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**Smith et al.**

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(54) **STAGGERED PERIODIC RIBLETS**

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(71) Applicant: **Lockheed Martin Corporation**,  
Bethesda, MD (US)

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(72) Inventors: **Brian R. Smith**, Colleyville, TX (US);  
**Patrick J. Yagle**, Fort Worth, TX (US);  
**Paul Douglas McClure**, Fort Worth,  
TX (US)

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(73) Assignee: **Lockheed Martin Corporation**,  
Bethesda, MD (US)

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*Primary Examiner* — Philip J Bonzell

*Assistant Examiner* — Michael B. Kreiner

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Baker Botts L.L.P.

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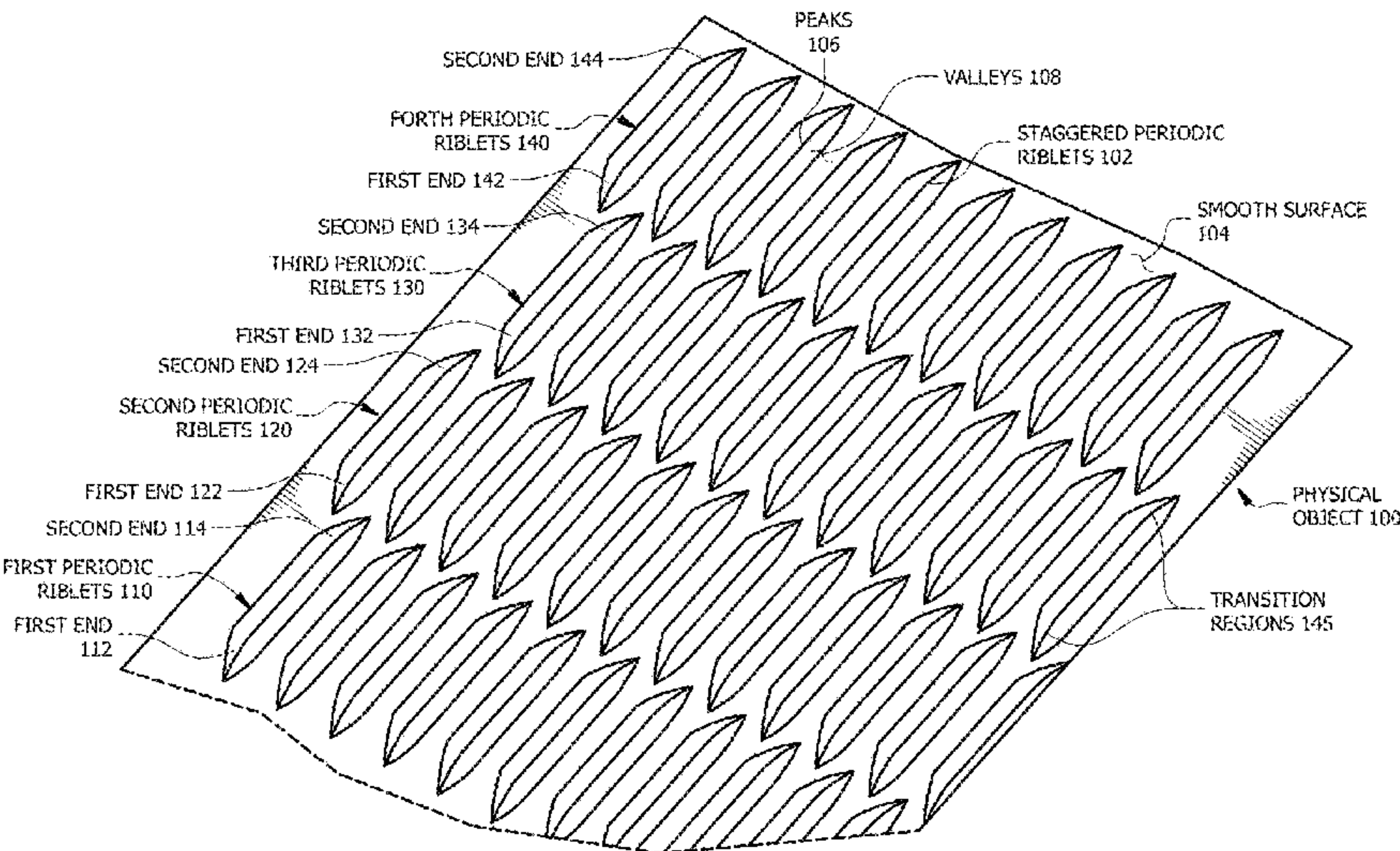
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

In one embodiment, a method for reducing drag includes forming first periodic riblets on a smooth surface of a physical object and forming second periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object. The method further includes generating a flow over the first and second periodic riblets of the physical object. Each first periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each first periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each first periodic riblet. Each second periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each second periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each second periodic riblet. Each second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet overlaps each first transition region at the first end of each second periodic riblet. A length of each riblet of the first and second periodic riblets runs parallel to a direction of the flow.

**14 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets**



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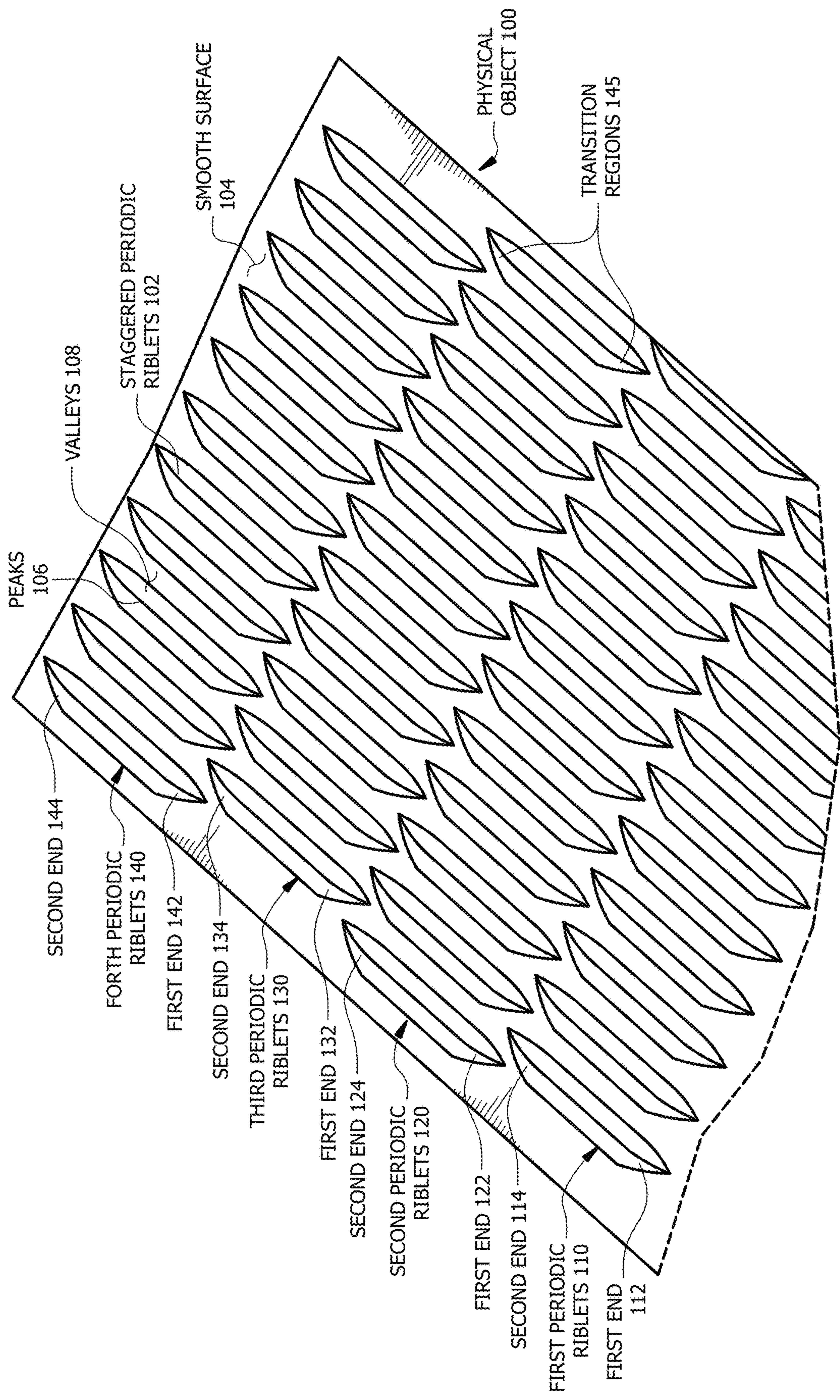
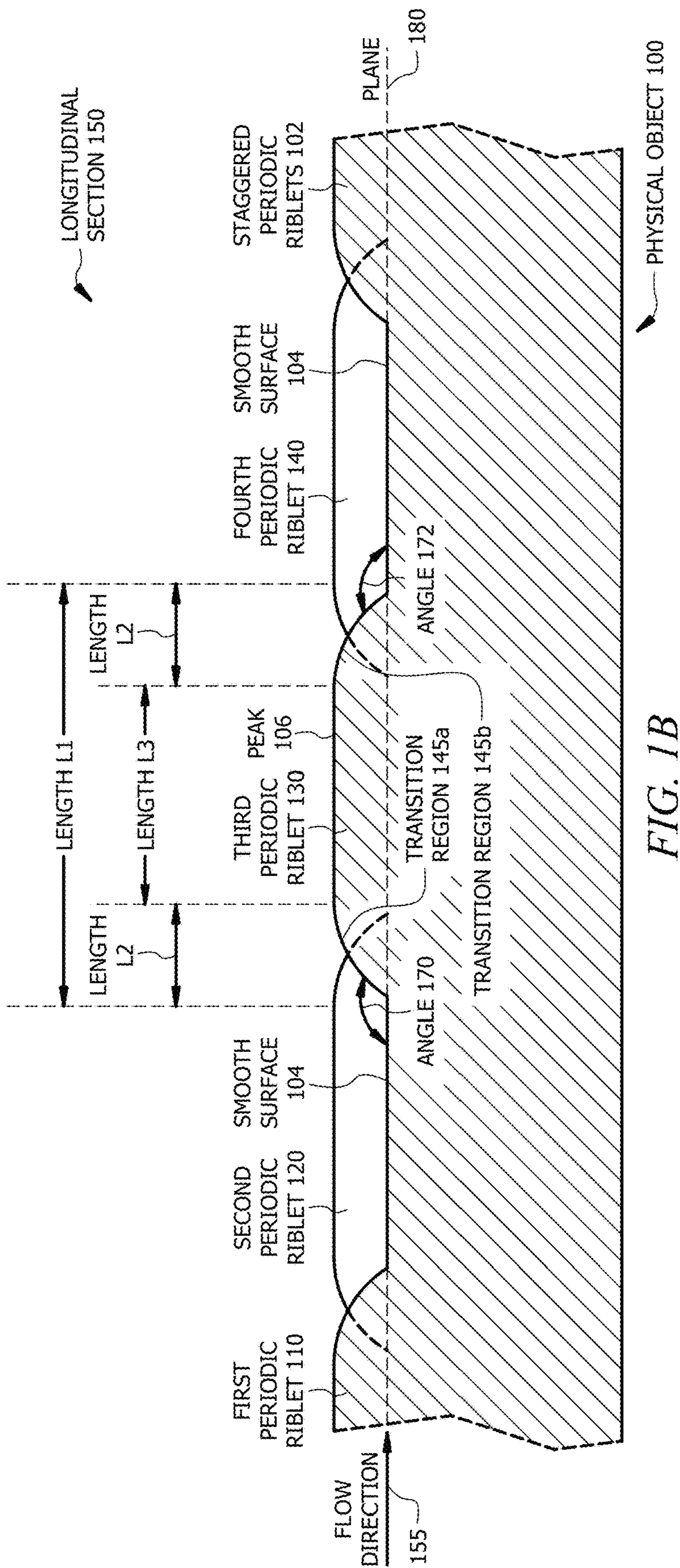


