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(54) **COMMON CHASSIS FOR GROUND
SUPPORT TRACTORS**

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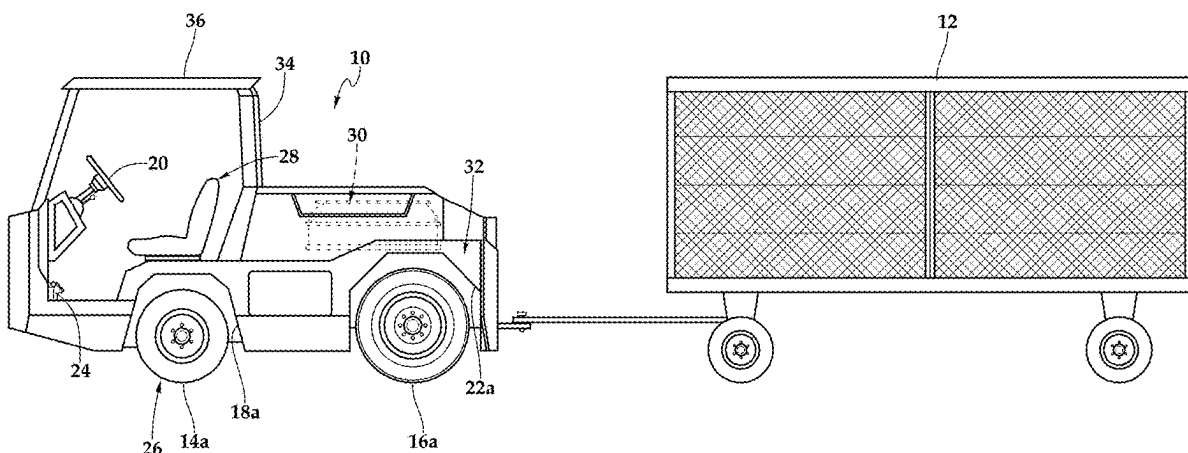
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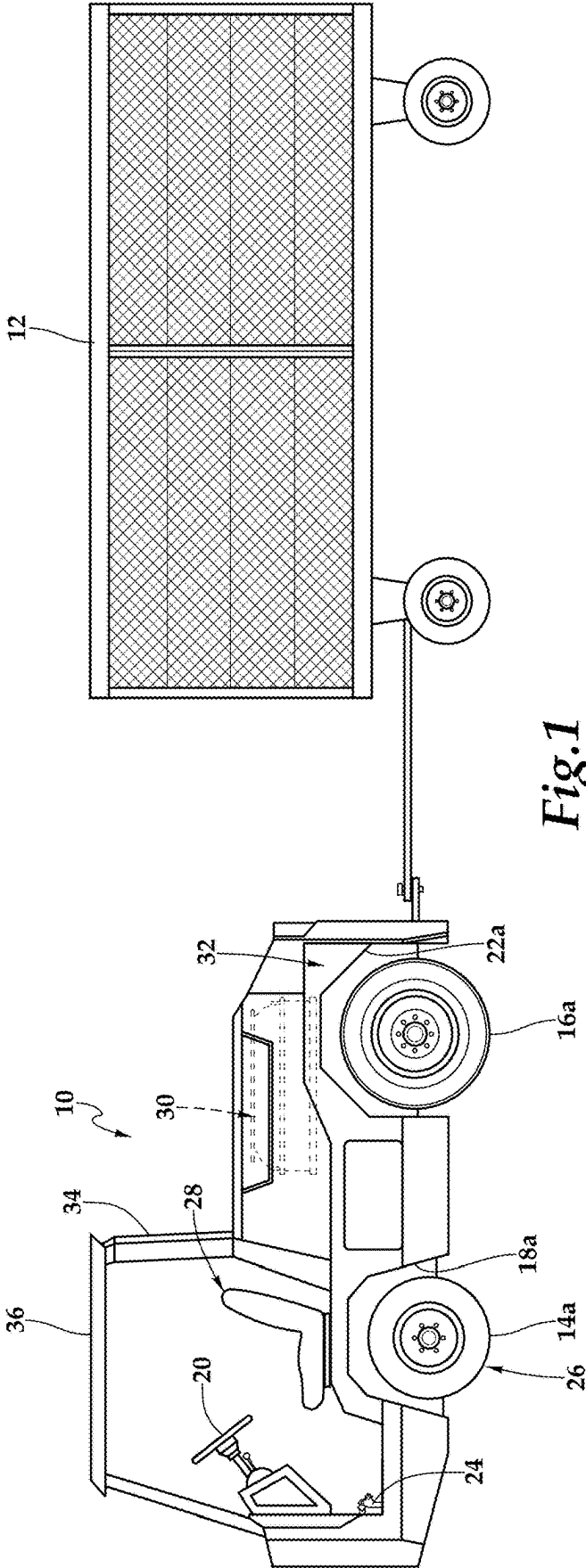
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ABSTRACT

A ground support tractor for providing ground support services at an airport. The ground support tractor has a cab forward configuration and a cab aft configuration. The ground support tractor includes a common chassis having a forward mounting location and an aft mounting location. An operator tub is coupled to the common chassis. In the cab forward configuration, the operator tub is coupled to the forward mounting location. In the cab aft configuration, the operator tub is coupled to the aft mounting location.





