Application Note

AN_216

Using the FT230X to design a GPS Dongle

Version 1.1

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This application note illustrates how to develop a GPS to USB design using the FTDI FT230X chip.

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1 Introduction

The FT230X is a USB to serial UART interface with optimised pin count for smaller PCB designs, offering single-chip USB to asynchronous serial data transfer interface. The entire USB protocol is handled on the chip. No USB specific firmware programming is required.
Small PCB footprint makes it ideal for space constrained applications such as the design of a GPS dongle – as described in this application note.

1.1 Overview

This application note gives detail of how to implement a GPS dongle design, which can be used to enable location services under Windows Operating System, using the FT230X USB to basic UART Bridge IC.

The application can be used as a reference design for the FT230X and details of the schematic and layout are given for reference.

1.2 Background

Computers today are more mobile than ever. From small laptops to Tablet PCs, many computers can go wherever the user wants to go. Programs that take advantage of the computer's mobility can add significant value to people's lives. For example, a program that can find nearby restaurants and provide driving directions would seem to be a natural fit for a portable computer. Starting with Windows 7, the Windows Sensor and Location platform enables the computer and applications to adapt to their current environment. With location sensors – such as GPS devices, applications and gadgets can know exactly where they are, enabling them to provide relevant content and functionality.

2 Example Circuit

The schematic diagram below gives details of how the FT230XQ chip can be connected to a GPS receiver to create a USB based GPS sensor. In this case a GPS module – GP-2106 has been used.
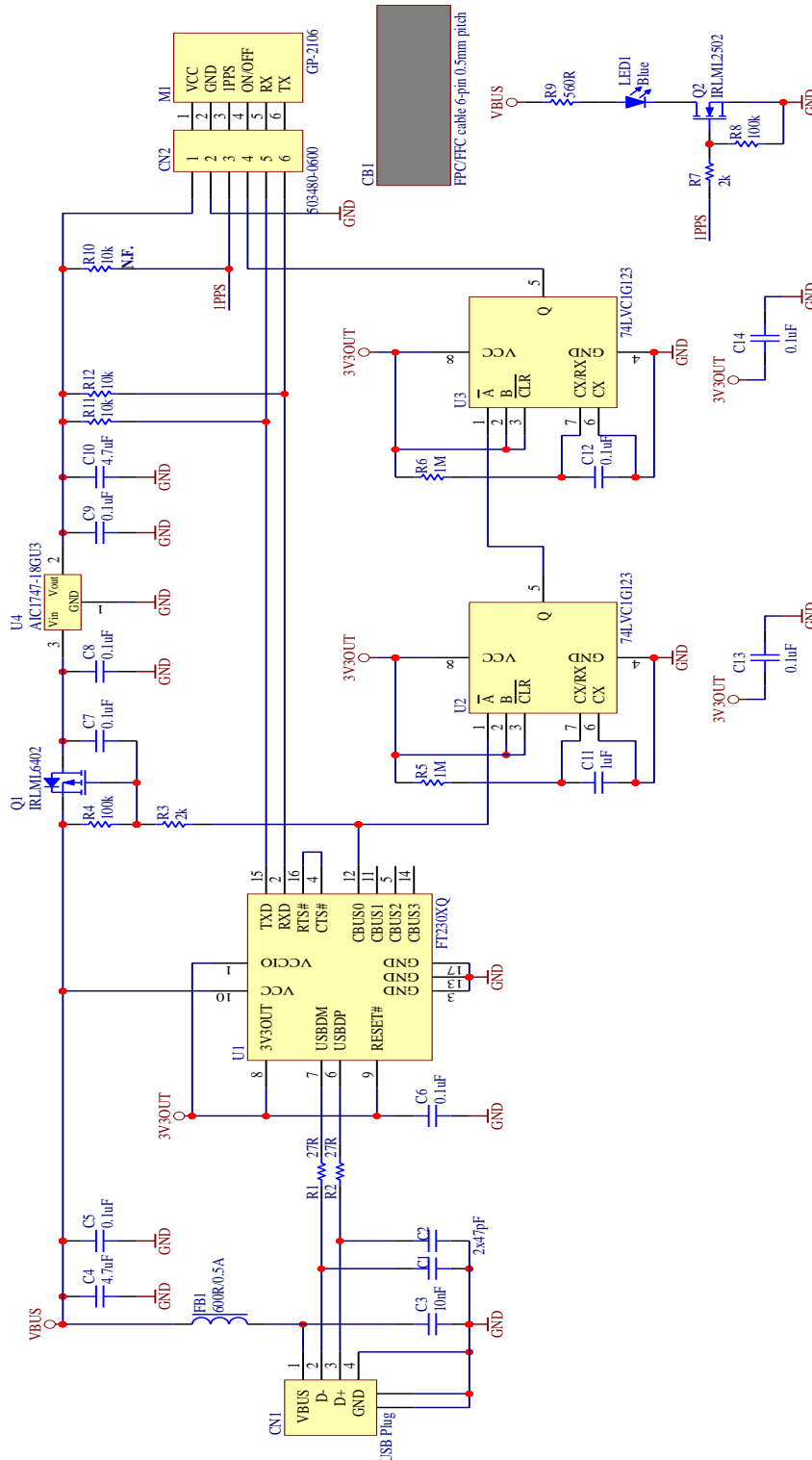

