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Overview of 2G LCS Technnologies and Standards

ABSTRACT

In this contribution, we will discuss why locating mobile phones becomes a hot topic in telecommunications industry, what technologies are being studied and standardized. For more information on different location technologies and related location services they can provide, refer to [1].

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has made E911 a mandatory requirement for wireless communications services such as cellular telephone, wideband (broadband) personal communications services (PCS), and geographic area specialized mobile radio (SMR). This ruling and upcoming service is called wireless E911. The FCC requires that by October 1, 2001, public safety answering point (PSAP) attendants of wireless communications networks must be able to know a 911 caller's phone number for return calls and the location of the caller, so that calls can be routed to an appropriate PSAP and related emergency assistance attendants [2]. On September 15, 1999, the FCC decided to tighten the location accuracy requirement for Phase II implementation from 125 meters in 67% of all cases to the new numbers shown in Table 1 [3]. In addition, the FCC requests manufacturers to begin selling and activating location-capable handsets no later than March 1, 2001. Besides emergency assistance, it will certainly trigger many location-based services with the mobile phone or wireless network. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why telecommunications manufacturers and operators have been actively pursuing the technologies to locate the mobile phone.

Table 1. Accuracy Required for Locating Mobile Phones

Solutions	67% of Calls	95% of Calls
Handset-Based	50 meters	150 meters
Network-Based	100 meters	300 meters

LOCATION TECHNOLOGIES

There are three most commonly used location technologies: stand-alone, satellite-based, and terrestrial radio-based. As examples, a typical stand-alone technology is dead reckoning. A typical satellite-based technology is global positioning system (GPS). A typical terrestrial radio-based technology is the "C" configuration of the Long Range Navigation (LORAN-C) system. For wireless E911, the radio-based (satellite and terrestrial) technologies are the most popular ones. Cellular networks are terrestrial-based communications systems. It is natural to utilize the signals of the network to determine the mobile phone location or to assist the location determination. In this paper, we will address these radio-based technologies only. The principles behind them are discussed below.

Radio-based technology typically uses base stations, satellites or devices emitting radio signals to the mobile receiver to determine the position of its user. Signals can also be emitted from the mobile device to the base. Commonly studied techniques are angle of arrival (AOA) positioning, time of arrival (TOA) positioning, and time difference of arrival (TDOA) positioning. All these methods require radio transmitters, receivers, or transceivers. In other words, they depend on emitting and receiving radio signals to determine the location of an object on which a radio receiver, or a transceiver is attached. To make the position determination, these methods generally have the assumption that one end of the positioning system is fixed and the other end is moveable such as a mobile phone. However, the location determination capability can be either at the fixed end or at the mobile end. Generally, it is up to the system designer to decide where the final location determination capability should reside. For performance improvement, hybrid methods (various combinations of the techniques discussed or with additional techniques) are possible.

The *angle of arrival (AOA) system* determines the mobile phone position based on triangulation (Figure 1). It is also called direction of arrival in some literature. The intersection of two directional lines of bearing defines a unique position, each formed by a radial from a base station to the mobile phone in a two-dimensional space. This technique requires a minimum of two stations (or one pair) to determine a position. If available, more than one pair can be used in practice. Because directional antennas or antenna arrays are required, it is difficult to realize AOA at the mobile phone.

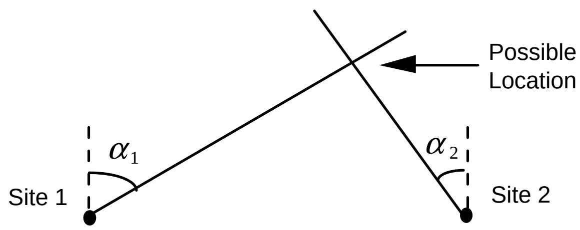

Figure 1. Location determination by angle of arrival (AOA).

