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(54) **FUEL INJECTION SYSTEM WITH
CROSS-FLOW NOZZLE FOR ENHANCED
COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS JET SPRAY**

(52) **U.S. Cl. 123/470; 123/456**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

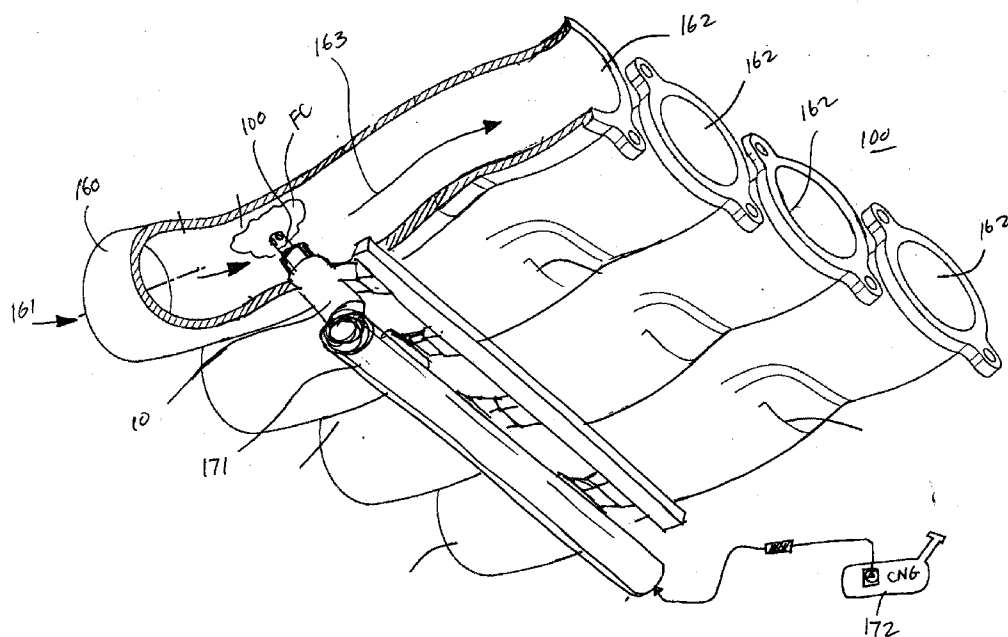
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An intake manifold system including an intake manifold and a compressed natural gas (CNG) fuel injector located between an inlet and an outlet of the intake manifold. The CNG fuel injector includes a housing, an inlet, an outlet, a seat, a closure member, and a nozzle. In a preferred embodiment, the inlet and outlet communicate a flow of gaseous fuel regulated by the closure member. The gaseous fuel passes through the seat, which is secured to a rim surface of a retainer portion of the nozzle, and into a flow passage that further communicates the flow of gaseous fuel into one or more flow channels. The orientation of the flow channels within the nozzle greatly affects the discharge pattern and mixing characteristics of the gaseous fuel within an intake manifold. A method of metering gaseous fuel in an intake manifold having a gaseous fuel supply coupled to a fuel injector is also described.

