(19) Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets

(11) **EP 1 775 692 A2**

(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(43) Date of publication:
18.04.2007 Bulletin 2007/16

(51) Int Cl.:
G08G 1/16 *(2006.01)* ***E04H 6/42*** *(2006.01)*
G08G 1/04 *(2006.01)*

(21) Application number: **06380262.3**

(22) Date of filing: **09.10.2006**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV MC NL PL PT RO SE SI SK TR
Designated Extension States:
AL BA HR MK YU

(30) Priority: **17.10.2005 ES 200502528**

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(54) **Safety procedure and device for vehicle junctions**

(57) The procedure is characterised in that it comprises an initial phase using automatic means to detect the movement of pedestrians in the vicinity of the vehicle junction and a second phase in which the vehicle driver is provided with information on the movement of pedestrians in the vicinity of the junction. The device comprises a pedestrian movement sensor system, a central control unit for the signal captured by the sensor system and a system for transmitting information to the driver.

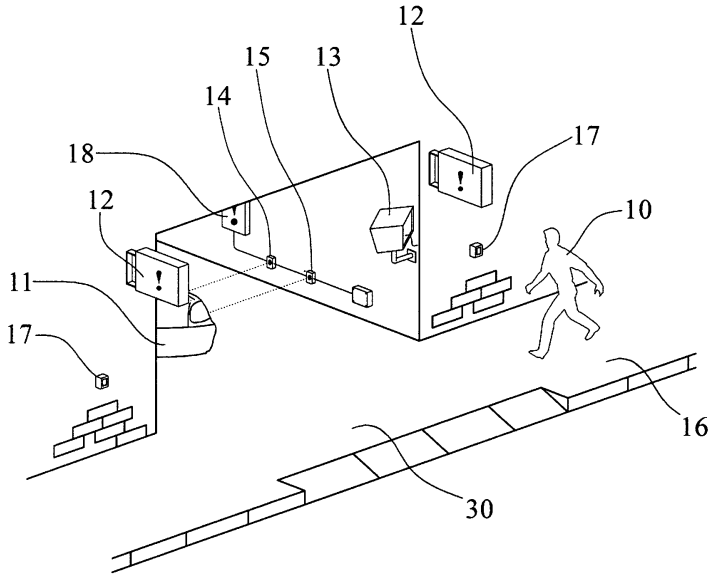

FIG.2

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a safety procedure and device for vehicle junctions.

[0002] In particular, the present invention will be applicable to any vehicle junctions that cross a flow which is substantially perpendicular to the trajectory of the vehicle, such as junctions of parking areas across pedestrian routes, or of other types of junction with reduced visibility.

[0003] In said junctions there is the problem of preventing a vehicle from running over crossing pedestrians.

[0004] To solve said problem, systems are known that warn the pedestrian of the presence of a vehicle in the vicinity of vehicle junctions. However, these systems have various drawbacks. Firstly, pedestrians may be people of any physical condition, age or understanding of traffic, and said warnings of the presence of a vehicle may therefore not be perceived or heeded. Typically, a case of this type may involve a child who is moving along the pavement playing and/or at high speed. Other typical cases involve disabled and/or handicapped people, older people, etc., who have reduced ability to detect the vehicle and/or reduced ability to react to it. Secondly, said systems leave the driver of the vehicle without protection, in that the final responsibility for knocking down a pedestrian usually falls on him, even though he is unable to control the situation properly. In the case of junctions from parking areas with very long vehicles, there is always a "blind moment" when the driver places the front part of the vehicle in the trajectory of the pedestrians but does not know whether pedestrians are approaching the vehicle junction.

[0005] To overcome the aforementioned drawbacks, the present invention consists of a procedure and a device for producing significant safety characteristics at vehicle entrances and exits, facilitating manoeuvres for drivers and increasing pedestrian safety.

[0006] In particular, the procedure according to the present invention is based on an initial phase using automatic means to detect the movement of pedestrians in the vicinity of a vehicle junction, and a second phase where the vehicle driver is provided with information about pedestrian movement in the vicinity of the junction.

[0007] The pedestrian movement detection phase may be performed by means, for example, of cameras and/or sensors, such as volumetric, infrared or other types of sensors.

