Abstract: A suspension system of the present invention pivots a wheel of a motor vehicle. An upper control arm and a lower control arm are cooperable with a spindle, which supports the wheel. A vibration damper is cooperable with the upper control arm. A link interconnects the lower control arm and one of the terminal ends of the vibration damper thereby defining a common axis bisecting the link. The vibration damper moves along the common axis to absorb vibration transferred from a road surface and through the wheel.
Published:

— with international search report

— with amended claims and statement
SUSPENSION SYSTEM FOR A VEHICLE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates a vehicle wheel suspension system and more particularly, to a vehicle wheel suspension incorporating vertical dampener struts for absorbing vibration transferred from a road surface and through the wheel.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Like the rest of the systems on automotive vehicles, a suspension system performs a complicated function. The suspension system keeps the wheels of the automotive vehicle lined up with the travel of the automotive vehicle, limits the movement of the body of the automotive vehicle during cornering and when going over bumps, and provides a smooth and comfortable ride for passengers and drivers. Numerous suspension systems are known in the art. A short-long arm (SLA) suspension system has been common on domestic vehicles for many years. In the SLA system, each wheel is independently connected to a frame of the vehicle by a steering knuckle, ball joint assemblies, and upper and lower control arms.

A double-wishbone suspension system presents numerous components such as a frame of the vehicle, a lower arm, an upper arm, a hub for supporting a wheel assembly, and a damper. The upper and lower control arms function as locators to fix a position of the suspension system and its components relative to the automotive vehicle and are attached to the frame with bushings that permit the wheel assemblies to move up and down separately in response to irregularities in the road surface.
The prior art is replete with various suspension systems having at least one yoke or linking element for interconnecting a shock absorber mounted between the vehicle body and a lower arm. These systems are taught by the United States Patent Nos. 4,377,298 to Finn et al.; 4,583,759 to Kami et al.; and 5,375,870 to Smith et al. The United States Patent No. 4,377,298 to Finn et al., for example, disclose a vehicle wheel suspension having a shock absorber mounted between the vehicle body and a lower arm. A clevis or yoke portion formed from a pair of legs and formed from a reverse bend doubled sheet metal form, connected to a neck portion or collar to engage the shock absorber. The clevis taught by the United States Patent No. 4,377,298 to Finn et al., fails to teach or suggest a reinforcing structure defined in the clevis and requires a plurality of members to form the clevis.

The United States Patent No. 4,583,759 to Kami et al., for example, teaches an upper suspension arm support structure having a shock absorber mounted between the vehicle body and a lower arm. The clevis is forged from a metal and has a neck portion to engage the shock absorber and a pair of legs extending to the respective distal ends and connected to the lower arm by a fastener. The clevis of the United States Patent No. 4,583,759 to Kami et al. fails to teach or suggest a reinforcing structure defined in the clevis and requires a plurality of members to form the clevis. Moreover, the clevis of the United States Patent No. 4,583,759 to Kami et al., is forged from a metal thereby negatively impacting the overall weight of the system.

Therefore, an opportunity exists for an improved suspension system and method of manufacturing the same that will reduce the mass of the clevis thereby reducing the effect of vibrations and the resulting noises, add structural
integrity to the suspension system, and increase performance of drive line applications at a low cost and a high volume.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] The suspension system of the present invention keeps the wheel assemblies of the automotive vehicle lined up with the travel of the automotive vehicle, limits the movement of the body of the automotive vehicle during cornering and when going over bumps, and provides a smooth and comfortable ride for passengers and drivers. The suspension system presents numerous components such as a frame of the vehicle, a lower control arm, an upper control arm, a hub or a spindle for supporting the wheel assembly, and a vibration damper. The upper control arm and the lower control arm of the suspension system are cooperable with a spindle cooperable with the hub, which defines a rotational axis and supports the wheel assembly. The vibration damper having first and second terminal ends with one of the terminal ends being cooperable with the upper control arm.

[0008] A link or clevis has a monolithic construction and a generally uniform thickness. The link interconnects the lower control arm and the second terminal end of the vibration damper. The link and the vibration damper define a common axis bisecting the link and extending in a direction different from the direction of the rotational axis. The vibration damper is movable along the common axis the absorbing vibration transferred from a road surface and through the wheel. The link is stamped from a blank formed from metal, metal alloys, and combination thereof. The link includes a neck portion having a generally circular cross section for receiving the vibration damper and a pair of spaced legs.