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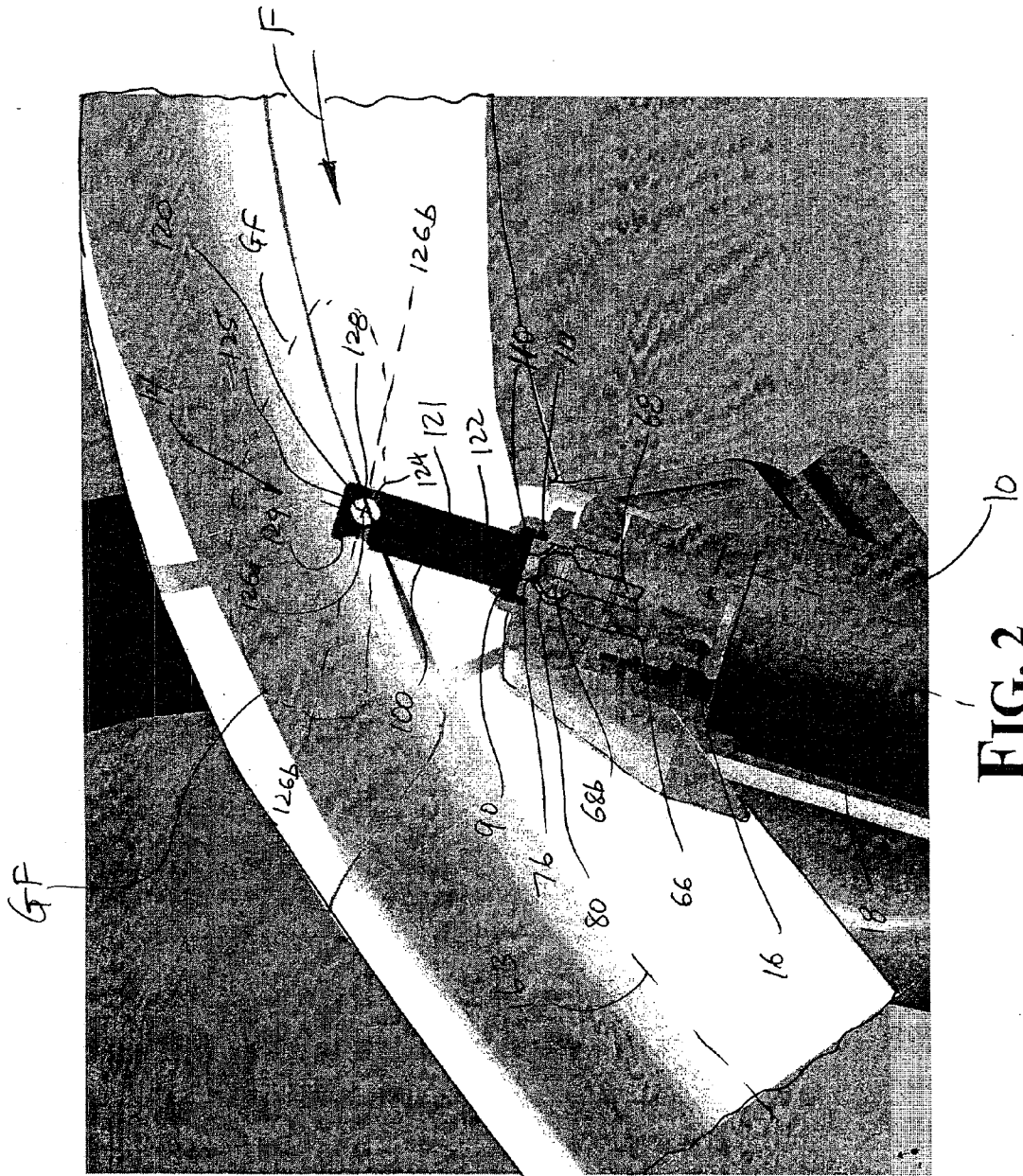


