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(54) **LANE BOUNDARY DETECTION DATA GENERATION IN VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
None
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 14/885,099, filed on Oct. 16, 2015, now Pat. No. 10,176,634.

A method and an apparatus pertaining to generating training data. The method may include executing a simulation process. The simulation process may include traversing one or more virtual sensors over a virtual driving environment defining a plurality of lane markings or virtual objects that are each sensible by the one or more virtual sensors. During the traversing, each of the one or more virtual sensors may be moved with respect to the virtual driving environment as dictated by a vehicle-dynamic model modeling motion of a vehicle driving on a virtual road surface of the virtual driving environment while carrying the one or more virtual sensors. Virtual sensor data characterizing the virtual driving environment may be recorded. The virtual sensor data may correspond to what an actual sensor would produce in a

(Continued)

(51) **Int. Cl.**

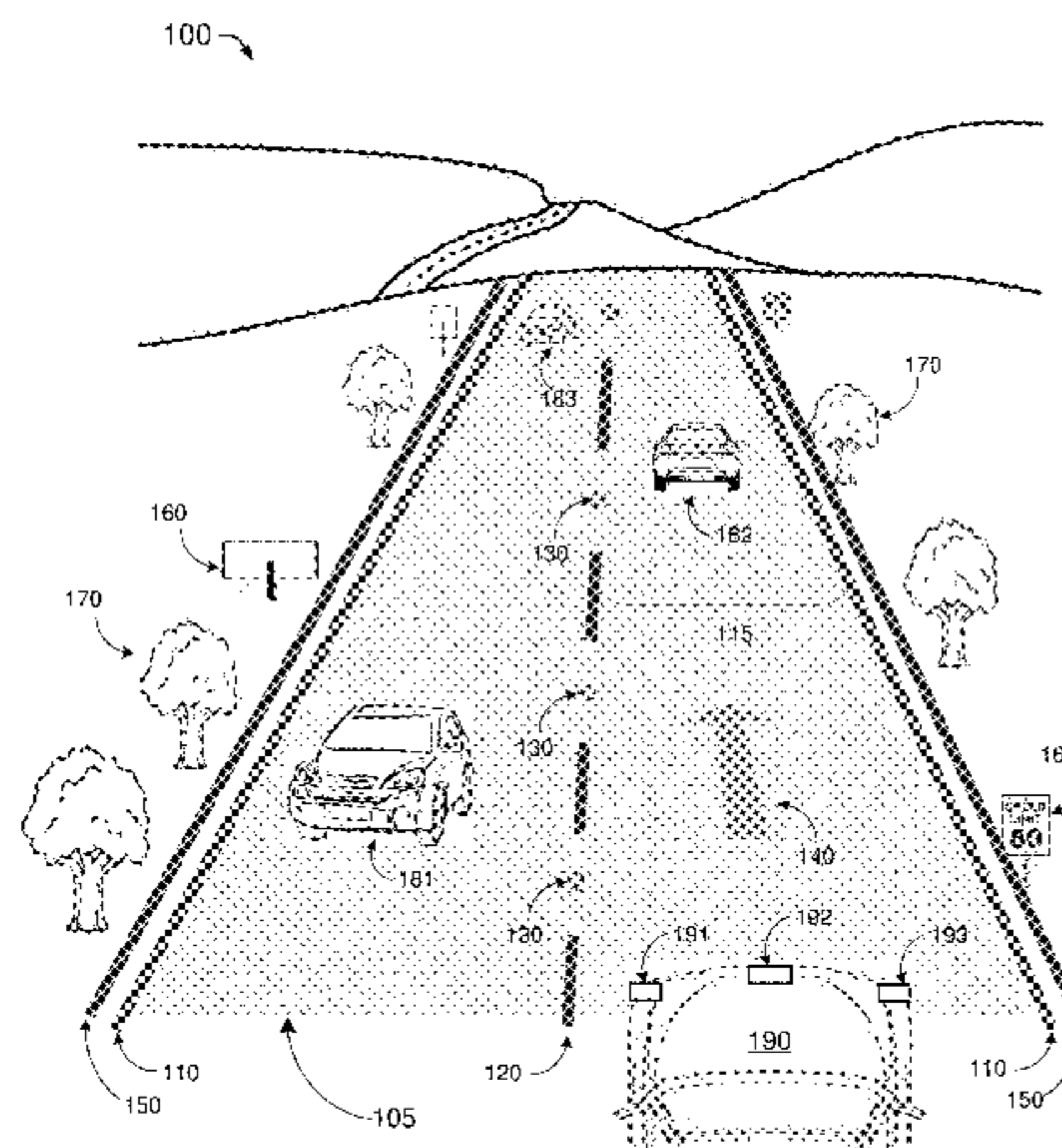
G06T 19/00 (2011.01)
G06F 17/50 (2006.01)

(Continued)

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CPC **G06T 19/003** (2013.01); **G06F 17/5095** (2013.01); **G06K 9/00798** (2013.01);

(Continued)



real-world environment that is similar or substantially matching the virtual driving environment.

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G09B 9/00 (2006.01)
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G09B 9/042 (2006.01)

(52) U.S. Cl.

CPC **G06K 9/6262** (2013.01); **G09B 9/00**
(2013.01); **G09B 9/042** (2013.01)