[0008] The phase where the driver is given information may be performed by means of a monitor or by producing an optical and/or acoustic warning signal using computational means.

[0009] Logically, the signals given to the driver should avoid producing a false sense of security in him, should no pedestrians be detected in the vicinity of the junction. Accordingly, for example, in a preferred embodiment of the invention, detection using a camera and detection using sensors will be combined, giving the driver information both on a screen showing what the cameras have shot and by means of optical and/or acoustic warning signals generated by the detection of pedestrian movement by the sensors, or alternatively it is combined with permanent warning indicator systems.

[0010] In preferred embodiments of the present invention, said phases will be combined with phases for detecting the movement of vehicles towards the junction and the generation of a warning signal for pedestrians who are in the vicinity of the vehicle junction.

[0011] The device according to the present invention, for performing the procedure described above, will consist, at least, of:

- a system for sensing the movement of pedestrians in the vicinity of the area of the vehicle junction;
- a central control unit for the signal captured by the sensor system that also generates information for the driver of the vehicle depending on the signal;
- a system for transmitting information to the driver.

[0012] The sensor system may consist, for example, of a system of cameras and/or presence sensors, such as volumetric, infrared or other types of sensor. Preferably, a camera system will be combined with presence sensors.

[0013] The system for transmitting information to the driver may consist of a visual system, such as a screen which, for example, shows what the cameras have shot, of a pictographic system which provides a warning signal, for example, depending on what has been detected by the presence sensors, or an acoustic warning system, or a combination thereof.

[0014] Preferably, the device will also comprise a system provided with a minimum of a vehicle movement sensor and an optical and/or acoustic warning device to pedestrians of the presence of a vehicle in the vicinity of the junction.

[0015] For a better understanding of the invention, the accompanying drawings of embodiments of the present invention are provided as an explanatory but not limiting example.

[0016] Fig. 1 shows a block diagram that illustrates diagrammatically the components of an embodiment of the device to which the present invention relates.

[0017] Fig. 2 shows a perspective view of a vehicle junction, in particular a parking area exit, provided with a device according to the present invention.

[0018] Fig. 3 shows another perspective view of a parking area exit provided with a different embodiment of the device according to the present invention.

[0019] Fig. 4 is a perspective view showing, in greater detail, the external elements of a further embodiment of the device according to the present invention.

[0020] Fig. 1 shows a block diagram illustrating diagrammatically the differing components of a device according to the present invention and the links established between said elements. The embodiment shown comprises a central control unit 1 by means of which the rest

of the components of the embodiment are interconnected, including a system of information sensors 4 with sensors for detecting the presence of pedestrians 41 and a warning system 3 to warn the driver of the vehicle. In addition, the illustration shows a communications inlet 5 through which, using a personal computer, the operation of the system can be controlled, and another communications inlet 6 used to connect to other pieces of equipment arranged, for example, in the same building as that in which the device is located.

[0021] In addition, in order to increase safety synergy, the embodiment illustrated has internal information sensors 42, for capturing information on vehicles approaching the vehicle junction, and an external warning system 2 for said pedestrians. Thus, information is provided simultaneously both to the driver and to pedestrians of the existence of a danger of an accident, and the possibility of this occurring is minimised.

[0022] The information sensors 41 for pedestrians situated in the vicinity of the vehicle junction may be presence and/or movement sensors, such as volumetric or infrared sensors. Video cameras may also be incorporated. Preferably, the presence of video cameras may be combined with presence and/or movement sensors.

[0023] The information sensors 42 for vehicles approaching the junction may, because of their characteristics and location, be volumetric, infrared, magnetic, infrared, etc. sensors. The system 3 for warning the vehicle driver may comprise monitors and visual, pictographic and/or acoustic warning systems. The optional pedestrian warning system 2 may include acoustic, pictographic, luminous, acoustic or other types of warning elements.

