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**Alberson et al.**

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(54) **LOCKING HOOK BOLT AND METHOD FOR USING SAME**

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(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **256/13.1; 256/32; 256/47**

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256/47, 13.1

(57) **ABSTRACT**

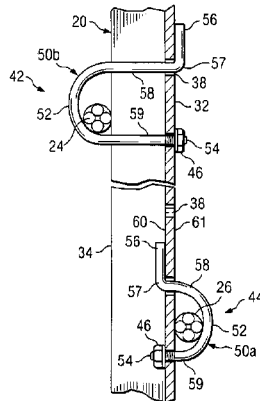
A locking hook bolt, which may be used for securing cable to support posts in guardrail assemblies, and a method for using the same are provided. The locking hook bolt includes a first leg, a second leg, and an arcuate portion coupling the first and second legs such that the second leg extends generally parallel with, and spaced apart from, the first leg. A locking portion configured to engage a support post extends from, and forms an angle of approximately 90 degrees with, the second leg. The first leg of the locking hook bolt includes a threaded portion opposite the arcuate portion.

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**13 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets**



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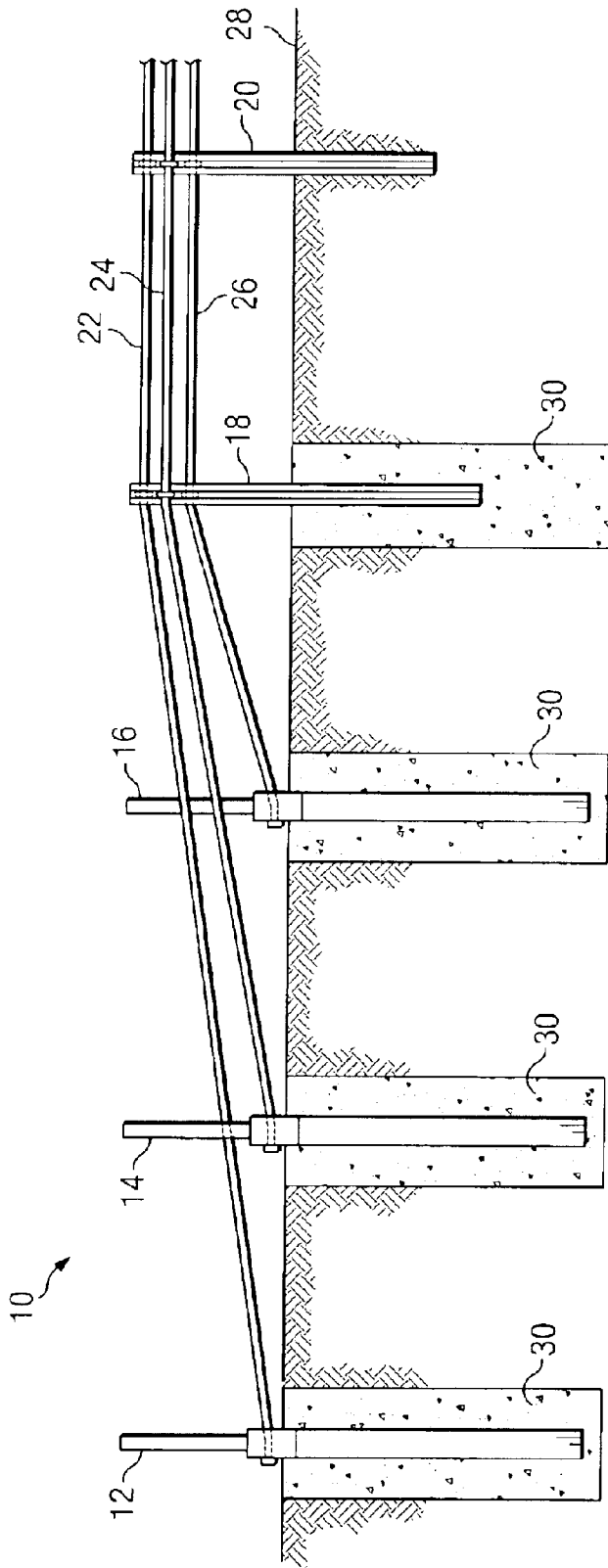