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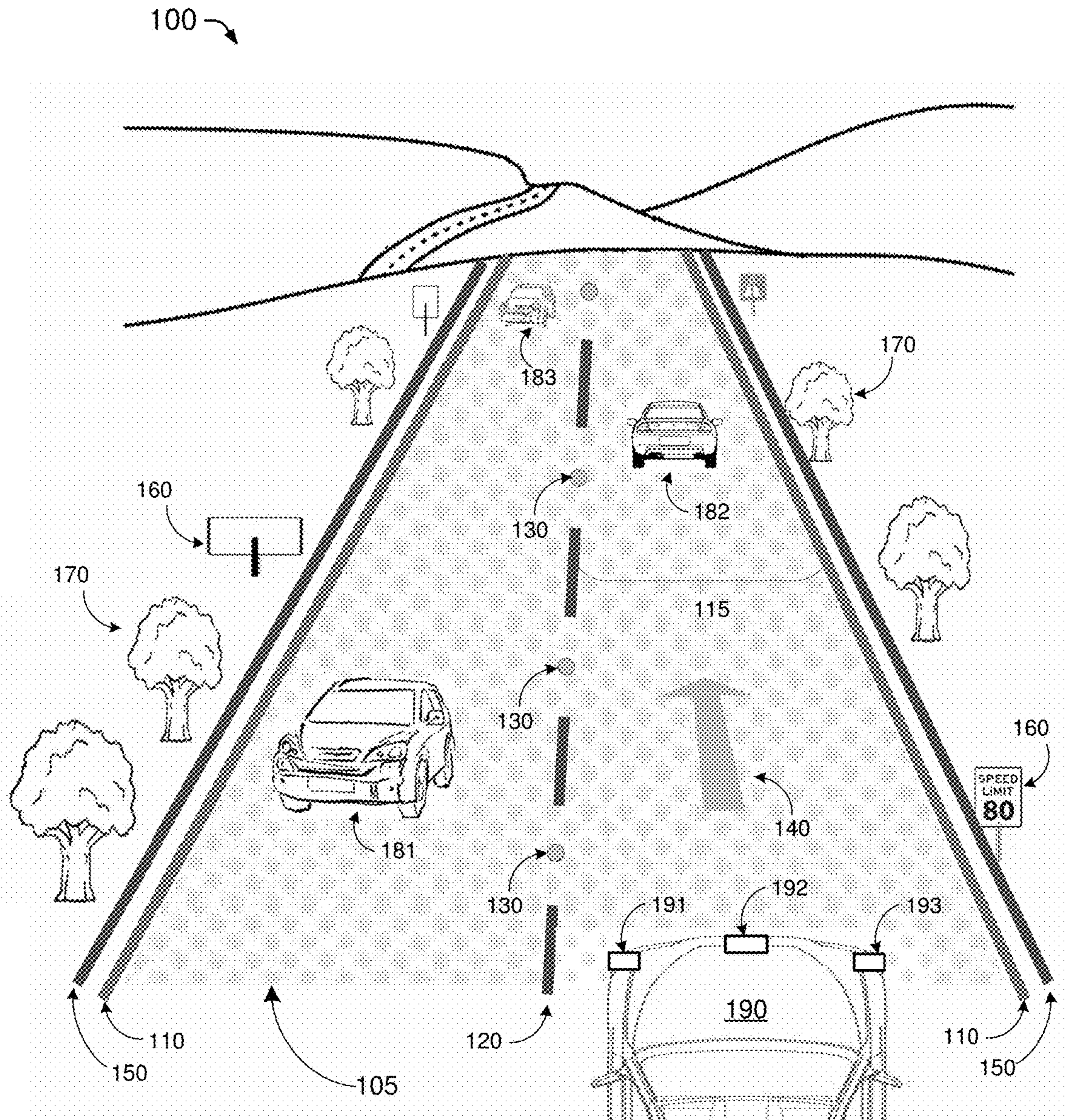