FIG. 1A



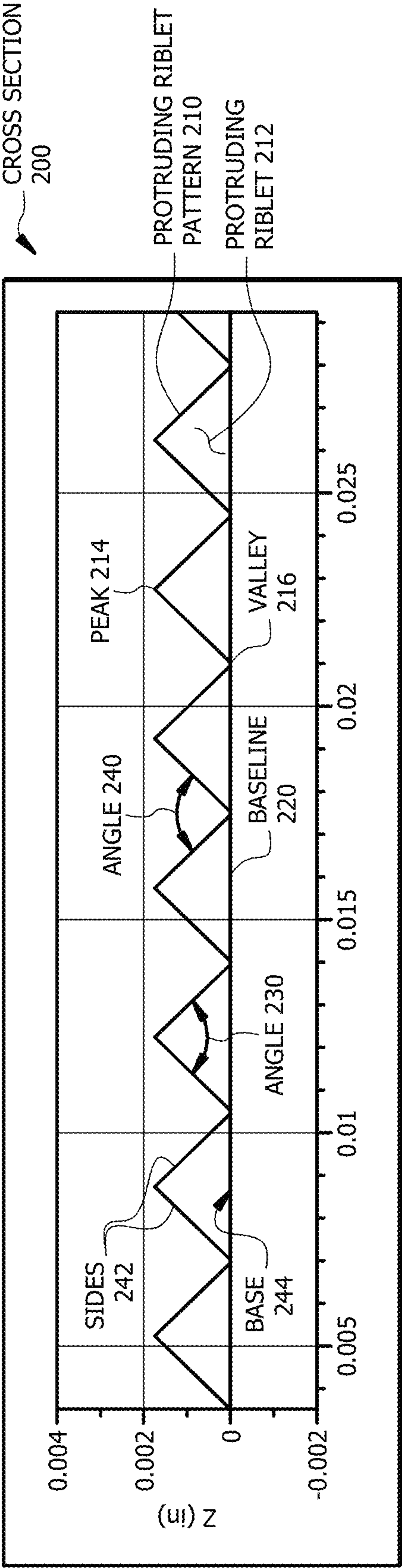


FIG. 2A

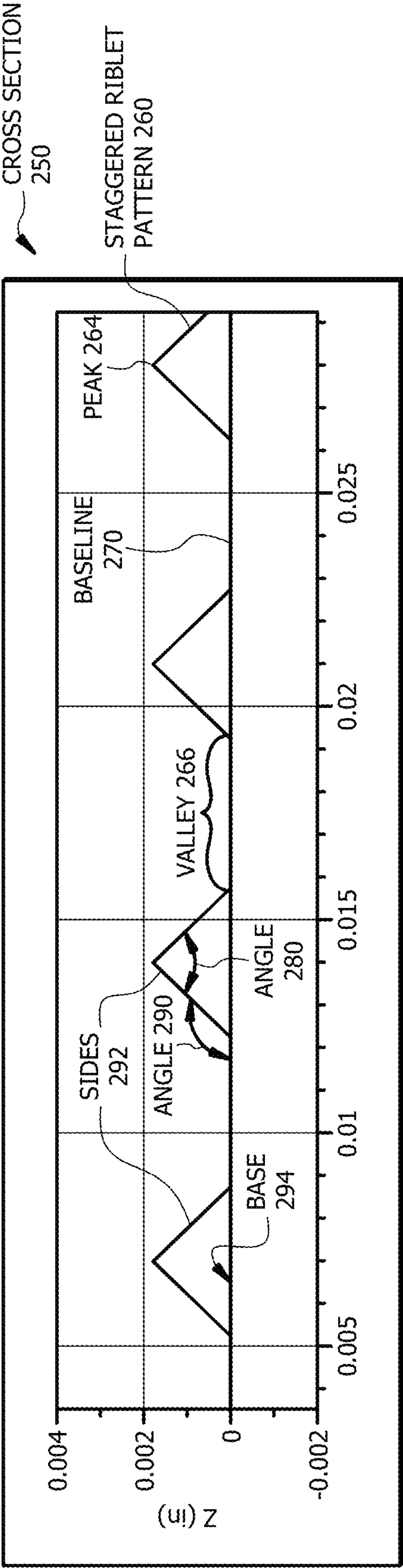


FIG. 2B

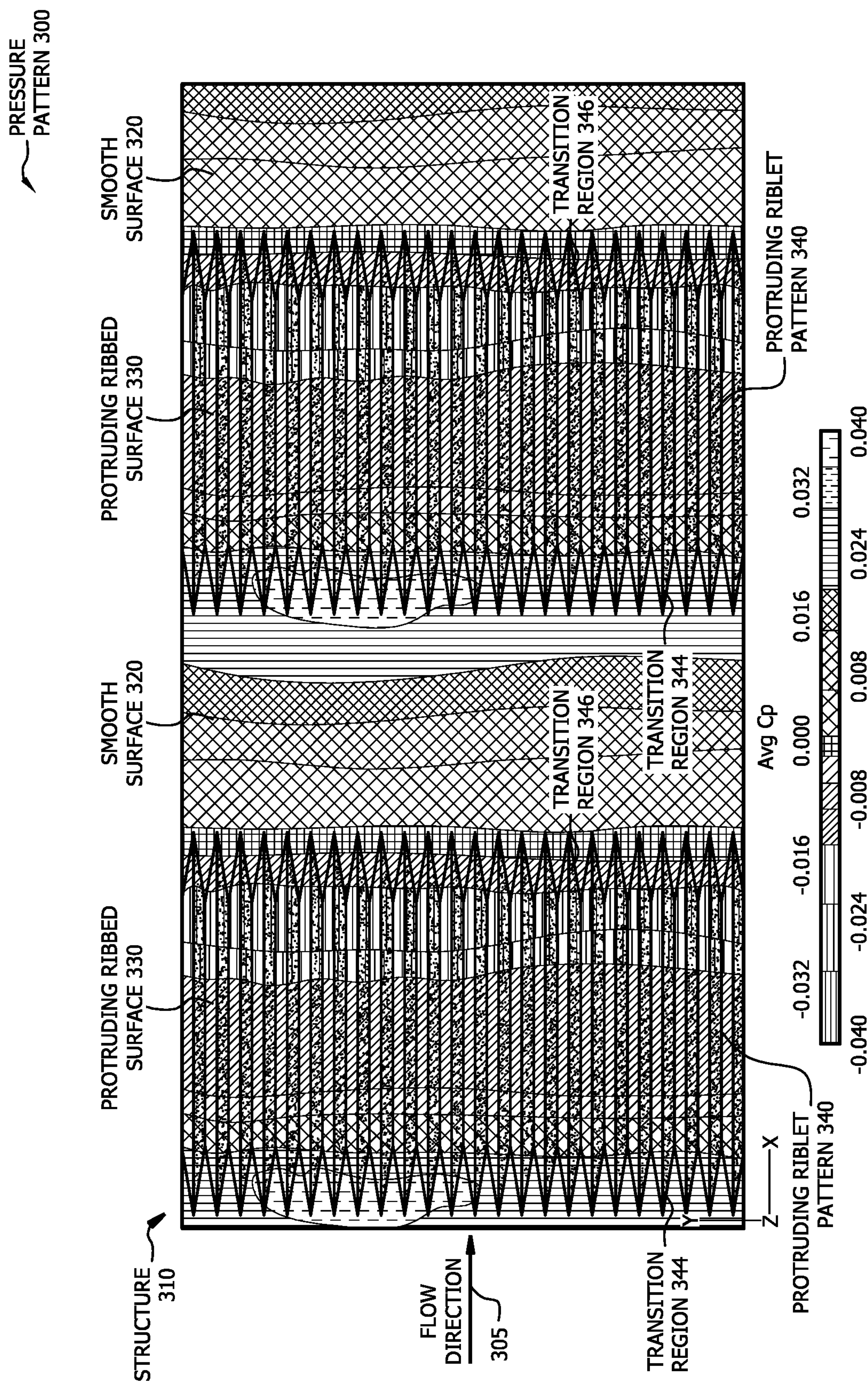


FIG. 3A

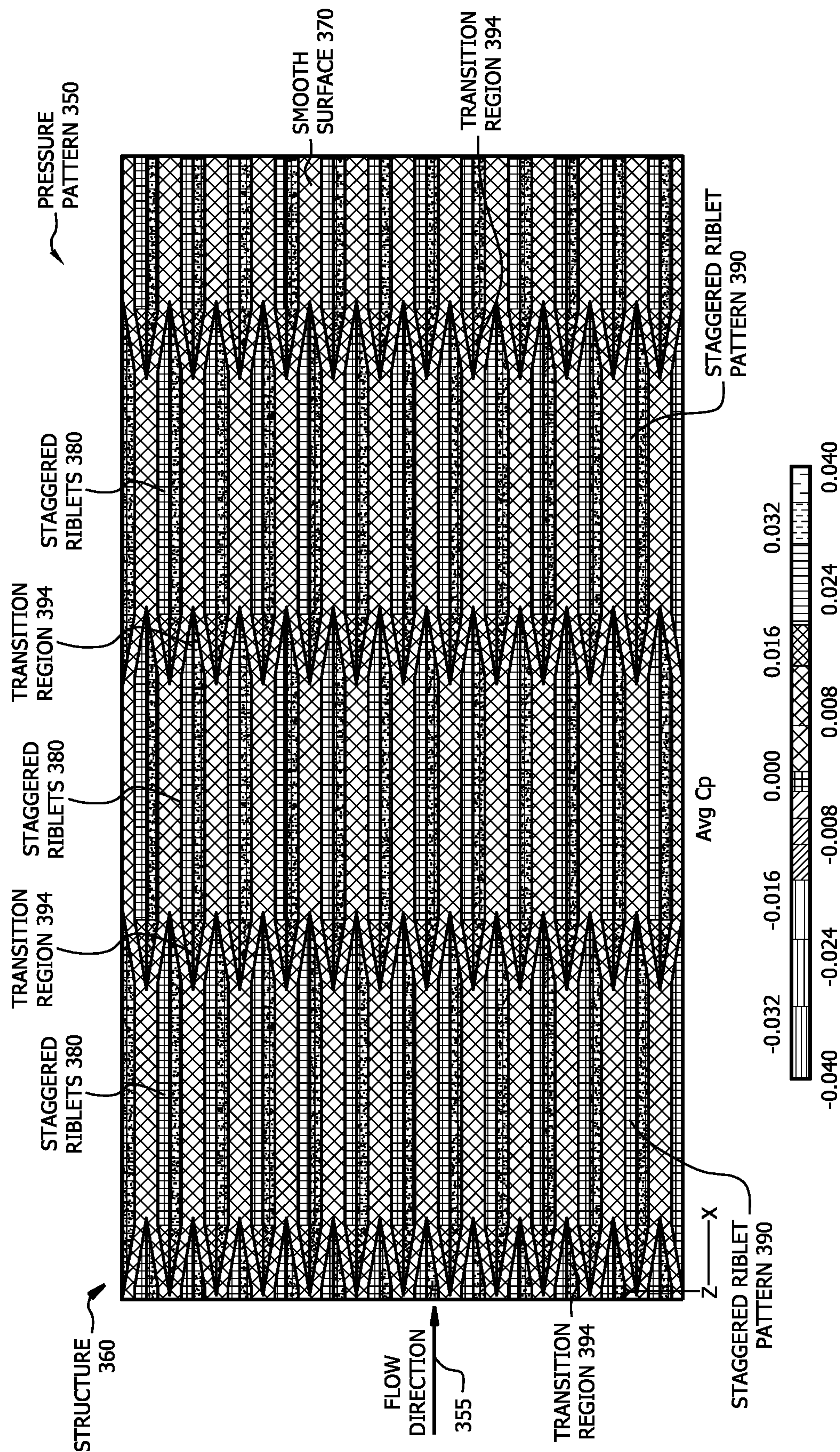


FIG. 3B

BAR CHART  
400

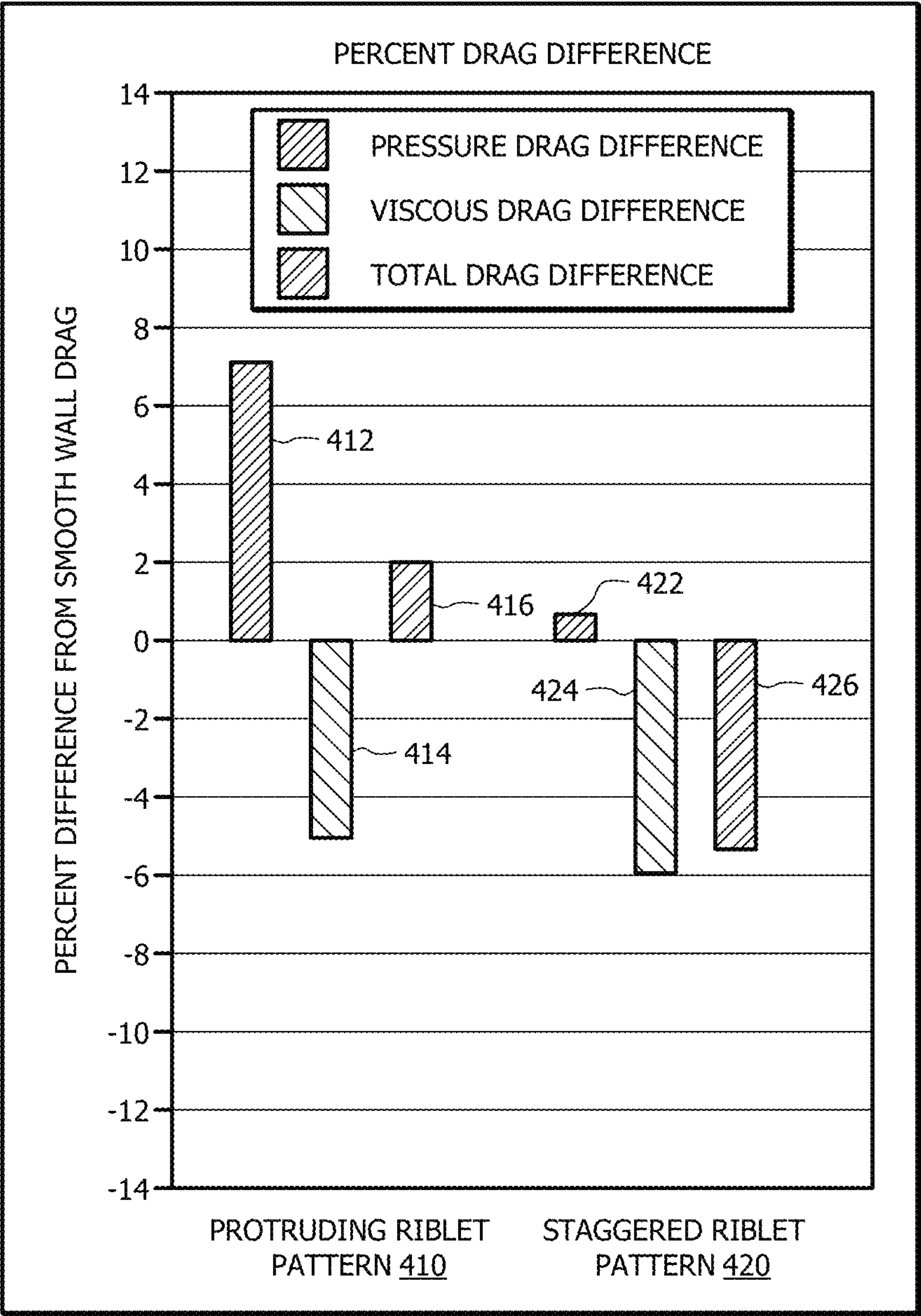


FIG. 4

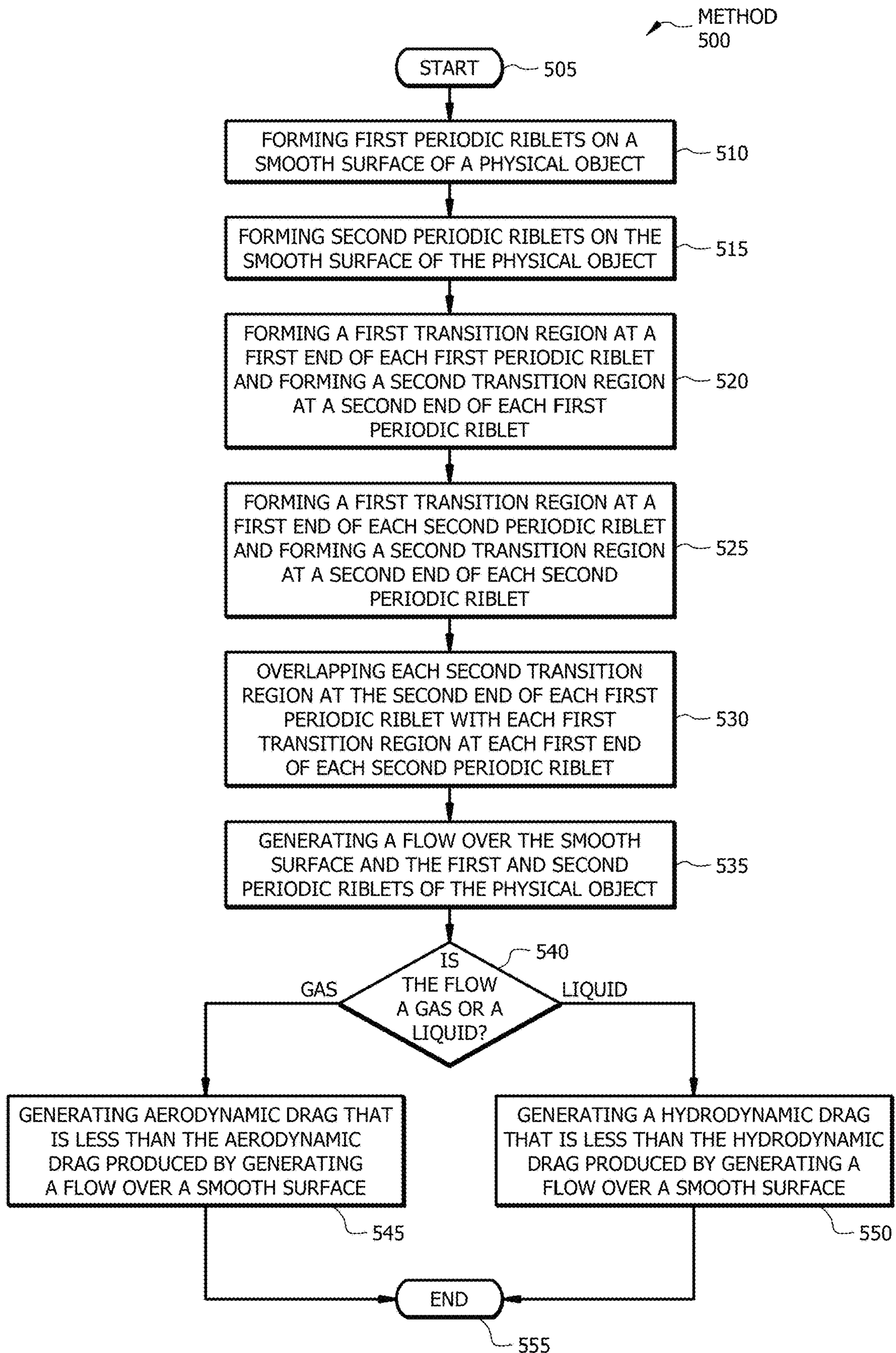


FIG. 5

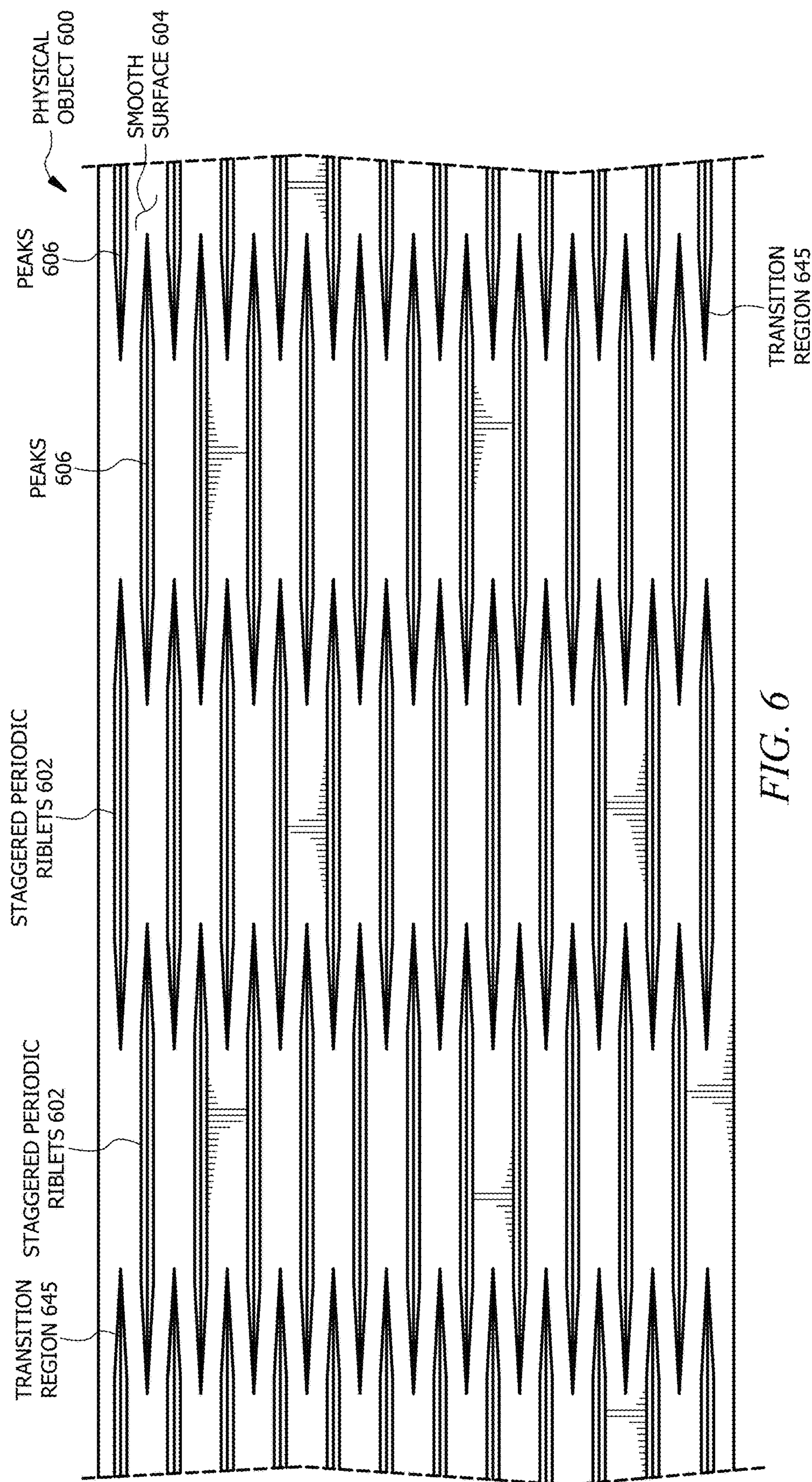


FIG. 6

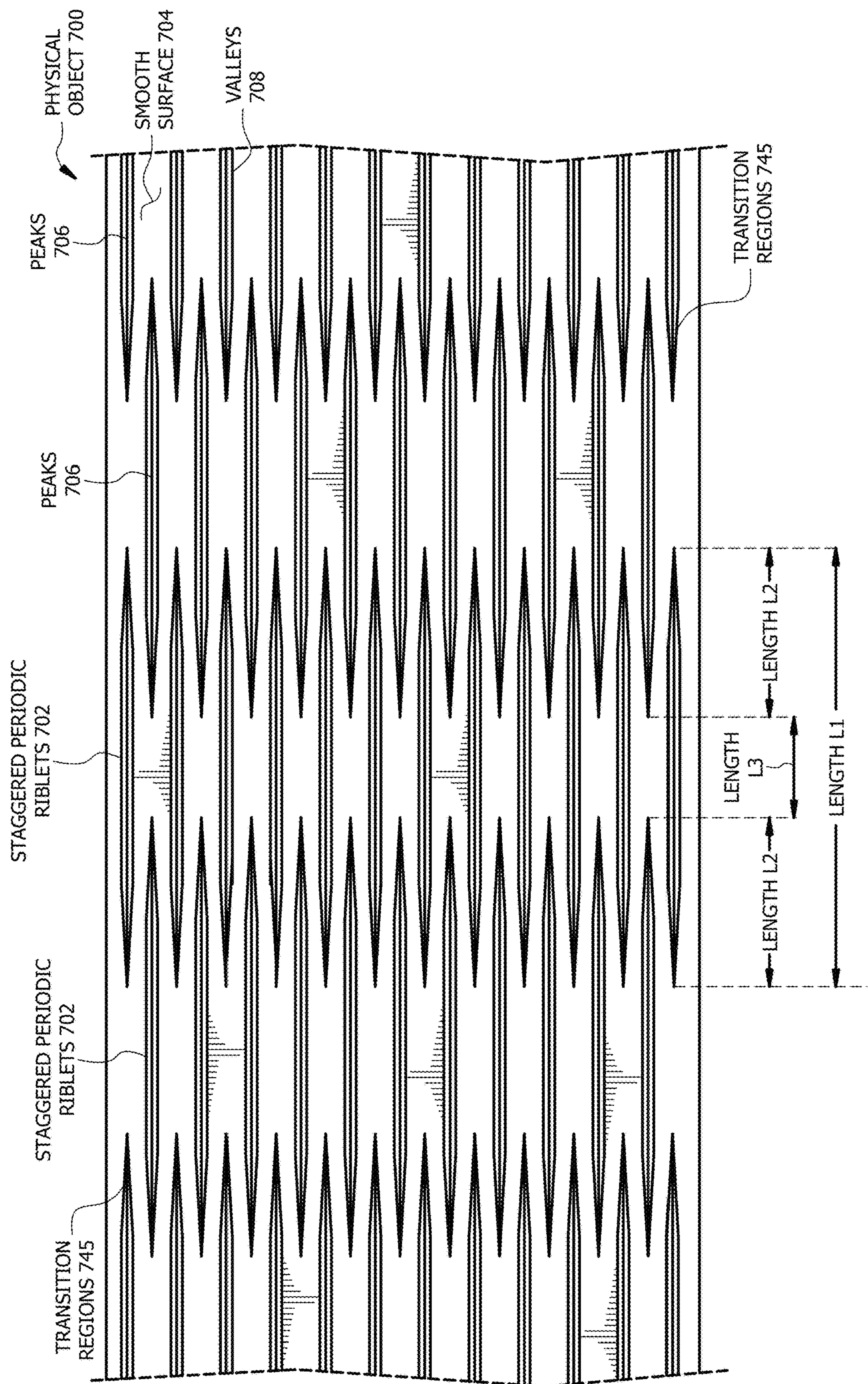


FIG. 7

**STAGGERED PERIODIC RIBLETS****TECHNICAL FIELD**

This disclosure generally relates to riblets, and more specifically to staggered periodic riblets.

**BACKGROUND**

An object (e.g., an aircraft or a marine vessel) that moves through a fluid (e.g., air or water) experiences a drag force. An increase in the drag force experienced by the object increases the energy required for the object to move through the fluid. For example, an increase in the drag force experienced by an aircraft moving at an established speed may increase the power required by the aircraft to move through the air at the same established speed. Thus, drag force has a significant impact of aircraft fuel consumption and aircraft range.

**SUMMARY**

According to an embodiment, a method for reducing drag includes forming first periodic riblets on a smooth surface of a physical object and forming second periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object. The method further includes generating a flow over the first and second periodic riblets of the physical object. Each first periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each first periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each first periodic riblet. Each second periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each second periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each second periodic riblet. Each second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet overlaps each first transition region at the first end of each second periodic riblet. A length of each riblet of the first and second periodic riblets runs parallel to a direction of the flow.

According to another embodiment, a physical object includes a smooth surface, first periodic riblets on the smooth surface of a physical object, and second periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object. Each first periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each first periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each first periodic riblet. Each second periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each second periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each second periodic riblet. Each second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet overlaps each first transition region at the first end of each second periodic riblet.

