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(54) **MOBILE COMMUNICATOR DEVICE INCLUDING USER ATTENTIVENESS DETECTOR**

USPC 713/100, 300, 310, 320; 455/410, 411, 455/466
See application file for complete search history.

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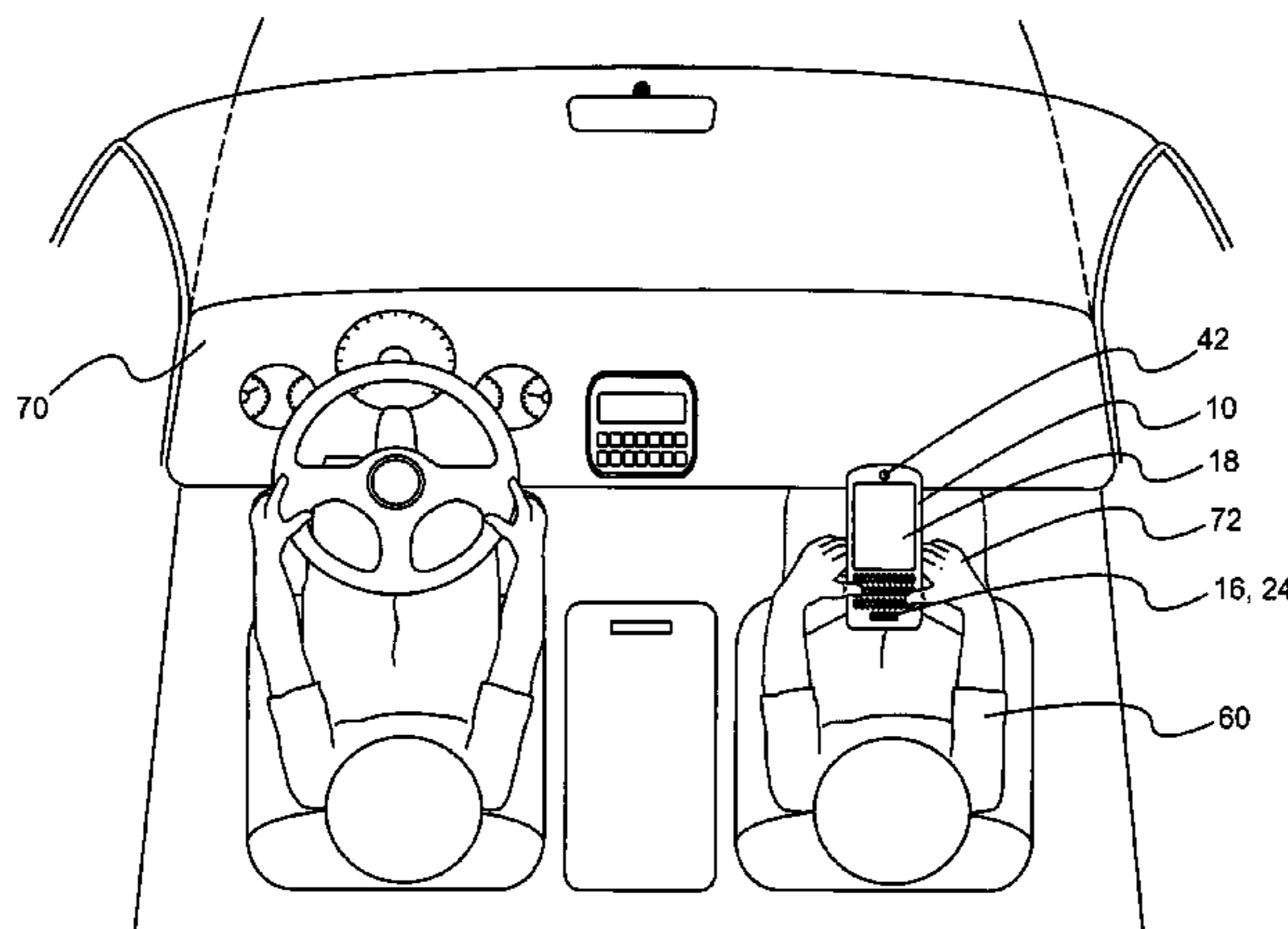
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Disclosed herein is a mobile communicator that includes a speed detection system for determining whether the mobile communicator is moving faster than a threshold speed. The mobile communicator further includes a user attentiveness detector configured determine whether a user is inattentive. The mobile communicator includes a circuit configured to ensure that a functionality of the mobile communicator is in a turned off state when the speed detection system determines that the mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the user attentiveness detector determines that the user is inattentive.

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31 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



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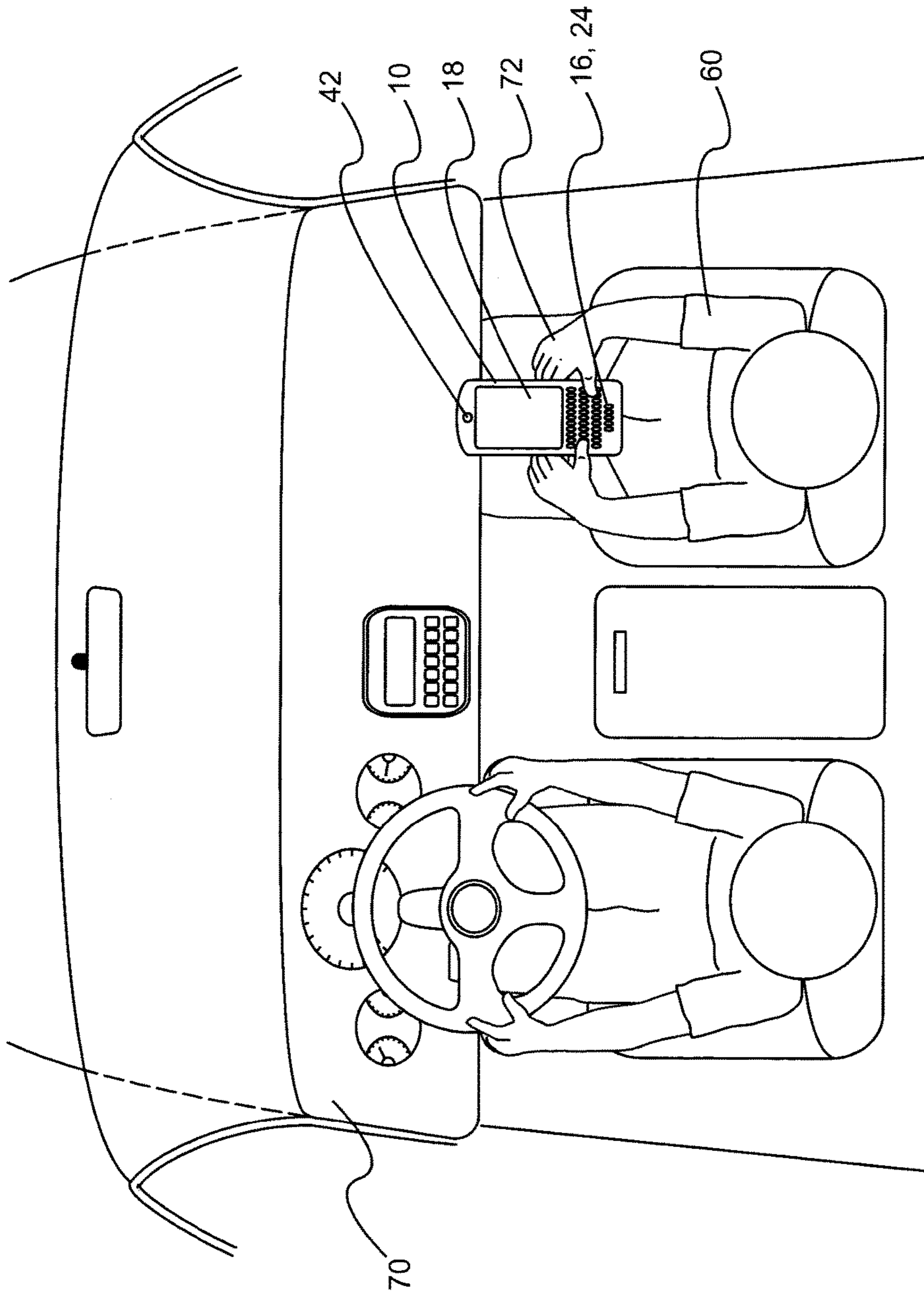