FIG. 1

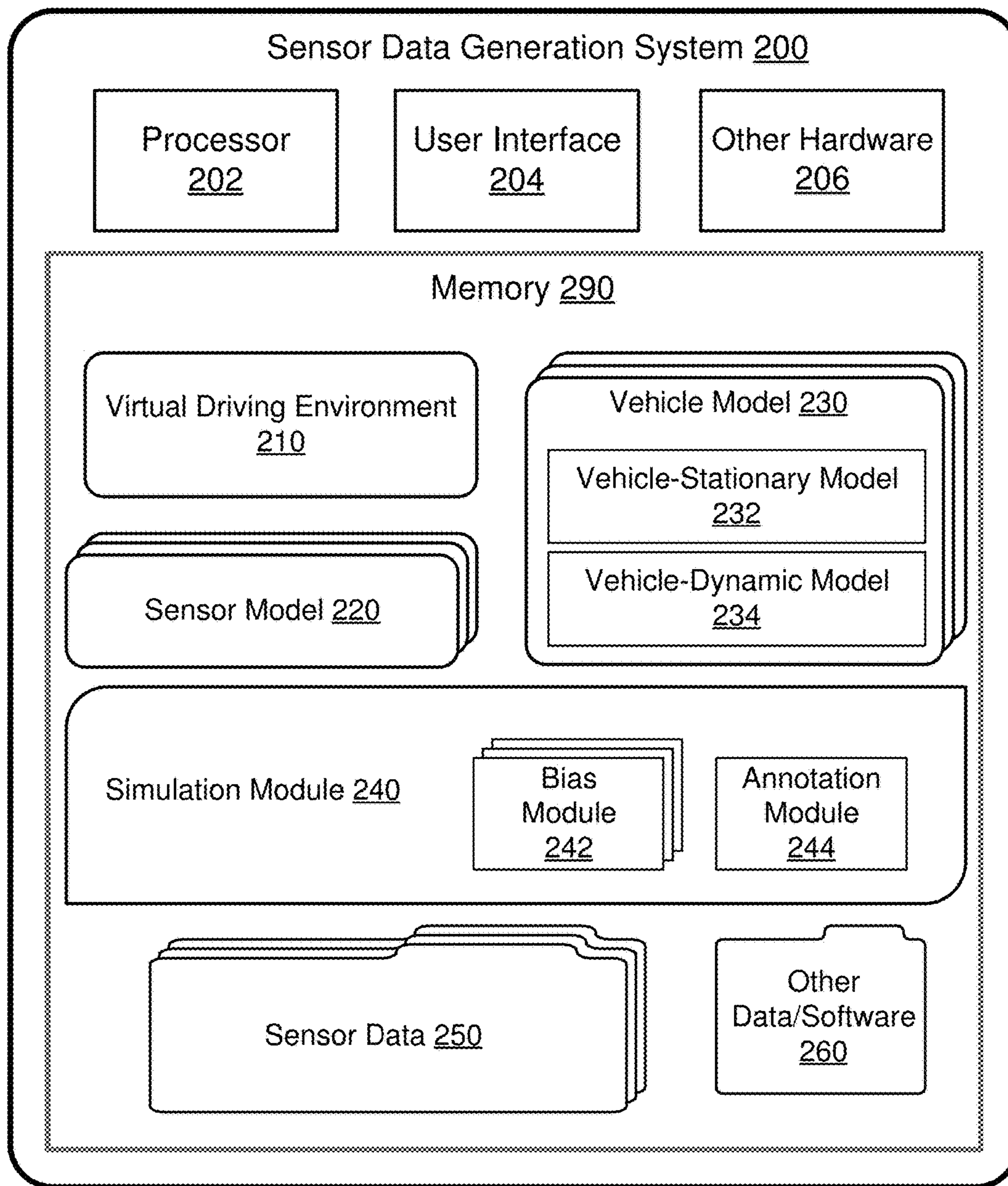


FIG. 2

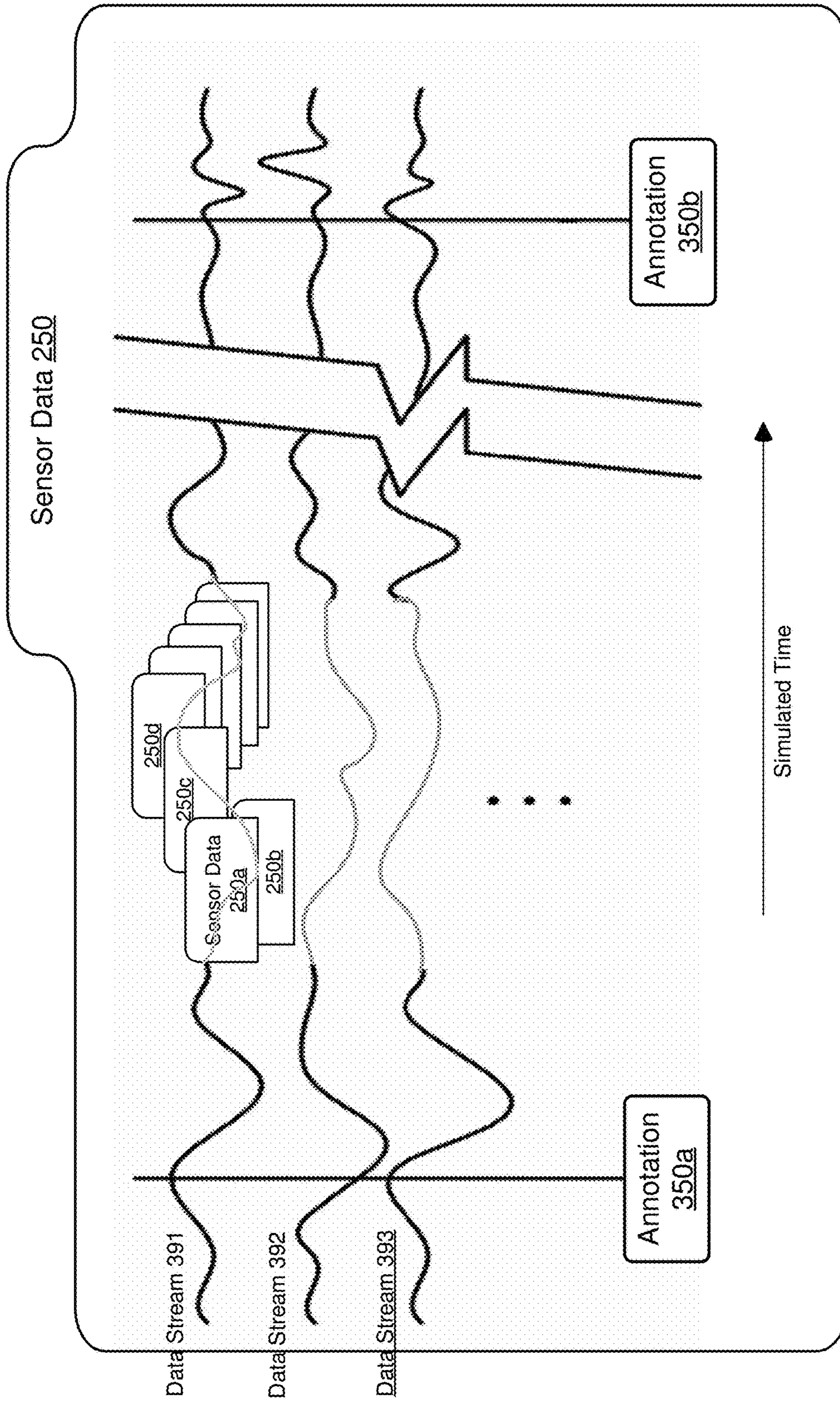


FIG. 3

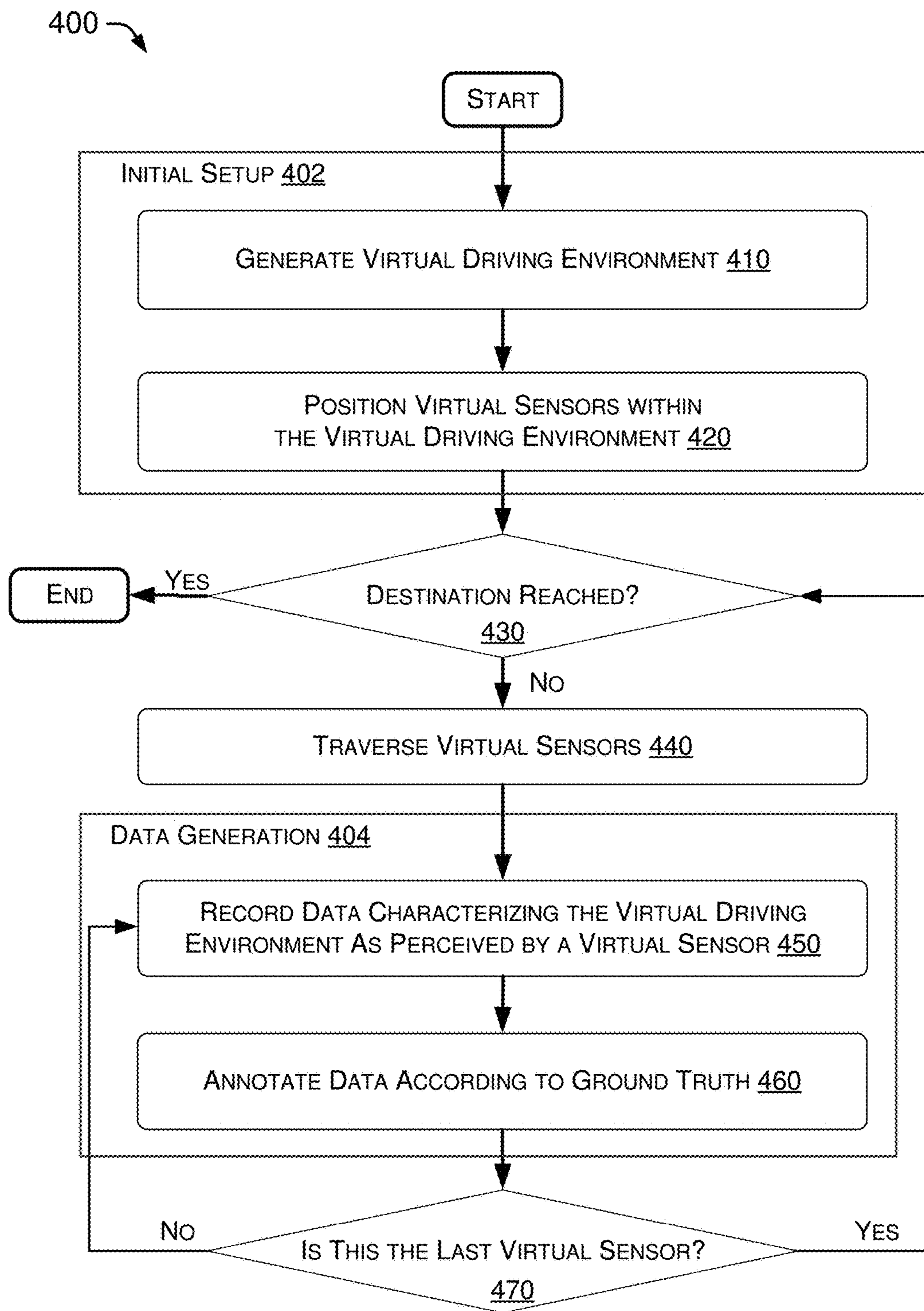


FIG. 4

LANE BOUNDARY DETECTION DATA GENERATION IN VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED PATENT APPLICATION

The present application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/885,099, filed on Oct. 16, 2015, which is incorporated by reference in its entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present disclosure generally relates to vehicular systems and, more particularly, to methods and systems for generating training data suitable for use in developing, training, testing and proving algorithms for detecting lane boundaries in a driving environment.

BACKGROUND

To provide, enable, or otherwise support functionalities such as driver assistance, controlling vehicle dynamics, and/or autonomous driving, well proven algorithms for interpreting sensor data are indispensable. In particular, algorithms for detecting boundaries of driving lanes are vital. Presently, real-world sensor data are relied upon for developing, training, testing and proving such algorithms. However, it is expensive, in terms of time, money and resources, to acquire a useful amount of real-world data.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Non-limiting and non-exhaustive embodiments of the present disclosure are described with reference to the following figures, wherein like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the various figures unless otherwise specified.

FIG. 1 is a diagram depicting an example environment in which example embodiments of the present disclosure may be implemented.

FIG. 2 is a block diagram depicting an example apparatus in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 3 is a diagram illustrating one embodiment of sensor data tagged with one or more annotations in accordance with the present disclosure.

FIG. 4 is a flowchart of an example process in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In the following description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings that form a part thereof, and in which is shown by way of illustrating specific exemplary embodiments in which the disclosure may be practiced. These embodiments are described in sufficient detail to enable those skilled in the art to practice the concepts disclosed herein, and it is to be understood that modifications to the various disclosed embodiments may be made, and other embodiments may be utilized, without departing from the scope of the present disclosure. The following detailed description is, therefore, not to be taken in a limiting sense.

In the development of lane boundary detection algorithms to detect lane boundaries with a variety of markings or without markings, diverse sets of sensor data are needed to train, develop, test and prove the lane boundary detection algorithms and additional downstream functions associated

with the algorithms. However, it usually takes considerable money, time and resources to acquire real-world sensor data. For example, to obtain real-world sensor data, sensors need to be physically mounted on a vehicle, and actual driving runs need to be performed on various types of road and for various traffic conditions for the sensors to collect sensor data for each scenario. In addition, ambient variables such as weather, temperature, wind, light conditions and other weather-related factors tend to increase the number of sets of sensor data to be collected by multiple orders of magnitude. In general, sensor data for thousands of miles of road are needed to develop a lane boundary detection algorithm, and thus considerable amount of time, money and resources are required to acquire such data.