Figure 2.1 FT230XQ GPS Dongle circuit diagram

The FT230XQ (U1) provides the UART to USB conversion while GPS Module – GP-2106 (M1) provides location data in NMEA0183 v.3.01 format.

For more information about GP-2106 GPS receiver please visit the product web site: http://www.adh-tech.com.tw/?gp-2106(sirf-star-iv),71

More information on the FT230XS may be obtained from the FTDI web page:

http://www.ftdichip.com/Products/ICs/FT230X.html

The implementation is straight-forward with TXD output from the FT230XQ connected to RXD input of the GP-2106 GPS receiver and RXD input of the FT230XQ connected to TXD output from the GP-2106. These connections form a data link between the GPS receiver and USB port. RTS# and CTS# pins of the FT230XQ are connected together to disable hardware flow control.

To properly start-up the GPS receiver, power must be applied and 'On' pulse must be generated at pin-4 of the receiver. To satisfy this condition two monostable multivibrators (74LVC1G123) have been employed. First multivibrator U2 generates a delay during which the FT230XQ is enumerated by the USB host controller and power is applied to the GPS receiver. The second multivibrator generates an 'On' pulse (high level) which starts-up the chipset inside the GPS receiver module.

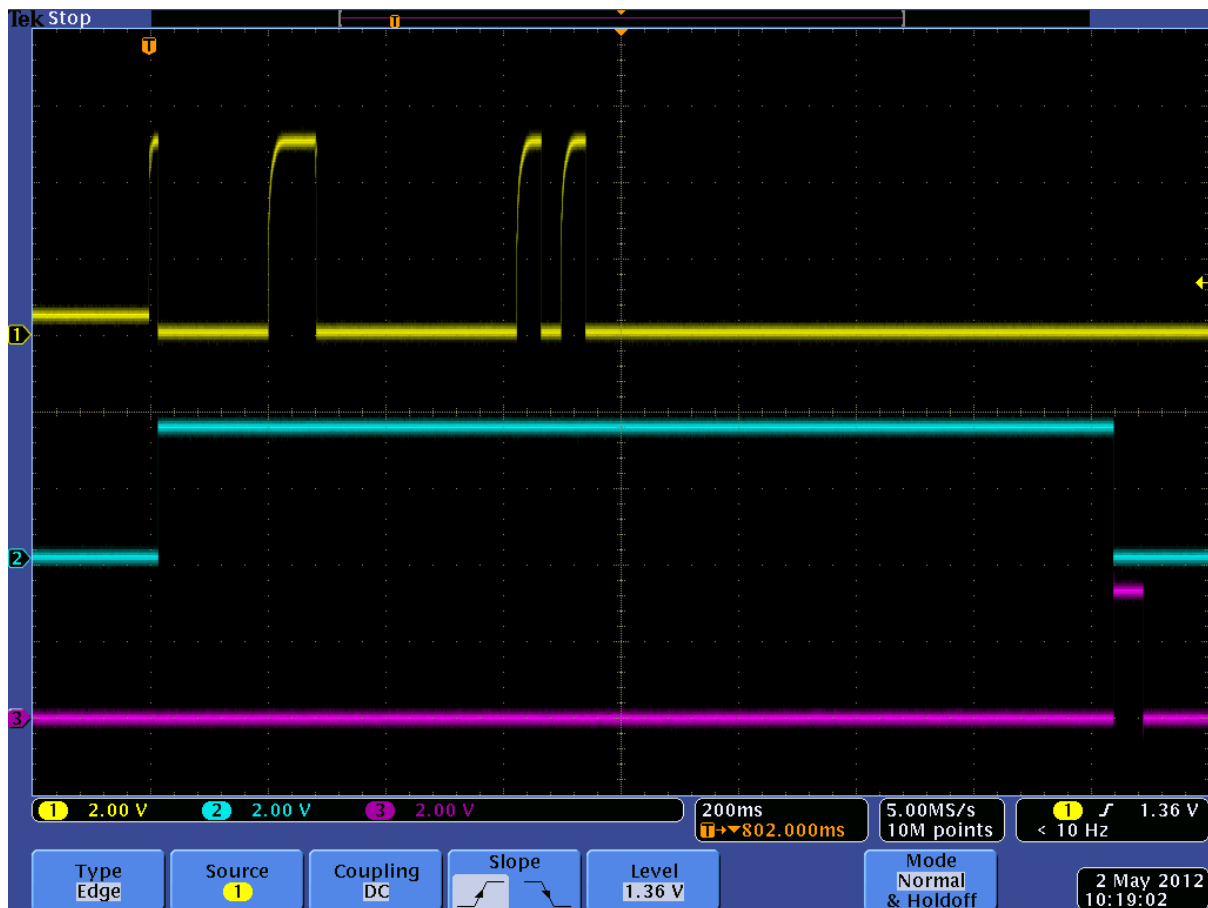Figure below illustrates the behaviour of the start-up circuit.

