

US Patent & Trademark Office

Patent Public Search | Text View

United States Patent Application Publication

20250261089

Kind Code

A1

Publication Date

August 14, 2025

Inventor(s)

McCann; Stephen et al.

Wireless Network Service Transaction Protocol

Abstract

A mobile device may retrieve service information about a network prior to associating with the network. Utilizing an advertisement protocol to transmit service query messages, a mobile device may receive service query responses from a network that identify the services available prior to establishing network capability. In other words, the messaging is prior to the exchange of any authentication parameters between the device and the network as well prior to the establishment of a recognized session between the device and the network.

Inventors: McCann; Stephen (Southampton, CA), Montemurro; Michael Peter (Toronto, CA)

Applicant: Malikie Innovations Limited (Dublin, IE)

Family ID: 1000008575240

Appl. No.: 19/169695

Filed: April 03, 2025

Related U.S. Application Data

parent US continuation 18403474 20240103 parent-grant-document US 12284599 child US 19169695

parent US continuation 17877045 20220729 parent-grant-document US 11895575 child US 18403474

parent US continuation 16912249 20200625 parent-grant-document US 11405857 child US 17877045

parent US continuation 16176467 20181031 parent-grant-document US 10736020 child US 16912249

parent US continuation 15483759 20170410 parent-grant-document US 10142921 child US 16176467

parent US continuation 14854685 20150915 parent-grant-document US 9622155 child US 15483759

Publication Classification

Int. Cl.: **H04W48/14** (20090101); **G06F21/60** (20130101); **H04L9/40** (20220101); **H04L61/4541** (20220101); **H04L67/51** (20220101); **H04L67/56** (20220101); **H04L67/568** (20220101); **H04W4/21** (20180101); **H04W4/50** (20180101); **H04W4/90** (20180101); **H04W12/06** (20210101); **H04W48/08** (20090101); **H04W48/16** (20090101); **H04W48/20** (20090101); **H04W84/12** (20090101); **H04W88/08** (20090101)

U.S. Cl.:

CPC **H04W48/14** (20130101); **G06F21/606** (20130101); **H04L61/4541** (20220501); **H04L63/0823** (20130101); **H04L63/162** (20130101); **H04L67/51** (20220501); **H04L67/56** (20220501); **H04L67/568** (20220501); **H04W4/21** (20180201); **H04W4/50** (20180201); **H04W48/08** (20130101); **H04W48/16** (20130101); **H04W4/90** (20180201); **H04W12/06** (20130101); **H04W48/20** (20130101); **H04W84/12** (20130101); **H04W88/08** (20130101)

Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS [0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 18/403,474 filed Jan. 3, 2024 by Stephen McCann, et al., entitled “Wireless Network Service Transaction Protocol”, which is a continuation of U.S. Pat. No. 11,895,575 issued Feb. 6, 2024, which is a continuation of U.S. Pat. No. 11,405,857 issued Aug. 2, 2022, which is a continuation of U.S. Pat. No. 10,736,020 issued Aug. 4, 2020, which is a continuation of U.S. Pat. No. 10,142,921 issued Nov. 27, 2018, which is a continuation of U.S. Pat. No. 9,622,155 issued Apr. 11, 2017, which is a continuation of U.S. Pat. No. 9,137,621 issued Sep. 15, 2015, all of which are incorporated by reference herein as if reproduced in their entireties.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Wireless network deployments, such as wireless local area networks (“WLANs”), allow mobile devices to access network and Internet services when within proximity of wireless communication signals of those wireless networks. Through network discovery communications with the WLAN, a mobile device, wireless terminal, or station (“STA”) may obtain network information about an access point or access network. Access Network Query Protocol (“ANQP”) may allow the mobile device to request additional network information prior to establishing network connectivity. Such network information may include access to particular subscription service provider (“SSP”) networks (“SSPN”), roaming agreements to allow connections from wireless clients associated with different SSPs, authentication capabilities to enable secure communications, support for emergency services or support for particular types of multi-media access (e.g., audio and/or video streaming, downloading, etc.). However, other network information not provided by ANQP, such as the availability of third party services, may only be provided following the establishment of a connection or association with that network. Depending on the services available, a mobile device may need to disconnect or disassociate with that network and pursue a different network. Accordingly, there may not be a way of discovering services available for a particular network without authenticating and associating with the network.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0003] FIG. 1 illustrates a communication network;
[0004] FIG. 2 illustrates a communication layer architecture;
[0005] FIG. 3 illustrates an alternative communication network;
[0006] FIG. 4 illustrates another alternative communication network;
[0007] FIG. 5 illustrates a mobile device (“STA”);
[0008] FIG. 6 illustrates an access point (“AP”);
[0009] FIG. 7 illustrates an embodiment of service transaction protocol messaging; and
[0010] FIG. 8 illustrates another embodiment of service transaction protocol messaging.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0011] The disclosed systems and methods allow mobile devices to retrieve service information from a local area network (“LAN”), such as a wireless LAN (“WLAN”). The service information may be requested and received from the WLAN before association with that WLAN. In other words, pre-association/discovery information from the mobile device is sent to the WLAN to determine available services. The service request may include a query for certain information. An advertisement protocol, such as the service transaction protocol (“STP”), may be utilized for transmitting the requests/responses for a service before associating with a network. In other words, the mobile device may be able to identify the services available to the network prior to establishing network capability (i.e., prior to the exchange of any authentication parameters between the device and the network as well prior to the establishment of a recognized session between the device and the network), which may generally be referred to as a pre-association state.

[0012] A service request from a mobile device may include a request for services for the mobile device. The services may include any applications or necessary components for those applications used by the mobile device. Accordingly, the running of an application on a mobile device may need certain requirements and/or resources from the network for full operation, and those requirements and/or resources may be referred to as services. Exemplary services include the connection to a voice messaging service, finding a printer (e.g. finding a three-dimensional (“3D”) printer), or finding an emergency service. There may be many other types of services available to the mobile device. In one embodiment, a service may be considered to be third party data provider that is connected to by an application and/or the mobile device. Additional exemplary services may include the downloading of drivers to the mobile device to enable use of a feature. For example, a 3D printer may require a driver to be downloaded. An additional example is that specific 3D printer drivers for a Macintosh™ computing device may be available, which may be an important decision point for that device to choose that particular network. Cellular system services such as IP Multimedia Subsystem (“IMS”), and home operator services are additional examples of services.

[0013] STP may be an advertisement protocol similar to Access Network Query Protocol (“ANQP”), which allows a mobile device to retrieve service information or available services about a network prior to associating with that network. Service information may generally refer to data transmissions related to services provided over a network. For example, service information may be transmitted to a mobile device regarding the availability of resources that software on that mobile device requires. Example services may include IMS, e911, 3D printing, and text messaging. As described, service information may be included in both service requests (also queries) and service responses (also query answers). ANQP supports information retrieval from an Advertisement Server that supports a Generic Advertisement Service (“GAS”). ANQP and GAS are defined in IEEE® 802.11u™ and also IEEE® 802.11-2012™, the entire disclosures of which is incorporated by reference. ANQP and GAS are further described below.

[0014] Communications prior to network association may be referred to discovery communications

or communications while a mobile device (e.g., a STA) is in a pre-associated state of operation in accordance with various communication standards such as the IEEE® (Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers) 802.11 standard. For example, as described in IEEE 802.11, a pre-associated state of a mobile device may include states such as, but not limited to, a “State 1: Initial start state, unauthenticated, unassociated” in which the device has neither authenticated or associated with a network and a “State 2: Authenticated, no associated” in which a mobile device has authenticated with a network but not yet associated with the network.