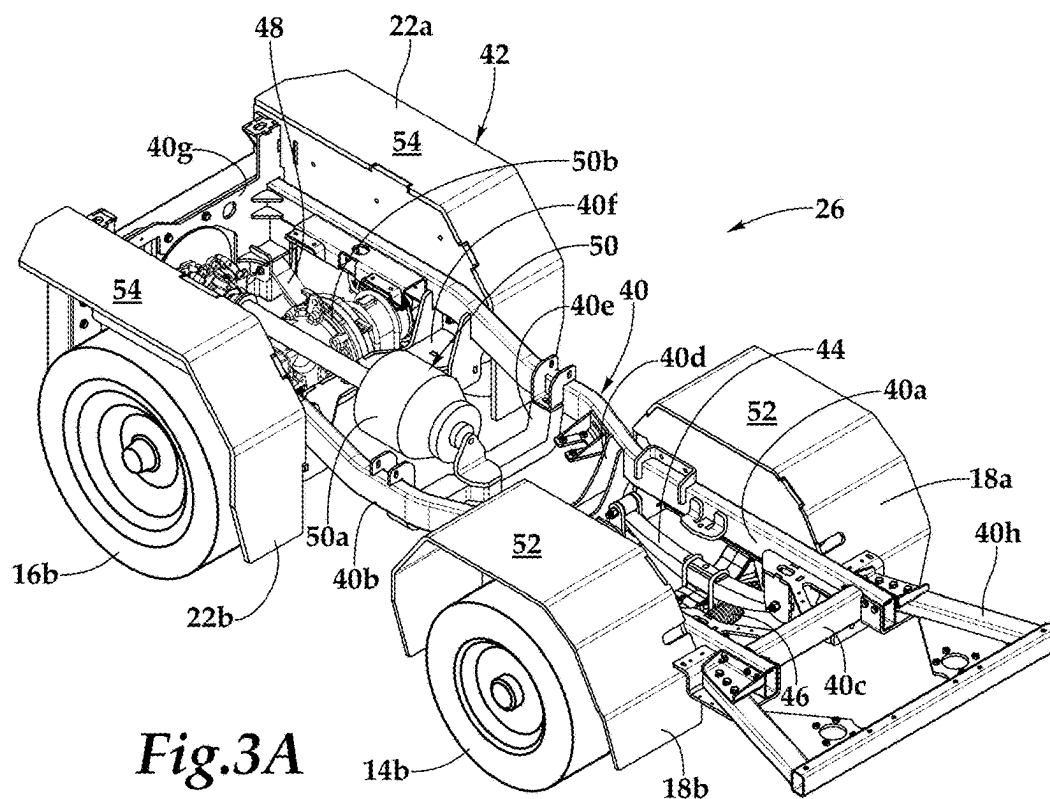


Fig.3A

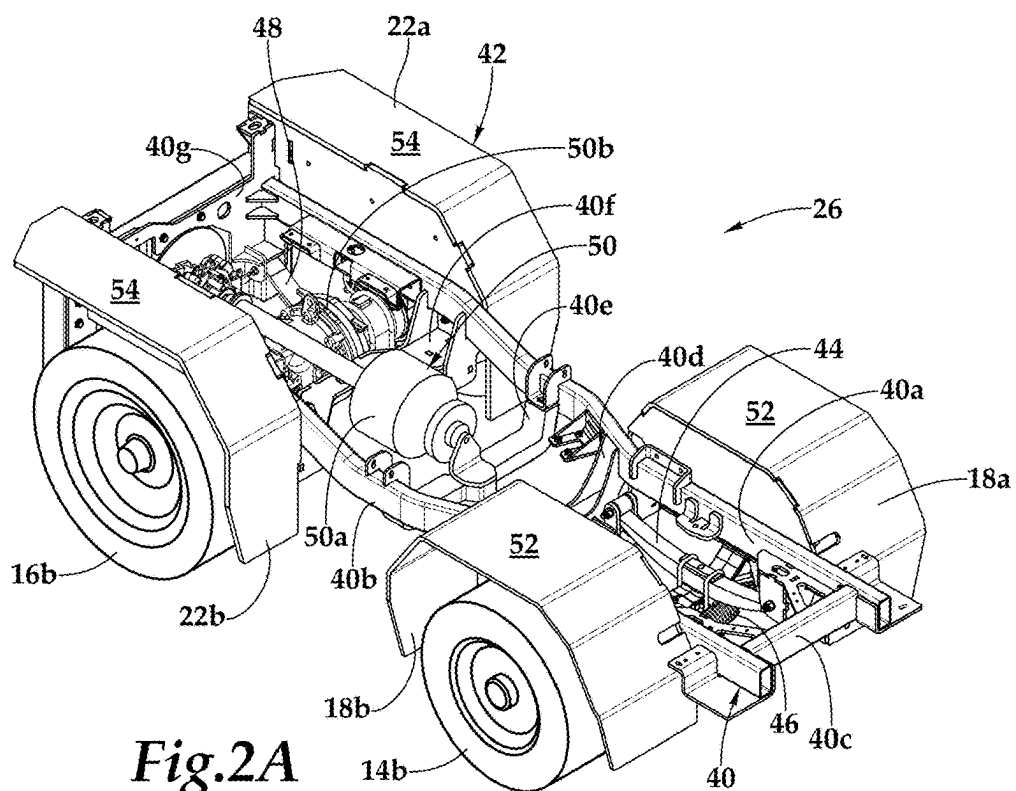
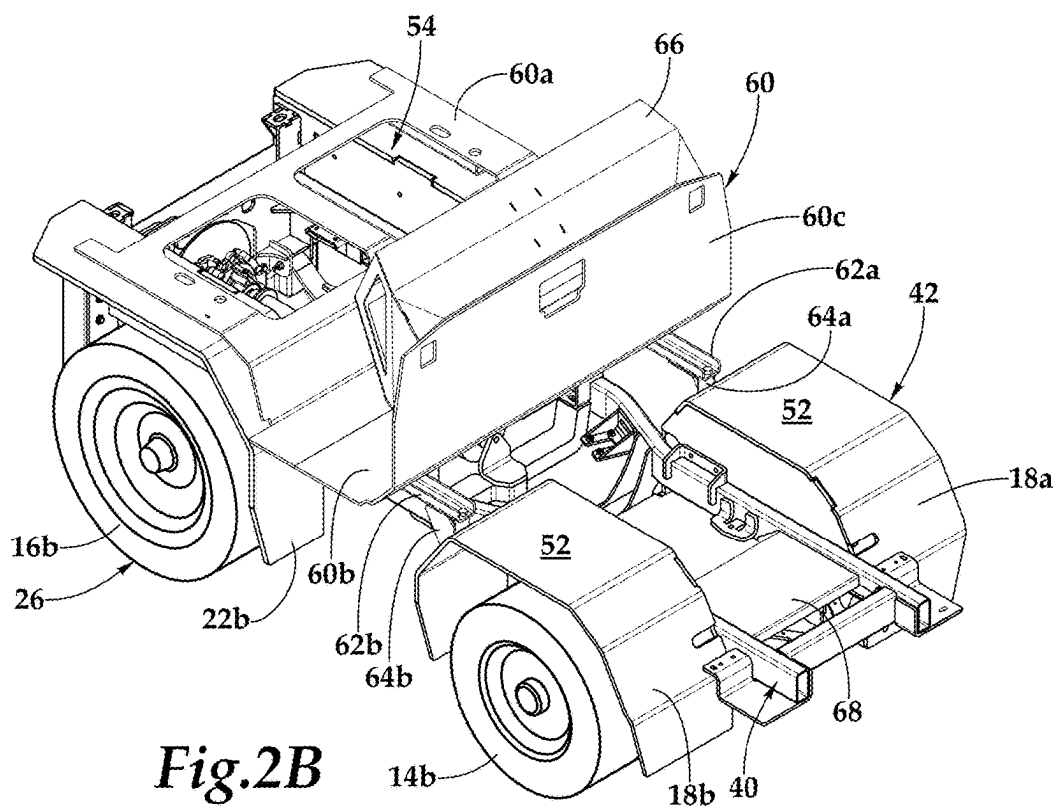
