Low-Power Current-Sensing Circuit for Boost Converter

Hou-Ming Chen, Yi-Shiang Tsai, Shih-Han Jheng, and Kuang-Hao Lin

***Abstract*—This paper presents an improved current-sensing circuit for boost converter. The proposed circuit replaces n-channel switching transistors with p-channel switching transistors to eliminate glitch current. The proposed circuit therefore consumes less current when the control voltage V_{GN} changes from V_{DD} to GND. The proposed current-sensing circuit has been designed using standard TSMC 0.18 μm 1P6M CMOS technology. In a simulation, the circuit achieved a high sensing accuracy of 96.38% at a 484 mA inductor current. Additionally, a boost converter using the proposed current-sensing circuit can regulate a 1.2 V supply to 1.8 V at a 50 mA load current.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Demand for battery-powered personal electronics, such as smartphones and cameras, has increased considerably in recent years. The batteries in these devices require a boost converter [1]-[3] to boost a low input voltage to a sufficient high voltage, but the boost converter's current-sensing circuit [1] often causes a glitch current and inaccurate senses voltage when the control voltage V_{GN} changes from V_{DD} to GND. This is problematic because boost converters must have an accurate current-sensing circuit. Current-sensing circuits [1], [4]-[6] have been developed and implemented to accurately sense the inductor current and limit the peak-inductor current; however, the current-sensing circuit proposed in this paper is an improvement over existing circuits and completely resolves the problem. With the proposed circuit, by changing the control voltage V_{GN} changes from V_{DD} to GND, a small current of 12.5 μA is achieved.

II. OPERATING ANALYSIS OF AN EXISTING CURRENT-SENSING CIRCUIT [1]

Leung et al. proposed an accurate current-sensing circuit for a boost converter based on an error-amplifier voltage mirror [1]. Their current-sensing circuit [1] is composed of an error amplifier, current mirror M_{R1} and M_{R2}, a power transistor M_{N1}, switching transistors M_{N2} and M_{S1} – M_{S3}, and a bias transistor M_1, as shown in Fig. 1. The circuit operation is divided into two periods: an energy storage period and an energy release period. In the energy storage period, the switching transistors M_{N2} and M_{S1} are turned on and M_{S2} and M_{S3} are turned off by setting V_{GN} to a high value. The ratio of M_{N1} to M_{N2} is K; therefore, their drain current ratio is K. A sensing voltage V_{SEN} is described in

$$\left(\frac{W}{L}\right)_{M_{N1}} \Big/ \left(\frac{W}{L}\right)_{M_{N2}} = K \tag{1}$$

$$V_{SEN} = I_{SEN} \times R_{SEN} = \frac{I_L}{K} \times R_{SEN} \tag{2}$$

To mirror the current of the power transistor M_{N1} accurately, an error amplifier is used to enforce equal voltage at nodes V_A and V_B; the drain voltage of M_{S2} and M_{S3} are approximately the same. Fig. 2 shows that the sensing accuracy is higher than 96% at V_{IN} = 1.2 V and I_L = 484mA. In the energy release period, transistors M_{N1}, M_{N2} and M_{S1} are turned off and the switching transistors M_{S2} and M_{S3} are turned on because the control voltage V_{GN} is low. The sensing current I_{SEN} equals I_{bias} during this period. The sensing voltage V_{SEN} = $I_{bias}R_{SEN}$ nears zero because the bias current I_{bias} is 1.83μA. A glitch current of 83 μA occurs when the control voltage V_{GN} changes from V_{DD} to GND, causing an inaccurate sensing voltage 642 mV, as shown in Fig. 2.

III. PROPOSED CURRENT-SENSING CIRCUIT

The proposed current-sensing circuit uses p-channel switching transistors M_{SP1} and M_{SP2} to replace the n-channel switching transistors M_{S2} and M_{S3} and thus eliminate the glitch current (Fig. 3). In the energy storage period, a high sensing accuracy of 96.38 % is achieved at V_{IN} = 1.2 V and I_L = 484 mA, as shown in Fig. 4. A small current of 12.5 μA flows into transistor M_{SP1} when the control voltage V_{GN} changes from V_{DD} to GND. This improved result is mainly attributable to two design factors. First, the mobility μ_p of a p-channel transistor is less than the mobility μ_n of an n-channel transistor. Second, the overdrive voltage (0.3 – 0.5 V) of the transistor M_{SP1} is less than the overdrive voltage (0.7 V) of the transistor M_{S3}. The simulation verified that a glitch current is effectively eliminated by using p-channel switching transistors. Compared with existing current-sensing circuits, the proposed current-sensing circuit consumes less current, and saves an inverter chain.

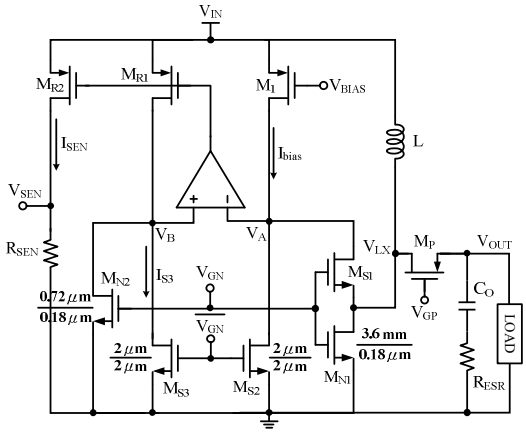

Fig. 1. Schematic of the existing current-sensing circuit [1].