[0015] ANQP may not include the ability to include free string queries, which may also be referred to as free form queries and include queries of an undefined content and length. Conversely, STP may provide a mechanism for the submission of free string queries and for receiving an answer in response to the free string query. In other words strings that conform to UNIX POSIX query formats, e.g. “print*”, where the “*” is a query character allowing any string to match it. In this example the following service descriptions may match this query string: “printer”, “printer at the store”, “printer service”, “printer 3d”. This free string or free form query allows for the discovery of services that may not otherwise be easily discoverable. It also provides a mechanism for more accurately identifying services and for greater flexibility because the query string does not need to be specific. Using the POSIX format, allows a rich variety of queries to be constructed, so for example, the query “[0-9]*3” would match any string of exactly 3 number characters.

[0016] Accordingly, ANQP may not allow free form queries (e.g. service requests) to be sent to the network. The STP may be an advertisement protocol in which free string queries, such as the service query messages, are communicated prior to network association. In particular, STP may be implemented as an advertisement protocol enabling it to be carried, over the IEEE 802.11 air interface, by an existing GAS mechanism.

[0017] Media Independent Handover (“MIH”) is another protocol under IEEE 802.21 that does include a different type of service discovery. The MIH advertisement protocol may be transported by GAS and may include a Media Independent Information Service (“MIIS”), which is defined within the IEEE 802.21 standard. The MIIS provides a set of information elements (“IEs”) and a query/response mechanism for information transfer before the mobile device is authenticated. In one embodiment, the queries comprise specific messages (e.g. “MIH_Capability_Discover”) that allow the discovery of MIH capabilities within an MIH Server, such as the list of available commands and available events. However, MIH only works for the IEEE 802.21 standard and does not work for WLAN connections. Further, IEEE 802.21 requires a device to pre-register before using its service discovery, which prevents a pre-association discovery as is performed by STP. In other words, the pre-registration requirement requires the device to first connect to the network before the services can be discovered, while STP provides the ability to discover services prior to association (i.e., a connection with the network such that data traffic may be passed between the device and the network).

[0018] Mobile devices that communicate prior to network association may include mobile communication devices, mobile computing devices, or any other device capable of communicating wirelessly with a wireless network. Such devices may also be referred to as terminals, mobile devices, stations (“STA”) or user equipment, and may also include mobile smart phones (e.g., a BlackBerry® smart phone or BlackBerry® Playbook), wireless personal digital assistants (“PDA”), machine to machine equipment, equipment within a smart grid (“SmartGrid”), equipment within a mesh network (an ad-hoc or peer network), laptop/notebook/netbook computers with wireless adapters, etc. FIG. 5 illustrates one embodiment of a mobile device or terminal.

[0019] Some devices may discover information about the external networks (e.g., subscription service provider networks (“SSPNs”)) may include a wireless local area network (“WLAN”). The network discovery and connectivity in a WLAN may occur through standards that define access, control and communications in networks, such as the communication standard known as IEEE® (Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers) 802.11, which, among other things, defines an

amendment entitled “interworking with external networks.” Alternatively, the network discovery and connectivity may be subject to other parts of the IEEE 802.11 standard and other wireless communication standards including WLAN standards including any IEEE® 802.xx standard (e.g. IEEE 802.15, IEEE 802.16, IEEE 802.19, IEEE 802.20, and IEEE 802.22), personal area network standards, wide area network standards, or cellular communication standards.

[0020] One exemplary network may be a WLAN and is described below. Alternatively, the devices may discover information about other networks through other protocols and architectures, including a cellular network or a WiMax network. The network may comprise a publicly accessible network, such as the Internet, a private network, such as an intranet, or combinations thereof, and may utilize a variety of networking protocols now available or later developed including, but not limited to TCP/IP based networking protocols. The networks may include any communication method or employ any form of machine-readable media for communicating information from one device to another.

[0021] The discovery of service information may be implemented in many environments providing WLAN access for network connectivity or in WLAN access locations or environments in which it may be expected that one or more users carrying respective mobile devices will associate with (i.e., join or connect to) and disassociate from a wireless network, access point, or WLAN as they enter and exit the WLAN access locations or environments.

[0022] In a WLAN environment, service discovery may include, for example, an active scan procedure or passive scan procedure performed by the mobile device. Typically, scanning procedures within a WLAN environment involve scanning for (i.e., determining) candidate STAs (e.g., mobile device, APs or mesh stations “MSTAs”) with which the mobile device may associate with during an association procedure or re-associate with during a re-association procedure. In a passive scan procedure, a mobile device may “listen for” (i.e., receive or detect) beacon frames periodically transmitted from another STA (e.g., a mobile device, an AP or MSTA). In an active scan procedure, the mobile device generates one or more probe request frames. A STA (e.g., a mobile device, an AP or MSTA) that receives a probe request frame, in response, transmits a probe response frame. The mobile device then processes any received probe response frames.

[0023] In some WLAN environments, service discovery may further include an IEEE 802.11 authentication procedure. In other words, service discovery may include a successful authentication, an unsuccessful authentication, or a deauthentication of a mobile device with one of the STAs that were identified during the scanning procedure discussed above. Stated another way, service discovery may include: a transition of the mobile device from “State 1” to “State 2” based on a successful authentication of the mobile device; an unchanged state (i.e., remaining in “State 1”) of the mobile device if authentication of the mobile device was unsuccessful; or a transition of the mobile device from “State 2” to “State 1” based on a deauthentication of the mobile device.

[0024] Some WLAN locations or environments may be known as “hotspots” in reference to a location or environment that is within communication range of WLAN signals. WLAN locations or environments may include coffee shops, retail stores, home locations (e.g. homes and apartments), educational facilities, office environments, airports, public transportation stations and vehicles, hotels, etc. Such WLANs are often implemented as access networks that provide access to publicly accessible networks and may be associated with, or support access to, external networks (or WLAN-supported networks) owned and/or operated by subscription-based service providers. For example, an external network can be owned and/or operated by an Internet-access service provider or a telecommunications carrier/service provider that provides subscription-based Internet access for a fee (e.g., a monthly fee). In some systems, a subscriber/user may subscribe to such a service can use wireless network access and/or Internet-access services based on such a subscription when the subscriber is in communication proximity of the WLAN with an appropriate mobile device. In some instances, different WLANs may provide access to different types of service information. For example, some WLANs may provide access to particular subscription service provider networks,

and some WLANs may support roaming agreements to allow connections from mobile devices associated with different SSPs.

[0025] During some service discovery processes a mobile device may transmit a query for service information from the wireless local area network (“WLAN”). The terminal may obtain service information or available services to determine whether to continue with a connection process to associate with that network. As discussed above, service information may refer to data transmitted over a network regarding the availability of services.

[0026] In accordance with the embodiments described herein, mobile devices may request service information from WLANs using STP. In one embodiment, STP is an advertisement protocol that utilizes GAS. In particular, GAS may serve as a transport mechanism, at layer-2 (see e.g. FIG. 2), for an advertisement protocol, such as STP. The advertisement protocol may connect the mobile device to one of several interworked servers. The advertisement protocol allows the transmission of frames between a mobile device and a server in the network prior to network connectivity. For example, GAS provides support for operations such as network selection by a mobile device, as well as for communication between the mobile device and other information resources in the network before the mobile device associates with a WLAN. The mobile device may be connected to a layer-2 radio service, without exchanging any authentication parameters or without having a recognized session (because no session keys are established and no internet protocol address is assigned). When in compliance with the IEEE 802.11 standard, no data traffic is allowed in this state.

[0027] Other layer-2 transport mechanisms or even authentication mechanisms may be used. For example, the Extensible Authentication Protocol (“EAP”) may be used to carry the advertisement protocol, as an alternative to GAS. The advertisement protocol information would be encapsulated within a suitable EAP-TLV (type length value) method frame (or alternative EAP method frame) and transported by the EAP. Use of secure credentials exchanged during the EAP transactions would also provide a level of security for any information carried within the advertisement protocol. For example, if any EAP method using SIM based credentials (e.g. EAP-SIM, EAP-AKA, or EAP-AKA) were to be the authentication protocol, any advertisement protocol information encapsulated (i.e. securely carried) within a suitable EAP-TLV frame during the same EAP transaction may also be protected by the SIM credentials.

