The OTIS TDC Chip
for LHCb Outer Tracker Readout

(Physikalisches Institut der Universität Heidelberg, Philosophenweg 12, D-69120 Heidelberg, Germany)
trunk@kip.uni-heidelberg.de

Abstract

OTIS\(^1\) is a 32 channel TDC\(^2\) chip developed at the University of Heidelberg. It will be used for the read-out of the Outer Tracker detector in the LHCb Experiment. It features radiation hard layout techniques and is implemented in commercial 0.25\(\mu\)m technology. The first full-scale prototype OTIS 1.0 has been submitted for manufacturing in April 2002.

The TDC itself is based on a clock driven architecture and uses a DLL\(^3\) as time reference. Each channel’s drift time data is written to a ring buffer to cover the trigger latency, after which the data is either transferred to the derandomiser FiFo or overwritten. The buffer management as well as the trigger handling, data formatting and transmission to the subsequent DAQ stages is accomplished by a control circuit.

Within the scope of this paper, measurement results and modifications leading to OTIS 1.1, the next version of the chip, are presented.

I. LHCb Outer Tracker Front End Electronics

The outer tracker detector of the LHCb experiment consists of \(\approx 50000\) straw tubes, whose anode wires are read out with ASDbhr\(^1\) chips. Being amplified and discriminated by 4 ASD chips, the signals of 32 channels connect to one OTIS chip for drift time measurement. The OTIS chip stores the drift times of all 32 channels relative to the 40 MHz LHC clock in an intermediate memory to cover the L0 trigger latency. Upon a trigger, the corresponding data is retrieved from the memory, formatted and transmitted to the next DAQ stage. Operating synchronous to the 40 MHz LHC clock, the 8 bit parallel ports of 4 OTIS chips can connect to the 32 bit wide input of the subsequent GOL\(^2\) chip. The latter serialises the data and drives it off the detector via an optical transmitter. The schema of the LHCb outer tracker DAQ is shown in fig. 1.

II. Chip Architecture

The OTIS chip consists of three main components:
- The TDC core with pre-pipeline register
- The pipeline memory with derandomiser buffer
- The control algorithm and slow control circuit

A general overview, which shows the relation of the different building blocks of the OTIS chip is given in fig. 2.

A. The TDC core

The TDC core comprises of a 64 stage DLL used as a time reference, the hit register and the decoder circuit. The 40 MHz LHC bunch crossing clock is delayed by the DLL’s chain of 64 starved inverters and subsequently compared to the original clock signal by a phase decoder. The latter steers a charge pump, which in turn adjusts the delay of the DLL to exactly 1 clock cycle. This determines the TDC’s intrinsic resolution of \(\Delta t \approx 390\)ps. The 64 fine time signals tapped from the DLL are used to clock the hit register, thus forming the clock driven architecture of the TDC. The subsequent decoder converts the hit position to a binary representation. It is split into two halves which are used...
interleavedly to maintain the dead-time free operation required by LHCb. It consists of a diode matrix, since an implementation with standard cells would require \( \approx 64,000 \) gates and considerably increase the chip size. Besides a 5 bit drift time information, each decoder half also provides a hit bit, indicating the recognition of a hit in the corresponding half of the decoder. The output signals of the first half are latched during the second half of a bunch crossing clock cycle, preserving this information for final processing in the first half of the next clock cycle. The outputs of the second decoder half are stable during the first half of the next clock cycle and thus are not latched, except for the hit bit. The so-called priority encoder uses the hit bits of the two decoder halves together with the original hit input. This encoder determines the half, that contained the first hit, or selects the second half, if no hit was found. The actual selection is performed by a multiplexer, which propagates the corresponding decoder half's fine time and hit bit information together with an artificially generated MSB to the pre-pipeline register for storage. The complete schema of the TDC is depicted in fig. 3.

