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CAPACITOR MOUNTING STRUCTURE FOR PRINTED
CIRCUIT BOARDS

5 The field of this invention relates to the
mounting structure for a capacitor onto a printed
circuit board in order to minimize parasitic
inductance.

10 It is well known in the art of printed circuit
board design to utilize capacitors to smooth the
effects of sporadic current peaks and noise which is
typical of electronic circuitry. Theoretically, a
capacitor has the characteristic of maintaining a
substantially constant voltage while absorbing applied
current changes, which is a typically important
function in computer circuit design where current
15 surges and peaks due to noise and the like must be
smoothed to prevent interference with signal
generation. In other words, capacitors are used to
stabilize the supply voltage by compensating for abrupt
current changes.

20 However, due to the application of current across
a capacitor, the capacitor generates an inductance
called "parasitic" inductance. And, just as in the
case of an inductor, such parasitic inductance can
limit the rate of current change across the capacitor
25 and thus cause the voltage to drop in spite of the
presence of the capacitor. Further, such parasitic
inductance can change the RF impedance characteristics
of capacitors making them more complex elements in RF

(radio frequency) applications, which makes design more complicated and performance objectives more difficult to achieve.

5 Methods have been tried to reduce parasitic
capacitor inductance. One method is to reduce the
length of conductor traces extending between the
capacitor terminal and the pad of a via. Another
suggestion is the widening of capacitors and traces and
10 shortening or eliminating traces from the capacitor
pads to vias. However, there is a lower limit on
capacitor lengths. For example, if a capacitor is too
short, there is not enough space between the metalized
contacts located at the ends of the capacitors and
solder bridging to the metalized contacts or terminals
15 becomes a problem. Capacitor shortening can also be
difficult where board fabrication processes set the
minimum space between vias, which dictates the minimum
total length for the capacitor and the mounting
structure combined. Increasing capacitor width at
20 minimum length increases space occupied by the
capacitor which uses more board space. In addition,
there is a limit to the ratio of width to length in
capacitor fabrication. Even with maximized capacitor
width, within the practical range of capacitor and
25 trace widths, inductance can only be reduced 30-40%.

30 This invention is directed to a capacitor mounting
structure for printed circuit boards which
substantially minimizes parasitic capacitor inductance.
In the capacitor mounting structure of this invention,
the vias are mounted under the central section of the
capacitor and in general alignment with each other.
The pads which electrically attach to the vias include

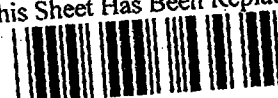


extensions or digits which provide for interdigitated mounting of the conductor pads to the vias.

Such a capacitor mounting structure includes the following specific components. The capacitor includes
5 a central dielectric section and first and second opposing terminals. A printed circuit board includes an upper surface for receiving electronic components such as the capacitors and has first and second conductor planes generally parallel to the upper
10 surface, one or both of the conductor planes being imbedded in the printed circuit board.

First, second and third vias are mounted in the printed circuit board underneath the central dielectric section of the capacitor. The three vias are in
15 alignment. The two outside vias are electrically connected to a first via pad while the via located between the first two vias is electrically connected to the second via pad, the via pads or footprints being soldered to the opposing terminals of the capacitor.
20 With positioning of the interdigitated traces and vias directly under the dielectric section of the capacitor, the magnetic field which forms between the capacitor and the traces is confined in a strait formed by the capacitor and the traces. The higher the ratio of the
25 length of the strait to the narrow dimension of the strait, the lower the resulting inductance. The proposed structure minimizes inductance by minimizing the distance between the capacitor and the traces.

The summary of this invention is not intended to
30 be exhaustive of the patentable features of this invention, which are set forth in the claims to be read in view of the specification.



Figs. 1 and 1A illustrate a prior art structure mounting a capacitor onto a printed circuit board wherein the vias are positioned away from the capacitor terminals;

Figs. 2 and 2A-B illustrate a capacitor mounting structure wherein the vias are located underneath the capacitor but in a position of non-alignment;

Figs. 3 and 3A-B illustrate the capacitor mounting structure of this invention; and

Fig. 4 illustrates the minimization of inductance generated by this invention.

The problem of parasitic inductance in printed circuit board design is well known. Figs. 1 and 1A-B illustrate a known mounting structure for a capacitor, which mounting structure creates undesirable levels of parasitic capacitive inductance. In Fig. 1, the printed circuit board B is represented by a first or upper conductor plane 10 and a second or lower conductor plane 11 which, in a well known manner, commonly provide power to the entire board. PCB board B includes upper non-conducting surface 10a. A first via 12 is electrically connected to the second conductor plane 11, which may be a voltage or power plane. The tubular conductor section of via 12 is shown as extending through an opening 10b in the upper conductor plane 10, which may be a ground plane, such that the via is not electrically connected to the ground plane. The tubular conductor section of via 14 is electrically connected to the upper or ground plane at 10c but extends through opening 11a in the voltage plane 11. The utilization of vias 12 and 14 to provide

electrical connection to various conductor or ground planes in a printed circuit board is well known.

