

DISTRIBUTED PROTOCOL OVER A WIRELESS CONNECTION

Claim of Priority under 35 U.S.C. §119

[0001] This application claims the benefit of the filing date of U.S. provisional application no. 60/710,365 filed on August 22, 2005, entitled "A DISTRIBUTED METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR ACHIEVING WIRELINE RELIABILITY FOR CELLULAR COMMUNICATION SYSTEM," and assigned to the assignee hereof and hereby expressly incorporated by reference herein.

BACKGROUND

FIELD

[0002] The present disclosure relates generally to communication systems, and more particularly, to methods and systems employing a distributed protocol over a wireless connection.

BACKGROUND

[0003] In conventional wireless communications, an access network is generally employed to connect one or more access terminals to a packet-based network, such as the Internet. The access network is typically implemented with multiple access points dispersed throughout a geographic region. The geographic region is generally subdivided into smaller regions known as cells with an access point in each cell. The access point generally includes a transceiver function that supports wireless connections with the access terminals in its cell. A network function may be used to interface the access point to the packet-based network. Alternatively, the network function may be integrated into the access points.

[0004] A common protocol used for transporting physical frames over a wireless connection is Radio Link Protocol (RLP). RLP is a Negative Acknowledgement (NAK) based protocol designed to lower the errors caused by disturbances in the wireless medium to a level acceptable for applications running over the Internet today. In current systems, the RLP operates between the network function and the access terminal. This design forces any wireless related optimizations, such as header or body compression to happen at the network function, rather than the edge of the access network, i.e., the transceiver function. This design also prevents the delivery of higher

layer packets to the edge of the access network when the network function and transceiver function are not co-located, thereby increasing the NAK turnaround time due to backhaul delay to the network function. The inability to deliver higher layer packets to the edge of the access network may also result in stale data in various queues in the access point because higher layer packets that are dropped due to quality of service (QoS) may realistically only happen before the network function.

SUMMARY

[0005] An aspect of an access point is disclosed. The access point includes a transceiver function, and a network function configured to route packets between a packet-based network and the transceiver function. The transceiver function is configured to support a wireless connection and maintain a protocol instance over the wireless connection, the transceiver function being further configured to provide protocol translation between the packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

[0006] An aspect of a method for communications by an access point is disclosed. The access point includes a network function and a transceiver function. The method includes using the network function to route packets between a packet-based network and the transceiver function, supporting a wireless connection, and using the transceiver function to maintain a protocol instance over the wireless connection and provide protocol translation between the packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

[0007] An aspect a transceiver function is disclosed. The transceiver function includes means for exchanging packets with a network function in an access point, means for supporting a wireless connection, means for maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection, and means for providing protocol translation between the packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

[0008] An aspect of computer-readable storage medium containing a set of instructions executable by a processor in a transceiver function is disclosed. The

instructions include code for exchanging packets with a network function in an access point, code for supporting a wireless connection, code for maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection, and code for providing protocol translation between the packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

[0009] An aspect of an access terminal is disclosed. The access terminal includes a transceiver configured to support a wireless connection with an access point, and a processor configured to maintain a protocol instance over the wireless connection separate and independent from protocol instances maintained by other access points. The processor is further configured to provide protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

[0010] An aspect of a method for communications by an access terminal is disclosed. The method includes supporting a wireless connection with an access point, maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection separate and independent from protocol instances maintained by other access points, and providing protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

[0011] An aspect of a processor for use in an access terminal is disclosed. The access terminal includes means for supporting a wireless connection with an access point, means for maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection separate and independent from protocol instances maintained by other access points, and means for providing protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

[0012] An aspect of computer-readable storage medium containing a set of instructions executable by a processor in an access terminal is disclosed. The instructions include code for supporting a wireless connection with an access point, code for maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection separate and

independent from protocol instances maintained by other access points, and code for providing protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] Various aspects of a wireless communications system are illustrated by way of example, and not by way of limitation, in the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0014] FIG. 1 is a conceptual block diagram of an embodiment of a communications system;

[0015] FIG. 2A is a conceptual diagram illustrating the conversion of a packet stream from a packet-based network to physical frames for transmission to the access terminal;

[0016] FIG. 2B is a conceptual diagram illustrating an example of fields in the headers of the physical frames in FIG. 2A;

[0017] FIG. 2C is a conceptual diagram illustrating another example of fields in the headers of the physical frames in FIG. 2A;

[0018] FIG. 3A is conceptual block diagrams illustrating the RLP functionality on the forward link;