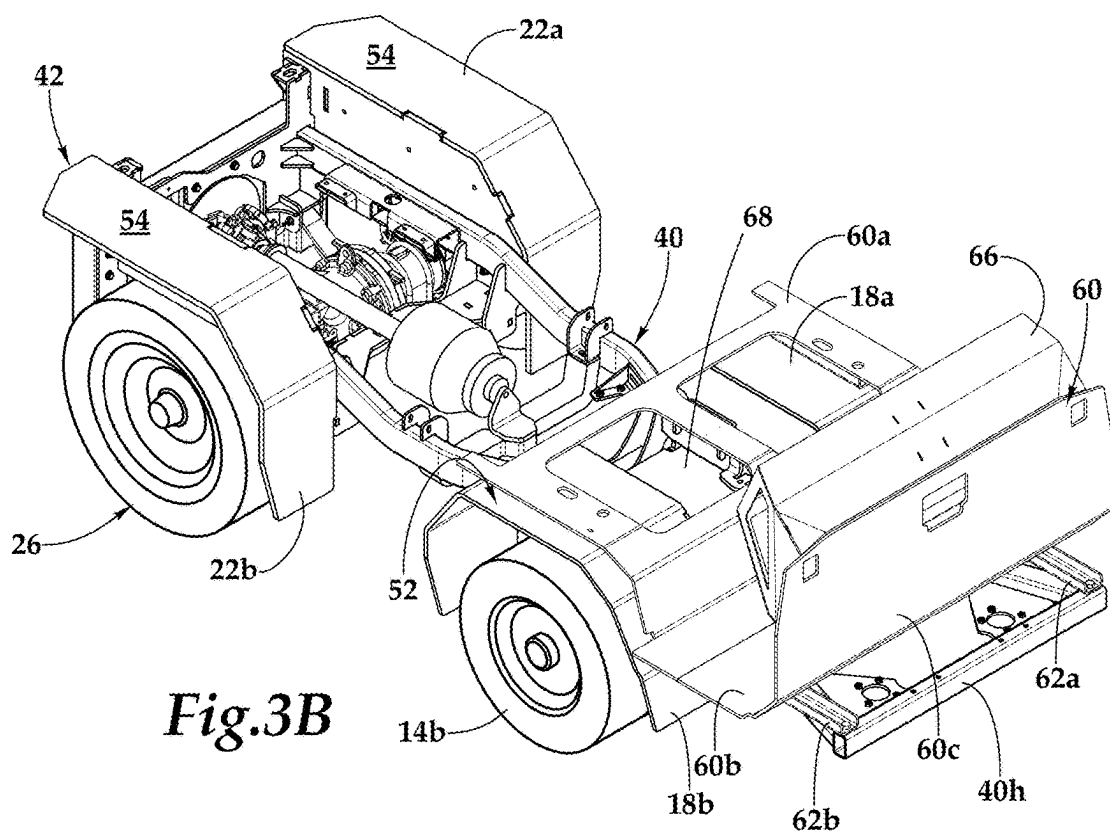
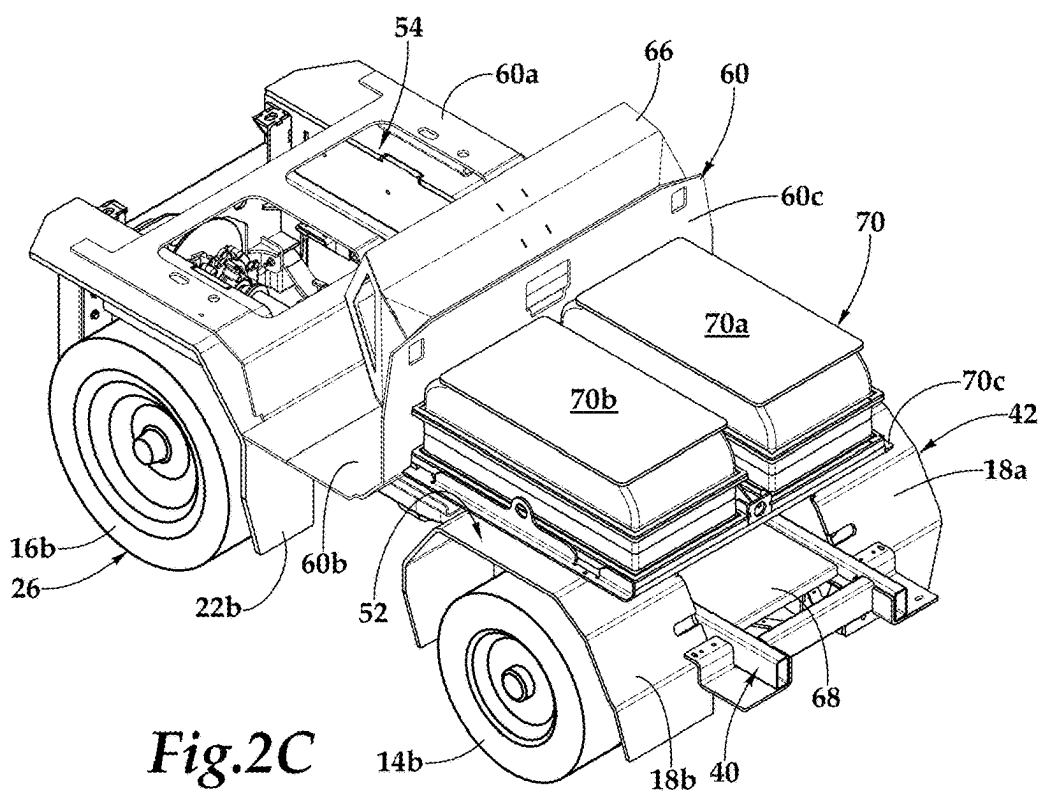
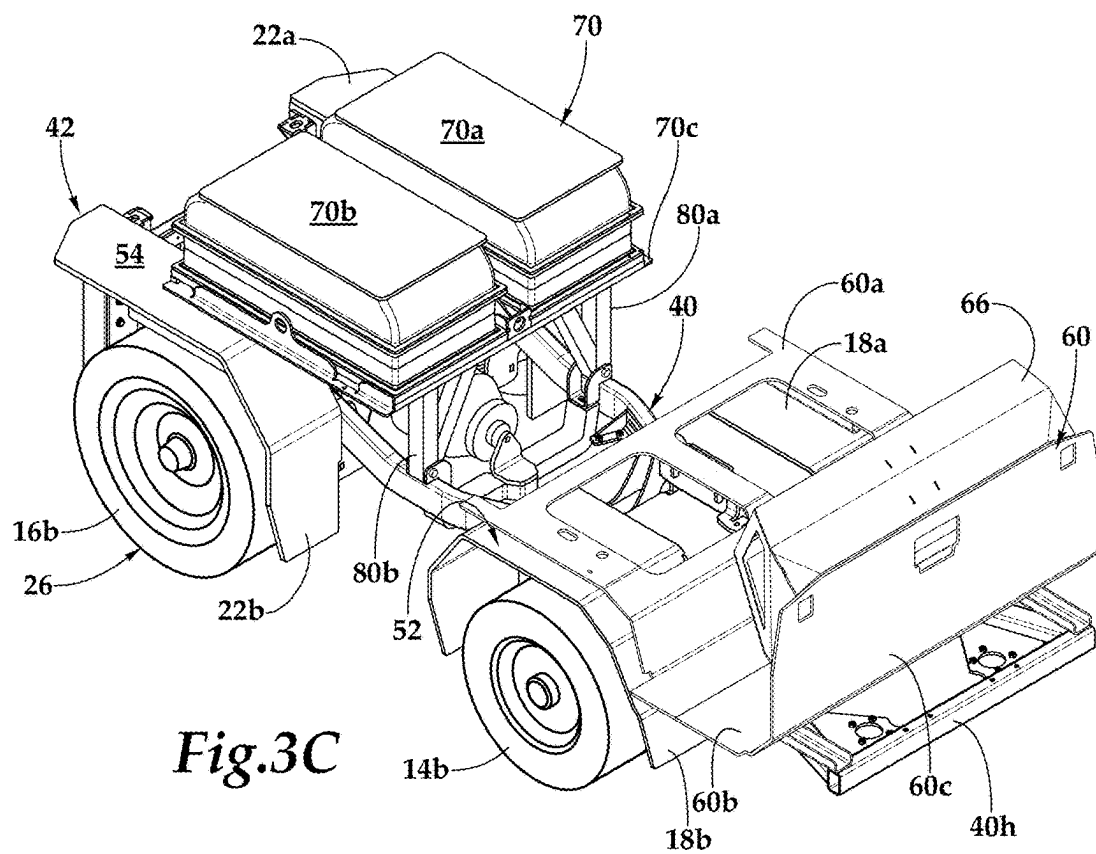