FIG. 2

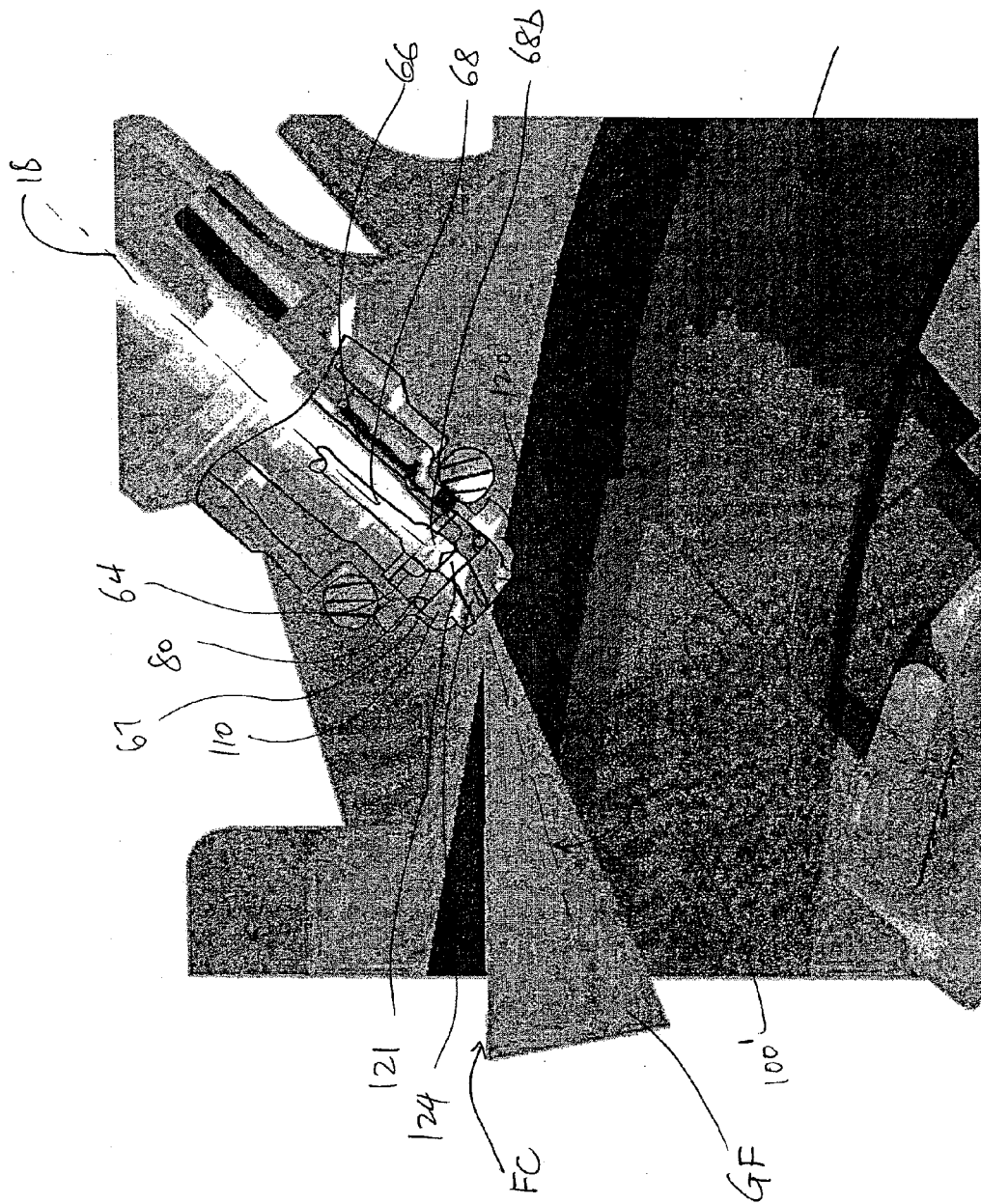


FIG. 3

FUEL INJECTION SYSTEM WITH CROSS-FLOW NOZZLE FOR ENHANCED COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS JET SPRAY

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0001] In the case of internal combustion engines having injection systems, fuel injectors are conventionally used to provide a precise amount of fuel needed for combustion. Compressed natural gas (hereinafter sometimes referred to as "CNG") is a common automotive fuel for commercial fleet vehicles and residential customers. In vehicles, the CNG is delivered to the engine in precise amounts through fuel injectors, hereinafter referred to as "CNG injectors", or simply "fuel injectors." CNG injectors of this type are described in commonly assigned U.S. Pat. No. 5,494,224, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference herein. Typically, the CNG injector is required to deliver the precise amount of fuel per injection pulse and maintain this accuracy over the life of the injector. In order to improve the combustion of fuel, certain strategies are required in the design of CNG injectors. These strategies are keyed to the delivery of gaseous fuel into the intake manifold of the internal combustion engine in precise amounts and flow patterns.