FIG. 1

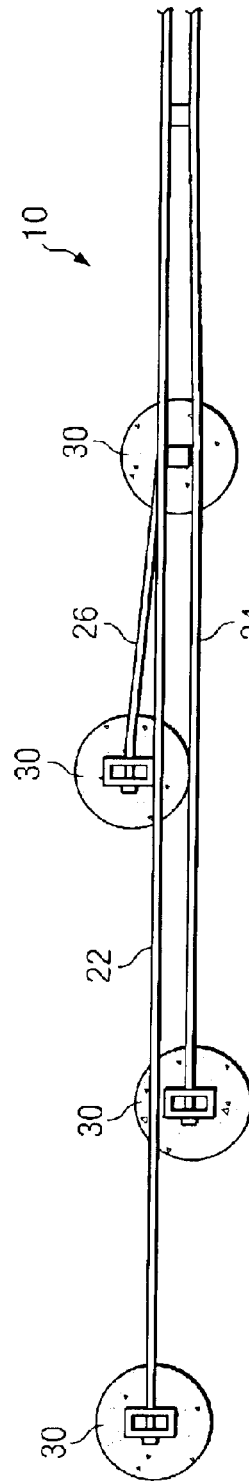


FIG. 2

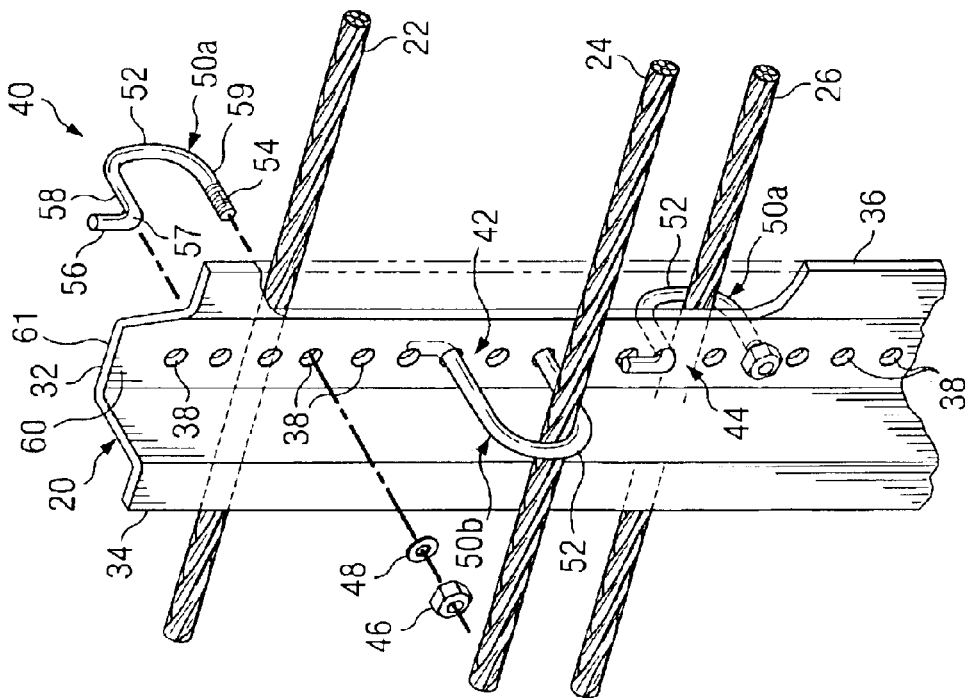


FIG. 3

