

FIG. 2

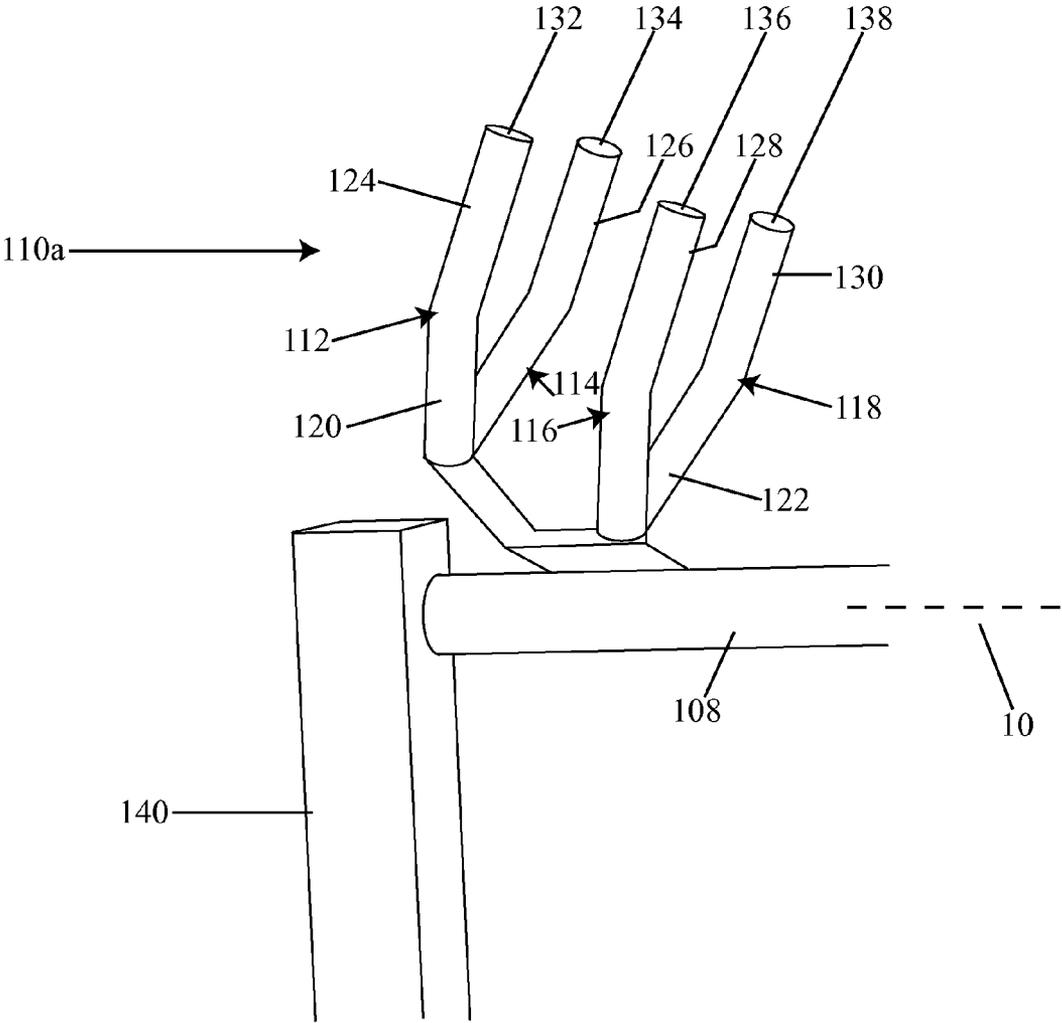


FIG. 3

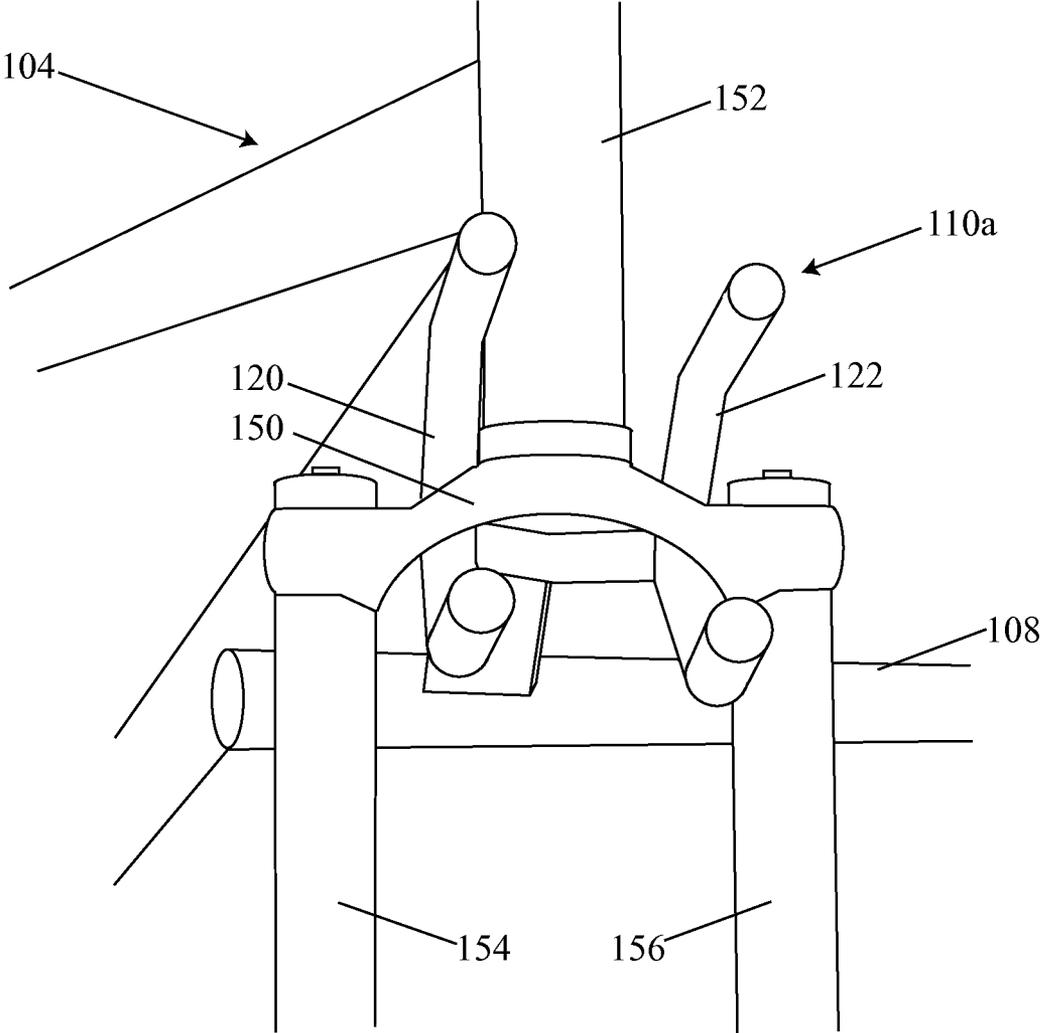


FIG. 4

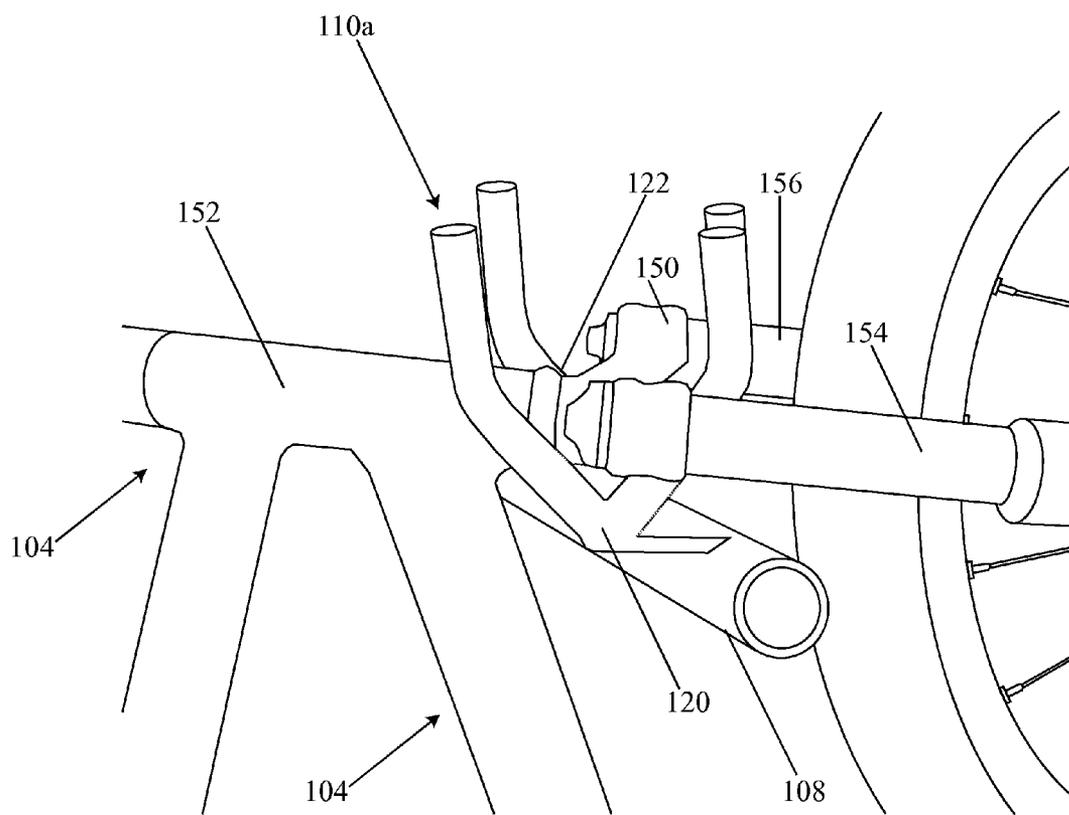


FIG. 5

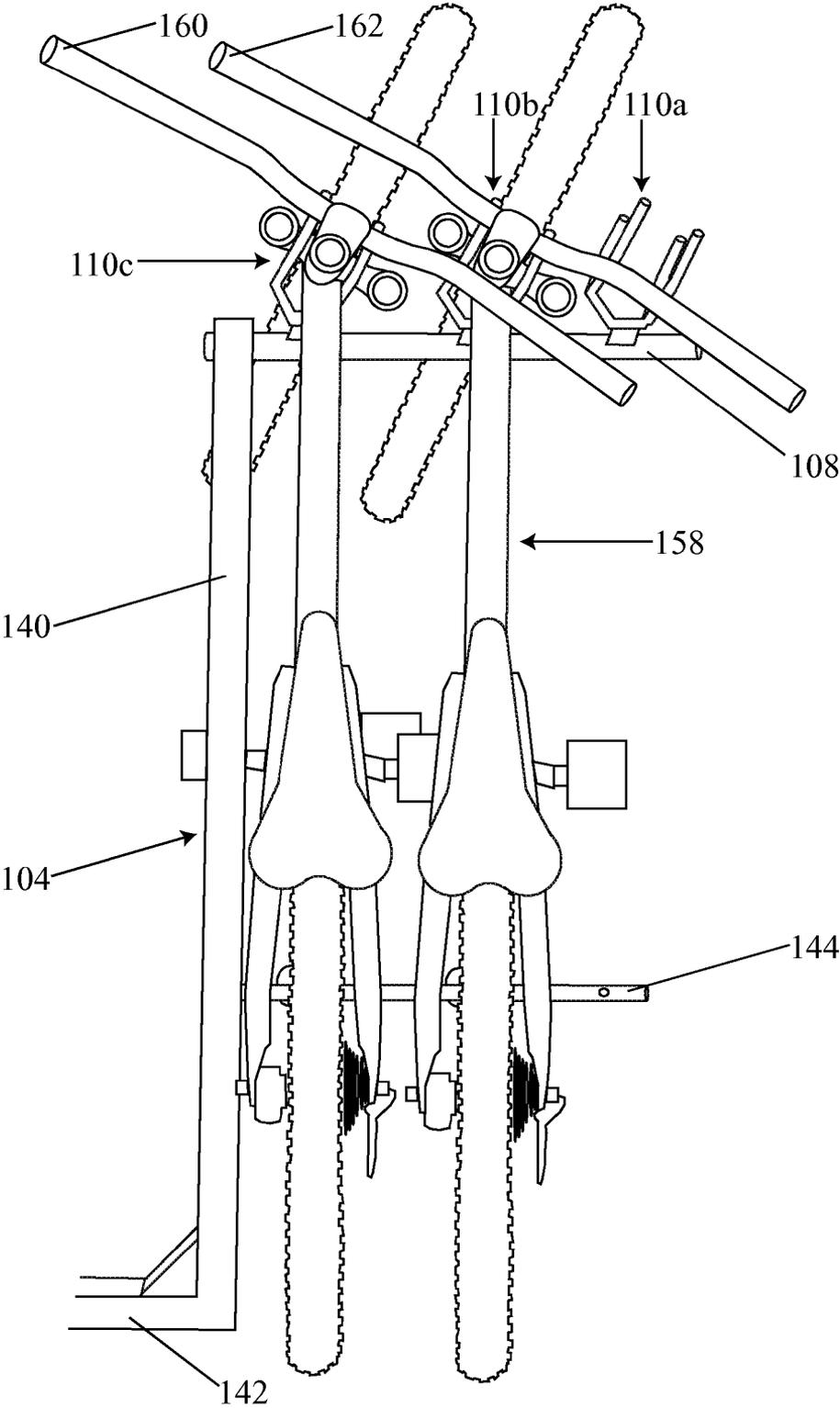


FIG. 6

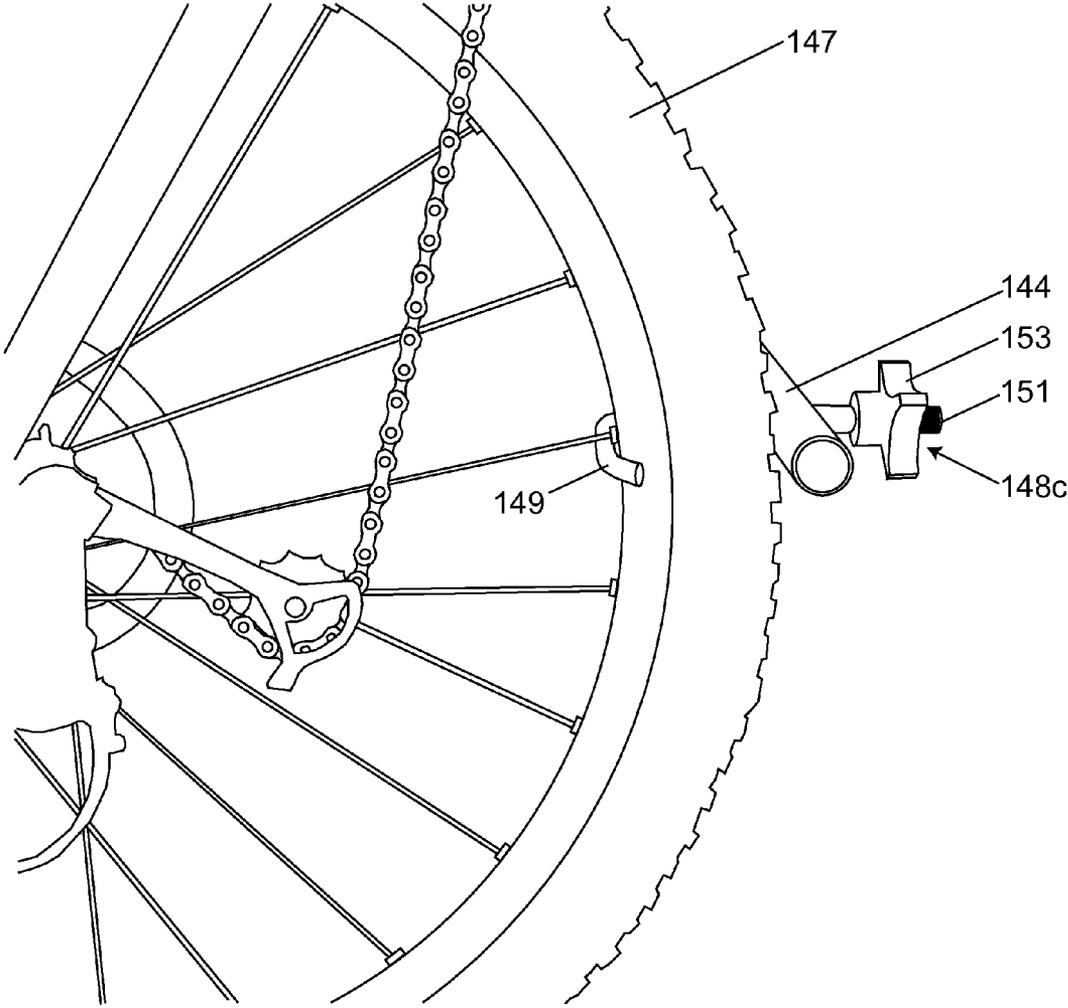


FIG. 7

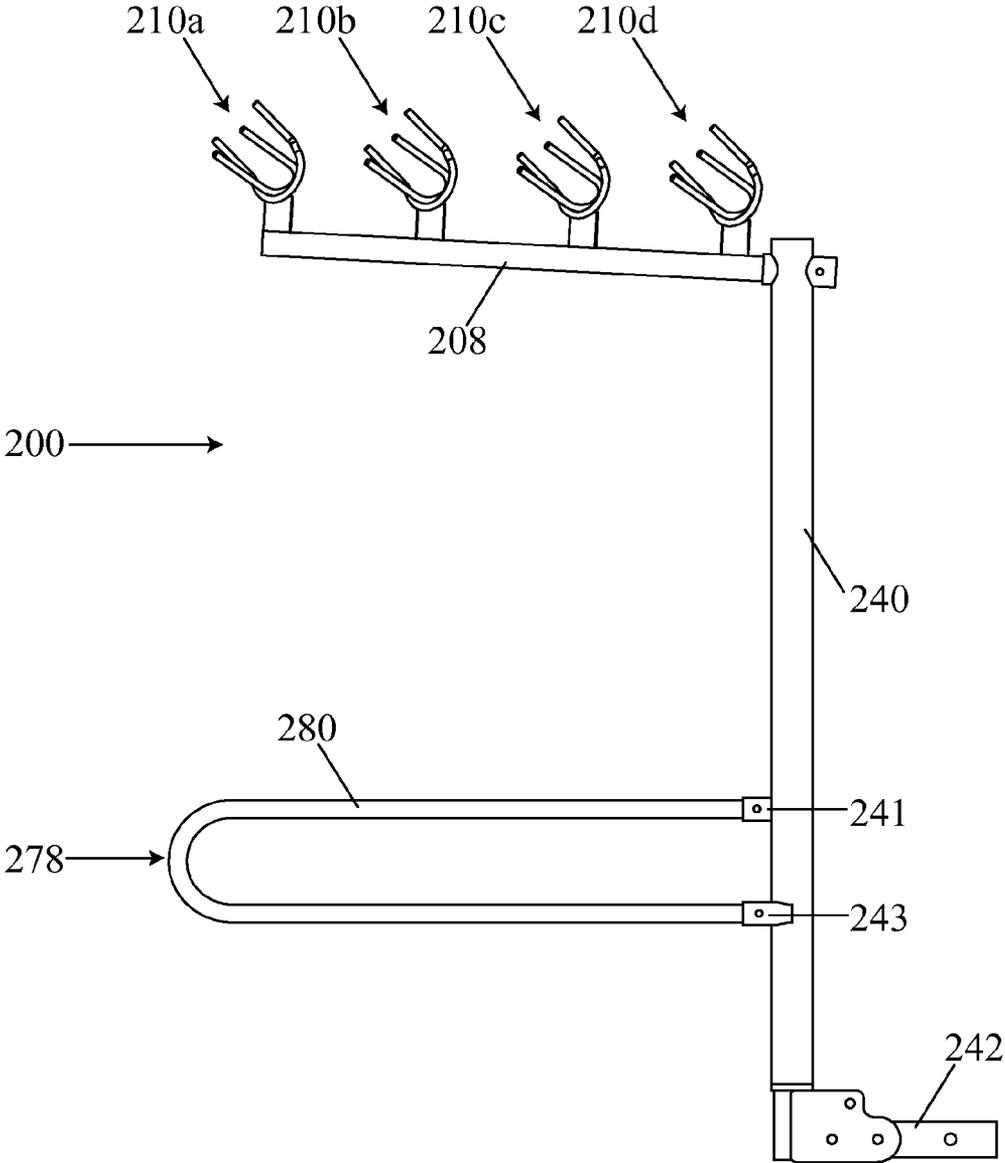


FIG. 8

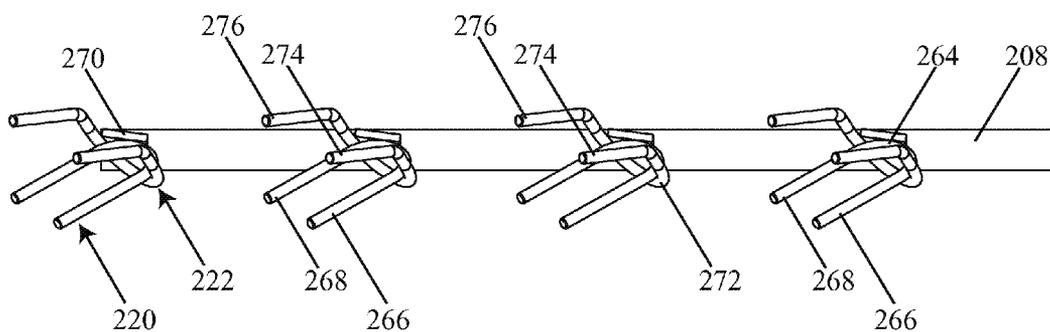


FIG. 9

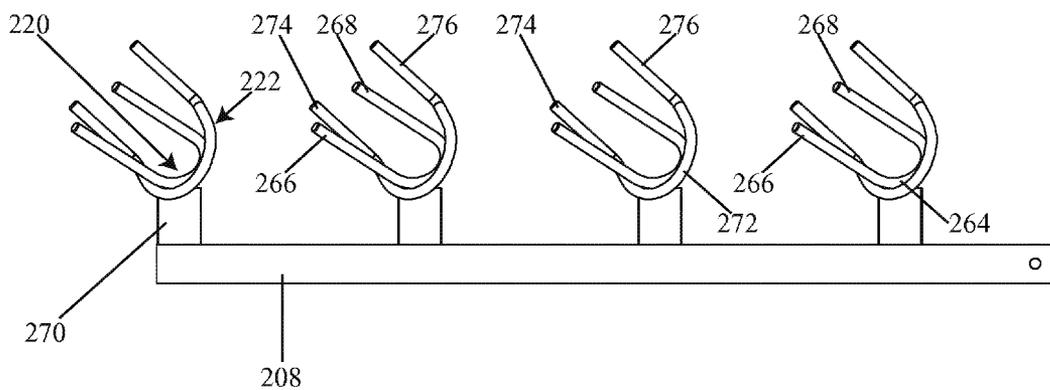


FIG. 10

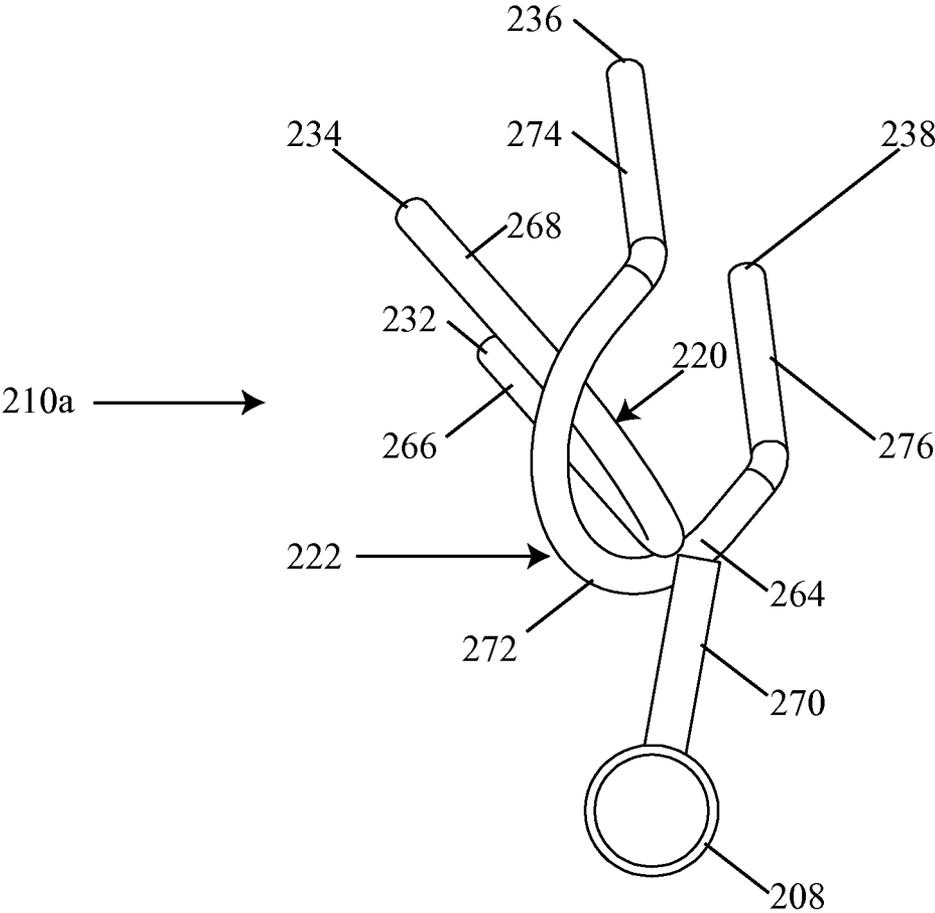


FIG. 11

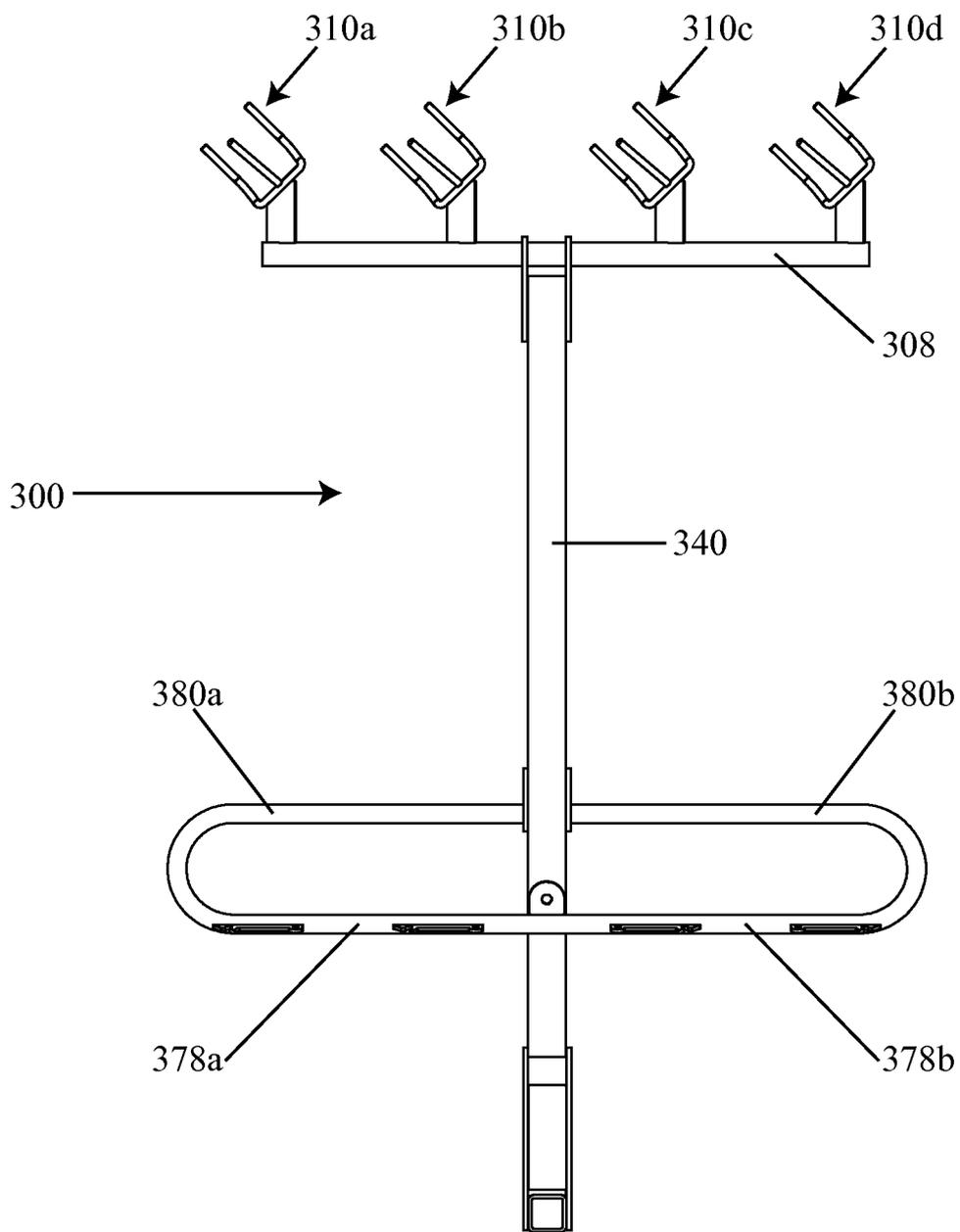


FIG. 12

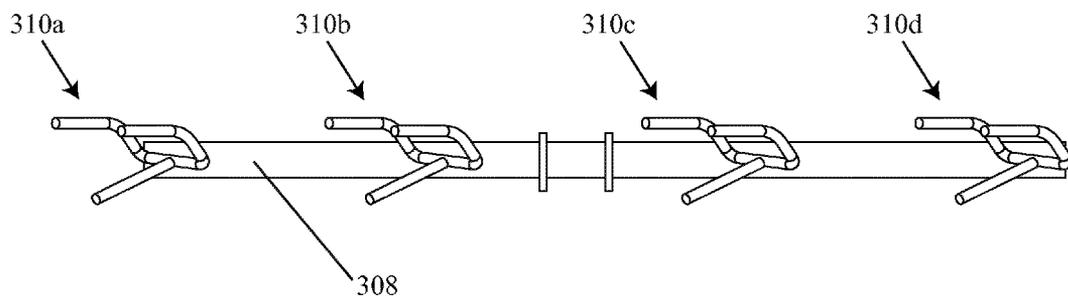


FIG. 13

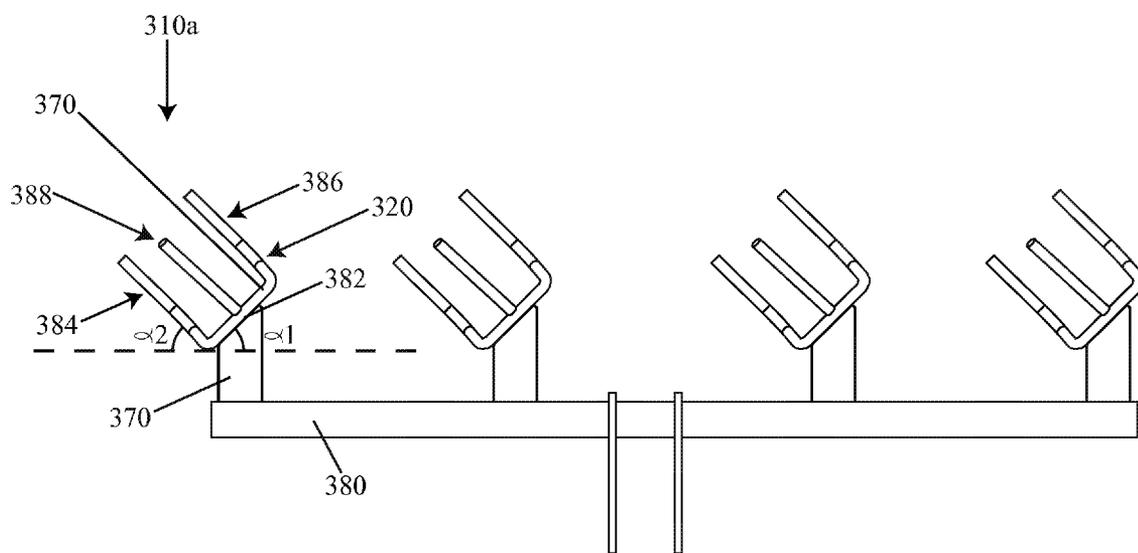


FIG. 14

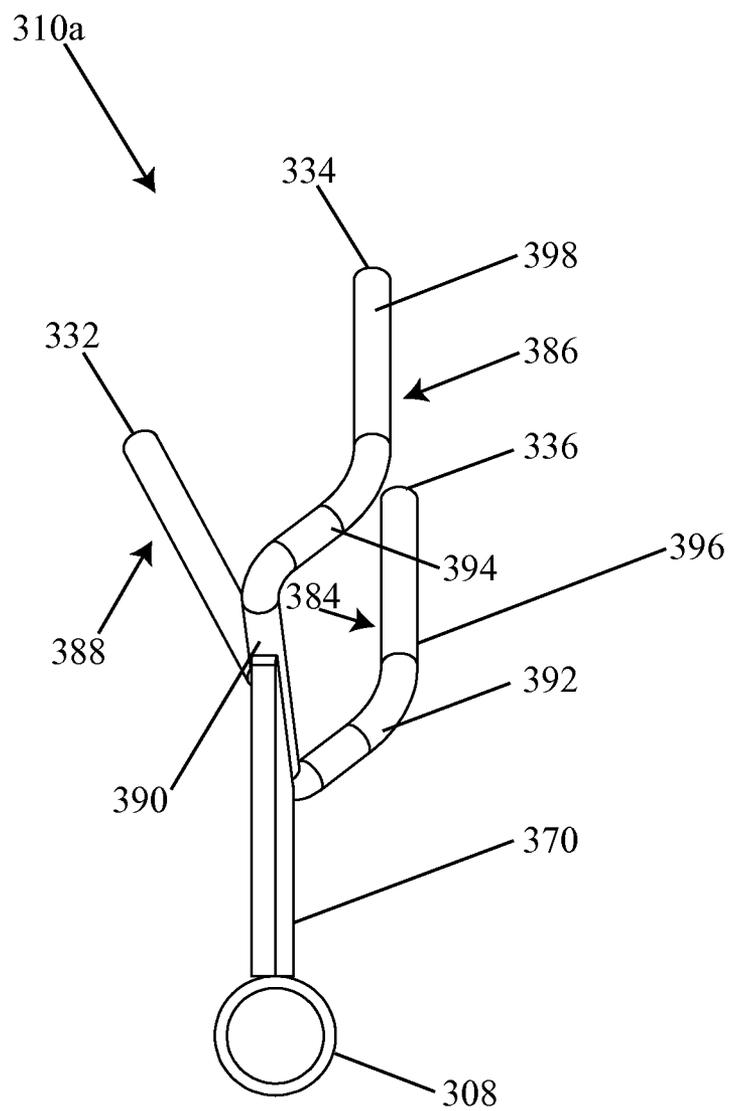


FIG. 15

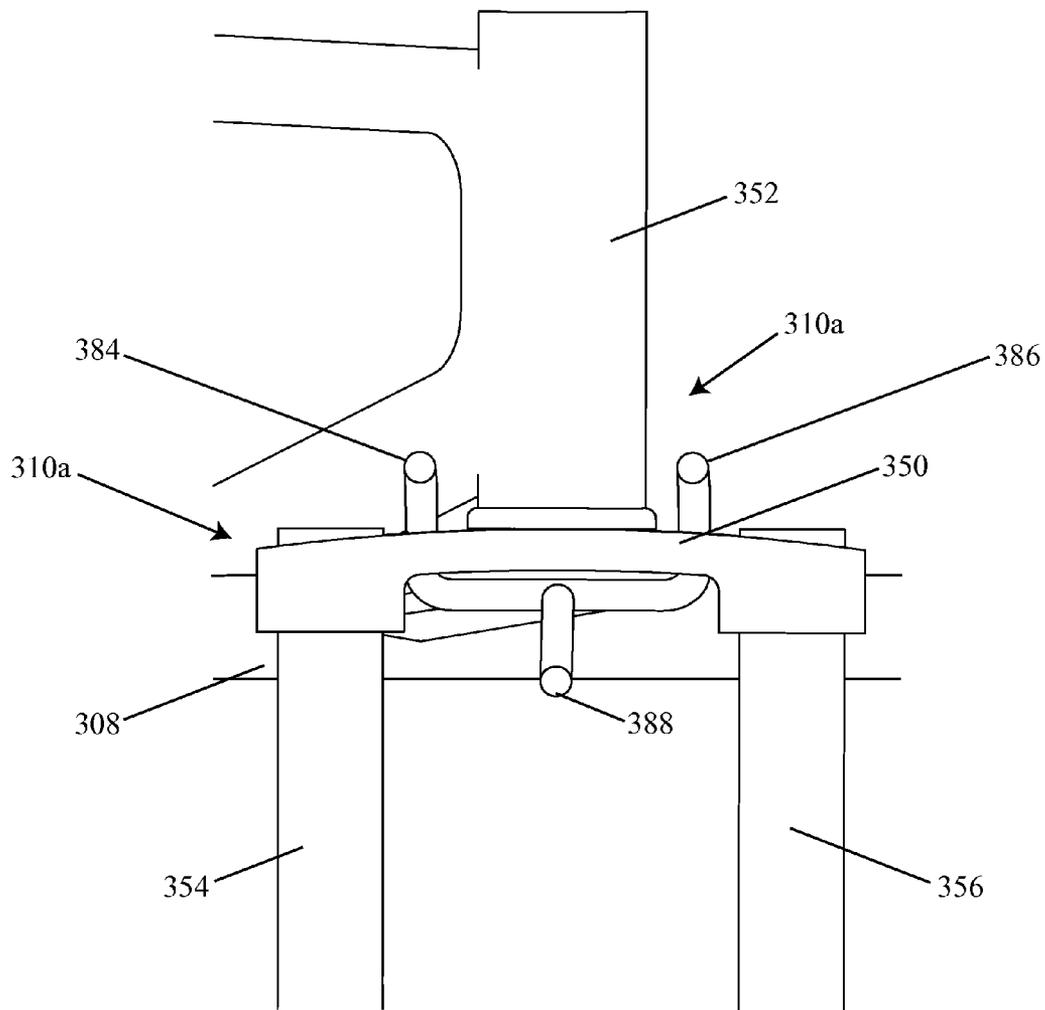


