

METAL-CONTAINING TRANSACTION CARD AND METHOD OF MAKING THE SAME

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Technical Field

Metal-containing transaction cards useful for the purchase of goods and/or services and methods of making the same are provided. The metal-containing transaction cards may be credit cards, debit cards, check cards, stored-value cards, or
10 any other transaction card. Each card may be standard-sized (i.e., about 3 3/8 inches by about 2 1/4 inches) or any other size yet still usable as a transaction card. Moreover, the metal-containing transaction cards may have a magnetic stripe, an embedded microchip, a signature panel, a holographic image, or any other feature typically contained on or within a transaction card. The transaction cards have at least one
15 layer of metal.

Background

The proliferation of transaction cards, which allow the cardholder to pay with credit rather than cash, started in the United States in the early 1950s. Initial transaction cards were typically restricted to select restaurants and hotels and were
20 often limited to an exclusive class of individuals. Since the introduction of plastic credit cards, the use of transaction cards have rapidly proliferated from the United States, to Europe, and then to the rest of the world. Transaction cards are not only information carriers, but also typically allow a consumer to pay for goods and services without the need to constantly possess cash, or if a consumer needs cash, transaction
25 cards allow access to funds through an automatic teller machine (ATM). Transaction cards also reduce the exposure to the risk of cash loss through theft and reduce the need for currency exchanges when traveling to various foreign countries. Due to the advantages of transaction cards, hundreds of millions of cards are now produced and

issued annually, thereby resulting in a need for companies to differentiate their cards from competitor's cards.

Initially, the transaction cards often included the issuer's name, the cardholder's name, the card number, and the expiration date embossed onto the card.

5 The cards also usually included a signature field on the back of the card for the cardholder to provide a signature to protect against forgery and tampering. Thus, the cards served as devices to provide data to merchants and the security associated with the card was the comparison of the cardholder's signature on the card to the cardholder's signature on a receipt along with the embossed cardholder's name on the
10 card.

Due to the popularity of transaction cards, numerous companies, banks, airlines, trade groups, sporting teams, clubs and other organizations have developed their own transaction cards. As such, many companies continually attempt to differentiate their transaction cards and increase market share not only by offering
15 more attractive financing rates and low initiation fees, but also by offering unique, aesthetically pleasing features on the transaction cards. As such, many transaction cards include not only demographic and account information, but the transaction cards also include graphic images, designs, photographs and security features. A recent security feature is the incorporation of a diffraction grating, or holographic image,
20 into the transaction card which appears to be three-dimensional. Holographic images restrict the ability to fraudulently copy or reproduce transaction cards because of the need for extremely complex systems and apparatus for producing holograms.

Administrative and security issues, such as charges, credits, merchant settlement, fraud, reimbursements, etc., have increased due to the increasing use of
25 transaction cards. Thus, the transaction card industry started to develop more

sophisticated transaction cards which allowed the electronic reading, transmission, and authorization of transaction card data for a variety of industries. For example, magnetic stripe cards, optical cards, smart cards, calling cards, and supersmart cards have been developed to meet the market demand for expanded features, functionality, and security. In addition to the visual data, the incorporation of a magnetic stripe on the back of a transaction card allows digitized data to be stored in machine readable form. As such, magnetic stripe readers are used in conjunction with magnetic stripe cards to communicate purchase data received from a cash register device on-line to a host computer along with the transmission of data stored in the magnetic stripe, such as account information and expiration date.

Due to the susceptibility of the magnetic stripe to tampering, the lack of confidentiality of the information within the magnetic stripe and the problems associated with the transmission of data to a host computer, integrated circuits were developed which could be incorporated into transaction cards. These integrated circuit (IC) cards, known as smart cards, proved to be very reliable in a variety of industries due to their advanced security and flexibility for future applications. However, even integrated circuit cards are susceptible to counterfeiting.

As magnetic stripe cards and smart cards developed, the market demanded international standards for the cards. The card's physical dimensions, features and embossing area were standardized under the International Standards Organization ("ISO"), ISO 7810 and ISO 7811. The issuer's identification, the location of particular compounds, coding requirements, and recording techniques were standardized in ISO 7812 and ISO 7813, while chip card standards were established in ISO 7813. For example, ISO 7811 defines the standards for the magnetic stripe which is a 0.5 inch stripe located either in the front or rear surface of the card and which is

divided into three longitudinally parallel tracks. The first and second tracks hold read-only information with room for 79 alphanumeric characters and 40 numeric characters, respectively. The third track is reserved for financial transactions and includes enciphered versions of the user's personal identification number, country
5 code, currency units, amount authorized per cycle, subsidiary accounts, and restrictions.

More information regarding the features and specifications of transaction cards can be found in, for example, Smart Cards by Jose Luis Zoreda and Jose Manuel Oton, 1994; Smart Card Handbook by W. Rankl and W. Effing, 1997, and the
10 various ISO standards for transaction cards available from ANSI (American National Standards Institute), 11 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036.

