Ultra-Low-Dropout Linear Regulator

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A radiation-tolerant, ultra-low-dropout linear regulator can operate between –150 and 150 °C. Prototype components were demonstrated to be performing well after a total ionizing dose of 1 Mrad (Si). Unlike existing components, the linear regulator developed during this activity is unconditionally stable over all operating regimes without the need for an external compensation capacitor. The absence of an external compensation capacitor reduces overall system mass/volume, increases reliability, and lowers cost.

Linear regulators generate a precisely controlled voltage for electronic circuits regardless of fluctuations in the load current that the circuit draws from the regulator. To maximize the efficiency of the regulator, the dropout voltage (a measure of the voltage the regulator itself needs to operate) needs to be as small as possible. Existing regulators use p-channel transistors to minimize the dropout voltage, but p-channel regulators are intrinsically unstable and require an external compensation capacitor to stabilize their operation. The electrical properties of the compensation capacitor (in particular, its equivalent series resistance, ESR) must be well controlled to ensure stability. Changes in the ESR with temperature and/or radiation doses present challenges to stable regulator operation in extreme environments. This innovation allows an n-channel transistor to perform the regulation without the need for an external capacitor.

The n-channel pass transistor of the linear regulator operates in depletion mode thereby allowing ultralow dropout voltages of less than 100 mV.

This work was done by Trevor Thornton of Arizona State University and William Lepekowski and Seth Wilk of SJT Micropower for Goddard Space Flight Center. For further information, contact the Goddard Innovative Partnerships Office at (301) 286-5810, GSC-16097-1.

Excitation of a Parallel Plate Waveguide by an Array of Rectangular Waveguides

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This work addresses the problem of excitation of a parallel plate waveguide by an array of rectangular waveguides that arises in applications such as the continuous transverse stub (CTS) antenna and dual-polarized parabolic cylindrical reflector antennas excited by a scanning line source. In order to design the junction region between the parallel plate waveguide and the linear array of rectangular waveguides, waveguide sizes have to be chosen so that the input match is adequate for the range of scan angles for both polarizations.

Electromagnetic wave scattered by the junction of a parallel plate waveguide by an array of rectangular waveguides is analyzed by formulating coupled integral equations for the aperture electric field at the junction. The integral equations are solved by the method of moments. In order to make the computational process efficient and accurate, the method of weighted averaging was used to evaluate rapidly oscillating integrals encountered in the moment matrix. In addition, the real axis spectral integral is evaluated in a deformed contour for speed and accuracy. The MoM results for a large finite array have been validated by comparing its reflection coefficients with corresponding results for an infinite array generated by the commercial finite element code, HFSS. Once the aperture electric field is determined by MoM, the input reflection coefficients at each waveguide port, and coupling for each polarization over the range of useful scan angles, are easily obtained.

Results for the input impedance and coupling characteristics for both the vertical and horizontal polarizations are presented over a range of scan angles. It is shown that the scan range is limited to about 35° for both polarizations and therefore the optimum waveguide is a square of size equal to about 0.62 free space wavelength.

This work was done by Sembiam Rengarajan of Caltech for NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory. For more information, contact iaoffice@jpl.nasa.gov. NPO-47943