Habitable Exoplanet Imager Optical-Mechanical Design and Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The Habitable Exoplanet Imager (HabEx) is a space telescope currently in development whose mission includes finding and spectroscopically characterizing exoplanets. Effective high-contrast imaging requires tight stability requirements of the mirrors to prevent issues such as line of sight and wavefront errors. PATRAN and NASTRAN were used to model updates in the design of the HabEx telescope and find how those updates affected stability. Most of the structural modifications increased first mode frequencies and improved line of sight errors. These studies will be used to help define the baseline HabEx telescope design.

BACKGROUND

Science Behind HabEx Technical Requirements

• Exoplanets are difficult to directly image due to their home star’s glare which can be billions of times brighter than the planet’s reflected light
• Blocking the light from the star is possible with a coronagraph
• The coronagraph has tight stability tolerances for the optical surfaces
• Technical challenges involve creating a telescope which is stiff enough to prevent deflections of the primary mirror in the realm of nanometers

METHODS

• Utilized PATRAN for finite element modeling and preprocessing
• Modeled and meshed JPL Spacecraft BUS
• Integrated various design modifications into full finite element model (FEM)

RESULTS

• Found that the “rigid” representation of the Spacecraft BUS created better LOS and jitter behaviors
• Changing from 1% damping to 0.05% damping changed displacements rotations by a factor of around 14 in the worst cases for the first few peaks
• Created a NASTRAN SOL 111 file (modal frequency response) which tracked the primary mirror nodes to find the dynamic surface figure error
• Explored mounting locations of the primary mirror and found an optimal mounting location for the current support structure design at 65% mount location.
• Created a new FEM to be used in the future for calculating microthruster disturbances

CONCLUSIONS

• A more rigid Spacecraft BUS leads to improved optical stability by an order of magnitude for some first peaks
• Changing from 1% to 0.05% structural damping does not increase displacements and rotations by large orders of magnitude
• Tilt in the primary mirror dynamic surface figure error needs to be removed
• A new MATLAB code needs to be run for the microthruster disturbance data
• Support structure levels off at a first modal frequency of ~50Hz for tubes 20cm (8in) in diameter. The stiffness of the structure may not improve with larger tube diameters due to the members of the structure approaching their maximum stiffness

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