

A DIELECTRIC DELAY LINE

This invention relates to delay lines for effecting desired time delays in the transmission of electromagnetic waves.

Transmission lines used to obtain pulse time delays are one class of structure known as delay lines. The line must be rather long even for small time delays since the electromagnetic waves propagate at a speed close to the speed of light. Special compact low-velocity lines have been developed to avoid this inconvenience. The most common type is a coaxial line, in which the inner conductor is a helix. The vast majority of the so-called "electric" delay lines are artificial transmission lines consisting of lumped capacitors and inductors. The limitations of physically realizable amplitude- and phase-transfer functions are such that the practical delays obtained do not exceed the order of a few pulse periods. Longer time delays are achieved with acoustic delay lines, employing acoustic wave propagation and electromechanical transducers at the input and output.

Though very small, flexible and compact, a coaxial cable delay line can have problems at higher frequencies in

that it exhibits very high insertion loss. The actual amounts of delay required usually involve very long lengths of cable. Generation of power at these frequencies is extremely expensive and, therefore, this is an important factor.

Conventional metal waveguide delay lines are rigid copper tubes which are difficult to package and pose numerous installation problems. Another problem with this type of delay line is that of dispersion. Dispersion is the phenomenon wherein different frequencies travel with different velocities. This type of delay line can provide a situation whereby, over a band of frequencies, there will be radically different values for the absolute delay.

Down-converters with surface acoustic wave delay lines involve down-converting the microwave/millimetre wave signal to a low frequency acoustic signal which may be delayed using a surface acoustic wave delay line. This line will only work over a narrow band and is thus of limited use.

U.S. Patent 4,463,329 discloses a dielectric waveguide of a shaped article having a core of polytetrafluoroethylene and having one or more layers of

expanded, porous polytetrafluoroethylene overwrapped on or around the core.

U.S. Patent 4,603,942 discloses a flexible waveguide for transmitting waves from a sensor mounted on a gimbal which includes a cable comprising an outer flexible sheath and a plurality of flexible polytetrafluoroethylene fibres bundled within the sheath and including a termination flange coupled to at least one end thereof, with the flange including a wedge-shaped plug and a tapered cavity engaging the end of the cable.

According to the present invention there is provided a delay line comprising a length L of a dielectric waveguide for the transmission of electromagnetic waves, said dielectric waveguide having a core of polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE); one or more layers of polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) overwrapped around said core, within wherein

$$T = KL/c$$

in which T is the total time delay, c is the velocity of light in free space and K is the delay constant for said dielectric waveguide; said one or more layers of

4.

polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) having an electromagnetic shielding layer thereover; and said shielding layer being further overwrapped with a tape of carbon-filled PTFE.

The core may be extruded, unsintered PTFE; extruded, sintered PTFE; expanded, unsintered, porous PTFE; or expanded, sintered, porous PTFE. The or each PTFE layer may be extruded, unsintered PTFE; extruded, sintered PTFE; expanded, unsintered, porous PTFE; or expanded,

sintered, porous PTFE. The core and/or each layer may contain a filler.

In a preferred embodiment, the delay line is overwrapped over a mandrel, and may be overwrapped in a multiplicity of wraps.

The delay line ^{has} ~~may have~~ an electromagnetic shielding layer which preferably is aluminized Kapton (Registered Trade Mark) polyimide tape. ~~The delay line may be overwrapped with a tape of carbon filled PTFE.~~

Delay lines embodying the invention will now be particularly ^{by way of example only} described [with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:-

Figure 1 is a side elevation of a dielectric waveguide for forming one of the delay lines, with parts cut away for illustration purposes and showing one launcher;

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the dielectric waveguide of Figure 1 taken along the line 2-2 of Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a side elevation of one of the delay lines with coupling launchers at either end of the line;

Figure 4 is a front elevation of the delay line of Figure 3 wrapped about a mandrel; and

Figure 5 is a front elevation of the delay line of Figure 3, wrapped about a mandrel in multiple wraps.