Fig.2A





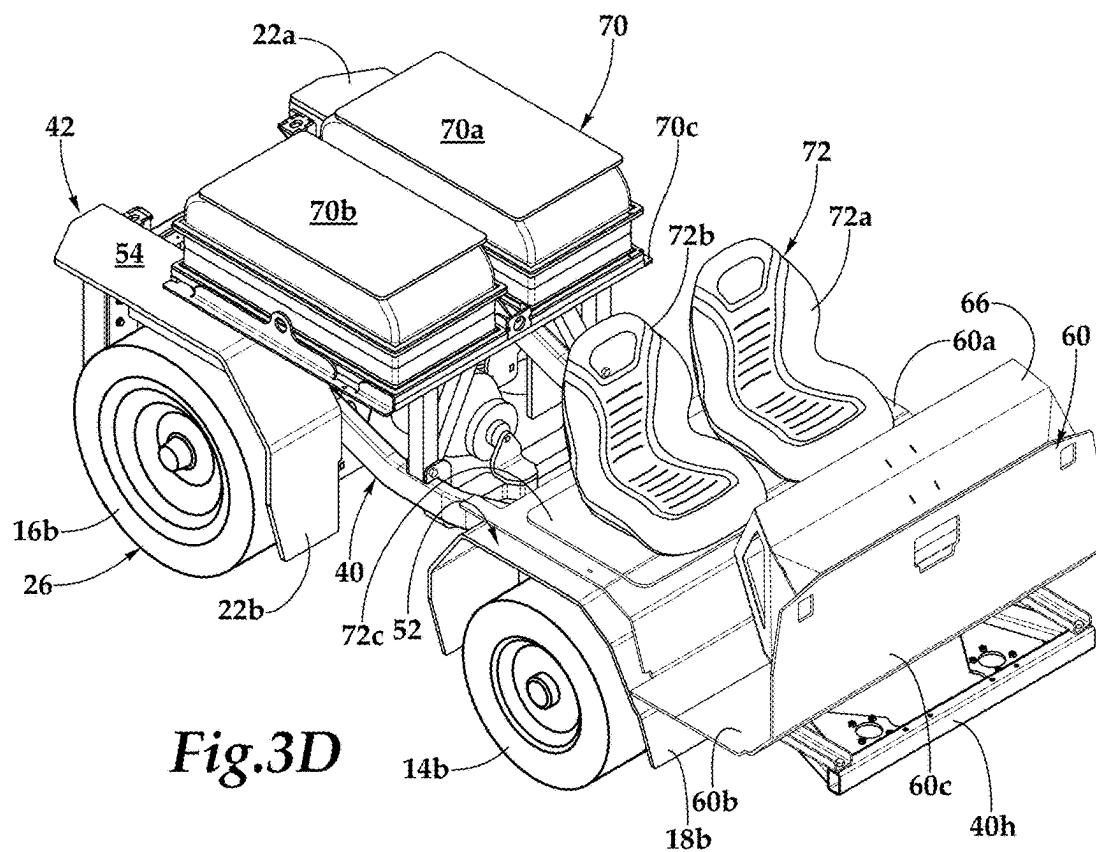


Fig. 3D

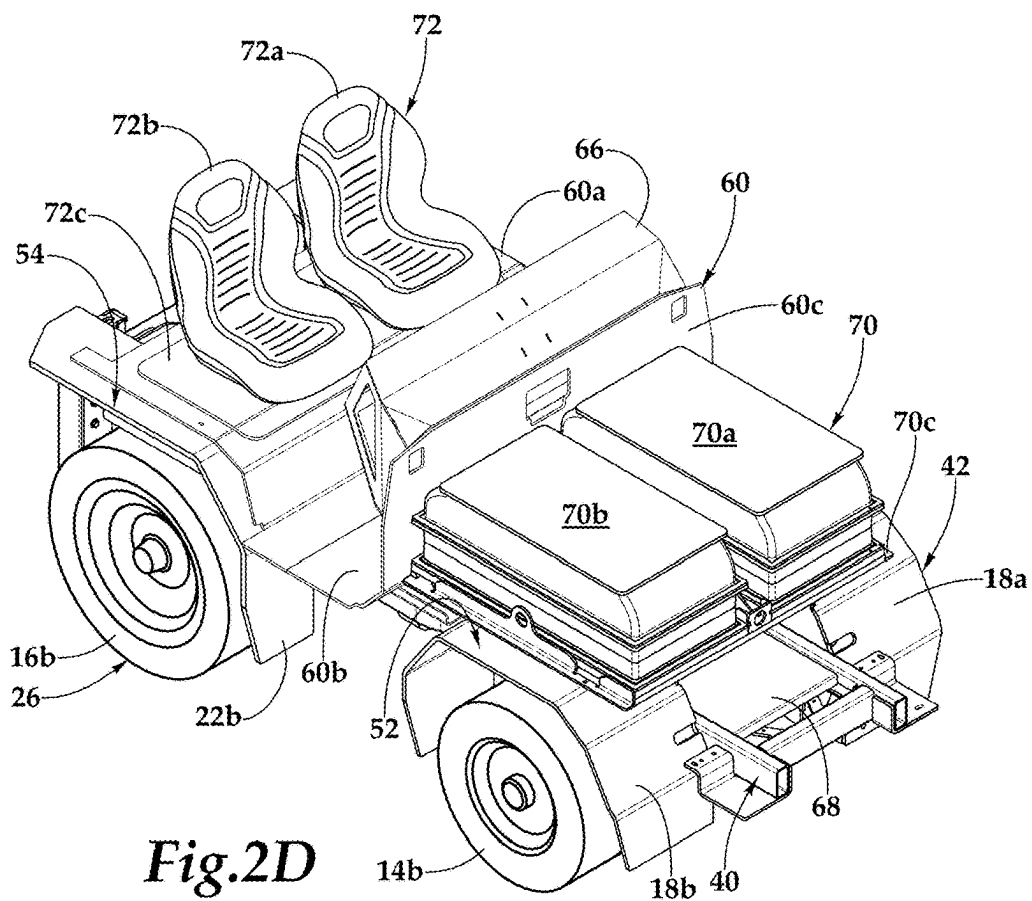


Fig. 2D

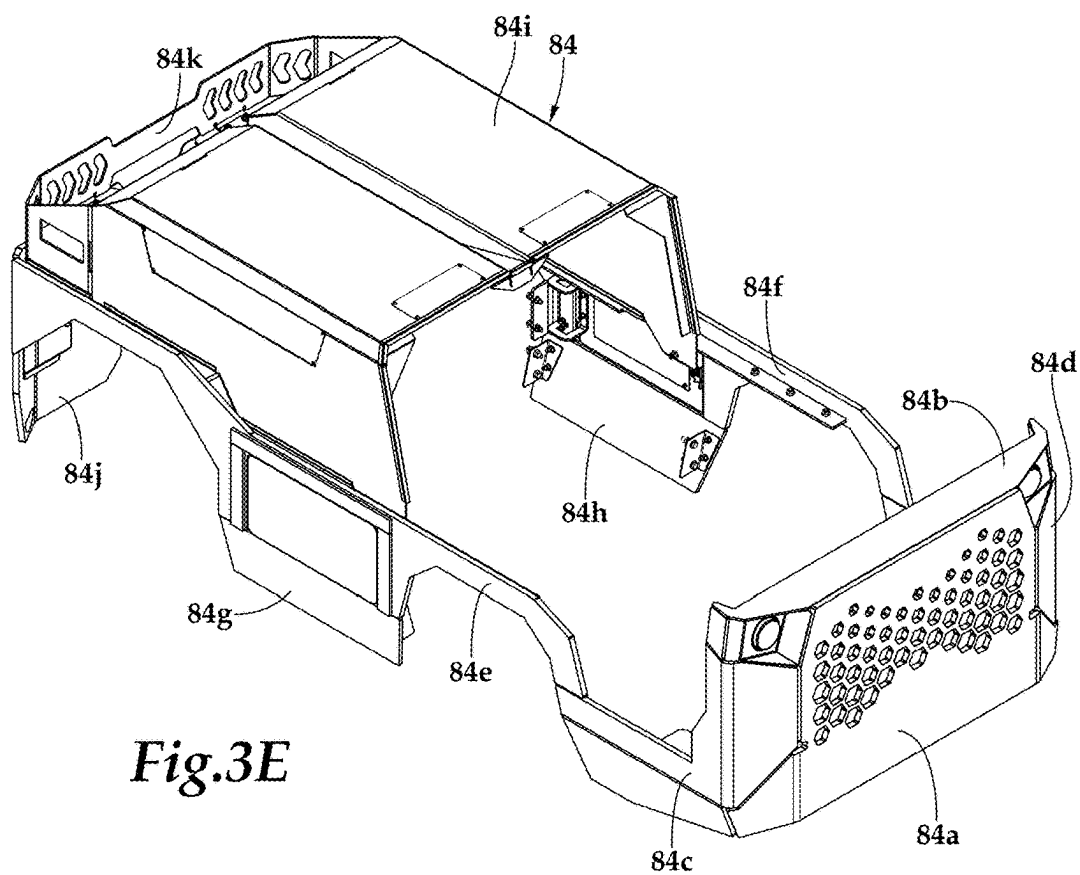


Fig. 3E

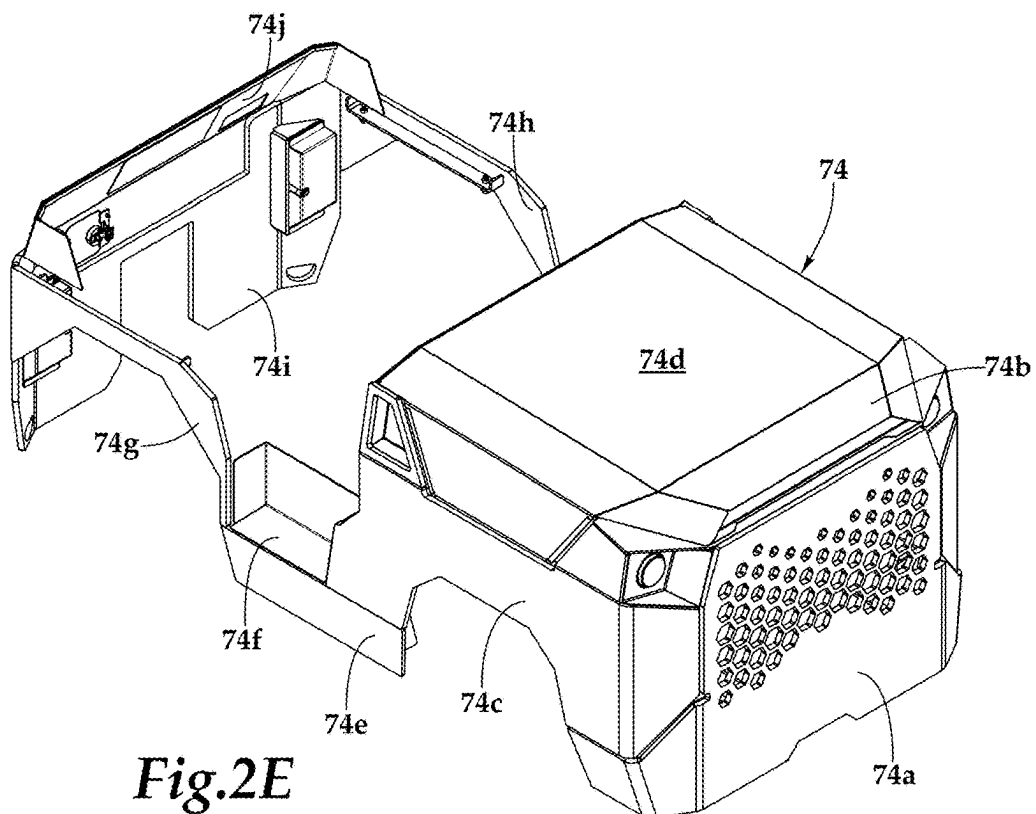


Fig. 2E

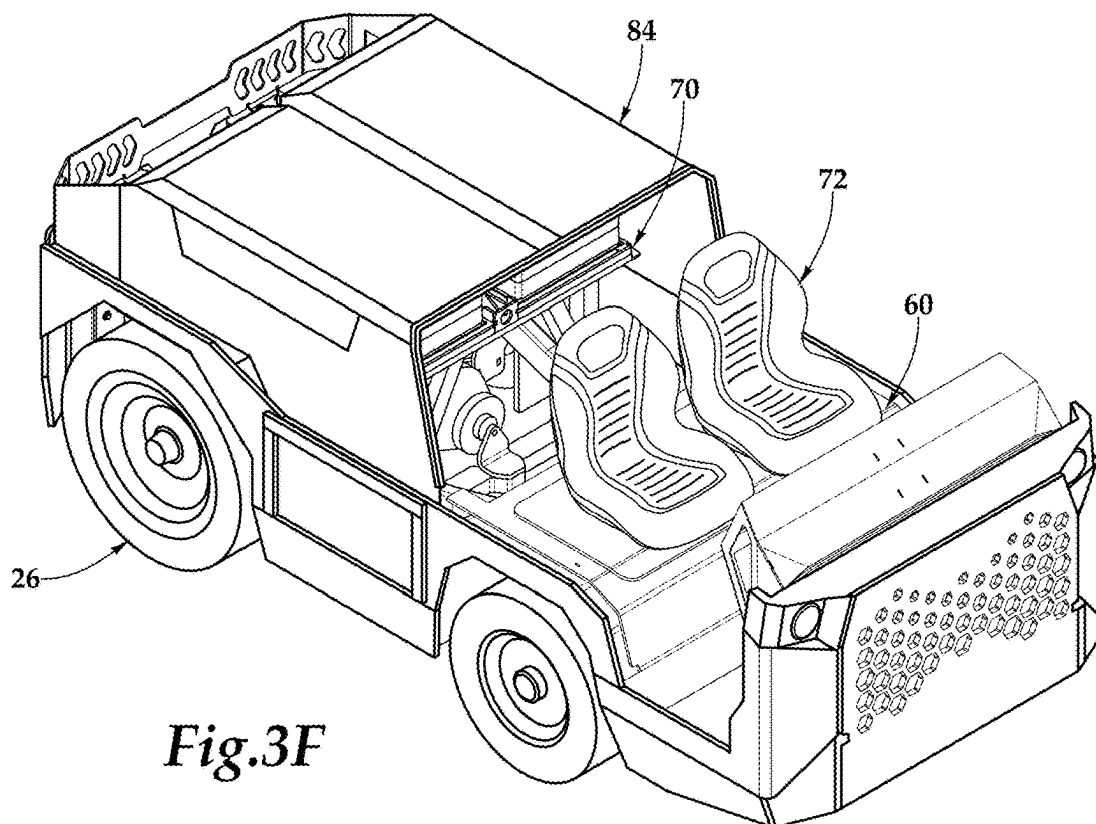


Fig. 3F

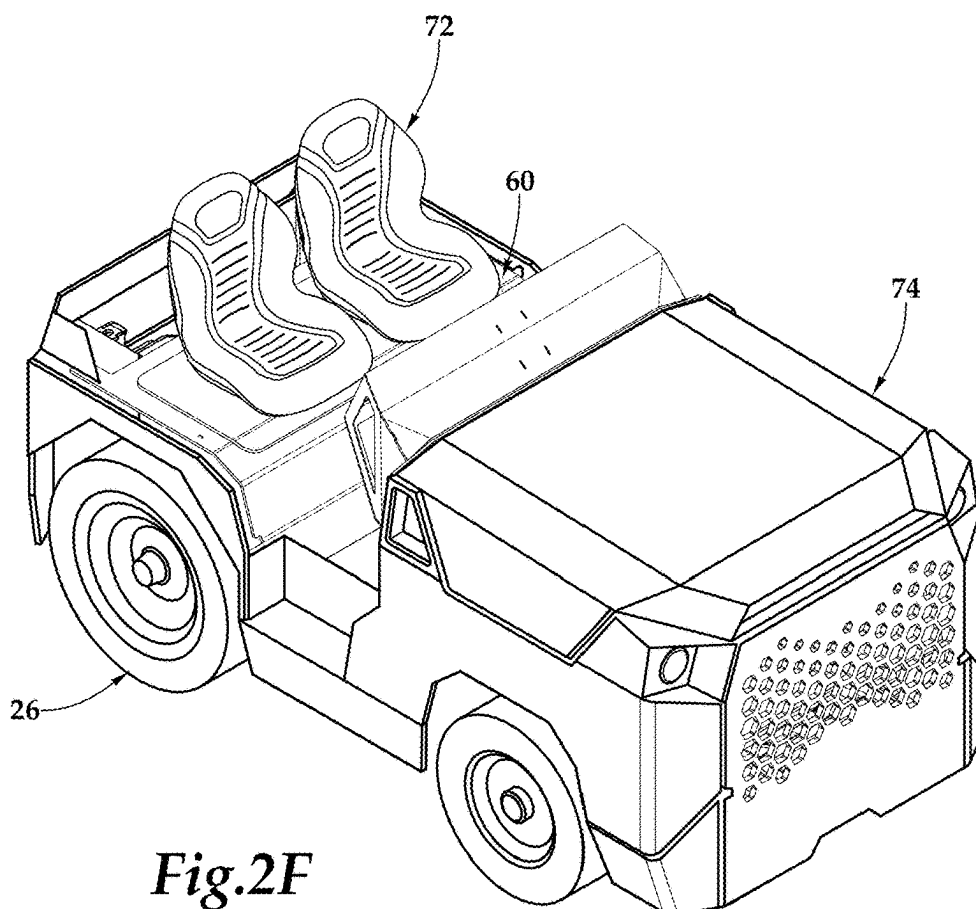
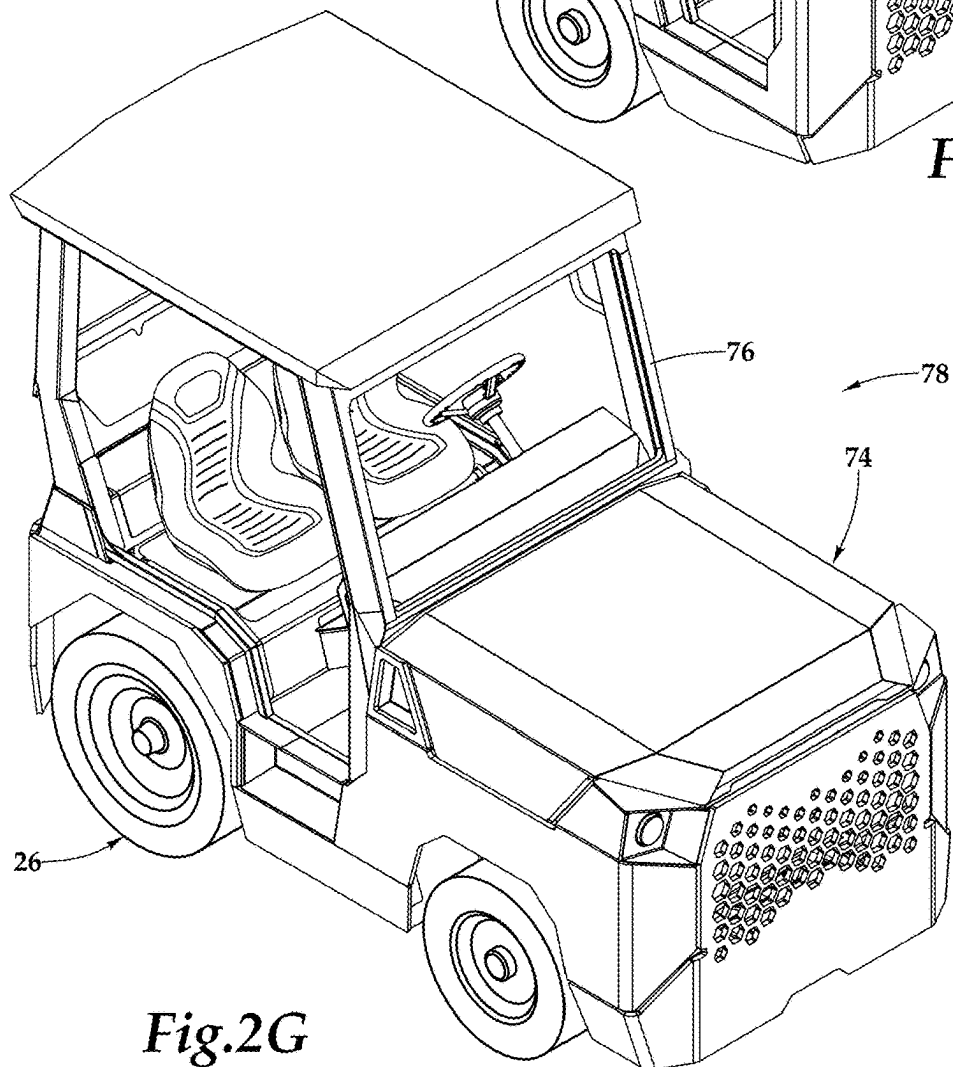
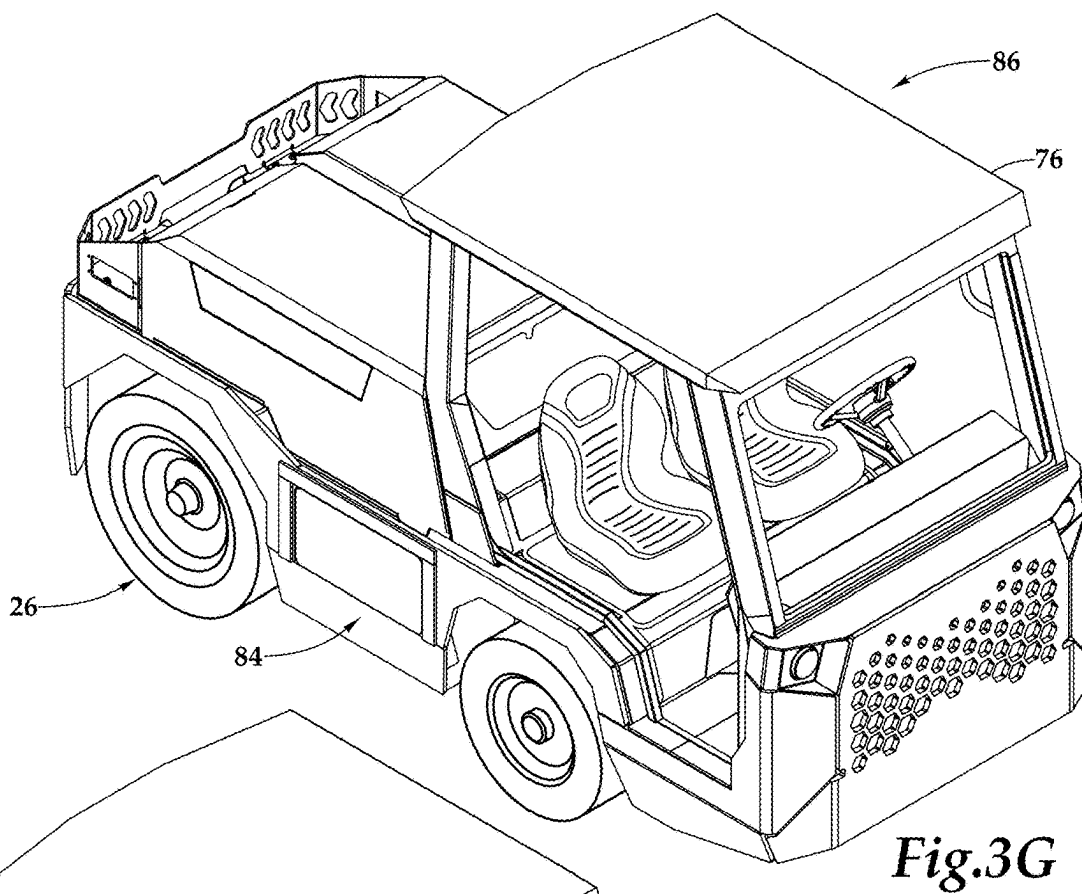


Fig. 2F



COMMON CHASSIS FOR GROUND SUPPORT TRACTORS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application is a continuation of co-pending application Ser. No. 18/802,315, filed Aug. 13, 2024, which is a continuation of application Ser. No. 18/244,747, filed Sep. 11, 2023, now U.S. Pat. No. 12,091,098 B1, the entire contents of each is hereby incorporated by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0002] The