[0024] Fig. 2 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of a device according to the present invention. The figure shows a pedestrian 10 walking along a pedestrian route or pavement 16 that passes through an intersection with a junction 30 for vehicles 11 from a parking area. On either side of the junction 30 volumetric sensors 17 have been arranged to detect the movement of pedestrians 10. In this embodiment, when the sensors 17 detect a pedestrian, they emit a signal, for example a pictographic signal, by means of the monitor 13 which informs the driver of the vehicle 11 approaching the junction 30 of the presence of pedestrians 10. The system also has sensors 14, 15, which detect the presence of a vehicle 11 heading towards the junction 30, generating a pictographic warning signal to pedestrians 10 by means of luminous elements 12. Finally, in the present embodiment, a luminous warning element 18 to the driver has also been added in order to remind the driver of the vehicle that he must manoeuvre with care even when no warning that pedestrians have been detected is projected on the element 13.

[0025] Fig. 3 shows another embodiment of the device according to the present invention which may be regarded as an extension of the embodiment shown earlier in Fig. 2. The elements that are common or similar to those in Fig. 2 have been shown with identical numerals. Unlike the previous embodiment, in this case, the sensors 17 for pedestrians 10 illustrated are of the infrared type, and cameras 19 have also been placed to take images of the vicinity of the junction 30, the images taken being shown, for example, by means of the monitor 13 so as to inform the driver of the state of the pedestrian route 16 on either side of the junction 30. In order to not interrupt the images displayed on the monitor 30, if the sensors 17 detect a pedestrian 10 walking towards the junction 30 a pictographic warning signal is produced for the driver by means of the luminous element or panel 21, which, alternatively to the one illustrated, may also be a traffic light that changes from amber to red when the sensors 17 detect a pedestrian 10. It may also be, for example, a luminous warning light situated on the parking area exit barrier. Finally, to improve the degree of warning to the pedestrian 10, luminous signals 20 have been placed integrally with the pavement, delimit the junction 20 and are actuated when the sensors 14, 15 detect a vehicle 11 being driven towards the junction 30. Thus, the pedestrian receives a visual warning even when he is not looking forwards.

[0026] Finally, Fig. 4 shows a further embodiment, similar to the one shown in Fig. 3, in which a module 31 is arranged recessed in the walls adjacent to the junction 30, which comprises a volumetric sensor 17 of the presence of pedestrians 10 and an acoustic-type signal generator 25 to warn the pedestrian. The combination of an acoustic and visual signal ensures that the pedestrian warning is effective. When acoustic-type signals are produced for the pedestrian 10, the central control unit of the device should have means of discerning the time of day, so that during the night the acoustic signal can be reduced or eliminated, depending on the requirements of the location.

[0027] Operation of the embodiments illustrated in the above figures is explained below.

[0028] The sensor system 41 collects information on the presence and/or approach of pedestrians in the vicinity of the vehicle junction and, by means of the central control unit, provides information to the vehicle on state of traffic on the pedestrian way by means of the vehicle information warning system 3, which includes, for example, monitors 13 and/or luminous elements 21. Thus, the vehicle driver is aware of the presence of pedestrians outside his field of vision, in the vicinity of the junction. Simultaneously, the other sensor system 42 (comprising, for example, the sensors 14, 15) detects the presence of a vehicle and issues a warning by means of the system 4 for warning the pedestrian 10 (which may, for example, comprise luminous panels 12, luminous components on the ground 20 or sound indicators 25) so that the pedestrian 10 also becomes aware of the presence of the vehicle 11. Thus, the pedestrian is also aware of the presence of the vehicle and can pay more attention and/or reduce his speed, thus minimising the possibility of an accident.

[0029] A person skilled in the art will be able to see

that the embodiments illustrated in the differing figures may be combined with each other without departing from the scope of the invention, and similarly the elements illustrated in the examples may be replaced by others that perform the same functions, also without departing from the spirit of the invention.

Claims

1. Safety procedure for vehicle junctions **characterised in that** it comprises the following phases:

   an initial phase using automatic means to detect pedestrian movement in the vicinity of a vehicle junction, and
   a second phase in which the vehicle driver is provided with information on the movement of pedestrians in the vicinity of the junction.

2. Procedure according to claim 1, **characterised in that** said initial phase uses cameras.

3. Procedure according to either claim 1 or claim 2, **characterised in that** in said initial phase presence and/or movement sensors are used.

4. Procedure according to claim 3, **characterised in that** said initial phase uses volumetric or infrared sensors.

5. Procedure according to claim 4, **characterised in that** the phase in which the vehicle driver is provided with information on pedestrian movement by means of the projection on a monitor of images of the vicinity of the junction.