The scenarios are further complicated, and the sensor data to be collected further expanded, when different types of vehicles (such as different makes/models) with different kinds of sensors equipped at different locations of the vehicles are taken into consideration. Moreover, characteristics of a particular vehicle, as well as characteristics of the various sensors mounted thereon, may change or drift over time due to factors such as aging or accumulation of odometer mileage, among others. In other words, a lane boundary detection algorithm that is developed and well-trained for a new vehicle with low mileage may not be as effective or accurate after the vehicle is put to service for a few years.

The present disclosure provides a solution to overcome the difficulties, and reduce the cost, of acquiring sensor data needed for a lane boundary detection algorithm by generating the sensor data utilizing a virtual environment. Various scenarios, conditions and parameters as mentioned above can be easily set up virtually in the virtual environment, and a virtual vehicle equipped with virtual sensors can traverse or drive about the virtual environment in a simulation and virtually collect (i.e., generate by simulation) the sensor data needed for the lane boundary detection algorithm. The virtual environment, virtual vehicle and virtual sensors are modeled to closely match the corresponding real-world environment, real-world vehicle and real-world sensors such that the simulation-generated virtual sensor data can substantially represent the same information collected by the real-world sensor in the real-world environment.

FIG. 1 illustrates an example environment **100** which is a virtual environment in which example embodiments of the present disclosure may be implemented. In example environment **100**, a road surface **105** may be designed to allow either one-way or two-way automobile traffic to travel thereon. Traffic on each direction may have one or more driving lanes **115**. Road surface **105** may be provided with one or more lines such as a line **110** and a line **120**, for example, as lane markings to identify or otherwise designate a driving lane **115** on road surface **105**. In some embodiments, road surface **105** may include other markings as lane markings such as, for example, a plurality of surface reflectors **130**. Either or both of lines **110** and **120** may be solid, broken or in another pattern, and may be of any color and any texture. For illustrative purpose and not limiting the scope of the present disclosure, in FIG. 1, line **110** is shown as a solid line and line **120** is shown as a broken line. In some embodiments, road surface **105** may have other kinds of markings such as, for example, an arrow sign **140** or other symbols or text painted or disposed on road surface **105**. In some embodiments, one or more or all kinds of markings and lines mentioned above may be absent on road surface **105** to simulate certain kinds of road surfaces such as, for

example, country roads, dirt roads, unpaved roads, private roads, and roads covered with debris, mud, or snow.

In some embodiments, road surface **105** may be provided with one or more road structures such as traffic dividers dividing a driving lane from another driving lane. In some embodiments, one or more roadside structures such as road shoulders, side rails or curbs **150** may be provided alongside the road surface **105** in a direction parallel with the automobile traffic, on either side or both sides of road surface **105**. In some embodiments, objects such as traffic signs **160**, commercial signs or billboards may also be provided alongside the road surface **105** in a direction parallel with the automobile traffic. Traffic signs or other signs may also be provided above road surface **105** where the automobile traffic is not affected.