The *time of arrival (TOA) system* determines the mobile phone position based on the intersection of the distance (or range) circles (Figure 2). Since the propagation time of the radio wave is directly proportional to its traversed range, multiplying the speed of light to the time obtains the range from the mobile phone to the communicating base station. Two range measurements provide an ambiguous fix and three measurements determine a unique position. The same principle is used by GPS, where the circle becomes the sphere in space and the fourth measurement is required to solve the receiver-clock bias for a three-dimensional solution. The bias is caused by the unsynchronized clocks between the receiver and the satellite. Similarly, for terrestrial-based systems, it also requires precisely synchronized clocks for all transmitters and receivers. Otherwise, a one microsecond timing error could lead to a 300-meter position error.

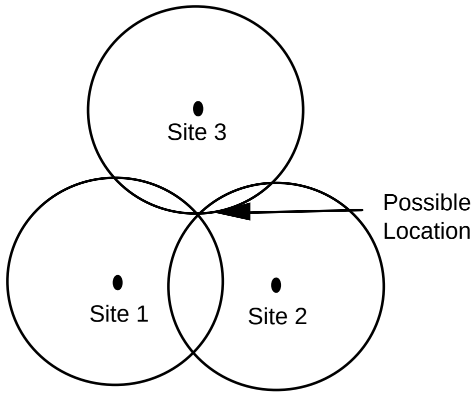

Figure 2. Location determination by time of arrival (TOA).

The *time difference of arrival (TDOA) system* determines the mobile phone position based on trilateration (Figure 3). This system uses time difference measurements rather than absolute time measurements as TOA does. It is often referred to as the hyperbolic system because the time difference is converted to a constant distance difference to two base stations (as foci) to define a hyperbolic curve. The intersection of two hyperbolas determines the position. Therefore, it utilizes two pairs of base stations (at least three for the 2-dimensional case as shown in Figure 3) for positioning. The accuracy of the system is a function of the relative base station geometric locations.

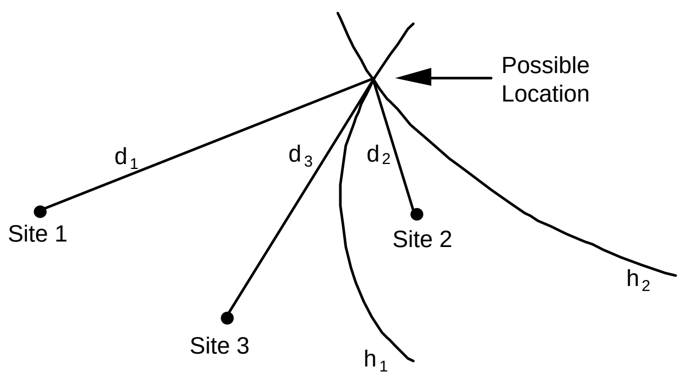

Figure 3. Location determination by time difference of arrival (TDOA)

Other location methods can also been used. One simple method for mobile phone location is to use the cell area (or cell ID) of the caller as the approximate location of the mobile phone. This results in the position error as large as the cell area. For instance, a pico-cell could be 150 meters in radius while a large cell could be more than 30,000 meters in radius. Therefore, this method has not demonstrated that it can achieve 100-meter accuracy reliably even under the best of conditions. Other methods are based on measuring the signal strength or measuring the signal characteristic patterns and multipath characteristics of radio signals arriving at a cell site from a caller. For measuring the signal strength, it employs multiple cell sites to find the location. For measuring the signal characteristic patterns, it identifies the unique radio frequency pattern or "signature" of the call and matches it to a similar pattern stored in its central database.

Because AOA requires the installation of directional antennas or antenna arrays, TOA and TDOA have been chosen as the current standardization choices. Of course, this may change if the next-generation systems can be equipped with these antennas. Both TOA and TDOA are time-based measurement technologies. They can be implemented either based on the forward (down) link signal or reserved (up) link signal. In addition, the location determination capability can reside either at the network side or at the mobile phone. In order to locate several base stations or cell sites, the sensitivity of the mobile phone may need to be increased. For better location accuracy, certain phones may require higher chip or bit resolution such as 1/8 or 1/16. These methods also require software modification on the mobile phone and additional location determination units and related software in the network. As discussed above, the mobile phone needs to listen to the signals of at least three base stations or cell sites. The visibility and geographical locations of these base stations will affect the availability and the accuracy of the location determination.