According to yet to another embodiment, a method of manufacturing a physical object includes forming first periodic riblets on a smooth surface of a physical object. The method further includes forming second periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object. Each first periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each first periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each first periodic riblet. Each second periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each second periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each second periodic riblet. Each second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet overlaps each first transition region at the first end of each second periodic riblet.

Technical advantages of this disclosure may include one or more of the following. The use of staggered periodic riblets on physical objects reduces overall drag, which includes pressure and viscous drag, experienced by the physical object as compared to physical objects having a smooth surface, which may significantly reduce fuel costs since less power is required to move the object through the fluid (e.g., gas or liquid). The drag reduction experienced by physical objects such as aircraft that use staggered periodic riblets may also increase the range (i.e., the maximum distance the aircraft can fly between takeoff and landing) of the physical object as compared to physical objects that have a smooth surface. In certain embodiments, the drag reduction may allow higher maximum speeds to be obtained for a fixed propulsion input.

In some embodiments, staggered periodic riblets may reduce heat transfer on a hot or cold surface adjacent to a turbulent boundary layer, which may reduce the insulation required in particular applications. The use of staggered periodic riblets may delay or prevent the separation of the flow in a turbulent boundary layer from the surface, which may reduce aerodynamic drag, increase lift on a physical object (e.g., an aircraft wing), and/or improve the performance of propulsion systems.

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**

To assist in understanding the present disclosure, reference is now made to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1A illustrates a physical object with staggered periodic riblets, in accordance with an example embodiment;

FIG. 1B illustrates a cross section of the physical object of FIG. 1A, in accordance with an example embodiment;

FIG. 2A illustrates a cross section of a protruding riblet pattern, in accordance with an example embodiment;

FIG. 2B illustrates a cross section of a staggered riblet pattern, in accordance with an example embodiment;

FIG. 3A illustrates a pressure output pattern associated with a physical object having a protruding riblet pattern, in accordance with an example embodiment;

FIG. 3B illustrates a pressure output pattern associated with a physical object having a staggered riblet pattern, in accordance with an example embodiment;

FIG. 4 illustrates a bar chart that compares drag produced by a physical object having a protruding riblet pattern to a physical object having a staggered riblet pattern, in accordance with an example embodiment;

FIG. 5 illustrates an example method for reducing drag on a surface using a staggered riblet pattern, in accordance with an example embodiment;