[0019] FIG. 3B is conceptual block diagrams the RLP functionality on the forward link during the handoff of an access terminal between access points;

[0020] FIG. 4 is a conceptual block diagram illustrating the RLP functionality on the reverse link during the handoff of the access terminal between access points;

[0021] FIG. 5 is a conceptual block diagram illustrating an example of a wireless transceiver and processor;

[0022] FIG. 6A is a conceptual block diagram illustrating the functionality of the wireless transceiver and processor of FIG. 5 in a transceiver function of an access point; and

[0023] FIG. 6B is a conceptual block diagram illustrating the functionality of the wireless transceiver and processor of FIG. 5 in an access terminal.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0024] The detailed description set forth below in connection with the appended drawings is intended as a description of various embodiments and is not intended to represent the only embodiments in which the concepts and techniques described herein may be practiced. The detailed description includes specific details for the purpose of providing a thorough understanding of various concepts and techniques. However, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that these concepts and techniques may be practiced without these specific details. In some instances, well known structures and components are shown in block diagram form in order to avoid obscuring the concepts and techniques disclosed herein.

[0025] Various concepts and techniques will be described in this disclosure in the context of a RLP distributed across multiple access points in an access network. However, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that these concepts and techniques may be extended to other protocols, such as a Signaling Link Protocol (SLP), Radio Link Control Protocol or the like. In one embodiment of an access point, the RLP functionality is moved down from the network function to the transceiver function. In this embodiment, the access point can maintain a separate and independent RLP instance over a wireless connection with an access terminal. As a result, the need to transfer the dynamic state of the RLP instance during handoff is eliminated because the target access point has its own RLP sequence space. In addition, higher layer packets can be forwarded to the edge of the network and compression can also be performed there.

[0026] FIG. 1 is a conceptual block diagram of an embodiment of a communications system 100. An access terminal 102 is shown connected to packet-based network 104, such as the Internet, through a wireless access network 106. The access terminal 102 may be a wireless telephone, a laptop computer, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a pager, a camera, a game console, an audio device, a video device, or any other suitable wireless communications device.

[0027] The access network 106 may include multiple access points dispersed throughout a geographic region. The geographic region is generally subdivided into smaller regions known as cells with an access point in each cell. The cell is typically made up of three sectors, covered by an arrangement of antennas pointed in different directions. For purposes of illustration, two access points 108a, 108b are shown,

however, any number of access points may be used to cover the geographic region of the communications system 100.

[0028] Each access point 108a, 108b includes a transceiver function 110a, 110b and a network function 112a, 112b. The transceiver function is used to maintain a wireless connection with the access terminal 102. In addition, the transceiver function maintains a RLP instance over the wireless connection that is separate and independent from the RLP instances maintained by other access points. With the RLP functionality in the transceiver function, the network function is limited to an Internet Protocol (IP) router.

[0029] Referring to FIG. 1, the access point 108a on the left is referred to as the “anchor” access point because it receives all packets from a packet source 114 addressed to the access terminal 102. The network function 112a in the anchor access point 108a is responsible for routing the packets to the access point currently in communication with the access terminal 102. In FIG. 1, the access terminal 102 is shown in communication with the anchor access point 108a, so all packets addressed to the access terminal 102 are routed to the transceiver function 110a in the anchor access point 108a. The transceiver function 110a maintains a wireless connection with the access terminal 102. A RLP instance over the wireless connection is also maintained between the transceiver function 110a and the access terminal 102. By maintaining the RLP instance on the network side at the transceiver function 110a, packets can be routed all the way to edge of the access network 106 before, for example, compressing the IP header or converting the packet to physical frames for transmission to the access terminal 102. NAK functionality can now be implemented at the transceiver function 110a, reducing the delay that might otherwise occur through the backhaul delay. In addition, packets may also be dropped at the transceiver function 110a to maintain QoS without generating unnecessary NAKs. Unnecessary NAKs are generated when the RLP sequence for a physical layer frame is assigned at the network function and the transceiver function drops the packet after the RLP sequence was assigned, resulting in missing data detected at the access terminal. The NAK is unnecessary since the packet was dropped due to QoS latency reasons and not due to disturbances in the wireless medium which the NAK was intended to correct.