Since the performance of the satellite-based GPS receiver is getting better and better while the receiver size and price keep going down, it becomes popular to develop an assisted GPS (A-GPS) solution for the mobile phone, which requires software and hardware modifications of both the mobile phone and its communications network. To understand this popular technology better, we will spend a little bit more space below to discuss it.

GPS provides an affordable means to determine position, velocity, and time around the globe. The satellite constellation is developed and maintained by the U.S. Department of Defense. Civilian access is guaranteed through an agreement with the Department of Transportation. GPS satellites transmit two carrier frequencies. Typically, only one is used by civilian receivers. From the perspective of these civilian receivers on the ground, GPS satellites transmit at 1575.42 MHz using code-division multiple-access (CDMA) technique, which uses a direct-sequence spread-spectrum (DS-SS) signal at 1.023 MHz (Mchips/sec) with a code period of one millisecond. Each satellite’s DS-SS signal is modulated by a 50 bit-per-second navigation message that includes accurate time and coefficients (ephemeris) to an equation that describes the satellite's position as a function of time. The receiver (more precisely, its antenna) position determination is based on TOA.

The four main conventional GPS receiver functions are:

1) Measuring distance from the satellites to the receiver by determining the pseudoranges (code phases);
2) Extracting the time of arrival of the signal from the contents of the satellite transmitted message;
3) Computing the position of the satellites by evaluating the ephemeris data at the indicated time of arrival;
4) Calculating the position of the receiving antenna and the clock bias of the receiver by using the above data items.

Position errors at the receiver are contributed by the satellite clock, satellite orbit, ephemeris prediction, ionospheric delay, tropospheric delay, and selective availability (SA). SA is an accuracy degradation scheme to reduce the accuracy available to civilian users to a level within the national security requirements of the United States. It decreases the accuracy capability of autonomous GPS to the 100 meter (2D-RMS) level, where RMS stands for root mean square. To reduce these errors, range and range-rate corrections can be applied to the raw pseudorange measurements in order to create a position solution that is accurate to a few meters in open environments. The most important correction technique is differential GPS (DGPS). It uses a reference receiver at a surveyed position to send correcting information to a mobile receiver over a communications link. Note that SA has been turned off since May 2000.

In addition to the task of shrinking the GPS antenna to fit a typical mobile phone, a traditional autonomous GPS receiver chipset is difficult to embed in the mobile phone for three main reasons. First, its start-up time (from turning on to the initial position fix) is relatively long due to its long acquisition time of the navigation message (at least 30 seconds to a few minutes). Second, its inability to detect weak signals that result from indoor and urban canyon operations as well as small cellular sized antennas. Third, its power dissipation is relatively high per fix, primarily due to the long signal acquisition time in an unaided application. To deal with these problems, the assisted GPS method was proposed (Figure 4).

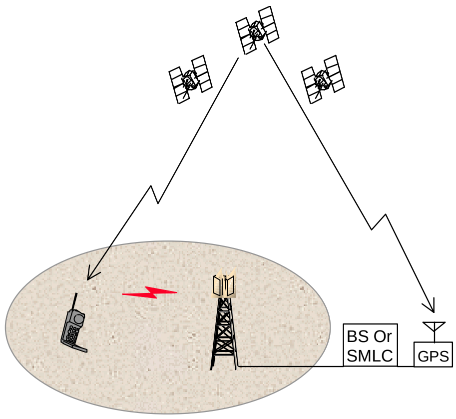

Figure 4. Assisted GPS Positioning
(BS stands for Base Station and SMLC stands for Serving Mobile Location Center)