In some environments, objects such as bushes, trees or other plants **170**, and other structures such as lampposts, power posts, utility poles or buildings may be provided alongside the road surface **105** in a direction parallel with the automobile traffic.

A virtual vehicle with one or more virtual sensors mounted thereon may be utilized in environment **100** for generation of sensor data. For example, a vehicle **190** as illustrated in FIG. 1 may traverse environment **100** by driving on road surface **105** within driving lane **115**. One or more sensors, such as sensors **191**, **192** and **193**, may be mounted on vehicle **190** and utilized, while vehicle **190** traverses on road surface **105**, to characterize environment **100** by generating certain sensor data according to specific characteristics of each of the sensors **191**, **192** and **193**. The sensor data may be recorded and later utilized in developing a lane boundary detection algorithm, a software procedure programmed to identify or otherwise determine lane boundaries of the one or more driving lanes **115** within environment **100**. For example, sensors **191**, **192** and **193** mounted on vehicle **190** may characterize environment **100** by identifying and/or recording certain characteristics of some or all of the objects, structures, markings and lines present in environment **100** as mentioned above, including lines **110** and **120**, surface reflectors **130**, markings or text **140**, road shoulders or side rails **150**, signs **160**, as well as trees or other plants **170**. In addition, sensors **191**, **192** and **193** mounted on vehicle **190** may also characterize and record other vehicles present in environment **100**, moving either in the same or opposite direction of vehicle **190**, such as vehicles **181**, **182** and **183** as illustrated in FIG. 1. Sensor data corresponding to characterization of other vehicles such as vehicles **181**, **182** and **183** may be utilized by the lane boundary detection algorithm to aid in identifying or otherwise determining the lane boundaries.

The approach taken by the present disclosure to realize a low-cost and efficient solution for acquisition of sensor data is by substantially transforming from real world to a virtual space items and objects illustrated in FIG. 1, as well as the traversal of the sensor-carrying vehicle and the characterization of the environment. Namely, every item depicted in FIG. 1 is modeled to represent an actual object in the real world, and can also represent a virtual object in a virtual space. In general, such a system that performs the real-world-to-virtual space transformation as well as the virtual sensor data generation is realized by utilizing a computing device or one or more processors.

FIG. 2 illustrates an example sensor data generation system **200** in which example embodiments of the present disclosure may be implemented. Sensor data generation system **200** may execute a simulation in order to produce sensor data **250** suitable for developing, testing, and/or

training various lane boundary detection algorithms. Sensor data generation system **200** may do this in any suitable method. For example, sensor data generation system **200** may be embodied as hardware, software, or some combination thereof.

In some embodiments, sensor data generation system **200** may include computer hardware and computer software. The computer hardware of sensor data generation system **200** may include one or more processors **202**, memory **290**, a user interface **204**, other hardware **206** such as, for example, a field-programmable gate array (FPGA) or a graphics processing unit (GPU), or the like or a combination or sub-combination thereof. Memory **290** may be operably connected to or otherwise accessible by the one or more processors **202**, and may be configured to store the computer software for execution by the one or more processors **202**.

User interface **204** may enable a user, e.g., an engineer, technician or the like, to interact with, run, customize, or control various aspects of sensor data generation system **200**. In some embodiments, user interface **204** may include one or more keypads, keyboards, touch screens, pointing devices, or the like or a combination or sub-combination thereof.

In some embodiments, memory **290** may store data, codes and/or instructions pertaining to or otherwise defining one or more virtual driving environments **210**. The one or more virtual driving environments **210** may contain various virtual objects, structures and markings as shown in FIG. 1. Memory **290** may also store one or more sensor models **220**, one or more vehicle models **230**, a simulation module **240**, sensor data **250**, other data or software **260** (such as "ground truth" information extracted from virtual driving environment **210** or codes programmed to visually display sensor data **250** through user interface **204**) or the like, or combinations or sub-combinations thereof.

In some embodiments, virtual driving environment **210** may include a three dimensional mesh defining in a virtual space locations, orientations, sizes, shapes, colors, surface reflectiveness and other characteristics of some or all of the stationary objects, structures, markings and lines present in environment **100** as illustrated in FIG. 1, including lines **110** and **120**, surface reflectors **130**, markings or text **140**, road shoulders or side rails **150**, signs **160**, as well as trees or other plants **170**. In some embodiments, virtual driving environment **210** may also define characteristics of other moving objects such as vehicles **181**, **182** and **183** as illustrated in FIG. 1, including but not limited to speed, moving direction, acceleration/deceleration and turning of each of the other moving objects.

In some embodiments, each sensor model **220** may be a software model that defines or predicts for certain situations or views the output of a corresponding real-world sensor. In certain embodiments, each sensor model **220** may be provided with information (e.g., data from a virtual driving environment **210**) characterizing various views of a road surface, e.g., road surface **105**. With this information, each sensor model **220** may predict what an actual sensor presented with those views in the real world would output.

In some embodiments, real-world sensors of interest may include transducers that sense or detect some characteristic of an environment and provide a corresponding output (e.g., an electrical or optical signal or an image) that defines that characteristic. For example, one or more real-world sensors of interest may be accelerometers that output an electrical signal characteristic of the proper acceleration being experienced thereby. Such accelerometers may be used to determine the orientation, acceleration, velocity, and/or distance

traveled by a vehicle. Other real-world sensors of interest may include cameras, laser scanners, light-detection-and-ranging (LIDAR) scanners, ultrasonic transducers, radar devices, gyroscopes, inertial measurement units, revolution counters or sensors, strain gauges, temperature sensors, or the like.

Each sensor model **220** may be used to model the output produced by a real-world sensor of interest. For example, sensor model **220** may be used to model sensors **191**, **192** and **193** mounted on vehicle **190**, as illustrated in FIG. **1**. As the outputs may be different for different real-world sensors, accordingly, in some embodiments, a given sensor model **220** may correspond to a specific type of real-world sensor. That is, one sensor model **220** may be suited to model the output of a particular type of sensor (e.g., a particular kind of camera), while another sensor model **220** may be suited to model the output of another type of sensor (e.g., a particular radar scanner).

Each sensor model **220** may produce an output of any suitable format. For example, in some embodiments, a sensor model **220** may output an analog signal that a corresponding real-world sensor would produce. Alternatively, a sensor model **220** may output a processed signal, such as a digitized and filtered version of an analog signal. For example, a sensor model **220** may output a processed signal such as one output by a data acquisition system. Accordingly, in some embodiments, the output of a sensor model **220** may be a conditioned, digital version of the signal that a corresponding real-world sensor would produce.

