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RFID News Roundup

The following are news announcements made during the week of Oct. 18.

ITA Funds Alliance to Grow Latin American Smart Card Market

The U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade

Administration this week awarded the Smart Card Alliance (SCA), a N.J.-based nonprofit multi-industry association, \$288,000 to help the group to develop Latin American markets for smart card technology. The funds awarded to the SCA are made available through the International Trade Administration's Market Development Cooperator Program (MDCP). The MDCP is a public-private partnership developed to help small and midsize U.S. firms expand exports that support jobs. The program builds partnerships by providing financial and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations involved in improving competitiveness and developing foreign markets. The SCA will match every federal dollar with two dollars of its own and plans to use the funds to establish a Latin American SCA chapter, launch an SCA conference in Latin America, and link U.S. smart card firms with Latin American business representatives, among other initiatives.

Willow Announces Integration Software for RFID

Willow Technology, Santa Clara, Calif.-based software development company, has launched the Ectropyx Integration Platform, a product that provides a bridge between sensors or sensor networks, such as RFID readers or networks of RFID readers, and enterprise software. The platform is composed of a sensor gateway, which is software that connects to sensors or their networks through microcontrollers. (These microcontrollers, which handle remote requests and can apply a layer of rules and filters for data collection from the sensors, are contained in hardware that networks the sensors, such as RFID readers. They are not part of the Ectropyx product.) The gateway, based in Java programming, connects to enterprise applications through the Ectropyx integration server, a part of the Ectropyx Integrated Platform. The integration server delivers data to enterprise applications

and sends commands from the enterprise application to the sensor gateway. The Ectropyx product will be available in late November. Pricing, which is not currently available, will depend on the number of sensors or sensor networks in use.

Georgia Tollway Authority Buys TransCore Passive Tags

Georgia's State Road and Tollway Authority, which operates Georgia state highway 400 in the Atlanta metro area, reported an agreement with TransCore, provider of RFID and transportation technology and services, to replace the active transponders the tollway authority currently issues for electronic fare collection with TransCore's, eGo tag, a 915 MHz, 1024-bit read-write passive tag in a paper-thin adhesive form factor. The tags, which adhere directly to a car's windshield, have a read range of 9.6 meters and are compliant with the ANS NCITS 256-2001 standard. The TransCore contract includes 100,000 tags and 18 multiprotocol eGo 3110A series readers, which read both the new eGo tags and the active tags currently in use. The eGo readers will be installed by TransCore on the 18-lane toll road by mid-summer 2005. Rather than conduct a recall of the current tags, the tollway authority will introduce eGo tags gradually, issuing them to new users and to current users as their active tags become dysfunctional. Nationwide, millions of active tags used in electronic toll collection systems are approaching the end of their battery life, according to TransCore.

New Unibar Bar Code Software Supports RFID

Unibar, a Michigan-based bar code software manufacturer, recently announced BARCODE 2000 V7, a version of its server-based label printing software for Unix, Linux and Windows that supports RFID-capable thermal label printers. The product currently supports the RFID capability of Printronix and Zebra

RFID thermal printers and will support similar printers from Sato, Datamax, Intermec and Paxar in early 2005. Eleven EPC (Electronic Product Code) tag types are supported, including both 64-bit tags and 96-bit tags, compliant with the EPC Tag Data Standard Version 1.1 revision 1.24. Users can set up component fields, such as serial number and company prefix, and let BARCODE 2000 perform the bit field manipulations necessary, or they can define a prebuilt string that is passed onto the printer. The software includes a label design function to determine the placement of the RFID antenna to avoid placing a printed field on top of the chip and antenna. BARCODE 2000 V7 is scheduled for general release in January 2005, but early release is available. Unibar products are sold through VARs and resellers or by contacting Unibar directly.

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