[0028] STP is an exemplary advertisement protocol utilized for transmitting service request messages. STP is configured for submitting service queries and receiving responses for those service queries. In one embodiment, STP includes the capabilities of ANQP in addition to the service request capabilities. ANQP operates as a query and response protocol used by a mobile device to discover a range of information from a server including accessible roaming partners, internet protocol address type, and other metadata useful in the mobile device's network selection process. In addition to being defined in IEEE® 802.11u, additional ANQP messages may alternatively or additionally be defined in the Wi-Fi Alliance (“WFA”) Hotspot 2.0 specifications, alternatively known as Wi-Fi Certified PassPoint. The WFA Hotspot 2.0 may also be referred to as WFA PassPoint. These ANQP extensions within the WFA Hotspot 2.0 specifications may be referred to as Hotspot (“HS”) 2.0 ANQP elements. Alternatively, other advertisement protocols (e.g., Registered Location Query Protocol “RLQP” as defined in IEEE® 802.11af and Hotspot Registration Protocol (HRP) as defined in WFA Hotspot 2.0 specifications) may also be used. In alternative embodiments, other layer-2 transport mechanisms or even authentication mechanisms such as the Extensible Authentication Protocol (EAP) could be used to carry the STP or ANQP messages, as an alternative to GAS. The STP or ANQP message would be encapsulated within a suitable EAP-TLV method frame (or alternative EAP method frame) and transported by the EAP.

[0029] FIG. 1 illustrates a communication network **100**. Service information may be communicated during network discovery using STP over the communications network **100**. The communication network **100** includes a plurality of WLAN access locations **102a-c** having respective access points

(“APs”) **104a-c** that provide access to respective access networks **106a-c**. The APs **104a-c** are further described with respect to FIG. 6. The access network A **106a** provides access to an external network A **108a** and the access network B **106b** provides access to an external network B **108b**. Unlike the access networks A **106a** and B **106b** that do not connect directly to the Internet **112**, the access network C **110** may connect directly to a publicly accessible network like the Internet. Thus, the access network C **106c** may be a public network, while the access networks A **106a** and B **106b** may be private networks. Any of the described networks may form part of an ESS.

[0030] In one embodiment, each of the external networks A **108a** and B **108b** may be a subscription service provider network (“SSPN”) owned or operated by data subscription service providers, Internet subscription service providers, media (e.g., audio/video) subscription service providers, wireless communications subscription service providers, or any combination thereof. The external networks A **108a** and B **108b** are connected to the Internet **112** and may, for example, provide subscription-based Internet access to mobile device devices. In some implementations, roaming agreements between different subscription service providers may enable the external networks A **108a** and B **108b** to support roaming connections for mobile devices associated with other subscription service providers. In one embodiment, the external networks **108a-b** are ESS networks. Alternatively, networks **106a-c** may be ESS networks.

[0031] The WLAN access location **102a** illustrates a mobile device **114** in wireless range of the access point (“AP”) **104a**. The mobile device **114** is further described with respect to FIG. 5. The AP **104a** connects with the access network A **106a**, which may provide a direct or indirect connection to other networks, including publicly accessible network like the Internet **112**. Prior to the mobile device **114** associating with the access network A **106a**, mobile device **114** sends a discovery request **116** to the AP **104a**. The AP **104a** may respond with a discovery response **118**. In alternative embodiments, the discovery request **116** may originate from the AP **104a** and the discovery response **118** may be from the mobile device **114**, such as with mesh, peer to peer, ad-hoc or Wi-Fi Direct networks. The discovery request **116** or the discovery response **118** may include discovery communications **120**. The discovery communications **120**, also known as service information, network information, discovery information, or network discovery information, may include information about the network and/or device that is communicated between the device and the network prior to the device associating with the network. Accordingly, the discovery communications **120** may be referred to as pre-association communications or pre-association information. In particular, the discovery communications **120** may include service information about services available to the network. Accordingly, the discovery request **116** may be a service request message or service query message, and the response **118** may be a service request response message. FIGS. 3-4 further illustrate service requests. In one embodiment, the discovery communications **120** or service requests/response may be communicated using STP.

[0032] The discovery communications (request **116** and response **120**) may be exchanged at a media access control (“MAC”) sub-layer of a data link layer of the Open Systems Interconnection (“OSI”) Reference Model without needing to use operations at or above an internet protocol (“IP”) layer (i.e., a network layer) and without needing to otherwise provide access to the IP layer while discovering discovery communications **120**. Discovering service information using messages exchanged at or above the network layer may require more processing power for a mobile device than implementing processes at the MAC sub-layer. The layers in which the discovery communication occurs are further illustrated in FIG. 2.

[0033] Each of the APs **104a-c** and the mobile device **114** may include a network adapter or network interface card that facilitates connections to a wireless medium. The network interface component may be referred to as a station (“STA”). The mobile device **114** may associate with different APs (e.g., the APs **104a-c**) based at least partially on the discovery communications **120** received regarding the available services that are provided through a particular AP from an external network. The mobile device **114** may receive information from the APs when moved in range of

one of the WLAN access locations **102a-c**, respectively.

[0034] FIG. 2 illustrates a communication layer architecture **200**. The communication layer architecture **200** includes seven layers which may be implemented in accordance with the Open Systems Interconnection (“OSI”) Reference Model. The communication layer architecture **200** includes a data link layer **202**, which includes a media access control (“MAC”) sub-layer **204**. The MAC sub-layer provides addressing and channel access control mechanisms that make it possible for several devices or network nodes to communicate within a multiple access network that incorporates a shared medium, e.g. Ethernet. The hardware that implements the MAC may be referred to as a medium access controller. The MAC sub-layer acts as an interface between the logical link control (“LLC”) sub layer and the network's physical layer. The MAC layer emulates a full-duplex logical communication channel in a multi-point network. This channel may provide unicast, multicast or broadcast communication service.

[0035] Mobile devices (e.g., the mobile device **114** of FIG. 1) may provide service requests or discovery communications **120** (e.g. the discovery request **116** and the discovery response **118**) with wireless APs (e.g., the APs **102a-c** of FIG. 1) at the MAC sub-layer **204**. A mobile device may access information from a memory or other hardware of the mobile device at the MAC sub-layer **204** without needing to perform operations at or above an internet protocol layer (e.g., a network layer **208**) and without needing to provide access to the internet protocol layer. Mobile devices (e.g., the mobile device **114** of FIG. 1) that include mobile smart phones, PDA's, processor based devices, etc. may have relatively limited processor cycles and less available electrical power than fixed-location computing devices powered using wired (e.g. alternating current) electricity sources. Low-level resource operations at the MAC sub-layer require relatively fewer system resources than user-interface-intensive and operating system intensive operations (e.g., web-browser operations) at an application layer.

[0036] Some communications or authentication techniques that use hypertext transfer protocol (“HTTP”) or other internet protocol processes may require establishing a connection between a mobile device and a wireless access point at one or more of the layers between and including the network layer **208** and an application layer **210** of the communication layer architecture **200**. In these applications, discovery communications **120** may not require a connection or access to the network layer **208** or any layers within a protocol suite. An inclusion of a discovery communication **120** on the MAC sub-layer **204** may allow for a mobile device to communicate with a network without associating with the network. Discovering service information available via access points using the MAC sub-layer may be used for identifying services that are provided.