FIG. 6 illustrates a physical object with staggered periodic riblets having a different size and shape than the staggered periodic riblets of FIG. 1A, in accordance with an example embodiment; and

FIG. 7 illustrates a physical object with staggered periodic riblets having a different size, shape, and arrangement than the staggered periodic riblets of FIG. 1A, in accordance with an example embodiment.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

Embodiments of this disclosure describe physical objects having staggered periodic riblets that may be used to reduce

drag, which includes pressure drag and friction drag, over the surfaces of the physical objects. Riblets are very small (e.g., less than a hundredth of an inch in depth) grooves or channels on a surface of a physical object (e.g., a vehicle). The riblets run parallel to the direction of flow. Staggered periodic riblets are riblets with overlapping regions. Staggered periodic riblets are located above a smooth surface of the physical object.

Certain three-dimensional (3D) riblet structures may reduce skin friction drag due to reduced wetted area. However, these 3D riblet structures may generate additional pressure drag due to the added frontal area of the surface feature. The staggered periodic riblets described herein increase the drag reducing benefits of riblets by significantly reducing or eliminating the pressure drag penalty as compared to certain other 3D riblet structures. Staggered periodic riblets may maintain a constant cross sectional area in the streamwise flow direction. The constant cross sectional area is achieved by compensating the decreasing volume of the trailing edge of each staggered periodic riblet with the increasing volume of the neighboring staggered periodic riblets. As such, embodiments of this disclosure use staggered periodic riblets to reduce and/or eliminate the pressure drag penalty as compared to certain other periodic riblets.

FIGS. 1 through 5 show example apparatuses and methods associated with staggered periodic riblets. FIG. 1A shows an example physical object with staggered periodic riblets and FIG. 1B shows an example longitudinal section of the physical object of FIG. 1A. FIG. 2A shows an example cross section of a protruding riblet pattern and FIG. 2B shows an example cross section of a staggered riblet pattern. FIG. 3A shows an example pressure output pattern associated with a physical object having a protruding riblet pattern and FIG. 3B shows an example pressure output pattern associated with a physical object having a staggered riblet pattern. FIG. 4 shows an example bar chart that compares drag produced by a physical object having a protruding riblet pattern to a physical object having a staggered riblet pattern. FIG. 5 shows an example method for reducing drag on a surface using a staggered riblet pattern. FIG. 6 shows a physical object with staggered periodic riblets having a different size and shape than the staggered periodic riblets of FIG. 1A, and FIG. 7 shows a physical object with staggered periodic riblets having a different size, shape, and arrangement than the staggered periodic riblets of FIG. 1A.