6. Procedure according to claim 4 or 5, **characterised in that** the phase in which the vehicle driver is provided with information on pedestrian movement comprises a phase to generate a warning signal to the vehicle driver depending on the results obtained in the initial detection phase.

7. Procedure according to claim 5, in which the generation of a warning signal to the driver comprises the generation of a visual and/or pictographic signal.

8. Procedure according to any one of claims 1 to 7, **characterised in that** said procedure is also combined with a phase of detecting vehicle movement towards the junction and the generation of a warning signal of said movement to pedestrians located in the vicinity of the vehicle junction.

9. Procedure according to claim 8, **characterised in that** said movement warning signal for pedestrians comprises the generation of a visual, acoustic and/or acoustic signal.

10. Safety procedure for vehicle junctions, **characterised in that** it comprises:

    - a system for sensing the movement of pedestrians in the vicinity of the area where the vehicle joins the traffic;
    - a central control unit for the signal captured by the sensor system which also generates information for the vehicle driver depending on the signal;
    - a system for transmitting information to the driver.

11. Device according to claim 10, **characterised in that** the sensor system comprises at least one camera.

12. Device according to either claim 10 or claim 11, **characterised in that** said sensor system comprises presence and/or movement sensors.

13. Device according to claim 12, **characterised in that** said sensor system comprises volumetric and/or infrared sensors.

14. Device according to any one of claims 10 to 13, **characterised in that** the system for transmitting information to the driver comprises a monitor.

15. Device according to any one of claims 10 to 14, **characterised in that** the system for transmitting information to the driver comprises a luminous alarm situated on the exit barrier of the parking area.

16. Device according to any one of claims 10 to 15, **characterised in that** it also comprises, as a minimum, a vehicle movement sensor and a system for transmitting information to the pedestrian.

17. Device according to claim 16, **characterised in that** the system for transmitting information to the driver and/or the system for informing the driver comprise a system for generating pictographic signals.

18. Device according to either claim 16 or claim 17, **characterised in that** the system for transmitting information to the pedestrian comprises a system for generating acoustic signals.

19. Device according to claim 18, **characterised in that** it comprises a module comprising pedestrian movement sensors and generators of acoustic signals to pedestrians.