[0037] FIG. 3 illustrates an alternative communication network **300**. In particular, the network **300** illustrates the communication between a mobile device **114**, one or more AP(s) **104**, and a service transaction proxy (“TPX”) server **302**. A WLAN is provided by one or more of the AP(s) **104**. The mobile device **114** communicates with pre-association messages with the WLAN from the AP(s) **104**. The TPX server **302** accesses an external network **305** for identifying available services. The TPX server **302** may be an advertisement server that communicates discovery or pre-association messages. In one embodiment, the TPX server **302** is an enhanced advertisement server that transmits service request messages utilizing STP. In another embodiment, the TPX server **302** communicates with ANQP discovery messages. The TPX server **302** may be located within the LAN and is connected to the network **305**, which may not be normally accessible by the mobile device **114** in a pre-association state. In other words, the TPX server **302** allows the mobile device **114** to determine service information and/or available services within the network **305** before associating with the WLAN through the use of pre-association messages. In one embodiment, the determination of service information may be from free string queries.

[0038] The TPX server **302** may transmit service query messages to identify services available through the WLAN or the network **305**. A service query message may be a communication using a pre-existing protocol on a network, such as Transmission Control Protocol (“TCP”). The TPX

server **302** sends the service query messages to the network. The network may include a one or more public or private networks and may be the Internet in one embodiment. STP Request is a request for service information about a particular service from a third-party over the network. In one embodiment the STP Request may include a keyword or query and an STP Response is an answer to the query.

[0039] Upon receiving a service request message, the TPX server **302** may respond by parsing the query string within the request to determine if it has an identification (and associated information) of such a service. If not, the TPX server **302** will search for services within the WLAN or in the external network **305**. If no service is found within the WLAN or in the external network **305** that “matches” (i.e., is responsive to or is associated with) the requested service, then the mobile device is notified. The messaging and codes used for STP communications are described below with respect to FIGS. 7-8.

[0040] The TPX server **302** may cache service information determined from previous requests so that responses to service query requests may be answered with service information stored in cache. This information may be reviewed after a timeout period and all stored information should have a lifetime associated with it (e.g. a period of validity). Existing network upper layer (e.g. layer 7 in FIG. 2) protocols such as Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (“LDAP”), Bonjour™ or Universal Plug and Play™ (“UPnP”) may be used to carry the service query messages between the TPX server **302** and the network. These protocols may be transported across the network using User Datagram Protocol (“UDP”) or Internet Protocol (“IP”). Alternatively a specific subset of one of these protocols may be used.

[0041] In one example, an application in the mobile device may require a 3D printer (i.e., a service as described above). Accordingly, the application operating within the mobile device sends a request to the STP in the mobile device. The request is forwarded over the WLAN to the TPX server **302**. The request is then analyzed and processed by the TPX server **302**. A suitable response may be already cached, or the TPX server **302** searches for the service requested by the request in the larger network **305**. Once a response to the request is determined, the TPX server **302** transmits the response back to the mobile device **114** using an STP frame over the WLAN and air interface. The response is then sent, from the STP in the mobile device **114**, to the original application in the mobile device that sent the request for locating a 3D printer in the present example.

[0042] The TPX server **302** may proactively search for services in the WLAN or in the external network **305**. The TPX server **302** may also search for services based on receiving a request from the mobile device **114**. The identification of services may occur when the TPX server **302** is switched “ON” through initial communications with the WLAN or in response to a STP element (e.g. Request message). The identification and information about services may be stored (e.g. cached) locally within the TPX server **302**.

[0043] In alternative embodiments, multiple TPX servers may be utilized within one or more WLANs. The TPX servers may be connected together. Information between the TPX servers may be shared and cached. Accordingly, service information from one TPX server may be utilized for answering requests from a different TPX server. In one embodiment, the IEEE 802.11 extended capability frame may be updated to allow an access point to advertise the STP capability.

[0044] FIG. 4 illustrates another alternative communication network **400**. In particular, FIG. 4 shows that the AP(s) **104** and the TPX server **302** may be combined as a single unit **402**. In other words, the TPX server **302** may be part of one of the AP(s) **104**. The mobile device **114** submits pre-association communications to the single unit **402** and the TPX server **302** transmits service query messages to the external network **305** as shown. FIG. 4 does not illustrate the WLAN from the AP(s) **104**.

[0045] FIG. 5 illustrates a mobile device **114** as shown in FIGS. 1, 3, and 4. The mobile device **114** includes a processor **502** that may be used to control the overall operation of the mobile device **114**. The processor **502** may be implemented using a controller, a general purpose processor, a digital

signal processor, dedicated hardware, or any combination thereof. The processor **502** may include a central processing unit, a graphics processing unit, a digital signal processor or other type of processing device. The processor **502** may be a component in any one of a variety of systems. For example, the processor **502** may be part of a standard personal computer or a workstation. The processor **502** may be one or more general processors, digital signal processors, application specific integrated circuits, field programmable gate arrays, servers, networks, digital circuits, analog circuits, combinations thereof, or other now known or later developed devices for analyzing and processing data. The processor **502** may operate in conjunction with a software program, such as code generated manually (i.e., programmed).

[0046] The mobile device **114** also includes a terminal message generator **504** and a terminal data parser **506**. The terminal message generator **504** may generate service discovery messages such as the discovery request **116** and discover response **118** for communicating the service information from FIG. **1**. The terminal data parser **506** may be used to retrieve network information from memory (e.g., random access memory **510**, etc.). For example, the terminal data parser **506** may request service information from a WLAN (e.g., the access networks **106a-c** of FIG. **1**) to identify services available to the network.

[0047] In the illustrated embodiment, the terminal message generator **504** and the terminal data parser **506** are shown as separate from and connected to the processor **502**. In alternative embodiments, the terminal message generator **504** and the terminal data parser **506** may be implemented in the processor **502** and/or in a wireless communication subsystem (e.g., a wireless communication subsystem **518**). The terminal message generator **504** and the terminal data parser **506** may be implemented using any combination of hardware, firmware, and/or software. For example, one or more integrated circuits, discrete semiconductor components, and/or passive electronic components may be used. For example, the terminal message generator **504** and the terminal data parser **506**, or parts thereof, may be implemented using one or more circuits, programmable processors, application specific integrated circuits, programmable logic devices, field programmable logic devices, etc.

[0048] The terminal message generator **504** and the terminal data parser **506**, or parts thereof, may be implemented using instructions, code, and/or other software and/or firmware, etc. stored on a machine accessible medium and executable by, for example, a processor (e.g., the processor **502**). The terminal message generator **504** or the terminal data parser **506** may be stored on or include a tangible storage medium or memory. For example, the terminal message generator **504** or the terminal data parser **506** may be implemented in software stored on a memory that is executable by the processor **502**. Alternatively, the terminal message generator **504** and/or the terminal data parser **506** may be implemented in hardware with software functions. The memory for storing software associated with the terminal message generator **504** and/or the terminal data parser **506** may include, but is not limited to, computer readable storage media such as various types of volatile and non-volatile storage media, including random access memory, read-only memory, programmable read-only memory, electrically programmable read-only memory, electrically erasable read-only memory, flash memory, magnetic tape or disk, optical media and the like. In one embodiment, the memory may include the random access memory **510** for the processor **502**, or may be an external storage device or database for storing recorded ad or user data. Examples include a hard drive, compact disc (“CD”), digital video disc (“DVD”), memory card, memory stick, floppy disc, universal serial bus (“USB”) memory device, or any other device operative to store user data. The memory is operable to store instructions executable by the processor **502**.

[0049] The mobile device **114** may include a FLASH memory **508**, a random access memory **510**, and/or an expandable memory interface **512** coupled with the processor **502**. The FLASH memory **508** may store computer readable instructions and/or data. In some embodiments, the FLASH memory **508** and/or the RAM **510** may store the discovery communications **120** (service information) from FIG. **1** and instructions for communicating that information. The processor **502**

may be coupled with the memory (e.g. the FLASH memory **508**, or the RAM **510**) for storing software instructions executable by the processor **502**. The memory may include, but is not limited to, computer readable storage media such as various types of volatile and non-volatile storage media, including random access memory, read-only memory, programmable read-only memory, electrically programmable read-only memory, electrically erasable read-only memory, flash memory, magnetic tape or disk, optical media and the like. The functions, acts or tasks illustrated in the figures or described herein may be performed by the programmed processor **502** executing the instructions stored in the memory. The functions, acts or tasks are independent of the particular type of instruction set, storage media, processor or processing strategy and may be performed by software, hardware, integrated circuits, firm-ware, micro-code and the like, operating alone or in combination. Likewise, processing strategies may include multiprocessing, multitasking, parallel processing and the like.