FIG. 16

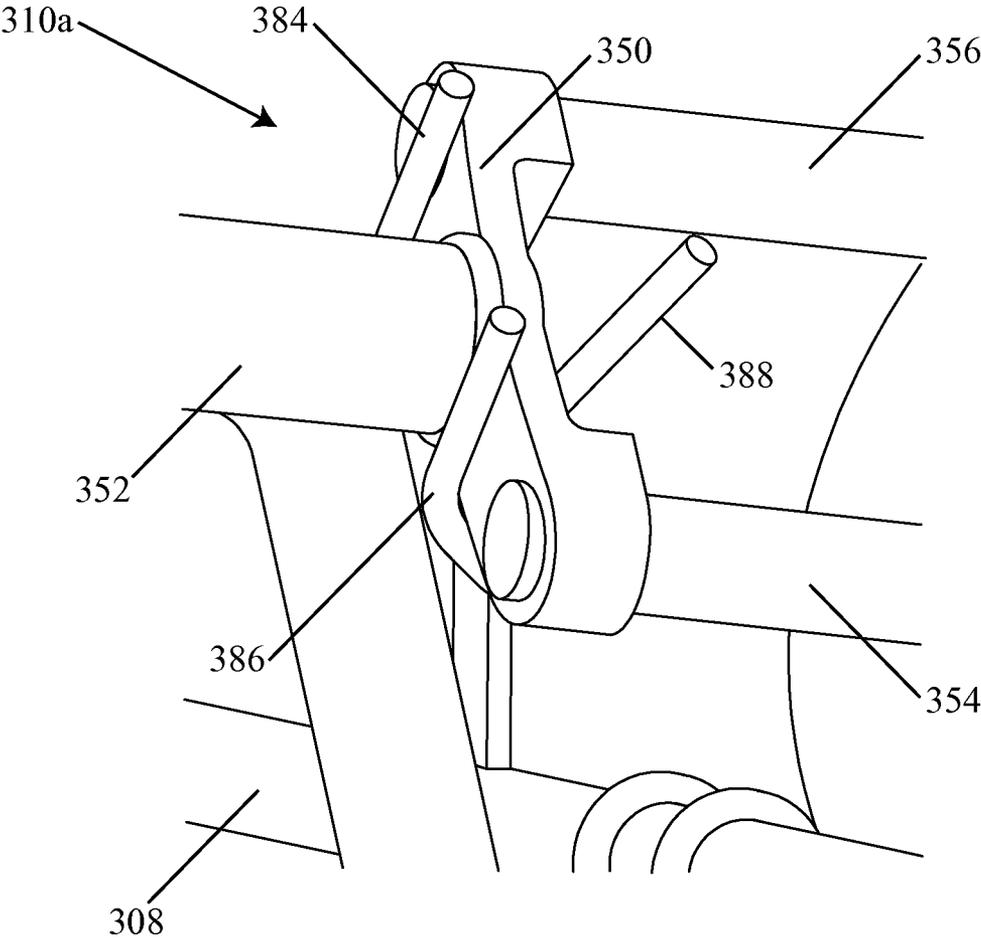


FIG. 17

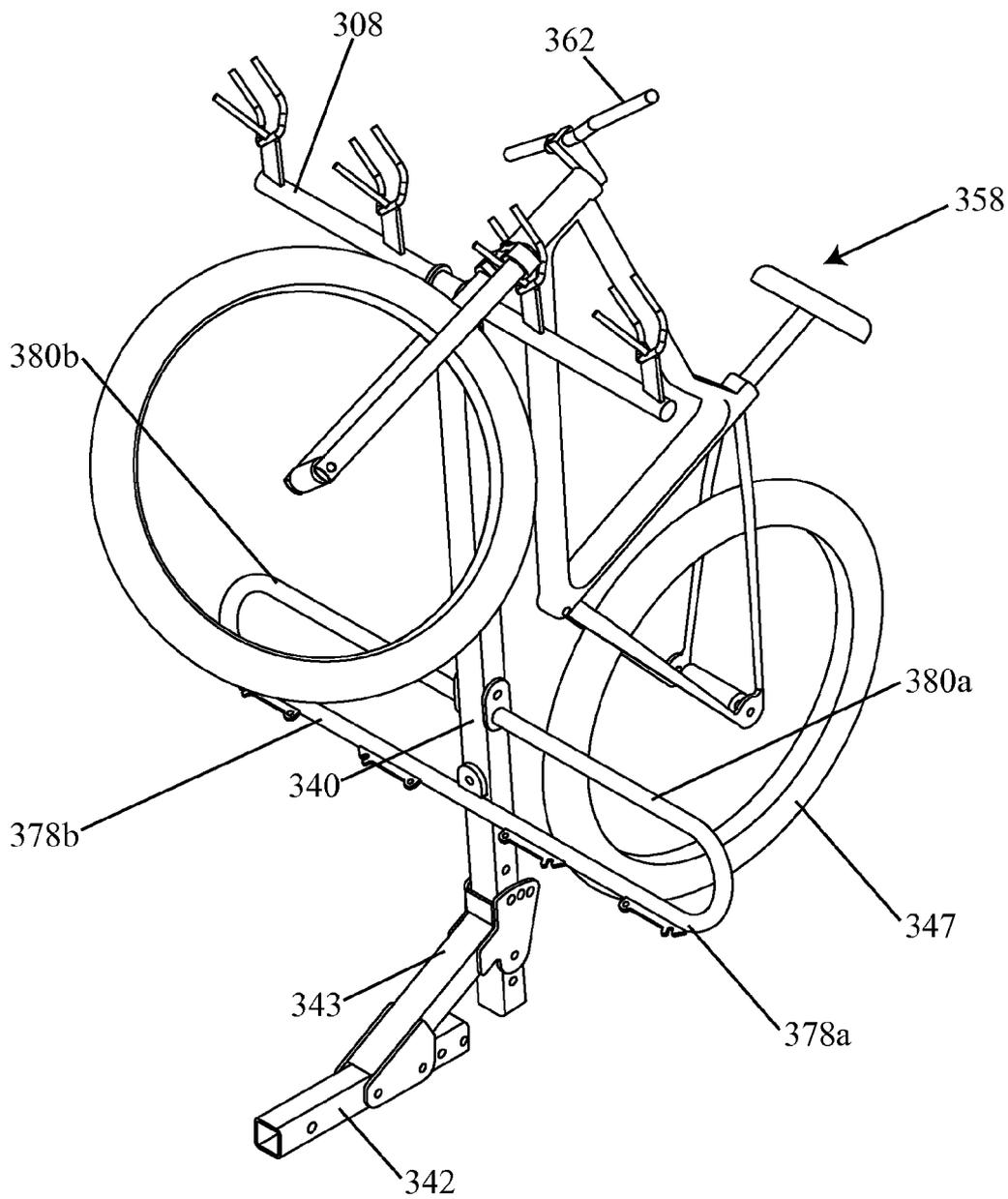


FIG. 18

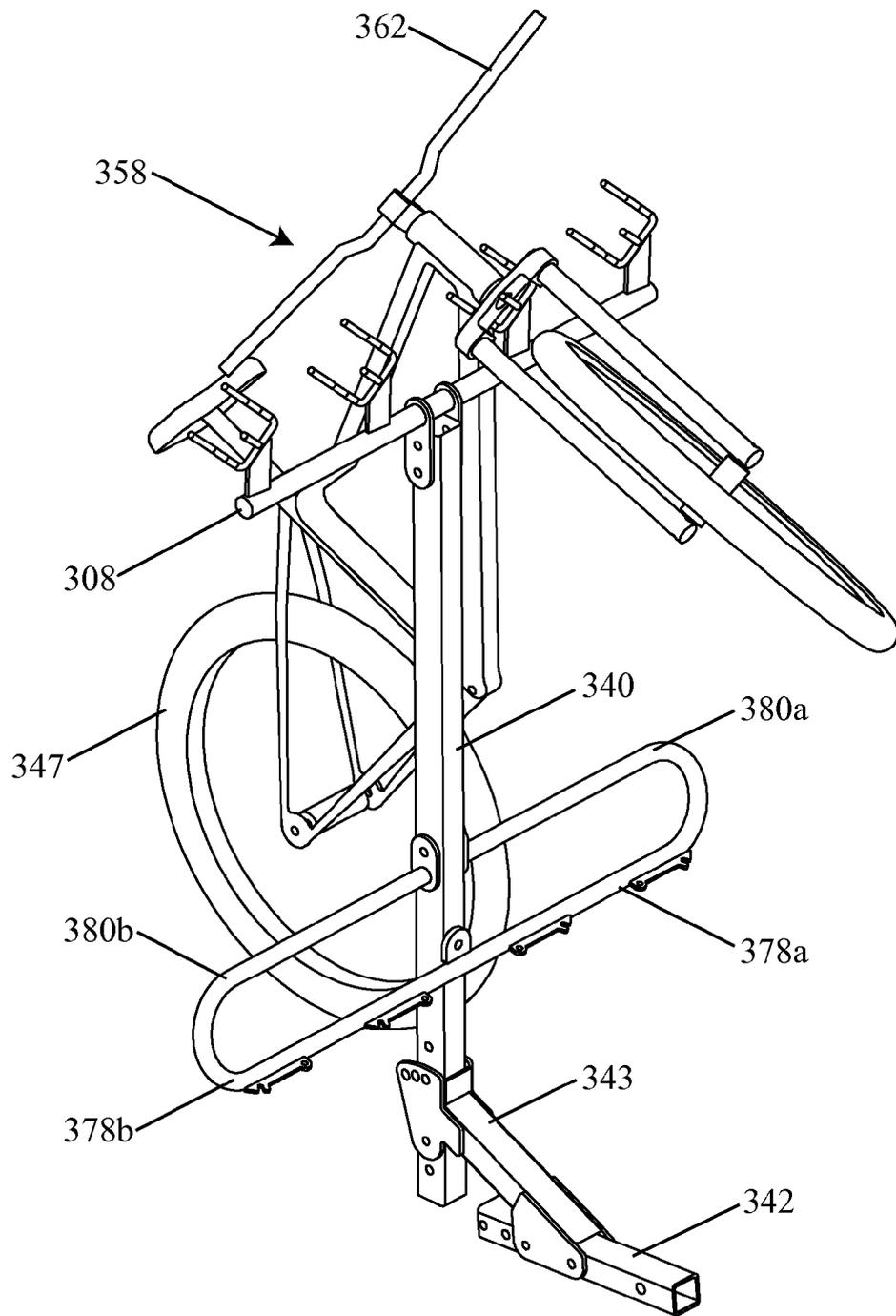


FIG. 19

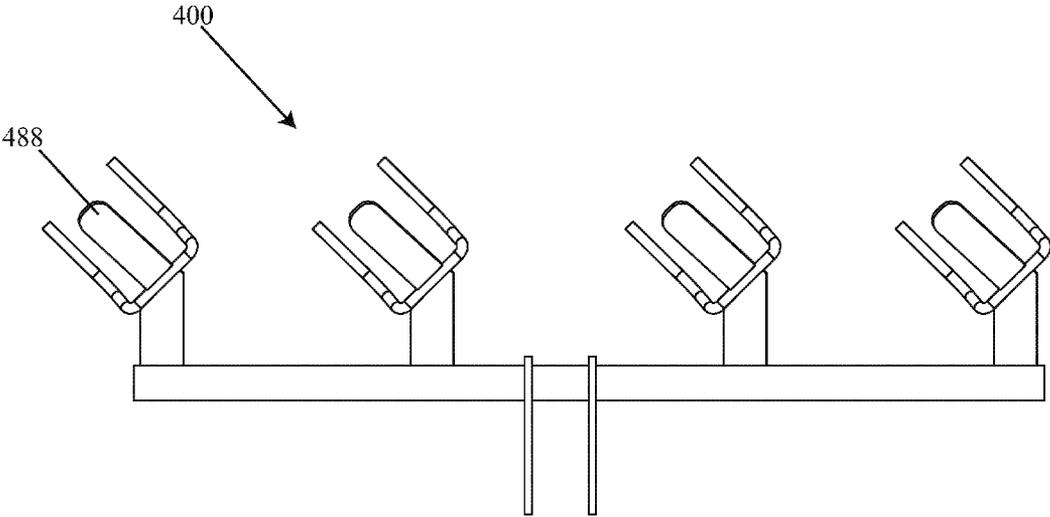


FIG. 20

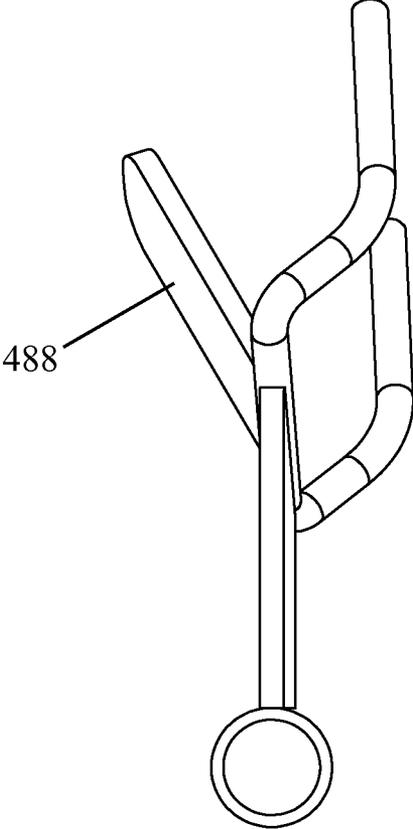


FIG. 21

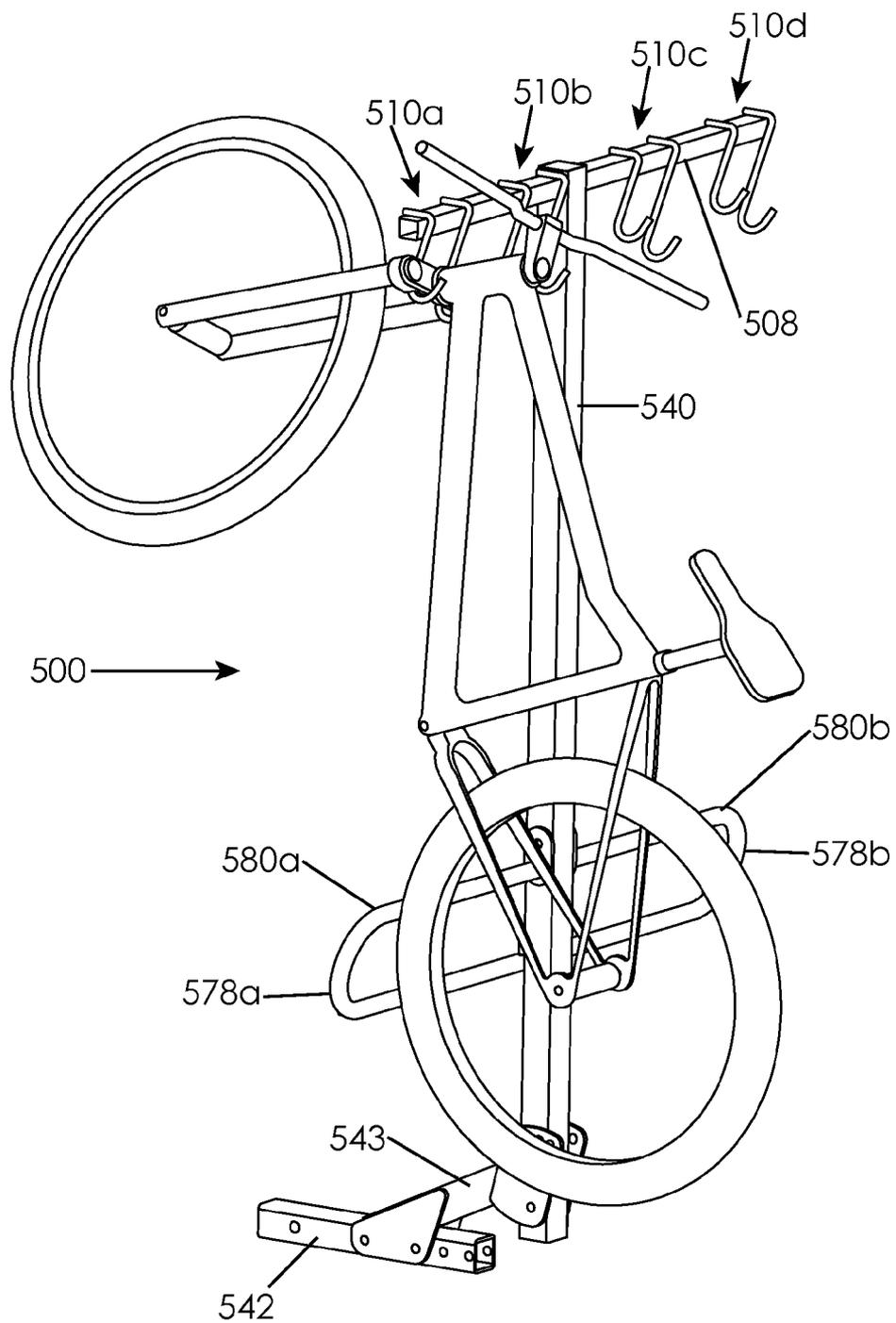


FIG. 22

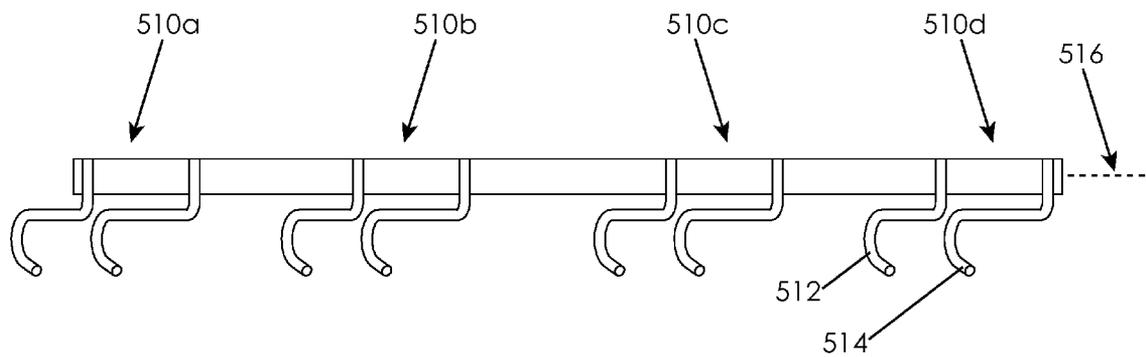


FIG. 23

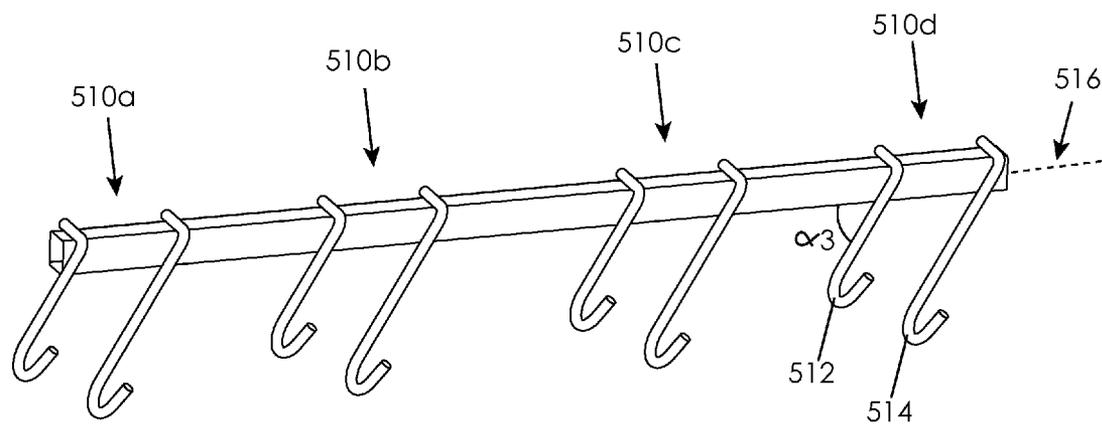


FIG. 24

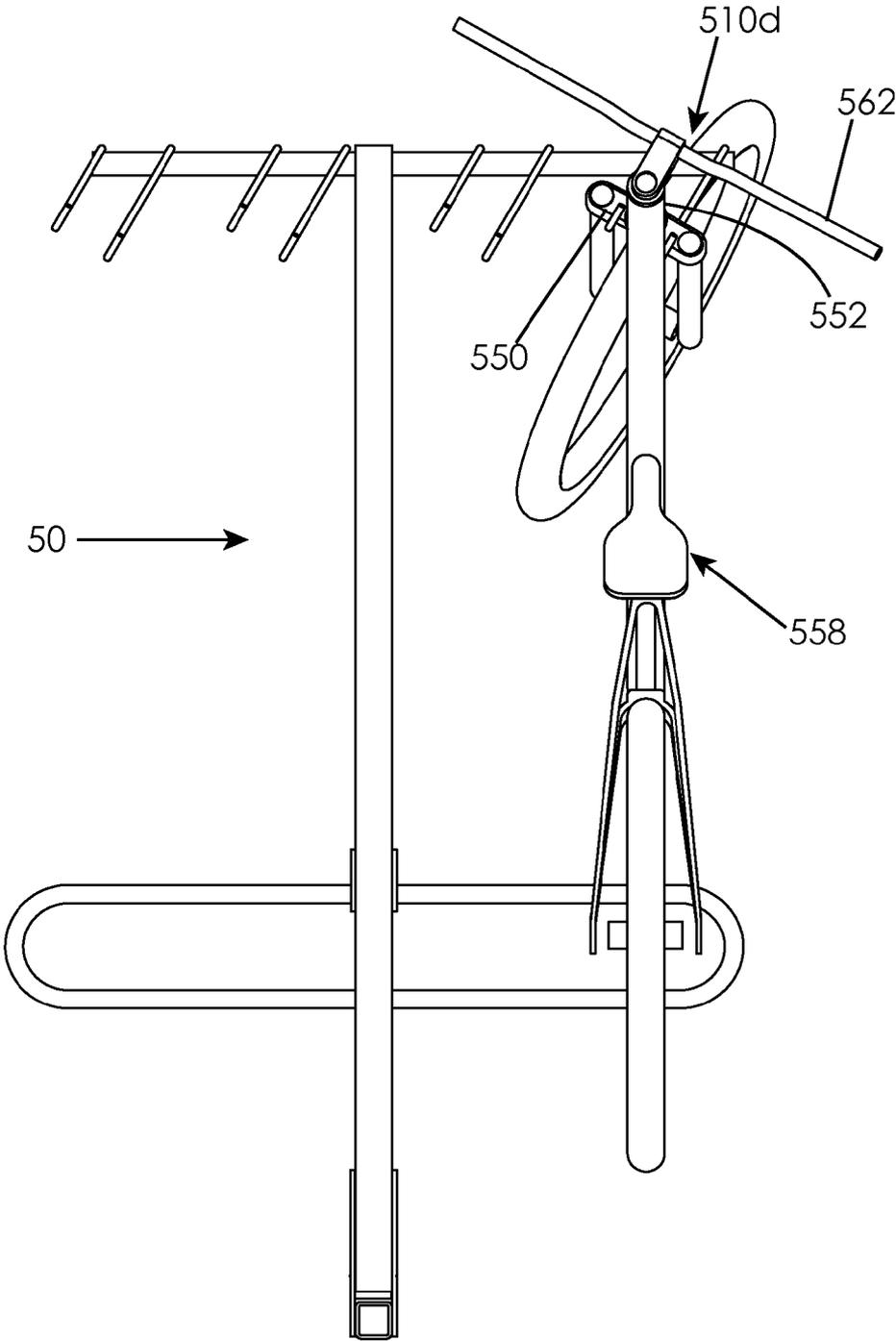


FIG. 25

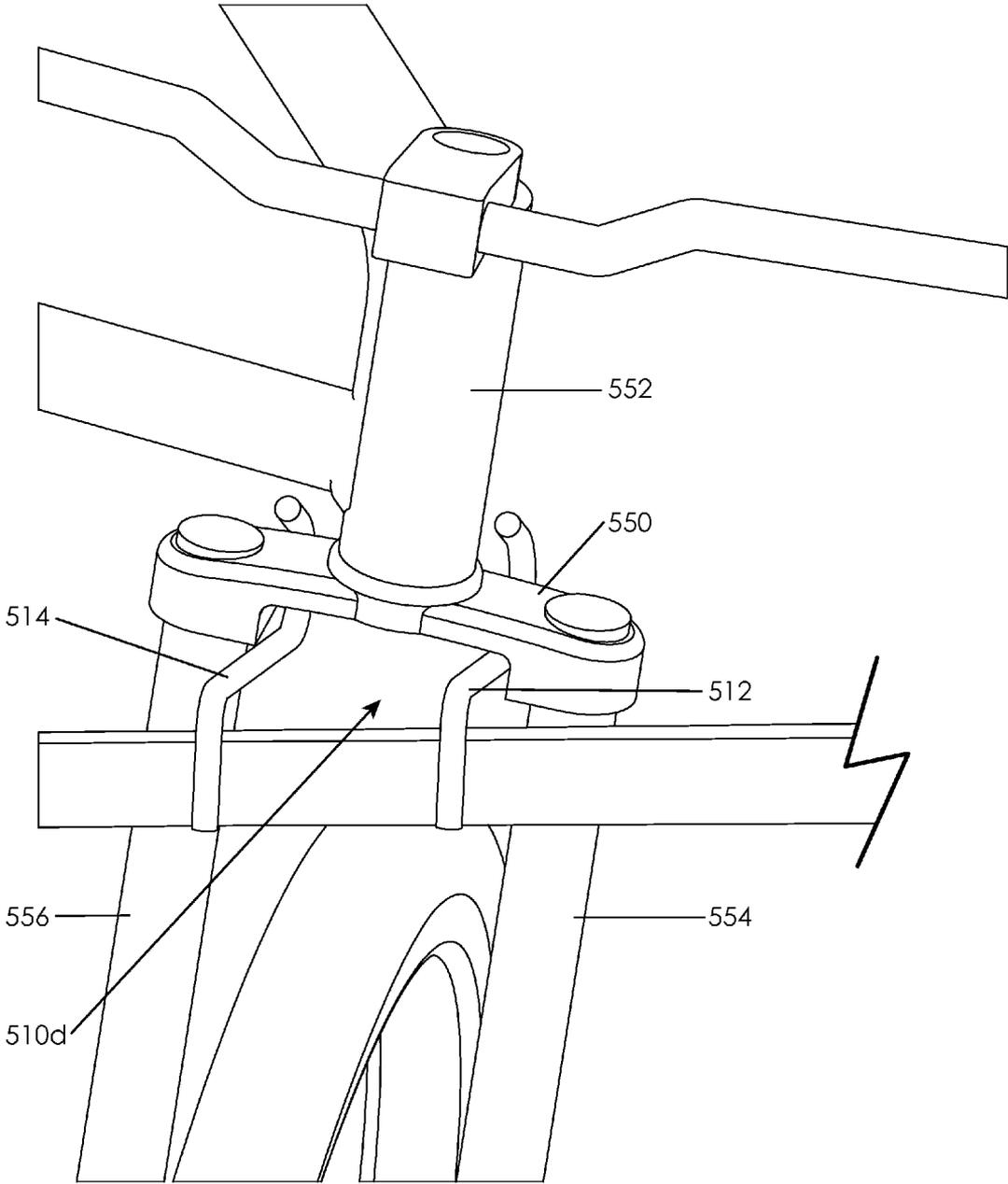


FIG. 26

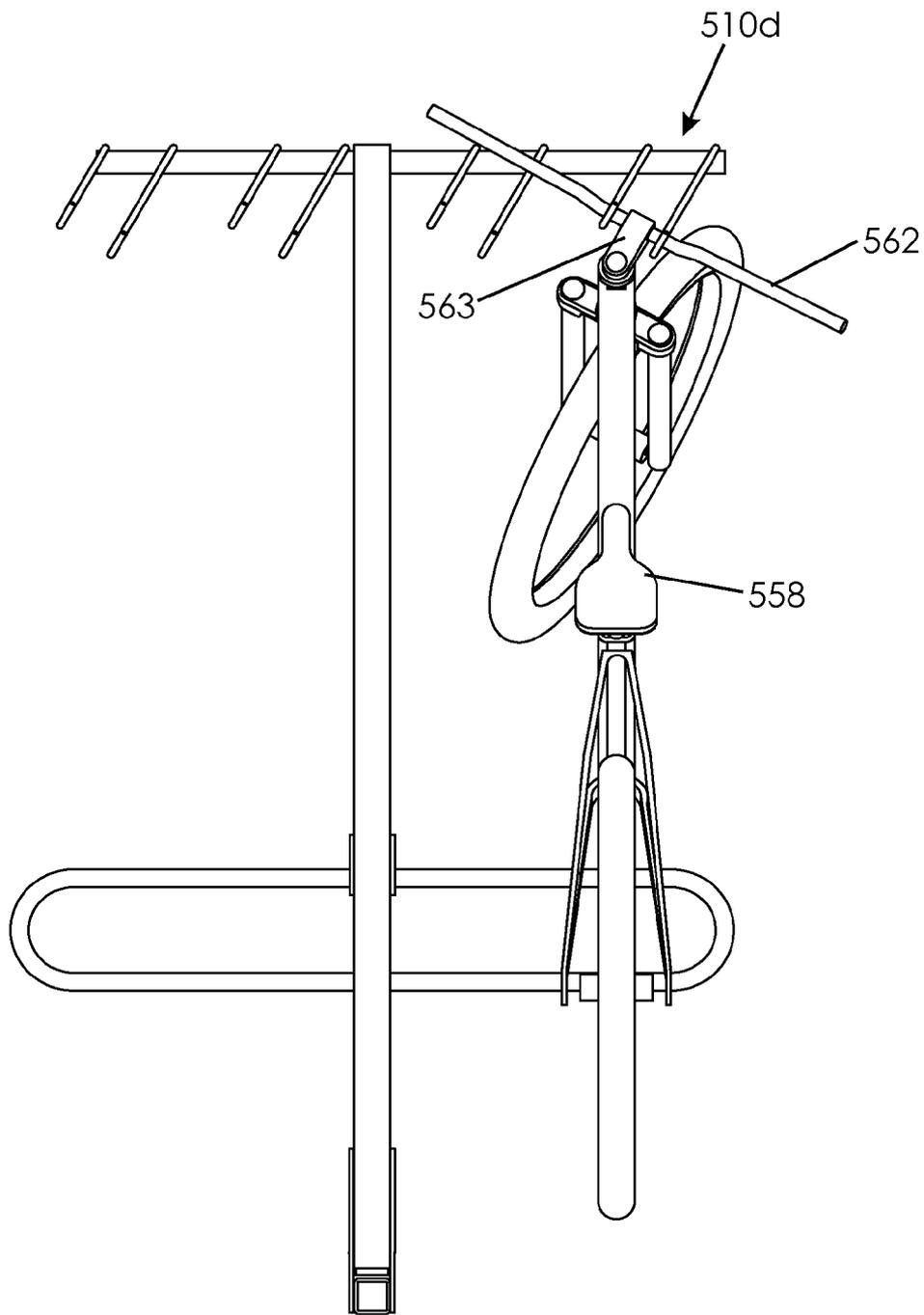


FIG. 27

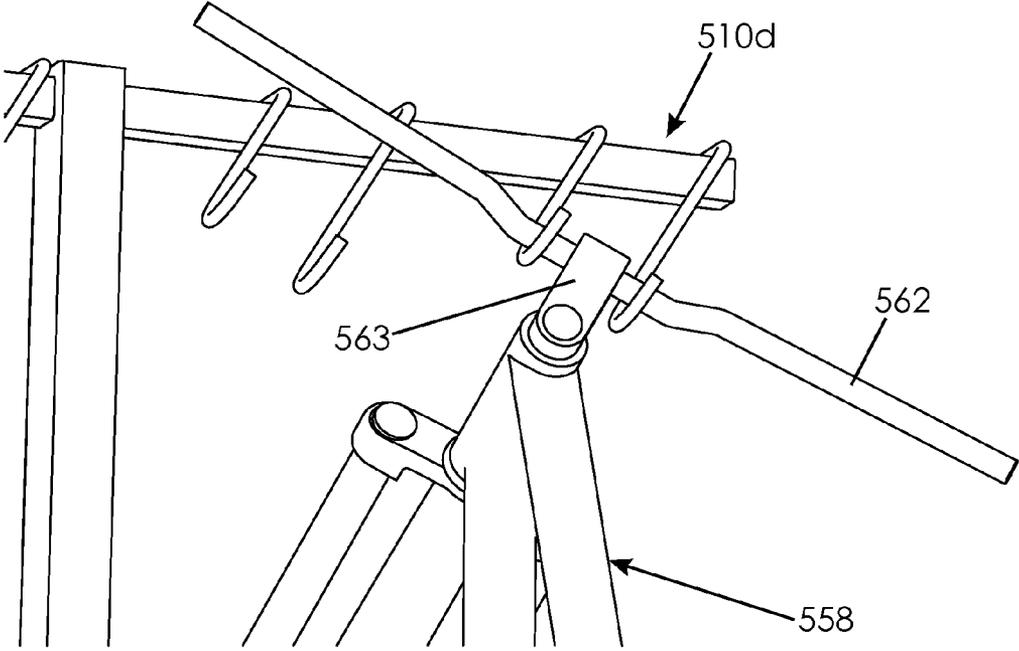


FIG. 28

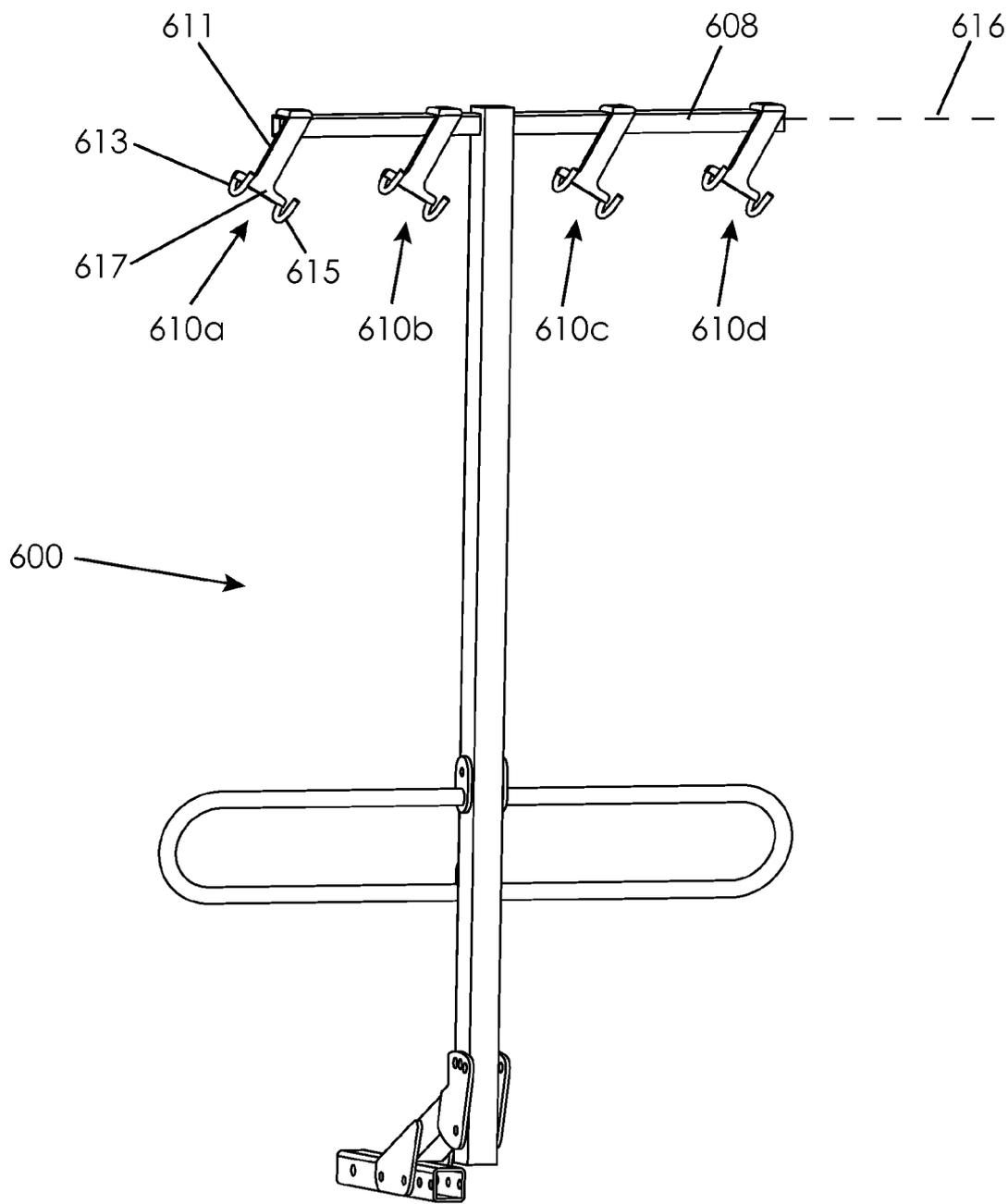


FIG. 29

