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(54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD INTEGRATING AN ENERGY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND YARD PLANNER SYSTEM**

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See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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A method and system for identifying cargo-carrying vehicles (CCV) to be included in a vehicle system that are non-propulsion-generating vehicles scheduled to depart from a vehicle yard and travel to one or more destination locations at a predetermined departure time. Further includes, calculating a minimum tractive effort threshold required by one or more propulsion-generating vehicles (PGV) to propel the vehicle system to the one or more destination locations along a route within a predetermined time period. And selecting a set of one or more PGV from a larger group of PGV within the vehicle yard to be included in the vehicle system. The set of one or more PGV produce a tractive effort of at least the minimum tractive effort threshold, and having at least one of a lower fuel consumption or lower emissions than selecting one or more of the remaining PGV from the larger group of PGV, respectively.

**Related U.S. Application Data**

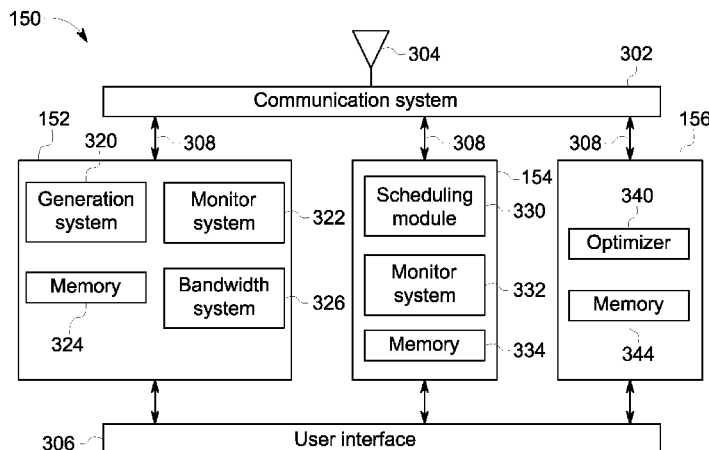
(62) Division of application No. 14/226,921, filed on Mar. 27, 2014, now Pat. No. 9,327,741.

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**B61L 27/00** (2006.01)  
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(58) **Field of Classification Search**  
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**18 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets**



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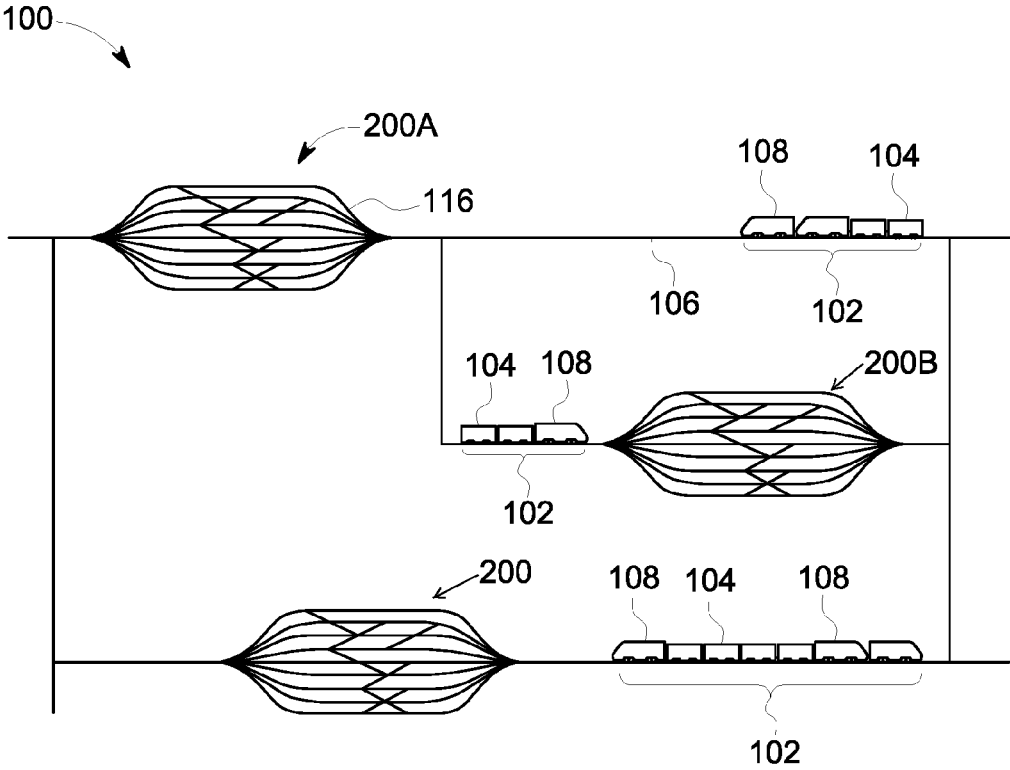
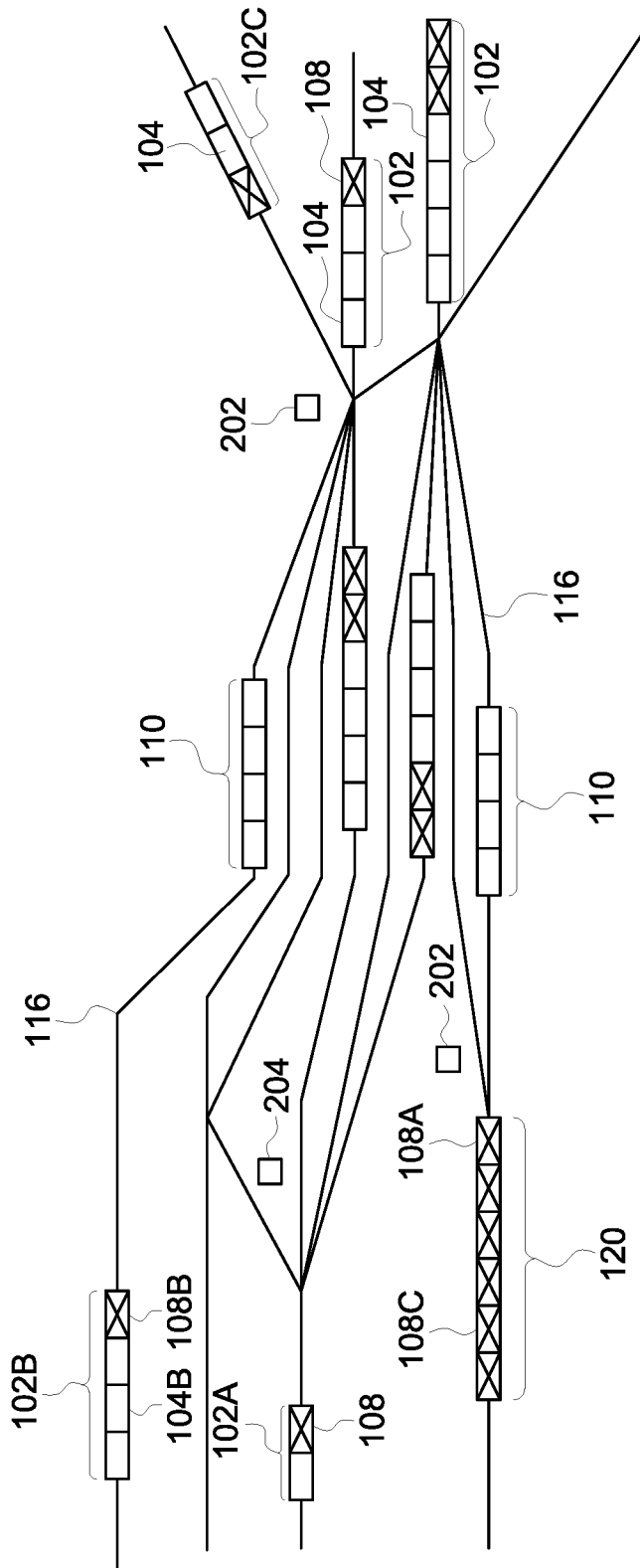