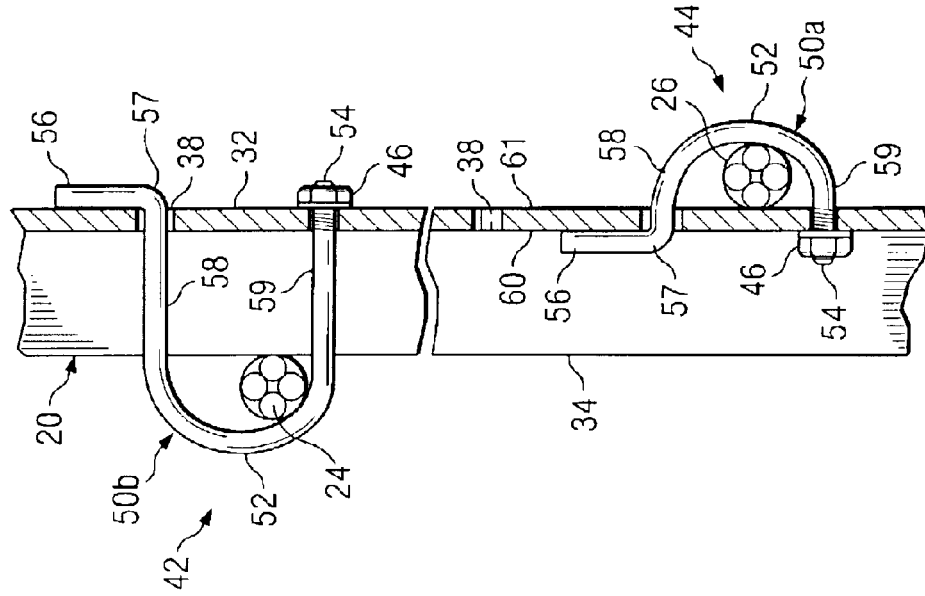
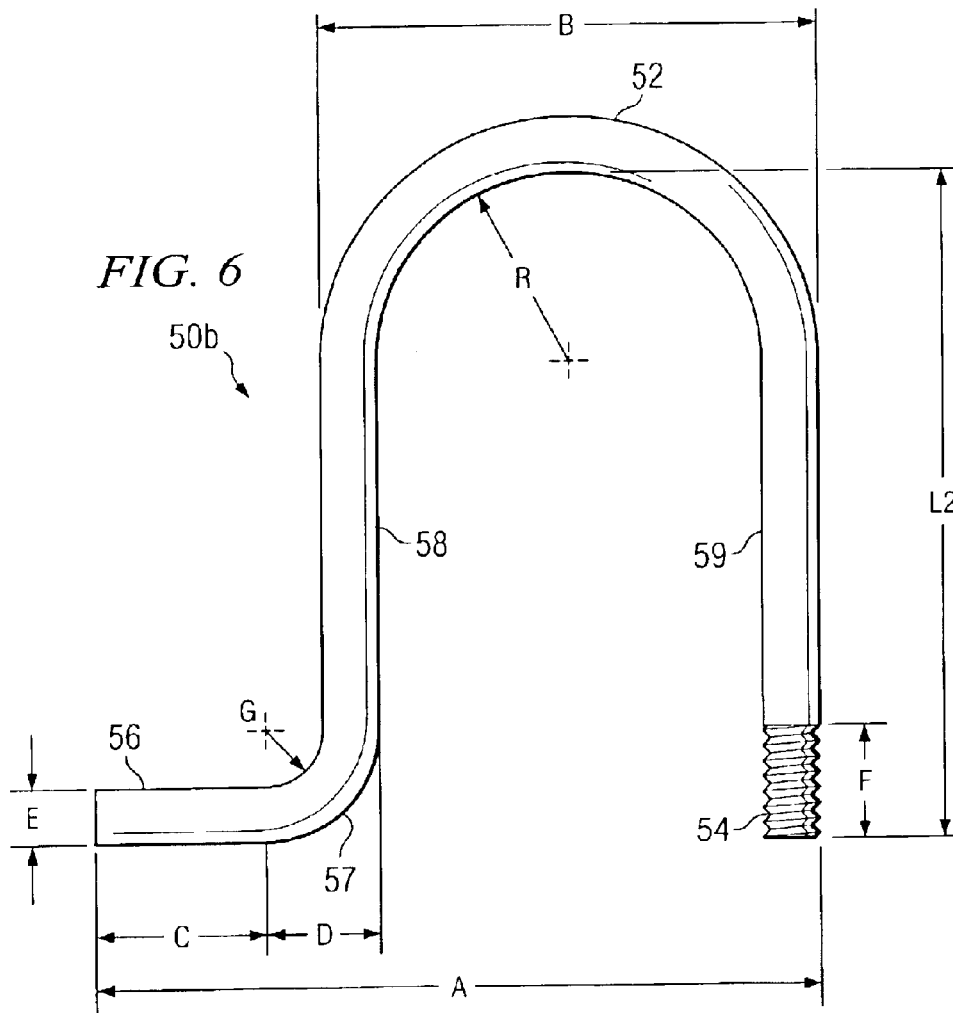
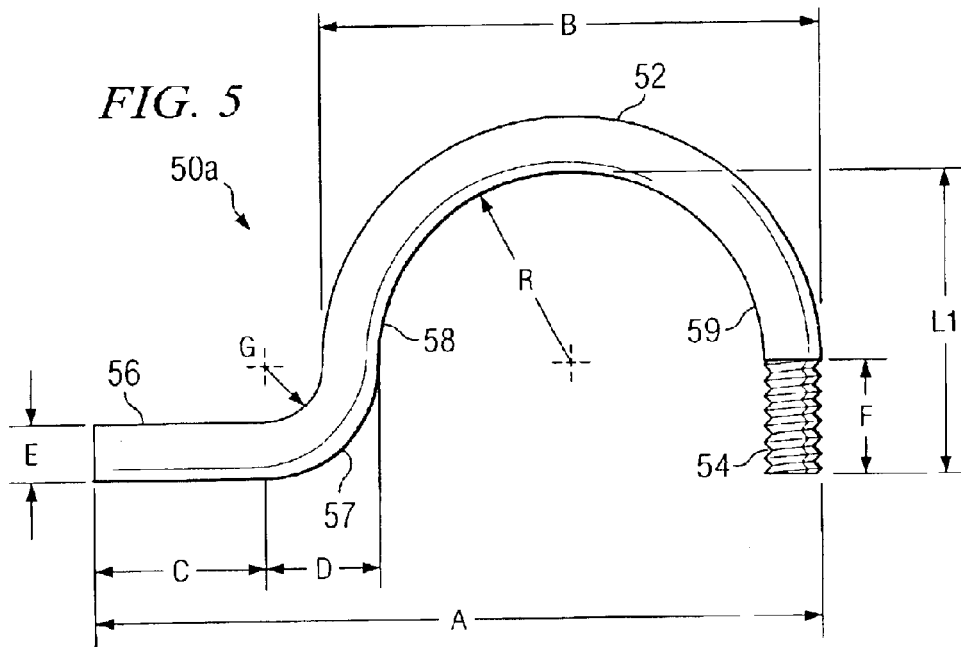


