface, the other communication protocol used to forward the
data on a switch fabric in the backplane.

15 3. A method according to claim 2, wherein the data from the board comprises data
forwarded from a processing element on the board, the processing element including a
network processor.

4. A method according to claim 3, wherein the communication protocol used to
forward the data from the processing element comprises a system packet interface-4 (SPI-
20 4) communication protocol and the other communication protocol used to forward the data
on the switch fabric comprises an Advanced Switching Interconnect (ASI) communication
protocol.

5. A method according to claim 1, wherein the one or more data transport interfaces include a base fabric interface to translate a communication protocol to another communication protocol, the communication protocol used to forward the data from the board to the switch fabric interface, the other communication protocol used to forward the data on a base fabric in the backplane.

6. A method according to claim 5, wherein the communication protocol used to forward the data from the board comprises a Peripheral Component Interconnect (PCI) Express communication protocol and the communication protocol used to forward the data on the base fabric comprises an Ethernet communication protocol.

7. A method according to claim 1, wherein the board and the backplane operate in compliance with the Advanced Telecommunications Computing Architecture (ATCA) specification.

8. A data transport module comprising:

a connector to be received and coupled to a backplane within a modular platform;

another connector to be received and coupled in a slot resident on a board such that the data transport module is coplanar to the board when received and coupled in the slot; and

one or more data transport interfaces to forward data between the board and the backplane via the connectors.

9. A data transport module according to claim 8 further comprising:

fasteners to couple the data transport module to the board; and

a power feed to couple another power feed resident on the board to route power from a power connector on the board to a power converter on the board, wherein a portion of the power feed is routed through the fasteners.

10. A data transport module according to claim 8, wherein the connector includes at least one selected from the following group of an optical interface, an inductive interface and a capacitive interface.
11. A data transport module according to claim 8, wherein the one or more data transport interfaces includes a switch fabric interface to translate a communication protocol to another communication protocol, the communication protocol used to forward the data from the board to the switch fabric interface, the other communication protocol used to forward the data on a switch fabric in the backplane.
12. A data transport module according to claim 11, wherein the data from the board comprises data forwarded from a processing element on the board, the processing element including a microprocessor.
13. A data transport module according to claim 12, wherein the communication protocol used to forward the data from the processing element comprises a system packet interface-4 (SPI-4) communication protocol and the other communication protocol used to forward the data on the switch fabric comprises an Advanced Switching Interconnect (ASI) communication protocol.
14. A data transport module according to claim 8, wherein the one or more data transport interfaces include a base fabric interface to translate a communication protocol to another communication protocol, the communication protocol used to forward the data

from the board to the base fabric interface, the other communication protocol used to forward the data on a base fabric in the backplane.

15. A data transport module according to claim 14, wherein the communication protocol used to forward the data from the board comprises a Peripheral Component

5 Interconnect (PCI) Express communication protocol and the communication protocol used to forward the data on the base fabric comprises an Ethernet communication protocol.

16. A data transport module according to claim 8, wherein the board and the backplane operate in compliance with the Advanced Telecommunications Architecture (ATCA) specification.

10 17. A board comprising:

a slot to receive and couple a data transport module to the board, wherein the data transport module couples to a backplane within a modular platform via one or more data transport connectors and the data transport module includes one or more data transport interfaces to forward data between the board and the backplane, the slot further

15 comprising:

a connector to couple to a board connector on the data transport module;

a cutout portion having dimensions to accommodate the full length of the data transport module on the side that couples to the connector and at least a portion of the module's width, the cutout portion to accommodate the data transport module such that
20 the data transport module is coplanar to the board when received and coupled to the board.

18. A board according to claim 17, wherein the board is designed to operate in compliance with the Advanced Telecommunications Computing Architecture (ATCA) specification.

19. A board according to claim 18, wherein the board has a same profile as an ATCA compliant board that couples to an ATCA compliant backplane with data transport connectors resident on the ATCA complaint board.

20. A modular platform system comprising:

5 a backplane;

a board including a slot; and

a data transport module including a connector to be received and coupled to the board in the slot and including another connector to be received and coupled to the backplane, wherein the data transport module is received and coupled in the slot coplanar to the board and further comprises one or more data transport interfaces to forward data
10 between the board and the backplane via communication links coupled by the connectors.

21. A system according to claim 20, wherein the one or more data transport interfaces include a base fabric interface to translate a communication protocol to another communication protocol, the communication protocol used to forward instructions on a
15 base fabric in the backplane from a control board to the board, the other communication protocol used to forward the instructions to a processing element on the board.