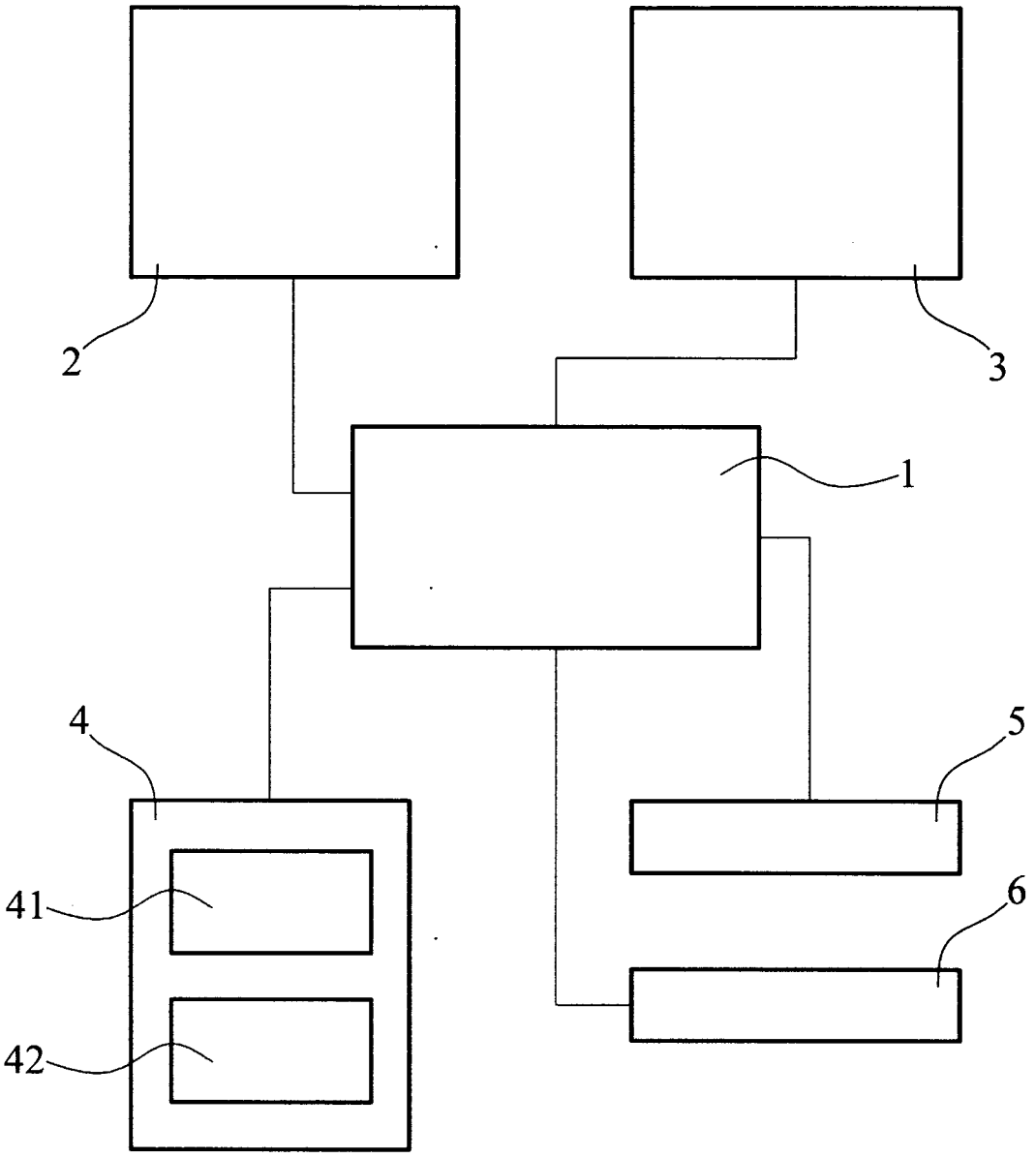

FIG. 1

