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Paper 15
Entered: November 1, 2022

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE PATENT TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD

MICRON TECHNOLOGY, INC.,
MICRON SEMICONDUCTOR PRODUCTS, INC., and
MICRON TECHNOLOGY TEXAS LLC,
Petitioner,

v.

NETLIST, INC.,
Patent Owner.

IPR2022-00744
Patent 10,489,314 B2

Before JON M. JURGOVAN, DANIEL J. GALLIGAN, and NABEEL U. KHAN, *Administrative Patent Judges.*

KHAN, *Administrative Patent Judge*.

DECISION
Granting Institution of *Inter Partes* Review
35 U.S.C. § 314

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 1

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background and Summary

Micron Technology, Inc., Micron Semiconductor Products, Inc., and Micron Technology Texas LLC (collectively "Petitioner") filed a Petition (Paper 2, "Pet.") requesting an *inter partes* review of claims 1–3, 5, 6, 8–10, and 12–14 ("the challenged claims") of U.S. Patent No. 10,489,314 B2 (the '314 patent," Ex. 1001). Netlist, Inc. ("Patent Owner") timely filed a Preliminary Response (Paper 9, "Prelim. Resp."). With our authorization, Petitioner filed a Reply (Paper 11, "Reply") and Patent Owner filed a Sur-reply (Paper 12, "Sur-reply") addressing the appropriateness of discretionary denial under 35 U.S.C. § 314(a).

An *inter partes* review may not be instituted "unless . . . the information presented in the petition . . . shows that there is a reasonable likelihood that the petitioner would prevail with respect to at least 1 of the claims challenged in the petition." 35 U.S.C. § 314(a) (2018). Having considered the arguments and evidence presented by Petitioner and Patent Owner, we determine that Petitioner has demonstrated a reasonable likelihood of prevailing for at least one of the challenged claims of the '314 patent, and we institute an *inter partes* review as to the challenged claims of the '314 patent on all the grounds of unpatentability set forth in the Petition.

B. Related Proceedings

The parties identify the following matter as related to this case: *Netlist, Inc. v. Micron Technology, Inc. et al.*, Case No. 1:22-cv-00136 (W.D. Tex). Pet. 82; Paper 3, 1. Petitioner also has concurrently filed a petition challenging different claims of the '314 patent in IPR2022-00745. Pet. 82.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 2

C. The '314 Patent (Ex. 1001)

The '314 patent, titled "Memory Module With Data Buffering," relates to a memory system that controls timing of memory signals based on timing information. Ex. 1001, codes (54), (57). Figure 1, reproduced below, illustrates a memory module. *Id.* at 5:53–55.

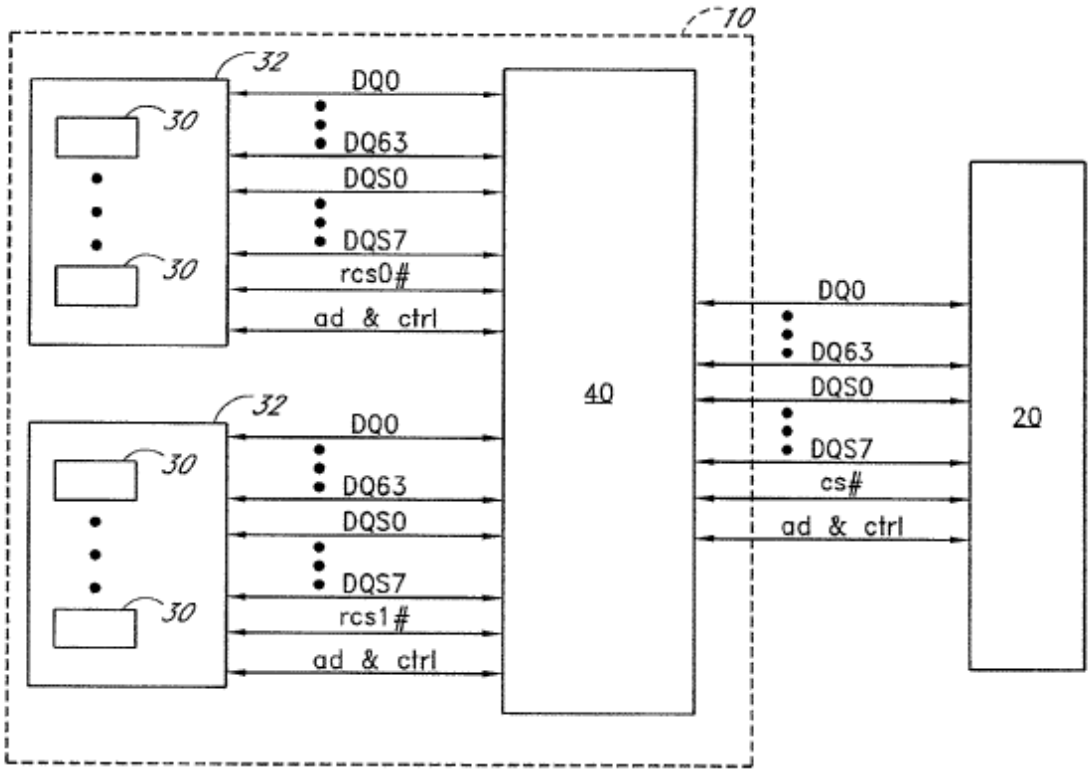


FIG. 1

As shown in Figure 1, memory module 10 is connectable to a memory controller 20 of a computer system (not shown). Ex. 1001, 5:53–56. The memory module 10 comprises a plurality of memory devices 30, each memory device having a corresponding load. *Id.* at 5:56–58. The memory module 10 further comprises a circuit 40 electrically coupled to the plurality of memory devices 30 and electrically coupled to the memory controller 20

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 3

of the computer system. *Id.* at 5:59–62. The circuit 40 selectively isolates one or more of the loads of the memory devices from the computer system. *Id.* at 5:62–64. The circuit 40 comprises logic that translates between a system memory domain of the computer system and a physical memory domain of the memory module 10. *Id.* at 5:64–67.

As described in the '314 patent, the plurality of memory devices 30 comprises a first number of memory devices 30, and the circuit 40 selectively isolates a second number of the memory devices 30 from the computer system, with the second number being less than the first number. Ex. 1001, 6:59–64. As also described in the '314 patent, the plurality of memory devices 30 are arranged in a first number of ranks, such as two ranks as illustrated in Figure 1. *Id.* at 6:65–7:1.

Figure 2, reproduced below, illustrates a circuit diagram of two memory devices of a memory module. Ex. 1001, 7:28–29.

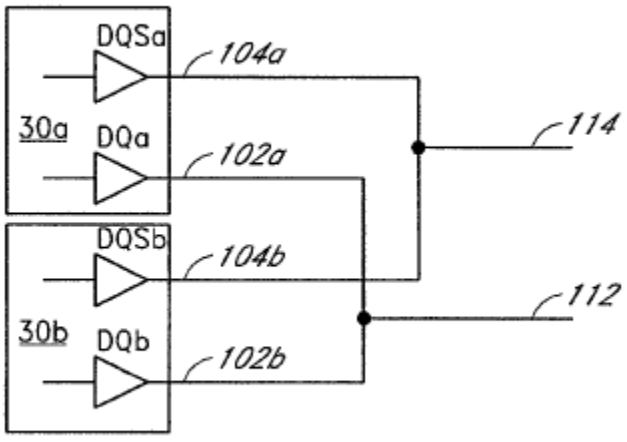


FIG. 2

As shown in Figure 2, the memory devices 30a, 30b have DQ data signal lines 102a, 102b and DQS data strobe signal lines 104a, 104b. Ex. 1001, 7:29–40. As further shown in Figure 2, the memory devices 30a, 30b have their DQ data signal lines 102a, 102b electrically coupled to a

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 4

common DQ line 112 and their DQS data strobe signal lines 104a, 104b electrically coupled to a common DQS line 114. *Id.* at 7:40–44. The common DQ line 112 and the common DQS line 114 are electrically coupled to the memory controller 20 of the computer system. *Id.* at 7:45–47.

As described in the '314 patent, the circuit 40 selectively isolates the loads of at least some of the memory devices 30 from the computer system. Ex. 1001, 7:49–51. In embodiments where the memory devices 30 are arranged in a plurality of ranks, the circuit 40 selectively isolates the loads of one, some, or all of the ranks of the memory module 10 from the computer system. *Id.* at 7:53–59.

D. Illustrative Claims

Claim 1, is the only independent claim of the '314 patent challenged in this Petition and is illustrative of the challenged claims. Claim 1 is reproduced below with limitation identifiers in brackets corresponding to claim analysis headings in the Petition. *See* Pet. 17–35.

> 1. [1a] A memory module operable in a computer system to communicate data with a memory controller of the computer system at a specified data rate via a N-bit wide data bus in response to memory commands received from the memory controller, [1b] the memory commands including a first memory command and a subsequent second memory command, the first memory command to cause the memory module to receive or output a first burst of N-bit wide data signals and a first burst of data strobes and the second memory command to cause the memory module to receive or output a second burst of N-bit wide data signals and a second burst of data strobes, the memory module comprising:
>
> [2] a printed circuit board having a plurality of edge connections configured to be electrically coupled to a corresponding plurality of contacts of a module slot of the computer system;

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 5

> [3] a plurality of memory integrated circuits mounted on the printed circuit board and arranged in a plurality of N-bit wide ranks, [4a] wherein the plurality of N-bit wide ranks include a first rank configured to receive or output the first burst of N-bit wide data signals and the first burst of data strobes at the specified data rate in response to the first memory command, [4b] and a second rank configured to receive or output the second burst of N-bit wide data signals and the second burst of data strobes at the specified data rate in response to the second memory command;
>
> [5] circuitry coupled between the plurality of N-bit wide ranks and the N-bit wide data bus; and
>
> [6] logic coupled to the circuitry and configured to respond to the first memory command by providing first control signals to the circuitry and to subsequently respond to the second memory command by providing second control signals to the circuitry, [7] wherein the circuitry is configured to enable data transfers through the circuitry in response to the first control signals and subsequently in response to the second control signals, [8] wherein respective N-bit wide data signals of the first burst of N-bit wide data signals and respective data strobes of the first burst of data strobes are transferred at the specified data rate between the first rank and the N-bit wide data bus through the circuitry, [9] and wherein respective N-bit wide data signals of the second burst of N-bit wide data signals and respective data strobes of the second burst of data strobes are transferred at the specified data rate between the second rank and the N-bit wide data bus through the circuitry;
>
> [10] wherein the data transfers through the circuitry are registered data transfers enabled in accordance with an overall CAS latency of the memory module, [11] and the circuitry is configured to add a predetermined amount of time delay for each registered data transfer through the circuitry so that the overall CAS latency of the memory module is greater than an actual operational CAS latency of each of the plurality of memory integrated circuits.

Ex. 1001, 42:12–67.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 6

E. Evidence

The Petition relies on the following references:

Reference	Exhibit No.
US 2002/0112119 A1; filed Mar. 13, 2002; published Aug. 15, 2002 ("Halbert").	1005
PC2100 and PC1600 DDR SDRAM Registered DIMM Design Specification, JEDEC Standard 21-C (January 2002) ("JESD21-C").	1006
DDR2 SDRAM Specification, JESD79-2A (January 2004) ("JESD79-2A")	1007

Petitioner also relies on the Declaration of Vojin G. Oklobdzija, Ph.D. (Ex. 1003) in support of its arguments. The parties rely on other exhibits as discussed below.

F. Asserted Grounds of Unpatentability

Petitioner asserts that claims 1–3, 5, 6, 8–10, and 12–14 would have been unpatentable on the following grounds:

Claim(s) Challenged	35 U.S.C. §	Reference(s)/Basis
1, 2, 6, 8, 12–14	103(a)[1]	Halbert
3, 9, 10	103(a)	Halbert, JESD21-C
5	103(a)	Halbert, JESD79-2A

Pet. 2–3.