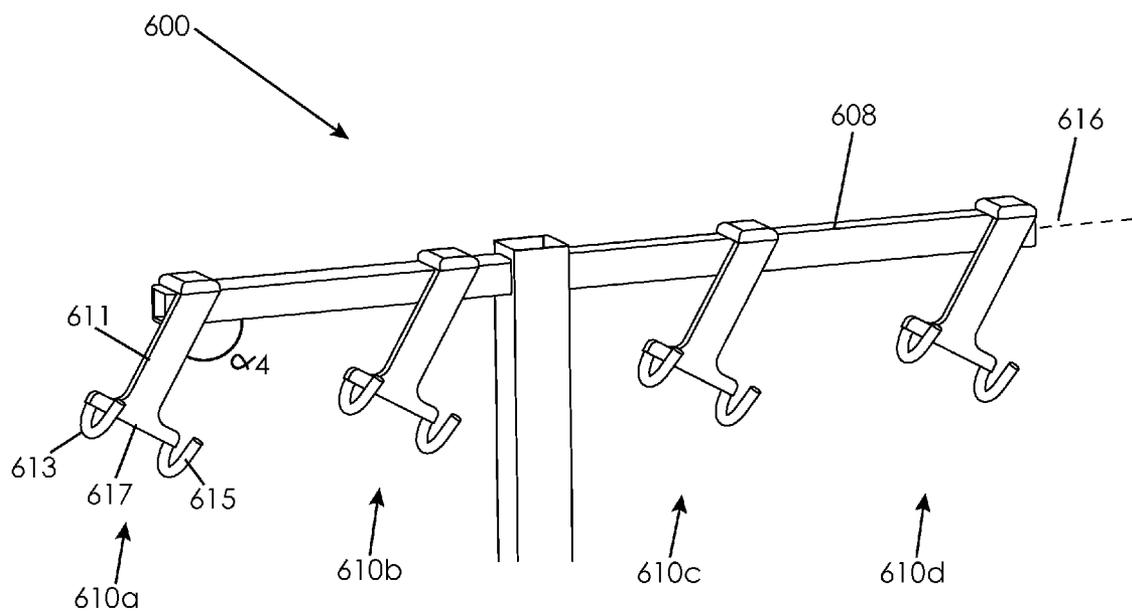


FIG. 30

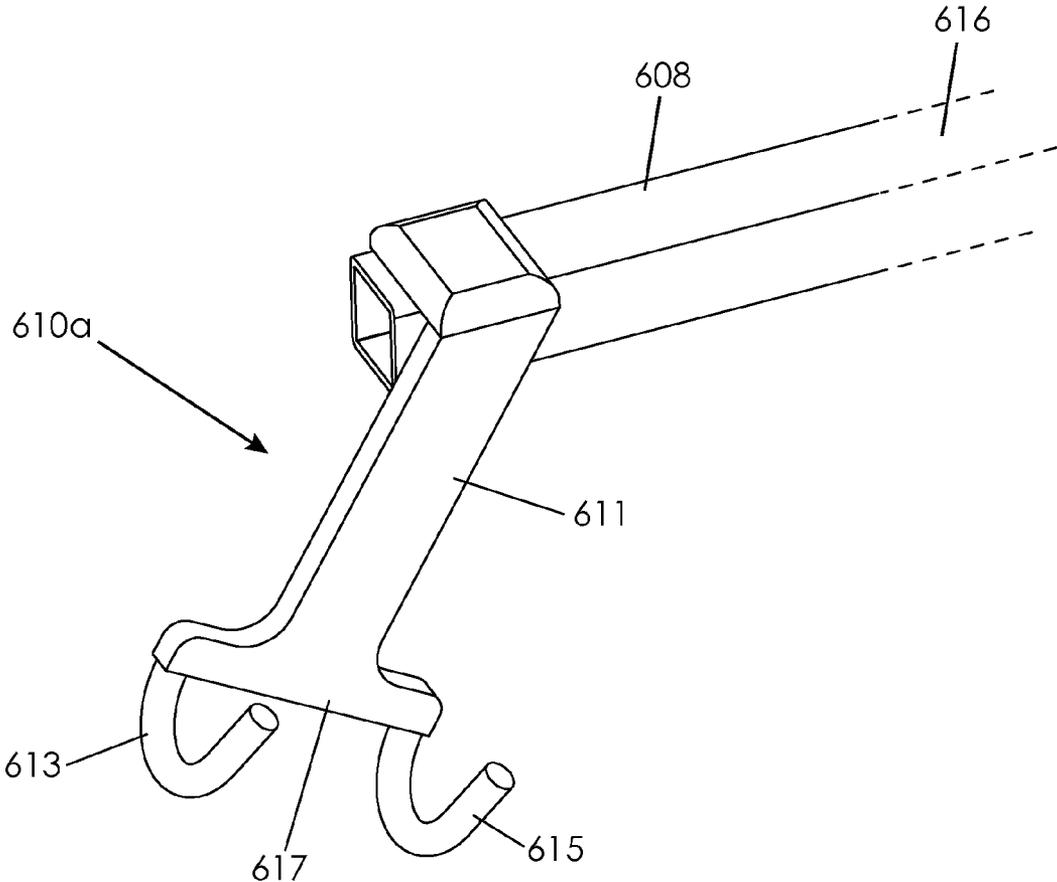


FIG. 31

CROWN FORK SUPPORTED BICYCLE CARRIER

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/004,748 filed Jan. 11, 2011 which itself is application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/453,095 filed Jun. 15, 2006 which itself is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/782,174 filed Feb. 20, 2004.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to a bicycle carrier and, in particular, to a vehicle mounted bicycle carrier having a cradle for engaging a fork crown of a bicycle.