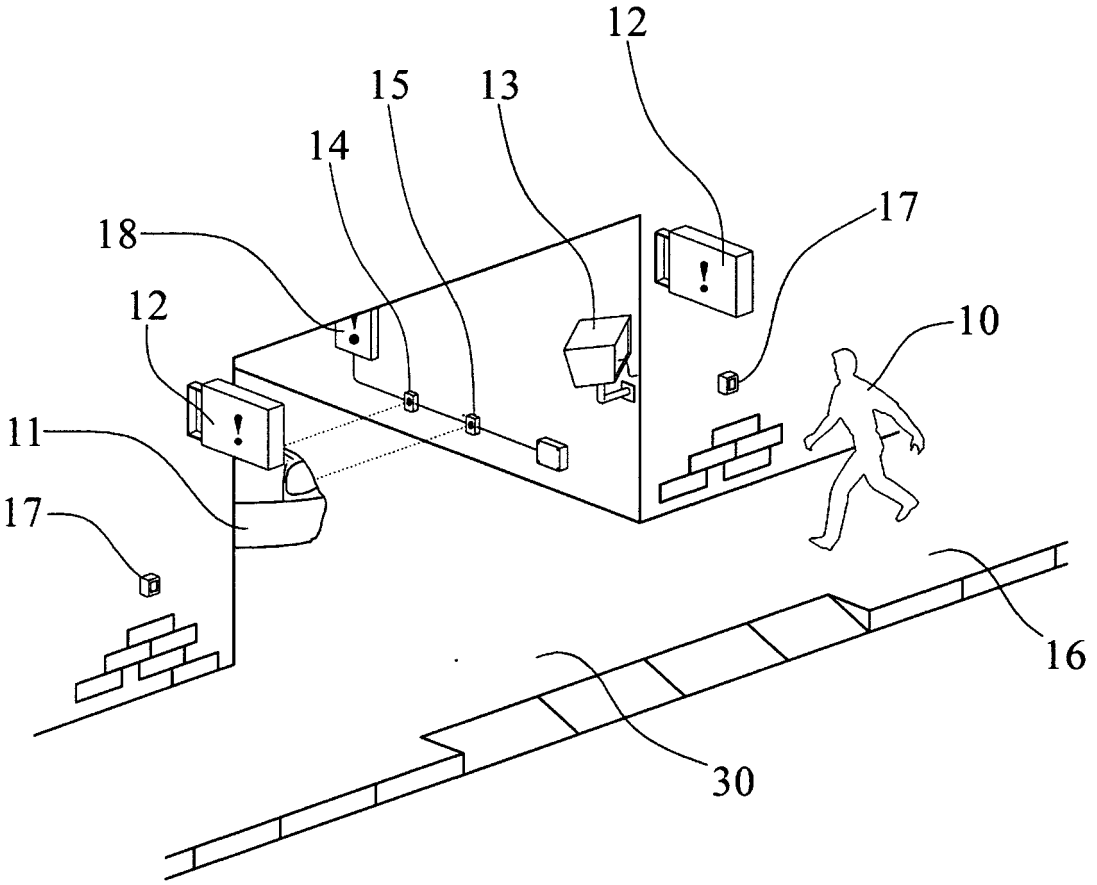

FIG.2

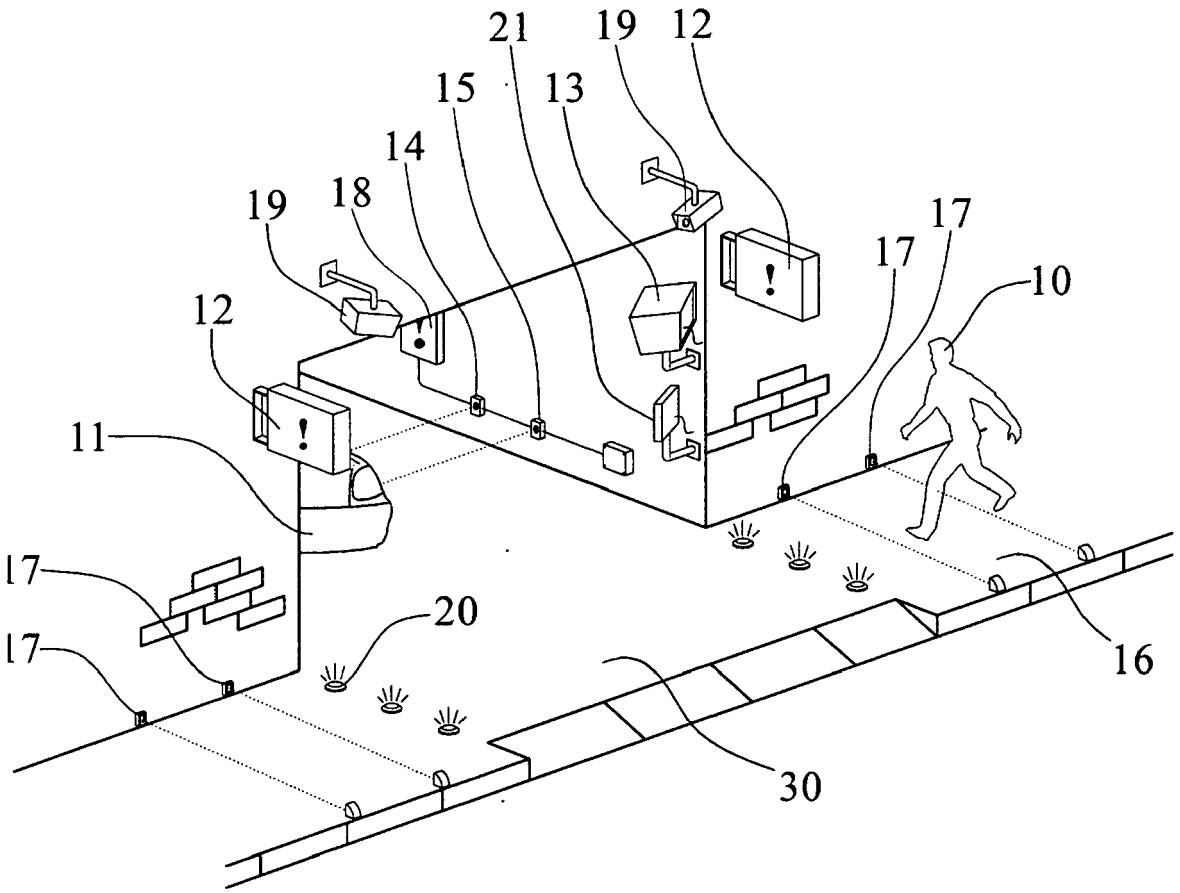