FIG. 1A illustrates an example physical object 100 having staggered periodic riblets 102. Physical object 100 with staggered periodic riblets 102 may be used to reduce overall drag (e.g., aerodynamic or hydrodynamic drag) over a surface as compared to a physical object 100 without staggered periodic riblets 102. One or more portions of physical object 100 may be made of steel, aluminum, copper, titanium, nickel, plastic, fiberglass, a combination thereof, or any other suitable material.

Physical object 100 is any object that is susceptible to drag (e.g., skin friction drag and pressure drag.) For example, physical object 100 may be a component (e.g., a portion of an outer body) of an aircraft (e.g., an airplane, a helicopter, a blimp, a drone, etc.), a component of a marine vessel (e.g., a cargo ship, a passenger ship, a canoe, a raft, etc.), a component of a motorized vehicle (e.g., a truck, a car, a train, a scooter, etc.), a component of a non-motorized vehicle (e.g., a bicycle, a skateboard, etc.), a component of a spacecraft (e.g., a spaceship, a satellite, etc.), a wind turbine, a projectile (e.g., a missile), or any other physical object that is capable of experiencing drag. In certain

embodiments, drag may be generated by a force acting opposite to the relative motion of physical object 100 (e.g., a wing of an aircraft) moving with respect to a surrounding fluid (e.g., air). In some embodiments, drag is generated by the viscosity of gas. In certain embodiments, drag may be generated due to the viscosity of a fluid (e.g., water) near the surface of physical object 100 (e.g., a section of a pipe or duct.)

Physical object 100 includes a smooth surface 104. In certain embodiments, smooth surface 104 of physical object 100 is flat. In some embodiments, smooth surface 104 of physical object 100 may have a curvature. Staggered periodic riblets 102 of physical object 100 may be formed on smooth surface 104. Staggered periodic riblets 102 of physical object 100 are staggered such that each staggered periodic riblet 102 overlaps at least one other staggered periodic riblet 102 in plan view. Each staggered periodic riblet 102 is located above a plane (e.g., plane 180 of FIG. 1B) of smooth surface 104 of physical object 100. In certain embodiments, a cross sectional area as measured above smooth surface 104 of physical object 100 is approximately (i.e., within five percent) the same at any cross section through staggered periodic riblets 102.

Each staggered periodic riblet 102 includes a peak 106. Each peak 106 of each staggered periodic riblet 102 is a point along an exterior surface of staggered periodic riblet 102 that is farthest away from the plane of smooth surface 104 in a direction away from physical object 100. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 1A, peaks 106 of staggered periodic riblets 102 extend a predetermined distance (e.g., 0.002 inches) above the plane of smooth surface 104 of physical object 100. In some embodiments, one or more peaks 106 of one or more staggered periodic riblets 102 may form a pointed tip. In some embodiments, one or more peaks 106 of one or more staggered periodic riblets 102 may form a flat or rounded peak surface. The spaces between adjacent staggered periodic riblets 102 create valleys 108. Each valley 108 between adjacent staggered periodic riblets 102 is an area along an exterior surface of staggered periodic riblet 102 that is closest to the plane of smooth surface 104. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 1A, valleys 108 of staggered periodic riblets 102 are located along the plane of smooth surface 104 of physical object 100.

Each staggered periodic riblet 102 includes two transition regions 145. A first transition region 145 is located at a first end of each staggered periodic riblet 102 and a second transition region 145 is located at a second end of each staggered periodic riblet 102. Each transition region 145 of each staggered periodic riblet 102 slopes down from peak 106 to smooth surface 104. In certain embodiments, each transition region 145 decreases in height and width as each respective staggered periodic riblet 102 slopes down from peak 106 to smooth surface 104. For example, the height and/or width of each transition region 145 may decrease (e.g., linearly decrease) until the height and/or width equals zero. The slope of each transition region 145 may be linear or parabolic. Transition regions 145 are discussed in more detail in FIG. 1B below. Each staggered periodic riblet 102 may be approximately the same in size, shape, and/or orientation.

Staggered periodic riblets 102 of FIG. 1A include first periodic riblets 110, second periodic riblets 120, third periodic riblets 130, and fourth periodic riblets 140. Each first periodic riblet 110 includes a first end 112 and a second end 114. Each second periodic riblet 120 includes a first end 122 and a second end 124. Each third periodic riblet 130 includes

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a first end **132** and a second end **134**. Each fourth periodic riblet **140** includes a first end **142** and a second end **144**.

First periodic riblets **110** of physical object **100** are parallel to one another. In certain embodiments, a distance between each peak **106** of each first periodic riblet **110** is approximately the same. Transition region **145** at each second end **114** of each first periodic riblet **110** overlaps transition region **145** at each first end **124** of each second periodic riblet **120**. Second periodic riblets **120** of physical object **100** are parallel to one another. In certain embodiments, a distance between each peak **106** of each second periodic riblet **120** is approximately the same. Transition region **145** at each second end **124** of each second periodic riblet **120** overlaps transition region **145** at each first end **132** of each third periodic riblet **130**.

Third periodic riblets **130** of physical object **100** are parallel to one another. In certain embodiments, a distance between each peak **106** of each third periodic riblet **130** is approximately the same. Transition region **145** at each second end **134** of each third periodic riblet **130** overlaps transition region **145** at each first end **142** of each fourth periodic riblet **140**. Fourth periodic riblets **140** of physical object **100** are parallel to one another. In certain embodiments, a distance between each peak **106** of each fourth periodic riblet **140** is approximately the same.

While the lengths of first periodic riblets **110**, second periodic riblets **120**, third periodic riblets **130**, and fourth periodic riblets **140** are approximately (e.g., within five percent) the same in the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 1A, the length of each first periodic riblet **110**, second periodic riblet **120**, third periodic riblet **130**, and fourth periodic riblet **140** may be any suitable length. For example, one or more lengths of first periodic riblets **110**, second periodic riblets **120**, third periodic riblets **130**, and fourth periodic riblets **140** may vary by a factor of two.

Although physical object **100** of FIG. 1A illustrates a particular number of staggered periodic riblets **102** (e.g., first periodic riblets **110**, second periodic riblets **120**, third periodic riblets **130**, and fourth periodic riblets **140**), smooth surfaces **104**, peaks **106**, valleys **108**, and transition regions **145**, this disclosure contemplates any suitable number of staggered periodic riblets **102**, smooth surfaces **104**, peaks **106**, valleys **108**, and transition regions **145**. For example, physical object **100** of FIG. 1A may include fifth staggered periodic riblets, sixth staggered periodic riblets, and so on.

Although physical object **100** of FIG. 1A illustrates a particular arrangement of staggered periodic riblets **102** (e.g., first periodic riblets **110**, second periodic riblets **120**, third periodic riblets **130**, and fourth periodic riblets **140**), smooth surfaces **104**, peaks **106**, valleys **108**, and transition regions **145**, this disclosure contemplates any suitable arrangement of staggered periodic riblets **102** (e.g., first periodic riblets **110**, second periodic riblets **120**, third periodic riblets **130**, and fourth periodic riblets **140**), smooth surfaces **104**, peaks **106**, valleys **108**, and transition regions **145**. For example, staggered periodic riblets **102** may be spaced further apart or closer together.

FIG. 1B illustrates an example longitudinal section **150** of physical object **100** of FIG. 1A. Longitudinal section **150** of FIG. 1B is cut through smooth surface **104** and a series of staggered periodic riblets **102**. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 1B, longitudinal section **150** is cut through first periodic riblet **110** and third periodic riblet **130**. First periodic riblet **110** overlaps second periodic riblet **120** and third periodic riblet **130** overlaps second periodic riblet **120** and fourth periodic riblet **140**. Each staggered periodic riblet **102** is located above plane **180** of smooth surface **104**. Each

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staggered periodic riblet **102** (e.g., third periodic riblet **130**) of FIG. 1B includes transition region **145a** and transition region **145b**. Transition region **145a** is located at a first end of each staggered periodic riblet **102** and transition region **145b** is located at a second end of each staggered periodic riblet **102**.

Each staggered periodic riblet **102** of FIG. 1B has a length **L1**. In certain embodiments, length **L1** is less than 0.10 inches. For example, length **L1** may be between 0.04 inches and 0.08 inches. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 1B, length **L1** is 0.06 inches. Each transition region **145a** and each transition region **145b** of staggered periodic riblet **102** has a length **L2**. In certain embodiments, length **L2** is less than 0.05 inches. For example, length **L2** may be between 0.01 inches and 0.02 inches. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 1B, length **L2** is 0.015 inches. Each peak of each staggered periodic riblet **102** has a length **L3**. In certain embodiments, length **L3** is less than 0.06 inches. For example, length **L3** may be between 0.02 inches and 0.04 inches.

In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 1B, length **L1** is 0.03 inches. Length **L1** of each staggered periodic riblet **102** equals the sum of length **L2** of transition region **145a**, length **L3** of peak **106**, and length **L2** of transition region **145b**. Length **L1** of staggered periodic riblets **102** of physical object **100** runs parallel to a flow direction **155**. For example, physical object **100** may be a wing of an aircraft, and length **L1** of staggered periodic riblets **102** of physical object **100** may run parallel to flow direction **155** generated by the aircraft when the aircraft is in flight. In certain embodiments, length **L1** of each staggered periodic riblet **102** is within a range of 8 to 100 times longer than a maximum height of each respective staggered periodic riblet **102**.

The surface of each transition region **145a** and each transition region **145b** of each staggered periodic riblet **102** intersects smooth surface **104** such that an edge is created along smooth surface **104**. Transition regions **145a** and **145b** may be constructed such that the sum of the increasing area in the longitudinal direction on transition region **145a** is equal to the decreasing cross sectional area of transition region **145b**. In certain embodiments, transition regions **145a** and **145b** are constructed with linear growth in the cross sectional area in the longitudinal direction for transition region **145a** and linear decrease in the longitudinal direction in the cross sectional area of downstream transition region **145b**. This construction maintains a constant longitudinal cross sectional area for overlapping transitional regions **145**.

In certain embodiments, for transitional regions **145** having a geometrically similar cross section in the longitudinal direction, the height of each transition region **145** is defined by a parabolic shape. A leading edge of transition region **145a** may be at an angle **170** of 90 degrees to smooth surface **104**. The ridge of transition section **145a** is convex to the external flow from flow direction **155** and meets peak **130** with an angular discontinuity. A trailing edge of transition region **145b** may be at an angle **172** of 90 degrees to smooth surface **104**. In some embodiments, the cross sectional shape of transition regions **145** in the longitudinal direction may vary while maintaining the linear longitudinal change in the cross sectional area. In certain embodiments, the height of one or more transition regions **145** may be defined by a non-parabolic shape (e.g., a linear shape).