[0030] The anchor access point 108a may also be referred to as the “serving” access point because it is serving as a connection point for the access terminal 102 to the packet-based network 104. As the access terminal 102 moves from left to right across

FIG. 1, it may be handed off to the access point 108b to the right of the anchor access point 108a. This access point 108b is referred to as the “target” access point because it is the target of the handoff. During handoff, the access terminal 102 tears down the wireless connection with the transceiver function 110a in the anchor access point 108a and establishes a new one with the transceiver function 110b in the target access point 108b. A new RLP instance is also established between the access terminal 102 and the transceiver function 110b in the target access point 108b. The new RLP instance is separate and independent from the RLP instance used to support the transport of physical frames prior to handoff. As a result, the dynamic state of the RLP instance in the anchor access point 108a does not need to be transferred to the serving access point 108b. Once the handoff is complete, the target access point 108b becomes the serving access point for access terminal 102. Packets received by the network function 112a in the anchor access point 108a are routed to the transceiver function 110b in the new serving access point 108b for delivery to the access terminal 102.

[0031] FIG. 2A is a conceptual diagram illustrating the conversion of a packet stream received from the network function to physical frames for transmission to the access terminal. In this example, each packet 202 is converted into two physical frames 206. Although not shown, a compression algorithm may be applied to each packet 202 before conversion. For example, the IP header may be compressed. Each physical frame 206 includes a header 208 and a payload 210. The headers contain sufficient information to recover the packet stream at the access terminal 102 (see FIG. 1). Included in the header 208 of each frame 206 is a RLP identifier that identifies the RLP instance. The payloads 210 contain the information in the packet.

[0032] Referring to FIGS. 3A and 3B, an example will now be given to illustrate the RLP functionality on the forward link. In FIG. 3A, the first packet 202a of a packet stream is delivered from the packet source 114 to the network function 112a in the anchor access point 108a. Since the anchor access point 108a is also the serving access point, the network function 112a routes the packet 202a to the transceiver function 110a in the anchor access point 108a.

[0033] The transceiver function 110a includes a compression layer 304a and a RLP layer 302a. The RLP layer 302a maintains a RLP instance with a RLP layer 302a' in the access terminal 102. The RLP layer 302a converts the compressed packet into two physical frames 206a₁, 206a₂. Each physical frame 206a₁, 206a₂ includes a header that

identifies the RLP instance (RLP1) between the transceiver function 110a and the access terminal 102. The two physical frames 206a₁, 206a₂ are transported over the wireless connection to the access terminal 102.

[0034] The RLP layer 302a' in the access terminal 102 strips the headers from the physical frames 206a₁, 206a₂ and reassembles the payloads. The reassembled payloads are provided to a decompression layer 304a' to recover the first packet 202a. The first packet 202a is then routed to a packet destination 306.

[0035] In FIG. 3B, the second packet 202b of the packet stream is delivered from the packet source 114 to the network function 112a in anchor access point 108a. The network function 112a routes the packet 202a to the transceiver function 110a where it is compressed and converted into two physical frames 206b₁, 206b₂. Each physical frame 206b₁, 206b₂ includes a header that identifies the RLP instance (RLP1) between the transceiver function 110a and the access terminal 102.

[0036] At the same time the second packet 202b is being processed by the anchor access point 108a, or thereabouts, the access terminal 102 initiates a handoff from the anchor access point 108a to a target access point 108b. In this example, the first physical frame 206b₁ is sent by the transceiver function 110a over the wireless connection to the access terminal 102 before the handoff. However, before the second physical frame 206b₂ can be sent, the access terminal 110 is handed off to the target access point 108b. The handoff process includes establishing a wireless connection between the transceiver function 110b in the target access point 108b and the access terminal. A new RLP instance (RLP2) is also established between a RLP layer 302b in the target access point 108b and a RLP layer 302b' in the access terminal.

[0037] Following the handoff of the access terminal 102 to the target access point 108b, which is now the serving access point, the second physical frame 206b₂ is routed by the transceiver function 110a in the anchor access point 108a to the transceiver function 110b in the serving access point 108b. The last byte in the first physical frame 206b₁ may be retransmitted with the second physical frame 206b₂ to effectively expire the flush timer used in conjunction with the NAK based protocol. The transceiver function 110b in the serving access point 108b then sends the second physical frame 206b₂ over the wireless connection to the access terminal 102.

[0038] As shown in FIG. 3B, the access terminal 102 maintains two RLP instances during handoff: RLP1 with the transceiver function 110a in the anchor access point 108a and RLP2 with the transceiver function 110b in the serving access point 108b. When the access terminal 102 receives the second physical frame 206b₂, it determines from the RLP identifier in the header that the payload belongs to the RLP instance identified as RLP1. The second physical frame 206b₂ is then delivered to the RLP layer 302a' supporting that RLP instance (RLP1). The RLP layer 302a' reassembles the payload from the second physical frame 206b₂ with the payload from the first physical layer 206b₁, which was received from the anchor access point 108a. The reassembled payloads are provided to the decompression layer 304a' to recover the second packet 202b. The second packet 202b is routed to the packet destination 306.