[1] The Leahy-Smith America Invents Act ("AIA"), Pub. L. No. 112-29, 125 Stat. 284, 287–88 (2011), amended 35 U.S.C. § 103 and became effective March 16, 2013. Petitioner applies the pre-AIA version of § 103. Pet. 2–3.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 7

II. ANALYSIS

A. Discretion under § 314(a)

As indicated above, Petitioner has concurrently filed with this Petition a parallel petition in IPR2022-00745. This Petition challenges claims 1–3, 5, 6, 8–10, and 12–14, while IPR2022-00745 challenges claims 15–20 and 22–33.

Patent Owner argues, *inter alia*, that we should exercise our discretion under 35 U.S.C. § 314(a) to deny institution because Petitioner has failed to sufficiently justify the two concurrently-filed petitions. Prelim. Resp. 16–22. Specifically, Patent Owner argues that the petitions are duplicative because both petitions use Halbert as the primary reference and a JEDEC standard as the secondary reference and that the parallel petitions place substantial and unnecessary burden on the Board and the Patent Owner. *Id*. at 19.

In its Reply, Petitioner argues that Patent Owner has asserted a large number of claims (29 total claims) against it in district court and that those claims are extremely lengthy requiring two petitions to address. Reply 1–2. Petitioner argues that it structured the petitions in a way to reduce prejudice to Patent Owner by asserting only a single ground for each asserted claim and having no overlapping claims between the petitions. *Id*. at 2. Petitioner distinguishes the two petitions by emphasizing that in IPR2022-00745 it challenges claims reciting a limitation that is not present in the claims in IPR2022-00744 except for in three dependent claims. *Id*. Petitioner does not, however, provide a ranking of the two petitions, arguing that because there is no claim overlap between the petitions and only a single obviousness ground per claim was proffered, it is not feasible for Petitioner to provide such a ranking. *Id*. at 5.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 8

In the Sur-reply Patent Owner argues that Petitioner has not explained the differences between the petitions and has not provided a ranking, both of which are required by the PTAB Consolidated Trial Practice Guide (Nov. 2019) (available at https://www.uspto.gov/TrialPracticeGuideConsolidated) ("TPG"), and that Petitioner's refusal to comply with the TPG is indefensible. Sur-reply 1.

Upon consideration of the specific circumstances under which Petitioner filed two petitions, we decline to exercise our discretion to deny institution in this proceeding. We agree with Petitioner that a large number of claims have been asserted against it in district court and that addressing those 29 claims may necessitate filing two separate petitions. *See* TPG at 59 ("[T]he Board recognizes that there may be circumstances in which more than one petition may be necessary, including, for example, when the patent owner has asserted a large number of claims in litigation.") The fact that the same claims are not challenged between the two petitions weighs in favor of declining to exercise our discretion to deny institution. *See Gen. Plastic Co., Ltd. v. Canon Kabushiki Kaisha*, IPR2016-01357, Paper 19 at 16–17 (PTAB Sept. 6, 2017) (precedential as to § II.B.4.i).

We disagree with Patent Owner that Petitioner has not explained the differences between the two petitions. In its Reply, Petitioner explains that the two Petitions challenge different claims; that the independent claims challenged in IPR2022-00745 include a limitation that is not present in the independent claim challenged in IPR2022-00744; and that the prior art combinations relied upon are, at least partly, different between the two petitions.

Although the TPG advises that a "petitioner should, in its petitions or in a separate paper filed with the petitions, identify: (1) a ranking of the

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 9

petitions in the order in which it wishes the Board to consider the merits, if the Board uses its discretion to institute any of the petitions" (TPG at 59–60), we determine that Petitioner's failure to rank its petitions does not outweigh the other facts discussed above. We therefore decline to exercise our discretion under § 314(a) to deny institution based on the concurrently filed petitions.

B. Principles of Law

Petitioner bears the burden of persuasion to prove unpatentability of the claims challenged in the Petition, and that burden never shifts to Patent Owner. *Dynamic Drinkware, LLC v. Nat'l Graphics, Inc.*, 800 F.3d 1375, 1378 (Fed. Cir. 2015).

A patent claim is unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) if the differences between the claimed subject matter and the prior art are such that the subject matter, as a whole, would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. *KSR Int'l Co. v. Teleflex Inc.*, 550 U.S. 398, 406 (2007). The question of obviousness is resolved on the basis of underlying factual determinations including: (1) the scope and content of the prior art; (2) any differences between the claimed subject matter and the prior art; (3) the level of skill in the art; and (4) any objective evidence of obviousness or non-obviousness. *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 17–18 (1966).

C. Level of Ordinary Skill in the Art

In determining the level of ordinary skill in the art, various factors may be considered, including the "type of problems encountered in the art; prior art solutions to those problems; rapidity with which innovations are made; sophistication of the technology; and educational level of active workers in the field." *In re GPAC Inc.*, 57 F.3d 1573, 1579 (Fed. Cir. 1995).

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 10

Petitioner contends a person of ordinary skill in the art "would have been someone with an advanced degree in electrical or computer engineering and at least two years of work experience in the field, or a bachelor's degree in such engineering disciplines and at least three years of work experience in the field." Pet. 3 (citing Ex. 1003 ¶ 52). Patent Owner asserts it "does not contest Petitioner's proffered definition of the level of a person of ordinary skill in the art." Prelim. Resp. 6.

For purposes of this Decision, we adopt Petitioner's proposed level of ordinary skill, except that we find that the phrase "at least" in Petitioner's proposed definition creates a vague, open-ended upper bound for the level of ordinary skill, and we therefore do not adopt that aspect of the proposal. Thus, we determine at this stage of the proceeding, that a person of ordinary skill in the art would have been a person with an advanced degree in electrical or computer engineering and two years of work experience in the field of memory module design and operation, or a bachelor's degree in such engineering disciplines and three years of work experience in the field.

D. Claim Construction

We apply the same claim construction standard used in district court actions under 35 U.S.C. § 282(b), namely that articulated in *Phillips v. AWH Corp.*, 415 F.3d 1303 (Fed. Cir. 2005) (en banc). *See* 37 C.F.R. § 42.100(b) (2020).

In applying that standard, claim terms generally are given their ordinary and customary meaning as would have been understood by a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention and in the context of the entire patent disclosure. *Phillips*, 415 F.3d at 1312–13. "In determining the meaning of the disputed claim limitation, we look principally to the intrinsic evidence of record, examining the claim language itself, the written

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 11

description, and the prosecution history, if in evidence." *DePuy Spine, Inc. v. Medtronic Sofamor Danek, Inc.*, 469 F.3d 1005, 1014 (Fed. Cir. 2006) (citing *Phillips*, 415 F.3d at 1312–17).

Neither party propose any constructions for any claim terms. *See* Prelim. Resp. 9–10; *see also* Pet. 6–7.[2] We determine no terms need to be construed to resolve the disputes between the parties at this stage of the proceeding.

E. Obviousness over Halbert (Ground 1)

Petitioner argues claims 1, 2, 6, 8, and 12–14 of the '314 patent would have been obvious over Halbert. Pet. 17–44. Below we provide a brief overview of the prior art references and then analyze Petitioner's contentions in light of Patent Owner's arguments.

1. Halbert (Ex. 1005)

Halbert relates to memory module architectures and methods for operating digital memory devices and systems. Ex. 1005 ¶ 2. Figure 4, reproduced below, is a block diagram of a memory module. *Id.* ¶ 15.

[2] Petitioner indicates that "[t]he parties' proposed constructions from [the related litigations] are set forth in Exs. 1008–1009" but that "[t]he parties' construction disputes from the related litigations do not affect the outcome of this Petition with respect to any claim." Pet. 6–7.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 12

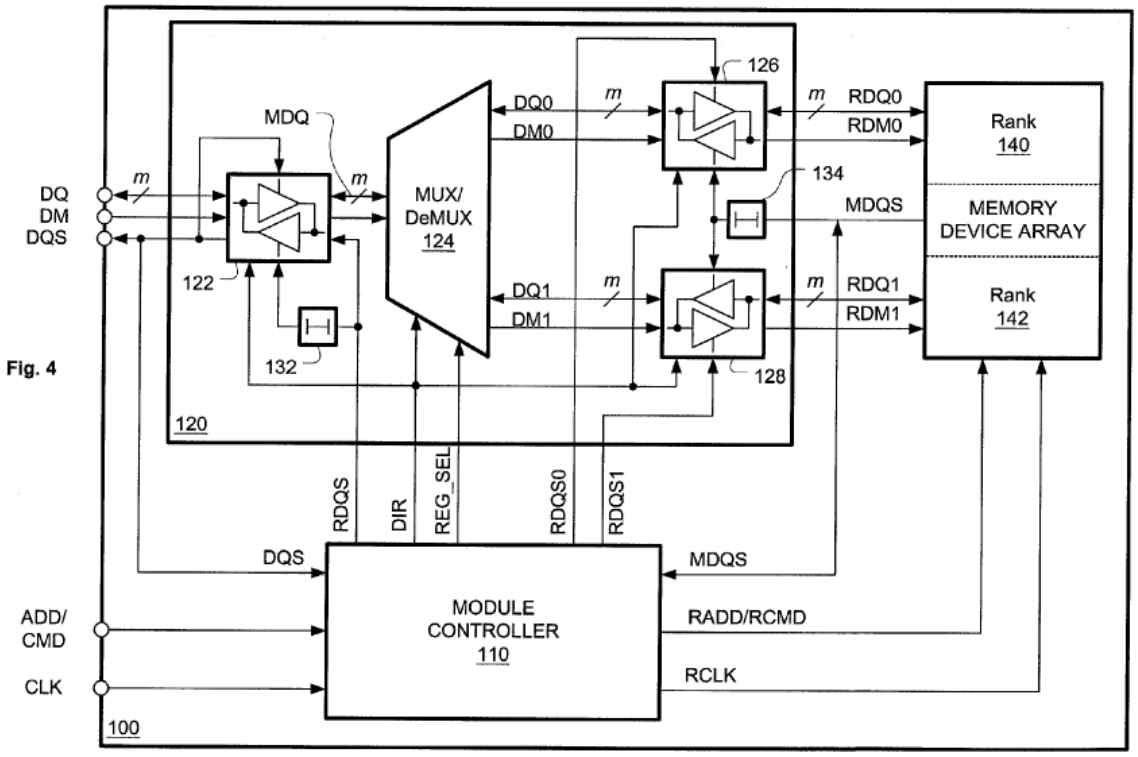
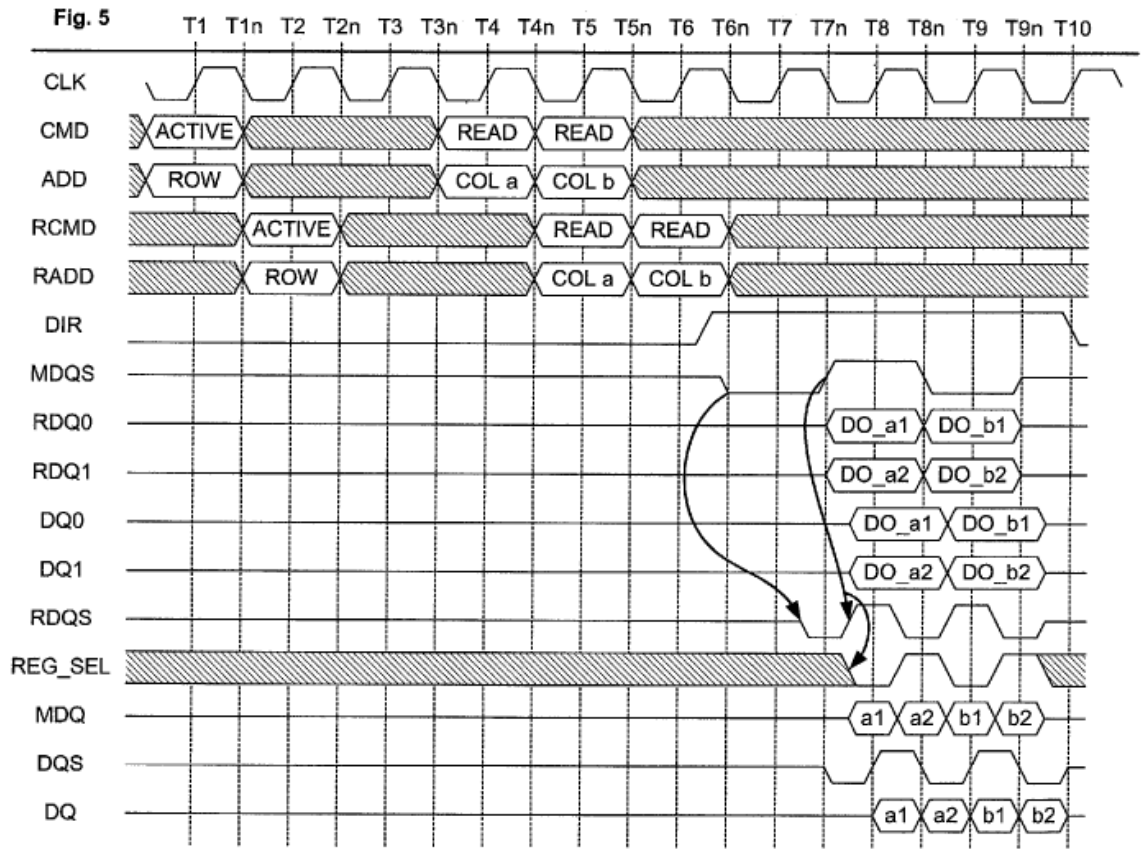