5 The capacitor 15 is illustrated as being mounted in between the vias 12 and 14. The capacitor 15 includes metallic terminals or caps 15a and 15b located at each end of the capacitor. The capacitor middle section 15C represents the central dielectric portion as is well known in the art. It is also known to connect capacitors such as 15 to the printed circuit board B through conductor pads or footprints 17 and 18 which are mounted onto the upper surface 10a of the printed circuit board. The capacitor 15 is electrically attached to the conductor pads 17 and 18 utilizing soldering techniques which produce the solder fillets 18 and 19 illustrated in Fig. 1. Electrical connection from the conductor pad 17a to the via 12 is provided by conductor line or trace 20. In the similar manner, a trace 21 extends electrical connection from the pad 18 to the via 14. In this manner, the capacitor 15 is mounted onto the printed circuit board B.

25 However, the mounting structure illustrated in Figs. 1 and 1A cause undesirable parasitic inductance during operation. Referring to Fig. 1, the area which can be considered as generating the parasitic inductance is located between the vias 12 and 14, above the ground plane 10 and below the traces 20 and 21, conductor pads 17 and 18 and the bottom of the dielectric portion 15C of the capacitor. This area, defined by the letter I, is the critical region which causes the generation of parasitic inductance. While the area I is described as influential on generation of parasitic inductance, technically, it is the aspect ratio that must be minimized, which is the width w of capacitor 15 divided by the gap thickness or distance d

between the bottom surface of the capacitor and the ground plane 10. The aspect ratio w/d is critical since it describes the effect of the strait on the magnetic field. As this aspect ratio w/d increases, the reluctance increases, which decreases the parasitic inductance generated. Stated another way, if the effect of the distance between capacitor solder pads is included, maximizing the aspect ratio of capacitor width to area I will minimize parasitic inductance of the capacitor.

Such undesirable parasitic inductance limits the rate of current change in pulse applications. For example, capacitors 15 are often used to stabilize supply voltages when the current increases abruptly. The presence of parasitic inductance limits the rate of current change and causes voltage to drop in spite of the utilization of capacitors. Further, inductance changes the RF impedance characteristics of capacitors, making them complex elements in RF applications, which makes design more complicated and performance objectives more difficult to achieve.

It is known to reduce capacitor inductance by reducing the length of traces such as 20 and 21 and or widening the capacitor 15, and even eliminating traces from capacitor pads to vias by placing the via within the pad.

For example, Figs. 2, 2A and 2B represent one such solution. The same numbers and letters will be used to describe the same elements. In Fig. 2, the capacitor 15 is actually mounted over vias 30 and 31. Via 30 is illustrated in connection to power plane 11 and via 31 is electrically connected to ground plane 10. Referring to Figs. 2A and 2B, a rectangular conductor pad 30a is mounted over via 30 and similarly, a rectangular connector pad 31a is mounted over via 31.

The metalized ends or caps 15a and 15b are electrically connected to the conductor pads 30a and 30b, respectively, by solder represented by soldering points 32 and 33. Referring now to Fig. 2, it can be seen
5 that the area I' defined by the ground plane 10, vias 30 and 31, and the bottom surface of the central capacitor section 15c is a much smaller area than area I shown in Fig. 1. The reduction in the area I to I' thus reduces the amount of parasitic inductance
10 generated during operation of the circuitry.

Another suggestion to reduce parasitic capacitance is to increase capacitor width and minimize capacitor length. However, an increase in the width of the capacitor increases the space necessary on the surface
15 of the PCB board to accommodate the capacitor. Further, there is a limit to the ratio of width to length in capacitor fabrication. Finally with respect to capacitor width, within the practical range of capacitor and trace width, inductance can probably only
20 be reduced about 30-40%.

Referring now to Figs. 3 and 3A-B, the capacitor mounting structure generally designated as 40 for minimizing parasitic inductance is illustrated. As before, the same numbers will be used to identify the
25 same elements. Thus the PCB board generally designated as B includes the ground plane 10 and power plane 11 and has upper surface 10a. Three vias 41, 42 and 43, are positioned in substantially straight line alignment as illustrated in Fig. 3B and are located substantially
30 adjacent to each other in a row, which row is approximately aligned with the centerline 50 of the capacitor 15. The vias 41-43 alternately electrically connect to either ground plane 10 or voltage plane 11. As illustrated in Fig. 3, tubular section of via 43 is
35 electrically connected to the voltage plane 11 and

extends through an opening in the ground plane 10. The tubular section of via 42 is electrically connected to the ground plane 10 and extends through an opening in the power plane 11. Though not shown, via 41 is electrically connected to the power plane 11.

The conductor pad or footprint 44 for via 42 is generally T-shaped and includes a central rectangular portion 44a formed with an extension or finger portion 44b, which extends into attachment to the top of the via 42.

The conductor pad 45 for vias 41 and 43, is generally U-shaped. A central rectangular portion 45a includes first and second extensions or fingers 45b and 45c which extend into connection with vias 41 and 43. A U-shaped recess is formed between the conductor pad extensions 45b and 45c. The conductor pad U-shaped recess formed between conductor pad extensions 45b and 45c receives the extension 44b for conductor pad 44. In this manner, the conductor pad extensions are interdigitated with respect to each other, so that effective electrical connection can be made with the vias 41-43 in substantially a straight line.