FIG. 1



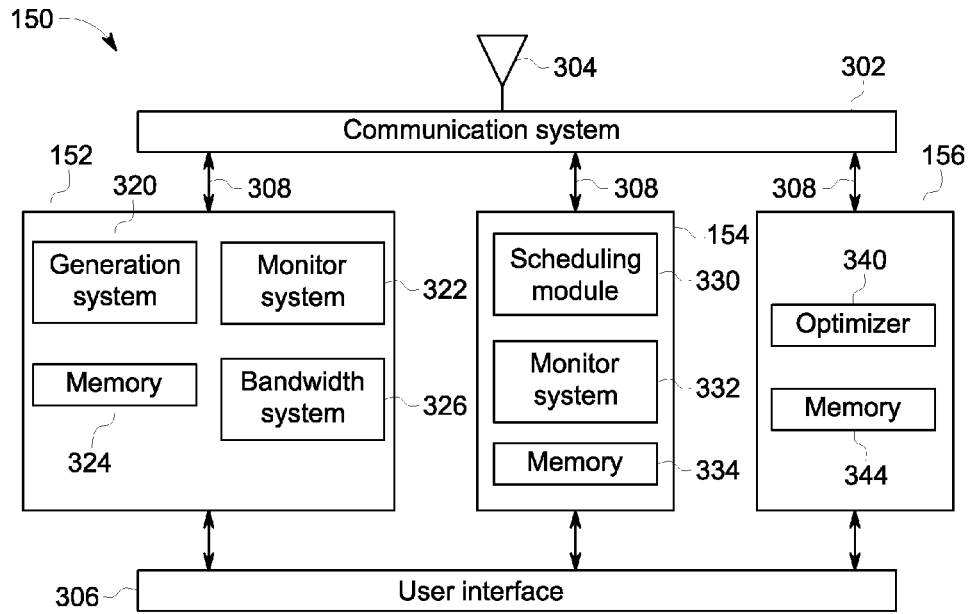


FIG. 3

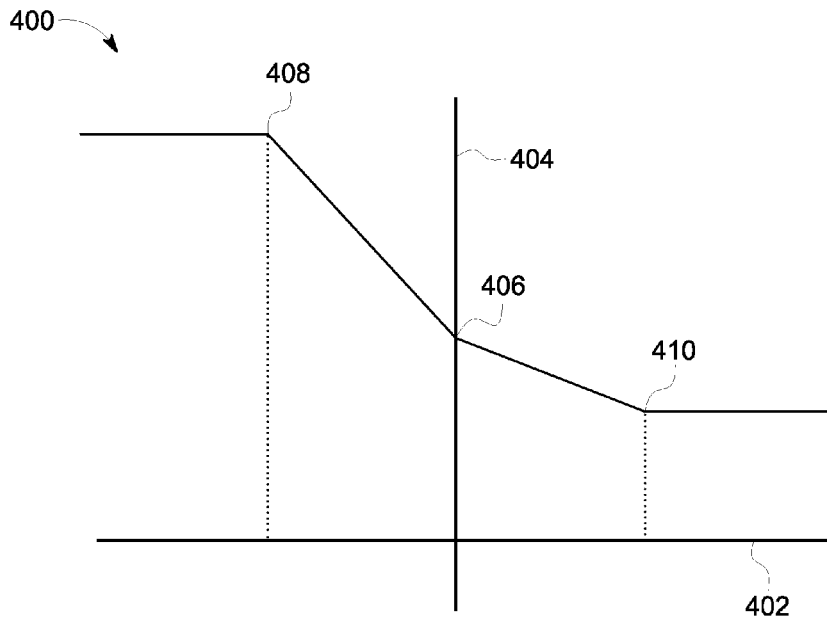


FIG. 4

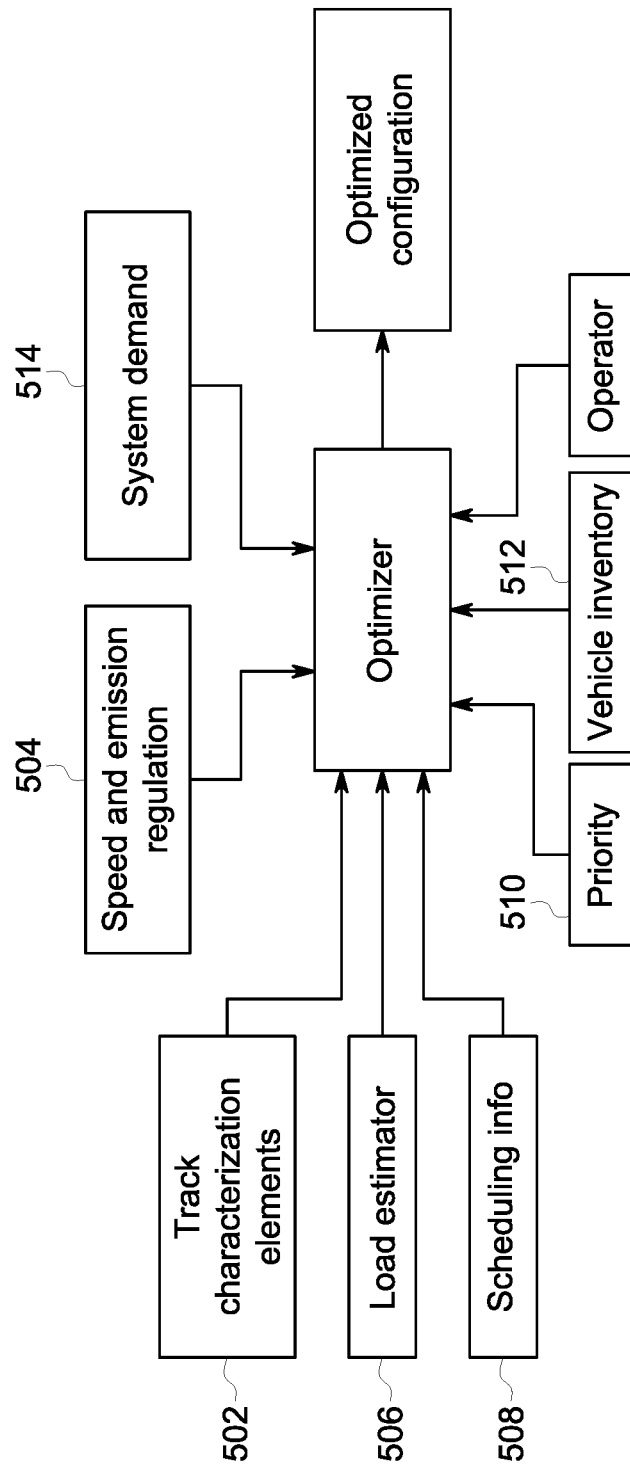


FIG. 5

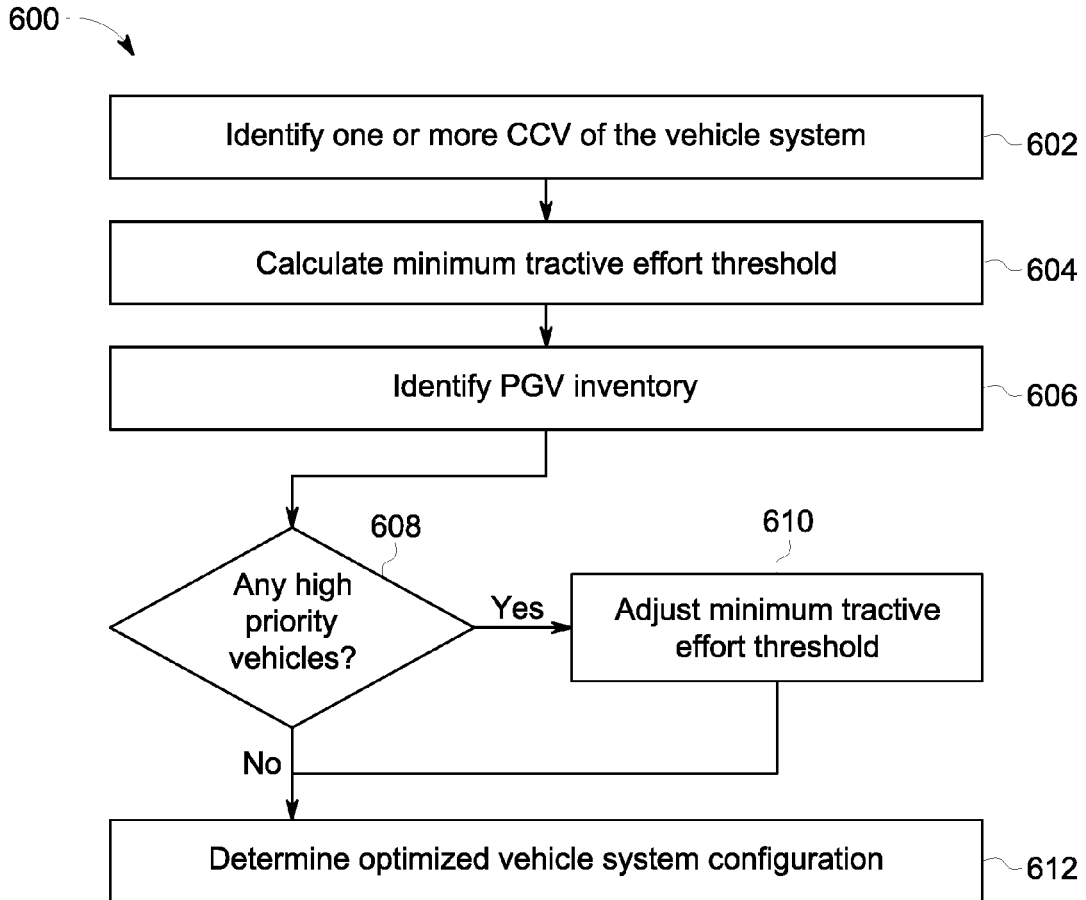


FIG. 6

## SYSTEM AND METHOD INTEGRATING AN ENERGY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND YARD PLANNER SYSTEM

### CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a divisional of and claims priority to U.S. application Ser. No. 14/226,921 filed Mar. 27, 2014, which is incorporated herein by reference.

### BACKGROUND

A transportation network for vehicle systems can include several interconnected main routes on which separate vehicles travel between locations to deliver or receive payloads. For example, a transportation network may be formed from interconnected railroad tracks with rail vehicles traveling along the tracks. The vehicles may travel according to schedules that dictate where and when the vehicles are to travel within the transportation network. The schedules may be coordinated with each other in order to arrange for certain vehicles to arrive at various locations in the transportation network at desired times and/or in a desired order.

The transportation network may include a vehicle yard or route hub, such as a rail yard or a distribution warehouse that includes a relatively dense grouping of routes or locations where several vehicles can congregate, deliver payloads, receive new payloads, perform maintenance, refuel, or the like. While in the vehicle yard, vehicles are assigned or paired with payloads based on power or ability of the vehicle to pull to carry the payload regardless on the overall energy or emission efficiency of available vehicles or the availability of vehicles in other vehicle yards within the transportation network. Thus, a need exists to increase the operation efficiency of the vehicle yards.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION

In an embodiment, a method includes identifying cargo-carrying vehicles (CCV) to be included in a vehicle system. The CCV are non-propulsion-generating vehicles scheduled to depart from a vehicle yard and travel to one or more destination locations at a predetermined departure time. The method further includes calculating with one or more processors, a tractive effort threshold required to propel the vehicle system to the one or more destination locations along a route within a predetermined time period. This threshold may be the minimum amount of tractive effort required to propel the vehicle system, or another, larger amount of tractive effort. The method further includes selecting, with the one or more processors, a set of one or more propulsion generating vehicles (PGV) from a larger group of PGV within the vehicle yard to be included in the vehicle system. The set of one or more PGV produces a tractive effort that is at least as large as the tractive effort threshold. The set of one or more PGV also consumes less fuel and/or generates fewer emissions than selecting one or more of the remaining PGV from the larger group of PGV for inclusion in the set. For example, the PGV in the set consume less fuel and/or generate fewer emissions while also providing the tractive effort threshold than would another set of PGV that also produce at least the tractive effort threshold.

It should be noted, as used herein, the term “vehicle yard” can refer to a grouping of interconnected routes at a central location or relatively close to each other and/or where

several vehicles can concurrently stop for maintenance, refueling, re-ordering of the vehicles relative to each other, or the like. Examples of vehicle yards may include, but are not limited to, interconnected railroad tracks at rail yards, airline routes condensing at hubs (e.g., airports), truck routes at distribution centers, shipping routes converging at waterways or ports, or the like.

In an embodiment, a control system includes a yard planner system having one or more processors. The yard planner system is configured to create a yard plan for a vehicle yard that includes vehicle connection plans for coupling a selection of one or more propulsion generating vehicles (PGV) with a selection of one or more cargo-carrying vehicles (CCV) to form a first vehicle system. The yard plan is further created based on a movement plan and a vehicle system configuration of the first vehicle system.

