



Wireless

UWB Alliance to focus on interoperability, further boosting the UWB ecosystemby [Monica Allevan](#) | Dec 20, 2018 7:31am

Founding members of the UWB Alliance include Hyundai, Kia, Zebra, Decawave, Alteros, Novelda and Ubisense. (Pixabay)

UWB, a technology that seems to have been around since the beginning of time, is getting another lease on life, so to speak, in the form of the UWB Alliance.

The UWB Alliance conducted an official public unveiling of itself Wednesday, although the group has existed since it was incorporated in May. UWB as a technology has been an old standby in the sense it's been used to track assets on trucks, for example, for years, but there's been a resurgence in the technology, with the likes of Apple and Samsung showing interest.

"UWB's time has come, and it's kind of exciting to now play a role in helping to foster that and really coalesce a lot of individual work that's been done," UWB Alliance Chairman Timothy Harrington told FierceWirelessTech.

One of the key goals for the UWB Alliance is to support growth of UWB technologies through end-to-end, vendor-agnostic interoperability programs.

Up until now, UWB technology has seen a lot of success in things like the NFL using it to track players during games and manufacturers relying on it to locate expensive tools that are used to make aircraft. The auto industry uses it in the vehicle assembly automation process to make sure settings in each vehicle match what they should be, for example. The most common place to find it in the U.S. is in the 6 GHz band.

“There’s been a lot of success and at the same time, what we’re seeing now is an inflection point where the interest level is getting to consumer-type interest,” Harrington said.

Harrington, who also serves as chairman of the IEEE 802.15.4z Enhanced Impulse Radio Group, said Apple and Samsung have been active participants in that group, which started out as “kind of a little group.” With Apple and Samsung giving their input into the standards process, it’s a good bet that UWB will see its status rise further in the smartphone and related ecosystems.

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The [press release](#) announcing the UWB Alliance names Hyundai, Kia, Zebra, Decawave, Alteros, Novelda and Ubisense as founding members, but Harrington indicated there are a lot of other players showing interest that he’s not at liberty to name.

There was a previous alliance around UWB, but that disbanded some years back. “It was just a little bit too early,” he said. There were few products on the market back then, but it provided the basis for some early work that allowed the exploration of UWB and what it could do.

UWB is a unique technology, according to Harrington. Literally, the name ultra-wideband expresses what it is: a technology that uses a wide piece of spectrum. It doesn’t require much power, so it can be in devices operating for years on a coin cell battery and it shares the band nicely, he said. It allows for locating and tracking down to the centimeter-type of level, where monitoring sleep or watching a heart beat are possible.

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The UWB Alliance already has expressed its concerns about plans related to the 6 GHz band in the U.S.; alliance representatives met with FCC staff back in October to discuss the situation. Mainly, the alliance says it wants to come up with a plan that would allow for more flexible use in the 6 GHz band while protecting incumbent licensed users and existing unlicensed UWB users.

The IEEE 802 LAN/MAN Standards Committee that oversees Local and Metropolitan Area networking standards—including standards used by UWB and Wi-Fi—has drafted and approved comments to the FCC 6 GHz proceeding expressing its recognition of the need for coexistence between UWB and Wi-Fi as the latter technology seeks to expand into the 6 GHz band. The committee has also requested the 802.19 coexistence Working Group work toward an effective resolution on the issue.

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