The incorporation of machine-readable components onto transactions cards encouraged the proliferation of devices to simplify transactions by automatically reading from and/or writing onto transaction cards. Such devices include, for
15 example, bar code scanners, magnetic stripe readers, point of sale terminals (POS), automated teller machines (ATM) and card-key devices. With respect to ATMs, the total number of ATM devices shipped in 1999 was 179,274 (based on Nilson Reports data) including the ATMs shipped by the top ATM manufacturers, namely NCR (138-18 231st Street, Laurelton, New York 11413), Diebold (5995 Mayfair, North Canton,
20 Ohio 44720-8077), Fujitsu (11085 N. Torrey Pines Road, La Jolla, California 92037), Omron (Japan), OKI (Japan) and Triton.

Typical transaction cards are made from thermoplastic materials, such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and polyethylene terephthalate (PET). However, these transaction cards are susceptible to being damaged or destroyed if exposed to
25 damaging environments. For example, transaction cards may be damaged if left

exposed to the elements for an extended period of time. Moisture and/or sunlight may break down the chemical bonds within the polymers of typical transaction cards, such that transaction cards left exposed to moisture and sunlight may become warped, cracked and unusable. In addition, thermoplastic transaction cards may be easily bent
5 or may be broken or cut, thereby damaging the transaction card and rendering it unusable.

A need, therefore, exists for a transaction card that has both strength and durability. Moreover, a need exists for a transaction card that withstands exposure to the elements, such as moisture or sunlight. A need further exists for a transaction card
10 that may incorporate the features noted above, such as holograms, signature panels, magnetic stripes, microchips, and the like, such that it has both strength and durability. In addition, a need exists for a transaction card that overcomes the problems noted above.

Summary

15 The present invention relates to a metal-containing transaction card and a method of making the same. The metal-containing transaction card may be standard-sized (i.e., about 3 3/8 inches by about 2 1/4 inches) or any other size yet still usable as a transaction card. Moreover, the transaction card may have a magnetic stripe, an embedded microchip, a signature panel, a holographic image, or any other feature
20 typically contained on or within the transaction card. The transaction card of the present invention has at least one layer of metal. Preferably, the transaction card of the present invention has at least one layer of titanium or stainless steel.

A transaction card and a method of making the same are provided whereby the transaction card has at least one layer of metal. The at least one layer of metal
25 provides durability and strength to the transaction card. The one layer of metal may

be any metal able to be utilized as a transaction card or incorporated into or within a transaction card. Preferably, the at least one layer of metal is titanium, stainless steel or aluminum.

Further, a transaction card having at least one layer of metal is provided
5 whereby the transaction card is of a standard size, i.e., compliant with the International Standards Organization (ISO) for transaction cards.

In addition, a transaction card having at least one layer of metal may further have other layers that include one or more polymeric materials or other metal material, such as aluminum and the like.

10 Still further, a metal-containing transaction card is provided having features typically contained on or in transaction cards, such as magnetic stripes, embedded microchips, signature panels, holographic images, and the like. Moreover, the metal-containing transaction card may be printed with indicia, such as via screen-printing or a laser-etching process to uniquely identify the transaction card and/or the issuer of
15 the transaction card or any other information.

Additional features and advantages of the present invention are described in, and will be apparent from, the detailed description of the presently preferred embodiments and from the drawings.

Brief Description of the Figures

FIG. 1A illustrates a plan view of a front face of a metal-containing transaction card.

FIG. 1B illustrates a plan view of a back face of a metal-containing transaction card.

FIG. 2A illustrates a cross-sectional view of a metal-containing transaction card along line II-II of FIG. 1B.

FIG. 2B illustrates a cross-sectional view of an alternate embodiment of a transaction card along line II-II of FIG. 1B.

FIG. 2C illustrates a cross-sectional view of another alternate embodiment of a transaction card along line II-II of FIG. 1B.

FIG. 2D illustrates a cross-sectional view of a still further alternate embodiment of a transaction card along line II-II of FIG. 1B.

FIG. 2E illustrates a cross-sectional view of another alternate embodiment of a transaction card along line II-II of FIG. 1B.

FIG. 3 illustrates a flow chart showing a method of making metal-containing transaction cards.

FIG. 4 illustrates a flow chart showing an alternate method of making titanium transaction cards.

FIG. 5 illustrates another flow chart showing an alternate methods of titanium transaction cards.

FIG. 6 illustrates an alternate flow chart showing a still further alternate method of making titanium transaction cards.

FIG. 7 illustrates a plan view of a titanium card made during the methods of making the titanium transaction cards.

FIG. 8 illustrates a plan view of a fill panel made during the methods of making the titanium transaction cards.

FIG. 9 illustrates a plan view of an embossed titanium card made during the methods of making the titanium transaction cards.

5 **FIG. 10** illustrates a plan view of a titanium card having a fill panel disposed within a pocket.

FIG. 11 illustrates a cross-sectional view of the titanium card having the fill panel disposed within the pocket.

Detailed Description of the Presently Preferred Embodiments

10 Metal-containing transaction cards and methods of making the same are provided. The transaction cards may be standard-sized (i.e., about 3 3/8 inches by about 2 1/4 inches) or any other size yet still usable as a transaction card. Moreover, the transaction card may have a magnetic stripe, an embedded microchip, a signature panel, a holographic image, or any other feature typically contained on or within a
15 transaction card. The transaction cards have at least one layer of metal, preferably titanium or stainless steel.