Each of the one or more vehicle models **230** is configured to model a respective sensor-mounted vehicle that traverses on a road surface in a driving environment, such as vehicle **190** of FIG. **1**. Similar to sensor models **220**, vehicle models **230** may be different for different types of real-world vehicles (e.g. different make/model of an automobile). A specific make/model of a vehicle (e.g., a particular sports car) may be modeled by a respective vehicle model **230** that is distinctive from another vehicle model **230** used to model another vehicle of different make/model (e.g., a particular pickup truck).

In general, a vehicle model **230** may include two sub-models: a vehicle-stationary model **232** and a vehicle-dynamic model **234**. With the two sub-models, the traversal of a vehicle within virtual driving environment **210** may be modeled to a reasonably accurate degree. Vehicle-stationary model **232** may be a software model that defines certain stationary characteristics of a corresponding type of vehicle. In some embodiments, a set of parameters may be used to record dimensions of the corresponding type of vehicle. The set of parameters may also include information regarding planned locations of one or more sensors mounted on the corresponding type of vehicle. Vehicle-dynamic model **234** may be a software model that defines certain dynamic characteristics of a corresponding type of vehicle in response to external forces or impacts. In some embodiments, vehicle-dynamic model **234** may include characteristics of chassis and/or suspension dynamics of a corresponding type of vehicle to certain fidelity.

In some embodiments, vehicle-dynamic model **234** may be provided with one or more driver inputs (e.g., one or more values characterizing parameters such as velocity, drive torque, brake actuation, steering input, or the like or combinations or sub-combinations thereof) and information (e.g., data from a virtual driving environment **210**) characterizing a road surface. With these inputs and information,

vehicle-dynamic model **234** may predict motion states of the body of a corresponding type of vehicle.

The parameters of vehicle-dynamic model **234** may be determined or specified in any suitable manner. In some embodiments, certain parameters of vehicle-dynamic model **234** may be derived from previous knowledge of the mechanical properties (e.g., geometries, inertia, stiffness, damping coefficients, etc.) of a corresponding real-world vehicle. The parameters may be different for different types of vehicles.

Simulation module **240** may be programmed to take a virtual driving environment **210**, one or more sensor models **220** and a vehicle model **230** as inputs and subsequently generate an output modeling a real-world output produced by one or more corresponding real-world sensors mounted on a corresponding real-world vehicle (e.g., the vehicle modeled by the vehicle model **230**) traversing a real-world driving environment modeled by (e.g., substantially or exactly matching) the virtual driving environment **210**. In some embodiments, at least a portion of the output generated by simulation module **240** may be stored in memory **290** as sensor data **250**. As previously stated, driving environment **100** may include one or more lane markings such as solid line **110**, broken line **120** and surface reflectors **130**. In this case, sensor data **250** may include data that directly characterize locations of lane boundaries. Alternatively, in some embodiments, driving environment **100** may not include any or some of the lane markings. In this case, sensor data **250** may include data that characterize other virtual objects defined in virtual driving environment **210**, either stationary or mobile, such as text **140**, road shoulders or side rails **150**, signs **160**, trees or other plants **170**, as well as other vehicles **181**, **182** and **183**. Though indirect, data of these virtual objects stored as sensor data **250** may still be utilized by a lane boundary detection algorithm to infer locations of lane boundaries.

In some embodiments, sensor data generation system **200** may include in simulation module **240** one or more bias modules **242**. A purpose of a bias module **242** is to account for secondary effects such as weather conditions, time of day, sensor aging and vehicle aging. In real-world scenarios, a sensor may not maintain same characteristics or performance over an indefinitely long period of time. More likely than not, real-world sensors may experience certain aging effects and their characteristics may change or drift over time. Similar situation may happen for real-world vehicles. A bias module **242** included in simulation module **240** may be programmed to account for such effects due to weather conditions, time of day, sensor aging and vehicle aging by adjusting either the output generated by simulation module **240** or the stored sensor data **250** according to a set of bias parameters. In some embodiments, a bias module **242** may be programmed to account for various weather conditions. In some embodiments, a bias module **242** may be programmed to account for lighting conditions that may change from dawn to dusk depending on different times of the day. In some embodiments, a bias module **242** may adjust or “bias” one or more sensor models **220** to account for such secondary effects.

An example implementation of bias module **242** may be further illustrated by the following examples. In some embodiments, a sensor model **220** may be a virtual camera that models a real-world visual camera, and thus the corresponding sensor data **250** may be one or more visual images. If the virtual weather condition is raining, the image perceived by the virtual camera would become blurred due to rain and may be disturbed by motion of windshield wipers,

as compared to a clear image otherwise perceived under a normal weather condition. As another example, the image perceived under a bright sunlight may have less contrast and thus having a “white out” effect as compared to a clear image under normal daylight condition. These visual effects on the images (e.g. sensor data **250**) generated by simulation module **240** may be produced by one or more bias modules **242**. In short, the one or more bias modules **242** not only account for various secondary effects, but also facilitate generating a large amount of sensor data **250** under various conditions in an efficient and low-cost way.

FIG. 3 illustrates one embodiment of sensor data tagged with one or more annotations in accordance with the present disclosure. Referring to FIG. 1 and FIG. 2 as an example, as virtual vehicle **190** traverses virtual driving environment **100** (or, equivalently, virtual driving environment **210**). For each of virtual sensors **191**, **192** and **193**, sensor data generation system **200** may generate sensor data **250** for each simulated moment over a period of simulated time. For example, also referring to FIG. 3, for a first simulated moment in time, simulation module **240** may generate sensor data **250a** characterizing virtual driving environment **100** as perceived by a particular virtual sensor **191** at that first moment. Subsequently, for a second simulated moment in time, simulation module **240** may generate sensor data **250b** characterizing virtual driving environment **210** as perceived by virtual sensor **191** at that second moment. This process may be repeated for a third simulated moment in time (generating sensor data **250c**), a fourth simulated moment in time (generating sensor data **250d**), and so forth. Accordingly, by advancing from one moment in time to the next, simulation module **240** may generate a data stream **391** characterizing virtual driving environment **210** as perceived by virtual sensor **191** over that simulated period of time. This simulation process may be repeated for all of the virtual sensors (e.g. sensors **191**, **192** and **193**) mounted on a particular virtual vehicle (e.g. vehicle **190**). Accordingly, for the particular virtual vehicle **190** and the virtual driving environment **100** that it has traversed, sensor data **250** comprising one or more data streams (e.g. data streams **391**, **392** and **393**) may be generated.