[0002] It is believed that some conventional CNG injector designs have failed to achieve suitable the combustion of gaseous fuel injected into the intake manifold of an internal combustion engine. Specifically, such design of CNG injectors may reduce air flow or even cause back-flow of the air-fuel mixture into the internal combustion engine's intake plenum or into other engine cylinders thereby causing drivability problems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention provides improved gaseous fuel targeting and fuel distribution with an intake manifold system. Back-flow of the air-fuel mixture into the internal combustion engine's intake plenum or into other engine cylinders may be avoided by providing a discharge pattern that forms a cloud of CNG inside the intake manifold. The discharge pattern of CNG delivered to the intake manifold of the present invention is believed to improve the air-fuel mixture and drivability problems that are believed to be in the prior art.

[0004] In one aspect of the present invention, an intake manifold system is provided with an intake manifold and a CNG fuel injector. The intake manifold has an inlet and an outlet to permit air flow from the inlet to the outlet along a flow axis connecting the inlet and outlet. The fuel injector is disposed in the intake manifold between the inlet and the outlet of the intake manifold. The fuel injector of the intake manifold system also includes an inlet and an outlet and a passage along a longitudinal axis that communicates a flow of gaseous fuel from the inlet to the outlet. The fuel injector includes a nozzle located proximate to the outlet so that when the fuel injector is operating with pressurized gaseous fuel, at least one column gaseous fuel spray is dispersed orthogonally with respect to a longitudinal axis of the fuel injector. The gaseous fuel spray is directed at an acute angle with respect to the direction of air flow along the flow axis through the intake manifold.

[0005] In another aspect of the present invention, a fuel injector system is provided with an intake manifold and a

CNG fuel injector. The intake manifold has an inlet and an outlet to permit air flow from the inlet to the outlet along a flow axis connecting the inlet and outlet. The fuel injector is disposed in the intake manifold between the inlet and the outlet. The fuel injector of the intake manifold system also includes an inlet and an outlet and a passage along a longitudinal axis that communicates a flow of gaseous fuel from the inlet to the outlet. The fuel injector includes a nozzle located proximate to the outlet so that when the fuel injector is operating with pressurized gaseous fuel, at least one column gaseous fuel spray is dispersed at an angle with respect to the longitudinal axis and in the direction of the flow axis.

[0006] In yet another aspect of the present invention, a method of metering gaseous fuel in an intake manifold having a gaseous fuel supply connected to a fuel injector is provided. The resulting discharge pattern of the gaseous fuel improves the mixing characteristics of the gaseous fuel within the intake manifold. The method can be achieved by: flowing air from an inlet to an outlet through a passage of an intake manifold; flowing gaseous fuel from the gaseous fuel supply to an inlet end of the fuel injector; and forming a generally ellipsoidal gaseous fuel spray pattern proximate the outlet in the passage of the intake manifold.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated herein and constitute part of this specification, illustrate presently preferred embodiments of the invention, and, together with the general description given above and the detailed description given below, serve to explain features of the invention.

[0008] FIG. 1 illustrates a perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the CNG fuel injection system.

[0009] FIG. 2 illustrates a close-up cross-sectional view of the CNG fuel injection system's CNG injector and integral nozzle with four flow channels.

[0010] FIG. 3 illustrates a close-up cross-sectional view of the CNG fuel injection system's CNG injector and external nozzle with singular flow channel.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0011] FIGS. 1-3 illustrate the preferred embodiments. In particular, FIG. 1 illustrates an intake manifold system 180 comprising an intake manifold 160 and a CNG fuel injector 10. A fuel rail 171 and a CNG fuel supply 172 are shown, but are not considered part of the intake manifold system 180.

