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(54) **EXHAUST PURIFICATION SYSTEM AND CATALYST REGENERATION METHOD**

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(71) Applicant: **ISUZU MOTORS LIMITED**, Tokyo (JP)

(72) Inventors: **Teruo NAKADA**, Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa (JP); **Takayuki SAKAMOTO**, Fujisawa-shi, Kanagawa (JP); **Daiji NAGAOKA**, Kamakura-shi, Kanagawa (JP); **Hiroyuki YUZA**, Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa (JP)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

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Provided is an exhaust purification system including: an NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst that is provided in an exhaust system of an internal combustion engine, and occludes NOx when an exhaust gas is in a lean state, and reduces the NOx when the exhaust gas is in a rich state; a regeneration control unit that executes a regeneration process of bringing the exhaust gas into a rich state to reduce the NOx occluded in the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst; a storing unit that stores an exhaust lambda prediction value in advance when the regeneration process is executed; a reduction amount estimating unit that estimates an NOx reduction amount when the regeneration process is executed; and a prohibition unit that prohibits the execution of the regeneration process by the regeneration control unit when the estimated NOx reduction amount is less than a predetermined lower limit threshold.

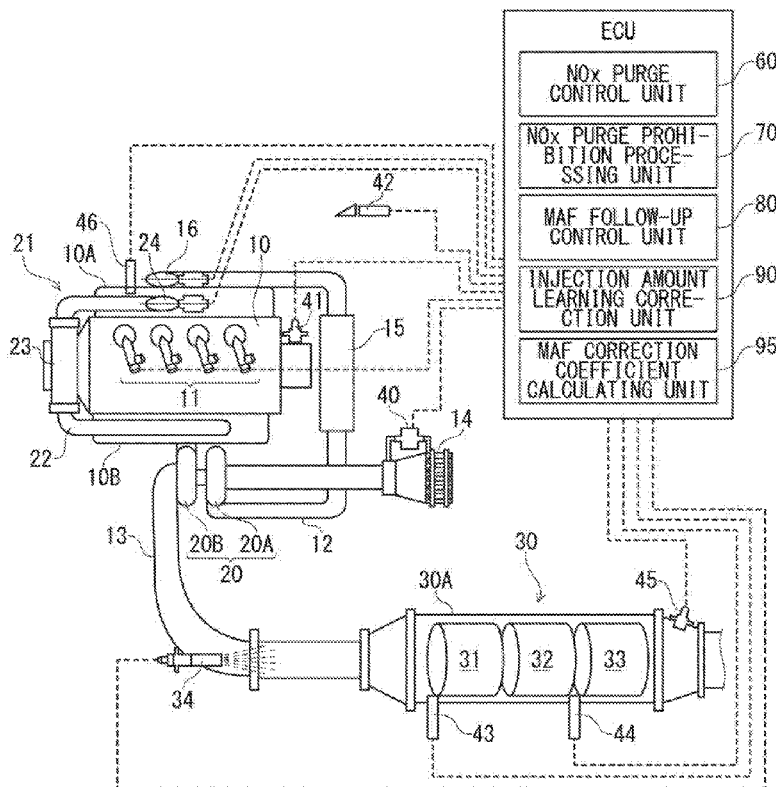


FIG. 2

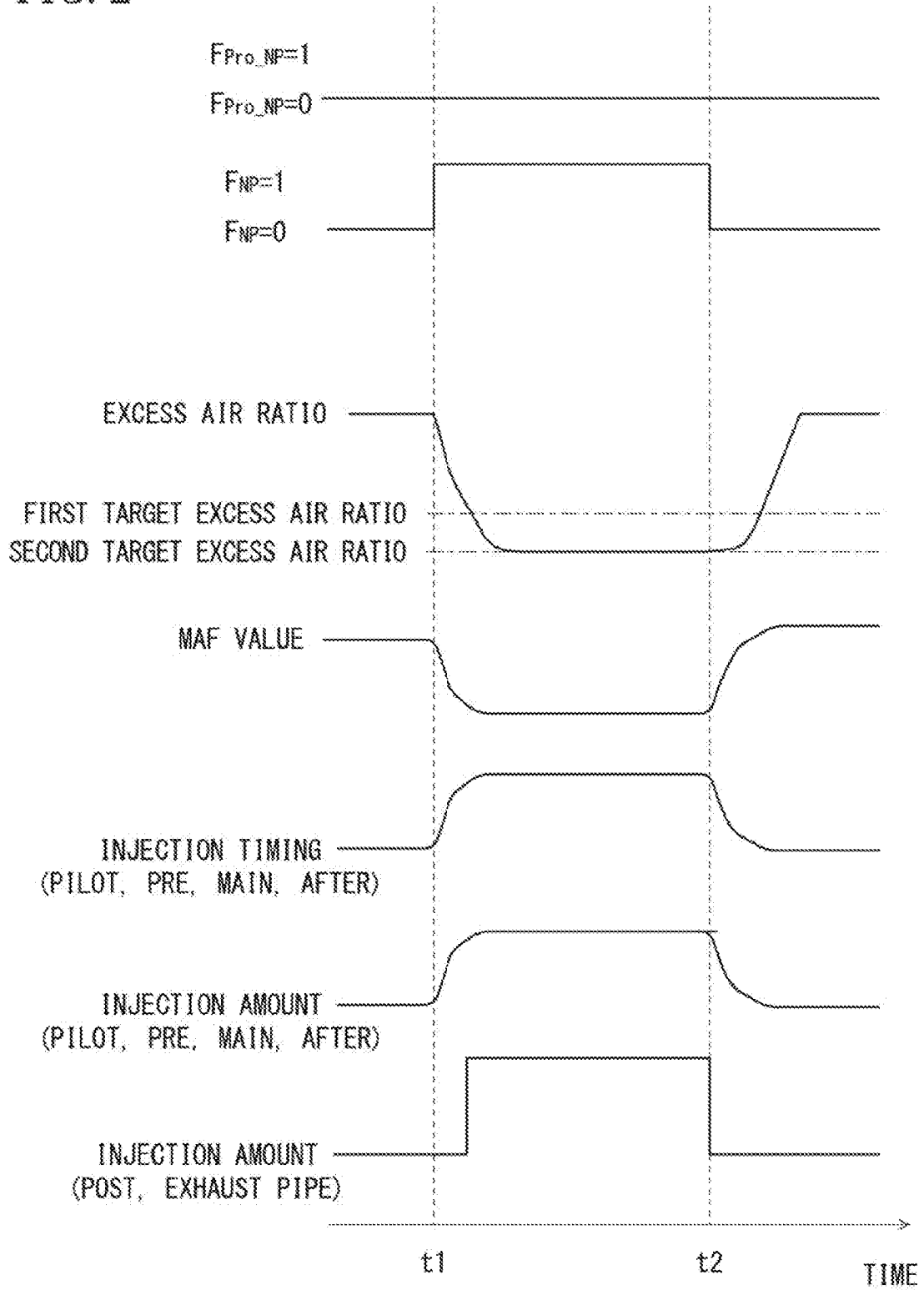


FIG. 3