In the example shown in FIG. 3, different data streams **391**, **392** and **393** may represent the outputs of different virtual sensors **191**, **192** and **193**. That is, a first data stream **391** may represent the output of a first virtual camera **191** mounted on the front-left corner of virtual vehicle **190**, a second data stream **392** may represent the output of a second virtual camera **192** mounted on the front center of virtual vehicle **190**, and a third data stream **393** may represent the output of a third virtual camera **193** mounted on the front-right corner of virtual vehicle **190**. Collectively, the various data streams **391**, **392** and **393** forming the sensor data **250** for a particular run (e.g., a particular virtual traverse of a particular virtual vehicle **190** through a particular virtual driving environment **210**) may represent or account for some or all the inputs that a particular algorithm (i.e., the algorithm that is being developed or tested) would use in the real world.

In some embodiments, simulation module **240** may include annotation module **244** programmed to couple sensor data **250** with one or more annotations such as annotation **350a** and annotation **350b** shown in FIG. 3. Each annotation may annotate “ground truth” information corresponding to the virtual driving environment **210**. In some embodiments, ground truth information includes actual spatial location of lane boundaries as defined within the virtual driving environment **210**. As such, ground truth is modeled by virtual

driving environment **210**, such information is readily available to sensor data generation system **200**. In some embodiments, the ground truth information contained in one or more annotations may be used to quantify or evaluate performance of a lane boundary detection algorithm when annotated sensor data **250** are used by the algorithm in a supervised learning approach.

For example, one or more annotations, including annotations **350a** and **350b**, may provide “true locations” of the boundaries of lane **115** within which virtual vehicle **190** is driven for a particular run. The true locations of the lane boundaries are defined according to the spatial definition of the lane **115** within the virtual driving environment **100**. Annotations **350a** and **350b** may be linked, tied to, overlaid upon, or otherwise associated with particular portions of data streams **391**, **392** and **393**. Accordingly, the ground truth information corresponding to a particular lane **115** may be linked to the portion of data streams **391**, **392** and **393** that reflect the perception of virtual sensors **191**, **192** and **193** of that boundaries of lane **115**. In some embodiments, not all of data streams **391**, **392** and **393** may have ground truth information annotated at same temporal portions thereof.

FIG. 4 illustrates an example process **400** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. Example process **400** may include one or more operations, actions, or functions shown as blocks such as **402**, **404**, **430**, **440** and **470** as well as sub-blocks **410**, **420**, **450** and **460**. Although illustrated as discrete blocks, various blocks may be divided into additional blocks, combined into fewer blocks, or eliminated, depending on the desired implementation. Example process **400** may be implemented in example environment **100** and/or example sensor data generation system **200**. For simplicity of description and not limiting the scope thereof, example process **400** is described below in the context of example sensor data generation system **200**.

At **402**, example process **400** may involve processor **202** setting up virtual driving environment **210**. This may involve operations performed at sub-blocks **410** and **420**. At **410**, example process **400** may involve processor **202** setting up virtual driving environment **210** according to various virtual objects (e.g. as text **140**, road shoulders or side rails **150**, signs **160**, trees or other plants **170**, as well as other vehicles **181**, **182** and **183**), lane markings (e.g. solid line **110**, broken line **120** and surface reflectors **130**) and virtual sensors (e.g. sensors **191**, **192** and **193**) shown in FIG. 1. At **420**, example process **400** may involve processor **202** and positioning virtual sensors within the virtual driving environment **210** using a vehicle-stationary model **232** of a vehicle model **230**. Block **402** may be followed by block **430**.

At **430**, example process **400** may involve processor **202** determining whether a traversal has reached a predetermined destination. For instance, after initial setup, processor **202** may determine whether or not a traversal has reached a predetermined destination. On one hand, if it is determined that the traversal has reached the predetermined destination, process **400** may end immediately. On the other hand, if it is determined that the traversal has not yet reached the predetermined destination, processor **202** may determine to traverse virtual sensors to a next location within the virtual driving environment, and example process **400** may proceed to **440**.

At **440**, in response to a determination that the traversal has not yet reached the predetermined destination, example process **400** may involve traversing the virtual sensors to a

next location using a vehicle-dynamic model **234** of a vehicle model **230**. Block **440** may be followed by block **404**.

At **404**, example process **400** may involve data generation. This may involve operations performed at sub-blocks **450** and **460**. At **450**, example process **400** may involve processor **202** recording sensor data **250** generated by simulation module **240** characterizing virtual driving environment **210** as perceived by a virtual sensor modeled by a sensor model **220**. At **460**, example process **400** may involve annotation module **244** of simulation module **240** annotating sensor data **250** with ground truth information such as locations of lane boundaries as defined in virtual driving environment **210** at various portions in time of the sensor data **250**. Block **404** may be followed by block **470**.

At **470**, example process **400** may involve processor **202** determining, in response to recording annotated data characterizing virtual driving environment **210** as perceived by a virtual sensor, whether the virtual sensor is the last among the virtual sensors sensing the virtual driving environment **210** whose perceptions need to be recorded. On one hand, if it is determined that the virtual sensor is not the last among the virtual sensors sensing the virtual driving environment **210** whose perceptions need to be recorded, processor **202** may proceed to **450** to record annotated data characterizing virtual driving environment **210** as perceived by a next virtual sensor. On the other hand, if it is determined that the virtual sensor is already the last among the virtual sensors sensing the virtual driving environment **210** whose perceptions need to be recorded, processor **202** may proceed to **430** to check again if the traversal has reached the predetermined destination.

In some embodiments, the virtual driving environment may include a virtual road surface having one or more driving lanes. In some embodiments, the virtual road surface may also include a plurality of lane markings corresponding to the one or more driving lanes, each of the plurality of lane markings sensible by the one or more virtual sensors.

In some embodiments, the one or more virtual sensors may include a virtual camera. The data may include one or more virtual images of the virtual driving environment as perceived by the virtual camera. Additionally or alternatively, the one or more virtual sensors may include a virtual light-detection-and-ranging (LIDAR) device, and the data may include virtual lane boundaries as perceived by the LIDAR device.

In some embodiments, the virtual driving environment may also include a plurality of virtual objects distributed therewithin. Each of the virtual objects may be either stationary or mobile relative to the virtual driving environment. Each of the virtual objects may be sensible by the one or more virtual sensors. In some embodiments, the data may include data useful for inferring a location of each of the one or more driving lanes of the virtual road surface as perceived by the one or more virtual sensors sensing one or more of the plurality of virtual objects. In some embodiments, the data may further include an annotation characterizing the location of at least one of the one or more driving lanes according to a spatial definition of the at least one of the one or more driving lanes on the virtual road surface.