Fig. 1

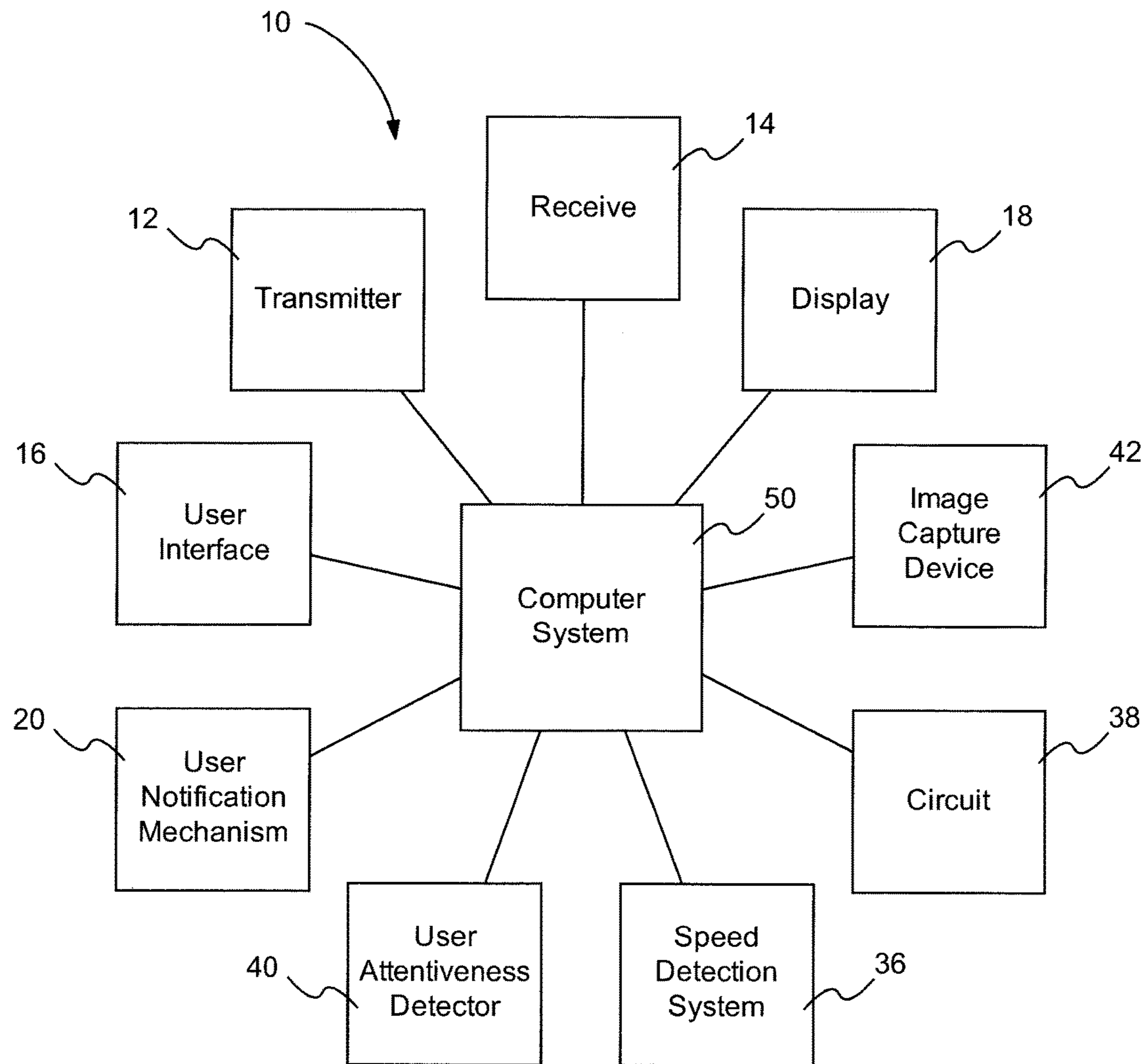


Fig. 2

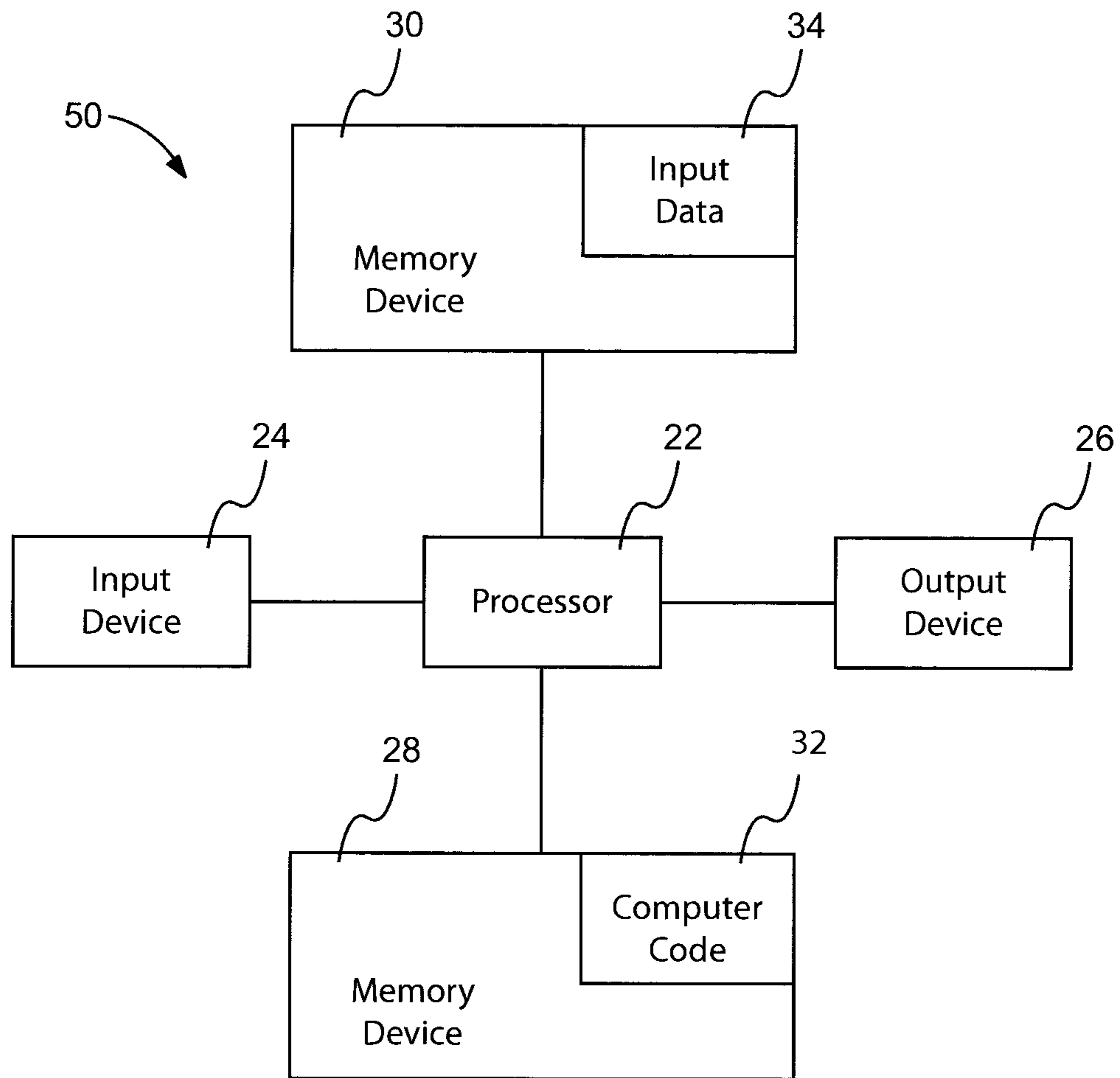


Fig. 3

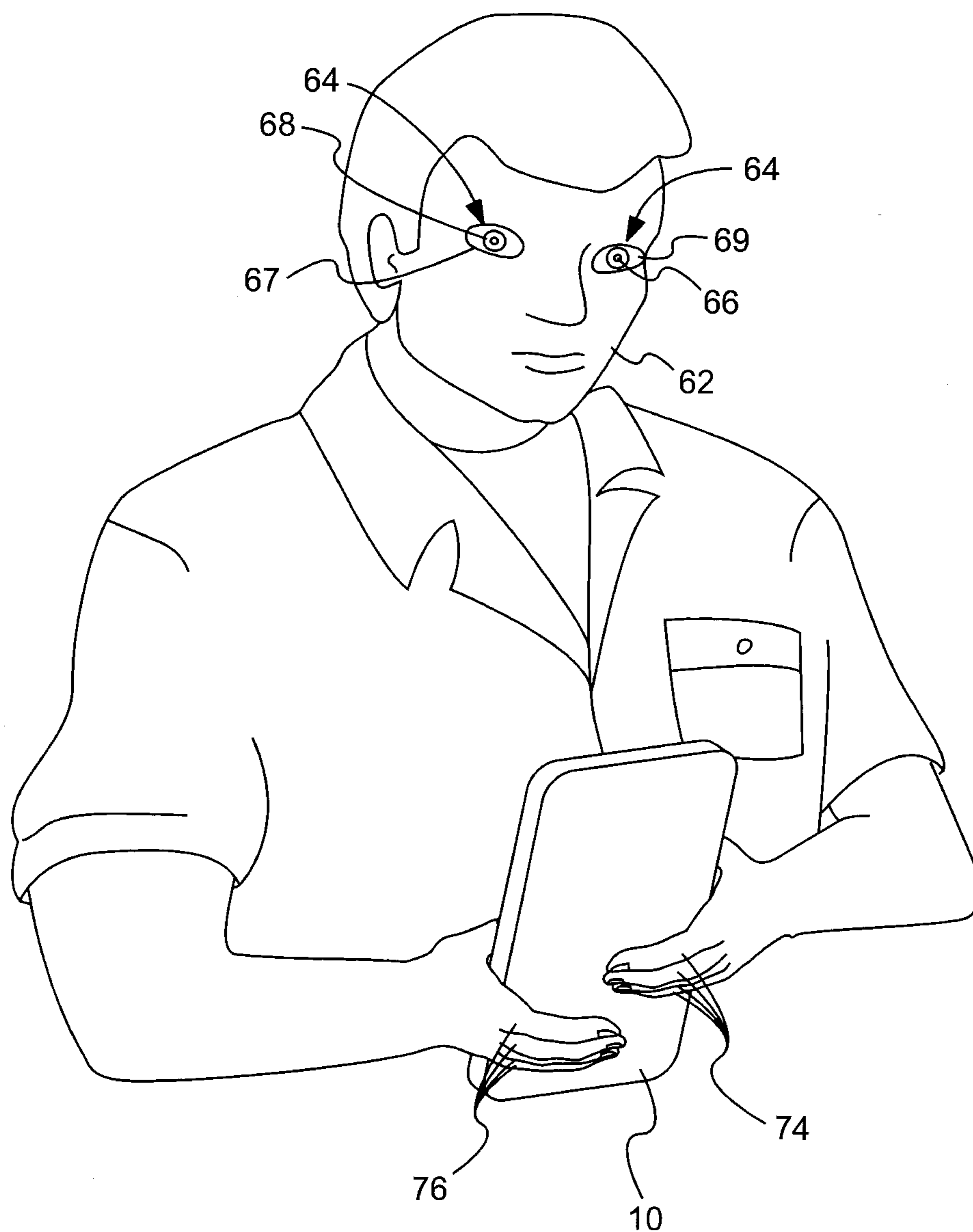


Fig. 4

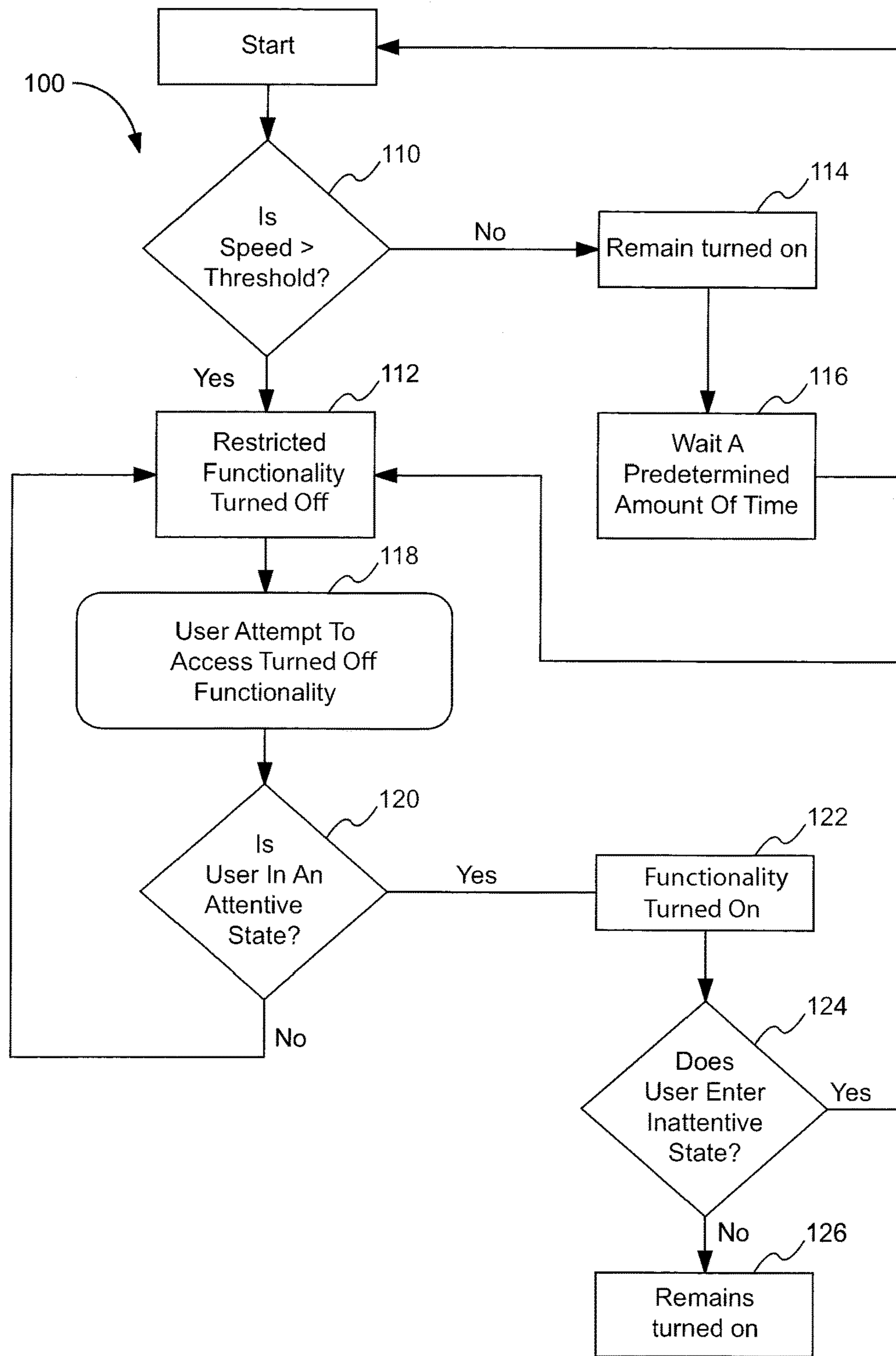


Fig. 5

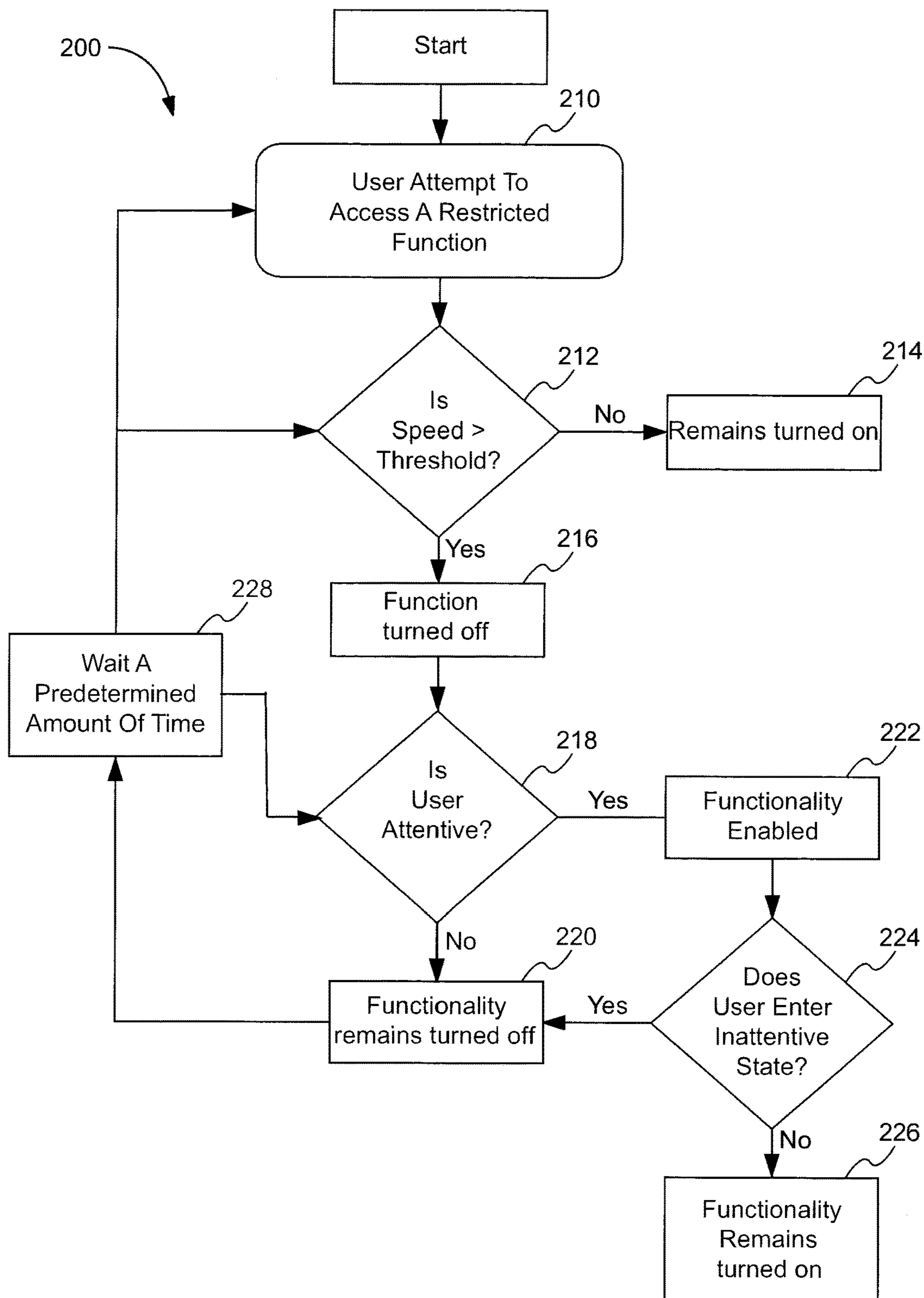


Fig. 6

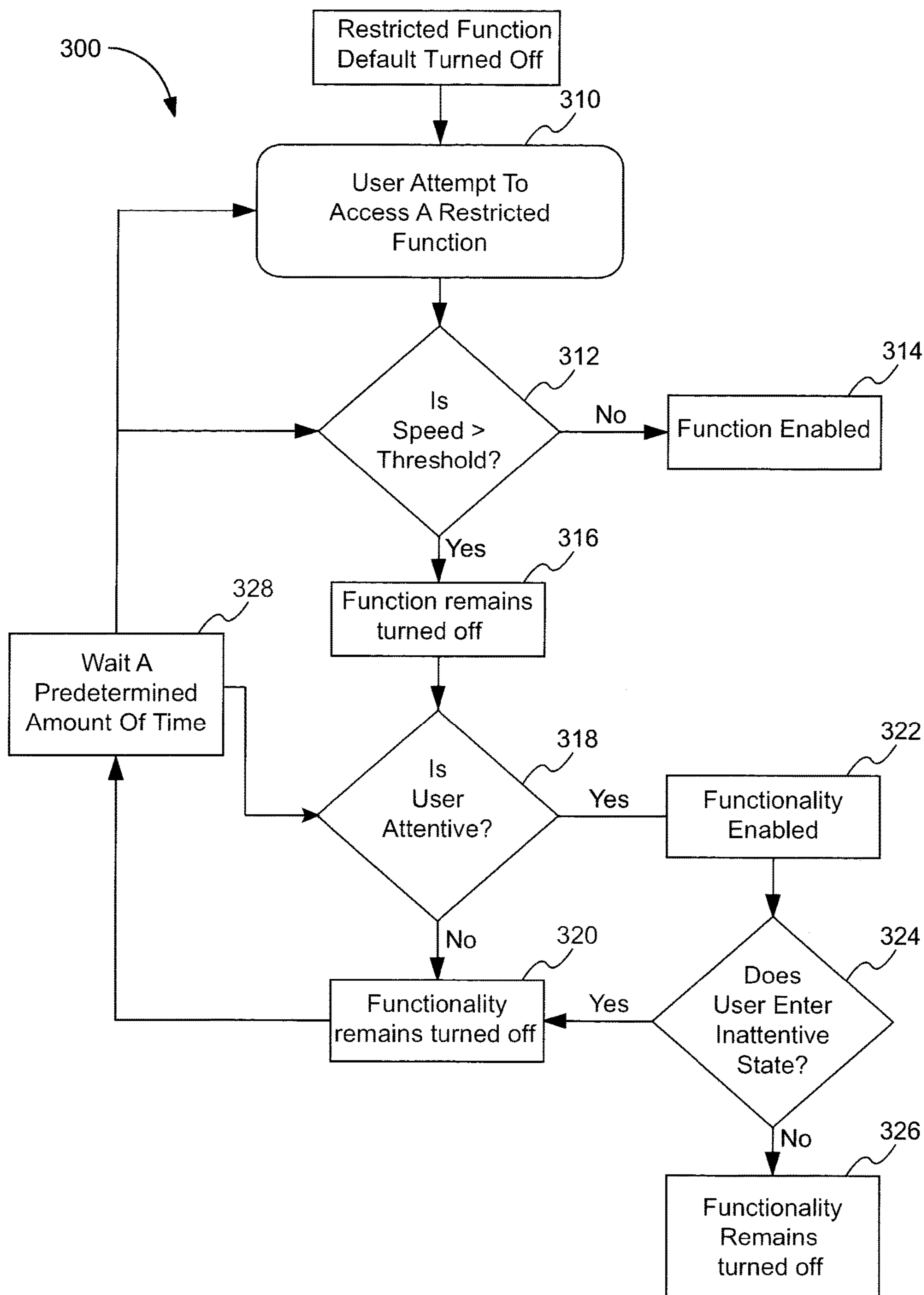


Fig. 7

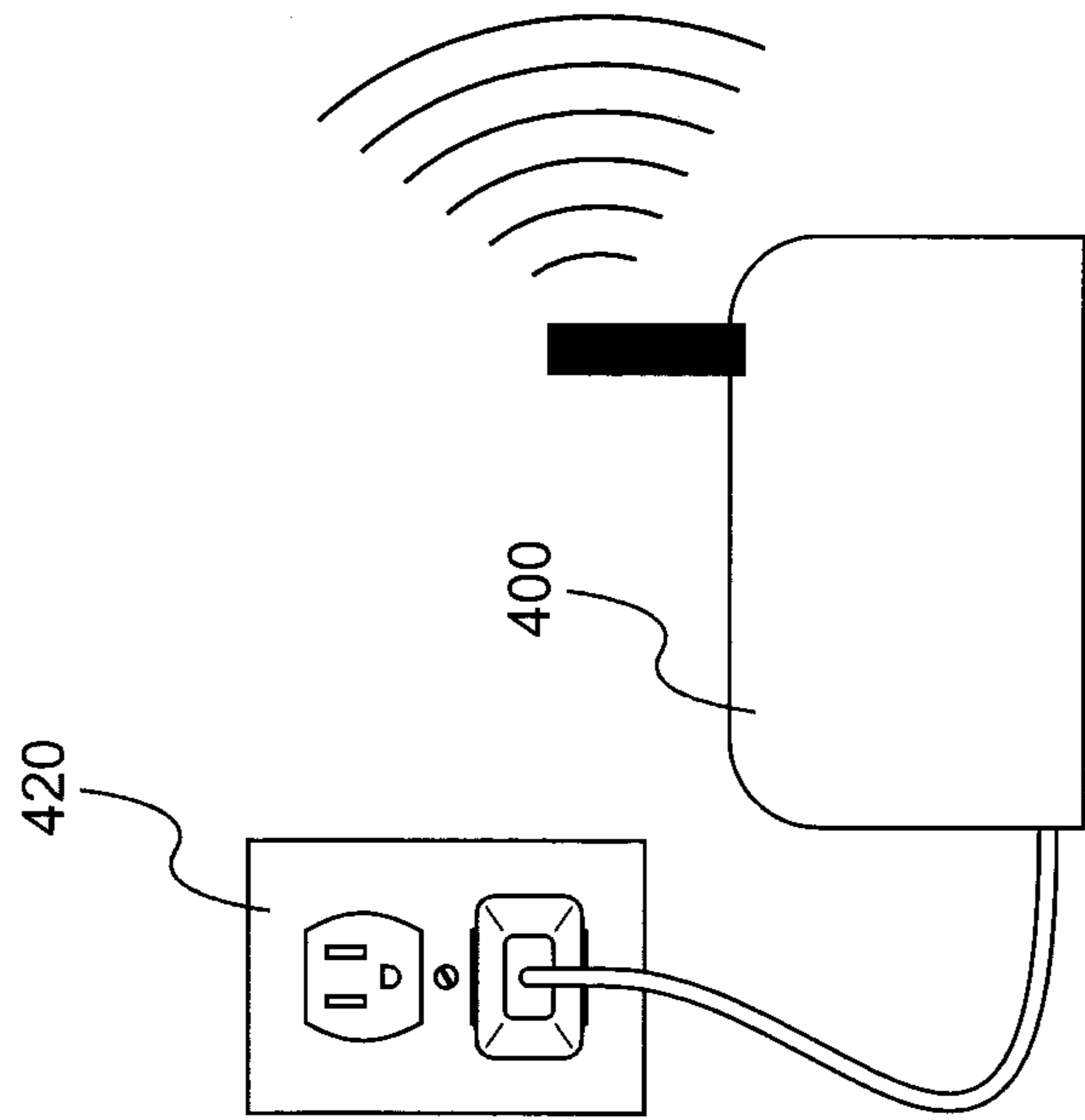
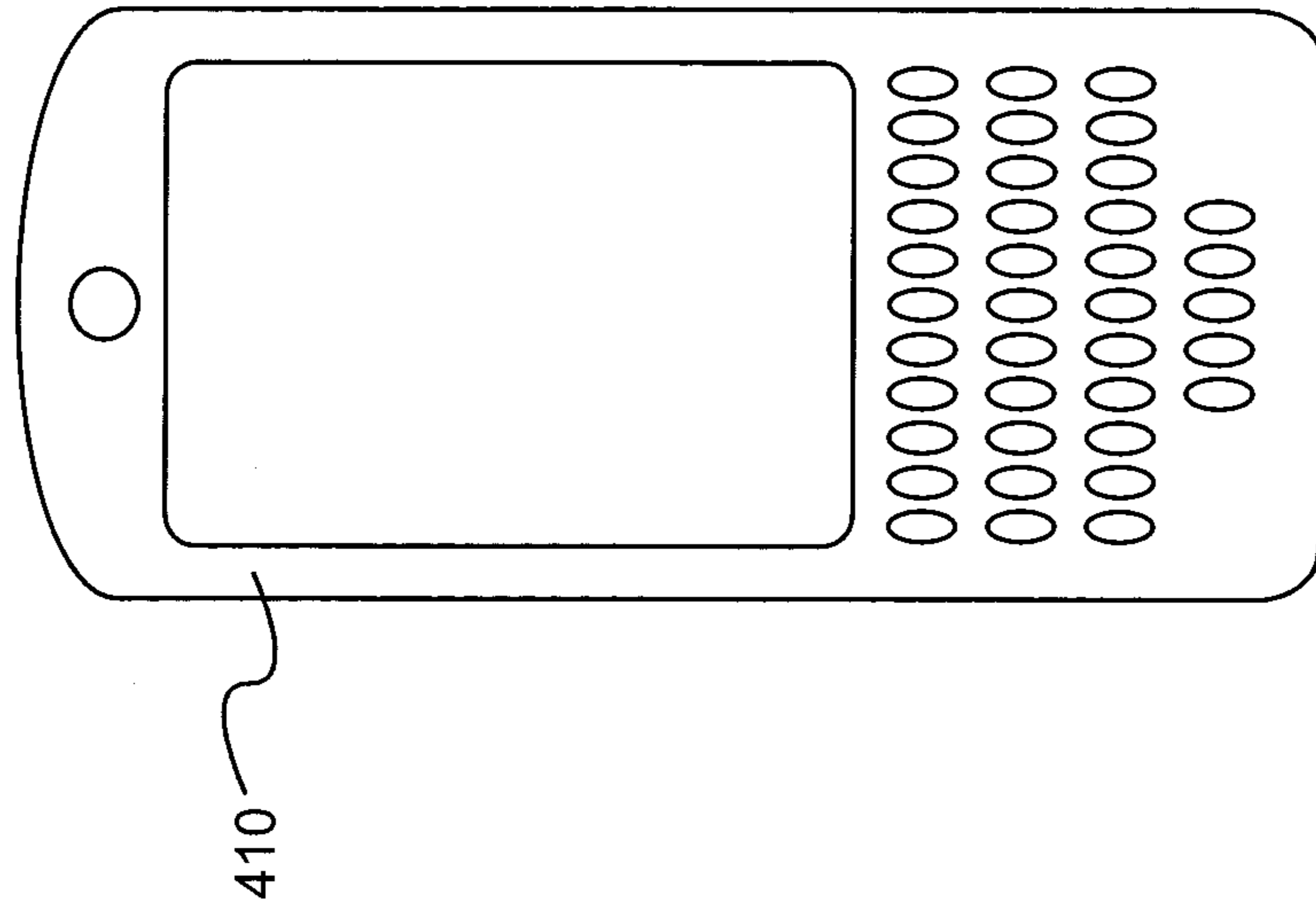


Fig. 8

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**MOBILE COMMUNICATOR DEVICE
INCLUDING USER ATTENTIVENESS
DETECTOR**

FIELD OF TECHNOLOGY

The subject matter disclosed herein relates generally to mobile communicators. More particularly, the subject matter relates to a mobile communicator having a user attentiveness detector that determines a user's attentiveness toward the mobile communicator, and a system and software for implementing such a mobile communicator.

BACKGROUND

Mobile communicators such as cell phones, BLACKBERRIES®, IPHONES®, netbooks, laptop computers, notepads, GPS devices, personal digital assistants (PDA) and the like are becoming increasingly utilized in today's society. However, these devices may also become an undesirable distraction in many situations. For example, many people choose to use their mobile communicators while driving. Text messaging, web surfing, and emailing functions may be particularly undesirable when driving because a person must constantly utilize at least one hand to input these types of communications, and must often look down to draft a text message. Studies have been undergone which show that this behavior significantly increases the likelihood of causing a traffic accident. Yet, people continue to text message with their mobile communicators while driving with increasing regularity. In light of this, many states attempting to pass legislation aimed at making it illegal to text while driving. However, governmentally regulated penalties alone may not be a sufficient enough deterrent to cause people to drastically change their behavior.

