RFID News Roundup

Topics/Verticals: RFID Channel

Sirit adds solution-oriented features to INfinity 510 RFID reader; Intelleflex gains Maxim development team and IP, secures new funding; RFIDTraxx introduces AssetTraxx asset-tracking system; Tetherball teams with ViVOtech to speed adoption of RFID-enabled loyalty programs; Houston selects TransCore for high-occupancy vehicle program; Mobile Aspects awarded Novation contract for RFID inventory management.

Nov. 5, 2009—The following are news announcements made during the past week.

Sirit Adds Solution-Oriented Features to INfinity 510 RFID Reader
RFID hardware provider Sirit has unveiled an upgrade for its EPC Gen 2 RFID interrogator, the Infinity 510 (IN510). The 3.0 upgrade includes a Feature License Manager application enabling customers to activate specific advanced features as needed, paying only for those features they activate. The upgrade features Stray Tag Elimination (STE) technology that, according to Sirit, allows customers to differentiate between tags that are actively transitioning the RF field and those in the field but not moving. The technology is particularly useful around portals, such as a dock door, or for electronic article surveillance, because the interrogator is able to distinguish between tags moving through a portal or an exit from stationary tags near the portal. "The issue of stray tags has been a very expensive problem for many users of RFID," said Sirit's CTO, Bruce Roesner, in a prepared statement. "Sirit has taken advantage of the already industry-leading performance of the IN510, coupling it with intelligent algorithms implemented directly in firmware to deliver a cost-effective solution to our customers." The 3.0 firmware, Sirit reports, enables the interrogator to achieve a peak throughput of 1,150 tags per second when configured for 640 kbps in regions under the Federal Communications Commission. In addition, the upgraded firmware expands regulatory support for usage in Japan, Barbados, Colombia, Peru and Korea. Other features include the ability to determine the order of closely spaced items as they move past the antenna; a tag phase reporting feature that advanced users can employ to observe raw tag phase data, which they can then input into advanced algorithms in order to solve problems; and automatic throughput optimization, which Sirit says proactively and dynamically manipulates reader settings to enhance performance. In addition, the interrogator now supports EPCglobal's Gen 2 v.1.2.0, 496-bit EPC ID numbers, Alien Technology's Higgs-3 custom commands and a variety of other enhancements. The 3.0 upgrade is fully compatible with all production hardware versions of the IN510. Previous IN510 versions currently covered under Sirit's warranty program qualify for a free upgrade.

Intelleflex Gains Maxim Development Team and IP, Secures New Funding
Intelleflex, a provider of battery-assisted passive (BAP) ultrahigh-frequency (UHF) RFID technology complying with EPCglobal's proposed Class 3 standard, has announced a definitive agreement with Maxim Integrated Products, a manufacturer of semiconductor products. Under the terms of the deal, Maxim will transfer to Intelleflex an engineering team and a portfolio of design works and related intellectual property (IP), in return for an equity position in Intelleflex. In addition, the two companies report, Intelleflex and Maxim will partner on future go-to-market activities. "This transaction combines the leaders in Class 3 RFID," said Intelleflex's president and CEO, Peter Mehring, in a prepared statement. "The added development capacity and complementary design ideas will allow us to accelerate the product road map and build a leading position in the applications and markets for Class 3

RFID technology." The deal follows Intelleflex's completion of an $8 million investment round led by New Venture Partners, a global venture capital firm dedicated to corporate technology spinouts. Earlier round investors Arcapita Ventures, Morgenthaler Ventures and The Woodside Fund also participated (see Intelleflex Partners With Motorola, Secures $15.5M in Funding).

RFIDTraxx Introduces AssetTraxx Asset-Tracking System

RFIDTraxx LLC, an RFID company specializing in tracking documents and assets, has introduced an RFID-based asset-tracking system known as AssetTraxx. The software combines Microsoft's SQL Server with active 2.45 GHz RFID tags and readers from Ingecom. According to the company, the system is designed to let companies track a variety of business items, including computers, medical equipment, a pallet of products or a box of files. The Web-based software features an alert system that enables an administrator to monitor the movement of any critical equipment, while affording users the flexibility to check assets in and out as required for their work. With the appropriate permissions, users can interrogate the system, either through an internal network or via the Internet. According to RFIDTraxx, AssetTraxx can accommodate companies of all sizes and requirements. In March 2009, RFIDTRaxx unveiled DocStaxx, its RFID-based document-tracking software (see RFIDTRaxx Delivers RFID-enabled Document-Tracking Software).