In some embodiments, the positioning may include setting a spatial relation for each of the one or more virtual sensors with respect to the virtual driving environment according to a vehicle-stationary model modeling a location of the respective virtual sensor on a virtual vehicle carrying the one or more virtual sensors and driving on a virtual road surface of the virtual driving environment.

In some embodiments, the traversing may include moving each of the one or more virtual sensors with respect to the virtual driving environment according to a vehicle-dynamic model modeling motions of a virtual vehicle carrying the one or more virtual sensors and driving on a virtual road surface of the virtual driving environment.

In some embodiments, the data may include data characterizing a location of each of one or more driving lanes of a virtual road surface as perceived by the one or more virtual sensors sensing one or more of a plurality of lane markings corresponding to the one or more driving lanes. In some embodiments, the data may further include an annotation characterizing the location of at least one of the one or more driving lanes according to a spatial definition of the at least one of the one or more driving lane on the virtual road surface.

In some embodiments, each of the one or more virtual sensors may be associated with one of a plurality of sensor types. Each of the plurality of sensor types may be modeled by a respective sensor model. The respective sensor model may be configured to be biased by a respective set of one or more weather parameters.

The articles “a” and “an” are used herein to refer to one or to more than one (i.e., to at least one) of the grammatical object of the article. By way of example, “a user” means one user or more than one users. Reference throughout this specification to “one embodiment,” “an embodiment,” “one example,” or “an example” means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment or example is included in at least one embodiment of the present disclosure. Thus, appearances of the phrases “in one embodiment,” “in an embodiment,” “one example,” or “an example” in various places throughout this specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment or example. Furthermore, the particular features, structures, databases, or characteristics may be combined in any suitable combinations and/or sub-combinations in one or more embodiments or examples. In addition, it should be appreciated that the figures provided herewith are for explanation purposes to persons ordinarily skilled in the art and that the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale.

Embodiments in accordance with the present disclosure may be embodied as an apparatus, method, or computer program product. Accordingly, the present disclosure may take the form of an entirely hardware-comprised embodiment, an entirely software-comprised embodiment (including firmware, resident software, micro-code or the like), or an embodiment combining software and hardware aspects that may all generally be referred to herein as a “circuit,” “module,” or “system.” Furthermore, embodiments of the present disclosure may take the form of a computer program product embodied in any tangible medium of expression having computer-usable program code embodied in the medium.

The flow diagrams and block diagrams in the attached figures illustrate the architecture, functionality, and operation of possible implementations of systems, methods, and computer program products according to various embodiments of the present disclosure. In this regard, each block in the flow diagrams or 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 will also be noted that each block of the block diagrams and/or flow diagrams, and combinations of blocks in the block diagrams and/or flow diagrams, may be implemented by special purpose hardware-based systems that perform the specified functions or acts, or

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combinations of special purpose hardware and computer instructions. These computer program instructions may also be stored in a computer-readable medium that can direct a computer or other programmable data processing apparatus to function in a particular manner, such that the instructions stored in the computer-readable medium produce an article of manufacture including instruction means which implement the function/act specified in the flow diagram and/or block diagram block or blocks.

Although the present disclosure is described in terms of certain embodiments, other embodiments will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure, including embodiments that do not provide all of the benefits and features set forth herein, which are also within the scope of this disclosure. It is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized, without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method, comprising:
 - generating, by a processor via a computer simulation, a virtual driving environment;
 - positioning, by the processor via the computer simulation, one or more virtual sensors within the virtual driving environment, the one or more virtual sensors modeled by the computer simulation and not comprising any physical component;
 - traversing, by the processor via the computer simulation, the one or more virtual sensors within the virtual driving environment; and
 - adjusting, by the processor according to a set of bias parameters via the computer simulation, the data to account for a weather condition, a time of a day having different lighting conditions, sensor aging and vehicle aging.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the virtual driving environment comprises a virtual road surface having one or more driving lanes.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the virtual road surface further comprises a plurality of lane markings corresponding to the one or more driving lanes, each of the plurality of lane markings sensible by the one or more virtual sensors.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein the virtual driving environment further comprises a plurality of virtual objects distributed therewithin, each of the virtual objects either stationary or mobile relative to the virtual driving environment, and each of the virtual objects sensible by the one or more virtual sensors.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein the data comprises data useful for inferring a location of each of the one or more driving lanes of the virtual road surface as perceived by the one or more virtual sensors sensing one or more of the plurality of virtual objects.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein the data further comprises an annotation characterizing the location of at

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least one of the one or more driving lanes according to a spatial definition of the at least one of the one or more driving lanes on the virtual road surface.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more virtual sensors comprise a virtual camera, and wherein the data comprises one or more virtual images of the virtual driving environment as perceived by the virtual camera.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more virtual sensors comprise a virtual light-detection-and-ranging (LIDAR) device, and wherein the data comprises virtual lane boundaries as perceived by the LIDAR device.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the positioning comprises setting a spatial relation for each of the one or more virtual sensors with respect to the virtual driving environment according to a vehicle-stationary model modeling, via the computer simulation, a location of the respective virtual sensor on a virtual vehicle carrying the one or more virtual sensors and driving on a virtual road surface of the virtual driving environment.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the traversing comprises moving each of the one or more virtual sensors with respect to the virtual driving environment according to a vehicle-dynamic model modeling, via the computer simulation, motions of a virtual vehicle carrying the one or more virtual sensors and driving on a virtual road surface of the virtual driving environment.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the data comprises data characterizing a location of each of one or more driving lanes of a virtual road surface as perceived by the one or more virtual sensors sensing, via the computer simulation, one or more of a plurality of lane markings corresponding to the one or more driving lanes.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the data further comprises an annotation characterizing the location of at least one of the one or more driving lanes according to a spatial definition of the at least one of the one or more driving lane on the virtual road surface.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein each of the one or more virtual sensors is associated with one of a plurality of sensor types, and wherein each of the plurality of sensor types is modeled by a respective sensor model via the computer simulation.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the adjusting of the data comprises biasing the respective sensor model according to a set of bias parameters accounting for the weather condition, the time of the day having the different lighting conditions, the sensor aging and the vehicle aging.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

- recording, by the processor, data generated by the computer simulation, the data characterizing the virtual driving environment and corresponding to information generated by the one or more virtual sensors sensing the virtual driving environment during the traversing.

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