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(54) **CABLE ANCHOR BRACKET**
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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 192 days.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **256/13.1**; 404/6; 404/10

According to one embodiment, a cable anchor system for an end terminal includes a cable anchor bracket configured to couple to a guardrail, in which the cable anchor bracket includes a flat plate having an aperture formed therein and a plurality of protrusions extending from a plane containing the aperture. The protrusions are configured to releasably engage the guardrail.

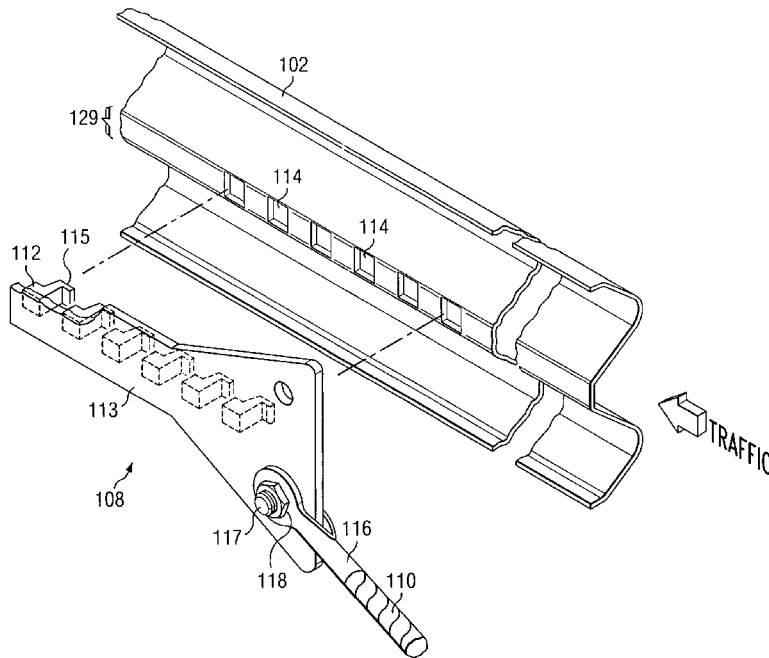
(58) **Field of Classification Search** 404/6, 404/9, 10; 256/13.1; 114/294
See application file for complete search history.