The control system also includes a schedule system having one or more processors. The schedule system is configured to create the movement plan of the first vehicle system. The movement plan includes a destination location and predetermined arrival time of the first vehicle system along a route.

The control system further includes an energy management system having one or more processors. The energy management system is configured to determine the optimized vehicle system configuration. The optimized vehicle system configuration includes the selection of the one or more PGV from a vehicle inventory, having a larger group of PGV, based on the movement plan of the first vehicle system and a tractive effort of the selection of the one or more PGV.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present inventive subject matter will be better understood from reading the following description of non-limiting embodiments, with reference to the attached drawings, wherein below:

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of a transportation network of an embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of a vehicle yard in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 3 is a simplified block diagram of an embodiment of a control system;

FIG. 4 is an illustration of a priority curve used by an embodiment of a scheduling system;

FIG. 5 is an illustration of information used by an optimizer of an energy management system in accordance with an embodiment; and

FIG. 6 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a method for a control system of a vehicle yard within a transportation network.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

One or more embodiments herein described provide systems and methods for coordinating a selection of one or more propulsion-generating vehicles (PGV) for forming a vehicle system having one or more cargo-carrying vehicles (CCV). The PGV may be traveling to (e.g., heading inbound to) a vehicle yard (e.g., for repair and/or maintenance of the PGV, to obtain additional fuel, to unload cargo and/or CCV off of another vehicle system, to load cargo and/or CCV onto the PGV to form the vehicle system, to sort the PGV among other PGV, or the like) or be stored within or at the vehicle yard. The vehicle yard may act as a transportation hub within a transportation network, such as when the vehicle yard is



coupled with several routes extending away from the vehicle yard for the vehicle system to travel along to reach other destinations. The vehicle yard may be a final destination location of a trip of the vehicle system, or may be an intermediate location as a stopping off point when the vehicle system is traveling to another business destination (e.g., the destination to which the vehicle system is contracted to travel).

The vehicle yard may have a capacity to receive vehicle systems into the vehicle yard. This capacity can be a space limitation on the number of vehicle systems that can exit off of a main line route into the vehicle yard. Additionally or alternatively, the capacity can be a throughput limitation on the number of vehicle systems the vehicle yard can partition (e.g., removing or separating the CCV or PGV from the vehicle system) or form (e.g., coupling the CCV or PGV into the vehicle system). As vehicle systems come and go from the vehicle yard, the availability or amount of PGV to select from to form alternative configurations of the vehicle systems with the one or more CCV changes. The travel and/or amount of the vehicle systems into the vehicle yard may be controlled such that the vehicle system arrives at the vehicle yard when the vehicle yard has sufficient capacity (e.g., space) to receive the vehicle system. Alternatively, in an embodiment, the vehicle system may be instructed to slow down as the vehicle system is traveling toward the vehicle yard, due to capacity restraints of the vehicle yard, so that an alternative vehicle system having a higher priority, respectively, may arrive or be received into the vehicle yard. The vehicle system may be instructed to slow down when doing so does not have a significantly negative impact (e.g., the impact is below a designated threshold) on the flow of traffic within a transportation network formed from interconnected routes, including the route on which the vehicle travels toward the vehicle yard.

While the discussion and figures included herein may be interpreted as focusing on rail yards as vehicle yards and rail vehicle consists (e.g., trains) as the vehicle systems, it should be noted that not all embodiments of the subject matter herein described and claimed herein are limited to rail yards, trains, and railroad tracks. (A consist is a group of vehicles that are mechanically linked to travel together.) The inventive subject matter may apply to other vehicles, such as airplanes, ships, or automobiles or the like. For example, one or more embodiments may select which airplane is selected to depart with a payload from an airport, a shipping facility (e.g., where the airplane drops off and/or receives cargo for delivery elsewhere), a repair or maintenance facility, or the like. Other embodiments may apply to control which ship is selected to depart with a payload from a ship yard or dock, which semi or delivery truck departs a repair facility, a shipping or distribution facility (e.g., where the automobile picks up and/or drops off cargo to be delivered elsewhere), or the like.

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of an embodiment of a transportation network 100. The transportation network 100 includes a plurality of interconnected routes 106, such as railroad tracks, roads, ship lanes, or other paths across which a vehicle system 102 travels. The routes 106 may be referred to as main line routes when the routes 106 provide paths for the vehicle systems 102 to travel along in order to travel between a starting location and a destination location (and/or to one or more intermediate locations between the starting location and the destination location). The transportation network 100 may extend over a relatively large area, such as hundreds of square miles or kilometers of area. While only one transportation network 100 is shown in FIG. 1, one or

more other transportation networks 100 may be joined with and accessible to vehicles traveling in the illustrated transportation network 100. For example, one or more of the routes 106 may extend to another transportation network 100 such that vehicles can travel between the transportation networks 100. Different transportation networks 100 may be defined by different geographic boundaries, such as different towns, cities, counties, states, groups of states, countries, continents, or the like. The number of routes 106 shown in FIG. 1 is meant to be illustrative and not limiting on embodiments of the described subject matter. Moreover, while one or more embodiments described herein relate to a transportation network formed from railroad tracks, not all embodiments are so limited. One or more embodiments may relate to transportation networks in which vehicles other than rail vehicles travel, such as flights paths taken by airplanes, roads or highways traveled by automobiles, waterborne shipping paths (e.g., shipping lanes) taken by ships, or the like.

Several vehicle systems 102 travel along the routes 106 within the transportation network 100. The vehicle systems 102 may concurrently travel in the transportation network 100 along the same or different routes 106. Travel of one or more vehicle systems 102 may be constrained to travel within the transportation network 100. Alternatively, one or more of the vehicle systems 102 may enter the transportation network 100 from another transportation network or leave the transportation network 100 to travel into another transportation network. In the illustrated embodiment, the vehicle systems 102 are shown and described herein as rail vehicles or rail vehicle consists. However, one or more other embodiments may relate to vehicles other than rail vehicles or rail vehicle consists. For example, the vehicle systems can represent other off-highway vehicles (e.g., vehicles that are not designed or permitted to travel on public roadways), marine vessels, airplanes, automobiles, and the like. While three vehicle systems 102 are shown in FIG. 1, alternatively, a different number of vehicle systems 102 may be concurrently traveling in the transportation network 100 (e.g., more than three, less than three).

Each vehicle system 102 may include one or more PGV 108 (e.g., locomotives or other vehicles capable of self-propulsion) and/or one or more CCV 104. The CCV 104 is a non-propulsion-generating vehicle, such as cargo cars, passenger cars, or other vehicles incapable of self-propulsion. The PGV 108 and the CCV 104 are mechanically coupled or linked together forming a vehicle system 102 (e.g., a consist) to travel or move along the routes 106. The routes 106 are interconnected to permit the vehicle systems 102 to travel over various combinations of the routes 106 to move from a starting location to a destination location and/or an intermediate location there between.

The transportation network 100 includes one or more vehicle yards 200. While three vehicle yards 200 are shown, alternatively, the transportation network 100 may include a different number of vehicle yards 200. FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of a vehicle yard 200 of the transportation network 100 having a control system 150 in accordance with an embodiment. The vehicle yard 200 is shown with a plurality of interconnected routes 116 that are located relatively close to each other. For example, the routes 116 in the vehicle yard 200 may be closer together (e.g., less than 10, 20, or 30 feet or meters between nearby routes 206) than the routes 106 outside of the vehicle yards 200 (e.g., more than several miles or kilometers between nearby routes 102). The number

of interconnected routes **116** shown in FIG. 2 is meant to be illustrative and not limiting on embodiments of the described subject matter.

The vehicle yards **200** are located along the routes **106** in order to provide services to the vehicle systems **102**, such as to repair or maintain the one or more PGV **108** (illustrated as a rectangle with an X in FIG. 2), re-order the sequence of vehicle systems **102** traveling along the routes **106** by adjusting an order to which the vehicle systems **102** exits the vehicle yard **200** relative to the order of the vehicle systems **102** entering vehicle yard **200**, partitioning and storing the one or more PGV **108** and/or CCV **104** (illustrated as a rectangle in FIG. 2) of the vehicle system **102**, load or couple additional CCV **104** and/or PGV **108** onto the vehicle system **102**, or the like. In an embodiment, the vehicle yards **200** are not used as routes to travel from a starting location to a destination location. For example, the vehicle yards **200** may not be main line routes along which the vehicle systems **102** travel from a starting location to a destination location. Instead, the vehicle yards **200** may be connected with the routes **106** to allow the vehicle systems **102** to get off of the main line routes **106** for services described above.

The services and operations of the rail yard **200** are controlled by the control system **150**. The control system **150** includes various systems that perform operations within the vehicle yard **200**. For example, as illustrated in FIG. 3, the control system **150** may include a communication system **302**, a user interface **306**, a yard planner system **152**, a scheduling system **154**, and an energy management system **156**. The yard planner system **152** manages the planned activities within the vehicle yard **200**, such as, processing operations that are scheduled to be performed on one or more PGV **108** and/or CCV **104** within the vehicle system **102**, receiving the vehicle systems **102** into the yard **200**, moving the vehicles (e.g., PGV **108**, CCV **104**, vehicle systems **102**) through the yard **200** (including performing maintenance, inspection, cleaning, loading/unloading of cargo, or the like), and preparing or coupling the one or more PGV **108** and CCV **104** for departing the yard by forming vehicle systems **102** (e.g., consists) which may or may not be the same vehicle system **102** in which the CCV **104** and PGV **108** arrived into the vehicle yard **200**. The scheduling system coordinates movement of the vehicle systems **102** within the transportation network **100**. The energy management system **156** determines a vehicle configuration for one or more, or each, of the vehicle systems **102**. The vehicle configuration can represent a set of one or more selected PGV **108** to be included in the vehicle system **102**.