Thus, a mobile communicator having a user attentiveness detector that determines a user's attentiveness toward the mobile communicator, and a system and software for implementing such a mobile communicator would be well received in the art.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

According to one embodiment, a mobile communicator comprises: a speed detection system for determining whether the mobile communicator is moving faster than a threshold speed; a user attentiveness detector configured determine whether a user is inattentive; and a circuit configured to ensure that a functionality of the mobile communicator is in a turned off state when the speed detection system determines that the mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the user attentiveness detector determines that the user is inattentive.

According to another embodiment, a mobile communicator comprises: a speed detection system for determining whether the mobile communicator is moving faster than a threshold speed; a user attentiveness detector configured determine whether a user is inattentive; and a circuit configured to disable a functionality of the mobile communicator when the speed detection system determines that the mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the user attentiveness detector determines that the user is inattentive.

According to another embodiment, a computer program product, comprising a non-transitory computer-readable storage medium having a computer-readable program code stored therein, said computer-readable program code con-

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tains instructions configured to be executed by a processor of a mobile communicator to implement a method of restricting the functionality of the mobile communicator, the method comprising: the processor determining whether the mobile communicator is moving faster than a threshold speed; the processor determining whether a user is inattentive; and the processor disabling a functionality of the mobile communicator if the mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the user is inattentive.