Figure 2.2 Start-up circuit scope waveforms

CH.1 (Yellow trace) was taken from the U1-pin-12 (CBUS0). CBUS0 is configured as an output of PWREN# signal.
CH.2 (Blue trace) probe was connected to the 'Q' output of U2.
CH.3 (Purple trace) probe was connected to the 'Q' output of U3.

The PWREN# pin toggles during the USB enumeration process and then it stays low as long as U1 is enumerated and the host computer is not in 'sleep' mode (i.e. it is not hibernated). A logic low level at this pin also enables the Q1 MOSFET transistor to conduct, feeding 'VBUS' (+5V) to the input of U4 voltage regulator. U4 reduces this voltage to 1.8V required by the GPS receiver.

As soon as PWREN# pin goes low for the first time, U2 triggers, driving its output high. Approximately 1.6 seconds later U2 output will go low triggering U3 which will generate 'On' pulse at the 'ON/OFF' input of the GPS receiver.

GPS dongle PCB has been equipped with the blue status LED (LED1). This LED will blink once a second when GPS fix is available (valid position has been acquired). LED1 is controlled by '1PPS' output from GPS receiver through Q2 MOSFET transistor.

3 PCB Data

FT230XQ GPS Dongle PCB files are available in Gerber format and Altium Designer project files and can be downloaded here:

http://www.ftdichip.com/support/documents/schematics/HW_248_rev1_1.zip

4 Using FT230XQ GPS Dongle as a location sensor under Windows 7

To use FT230XQ GPS Dongle as a location sensor, a special driver must be installed. There are many location sensor drivers freely available on the web. One of them can be downloaded from following location: http://www.turboirc.com/gps7/

5 Ordering Information

Due to the large volume of interest expressed in this solution by FTDI customers, FTDI are delighted to offer a finished product, ready to use in a tough, contoured, hardened plastic enclosure.

The module has a type A USB connector with dust cap for connecting to the USB host and will be powered from the USB host.

Figure 5.1 FT-X-GPS Dongle

Module Code	Utilised IC Code	Description
FT-X-GPS	FT230XQ	USB GPS Dongle

Table 5-1 – Ordering Information

Drivers for the FT230X are available at:

http://www.ftdichip.com/Drivers/VCP.htm

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Appendix A – References

Document References

FT230XQ webpage:

http://www.ftdichip.com/Support/Documents/DataSheets/ICs/DS_FT230X.pdf

GP-2106 webpage:

http://www.adh-tech.com.tw/?gp-2106(sirf-star-iv),71

Information on GPS system:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Positioning_System

Information on Windows Location API:

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Terms	Description
GPS	Global Positioning System
LED	Light Emitting Diode
MOSFET	Metal–Oxide–Semiconductor Field-Effect Transistor
RXD	Receive Data (The receive data line of RS232)
TXD	Transmit Data (The transmit data line of RS232)
UART	Universal Asynchronous Receiver/Transmitter
USB	Universal Serial Bus
USB-IF	USB Implementers Forum

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Appendix C – Revision History

Document Title: AN_216 Using the FT230X to design a GPS Dongle

Document Reference No.:   FT_000698

Clearance No.:   FTDI# 301

Product Page: http://www.ftdichip.com/Support.htm/FTReferenceDesigns.htm

Document Feedback: Send Feedback

Revision	Changes	Date
1.0	Initial Release	2012-07-09
1.1	Included details of dongle for retail. Updated US contact details Added image in section 5	2013-08-08