Fig. 4

As shown in Figure 4, memory module 100 includes three functional blocks: a module controller 110; a data interface circuit 120; and a memory device array 140/142. Ex. 1005 ¶ 28. The module controller 110 synchronizes the operation of module 100 with the attached memory system. *Id.* ¶ 29. Additionally, module controller 110 provides timing and synchronization signals to data interface circuit 120. *Id.* In Figure 4, a bi-directional buffer 122 is coupled to a bi-directional module data port that can be connected to a system memory data bus. *Id.* ¶ 31. Further, a data strobe signal DQS can be driven by buffer 122 onto the memory data bus. *Id.* Figure 5, reproduced below, shows a timing diagram for two consecutive read operations for the memory module of Figure 4. *Id.* ¶ 16.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 13



Externally, a primary memory controller initiates READ operations. Ex. 1005 ¶ 37. As part of the READ operation, device array 140/142 signals that it is about to drive data onto buses RDQ0 and RDQ1 by taking data strobe MDQS low at T6n. *Id.* ¶ 38. At T7n, device array 140/142 takes MDQS high, signifying that data outputs "DO_a1" and "DO_a2" are being driven respectively onto buses RDQ0 and RDQ1. *Id.* ¶ 39. Delay element 134 delays MDQS long enough for the buses to settle, and then passes the MDQS strobe to registers 126 and 128. *Id.* Upon receiving MDQS, registers 126 and 128 latch DO_a1 and DO_a2. *Id.* Figure 8, reproduced below, shows a side view of multiple DIMM modules connected to a multi-drop memory bus. *Id.* ¶ 18.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 14

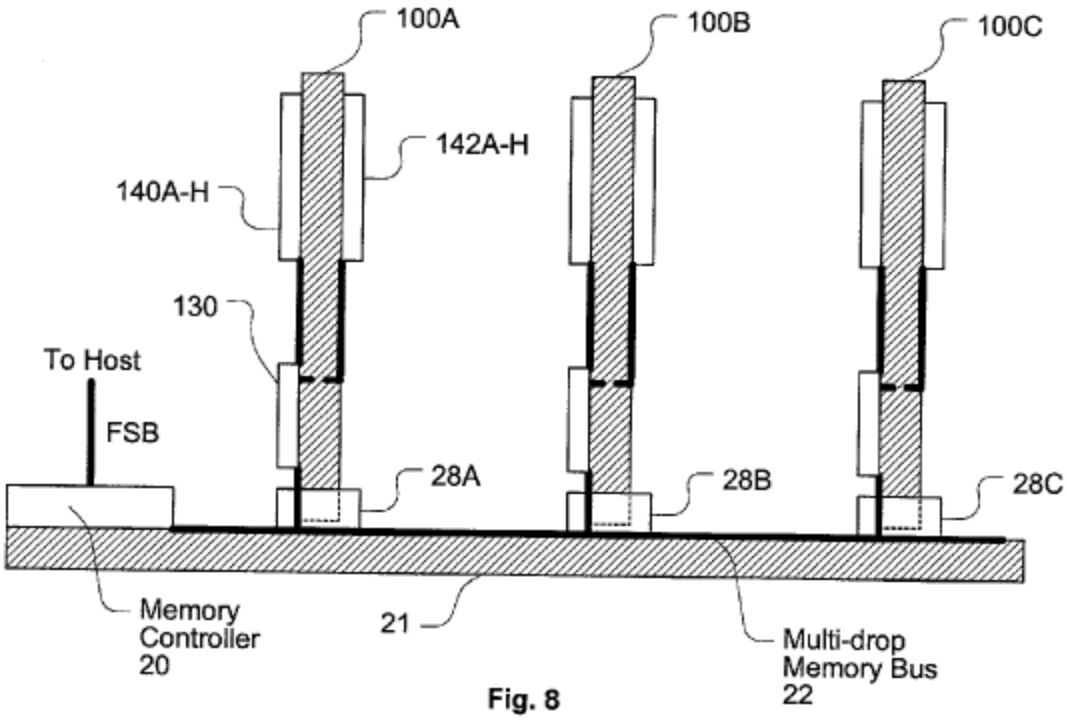


Fig. 8

Memory modules 100A, 100B, and 100C are arranged in a memory system with a primary memory controller 20 and a multi-drop memory bus 22. Ex. 1005 ¶ 49. With multiple modules, each module recognizes ACTIVE commands addressed to that module and respond accordingly. *Id.*

2. Analysis of Claim 1

Regarding limitation 1.1a, Petitioner argues that Halbert's memory module 100 teaches the recited "memory module," that Halbert's memory controller 20 teaches the recited "memory controller," and that memory bus 22 teaches the recited "data bus." Pet. 17–18. Petitioner argues that memory module 100 has a data interface 120 that provides for m-bit wide data transfers between the module and the system memory data bus. *Id*. at 18 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 5, 30, 49, Figs. 4, 8; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 93–94). Petitioner further argues that Halbert's memory module enables data transfers at a "specified data rate" and that this data rate is twice the data rate of the

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 15

registered dual-bank DIMM. *Id*. at 18–19 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶ 24; Ex. 1003 ¶ 95).

Regarding limitation 1.1b, Petitioner argues that memory module 100 outputs and receives first and second bursts of m-bit-wide data signals (i.e. the recited N-bit wide data signals) and data strobes caused by first and second memory commands. Pet. 19 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 31, 37, Fig. 4; Ex. 1003 ¶ 96). These memory commands can be a read command and a subsequent write command or, in the alternative, can be a read command and a subsequent read command. *Id*. at 19–20 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 33, 35, 36–38, 41; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 97–100).

Regarding limitation 1.2, Petitioner argues Halbert teaches a printed circuit board having a plurality of edge connections configured to be electrically coupled to a corresponding plurality of contacts of a module slot of the computer system. Pet. 21–22 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 6–7, cl. 11, Fig. 8; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 102–104).

Regarding limitation 1.3, Petitioner argues Halbert teaches a plurality of memory integrated circuits mounted on the printed circuit board and arranged in a plurality of N-bit wide ranks. Pet. 22 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 27–28, 30; Fig. 4; Ex. 1003 ¶ 106).

Limitations 1.4a and 1.4b require first and second ranks configured to receive or output bursts of N-bit wide data signals and data strobes at the specified data rate in response to the first and second memory commands, respectively. Petitioner identifies Halbert's memory device ranks 140 and 142 as the respective first and second ranks and argues that they are configured to output the first and second bursts of N-bit wide data signals and strobes at the specified data rate in response to memory commands (a read command and subsequent write command or a read command and

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 16

subsequent read command). Pet. 22–24 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 33, 35, 37–38, Fig. 5; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 108–109).

Regarding limitation 1.5, Petitioner identifies Halbert's data interface circuit 120 as the recited "circuitry coupled between the plurality of N-bit wide ranks and the N-bit wide data bus." Pet. 26 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶ 30, Fig. 4; Ex. 1003 ¶ 116).

Regarding limitation 1.6, Petitioner identifies Halbert's module controller 110 and control signals AWAY, TO, and REG_SEL as the recited "logic coupled to the circuitry and configured to respond to the first memory command by providing first control signals to the circuitry and to subsequently respond to the second memory command by providing second control signals to the circuitry." Pet. 27–28 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 34–35, Ex. 1005 ¶ 118–119).

Regarding limitation 1.7, Petitioner argues that in response to the first control signals, in AWAY mode, data transfers are enabled away from memory device ranks 140/142, through data interface 120 and buffer 122 toward system memory data bus. Pet. 28 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 35; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 120–122).

Regarding limitations 1.8 and 1.9, Petitioner argues that Halbert's DIMM can provide twice the data rate of the dual-bank registered DIMM and that this is the claimed "specified data rate." Pet. 29 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 24, 35). Thus, according to Petitioner, a person of ordinary skill "would have understood that Halbert's memory module 100 enables data signals and strobes transfer from the memory device array *to the system memory data bus in response to read commands*, and from the system memory data bus *to the memory device array in response to write commands*, at the specified data rate, i.e., at twice the data rate of the registered DIMM." *Id*. (citing

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 17

Ex. 1005 ¶ 35; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 123, 125, 127). Petitioner argues that Figure 4 of Halbert shows that the burst of data signals and strobes are transferred through the data interface circuit 120. Pet. 29–30.

Regarding limitation 1.10, Petitioner argues that Halbert discloses registers 126, 128, and 122 for providing registered data transfers through data interface 120. Pet. 30 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶ 36; Ex. 1003 ¶ 129). Further, Petitioner argues that the registered data transfers are enabled by module controller 110 in accordance with an overall CAS latency of memory module 100. *Id*. at 31 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶ 29, Fig. 5; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 130–131).

Regarding limitation 1.11, Petitioner argues data interface circuit 120 is configured to add a predetermined amount of time delay for each registered data transfer through the circuitry because registers 126 and 128 add a predetermined time delay of one clock cycle for each registered data transfer through circuit 120. Pet. 33–34 (citing Ex. 1005, Fig. 5; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 132–133). Petitioner argues that as a result, the overall CAS latency of memory module 100, e.g., from T4 to T8, is greater than the actual operational CAS latency of each of the plurality of memory integrated circuits, e.g., from T5 to T7n. *Id*. at 34–35 (citing Ex. 1005, Fig. 5; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 132–133).

Patent Owner argues that claim 1 requires: (1) that the same specified data rate is used when transferring information between the memory module and memory controller as well as within the memory module (Prelim. Resp. 23); (2) that "the ***same*** first burst of data signals and data strobes are transferred between the module and the memory controller of the computer, and to or from the first rank within the memory module" (*id*. at 29–31); and (3) that the same first memory command causes the memory module and the first rank to receive or output the first bursts of data signals and strobes (i*d*.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 18

at 31–32). Patent Owner argues that Petitioner has not shown that any of the three requirements above are taught by Halbert.