According to another embodiment, a computer system comprises: a processor; and a computer-readable memory unit coupled to the processor, the memory unit containing instructions that when executed by the processor implement a method of restricting the functionality of the computer system, the method comprising: determining whether the computer system is moving faster than a threshold speed; determining whether a user is inattentive; and disabling a functionality of the computer system if the speed is greater than a threshold speed and the user is inattentive.

According to another embodiment, a mobile communicator comprises: a functionality including a default turned off state; a speed detection system for determining whether the mobile communicator is moving faster than a threshold speed; a user attentiveness detector configured to determine whether a user is attentive; and a circuit configured to enable the functionality of the mobile communicator when the speed detection system determines that the mobile communicator is moving slower than the threshold speed, wherein the circuit is further configured to enable the functionality of the mobile communicator when the user attentiveness detector determines that the user is attentive.

According to another embodiment, a computer program product, comprising a non-transitory computer-readable storage medium having a computer-readable program code stored therein, said computer-readable program code contains instructions configured to be executed by a processor of a mobile communicator to implement a method of restricting the functionality of the mobile communicator, the method comprising: the processor determining whether the mobile communicator is moving slower than a threshold speed; the processor determining whether a user is attentive; the processor enabling a functionality of the mobile communicator if the mobile communicator is moving slower than the threshold speed; and the processor enabling a functionality of the mobile communicator if the user is attentive.