FIG.3

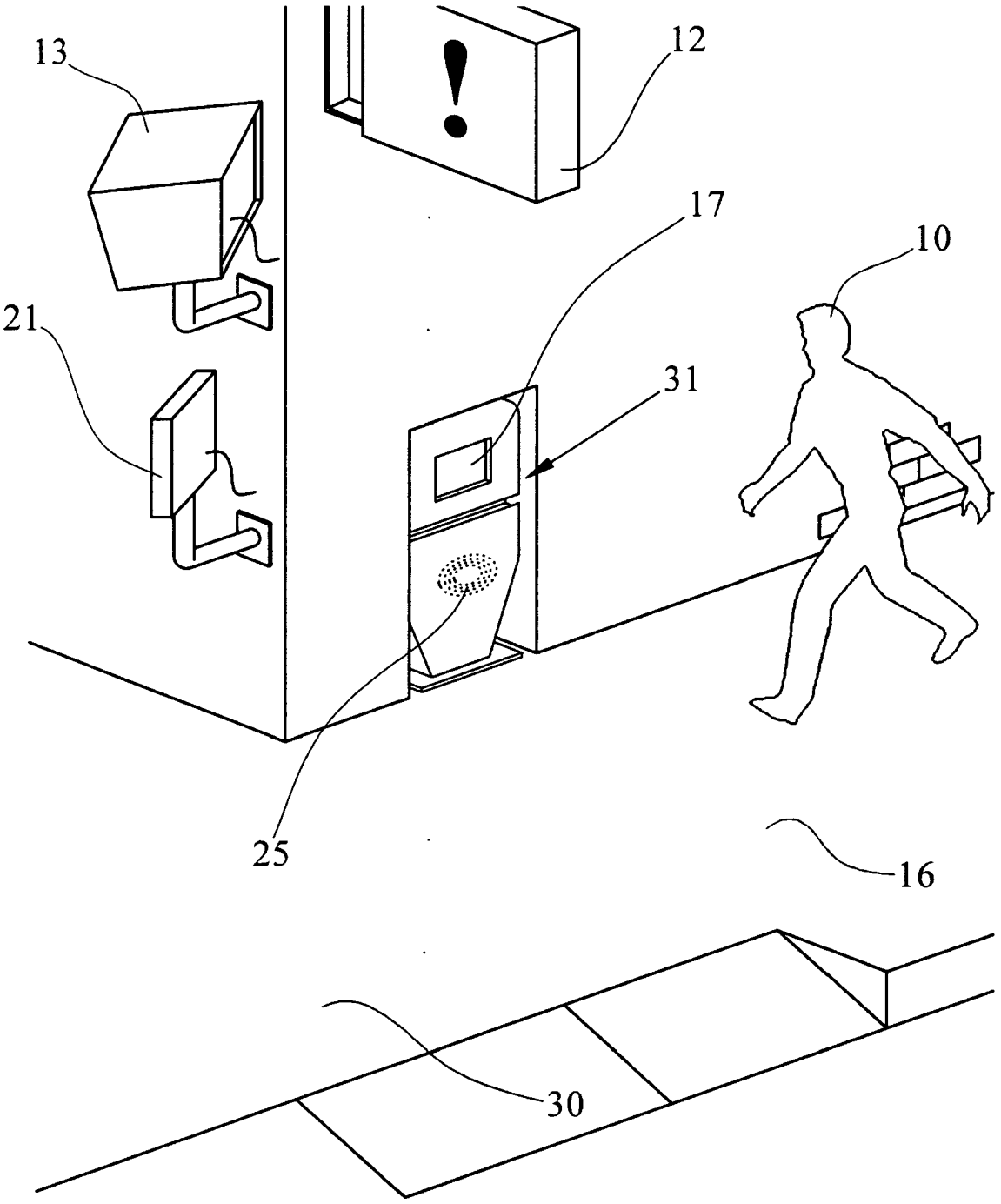

FIG.4