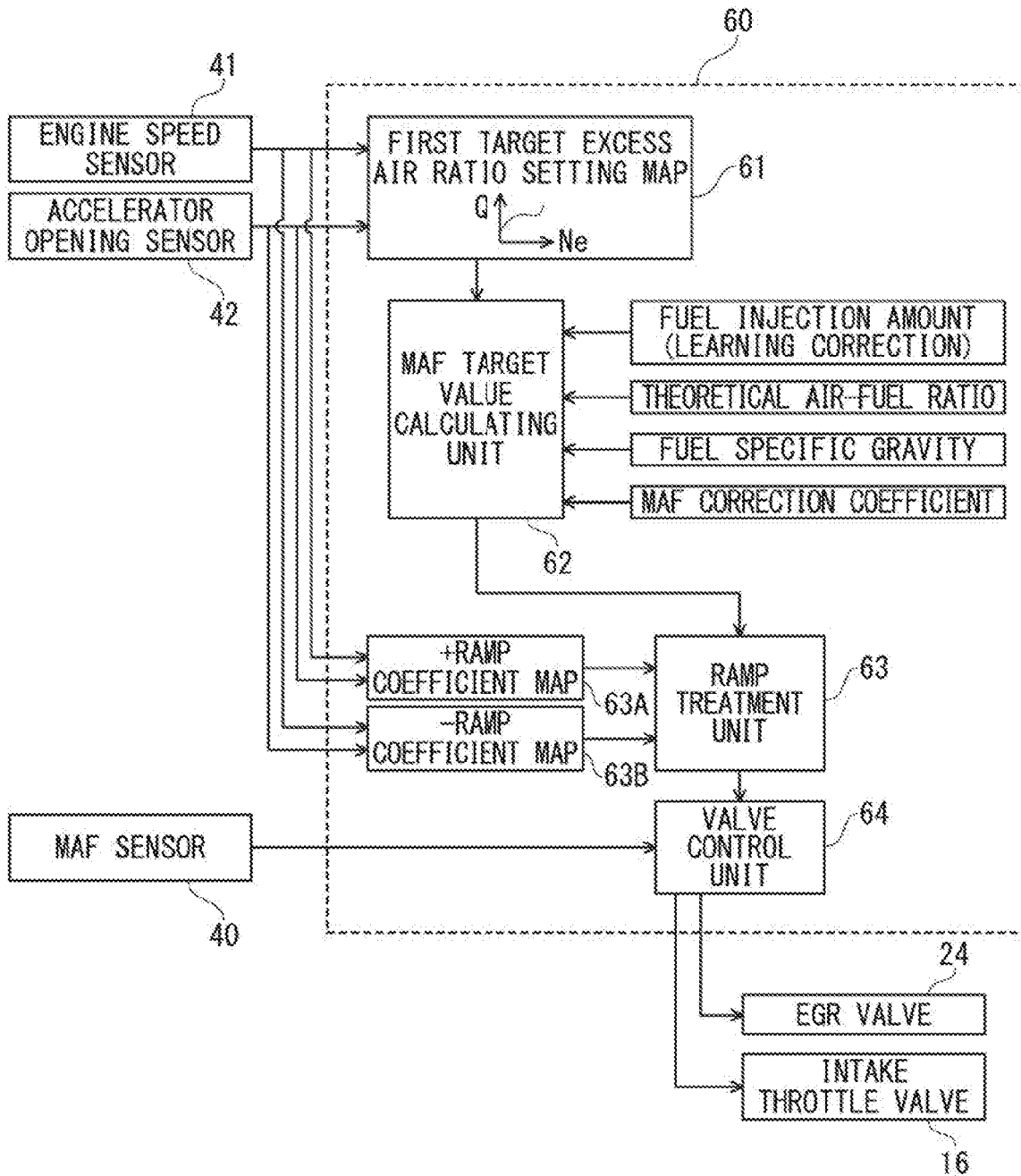


FIG. 4

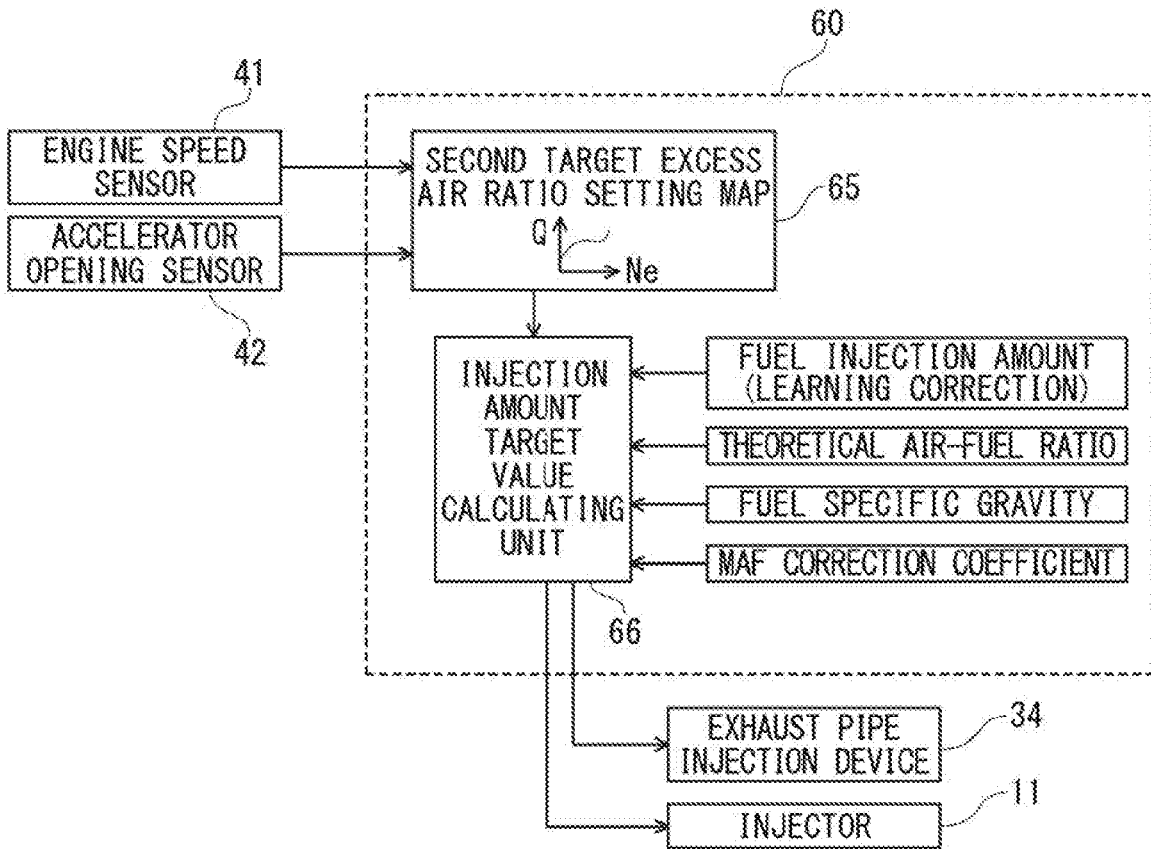


FIG. 5

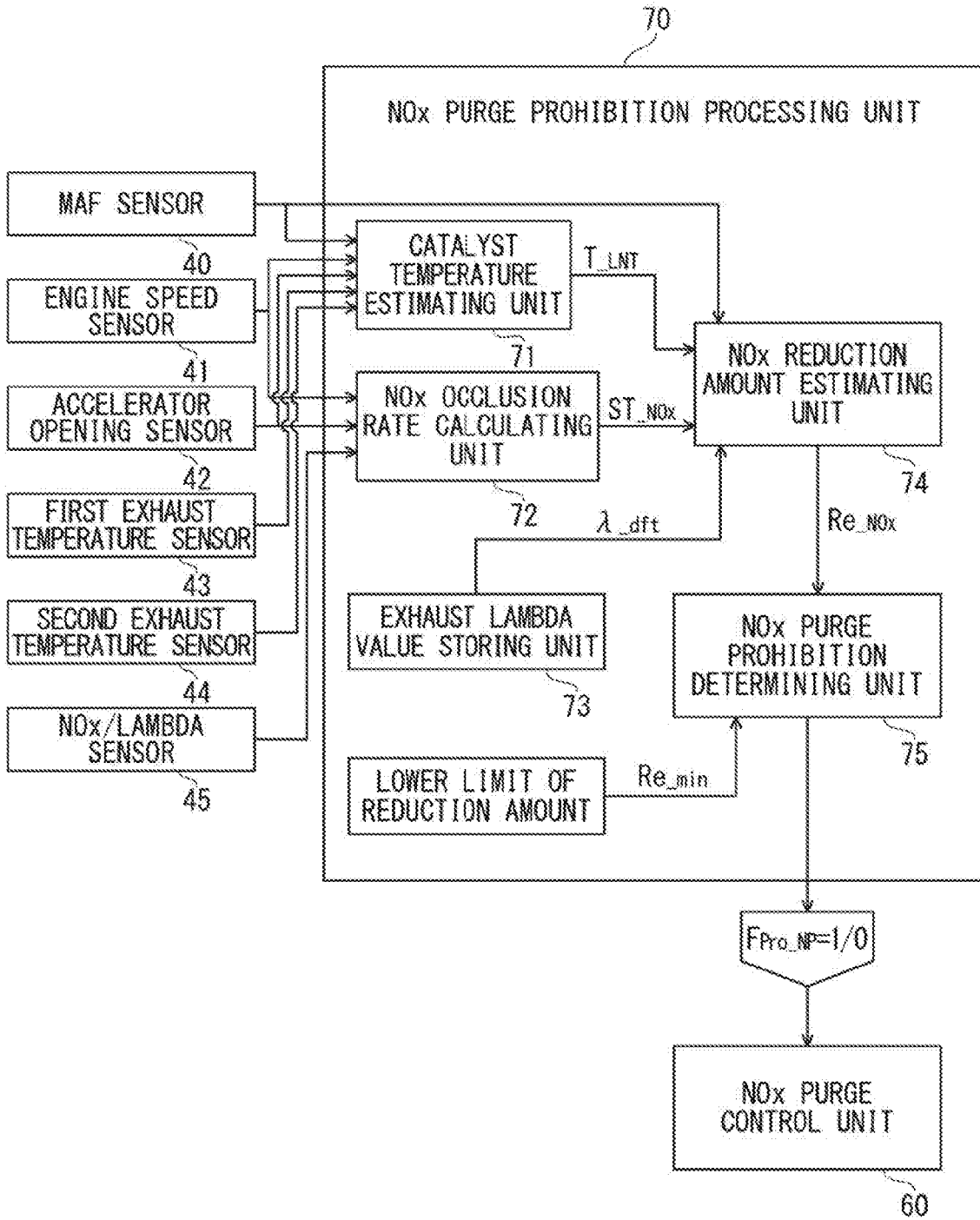


FIG. 6

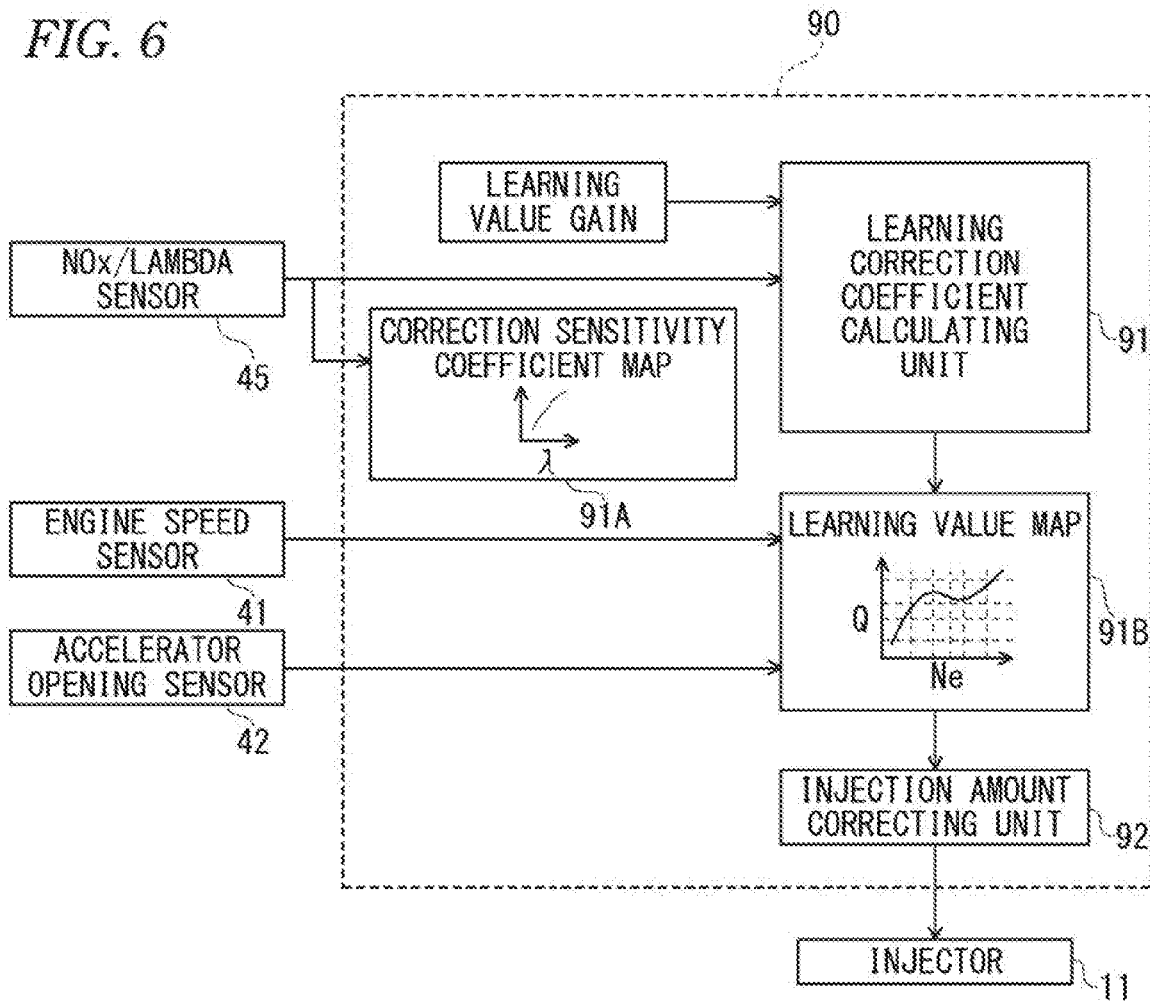


FIG. 7

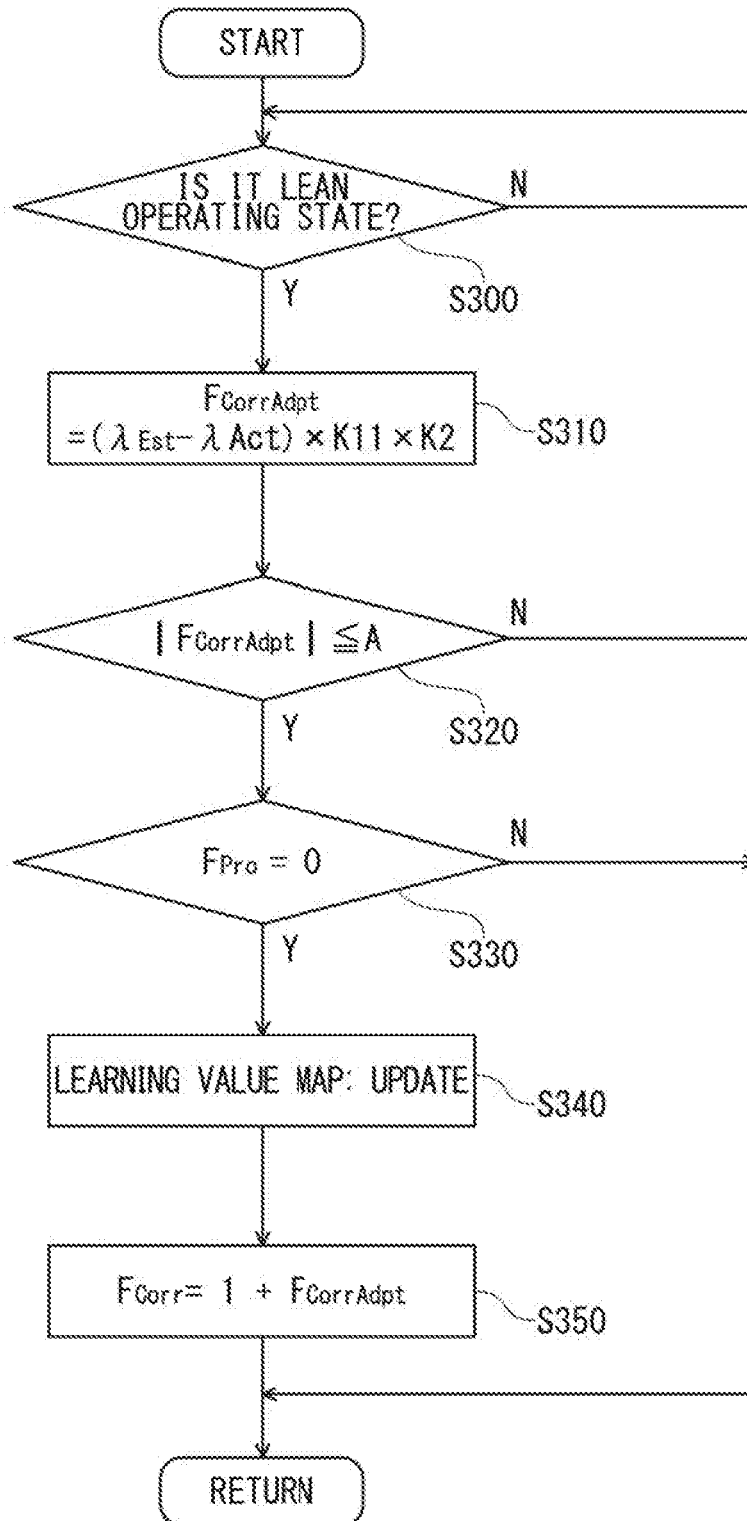
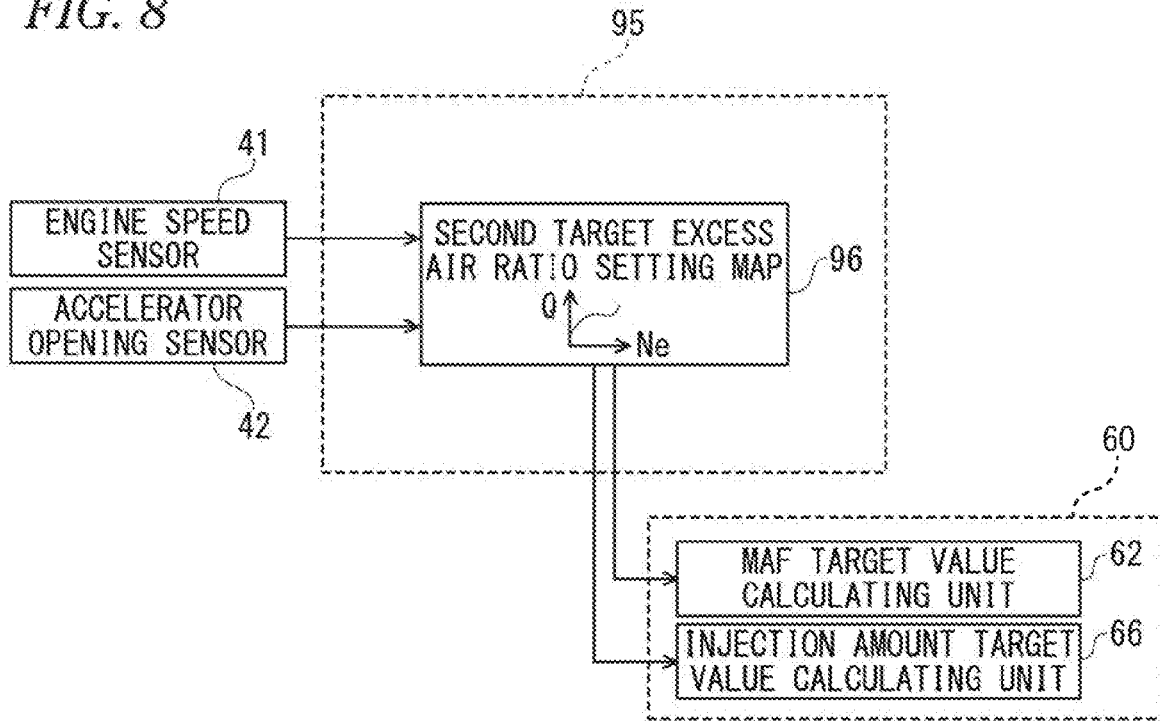


FIG. 8



EXHAUST PURIFICATION SYSTEM AND CATALYST REGENERATION METHOD

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates to an exhaust purification system and a catalyst regeneration method.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] In the related art, an NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst is known as a catalyst which reduces and purifies a nitrogen compound (NOx) in an exhaust gas discharged from an internal combustion engine. When the exhaust gas is under a lean atmosphere, the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst occludes the NOx contained in the exhaust gas. When the exhaust gas is under a rich atmosphere, the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst detoxifies the occluded NOx through reducing and purifying with hydrocarbon contained in the exhaust gas, and discharges the NOx. For this reason, in a case where the NOx occlusion amount of the catalyst reaches a predetermined amount, in order to recover NOx occlusion capacity, it is necessary to regularly perform the so-called NOx purge which makes the exhaust gas be in a rich state by a post injection or an exhaust pipe injection (for example, see JP-A-2008-202425).