For example, Patent Owner argues that Figure 5 of Halbert shows instead that Halbert uses a different data rate between the memory module and the computer system than the data rate between memory ranks 140, 142 and data interface 120. *Id*. at 24–27 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 13, 24, 42, Figs. 4, 5). Similarly, Patent Owner argues that Figure 5 of Halbert shows that the first burst of data signals between the module and memory controller and to or from the first rank within the memory module are different. *Id*. at 29–31. And again, Patent Owner argues that in Halbert the memory command for the module causes two pieces of data to be received or output by the module, but the memory command presented to the ranks requests a single column of data and that, therefore, different memory commands are presented to the memory module versus the first and second ranks. *Id*. at 32–33.

Patent Owner further argues that claim 1 requires the first memory command to cause a burst of data to be received or output by the first rank and that a "burst" of signals requires at least two or more data signals. Prelim. Resp. 27–28 (citing Ex. 1001, 13:30–31, 13:35–37, 13:42–46, Figs. 6A, 6B, 7). Figure 5 of Halbert, according to Patent Owner, shows only one piece of data being transferred for rank 0 in response to the first read command. *Id*. at 28.

At this stage of the proceeding we are persuaded by Petitioner's arguments of a reasonable likelihood that Halbert teaches the limitations of claim 1 for the reasons summarized above. Petitioner supports its contentions with citations from Halbert and with unrebutted testimony from Dr. Oklobdzija. In relation to Patent Owner's arguments regarding the specified data rate specifically, Dr. Oklobdzija testifies that "Halbert

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 19

discloses that memory device rank 140 can be a first rank that is configured to output the first burst of N-bit wide data signals and the first burst of data strobes at the specified data rate in response to the first memory command." Ex. 1003 ¶ 107 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 33, 38). Dr. Oklobdzija also testifies that "[d]ata signals DQ0 are output to the memory data bus at the specified data rate" and that the "[m]emory device array 140 also outputs the first burst of data strobes at the specified data rate, i.e., memory data strobe MDQS, as part of the read operation." *Id*. ¶ 108 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 35, 37). Dr. Oklobdzija provides similar testimony for the second rank as well. *Id*. ¶¶ 109–114. Finally, Dr. Oklobdzija testifies that a person of ordinary skill "would have understood that Halbert's memory module 100 enables data and data strobes transfer from the memory device array to the system memory data bus in response to the read command at the specified data rate of twice the data rate of the registered DIMM." *Id*. ¶ 123.

Further in relation to arguments regarding the "burst" of signals, Dr. Oklobdzija testifies that "Halbert discloses that the memory module 100 receives and outputs bursts of N-bit wide data signals and data strobes. Ex. 1003 ¶ 96 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 31, 32). Based on the evidence presented at this stage of the proceeding we are not persuaded that the term "burst" recited in claim 1 should be limited to refer to at least two or more data signals. The citations Patent Owner relies upon from the '314 patent do not expressly limit the term in this manner (*see* Ex. 1001, 13:30–31, 13:35–37, 13:42–46) and Patent Owner does not present any other intrinsic or extrinsic evidence to support this construction. To the extent Patent Owner's argument focuses on the recitation of the plural term "signals," as explained above, Dr. Oklobdzija testifies that Halbert outputs "bursts of N-bit wide data signals." Ex. 1003 ¶ 96 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 31, 32).

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 20

Although we determine that Petitioner's contentions are sufficient at this stage of the proceeding, we note that Patent Owner's arguments raise several issues that would benefit from further development as trial progresses including what specifically claim 1 requires regarding the "specified data rate" and "burst" of signals limitations and whether Halbert teaches these limitations when properly construed. For example, the parties may wish to address whether claim 1 requires the same specified data rate to be used when communicating data between the memory controller of the computer system and the memory module over the N-bit wide data bus, as well as between the first and second ranks and the recited circuitry. Additionally, the parties may wish to provide further evidence and analysis (to the extent permitted by our rules) regarding the data rates used in Halbert between the data interface 120 and the computer system, the data rate between memory ranks 140, 142 and data interface 120, and the data rates through data interface 120.

3. Analysis of Claims 2, 6, 8, 12–14

Based on a review of the current record at this stage of the proceeding, Petitioner has made a sufficient showing of a reasonable likelihood that claims 2, 6, 8, 12–14 would have been obvious over Halbert. *See* Pet. 35–44. Patent Owner has not provided a separate response to these arguments at this stage of the proceeding. *See* Prelim. Resp.

4. Conclusion – Obviousness over Halbert (Ground 1)

Accordingly, having considered the arguments and evidence, we are persuaded that Petitioner has demonstrated a reasonable likelihood of prevailing on its challenge to claims 1, 2, 6, 8, and 12–14 of the '314 patent as obvious over Halbert.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 21

F. Obviousness over Halbert and JESD21-C (Ground 2); Obviousness over Halbert and JESD79-2A (Ground 3)

Petitioner argues claims 3, 9, and 10 of the '314 patent would have been obvious over Halbert and JESD21-C (Pet. 45–66) and claim 5 would have been obvious over Halbert and JESD79-2A (Pet. 66–76). Based on a review of the current record at this stage of the proceeding, Petitioner has made a sufficient showing of a reasonable likelihood that the challenged claims under the aforementioned grounds would have obvious over the respective references. Patent Owner has not provided a separate response to these arguments at this stage of the proceeding. *See* Prelim. Resp.

III. CONCLUSION

Petitioner has demonstrated a reasonable likelihood of prevailing in showing the unpatentability of at least one challenged claim of the '314 patent. At this stage of the proceeding, however, we have not made a final determination with respect to the patentability of the challenged claims.

IV. ORDER

For the foregoing reasons, it is:

ORDERED that, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 314(a), an *inter partes* review of claims 1–3, 5, 6, 8–10, and 12–14 of the '314 patent is instituted with respect to all grounds of unpatentability set forth in the Petition; and

FURTHER ORDERED that, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 314(c) and 37 C.F.R. § 42.4(b), *inter partes* review of the '314 patent shall commence on the entry date of this Order, and notice is hereby given of the institution of a trial.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 22

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Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 23

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Paper 15
Entered: November 1, 2022

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE PATENT TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD

MICRON TECHNOLOGY, INC.,
MICRON SEMICONDUCTOR PRODUCTS, INC., and
MICRON TECHNOLOGY TEXAS LLC,
Petitioner,

v.

NETLIST, INC.,
Patent Owner.

IPR2022-00745
Patent 10,489,314 B2

Before JON M. JURGOVAN, DANIEL J. GALLIGAN, and NABEEL U. KHAN, *Administrative Patent Judges.*

KHAN, *Administrative Patent Judge*.

DECISION
Granting Institution of *Inter Partes* Review
35 U.S.C. § 314, 37 C.F.R. § 42.4

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background and Summary

Micron Technology, Inc., Micron Semiconductor Products, Inc., and Micron Technology Texas LLC (collectively "Petitioner") filed a Petition (Paper 2, "Pet.") requesting an *inter partes* review of claims 15–20 and 22–33 ("the challenged claims") of U.S. Patent No. 10,489,314 B2 (the '314 patent," Ex. 1001). Netlist, Inc. ("Patent Owner") timely filed a Preliminary Response (Paper 9, "Prelim. Resp."). With our authorization, Petitioner filed a Reply (Paper 11, "Reply") and Patent Owner filed a Sur-reply (Paper 12, "Sur-reply") addressing the appropriateness of discretionary denial under 35 U.S.C. § 314(a).

An *inter partes* review may not be instituted "unless . . . the information presented in the petition . . . shows that there is a reasonable likelihood that the petitioner would prevail with respect to at least 1 of the claims challenged in the petition." 35 U.S.C. § 314(a) (2018). Having considered the arguments and evidence presented by Petitioner and Patent Owner, we determine that Petitioner has demonstrated a reasonable likelihood of prevailing for at least one of the challenged claims of the '314 patent, and we institute an *inter partes* review as to the challenged claims of the '314 patent on all the grounds of unpatentability set forth in the Petition.

B. Related Proceedings

The parties identify the following matter as related to this case: *Netlist, Inc. v. Micron Technology, Inc. et al.*, Case No. 1:22-cv-00136 (W.D. Tex). Pet. 90; Paper 3, 1. Petitioner also has concurrently filed a petition challenging different claims of the '314 patent in IPR2022-00744. Pet. 90.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 25

C. The '314 Patent (Ex. 1001)

The '314 patent, titled "Memory Module With Data Buffering," relates to a memory system that controls timing of memory signals based on timing information. Ex. 1001, codes (54), (57). Figure 1, reproduced below, illustrates a memory module. *Id.* at 5:53–55.

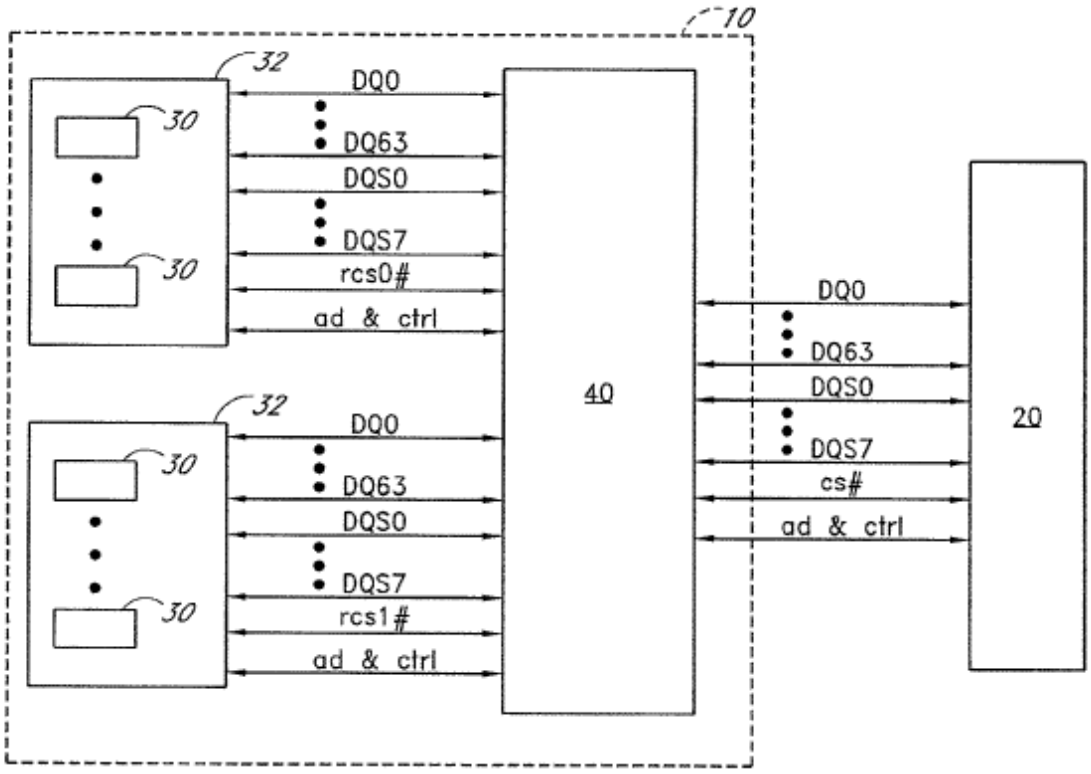


FIG. 1

As shown in Figure 1, memory module 10 is connectable to a memory controller 20 of a computer system (not shown). Ex. 1001, 5:53–56. The memory module 10 comprises a plurality of memory devices 30, each memory device having a corresponding load. *Id.* at 5:56–58. The memory module 10 further comprises a circuit 40 electrically coupled to the plurality of memory devices 30 and electrically coupled to the memory controller 20

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 26

of the computer system. *Id.* at 5:59–62. The circuit 40 selectively isolates one or more of the loads of the memory devices from the computer system. *Id.* at 5:62–64. The circuit 40 comprises logic that translates between a system memory domain of the computer system and a physical memory domain of the memory module 10. *Id.* at 5:64–67.