[0039] In this example, the third packet 202c of a packet stream is delivered from the packet source 114 to the network function 112a in anchor access point 108a. The network function 112a routes the packet 202a to the transceiver function 110b in the serving access point 108b. The transceiver function 110b in the serving access point 108b provides the third packet 202c to the compression and RLP layers 304b, 302b, which function together to generate two physical frames 206c₁, 206c₂. Each physical frame 206c₁, 206c₂ includes a header that identifies the RLP instance (RLP2) between the transceiver function 110b and the access terminal 102. The two physical frames 206c₁, 206c₂ are transported over the wireless connection to the access terminal 102.

[0040] The RLP layer 302b' in the access terminal 102 strips the headers from the physical frames 206c₁, 206c₂ and reassembles the payloads. The reassembled payloads are provided to a decompression layer 304b' to recover the third packet 202c. The third packet 202c is then routed to the packet destination 306.

[0041] In the above example, the second physical frame 206b₂ for the second packet 206b is received by the transceiver function 110b in serving access point 108b and sent to the access terminal 102 before the physical frames 206c₁, 206c₂ for the third packet 202c. Those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that the RLP functionality described in connection with FIGS. 3A and 3B would enable the access terminal 102 to recover the packet stream even if the physical frames are received out of order. More specifically, the transceiver function 110b in the serving access point 108b may receive the third packet 202c from the network function 112a in the serving access point 108 before receiving the second physical frame 206b₁. In that case, the transceiver function

110b may convert the third packet 202c to physical frames 206c₁, 206c₂ and send the frames 206c₁, 206c₂ to the access terminal 102 before sending the second physical frame 206b₂ for the second packet 202b. Today, a number of higher layer protocols exist, such as Transport Control Protocol (TCP) and the like, that can handle out-of-order packets.

[0042] As explained above, the RLP identifiers in the headers of the physical frames allow the access terminal 102 to recover a packet stream that is sent via different RLP instances. In at least one embodiment, additional information may be included in the header. This information may be anything that assists the access terminal 102 to recover the packet stream. An example will be discussed with reference to FIG. 2B. In this example, the header contains multiple fields including the RLP identifier, a flow identifier, a sequence stamp, a begin bit, and an end bit.

[0043] The access terminal may be configured to support multiple sessions over the packet-based network. By way of example, the access terminal may be engaged in a voice call while simultaneously downloading a page from a web-site. The flow identifier may be used to identify the packet stream that the payload in each physical frame belongs to. In this example, all payloads created from voice packets may be assigned one flow identifier and all payloads created from data packets may be assigned another flow identifier. This allows the recovery of different packet streams at the access terminal. In addition it allows the transceiver function to service different packet streams according to different requirements in order to satisfy the QoS requirements for different types of applications.

[0044] Each RLP instance has its own sequence space from which sequence stamps may be generated. The sequence stamps may be based on the frame sequence, the byte sequence, or any other suitable sequence indicator that would allow access terminal to recover a packet stream. The sequence space is used for re-assembling the packets at the receiver. By way of example, the leftmost frame 206a₁ in FIG. 2B may have a sequence stamp of n , indicating that the frame 206a₁ is the n^{th} frame in the packet sequence. The frame 206a₂ to the immediate right may have a sequence stamp of $(n+1)$, indicating that the frame 206a₂ is the $(n+1)^{th}$ frame in the packet sequence, and the frame 206b₁ to the immediate right of that may have a sequence stamp of $(n+2)$, indicating that the frame 206c is the $(n+2)^{th}$ frame in the packet sequence.

[0045] As an alternative, the sequence stamp may be based on the byte sequence. In this example, the leftmost frame 206a in FIG. 2B may have a sequence stamp of n , indicating that the first byte in the frame 206a₁ is the n^{th} byte in the compressed packet stream. Assuming that the payload carried by each frame is p bytes, the frame 206a₂ to the immediate right will have a sequence stamp of $(n+p)$, indicating that the first byte in the frame 206a₂ is the $(n+p)^{\text{th}}$ byte in the compressed packet stream. The frame 206b₁ to the immediate right of that will have a sequence stamp of $(n+2p)$, indicating that the first byte in the frame 206b₁ is the $(n+2p)^{\text{th}}$ byte in the compressed packet stream, and so on.