[0050] The mobile device **114** may include a security hardware interface **514** to receive a SIM card from a wireless service provider. A SIM card may be used for service discovery communications including authentication of the mobile device **114** for establishing a connection with a WLAN-supported network. The mobile device **114** may be provided with an external data I/O interface **516**. The external data I/O interface **516** may be used by a user to transfer information to the mobile device **114** through a wired medium.

[0051] The mobile device **114** may include wireless communication subsystem **518** to enable wireless communications with access points (e.g., the APs **104a-c** of FIG. **1**). Although not shown, the mobile device **114** may also have a long-range communication subsystem to receive messages from, and send messages to, a cellular wireless network. In the illustrated examples described herein, the wireless communication subsystem **518** can be configured in accordance with the IEEE® 802.11 standard. In other example implementations, the wireless communication subsystem **518** may be implemented using a BLUETOOTH® radio, a ZIGBEE® device, a wireless USB device, an ultra-wideband radio, a Near Field Communications (“NFC”) device, or a Radio Frequency Identifier (“RFID”) device.

[0052] The mobile device **114** may include a user interface for communicating with the mobile device. The user interface may be separate component or it may include a speaker **520**, a microphone **522**, a display **524**, and a user input interface **526**. The display **524** may be a liquid crystal display, an organic light emitting diode, a flat panel display, a solid state display, a cathode ray tube, a projector, a printer or other now known or later developed display device for outputting determined information. The user input interface **526** may include alphanumeric keyboard and/or telephone-type keypad, a multi-direction actuator or roller wheel with dynamic button pressing capability, a touch panel, etc. The service discovery information that is communicated with a network prior to connection may be communicated with or without each of the user interfaces described herein. The speaker, **520**, the microphone **522**, the display **524**, the user input interface **526**, and/or any combination thereof may be omitted in alternative embodiments. In one embodiment, the mobile device **114** is a battery-powered device and includes a battery **528** and a battery interface **530**.

[0053] FIG. **6** illustrates an access point (“AP”) **104a**. The access point shown in FIG. **6** is AP **104a**, but may also be illustrative of other access points (e.g. APs **104b**, **104c**). AP **104a** includes a processor **602** to perform operations of the AP **104a**. The processor **602** may be similar to the processor **502** described above.

[0054] The AP **104a** includes an access point message generator **604** to generate service information communications and an access point data parser **606** for retrieving service information communications from the mobile device **114** and/or the external network A **108a** as illustrated in FIG. **1**. The access point message generator **604** may be similar to the terminal message generator **504** of FIG. **5**, and the access point data parser **606** may be similar to the terminal data parser **506** of FIG. **5**. As with the terminal message generator **504** and the terminal data parser **506** of FIG. **5**,

the access point message generator **604** and the access point data parser **606** may be implemented in software stored on a memory that is executable by the processor **602** or may be implemented in hardware with software functions executed by the processor **602**. Alternatively, the access point message generator **604** and the access point data parser **606** may be implemented in a wireless communication subsystem (e.g., a wireless communication subsystem **612**) using any combination of hardware, firmware, and/or software including instructions stored on a tangible computer readable medium and/or a non-transitory computer readable medium.

[0055] The AP **104a** may also include a FLASH memory **608** and a RAM **610**, both of which are coupled to the processor **602**. The FLASH memory **608** and/or the random access memory (“RAM”) **610** may be configured to store network information (e.g., discovery communications **120**, including service information from FIG. 1). The RAM **610** may also be used to generate messages for communication with the mobile device **114** and/or to the external network A **108a**. The RAM **610** may also store received messages communicated by the mobile device **114** and/or the external network A **108a**.

[0056] To communicate with mobile devices such as the mobile device **114**, the AP **104a** may include a wireless communication subsystem **612**, which may be similar to the wireless communication subsystem **518** of the mobile device **114** illustrated in FIG. 5. To communicate with a WLAN-supported network or external network (e.g., the networks **106a-c**, **108a**, and **108b** of FIG. 1), the AP **104a** may include a network uplink communication interface **614**.

[0057] Service Transaction Protocol (“STP”) was described above and may allow service discovery to occur between a mobile device and an advertisement server (e.g. TPX server **302** in FIG. 3), so that network service capabilities (e.g. for a specific application) can be determined, before the mobile device is assigned an IP address. STP may allow service discovery to occur between a mobile device and an access point (and hotspot), so that network service capabilities (e.g. for a specific application) can be determined, before the mobile device is assigned an IP address. For example, if an application on the mobile device requires a 3D Printer service, this protocol will enable the discovery of that service prior to the mobile device associating with the network.

[0058] STP may be transaction oriented so that when a mobile device or access point receives a message from an upper layer (see FIG. 2), the message is transported within the protocol to the other device. The protocol is bi-directional and can be initiated and terminated by either the mobile device or the access point. Transaction tokens may be used to allow the protocol to manage the transmission of messages from the mobile device to the TPX. Therefore upper layer protocols, for example SLP and UPnP may be carried within MAC frames over the IEEE 802.11 air interface prior to the mobile device associating with a network. An indication of which upper layer protocol is being carried may also be provided.

[0059] FIG. 7 illustrates an embodiment of STP messaging. A security relationship may be established between the AP **104** and the TPX server **302** through an initialization message **702**. In alternative embodiments (e.g. FIG. 4), the TPX server **302** may be combined with the AP which may eliminate the need for an initialization message. STP communications may further include an STP Request **704** from a mobile device **114** to the STP advertisement server (e.g. the TPX server **302**) and an STP Response **706** from the STP advertisement server to the mobile device **114** that includes the service information requested. The service request may be from an application within the mobile device that requests a service (e.g. 3D Printer) in the LAN. An STP Request message carries this information to the STP Advertisement Server (e.g. the TPX server **302**). A suitable network protocol may be used to transport the search message. Once a response is determined the STP Advertisement Server transmits an STP Response back to the mobile device, including information related to the original search message. The contents of the STP Response, once received by the mobile terminal, is passed back to the application.

[0060] The STP Request **704** may be from an application within the mobile device requesting a service (e.g. 3D Printer) in the WLAN. An enhanced STP Request message **704** carries this

information to the TPX server **302**. A token may be attached to the request so that the STP Response **706** can be paired up with the STP Request **704**. The TPX server **302** processes and analyses the message. A suitable response may be already cached, or the TPX server **302** searches for the service required in the WLAN or external network **305**. A query message (comprising a request and a response) may be provided as part of STP that allows for matching patterns and keywords to be included by the mobile device **114** within an STP Request, and for subsequent STP Responses to be received that contain information about available services within the network. [0061] GAS may provide a dialog token that is carried over the IEEE 802.11 air interface, but it effectively terminates in the AP, so an STP token may be required to uniquely identify the STP message as it is transmitted over the network between the AP and the TPX server **302**.

[0062] The TPX server **302** transmits an enhanced STP Response **706** (or an STP return code) back to the mobile device **114**, including: the STP token, some indication of success (or failure) and information directly related to the original search message (e.g. service availability). As an example this may be the destination address of a 3D printer as an address. The contents of the enhanced STP Response **706**, once received by the mobile terminal **114** may be passed back to the application.