The systems described herein (e.g., systems included in the control system **150** and external to the control system **150**) may include or represent hardware and associated instructions (e.g., software stored on a tangible and non-transitory computer readable storage medium (e.g., memory **324**, **334** and **344**), such as a computer hard drive, ROM, RAM, or the like) that perform the operations described herein. The hardware may include electronic circuits that include and/or are connected to one or more logic-based devices, such as microprocessors, processors, controllers, or the like. These devices may be off-the-shelf devices that perform the operations described herein from the instructions described above. Additionally or alternatively, one or more of these devices may be hard-wired with logic circuits to perform these operations. Two or more of the systems may share one or more electronic circuits, processors, and/or logic-based devices. In one or more embodiments, the systems described herein may be understood as including or representing electronic processing circuitry such as one or

more field programmable gate arrays (FPGA), application specific integrated circuits (ASIC), or microprocessors. The systems may be configured to execute one or more algorithms to perform functions described herein. The one or more algorithms may include aspects of embodiments disclosed herein, whether or not expressly identified in a flowchart or as a step or operation of a method. Various embodiments described herein may be characterized as having different systems/elements (e.g., modules) that include one or more processors. However, it should be noted that the one or more processors may be the same processor or different processors (e.g., each system/element implemented in a separate processor(s), the system/elements all implemented in the same processor(s), or some systems/elements in the same processor(s), and others in different processor(s)).

The yard planner system **152** may include a monitoring system **322**. The monitoring system may obtain input information used by the yard planner system **152** to create the yard plans and monitor the yard state information of the vehicle yard **200** and the vehicles (e.g., vehicle systems **102**, CCV **104**, PGV **108**) within the yard **200**.

The yard state information may indicate the status of the different vehicles (e.g., vehicle system **102**, CCV **104**, PGV **108**) within the vehicle yard **200**, such as where the vehicles currently are located, where the vehicles are expected (e.g., scheduled) to be located at a future time period, what operations are being performed on the vehicles, what resources (e.g., equipment, tools, personnel, or the like) are being expended or used to perform the operations on the vehicles, or the like. The yard state information may be obtained by the monitoring system **322** using messaging (e.g. peer-to-peer messaging) with management information systems, such as system-wide vehicle inventory management systems (that monitor which vehicles are in the yard and/or locations of the vehicles as the vehicles move through the yard), through direct data entry by the operators via the user interface **306**. For example, the monitoring system **322** may receive the yard state information from the operator using yard workstations **202** such as computer workstations, tablet computers, mobile phones, and/or other devices through the communication system **302**. Additionally or alternatively, some of the yard state information may be received, via the communication system **302**, from one or more yard sensors **204** (e.g., include transponders, video cameras, track circuits, or the like) that measure or otherwise obtain data indicative of the yard state information.

Input information may include vehicle connection plans based on a priority and/or selection requests (e.g., for the vehicle system **102**, CCV **104**, PGV **108**) received from the operator (e.g., using the user interface **306**) and/or the energy management system **156**, the destination locations (e.g., of the vehicle system **102**, CCV **104**, PGV **108**) received from the operator and/or the scheduling system **154**, or the like. A vehicle connection plan identifies one or more CCV **104** and/or one or more PGV **108** to be included or coupled to an outbound vehicle system **102** (e.g., vehicle **102** leaving the vehicle yard **200**). Additionally or alternatively, the input information may include primary and secondary vehicle connection plans. The secondary vehicle connection plan may represent one or more additional output vehicle systems **102** that the one or more CCV **104** and/or the one or more PGV **108** may be coupled to or included to if the primary vehicle connection plan is unattainable. Optionally, the vehicle connection plans may include an order, priority list, or timing deadlines, related to the completion of the vehicle connection plan. In an embodi-

ment the priority of the vehicle connection plan correlates to a priority of the vehicle system **102**, CCV **104**, and/or PGV **108** described below. The priority of the vehicle connection plan instructs the yard planner system **152** on the order of which vehicle system **102** relative to the other vehicle systems to be completed in the yard plan. Optionally, the yard planner system **152** may automatically transmit or signal to the operator within the vehicle yard **200** to direct the coupling to complete the vehicle connection plan of the one or more PGV with the CCV.

For example, the vehicle system **102B** enters into the vehicle yard **200** having the CCV **104B**. The yard planner system **152** receives input information from the scheduling system **154** that the CCV **104B** is scheduled for a different destination location than the destination location of the vehicle system **102B**. In order to ensure that the vehicle system **102B** and CCV **104B** reach the appropriate destination locations, the monitoring system **322** may match an outgoing vehicle system to the CCV **104B** having similar destination locations or using the destination location of the outgoing vehicle system as the intermediate location for the CCV **104B**. To determine a match, the monitoring system **322** may track the scheduled outbound destination locations of different vehicle systems **102** currently within the vehicle yard **200** or entering the vehicle yard **200** within a predetermined future time period (e.g., two hours before the predetermined departure time of the CCV **104B**) by analyzing movement plans or schedule of the vehicle systems **102** from the scheduling system **154**. Once the outgoing vehicle system is selected or matched, the yard planner system **152** may create a yard plan or modify an existing yard plan to decouple or partition the CCV **104B** from the vehicle system **102B** and couple the CCV **104B** to the matched outgoing vehicle system.

Additionally or alternatively, if the matched outgoing vehicle system, determined by the monitoring system **322**, is not within the vehicle yard **200** (e.g., the matched outgoing vehicle system is not in the yard or is not arriving within a predetermined future time period), the yard planner system **152** may create and/or modify the yard plan to decouple or partition the CCV **104B** from the vehicle system **102B** and couple the CCV **104B** to a CCV group **110** to await coupling with the matched outgoing vehicle system and/or one or more PGV **108** to form the matched outgoing vehicle system. The CCV group **110** may be formed of one or more CCV **104** based on the predetermined departure time of the CCV **104**, the destination location or intermediate location of the CCV **104**, the type of payload within the CCV **104**, selection by the operator of the vehicle yard **100**, priority of the CCV **104**, communication by a remote vehicle yard, or the like.

In an embodiment, the yard plan may be later modified or adjusted by the yard planning system **152** after the monitoring system **322** receives a PGV change request by the energy management system **156**. For example, the monitoring system **322** receives the PGV change request from the energy management system **156** instructing that the vehicle system **102B** should be coupled to the PGV **108A** and not PGV **108B** (e.g., the PGV **108B** should be partitioned from the vehicle system **102B**). The yard planning system **152** may modify or adjust the yard plan to partition the PGV **108B** from the vehicle system **102B** and couple the PGV **108A** to the vehicle system **102B**.

A bandwidth system **326** of the yard planner system **152** monitors constraints on the processing operations that are performed on one or more of the vehicles within the vehicle yard **200** in order to move the vehicle systems into, through,

and out of the vehicle yard **200**. The bandwidth system **326** may receive data representative of the processing constraints from one or more of the operators, sensors **204**, or the like in order to track and/or update the processing constraints over time. The yard plans that are generated by the yard planner system **152** may be updated when the processing constraints change or significantly change such as from route configurations, vehicle inventory, route maintenance, or the like.

For example, the bandwidth system **326** may track route configurations in the yard **200**. The route configuration includes the layout (e.g., arrangement, orientations, allowed directions of travel, intersections, or the like) of routes **116** (e.g., tracks) within the vehicle yard **200** on which the vehicles travel and/or are processed in the yard **200**. The route configuration also can include the capacities of the routes **116** within the yard **200**, such as the sizes of the routes **116** (e.g., lengths). Larger (e.g., longer) stretches of the routes **116** have a larger capacity for receiving vehicles than smaller (e.g., shorter) stretches of the routes **116**. These capacities can change with respect to time as the number of vehicles in the yard **200** (and on the routes **116**) changes, as segments of the route **116** are unavailable due to maintenance or repair, as segments of the routes **116** become available after being unavailable due to maintenance or repair, or the like.

As another example of processing constraints that can be monitored, the bandwidth system **326** may track vehicle inventories in the vehicle yard **200**. Vehicle inventories can represent the locations of various (or all) of the vehicle systems **102**, PGV **108** and/or CV **104** within the vehicle yard **200**, the intended (e.g., scheduled) locations and/or routes that the vehicles are to occupy and/or travel along in the vehicle yard **200**, the current and/or future (e.g., scheduled) status of the processing operations being performed on the various vehicles in the yard, or the like.

A generation system **320** of the yard planner system **152** plans movements of vehicles through the yard and processing activities to be performed on the vehicles to create the yard plan. As described above, the yard plan is a schedule of movements of the vehicles (e.g., vehicle systems **102**, CCV **104**, PGV **108**) through different locations and/or along different routes **116** within the yard **200**, as well as a schedule of processing operations to be performed on or with the vehicles at various locations of the vehicles, as the vehicles move from an inbound consist to an outbound consist.

The monitoring system **322** and/or bandwidth system **326** may obtain the information described above via the communication system **302** coupled to or wirelessly communicating with the yard planner system **152**. The communication system **302** may include electronic circuitry and other hardware that communicates data signals with the scheduling system **154**, the energy management system **156**, remote control systems, the yard sensors **204**, and/or the yard workstations **202**. For example, the communication system **302** may include one or more antennas **304** for wirelessly communicating with the remote control systems, sensors **204**, and/or workstations **202**. Additionally or alternatively, the communication system **302** may be coupled with conductive communication pathways **308**, such as one or more cables, busses, wires, rails, or the like, through which the information can be communicated with, for example, the yard planner system **152**, the scheduling system **154**, the energy management system **156**, the yard sensors **204**, and/or the yard workstations **202**. As described below, the communication system **302** may send data signals to one or

more of the yard workstations **202** in order to visually present the yard **200** to users of the workstations **202**.

The scheduling information obtained by the yard planner system **152** may describe the intended routing and arrival and/or departure times of the vehicle system **102**, CCV **104**, and/or PGV **108** within the transportation network **100**. The scheduling information or the movement plan may be determined or created by the scheduling system **154** coordinating the schedules of the various vehicle traveling within the transportation network **100** and through the vehicle yards **200**. The movement plan may include the origin location of the vehicle system **120**, CCV **104**, and/or PGV **108**, the destination location, and/or intermediate locations (e.g., vehicle yards **200**). Additionally, the movement plan may list the vehicle yards **200** that the vehicles are to travel to and enter in during each portion (e.g., leg) of travel of the vehicles from the origin location to the respective destination locations. The scheduling system **154** may be disposed at a central dispatch office, within the vehicle yard **200**, and/or within the vehicle system **102**. The scheduling system **154** may create and communicate the scheduling information to one or more vehicle systems **102**, the yard planner system **152**, the energy management system **156**, or the like through the communication system **302** using a wireless connection (e.g., radio frequency (RF)) or via the conductive communication pathway **308**.