[0004] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] Bicycles are often transported between locations on carriers attached to vehicles. In many cases, these carriers include an arm or cradle that a top tube of a bicycle rests on or in, to support the bicycle. However, women's bicycles and many newer non-traditional frames, especially full suspension mountain bikes, do not have a top tube. As a result, these types of bicycles cannot be directly mounted on such carriers.

[0006] Several bicycle carrier designs aim to overcome this problem. One such design places the bicycle on top of the vehicle by removing the front wheel of the bicycle and clamping the carrier to the exposed ends of the bicycle fork. Problems with this design include the hassle associated with removing the front wheel, and the need to store the wheel elsewhere. Also the bicycle needs to be lifted up high and placed on top of the vehicle. Another carrier design incorporates a surrogate top tube, as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,435,523 to Hilk issued Aug. 20, 2002, whereby a tube is attached to the handlebars and seat post of a bicycle. The bicycle and attached tube is then affixed to the bicycle carrier. This design requires the user to attach the device to the bicycle in two different places, and then to attach the device to the bicycle carrier, adding greatly to the amount of time needed to attach the bicycle to the vehicle. Yet other carrier designs carry a bicycle behind a vehicle via cradles in which the bicycle wheels sit. This style of bicycle carrier is generally large, complicated, and cumbersome, especially those which carry a plurality of bicycles. Another common design of hitch mounted bicycle carriers simply stacks the bicycles on a fork or similar structure, requiring the removal of the outermost bicycles to access the innermost bicycles.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] It is an object of the present invention to provide a vehicle mountable bicycle carrier capable of carrying any bicycle regardless of its frame design.

[0008] It is another object of the present invention to provide a vehicle mountable bicycle carrier which is easy to use.