Referring now to the drawings, wherein like numerals refer to like parts, FIG. 1 illustrates a plan view of a metal-containing transaction card 1 having a front face 10. The transaction card 1 is composed of at least one layer of metal that has been
20 flattened into a card shape. Typically metal can be rolled into a sheet. The sheet can then be cut to form individual transaction cards.

Any metal may be utilized as the layer or layers of the transaction cards described herein. Specifically, the metals may include titanium, stainless steel, or aluminum, although any other metal is contemplated by the present invention.

On the front face 10 of the transaction card 1 may be indicia, such as images, graphics, words, or other symbols, that may be printed on the front face 10 using conventional printing techniques. Alternatively, the indicia may be laser-etched. A typical laser-etching device for laser-etching metal, such as titanium or stainless steel, is done by a laser from Virtek Vision International, Inc. Lasers can provide marking of metals such as titanium, stainless steel or aluminum of depths of up to 0.100 inches and as low as about 0.003 inches. A pattern may be laser marked onto the front face 10 (or the rear face 20, as described below and illustrated by FIG. 1B).

In addition, the laser-etching of the metal layer, typically titanium, may provide the transaction card 1 with a plurality of colors on one or both of the faces of the card 1. Specifically, the energy utilized to laser-etch the metal may allow the metal to recrystallize in such a way as to be viewable by an individual as being of a specific color or colors.

In an alternative embodiment, one or both faces of the transaction card 1 may be anodized using conventional anodizing methods, thereby providing a surface on one or both faces of the transaction card 1 that may be sealed with an oxide layer thereby protecting the metal and allowing the surface to be receptive to printing inks or coatings. In addition, the anodizing process may provide a color to one or both faces of the transaction card 1. For example, the anodizing process may comprise treatment of the surface of the metal with an ionic solution under an electrical current, which can provide one or both faces of the transaction card 1 with a color depending on the voltage of the electricity that is used to anodize the one or both faces of the transaction card 1.

A coating may be applied to one or both faces of the transaction card 1. Preferably, the coating may be a silane compound thereby providing the metal in the

transaction card 1 resistance to scratches, damage, fingerprints, and the like. In addition, a dye or ink may be incorporated into the silane coating thereby providing the transaction card 1 with a particular color. Typically, the silane and the dye are provided across one or both surfaces of the transaction card 1. Preferably, the silane coating may be incorporated with a black dye whereby one or both faces of the transaction card 1 will have a black appearance. Of course, any other colored coating may be applied to the surface of one or both faces of the transaction card 1 after the surface of one or both faces of the transaction card 1 are anodized, such as acrylic or polyethylene terephthalate. In addition, the surface coating may be comprised of a thermoset polymeric material, applied to one or both faces of the transaction card. The thermoset material may be applied to the transaction card 1 by coating one or both faces of the transaction card 1 with dry powder of the thermoset material, and baking the thermoset material to melt the same and set the material on the surface of the transaction card 1. Of course, the transaction card 1 may be provided with no colored coating, thereby providing a metal-colored transaction card, whereby the natural color of the metal may be viewable.

FIG. 1B illustrates a rear face 20 of the transaction card 1 of the present invention. Provided on the rear face 20 may be a magnetic stripe 22 that may be applied to the rear face 20 using conventional methods, such as by stamping the magnetic stripe to the transaction card 1. Moreover, a signature panel 24 may be provided as well and may also be stamped to the transaction card 1 or applied via any other conventional method. The signature panel allows the owner of the transaction card to place his or her signature on the transaction card, thereby providing a security feature. In addition, a microchip may be embedded into the transaction card of the present invention. Of course, any other feature may be included on the front face 10

or the rear face 20 of the transaction card 1 as may be apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art.

FIG. 2A illustrates a cross-sectional side view of the transaction card 1 along lines II-II of FIG. 1B. As illustrated, the transaction card 1 includes at least a first layer 26 of metal. Of course, the transaction card 1 may comprise two or more layers of metal that are adhered together via heat, pressure, and/or adhesive. Preferably, the transaction card 1 contains at least one layer of titanium or stainless steel. The first layer 26 further includes the magnetic stripe 22 and the signature panel 24 adhered directly to the first layer 26 of metal. Preferably, the total thickness of the first layer 26 is about 30 mils, although other thicknesses of the first layer 26 are contemplated by the present invention. The layers illustrated in FIGS. 2A-2E are exaggerated in thickness to clearly illustrate the structures of the transaction cards described herein.

The transaction card 1 may be stamped, embossed or etched to provide texture, images, alphanumeric characters, or the like. As described above, the front or rear surfaces of the transaction card 1 may be printed or laser-etched to provide indicia, such as graphics, images, text, or any other indicia. In addition, the surface of each face of the first layer 26 may be anodized and/or coated with a coating to protect the surfaces of the metal and/or to provide the surfaces with a color. Moreover, an adhesive (not shown) may be provided for adhering the magnetic stripe 22 and the signature panel 24 to the metal of the first layer 26. Further, a microchip (not shown) may be embedded into the first layer 26 of metal to provide smart card capabilities to the transaction card made therefrom.