The basic idea of assisted GPS is to establish a GPS reference network (or a wide-area DGPS network) whose receivers have clear views of the sky and can operate continuously. This reference network is also connected with the cellular infrastructure, and continuously monitors the real-time constellation status and provides precise data such as satellite visibility, ephemeris and clock correction, Doppler, and even the pseudorandom noise code phase for each satellite at a particular epoch time. At the request of the mobile phone or location-based application, the assist data derived from the GPS reference network are transmitted to the mobile phone GPS receiver (or sensor) to aid fast start-up and to increase the sensor sensitivity. Acquisition time is reduced because the Doppler versus code phase uncertainty space is much smaller than in conventional GPS due to the fact that the search space has been predicted by the reference receiver and network. This allows for rapid search speed and for a much narrower signal search bandwidth which enhances sensitivity. Once the embedded GPS receiver acquires the available satellite signals, the pseudorange measurements can be delivered to network-based position determination entity (PDE) for position calculation or used internally to compute position in the handset.

Additional assisted data, such as DGPS corrections, approximate handset location or cell base station (BS) location, and other information such as the satellite almanac, ionospheric delay, universal time coordinated (UTC) offset can be transmitted to improve the location accuracy, decrease acquisition time, and allow for handset-based position computation. Several schemes have been proposed in the standards which reduce the number of bits necessary to be exchanged between the handset and the network by using compression techniques such as transmitting only the non-redundant or the changes to parameters instead of the raw parameters themselves. Other satellite systems could be used, such as the Russian GLONASS system, but none of the standards have made provision for anything except GPS and the future GPS Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS) signals. Besides adding a GPS reference network and additional location determination units in the network, the mobile phone must embed, at a minimum, a GPS antenna and RF down converter circuits, as well as make provision for some form of digital signal processing software or dedicated hardware.

Recent field trials of the assisted GPS system have shown the feasibility of this technology. However, the current implementation has not demonstrated that it can cover every location where voice communication is available. In addition, this solution will not work for legacy phones.

In general, all the radio-based technologies discussed can be affected by interference, blockage, and multipath. It is a great challenge to solve these adverse effects caused by the environment we live.

LOCATION TECHNOLOGY BEING STANDARIZED

Three main standard organizations involved for second generation (2G) systems are the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA), and the T1 Committee. T1 is sponsored by the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS), which is accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). For third generation (3G) systems, the work has been handled by the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) and 3GPP2, respectively.

Listed below are technologies being standardized by the above organizations. However, finding a technology which can achieve the accuracy requirements set by the FCC presents a great challenge. Listed below are technologies being standardized by the organizations already mentioned. CDMA2000, W-CDMA, and UMTS (3G systems) may adopt and further evolve the location technologies being developed for CDMA and GSM, and are not included. Interested readers can refer to 3GPP and 3GPP2 Web sites for new development information [4,5].

Table 2. Location Technologies

MA	Technology
Analog Mode (TIA's TR45.1)	A-GPS
CDMA (TIA's TR45.5)	A-GPS
	A-FLT
GSM (T1P1.5's LCS SWG for ETSI)	A-GPS
	E-OTD
	TOA (Network-based)
TDMA (TIA's TR45.3)	A-GPS

Note that A-FLT and E-OTD are described in the following section. LCS SWG stands for LoCation Services Sub-Working Group. Provided in Table 2 is a sampling of the technologies being considered by different standards organizations based on different multiple access (MA) techniques. In the following sections, we will discuss these technologies in detail.

A. Time Difference of Arrival (TDOA)

The main TDOA location technologies considered for GSM and CDMA are E-OTD (enhanced observed time difference) and A-FLT (advanced forward link trilateration). In the following subsections, we examine each of them more closely.

Same as the assisted GPS discussed shortly, when the position is calculated at the network, we call it a network-based MS-assisted TDOA solution. When the position is calculated at the handset, we call it a network-assisted MS-based TDOA solution. In general, MS-assisted solutions take less bandwidth to transmit position data from the network to the handset. Note that the “network-based” term used here may not have the same meaning as the one used in the recent rulings of the FCC. In the telecommunication standards literature, handset is often referred as mobile station (MS).