[0012] The intake manifold 160 directs an air flow from an inlet 161 to an outlet 162. Outlets 162 are substantially tubular in shape and generally bolt to an engine block, not shown. The intake manifold provides combustion air to the combustion chamber(s) of the engine. The intake manifold 160 may be made of a metallic material, plastic, or other composite material. The intake manifold is preferably made of plastic, most preferably nylon 6-6.

[0013] The CNG fuel injector 10 has a housing, which includes a fuel inlet 12 (not shown), a fuel outlet 14, and a fuel passageway 16 extending from the inlet 12 to the outlet

14 along a longitudinal axis **18**. The fuel outlet **14** of the CNG fuel injector **10** is located partially within the intake manifold between its inlet **161** and the outlet **162**. The CNG fuel injector **10** provides a metered amount of gaseous fuel that flows through the passageway **16**, exits the fuel outlet **14**, and discharges inside of the intake manifold **160** for delivery to engine's combustion chambers. The outlet **14** of the CNG fuel injector may be positioned and angled within the intake manifold to optimize engine performance. Features of the CNG fuel injector and its operative performance are disclosed in commonly assigned, commonly filed application entitled "Fuel Injector Having an Internally Mounted Cross-Flow Nozzle For Enhanced Compressed Natural Gas Jet Spray," (Attorney Docket No. 2006P13278US (051252-5298) and application entitled "Fuel Injector Having an External Cross-Flow Nozzle For Enhanced Compressed Natural Gas Jet Spray," (Attorney Docket No. 2006P13264US (051252-5292), which copending applications are incorporated herein by reference in their entireties into this application.

[0014] As shown in FIG. 2, a closure member **68** of the CNG fuel injector **10** is centrally located within and spaced from a neck portion **66**. The closure member **68** is axially aligned with the longitudinal axis **18** of the gaseous fuel injector **10** and includes a contact portion **68b**. The contact portion **68b** is imperforate to prevent the flow of air or liquid past the contact portion **68b** or a seat orifice **76** when the contact portion **68b** is contiguous to a sealing surface **80**. Although the closure member **68** is shown as a solid member, the closure member can be provided with an internal bore to reduce its mass or provide for an alternate flow path for fuel as long as the contact portion **68b** is imperforate.

[0015] FIG. 2 also shows an internally mounted nozzle **100** located proximate to the outlet of the gaseous fuel injector **10**, includes a retainer portion **110** and a flow modifier portion **120**. The internally mounted nozzle **100** may be made from a suitable material for gaseous fuel. Preferably, the internally mounted nozzle may be made from a plastic material, most preferably nylon 6-6.

[0016] The retainer portion **110** of the internally mounted nozzle engages numerous surfaces of a locking portion **90**. A first retainer surface **111** of the retainer portion **110** is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis **18** and forms a planar surface to engage a bottom surface of a seat **64** as shown in FIG. 2.

[0017] The flow modifier portion **120** affects the flow distribution pattern of gaseous fuel through the internally mounted nozzle **100**. The flow modifier portion **120** defines a flow passage **121** that is in fluid communication with the seat orifice **76** and extends along a first flow modifier surface **122** disposed about the longitudinal axis **18**. The flow passage **121** extends to a first flow channel **124** located within the internally mounted nozzle **100** as shown in FIG. 3.

[0018] The first flow channel **124** is encompassed by a second modifier surface **125** and extends along a first axis **126a**. Preferably, the first axis **126a** is generally orthogonal to the longitudinal axis **18** as shown in FIG. 3. The first flow channel **124** directs gaseous fuel to discharge the internally mounted nozzle **100**. Preferably, the first flow channel **124** is generally circular in cross-section and has fuel flowing out of the flow channel in the form of a cone.

[0019] In one preferred embodiment, a second flow channel (not shown) may extend along the first axis **126a**, but in a direction diametrically opposed to the first channel **124**. In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, a third flow channel **128** and a fourth flow channel **129** may be extended along a second axis **126b** that is generally orthogonal to the longitudinal axis **18** of the internally mounted nozzle **100** as shown in FIG. 3. The third and fourth flow channels can be diametrically opposed to each other and may be generally circular in cross-section as shown in FIG. 3.