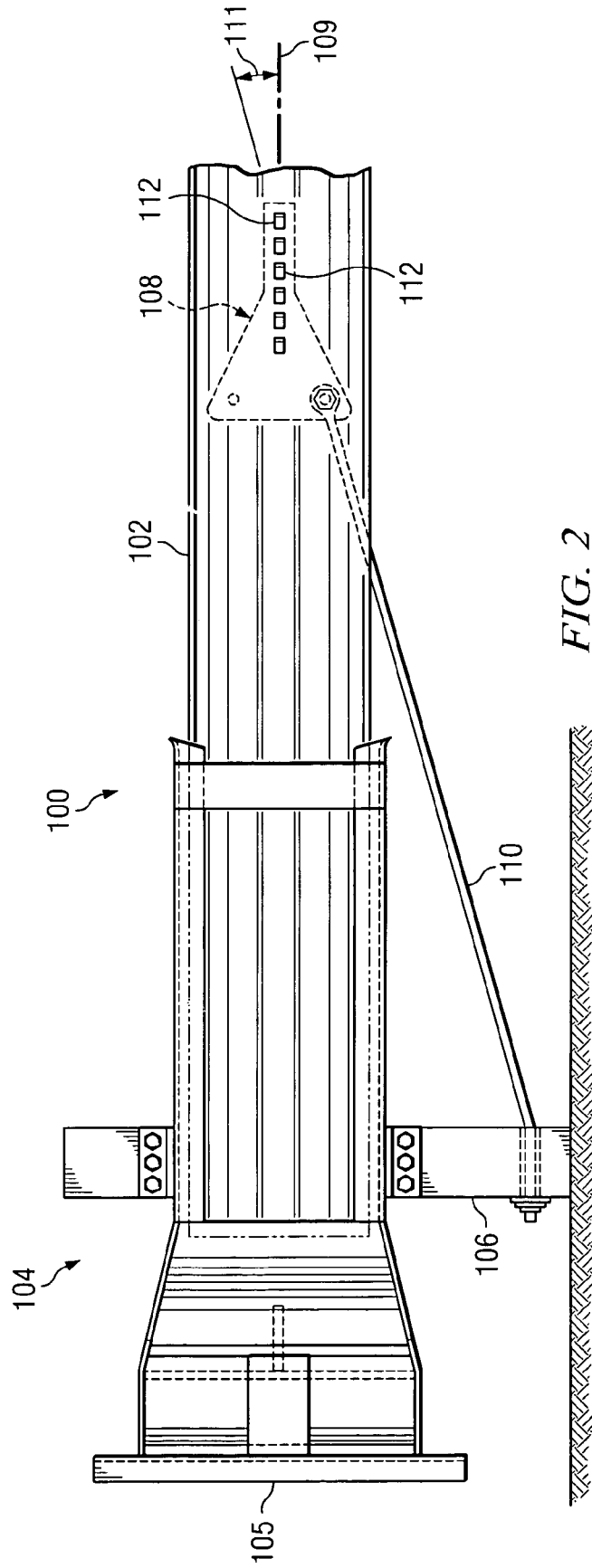
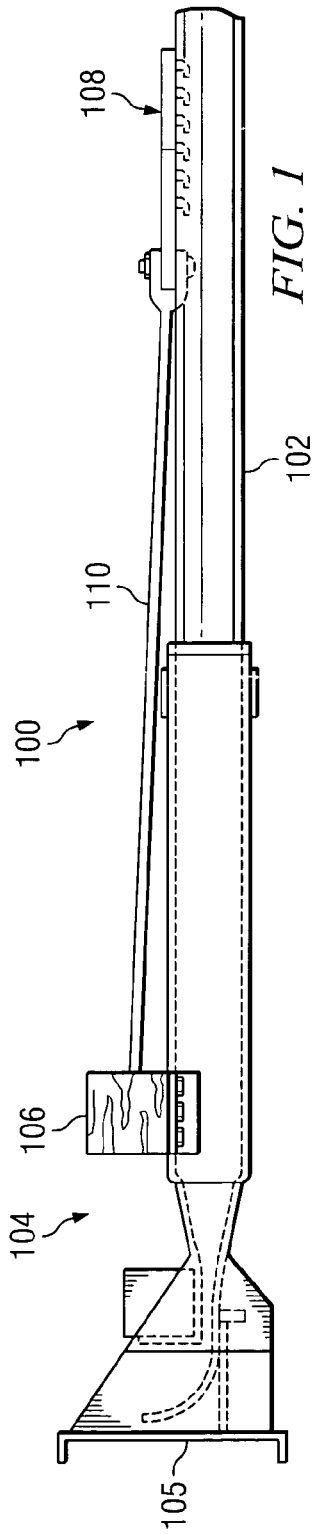
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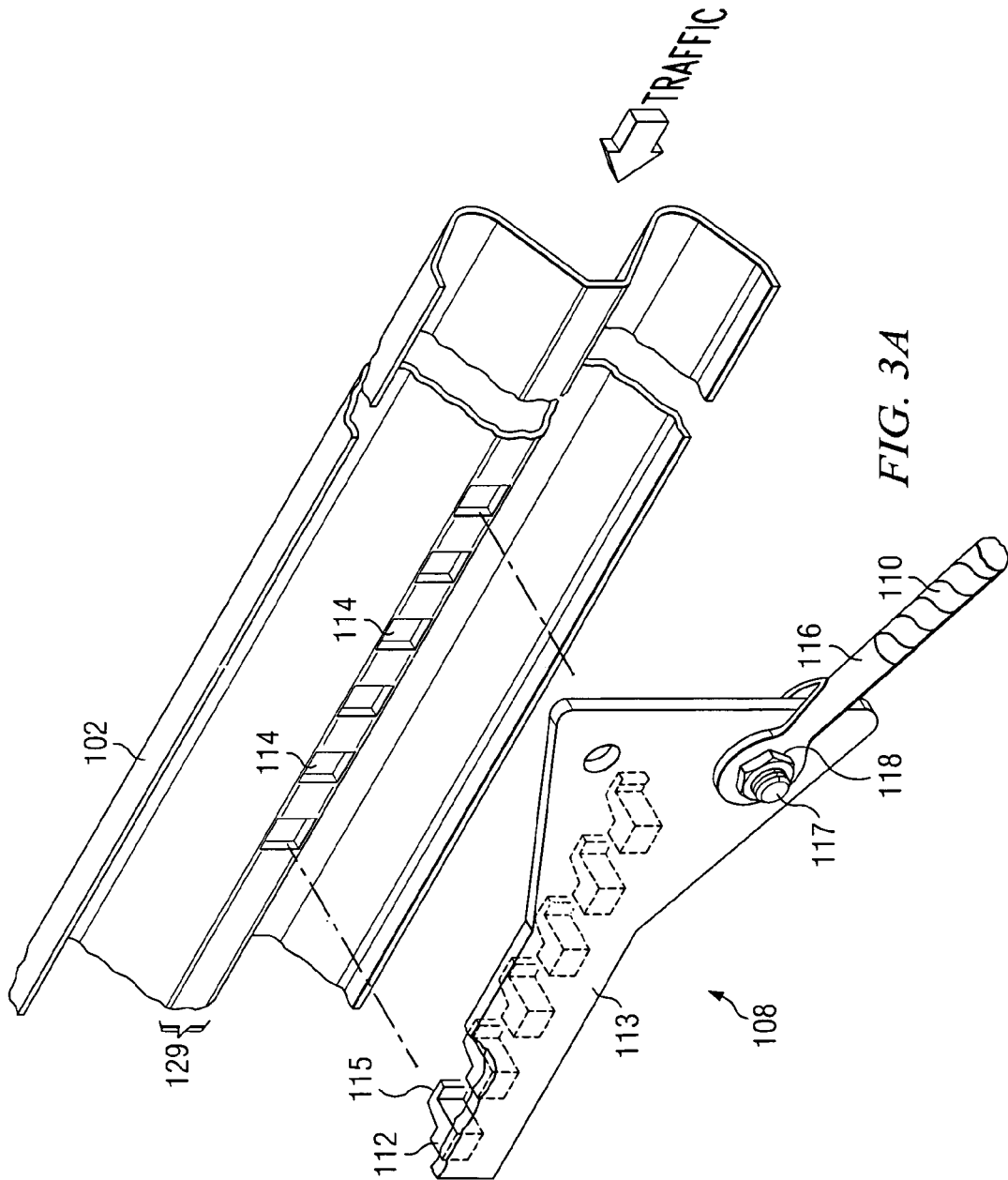
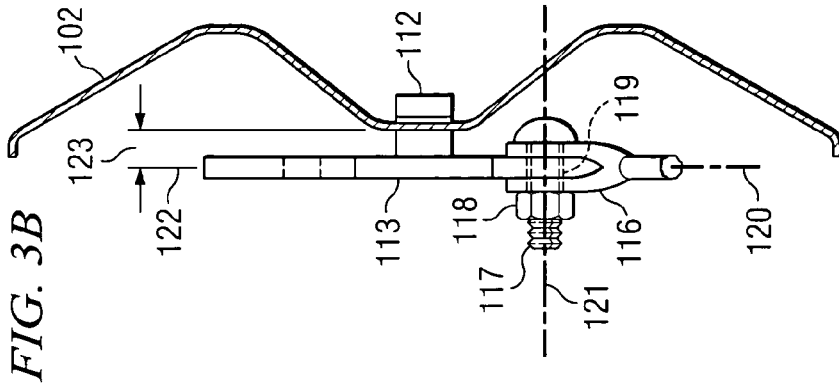
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16 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets







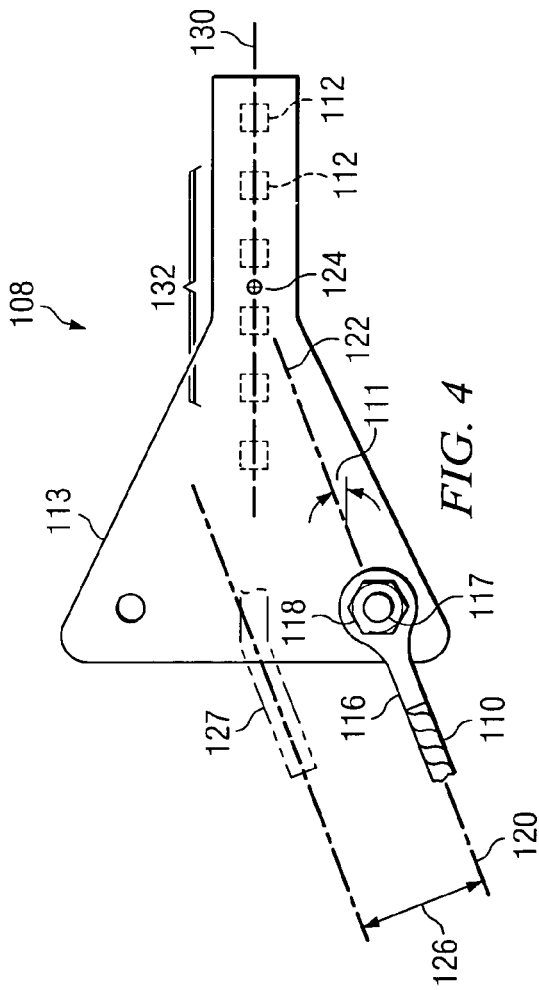


FIG. 4

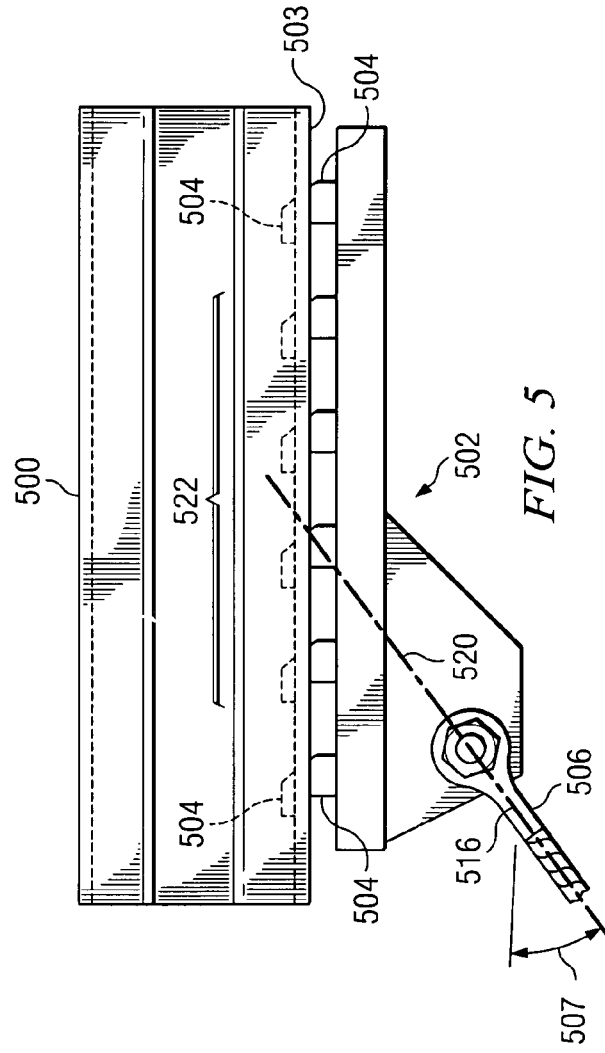


FIG. 5

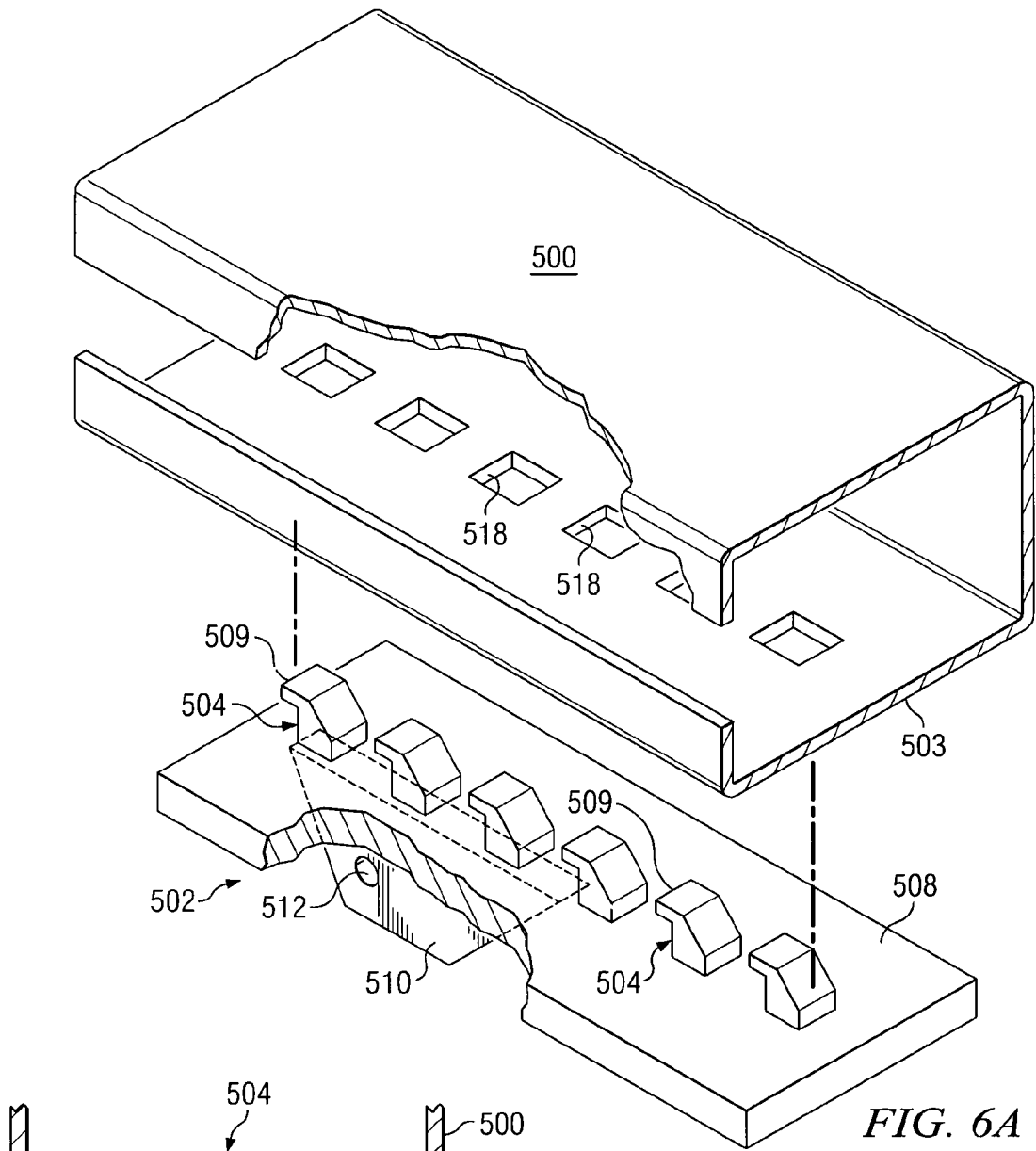


FIG. 6A

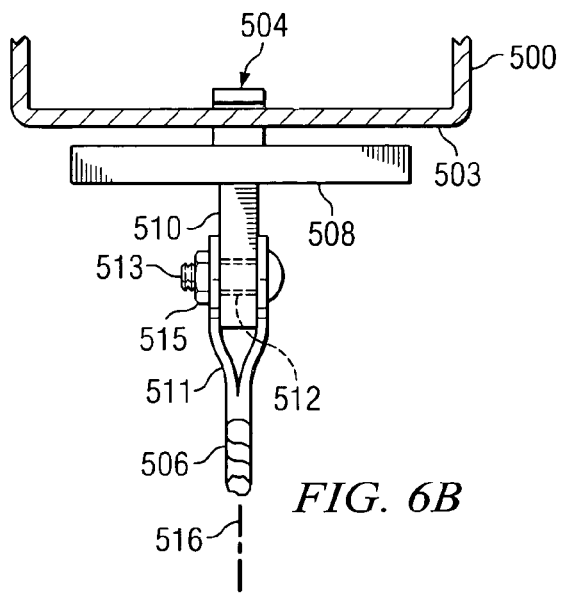


FIG. 6B

CABLE ANCHOR BRACKET

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to guardrail systems and, more particularly, to a cable anchor system.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Guardrail systems are widely used along heavily traveled roadways to enhance the safety of the roadway and adjacent roadside. For example, end terminals are utilized at the upstream end of guardrail systems to dissipate impact energy from head-on collisions of vehicles with the upstream end to prevent intense deceleration of the vehicles. In addition, guardrail systems are designed to contain and redirect vehicles that impact the guardrails predominantly from the side.

One element that is utilized in guardrail systems to address impacts along the side of the guardrail downstream from the end terminal is a tension cable that connects between the end terminal support post and the guardrail. The tension cable is designed to provide tension strength during side impacts and to breakaway during head-on impacts to avoid counteracting the benefits of the impact absorbing end terminal.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to one embodiment, a cable anchor system for an end terminal includes a cable anchor bracket configured to couple to a guardrail, in which the cable anchor bracket includes a flat plate having an aperture formed therein and a plurality of protrusions extending from a plane containing the aperture. The protrusions are configured to releasably engage the guardrail.