[0010] A reinforcement rib is deformed into each of the legs thereby preventing the legs from bending as the vibration damper absorbs vibration
transferred from the road surface and through the wheel. The reinforcement rib is further deformed into the neck portion tapering away from the distal end to increase strength of the link. The reinforcement rib presents a first width as the reinforcement rib extends from the distal end to the neck portion and a second width as the leg transforms to the neck portion and a third width as the reinforcement rib further tapers onto the neck portion. The neck portion includes terminal edges and a seam extending therebetween. The seam receives a connector to secure the link to the vibration damper. Each of the legs presents a face having opposed peripheral edges extending outwardly from the face and tapering proximate the distal end to present the distal end having a generally flat cross section.

[0011] An advantage of the present invention is to provide the improved link for the suspension system that is stamped from a sheet metal presenting a lightweight alternative to an iron cast links known in the prior art.

[0012] Another advantage of the present invention is to provide an improved link for the suspension system that reduces the mass of the improved link.

[0013] Still another advantage of the present invention is to provide an improved link having at least one reinforcement rib deformed into each of the legs of the link thereby preventing the legs from bending as the vibration damper absorbs vibration transferred from the road surface and through the wheel and to provide structural integrity to the link and the entire suspension system.

[0014] Still another advantage of the present invention is to provide an improved mounting structure for mounting both right and left suspension assemblies as a unit to the vehicle body.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS
Other advantages of the present invention will be readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

Figure 1 illustrates a perspective view of a suspension assembly having an upper arm and a lower arm and a link cooperable with a vibration damper and connected to the lower arm;

Figure 2 illustrates a perspective and partially exploded view of the suspension assembly of Figure 1;

Figure 3A illustrates the inventive link having a monolithic construction and a generally uniform thickness;

Figure 3B illustrates the cross sectional view of the link shown in Figure 3A and taken along lines 3B-3B;

Figure 4 illustrates a first alternative embodiment of the inventive link;

Figure 5 illustrates a second alternative embodiment of the inventive link; and

Figure 6 illustrates a third alternative embodiment of the inventive link.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to the Figures, wherein like numerals indicate like or corresponding parts, a suspension system of the present invention is generally shown at 10 in Figures 1 and 2. The suspension system 10 keeps the wheel assemblies 12 of an automotive vehicle (not shown) lined up with the travel of the automotive vehicle, limits the movement of the body of the automotive vehicle during cornering and when
going over bumps, and provides a smooth and comfortable ride for passengers and drivers. The suspension system 10 presents numerous components such as a frame 14 (only partially shown in Figure 1) of the vehicle, a lower control arm 16, an control upper arm 18, a hub or a spindle 20 for supporting the wheel assembly 12 and defining a rotational axis A, and a vibration damper or strut 22. The upper and lower control arms 18 and 16 function as locators to fix a position of the suspension system 10 and its components relative to the automotive vehicle and are attached to the frame 14 with bushings that permit the wheel assemblies 12 to move up and down separately in response to irregularities in the road surface. Those skilled in the automotive art will appreciate that the suspension system 10 described above and to be further described further below may be a short-long arm (SLA) suspension system has been common on domestic vehicles for many years, a double-wishbone suspension systems, and other suspension systems of the kind without limiting the scope of the present invention.

[0024] The vibration damper 22 has first and second terminal ends 24 and 26 with the second terminal end 26 being cooperable with the upper control arm 18. A link or clevis, generally indicated at 30 in Figures 1 through 3, interconnects the vibration damper 22 and the lower control arm 16, as best shown in Figure 2. The link 30 is stamped from a blank of metal, metal alloys, and combination thereof, as the blank goes through a progressive die tool, a line die tool, or a transfer die tool, as described in the provisional application serial numbers 60/945,613, filed June 22, 2007 and 60/952,089 filed July 26, 2007 and incorporated herewith in its entirety.