FIG. 4



## LOCKING HOOK BOLT AND METHOD FOR USING SAME

### RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Ser. No. 10/355,601, filed Jan. 30, 2003, entitled Cable Guardrail Release System. The present application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/380,549 filed May 14, 2002 entitled Locking Hook Bolt, U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/380,632 filed May 15, 2002, entitled Cable Guardrail Terminal, and U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/353,000 filed Jan. 30, 2002, entitled Cable Guardrail Terminal.

### TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates in general to field of bolt assemblies and, in particular, to a locking hook bolt and a method for using the same.

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Guardrail systems are commonly used along highways and other roadways to prevent or reduce damage to vehicles and their occupants when they leave the road. These guardrails are designed to redirect the vehicle back onto the roadway and absorb the energy from the errant vehicle in a controlled manner.

One such guardrail design employs cables or wire ropes strung between, and coupled to, a plurality of support posts to restrain vehicles to the road. These cables or wire ropes may be coupled to the support post using a variety of bolt members, such as "J-shaped" bolts or other hook-type bolt members. In this manner, the cables distribute the force of the impact of an errant vehicle among the support posts to which they are coupled.

Despite their widespread use, some previous cable guardrail systems have suffered from a variety of problems relating to the premature release of the cables from the support posts due to the failure of the bolt members employed to fasten the cables. Due to this premature release, the force of the impact of an errant vehicle is distributed among fewer support posts than originally intended. This can lead to increased deflection of the system, increasing guardrail maintenance costs and leaving the guardrail systems less able to withstand subsequent impacts from other errant vehicles.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the present invention, a locking hook bolt, which may be used for securing cable to support posts in guardrail assemblies, and a method for using the same are provided. The locking hook bolt comprises a first leg, a second leg, and an arcuate portion coupling the first and second legs such that the second leg extends generally parallel with, and spaced apart from, the first leg. A locking portion configured to engage a support post extends from the second leg, forming an angle of approximately 90 degrees with the second leg. On the opposite end of the locking hook bolt, the first leg of the locking hook bolt includes a threaded portion opposite the arcuate portion, which may be threadably coupled with a nut, with or without a lock washer.

A technical advantage of particular embodiments of the present invention includes the ability to create a stronger connection to support posts due to the shape of the locking hook bolt along with its threaded portion, which secure both ends of the locking hook bolt to the support post. This permits the strength of the post to be fully utilized to

dissipate the energy of an errant vehicle before the release of the wire ropes from the support post.

Another technical advantage of particular embodiments of the present invention is a reduction in the number of premature releases of wire ropes upon impact by errant vehicles. This allows more of the load from an errant vehicle to be transmitted to more adjacent support posts, spreading the load among more support posts and, thus, decreasing system deflections upon impact by errant vehicles.

Yet another technical advantage of particular embodiments of the present invention is that the strength of the locking hook bolt can be adjusted to match the strength of the support post. This can be accomplished by varying the material properties or diameter of the steel round stock from which the locking hook bolt is fabricated, and/or adjusting the length of the locking portion extending from the second leg of the locking hook bolt. In this manner, the strength of the post may be more fully utilized, but the cable is allowed to release from the support post as the capacity of the post is reached. This not only prevents the premature release of the cable from the support post, but also prevents the cable from being pulled down as the support post deforms, thus reducing the potential for vehicles to override the system.

Other technical advantages will be readily apparent to one skilled in the art from the following figures, descriptions, and claims. Moreover, while specific advantages have been enumerated above, various embodiments may include all, some, or none of the enumerated advantages.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a more complete understanding of the present invention and its advantages, reference is now made to the following descriptions, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates a side-view of a cable guardrail system that incorporates a locking hook bolt assembly, in accordance with a particular embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 illustrates a top-view of the cable guardrail system depicted in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 illustrates a close-up, isometric, partially exploded view of the upper end of a "U-shaped" support post depicting a manner of securing cables to the support post using locking hook bolt assemblies;

FIG. 4 illustrates a side-view of the arrangement depicted in FIG. 3;

FIG. 5 illustrates a side-view of a locking hook bolt member in accordance with a particular embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 6 illustrates a side-view of an alternative locking hook bolt member in accordance with a particular embodiment of the present invention.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with particular embodiments of the present invention, a locking hook bolt and method for using the same are provided. The locking hook bolt allows cable to be securely fastened to a support post in a guardrail system that is used to restrain errant vehicles to a roadway, such that the overall instances of premature release and system deflections are reduced. This is due, at least in part, to the fact that the shape of the bolt, in connection with its threaded section, serves to create a stronger connection to the support posts.