[0020] Gaseous fuel flows through the seat orifice **76**, along the flow passage **121**, and may be dispersed through one, two, three, four, or other multiple flow channel configurations of the internally mounted nozzle **100**. Thus, the resulting multiple columns of gaseous fuel are dispersed perpendicular to the longitudinal axis **18** of the gaseous fuel injector **10** to improve the mixing characteristics within the intake manifold (not shown). The preferred pressure at which the gaseous fuel injector **10** operates is approximately 200 pounds per square inch gauge pressure and a pressure drop of no more than five pounds per square inch gauge is expected across the nozzle.

[0021] As shown in FIG. 3, the CNG fuel injector **10** has a housing, which includes a fuel inlet **12** (not shown), a fuel outlet **14**, and a fuel passageway **16** extending from the inlet **12** to the outlet **14** along a longitudinal axis **18**. The fuel outlet **14** of the CNG fuel injector **10** is located partially within the intake manifold between the inlet **161** and the outlet **162**. See also FIG. 1. The CNG fuel injector **10** provides a metered amount of gaseous fuel that flows through the passageway **16**, exits the fuel outlet **14**, and discharges inside of the intake manifold **160** for delivery to engine's combustion chambers. The outlet **14** of the CNG fuel injector may be positioned and angled within the intake manifold to optimize engine performance.

[0022] As shown in FIG. 3, the CNG fuel injector **10** has the closure member **68** centrally located within the housing and spaced from the neck portion **66**. The closure member **68** is axially aligned with the longitudinal axis **18** of the gaseous fuel injector **10** and includes the contact portion **68b**. The contact portion **68b** is imperforate to prevent the flow of air or liquid past the contact portion **68b** or the seat orifice **76** when the contact portion **68b** is contiguous to the sealing surface **80**. Although the closure member **68** is shown as a solid member, the closure member can be provided with an internal bore to reduce its mass or provide for an alternate flow path for fuel as long as the contact portion **68b** is imperforate.

[0023] As shown in FIG. 3, an external nozzle **100'** is located proximate to the seat **64** of the gaseous fuel injector **10**. The external nozzle also includes the retainer portion **110** and the flow modifier portion **120**. The external nozzle may be made from a suitable material for gaseous fuel. Preferably, the external nozzle **100'** may be made from a plastic material, most preferably nylon 6-6.

[0024] The retainer portion **110** of the external nozzle engages an outer surface **67** of the outlet **14** about the longitudinal axis **18** of the gaseous fuel injector **10**. The retainer portion **110** couples with the outer surface **67** through e.g., a press-fit, snap-fit, welded, or screw-on connection. A rim surface **111** engages a bottom surface of the seat **64**, as shown in FIG. 3.

[0025] The flow modifier portion **120** affects the flow distribution pattern of gaseous fuel through the internally mounted nozzle **100'**. The flow modifier portion **120** defines a flow passage **121** that is in fluid communication with the seat orifice **76** and extends along a first flow modifier surface **122** disposed about the longitudinal axis **18**. The flow passage **121** extends to a first flow channel **124** located within the internally mounted nozzle **100'** as shown in FIG. 3.

[0026] As shown in FIG. 3, a second flow modifier surface **125** of nozzle **100'** may be disposed about an oblique axis **141** to the longitudinal axis **18** and gaseous flow is discharged through a singular flow channel **124**, as shown in FIG. 3. A single conical column of gaseous fuel is delivered to the intake manifold **160** at an oblique angle with respect to the longitudinal axis **18** so that in conjunction with an intake manifold geometry, the fuel injector is able to improve its mixing characteristics with air flow in the manifold. The oblique angle θ_2 is preferably between 0° and 90° , and most preferably at 26° . Preferably, the first flow channel **124** is generally circular in cross-section and has fuel flowing out of the flow channel in the form of a cone.