[0009] It is a further object of the present invention to provide a vehicle mountable bicycle carrier which carries one or more bicycles without removing any part of any bicycle.

[0010] It is still further object of the present invention to provide a vehicle mountable bicycle carrier which carries a plurality of bicycles and does not require the removal of any bicycle to access another bicycle.

[0011] It is yet still a further another object of the present invention to provide a vehicle mountable bicycle carrier which is not overly complex and cumbersome.

[0012] There is accordingly provided a bicycle carrier having a support mast, an elongate support member extending from the support mast, and a cradle disposed along the elongate support member. The cradle is for receiving a fork crown of a bicycle. The cradle includes a first hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member and a second hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member. The first hook member and the second hook member are spaced-apart so as to allow the fork crown to be received by the cradle. A head tube of the bicycle is disposed between the first hook member and the second hook member. The first hook member and the second hook member are disposed between fork tubes of the bicycle. The first hook member and the second hook member may each extend at an angle of 45 degrees relative to the longitudinal axis of the support member. The first hook member and the second hook member may be substantially J-hook shaped hook members. The cradle may further include a T-shaped member. The first hook member and the second hook member may extend from opposite ends of a crossbar of the T-shaped member.

[0013] There is also provided a bicycle carrier for receiving a fork crown of a bicycle. The bicycle carrier includes a support mast and a hitch attachment bar extending from the support mast. A first elongate support member extends generally perpendicularly from the support mast. A second elongate support member is connected to the support mast and extends substantially parallel to the first elongate support member. A cradle is disposed along the first elongate support member. The cradle is for receiving a fork crown of a bicycle. The cradle includes a first hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member and a second hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member. The first hook member and the second hook member are spaced-apart so as to allow the fork crown to be received by the cradle. A head tube of the bicycle is disposed between the first hook member and the second hook member. The first hook member and the second hook member are disposed between fork tubes of the bicycle. There is also a means for securing a wheel of said bicycle to the bicycle carrier disposed along the second elongate support member.

[0014] The first hook member and the second hook member may each extend at an angle of 45 degrees relative to the longitudinal axis of the support member. The first hook member and the second hook member may be substantially J-hook shaped hook members. The cradle may further include a T-shaped member. The first hook member and the second hook member may extend from opposite ends of a crossbar of the T-shaped member. The second elongate support member may be a substantially U-shaped support member extends generally perpendicularly from the support mast and generally parallel to the elongate support member. The U-shaped support member is disposed between the hitch attachment bar and the elongate support member. The U-shaped member is positioned and configured to stabilize a rear wheel of the bicycle by functioning as a wheel chock to prevent the rear wheel from riding over the U-shaped member.

[0015] There is further provided a bicycle carrier having a support mast, an elongate support member extending from the support mast, and a cradle disposed along the elongate

support member. The cradle is for receiving a handlebar of a bicycle. The cradle includes a first hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member and a second hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member. The first hook member and the second hook member are spaced-apart so as to allow the handlebar to be received by the cradle. A handle bar stem of the bicycle is disposed between the first hook member and the second hook member. The first hook member and the second hook member are disposed between fork tubes of the bicycle. The first hook member and the second hook member may each extend at an angle of 45 degrees relative to the longitudinal axis of the support member. The first hook member and the second hook member may be substantially J-hook shaped hook members. The cradle may further include a T-shaped member. The first hook member and the second hook member may extend from opposite ends of a crossbar of the T-shaped member.

[0016] The bicycle carrier disclosed herein may be used to transport, by vehicle, any bicycle with a front fork, encompassing virtually all known bicycle designs. The carrier design allows the quick and convenient loading and unloading of bicycles, without the need to remove any bicycle to access another. Furthermore the design provides an efficient way to carry as many bicycles as possible, in as little space as possible, by turning the handlebars, thereby preventing interference.

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF DRAWINGS

[0017] The invention will be more readily understood from the following description of the embodiments thereof given, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

- [0018] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an end of a vehicle with a first embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier having a bicycle mounted thereon;
- [0019] FIG. 2 is a perspective side view of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 1;
- [0020] FIG. 3 is a perspective side view of an upper bar and fork crown cradle of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 1;
- [0021] FIG. 4 is a perspective top view showing the fork crown cradle of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 1 engaging a fork crown of the bicycle;
- [0022] FIG. 5 is a perspective side view showing the fork crown cradle of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 1 engaging the fork crown of the bicycle;
- [0023] FIG. 6 is a side view showing the bicycle carrier of FIG. 1 with two bicycles mounted thereon in close proximity;
- [0024] FIG. 7 is a fragmentary side view showing a bicycle rear wheel secured to a rear wheel stabilizer bar of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 1 by a J-hook and knob device;
- [0025] FIG. 8 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier;
- [0026] FIG. 9 is a perspective top view of an upper bar and fork crown cradles of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 8;
- [0027] FIG. 10 is a perspective side view of the upper bar and fork crown cradles of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 8;
- [0028] FIG. 11 is a perspective end view the upper bar and a single fork crown cradle of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 8;
- [0029] FIG. 12 is a perspective side view of a third embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier;
- [0030] FIG. 13 is a top view of an upper bar and fork crown cradles of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 12;

- [0031] FIG. 14 is a side view of the upper bar and fork crown cradles of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 12;
- [0032] FIG. 15 is an end view the upper bar and a single fork crown cradle of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 12;
- [0033] FIG. 16 is a fragmentary top view showing the fork crown cradle of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 12 engaging a fork crown of the bicycle;
- [0034] FIG. 17 is a fragmentary side view showing the fork crown cradle of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 12 engaging the fork crown of the bicycle;
- [0035] FIG. 18 is a perspective view of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 12 with a bicycle mounted thereon;
- [0036] FIG. 19 is another perspective view of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 12 with a bicycle mounted thereon;
- [0037] FIG. 20 is a top view of an upper bar and fork crown cradles of a fourth embodiment of an improved the bicycle carrier;
- [0038] FIG. 21 is a perspective side view of the upper bar and fork crown cradles of the fourth embodiment of the improved bicycle carrier;
- [0039] FIG. 22 is a perspective side view of a fifth embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier;
- [0040] FIG. 23 is a top view of an upper bar and fork crown cradles of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 22;
- [0041] FIG. 24 is a side view of the upper bar and fork crown cradles of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 22;
- [0042] FIG. 25 is a front elevation view of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 22 with a bicycle mounted thereon;
- [0043] FIG. 26 is a fragmentary top view showing the fork crown cradle of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 22 engaging a fork crown of the bicycle;
- [0044] FIG. 27 is another front elevation view of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 22 with a bicycle mounted thereon;
- [0045] FIG. 27 is a fragmentary top view showing the fork crown cradle of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 22 engaging a handlebar crown of the bicycle;
- [0046] FIG. 29 is a perspective side view of a sixth embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier;
- [0047] FIG. 30 is a side view of the upper bar and fork crown cradles of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 29; and
- [0048] FIG. 31 is an enlarged perspective view of a fork crown cradles of the bicycle carrier of FIG. 29.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0049] Referring to drawings and first to FIG. 1, there is shown a first embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier 100. The bicycle carrier 100 is mounted on a rear of a vehicle 102 for the convenient transport of at least one bicycle 104. In this example, the bicycle carrier 100 is attached to the vehicle 102 through hitch structure 106 which is mounted to vehicle 102. The bicycle 104 is releasably secured to bicycle carrier 100 for transport by the vehicle 102 and subsequent removal and use at a desired destination.

[0050] FIG. 2 shows the bicycle carrier 100 in greater detail. The bicycle carrier 100 has a first elongate support member in the form of a horizontal upper bar 108 with a plurality of fork crown cradles 110a, 110b and 110c disposed thereon. The fork crown cradles are substantially similar in structure and function. Accordingly, only one of the of the fork crown cradles 110a is described in detail herein with the understanding that the other fork crown cradles 110b and 110c have a similar structure and function in a similar manner. The fork crown cradle 110a is shown in greater detail in FIG.

3 and is provided with four tines 112, 114, 116 and 118 which are rods in this example. The tines are approximately five inches in length, paired and arranged in two V-shaped structures 120 and 122, with a V angle of approximately seventy degrees. The V-shaped structures 120 and 122 are spaced approximately four inches apart. Arms 124, 126, 128 and 130 each define a top half of a corresponding tine 112, 114, 116 and 118. The arms are parallel to each other. Each of the tines also has a corresponding free distal end 132, 134, 136 and 138. The fork crown cradle 110a can be set at an angle between zero and ninety degrees with respect to a longitudinal axis 10 of the horizontal upper bar 108.

[0051] In this example, the fork crown cradles 110a, 110b and 110c are set at an angle of approximately forty-five degrees from the longitudinal axis 10 of the horizontal upper bar 108. Each fork crown cradle 110a, 110b and 110c is also spaced at a distance from an adjacent fork crown cradle 110a, 110b and 110c to allow the closest possible proximity between bicycles, about seven inches in this example. The horizontal upper bar 108, best shown in FIG. 2, is attached to vertical support mast 140, and the lowermost end of vertical support mast 140 is affixed to a hitch attachment bar 142. The hitch attachment bar 142 is simply slid into the receiver style vehicle hitch structure 106, thereby positioning horizontal upper bar 108 at an approximate right angle to the bumper of vehicle 102 as shown in FIG. 1. In other embodiments, other means of attaching bicycle carrier 100 to the vehicle 102 may be employed, for example, use of a strap system (possibly in combination with hooks) or by connecting bicycle carrier 100 to a roof mount.

[0052] Referring back to FIG. 2, at a point on vertical support mast 140 located approximately one bicycle wheel-base length down from horizontal upper bar 108, is a second elongate support member in the form of a rear wheel horizontal stabilizer bar 144. In this example, the rear wheel horizontal stabilizer bar 144 is offset from the horizontal upper bar 108 approximately one half of a bicycle wheel diameter by a stabilizer offset tube 146. J-hook and knob devices 148a, 148b and 148c are spaced-apart approximately equidistantly on rear wheel stabilizer bar 144 and centered with respect to fork crown cradles 110a, 110b and 110c on the horizontal upper bar 108. The J-hook and knob devices 148a, 148b and 148c are simply hooks with threads and a knob on the non-hooked end, which pass through holes in the rear wheel stabilizer bar 144, and are used to secure a bicycle rear wheel 147, as best shown in FIG. 7 for device 148c.

[0053] FIG. 4 and FIG. 5 show the fork crown cradle 110a engaging or receiving a bicycle fork crown 150 and bicycle head tube 152. The fork crown 150 extends between the two V-shaped structures 120 and 122. A portion of the fork crown 150 adjacent a first bicycle fork tube 154 is received between a first one of the V-shaped structures 120. A portion of the fork crown 150 adjacent a second bicycle fork tube 156 is received between a second one of the V-shaped structures 122. The bicycle fork tubes 154 and 156 are disposed outside the fork crown cradle 110a. The head tube 152 extends outwardly from the fork crown cradle between the two V-shaped structures 120 and 122.

[0054] FIG. 6 shows the close mounting of adjacent bicycles 104 and 158 facilitated by the fork crown cradles 110b and 110c each being set at an angle of approximately forty-five degrees from the horizontal upper bar 108. This angle inherently turns the bicycle fork and more specifically the handlebars 160 and 162 to approximately the same angle,

thereby eliminating interference with another bicycle's handlebars, mounted to an adjacent fork crown cradle.

[0055] FIG. 7 shows how the rear wheel 147 of a bicycle is secured against the rear wheel stabilizer bar 144 by a J-hook and knob device 148c. The J-hook and knob device 148c consist of a hooked metal rod 149 mounted through a hole in the rear wheel stabilizer bar 144. The straight end 151 is threaded with a knob 153 attached. The rear wheel 147 of the bicycle is simply hooked by the J-hook and tightened against the rear wheel stabilizer bar 144 by the knob.

[0056] A second embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier 200 is shown in FIGS. 8 to 11. As shown in FIG. 8, the second embodiment of the bicycle carrier 200 has an upper horizontal bar 208 with a plurality of fork crown cradles 210a, 210b, 210c and 210d disposed thereon. The fork crown cradles are substantially similar in structure and function. Accordingly, only one of the of the fork crown cradles 210a is described in detail herein with the understanding that the other fork crown cradles 210b, 210c and 210d have a similar structure and function in a similar manner. The fork crown cradle 210a is shown in greater detail in FIG. 11 and is provided with two pairs 220 and 222 of tines which are rods in this example. An inside pair 220 of tines forms a U-shaped base 264 with arms 266 and 268 extending outwardly therefrom. The U-shaped base is connected to an attachment member 270 such that a lower arm 266 of the inside pair 220 of tines is at an approximate forty-five degree angle to the horizontal upper bar 208.

[0057] An outside pair 222 of the tines forms a U-shaped base 272 with arms 274 and 276 extending angularly therefrom. The arms 274 and 276 of the outside pair 222 of tines are positioned adjacent to, but outside the arms 266 and 268 of the inside pair 220 of tines. The U-shaped base 272 of the outside pair 222 of tines is secured to the lower arm 266 of the inside pair 220 of tines. Each of the arms 266, 268, 274 and 276 of the fork crown cradle 210a has a corresponding free distal end 232, 234, 236 and 238. The fork crown cradle 210a, of the second embodiment of the bicycle carrier 200, engages or receives a fork crown in a substantially similar manner as fork crown cradle 110a, of the first embodiment 100 of the bicycle carrier 100, and is compatible with most styles of bicycle forks. However, the fork crown cradle of the second embodiment of the bicycle carrier may be simpler to manufacture than the fork crown of the first embodiment of the bicycle carrier.

[0058] Referring back to FIG. 8, the second embodiment of the bicycle carrier 200 also has a generally U-shaped support member 278 which extends horizontally, i.e. perpendicularly, from a vertical support mast 240 and is connected to the support mast 240 at two points 241 and 243. The support member 278, when in use, prevents a rear wheel of a bicycle from riding up and over upper horizontal bar 208 thereby preventing the bicycle from moving upwards and off fork crown cradles tines 210a, 210b, 210c and 210d. An upper horizontal bar 280 of support member 278 functions in a similar manner as a wheel chock. A tie may also be used to secure a rear wheel of a bicycle to the support member 278. There is also a hitch attachment bar 242 to allow the bicycle carrier to be mounted on a vehicle.