Technical advantages of particular embodiments of the present invention include improved performance of the connection between the tension cable and the guardrail by improving the alignment between the tension cable and anchor bracket. This is facilitated by an improved cable anchor bracket that reduces the eccentricity of the alignment between the cable and the guardrail. The cable anchor bracket also reduces manufacturing cost.

Other technical advantages are 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

FIGS. 1 and 2 are plan and elevation views, respectively, of a guardrail system according to one embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 3A and 3B are perspective and elevation views, respectively, illustrating the coupling of a cable anchor bracket to a guardrail in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is an elevation view of a cable anchor bracket according to one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is an elevation view of a guardrail system according to one embodiment of the present invention in which the guardrail is a box beam; and

FIGS. 6A and 6B are perspective and elevation views, respectively, illustrating the coupling of a cable anchor bracket to a box beam in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

FIGS. 1 and 2 are plan and elevation views, respectively, of a guardrail system 100 according to one embodiment of the present invention. Guardrail system 100 may be installed adjacent a roadway to protect vehicles, drivers and passengers from various obstacles and hazards and prevent vehicles from leaving the roadway during a traffic accident or other hazardous condition. Guardrail systems incorporating aspects of the present invention may be used in median strips or shoulders of highways, roadways, or any suitable path that is likely to encounter vehicular traffic.

In the illustrated embodiment, guardrail system 100 includes a guardrail 102, an end terminal 104, a support post 106, a cable anchor bracket 108, and a cable 110.