According to another embodiment, a computer system comprises: a processor; and a computer-readable memory unit coupled to the processor, the memory unit containing instructions that when executed by the processor implement a method of restricting the functionality of the computer system, the method comprising: determining whether the mobile communicator is moving slower than a threshold speed; determining whether a user is attentive; enabling a functionality of the mobile communicator if the mobile communicator is moving slower than the threshold speed; and enabling a functionality of the mobile communicator if the user is attentive.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The subject matter which is regarded as the invention is particularly pointed out and distinctly claimed in the claims at the conclusion of the specification. The foregoing and other features and advantages of the invention are apparent from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 depicts a mobile communicator according to one embodiment;

FIG. 2 depicts a schematic view of the mobile communicator of FIG. 1 according to one embodiment;

FIG. 3 depicts a schematic view of an embodiment of a computer system of the mobile communicator of FIGS. 1-2;

FIG. 4 depicts the mobile communicator of FIGS. 1-2 in the vicinity of a face of a user;

FIG. 5 depicts a flow chart of a process according to one embodiment;

FIG. 6 depicts another flow chart of a process according to one embodiment;

FIG. 7 depicts another flow chart of a process according to one embodiment; and

FIG. 8 depicts a kit and a mobile communicator according to one embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A detailed description of the hereinafter described embodiments of the disclosed apparatus and method are presented herein by way of exemplification and not limitation with reference to the Figures.

Referring to FIGS. 1-2, a mobile communicator 10 is shown in both a perspective view and schematically. The mobile communicator 10 may be a cell phone such as an IPHONE®, ANDROID® or BLACKBERRY®. However, in other embodiments the mobile communicator may be a PDA, a net book, a laptop, a GPS device, a walkie-talkie, an IPAD® or any other communicative device. The mobile communicator 10 may include at least one transmitter 12, at least one receiver 14, at least one user interface 16, at least one display 18, and at least one user notification mechanism 20. The mobile communicator 10 may also include various functions including but not limited to a text messaging interface, an image messaging interface, a video messaging interface, an internet browser, an image capturer, a voice capturer, a video capturer, a GPS graphical map viewer, a game player, a digital music player, an alarm clock, a digital memo pad, a digital calendar, a two-way radio, an e-book reader, an electronic contact rolodex, a calculator, an application download interface, and any other application that is available to provide further functionalities. It should be understood that this list is not exhaustive and that the mobile communicator 10 may further include any other functionality that is known to those skilled in the art. The mobile communicator 10 is shown in FIG. 1 to be held by a user 60 that is riding as a passenger in an automobile 70. Furthermore, it should be understood that the user 60 may not necessarily be holding the mobile communicator 10. The mobile communicator 10 may be a pad, or some other mounted device that is mounted onto the automobile 70, or another vehicle or structure.

FIG. 3 illustrates a computer system 50 of the mobile communicator 10 (examples of which may be various embodiments of described hereinbelow) usable for communication and various other applications. The computer system 50 of the mobile communicator 10 may further comprise a processor 22, an input device 24, such as the user interface 16 and the receiver 14, coupled to the processor 22, an output device 26, such as the transmitter 12, coupled to the processor 22, and memory devices 28 and 30 each coupled to the processor 22. The memory devices 28 and 30 may be, among other things, a hard disk, a floppy disk, a magnetic tape, an optical storage such as a compact disc (CD) or a digital video disc (DVD), a dynamic random access memory (DRAM), a read-only memory (ROM), etc.

The memory device 28 may include a computer code 32. The computer code 32 includes algorithms or a predetermined set of parameters for performing a process for monitoring a communication system. The processor 22 may execute the computer code 32. The memory device 30 may include input data 34. The input data 34 includes input required by the computer code 32. The output device 26 displays output from the computer code 32. Either or both memory devices 28 and 30 (or one or more additional memory devices not shown in FIG. 2) may comprise the algorithm or predetermined parameters and may be used as a computer usable medium (or a computer readable medium or a program storage device) having a computer readable program code embodied therein and/or having other data stored therein, wherein the computer readable program code comprises the computer code 32. Generally, a computer program product (or, alternatively, an article of manufacture) of the mobile computer 10 may comprise said computer usable medium (or said program storage device).

While FIG. 3 shows the computer system 50 of the mobile communicator 10 as a particular configuration of hardware and software, any configuration of hardware and software, as would be known to a person of ordinary skill in the art, may be utilized for the purposes stated herein in conjunction with the particular mobile communicator 10 of FIG. 2. For example, the memory devices 28 and 30 may be portions of a single memory device rather than separate memory devices.

It should be noted that the embodiments described hereinbelow illustrate the architecture, functionality, and operation of possible implementations of systems, methods and computer program products according to various described and depicted embodiments. In this regard, each block in the block diagrams may represent a module, segment, or portion of code, which comprises one or more executable instructions for implementing the specified logical function(s). It should also be noted that, in some alternative implementations, the functions noted in the block may occur out of the order noted in the figures. For example, two blocks shown in succession may, in fact, be executed substantially concurrently, or the blocks may sometimes be executed in the reverse order, depending upon the functionality involved. It will also be noted that each block of the block diagrams and/or flowchart illustration, and combinations of blocks in the block diagram illustrations, can be implemented by special purpose hardware-based systems that perform the specified functions or acts, or combinations of special purpose hardware and computer instructions.

Referring back to FIGS. 1-2, the display 18 of the mobile communicator 10 may be a complex interactive touchscreen that is integrated with the user interface 16. Thus, it should be understood that the display 18 may also be the user interface 16. Alternately, the display 18 may be a simple LCD display for presenting information to the user 60 such as a calling number or the number dialed. It should be understood any form of display is contemplated. It should further be understood that the mobile communicator 10 may include a plurality of displays 18.

Likewise, the user notification mechanism 20 of the mobile communicator 10 may be a noise notification element, such as a speaker that emits a ring or "ring-tone" that alerts the user 60. For example, when the mobile communicator 10 receives a transmission signal, a speaker may emit a pre-programmed audible ring that alerts the user 60 of the incoming transmission. Alternately, the notification mechanism 20 may be a change found on the display 18. For example, the display 18 may light up when a transmission is

incoming. Still further, the mobile communicator **10** may vibrate, as is known in the art. The user notification mechanism **20** may be any mechanism for alerting the user **60** of a communication event. Additionally, the notification mechanism **20** may be preprogrammed to alert the user **60** of a predetermined event, such as when a time of day is reached (in the case of an alarm clock notification). It should further be understood that the mobile communicator **10** may include a plurality of user notification mechanisms **20**.

The user interface **16** may be configured for allowing the user **60** to enter a plurality of identity inputs associated with an alphanumeric combination of numbers and letters. For example, the user interface **16** may be a touch screen, a keyboard, or a simple number pad. Alternately, the user interface **16** may be a voice receiver that allows the user **60** to enter a plurality of identity inputs by voice. In one embodiment, the user interface **16** may be a text messaging interface. The user interface may thus be configured for web browsing and video watching. The text messaging interface may be a telephone text messaging interface, or another “chat” functionality such as email, Google Talk®, AIM®, Skype®, Facebook®, Myspace®, Twitter® or any other communication application that allows the user **60** to communicate via text-based messages. In other embodiments, the user interface **16** is a telephone number dialing interface. It should therefore be understood that the mobile communicator **10** may include any type of user interface **16** that would be apparent to those skilled in the art such as a voice input user interface. It should further be understood that the mobile communicator **10** may include a plurality of different user interfaces **16**, for example, both a touch screen and a keypad.

The transmitter **12** of the mobile communicator **10** may be in operable communication with the user interface **16** and configured to send a transmission from the mobile communicator **10** to an output device having an identity corresponding with the identity input that is inputted into the mobile communicator **10** via the user interface **16**. The transmitter **12** may be configured to communicate typical electromagnetic and/or sonic transmissions such as a cell phone voice transmission, an email, a video or picture message, or a transmission that interacts with the internet. For example, the transmitter **12** may be a network adapter or card that is configured to transmit signals through a router or local area network. Alternately, the transmitter **12** of the mobile communicator **10** may be configured to send a transmission on a 3rd or 4th generation wireless network, or any future wireless networks. It should further be understood that the mobile communicator **10** may include a plurality of transmitters **12**.

Likewise, the receiver **14** of the mobile communicator **10** may be capable of receiving a transmission from a transmitting device. The mobile communicator may be configured to receive any type of transmission such as a cell phone voice transmission, an email, a text, video or picture message, or a transmission from a laptop or computer. For example, the receiver **14** of the mobile communicator may be configured to receive local signals from a router, switch or other local area network. Alternately, the receiver **14** of the mobile communicator **1000** may be configured to receive transmissions from 3rd or 4th generation wireless networks, or any future wireless networks. It should further be understood that the mobile communicator **10** may include a plurality of different receivers **14**.

The present invention contemplates that the velocity of the mobile communicator **10** is determinable by at least one speed detection system **36**. For example, the mobile com-

municator **10** may include an internal GPS system for determining velocity. Alternately, the mobile communicator **10** may use another speed detection system such as cell tower triangulation, multilateration, or the like. Furthermore, the speed detection mechanism may be an accelerometer or may be included in a kit such as the kit **400** described herein below. In one embodiment, the speed detection system may actually be a retrieval system for retrieving the speed of the mobile communicator from another device. For example, the speed detection system of the mobile communicator **10** may retrieve the speed from the speedometer of the vehicle that the mobile communicator **10** is located within. Thus, the speed of the mobile communicator **10** may be determined internally by the mobile communicator **10** or may be determined by a third party such as a cell phone service provider (not shown), a vehicle or a kit. It should be understood that the speed detection system **36** may store the speed in the memory device **30** for processing by the processor **22**. The speed detection system **36** may further be in operable communication with the vehicle speed detector, such as the speedometer. In this embodiment, the speed detection may be attached to **36**, or may actually be the speed detection system of the vehicle. For example, the mobile communicator may be operably connected to the speed detection system of an automobile in order to determine velocity.

Further, in one embodiment, the speed detection system **36** may include a hierarchy system. For example, the GPS system may be activated first. If there is no GPS signal, a secondary system such as cell tower triangulation may be utilized. If this is unavailable, multilateration may be used. The speed detection system **36** may determine which form of speed determination means is best from a battery life, data transfer requirement, or usability perspective.

The mobile communicator **10** may include a circuit **38** that is configured to bring a restricted functionality into a “turned off” state or a “turned on” state depending on the determination that is made by the speed detection system **36**. It should be understood that the circuit **38** may be included in the processor **22**. Hereinafter, it should be understood that “restricted functionality” may refer to any functionality that is “enabled” or “disabled,” by the circuit **38** based at least partially on the speed detected by the speed detection system **36**. Hereinafter, it should be understood that the word “disable,” or “disabled” refers to the actual process or method by which the circuit **38** disables the restricted functionality of the mobile communicator **10**. Likewise, “enable” or “enabled” refers to the actual process or method by which the circuit **38** enables the restricted functionality of the mobile communicator **10**. In contrast, when the restricted functionality has been “disabled” by the circuit **38**, the restricted functionality will be referred to as being in a “turned off” state. The “turned off” state may refer to any state where the restricted functionality is turned off, disabled, blocked, restricted, or the like. When the restricted functionality has been “enabled” by the circuit **38**, the restricted functionality will be referred to as being in a “turned on” state. The “turned on” state may refer to any state where the restricted functionality is turned on, enabled, allowed, unrestricted, or the like.