[0046] The begin and end bits may be used to identify the first and last frames of a packet. By way of example, the begin bit may be asserted in the leftmost frame 206a₁ to indicate that it is the first frame in the packet 202a. The end bit may be asserted in the frame 206a₂ to the immediate right indicating that it is the last frame in the packet 202a. In this example, the begin bit is also asserted in the frames 202b₁, 202c₁, and the end bit asserted in the frames 202b₂, 202c₂.

[0047] An alternative header configuration is shown in FIG. 2C. In this example, the header contains a number of fields that are the same as shown in FIG. 2B including the flow identifier, the sequence stamp, and the begin and end bit. The difference between the two is that header shown in FIG. 2C includes a RLP included bit, and the RLP identifier is sent in the header only when the RLP included bit is asserted. As an example, the RLP included bit may be set only when a physical frame includes data from an RLP instance between the access terminal and the transceiver function in an access point that is not serving the access terminal, such as the case for the second physical frame 206b₂ for the second packet in FIG. 3B. In this example, when the RLP instance for a physical frame is between the access terminal and the serving access point, such as the case for the physical frames for the first and third packets 202a, 202c, there is no need to send the RLP identifier.

[0048] FIG. 4 is a conceptual block diagram illustrating the RLP functionality on the reverse link. In this example, the access terminal 102 maintains a RLP instance with each sector in its active set, which includes the anchor access point 108a and the access point 108b to its right. Although not shown, each access point 108a, 108b may use the same RLP instance when the access terminal 102 is handed off between sectors, i.e.

softer handoff. Since the same transceiver function serves all three sectors, the same RLP instance can be maintained during a softer handoff of the access terminal.

[0049] Referring to FIG. 4, a first packet 202a' from a packet source 406' in the access terminal 102 is provided to the compression layer 404a' and the RLP layer 402a' supporting the RLP instance for the first packet 202a'. The first packet 202a' is compressed by the compression layer 404a' and converted into two physical frames 206a₁', 206a₂' by the RLP layer 402a'. Each physical frame 206a₁', 206a₂' includes a header that identifies the RLP instance (RLP1) between the RLP layer 402a' in the access terminal 102 and the RLP layer 402a in the transceiver function 110a of the anchor access point 108a.

[0050] The first physical frame 206a₁' is transported over the wireless connection to the RLP layer 402a in the transceiver function 110a of the anchor access point 108a. However, before the second physical frame 206a₂' is output from the RLP layer 402', the access terminal 102 is handed off to a target access point 108b. Following the handoff of the access terminal 102 to the target access point 108b, which is now the serving access point, the second physical frame 206a₂' is transported over the wireless connection to transceiver function 110b in the new serving access point 108b. The transceiver function 110b determines that the second physical frame 206a₂' belongs to the RLP instance (RLP1) between the RLP layer 402a' in the access terminal 102 and the RLP layer 402a in the transceiver function 110a of the anchor access point 108a. As a result, the second physical frame 206a₂' is delivered to the RLP layer 402a' in the anchor access point 108a. The RLP layer 402a' reassembles the payloads from the two physical frames 206a₁', 206a₂' and provides them to the decompression layer 404a' to recover the first packet 202a. The first packet 202a is then provided to the network function 112a in the anchor access point 108a for routing to the packet destination 414.

[0051] The second packet 202b' is released from the packet source 406' in the access terminal 102 after handoff, and therefore, the second packet 406' is delivered to the compression layer 404b' and the RLP layer 402b' supporting the RLP instance between the access terminal 102 and the transceiver function 108b in the serving access point 108b. The second packet 202b' is compressed and converted into two physical frames 206b₁', 206b₂'. The physical frames 206b₁', 206b₂' are transported over the wireless connection to the RLP layer 402b in the transceiver function 110b of the serving access point 108b.

[0052] At the serving access point 108b, the payloads from the physical frames 206b₁', 206b₂' are reassembled by the RLP layer 402b'. The result is provided to the decompression layer 404b' to recover the second packet 202b. The second packet 202b' is routed to the network function 112a in the anchor access point 108a for routing to the packet destination 414.