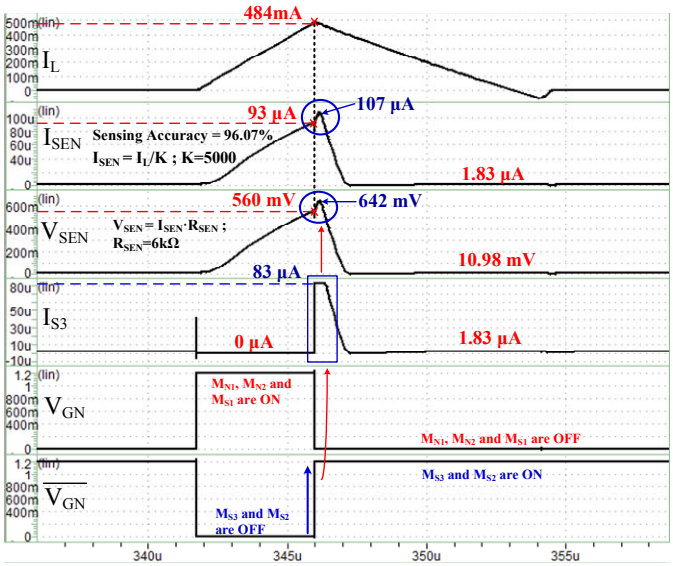

Fig. 2. Simulation result of the existing current-sensing circuit.

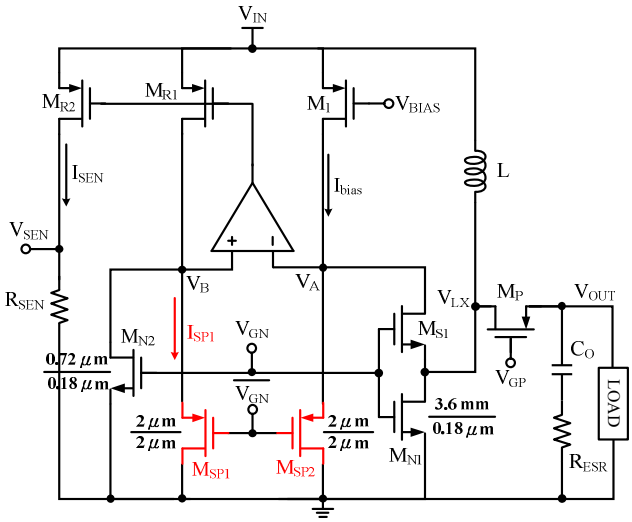

Fig. 3. Proposed current-sensing circuit.

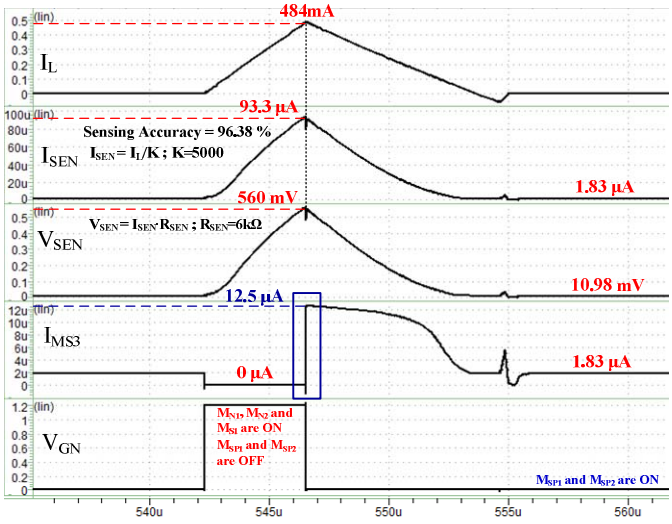

Fig. 4. Simulation result of the proposed current-sensing circuit.

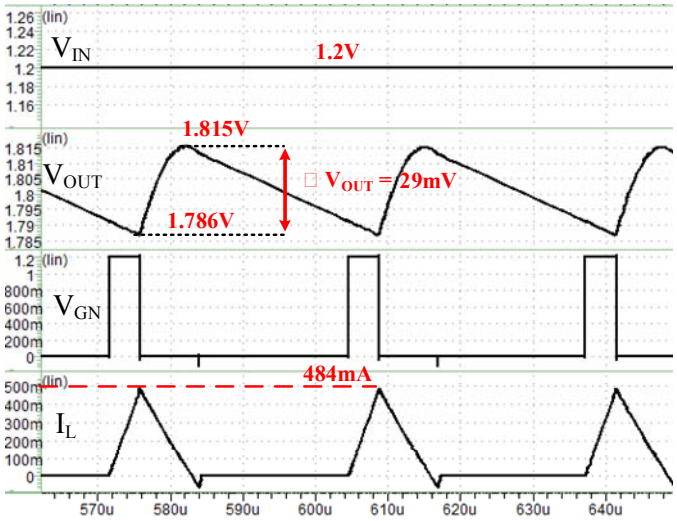

Fig. 5. Simulation result of the proposed boost converter under a 50 mA load.

IV. Conclusion

The proposed low-power current-sensing circuit was designed using the TSMC 0.18 µm CMOS 1P6M technology and was simulated in HSPICE. The simulation of the proposed current-sensing circuit verified that the glitch current is effectively eliminated when the control voltage V_{GN} changes from V_{DD} to GND. A 96.38% sensing accuracy is achieved at a peak-inductor current of 484 mA. The proposed boost converter with the current-sensing circuit can boost a 1.2 V supply to 1.8 V at a 50 mA load current and has the stable operation with an output ripple voltage of 29 mV.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank the National Chip Implementation Center (CIC) of Taiwan for technical support.

Reference

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