Transition region **145b** at the second end of each first periodic riblet **110** overlaps transition region **145a** at the first end of each second periodic riblet **120**. Transition region **145b** at the second end of each second periodic riblet **120** overlaps transition region **145a** at the first end of each third

periodic riblet **130**. Transition region **145b** at the second end of each third periodic riblet **130** overlaps transition region **145a** at the first end of each fourth periodic riblet **140**. In certain embodiments, the intermittent pattern created by first periodic riblets **110**, second periodic riblets **120**, third periodic riblets **130**, and fourth periodic riblets **140** repeats along a predetermined length. For example, this intermittent pattern may repeat along the width of an airplane wing.

Staggered riblets **102** are staggered such that a cross sectional area as measured above smooth surface **104** of physical object **100** is approximately the same at any cross section through longitudinal section **150**. For example, the total cross sectional area of a cross section taken through peak **130** of third periodic riblet **130** (which includes the cross sectional areas of a plurality of third periodic riblets **130**) is approximately the same as the total cross sectional area of a cross section taken through transition region **145a** of third periodic riblet **130** (which includes the cross sectional areas of a plurality of second periodic riblets **120** and a plurality of third periodic riblets **130**.) Maintaining a constant cross-sectional area of staggered periodic riblets **102** in flow direction **155** reduces the pressure drag penalty as compared to other riblet patterns, as illustrated in FIG. 3A, FIG. 3B, and FIG. 4 below.

FIG. 2A illustrates an example cross section **200** of a protruding riblet pattern **210**. Protruding riblet pattern **210** is a pattern of protruding riblets **212** that protrude above a plane of an adjacent surface. For example, referring to the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 1A, protruding riblets **212** would be located above the plane of smooth surface **104** of first periodic riblets **110** of physical object **100** such that each valley between adjacent protruding riblets **212** may be located along the plane of smooth surface **104** of first periodic riblets **110** of physical object **100**. A physical object having a ribbed surface of protruding riblets **212** experiences less friction drag when subjected to dynamic (e.g., aerodynamic or hydrodynamic) flow than a comparable physical object having a smooth surface. However, due to the geometry of protruding riblet pattern **210**, a physical object having a ribbed surface of protruding riblets **212** experiences higher pressure drag when subjected to dynamic flow than a comparable physical object having a smooth surface.

In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 2A, protruding riblet pattern **210** protrudes above baseline **220**. Baseline **220** is equivalent to a plane of an adjacent surface (e.g., smooth surface **104** of FIG. 1A). Protruding riblet pattern **210** of FIG. 2A is a sawtooth pattern. Each protruding riblet **212** of protruding riblet pattern **210** has a peak **214**. Peak **214** of each protruding riblet **212** has a height relative to baseline **220** of less than 0.002 inches. In certain embodiments, the height of each peak **214** of each protruding riblet **212** may be within a range of 0.001 inches to 0.002 inches (e.g., 0.0018 inches). Each peak **214** of each protruding riblet **212** forms an angle **230**. Angle **230** may range from 45 degrees to 135 degrees. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 2A, angle **230** is 90 degrees. In certain embodiments, each protruding riblet **212** may be a two-dimensional (2D), thin plate riblet that is perpendicular to and located above baseline **220** of cross section **200**. The 2D, thin plate riblets may create a series of channels with thin blades defining the channel walls.

Adjacent protruding riblets **212** of protruding riblet pattern **210** form valleys **216**. Each valley **216** of each protruding riblet **212** is located at baseline **220**. Each valley **216** forms an angle **240**. Angle **240** may range from 45 degrees to 135 degrees. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 2A, angle **240** is 90 degrees. In some embodiments, one or more

valleys **216** may be located above baseline **220**. For example, each valley **216** of each protruding riblet **212** may be located 0.0002 inches above baseline **220**.

Each protruding riblet **212** of protruding riblet pattern **210** of FIG. 2A is in the shape of a triangle. Each protruding riblet **212** may be equal in size, shape, and/or orientation relative to baseline **220**. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 2A, each protruding riblet **212** of protruding riblet pattern **210** has two sides **242** and a base **244**. Each side **242** of each protruding riblet **212** has a length less than 0.004 inches. In certain embodiments, the length of each side **242** of each protruding riblet **212** of protruding riblet pattern **210** is within a range of 0.002 inches to 0.003 inches (e.g., 0.0025 inches). Each base **244** of each protruding riblet **212** has a length less than 0.004 inches. In certain embodiments, the length of each base **244** of each protruding riblet **212** of protruding riblet pattern **210** is within a range of 0.003 inches to 0.004 inches (e.g., 0.0035 inches).

Although cross section **200** of FIG. 2A illustrates a particular number of protruding riblets **212**, peaks **214**, and valleys **216**, this disclosure contemplates any suitable number of protruding riblets **212**, peaks **214**, and valleys **216**. For example, protruding riblet pattern **210** of FIG. 2A may include more or less than seven protruding riblets **212**. Although cross section **200** of FIG. 2A illustrates a particular arrangement of protruding riblets **212**, peaks **214**, and valleys **216**, this disclosure contemplates any suitable arrangement of protruding riblets **212**, peaks **214**, and valleys **216**. For example, two or more protruding riblets **212** of FIG. 2A may have different sizes, shapes, and/or orientations. As another example, two or more peaks **214** of two or more protruding riblets **212** may have different heights above baseline **220**. As still another example, one or more peaks **214** and/or valleys **216** of one or more protruding riblets **212** may have a rounded point. As yet another example, the length of sides **242** and base **244** may be the same to form equilateral triangles.

As illustrated in cross section **200** of FIG. 2A, the geometry of a ribbed surface of a physical object that uses protruding riblet pattern **210** increases the wetted area as compared to a smooth surface. As such, while a physical object with a protruding ribbed surface that uses protruding riblet pattern **210** experiences less friction drag when subjected to dynamic flow than a comparable physical object having a smooth surface, the pressure drag increases due to the increased projected area in the flow direction.

FIG. 2B illustrates an example cross section **250** of a staggered riblet pattern **260**. Staggered riblet pattern **260** is a pattern of repeating staggered riblets that are located above a plane of a smooth surface. For example, staggered periodic riblets **262** may be equivalent to staggered periodic riblets **102** of FIG. 1A, which are located above the plane of smooth surface **104** of physical object **100**. A physical object with a staggered ribbed surface that uses staggered riblet pattern **260** experiences less friction drag when subjected to dynamic flow than a comparable physical object having a smooth surface. While a physical object with a staggered ribbed surface that uses staggered riblet pattern **260** experiences higher pressure drag when subjected to dynamic flow than a comparable physical object having a smooth surface, the pressure drag created by staggered riblet pattern **260** is significantly less than the pressure drag created by protruding riblet pattern **210** of FIG. 2A.

In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 2B, staggered riblet pattern **260** is staggered above baseline **270**. Baseline **270** is equivalent to a plane of a smooth surface (e.g., smooth surface **104** of FIG. 1A). Staggered riblet pattern **260** of FIG.

2B is a variant of a sawtooth pattern with a space between each of the teeth. Each staggered riblet **262** of staggered riblet pattern **250** has a peak **264** located above baseline **270**. Each peak **264** of each staggered riblet **262** has a height relative to baseline **270** of less than 0.002 inches. Each peak **264** forms an angle **280**. Angle **280** may range from 45 degrees to 135 degrees. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 2B, angle **280** is 90 degrees.

Adjacent staggered riblets **262** of staggered riblet pattern **260** form valleys **266**. Each valley **266** of each staggered riblet **262** is located along baseline **270**. Each valley **266** of each staggered riblet **262** includes a space between staggered riblets **262** and forms an angle **290** at an intersection of each adjacent staggered riblet **262**. Angle **290** may range from 45 degrees to 135 degrees. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 2B, angle **290** is 90 degrees.

Each staggered riblet **262** of staggered riblet pattern **260** of FIG. 2B is in the shape of a triangle. Each staggered riblet **262** may be equal in size, shape, and/or orientation. Each staggered riblet **262** of staggered riblet pattern **260** has two sides **292** and a base **294**. Each side **292** of each staggered riblet **262** has a length less than 0.004 inches. In certain embodiments, the length of each side **292** of each staggered riblet **262** of staggered riblet pattern **260** is within a range of 0.002 inches to 0.003 inches (e.g., 0.0025 inches). Each base **294** of each staggered riblet **262** has a length less than 0.004 inches. In certain embodiments, the length of each base **294** of each staggered riblet **262** of staggered riblet pattern **260** is within a range of 0.003 inches to 0.004 inches (e.g., 0.0035 inches). In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 2B, the space along each valley **266** between adjacent staggered riblets **262** is equal in length to the length of base **294**.

The sizes of staggered riblets **262** depends on the application of staggered riblet pattern **260**. For example, the size of each staggered riblet **262** may depend on the speed of fluid, the viscosity and/or density of the fluid, the scale of the object (e.g., physical object **100** of FIG. 1A), etc. In certain applications, staggered riblets **262** are less than a hundredth of an inch in depth. For a highly viscous fluid (e.g., oil), staggered riblets **262** may be greater than a hundredth of an inch in depth. In certain embodiments, staggered riblets **262** may be sized using turbulent wall scaling. For example, staggered riblets **262** may be sized according to the following formula: non-dimensional scaling  $h^+ = (\text{height}) \cdot \sqrt{((\text{density}) \cdot (\text{wall shear stress})) / (\text{viscosity})}$ , where  $h^+$  may be set to a value between 5 and 16. As another example, staggered riblets **262** may be sized according to the following formula: nondimensional spanwise spacing  $s^+ = (\text{height}) \cdot \sqrt{((\text{density}) \cdot (\text{wall shear stress})) / (\text{viscosity})}$ , where  $s^+$  may be set to a value between 8 and 25.

Although cross section **250** of FIG. 2B illustrates a particular number of staggered riblets **262**, peaks **264**, and valleys **266**, this disclosure contemplates any suitable number of staggered riblets **262**, peaks **264**, and valleys **266**. For example, staggered riblet pattern **260** of FIG. 2B may include more or less than four staggered riblets **262**. Although cross section **250** of FIG. 2B illustrates a particular arrangement of staggered riblets **262**, peaks **264**, and valleys **266**, this disclosure contemplates any suitable arrangement of staggered riblets **262**, peaks **264**, and valleys **266**. For example, two or more staggered riblets **262** of FIG. 2B may have different sizes, shapes, and/or orientations. As another example, two or more peaks **262** may have different heights relative to baseline **270**. As still another example, the length of sides **292** and base **294** of one or more staggered riblets **262** may be the same to form equilateral triangles.

FIG. 3A illustrates an example pressure pattern **300** associated with a protruding riblet pattern **340** (e.g., protruding riblet pattern **210** of FIG. 2A). Pressure pattern **300** was created using a simulation of a small scale structure **310** representative of a physical object (e.g., physical object **100** of FIG. 1A). The simulation was performed in a low Reynolds number channel with limited spanwise and streamwise extent. The effects of the pressure gradients illustrated in FIG. 3A were assessed from a highly resolved computational large eddy simulation of the riblet configuration in a channel flow. The simulation mimics the flow of a fluid (e.g., a liquid or gas) on a surface having a protruding riblet pattern. The flow direction **305** is parallel to the protruding riblets of protruding riblet pattern **340**. The output of the simulation is displayed in FIG. 3A as pressure pattern **300**.