A delay line is provided for effecting a desired delay in the transmission of electromagnetic waves in the microwave and millimetre range of the spectrum. The line comprises a length L of a dielectric waveguide for transmission of electromagnetic waves comprising a core of polytetrafluoroethylene having one or more layers of polytetrafluoroethylene overwrapped around the core, wherein $T = KL/c$, in which T is the total time delay, c is the velocity of light in free space and K is the delay constant of the dielectric waveguide. Preferably, the delay line is overwrapped around a mandrel.

When launcher 20 with conventional flange 21 is connected to dielectric waveguide 10 within seat 12' indicated by the dashed lines, electromagnetic energy enters the launcher 20. An impedance transformation is carried out in the taper 13 of waveguide 10 such that the energy is coupled efficiently into the core 12 of dielectric waveguide 10. Once captured by the core 12,

propagation takes place through the core 12 which is surrounded by cladding 14. The core 12 is polytetrafluoroethylene and the cladding 14 is polytetrafluoroethylene, preferably expanded, porous polytetrafluoroethylene tape overwrapped over core 12. Propagation uses the core/cladding interface to harness the energy. Unlike conventional waveguides, the loss mechanism is due to the loss-tangent of the core material and not to surface currents induced on the waveguide walls. The core material also serves to delay the signal by an amount proportional to its dielectric constant.

To prevent cross-coupling or interference from external sources, an electromagnetic shield 16 is provided as well as an external absorber 18. The shield is preferably aluminized Kapton (Registered Trade Mark) polyimide tape, and the absorber is ~~preferably~~ carbon-loaded PTFE tape.

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of dielectric waveguide 10 taken along line 2-2 of Figure 1 showing rectangular core 12 overwrapped with tape 14 and showing shield layer 16 and absorber layer 18.

Figure 3 shows an elevational view of the dielectric waveguide 10 wound about mandrel 26, the combination

designated 24, and input and output launching horns 20 and 22, respectively, having conventional flanges 21 and 23. By winding dielectric waveguide 10 around mandrel 26, an appropriate amount of cable length is provided to provide a given time delay. This length L may be calculated from knowledge that the unit delay, t , is given by

$$t = K/c$$

wherein c is the velocity of light in free space and K is the delay constant for the material used. For PTFE, K is approximately 1.45. For a total required time delay T , it follows that the required length of cable is L , wherein

$$L = Tc/K$$

At the output end of the delay line, the other launching horn 22 converts the electromagnetic energy back into its initial field distribution. Attachment to external circuitry is achieved through the standard waveguide flanges 21 and 23.

Figure 4 is a front elevational view of the combination delay line and mandrel 24 showing dielectric waveguide 10 helically wrapped around mandrel 26. The mandrel may be of any suitable material and preferably is a plastic tube of an acrylic plastic.

Figure 5 shows a front elevation of the combination delay-line-and-mandrel 24 showing dielectric waveguide 10 wrapped around mandrel 26 in a multiplicity of wraps.



10

CLAIMS

1. A delay line comprising a length L of a dielectric waveguide for the transmission of electromagnetic waves, said dielectric waveguide having a core of polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE); one or more layers of polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) overwrapped around said core, ~~within wherein~~

$$T = KL/c$$

in which T is the total time delay, c is the velocity of light in free space and K is the delay constant for said dielectric waveguide;

said one or more layers of polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) having an electromagnetic shielding layer thereover; and said shielding layer being further overwrapped with a tape of carbon-filled PTFE.

2. A delay line according to claim 1 wherein said core is extruded, sintered or unsintered PTFE.

3. A delay line according to claim 1 wherein said core is expanded, sintered or unsintered porous PTFE.



11.

4. A delay line according to any preceding claim wherein said core contains a filler.

5. A delay line according to any preceding claim, wherein the or each said PTFE layer is extruded, sintered or unsintered PTFE.

6. A delay line according to any preceding claim, wherein the or each said PTFE layer is expanded, sintered or unsintered, porous PTFE.

7. A delay line according to any preceding claim, wherein the or each said PTFE layer contains a filler.

8. A delay line according to any preceding claim, overwrapped over a mandrel.

9. A delay line according to claim 8, overwrapped over a mandrel in a multiplicity of wraps.



12.

10. A delay line according to any preceding claim,
wherein the electromagnetic shielding layer is polyimide
tape.

11. A delay line substantially as herein described in
conjunction with the accompanying drawings.