[0027] It is believed that at least the preferred embodiments described above in relation to the nozzle **100'** alleviate back-flow of the air-fuel mixture into the internal combustion engine's intake plenum or into other engine cylinders in that the preferred embodiments provide a cloud of gaseous fuel, which can be entrained by the airflow towards the intake for dispersal into the combustion chamber. The discharge pattern of gaseous fuel delivered to the intake manifold of the present invention is believed to improve the air-fuel mixture and drivability problems in certain applications.

[0028] In yet another aspect of the present invention, a method of metering gaseous fuel in an intake manifold **160** with a gaseous fuel supply **172** coupled to a CNG fuel injector **10** is provided. The method can be achieved by flowing air from an inlet **161** to an outlet **162** along a flow axis **163** of an intake manifold **160**. Concurrently, gaseous fuel flows from the gaseous fuel supply **172** to a fuel inlet **12** of the CNG fuel injector **10**. The gaseous fuel flows through the passage **16** and exits a fuel outlet **14** where it is discharged within the intake manifold **160**.

[0029] The CNG fuel injector **10** has a closure member **68** that interfaces with a seat **64** to regulate the amount of gaseous fuel discharge. A contact portion **68b** of the closure member is imperforate to prevent the flow of air or liquid past the contact portion **68b** or a seat orifice **76** when the contact portion **68b** is contiguous to a sealing surface **80**. The closure member **68** is disposed in at least two positions along the longitudinal axis **18** in the passage **16**. The seat **64** is disposed in the passage **16** proximate the outlet **14** having a seat orifice **76** extending through the seat **64**.

[0030] A nozzle e.g., nozzle **100**, is proximate the outlet **14** and may have a flow passage **121** and flow channels that intersect each other orthogonally with respect to the longitudinal axis **18**. The nozzle **100** may disperse the gaseous fuel into four columns of gaseous fuel spray. The discharged gaseous fuel forms a generally ellipsoidal gaseous fuel spray pattern proximate the outlet **14** in the flow axis **163** of the intake manifold. The resulting discharge pattern of the gaseous fuel improves the mixing characteristics of the gaseous fuel within the intake manifold **160**.

[0031] While the present invention has been disclosed with reference to certain preferred embodiments, numerous modifications, alterations, and changes to the described embodiments are possible without departing from the sphere and scope of the present invention, as defined in the appended claims. For example, the orthogonal multiple flow channel nozzle also can be an external nozzle, and the oblique single flow channel nozzle also can be an internal nozzle. Accordingly, it is intended that the present invention not be limited to the described embodiments, but that it have the full scope defined by the language of the following claims, and equivalents thereof.

1. An intake manifold system comprising:

an intake manifold having an inlet and an outlet to permit air flow from the inlet to the outlet along a flow axis connecting the inlet and outlet; and

a fuel injector having an inlet and an outlet and a passage extending along a longitudinal axis from the inlet to the outlet, the fuel injector including a nozzle proximate the outlet and disposed in the intake manifold between the inlet and outlet so that when the fuel injector is provided with pressurized gaseous fuel actuated, at least a pair of diametrically opposed columns of gaseous fuel spray is dispersed orthogonally with respect to a longitudinal axis of the fuel injector and directed at an angle with respect to the direction of air flow along the flow axis through the intake manifold.

2. An intake manifold system comprising:

an intake manifold having an inlet and an outlet to permit air flow from the inlet to the outlet along a flow axis connecting the inlet and outlet; and

a fuel injector having an inlet and an outlet and a passage extending along a longitudinal axis from the inlet to the outlet, the fuel injector including a nozzle proximate the outlet and disposed in the intake manifold between the inlet and outlet so that when the fuel injector is provided with pressurized gaseous fuel actuated, at least one column of gaseous fuel spray is dispersed orthogonally with respect to a longitudinal axis of the fuel injector and directed at an acute angle with respect to the direction of air flow along the flow axis through the intake manifold,