present disclosure relates, in general, to chassis for ground support tractors and, in particular, to a common chassis for a ground support tractor that has a cab forward configuration in which the seat assembly is positioned forward of the battery system and a cab aft configuration in which the seat assembly is positioned aft of the battery system.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Ground support tractors, also known as airport tugs or aircraft tugs, are designed to transport and handle diverse types of loads at airports. For example, certain ground support tractors are used to move and tow aircraft on the ground. These ground support tractors are designed to maneuver aircraft safely and efficiently in and out of gates, hangars, runways and other areas of the airport. Such ground support tractors are essential for tasks such as pushing aircraft back from the gate, positioning aircraft for departure and towing aircraft to maintenance or storage areas. As such, these ground support tractors ensure that aircraft are properly positioned and ready for takeoff or maintenance, contributing to the smooth operation of the airport. Other ground support tractors are equipped with specialized attachments, such as cargo loaders or baggage carts that allow them to efficiently move luggage, cargo containers and other types of freight between different areas of the airport, such as the terminal, the cargo hold of an aircraft and airport storage facilities. As such, these ground support tractors help streamline the process of loading, transporting and unloading cargo and baggage.

[0004] To minimize delivery times, ground support tractor manufacturers may prefabricate certain subassemblies in anticipation of orders. For example, a manufacturer may gain efficiencies by preassembling the wheeled chassis of their ground support tractors. Due to national standards and customer preferences, however, it has been found that a variety of such wheeled chassis must be maintained in inventory as some customers desire the cab toward the front of the vehicle, in a cab forward configuration, while other customers desire the cab toward the rear of the vehicle, in a cab aft configuration. For manufacturers, having to prefabricate multiple chassis variants not only requires added warehouse space but also necessitates increased capital investment.