Enhanced Observed Time Difference (E-OTD)

E-OTD has been finalized by the GSM standard committees (T1P1.5 and ETIS) in LCS Release 98 and Release 99. Future releases will be handled by 3GPP. E-OTD is a TDOA positioning method based on the OTD feature already existing in GSM. The MS measures relative time of arrival of the signals from several BTSs (Base Transceiver Stations). The position of the MS is determined by trilateration (Figure 5).

There are three basic timing quantities associated with this method:

1) Observed Time Difference (OTD) is the time interval observed by an MS between the reception of signals (bursts) from two different Base Transceiver Stations (BTSs). If we denote t1 as the moment that a burst from the BTS 1 is received and t2 as the moment that a burst from the BTS 2 is received, the OTD value is the time difference, i.e., OTD = t2 - t1. If the two bursts arrive exactly at the same moment, the difference is zero, i.e., OTD = 0;
2) Real Time Difference (RTD) is the relative synchronization interval in the network between two BTSs. If we denote t3 as the moment that the BTS 1 sends a burst and t4 as the moment that the BTS 2 sends a burst, the RTD value is the difference of these moments, i.e., RTD = t4 - t3. If the BTSs transmit exactly at the same moment, the difference is zero, i.e., RTD = 0. This implies that we have a synchronized network;
3) Geometric Time Difference (GTD) is the time interval measured at the MS between bursts from two BTSs due to geometry. If we denote that d1 as the length of the propagation path between the BTS 1 and the MS, and d2 as the length of the path between the BTS 2 and the MS, the GTD value can be calculated as GTD = (d2 - d1) / c, where c is the speed of light. If the distances to the MS are the same for both BTSs, GTD = 0.

These quantities are related by:
GTD = OTD - RTD

Since the MS knows OTD, and RTD can be measured by an additional location measurement unit (LMU) in the infrastructure, we can calculate GTD as shown in the above equation. A constant GTD value between two BTSs defines a hyperbola. Intersection of two hyperbolas determines the location of the MS.

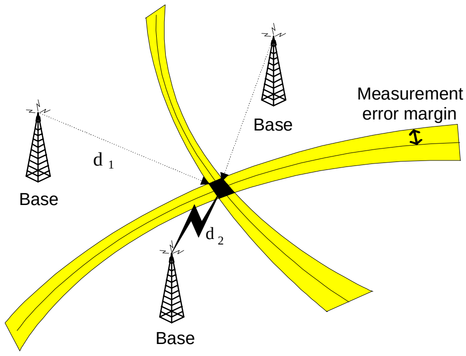

Figure 5. E-OTD: Hyperbolic Positioning.

Another method classified under E-OTD is a mixed TOA and TDOA approach. It measures the time of arrival of the signals from a BTS to the MS and to the network node LMU and uses the equation described below to derive the MS position.

There are five quantities associated with this method:
1) The observed time from a BTS to the MS (MOT) is a time measured against the internal clock of the MS;
2) The observed time from a BTS to the LMU (LOT) is a time measured against the internal clock of the LMU;
3) Time offset ε is the bias between the two internal clocks of the MS and LMU;
4) The distance from MS to BTS (DMB);
5) The distance from LMU to BTS (DLB).

These quantities are related by:
DMB - DLB = c (MOT - LOT + ε), where c is the speed of light.

There will be one such equation for each BTS. Since there are three unknowns (MS position x, y and clock offset ε), at least three BTSs are required to solve for the MS location x and y and the unknown clock offset ε. The position of the MS is determined by the intersection of circles centered on the BTSs common to observations made by the MS and LMUs (see Figure 6).

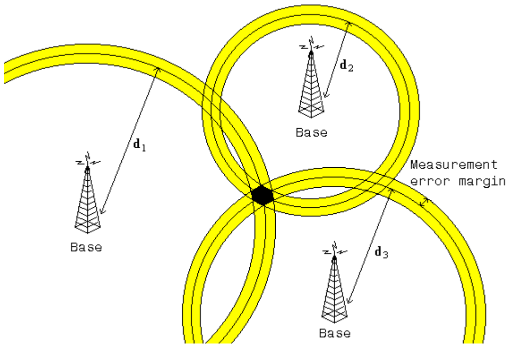

Figure 6. E-OTD: Circular Positioning.