The capacitor end metal caps 15a and 15b are soldered onto the rectangular portions 45a and 44a of the pads, respectively. The solder pads 47 and 48 are applied as thinly as possible, such that there is little separation or thickness d'' between the capacitor bottom surface and the conductor pads. In this manner, the cross-sectional area I'' between the conductor pads, the solder points 47 and 48 and the bottom of the central capacitor section 15C is minimized in area, thereby minimizing the distance d'' between the bottom of the capacitor and the pads 44 and 45 wherein parasitic inductor can be generated. Reduction of the distance d'' between the conductor pads 44 and 45 and

the bottom of the capacitor 15 maximizes the aspect ratio and minimizes the generation of inductance by maximizing reluctance. It is noted that placement of the conductor pads under the central section of the capacitor 15 also acts to reduce thickness d".

Referring now to Fig. 4, the effect of the constriction on parasitic inductance generating region is illustrated. Constricting the field lines increases the reluctance of the magnetic path which in turn reduces magnetic flux and thus reduces inductance.

Further, the interdigitated vias formed by pad extensions 45b and c and 44b form a low inductance structure. It is believed that the insertion of the via 42 between vias 41 and 43 reduces inductance by a factor approaching 50%. A designer might typically add a pair of opposing vias (connected to ground and voltage planes) to reduce inductance roughly 50%; however, the proposed structure of Fig. 3 achieves the same benefit with only 3 vias instead of 4.

It is further contemplated that, while the capacitor mounting structure 40 of Fig. 3 shows 3 vias in alignment, any number of vias could be added in a line, such that current would be returned under the capacitor in a position complementary to the current flowing through the capacitor, which minimizes parasitic inductance. It is contemplated that more vias may be utilized as smaller geometries become feasible. These concepts can be applied to circuit boards of various manufacture, whether printed or not.

The advantages of this invention are many. Reducing the number of capacitors for a particular PCB will save money in the number of capacitors used as well as the number of solder points needed. Reduction in the number of capacitors can also increase lay-out flexibility and even reduce the over-all size of the

PCB board needed. As an example of the significance of this invention, in one example, PCB circuitry using this invention was as effective with 25 capacitors as a conventional design of Fig. 1 was with 106 capacitors.

5 The foregoing disclosure and description of the invention are illustrative and explanatory thereof, and various changes in the size, shape, materials, components, circuit elements, wiring connections and contacts, as well as in the details of the illustrated
10 circuitry and construction and method of operation may be made without departing from the spirit of the invention.



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CLAIMS:

1 1. A capacitor mounting structure for printed
2 circuit boards wherein the capacitor includes first and
3 second terminals which are connected to first and
4 second conductor planes in the printed circuit board in
5 a manner to minimize parasitic inductance, comprising:
6 a capacitor including a central dielectric
7 section and first and second opposing terminals;
8 a printed circuit board having an upper
9 surface for receiving electronic components such as
10 capacitors and including first and second conductor
11 planes generally parallel to said upper surface, one or
12 both of said conductor planes being imbedded in said
13 printed circuit board;
14 first and second vias mounted in said printed
15 circuit board, each of said vias including a tubular
16 conductor section and a substantially flat conductor
17 section extending from one end of said tubular
18 conductor section, said first via being electrically
19 connected to said first conductor section and said
20 second via being electrically connected to said second
21 conductor section, said tubular conductor sections of
22 said first and second vias being positioned immediately
23 adjacent to each other with said capacitor being
24 mounted onto said conductor sections with said first
25 and second terminals of said capacitor being
26 electrically connected to said first and second
27 conductor sections of said vias thereby minimizing
28 parasitic inductance associated with said capacitor.

1 2. The structure set forth in claim 1, including:
2 a third via mounted in said printed circuit
3 board in addition to said first and second vias;
4 said first conductor section including two
5 conductor extensions, said extensions being spaced

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6 apart and extending into electrical connection with
7 said first and third vias;
8 said second conductor section including an
9 extension extending into electrical connection with
10 said second via at a location between said first
11 conductor section extensions.

1 3. The structure set forth in claim 2, including:
2 said spaced apart extensions of said first
3 conductor section and said one extension of said second
4 conductor section being substantially interdigitated.

1 4. The structure set forth in claim 2, including:
2 said first, second and third vias being in
3 substantial alignment.

1 5. The structure set forth in claim 1, including:
2 said first conductor section being U-shaped
3 to provided opposing, spaced apart mounting digits;
4 said second conductor section including a
5 digit interposed between said spaced apart mounting
6 digits of said first conductor section.

7 6. The structure set forth in claim 1, including:
8 said capacitor having a bottom surface;
9 the distance between said conductor sections
10 and said bottom surface of said capacitor provides a
11 minimum distance subject to parasitic inductance.

1 7. The structure set forth in claim 1,
2 including:
3 said capacitor central dielectric section
4 being positioned over said first, second and third
5 vias, which are approximately aligned with the
6 centerline of the length of said capacitor.

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