FIG. 2B illustrates an alternate embodiment of the present invention of a cross-sectional view of the transaction card 1 along line II-II of FIG. 1B. As illustrated, the transaction card 1 includes a metal layer 30, and an optional adhesive

layer 32 to adhesively secure the magnetic strip 22 and signature panel 24 to the metal layer 30. The adhesive layer 32 may be laminated, coated, or otherwise applied to the metal layer 30. Preferably, the total thickness of the transaction card 1 including the metal layer 30 and the adhesive layer 32, as illustrated in FIG. 2B, is about 30 mils, although other thicknesses are contemplated in the present invention. Preferably, the metal layer 30 is made of titanium or stainless steel.

Alternatively, the transaction card does not include an adhesive layer, as illustrated in FIG. 2A, and the magnetic stripe 22 and/or signature panel 24, as well as any other feature, is applied directly to one or both surfaces of the metal layer 30. Alternatively, the transaction card 1 may have an adhesive layer (not shown) provided on the front face 10 of the transaction card 1 for adhering inks or other printing to the metal layer 30.

The transaction card of FIG. 2B may be stamped, embossed or etched to provide texture, images, graphics, alphanumeric characters or the like to the transaction card. As described above, the front or rear surfaces of the transaction card may be printed or laser-etched to provide indicia, such as graphics, images, text, or any other indicia.

FIG. 2C illustrates an alternate embodiment of the present invention of a cross-sectional view of a transaction card taken along line II-II of FIG. 1B. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 2C, the transaction card 1 comprises a core layer 40 of a substrate, such as a thermoplastic material of, for example, PVC, PET copolymer, or other substrate. Further, the core layer 40 has a layer of metal laminated to one or both sides of the core layer 40. In FIG. 2C, the core layer 40 has a first metal layer 42 laminated or otherwise disposed adjacent to a first surface of the core layer 40 and a second metal layer 44 laminated or otherwise disposed adjacent to a second surface of

the core layer 40. The core layer 40 may be about 18 mils, while each metal layer 42, 44 may be about 6 mils to provide a transaction card that is about 30 mils in total thickness. However, the core layer 40 and metal layers 42, 44 may be any thickness. Preferably, the metal layers 42, 44 are titanium or stainless steel.

5 Provided on the second metal layer 44 may be an adhesive 46 laminated or otherwise applied thereto for providing adhesion for the magnetic stripe 22, signature panel 24, or other feature typically included on a transaction card. Alternatively, an adhesive layer (not shown) is provided on the first metal layer 42 for providing adhesion to inks for printing purposes, or for any other reason. Alternatively, there is
10 no adhesive layer between the magnetic stripe 22, signature panel 24, or other feature typically included on the transaction card and the first and/or second metal layers 42, 44.

In addition, the transaction card of FIG. 2C may be stamped, embossed or etched to provide texture, images, graphics, alphanumeric characters or the like to the
15 transaction card. As described above, the front or rear surfaces of the transaction card may be printed or laser-etched to provide indicia, such as graphics, images, text, or any other indicia.

FIG. 2D illustrates a fourth embodiment of the present invention, whereby the transaction card 1, illustrated in a cross-sectional view in FIG. 2D, comprises a first
20 layer 50 of a substrate, such as a thermoplastic material of, for example, PVC or PET copolymer, and a second layer 52 of metal laminated or otherwise disposed adjacent to the first layer 50. The first layer 50 and the second layer 52 may have thicknesses that sum to about 30 mils. For example, the first layer may be about 18 mils and the second layer (of metal) may be about 12 mils. However, the layers may be any other
25 thicknesses. Preferably, the second layer 52 of metal is titanium or stainless steel.

The first layer 50 may further include an adhesive 54 to provide adhesion to the magnetic stripe 22, the signature panel 24, or to any other feature contained on the transaction card 1. Alternatively, no adhesive layer is present.

FIG. 2E illustrates a fifth embodiment of the present invention, whereby the transaction card 1, illustrated in a cross-sectional view in FIG. 2E, comprises a first layer 60 of a metal substrate, such as aluminum, or other metal substrate, and a second layer 62 of a second metal laminated or otherwise disposed adjacent to the first layer 60. Preferably, the second layer 62 is titanium or stainless steel, although other metals are contemplated by the present invention. As with the transaction cards described above, the first layer 60 may have an adhesive layer 64 laminated or otherwise applied thereto for providing adhesion to the magnetic stripe 22 or the signature panel 24. As with the other embodiment described above, the adhesive may be provided on the second layer as well for providing adhesion to inks for printing, or for other features typically contained on a transaction card. Alternatively, no adhesive layer is present.

FIG. 3 illustrates a method 100 of making a metal-containing transaction card of the present invention, wherein the metal is titanium. Specifically, the method 100 includes a first step 102 of preparing the titanium to form into transaction cards. Specifically a sheet of titanium may be prepared that is about 30 mils thick. Typically, the titanium metal is rolled and flattened to the required thickness. Preferably, the titanium sheet comprises titanium metal that has little to no magnetic properties, so that the titanium does not interfere with the magnetic stripe and/or microchip that may be embedded within the transaction card.