FIG. 1 illustrates a portion of a cable guardrail system 10, in accordance with a particular embodiment of the present

invention, in which a plurality of locking hook bolts are used to secure a plurality of cables to the support posts of the guardrail assembly. Cable guardrail system **10** may be installed adjacent to a roadway to protect vehicles, drivers, and passengers from various obstacles and hazards and to prevent vehicles from leaving the roadway during a traffic accident or other hazardous condition. Furthermore, cable guardrail systems in accordance with embodiments of the present invention may be used in median strips or shoulders of highways, roadways, or any path that is likely to encounter vehicular traffic.

As shown in FIG. 1, the illustrated portion of cable guardrail system **10** includes intermediate support posts **18** and **20** and cable release anchor posts **12**, **14**, and **16**. Intermediate support posts **18** and **20** provide support to upper cable **22**, middle cable **24**, and lower cable **26**, all of which may comprise wire rope, such as 19 mm (0.748 in) diameter 3×7 wire rope, or other types of cables or steel strands. Although only three cables are illustrated, it should also be recognized by one of ordinary skill in the art that other embodiments may include other numbers of cables, as well. Furthermore, for the purposes of this application, cable refers to cable, wire rope, and/or steel strands.

Cable guardrail system **10** also includes a plurality of cable release anchor posts **12**, **14**, and **16**. Cables **22**, **24**, and **26** are each anchored by, or coupled to, cable release anchor posts **12**, **14**, and **16**, respectively, proximate ground surface **28**. However, other embodiments may include other numbers of cable release anchor posts, as well as other number of cables. Furthermore, cable guardrail release systems in accordance with other embodiments may also include terminal systems with more than one cable coupled to a single cable release anchor post.

In addition to being secured to a cable release anchor post, each of cables **22**, **24**, and **26** are also secured to intermediate support posts **18** and **20**, which support the cables in a generally horizontal and parallel relation above ground surface **28**.

In the illustrated embodiment, cable release anchor posts **12**, **14**, and **16**, and intermediate support post **18** are securely anchored in concrete footers **30**. However, other embodiments may utilize other methods to secure the support or anchor posts to a ground surface, as shown by intermediate post **20** which is merely inserted into ground surface **28**. Other embodiments may also utilize sleeves, foundation tubes, ground struts, or trapezoidal soil plates to accomplish a similar result.

FIG. 2 illustrates a top view of the portion of the cable guardrail system shown in FIG. 1. As shown in this particular embodiment, upper cable **22** and lower cable **26** are secured to one side of intermediate support posts **18** and **20**, while middle cable **24** is secured to the other side of intermediate support posts **18** and **20**. This configuration may be particularly suited for installation in a median. Cables in other embodiments may be secured to support posts in other ways or configurations, as well. For example, in some embodiments each cable may be secured to the traffic side of the intermediate support posts. Such a configuration may be particularly suited for roadside, as opposed to median, installation.

Of course, it should be understood that cable release anchor posts **12**, **14**, and **16** of FIGS. 1 and 2 make up only one terminal of a complete cable guardrail release system **10**. Thus, cable guardrail release system **10** may include an opposite terminal that includes a number of cable release anchor posts and one or more intermediate support posts

between the terminals. Such opposite terminal may be constructed in essentially the same manner as the terminal illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2. The portion of a guardrail system between and including the intermediate support posts is referred to in the art as the system's "length of need." Thus, the length of need section of a cable guardrail safety system may include the intermediate support posts of the system as well as the portions of the cables that run between the intermediate support posts, such as the portions of cables **22**, **24**, and **26** that run between intermediate support posts **18** and **20** and any other intermediate support post of the system.

FIG. 3 illustrates an isometric view of a portion of intermediate support post **20**, also shown in FIG. 1 and 2. A side-view of a portion intermediate support post **20** is shown in FIG. 4.

As shown in FIG. 3, intermediate support post **20** includes an approximately "U-shaped" cross-section with a central web portion **32** and a pair of oppositely directed flanges **34** and **36**. It should be understood by those of skill in the art, however, that support posts having other cross-sections may also be used, including "C-shaped", "Z-shaped", "I-shaped", "S-shaped", "L-shaped", "M-shaped", and "W-shaped" support posts. A plurality of apertures **38** are disposed through the central web portion **32** of support post **20**.

Upper and lower cables **22** and **26** run along and are secured to one side of support post **20**, side **61**, while middle cable **24** runs along and is secured to an opposite side of support post **20**, side **60**. This arrangement helps to accommodate impacts on either side of cable guardrail system **10** (FIG. 1). Such impacts on either side of the cable guardrail system might be expected when the system is installed in a median. Alternatively, other embodiments of the present invention may employ cables secured to one (the same) side of a support post. Such an arrangement helps to accommodate impacts on one side of the cable guardrail system, which might be expected when the system is installed along a roadway.