As described in the '314 patent, the plurality of memory devices 30 comprises a first number of memory devices 30, and the circuit 40 selectively isolates a second number of the memory devices 30 from the computer system, with the second number being less than the first number. Ex. 1001, 6:59–64. As also described in the '314 patent, the plurality of memory devices 30 are arranged in a first number of ranks, such as two ranks as illustrated in Figure 1. *Id.* at 6:65–7:1.

Figure 2, reproduced below, illustrates a circuit diagram of two memory devices of a memory module. Ex. 1001, 7:28–29.

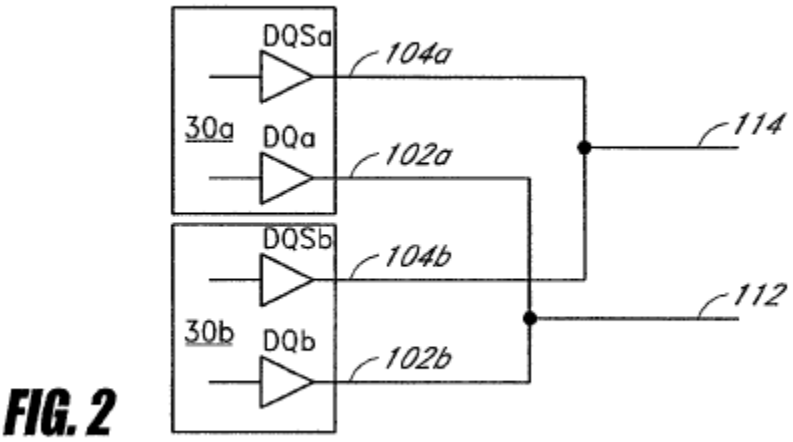


FIG. 2

As shown in Figure 2, the memory devices 30a, 30b have DQ data signal lines 102a, 102b and DQS data strobe signal lines 104a, 104b. Ex. 1001, 7:29–40. As further shown in Figure 2, the memory devices 30a, 30b have their DQ data signal lines 102a, 102b electrically coupled to a

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 27

common DQ line 112 and their DQS data strobe signal lines 104a, 104b electrically coupled to a common DQS line 114. *Id.* at 7:40–44. The common DQ line 112 and the common DQS line 114 are electrically coupled to the memory controller 20 of the computer system. *Id.* at 7:45–47.

As described in the '314 patent, the circuit 40 selectively isolates the loads of at least some of the memory devices 30 from the computer system. Ex. 1001, 7:49–51. In embodiments where the memory devices 30 are arranged in a plurality of ranks, the circuit 40 selectively isolates the loads of one, some, or all of the ranks of the memory module 10 from the computer system. *Id.* at 7:53–59.

D. Illustrative Claims

Claims 15 and 28 are independent claims of the '314 patent. Claims 15 and 28 are reproduced below with limitation identifiers in brackets corresponding to claim analysis headings in the Petition. *See* Pet. 15–43.

> 15. [15.1] A memory module operable in a computer system to communicate data with a memory controller of the computer system via a N-bit wide memory bus in response to read or write memory commands received from the memory controller, the memory module comprising:
>
> [15.2] a printed circuit board having a plurality of edge connections configured to be electrically coupled to a corresponding plurality of contacts of a module slot of the computer system;
>
> [15.3] logic coupled to the printed circuit board and configured to receive a first set of input address and control signals associated with a first read or write memory command and to output a first set of registered address and control signals in response to the first set of input address and control signals, [15.4] the first set of input address and control signals including a first plurality of input chip select signals, [15.5] the first set of registered address and control signals including a first plurality of registered chip select signals corresponding to respective ones

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 28

of the first plurality of input chip select signals, [15.6] the first plurality of registered chip select signals including a first registered chip select signal having an active signal value and one or more other registered chip select signals each having a non-active signal value;

[15.7] memory devices mounted on the printed circuit board and arranged in a plurality of N-bit wide ranks, wherein the plurality of N-bit wide ranks are configured to receive respective ones of the first plurality of registered chip select signals, [15.8] wherein a first N-bit wide rank in the plurality of N-bit wide ranks receiving the first registered chip select signal having the active signal value is configured to receive or output a first burst of N-bit wide data signals and a first burst of data strobes associated with the first read or write command;

[15.9] circuitry coupled between data and strobe signal lines in the N-bit wide memory bus and corresponding data and strobe pins of memory devices in each of the plurality of N-bit wide ranks; and

[15.10] wherein the logic is further configured to, in response to the first read or write memory command, output first control signals to the circuitry, [15.11] and wherein the circuitry is configured to enable data transfers between the first rank and the memory bus through the circuitry in response to the first control signals so that respective N-bit wide data signals of the first burst of N-bit wide data signals and respective data strobes of the first burst of data strobes are transferred through the circuitry in accordance with an overall CAS latency of the memory module; and

[15.12] wherein the data transfers between the first rank and the memory bus through the circuitry are registered data transfers and the circuitry is configured to add a predetermined amount of time delay for each registered data transfer through the circuitry such that the overall CAS latency of the memory module is greater than an actual operational CAS latency of each of the memory devices.

Ex. 1001, 44:47–45:37.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 29

28. [28.1] A memory module operable in a computer system to communicate data with a memory controller of the computer system via a N-bit wide memory bus in response to read or write memory commands received from the memory controller, the memory module comprising:

[28.2] a printed circuit board having a plurality of edge connections configured to be electrically coupled to a corresponding plurality of contacts of a module slot of the computer system;

[28.3] logic coupled to the printed circuit board and configured to receive a set of input control and address signals associated with a read or write memory command via the memory bus and to output a set of registered control and address signals in response to the set of input control and address signals,

[28.4] the set of input control and address signals including a plurality of input chip select signals,

[28.5] the set of registered control and address signals including a plurality of registered chip select signals corresponding to respective ones of the plurality of input chip select signals,

[28.6] the plurality of registered chip select signals including a registered chip select signal having an active signal value and one or more other registered chip select signals each having a non-active signal value

[28.7] memory devices mounted on the printed circuit board and arranged in a plurality of N-bit wide ranks, wherein the plurality of N-bit wide ranks are configured to receive respective ones of the plurality of registered chip select signals,

[28.8] wherein a first N-bit wide rank receiving the registered chip select signal having the active signal value is configured to receive or output a first burst of N-bit wide data signals and a first burst of data strobes associated with the read/write command;

[28.9] circuitry between data and data strobe signal lines in the memory bus and corresponding data and data strobe pins of the memory devices,

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 30

[28.10] wherein the circuitry includes logic pipelines configured to enable data transfers between the first rank and the memory bus in response to the first read or write memory command,

[28.11] wherein respective N-bit wide data signals of the first burst of N-bit wide data signals and respective data strobes of the first burst of data strobes are transferred between the first rank and the memory bus through the circuitry in accordance with an overall CAS latency of the memory module; and

[28.12] wherein the data transfers between the first rank and the memory bus are registered data transfers; and

[28.13] wherein the circuitry is configured to add a predetermined amount of time delay for each data transfer between the memory controller and the memory devices such that the overall CAS latency of the memory module is greater than an actual operational CAS latency of each of the memory devices.

E. Evidence

The Petition relies on the following references:

Reference	**Exhibit No.**
US 2002/0112119 A1; filed Mar. 13, 2002; published Aug. 15, 2002 ("Halbert").	1005
PC2100 and PC1600 DDR SDRAM Registered DIMM Design Specification, JEDEC Standard 21-C (January 2002) ("JESD21-C").	1006

Petitioner also relies on the Declaration of Vojin G. Oklobdzija, Ph.D. (Ex. 1003) in support of its arguments. The parties rely on other exhibits as discussed below.

F. Prior Art and Asserted Grounds

Petitioner asserts that claims 15–20 and 22–33 would have been unpatentable on the following ground:

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 31

Claim(s) Challenged	35 U.S.C. §	Reference(s)/Basis
15–20, 22–33	103(a)[1]	Halbert, JESD21-C

II. ANALYSIS

A. Discretion under 35 U.S.C. § 314(a)

As indicated above, Petitioner has concurrently filed with this Petition, a parallel petition in IPR2022-00744. This Petition challenges claims 15–20 and 22–33, while IPR2022-00744 challenges claims 1–3, 5, 6, 8–10, and 12–14.

Patent Owner argues, *inter alia*, that we should exercise our discretion under 35 U.S.C. § 314(a) to deny institution because Petitioner has failed to sufficiently justify the two concurrently-filed petitions. Prelim. Resp. 17–23. Specifically, Patent Owner argues that the petitions are duplicative because both petitions use Halbert as the primary reference and a JEDEC standard as the secondary reference and that the parallel petitions place substantial and unnecessary burden on the Board and the Patent Owner. *Id*. at 20.

In its Reply, Petitioner argues that Patent Owner has asserted a large number of claims (29 total claims) against it in district court and that those claims are extremely lengthy requiring two petitions to address. Reply 1–2. Petitioner argues that it structured the petitions in a way to reduce prejudice to Patent Owner by asserting only a single ground for each asserted claim and having no overlapping claims between the petitions. *Id*. at 2. Petitioner distinguishes the two petitions by emphasizing that in IPR2022-00745 it

[1] The Leahy-Smith America Invents Act ("AIA"), Pub. L. No. 112-29, 125 Stat. 284, 287–88 (2011), amended 35 U.S.C. § 103 and became effective March 16, 2013. Petitioner applies the pre-AIA version of § 103. Pet. 2–3.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 32

challenges claims reciting a limitation that is not present in the claims in IPR2022-00744 except for in three dependent claims. *Id*. Petitioner does not, however, provide a ranking of the two petitions, arguing that because there is no claim overlap between the petitions and only a single obviousness ground per claim was proffered, it is not feasible for Petitioner to provide such a ranking. *Id*. at 5.

In the Sur-reply Patent Owner argues that Petitioner has not explained the differences between the petitions and has not provided a ranking, both of which are required by the PTAB Consolidated Trial Practice Guide (Nov. 2019) (available at https://www.uspto.gov/TrialPracticeGuideConsolidated) ("TPG"), and that Petitioner's refusal to comply with the TPG is indefensible. Sur-reply 1.

Upon consideration of the specific circumstances under which Petitioner filed two petitions, we decline to exercise our discretion to deny institution in this proceeding. We agree with Petitioner that a large number of claims have been asserted against it in district court and that addressing those 29 claims may necessitate filing two separate petitions. *See* TPG at 59 ("[T]he Board recognizes that there may be circumstances in which more than one petition may be necessary, including, for example, when the patent owner has asserted a large number of claims in litigation.") The fact that the same claims are not challenged between the two petitions weighs in favor of declining to exercise our discretion to deny institution. *See Gen. Plastic Co., Ltd. v. Canon Kabushiki Kaisha*, IPR2016-01357, Paper 19 at 16–17 (PTAB Sept. 6, 2017) (precedential as to § II.B.4.i).

We disagree with Patent Owner that Petitioner has not explained the differences between the two petitions. In its Reply, Petitioner explains that the two Petitions challenge different claims; that the independent claims

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 33

challenged in IPR2022-00745 include a limitation that is not present in the independent claim challenged in IPR2022-00744; and that the prior art combinations relied upon are, at least partly, different between the two petitions. Reply 2.

Although the TPG advises that a "petition should, in its petitions or in a separate paper filed with the petitions, identify: (1) a ranking of the petitions in the order in which it wishes the Board to consider the merits, if the Board uses its discretion to institute any of the petitions" (TPG at 59–60), we determine that Petitioner's failure to rank its petitions does not outweigh the other facts discussed above. We therefore decline to exercise our discretion under § 314(a) to deny institution based on the concurrently filed petitions.