wherein the nozzle comprises a retainer portion and flow modifier portion, the retainer portion being secured to an outer surface of the outlet, the flow modifier including a first flow modifier surface and a second flow modifier surface, the first flow modifier surface being disposed about the longitudinal axis to define a flow passage in fluid communication with the seat orifice, the second flow modifier surface being disposed along and about a first axis at an angle with respect to the longitudinal axis to define at least a flow channel.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein the fuel injector comprises:

a closure member disposed in at least two positions along the longitudinal axis in the passage, the closure member having an imperforate contact portion proximate the outlet; and

a seat disposed in the passage proximate the outlet, the seat including a sealing surface contiguous to the

imperforate contact portion of the closure member in one position of the closure member to occlude flow through a seat orifice extending through the seat from the sealing surface along the longitudinal axis.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein the second flow modifier surface further comprises a second flow channel diametric to the first flow channel.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein the second flow channel diametric aligned along a second axis generally orthogonal to the longitudinal and first axes, and each of the flow channels comprises a generally circular cross-section with respect to the first and second axes.

6. The system of claim 3, wherein the at least one column comprises four columns disposed generally orthogonal with respect to the longitudinal axis.

7. The system of claim 3, wherein the retainer portion comprises a portion surrounding an outer surface proximate the outlet of the fuel injector.

8. The system of claim 3, wherein the outlet comprises an inner surface that surrounds a portion of the retainer portion.

9. The system of claim 6, wherein the pressurized gaseous fuel comprises compressed-natural-gas at 200 psi.

10. An intake manifold system comprising:

an intake manifold having an inlet and an outlet to permit air flow from the inlet to the outlet along a flow axis connecting the inlet and outlet; and

a fuel injector having an inlet and an outlet and a passage extending along a longitudinal axis from the inlet to the outlet, the fuel injector including a nozzle proximate the outlet and disposed in the intake manifold between the inlet and outlet, the nozzle having a flow passage disposed about an axis that is at an acute angle with respect to the longitudinal axis, so that when the fuel injector is provided with pressurized gaseous fuel actuated, at least one column of gaseous fuel spray is dispersed generally at an acute angle with respect to the longitudinal axis and in the direction of the flow axis.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the acute angle comprises about 26 degrees.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein the column comprises a generally conical column extending along a spray axis disposed at the acute angle with respect to the longitudinal axis.

13. The system of claim 10, wherein the pressurized gaseous fuel comprises compressed-natural-gas at 200 psi.

14. The system of claim 10, wherein the fuel injector comprises:

a closure member disposed in at least two positions along the longitudinal axis in the passage, the closure member having an imperforate contact portion proximate the outlet; and

a seat disposed in the passage proximate the outlet, the seat including a sealing surface contiguous to the imperforate contact portion of the closure member in one position of the closure member to occlude flow through a seat orifice extending through the seat from the sealing surface along the longitudinal axis.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein the retainer portion comprises a portion surrounding an outer surface proximate the outlet of the fuel injector.

16. The system of claim 14, wherein the outlet comprises an inner surface that surrounds a portion of the retainer portion.

17. A method of metering gaseous fuel in an intake manifold having a gaseous fuel supply coupled to a fuel injector, the method comprising:

flowing air from an inlet to an outlet through a passage of an intake manifold; flowing gaseous fuel from the gaseous fuel supply to an inlet end of the fuel injector; and

forming a generally ellipsoidal gaseous fuel spray pattern proximate the outlet in the passage of the intake manifold,

wherein the forming comprises dispersing the gaseous fuel from the inlet through a nozzle proximate the outlet into four columns of gaseous fuel spray, the nozzle having a flow passage in communication with two flow channels intersecting each other orthogonally with respect to a longitudinal axis of the fuel injector.

18. (canceled)

19. The method of claim 17, wherein the dispersing comprises entraining the four columns of gaseous fuel spray with air flowing through the passage of the intake manifold into the ellipsoidal gaseous fuel spray pattern.

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