Structure **310** of pressure pattern **300** includes smooth surfaces **320** similar to smooth surface **104** of FIG. 1A. Structure **310** of pressure pattern **300** includes protruding ribbed surfaces **330** that protrude above the plane of smooth surfaces **320**. Protruding ribbed surfaces **330** form protruding riblet pattern **340**. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 3A, protruding riblet pattern **340** is a sawtooth pattern similar to protruding riblet pattern **210** of FIG. 2A.

Pressure pattern **300** of FIG. 3A shows a distribution of constant pressure ( $C_p$ ) as generated by the simulation.  $C_p$  is a non-dimensional parameter defined as a non-dimensional ratio of a difference between a local pressure and a free stream pressure and a dynamic pressure in a free stream region. A  $C_p$  value of zero indicates that the pressure at a particular point is the same as the free stream pressure, a  $C_p$  value of one indicates a stagnation point, and a  $C_p$  value less than zero indicates that the local velocity is greater than the free stream velocity. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 3A,  $C_p$  represents a time average pressure taken over a predetermined amount of time.  $C_p$  is represented as a grayscale in the embodiment of FIG. 3A. The lowest  $C_p$  value (i.e.,  $-0.040$ ) is the darkest shade in the grayscale and the highest  $C_p$  value (i.e.,  $0.040$ ) is the lightest shade in the grayscale. As such, the grayscale lightens in shade as the  $C_p$  value increases.

As indicated by the different shades of gray in pressure output pattern **300** of FIG. 3A, protruding riblet pattern **340** produces a large variant of  $C_p$  values ranging from  $-0.040$  to  $0.040$ . The highest  $C_p$  values are generated in forward facing transition regions **344** between smooth surfaces **320** and protruding riblet surfaces **330** as the flow travels in flow direction **305** from smooth surfaces **320** to protruding riblet surfaces **330**. The lowest  $C_p$  values are generated in aft facing transition regions **346** between smooth surfaces **320** and protruding riblet surfaces **330** as the flow travels in flow direction **305** from protruding ribbed surfaces **330** to smooth surfaces **320**. The staggered riblet pattern mitigates these pressure differentials by producing a more constant pressures over the surfaces of the structure, as described below in FIG. 3B.

FIG. 3B illustrates an example pressure pattern **350** associated with a staggered riblet pattern **390** (e.g., staggered riblet pattern **260** of FIG. 2B). Pressure pattern **350** was created using the same simulation technique of FIG. 3A. The flow direction **355** is parallel to the staggered riblets of staggered riblet pattern **390**. The output of the simulation is displayed in FIG. 3B as pressure pattern **350**.

Structure **360** of pressure pattern **350** includes smooth surface **370** similar to smooth surface **104** of FIG. 1A. Structure **360** of pressure pattern **350** includes staggered riblets **380** that protrude above the plane of smooth surface

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370. Staggered riblets 380 form staggered riblet pattern 390. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 3B, staggered riblet pattern 390 is equivalent to staggered riblet pattern 260 of FIG. 2B.

As indicated by the different shades of gray in pressure output pattern 350 of FIG. 3B, staggered riblet pattern 390 produces a small variant of  $C_p$  values ranging from 0 to 0.008. Positive  $C_p$  values are generated along staggered riblet pattern 390. The highest  $C_p$  values are generated in transition regions 394 as the flow travels in flow direction 355 from smooth surface 370 to each staggered riblet 380. As such, staggered riblet pattern 390 shown in FIG. 3B mitigates the pressure differentials shown in pressure pattern 300 of FIG. 3A by producing almost constant pressures over the surfaces of structure 360.

FIG. 4 illustrates an example bar chart 400 that compares drag produced by a physical object having a protruding riblet pattern to a physical object having a staggered riblet pattern. The pressure drag and viscous drag increments are calculated from a time average of the forces in a computational large eddy simulation of the flow in a channel with constant cross section in the spanwise direction. Periodic boundary conditions are applied in the spanwise direction to approximate a 2D channel flow of infinite span. The simulation includes a smooth surface on one wall of the channel and a riblet wall on the opposing channel wall. The difference in the drag components between the smooth wall and the riblet wall provides the increments shown in FIG. 4.

Bar chart 400 includes drag differences for a protruding riblet pattern 410 and a staggered riblet pattern 420. Protruding riblet pattern 410 is equivalent to protruding riblet pattern 210 of FIG. 2A. Staggered riblet pattern 410 is equivalent to staggered riblet pattern 260 of FIG. 2B. The drag for protruding riblet pattern 410 and staggered riblet pattern 420 is measured as a percentage difference from the drag generated by a smooth surface without riblets. Pressure drag differences, friction (e.g., viscous) drag differences, and total drag differences are provided in bar chart 400.

Protruding riblet pattern 410, as illustrated in bar chart 400 of FIG. 4, generates a percent pressure drag difference 412 of positive seven percent, which indicates that protruding riblet pattern 410 generates a pressure drag that is seven percent greater than the negligible pressure drag generated by a smooth surface. Protruding riblet pattern 410 generates a percent viscous drag difference 414 of negative five percent, which indicates that protruding riblet pattern 410 generates a viscous drag that is five percent lower than the viscous drag generated by a smooth surface. The total drag difference, which is calculated by adding pressure drag difference 412 and viscous drag difference 414 of protruding riblet pattern 410, is positive two percent, which indicates that protruding riblet pattern 410 generates a total drag that is two percent higher than the total drag generated by a smooth surface. Thus, while protruding riblet pattern 410 is effective at reducing viscous drag as compared to a smooth surface without riblets, protruding riblet pattern 410 increases the overall drag when taking into consideration pressure drag.

Staggered riblet pattern 420, as illustrated in bar chart 400 of FIG. 4, generates a percent pressure drag difference 422 of positive 0.8 percent, which indicates that staggered riblet pattern 420 generates a pressure drag that is 0.8 percent greater than the pressure drag generated by a smooth surface. Staggered riblet pattern 420 generates a percent viscous drag difference 424 of negative six percent, which indicates that staggered riblet pattern 420 generates a viscous drag that is six percent lower than the viscous drag

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generated by a smooth surface. The total drag difference, which is calculated by adding pressure drag difference 422 and viscous drag difference 424 of staggered riblet pattern 420, is negative 5.2 percent, which indicates that staggered riblet pattern 420 generates a total drag that is 5.2 percent lower than the total drag generated by a smooth surface. Thus, staggered riblet pattern 420 is effective at reducing viscous drag as compared to a smooth surface without riblets and is also effective at reducing the overall drag when taking into consideration both viscous drag and pressure drag.

FIG. 5 illustrates an example method 500 for reducing drag on a surface having a staggered riblet pattern, in accordance with an example embodiment. Method 500 starts at step 505. At step 510, first periodic riblets (e.g., first periodic riblets 110 of FIG. 1) are formed on a smooth surface (e.g., smooth surface 104 of FIG. 1A) of a physical object (e.g., physical object 100 of FIG. 1A). The physical object may be a component (e.g., a portion of an outer body) of an aircraft (e.g., an airplane, a helicopter, a blimp, a drone, etc.), a component of a marine vessel (e.g., a cargo ship, a passenger ship, a canoe, a raft, etc.), a component of a motorized vehicle (e.g., a truck, a car, a train, a scooter, etc.), a component of a non-motorized vehicle (e.g., a bicycle, a skateboard, etc.), a component of a spacecraft (e.g., a spaceship, a satellite, etc.), a wind turbine, a projectile (e.g., a missile), or any other physical object that is capable of experiencing drag. Method 500 then moves from step 510 to step 515, where second periodic riblets (e.g., second periodic riblets 120 of FIG. 1) are formed on the smooth surface of the physical object.

Method 500 then moves from step 515 to step 520, where a first transition region (e.g., transition region 145a of FIG. 1B) is formed at a first end (e.g., first end 112 of FIG. 1A) of each first periodic riblet and a second transition region (e.g., transition region 145b of FIG. 1B) is formed at a second end (e.g., second end 114 of FIG. 1A) of each first periodic riblet. The transition regions may be approximately the same length. An angle between a surface of each transition region and the smooth surface may be the same. For example, each angle between the surface of each transition region and the smooth surface of each staggered periodic riblet may be approximately 170 degrees. Method 500 then moves from step 520 to step 525. At step 525, a first transition region is formed at a first end of each second periodic riblet and a second transition region is formed at a second end of each second periodic riblet. Method 500 then moves from step 525 to step 530.

At step 530, each second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet is overlapped with each first transition region at each first end of each second periodic riblet. The transition regions are overlapped such that a cross sectional area as measured above the smooth surface of the physical object is the same at any cross section through the first and second periodic riblets. For example, a cross sectional area as measured at a cross section cut through a peak of first periodic riblets is the same as a cross sectional area as measured at a cross section cut through the overlapping transition regions of the first and second periodic riblets. Method 500 then moves from step 530 to step 535.

At step 535, a flow is generated over the smooth surface and the first and second periodic riblets of the physical object. For example, the flow may be generated by an airplane moving through the air at a predetermined speed. The flow direction (e.g., flow direction 335 of FIG. 3B) runs parallel to the length of each riblet of the staggered periodic

riblets. Method **500** then moves from step **535** to step **540**, where method **500** determines whether the flow is a gas or a liquid.

If the flow is a gas (e.g., air), method **500** moves from step **540** to step **545**, where an aerodynamic drag is generated over the staggered riblet pattern that is less than the total aerodynamic drag (i.e., pressure drag and viscous drag) produced by generating a flow over a smooth surface without riblets. As indicated in FIG. 4 above, the aerodynamic drag generated over the staggered riblet pattern that is less than the total aerodynamic drag produced by generating a flow over a protruding riblet pattern (e.g., protruding riblet pattern **410** of FIG. 4). As such, the staggered riblet pattern reduces drag over aerodynamic surfaces, which may reduce fuel costs and increase range in vehicles (e.g., aircraft) utilizing the staggered riblet pattern.

If the flow is a liquid (e.g., water), method **500** advances from step **540** to step **550**, where a hydrodynamic drag is generated over the staggered riblet pattern that is less than the total hydrodynamic drag (i.e., pressure drag and viscous drag) produced by generating a flow over a smooth surface without riblets. As indicated in FIG. 4 above, the hydrodynamic drag generated over the staggered riblet pattern that is less than the total hydrodynamic drag produced by generating a flow over a protruding riblet pattern (e.g., protruding riblet pattern **410** of FIG. 4). As such, the staggered riblet pattern reduces drag over hydrodynamic surfaces, which may reduce fuel costs and increase range in vehicles (e.g., marine vessels) utilizing the staggered riblet pattern. Method **500** then moves from steps **545** and **550** to step **555**, where method **500** ends.

Modifications, additions, or omissions may be made to method **500** depicted in FIG. 5. Method **500** may include more, fewer, or other steps. For example, method **500** may include forming each peak of each riblet of the periodic riblets at an angle between 45 degrees and 135 degrees (e.g., 90 degrees.) As another example, method **500** may repeat steps **510** through **525** to form an intermittent pattern along a predetermined length of a component (e.g., an aircraft wing.) Steps of method **500** depicted in FIG. 5 may be performed in parallel or in any suitable order. Any suitable component may perform any step of method **500**. For example, one or more machines (e.g., robotic machines) may be used to form one or more surfaces of the physical object.