[0059] A third embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier 300 is shown in FIGS. 12 to 19. As shown in FIG. 12, the third embodiment of the bicycle carrier 300 has a first elongate support member in the form of an upper horizontal bar 308 with a plurality of fork crown cradles 310a, 310b, 310c and

310d disposed thereon. The fork crown cradles are substantially similar in structure and function. Accordingly, only one of the fork crown cradles **310a** is described in detail herein with the understanding that the other fork crown cradles **310b**, **310c** and **310d** have a similar structure and function in a similar manner. As best shown in FIG. 14, the fork crown cradle **310a** is connected to the upper horizontal bar **308** by an attachment member **370**. The attachment member **370** has a sloped edge **382** which extends at angle α_1 relative to the upper horizontal bar **308**. In this example, the angle α_1 is forty-five degrees. The fork crown cradle **310a** is mounted on the sloped edge of **382** of the attachment member **370** and is accordingly angled relative to the upper horizontal bar at an angle α_2 which, in this example, would also be forty-five degrees. In other examples angles α_1 and α_2 may be any suitable or desired angles.

[0060] The fork crown cradle **310a** is shown in greater detail in FIG. 15 and is provided with three tines **384**, **386** and **388** which are rods in this example and extend away from the horizontal upper bar **308**. Two of the tines **384** and **386** extend from opposite ends of mounting rod **390** which is secured to the attachment member **370**. Together the mounting rod **390** and the pair of tines **384** and **386** form a generally U-shaped structure **320** as best shown in FIG. 14. Referring back to FIG. 15, the tines **384** and **386** each includes a corresponding generally curved portion **392** and **394**. The curved portions are disposed along the mounting rod **390** and extend between the mounting rod **390** and corresponding parallel arms **396** and **398** of each of the tines **384** and **386**. The curved portions form a cradle to receive a bicycle fork as will be discussed in greater detail below. The third tine **388** is disposed between the pair of tines **384** and **386** and extends from the mounting rod **390** angularly away from the pair of tines **384** and **386**. In this example, the third tine **388** is a straight rod. Each of the tines has a corresponding distal free end **332**, **334** and **336**.

[0061] FIG. 16 and FIG. 17 show the fork crown cradle **310a** engaging or receiving a bicycle fork crown **350** and bicycle head tube **352**. The fork crown **350** is disposed between the pair of tines **384** and **386** and the third tine **388**, i.e. the pair of tines are on an opposite side of the fork crown from the third tine. The head tube **352** extends outwardly from the fork crown cradle **350** between the pair of tines **384** and **386**. Bicycle fork tubes **354** and **356** are disposed on opposite sides of the third tine **388**. In this example, since the fork crown cradle **310a** is set at an angle of approximately forty-five degrees relative to the upper horizontal bar **308**, the fork crown **350** will inherently turn approximately forty-five degrees. More importantly, as shown in FIG. 18 and FIG. 19, the handlebars **362** of a mounted bicycle **358** will also inherently turn approximately forty-five degrees from their center positions, thereby eliminating interference with another bicycle's handlebars (not shown) mounted on an adjacent fork crown cradle.

[0062] Referring back to FIG. 12, the third embodiment of the bicycle carrier **300** also has a pair of generally U-shaped support members **378a** and **378b** which extend horizontally, i.e. perpendicularly, from opposite sides of a vertical support mast **340**. Each of the U-shaped support members **378a** and **378b** is connected to an opposite side of the support mast **340** at two points. The support members **378a** and **378b**, when in use, prevent a rear wheel of a bicycle from riding up and over upper horizontal bar **308**, thereby preventing the bicycle from moving upwards and off of fork crown cradles **310a**, **310b**, **310c** and **310d**. Upper horizontal bars **380a** and **380b** of

support members **378a** and **378b** function in a similar manner as a wheel chock. This is best shown in FIG. 18 and FIG. 19. A tie (not shown) may also be used to secure the rear wheel **347** of the bicycle **358** to one of the support member **378a**. Alternatively, the rear wheel **347** may be secured to the other one of the support members **378b**.

[0063] The third embodiment of the bicycle carrier **300** is also provided with a hitch attachment bar **342**, shown in FIG. 18, to allow the bicycle carrier to be mounted on a vehicle. However, in the embodiment of FIG. 18, a link **343** connects the hitch attachment bar **342** to the support mast **340**. In this example, the link **343** is pivotably connected to both the support mast **340**. This allows the support mast **340** to extend at varying angles relative to the hitch attachment bar. In other examples, the link **343** may be pivotably connected to the attachment bar **342** or to both the support mast **340** and attachment bar **342**.

[0064] A fourth embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier **400** is shown in FIG. 20 and FIG. 21. The fourth embodiment of the bicycle carrier **400** is identical in structure and function to the third embodiment **300** of the bicycle carrier with the exception that in the fourth embodiment of the bicycle carrier the third tine **488** is a planar member or plate.

[0065] A fifth embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier **500** is shown in FIGS. 22 to 28. As shown in FIG. 22, the fifth embodiment of the bicycle carrier **500** has a first elongate support member in the form of an upper horizontal bar **508** with a plurality of fork crown cradles **510a**, **510b**, **510c** and **510d** disposed thereon. The fork crown cradles are substantially similar in structure and function. Accordingly, only one of the fork crown cradles **510d** is described in detail herein with the understanding that the other fork crown cradles **510a**, **510b** and **510c** have a similar structure and function in a similar manner. As best shown in FIGS. 23 and 24, the fork crown cradle **510d** includes a pair hook members which, in this example, are a pair of spaced-apart substantially J-hook shaped members **512** and **514**. The J-hook shaped members **512** and **514** extend angularly from the upper horizontal bar member **508** and are oblique relative to a longitudinal axis **516** of the upper horizontal bar member. In this example, the J-hook shaped members **512** and **514** extend at an angle of approximately forty-five degrees relative the longitudinal axis **516** of the upper horizontal bar member **508** as shown by angle α_3 in FIG. 24 for one of the J-shaped members **512** of the fork crown cradle **510d**. In other examples angle α_3 may be any suitable or desired angle.

[0066] FIGS. 25 and 26 show the fork crown cradle **510d** engaging or receiving a bicycle crown fork **550** and a bicycle head tube **552**. FIG. 27 best shows how the fork crown **550** is received by fork crown cradle **510d**. The head tube **552** extends outwardly from the fork crown cradle **510d** between the J-hooked shaped members **512** and **514** while the J-hooked shaped members **512** and **514** are disposed between the fork tubes **554** and **556**. In this example, since the fork crown cradle **510d** is set at an angle of approximately forty-five degrees relative to the upper horizontal bar **508**, the fork crown **550** will inherently turn approximately forty-five degrees. More importantly, as best shown in FIG. 25, the handlebars **562** of a mounted bicycle **558** will also inherently turn approximately forty-five degrees from their center positions, thereby eliminating interference with another bicycle's handlebars (not shown) mounted on an adjacent fork crown cradle. The fork crown cradle **510d** may also receive the handlebars **562** of the mounted bicycle **558** as shown in FIGS.

27 and 28. A handle bar stem 563 extends outwardly from the fork crown cradle between the J-hooked shaped members 512 and 514 when the fork crown cradle 510d receives the handlebars 562. This also causes the handlebars 562 of the mounted bicycle 558 to inherently turn approximately forty-five degrees from their center positions, thereby eliminating interference with another bicycle's handlebars (not shown) mounted on an adjacent fork crown cradle.

[0067] Referring back to FIG. 22, the fifth embodiment of the bicycle carrier 500 also has a second elongate support member in the form of a pair of generally U-shaped support members 578a and 578b which extend horizontally, i.e. perpendicularly, from opposite sides of a vertical support mast 540. Each of the U-shaped support members 578a and 578b is connected to an opposite side of the support mast 540 at two points. The support members 578a and 578b, when in use, prevent a rear wheel of a bicycle from riding up and over upper horizontal bar 508, thereby preventing the bicycle from moving upwards and off of fork crown cradles 510a, 510b, 510c and 510d. Upper horizontal bars 580a and 580b of support members 578a and 578b function in a similar manner as a wheel chock. A link 543 connects a hitch attachment bar 542 to the vertical support mast 540. In this example, the link 543 is pivotably connected to both the support mast 540. This allows the support mast 540 to extend at varying angles relative to the hitch attachment bar 542. In other examples, the link 543 may be pivotably connected to the hitch attachment bar 542 or to both the support mast 540 and attachment bar 542.

[0068] A sixth embodiment of an improved bicycle carrier 600 is shown in FIGS. 29 to 31. The sixth embodiment of the bicycle carrier 600 is identical in structure and function to the fifth embodiment of the bicycle carrier 500 with the exception that in the sixth embodiment of the bicycle carrier 600 the fork crown cradles 610a, 610b, 610c and 610d have a different structure. The fork crown cradles of the sixth embodiment of the bicycle carrier are substantially similar in structure and function. Accordingly, only one of the fork crown cradle 610a is described in detail herein with understanding that the other fork crown cradles 610b, 610c and 610d have a similar structure and function in a similar manner. The fork crown cradle 610a includes a T-shaped member 611 which extends angularly from the upper horizontal bar member 608 and is oblique relative to a longitudinal axis 616 of the upper horizontal bar member. In this example, T-shaped member 611 extends at an angle of approximately forty-five degrees relative the longitudinal axis 616 of the upper horizontal bar member 608 as shown in FIG. 30 by angle α_4 for T-shaped member 611 of the fork crown cradle 610a. In other examples angle α_4 may be any suitable or desired angle.

[0069] The fork crown cradle 610a further includes hooks 613 and 615 which are disposed at opposite ends of a crossbar 617 of the T-shaped member 611. The fork crown cradle 610a receives a fork crown of a mounted bicycle such that a head tube extends outwardly from the fork crown cradle 610a between the hooks 613 and 615 while the hooks are disposed between the fork tubes. This is similar as described and shown above for the fifth embodiment of the bicycle carrier 500.

[0070] It will be understood by a person skilled in the art that the terms "upper", "lower", "horizontal" and "vertical" as used herein are used in relation to the orientation of the bicycle carrier as shown in the drawings.

[0071] It will be further understood by a person skilled in the art that many of the details provided above are by way of

example only, and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention which is to be determined with reference to following claims.

I claim:

1. A bicycle carrier having a support mast, an elongate support member extending from the support mast and a cradle disposed along the elongate support member, the cradle being for receiving a fork crown of a bicycle and the cradle comprising:

- a first hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member; and
- a second hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member, wherein the first hook member and the second hook member are spaced-apart so as to allow the fork crown to be received by the cradle, whereby a head tube of the bicycle is disposed between the first hook member and the second hook member, and the first hook member and the second hook member are disposed between fork tubes of the bicycle.

2. The bicycle carrier as claimed in claim 1 wherein the first hook member and the second hook member each extend at an angle of 45 degrees relative to the longitudinal axis of the support member.

3. The bicycle carrier as claimed in claim 1 wherein the first hook member and the second hook member are substantially J-hook shaped hook members.

4. The bicycle carrier as claimed in claim 1 wherein the cradle further includes a T-shaped member, and the first hook member and the second hook member extend from opposite ends of a crossbar of the T-shaped member.

5. A bicycle carrier for receiving a fork crown of a bicycle, the bicycle carrier comprising:

- a support mast;
- a hitch attachment bar extending from the support mast;
- a first elongate support member extending generally perpendicularly from the support mast;
- a second elongate support member connected to the support mast and extending substantially parallel to the first elongate support member;
- a cradle disposed along the first elongate support member, the cradle including a first hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member and a second hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member, the first hook member and the second hook member being spaced-apart so as to allow the fork crown to be received by the cradle, whereby a head tube of the bicycle is disposed between the first hook member and the second hook member, and the first hook member and the second hook member are disposed between fork tubes of the bicycle;

means for securing a wheel of said bicycle to the bicycle carrier, said means being disposed along the second elongate support member.

6. The bicycle carrier as claimed in claim 5 wherein the first hook member and the second hook member each extend at an angle of 45 degrees relative to the longitudinal axis of the support member.

7. The bicycle carrier as claimed in claim 5 wherein the first hook member and the second hook member are substantially J-hook shaped hook members.

8. The bicycle carrier as claimed in claim 5 wherein the cradle further includes a T-shaped member, and the first hook

member and the second hook member extend from opposite ends of a crossbar of the T-shaped member.

9. A bicycle carrier as claimed in claim 5 wherein the second support member is a substantially a substantially U-shaped support member extending generally perpendicularly from the support mast and generally parallel to the elongate support member, the U-shaped support member being disposed between the hitch attachment bar and the elongate support member, and the U-shaped member being positioned and configured to stabilize a rear wheel of the bicycle by functioning as a wheel chock to prevent the rear wheel from riding over the U-shaped member.

10. A bicycle carrier having a support mast, an elongate support member extending from the support mast and a cradle disposed along the elongate support member, the cradle being for receiving a handlebar of a bicycle and the cradle comprising:

a first hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member; and

a second hook member extending angularly relative to a longitudinal axis of the elongate support member, wherein the first hook member and the second hook member are spaced-apart so as to allow the handlebar to be received by the cradle, whereby a handle bar stem of the bicycle is disposed between the first hook member and the second hook member.

11. The bicycle carrier as claimed in claim 10 wherein the first hook member and the second hook member each extend at an angle of 45 degrees relative to the longitudinal axis of the support member.

12. The bicycle carrier as claimed in claim 10 wherein the first hook member and the second hook member are substantially J-hook shaped hook members.

13. The bicycle carrier as claimed in claim 10 wherein the cradle further includes a T-shaped member, and the first hook member and the second hook member extend from opposite ends of a crossbar of the T-shaped member.

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