22. A system according to claim 21, wherein the communication protocol used to forward the instructions to the processing element comprises a Peripheral Component Interconnect (PCI) Express communication protocol and the communication protocol used
20 to forward the instructions on the base fabric comprises an Ethernet communication protocol.

23. A system according to claim 22, wherein the processing element includes a network processor. 24. A system according to claim 20, wherein the data transport module further includes:

a guide to facilitate the receipt and coupling of the other connector to the
5 backplane.

25. A system according to claim 21, wherein the modular platform and the control board are compliant with the Advanced Telecommunications Computing Architecture (ATCA) specification and the control board is a shelf manager controller (ShMC).

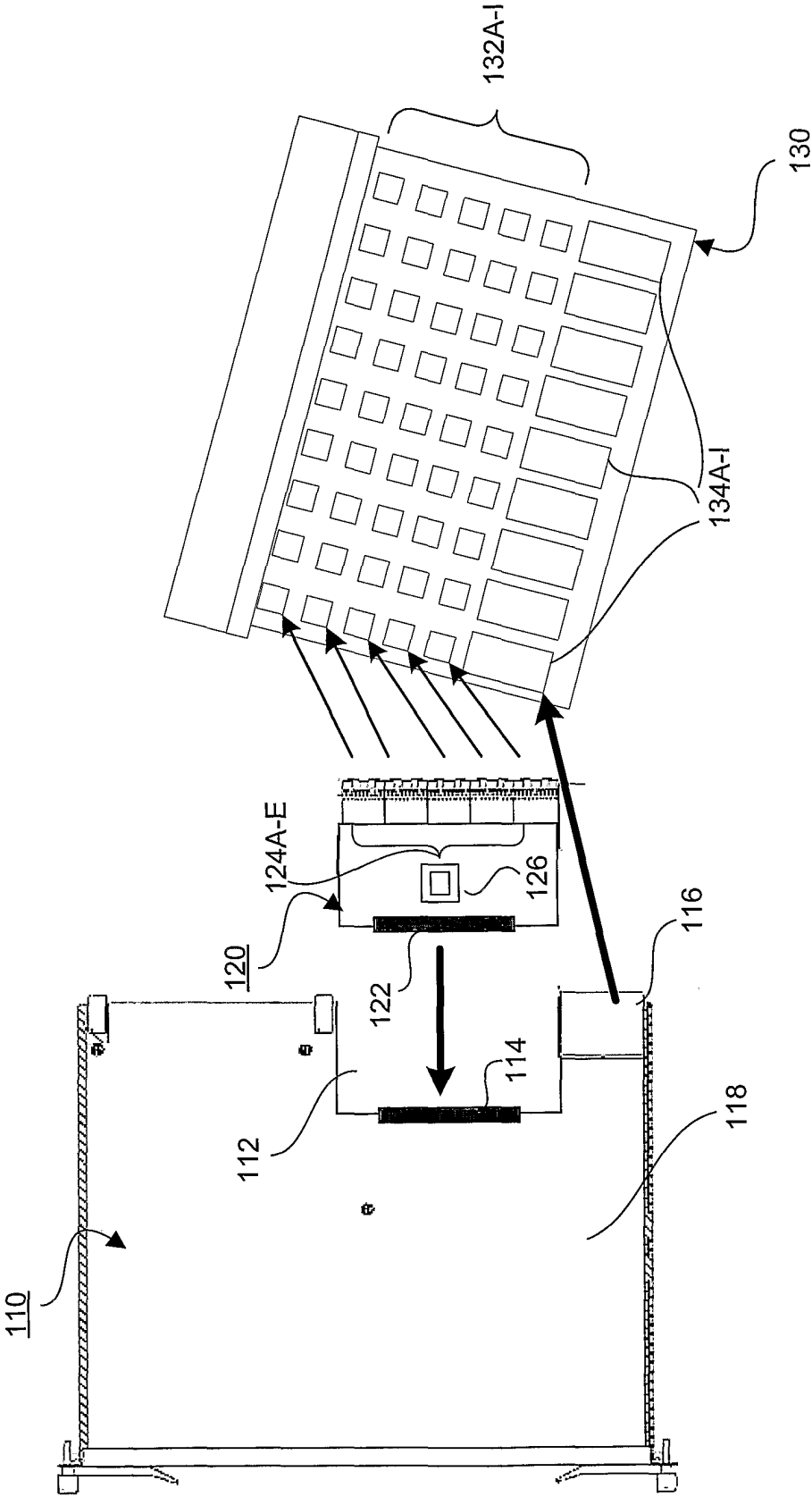


FIG. 1

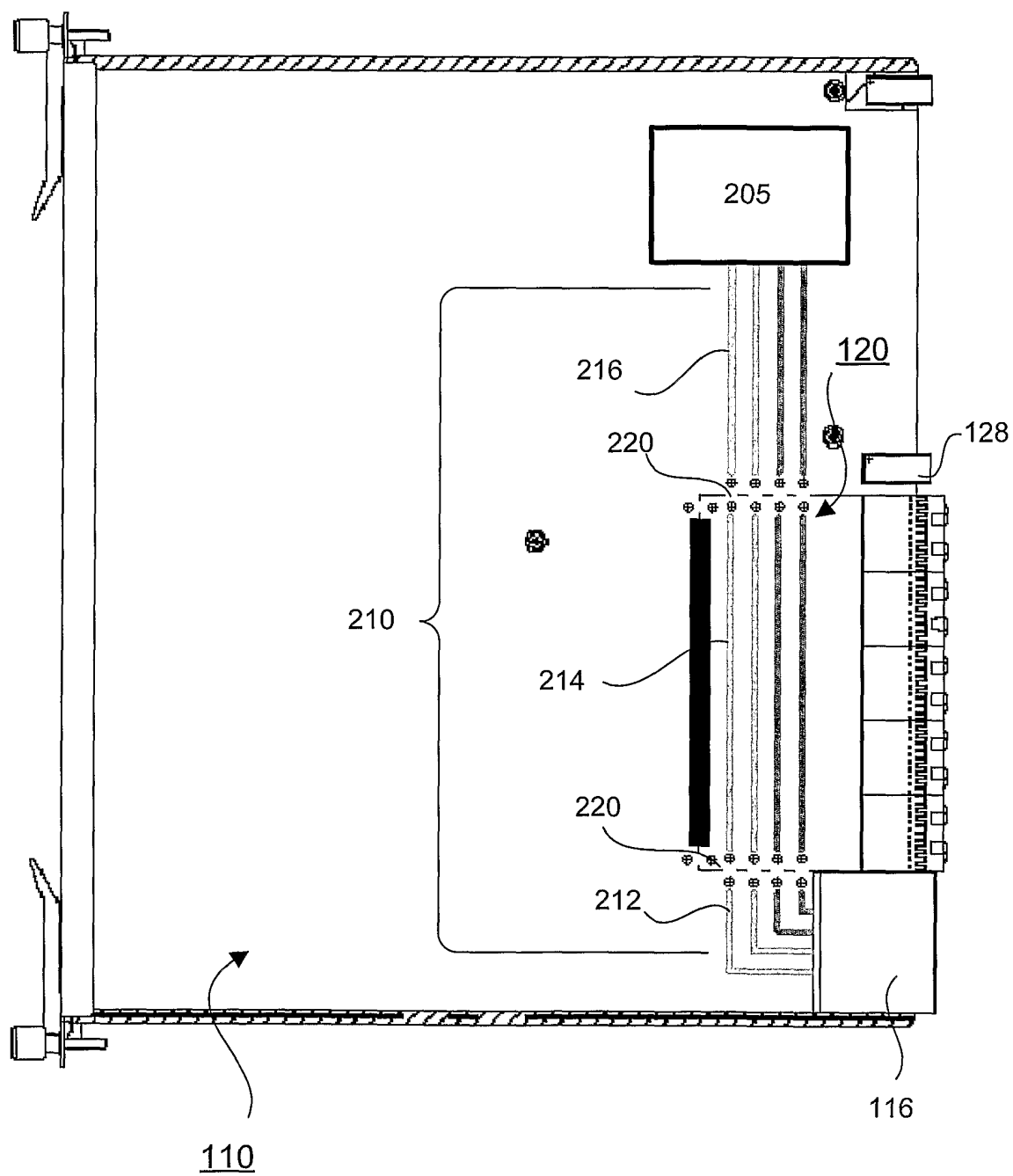


FIG. 2

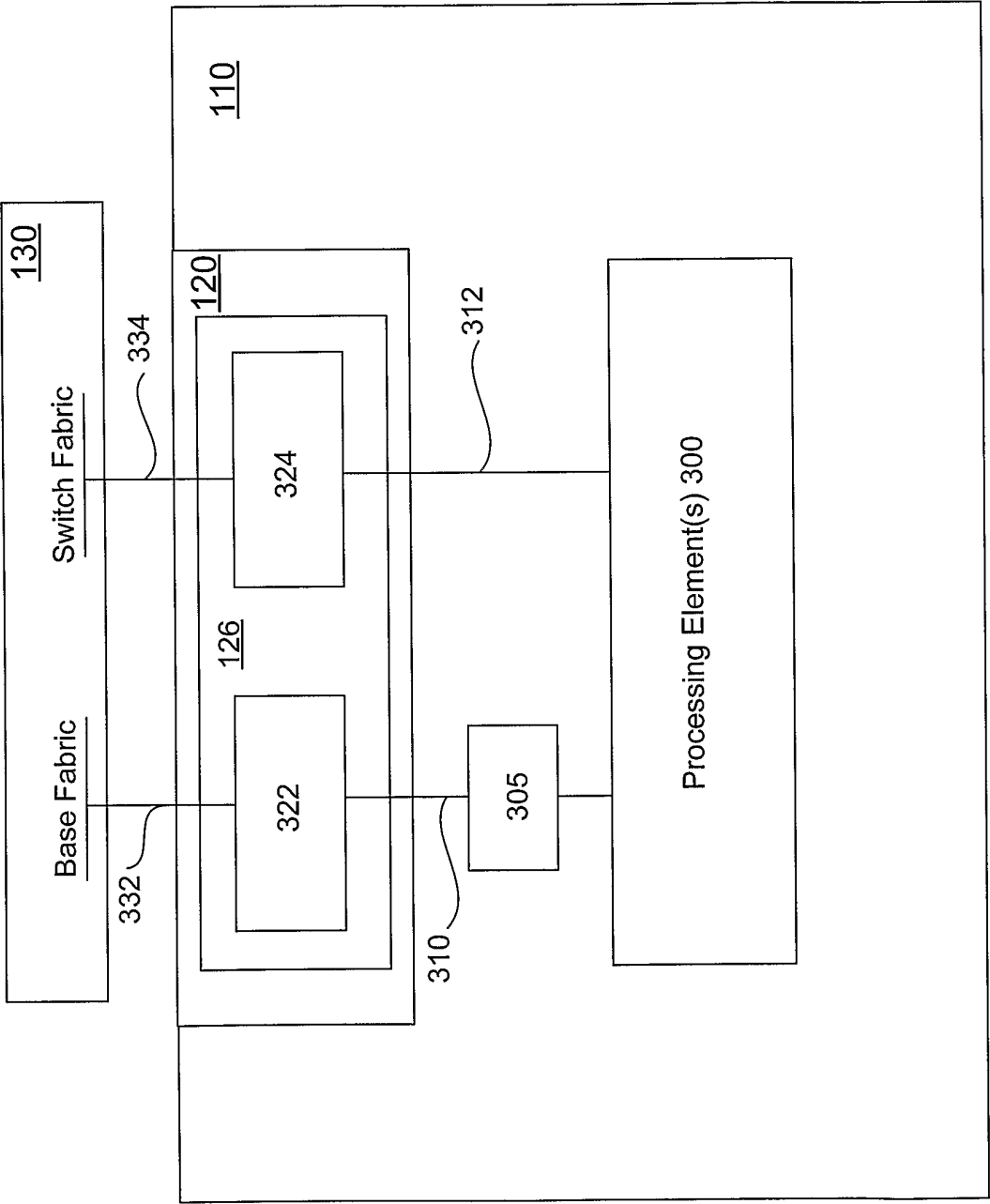


FIG. 3

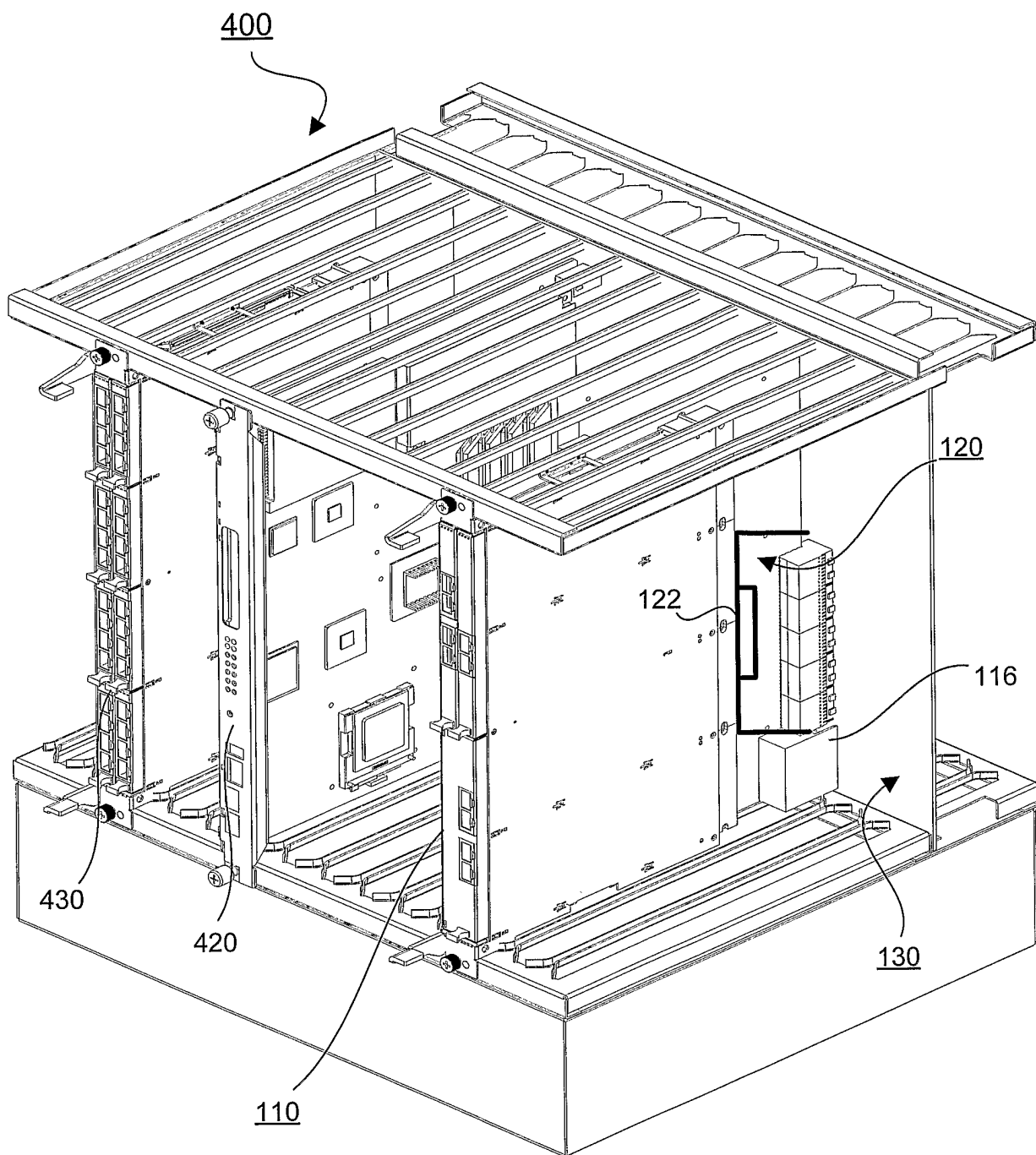


FIG. 4

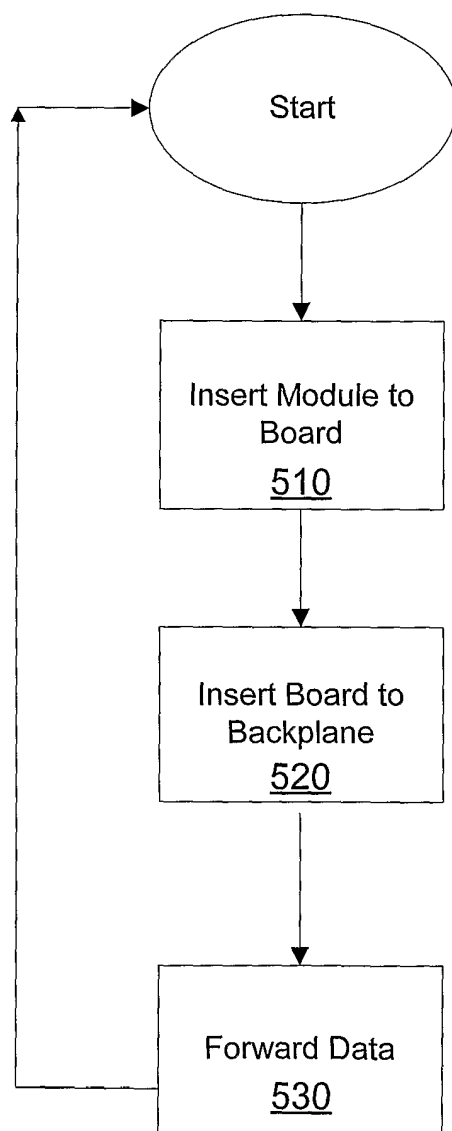


FIG. 5