The E-OTD method requires a minimum of three spatially distinct BTSs. All these BTSs must be detectable by the MS. More than three measurements generally produce better location accuracy. An implementation of the E-OTD method may require an LMU to BTS ratio between 1:3 and 1:5.

Advanced Forward Link Trilateration (A-FLT)

A-FLT has been standardized by the CDMA standard committee (TR45.5) [7]. The next LCS release will be handled by 3GPP2. Unlike GSM, CDMA (IS-95) is a time-synchronized system. Therefore, time difference measurement is easier than GSM. The basic idea of this method is to measure the time difference (phase delay) between CDMA pilot signal pairs. Each pair consists of the serving cell pilot and a neighboring pilot. The time difference is converted to the range information. Finally, the range data is used to form certain curves at which an intersection is defined for the MS location.

Although the name of this method implies that A-FLT is a handset-based solution, the location can be determined either at the MS or at the network. For an MS-based solution, the MS must determine the time difference of arrival among multiple pilot signals though its searcher. For a network-based solution, Pilot signal measurement message (PSMM) along the round-trip delay can be used to determine the time difference. Since the basic principle of this method is not much different than TDOA (or E-OTD), we will not discuss it in detail in this paper.

Challenges

For TDOA to work properly, additional location-determination software and hardware must be added to the network. In GSM standards literature, the hardware and associated element are named as location measurement unit (LMU). In CDMA standards literature, the software and associated device are called as position determination entity (PDE).

Many challenges exist. For GSM, one challenge is the unsynchronized nature of the network. Unsynchronized clocks in the network can make the accurate measurements of TDOA very difficult since 1 microsecond (one millionth of a second) time error could lead to a 300-meter position error. The primary purpose of the LMU is to provide a method of synchronization to the GSM system. For CDMA, GSM, and TDMA, the main challenge is the power control implemented for the smooth operation of the network. Power control means that the power of each individual MS must be carefully controlled so that no one is unnecessarily interfering with others who are sharing the same frequency or spreading code. To make TDOA-based methods work, at least three "hearable" BSs with good geometry are required. In some areas, this condition may not be satisfied easily. Even in an area that enough BSs are available, the power control mechanism may make the detection of the neighboring BSs more difficult. One choice is to utilize the power-up function (PUF), i.e., waking up the idle MS periodically for a very short period of time so the BSs can detect the signal from it. Recently, members of the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) have proposed to pause the transmission of the serving BS for a very short moment in order to make sure that the MS closest to it can hear the neighboring BSs. This could solve the problem caused by the power control mechanism.

B. Time of Arrival (TOA) in GSM

The real time of arrival (TOA) system determines the mobile phone position based on the intersection of the distance (or range) circle. To shorten this paper, we concentrate instead on the network-based TOA (or uplink TOA) which has been standardized in GSM [6].

This method is based on measuring the TOA of a known signal from the handset at three or more LMUs in the infrastructure. The known signal is the access burst generated by having the handset perform an asynchronous handover.

After signal measurement, the TDOA principle is used to determine the position of the MS. In other words, it calculates the time difference of at least two pairs of TOA signals and derives the MS position by hyperbolic trilateration. Therefore, it is a hybrid of TOA and TDOA methods. Its position calculation technique is very similar to E-OTD. The main difference is that the network-based TOA does its calculations at the infrastructure, while the MS-based E-OTD does its calculations at the MS.

One analysis has compared the uplink TOA and E-OTD methods [8]. It shows that the uplink TOA method is more effective at reducing noise and interference through correlation and burst averaging than E-OTD. On the other hand, higher deployment density (1:1 to 1:2) is expected of the E-OTD LMU due to the impact of RTD error on the MS location accuracy. We are led to believe that the second generation LMUs cannot be reused for W-CDMA. Listed in Table 3 is a summary of the main factors degrading the performance of both the uplink TOA and E-OTD.