Cables **22**, **24**, and **26** are reversibly secured to support post **20** by locking hook bolt assemblies **40**, **42**, and **44**, respectively. Each of the assemblies **40**, **42**, **44** comprises a bolt member **50** having a generally cylindrical, unitary body, which may be constructed of  $\frac{5}{16}$  inch diameter round, Rockwell A Hardness 60 field material, or some other suitable material.

Each bolt member **50** includes a first leg **59** and a second leg **58**, which extends generally parallel with, and spaced apart from first leg **59**. First leg **59** and second leg **58** are coupled by a U-shaped, arcuate portion **52**. Opposite this arcuate portion **52**, first leg **59** includes a threaded portion **54**, to which a nut **46** may be threadably affixed. Additionally, a lock washer **48** may optionally be used in coupling nut **46** to bolt member **50**.

Particular embodiments of the locking hook bolt may also include a shoulder (not illustrated) disposed between threaded portion **54** and the remainder of the first leg **59**. This shoulder may be configured to engage one side of central web **32** while nut **46** engages the other side of the central web. As such, the shoulder helps to form a stronger, more rigid coupling between support post **20** and bolt member **50**. Alternatively, in place of a shoulder, other embodiments of the locking hook bolt may use a second nut (not illustrated) coupled with threaded portion **54** to serve a similar purpose. Like the addition of a shoulder, the addition of the second nut also helps to form a stronger, more rigid coupling between support post **20** and bolt member **50**.



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Opposite threaded portion **54**, each bolt member **50** also includes a substantially straight, locking portion **56** that forms an approximately 90 degree angle with second leg **58** by virtue of bend **57**, and which is configured to engage support post **20** of guardrail system **10**.

In operation, locking hook bolt members **50** cooperate to secure cables **22**, **24**, and **26** to the support post **20** of guardrail system **10**. For each of the cables **22**, **24**, **26**, the arcuate portions **52** of the bolt members **50** are placed adjacent the body of the cable to be secured.

To install a locking hook bolt assembly **40**, **42**, or **44**, the locking portion **56** of the bolt member **50** is inserted through one of the apertures **38** in support post **20**. The bolt member **50** is then rotated downwardly (or upwardly depending upon the direction of insertion) so that bend **57** is disposed within the aperture. The threaded portion **54** is then inserted through a respective aperture **38** proximate the aperture through which locking portion **56** is inserted. Washer **48** and nut **46** are then coupled to threaded portion **54** to secure bolt member **50** to support post **20**.

FIGS. **3** and **4** also illustrate two varieties of bolt members **50**, which are referred to herein as bolt members **50a** and **50b**, respectively. The difference between the two varieties is best shown in FIG. **4**. As is apparent from the illustration, first and second legs **59** and **58** of bolt member **50a** are shorter in length than the first and second legs **59** and **58** of bolt member **50b**. This is due to the fact that the lengths of legs **58** and **59** of bolt members **50a** and **50b** are chosen to allow the bolt members to couple cables to support post **20** in two different orientations.

The lengths of legs **58** and **59** of bolt member **50a** are selected to allow locking portion **56** of bolt member **50a** to engage side **60** of central web **32** while arcuate portion **52** of bolt member **50a** extends beyond the opposite side of the central web **32**, side **61**, by an amount sufficient to couple cable **26** to that side, securing the cable within arcuate portion **52**.

In contrast, legs **58** and **59** of bolt member **50b** are selected to allow locking portion **56** of bolt member **50b** to engage side **61** of central web **32**, while arcuate portion **52** of bolt member **50b** extends beyond flanges **34** and **36** by an amount sufficient to couple cable **24** with the flanges, securing the cable within the arcuate portion **52**.

Because of these different lengths of legs **58** and **59** of bolt members **50**, bolt member **50b** is suitable for securing a cable in intimate contact with the flanges **34** and **36** of support post **20**, whereas bolt member **50a** is suitable for securing a cable in intimate contact with the central web **32** of support post **20**.

FIG. **5** and **6** further illustrate bolt members **50a** and **50b**, respectively. A comparison of FIGS. **5** and **6** shows that the lengths **L1** of each of the legs **58** and **59** of bolt member **50a** are approximately half as long (as measured from the inside of the center of the curved portion to the ends of legs **58** and **59**) as the lengths **L2** of each of the legs **58** and **59** of bolt member **50b**. Aside from that difference, bolt members **50a** and **50b** are constructed identically to one another, including featuring the same radius **R**. Thus, as illustrated in FIGS. **5** and **6**, the leg length **L1** of bolt member **50a** is approximately equal to the radius **R** of arcuate portion **52** of bolt member **50a**, whereas the leg length **L2** of bolt member **50b** is greater than the radius of arcuate portion **52** of bolt member **50b**, being at least approximately twice the radius **R**.