Guardrail 102 may be any suitable guardrail, such as a w-beam (illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2) or a box beam (as illustrated in FIG. 5), having any suitable length. In the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, an end of guardrail 102 is supported by end terminal 104, which may be any suitable end treatment. In the illustrated embodiment, end terminal 104 resembles a guardrail extruder terminal ("GET"), such as the ET-2000® and ET-PLUS® manufactured by Trinity Industries, Inc. An example description of a GET is described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,928,928 by Buth et al., which is herein incorporated by reference. The present invention contemplates any suitable end terminal that has a releasable anchor plate, such as a Sequential Kinking Guardrail Terminal System ("SKGTS"), an Anchor Assembly for Highway Guardrail End Terminal ("AAHGET"), a Guardrail Cutting Terminal ("GCT"), and a Box Beam Terminal.

Support post 106 functions to support end terminal 104 and/or guardrail 102. In the illustrated embodiment, support post 106 is a breakaway support post formed from a generally rectangular wood post; however, support post 106 may be any suitable support post formed from any suitable material and having any suitable shape.

Cable anchor bracket 108 may be coupled to guardrail 102 in any suitable manner; however, it is envisioned that cable anchor bracket 108 be releasably engaged with guardrail 102 so that cable anchor bracket 108 may be easily released from guardrail 102 during a head-on collision of a vehicle with an end 105 of end terminal 104 to avoid possible jamming of the movement of end terminal 104 and facilitate the safe and effective kinetic energy reduction during the head-on collision. In the illustrated embodiment, cable anchor bracket 108 is releasably coupled to guardrail 102 with a plurality of protrusions 112, as described in greater detail below in conjunction with FIGS. 3A and 3B.

According to the teachings of the present invention, cable anchor bracket 108 provides an improved alignment of cable 110 with guardrail 102 to provide improved performance of the connection between cable 110 and guardrail 102. As described in greater detail below, eccentricities with respect to cable 110 and the connection between cable anchor bracket 108 and guardrail 102 are reduced, thereby reducing moments resulting from a collision of a vehicle with the side of guardrail 102. A reduction in moments reduces the likelihood of "tear-out" of protrusions 112 and strengthens the connection between cable anchor bracket 108 and guardrail 102. The connection between cable anchor bracket 108 and guardrail 102 is described in greater detail below in conjunction with FIGS. 3A and 3B.

Cable 110 extends between support post 106 and cable anchor bracket 108. Cable 110 may be any suitable elongated element formed from any suitable material that pro-

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vides tension to guardrail system **100** during a collision of a vehicle with a side of guardrail **102**. A general function of cable **110** during a collision may be found in U.S. Pat. No. 4,928,928. In the illustrated embodiment, cable **110** forms an acute angle **111** with respect to a longitudinal axis **109** of guardrail **102**. Acute angle **111** may be any suitable angle; however, in one embodiment, acute angle **111** is between approximately 15 and 25 degrees. One end of cable **110** couples to a lower portion of support post **106** in any suitable manner and the other end of cable **110** couples to cable anchor bracket **108** in any suitable manner. One example of coupling cable **110** to cable anchor bracket **108** is shown and described below in conjunction with FIGS. 3A and 3B.

FIG. 3A is a perspective view and FIG. 3B is an elevation view illustrating the coupling of cable **110** to cable anchor bracket **108** and cable anchor bracket **108** to guardrail **102** according to one embodiment of the invention. In the illustrated embodiment, cable anchor bracket **108** is formed from a plate **113** having an aperture **119** formed therein and a plurality of protrusions **112** coupled to plate **113** and extending from a plane containing aperture **119**. Plate **113** is preferably a single flat plate of structural steel with a thickness between approximately ¼ inches and ¾ inches. However, plate **113** may be formed from any suitable material having any suitable thickness.

Aperture **119** is utilized to couple cable **110** to cable anchor bracket **108** by any suitable method. In the illustrated embodiment, a shackle **116** is utilized along with a bolt **117** and a nut **118** to couple the end of cable **110** to plate **113**. The use of shackle **116** allows a longitudinal axis **120** (FIG. 3B) of cable **110** to substantially align with a plane containing plate **113**. For example, a plane running through the mid-thickness of plate **113**, as denoted by reference numeral **122**, substantially aligns with longitudinal axis **120**. Depending on the location of support post **106** (see FIG. 1) and where cable **110** couples to support post **106**, longitudinal axis **120** may form a slight angle with a plane containing plate **113**. In addition, a longitudinal axis **121** of aperture **119** (FIG. 3B) is substantially perpendicular to longitudinal axis **120**. This positioning of cable **110** with respect to plate **113** results in an eccentricity **123** with guardrail **102** that is less than eccentricities of prior cable anchor systems. The reduction in eccentricity reduces the moment on the connection of protrusions **112** with guardrail **102**, thereby introducing less stress to the connection during a side impact collision. Thus, there is less chance for “tearing-out” of protrusions **112** during a side impact collision, which improves the performance of the connection.