Table 3. Error Sources in TOA and E-OTD

Source	TOA	E-OTD
Multipath	x	x
Noise and Interference	x	x
Clock Instabilities	x	x
Implementation Errors	x	x
Base Station Geometry	x	x
RTD Errors		x
No Benefit from Antenna Diversity		x
No Benefit from Frequency Hopping		x
No Benefit from Radio Motion in RTD Link		x
Does Not Function in Areas with Repeaters		x
Limited Signal Processing Capability in the Handset		x

C. Assisted-GPS

For classification, when the position is calculated at the network, we call it a network-based MS-assisted GPS solution. When the position is calculated at the handset, we call it a network-assisted MS-based GPS solution.

Despite the above classification of two assisted GPS solutions, their principles are the same. If the GPS receiver does not know its approximate location, it will not be able to determine the visible satellites or estimate the range and Doppler frequency of these satellites. It has to search the entire code phase and frequency spaces to locate the visible satellites. For the code phase space, it spans from 0 to 1023 chips. For the frequency space, it spans from –4.2 kHz to +4.2 kHz. The relative movements between the satellites and receiver make the search even more time-consuming. Therefore, the time-to-first-fix (TTFF) is one important parameter to evaluate the quality of a receiver. For autonomous GPS, the present state-of-the-art fix-time for an un-initialized GPS sensor is approximately 60 seconds. Clearly, this is unacceptable for certain applications such as E911. By transmitting assistance data over the cellular network, we can reduce the TTFF of a receiver to a few seconds. It is achieved by significantly reducing the search window of the code phase and frequency space by sending precise measurements of these parameters to the handset from the network. The reduction in search space allows the receiver to spend its search time focusing on where the signal is expected to be.

MS-Assisted GPS

The network-based MS-assisted solution shifts the majority of the traditional GPS receiver functions to the network processor. This method requires an antenna, RF section, and digital processor for making measurements by generating replica codes and correlating them with the received GPS signals. The network transmits a short assistance message to the mobile station (MS), consisting of time, visible satellite list, satellite signal Doppler, and code phase search window. These parameters help the embedded GPS sensor reduce the GPS acquisition time considerably. These assistance data are valid for a few minutes. It returns from the MS the pseudorange data processed by the GPS sensor. After receiving the pseudorange data, the corresponding network processor or location server estimates the position of the MS. The differential correction (DGPS) can be applied to the pseuo-range data or final result at the network side to improve the position accuracy.

MS-Based GPS

The network-assisted MS-based solution maintains a fully functional GPS receiver in the handset. This requires the same functionality as described in handset-assisted GPS, plus additional means for computing the positions of the satellites and ultimately the MS's position. This additional handset function generally adds to the handset's total memory (RAM, ROM) requirements in addition to the MIPS. In the initial start-up scenario, more data in the form of the precise satellite orbital elements (ephemeris) must be provided to the MS than for the network-based MS-assisted case. For the case of ephemeris data transmitted to the handset, this data is valid for two to four hours or more and can be updated as necessary over time, thus, once the handset has the data, subsequent updates are rare. Besides point-to-point transmission, it also includes using a broadcast channel to distribute this data efficiently to all handsets in a network. If better position accuracy is required for certain applications, differential correction (DGPS) data must be transmitted to the MS approximately every 30 seconds while SA is on. The final position of the MS is generated at the MS itself. The calculated MS location can then be sent to an application outside of the MS if required.

CONCLUSIONS

Mobile phone location determination activities have been intensified recently due to the October 1, 2001 deadline. Telecommunications standard organizations are busy incorporating the new location technologies into their standards, whether it is GSM, UMTS, CDMA, CDMA2000, W-CDMA or TDMA. Among the technologies discussed above, TDOA, and assisted-GPS solutions are the leading contenders for the current communication systems. Once these technologies are finalized in various standards organizations, the location-capable phone will hit the market soon. The location-based services will certainly follow. Besides wireless E911, these services may include location-sensitive billing, location tracking, location-based advertisement, and information services such as navigation, weather, and points of interest. As we learned, these systems will be less and less complex while providing more convenient and attractive services.

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