In an anodizing step 104, the titanium sheet is anodized using a conventional anodizing process. Specifically, the titanium may be disposed in a bath having ions

and an electrical current therein to anodize one or both of the faces of the sheet of titanium. As noted above, anodizing the sheet of titanium can provide one or both faces of the sheet of titanium with a colored surface, depending on the current that is supplied during the anodizing process, as is apparent to one having ordinary skill in
5 the art. Moreover, anodizing oxidizes the surface of the titanium, thereby sealing and protecting the titanium.

In a coating step 106, a coating is applied to one or both faces of the sheet of titanium to provide one or both faces of the sheet with a color and to further protect the titanium. Specifically, the coating may be a silane coating having a dye contained
10 therein, wherein the silane is coated as a layer on one or both faces of the transaction card. The silane coating may be applied in a waterless solvent or a water-based system. In addition, other materials that may be coated to one or both faces of the transaction card are polyethylene terephthalate and acrylic, although any other coating may be utilized to provide a coating to protect the titanium and, optionally, to provide
15 a color to the one or both faces of the transaction card. For example, the coating may be made from a thermoset material that may be sprayed onto the one or both faces of the transaction card in powder form. The transaction card may then be baked, and the powder may melt to the surface of the transaction card.

Step 108 illustrates a cutting step whereby the sheet of titanium, which may
20 have been anodized and/or coated as described above, may be cut into individual transaction card shapes. Common methods of cutting titanium include, but are not limited to, water jet cutting, die cutting, laser cutting or plasma cutting. The goal in cutting the titanium is to easily and efficiently cut the titanium sheet into transaction card shapes while avoiding sharp edges.

After cutting the titanium sheet via step 108, the individual transaction cards may be laser-engraved via a laser-engraving step 110. The laser engraving may be done via commonly known laser engraving techniques to provide a pattern in one or both faces of the transaction card. Moreover, the laser engraving may cut away a coating that may be disposed on the one or both faces of the transaction card, thereby providing a visible pattern. For example, if a black coating is applied to the titanium sheet via step 106, the laser beam may etch a pattern in the black coating to give a pattern that is not black, but may be metal colored, or colored in any other way. In addition, the laser beam may melt the surface of one or both faces of the transaction card, which may cause the titanium to recrystallize when cooled. The recrystallization may produce a variety of colors in the surface of one or both faces of the transaction card. Preferably, the laser engraving step 110 may be accomplished via a laser, such as, for example, a YAG laser having a wavelength of about 1064 nanometers. Of course, any other laser may be utilized that provides a pattern, a texture or a color to the titanium as may be apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art.

After laser engraving the transaction card, a magnetic stripe and signature panel of the transaction card may be applied to the transaction card via step 112. Typically, the magnetic stripe and the signature panel are stamped using techniques common in the art of making transaction cards. Specifically, the magnetic stripe and signature panel are applied to one or both of the faces of the transaction card with the use of an adhesive that may be applied on one or both faces of the transaction card. Preferably, the adhesive may be screen-printed to one or both faces of the transaction card, although any other method of applying the adhesive is contemplated by the present invention. Most materials require the use of an adhesive to stick to one or

both faces of the transaction card. However, certain coatings may allow the magnetic stripe and the signature panel to be applied without the use of adhesives. For example, a coating of thermoplastic, such as a flat black vinyl thermoplastic, may be coated onto the card and may allow the magnetic stripe and the signature panel to be applied to the transaction card without adhesive. The stamping process may melt the thermoplastic material, thereby allowing the thermoplastic material to adhere the magnetic stripe and/or the signature panel when cooled and solidified.

After the magnetic stripe and the signature panel have been applied to the transaction card, the transaction card may be milled via step 114 to provide a space to apply an embedded microchip for a smart card. The milling process may be done in a similar manner to conventional plastic transaction cards, but may be accomplished with a boron nitride, boron carbide tipped machine or other machine able to mill titanium. In addition, the transaction card may be milled via a cryo-milling process, in which the mill head is cooled with a stream of liquid nitrogen to ensure that the transaction card and/or the mill head does not overheat. Typically, the transaction card may have an area about 20 to about 25 mils deep milled from the transaction card to provide a space for the microchip. The microchip may be applied to the milled area of the transaction card, and may stay within the milled area due to an adhesive that may be provided.

After milling the transaction card to embed the microchip therein, the transaction card may be embossed via an embossing step 116. Specifically, the embossing may be done by subjecting the transaction card to a high pressure die that may punch a character or a plurality of characters into the surface of the transaction card. The embossing may be done to provide information on the surface of the transaction card that may be readable by an individual or a machine. Specifically, an

account number or other unique identifier is typically embossed on a transaction card. Preferably, the embossing step 116 may be accomplished with an addressograph machine. Of course, other methods of embossing the transaction card are contemplated, and the invention should not be limited as herein described.

5 Finally, the transaction card may be encoded via step 118 via any encoding steps commonly used to encode the transaction cards. Specifically, either or both of the recordable media, such as the magnetic stripe and/or the microchip, may be encoded to provide the transaction card having information contained thereon within the recordable media. The recordable media may be read via a magnetic stripe reader
10 or a microchip reader, as may be apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art.

FIG. 4 illustrates an alternate method 200 of making transaction cards comprising titanium. The method 200 comprises a first step 202 of preparing the titanium by rolling and flattening the titanium into a sheet to form into transaction cards. The first step 202 may be substantially similar to the first step 102 described
15 above with respect to FIG. 3.