In the illustrated embodiment, protrusions **112** cooperate with a plurality of apertures **114** formed in guardrail **102** in order to releasably couple cable anchor bracket **108** to guardrail **102**. In the illustrated embodiment, this is facilitated by a plurality of tabs **115** associated with respective protrusions **112** that “hook on” respective apertures **114** formed in an attachment portion **129** of guardrail **102**. The tautness of cable **110** after installation ensures the correct positioning of cable anchor bracket **108** in addition to keeping a snug fit of protrusions **112** with apertures **114**. Any suitable number and arrangement of protrusions **112** may be utilized within the teachings of the present invention. The present invention also contemplates other suitable coupling methods for cable anchor bracket **108** that facilitate a releasable engagement.

FIG. 4 is an elevation view illustrating another advantage of cable anchor bracket **108** according to one embodiment of the invention. As described above in conjunction with FIGS. 1 and 2, cable **110** forms acute angle **111** with respect to the

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longitudinal axis **109** of guardrail **102**. As illustrated by FIG. 4, this facilitates an extension **122** of longitudinal axis **120** of cable **110** intersecting a line **130** extending through the interior protrusions, as denoted by reference numeral **132**, when viewed from a side elevation as in FIG. 4. In a particular embodiment, extension **122** may intersect a centroid **124** of all of the protrusions **112**. Interior protrusions are defined by all of the protrusions **112** except the upstream-most protrusion(s) **112** and downstream-most protrusion(s) **112**.

This positioning of cable **110** with respect to plate **113** substantially reduces or eliminates eccentricities, as denoted by eccentricity **126**, that exists in prior cable anchor systems, thereby reducing an additional moment on the connection between cable anchor bracket **108** and guardrail **102**. Eccentricity **126** results from the positioning of prior cables (denoted by reference numeral **127**) of prior cable anchor systems. Eccentricity **126** causes additional stress on the connection between the cable anchor bracket and the guardrail of prior guardrail systems, thereby enhancing the possibility of failure of the connection and minimizing the effectiveness of a tension cable during a side impact with the guardrail.

Referring now to FIG. 5, an elevation view of guardrail system **100** according to another embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in which the guardrail is a box beam **500**. In this embodiment, guardrail system **100** includes a cable anchor bracket **502** that couples to a bottom **503** of box beam **500**. In the illustrated embodiment, box beam **500** has an “open” cross-section that resembles a C-section; however, box beam **500** may also have a “closed” cross-section.

Cable anchor bracket **502** may be coupled to bottom **503** of box beam **500** in any suitable manner; however, it is envisioned that cable anchor bracket **502** be releasably engaged with box beam **500** for reasons discussed above in conjunction with cable anchor bracket **108**. In the illustrated embodiment, cable anchor bracket **502** is releasably coupled to box beam **500** with a plurality of protrusions **504**, as described in greater detail below in conjunction with FIGS. 6A and 6B.

FIG. 6A is a perspective view and FIG. 6B is an elevation view illustrating the coupling of a cable **506** to cable anchor bracket **502** and cable anchor bracket **502** to box beam **500** according to one embodiment of the invention. In the illustrated embodiment, cable anchor bracket **502** is formed from a flange plate **508**, a web plate **510** having an aperture **512** formed therein, and a plurality of protrusions **504** coupled to flange plate **508**. Flange plate **508** and web plate **510** are preferably single flat plates of structural steel with a thickness between approximately ¼ inches and ¾ inches. However, flange plate **508** and web plate **510** may be formed from any suitable material having any suitable thickness. In the illustrated embodiment, web plate **510** extends substantially perpendicular to flange plate **508**; however, web plate **510** may be angled with respect to flange plate **508** in some embodiments.

Aperture **512** is utilized to couple cable **506** to cable anchor bracket **502** by any suitable method. In the illustrated embodiment, a shackle **511** is utilized along with a bolt **513** and a nut **515** to couple the end of cable **506** to web plate **510**. The use of shackle **511** allows a longitudinal axis **516** (FIG. 6B) of cable **506** to substantially align with web plate **510**. Depending on the location of support post **106** (see FIG. 1) and where cable **506** couples to support post **106**, longitudinal axis **516** may form a slight angle with web plate **510**.