The pre-pipeline register is the interface to the following pipeline memory. In addition to the fine time, it also stores some status informations. It is further needed to feed the subsequent stages with programmable test data and also provides the test patterns for the self-test of the pipeline memory.

\[ \text{Figure 2: Block schematic showing the relation of the OTIS chip's basic building blocks.} \]

\[ \text{Figure 4: Schematic of an SRAM memory cell used in the OTIS' pipeline memory and derandomiser buffer.} \]

B. Pipeline memory and derandomiser buffer

The pipeline memory is a 164 \( \times \) 240 bit dual ported SRAM used as a ring buffer. Synchronous to the bunch crossing clock the data of the pre-pipeline register is written to the memory. A trigger initiates the clock synchronous transfer of 1, 2 or 3 words to the derandomiser buffer, selecting data that has been written to the memory up to 160 clock cycles (i.e. 4 \( \mu s \)) ago. The derandomiser compensates trigger rate fluctuations and uses the same SRAM architecture as the pipeline memory. The size of it is 48 \( \times \) 240 bit. Thus it is large enough to hold the data of 16 triggers (\( \hat{3} \) words), which is an LHCb requirement. A cell of the SRAM memory is shown in fig. 4.

C. The control algorithm

The control algorithm performs the memory access required for trigger handling and data retrieval for readout. In addition it provides the 50 ns and 75 ns measurement ranges by combining data from up to 3 consecutive bunch crossings. Furthermore it implements the two different formats of the readout data stream:

- **Encoded Hitmask:** This data format is shown in tab. 1. The 4 byte header information (containing e.g. BX counter and status information) is followed by 32 bytes representing the drift times of the 32 channels according to table 2. While the lower 6 bits are the measured fine time within the clock cycle, the first two indicate the bunch crossing of the hit, starting with 00 for the first one and leaving 11 to indicate the absence of a hit signal. Obviously only the first hit per trigger and channel is read out, allowing for a 100% channel occupancy. The fixed 900 ns readout time required by LHCb is intrinsic to this mode.

- **Plain Hitmask:** In this readout mode the 4 header bytes are followed by 1, 2 or 3 32 bit hit
Figure 3: Schematic of the TDC core. The clock waveform on top together with the order of the different components is intended to visualize the timings of the different parts.

Table 2: 8 bit drift time encoding of the OTIS chip in Encoded Hitmask mode.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Hit Position</th>
<th>Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st BX</td>
<td>00xxxxxxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd BX</td>
<td>01xxxxxxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd BX</td>
<td>10xxxxxxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Hit</td>
<td>11xxxxxx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- no Plain Hitmask readout mode
- no Data Valid Signal
- no event readout via I²C bus
- unbuffered DAC outputs
- LVDS (instead of differential CMOS) data outputs.

Measurements performed with the OTIS 1.0 chip during the last 14 month lead to a thorough understanding of the chip's features. The control algorithm performed as expected from simulations, i.e. the readout of a data frame takes exactly 900ns, and while in playback mode, the read data is exactly as programmed. Also the trigger handling shows the predicted behavior, e.g. a FiFo full signal after 16 triggers in 3-BX mode. Furthermore a random trigger test performed at 40 MHz clock speed with some 10⁷ triggers did not reveal any problems. However, depending on temperature and clock speed the chip's memory self test function failed after a certain time. Operation in playback mode, which is identical to the memory self test regarding pre-pipeline register and memory, did not yield any data corruption. Thus this failure was attributed to a timing problem in the error checker circuit, which is part of the control algorithm.

Tests of the TDC exhibited missing codes in the 2nd half of a clock cycle, including also losses of the hit bit. These effects are strongly channel-dependent as fig. 5 shows. The strong channel dependency, together with the vanishing of the effect in case a double hit (i.e. a hit signals with same relative timing in two consecutive clock cycles) was was applied gave a strong hint