After the titanium sheet is prepared via step 202, the titanium sheet may be cut in a cutting step 204, whereby the sheet of titanium may be cut into individual transaction card shapes. For example, the titanium sheet may be cut via the methods described above with respect to step 108 of FIG. 3.

20 Once the individual transaction cards have been cut from the titanium sheet, each individual transaction card may be tumbled and cleaned to smooth any sharp edges via a tumbling and cleaning step 206. It is important to ensure that all of the edges are smooth.

After the transaction cards have been smoothed and cleaned, each transaction
25 card may be anodized and primed via an anodizing step 208. The anodizing step may

be substantially similar to the anodizing step 104 as described above with reference to FIG. 3.

After being anodized and primed, each transaction card may be coated and oven cured via a coating step 210. The coating step 210 may be substantially similar
5 to the coating step 106 as described above with reference to FIG. 3. Each side of each transaction card may be coated and oven-cured separately in a multi-step process.

After each side of each transaction card is coated and oven-cured, each transaction card may be laser engraved via laser engraving step 212, which may be substantially similar to the laser-engraving step 110, as described above with
10 reference to FIG. 3.

Once each transaction card is laser engraved, a primer may be applied to one or both of the surfaces by screen printing the primer via a priming step 214. The primer may be applied across the entire surface of each transaction card, or may be applied precisely where a magnetic stripe and/or signature panels are desired.

15 After each transaction card is primed, the magnetic stripe and/or signature panels may be applied via step 216. The magnetic stripe and/or signature panel may be applied in a substantially similar way as described in step 112, described above with respect to FIG. 3.

After the magnetic stripe and/or signature panels have been applied, each of
20 the surfaces of each transaction card may be laser scored via step 218 to provide graphics, text and numerals to either or both of the surfaces of each transaction card.

Once each transaction card has been laser scored to provide graphics, text or numerals, a microchip may be disposed within the transaction card via step 220. For example, the transaction card may be milled to provide a space in the transaction card
25 for an embedded microchip. The disposing of the microchip into the transaction card

may be done in a substantially similar manner as step 114, described above with reference to FIG. 3.

Each transaction card may then be embossed via an embossing step 222, which may be substantially similar to the embossing step 118, as described above
5 with reference to FIG. 3. Further, the magnetic stripe and/or microchip may be encoded. The transaction cards may then be shipped to customers.

Finally, each transaction card's recordable media, such as the magnetic stripe and/or the embedded microchip, may be encoded via an encoding step 224.

In an alternate method of making titanium transaction cards 300 illustrated in
10 FIG. 5, sheets of titanium are prepared via step 302. The titanium sheets may be prepared as described above in steps 102, 104 with respect to FIGS. 3, 4. Specifically sheets of titanium may be prepared that are about 30 mils thick. In addition, sheets of titanium may be prepared that are about 15 mils thick, that will be cut into fill panels, as described below. Typically, the titanium metal is rolled and flattened to the
15 required thickness. Preferably, the titanium sheets comprise titanium metal that has little to no magnetic properties, so that the titanium does not interfere with the magnetic stripe and/or a microchip that may be embedded within the transaction card.

The 30 mil thick titanium sheets are then cut into individual cards via step 304. At the same time, the edges of the individual cards may be beveled to create
20 camfer edges. Preferably, the camfer edges may be prepared on both sides of each individual card on all four edges of each titanium card. Alternatively, the camfer edges may be prepared on only one side of each titanium card, such as on a front surface of each titanium card. In addition, at the same time that the camfer edges are prepared, a pocket may be milled into each individual card. The pocket may be
25 milled into a backside of each transaction card at the same location on the transaction

card that is embossed to provide characters on the front surface of each transaction card.

FIG. 7 illustrates a titanium card 350 prepared by the method described in FIG. 5. Specifically, the transaction card has a pocket 352 that is milled into the backside 354 of a titanium card that eventually will be manufactured into a transaction card, having typical transaction card functionality.

Referring now to FIG. 5, the 15 mil thick titanium sheets may then be cut into individual fill panels via step 306. FIG. 8 illustrates a fill panel 360 made by the process described herein with respect to FIG. 5. The fill panel will fit within the pocket 352, as shown in FIG. 7, when placed therein with a suitable adhesive. When the fill panel is disposed within the pocket 352 with a suitable adhesive, the fill panel forms a smooth surface on the backside of the titanium card 354, as illustrated by FIG. 10.

Both the cards and the fill panels may then be brushed via step 308 to provide a nice finish on each transaction card made. Typically, the brushing is done via known titanium brushing techniques to provide titanium surfaces having a grain running in the same direction. The brushing may also create titanium surfaces on each transaction card having any other type of pattern.

Both sides of each titanium card may be coated via step 310 by physical vapor deposition ("PVD") of a coating that may be utilized to both protect the titanium surfaces and provide a distinctive appearance. Preferably, the coating may be titanium carbonitride, which, when vapor deposited on the surfaces of each titanium card, provides an even and substantially black coating to each surface of each titanium card. One surface of each fill panel may also be coated by physical vapor deposition. Specifically, the surface of the fill panel that is disposed on the outside of the

transaction card when the fill panel is adhesively disposed within the pocket 352 should be coated by physical vapor deposition. Other coating techniques may also be utilized to provide the coating on the titanium card as apparent to one having skill in the art.