The scheduling system **154** includes several modules that perform various operations or functions described herein. The modules may include hardware and/or software systems that operate to perform one or more functions, such as one or more computer processors and/or one or more sets of instructions. The modules shown in FIG. **3** may represent the hardware (e.g., a computer processor) and/or software (e.g., one or more sets of instructions such as software applications or hard-wired logic) used to perform the functions or operations associated with the modules. A single hardware component (e.g., a single processor) and/or software component may perform the operations or functions of several modules, or multiple hardware components and/or software components may separately perform the operations or functions associated with different modules. The instructions on which the hardware components operate may be stored on a tangible and non-transitory (e.g., not a transient signal) computer readable storage medium, such as a memory **334**. The memory **334** may include one or more computer hard drives, flash drives, RAM, ROM, EEPROM, or the like. Alternatively, one or more of the sets of instructions that direct operations of the hardware components may be hard-wired into the logic of the hardware components, such as by being hard-wired logic formed in the hardware of a processor or controller.

The scheduling system **154** may include a scheduling module **330** that creates schedules for the vehicle systems **102** within the transportation network **100** and the vehicle yards **200**. The scheduling module **330** may form the movement plan, for example, by generating schedules for the vehicle systems **102** that are based (at least in part) on capacities of the vehicle yards **200** (shown in FIG. **2**) to receive incoming vehicle systems **102**. The scheduling module **330** may delay a scheduled arrival time for a vehicle system **102** to arrive at a vehicle yard **200** if doing so does not have a significant negative impact on the flow of traffic in the transportation network **100**. For example, the scheduling module **330** may delay an arrival time of a vehicle system **102** such that delaying the arrival time does not decrease a throughput parameter of the transportation network **100** below a predetermined threshold.

The throughput parameter may represent the flow, rate, or movement of the vehicle systems **102** traveling through the transportation network **100** or a subset of the transportation network **100** (e.g., the vehicle yard **200**, segment of the route **106**). In an embodiment, the throughput parameter may indicate how successful the vehicle systems **102** are in arriving at the destination location or intermediate location according with respect to the schedule or movement plan associated with each vehicle system **102**. For example, the throughput parameter may be a statistical measure of adherence of the vehicle systems **102** to the schedules of the vehicle systems **102** within the movement plan. The term "statistical measure of adherence" may refer to a quantity that is calculated for a vehicle system **102** indicating how closely the vehicle system **102** is following the schedule associated with the vehicle system **102**. Further, several statistical measures of adherence to the movement plan may be calculated for more than one or various vehicle systems **102** traveling within the transportation network **100**.

The monitoring module **332** may determine the throughput parameters for the transportation network **100**, or an area thereof, based on the statistical measures of adherence associated with the vehicle systems **102**. For example, a throughput parameter may be an average, median, or other statistical calculation of the statistical measures of adherence for the vehicle systems **102** concurrently traveling in the transportation network **100**. The throughput parameter may be calculated based on the statistical measures of adherence for all, substantially all, a supermajority, or a majority of the vehicle systems **102** traveling in the transportation network **100**.

The scheduling system **154** may include a monitoring module **332** which monitors travel of the vehicle systems **102** within the transportation network **100** (shown in FIG. **1**) and/or capacities of the vehicle yards **200** over time. The vehicle systems **102** may periodically report current positions of the vehicle system **102** to the scheduling system **154** (and/or other information such as route and speed) so that the monitoring module **332** may track where the vehicle systems **102** are located over time. Alternatively, signals or other sensors disposed alongside the routes **106** and **116** of the transportation network **100** may periodically report the passing of vehicle system **102** by the signals or sensors to the scheduling system **152**. Optionally, the monitoring module **332** may track the capacities of the vehicle yards **200** (shown in FIG. **2**) by monitoring how many vehicle systems **102** enter and how many vehicle systems **102** leave each of the vehicle yards **200**. Additionally or alternatively, the monitoring system **322** may receive vehicle connection plan status updates from the yard planner system **152** relating to the position or estimate of when the vehicle system **102** may leave the vehicle yard **200**.

The monitoring module **332** may determine the throughput parameters of the transportation network **100** (shown in FIG. **1**) and/or areas of the transportation network **100** that are used by the scheduling module **330**. The monitoring module **332** may calculate the throughput parameters based on the schedules of the vehicle systems **102** and deviations from the schedules by the vehicle systems **102**. For example, in order to determine a statistical measure of adherence to the schedule associated with the vehicle system **102**, the monitoring module **332** may monitor how closely the vehicle system **102** adheres to the schedule (e.g., arrival times of the vehicle system **102** at a destination or intermediate location compared to the scheduled arrival time) as the vehicle system **102** travels within the transportation network **100**.

The vehicle system **102** may adhere to the schedule of the vehicle system **102** by proceeding along a path on the route **106** toward the scheduled destination or intermediate location such that the vehicle system **102** will arrive at the scheduled location at the scheduled arrival time or within a predetermined time buffer of the scheduled arrival time. For example, an estimated time of arrival (ETA) of the vehicle system **102** may be calculated as the time that the vehicle system **102** will arrive at the scheduled destination or intermediate location if no additional anomalies (e.g., mechanical failures, route damage, route traffic, waiting for vehicle connection plan at the vehicle yard **200**, or the like) occur that changes the speed or departure from an intermediate location (e.g., vehicle yard **200**) at which the vehicle system **102** travels. If the ETA is the same as or within a predetermined time buffer the scheduled arrival time, then the monitoring module **332** may calculate a large statistical measure of adherence for the vehicle system **102**. As the ETA differs from the scheduled arrival time (e.g., by occurring after the scheduled arrival time), the statistical measure of adherence may decrease.

Additionally or alternatively, the vehicle system **102** may adhere to the schedule by arriving at or passing through scheduled waypoints of the schedule at scheduled times that are associated with the waypoints, or within the predetermined time buffer of the scheduled times. As differences between actual times that the vehicle system **102** arrives at or passes through the scheduled waypoints and the associated scheduled times of the waypoints increases, the statistical measure of adherence for the vehicle system **102** may decrease. Conversely, as these differences decrease, the statistical measure of adherence may increase.

The monitoring module **332** may calculate the statistical measure of adherence as a time difference between the ETA of the vehicle system **102** and the scheduled arrival time of the schedule associated with the vehicle system **102**. Alternatively, the statistical measure of adherence for the vehicle system **102** may be a fraction or percentage of the scheduled arrival time. For example, the statistical measure of adherence may be the difference between the ETA and the scheduled arrival time over the scheduled arrival time. Optionally, the statistical measure of adherence may further include the ETA of the vehicle system **102** to a number of scheduled waypoints (e.g., between the origin location and/or intermediate locations and the destination location) along the path of the movement plan for the vehicle system **102** and the scheduled arrival time. Alternatively, the statistical measure of adherence may be a sum total, average, median, or other calculation of time differences between the actual times that the vehicle system **102** arrives at or passes by scheduled waypoints and the associated scheduled times.

The differences between when the vehicle system **102** arrives at or passes through one or more scheduled locations and the time that the vehicle system **102** was scheduled to arrive at or pass through the scheduled locations may be used to calculate the statistical measure of adherence to a schedule for the vehicle system **102**. In an embodiment, the statistical measure of adherence for the vehicle system **102** may represent the number or percentage of scheduled locations that the vehicle system **102** arrived too early or too late. For example, the monitoring module **332** may count the number of scheduled locations that the vehicle system **102** arrives at or passes through outside of a time buffer around the scheduled time. The time buffer can be one to several minutes. By way of example only, if the time buffer is three minutes, then the monitoring module **332** may examine the differences between the scheduled times and the actual times

and count the number of scheduled locations that the vehicle system **102** arrived more than three minutes early or more than three minutes late. Alternatively, the monitoring module **332** may count the number of scheduled locations that the vehicle system **102** arrived early or late without regard to a time buffer.

The monitoring module **332** may calculate the statistical measure of adherence by the vehicle system **102** to the schedule based on the number or percentage of scheduled locations that the vehicle system **102** arrived on time (or within the time buffer). For example, the monitoring module **332** may calculate that the vehicle system **102** adhered to the schedule (e.g., remained on schedule) for 71% of the scheduled locations and that the vehicle system **102** did not adhere (e.g., fell behind or ahead of the schedule) for 29% of the scheduled locations. Additionally or alternatively, the monitoring module **332** may calculate the statistical measure of adherence by the vehicle system **102** to the schedule based on the total or sum of time differences between the scheduled times associated with the scheduled locations and the actual times that the vehicle system **102** arrived at or passed through the scheduled locations.

In an embodiment, the monitoring module **332** may calculate the average statistical measure of adherence by comparing the deviation of each vehicle system **102** from the average or median statistical measure of adherence of the several vehicle systems **102** traveling within the transportation network **100**. For example, the monitoring module **332** may calculate an average or median deviation of the measure of adherence for the vehicle systems **102** from the average or median statistical measure of adherence of the vehicle systems **102**.

Additionally, the scheduling system **154** may assign the priority to the vehicle system **102** and/or the vehicles within the vehicle system **102** (e.g., the CCV **104**, the PGV **108**) which may be used by the yard planner system **152** (as described above). The priority may be based on the throughput parameter or statistical measure of adherence determined by the monitoring module **332**, a business objective of the transportation network **100** (e.g., delivery deadline of a payload of the CCV **104**, reliance on the vehicle system **102** and/or PGV **108** by a plurality of other vehicle systems **102**), by the operator of the vehicle yard **200**, the central dispatch or other office that generates the trip plans for one or more vehicle systems **102**, or the like.