In a first embodiment, restricted functionality may be in a turned on state by default. In this case, the circuit **38** may disable the restricted functionality of the mobile communicator **10** when the speed detection system **36** determines that the mobile communicator **10** is moving at a speed that is greater than or equal to a certain threshold speed. The threshold speed may be five miles per hour, ten miles per

hour, twenty miles per hour or any other suitable speed. Whatever the threshold speed, the circuit 38 may disable the restricted functionality of the mobile communicator 10 when it is determined that there is a potential that the user 60 of the mobile communicator 10 is operating a moving vehicle.

In this embodiment, the restricted functionality may be the text messaging interface of the mobile communicator 10. The circuit 38 may thus disable the text messaging interface when the speed detection system 36 determines that the mobile communicator 10 is moving above the threshold speed. In this embodiment, the mobile communicator 10 may also display a message to the user 60 when the text messaging interface is accessed by the user 60 that tells the user 60 to stop texting or that texting has been disabled and is turned off. The circuit 38 may also be configured to disable any of the receiver 14, the transmitter 12, the user interface 16, the user notification mechanism 20, the display 18 or any of the other various functionalities that the mobile communicator may include, described hereinabove. The circuit 38 may be configured to disable more than one of these functionalities in one or more embodiments. Furthermore, the circuit 38 may be configured to disable the preprogrammed functionalities if the speed detection system 36 is tampered with or does not have any determination of speed. For example, in the case that the speed detection system 36 is a GPS and the mobile communicator 10 is moving through a tunnel, the circuit 38 may be configured to disable texting or phone calls despite that there is no speed determination being made by the speed detection system 36. The mobile communicator 10 may also notify the user 60 via the display 18 when the speed detection system 36 determines that the mobile communicator is moving at a speed that is above a threshold speed. Alternately, the mobile communicator 10 may notify a third party device (not shown), for example, by sending an email to the third party device.

In this embodiment, either or both of the circuit 38 and the speed detection system 36 may not always be in operation. The circuit 38 and the speed detection system 36 may instead be dormant until, for example, the restricted functionality of the mobile communicator 10 is accessed by the user 60. In this situation, the speed detection system 36 and then the circuit 38 may then be activated in order to disable the restricted functionality until an enabling event occurs. It should be understood that restricted applications may include text messaging applications, as described hereinabove. Alternately, either or both of the speed detection system 36 and the circuit 38 may always be in operation. In this embodiment, the speed detection system 36 may be activated constantly or at regular intervals in order to make a determination as to whether the mobile communicator 10 is moving above the threshold speed. The circuit 38 may then disable the restricted functionalities of the mobile communicator 10 if the speed is greater than the threshold speed. It should further be understood that the speed detection system 36 may be activated at more frequent intervals when it is determined that the speed is greater than the threshold speed. However, even in this scenario, the speed detection system 36 may not be constantly in operation, but may instead be activated at regular predetermined intervals in order to conserve battery life of the mobile communicator 10.

Referring still to the embodiment where the restricted functionality is turned on by default, the mobile communicator 10 may further include a user attentiveness detector 40 that is utilized in determining whether the user 60 is in an attentive state. Hereinafter, "attentiveness" will refer to a

user's attentiveness toward the mobile communicator 10. For example, a user referred to in an "attentive" state means that the user is attentive to the mobile communicator 10 according to one of the various ways described herein. On the other hand, a user referred to in an "inattentive" state means that the user is not attentive to the mobile communicator 10 because the user is distracted or doing something else such as driving a vehicle.

In one example, the user attentiveness detector 40 may include an image capture device 42, such as a camera or a video capturer. In this embodiment, the image capturer device 42 may provide images that may be used by the processor 22 to determine if the user 60 is looking at the display 18 of the mobile communicator 10. The images may be stored in the memory device 30, for example, and then analyzed by the processor 22 to determine if the user 60 is looking at the display 18, or looking at the image capturer device 42 that may be located on or near the display 18 on the same face of the mobile communicator 10. The image capturing device 42 may further be a beam of infrared radiation that scans the user's face 62 or eyes 64 (shown more particularly in FIG. 4) or any other eye or face detection means.

Referring to FIG. 4, a representation of the user's eyes 64 is shown in proximity to the mobile communicator 10. The processor 22 may be programmed to analyze the movements of the user's eyes 64 in particular to determine whether the user 60 is in an attentive state. For example, the processor 22 may determine where the user's pupils 66 are directed. From this information, the processor 22 may determine whether a user's pupils are directed at the display 18 or looking in a direction that is not in the vicinity of the display 18. Alternately, the processor 22 may analyze the location of the cornea 68 or sclera 69 in relation to the eyelids 67 of the eye 64. Whatever the embodiment, the processor 22 may contain a program found on one or both of the memory devices 28, 30 that locates the eyes 64 of one or more users 60 in the vicinity and then determines where the eyes 64 are focused from the pupil 66, sclera 69, and cornea 68. Further, the processor 22 may be configured to operate with the data input from only a single eye 64, in the case that a user has a patch covering one of his or her eyes. In this embodiment, the focus of a single eye 64 may cause the processor 22 to determine that a user 60 is attentive, despite the fact that the second eye of the user is not visible, or not being focused at the display 18.

The processor 22 may analyze the movements of the user's head or face 62 to determine attentiveness. Particularly, the processor 22 may be configured to take the images gathered by the image capture device 42 and make a determination as to whether a user's head 62 is facing the display 18 or looking in a direction that is not in the vicinity of the display 18. Like the eye focusing technology, the mobile communicator 10 may include software that is stored on one of the memory devices 28, 30 and is configured to provide the processor 22 with the capability of making this determination. The user attentiveness detector 40 may further include a laser that is configured to determine the distance from the mobile communicator 10 to the user 60. The laser may be a range finder. A constantly changing distance may be a factor that is utilized by the processor 22 in interpreting whether the user 60 is in an attentive or inattentive state. For example, if the user 60 is constantly varying moving the mobile communicator 10 with respect to his or her face 62, this may indicate to the processor 22 that the user 60 is in an inattentive state.

The mobile communicator **10** may further be programmed with an algorithm to determine whether the user **60** is in an attentive state or an inattentive state. This program may be configured to determine if the user **60** is actually attentive over a period of time. For example, the user attentiveness detector **40** may provide information to the processor **10** regarding a user's pupil movements multiple times in a second. In one embodiment, the user attentiveness detector **40** or the image capture device **42** may provide the processor **22** analyzable frames at a rate of twenty or more frames per second. It should be understood that the number of individual frames provided by the user attentiveness detector **40** or the image capture device **42** per second may be any appropriate amount. The processor **22** may be configured to analyze each frame to make a determination whether the user **60** is looking at the display **18** in that frame. Then, the processor **22** may be configured to compile the information about each frame and make a determination of the overall attentiveness level of the user **60**. Namely, the processor **22** may determine whether the user **60** is currently attentive or currently inattentive. If, for example, it is determined that the user **60** is attentive for a high percentage of frames over a predetermined period of time, the mobile communicator **10** may determine that the user **60** is in an attentive state. Alternately, the mobile communicator **10** may determine that the user **60** is looking at the display **18** only briefly before looking away and that the user **60** is attentive for only a low percentage of frames over a predetermined period of time. The mobile communicator **10** may thus determine that the user **60** is not in an inattentive state.

In one embodiment, the user attentiveness detector **40** may operate completely separately from the speed detection system **36**. The embodiments of the user attentiveness detector **40** described herein may be utilized to determine user attentiveness for any appropriate purpose, and may affect any appropriate functionality of the mobile communicator **10** based on the determination of user attentiveness as described herein. For example, the mobile communicator **10** may disable a functionality if it is determined that a user is inattentive, regardless of the speed of the mobile communicator **10** and even if the mobile communicator does not include a speed detection mechanism.

Again referring to the first embodiment where the restricted functionality is turned on by default and then the restricted functionality is then disabled by the circuit **38**, if the user attentiveness detector **40** in combination with the processor **22** determines that the user **60** is in an attentive state, the mobile communicator **10** may be programmed such that the processor **22** enables the previously disabled functionality. For example, if the user **60** is driving in the automobile **70** instead of being a passenger, then the text messaging functionality of the mobile communicator **10** may be disabled by the disabling circuit **34** as described hereinabove. However, if the image capture device **38** determines that the user **60** is in an attentive state and looking at the display **18** of the mobile communicator **10**, the mobile communicator **10** may be configured to enable the text messaging functionality, or other functionality.

Alternately, if the restricted functionality is turned on by default, the circuit **38** may not immediately disable the restricted functionality if the speed determined by the speed detection system **36** to be greater than the threshold speed. Instead, the processor **22** may be configured to query the user attentiveness detector **40** to determine if a user is attentive. If the user **60** is determined by the processor **22** to be attentive, the circuit **38** may then keep restricted functionality in a turned on state. In contrast, if the user **60** is

determined by the processor **22** to be inattentive, the circuit **38** may then disable the restricted functionality so that it is then in a turned off state.

Whatever the embodiment, a predetermined period of inattentive time may result in the processor **22** concluding that the user **60** is in an inattentive state. If the user **60** is determined to be in an inattentive state, the mobile communicator **10** may be placed into a disabled state whereby one or more functionalities, such as text messaging, are disabled. In this embodiment, the processor **22** may be configured to determine that the user **60** is in an inattentive state when, for example, the user **60** is not looking at the display **18** for two consecutive seconds. This duration of inattentiveness may be greater or less than two seconds depending on the embodiment.

In an illustrative example meant to further clarify the first embodiment described above, if the user **60** is traveling in the automobile **70** at a speed greater than the certain threshold speed, the circuit **38** may disable at least one function (such as one or more text messaging interfaces) of the mobile communicator **10**. If it is determined that the user **60** is attentive by the user attentiveness detector **40** and the processor **22**, the mobile communicator **10** may then enable the previously disabled functionality. If, however, at any point during the turned on text messaging session, the mobile communicator **10** determines that a predetermined period of inattentive time passes, then the circuit **38** may once again disable the restricted functionalities. Alternately, if at any point during a enabled text messaging session the mobile communicator **10** determines that a low percentage of frames over a predetermined period of time show an attentive user **60**, the circuit **38** may once again disable the restricted functionalities. Thus, the mobile communicator **10** may be configured to ensure that the restricted functionalities are in a turned off state whenever the user attentiveness detector **26** determines that the user **60** is not attentive, even if it was previously determined that a user was in an attentive state during the restricted functionality session. In other words, the user attentiveness detector **40** and the processor **22** may be configured to constantly monitor the attentiveness state of the user **60** during operation of a restricted function such as text messaging.