5 Graphics may then be laser etched into the titanium card via step 312. Specifically, the laser etching may etch both the coating and the titanium to provide the graphics, as described above.

 Primer may be applied to the backside of each titanium card via step 314 to allow the magnetic stripe and the signature panel to be hot stamped thereon, via step
10 316. A primer material that may be utilized is known as "passport transfer material," and may be utilized to allow the magnetic stripe and the signature panel to adhere to the titanium and/or the coating applied by physical vapor deposition, as described above. The signature panel and the magnetic stripe may be substantially similar to or identical to typical magnetic stripes and signature panels typically utilized in
15 transaction cards.

 Each titanium card may then be embossed via step 318. The embossing of the characters may be applied on the surface of the titanium within the pocket, as illustrated in FIG. 9 by a suitable embossing machine, such as an addressograph machine, wherein each embossed character 362 is represented by an "X". The
20 embossing is done within the pocket 352 so that the embossing may be done in titanium that is thinner than the total thickness of the transaction card. It has been found that embossing the characters 362 in thinner titanium is easier, and provides clearer and more visible characters, without distortion or warping of the characters or of the transaction card.

The recordable media that may be contained within each titanium card may then be recorded via step 320. For example, magnetic stripes are typically disposed on a surface of a transaction card. The magnetic stripe disposed on the surface of each titanium card may be encoded via step 320. In addition, if other recordable
5 media are present, such as an embedded microchip, it may be encoded via step 320.

Each embossed character displayed on the front surface of each transaction card may then be “tipped” or sanded or abraded to remove the coating applied by the physical vapor deposition. This allows each character to obtain a metallic hue that is easily and clearly visible when contrasted with the substantially black coating on the
10 remainder of the transaction card.

The fill panel 360 may then be adhered within the pocket 352 via step 324. A suitable adhesive may be utilized that adheres the titanium surface of the fill panel 360 with the titanium surface within the pocket 352 or the coating that may be on the surface of within the pocket 352 by physical vapor deposition. A suitable adhesive is
15 known as “die mount adhesive”, which is a heat activated film. FIG. 10 illustrates a titanium card with the fill panel 360 disposed within the pocket. FIG. 11 illustrates a cross-sectional view of the transaction card of FIG. 10 illustrating an adhesive 364 that may adhere the fill panel 360 within the pocket. An embossed character 362 is further illustrated in FIG. 11 protruding from the front surface of the transaction card.
20 Utilizing the fill panel 360 provides embossed characters that protrude from the front surface of the transaction card without being visible from the backside of the transaction card.

FIG. 6 illustrates an alternate method 400 of making titanium transaction cards. The method 400 is similar to the method 300, described above with respect to
25 FIG. 5. However, the transaction card made by the method 400 may have a chamfer

edge that is bare. In other words, the titanium transaction card may have a coating thereon, such as applied via physical vapor deposition. However, the chamfer edges may have a metallic hue because the coating may be removed at the edges to create a transaction card having a metallic "frame" around each transaction card.

5 A first step 402 of preparing the titanium sheets may be similar, if not identical, to the step of preparing the sheets as described in FIG.5, above. Step 404 entails applying the coating to the titanium sheets so that the entire titanium sheets are coated prior to cutting the sheets into individual cards and fill panels, which is done via step 406. When cutting each titanium sheet into individual titanium cards via step
10 406, each edge of each transaction card may be beveled to create the chamfer edges without the coating disposed thereon. The pocket, as illustrated in FIG. 7 is also milled during step 406.

 The fill panels are cut from the 15 mil thick titanium sheets via step 408. When coating the titanium sheets utilized as the fill panels, only one surface of the
15 sheet need be coated via vapor deposition. However, having both surfaces coated by physical vapor deposition does not change the method described herein.

 Each chamfer edge may be brushed and cleaned via step 410 to provide smooth edges having metallic grain running in the same direction. Alternatively, the edges may be brushed to provide patterns in the titanium on the edges of the
20 transaction cards.

 The titanium cards may then be etched to provide graphics via step 412. Primer may be applied for the magnetic stripe and signature panel for each transaction card via step 414. The magnetic stripe and signature panel may be applied via step 416. The card may be embossed via step 418. The recordable media may be encoded
25 via step 420. Each embossed character may be "tipped" via step 422. And the fill

panel may be adhered within the pocket via step 424. Each step 412-424 may be substantially similar to or identical to the steps 312-324, as described above with respect to FIG. 5.

It should be noted that various changes and modifications to the presently
5 preferred embodiments described herein will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Such changes and modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention and without diminishing its attendant advantages. It is, therefore, intended that such changes and modifications be covered by the appended claims.