Tetherball Teams With ViVOtech to Speed Adoption of RFID-enabled Loyalty Programs

Applications service provider Tetherball has announced it has teamed with ViVOtech, a provider of Near Field Communications (NFC) mobile phone payments, over-the-air (OTA) provisioning of promotions and payment cards, and smart poster applications. The partnership will enable Tetherball to offer its recently introduced RFID-based mobile loyalty program, Mobiquitous, to existing users of ViVOtech's contactless reader technology. Tetherball's mobile loyalty solution leverages high-frequency (HF) 13.56 MHz RFID tags complying with the ISO 14443 standard (see Dairy Queen Serves Up Personal Discounts With RFID). Tetherball's clients provide the tags to their loyalty program customers, who then affix them to their mobile phones. Each tag uniquely identifies the customer via Tetherball's software. Tetherball's clients are then able to send offers to their customers via standard text messaging, and the offers can be redeemed electronically using existing in-store contactless point-of-sale terminals, or stand-alone contactless kiosks provided by Tetherball. "For the 140,000 merchant locations in the United States that have deployed close to 500,000 of ViVOtech's contactless readers in total, adoption of mobile loyalty programs is easier than ever—no other equipment or software is required to establish a measurable mobile marketing solution through Tetherball," said Jay Highley, Tetherball's president and COO, in a prepared statement.

Houston Selects TransCore for High-Occupancy Vehicle Program

Houston's Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (Metro) has selected RFID technology firm TransCo as the prime contractor to design, furnish, install, operate and maintain a toll and automated gate operation system for 83 miles of reversible high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes. The first corridors are expected to become operational by late 2010, and the entire system is slated to be completed within two years. TransCore will provide system operations and maintenance for five years following the installation. The system will leverage the company's eZGo Anywhere active RFID tag, which operates at

902 to 928 MHz and is capable of working with nearly all tollway RFID readers around the United States, including E-ZPass in the Northeast, Texas' TxTag and Florida's SunPass (see Avis Budget Group Plans to Put Interoperable Toll Transponders on the Road). In mid-2006, TransCore reports, Houston's Harris County Toll Road Authority adopted the company's eZGo tags, and the city now has more than a million RFID-based eZGo tags in use for electronic toll collection. Houston Metro will convert five existing HOV corridors throughout the Houston metropolitan area, including I-45 North and South, U.S. 290, and U.S. 59 North and South, to allow single-occupant vehicles access to the HOV lanes for a toll. The program will include an automated reversible-gate operation (ARGO) system to control entry into the reversible roadway system. Houston Metro expects the conversion to increase utilization of the HOV system by up to 50 percent, TransCore indicates, while decreasing congestion in the general-purpose freeway lanes.

Mobile Aspects Awarded Novation Contract for RFID Inventory Management

Pittsburgh-based Mobile Aspects, a supplier of RFID-based tracking systems in hospitals, has announced that it has been awarded a three-year contract to supply RFID inventory-management systems to Novation, the health-care contracting services company for VHA, the University HealthSystem Consortium (UHC) and Provista, a provider of group purchasing and business solutions. VHA is a nationwide network of community-owned health-care systems and their physicians, and UHC is a consortium of academic medical centers and their affiliated hospitals. The contract covers several of Mobile Aspects' solutions, including its iRISupply supply-automation system and its iRISecure tissue-tracking technology (see University of Michigan Health System Tags Surgical Tissue). "We look forward to helping VHA, UHC and Provista members leverage our RFID inventory-management systems to create improved efficiency, increased profitability and enhanced patient outcomes," said Bryan Christianson, Mobile Aspects' VP of marketing, in a prepared statement.