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(71) Applicant: NEXT LEVEL COMMUNICATIONS [US/US]; 6153 State Farm Drive, Rohnert Park, CA 94928 (US).			
(72) Inventors: BUCKLAND, Kenneth, M.; 7466 Mercedes Way, Rohnert Park, CA 94928 (US). EAMES, Thomas, R.; 5206 Pressley Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404 (US). TRINH, Lac, X.; 1255 Marlene Court, Rohnert Park, CA 94928 (US). WARWICK, Steven, D.; 4471 Mount Taylor Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404 (US).		Published <i>With international search report.</i>	
(74) Agents: ELDERING, Charles, A. et al.; 111 North Broad Street, Doylestown, PA 18901 (US).			

In an Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) communications network (150) which operates over a shared media a method of addressing and access control between a central transceiver (120) and multiple transceivers (130) is required. A device identifier is placed in the Generic Flow Control (GFC) field (400) of the ATM cells (320) to indicate that cells (320) are designated for a particular transceiver or transceivers in the residence. In the reverse direction, transceivers (130) in the residence use the GFC field to indicate that they are attempting to sign on to the network. The GFC bits are returned to zero prior to passing the ATM cells to the ATM processing layer.