[0053] FIG. 5 is a conceptual block diagram illustrating an example of a wireless transceiver and a processor. The wireless transceiver 502 and processor 504 may reside in the transceiver function of an access point or an access terminal. The wireless transceiver 502 is configured to support one or more wireless protocols. By way of example, the transceiver 502 may be configured to support code division multiple access (CDMA), wideband code division multiple access (WCDMA), time division multiple access (TDMA), frequency division multiple access (FDMA), orthogonal frequency division multiple access (OFDMA), World Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMAX), Bluetooth, ultra wide band (UWB) protocol, home radio frequency (HomeRF), Ethernet, wireless fidelity alliance (Wi-Fi Alliance), 802.11 network technology, or any other suitable wireless technology, or any combination thereof.

[0054] The transceiver 502 is controlled by a processor 504. The processor 204 may be implemented with a general purpose processor and memory for storing data and instructions for software programs. The software programs may be used by the general purpose processor to provide compression and RLP functionality, as well as provide other communication and processing functions. The software programs may also provide an interface 506 to the general purpose processor. Alternatively, the interface 506 may be a separate entity. When operating in a transceiver function, the interface 506 communicates with a network function. When operating in an access terminal, the interface 506 may be used to communicate with various user devices such as a keypad and display. The processor 502 may also include a digital signal processor (DSP) with an embedded software layer to offload various signal processing functions, such as convolutional encoding, modulation and spread-spectrum processing. The DSP may also perform vocoder functions to support telephony applications. Alternatively, the processor 504 may be implemented with one or more application specific processors. The manner in which the processor 504 is implemented will depend on the particular application and the design constraints imposed on the overall system. Those skilled in the art will recognize the interchangeability of hardware, firmware, and software

configurations under these circumstances, and how best to implement the described functionality for each particular application.

[0055] FIG. 6A is a conceptual block diagram illustrating the functionality of the wireless transceiver and processor of FIG. 5 in a transceiver function of an access point. The transceiver function 110 includes component 602 for exchanging packets with a network function 112 in an access point. The transceiver function 110 also includes component 604 for supporting a wireless connection, component 606 for maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection, and component 608 for providing protocol translation between the packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection.

[0056] FIG. 6B is a conceptual block diagram illustrating the functionality of the wireless transceiver and processor of FIG. 5 in an access terminal. The access terminal 102 includes component 610 for supporting a wireless connection with an access terminal, component 612 for maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection, and component 614 for providing protocol translation between the packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection.

[0057] The various illustrative logical blocks, modules, circuits, elements, and/or components described in connection with the embodiments disclosed herein may be implemented or performed with a general purpose processor, a digital signal processor (DSP), an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a field programmable gate array (FPGA) or other programmable logic component, discrete gate or transistor logic, discrete hardware components, or any combination thereof designed to perform the functions described herein. A general-purpose processor may be a microprocessor, but in the alternative, the processor may be any conventional processor, controller, microcontroller, or state machine. A processor may also be implemented as a combination of computing components, e.g., a combination of a DSP and a microprocessor, a plurality of microprocessors, one or more microprocessors in conjunction with a DSP core, or any other such configuration.

[0058] The methods or algorithms described in connection with the embodiments disclosed herein may be embodied directly in hardware, in a software module executed by a processor, or in a combination of the two. A software module may reside in RAM memory, flash memory, ROM memory, EPROM memory, EEPROM memory,

registers, hard disk, a removable disk, a CD-ROM, or any other form of storage medium known in the art. A storage medium may be coupled to the processor such that the processor can read information from, and write information to, the storage medium. In the alternative, the storage medium may be integral to the processor.

[0059] The previous description is provided to enable any person skilled in the art to practice the various embodiments described herein. Various modifications to these embodiments will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art, and the generic principles defined herein may be applied to other embodiments. Thus, the claims are not intended to be limited to the embodiments shown herein, but is to be accorded the full scope consistent with the language claims, wherein reference to an element in the singular is not intended to mean “one and only one” unless specifically so stated, but rather “one or more.” All structural and functional equivalents to the elements of the various embodiments described throughout this disclosure that are known or later come to be known to those of ordinary skill in the art are expressly incorporated herein by reference and are intended to be encompassed by the claims. Moreover, nothing disclosed herein is intended to be dedicated to the public regardless of whether such disclosure is explicitly recited in the claims. No claim element is to be construed under the provisions of 35 U.S.C. §112, sixth paragraph, unless the element is expressly recited using the phrase “means for” or, in the case of a method claim, the element is recited using the phrase “step for.”