[0025] The link 30 presents a monolithic construction and a generally uniform thickness, as best shown in Figure 3B. The link 30 interconnects the lower control arm 16 and the second terminal end 26 of the vibration damper 22. As best
shown in Figure 2, the link 30 and the vibration damper 22 define a common axis B bisecting the link 30 and extending in a direction different from the direction of the rotational axis A. The vibration damper 22 is movable along the common axis B to absorb vibration transferred from a road surface and through the wheel assembly 12.

[0026] Referring now to Figure 3A, the link 30 is further defined by a neck portion 32 having a circular cross section and a pair of opposing legs 34 and 36 extending from the neck portion 32 to distal ends 38 and 40. A plurality of weld openings 41 are formed peripherally defined in the neck portion 32 to weld the neck portion 32 to the vibration damper 22. Each distal end 38 and 40 defines an opening 42 and 44 to receive a fastener 46 for affixing the link to the lower control arm 16. The neck portion 32 includes terminal edges 50 and 52 and a pair of lips 54 and 56 extending from each of the terminal edges 50 and 52 to receive a connector 58 extending therethrough as the neck portion 32 circumscribes and engages the terminal end of the vibration damper 22, as best shown in Figures 1 and 2.

[0027] Referring back to Figure 3A and 3B, each of the legs 34 and 36 defines a periphery, generally indicated at 58, extending to a common flange 60 for strengthening the link 30. The common flange 60 further extends to surround the pair of lips 54 and 56. The flange 60 becomes tapered proximate to the distal end 38 and 40 of each of the legs 34 and 36 (not shown). Alternatively, as shown in Figure 3A and without limiting the scope of the present invention, the flange 60 partially circumscribes the distal end 38 and 40. The periphery 58 defines a generally curvilinear geometry 62 as shown in Figure 5. The periphery 58 defines a generally linear geometry (not shown).

[0028] A pair of reinforcement ribs 62 and 64 is formed into each leg 34 and 36. The ribs 62 and 64 further extend into neck portion 32 thereby tapering in
an opposite direction from the distal ends of each of the legs 34 and 36 to increase
strength of the link 30. The reinforcement ribs 62 and 64 bridge the neck portion 32
and the legs 34 and 36. The reinforcement ribs 62 and 64 present a first width 66 as
the reinforcement ribs 62 and 64 extends from the distal end to the neck portion 32
and a second width 68 as each of the legs 34 and 36 transforms to the neck portion 32
and a third width 70 as the reinforcement ribs 62 and 64 further taper onto the neck
portion 32.

[0029] Figure 4 illustrates a first alternative embodiment of the
inventive link, generally shown at 100. The numeral references will be reflected
accordingly to distinguish the first alternative embodiment illustrated in Figure 4 from
the embodiment of the link as shown in Figure 3A without limiting the scope of the
present invention. The link 100 is further defined by a neck portion 102 having a
circular cross section and a pair of opposing legs 104 and 106 extending from the
neck portion 102 to distal ends 108 and 110. A plurality of weld openings 111 are
formed peripherally defined in the neck portion 102 to weld the neck portion 102 to
connect the neck portion 102 to the vibration damper 22. The neck portion 102
includes terminal edges 112 and 114 spaced from one another thereby forming a
seam. All other parts of the link 100 are identical to the link 30 as illustrated in
Figures 3A and 3B.

[0030] Figure 5 illustrates a second alternative embodiment of the
inventive link generally indicated at 200. The numeral references will be reflected
accordingly to distinguish the second alternative embodiment illustrated in Figure 5
from the embodiment of the link as shown in Figures 3A and 4 without limiting the
scope of the present invention. Referring now to Figure 5, the link 200 is further
defined by a neck portion 202 having a circular cross section and a pair of opposing
legs 204 and 206 extending from the neck portion 202 to distal ends 208 and 210. A plurality of weld openings 211 are formed peripherally defined in the neck portion 202 to connect the neck portion 202 to the vibration damper 22. Each distal end 208 and 210 defines an opening 212 and 214 to receive a fastener 46 for affixing the link to the lower control arm 16. The neck portion 202 includes terminal edges 216 and 218 and a pair of lips 220 and 222 extending from each of the terminal edges 216 and 218 to receive a connector 58 extending therethrough as the neck portion 202 circumscribes and engages the terminal end of the vibration damper 22, as best shown in Figure 2.