As mentioned above, these differing leg lengths **L1** and **L2** make bolt members **50a** and **50b** suitable for securing

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cable to support post **20** in different orientations. The greater leg length **L2** of bolt member **50b** makes bolt member **50b** suitable for securing a cable in intimate contact with flanges **34** and **36** of support post **20**, as opposed to the central web **32**. The lesser leg length **L1** of bolt member **50a**, on the other hand, makes bolt member **50a** suitable for securing a cable in intimate contact with central web **32**, as opposed to flanges **34** and **36**. Of course, it should be understood by those skilled in the art that the lengths legs **58** and **59** of the bolt members **50** may vary depending upon the material thickness, type, and geometry of the support post **20** and still be within the teachings of the present invention.

In particular embodiments of bolt members **50a** and **50b**, the diameter **E** of the bolt member may be 8 mm ( $\frac{5}{16}$  in). Locking portion **56** may have a length **C** of 22 mm ( $\frac{7}{8}$  in). The radius **G** of bend **57** may be 7 mm ( $\frac{1}{4}$  in), such that bend **57** has a longitudinal length **D** of 15 mm ( $\frac{9}{16}$  in). The radius **R** of arcuate section **52** may be 21.5 mm ( $\frac{7}{8}$  in), such that arcuate portion **52** has a longitudinal length **B** of 59 mm ( $2\frac{5}{16}$  in). These dimensions result in bolt member **50** having an overall longitudinal length **H** of 88 mm ( $3\frac{7}{16}$  in). Additionally, as mentioned above, bolt members **50a** and **50b** differ in that the two bolt members have different leg lengths **L1** and **L2**, respectively. In particular embodiments, such as those described above, **L1** may have a length of 38.5 mm ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  in), while **L2** may have a length of 76.5 mm (3 in). Lastly, threaded portion **54** may have a length **F** of 17 mm ( $1\frac{1}{16}$  in) or longer. Of course, these dimensions are provided for illustration and example only. It should be recognized by one of ordinary skill in the art that bolt members may have other dimensions and still be within the teachings of the present invention.

Once installed, the locking hook bolt assembly of the present invention provides a stronger connection between the cables **22**, **24**, and **26** and support post **20**, proving more effective in preventing the cables **22**, **24**, **26** from being disconnected or knocked loose from the supporting posts when impacted by a vehicle or other object. Only when a predetermined load is applied will the bolt release, either by the shearing of the bolt or by the straightening of the locking portion **56** of the bolt. As a result, premature failures of the bolt members are greatly reduced. This allows the cable guardrail system to use more of the available section modulus of the support posts, while releasing prior to creating vehicle override or stability problems through snagging at support post locations. This allows more of the load to be transmitted to more of the adjacent support posts, thus significantly reducing overall system deflections upon impact by errant vehicles and increasing the safety of the guardrail system. Use of the locking hook bolt system also reduces maintenance after a collision by keeping the cables affixed to more posts, and helps keep the cables in a better position to accommodate a subsequent impact prior to repair of the system.

Additionally, the strength of the locking hook bolt can be adjusted to match the strength of the support post. This can be accomplished by varying the material properties or diameter of the steel round stock from which the locking hook bolt is fabricated, and/or adjusting the length of the locking portion extending from the second leg of the locking hook bolt. In this manner, the strength of the post may be more fully utilized, but the cable is allowed to release from the support post as the capacity of the post is reached. This not only prevents the premature release of the cable from the support post, but also prevents the cable from being pulled down as the support post deforms, thus reducing the potential for vehicles to override the system.

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Although a preferred embodiment of the method and apparatus of the present invention has been illustrated in the accompanying drawings and described in the foregoing detailed description, it will be understood that the invention is not limited to the embodiment disclosed, but is capable of numerous rearrangements, modifications, and substitutions without departing from the spirit of the invention as set forth and defined by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A guardrail assembly, comprising:

a support post;

a first locking hook bolt operable to couple a first cable to the support post;

the first locking hook bolt having a first leg, a second leg extending generally parallel with and spaced apart from, the first leg, an arcuate portion coupling the first leg and the second leg, and a locking portion extending from, and forming an angle of approximately 90 degrees with, the second leg;

the locking portion of the first locking hook bolt being configured to engage the support post; and

the first leg of the first locking hook bolt having a threaded portion at an end of the first leg of the first locking hook bolt that is opposite the arcuate portion of the first locking hook bolt.

2. The guardrail assembly of claim 1, wherein a first length of the first leg and a second length of the second leg are approximately equal.

3. The guardrail assembly of claim 1, wherein a first length of the first leg and a second leg are each approximately twice a radius of the arcuate portion.

4. The guardrail assembly of claim 1, wherein a first length of the first leg and a second leg are each approximately equal to a radius of the arcuate portion.