B. Principles of Law

Petitioner bears the burden of persuasion to prove unpatentability of the claims challenged in the Petition, and that burden never shifts to Patent Owner. *Dynamic Drinkware, LLC v. Nat'l Graphics, Inc.*, 800 F.3d 1375, 1378 (Fed. Cir. 2015).

A patent claim is unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) if the differences between the claimed subject matter and the prior art are such that the subject matter, as a whole, would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. *KSR Int'l Co. v. Teleflex Inc.*, 550 U.S. 398, 406 (2007). The question of obviousness is resolved on the basis of underlying factual determinations including: (1) the scope and content of the prior art; (2) any differences between the claimed subject matter and the prior art;

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 34

(3) the level of skill in the art; and (4) any objective evidence of obviousness or non-obviousness.[2] *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 17–18 (1966).

C. Level of Ordinary Skill in the Art

In determining the level of ordinary skill in the art, various factors may be considered, including the "type of problems encountered in the art; prior art solutions to those problems; rapidity with which innovations are made; sophistication of the technology; and educational level of active workers in the field." *In re GPAC Inc.*, 57 F.3d 1573, 1579 (Fed. Cir. 1995).

Petitioner contends a person of ordinary skill in the art "would have been someone with an advanced degree in electrical or computer engineering and at least two years of work experience in the field, or a bachelor's degree in such engineering disciplines and at least three years of work experience in the field." Pet. 3 (citing Ex. 1003 ¶ 52). Patent Owner asserts it "does not contest Petitioner's proffered definition of the level of a person of ordinary skill in the art." Prelim. Resp. 7.

For purposes of this Decision, we adopt Petitioner's proposed level of ordinary skill, except that we find that the phrase "at least" in Petitioner's proposed definition creates a vague, open-ended upper bound for the level of ordinary skill, and we therefore do not adopt that aspect of the proposal. Thus, we determine at this stage of the proceeding, that a person of ordinary skill in the art would have been a person with an advanced degree in electrical or computer engineering and two years of work experience in the field of memory module design and operation, or a bachelor's degree in such engineering disciplines and three years of work experience in the field.

[2] At this stage, Patent Owner does not present any objective evidence of non-obviousness (i.e., secondary considerations) as to any of the challenged claims.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 35

D. Claim Construction

We apply the same claim construction standard used in district court actions under 35 U.S.C. § 282(b), namely that articulated in *Phillips v. AWH Corp.*, 415 F.3d 1303 (Fed. Cir. 2005) (en banc). *See* 37 C.F.R. § 42.100(b) (2020).

In applying that standard, claim terms generally are given their ordinary and customary meaning as would have been understood by a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention and in the context of the entire patent disclosure. *Phillips*, 415 F.3d at 1312–13. "In determining the meaning of the disputed claim limitation, we look principally to the intrinsic evidence of record, examining the claim language itself, the written description, and the prosecution history, if in evidence." *DePuy Spine, Inc. v. Medtronic Sofamor Danek, Inc.*, 469 F.3d 1005, 1014 (Fed. Cir. 2006) (citing *Phillips*, 415 F.3d at 1312–17).

Neither party propose any constructions for any claim terms. *See* Prelim. Resp. 10–11; *see also* Pet. 6–7.[3] We determine no terms need to be construed to resolve the disputes between the parties at this stage of the proceeding.

E. Obviousness over Halbert and JESD21-C (Ground 1)

Petitioner argues claims 15–20 and 22–33 of the '314 patent would have been obvious over Halbert and JESD21-C. Pet. 15–84. Below we provide a brief overview of the prior art references and then analyze Petitioner's contentions in light of Patent Owner's arguments.

[3] Petitioner indicates that "[t]he parties' proposed constructions from [the related litigations] are set forth in Exs. 1008–1009" but that "[t]he parties' construction disputes from the related litigations do not affect the outcome of this Petition with respect to any claim." Pet. 6–7.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 36

1. Halbert

Halbert relates to memory module architectures and methods for operating digital memory devices and systems. Ex. 1005 ¶ 2. Figure 4, reproduced below, is a block diagram of a memory module. *Id.* ¶ 15.

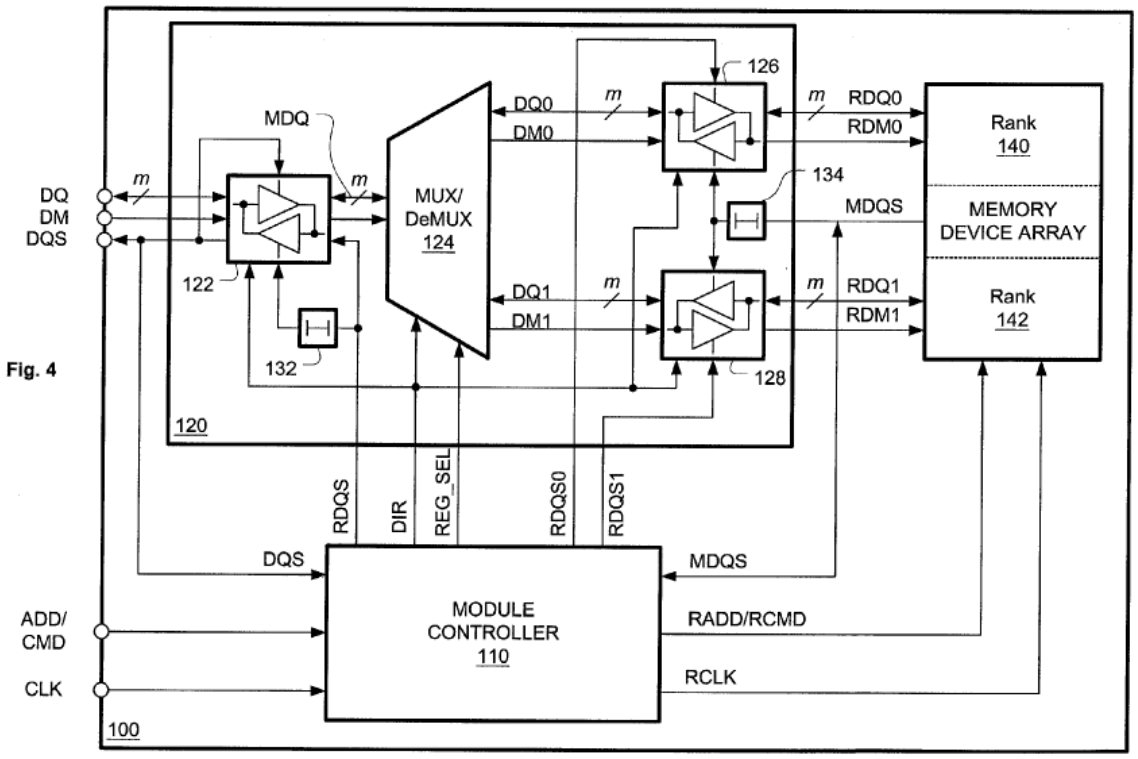
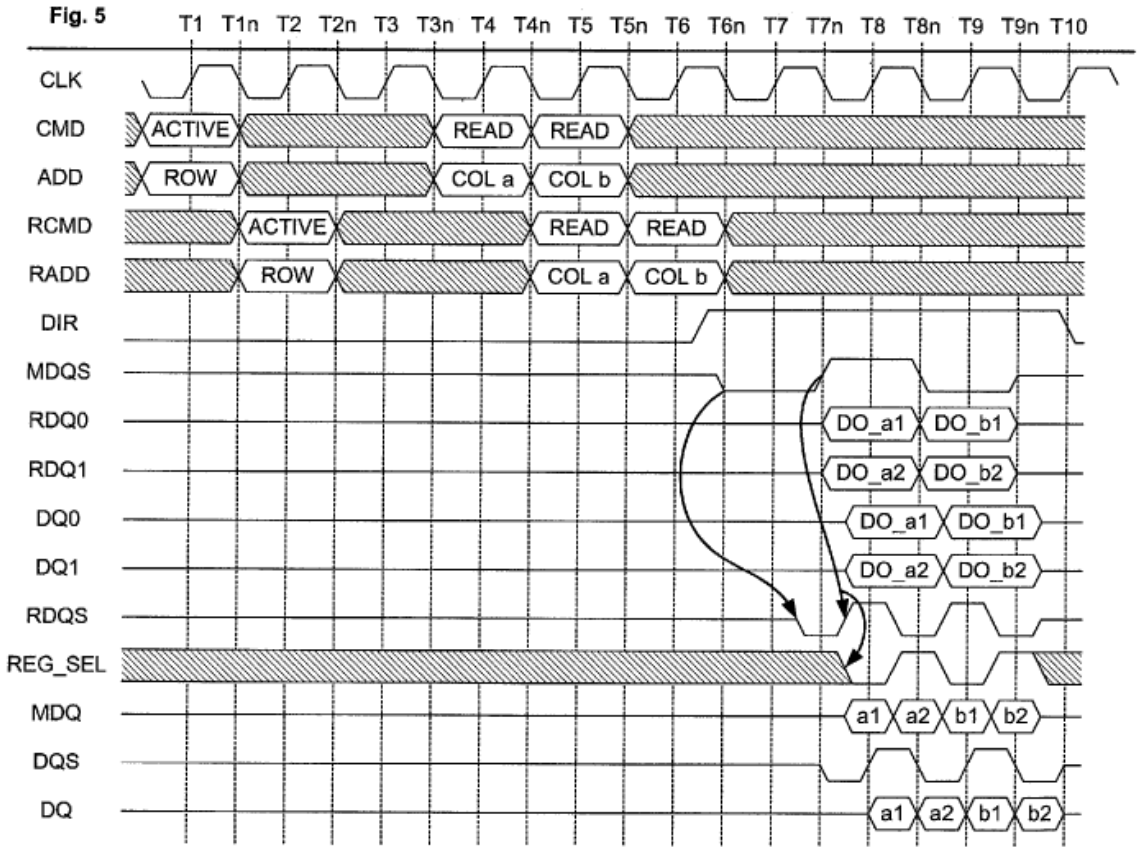


Fig. 4

As shown in Figure 4, memory module 100 includes three functional blocks: a module controller 110; a data interface circuit 120; and a memory device array 140/142. Ex. 1005 ¶ 28. The module controller 110 synchronizes the operation of module 100 with the attached memory system. *Id.* ¶ 29. Additionally, module controller 110 provides timing and synchronization signals to data interface circuit 120. *Id.* In Figure 4, a bi-directional buffer 122 is coupled to a bi-directional module data port that can be connected to a system memory data bus. *Id.* ¶ 31. Further, a data strobe signal DQS can be driven by buffer 122 onto the memory data bus. *Id.*

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 37

Figure 5, reproduced below, shows a timing diagram for two consecutive read operations for the memory module of Figure 4. *Id.* ¶ 16.