[0063] FIG. **8** illustrates another embodiment of service transaction protocol messaging utilizing upper layer protocols (“ULP”). The STP may encapsulate upper layer service discovery messages, for example Bonjour or UPnP. Typically a subset of these ULPs (e.g. Bonjour identifiers) may be used, as no IP connectivity would exist between the mobile device and the access point in the discovery or pre-association stage. FIG. **8** shows a message sequence supporting an ULP (typically within an application) on the mobile device **114**, which may wish to communicate with a corresponding ULP **804** in the TPX server **302**. The ULP **804** may be software that is installed on the mobile device and access point. In one embodiment, the TPX server **302** may be co-located on the AP **104** and performs a minimal role in just forwarding ULP frames to an application on the same AP **104**.

[0064] A service discovery ULP **804** (e.g. UPnP) within the mobile device **114** wishes to send a message A to the LAN or external network (e.g. to discover a service). An STP Encapsulation message carries the ULP message A to the TPX server **302**. The TPX server **302** may be combined **806** with the AP **104**. The TPX server **302** may also include a co-located service discovery ULP (not shown) that receives the encapsulation message. As the STP element type is STP encapsulation the TPX server **302** recognizes that no analysis is required. It merely forwards the message to the higher layer. When the higher layer ULP responds with another message B, the TPX server **302** uses another STP encapsulation message to transmit message B back to the mobile device **114** including the STP token. If an error occurs in the TPX server **302** transaction, a return code may be alternatively returned to the mobile. When the STP encapsulation message is received by the mobile device, the contents are passed back to the service discovery ULP.

[0065] This message sequence in FIG. **8** may be bi-directional and can be initiated by the ULP **804** co-located with the TPX server **302** in unit **802**. Additionally STP may not need to “answer” Message A with a Message B, as it may have no knowledge of how the ULP operates. STP forwards each ULP message over the IEEE 802.11 air interface as individual transactions and may be transparent to the ULP operation.

[0066] The messaging for STP may include the following exemplary messages with unique identifications (“ID”). The following messages may also be referred to as STP Message definitions: TABLE-US-00001 TABLE 1 STP Message Definitions

STP message ID	Reserved	0	Encapsulation
1	Request	2	Response
3	Return Code	4	Certificate
5	Location	6	Reserved
7-220	Vendor Specific		
221	Reserved	222-255	

[0067] The “Reserved” and “Vendor Specific” values may be utilized to preserve backward compatibility with IEEE 802.11 element definitions. The STP messages are further described below. In each of these frame formats, the length of each field is merely exemplary.

Encapsulation Message:

[0068] The encapsulation message may be used to carry upper layer service discovery messages. The message may be used in ULP Discovery or ULP Encapsulation. In ULP Discovery, the encapsulation message is sent from a mobile device to the TPX server **302** to determine which ULPs are available within the local access network or network. The TPX server **302** may respond with none, a specific one, or even a list of options. It may then be up to the mobile device to determine how to proceed. Other encapsulation messages can be subsequently used for negotiation between the mobile device **114** and the TPX server **302** as to which specific ULP will be used. Alternatively the mobile device and the TPX server **302** may decide to use different ULPs. For example, the mobile device to TPX server **302** segment may be Bonjour and then the TPX server **302** translates the Bonjour into UPnP for the network to which it is attached.

[0069] In ULP Encapsulation, the encapsulation message may be sent from the mobile device **114** or a TPX server **302**, encapsulating a ULP. STP may be transparent to the actual operation of the ULP. The format for the encapsulation message may be:

TABLE-US-00002 Signature STP ULP ULP Length Signature ID Token Length ID payload (optional) (optional) Octets: 2 2 2 1 variable 2 variable

[0070] The ID field may be set to 1 as per the STP message definitions. The STP Token field may be used for matching STP messages when there are multiple, concurrent messages, between the mobile device and the TPX server. As described, the mobile device **114** and the TPX server **302** may be exemplary STP ending points for STP communications. The Length field may be set to the number of octets in the ULP payload field and Signature fields (if present)+1. The ULP ID field may be an identity of the ULP as shown in the following table.

TABLE-US-00003 TABLE 2 Upper Layer Protocol Identifiers ULP name ULP Abbreviation ULP ID List of available ULPs — 0 DNS Service Discovery, part of DNS-SD, Bonjour 1 Apple's Bonjour technology Service Location Protocol SLP 2 Simple Service Discovery Protocol SSDP, UPnP 3 as used in Universal Plug and Play Universal Description Discovery UDDI 4 and Integration for web services Jini for Java objects. JINI 5 Bluetooth Service Discovery SDP 6 Protocol Salutation Salutation 7 XMPP Service Discovery XEP-0030 8 Web Services Dynamic Discovery WS-Discovery 9 multicast DHCP MDHCP 10 Internet Storage Name Service iSNS 11 Web Proxy Autodiscovery Protocol WPAD 12 Dynamic Host Configuration DHCP 13 Protocol eXtensible Resource Descriptor XRDS 14 Sequence e911 (Emergency Service) e911 15 Next Generation 911 (Emergency NG911 16 Service) Location Service Location 17 ANQP element ANQP 18 RLQP element RLQP 19 Reserved — 20-255

[0071] The commonly used service discovery protocols discussed above may also include emergency service capabilities. Location can be any location information, carried by the Encapsulation message and is further discussed below. ANQP element is designed to carry an ANQP-element as defined by IEEE 802.11u or WFA Hotspot 2.0. Likewise, the RLQP element is designed to carry an RLQP element as defined by IEEE 802.11af or the WFA TV White Spaces Group. If set to 0, the ULP payload field then contains a comma separated list of all supported ULPs (e.g. "3, 12, 14").

[0072] The ULP payload field may carry the ULP. The Signature Length field may be set to the number of octets in the Signature field. It may only be required if the signature field is present. The Signature field allows a signature to be generated by the transmitting device (typically the AP using for example an elliptic curve algorithm) using the contents of the frame together with a secure identity. The signature provides authenticity of the contents of the Encapsulation message. The receiving device then uses the certificate to verify the Signature.

Query Request Message

[0073] The Query messages may used to carry a query exchange between the mobile device and the TPX server. An exemplary STP Request message format may be:

TABLE-US-00004 Signature STP Query Length Signature ID Token Length Request (optional) (optional) Octets: 2 2 2 variable 2 variable

[0074] The ID field may be set to 2 as per the STP message definitions in Table 1. The STP Token field may be used for matching STP responses with requests when there are multiple, concurrent requests, between the mobile device and the STP terminating point. The Length field may be set to the number of octets in the Query Request field and Signature fields (if present). The Query Request field may carry a free text query string (for example, “printer” or a specific identifier for identifying a service). An empty string will result in all services being provided by the TPX server. A protocol such as UNIX POSIX is used for the matching patterns (e.g. “3DPrinter*” where the “*” indicates a match to any trailing string pattern). The Signature fields are the same as those defined above for the Encapsulation message.

Query Response Message

[0075] The Query messages (Requests/Responses) may be used to carry a query exchange between the mobile device and the TPX server. An exemplary STP Response message format may be:

TABLE-US-00005 Fragment Signature STP Number Query Length Signature ID Token Length
Fragment (optional) Response (optional) (optional) Octets: 2 2 2 1 1 variable 2 variable

[0076] The ID field may be set to 3 as per the STP message definitions in Table 1. The STP Token field may be used for matching STP responses with requests when there are multiple, concurrent requests, between the mobile device and the STP terminating point. The Length field may be set to the number of octets in the Query Response field and Signature fields (if present) and the Fragment Number field (if the Fragment field is not set to 0). The Fragment field is set to 1 if the response is fragmented over several STP messages and there are more fragmented STP Responses to follow. Unfragmented STP responses (or the last fragment) have this field set to 0. The Fragment number indicates the number of the specific fragment, to allow for re-ordering or error checking if a fragment is not transmitted correctly. The Query Response carries response information (for example, a list of IP addresses, URIs or URLs of any known printers). The Signature fields are the same as those defined above for the Encapsulation message.