III. THE OTIS 1.0 CHIP

OTIS 1.0 is the first full scale prototype chip. On a die size of 5.4 x 6.0mm² it implemented all key features, but
on a timing problem with either \( Clk2 \) or \( Clk3 \) in fig. 3. At this point it should be noted, that a parasitic simulation of the complete TDC circuit was not possible: A Simulation on the extracted netlist, which has a flat topology, failed due to insufficient computer resources\(^4\). A Simulation with backannotated capacitances is also impossible due to multiple instantiations of the same cell, which prevents the backannotation of the individual capacitances of each instantiation. An FIB\(^5\) patch on one chip, providing an external clock input to the timer block in fig. 3 proved ineffective. In turn a second patch, establishing an external \( Clk3 \) inputs on channels 28, 29 and 30 was applied. Delaying this \( Clk3 \) input by about 4 ns resulted in the nicely linear delay scan shown in fig. 6, which proves that the OTIS' TDC concept is working. Further measurements on this chip resulted in a differential nonlinearity of 0.54 ns (or 1.4 LSB), when no correction for the DLL’s intrinsic asymmetry and the mismatch of the first and last time bin is (which is due to different routing and parasitics) is applied. Correcting for these systematic effects, the DNL is reduced to 0.25 ns (or 0.64 LSB), which is comparable to the results from the first DLL prototype (DNL = 0.51 LSB), which did not have this features.

IV. THE OTIS 1.1 CHIP

The crucial point causing the timing problems of the OTIS 1.0 TDC is the use of two clock domains within this circuit (c.f. fig 3): The clock signals delayed by the timer block made of unregulated inverter chains is used to latch signals locked to the well regulated timing of the DLL. Thus it was decided to eliminate the second clock domain inside the TDC by simply deriving all clock signals from the DLL. This is shown in fig. 7. Provided a good estimation of parasitics and a sufficient safety margin for process parameter variations, this approach is immune against timing problems. Also the linearity of the DLL is improved by a better matching of the first and last delay elements to the center part of the DLL. Finally OTIS 1.1 will implement all missing features of OTIS 1.0, e.g:

- Plain Hitmask readout mode
- Data Valid signal for the subsequent GOL chip
- DAC outputs suitable to provide threshold levels to ASDbr or ASDq discriminator chips
- Differential CMOS outputs
- 5 V compatible \( \text{F} \text{C} \) pads
- Event readout via the \( \text{F} \text{C} \) bus
- Revised reset schema
- other minor changes

\(^4\)on a SUN Fire280 w. 8GByte RAM and 36GByte swap
\(^5\)Focused Ion Beam

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**Table 1: Data format of the OTIS chip in Encoded Hitmask mode.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bit</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>0...31</th>
<th>32...39</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>280...287</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Header</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Drift time (CH0)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Data format of the OTIS chip in Plain Hitmask mode for 1, 2 and 3 BX (top to bottom) readout.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bit</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>0...31</th>
<th>32...63</th>
<th>64...69</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>58 + (6n) ... 63 + (6n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Header</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hitmask [1 BX]</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bit</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>0...31</th>
<th>32...95</th>
<th>96...101</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>90 + (6n) ... 95 + (6n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Header</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hitmasks [2 BX]</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bit</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>0...31</th>
<th>32...127</th>
<th>128...133</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>122 + (6n) ... 127 + (6n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Header</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hitmasks [3 BX]</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 5: Delay scan of the OTIS 1.0 TDC.** The figure shows channel-dependent missing codes in the 2nd half of a clock cycle, which disappear if signals with identical relative timing are applied in two consecutive clock cycles (DH = double hit).
V. Conclusions

The first full-scale prototype chip OTIS 1.0 fulfills all LHCb key requirements regarding timing and control signals, but needs some external components like level converters to fit into the LHCb outer tracker readout chain. Its TDC showed missing codes in the 2nd half of a bunch crossing and had to be patched to become fully functional. This patch lead to a thorough understanding of the TDC and proved that the OTIS’ TDC concept is working. The OTIS 1.1 will be submitted for production by the end of October 2003. It incorporates improved TDC and DLL components. Furthermore it features all planned readout modes and modifications to seamlessly fit into the LHCb outer tracker readout chain. In turn it is intended for production to equip this detector.

Status reports and further test results will be available at [3].

VI. References

[1] ATLAS use of ASDblr:
http://www.quark.lu.se/atlas/electronics/trt/chip_asdblr.html
Measurements for LHCb:
http://www.nikhef.nl/user/toms/lhcbot/afe/deadtime/index.html