FIG. 6 illustrates an example physical object **600** with staggered periodic riblets **702** having a different size and shape than staggered periodic riblets **102** of FIG. 1A. Physical object **600** is similar to physical object **100** except as follows. A cross section of each staggered periodic riblet **602** of FIG. 6 forms an equilateral triangle such that a length of each base (e.g., base **294** of FIG. 2B) of each staggered periodic riblet **602** is the same as a length of each side (e.g., sides **292** of FIG. 2B) of each staggered periodic riblet **602**. The height of each peak **606** of each staggered periodic riblet **602** above a plane (e.g., plane **180** of FIG. 1B) of smooth surface **604** is less than the height of each peak **106** of each staggered periodic riblet **102** of FIG. 1A. For example, the height of each peak **606** of each staggered periodic riblet **602** above a plane of smooth surface **604** may be less than 0.0018 inches (e.g., 0.0015 inches.) Transition regions **645** of FIG. 6 are regions staggered periodic riblets **602** overlap.

FIG. 7 illustrates an example physical object **700** with staggered periodic riblets **702** having a different size, shape, and arrangement than staggered periodic riblets **102** of FIG. 1A. Physical object **700** is similar to physical object **100** of FIG. 1A except as follows. A cross section of each staggered

periodic riblet **702** of FIG. 7 forms an equilateral triangle such that a length of each base (e.g., base **294** of FIG. 2B) of each staggered periodic riblet **702** is the same as a length of each side (e.g., sides **292** of FIG. 2B) of each staggered periodic riblet **702**. The height of each peak **706** of each staggered periodic riblet **702** above a plane (e.g., plane **180** of FIG. 1B) of smooth surface **704** is greater than the height of each peak **106** of each staggered periodic riblet **102** of FIG. 1A. For example, the height of each peak **706** of each staggered periodic riblet **702** above a plane of smooth surface **704** may be greater than 0.0018 inches (e.g., 0.002 inches.)

Each staggered periodic riblet **702** of physical object **700** has a length **L1**. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 7, each length **L1** is 0.07 inches. Length **L2** represents a length of each transition region **745** of each staggered periodic riblet **702**. Transition regions **745** are regions where staggered periodic riblets **702** overlap. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 7, each length **L2** of each transition region **745** is 0.025 inches. Each peak **706** of each staggered periodic riblet **102** has a length **L3**. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 7, each length **L3** of each peak **706** is 0.02 inches. Length **L1** of each staggered periodic riblet **702** equals the sum of length **L2** of transition region **745** at a first end of each staggered periodic riblet **702**, length **L3** of peak **706**, and length **L2** of transition region **745** at a second end of each staggered periodic riblet **702**. In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 7, the length of smooth surface **704** between ends of staggered periodic riblets is 0.02 inches.

Although physical objects **600** and **700** of FIGS. 6 and 7 illustrate a particular number of staggered periodic riblets **602** and **702**, smooth surfaces **604** and **704**, peaks **606** and **706**, valleys **608** and **708**, and transition regions **645** and **745**, this disclosure contemplates any suitable number of staggered periodic riblets **602** and **702**, smooth surfaces **604** and **704**, peaks **606** and **706**, valleys **608** and **708**, and transition regions **645** and **745**.

Although physical objects **600** and **700** of FIGS. 6 and 7 illustrate a particular arrangement of staggered periodic riblets **602** and **702**, smooth surfaces **604** and **704**, peaks **606** and **706**, valleys **608** and **708**, and transition regions **645** and **745**, this disclosure contemplates any suitable arrangement of staggered periodic riblets **602** and **702**, smooth surfaces **604** and **704**, peaks **606** and **706**, valleys **608** and **708**, and transition regions **645** and **745**. In certain embodiments, staggered periodic riblets **702** may be spaced further apart or closer together. For example, staggered periodic riblets **702** may be continuous along a length of physical object **700** such that an end of a first staggered periodic riblet **702** touches an end of a second staggered periodic riblet **702**.

Embodiments of this disclosure may be applied to any fluid flow application where the turbulent boundary layer is turbulent and skin friction is significant. For example, embodiments of this disclosure may be used to reduce internal flow drag in propulsion systems, reduce pipe flow drag, reduce drag in automotive systems, and the like.

Herein, “or” is inclusive and not exclusive, unless expressly indicated otherwise or indicated otherwise by context. Therefore, herein, “A or B” means “A, B, or both,” unless expressly indicated otherwise or indicated otherwise by context. Moreover, “and” is both joint and several, unless expressly indicated otherwise or indicated otherwise by context. Therefore, herein, “A and B” means “A and B, jointly or severally,” unless expressly indicated otherwise or indicated otherwise by context.

The scope of this disclosure encompasses all changes, substitutions, variations, alterations, and modifications to the

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example embodiments described or illustrated herein that a person having ordinary skill in the art would comprehend. The scope of this disclosure is not limited to the example embodiments described or illustrated herein. Moreover, although this disclosure describes and illustrates respective 5 embodiments herein as including particular components, elements, feature, functions, operations, or steps, any of these embodiments may include any combination or permutation of any of the components, elements, features, functions, operations, or steps described or illustrated anywhere herein that a person having ordinary skill in the art would comprehend. Furthermore, reference in the appended claims to an apparatus or system or a component of an apparatus or system being adapted to, arranged to, capable of, configured to, enabled to, operable to, or operative to perform a particular function encompasses that apparatus, system, component, whether or not it or that particular function is activated, turned on, or unlocked, as long as that apparatus, system, or component is so adapted, arranged, capable, 10 configured, enabled, operable, or operative. Additionally, although this disclosure describes or illustrates particular embodiments as providing particular advantages, particular embodiments may provide none, some, or all of these advantages.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for reducing drag, comprising:

forming first periodic riblets on a smooth surface of a physical object;

forming second periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object; and generating a flow over the first and second periodic riblets of the physical object;

wherein:

each first periodic riblet comprises a first transition 35 region at a first end of each first periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each first periodic riblet;

each second periodic riblet comprises a first transition 40 region at a first end of each second periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each second periodic riblet;

each second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet overlaps each first transition 45 region at the first end of each second periodic riblet;

a length of each riblet of the first and second periodic riblets runs parallel to a direction of the flow;

a maximum height of each riblet of first and second periodic riblets is less than 0.002 inches;

a maximum width of each riblet of the first and second 50 periodic riblets is less than 0.004 inches;

the length of each first and second riblet that runs parallel to the direction of flow is within a range of 8 to 100 times longer than the maximum height of each respective riblet; and 55

generating a constant cross-sectional area through the first and second periodic riblets as measured above the smooth surface of the physical object by compensating a decreasing volume of a trailing edge of the first and second periodic riblets with an increasing volume of 60 the neighboring first and second periodic riblets.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein a length of each first transition region of each first periodic riblet, a length of each second transition region of each first periodic riblet, a length of each first transition region of each second periodic riblet, 65 and a length of each second transition region of each second periodic riblet are the same.

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3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

forming third periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object; and

forming fourth periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object;

wherein:

each third periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each third periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each third periodic riblet;

each fourth periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each fourth periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each fourth periodic riblet;

each first transition region at the first end of each third periodic riblet overlaps each second transition region at the second end of each second periodic riblet; and

each second transition region at the second end of each third periodic riblet overlaps each first transition region at the first end of each fourth periodic riblet.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the first transition region at the first end of each first periodic riblet, the second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet, the first transition region at the first end of each second periodic riblet, and the second transition region at the second end of each second periodic riblet each form a parabolic curve.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the physical object is one of the following:

an aircraft;

a marine vessel;

a vehicle; and

a pipeline.

6. A physical object, comprising:

a smooth surface;

first periodic riblets on the smooth surface of a physical object; and

second periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object;

wherein:

each first periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each first periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each first periodic riblet;

each second periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each second periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each second periodic riblet;

each second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet overlaps each first transition region at the first end of each second periodic riblet; and

a length of each riblet of the first and second periodic riblets runs parallel to a direction of the flow;

a maximum height of each riblet of first and second periodic riblets is less than 0.002 inches;

a maximum width of each riblet of the first and second periodic riblets is less than 0.004 inches;

the length of each first and second riblet that runs parallel to the direction of flow is within a range of 8 to 100 times longer than the maximum height of each respective riblet; and

generating a constant cross-sectional area as measured above the smooth surface of the physical object is constant at any cross section through the first and second periodic riblets by compensating a decreasing

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volume of a trailing edge of each first and second periodic riblets with an increasing volume of neighboring periodic riblets.

7. The physical object of claim 6, wherein a length of each first transition region of each first periodic riblet, a length of each second transition region of each first periodic riblet, a length of each first transition region of each second periodic riblet, and a length of each second transition region of each second periodic riblet are the same.

8. The physical object of claim 6, further comprising:  
third periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object; and  
fourth periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object:  
wherein:

each third periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each third periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each third periodic riblet:

each fourth periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each fourth periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each fourth periodic riblet:

each first transition region at the first end of each third periodic riblet overlaps each second transition region at the second end of each second periodic riblet; and  
each second transition region at the second end of each third periodic riblet overlaps each first transition region at the first end of each fourth periodic riblet.

9. The physical object of claim 6, wherein the first transition region at the first end of each first periodic riblet, the second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet, the first transition region at the first end of each second periodic riblet, and the second transition region at the second end of each second periodic riblet each form a parabolic curve.

10. The physical object of claim 6, wherein the physical object is one of the following:

an aircraft;

a marine vessel;

a vehicle; and

a pipeline.

11. A method of manufacturing a physical object, comprising:

forming first periodic riblets on a smooth surface of a physical object; and

forming second periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object:

wherein:

each first periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each first periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each first periodic riblet:

each second periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each second periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each second periodic riblet:

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each second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet overlaps each first transition region at the first end of each second periodic riblet;

a length of each riblet of the first and second periodic riblets runs parallel to a direction of the flow:

a maximum height of each riblet of first and second periodic riblets is less than 0.002 inches;

a maximum width of each riblet of the first and second periodic riblets is less than 0.004 inches;

the length of each first and second riblet that runs parallel to the direction of flow is within a range of 8 to 100 times longer than the maximum height of each respective riblet; and

generating a constant cross-sectional area as measured above the smooth surface of the physical object is constant at any cross section through the first and second periodic riblets by compensating a decreasing volume of a trailing edge of each first and second periodic riblets with an increasing volume of neighboring periodic riblets.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein a length of each first transition region of each first periodic riblet, a length of each second transition region of each first periodic riblet, a length of each first transition region of each second periodic riblet, and a length of each second transition region of each second periodic riblet are the same.

13. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

forming third periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object; and

forming fourth periodic riblets on the smooth surface of the physical object:

wherein:

each third periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each third periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each third periodic riblet:

each fourth periodic riblet comprises a first transition region at a first end of each fourth periodic riblet and a second transition region at a second end of each fourth periodic riblet:

each first transition region at the first end of each third periodic riblet overlaps each second transition region at the second end of each second periodic riblet; and

each second transition region at the second end of each third periodic riblet overlaps each first transition region at the first end of each fourth periodic riblet.

14. The method of claim 9, wherein the first transition region at the first end of each first periodic riblet, the second transition region at the second end of each first periodic riblet, the first transition region at the first end of each second periodic riblet, and the second transition region at the second end of each second periodic riblet each form a parabolic curve.

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