Claims

We claim:

1. A transaction card comprising:
 - a first layer of metal contained within the transaction card; and
 - 5 a recordable medium on or within the transaction card for storing information relating to a transaction account.
2. The transaction card of claim 1 wherein the metal is titanium.
3. The transaction card of claim 1 wherein the metal is stainless steel.
4. The transaction card of claim 1 wherein the layer of metal is provided on a surface
- 10 of the transaction card.
5. The transaction card of claim 1 further comprising:
 - a second layer of a substrate disposed adjacent to the first layer of metal.
6. The transaction card of claim 5 further wherein the substrate is laminated to the first layer of metal.
- 15 7. The transaction card of claim 5 wherein the substrate is selected from the group consisting of a thermoplastic polymer and metal.
8. The transaction card of claim 7 wherein the thermoplastic polymer is selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl chloride and polyethylene terephthalate copolymer.
9. The transaction card of claim 1 further comprising:
 - 20 an adhesive layer disposed adjacent to the first layer of metal.
10. The transaction card of claim 5 further comprising:
 - an adhesive layer disposed adjacent the second layer of the substrate.
11. The transaction card of claim 1 wherein the recordable medium comprises a magnetic stripe disposed on the first layer of metal.

12. The transaction card of claim 5 wherein the recordable medium comprises a magnetic stripe disposed on the second layer of the substrate.
13. The transaction card of claim 9 wherein the recordable medium comprises a magnetic stripe disposed on the adhesive layer.
- 5 14. The transaction card of claim 10 wherein the recordable medium comprises a magnetic stripe disposed on the adhesive layer.
15. The transaction card of claim 1 further comprising:
a coating on a surface of the transaction card.
16. The transaction card of claim 15 wherein the coating is comprised of a material
10 selected from the group consisting of silane, polyethylene terephthalate, acrylic, titanium carbonitride and a thermoset polymeric material.
17. The transaction card of claim 15 wherein the coating comprises a dye for providing a color to the transaction card.
18. The transaction card of claim 1 further comprising:
15 a pattern etched into the surface of the metal layer.
19. The transaction card of claim 18 wherein the pattern is etched by a laser beam.
20. The transaction card of claim 1 further comprising:
a microchip embedded in the metal layer.
21. The transaction card of claim 1 further comprising:
20 an oxide layer on at least one surface of the metal layer from an anodizing process.
22. The transaction card of claim 1 wherein the metal layer is about 30 mils thick.
23. The transaction card of claim 1 further comprising:
a pocket;

embossed characters in the metal located within the pocket and protruding from a surface of the transaction card; and

a fill panel disposed within the pocket.

24. The transaction card of claim 1 further comprising:

5 an adhesive disposed within the pocket for adhering the fill panel within the pocket.

25. The transaction card of claim 1 further comprising:

chamfer edges around the perimeter of the transaction card.

26. A method of making a transaction card comprising the steps of:

10 providing a sheet of metal;

cutting the metal sheet into individual cards; and

applying a recordable medium on each card for storing information relating to a transaction account.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein the metal comprises titanium.

15 28. The method of claim 27 wherein the metal comprises stainless steel.

29. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of anodizing the metal to provide an oxide layer on at least one surface of the metal.

30. The method of claim 26 further comprising coating the metal with a coating.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein the coating comprises a material selected from
20 the group consisting of silane, polyethylene terephthalate, acrylic, titanium carbonitride, and a thermoset polymeric material.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the coating comprises a dye for providing a color to the transaction card.

33. The method of claim 26 wherein the cutting of the sheet of metal is accomplished via a means selected from the group consisting of water jet cutting, laser cutting, die cutting, and plasma cutting.

34. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of:

5 engraving at least one surface of the metal to provide a pattern in the surface of the transaction card.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein the engraving is accomplished via a laser beam.

36. The method of claim 35 further comprising the steps of:

 melting the surface of the metal with the laser beam; and

10 recrystallizing the surface of the metal to impart a color to the surface of the titanium.

37. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of:

 applying a signature panel to a surface of the transaction card.

38. The method of claim 37 further comprising the steps of:

15 applying an adhesive to the surface of the metal prior to applying the signature panel to the surface of the metal; and

 applying the signature panel to the adhesive.

39. The method of claim 26 wherein the recordable medium comprises a magnetic stripe.

20 40. The method of claim 39 further comprising the steps of:

 applying a primer material to the surface of the metal prior to applying the magnetic stripe to the metal; and

 applying the magnetic stripe to the primer material.

41. The method of claim 26 wherein the recordable medium comprises a microchip.

42. The method of claim 26 wherein the recordable medium comprises both a magnetic stripe and a microchip.
43. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of embossing each card to provide information thereon.
- 5 44. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of:
encoding the recordable medium with information.
45. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of:
laminating a substrate to the metal.
46. The method of claim 45 further wherein the substrate comprises a material
10 selected from the group consisting of a thermoplastic polymer and metal.
47. The method of claim 46 wherein the thermoplastic polymer is selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl chloride and polyethylene terephthalate copolymer.
48. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of:
beveling the edges of the transaction card.
- 15 49. A method of making a metal containing transaction card comprising:
providing a metal-containing card;
cutting a pocket within the card;
embossing the card within the pocket to provide embossed characters on a first
surface of the transaction card; and
20 filling the pocket to provide a smooth surface on a second surface of the
transaction card.
50. The method of claim 49 wherein the metal is titanium.
51. The method of claim 49 wherein the pocket is filled by a fill panel.
52. The method of claim 51 wherein the fill panel is titanium.

53. The method of claim 51 wherein the fill panel is disposed within the pocket with an adhesive.