[0003] In addition, there is proposed a technique for calculating, based on an output of a sensor disposed downstream of an NOx absorbent, at least one of the maximum amount of NOx absorption of the NOx absorbent and an NOx absorption rate in the NOx absorbent and for determining that the NOx absorbent has deteriorated when the calculated maximum amount of NOx absorption or the NOx absorption rate is smaller than the determination value (for example, see JP-A-2002-266629).

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Technical Problem

[0004] Meanwhile, even when the NOx purge is performed in a state where the temperature of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst is lower than the activation temperature, for example, a desired NOx reduction amount cannot be obtained in some cases. When the NOx purge is performed in such a state that the NOx reduction amount cannot be expected, there is a problem that fuel consumed by post injection or exhaust pipe injection is wasted, resulting in causing deterioration of fuel consumption.

[0005] An object of the exhaust purification system and the catalyst regeneration method of the present disclosure is to effectively suppress useless execution of NOx purge, thereby preventing deterioration of fuel consumption.

Solution to Problem

[0006] An exhaust purification system according to the disclosure includes: an NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst that is provided in an exhaust passage of an internal combustion engine and, when an exhaust gas is in a lean state, occludes NOx contained in the exhaust gas and, when the exhaust gas is in a rich state, reduces and purifies the occluded NOx; a catalyst regeneration unit that executes a catalyst regeneration process of bringing the exhaust gas into a rich state to reduce and purify the NOx occluded in the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst; a reduction amount estimating unit that estimates an NOx reduction amount

predicted at the time of executing the catalyst regeneration process before starting the catalyst regeneration process using the catalyst regeneration unit; and a prohibition unit that prohibits the execution of the catalyst regeneration process by the catalyst regeneration unit when the NOx reduction amount estimated by the reduction amount estimating unit is less than a predetermined lower limit threshold.

[0007] In addition, an exhaust purification system according to the disclosure includes: an NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst that is disposed in an exhaust passage of an internal combustion engine, and occludes and reduce a nitrogen compound contained an exhaust gas discharged from the internal combustion engine; and a control unit that controls an air-fuel ratio of the exhaust gas discharged from the internal combustion engine, wherein the control unit operates to execute a series of process including:

[0008] a catalyst regeneration process of bringing the exhaust gas into a rich state to reduce and purify NOx occluded in the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst;

[0009] a reduction amount estimating process of estimating an NOx reduction amount predicted at the time of executing the catalyst regeneration process before execution of the catalyst regeneration process; and

[0010] a prohibition process of prohibiting the execution of the catalyst regeneration process when the NOx reduction amount estimated by the reduction amount estimating process is less than a lower limit threshold.