In another illustrative example, the user **60** may attempt to use a restricted functionality while traveling at a speed greater than the threshold speed. This may activate the speed detection system **36** and the user attentiveness detector **40**. During the gathering of information by these systems, the mobile communicator **10** may be configured to display a message to the user **60** on the display **18**, indicating that the mobile communicator is checking the availability of the restricted function. The mobile communicator **10** may include a message stating that the restricted function requires the full attention of the user **60**. During this stage, the user **60** may be required to be directly looking at the mobile communicator **10** in order to ensure that the restricted functionality is in a turned on state. If the user **60** is determined to be inattentive, the processor **22** may ensure that the restricted functionality is in a turned off state.

Referring still to FIG. **4**, the user attentiveness detector **26** may also comprise other embodiments other than a camera or video capturer. For example, the mobile communicator **10** may further detect that the user **60** is using both hands **72** to type. In this situation, the user attentiveness detector **26** may include a user interface **16** such as a touch screen display that is configured to determine which fingers **74**, **76** are typing. The user attentiveness detector **26** may relay information to the processor **22** regarding the finger print used by

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the user 60. The processor 22 may take this fingerprint information and may be able to determine whether the finger from the left hand 74 or the right hand 76 is being used by the user 60 to compose a text message by determining the orientation of a fingerprint. If the processor 22 determines that both hands 72 are being utilized to type or compose the text message, the processor 22 may determine that the user 60 is in an attentive state. Alternately, if the processor determines that only a single hand 72 is being utilized by the user 60, the processor 22 may determine that the user 60 is in an inattentive state. Furthermore, the user attentiveness detector 26 may determine, via a heat sensor or other sensor, whether the user 60 is holding the phone from both sides with both hands 72. When this information is provided to the processor 22, this may indicate that the user 60 is in an attentive state.

It should be understood that the various functionalities of the mobile communicator 10 described herein may be provided as an inherent property programmed into a mobile communicator such as the mobile communicator 10. Alternately, the embodiments may be provided by one or more downloadable or installable programs, applications or other software. These applications, downloadable or installable programs or other software may turn a typical mobile communicator into the mobile communicator 10 having one or more embodiments of the present invention, described hereinabove. Furthermore, various methods are also contemplated to accomplish the various embodiments of the mobile communicator 10 described herein.

Referring now to FIG. 5, a flow chart of an example of a process or method 100 implemented by the mobile communicator 10 is shown. The method 100 may include an initial default turned on state, as described hereinabove. The method 100 may include a first step 110 where the speed detection system 36 of the mobile communicator 10 determines whether the mobile communicator 10 it is traveling at a speed that is greater than a threshold speed. If the speed is greater than the threshold speed the restricted functionality of the mobile communicator 10 is disabled by the processor 22 whereby the restricted functionality is turned off, shown in box 112. If the speed is less than the threshold speed the restricted functionality of the mobile communicator 10 remains in a state whereby the restricted functionality is turned on, shown in box 114. Whether or not the functionalities are turned on or turned off, the mobile communicator 10 may wait a predetermined time, shown in step 116, before going back to step 110 and making another determination as to the speed of the mobile communicator 10. These steps 110, 112, 114, 116 may continue in a recurring manner as long as the mobile communicator 10 is in an operational state.

If at any point, the user attempts to access a restricted functionality, shown at step 118, the mobile communicator 10 may determine whether the user 60 is in an attentive state, shown at step 120. The determination of attentiveness may be made by the user attentiveness detector 40 and the processor 22 as described in the various embodiments hereinabove. If it is determined that the user 60 is not in an attentive state, the mobile communicator 10 may be configured to keep the restricted functionalities in the turned off state, shown at step 112. If, however, the user 60 is in an attentive state, the mobile communicator 10 may be re-enabled such that the restricted functionalities are turned on, shown at step 122. If the mobile communicator 10 has been re-enabled due to user attentiveness, the method 100 may then include continuously determining if the user remains in an attentive state for the entirety of the restricted function-

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ality session, or alternately whether the user ever becomes inattentive. This is shown in step 124. If the user 60 remains attentive, the restricted functionality of the mobile communicator 10 may remain in a turned on state for the entirety of the restricted functionality session, shown in step 126. If however, the user 60 ever becomes inattentive during the restricted functionality session, the mobile communicator 10 may revert back to the turned off state of step 112.

Referring now to FIG. 6, another flow chart of an example of a process or method 200 implemented by the mobile communicator 10 is shown. The method 200 may be initiated in this case by the user 60 attempting to access a restricted function, shown at step 210. This is differentiated from the method 100 because the mobile communicator 10 is not constantly monitoring speed, and is only monitoring speed if a restricted functionality is attempted to be accessed by the user 60. The mobile communicator 10 may then be configured to determine whether the speed is greater than a certain threshold, shown in step 212. If the speed is less than the threshold speed, the restricted functionality may be in a turned on state, shown in step 214. If, however, the speed is greater than the threshold speed, the restricted functionality may be in a turned off state, shown in step 216. Next, the mobile communicator 10, the user attentiveness detector 40 and the processor 22 may determine if the user is in an attentive state, shown at step 218. If the user 60 is in an inattentive state, the restricted functionality may be disabled or be in a turned off state, shown in step 220. It should further be understood that the disabling step 216 may not be necessary, and may be simply integrated into the disabling step 220. If, however, the user 60 is in an attentive state, the processor 22 may ensure that the restricted functionality is in a turned on state, shown in step 222. It should be understood that this step may simply be an absence of the disabling step 220 in the case that the mobile communicator 10 was never disabled in step 216. Further, if the mobile communicator remains in a turned on state or becomes re-enabled in step 216, the mobile communicator 10 may continuously determine whether the user 60 remains in the attentive state, shown in step 224. If the user 60 remains in an attentive state, the restricted functionality remains turned on for the entirety of the restricted functionality session, shown in step 226. If, however, the user 60 ever enters an inattentive state, the functionality may revert back to being turned off, shown in step 220. When the functionality remains turned off in step 220, the mobile communicator 10 may wait for a predetermined amount of time before reverting back to checking whether the speed is greater than a threshold speed. This waiting step is depicted at step 228. Alternately, the mobile communicator 10 may simply exit out of the restricted functionality or application. Thus, the user may have to re-access the restricted application and being the method 200 anew. For example, if the user 60 becomes inattentive, the mobile communicator 10 may display a message to the user 60 that the restricted program will now close because of the user's inattentive state.

The embodiments described hereinabove assume that the mobile communicator 10 has one or more restricted functionalities, such as text messaging interface, which is in a default turned on state. Thus, it has been described that the restricted functionality is disabled by the circuit 38 when the speed detection system 36 determines that the speed is greater than a certain threshold speed and a user is attentive. However, it should be understood that the restricted functionality of the mobile communicator 10 may initially be in a default turned off state. In other words, the mobile communicator 10 may be turned off by default, and be enabled

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by the circuit 38 if the speed detection system 36 determines that the speed is less than a certain threshold. Further, the restricted functionality may remain in the default turned off state if the speed detection system 36 determines that the speed is greater than a certain threshold. Then, if the user attentiveness detector 40 and the processor 22 determine that a user is attentive, the circuit 38 may be configured to enable the restricted functionality such that it is in a turned on state. Whatever the embodiment, it should be understood that the restricted functionality of the mobile communicator 10 may be configured to be in a turned off state if a user is inattentive and that the speed detection system 36 determines that the speed is greater than the threshold speed (or if the speed detection system 36 determines that the speed isn't less than the threshold speed).

Shown in FIG. 7 is a flow chart of an example of another process or method 300 implemented by the mobile communicator. In this example, the process 300 begins with the restricted functionality in the default turned off state. The user 60 may then attempt to access a restricted function, shown at step 310. The mobile communicator 10 may then be configured to determine whether the speed is greater than a certain threshold, shown in step 312. If the speed is less than the threshold speed, the restricted functionality may then be enabled, shown in step 314. If, however, the speed is greater than the threshold speed, the restricted functionality may remain in a turned off state, shown in step 316. Next, the mobile communicator 10, the user attentiveness detector 40 and the processor 22 may determine if the user is in an attentive state, shown at step 318. If the user 60 is in an inattentive state, the restricted functionality may remain in a turned off state, shown in step 320. If, however, the user 60 is in an attentive state, the processor 22 may ensure that the restricted functionality is in a turned on state by enabling the restricted functionality, shown in step 322. It should be understood that in another embodiment, the mobile communicator 10 may first check for user attentiveness and then check for speed after the mobile communicator determines whether a user is attentive. Further, the mobile communicator 10 may continuously determine whether the user 60 remains in the attentive state, shown in step 324. If the user 60 remains in an attentive state, the restricted functionality remains turned on for the entirety of the restricted functionality session, shown in step 326. If, however, the user 60 ever enters an inattentive state, the functionality may revert back to being turned off, shown in step 220. When the functionality remains turned off in step 320, the mobile communicator 10 may wait for a predetermined amount of time before reverting back to checking whether the speed is greater than a threshold speed. This waiting step is depicted at step 328. Alternately, the mobile communicator 10 may simply exit out of the restricted functionality or application. Thus, the user may have to re-access the restricted application and begin the method 300 anew. For example, if the user 60 becomes inattentive, the mobile communicator 10 may display a message to the user 60 that the restricted program will now close because of the user's inattentive state. Further, the user may exit the restricted functionality voluntarily, causing the method 300 to begin anew the next time the user 60 attempts to access the restricted functionality.

Furthermore, in another embodiment, one or more of the functionalities described herein may be provided in the form of one or more kits, such as a kit 400 for a mobile communicator 410, as shown in FIG. 8. In this embodiment, the mobile communicator 410 may be a typical cell phone or may be a cell phone with any or all of the added functionality

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described hereinabove with respect to the mobile communicator 10. However, any or all of the described functionality including the speed detection system 36, the disabling circuit 38, the user attentiveness detector 40, and the image capture device 42, described hereinabove, may be included on the kit 400. It should be understood that the kit 400 may include its own separate processor, memory, computer code, and input device. The kit 400 may be in operable communication with the mobile communicator 410 either via a wired or a wireless system. Once the mobile communicator 410 is linked to the kit 400, the speed detection system 36, the disabling circuit 38, the user attentiveness detector 40, and/or the image capture device 42 of the kit 400 may affect the functionality of the mobile communicator 410 in the ways described hereinabove. It should be understood that the kit 400 may be integrated into a vehicle during, for example, the manufacturing of the vehicle. Furthermore, it should be understood that the kit 400 may include multiple separate components for performing separate functionalities, rather than a single device as depicted in FIG. 8.

Furthermore, the kit 400 may generate a signal that may enable the mobile communicator 410. The kit 400 may be portable, or built into a vehicle or structure. The kit 400 may be utilized to enable the mobile communicator 410 when, for example, there is no GPS signal available for the speed detection system 36 of the mobile communicator 10. The kit 400 may include an independent means of detecting motion or movement so that if the kit 400 was moving, the signal may be disabled to prevent a user from bringing the kit 400 into a car to allow them to utilize the restricted functionality in a manner that would not otherwise be enabled. Alternately, kits 400 may be integrated into vehicles such that their enabling signals are only accessible to areas of the vehicle where passengers are located. For example, the back seat of a passenger vehicle may include the kit 400 for enabling this area of the vehicle. The kit 400 is shown being powered from an outlet 420. However, it should be understood that the kit 400 may include its own internal battery or may be plugged into an automobile as would be known to those skilled in the art.