Externally, a primary memory controller initiates READ operations. Ex. 1005 ¶ 37. As part of the READ operation, device array 140/142 signals that it is about to drive data onto buses RDQ0 and RDQ1 by taking data strobe MDQS low at T6n. *Id.* ¶ 38. At T7n, device array 140/142 takes MDQS high, signifying that data outputs "DO_a1" and "DO_a2" are being driven respectively onto buses RDQ0 and RDQ1. *Id.* ¶ 39. Delay element 134 delays MDQS long enough for the buses to settle, and then passes the MDQS strobe to registers 126 and 128. *Id.* Upon receiving MDQS, registers 126 and 128 latch DO_a1 and DO_a2. *Id.* Figure 8, reproduced below, shows a side view of multiple DIMM modules connected to a multi-drop memory bus. *Id.* ¶ 18.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 38

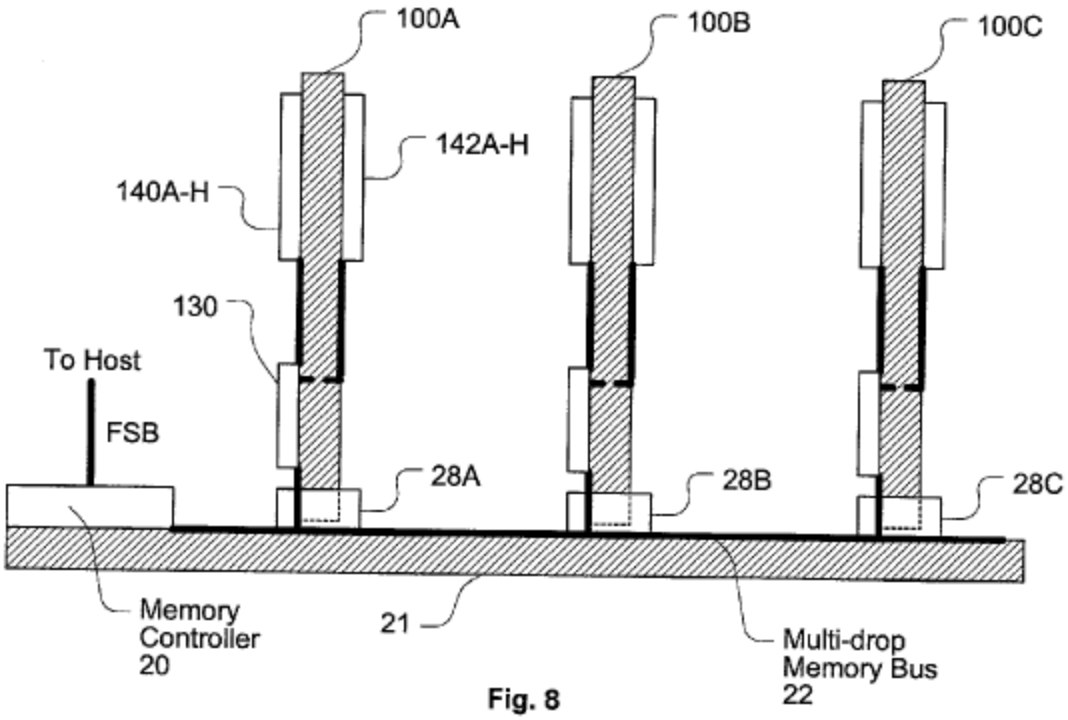


Fig. 8

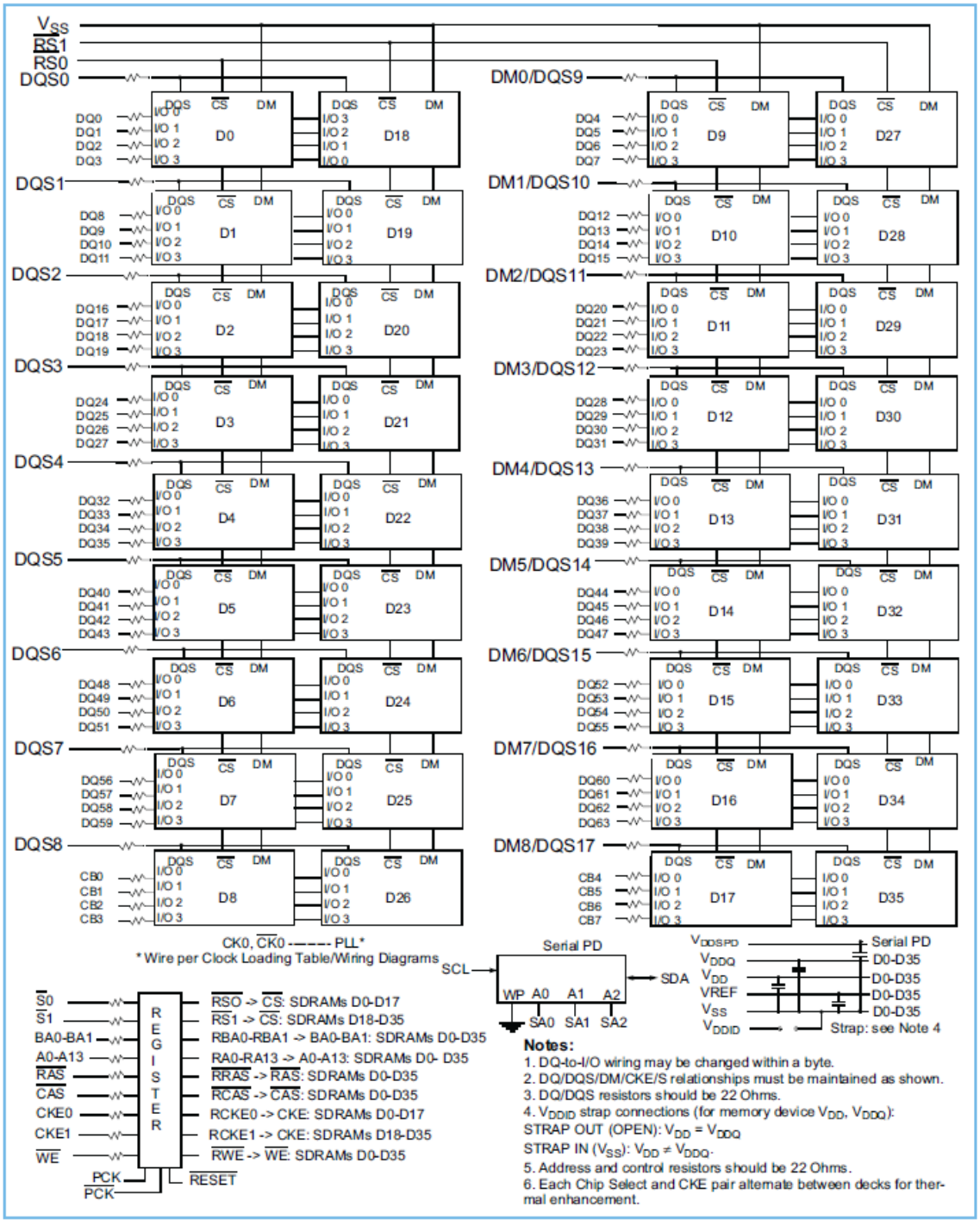
Memory modules 100A, 100B, and 100C are arranged in a memory system with a primary memory controller 20 and a multi-drop memory bus 22. Ex. 1005 ¶ 49. With multiple modules, each module recognizes ACTIVE commands addressed to that module and respond accordingly. *Id.*

2. JESD21-C

JESD21-C is a specification that defines the electrical and mechanical requirements for specific types of synchronous dynamic read-access memory ("SDRAM") dual in-line memory modules ("DIMMs") that are intended for use as main memory when installed in systems such as servers and workstations. Ex. 1006, 5. JESD21-C provides several example architecture block diagrams of double data rate ("DDR") SDRAMs, where an example architecture block diagram of two physical banks of x4 DDR SDRAMs is shown below. *Id.* at 15.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 39

Block Diagram: Raw Card Version N (Populated as two physical banks of x4 DDR SDRAMs)



According to Petitioner, the above architecture block diagram shows eighteen 4-bit wide memory devices configured in nine pairs. Pet. 14. As described by Petitioner, the D0–D8 and D9–D17 memory devices are

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 40

selected for data transfers by RS0[bar], and the D18–D26 and D27–D35 memory devices are selected for data transfers by RS1[bar]. *Id.* (citing Ex. 1003 ¶ 81).

3. Analysis of Claim 15

a) Preamble and Limitations 15.1–15.3 and 15.7–15.12

Regarding the preamble 15.1, Petitioner identifies Halbert's memory module 100 as the recited "memory module," Halbert's memory controller 20 as the recited "memory controller," and memory bus 22 as the recited "N-bit wide memory bus." Pet. 17–18. Petitioner argues that memory module 100 has a data interface 120 that provides for m-bit wide data transfers between the module and the system memory data bus. *Id*. at 18 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 5, 30, 49, Figs. 4, 8; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 93–94).

Regarding limitations 15.2 and 15.3, Petitioner argues that memory module 100 is a printed circuit board and identifies module controller 110 as the recited "logic coupled to the printed circuit board." Pet. 18 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶ 34). Petitioner argues that module controller 110 receives input address and control signals such as ADD/CMD signals and outputs registered address and control signals RADD/RCMD. *Id*. at 18–19 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 9, 29, Fig. 4, 5; Ex. 1003 ¶ 243).

Regarding limitations 15.7 and 15.8, Petitioner identifies Halbert's memory device array 140/142 as the recited "memory devices mounted on the printed circuit board and arranged in a plurality of N-bit wide ranks." Pet. 32–33 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 27, 28, 30; Ex. 1003 ¶ 258). Petitioner further argues that Halbert discloses that memory device rank 140 can be configured to output the first burst of N-bit wide data signals and a first burst of data strobes associated with the read command. *Id*. at 35 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 33, 35, 37, 38; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 261–262).

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 41

Regarding limitation 15.9, Petitioner identifies Halbert's data interface circuit 120 as the recited "circuitry coupled between data and strobe signal lines in the N-bit wide memory bus and corresponding data and strobe pins of memory devices in each of the plurality of N-bit wide ranks." Pet. 36–37 (citing ex. 1005 ¶ 30, Fig. 4; Ex. 1003 ¶ 264–265).

Regarding limitations 15.10 and 15.11, Petitioner argues that module controller 110 synchronizes operation of the module via a number of control signals to the data interface 120, such as the TO or AWAY signals that determine whether data flow is towards or away from the memory array in response to read or write commands respectively. Pet. 37–38 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶ 34; Ex. 1003 ¶ 267). Petitioner argues that in response to the first control signals, i.e., in the AWAY mode, data interface circuit 120 enables data transfers from memory device rank 140 through data interface circuit 120 to buffer 122 toward the system memory data bus and that the burst of data signals and data strobes is transferred through the circuitry in accordance with an overall CAS latency of memory module 100. *Id*. at 38 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶ 29; Ex. 1003 ¶ 269).

Regarding limitation 15.12, Petitioner argues that registers 126, 128, 122 provide registered data transfers through data interface 120. Pet. 40 (citing Ex. 1005, ¶ 33, Fig. 4; Ex. 1003 ¶ 272). Petitioner further argues that registers 126 and 128 add a predetermined time delay of one clock cycle for each registered data transfer through circuit 120 and as a result the overall CAS latency of memory module 100, e.g., from time T4 to T8 shown in Figure 5 of Halbert, is greater than the actual operational CAS latency of each of the memory devices, which is from T5 to T7n, where the data exits the memory device array 140 on RDQ0. *Id*. at 41–43 (citing Ex. 1005, Fig. 5; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 273–274).

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 42

Patent Owner argues that claim 15 requires that the read or write command must cause a corresponding burst of data to be output or received by the first rank and that a "burst of signals" requires at least two or more data signals. Prelim. Resp. 23–24 (citing Ex. 1001, 13:30–31, 13:35–37, 13:42–46, Figs. 6A, 6B, 7). Figure 5 of Halbert, according to Patent Owner, shows only one piece of data (DO_a1) being transferred for rank 0 in response to the first read command and only one piece of data (DO_b1) being transferred in response to the second read command for rank 0. *Id*. at 24–25.