[0011] In an exhaust purification system including an NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst that is disposed in an exhaust passage of an internal combustion engine, and occludes and reduce a nitrogen compound contained an exhaust gas discharged from the internal combustion engine, a catalyst regeneration method according to the disclosure includes: a catalyst regeneration process of bringing the exhaust gas into a rich state to reduce and purify NOx occluded in the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst; a reduction amount estimating process of estimating an NOx reduction amount predicted at the time of executing the catalyst regeneration process before execution of the catalyst regeneration process; and a prohibition process of prohibiting the execution of the catalyst regeneration process when the NOx reduction amount estimated by the reduction amount estimating process is less than a lower limit threshold.

Advantageous Effects of the Invention

[0012] According to the exhaust purification system and the catalyst regeneration method of the present disclosure, it is possible to effectively suppress useless execution of NOx purge, thereby preventing deterioration of fuel consumption.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is an entire configuration diagram illustrating an exhaust purification system according to this embodiment.

[0014] FIG. 2 is a timing chart for describing an NOx purge control according to this embodiment.

[0015] FIG. 3 is a block diagram illustrating a setting process of a MA_F target value at the time of an NOx purge lean control according to this embodiment.

[0016] FIG. 4 is a block diagram illustrating a setting process of a target injection amount at the time of an NOx purge rich control according to this embodiment.

[0017] FIG. 5 is a block diagram illustrating a prohibition process of an NOx purge control according to this embodiment.

[0018] FIG. 6 is a block diagram illustrating a process of an injection amount learning correction of an injector according to this embodiment.

[0019] FIG. 7 is a flow diagram for describing a calculation process of a learning correction coefficient according to this embodiment.

[0020] FIG. 8 is a block diagram illustrating a setting process of a MAF correction coefficient according to this embodiment.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

[0021] Hereinafter, an exhaust purification system according to one embodiment of the present invention will be described based on accompanying drawings.

[0022] As illustrated in FIG. 1, an injector 11 which directly injects high pressure fuel accumulated in a common rail (not illustrated) into a cylinder is provided in each of cylinders of a diesel engine (hereinafter, simply referred to as an engine) 10. The fuel injection amount or the fuel injection timing of the injector 11 is controlled in response to an instruction signal input from an electronic control unit (hereinafter, referred to as ECU) 50.

[0023] An intake manifold 10A of the engine 10 is connected with an intake passage 12 which introduces fresh air therein, and an exhaust manifold 10B is connected with an exhaust passage 13 which derives an exhaust gas outside. An air cleaner 14, an intake air amount sensor (hereinafter, referred to as a MAF sensor) 40, a compressor 20A of a variable capacity supercharger 20, an intercooler 15, an intake throttle valve 16, and the like are provided in order from an intake upstream side in the intake passage 12. A turbine 20B of the variable capacity supercharger 20, an exhaust post-treatment device 30, and the like are provided in order from an exhaust upstream side in the exhaust passage 13. The engine 10 is attached with an engine speed sensor 41, an accelerator opening sensor 42, and a boost pressure sensor 46.

[0024] In the description of this embodiment, an MAF sensor 40 for measuring and detecting the mass air flow is used as the intake air amount sensor for measuring and detecting the intake air amount (suction air flow) of the engine, but a different type of air flow sensor from the MAF sensor 40 or a unit substituted for the air flow sensor may be used as long as it can measure and detect the suction air flow of the engine.

[0025] An EGR (Exhaust Gas Recirculation) device 21 includes an EGR passage 22 which connects the exhaust manifold 10B and the intake manifold 10A, an EGR cooler 23 which cools an EGR gas, and an EGR valve 24 which adjusts an EGR amount.

[0026] The exhaust post-treatment device 30 is configured such that an oxidation catalyst 31, an NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst 32, and a particulate filter (hereinafter, simply referred to as a filter) 33 are disposed in order from the exhaust upstream side in a case 30A. An exhaust pipe injection device 34 which injects an unburned fuel (mainly, HC) into the exhaust passage 13 in response to the instruc-

tion signal input from an ECU 50 is provided in the exhaust passage 13 on the upstream side from the oxidation catalyst 31.

[0027] For example, the oxidation catalyst 31 is formed by carrying an oxidation catalyst component on a ceramic carrier surface such as a honeycomb structure. When an unburned fuel is supplied by the post injection of the exhaust pipe injection device 34 or the injector 11, the oxidation catalyst 31 oxidizes the unburned fuel to raise the exhaust temperature.

[0028] For example, the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst 32 is formed by carrying an alkali metal and the like on a ceramic carrier surface such as a honeycomb structure. The NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst 32 occludes NOx in the exhaust gas when an exhaust air fuel ratio is in a lean state, and reduces and eliminates the occluded NOx by a reducing agent (HC and the like) contained in the exhaust gas when the exhaust air fuel ratio is in a rich state.

[0029] For example, the filter 33 is formed such that a plurality of cells sectioned by porous partition walls are disposed in a flowing direction of the exhaust gas, and the upstream side and the downstream side of the cells are sealed alternately. In the filter 33, PM in the exhaust gas is collected in a pore or a surface of the partition wall, and when the estimation amount of PM deposition reaches a predetermined amount, the so-called filter-forced regeneration is performed which combusts and removes the PM. The filter-forced regeneration is performed in such a manner that the unburned fuel is supplied to the oxidation catalyst 31 on the upstream side by an exhaust pipe injection or the post injection, and the temperature of the exhaust gas flowing in the filter 33 is raised to a PM combusting temperature.

[0030] A first exhaust temperature sensor 43 is provided on the upstream side from the oxidation catalyst 31, and detects the temperature of the exhaust gas flowing in the oxidation catalyst 31. A second exhaust temperature sensor 44 is provided between the oxidation catalyst 31 and the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst 32, and detects the temperature of the exhaust gas flowing in the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst 32. An NOx/lambda sensor 45 is provided on the downstream side from the filter 33, and detects an NOx value and a lambda value of the exhaust gas passing through the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst 32 (hereinafter, referred to as an excess air ratio).

[0031] The ECU 50 performs various controls on the engine 10 and the like, and includes a well-known CPU or a ROM, a RAM, an input port, an output port, and the like. In order to perform the various controls, the sensor values of the sensors 40 to 46 are input to the ECU 50. The ECU 50 includes a NOx purge control unit 60, a NOx purge prohibition processing unit 70, a MAF follow-up control unit 80, an injection amount learning correction unit 90, and a MAF correction coefficient calculating unit 95 as partial functional elements. In description, such functional elements are included in the ECU 50 which is an integral hardware. However, any part thereof may be provided in a separate hardware.

[0032] [NOx Purge Control]

[0033] The NOx purge control unit 60 is an example of the catalyst regeneration unit of the present disclosure, and executes a control (hereinafter, referred to as an NOx purge control) that recovers the NOx occlusion capacity of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst 32 by detoxifying the NOx, which is occluded in the NOx occlusion reduction type

catalyst **32** when the exhaust gas is under a rich atmosphere, by reduction purification, and then discharging the NOx.

[0034] The “start request” of the NOx purge control is established, for example, when an NOx discharging amount per unit of time is estimated from the operating state of the engine **10** and an estimated accumulated value ΣNOx calculated by accumulating the NOx discharging amounts exceeds the predetermined threshold, alternatively, when an NOx purification rate of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32** is calculated from the NOx discharging amount on the catalyst upstream side estimated from the operating state of the engine **10**, an NOx amount on the catalyst downstream side detected by the NOx/lambda sensor **45**, and the NOx purification rate is lower than the predetermined determination threshold. The NOx purge flag F_{NP} , which executes the NOx purge control, is turned on ($F_{NP}=1$) (see time t_1 of FIG. 2) when the “start request” is established and the prohibition flag F_{Pro_NP} (the details will be described below) is turned off.