Elements of the embodiments have been introduced with either the articles "a" or "an." The articles are intended to mean that there are one or more of the elements. The terms "including" and "having" and their derivatives are intended to be inclusive such that there may be additional elements other than the elements listed. The conjunction "or" when used with a list of at least two terms is intended to mean any term or combination of terms. The terms "first" and "second" are used to distinguish elements and are not used to denote a particular order.

While the invention has been described in detail in connection with only a limited number of embodiments, it should be readily understood that the invention is not limited to such disclosed embodiments. Rather, the invention can be modified to incorporate any number of variations, alterations, substitutions or equivalent arrangements not heretofore described, but which are commensurate with the spirit and scope of the invention. Additionally, while various embodiments of the invention have been described, it is to be understood that aspects of the invention may include only some of the described embodiments. Accordingly, the invention is not to be seen as limited by the foregoing description, but is only limited by the scope of the appended claims.

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What is claimed is:

1. A handheld mobile communicator comprising:
a speed detection system for determining whether the handheld mobile communicator is moving faster than a threshold speed;
a processor; and
an image capture device in operable communication with the processor, the image capture device configured to provide an image of a user to the processor wherein the processor is configured to determine whether the user is inattentive;
wherein the image capture device is configured to provide to the processor at least one frame image of the user within a predetermined time period;
wherein the predetermined time period is configured to commence when the user attempts to use a functionality of the mobile handheld device when the mobile handheld device is in a turned on state;
wherein the processor is configured to analyze the at least one frame image of the user to determine a percentage of the predetermined time period that the user is looking at the handheld mobile communicator;
wherein the processor is configured to determine that the user is inattentive if the percentage of the predetermined time period that the user is looking at the handheld mobile communicator is below a threshold percentage;
wherein the processor is configured to ensure that a text input functionality of the handheld mobile communicator is in a turned off state when the speed detection system determines that the handheld mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the processor determines that the user is inattentive.
2. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 1, wherein the processor is configured to determine a direction that an eye of the user is looking.
3. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 1, wherein the processor is configured to determine if a head of the user is moving over time.
4. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 1, wherein the processor is configured to determine whether the user is using both hands to operate the handheld mobile communicator.
5. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 1, wherein the processor is configured to disable the text input functionality when the speed detection system determines that the handheld mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the processor determines that the user is inattentive.
6. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 1, wherein the text input functionality includes at least one of text messaging, web browsing, video viewing, and video gaming.
7. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 1, wherein the speed detection system is at least one of a GPS system, cell tower triangulation, a signal from an external means for determining speed, an accelerometer and multilateration.
8. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 1, wherein the speed detection system is activated in response to the user attempting to use the text input functionality.
9. The handheld mobile communication of claim 1, wherein the image capture device continuously detects attentiveness of the user throughout operation of the text input functionality by the user.

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10. A handheld mobile communicator comprising:
a speed detection system for determining whether the handheld mobile communicator is moving faster than a threshold speed;
a processor; and
an image capture device in operable communication with the processor, the image capture device configured to provide an image of a user to the processor wherein the processor is configured to determine whether the user is inattentive;
wherein the image capture device is configured to provide to the processor at least one frame image of the user within a predetermined time period;
wherein the predetermined time period is configured to commence when the user attempts to use a functionality of the mobile handheld device when the mobile handheld device is in a turned on state;
wherein the processor is configured to analyze the at least one frame image of the user to determine a percentage of the predetermined time period that the user is looking at the handheld mobile communicator;
wherein the processor is configured to determine that the user is inattentive if the percentage of the predetermined time period that the user is looking at the handheld mobile communicator is below a threshold percentage;
wherein the processor is configured to disable a text input functionality of the handheld mobile communicator when the speed detection system determines that the handheld mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the processor determines that the user is inattentive.
11. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 1, wherein the handheld mobile communicator is configured to determine and provide to the processor at least one measurement of distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user within a predetermined time period;
wherein the processor is configured to determine whether the distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user exceeds a threshold distance within the predetermined time period;
wherein the processor is configured to ensure that a text input functionality of the handheld mobile communicator is in a turned off state when the speed detection system determines that the handheld mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the processor determines that the user is inattentive and the distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user exceeds the threshold distance within the predetermined time period.
12. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 10, wherein the processor is configured to determine a direction that an eye of the user is looking.
13. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 10, wherein the processor is configured to determine if a head of the user is moving over time.
14. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 10, wherein the image capture device is configured to determine whether the user is using both hands to operate the mobile communicator.
15. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 10, wherein the text input functionality includes at least one of text messaging, web browsing, and video viewing.
16. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 10, wherein the speed detection system is at least one of a GPS

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system, cell tower triangulation, a signal from an external means for determining speed, an accelerometer and multi-lateration.

17. The handheld mobile communicator of claim 10, wherein the speed detection system is activated in response to the user attempting to use the text input functionality.

18. The handheld mobile communication of claim 10, wherein the image capture device continuously detects attentiveness of the user throughout operation of the text input functionality by the user.

19. The handheld mobile communication of claim 10, wherein the handheld mobile communicator is configured to determine and provide to the processor at least one measurement of distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user within a predetermined time period;

wherein the processor is configured to determine whether the distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user exceeds a threshold distance within the predetermined time period;

wherein the processor is configured to disable a text input functionality of the handheld mobile communicator when the speed detection system determines that the handheld mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the processor-determines that the user is inattentive and the distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user exceeds the threshold distance within the predetermined time period.

20. A computer program product, comprising a non-transitory computer-readable storage medium having a computer-readable program code stored therein, said computer-readable program code containing instructions configured to be executed by a processor of a handheld mobile communicator to implement a method of restricting a text input functionality of the handheld mobile communicator, the method comprising:

the processor determining whether the handheld mobile communicator is moving faster than a threshold speed; capturing at least one images frame of the user within a predetermined time period with an image capture device;

wherein the predetermined time period is configured to commence when the user attempts to use a functionality of the mobile handheld device when the mobile handheld device is in a turned on state;

the processor analyzing the at least one images frame of the user and determining a percentage of the predetermined time period that the user is looking at the handheld mobile communicator;

the processor determining whether a user is inattentive based on whether the percentage of the predetermined time period that the user is looking at the handheld mobile communicator is below a threshold percentage; and

the processor disabling the text input functionality of the handheld mobile communicator if the handheld mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the user is inattentive.

21. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the method further comprises determining a direction that an eye of the user is looking.

22. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the method further comprises determining whether a head of the user is moving over time.

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23. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the method further comprises determining whether a user is operating the handheld mobile communicator with two hands.

24. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the method further comprises continuously determining whether the user is inattentive during operation of the text input functionality and disabling the text input functionality if the user becomes inattentive.

25. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the method further comprises determining and providing to the processor at least one measurement of distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user within a predetermined time period;

determining whether the distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user exceeds a threshold distance within the predetermined time period; and the processor disabling the text input functionality of the handheld mobile communicator if the handheld mobile communicator is moving faster than the threshold speed and the user is inattentive and the distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user exceeds the threshold distance within the predetermined time period.

26. A handheld computer system comprising:

a processor; and

a computer-readable memory unit coupled to the processor, the memory unit containing instructions that when executed by the processor implement a method of restricting a text input functionality of the computer system, the method comprising:

determining whether the computer system is moving faster than a threshold speed;

capturing at least one image frame of the user within a predetermined time period with an image capture device;

wherein the predetermined time period is configured to commence when the user attempts to use a functionality of the mobile handheld device when the mobile handheld device is in a turned on state;

the processor analyzing the at least one image frame of the user and determining a percentage of the predetermined time period that the user is looking at the handheld mobile communicator;

the processor determining whether a user is inattentive based on the images whether the percentage of the predetermined time period that the user is looking at the handheld mobile communicator is below a threshold percentage; and

disabling the text input functionality of the computer system if a speed is greater than a threshold speed and the user is inattentive.

27. The handheld computer system of claim 26, wherein the method further comprises determining the direction that an eye of the user is looking.

28. The handheld computer system of claim 26, wherein the method further comprises determining whether the head of the user is moving over time.

29. The handheld computer system of claim 26, wherein the method further comprises determining whether a user is operating the mobile communicator with two hands.

30. The handheld computer system of claim 26, wherein the method further comprises continuously determining whether the user is inattentive during operation of the text input functionality and disabling the text input functionality if the user becomes inattentive.

31. The handheld computer system of claim 26, wherein the method further comprises determining and providing to the processor at least one measurement of distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user within a predetermined time period;

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determining whether the distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user exceeds a threshold distance within the predetermined time period; and

disabling the text input functionality of the computer system if a speed is greater than a threshold speed and the user is inattentive and the distance from the handheld mobile communicator to the user exceeds the threshold distance within the predetermined time period.

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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

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Page 1 of 1

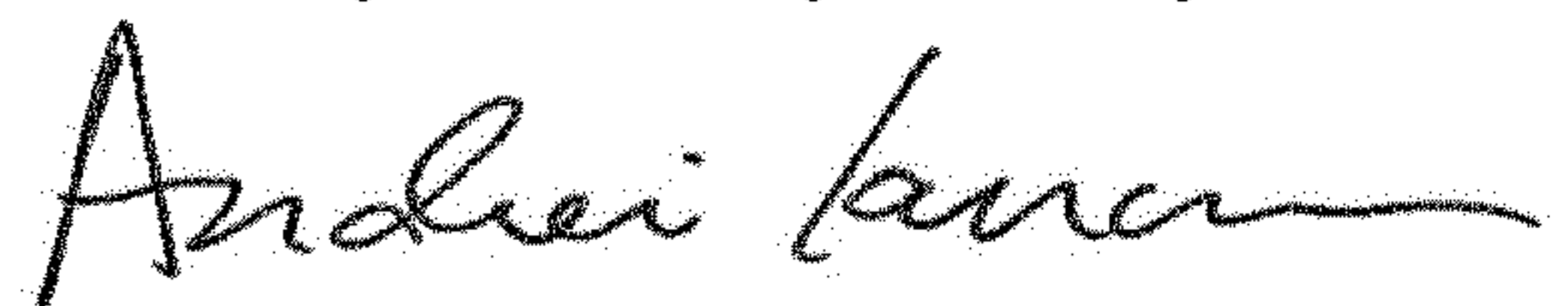
It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

In the Claims

Column 17, Line 41, please change "images" to -- image --

Column 17, Line 48, please change "images" to -- image --

Signed and Sealed this
Twenty-first Day of May, 2019



Andrei Iancu
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office