FIG. 4 illustrates a priority curve **400** that may be used by the scheduling system **154**. The priority curve **400** may be predetermined and stored on memory **334**, received by the scheduling system **154** from an input by the operator using the user interface **302**, or the like. The x-axis **402** may represent the statistical measure of adherence. For example, a position traversing left along the x-axis **402** exemplifies a decreasing statistical measure of adherence (e.g., ETA of the vehicle system **102** is greater than or later in time than the scheduled time of arrival), and conversely the position traversing right along the x-axis **402** exemplifies an increasing statistical measure of adherence (e.g., ETA of the vehicle system **102** is lesser than or earlier in time than the scheduled time of arrival). The y-axis **404** represents the priority, such that, a position traversing upwards and away from the x-axis **402** exemplifies an increasing priority and conversely the position traversing towards the x-axis exemplifies a decreasing priority. For example, the monitoring module **332** is tracking three vehicles systems **102A**, **102B** and **102C** entering the vehicle yard **200** (FIG. 2) each having a movement plan. The monitoring module **332** determines a statistical measure of adherence for each vehicle system

with respect to the priority curve **400**, such that, **406** represents the vehicle system **102A**, **408** represents the vehicle system **102B**, and **410** represents the vehicle system **102C**. Further, using the priority curve **400** the monitoring module **332** may determine a priority (e.g., value of the y-axis) associated for each vehicle system **102A**, **102B**, **102C** and may output the said priorities to the yard planner system **152**, using the communication system **302**. The priority may be represented as a number for each vehicle system **102**, a list of the vehicle systems **102** within the transportation network **100** and/or in the vehicle yard **200** in a priority order, a color scheme, or the like. The yard planner system **152** may determine or adjust the yard plan based on the priority of the incoming vehicle systems **102A**, **102B**, and **102C** and/or vehicle systems **102** currently within the vehicle yard **200**. For example, the yard planner system **152** may complete the vehicle connection plan of the vehicle system **102B**, represented as **408** on the priority curve **400**, before the vehicle connection plans of the vehicle systems **102A** and **102C**, respectively, due to the higher priority of the vehicle system **102B**.

The energy management system **156** may be embodied in hardware, such as a processor, controller, or other logic-based device, that performs functions or operations based on one or more sets of instructions (e.g., software). The instructions on which the hardware operates may be stored on a tangible and non-transitory (e.g., not a transient signal) computer readable storage medium, such as a memory **344**. The memory **344** may include one or more computer hard drives, flash drives, RAM, ROM, EEPROM, or the like. Alternatively, one or more of the sets of instructions that direct operations of the hardware may be hard-wired into the logic of the hardware.

The energy management system **156** determines an optimized vehicle system configuration for the movement plan which may be used by the yard planner system **152** to determine a vehicle connection plan to create the yard plan and/or to adjust an existing yard plan. As used herein, the term “optimize” (and forms thereof) are not intended to require maximizing or minimizing a characteristic, parameter, or other object in all embodiments described herein. Instead, “optimize” and its forms are intended to mean that a characteristic, parameter, or other object is increased or decreased toward a designated or desired amount. For example, an “optimized” vehicle system configuration for fuel efficiency is not limited to a complete absence of fuel consumption or that the absolute minimum amount of fuel is consumed by the vehicle system. Rather, the optimized vehicle system configuration for fuel efficiency may mean that the fuel efficiency is increased, but not necessarily maximized, relative to other possible vehicle system configurations available. However, the “optimized” vehicle system configuration for fuel efficiency can include reducing fuel consumption to the minimum amount possible. As another example, optimized vehicle system configuration for emission generation may not mean completely eliminating the generation of all emissions from the vehicle system. Instead, optimized vehicle system configuration for emission generation may mean that the amount of emissions generated by the vehicle system is reduced but not necessarily eliminated relative to other possible vehicle system configurations available. However, optimized vehicle system configuration for emission generation can include reducing the amount of emissions generated to a minimum amount possible. In an embodiment, the “optimized” vehicle system configuration for a characteristic (e.g., fuel efficiency, generated emissions, weight distribution), parameter

(e.g., tractive effort), or other object includes increasing or decreasing the characteristic, parameter, or object (as appropriate) during performance of a mission (e.g., a trip) such that the characteristic, parameters, or object is increased or decreased (as appropriate) relative to performing the same mission in another vehicle system configuration. For example, the energy management system **156** determined that the PGV **108A** selected for the vehicle system **102A** traveling along a trip according to an optimized vehicle system configuration and trip plan and may result in the vehicle system **102A** consuming less fuel and/or generating fewer emissions relative to traveling along the same trip having another vehicle configuration, such as having PGV **108B** rather than PGV **108A** for the vehicle system **102A**.

The optimized vehicle configuration, for example, may be determined by an optimizer module **340** analyzing or calculating different timing and load demands of the vehicle system **102** and the transportation network **100** using different input information. The optimizer module **340** may analyze the movement plan of the vehicle system **102**, specifically, the scheduling information **508** (e.g., timing requirements of the vehicle system **102** to arrive at the destination or intermediate location), speed and emission regulations **504** (e.g., predetermined and based on the route **106** location), track characterization elements **502**, the vehicle inventory **512**, and the load estimator **506** to determine a minimum tractive effort threshold required to be produced by the one or more PGV **108** selected for the optimized vehicle configuration for the vehicle system **102**. The optimizer module **340** further selects the one or more PGV **108** based on a sum of the tractive effort produced from each of the PGV **108** of the vehicle inventory **512** is at least or greater than the minimum tractive effort threshold of the vehicle system **102** to arrive within a predetermined time period (e.g., scheduling information **508**), and an optimization requirement (e.g., fuel consumption, emission generation) received from the operator, the dispatch facility, or the like. Optionally, the optimizer module **340** may additionally base the selection and/or optimized vehicle configuration of the vehicle system **102** on the weight distribution of the vehicle system **102**.

The tractive effort is representative of the tractive effort the one or more PGV **108** units are capable of and/or need to provide to propel the vehicle system **102** along the route **106** and **116**. The tractive effort may be a measure of pounds force or traction amps (for electric motors). The tractive effort may vary along the movement plan due to changes in parameters, for example, changes in a curvature and/or grade of the route **106**, speed limits and/or requirements of the vehicle system **102**, or the like. As these parameters change during the movement plan, the total tractive effort, or force, that is required to propel the vehicle system **102** along the track **106** may also change.

The track characterization elements **502** may provide information, for example terrain characteristics, about the remaining segments or portions of the route **106** to be traveled by the vehicle system **102** from the vehicle yard **200** to the destination location and/or remaining intermediate locations before the destination location (e.g., other vehicle yards **200**) while following the movement plan. The track characterization elements **402** may be used by the optimizer module **340** to account for additional or reduced tractive effort needed by the one or more PGV **108** until the destination or intermediate location. For example, the vehicle system **102** following the movement plan along the route **106** that has a negative average track grade from the vehicle yard **200** to the destination or intermediate locations.

The negative average track grade of the movement plan may require a lower minimum tractive effort threshold of the vehicle system **102** than a positive or zero average track grade, respectively. The track characterization elements **402** may include grade, elevation, curvature information, or the like of the remaining segments of the route **106**.

The vehicle inventory may be received by the optimizer module **340** from the yard planner system **152** using the communication system **302** and/or stored on the memory **344**. The vehicle inventory **512** may include a database of all available PGV **108** within the vehicle yard **200**. The availability of the PGV **108** may be based on the vehicle connection plans of the yard plan (e.g., the available PGV **108** are not included in any vehicle connection plans), the maintenance cycles of the PGV **108**, user input by the operator (e.g., through the user interface **306**), or the like.

Additionally or alternative, the yard plan may isolate or store the one or more available PGV **108** into a larger group of PGV **120** within the vehicle yard **200**. The database may include characteristics of the available PGV **108** such as the weight, propulsion capabilities or tractive effort, fuel efficiency with respect to various speed or tractive efforts, range capabilities on a single fueling, or the like. The vehicle inventory **512** may also include or identify the CCV **104** that are to be included into the optimized vehicle system configuration from the movement plan and/or yard plan (e.g., vehicle connection plans). Optionally, the vehicle inventory **512** may include PGV **108** and/or CCV **104** that are included in vehicle systems **102** that are inbound (e.g., next stop is the vehicle yard **200**) within a set distance of the vehicle yard **200** or scheduled to arrive into the vehicle yard **200** within a predetermined future time period (e.g., within thirty minutes of the scheduled departure time of the vehicle system being optimized).

The load estimator **560** calculates a load of the vehicle system **102** based on information contained in the vehicle inventory or yard plan (e.g., the CCV **104** to be included in the vehicle system **102**), historical data, a rule of thumb estimation, and/or table data.

In an embodiment, the optimizer module **340** may receive the priority of the vehicle system **102** and/or the CCV **104** from the scheduling system **154** through the communication system **302**, vehicle yard operator, dispatch facility, or the like and adjust the minimum tractive effort threshold. For example only, the optimizer module **340** has determined the minimum tractive effort threshold for the vehicle system **102B**, not accounting for the priority of the vehicle system **102B**, is 40,000 Newtons (N). The vehicle inventory **512** includes the PGV **108B** (currently coupled to the vehicle system **102B**) and the larger group PGV **120** having the PGV **108A** and PGV **108C**. The tractive effort of the PGV **108B** is 30,000 N which is below the minimum tractive effort threshold for the vehicle system **102B** when leaving the vehicle yard **200**. The tractive effort of the PGV **108A** is 44,000 N and the tractive effort of the PGV **108C** is 51,000 N which are both greater than the minimum tractive effort threshold. However, regarding fuel consumption and/or generation of emissions traveling along the movement plan, the PGV **108A** is determined by the optimizer module **340** to consume less fuel and/or generates less emissions, respectively, than the PGV **108B**. Due to the lower fuel consumption and/or less emissions the optimizer module **340** selects the PGV **108A**, and outputs the PGV selection to the yard planner **152** as the vehicle connection plan for vehicle system **102B**.

Conversely, continuing with the above example, the inclusion of the priority of the vehicle system **102B** may affect the

selection of the one or more PGV **108** by the optimizer module **340**. The vehicle system **102B** may be represented at **408** on the priority curve **400** (FIG. 4) illustrating a high priority. The high priority of the vehicle system **102B** may require the vehicle system **102B** to demand more power or tractive effort of the one or more PGV **108** (e.g., quick acceleration, higher speed) beyond the preset requirements described above (e.g., track characterization elements, load estimator). Accordingly, the optimizer module **340** may determine that the minimum tractive effort threshold of the vehicle system **102B** should be increased to 50,000 N. Due to the high priority of the vehicle system **102B**, the optimizer module **340** selects the PGV **108C** having a tractive effort of 50,000 N even though the PGV **108A** has a higher fuel efficiency, respectively.