5. The guardrail assembly of claim 3, wherein the first length of the first leg and the second length of the second leg are selected to allow the arcuate portion to extend beyond a flange of the support post by an amount sufficient to couple a cable with the flange, and secure the cable within the arcuate portion.

6. The guardrail assembly of claim 3, wherein the first length of the first leg and the second length of the second leg are selected to allow the arcuate portion to extend beyond a second surface of the central web by an amount sufficient to couple a cable with the second surface of the central web, and secure the cable within the arcuate portion.

7. The guardrail assembly of claim 1, further comprising a nut threadably coupled with the threaded portion of the first leg, the nut being configured and positioned to engage a surface of the support post to couple the first leg to the support post.

8. The locking hook bolt of claim 7, further comprising a lock washer coupled with the first leg, intermediate the surface of the support post and the nut.

9. The guardrail assembly of claim 1, wherein a first length of the first leg and a second length of the second leg are selected to allow the locking portion to engage a first surface of a central web of the support post and to allow the arcuate portion to extend beyond a flange of the support post by an amount sufficient to couple the first cable with the flange, and secure the first cable within the arcuate portion.

10. The guardrail assembly of claim 1, wherein a first length of the first leg and a second length of the second leg are selected to allow the locking portion to engage a first surface of a central web of the support post and to allow the arcuate portion to extend beyond a second surface of the

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central web by an amount sufficient to couple the first cable with the second surface, and secure the first cable within the arcuate portion.

11. The guardrail assembly of claim 1, further comprising: a second locking hook bolt operable to couple a second cable to the support post;

the second locking hook bolt having a first leg, a second leg extending generally parallel with, and spaced apart from, the first leg, an arcuate portion coupling the first leg and the second leg, and a locking portion extending from, and forming an angle of approximately 90 degrees with, the second leg;

the locking portion of the second locking hook bolt being configured to engage the support post; and

the first leg of the second locking hook bolt having a threaded portion at an end of the first leg of the second locking hook bolt that is opposite the arcuate portion of the second locking hook bolt.

12. The guardrail assembly of claim 11, wherein a first length of the first leg of the first locking hook bolt and a second length of the second leg of the first locking hook bolt are selected to allow the locking portion of the first locking hook bolt to engage a first surface of a central web of the support post and to allow the arcuate portion of the first locking hook bolt to extend beyond a flange of the support post by an amount sufficient to couple the first cable with the flange, and secure the first cable within the arcuate portion of the first locking hook bolt; and

wherein a first length of the first leg of the second locking hook bolt and a second length of the second leg of the second locking hook bolt are selected to allow the locking portion of the second locking hook bolt to engage a second surface of a central web of the support post and to allow the arcuate portion to extend beyond the first surface of the central web by an amount sufficient to couple the second cable with the first surface, and secure the second cable within the arcuate portion of the second locking hook bolt.

13. A guardrail assembly, comprising:

a support post;

a first locking hook bolt operable to couple a first cable with the support post;

a second locking hook bolt operable to couple a second cable with the support post;

the first and second locking hook bolts each having a first leg, a second leg extending generally parallel with, and spaced apart from, the first leg, an arcuate portion coupling the first leg and the second leg, and a locking portion extending from, and forming an angle of approximately 90 degrees with, the second leg;

the locking portion of each of the first and second locking hook bolts being configured to engage the support post;

the first leg of each of the first and second locking hook bolts having a threaded portion at an end of the first end of the first or second locking hook bolt, respectively, that is opposite the arcuate portion;

wherein a first length of the first leg of the first locking hook bolt and a second length of the second leg of the first locking hook bolt are selected to allow the locking portion of the first locking hook bolt to engage a first surface of a central web of the support post and to allow the arcuate portion of the first locking hook bolt to extend beyond a flange of the support post by an amount sufficient to couple the first cable with the flange, and secure the first cable within the arcuate portion of the first locking hook bolt; and

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wherein a first length of the first leg of the second locking hook bolt and a second length of the second leg of the second locking hook bolt are selected to allow the locking portion of the second locking hook bolt to engage a second surface of a central web of the support post and to allow the arcuate portion to extend beyond

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the first surface of the central web by an amount sufficient to couple the second cable with the first surface, and secure the second cable within the arcuate portion of the second locking hook bolt.

\* \* \* \* \*

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE  
**CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION**

PATENT NO. : 6,948,703 B2  
DATED : September 27, 2005  
INVENTOR(S) : Dean C. Alberson et al.

Page 1 of 1

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:


Column 7,

Lines 31 and 34, after "first leg" insert -- second length of the --.

Line 53, after "The" delete "locking hook bolt" and insert -- guardrail assembly --.

Signed and Sealed this

Fourth Day of April, 2006

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light gray dotted background. The signature reads "Jon W. Dudas" in a cursive style.

JON W. DUDAS

*Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office*