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

CLAIMS

1. An access point, comprising:
a transceiver function; and
a network function configured to route packets between a packet-based network and the transceiver function;
wherein the transceiver function is configured to support a wireless connection and maintain a protocol instance over the wireless connection, the transceiver function being further configured to provide protocol translation between the packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.
2. The access point of claim 1 wherein the protocol translation provided by the transceiver function is Radio Link Protocol (RLP).
3. The access point of claim 2 wherein the RLP instance maintained by the transceiver function over the wireless connection is separate and independent from RLP instances maintained by other access points.
4. The access point of claim 3 wherein the transceiver function is further configured to cover a plurality of sectors in a cellular region, the transceiver function being further configured to maintain the RLP instance with an access terminal when the access terminal is handed off between sectors.
5. The access point of claim 3 wherein the transceiver function is further configured to include a RLP instance identifier in the header to identify the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.
6. The access point of claim 3 wherein the transceiver function is further configured to exclude a RLP instance identifier from the header to identify the RLP instance maintained by the transceiver as the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

7. The access point of claim 3 wherein the transceiver function is further configured to include in the header sequence space information, the sequence space being separate and independent from sequence space for other access points.

8. The access point of claim 3 wherein the transceiver function is configured to exchange physical frames for the RLP instance with a second access point following the handoff of an access terminal to the second access point.

9. The access point of claim 8 wherein the network function is configured to route packets between the packet-based network and the second access point following the handoff of the access terminal to the second access point.

10. The access point of claim 1 wherein the transceiver function is further configured to compress the packets received from the network function.

11. A method of communications by an access point having a network function and a transceiver function, comprising:

using the network function to route packets between a packet-based network and the transceiver function;

supporting a wireless connection;

using the transceiver function to maintain a protocol instance over the wireless connection and provide protocol translation between the packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the protocol translation provided by the transceiver function is Radio Link Protocol (RLP).

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the RLP instances maintained by the transceiver function over the wireless connection is separate and independent from RLP instances other access points.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the transceiver function is further configured to cover a plurality of sectors in a cellular region, the method further comprising maintaining the RLP instance with an access terminal when the access terminal is handed off between sectors.

15. The method of claim 13 wherein the header includes a RLP instance identifier to identifier the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

16. The method of claim 13 wherein the a RLP instance identifier is excluded from the header to identify the RLP instance maintained by the transceiver as the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

17. The method of claim 13 wherein the header includes sequence space information, the sequence space being separate and independent from sequence space for other access points.

18. The method of claim 13 further comprising handing off of an access terminal to a second access point, and wherein the protocol translation further comprises exchanging physical frames for the RLP instance with the second access point.

19. The method of claim 18 further comprising using the network function to route packets between the packet-based network and the second method.

20. The method of claim 11 further comprising using the transceiver function to compress the packets received from the network function.

21. A transceiver function, comprising:
means for exchanging packets with a network function in an access point;
means for supporting a wireless connection;
means for maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection; and
means for providing protocol translation between the packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

22. The transceiver function of claim 21 wherein the protocol translation provided by the transceiver function is Radio Link Protocol (RLP).

23. The transceiver function of claim 22 wherein the RLP instance maintained over the wireless connection is separate and independent from RLP instances maintained by other access points.

24. The transceiver function of claim 23 further comprising means for covering a plurality of sectors in a cellular region, and wherein the means for providing protocol translation further comprises means for maintaining the RLP instance with an access terminal when the access terminal is handed off between sectors.

25. The transceiver function of claim 23 wherein the header includes a RLP instance identifier to identify the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

26. The transceiver function of claim 23 wherein a RLP instance is excluded from the header to identify the RLP instance maintained by the means for maintaining a protocol instance as the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

27. The transceiver function of claim 23 wherein the header includes sequence space information, the sequence space being separate and independent from sequence space for other access points.

28. The transceiver function of claim 23 wherein the means for providing protocol translation further comprises means for exchanging physical frames for the RLP instance with a second access point following the handoff of an access terminal to the second access point.

29. The transceiver function of claim 21 further comprising means for compressing the packets received from the network function.

30. Computer-readable storage medium containing a set of instructions executable by a processor in a transceiver function, wherein the computer-readable storage medium is a physical medium, the instructions comprising:

code for exchanging packets with a network function in an access point;
code for supporting a wireless connection;
code for maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection;
and code for providing protocol translation between the packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

31. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 30 wherein the protocol translation is Radio Link Protocol (RLP).

32. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 31 wherein the RLP instance over the wireless connection is separate and independent from RLP instances maintained by other access points.

33. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 32 further comprising code for covering a plurality of sectors in a cellular region, and wherein the code for providing protocol translation further comprises code for maintaining the RLP instance with an access terminal when the access terminal is handed off between sectors.

34. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 32 wherein the header includes a RLP instance identifier to identify a RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

35. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 32 wherein a RLP instance identifier is excluded from the header to identify the RLP instance maintained by the code for maintaining a protocol instance as the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

36. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 32 wherein the header includes sequence space information, the sequence space being separate and independent from sequence space for other access points.

37. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 32 wherein the code for providing protocol translation further comprises code for exchanging physical frames for the RLP instance

with a second access point following the handoff of an access terminal to the second access point.

38. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 30 further comprising code for compressing the packets received from the network function.

39. An access terminal, comprising:
a transceiver configured to support a wireless connection; and
a processor configured to maintain a protocol instance over the wireless connection separate and independent from protocol instances maintained by other access points, the processor being further configured to provide protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

40. The access terminal of claim 39 wherein the protocol translation provided by the transceiver function is Radio Link Protocol (RLP).

41. The access terminal of claim 40 wherein the processor is further configured to include a RLP instance identifier in the header to identify the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

42. The access terminal of claim 40 wherein the processor is further configured to exclude a RLP instance identifier from the header to identify the RLP instance maintained by the transceiver as the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

43. The access terminal of claim 40 wherein the processor is further configured to include in the header sequence space information, the sequence space being separate and independent from sequence space for other access points in communication with the access terminal.

44. The access terminal of claim 39 wherein the transceiver is further configured to support a second wireless connection with a second access point, and wherein the processor is further configured to maintain a second protocol instance, separate and independent from the protocol instance, over the second wireless connection, and provide protocol translation between

packets and physical frames transported over the second wireless connection.

45. A method of communications by an access terminal, comprising:
supporting a wireless connection with an access point;
maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection separate and independent from protocol instances maintained by other access points; and
providing protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

46. The method of claim 45 wherein the protocol translation provided by the transceiver function is Radio Link Protocol (RLP).

47. The method of claim 46 wherein the header includes a RLP instance identifier header to identify the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

48. The method of claim 46 wherein a RLP instance identifier is excluded from the header to identify the RLP instance maintained over the wireless connection as the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

49. The method of claim 46 wherein the header includes sequence space information, the sequence space being separate and independent from sequence space for other access points in communication with the access terminal.

50. The method of claim 45 further comprising supporting a second wireless connection with a second access point, maintaining a second protocol instance, separate and independent from the protocol instance, over the second wireless connection, and providing protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the second wireless connection.

51. A processor for use in an access terminal, comprising:
means for supporting a wireless connection with an access point;
means for maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection separate and independent from protocol instances maintained by other access points; and

means for providing protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

52. The processor of claim 51 wherein the protocol translation provided by the transceiver function is Radio Link Protocol (RLP).

53. The processor of claim 51 wherein the header includes a RLP instance identifier header to identify the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

54. The processor of claim 51 wherein a RLP instance identifier is excluded from the header to identify the RLP instance maintained over the wireless connection as the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

55. The processor of claim 51 wherein the header includes sequence space information, the sequence space being separate and independent from sequence space for other access points in communication with the access terminal.

56. The processor of claim 51 further comprising means for supporting a second wireless connection with a second access point, means for maintaining a second protocol instance, separate and independent from the protocol instance, over the second wireless connection, and means for providing protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the second wireless connection.

57. Computer-readable storage medium containing a set of instructions executable by a processor in an access terminal, wherein the computer-readable storage medium is a physical medium, the instructions comprising: code for supporting a wireless connection with an access point;

code for maintaining a protocol instance over the wireless connection separate and independent from protocol instances maintained by other access points; and

code for providing protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the wireless connection, each of the physical frames including a header identifying the

protocol instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

58. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 57 wherein the protocol translation provided by the transceiver function is Radio Link Protocol (RLP).

59. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 58 wherein the header includes a RLP instance identifier header to identify the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

60. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 58 wherein a RLP instance identifier is excluded from the header to identify the RLP instance maintained over the wireless connection as the RLP instance performing the translation for the physical frame.

61. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 58 wherein the header includes sequence space information, the sequence space being separate and independent from sequence space for other access points in communication with the access terminal.

62. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 57 wherein the instructions further comprise code for supporting a second wireless connection with a second access point, code for maintaining a second protocol instance, separate and independent from the protocol instance, over the second wireless connection, and code for providing protocol translation between packets and physical frames transported over the second wireless connection.

63. The access point of claim 1, wherein the protocol instance corresponds to a particular communication session between the transceiver function and a remote entity.

64. The access point of claim 1, wherein the header includes a protocol instance identification field.