In an embodiment, the optimizer module **340** may adjust the selection of the one or more PGV **108** based on the availability of vehicles at the destination or intermediate locations based on a system demand database **514**. The system demand database **514** may log requests or status alerts from remote vehicle yards, operators, dispatch facilities, the schedule system **154**, or the like of a shortage or need for one or more PVG **108** having certain characteristics (e.g., tractive effort, speed, generated emissions, fuel efficiency). The requests on the system demand database **514** may be automated by the scheduling system **154** to maintain an equal distribution of one or more PGV **108** having a higher tractive effort, set fuel efficiency, emissions, or the like. Optionally, the requests may represent a future or current need by the remote vehicle yard **200** for a PGV **108** having a tractive effort for an awaiting vehicle system **200** within the remote vehicle yard **200**.

For example only, the optimizer module **340** has determined the minimum tractive effort threshold for the vehicle system **102A** is 35,000 N. The vehicle inventory **512** includes the PGV **108B** coupled to an incoming vehicle system (the vehicle system **102B**) and the larger group PGV **120** having the PGV **108A** and PGV **108C**. The tractive efforts are of the PGV **108B** is 30,000 N, of the PGV **108A** is 44,000 N, and of the PGV **108C** is 51,000 N. The optimizer module **340** may compare the movement plan of the vehicle system **102A** with the system demand database **514** and determine that one of the intermediate locations (e.g., vehicle yards **200**) has a request listed within the system demand database **514** for a PVG **108** having a tractive effort of over 40,000 N. The optimizer module **340** may reset or adjust the minimum tractive effort threshold to match the requested tractive effort of the remote vehicle yard **200** of 40,000 N resulting in the selection of PGV **108A** and/or PGV **108C**.

FIG. 6 is a flowchart of a method **600** for a control system **150** for the vehicle yard **200** within a transportation network **100**. The method **600** for example, may employ or be performed by structures or aspects of various embodiments (e.g., systems and/or methods) discussed herein. In various embodiments, certain steps may be omitted or added, certain steps may be combined, certain steps may be performed simultaneously, certain steps may be performed concurrently, certain steps may be split into multiple steps, certain steps may be performed in a different order, or certain steps or series of steps may be re-performed in an iterative fashion. In various embodiments, portions, aspects, and/or variations of the method **600** may be able to be used as one or more algorithms to direct hardware to perform one or more operations described herein. Additionally or alternatively, the method **600** may represent a work flow for the operator of a vehicle yard **200**.

At **602**, identify the one or more **CCV 104** for the vehicle system **102**. For example, the one or more **CCV 104** may be identified by the scheduling system **154** based on the predetermined departure time of the **CCV 104**, the destination location or intermediate location of the **CCV 104**, the type of payload within the **CCV 104**, selection by the operator of the vehicle yard **100**, priority of the **CCV 104**, communication by a remote vehicle yard, or the like. Additionally or alternatively, the yard planner system **152** may identify the one or more **CCV 104** using the monitoring system **322** and group the **CCV 104** into a **CCV group 110** to await coupling with the matched outgoing vehicle system and/or one or more **PGV 108** to form the matched outgoing vehicle system.

At **604**, calculate the minimum tractive effort threshold. As described above, the energy management system **156** may determine the minimum tractive effort threshold by analyzing the movement plan of the vehicle system **102**, specifically, the scheduling information **508** (e.g., timing requirements of the vehicle system **102** to arrive at the destination or intermediate location), speed and emission regulations **504** (e.g., predetermined and based on the route **106** location), track characterization elements **502**, the vehicle inventory **512**, and the load estimator **506** to determine a minimum tractive effort threshold required to be produced by the one or more **PGV 108** selected for the optimized vehicle configuration for the vehicle system **102**.

At **606**, identify the **PGV** inventory. As described above, the **PGV** inventory may be included within the vehicle inventory database **512** received by the optimizer module **340**. The **PGV** inventory may include all available **PGV 108** within the vehicle yard **200** based on the vehicle connection plans of the yard plan (e.g., the available **PGV 108** are not included in any vehicle connection plans), the maintenance cycles of the **PGV 108**, user input by the operator (e.g., through the user interface **306**), or the like. Additionally, the optimizer module **340** may include **PGV 108** within the vehicle inventory database **512** that are included in vehicle systems **102** that are inbound within a set distance of the vehicle yard **200** or scheduled to arrive into the vehicle yard **200** within a predetermined future time period (e.g., within thirty minutes of the scheduled departure time of the vehicle system being optimized).

At **608**, determine whether there are any high priority vehicles. If there are high priority vehicles, at **610**, adjust the minimum tractive effort threshold. As described above, the priority of the vehicles (e.g., vehicle system **102**, **CCV 104**, **PGV 108**) may be determined using the priority curve **400** (FIG. 4) by the scheduling system **154**, the operator, or the like. Based on the priority of the vehicle, as described above, the optimizer module **340** may adjust the minimum tractive effort threshold, for example, the optimizer module **340** may increase the minimum tractive effort threshold of a high priority vehicle system **102** relative to a low priority vehicle system **102** due to the priority of the vehicle system **102**.

At **612**, determine an optimized vehicle system configuration. As described above, the optimizer module **340** within the energy management system **156** determines the optimized vehicle configuration by isolating the one or more **PGV 108** within the larger group of **PGV** available within the vehicle inventory database **512** having a tractive effort greater than the minimum tractive effort threshold. Additionally, depending on what is being optimized (e.g., fuel efficiency, emission generation), the optimizer module **340** determines which set of the one or more **PGV 108** to be included within the vehicle system **102** having the highest

fuel efficiency and/or lowest emission generation relative to the larger group of **PGV** available within the vehicle inventory database **512**.

Optionally, the method **600** may further include automatically generating one or more signals to be communicated to an operator in the vehicle yard **200** to direct coupling of the set of one or more **PGV 108** with the **CCV 104** to form the vehicle system **200**.

Optionally, the method **600** may further include determining a priority of the vehicle system **200** within a rail network **100**. The priority of the vehicle system **200** adjusts the minimum tractive effort threshold.

Optionally, the method **600** may additionally base the minimum tractive effort threshold on a terrain of the route **106**.

Optionally, the method **600** may further have the selection of the set of one or more **PGV 108** further based on a planned position of the set of one or more **PGV 108** within the vehicle system **102**. Alternatively, the selection of the set of one or more **PGV 108** is further based on a weight distribution of the vehicle system. Alternatively, the selection of the set of one or more **PGV 108** is further based on a number of available **PGV 108** from a remote vehicle yard along the route **106** or a communication from the remote vehicle yard along the route **106**.

Optionally, the method **600** may further have the larger group of **PGV** include **PGV 108** entering the vehicle yard **200** within a predetermined future time period. Additionally, the method **600** may further include determining a priority of the **CCV 104**, such that the priority of the **CCV** adjusts which **PGV 108** are available within the larger group of **PGV**.

In an embodiment, the memories **324**, **334**, and/or **344** may contain maintenance data of each **PGV 108** within the transportation network **100** and/or vehicle yard **200**. The maintenance data may include a maintenance or repair history of the **PGV 108** (may include type and date of work completed on the **PGV 108**), life span or life expectancy of parts installed in the **PGV 108** (e.g., bearings, axles, rotors, wheels, lights, air brake valve, or the like), general maintenance schedule of the **PGV 108** based on a predetermined distance traveled or a predetermined time of a previous maintenance service (e.g., flushing of fluids, check lubrication), or the like. The maintenance data may be used to determine whether a maintenance cycle of the **PGV 108** may be scheduled and included in the yard plan (e.g., vehicle connection plan) to complete a maintenance task (e.g., flushing of fluids, replacing a bearing, or the like) within the vehicle yard **200**. For example only, the **PGV 108B** of the vehicle system **102B** enters the vehicle yard **200**. The yard planning system **152** may access the general maintenance schedule relating to the **PGV 108B** stored on the memory **324** determining (e.g., based on a length of time from the last maintenance cycle, based on a distance traveled from the last maintenance cycle) that the maintenance cycle for the **PGV 108B** may be scheduled and included in the yard plan. Accordingly, the yard planning system **152** may include a vehicle connection plan to partition the **PGV 108B** from the vehicle system **102B** to fulfill the maintenance cycle of the **PGV 108B** within the vehicle yard **200**.

Optionally, the method **600** may have the selection of the set of the one or more **PGV 108** further based on the maintenance cycles of the one or more **PGV 108**. In an embodiment, select vehicle yards **200** within the transportation network **100** may perform maintenance tasks (e.g., replacing bearings within the electric motor) faster than or may have a needed replacement part (e.g., axle) for the



maintenance cycle of the PGV **108** relative to other vehicle yards **200** within the transportation network **100**. The maintenance task performance (e.g., duration of time to complete the maintenance task) and/or a replacement part inventory of the vehicle yards **200** may be stored within a maintenance database in the memory **344**. Additionally, the optimizer module **340** may determine the vehicle configuration of the vehicle system **102** based on the maintenance cycle of the PGV **108**.

For example only, a vehicle system **102B** that includes the PGV **108B** enters the vehicle yard **200A**. The PGV **108B**, based on the maintenance data, may be determined to need or is due for a maintenance cycle. The maintenance cycle for the PGV **108B** may be added to the scheduling information **508**. The optimizer module **340**, analyzing the scheduling information **508**, may determine an idle time based on the maintenance database (e.g., maintenance task performance, replacement inventory) for the vehicle yard **200A** and other vehicle yards **200** (e.g., the vehicle yard **200B**) within the transportation network **100**. The idle time may represent the amount or duration of time the PGV **108B** may be unavailable (e.g., not included within the vehicle inventory **512**) due to the completion of the maintenance cycle. It should be noted, the idle time may also include an amount of time for the vehicle yard **200** to order or receive a needed replacement part for the maintenance cycle into the replacement part inventory. The optimizer module **340** may compare the idle times for the maintenance cycles performed at various vehicle yards **200**, respectively, against a predetermined idle threshold. Once the idle times are determined, the optimizer module **340** may determine the selection of the set of one or more PGV **108** for the various vehicle systems **102** in order to minimize the PGV **108** idle times within the transportation network **100**. For example, the optimizer module **340** may determine that the idle time, based on the maintenance cycle, for the vehicle yard **200A** may be greater than the predetermined idle threshold. Further, the optimizer module **340** may determine that the idle time, based on the maintenance cycle, within the vehicle yard **200B** may be below the predetermined idle threshold. Based on the idle times of the vehicle yards **200**, the optimizer module **340** may adjust the selection of the set of one or more PGV **108** based on the destination or intermediate location of the vehicle system **102**. For example, the optimizer module **340** may include and/or flag (e.g., prioritize over alternative PGV **108** meeting optimization requirements) the PGV **108B** within the vehicle inventory **512** for vehicle systems **102** that have the vehicle yard **200B** as a destination or intermediate location within the scheduling information **508**.