Return Code Message

[0077] The Return Code message may be used to carry a return code between the TPX server and the mobile device. It can also be used by the mobile device to transmit a return code to the TPX server when an Encapsulation message is received from the TPX server. The Return Code message format may be:

TABLE-US-00006 ID STP Token Return Code Octets: 2 2 1

[0078] The ID field may be set to 4 as per the STP message definitions in Table 1. The STP Token field may be used for matching STP responses with requests when there are multiple, concurrent requests, between the mobile device and the STP terminating point. The Return Code field is set to a value defined in

TABLE-US-00007 Message Return Code Reserved 0 Empty List 1 No TXP available 2 No Service available 3 Unknown message 4 Message too large 5 Unknown failure 6 Reserved 7-255

Certificate/Signatures

[0079] Signature schemes may be used in electronic communications to provide data integrity, origin authentication, and/or non-repudiation. Data may be modified during transit and a signature on the transmitted data could be used to ensure that the receiver can identify if some modification has been made to the signed data. Signatures may be used to provide assurance to the receiver about the source of origin of a given message. Signatures may be used to ensure that an entity that signs the message cannot at a later stage deny having signed the message. A common root of trust may be necessary for signatures to provide the above mentioned services. The trust may be established using a digital certificate comprising at least a public key of the entity that signs the messages. The certificates are usually issued by a trusted third party.

[0080] The requesting mobile device may have a pre-existing security relationship with the TPX server and may use keying information to digitally sign requests and authenticate responses. A pre-existing security relationship is established through provisioning keys to the mobile device and the

TPX server infrastructure prior to connecting. As STP messages are encapsulated within IEEE 802.11 management frames, the identity of the devices (e.g. MAC address) may be transmitted with the STP messages. In one example, the mobile device and the TPX server store public key/private key pairs from the same root certificate. In this embodiment, the private key is stored in only one location. In another example, the mobile device may have registered with the TPX server and obtained keying material that could be used for signing requests and validating responses. This process may provide data integrity for subsequent STP messages from the TPX server, but not provide integrity for the information within those frames. In other words, the TPX server cannot prove that advertised services are authentic. This would typically be proven by a mobile device, once a network is selected and associated.

[0081] The Certificate message may be used to carry a TPX server certificate that may be used by the mobile device to verify subsequent signed STP messages. The TPX server can have a certified public key (in the certificate) from the certificate authority (“CA”) and advertise this on the air and then use the corresponding private key to sign the advertised services on the air. If the mobile device wishes to use signed STP elements, then it may send this element with the Length set to 0. The TPX server then knows that the mobile device wishes to use signed element responses. Since STP is bi-directional, it may also be possible for a mobile device to transmit a certificate, in which case the TPX server would transmit a message with the length set to 0. The format for the Certificate message may be:

TABLE-US-00008 STP Validity Certificate ID Token Length Certificate Length Validity Octets: 2 2 Variable 1 variable

[0082] The ID field is set to 5 as per the STP message definitions in Table 1. The STP Token field is used for matching STP responses with requests when there are multiple, concurrent requests, between the mobile device and the TPX server. The mobile device will only accept a response when the STP Token matches that of one of its requests. The Length field may be set to the number of octets of the Certificate field plus the validity fields. It may also be set to 0 to indicate to the TPX server, that the mobile device wishes to use signed messages (or vice versa). If the Length field is not equal to 0 then: 1) the Certificate field is a certificate from the TPX server and it is assumed that it includes the TPX server's public key (or alternatively the certificate from the mobile device, if the TPX server is requesting); 2) the Validity Length field is set to the number of octets of the Certificate Validity field; and 3) the Certificate Validity field includes the validity start and end date of the certificate. It may also contain other information about how a new certificate can be requested (e.g. a URL for online hotspot sign up).

Location

[0083] The Location message may be used to carry location information (e.g. as a location service) and is sent from a mobile device or a TXP. The Location message format may be:

TABLE-US-00009 STP Location ID Token Length Information Octets: 2 2 2 variable

[0084] The ID field may be set to 6 as per Table 1. The STP Token field is used for matching STP messages when there are multiple, concurrent messages, between the mobile device and the TXP (i.e. the STP terminating points). The Length field may be set to the number of octets in the Location Information field and the Location Information field contains the location information as a variable length field.

Additional STP Messaging Features

[0085] STP support may be advertised by a network. Mobile devices that receive discovery information prior to network association can identify which networks support STP and which networks cannot communicate using STP. In one embodiment, the advertisement of STP compatibility may be through the IEEE 802.11 extended capabilities element. The extended capabilities element may be modified to allow IEEE 802.11 devices (e.g. a mobile device and an AP) to advertise (within a beacon) the support of STP. The extended capabilities element may include a MIB variable of type Boolean that is introduced to support this capability bit. When the

variable is true, the STP Capability field is set to 1 to indicate the mobile device supports STP. When the variable is false, the STP Capability field is set to 0 to indicate the mobile device does not support STP.

[0086] It may be useful to also provide a new ANQP-element to discover whether a network supports STP. A mobile device may use ANQP to discover STP support, and then once found switch to using STP between itself and the TPX server.

[0087] To improve the operation of GAS, GAS responses may be broadcast from an AP, so that all mobile devices, within range, can benefit from the information. This may not work if the mobile device is unable to verify signed messages. It is possible that an AP switches from unicast GAS responses to broadcast GAS responses, depending upon the number of GAS requests received in a given time, or another measurement of a high number of mobile devices within the AP's radio range. Mobile devices may be allowed to operate in promiscuous mode (i.e. they don't need to wait for frames specifically addressed to them), so that all GAS response frames can be parsed. This may not always work if the mobile device is unable to verify signed messages.

[0088] In another embodiment, STP may be implemented as an extra Public Action Frame, which is an existing IEEE 802.11 structure. This allows STP to be carried by the action frame mechanism. This may be more efficient since GAS is not used, which reduces the size of the frame headers and removes the GAS state machine. The disadvantage of not using GAS is that large messages (e.g. STP messages transmitted as query responses from the TPX server to the mobile device), which do not fit into air interface transmission frames, cannot be fragmented and will be dropped. The format of a new STP Public Action Frame may be:

TABLE-US-00010 Category Public Action STP message Octets: 1 1 variable

[0089] The Category field may be set to 4 (Public). The Public Action field may be set to 16-20 corresponding to the STP messages types. The STP messages field contains STP messages as defined above.

[0090] In another embodiment, STP may be implemented as an extension to the Probe Request/Response formats as defined within IEEE 802.11. This allows STP to be carried by a very low level management frame during an active scan. This may provide a more efficient solution since this is a simple frame that is transmitted by a device with minimal checking and protection. However, there is a possibility of placing a large amount of data within a probe response frame that may not be useful from a system radio resource point of view. If this frame is dropped by the IEEE 802.11 air interface, there is minimal indication reported back to the transmitting device. Therefore it may be difficult for a mobile device to actually determine whether an AP actually supports the STP capability or not. The Probe Request Frame Body may be extended as follows:

TABLE-US-00011 Order Information Notes 14 STP Certificate The STP Certificate element is present if STPCertificateActivated is true 15 STP Encapsulation The STP Encapsulation element is present if STPEncapsulationActivated is true 16 STP Request The STP Request element is present if STPQueryActivated is true 17 STP Return Code The STP Return Code element is present if STPCertificateActivated or STPEncapsulationActivated or STPQueryActivated are true
The Probe Response Frame Body may be extended as follows:

TABLE-US-00012 Order Information Notes 56 STP Response The STP Response element is present if STPQueryActivated is true

[0091] In another embodiment, cellular emergency service discovery may be enabled through the WLAN. These extensions allow an IEEE 802.11 mobile device (and also an AP) to discover if emergency services (and other services), typically found in cellular networks, are available through the WLAN. This may benefit a dual mode (cellular and WLAN) mobile device, if it is located in an area of poor cellular radio coverage or if its credentials (e.g. SIM card) are invalid preventing a connection to the cellular network. The existing IEEE 802.11 standard allows the mobile device to return a list of available cellular networks known by the AP, using the 3GPP Cellular Network ANQP-element containing a payload list of available Public land mobile networks ("PLMNs").