[0031] Referring back to Figure 5, each of the legs 204 and 206 defines a periphery, generally indicated at 224, extending to a common flange 226 for strengthening the link 200. The common flange 226 further extends to surround the pair of lips 220 and 222. The periphery 224 defines a generally linear geometry 228. A pair of reinforcement ribs 230 and 232 is formed into each leg 204 and 206. The ribs 230 and 232 further extend into neck portion 202 thereby tapering in an opposite direction from the distal ends of each of the legs 204 and 206 to increase strength of the link 200. The reinforcement ribs 230 and 232 bridges the neck portion 202 and the legs 204 and 206. The reinforcement ribs 230 and 232 present a uniform width or a variable width.

[0032] Figure 6 illustrates a third alternative embodiment of the inventive link, generally shown at 300. The numeral references will be reflected accordingly to distinguish the first alternative embodiment illustrated in Figure 4 from the embodiment of the link as shown in Figure 3A without limiting the scope of the present invention. The link 300 is formed from two parts, generally indicated at 302 and 304, when combined forming a neck portion 306 having a circular cross section
and a pair of opposing legs 308 and 310 extending from the neck portion 306 to distal
ends 312 and 314. A plurality of weld openings 315 are formed peripherally defined
in the neck portion 306 to connect the neck portion 306 to the vibration damper 22.
The neck portion 306 includes terminal edges 316 A-B and 318 A-B spaced from one
another thereby forming a seam. As the parts 302 and 304 circumscribe the terminal
end 26 of the vibration damper 22, the parts 302 and 304 are welded thereto. All
other parts of the link 300 are identical to the link 30 as illustrated in Figures 3A and
3B.

[0033] The suspension system 10 of the present invention provides
numerous advantages over the prior art systems, such as the systems taught by the
United States Patent Nos. 4,377,298 to Finn et al.; 4,583,759 to Kami et al.; and
5,375,870 to Smith et al. The improved links 30, 100, 200, and 300 is stamped from a
sheet metal presenting a light weight alternative to an iron cast links known in the
prior art. Another advantage of the improved link for the suspension system 10
relates to reduction in the mass of the link. The improved link 30, 100, 200, and 300
has at least one reinforcement rib deformed into each of the legs of the link thereby
preventing the legs from bending as the vibration damper absorbs vibration
transferred from the road surface and through the wheel and to provide structural
integrity to the link and the entire suspension system 10.

[0034] While the invention has been described with reference to an
exemplary embodiment, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various
changes may be made and equivalents may be substituted for elements thereof
without departing from the scope of the invention. In addition, many modifications
may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings of the
invention without departing from the essential scope thereof. Therefore, it is intended
that the invention not be limited to the particular embodiment disclosed as the best mode contemplated for carrying out this invention, but that the invention will include all embodiments falling within the scope of the appended claims.
What is claimed is:

1. A suspension system for pivotally supporting a wheel of a motor vehicle, said suspension system comprising:
   - an upper control arm;
   - a lower control arm cooperable with a spindle defining a rotational axis, said spindle supporting the wheel;
   - a vibration damper having first and second terminal ends with said first terminal ends being cooperable with said upper control arm; and
   - a link having a monolithic construction and a generally uniform thickness interconnecting said lower control arm and said second terminal end of said vibration damper with said link and said vibration damper defining a common axis bisecting said link and extending in a direction different from the direction of said rotational axis with said vibration damper being movable along said common axis for absorbing vibration transferred from a road surface and through the wheel.

2. A suspension system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said link is stamped from a blank formed from metal, metal alloys, and combination thereof.

3. A suspension system as set forth in claim 2 wherein said link is further defined by a neck portion having a circular cross section and a pair of opposing legs extending from said neck portion to distal ends with each said distal end defining an opening to receive a fastener for affixing said link to said lower control arm.

4. A suspension system as set forth in claim 3 wherein said neck portion includes terminal edges and a pair of lips extending from each of said terminal edges...
to receive a connector extending therethrough as said neck portion circumscribes and engages said terminal end of said vibration damper.

5. A suspension system as set forth in claim 4 wherein each of said legs defines a periphery having a flange for strengthening said link and said flange becomes tapered proximate to said distal end of each of said legs.