[0035] In this embodiment, the exhaust gas is made rich using the NOx purge control, for example, in a such a manner that the NOx purge lean control that lowers the excess air ratio by an air-system control from a steady operating state (for example, about 1.5) to a first target excess air ratio (for example, about 1.3) on a lean side from a value equivalent to a theoretical air-fuel ratio (about 1.0), and the NOx purge rich control that lowers the excess air ratio by the injection system control from the first target excess air ratio to a second target excess air ratio on a rich side (for example, about 0.9) are used in combination. Hereinafter, a detail description will be given about the NOx purge lean control and the NOx purge rich control.

[0036] <MAF Target Value Setting of NOx Purge Lean Control>

[0037] FIG. 3 is a block diagram illustrating a setting process of the MAF target value MAF_{NPL_Ttgt} at the time of the NOx purge lean control. The third target excess air ratio setting map **61** is a map based on the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q . The excess air ratio target value λ_{NPL_Ttgt} at the time of the NOx purge lean control corresponding to the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q is set based on an experiment and the like in advance.

[0038] First, the excess air ratio target value λ_{NPL_Ttgt} at the time of the NOx purge lean control is read from the first target excess air ratio setting map **61** using the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q as input signals, and is input to the MAF target value calculating unit **62**. In addition, in the MAF target value calculating unit **62**, the MAF target value MAF_{NPL_Ttgt} at time of the NOx purge lean control is calculated based on the following Equation (1).

$$\text{MAF}_{NPL_Ttgt} = \lambda_{NPL_Ttgt} \times Q_{fuel_corr} \times R_{O_{Fuel}} \times AFR_{sto} / \text{Maf}_{-corr} \quad (1)$$

[0039] In Equation (1), Q_{fuel_corr} indicates a learning-corrected (to be described later) fuel injection amount (excluding the post injection). R_{Fuel} indicates a fuel specific gravity, AFR_{sto} indicates a theoretical air-fuel ratio, and Maf_{-corr} indicates a MAF correction coefficient (to be described later).

[0040] The MAF target value MAF_{NPL_Ttgt} calculated by the MAF target value calculating unit **62** is input to a ramp treatment unit **63** when the NOx purge flag F_{NP} is turned on (see time t_1 of FIG. 2). The ramp treatment unit **63** reads a ramp coefficient from a plus ramp coefficient map **63A** and

a minus ramp coefficient **63B** using the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q as input signals, and inputs a MAF target ramp value $\text{MAF}_{NPL_Ttgt_Ramp}$, in which the ramp coefficient is added, to a valve control unit **64**.

[0041] The valve control unit **64** executes a feedback control that throttles the intake throttle valve **16** to the shutting side and opens the EGR valve **24** to the open side such that the actual MAF value MAF_{Act} input from the MAF sensor **40** becomes the MAF target ramp value $\text{MAF}_{NPL_Ttgt_Ramp}$.

[0042] In this manner, in this embodiment, the MAF target value MAF_{NPL_Ttgt} is set based on the excess air ratio target value λ_{NPL_Ttgt} read from the first target excess air ratio setting map **61** and the fuel injection amount of the injector **11**, and an air system operation is feedback-controlled based on the MAF target value MAF_{NPL_Ttgt} . Accordingly, without providing the lambda sensor on the upstream side of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32**, or without using a sensor value of the lambda sensor although the lambda sensor is provided on the upstream side of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32**, the exhaust gas can be effectively lowered to the desired excess air ratio required for the NOx purge lean control.

[0043] When the fuel injection amount Q_{fuel_corr} after the learning correction is used as the fuel injection amount of the injector **11**, the MAF target value MAF_{NPL_Ttgt} can be set by a feed-forward control to effectively exclude influence such as the aged deterioration, the property change, or the like of the injector **11**.

[0044] When the ramp coefficient set in response to the operating state of the engine **10** is added to the MAF target value MAF_{NPL_Ttgt} , the deterioration of the drivability and the like caused by the misfire or the torque fluctuation of the engine **10** due to the rapid change of the intake air amount can be effectively prevented.

[0045] <Fuel Injection Amount Setting of NOx Purge Rich Control>

[0046] FIG. 4 is a block diagram illustrating a setting process of the target injection amount Q_{NPR_Ttgt} (injection amount per unit of time) of the exhaust pipe injection or the post injection in the NOx purge rich control. A second target excess air ratio setting map **65** is a map based on the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q . The excess air ratio target value λ_{NPR_Ttgt} at the time of the NOx purge rich control corresponding to the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q is set based on an experiment and the like in advance.

[0047] First, the excess air ratio target value λ_{NPR_Ttgt} at the time of the NOx purge rich control is read from the second target excess air ratio setting map **65** using the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q as input signals, and is input to an injection amount target value calculating unit **66**. In addition, in the injection amount target value calculating unit **66**, the target injection amount Q_{NPR_Ttgt} at the time of the NOx purge rich control is calculated based on the following Equation (2).

$$Q_{NPR_Ttgt} = \text{MAF}_{NPL_Ttgt} \times \text{Maf}_{-corr} / (\lambda_{NPR_Ttgt} \times R_{O_{Fuel}} \times AFR_{sto}) - Q_{fuel_corr} \quad (2)$$

[0048] In Equation (2), MAF_{NPL_Ttgt} is a MAF target value at the time of a lean NOx purge, and is input from the above-described MAF target value calculating unit **62**. Q_{fuel_corr} indicates a learning-corrected (to be described later) fuel injection amount (excluding the post injection) before a MAF follow-up control is applied thereto, R_{Fuel} indicates a

fuel specific gravity, and AFR_{sto} indicates a theoretical air-fuel ratio, and Maf_{-corr} indicates a MAF correction coefficient (to be described later).

[0049] When the NOx purge flag F_{NP} is turned on, the target injection amount Q_{NPR_Tgt} calculated by the injection amount target value calculating unit **66** is transmitted as the injection instruction signal to the exhaust pipe injection device **34** or the injector **11** (time t_1 of FIG. **2**). The transmission of the injection instruction signal is continued until the NOx purge flag F_{NP} is turned off (time t_2 of FIG. **2**) by the termination determination of the NOx purge control (to be described later).

[0050] In this manner, in this embodiment, the target injection amount Q_{NPR_Tgt} is set based on the excess air ratio target value λ_{NPL_Tgt} read from the second target excess air ratio setting map **65** and the fuel injection amount of the injector **11**. Accordingly, without providing the lambda sensor on the upstream side of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32**, or without using a sensor value of the lambda sensor although the lambda sensor is provided on the upstream side of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32**, the exhaust gas can be effectively lowered to the desired excess air ratio required for the NOx purge rich control.

[0051] When the fuel injection amount Q_{fuel_corr} after the learning correction is used as the fuel injection amount of the injector **11**, the target injection amount Q_{NPR_Tgt} can be set by the feed-forward control to effectively exclude influence such as the aged deterioration, the property change, or the like of the injector **11**.

[0052] [Prohibition Process of NOx Purge Control]

[0053] FIG. **5** is a block diagram illustrating a prohibition process of the NOx purge control executed by the NOx purge prohibition processing unit **70**.

[0054] The NOx purge prohibition processing unit **70** includes an oxidation catalyst temperature estimating unit **71A**, an NOx catalyst temperature estimating unit **71B**, an NOx occlusion rate calculating unit **72**, an exhaust lambda value storing unit **73**, an NOx reduction amount estimating unit **74**, and an NOx purge prohibition determining unit **75**.