Extending this payload may allow another entry for Emergency Realm PLMNs. Accordingly, when an IEEE 802.11 mobile device uses the ANQP-element to discover available PLMNs, it will also discover any available Emergency Realm PLMNs. There may be an information element identity for the emergency realm list. The emergency realm list may be used by the IEEE 802.11 access network to indicate the emergency realm that can be used by the WLAN for the purposes of performing IMS emergency calls.

[0092] The system and process described may be encoded in a signal bearing medium, a computer readable medium such as a memory, programmed within a device such as one or more integrated circuits, and one or more processors or processed by a controller or a computer. If the methods are performed by software, the software may reside in a memory resident to or interfaced to a storage device, synchronizer, a communication interface, or non-volatile or volatile memory in communication with a transmitter. A circuit or electronic device designed to send data to another location. The memory may include an ordered listing of executable instructions for implementing logical functions. A logical function or any system element described may be implemented through optic circuitry, digital circuitry, through source code, through analog circuitry, through an analog source such as an analog electrical, audio, or video signal or a combination. The software may be embodied in any computer-readable or signal-bearing medium, for use by, or in connection with an instruction executable system, apparatus, or device. Such a system may include a computer-based system, a processor-containing system, or another system that may selectively fetch instructions from an instruction executable system, apparatus, or device that may also execute instructions.

[0093] A “computer-readable medium,” “machine readable medium,” “propagated-signal” medium, and/or “signal-bearing medium” may comprise any device that includes, stores, communicates, propagates, or transports software for use by or in connection with an instruction executable system, apparatus, or device. The machine-readable medium may selectively be, but not limited to, an electronic, magnetic, optical, electromagnetic, infrared, or semiconductor system, apparatus, device, or propagation medium. A non-exhaustive list of examples of a machine-readable medium would include: an electrical connection “electronic” having one or more wires, a portable magnetic or optical disk, a volatile memory such as a Random Access Memory “RAM”, a Read-Only Memory “ROM”, an Erasable Programmable Read-Only Memory (EPROM or Flash memory), or an optical fiber. A machine-readable medium may also include a tangible medium upon which software is printed, as the software may be electronically stored as an image or in another format (e.g., through an optical scan), then compiled, and/or interpreted or otherwise processed. The processed medium may then be stored in a computer and/or machine memory.

[0094] In an alternative embodiment, dedicated hardware implementations, such as application specific integrated circuits, programmable logic arrays and other hardware devices, can be constructed to implement one or more of the methods described herein. Applications that may include the apparatus and systems of various embodiments can broadly include a variety of electronic and computer systems. One or more embodiments described herein may implement functions using two or more specific interconnected hardware modules or devices with related control and data signals that can be communicated between and through the modules, or as portions of an application-specific integrated circuit. Accordingly, the present system encompasses software, firmware, and hardware implementations.

[0095] The illustrations of the embodiments described herein are intended to provide a general understanding of the structure of the various embodiments. The illustrations are not intended to serve as a complete description of all of the elements and features of apparatus and systems that utilize the structures or methods described herein. Many other embodiments may be apparent to those of skill in the art upon reviewing the disclosure. Other embodiments may be utilized and derived from the disclosure, such that structural and logical substitutions and changes may be made without departing from the scope of the disclosure. Additionally, the illustrations are merely representational and may not be drawn to scale. Certain proportions within the illustrations may be

exaggerated, while other proportions may be minimized. Accordingly, the disclosure and the figures are to be regarded as illustrative rather than restrictive.

Claims

1. A method for an access point of a wireless local area network (WLAN), the method comprising: receiving, from a wireless communication device, prior to an association of the wireless communication device with the WLAN, a service information request for service information that comprises information about a service requested by the wireless communication device, wherein the service information request is an Access Network Query Protocol (ANQP) element encapsulated with an ANQP carried by an Extensible Authentication Protocol (EAP).
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises: transmitting, from the access point to the wireless communication device, prior to the association of the wireless communication device with the WLAN, a service information response that is an ANQP element, wherein the service information response indicates if a service matching the service requested by the wireless communication device is available or not available.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the service information identifies the service requested by the wireless communication device using a string.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein the service information identifies the service requested by the wireless communication device using a string.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the service information request comprises a query request field, wherein the query request field includes information identifying the service requested by the wireless communication device.
6. The method of claim 2, wherein the service information request comprises a query request field, wherein the query request field includes information identifying the service requested by the wireless communication device and wherein the service information response comprises a query response field, wherein the query response field indicates whether the service matching the service requested by the wireless communication device is available or not available.
7. The method of claim 2, wherein the access point transmits a return code of at least one of “0”, “unknown failure”, “no service available”, or “message too large” in response to receiving the service information request from the wireless communication device.
8. The method of claim 5, wherein the query request field is of a variable number of octets in length.
9. The method of claim 6, wherein the query request field is of a variable number of octets in length.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein the service information request includes an identifier (ID) field of 2-octets in size and a length field of 2-octets in size.
11. The method of claim 2, wherein the service information response includes an identifier (ID) field of 2-octets in size and a length field of 2-octets in size.
12. The method of claim 1, wherein the service information request is encapsulated with the ANQP carried by the EAP using Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) based credentials, wherein the service information is encapsulated within an EAP frame and is protected by the SIM credentials.
13. The method of claim 2, wherein the service information response is determined by a proxy server.
14. The method of claim 13, wherein the proxy server is coupled to the access point and the access point exchanges information between the WLAN and the wireless communication device.
15. The method of claim 13, wherein the proxy server is separate from the access point and the access point exchanges information between the WLAN and the wireless communication device.
16. A non-transitory computer readable medium configured to store a computer program product comprising computer executable instructions that when executed by a processor cause the

processor to: receive, prior to an association of a wireless communication device with a wireless local area network (WLAN), a service information request for service information that comprises information about a service requested by the wireless communication device, wherein the service information request is an Access Network Query Protocol (ANQP) element encapsulated with an ANQP carried by an Extensible Authentication Protocol (EAP).

17. The non-transitory computer readable medium of claim 16, wherein when executed by the processor the instructions further cause the processor to: transmit, prior to the association of the wireless communication device with the WLAN, a service information response that is an ANQP element, wherein the service information response indicates if a service matching the service requested by the wireless communication device is available or not available.

18. An access point of a wireless local area network (WLAN), the access point comprising: at least one receiver configured to receive from a wireless communication device, prior to an association between the wireless communication device and the WLAN, a service information request for service information that comprises information about a service requested by the wireless communication device, wherein the service information request is an Access Network Query Protocol (ANQP) element encapsulated with an ANQP carried by an Extensible Authentication Protocol (EAP), wherein the service information identifies the service requested by the wireless communication device using a string.

19. The access point of claim 18, further comprising: at least one transmitter configured to transmit, prior to the association between the wireless communication device and the WLAN, a service information response to the wireless communication device, wherein the service information response is an ANQP element, and wherein the service information response indicates if a service matching the service requested by the wireless communication device is available or not available.

20. A wireless communication device, comprising: a transmitter configured to transmit prior to an association with a wireless local area network (WLAN), a service information request for service information that comprises information about a service requested by the wireless communication device, wherein the service information request is an Access Network Query Protocol (ANQP) element encapsulated with an ANQP carried by an Extensible Authentication Protocol (EAP), wherein the service information identifies the service requested by the wireless communication device using a string.

21. The wireless communication device of claim 20, further comprising: a receiver configured to receive, prior to the association with the WLAN, a service information response that is an ANQP element, wherein the service information response indicates if a service matching the service requested by the wireless communication device is available or not available.