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In the illustrated embodiment, protrusions **504** cooperate with a plurality of apertures **518** formed in bottom **503** of box beam **500** in order to releasably couple cable anchor bracket **502** to box beam **500**. In the illustrated embodiment, this is facilitated by a plurality of tabs **509** associated with respective protrusions **504** that “hook on” respective apertures **518** formed in bottom **503** of box beam **500**. The tautness of cable **506** after installation ensures the correct positioning of cable anchor bracket **502** in addition to keeping a snug fit of protrusions **504** with apertures **518**. Any suitable number and arrangement of protrusions **504** may be utilized within the teachings of the present invention. The present invention also contemplates other suitable coupling methods for cable anchor bracket **502** that facilitate a releasable engagement.

Referring back to FIG. 5, cable **506** forms an acute angle **507** with respect to the longitudinal axis of box beam **500**. This facilitates an extension **520** of longitudinal axis **516** of cable **506** intersecting a line extending through the interior protrusions, as denoted by reference numeral **522**. In a particular embodiment, extension **520** may intersect a centroid of all of the protrusions **504**.

Thus, an improved cable anchor bracket is disclosed by the present invention that improves performance of the connection of the cable anchor bracket with the guardrail by reducing eccentricities associated therewith. Reduced eccentricities result in reduced moments and reduced stress at the connection, thereby increasing the strength of the connection and ensuring that the anchor cable may perform its function in an efficient and safe manner.

Although the present invention is described by several embodiments, various changes and modifications may be suggested to one skilled in the art. The present invention intends to encompass such changes and modifications as they fall within the scope of the present appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A guardrail system, comprising:

a guardrail;
an end terminal coupled to the guardrail;
a support post for supporting the end terminal;
a cable anchor bracket coupled to the guardrail;
a cable extending between the support post and the cable anchor bracket;

the cable anchor bracket comprising:

a plate having an aperture formed therein;
a plurality of protrusions coupled to the plate and extending from a plane containing the aperture, the plurality of protrusions releasably engaging a plurality of apertures formed in the guardrail;

wherein the cable is coupled to the support post at a first end and coupled to the aperture of the plate at a second end, the cable terminating at the aperture such that an extension of a longitudinal axis of the cable from the second end forms an acute angle with respect to a longitudinal axis of the guardrail and approximately intersects a centroid of the protrusions; and

wherein a longitudinal axis extending through the center of the aperture in a direction substantially perpendicular to the plane having the aperture is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the cable when the cable is coupled to the plate having the aperture.

2. The guardrail system of claim 1, further comprising a shackle coupling the second end of the cable to the aperture of the plate.

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3. The guardrail system of claim 1, wherein the longitudinal axis of the cable substantially aligns with a plane containing the plate.

4. The guardrail system of claim 1, wherein the acute angle is between approximately 15 and 25 degrees.

5. The guardrail system of claim 1, wherein the aperture of the plate is located below a horizontal line extending through each of the protrusions.

6. The guardrail system of claim 1, wherein a thickness of the plate is between approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ inches and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

7. The guardrail system of claim 1, wherein the plate comprises a single flat plate.

8. The guardrail system of claim 1, wherein the end terminal comprises a guardrail extruder terminal.

9. A guardrail system, comprising:

a guardrail;
an end terminal coupled to the guardrail;
a support post for supporting the end terminal;
a cable anchor bracket coupled to an attachment portion of the guardrail;
a cable extending between the support post and the cable anchor bracket;

the cable anchor bracket comprising:

a flat plate defining a plane having an aperture formed therein;

a plurality of protrusions coupled to the flat plate and extending from the plane containing the aperture, the plurality of protrusions releasably engaging a plurality of apertures formed in the attachment portion of the guardrail; and

wherein the cable is coupled to the support post at a first end and coupled to the aperture of the flat plate at a second end, a longitudinal axis of the cable substantially aligning with the plane defined by the flat plate having the aperture formed therein.

10. The guardrail system of claim 9, wherein a distance between the plane containing the flat plate and the attachment portion of the guardrail is no more than approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

11. The guardrail system of claim 9, wherein the second end of the cable terminates at the aperture of the flat plate such that an extension of the longitudinal axis of the cable from the second end forms an acute angle with respect to a longitudinal axis of the guardrail and approximately intersects a centroid of the protrusions.

12. The guardrail system of claim 11, wherein the acute angle is between approximately 15 and 25 degrees.

13. The guardrail system of claim 9, further comprising a shackle coupling the second end of the cable to the aperture of the flat plate.

14. The guardrail system of claim 9, wherein the protrusions are aligned in a single row and the aperture of the flat plate is located below a horizontal line extending through the protrusions.

15. The guardrail system of claim 9, wherein a thickness of the plate is between approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ inches and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

16. The guardrail system of claim 9, wherein the end terminal comprises a guardrail extruder terminal.

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