[0055] The oxidation catalyst temperature estimating unit **71A** estimates an internal temperature (hereinafter, referred to as an oxidation catalyst temperature T_{DOC}) of the oxidation catalyst **31**. In this embodiment, the oxidation catalyst temperature T_{DOC} is estimated based on a model equation or a map including, for example, an inlet temperature of the oxidation catalyst detected by the first exhaust temperature sensor **43**, an HC/CO calorific value inside the oxidation catalyst **31**, and the amount of heat radiated to the outside air, as an input value.

[0056] The NOx catalyst temperature estimating unit **71B** estimates an internal temperature (hereinafter, referred to as an NOx catalyst temperature T_{LNT}) of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32**. In this embodiment, the NOx catalyst temperature T_{LNT} is estimated based on a model equation or a map including, for example, an oxidation catalyst temperature T_{DOC} (an inlet temperature of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32**) input from the oxidation catalyst temperature estimating unit **71A**, an HC/CO calorific value inside the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32**, and the amount of heat radiated to the outside air, as an input value.

[0057] The NOx occlusion rate calculating unit **72** estimates an NOx occlusion rate ST_{NOx} of the NOx occlusion

reduction type catalyst **32**. The NOx occlusion rate ST_{NOx} may be calculated based on, for example, an NOx value upstream of the NOx catalyst estimated from the operating state of the engine **10** and an NOx value downstream of the NOx catalyst detected by the NOx/lambda sensor **45**.

[0058] The exhaust lambda value storing unit **73** stores an excess air ratio of the exhaust gas (hereinafter, referred to as an exhaust default lambda value λ_{dfit}) during the NOx purge rich control. The exhaust default lambda value λ_{dfit} is obtained by experiment, simulation or the like for the excess air ratio of the exhaust gas on the upstream side of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32** in the case where the normal NOx purge rich control is executed, and is a fixed value less than 1 (for example, 0.9).

[0059] Upon executing the NOx purge control, the NOx reduction amount estimating/calculating unit **74** calculates the NOx amount (hereinafter, referred to as an estimated NOx reduction amount Re_{NOx}) that will be reduced by the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32**. In this embodiment, the calculation of the estimated NOx reduction amount Re_{NOx} is preferably executed immediately before the start of the NOx purge control in which the NOx occlusion amount of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32** approaches a predetermined threshold. The estimated NOx reduction amount Re_{NOx} is calculated based on a model equation or a map including, for example, the intake and exhaust air flow detected by the MAF sensor **40** or an exhaust air flow sensor (not illustrated), the catalyst temperature T_{LNT} estimated by the catalyst temperature estimating unit **71**, the NOx occlusion rate ST_{NOx} calculated by the NOx occlusion efficiency calculating unit **72**, and the exhaust default lambda value λ_{dfit} stored in the exhaust lambda value storing unit **74** as an input value.

[0060] The NOx purge prohibition determining unit **75** determines based on the estimated NOx reduction amount Re_{NOx} input from the NOx reduction amount calculating unit **74** whether or not to prohibit the execution of the NOx purge control. More specifically, when the estimated NOx reduction amount Re_{NOx} is less than a predetermined lower limit reduction amount Re_{Min} ($Re_{NOx} < Re_{Min}$), the NOx purge prohibition determining unit **75** determines that the execution of the NOx purge control should be prohibited, and sets the prohibition flag F_{Pro_NP} to be turned on ($F_{Pro_NP} = 1$). On the other hand, when the NOx reduction amount Re_{NOx} is equal to or larger than the lower limit reduction amount Re_{Min} ($Re_{NOx} \geq Re_{Min}$), the NOx purge prohibition determining unit **75** turns off the prohibition flag F_{Pro_NP} ($F_{Pro_NP} = 0$) so as to permit the execution of the NOx purge control. The lower limit reduction amount $Re_{NOx-Min}$ used in these determinations may be set based on, for example, the NOx reduction amount corresponding to the fuel injection increase amount by the NOx purge rich control.

[0061] In this embodiment, as described above, the execution of the NOx purge control is prohibited when the estimated NOx reduction amount Re_{NOx} expected at the time of the execution of the NOx purge control is less than the lower limit reduction amount Re_{Min} , and thus it is possible to prevent deterioration of fuel consumption caused by the useless NOx purge control.

[0062] <Termination Determination of NOx Purge Control>

[0063] When any condition of (1) a case where the injection amount of the exhaust pipe injection or the post injection

tion is accumulated since the NOx purge flag F_{NP} is turned on, and the cumulative injection amount reaches a predetermined upper limit threshold amount, (2) a case where the elapsed time timed from the start of the NOx purge control reaches the predetermined upper limit threshold time, and (3) a case where the NOx occlusion amount of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst **32** calculated based on a predetermined model equation including an operating state of the engine **10**, a sensor value of the NOx/lambda sensor **45**, or the like as input signals is reduced to a predetermined threshold indicating NOx removal success is satisfied, the NOx purge control is terminated by turning off the NOx purge flag F_{NP} (see time t_2 of FIG. 2).

[0064] In this manner, in this embodiment, the upper limit of the cumulative injection amount and the elapsed time is set in the termination condition of the NOx purge control so that it can be reliably prevented that the fuel consumption amount is excessive in a case where the NOx purge does not succeed due to the lowering of the exhaust temperature and the like.

[0065] <MAF Follow-Up Control>

[0066] In (1) a time of switching from the lean state of a regular operation to the rich state through the SOx purge control or the NOx purge control, and (2) a time of switching the rich state to the lean state of the regular operation through the SOx purge control or the NOx purge control, the MAF follow-up control unit **80** executes a control to correct the fuel injection timing and the fuel injection amount of each injector **11** in response to a MAF change (hereinafter, referred to the control as a MAF follow-up control).

[0067] <Injection Amount Learning Correction>

[0068] As illustrated in FIG. 6, the injection amount learning correction unit **90** includes a learning correction coefficient calculating unit **91** and an injection amount correcting unit **92**.

[0069] The learning correction coefficient calculating unit **91** calculates a learning correction coefficient F_{Corr} of the fuel injection amount based on an error $\Delta\lambda$ between an actual lambda value λ_{Act} detected by the NOx/lambda sensor **45** at the time of a lean operation of the engine **10** and an estimated lambda value λ_{Est} . When the exhaust gas is in the lean state, the HC concentration in the exhaust gas is very low, so that the change in the exhaust lambda value due to the oxidation reaction of HC in the oxidation catalyst **31** is negligibly small. For this reason, it is considered that the actual lambda value λ_{Act} in the exhaust gas which passes through the oxidation catalyst **31** and is detected by the NOx/lambda sensor **45** on the downstream side matches with the estimated lambda value λ_{Est} in the exhaust gas discharged from the engine **10**. For this reason, in a case where the error $\Delta\lambda$ occurs between the actual lambda value λ_{Act} and the estimated lambda value λ_{Est} , the error can be assumed to result from a difference between an instructed injection amount and an actual injection amount in the injector **11**. Hereinafter, the calculation process of the learning correction coefficient performed by the learning correction coefficient calculating unit **91** using the error $\Delta\lambda$ will be described based on the flow of FIG. 7.

[0070] In Step S300, it is determined based on the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q whether the engine **10** is in a lean operating state. If the engine **10** is in the lean operating state, the procedure proceeds to Step S310 in order to start the calculation of the learning correction coefficient.

[0071] In Step S310, a learning value $F_{CorrAdpt}$ is calculated by multiplying the error $\Delta\lambda$ obtained by subtracting the actual lambda value λ_{Act} detected by the NOx/lambda sensor **45** from the estimated lambda value λ_{Est} by a learning value gain K_1 and a correction sensitivity coefficient K_2 ($F_{CorrAdpt} = (\lambda_{Est} - \lambda_{Act}) \times K_1 \times K_2$). The estimated lambda value λ_{Est} is estimated and calculated from the operating state of the engine **10** depending on the engine speed Ne or the accelerator opening Q. The correction sensitivity coefficient K_2 is read from a correction sensitivity coefficient map **91A** illustrated in FIG. 6 using the actual lambda value λ_{Act} detected by the NOx/lambda sensor **45** as an input signal.