At this stage of the proceeding we are persuaded by Petitioner's arguments of a reasonable likelihood that the combination of Halbert and JESD21-C teaches the preamble and limitations 15.1–15.3 and 15.7–15.12 for the reasons summarized above. Petitioner supports its contentions with citations from Halbert and with unrebutted testimony from Dr. Oklobdzija. Based on the evidence presented at this stage of the proceeding we are not persuaded that the term "burst" recited in claim 15 should be limited to refer to at least two or more data signals. The citations Patent Owner relies upon from the '314 patent do not expressly limit the term in this manner (*see* Ex. 1001, 13:30–31, 13:35–37, 13:42–46), and Patent Owner does not present any other intrinsic or extrinsic evidence to support this construction. To the extent Patent Owner's argument focuses on the recitation of the plural term "signals," (Prelim. Resp. 23–24) as explained above, Petitioner argues Halbert discloses a "burst of N-bit wide data signals" and supports its argument with testimony from Dr. Oklobdzija (Pet. 35 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 33, 35, 37, 38; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 261–262)).

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 43

b) Limitations 15.4–15.6 Reciting "Plurality of Input/Registered Chip Select Signals"

Limitations 15.4, 15.5 and 15.6 recite, in pertinent part, "a first plurality of input chip select signals," and "a first plurality of registered chip select signals." Petitioner relies on the description of Halbert's Figure 2, which discloses two bank select signals, B0_SEL# and B1_SEL#, corresponding to memory banks D00–D08 and D10–D18 respectively, as teaching the recited "first plurality of input chip select signals." Pet. 20 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶ 9, Fig. 2; Ex. 1003 ¶ 244). Petitioner argues that it would have been obvious to include the first plurality of input chip select signals B0_SEL# and B1_SEL# from Figure 2 in Halbert's Figure 4 memory module and to have the two input chip select signals correspond to memory device ranks 140 and 142. *Id*. at 21 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶ 37, Fig. 4; Ex. 1003 ¶ 245). As a reason to combine the bank select signals B0_SEL# and B1_SEL# of Figure 2 with Figure 4 of Halbert, Petitioner argues that both Figure 2 and Figure 4 are designs of registered DIMMs, that module controller 110 in Figure 4 would have a plurality of chip selects as inputs because there are multiple memory device ranks 140 and 142, and that there would be chip selects to select whether data is transferred to/from memory device rank 140 or 142. *Id.*

Alternatively, Petitioner relies on JESD21-C as teaching a first plurality of input chip select signals S0 and S1 as shown in the Raw Card Version N diagram in JESD21-C. Pet. 22–23 (citing Ex. 1006, 15; Ex. 1003 ¶ 146). Petitioner argues that the Card N block diagram shows two physical banks of SDRAM and that chip select S0 corresponds to the rank that includes D0–D17 memory devices, while chip select S1 corresponds to the rank that includes D18–D35 memory devices. *Id*. According to Petitioner,

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 44

this is similar to what is disclosed in Figure 4 of Halbert where there are memory devices in two ranks 140 and 142. *Id*. at 23. Petitioner argues that both references are in the same field and are directed toward improving the design of memory modules using SDRAM. *Id*. at 23–24 (citing Ex. 1003 ¶ 247). Petitioner argues that one of ordinary skill would have been motivated to design the memory modules of Halbert to comply with the industry wide standard such as JEDEC. *Id*. at 24 (citing Ex. 1003 ¶ 247). Further, one of ordinary skill would have been motivated to combine JESDC-21C with Halbert because Halbert's goal is to improve on dual-bank registered DIMMs and JESD21-C is a specification that defines registered DDR SDRAM DIMMs. *Id*. at 24 (citing Ex. 1003 ¶ 247).

Patent Owner argues that Petitioner fails to show that it would have been obvious to include a first plurality of input chip select signals as required by limitation 15.4.[4] Prelim. Resp. 25–35. Specifically, Patent Owner takes issue with Petitioner combining Halbert's device, as described by Figure 4 of Halbert, with a "generic prior art device" described in Figure 2 of Halbert, in order to show that the combination teaches a "first plurality of input chip select signals." *Id*. at 26. This is because, according to Patent Owner, "the heart of the Halbert invention is the use of multiple memory ranks *concurrently in an interleaved manner* to increase bandwidth." *Id*. at 30 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 24, 30, 42). Thus, Patent Owner argues, "the Halbert device was specifically designed to avoid the need for a plurality of input chip select signals despite having multiple ranks" and combining Halbert's device "with elements that Halbert itself implicitly rejected (*e.g.*, the use of

[4] Claim 28 also appears to include limitations similar to limitations 15.4–15.6 (*see* limitations 28.4–28.6). Patent Owner, however, does not expressly indicate that its argument applies to claim 28.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 45

bank select signals from the Fig. 2 device) represents classic impermissible hindsight reasoning, which must be rejected." *Id*. at 32. Patent Owner also argues that Halbert teaches away from combining the prior art design shown in Figure 2 with the Figure 4. *Id*. at 33.

For these same reasons, Patent Owner argues that a person of ordinary skill would not have used a plurality of chip select signals in the Halbert device in view of JESD21-C because the Raw Card Version N description for JESD21-C relied upon by Petitioner is identical to the Figure 2 prior art device of Halbert. Prelim. Resp. 35.

At this stage of the proceeding, we are persuaded by Petitioner's arguments that Halbert teaches limitations 15.4–15.6 for the reasons summarized above. Petitioner supports its contentions with citations from Halbert and JESD21-C and with unrebutted testimony from Dr. Oklobdzija.

For example, Halbert discloses that registered DIMMs that have more than one bank of memory devices, such as that depicted in Figure 2 of Halbert, have bank select signals B0_SEL# and B1_SEL# that connect to corresponding banks of memory devices. Ex. 1005 ¶ 9. Similarly, JESD21-C discloses input chip select signals S0 and S1 that correspond with ranks of memory devices as shown in the block diagram of Raw Card Version N. Ex. 1006 at 15.

Dr. Oklobdzija provides unrebutted testimony that it would have been obvious for a person of ordinary skill to include in the Figure 4 device chip select signals B0_SEL# and B1_SEL# with the ADD/CMD signals sent by the memory controller to module controller 110 similar to how those signals are input to register 25 in the Figure 2 device. Ex. 1003 ¶ 245.
Dr. Oklobdzija testifies that both the Figure 2 and Figure 4 devices are designs of a registered DIMMs and that, because there are multiple memory

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 46

ranks 140 and 142 in Figure 4, it would have been obvious to have a plurality of chip select signals. *Id*. Dr. Oklobdzija also testifies that a person of ordinary skill would have been motivated to combine Figure 4 of Halbert with JESD21-C because both references are directed to improving the design of memory modules that use SDRAM. *Id*. ¶ 247. Dr. Oklobdzija testifies that a person of ordinary skill would have combined the two references to bring Halbert in compliance with an industry-wide governing standard such as JEDEC. *Id*.

As noted above, Patent Owner argues that Halbert's invention uses multiple memory ranks concurrently in an interleaved manner to increase bandwidth. Prelim. Resp. 30 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶¶ 24, 30, 42). Assuming this is true, at this stage of the proceeding, there is insufficient evidence or reasoning to show that such a fact means that Halbert's Figure 4 device was specifically designed to avoid the need for a plurality of input chip select signals despite having multiple ranks or that it implicitly rejected the use of such signals. If Patent Owner so chooses, such arguments may benefit from additional evidence and analysis as trial progresses.

c) Conclusion as to Claim 15

For the aforementioned reasons we are persuaded that the combination of the Halbert and JESD21-C teaches the limitations of claim 15 and that Petitioner has established a reasonable likelihood that the combination would have rendered claim 15 obvious.

4. Analysis of Claim 28

Petitioner relies for claim 28 almost entirely on its contentions for claim 15 except that for limitation 28.10, it relies instead on its analysis of dependent claim 20. *See* Pet. 77–79. We will not repeat here Petitioner's

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 47

contentions for claim 15 but we will summarize Petitioner's contentions from claim 20 that apply to limitation 28.10.

Limitation 28.10 recites "wherein the circuitry includes logic pipelines configured to enable data transfers between the first rank and the memory bus in response to the first read or write memory command." Petitioner argues that

> Halbert discloses that data interface circuit 120 includes logic pipelines, i.e., the circuit paths from buffer 122 through MUX/DeMUX 124 through either register 126 or register 128, that enable data transfers between memory device rank 140 and memory bus 22 through the circuitry in response to the first control signals associated with the read operation/command, by multiplexing data signal DQ0 from register 126 to buffer 122.

Pet. 52–53 (citing Ex. 1005 ¶ 33; Ex. 1003 ¶¶ 300–301).

Patent Owner argues Petitioner fails to show that it would have been obvious to include logic pipelines configured to enable data transfers. Prelim. Resp. 36–39. Patent Owner argues that, in the context of the '314 patent, a "logic pipeline" is not just any pipeline, but one that is "capable of processing, delaying, and/or transferring command and address information and associated control signals to enable data transfers." Prelim. Resp. 37 (citing Ex. 1001, 47:33–34, 47:45–47, 7:22–23, 9:35–36, 17:51–52, 23:19–22, 25:4–6). Patent Owner argues that the circuit paths in Halbert's data interface circuit 120, which are relied upon by Petitioner as teaching the "logic pipelines" of claim 28, only transmit data between ranks of memory devices and the system memory but are not "capable of processing, delaying and/or transferring command and address information and associated control signals to enable data transfers." *Id*. at 38.

At this stage of the proceeding we are persuaded by Petitioner's arguments that Halbert teaches the limitations of claim 28 for the reasons

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 48

summarized above. Petitioner supports its contentions with citations from Halbert and with unrebutted testimony from Dr. Oklobdzija. Patent Owner's argument that it would not have been obvious to include logic pipelines configured to enable data transfers in Halbert is based on interpreting "logic pipeline" as a pipeline that is "capable of processing, delaying, and/or transferring command and address information and associated control signals to enable data transfers." Prelim. Resp. 37 (citing Ex. 1001, 47:33–34, 47:45–47, 7:22–23, 9:35–36, 17:51–52, 23:19–22, 25:4–6). Having reviewed the portions of the '314 patent that Patent Owner cites, we determine that they do not expressly limit the term in this manner. Patent Owner does not present any additional intrinsic or extrinsic evidence to support limiting the term as argued.

For the aforementioned reasons and those given in the Petition, we are persuaded that the combination of the Halbert and JESD21-C teaches the limitations of claim 28 and that a person of ordinary skill in the art would have had reason to combine Halbert and JESD21-C with a reasonable expectation of success. Accordingly, Petitioner has established a reasonable likelihood that the combination would have rendered claim 28 obvious.

5. Analysis of Claims 16–20, 22–27, and 29–33

Based on a review of the current record at this stage of the proceeding, Petitioner has made a sufficient showing of a reasonable likelihood that claims 16–20, 22–27, and 29–33 would have been obvious over the combination of Halbert and JESD21-C. *See* Pet. 43–77, 79–84. Patent Owner has not provided a separate response to these arguments at this stage of the proceeding. *See* Prelim. Resp.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 49

6. Conclusion – Obviousness over Halbert and JESD21-C

Accordingly, having considered the arguments and evidence, we are persuaded that Petitioner has demonstrated a reasonable likelihood of prevailing on its challenge to claims 15–20 and 22–33 of the ’314 patent as obvious over Halbert and JESD21-C.

III. CONCLUSION

Petitioner has demonstrated a reasonable likelihood of prevailing in showing the unpatentability of at least one challenged claim of the ’314 patent. At this stage of the proceeding, however, we have not made a final determination with respect to the patentability of the challenged claims.

IV. ORDER

For the foregoing reasons, it is:

ORDERED that, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 314(a), an *inter partes* review of claims 15–20 and 22–33 of the ’314 patent is instituted with respect to all grounds of unpatentability set forth in the Petition; and

FURTHER ORDERED that, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 314(c) and 37 C.F.R. § 42.4(b), *inter partes* review of the ’314 patent shall commence on the entry date of this Order, and notice is hereby given of the institution of a trial.

Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 50

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Petitioners
Ex. 1056, p. 51