6. A suspension system as set forth in claim 4 wherein one of said periphery defines a generally linear geometry.

7. A suspension system as set forth in claim 4 wherein one of said periphery defines a generally curvelinear geometry.

8. A suspension system as set forth in claim 5 including a reinforcement rib formed into said leg and extending from said neck portion to said distal end.

9. A suspension system as set forth in claim 8 wherein said reinforcement rib is further formed into said neck portion thereby tapering in an opposite direction from said distal end to increase strength of said link.

10. A suspension system as set forth in claim 9 wherein said reinforcement rib bridges said neck portion and said legs and presents a first width as said reinforcement rib extends from said distal end to said neck portion and a second width as said leg transforms to said neck portion and a third width as said reinforcement rib further tapers onto said neck portion.
11. A suspension system for pivotally supporting a wheel of a motor vehicle and including an upper control arm, a lower control arm cooperable with a spindle defining a rotational axis and supporting the wheel, said suspension system comprising:

a vibration damper having first and second terminal ends with said first terminal end being cooperable with the upper control arm; and

a link having a monolithic construction and a generally uniform thickness for interconnecting the lower control arm and said second terminal end of said vibration damper with said link and said vibration damper defining a common axis bisecting said link and extending in a direction different from the direction of the rotational axis with said vibration damper being movable along said common axis for absorbing vibration transferred from a road surface and through the wheel.

12. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said link is further defined by a neck portion having a generally circular cross section for receiving said vibration damper.

13. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said link includes a reinforcement rib deformed into each of said legs thereby preventing said legs from bending as said strut device absorbs vibration transferred from the road surface and through the wheel.

14. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said link is stamped from a blank formed from metal, metal alloys, and combination thereof.
15. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said neck portion includes terminal edges and a seam extending therebetween, said seam being adapted to receive a connector for securing said link to said vibration damper.

16. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein each of said legs presents a face having opposed peripheral edges extending outwardly from said face and tapering proximate said distal end to present said distal end having a generally flat cross section.

17. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said peripheral edges are parallel to one another.

18. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein one of said peripheral edges is generally linear.

19. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said face of said leg is curvelinear.

20. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said face of said leg is non-planar.

21. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said reinforcement rib is further deformed into said neck portion tapering away from said distal end to increase strength of said link.
22. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said reinforcement rib presents a first width as said reinforcement rib extends from said distal end to said neck portion and a second width as said leg transforms to said neck portion and a third width as said reinforcement rib further tapers onto said neck portion.
WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A suspension system for supporting a wheel of a motor vehicle, said suspension system comprising:
   - an upper control arm;
   - a lower control arm cooperable with a spindle defining a rotational axis, said spindle supporting the wheel;
   - a vibration damper having first and second terminal ends with said first terminal ends being cooperable with said upper control arm; and
   - a link having a monolithic construction and a reinforcement rib defined in said link, said link having a generally uniform thickness interconnecting said lower control arm and said second terminal end of said vibration damper with said link and said vibration damper defining a common axis bisecting said link and extending in a direction different from the direction of said rotational axis with said vibration damper being movable along said common axis for absorbing vibration transferred from a road surface and through the wheel.

2. A suspension system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said link is stamped from a blank formed from metal, metal alloys, and combination thereof.

3. A suspension system as set forth in claim 2 wherein said link is further defined by a neck portion having a circular cross section and a pair of opposing legs extending from said neck portion to distal ends with each said distal end defining an opening to receive a fastener for affixing said link to said lower control arm.

4. A suspension system as set forth in claim 3 wherein said neck portion includes terminal edges and a pair of lips extending from each of said terminal edges to receive a
connector extending therethrough as said neck portion circumscribes and engages said terminal end of said vibration damper.

5. A suspension system as set forth in claim 4 wherein each of said legs defines a periphery having a flange for strengthening said link and said flange becomes tapered proximate to said distal end of each of said legs.

6. A suspension system as set forth in claim 4 wherein one of said periphery defines a generally linear geometry.

7. A suspension system as set forth in claim 4 wherein one of said periphery defines a generally curvelinear geometry.

8. A suspension system as set forth in claim 5 wherein reinforcement rib is formed into said leg and extending from said neck portion to said distal end.