Conversely, continuing with the example above, the optimizer module **340** may determine that the PGV **108B** has an idle time below the predetermined idle threshold for the vehicle yard **200A**. Since the idle time is below the predetermined threshold, the optimizer module **340** may instruct the yard planner system **152** to remove the PGV **108B** from the available vehicle inventory **512** and include a vehicle connection plan in the yard plan to partition or decouple the PGV **108B** from the vehicle system **102B** for the maintenance cycle.

In an embodiment, the control system **150** includes the yard planner system **152** having one or more processors. The yard planner system **152** may be configured to create the yard plan for the vehicle yard **200** that includes a vehicle connection plans for coupling a selection of one or more propulsion generating vehicles (PGV) **108** with a selection of one or more cargo-carrying vehicles (CCV) **104** to form a first vehicle system. The yard plan is further created based

on the movement plan and an optimized vehicle system configuration of the first vehicle system. The control system **150** also includes the schedule system **154** having one or more processors. The schedule system **154** is configured to create the movement plan of the first vehicle system. The movement plan includes a destination location and predetermined arrival time of the first vehicle system along a route. The control system **150** further includes the energy management system **156** having one or more processors. The energy management system is configured to determine the optimized vehicle system configuration. The optimized vehicle system configuration includes the selection of the one or more PGV **108** from a vehicle inventory having a larger group of PGV (e.g., the larger PGV group **120**), based on the movement plan of the first vehicle system and a tractive effort of the selection of the one or more PGV **108**.

Optionally, the selection of the one or more PGV **108**, by the control system **150**, may be further based on fuel consumption and/or emission generation such that the selected one or more PGV **108** have a lower fuel consumption and/or generate less emission than the remaining PGV (e.g., the larger PGV group **120**) in the vehicle inventory. It should be noted that the selected one or more PGV **108** has a lower fuel consumption and/or generates less emission with respect to having or respectively to the fuel consumption and/or emissions generated if the one or more of the remaining PGV forming and propelling the vehicle system **102** to the subsequent intermediate location or final destination along the same movement plan.

Optionally, the selection of the one or more PGV **108**, by the control system **150**, may be further based on the weight distribution of the first vehicle system.

Optionally, the energy management system **156** may be configured to determine the minimum tractive effort threshold required to propel the first vehicle system along the route at or within the predetermined arrival time, and the tractive effort of the selected one or more PGV is at least or greater than the minimum tractive effort threshold. Additionally, the minimum tractive effort threshold may be further based on the terrain of the route.

Optionally, the vehicle inventory may include PGV entering the vehicle yard **200** within a predetermined future time period.

Optionally, the vehicle inventory may be adjusted based on a number of available PGV from a remote vehicle yard **200** along the route or a communication from the remote vehicle yard.

Optionally, the schedule system **154** of the control system **150** may be further configured to assign a priority of the first vehicle system based on the statistical measure of adherence. The statistical measure of adherence may be determined from a position of the first vehicle system relative to a scheduled position of the first vehicle system determined by the movement plan. Additionally, the yard planner system **152** may be configured to adjust the yard plan based on the priority of the first vehicle system, such that, the vehicle connection plan of the first vehicle system displaces a vehicle connection plan of a second vehicle system having a different priority, relatively. Additionally or alternatively, the vehicle inventory may be adjusted based on the priority of the first vehicle system.

Optionally, the yard planner system **152** may generate one or more signals communicating the yard plan to an operator in the vehicle yard **200** to direct coupling of the selection of the one or more PGV **108** with the selection of the one or more CCV **104** to form the first vehicle system.

As used herein, the terms “software” and “firmware” are interchangeable, and include any computer program stored in memory for execution by a computer, including RAM memory, ROM memory, EPROM memory, EEPROM memory, and non-volatile RAM (NVRAM) memory. The above memory types are exemplary only, and are thus not limiting as to the types of memory usable for storage of a computer program.

It is to be understood that the above description is intended to be illustrative, and not restrictive. For example, the above-described embodiments (and/or aspects thereof) may be used in combination with each other. In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings of the inventive subject matter without departing from its scope. While the dimensions and types of materials described herein are intended to define the parameters of the inventive subject matter, they are by no means limiting and are exemplary embodiments. Many other embodiments will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art upon reviewing the above description. The scope of the inventive subject matter should, therefore, be determined with reference to the appended claims, along with the full scope of equivalents to which such claims are entitled. In the appended claims, the terms “including” and “in which” are used as the plain-English equivalents of the respective terms “comprising” and “wherein.” Moreover, in the following claims, the terms “first,” “second,” and “third,” etc. are used merely as labels, and are not intended to impose numerical requirements on their objects. Further, the limitations of the following claims are not written in means-plus-function format and are not intended to be interpreted based on 35 U.S.C. § 112(f), unless and until such claim limitations expressly use the phrase “means for” followed by a statement of function void of further structure.

This written description uses examples to disclose several embodiments of the inventive subject matter, including the best mode, and also to enable one of ordinary skill in the art to practice the embodiments of inventive subject matter, including making and using any devices or systems and performing any incorporated methods. The patentable scope of the inventive subject matter is defined by the claims, and may include other examples that occur to one of ordinary skill in the art. Such other examples are intended to be within the scope of the claims if they have structural elements that do not differ from the literal language of the claims, or if they include equivalent structural elements with insubstantial differences from the literal languages of the claims.

The foregoing description of certain embodiments of the present inventive subject matter will be better understood when read in conjunction with the appended drawings. To the extent that the figures illustrate diagrams of the functional blocks of various embodiments, the functional blocks are not necessarily indicative of the division between hardware circuitry. Thus, for example, one or more of the functional blocks (for example, processors or memories) may be implemented in a single piece of hardware (for example, a general purpose signal processor, microcontroller, random access memory, hard disk, or the like). Similarly, the programs may be stand alone programs, may be incorporated as subroutines in an operating system, may be functions in an installed software package, or the like. The various embodiments are not limited to the arrangements and instrumentality shown in the drawings.

As used herein, an element or step recited in the singular and proceeded with the word “a” or “an” should be understood as not excluding plural of said elements or steps, unless such exclusion is explicitly stated. Furthermore,

references to “one embodiment” of the present invention are not intended to be interpreted as excluding the existence of additional embodiments that also incorporate the recited features. Moreover, unless explicitly stated to the contrary, embodiments “comprising,” “comprises,” “including,” “includes,” “having,” or “has” an element or a plurality of elements having a particular property may include additional such elements not having that property.

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

identifying cargo-carrying vehicles (CCV) to be included in a vehicle system, wherein the CCV are non-propulsion-generating vehicles scheduled to depart from a vehicle yard and travel to one or more destination locations at a predetermined departure time;

calculating, with one or more processors, a minimum tractive effort threshold required to propel the vehicle system to the one or more destination locations along a route within a predetermined time period;

selecting, with one or more processors, a set of one or more propulsion-generating vehicles (PGV) from a larger group of PGV within the vehicle yard to be included in the vehicle system, wherein a tractive effort produced from the set of one or more PGV is at least or greater than the minimum tractive effort threshold and the set of one more PGV having at least one of a lower fuel consumption or generating lower emissions than selecting one or more of the remaining PGV from the larger group of PGV, and

forming a vehicle system from the identified CCV and selected set of one or more PGV.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising automatically generating one or more signals to be communicated to an operator in the vehicle yard to direct coupling the set of one or more PGV with the CCV to form the vehicle system.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining a priority of the vehicle system within a rail network, wherein the minimum tractive effort threshold is calculated based at least in part on the priority of the vehicle system.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein calculation of the minimum tractive effort threshold is further based on a terrain of the route.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein selection of the set of one or more PGV is further based on a planned position of the set of one or more PGV within the vehicle system.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein selection of the set of one or more PGV is further based on a weight distribution of the vehicle system.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the larger group of PGV includes PGV entering the vehicle yard within a predetermined future time period.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising determining a priority of the CCV, wherein which PGV are available within the larger group of PGV is adjusted based on the priority of the CCV.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the selection of the set of one or more PGV is further based on at least one of a number of available PGV from a remote vehicle yard along the route, a communication from the remote vehicle yard along the route, or maintenance cycles of the set of one or more PGV.

10. A system comprising:

one or more processors configured to identify cargo-carrying vehicles (CCV) to be included in a vehicle system, wherein the CCV are non-propulsion-generating vehicles scheduled to depart from a vehicle yard

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and travel to one or more destination locations at a predetermined departure time;

wherein the one or more processors are further configured to calculate a minimum tractive effort threshold required to propel the vehicle system to the one or more destination locations along a route within a predetermined time period; and

wherein the one or more processors are further configured to select a set of one or more propulsion-generating vehicles (PGV) from a larger group of PGV within the vehicle yard to be included in the vehicle system, wherein a tractive effort produced from the set of one or more PGV is at least or greater than the minimum tractive effort threshold and the set of one more PGV having at least one of a lower fuel consumption or generating lower emissions than selecting one or more of the remaining PGV from the larger group of PGV.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the one or more processors are further configured to automatically generate one or more signals to be communicated to an operator in the vehicle yard to direct coupling the set of one or more PGV with the CCV to form the vehicle system.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein the one or more processors are further configured to determine a priority of the vehicle system within a rail network, wherein the minimum tractive effort threshold is calculated based at least in part on the priority of the vehicle system.

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13. The system of claim 10, wherein the one or more processors are further configured to calculate of the minimum tractive effort threshold based on a terrain of the route.

14. The system of claim 10, wherein the one or more processors are further configured to select the set of one or more PGV based on a planned position of the set of one or more PGV within the vehicle system.

15. The system of claim 10, wherein the one or more processors are further configured to select the set of one or more PGV based on a weight distribution of the vehicle system.

16. The system of claim 10, wherein the larger group of PGV includes PGV entering the vehicle yard within a predetermined future time period.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the one or more processors are further configured to determine a priority of the CCV, wherein which PGV are available within the larger group of PGV is adjusted based on the priority of the CCV.

18. The system of claim 10, wherein the one or more processors are further configured to select the set of one or more PGV based on at least one of a number of available PGV from a remote vehicle yard along the route, a communication from the remote vehicle yard along the route, or maintenance cycles of the set of one or more PGV.

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