[0072] In Step S320, it is determined whether an absolute value $|F_{CorrAdpt}|$ of the learning value $F_{CorrAdpt}$ is in a range of a predetermined correction limit value A. In a case where the absolute value $|F_{CorrAdpt}|$ exceeds the correction limit value A, this control returns to stop the present learning.

[0073] In Step S330, it is determined whether a learning prohibition flag F_{Pro} is turned off. The learning prohibition flag F_{Pro} corresponds, for example, to the time of a transient operation of the engine **10**, the time of the NOx purge control ($F_{NP}=1$), and the like. It is because in a state where such a condition is satisfied, the error $\Delta\lambda$ becomes larger according to the change of the actual lambda value λ_{Act} so that the learning is not executed exactly. As for whether the engine **10** is in a transient operating state, for example, based on the time change amount of the actual lambda value λ_{Act} detected by the NOx/lambda sensor **45**, a case where the time change amount is larger than the predetermined threshold may be determined as the transient operating state.

[0074] In Step S340, a learning value map **91B** (see FIG. 6) based on the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q is renewed to the learning value $F_{CorrAdpt}$ calculated in Step S310. More specifically, a plurality of learning areas sectioned in response to the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q are set on the learning value map **91B**. Preferably, such learning areas are set such that the range thereof is narrower as the area is used more frequently, and the range thereof is wider as the area is used less frequently. Accordingly, in the frequently used area, a learning accuracy can be improved, and in the less-frequently used area, non-learning can be effectively prevented.

[0075] In Step S350, the learning correction coefficient F_{Corr} is calculated by adding "1" to the learning value read from the learning value map **91B** using the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q as input signals ($F_{Corr} = 1 + F_{CorrAdpt}$). The learning correction coefficient F_{Corr} is input to the injection amount correcting unit **92** illustrated in FIG. 6.

[0076] The injection amount correcting unit **92** executes the correction of the fuel injection amount by multiplying respective basic injection amounts of a pilot injection Q_{Pilot} , a pre-injection Q_{Pre} , a main injection Q_{Main} , an after injection Q_{After} , and a post injection Q_{Post} by the learning correction coefficient F_{Corr} .

[0077] In this manner, a variation such as the aged deterioration, the property change, or the individual difference of the injectors **11** can be effectively excluded by correcting the fuel injection amount of the injector **11** with the learning value according to the error $\Delta\lambda$ between the estimated lambda value λ_{Est} and the actual lambda value λ_{Act} .

[0078] <MAF Correction Coefficient>

[0079] The MAF correction coefficient calculating unit **95** calculates a MAF correction coefficient Maf_{corr} used to set

the MAF target value MAF_{NPL_Ttgt} or the target injection amount Q_{NPR_Ttgt} at the time of the NOx purge control.

[0080] In this embodiment, the fuel injection amount of the injector 11 is corrected based on the error $\Delta\lambda$ between the actual lambda value λ_{Act} detected by the NOx/lambda sensor 45 and the estimated lambda value λ_{Est} . However, since the lambda is a ratio of air and fuel, a factor of the error $\Delta\lambda$ is not necessarily limited to the effect of the difference between the instructed injection amount and the actual injection amount in the injector 11. That is, the error $\Delta\lambda$ of the lambda may be affected by an error of the MAF sensor 40 as well as that of the injector 11.

[0081] FIG. 8 is a block diagram illustrating a setting process of the MAF correction coefficient Maf_{corr} performed by the MAF correction coefficient calculating unit 95. A correction coefficient setting map 96 is a map based on the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q, and the MAF correction coefficient Maf_{corr} indicating the sensor property of the MAF sensor 40 corresponding to the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q is set based on an experiment and the like in advance.

[0082] The MAF correction coefficient calculating unit 95 reads the MAF correction coefficient Maf_{corr} from the correction coefficient setting map 96 using the engine speed Ne and the accelerator opening Q as input signals, and transmits the MAF correction coefficient Maf_{corr} to the MAF target value calculating unit 62 and the injection amount target value calculating unit 66. Accordingly, the sensor property of the MAF sensor 40 can be effectively reflected to set the MAF target value MAF_{NPL_Ttgt} or the target injection amount Q_{NPR_Ttgt} at the time of the NOx purge control.

[0083] <Others>

[0084] The present invention is not limited to the above-described embodiment, and the invention may be modified appropriately without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0085] This application is based upon and claims the benefit of priority from Japanese Patent Application No. 2015-042668, filed Mar. 4, 2015, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

[0086] The exhaust purification system and the catalyst regeneration method of the invention have an effect of effectively suppressing useless execution of NOx purge, thereby preventing deterioration of fuel consumption, and are useful in that the exhaust gas discharged from an internal combustion engine is effectively purified.

REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

- [0087] 10: engine
- [0088] 11: injector
- [0089] 12: intake passage
- [0090] 13: exhaust passage
- [0091] 16: intake throttle valve
- [0092] 24: EGR valve
- [0093] 31: oxidation catalyst
- [0094] 32: NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst
- [0095] 33: filter
- [0096] 34: exhaust pipe injection device

[0097] 40: MAF sensor

[0098] 45: NOx/lambda sensor

[0099] 50: ECU

1. An exhaust purification system comprising:

an NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst that is provided in an exhaust passage of an internal combustion engine and, when an exhaust gas is in a lean state, occludes NOx contained in the exhaust gas and, when the exhaust gas is in a rich state, reduces and purifies the occluded NOx; and

a controller configured to:

execute a catalyst regeneration process of bringing the exhaust gas into a rich state to reduce and purify the NOx occluded in the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst;

estimate an NOx reduction amount predicted at the time of executing the catalyst regeneration process before starting the catalyst regeneration process; and

prohibit the execution of the catalyst regeneration process when the NOx reduction amount is less than a predetermined lower limit threshold.

2. The exhaust purification system according to claim 1, wherein the controller is further configured to estimate the NOx reduction amount based on a preset and predetermined fixed value of an excess air ratio of the exhaust gas.

3. The exhaust purification system according to claim 2, wherein the controller is further configured to estimate the NOx reduction amount based on an exhaust air flow of the internal combustion engine, a temperature of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst, and an NOx occlusion rate of the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst.

4. An exhaust purification system comprising:

an NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst that is disposed in an exhaust passage of an internal combustion engine, and occludes and reduces a nitrogen compound contained in an exhaust gas discharged from the internal combustion engine; and

a controller that controls an air-fuel ratio of the exhaust gas discharged from the internal combustion engine, wherein

the controller operates to execute the following processes:

a catalyst regeneration process of bringing the exhaust gas into a rich state to reduce and purify NOx occluded in the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst;

a reduction amount estimating process of estimating an NOx reduction amount predicted at the time of executing the catalyst regeneration process before execution of the catalyst regeneration process; and

a prohibition process of prohibiting the execution of the catalyst regeneration process when the NOx reduction amount estimated by the reduction amount estimating process is less than a lower limit threshold.

5. A catalyst regeneration method in an exhaust purification system including an NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst that is disposed in an exhaust passage of an internal combustion engine, and occludes and reduce a nitrogen compound contained an exhaust gas discharged from the internal combustion engine, the method comprising:

a catalyst regeneration process of bringing the exhaust gas into a rich state to reduce and purify NOx occluded in the NOx occlusion reduction type catalyst;

- a reduction amount estimating process of estimating an NOx reduction amount predicted at the time of executing the catalyst regeneration process before execution of the catalyst regeneration process; and
- a prohibition process of prohibiting the execution of the catalyst regeneration process when the NOx reduction amount estimated by the reduction amount estimating process is less than a lower limit threshold.

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