9. A suspension system as set forth in claim 8 wherein said reinforcement rib is further formed into said neck portion thereby tapering in an opposite direction from said distal end to increase strength of said link.

10. A suspension system as set forth in claim 9 wherein said reinforcement rib bridges said neck portion and said legs and presents a first width as said reinforcement rib extends from said distal end to said neck portion and a second width as said leg transforms to said neck portion and a third width as said reinforcement rib further tapers onto said neck portion.

11. A suspension system for pivoting support of a wheel of a motor vehicle and including an upper control arm, a lower control arm cooperable with a spindle defining a rotational axis and supporting the wheel, said suspension system comprising:
a vibration damper having first and second terminal ends with said first terminal end being cooperable with the upper control arm; and

a link having a reinforcement rib defined in said link, said link having a monolithic construction and a generally uniform thickness for interconnecting the lower control arm and said second terminal end of said vibration damper with said link and said vibration damper defining a common axis bisecting said link and extending in a direction different from the direction of the rotational axis with said vibration damper being movable along said common axis for absorbing vibration transferred from a road surface and through the wheel.

12. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said link is further defined by a neck portion having a generally circular cross section for receiving said vibration damper.

13. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said reinforcement rib is deformed into each of said legs thereby preventing said legs from bending as said strut device absorbs vibration transferred from the road surface and through the wheel.

14. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said link is stamped from a blank formed from metal, metal alloys, and combination thereof.

15. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said neck portion includes terminal edges and a seam extending therebetween, said seam being adapted to receive a connector for securing said link to said vibration damper.

16. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein each of said legs presents a face having opposed peripheral edges extending outwardly from said face and tapering proximate said distal end to present said distal end having a generally flat cross section.

AMENDED SHEET (ARTICLE 19)
17. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said peripheral edges are parallel to one another,

18. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein one of said peripheral edges is generally linear.

19. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said face of said leg is curvelinear.

20. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said face of said leg is non-planar,

21. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said reinforcement rib is further deformed into said neck portion tapering away from said distal end to increase strength of said link.

22. A suspension system as set forth in claim 11 wherein said reinforcement rib presents a first width as said reinforcement rib extends from said distal end to said neck portion and a second width as said leg transforms to said neck portion and a third width as said reinforcement rib further tapers onto said neck portion.
STATEMENT UNDER ^RTICLE 19m

Item V of Written Opinion:

With regard to the novelty and the inventive step of the claimed invention in view of:

Independent claims 1 and 11 have been amended to further define that a link includes a *reinforcement (~)* defined therein. The Examiner cited the United States Patent No. 4,377,298 to Finn et al. (the *Finn reference*) previously considered by the Applicant. A vehicle wheel suspension of the *Finn reference* teaches a shock absorber mounted between the vehicle body and a lower arm. A clevis or yoke portion formed from a pair of legs and formed from a reverse bend doubled sheet metal form, connected to a neck portion or collar to engage the shock absorber. The clevis taught by the *Finn reference* fails to teach or suggest the aforementioned *reinforcing rib* defined in the link. Claims 8 and 13, dependent upon the independent claims 1 and 11, respectively, have been amended to complement with amendments incorporated in the aforementioned claims 1 and 11.

Thus, the Applicant respectfully submits that the claimed invention, as amended, is novel and involves an inventive step over the documents cited in the ISR. Further and favorable reconsideration of the subject application is hereby requested.
FIG - 2
INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

A  CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - B60G 15/00 (2008.01)
USPC - 280/124.1

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

B  FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC(8) - B60G 15/00 (2008 01)
USPC - 280/1 241, 124 134

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

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

PatBasβ and Google Patents

C  DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category*</th>
<th>Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th>
<th>Relevant to claim No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>US 4,377,298 A (FINN et al) 22 March 1983 (22 03 1983) entire document</td>
<td>1-3, 11-12, 14, 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>4-10, 13, 15-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>US 5,145,204 A (PERKINS) 08 September 1992 (08 09 1992) entire document</td>
<td>4-10, 13, 16-18, 21</td>
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</table>

* Special categories of cited documents

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

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"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance, the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance, the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C

Date of the actual completion of the international search

28 March 2008

Date of mailing of the international search report

23 JUN. 2008

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US

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