SUMMARY

[0005] In a first aspect, the present disclosure is directed to a ground support tractor having cab forward and cab aft configurations. The ground support tractor includes a common chassis that has a forward mounting location and an aft

mounting location. A seat assembly, a battery system and a plurality of body panels are coupled to the common chassis. In the cab forward configuration, the seat assembly is coupled to the forward mounting location, the battery system is coupled to the aft mounting location and the body panels are positioned in a cab forward orientation. In the cab aft configuration, the seat assembly is coupled to the aft mounting location, the battery system is coupled to the forward mounting location and the body panels are positioned in a cab aft orientation.

[0006] In certain embodiments, the seat assembly may be higher in the cab aft configuration than in the cab forward configuration. In some embodiments, an operator tub may be coupled to the common chassis. In such embodiments, in the cab forward configuration, the operator tub may be coupled to the forward mounting location and, in the cab aft configuration, the operator tub may be coupled to the aft mounting location. In certain embodiments, the operator tub may be a common operator tub. In some embodiments, the seat assembly may be coupled to the operator tub. In certain embodiments, a dash frame may be coupled to the operator tub. In some embodiments, the dash frame may be a common dash frame. In certain embodiments, in the cab forward configuration, a forward frame extension may be coupled to the common chassis. In such embodiments, the operator tub may be coupled to the forward frame extension.

[0007] In some embodiments, the common chassis may include a frame with first and second forward wheel wells coupled thereto and with first and second aft wheel wells coupled thereto. In such embodiments, the forward mounting location may be positioned above the first and second forward wheel wells and the aft mounting location may be positioned above the first and second aft wheel wells. In certain embodiments, in the cab forward configuration, the seat assembly may be positioned above the first and second forward wheel wells and, in the cab aft configuration, the seat assembly may be positioned above the first and second aft wheel wells. In some embodiments, in the cab forward configuration, the battery system may be positioned above the first and second aft wheel wells and, in the cab aft configuration, the battery system may be positioned above the first and second forward wheel wells. In certain embodiments, first and second steering control wheels may be respectively positioned within the first and second forward wheel wells. In addition, first and second drive wheels may be respectively positioned within the first and second aft wheel wells. In such embodiments, in the cab forward configuration, the seat assembly may be positioned above the first and second steering control wheels and, in the cab aft configuration, the seat assembly may be positioned above the first and second drive wheels. In some embodiments, in the cab forward configuration, the battery system may be positioned above the first and second drive wheels and, in the cab aft configuration, the battery system may be positioned above the first and second steering control wheels.

[0008] In certain embodiments, the seat assembly may be a common seat assembly. In some embodiments, the battery system may be a common battery system. In certain embodiments, the plurality of body panels may include at least one common body panel and at least some body panels that are not common to the cab forward configuration and the cab aft configuration. In some embodiments, a drivetrain may be coupled to the common chassis such that, in the cab forward configuration, the battery system is positioned above the

drivetrain and, in the cab aft configuration, the battery system is positioned forward of the drivetrain.

[0009] In a second aspect, the present disclosure is directed to a ground support tractor that has cab forward and cab aft configurations. The ground support tractor includes a common chassis formed from a frame with first and second forward wheel wells coupled thereto and with first and second aft wheel wells coupled thereto. The common chassis has a forward mounting location positioned above the first and second forward wheel wells and an aft mounting location positioned above the first and second aft wheel wells. A common seat assembly and a common battery system are coupled to the common chassis. First and second steering control wheels are respectively positioned within the first and second forward wheel wells. First and second drive wheels are respectively positioned within the first and second aft wheel wells. In the cab forward configuration, the common seat assembly is coupled to the forward mounting location and the common battery system is coupled to aft mounting location. In the cab aft configuration, the common seat assembly is coupled to the aft mounting location and the common battery system coupled to forward mounting location.

[0010] In certain embodiments, a common operator tub may be coupled to the common chassis with a common dash frame coupled to the common operator tub. In such embodiments, in the cab forward configuration, the common operator tub may be coupled to the forward mounting location and, in the cab aft configuration, the common operator tub may be coupled to the aft mounting location. In some embodiments, a common drivetrain may be coupled to the common chassis such that, in the cab forward configuration, the common battery system is positioned above the common drivetrain and, in the cab aft configuration, the common battery system is positioned forward of the common drivetrain.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] For a more complete understanding of the features and advantages of the present disclosure, reference is now made to the detailed description along with the accompanying figures in which corresponding numerals in the different figures refer to corresponding parts and in which:

[0012] FIG. 1 is a schematic illustration of a ground support tractor having a common chassis that is towing a cargo container in accordance with embodiments of the present disclosure;

[0013] FIGS. 2A-2G are sequential isometric views of a ground support tractor having a common chassis in a cab aft configuration that is depicted in various states of assembly in accordance with embodiments of the present disclosure; and

[0014] FIGS. 3A-3G are sequential isometric views of a ground support tractor having a common chassis in a cab forward configuration that is depicted in various states of assembly in accordance with embodiments of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0015] While the making and using of various embodiments of the present disclosure are discussed in detail below, it should be appreciated that the present disclosure provides many applicable inventive concepts, which can be embodied

in a wide variety of specific contexts. The specific embodiments discussed herein are merely illustrative and do not delimit the scope of the present disclosure. In the interest of clarity, all features of an actual implementation may not be described in this specification. It will of course be appreciated that in the development of any such actual embodiment, numerous implementation-specific decisions must be made to achieve the developer's specific goals, such as compliance with system-related and business-related constraints, which will vary from one implementation to another. Moreover, it will be appreciated that such a development effort might be complex and time-consuming but would nevertheless be a routine undertaking for those of ordinary skill in the art having the benefit of this disclosure.

[0016] In the specification, reference may be made to the spatial relationships between various components and to the spatial orientation of various aspects of components as the devices are depicted in the attached drawings. However, as will be recognized by those skilled in the art after a complete reading of the present disclosure, the devices, members, apparatuses, and the like described herein may be positioned in any desired orientation. Thus, the use of terms such as "above," "below," "upper," "lower" or other like terms to describe a spatial relationship between various components or to describe the spatial orientation of aspects of such components should be understood to describe a relative relationship between the components or a spatial orientation of aspects of such components, respectively, as the devices described herein may be oriented in any desired direction. As used herein, the term "coupled" may include direct or indirect coupling by any means, including by mere contact or by moving and/or non-moving mechanical connections.

[0017] Referring to FIG. 1 in the drawings, a land vehicle depicted as a ground support tractor is schematically illustrated and generally designated 10. In the illustrated embodiment, ground support tractor 10 is towing a load depicted as a cargo container 12 at an airport, such as between the terminal and a cargo hold of an aircraft. Ground support tractor 10 is a wheeled vehicle that includes a pair of front steering control wheels 14a, 14b (see also FIG. 3A) and a pair of aft drive wheels 16a, 16b. Front steering control wheels 14a, 14b of ground support tractor 10 are respectively positioned within front wheel wells 18a, 18b which are sized to allow rotation and turning of front steering control wheels 14a, 14b therein to control the direction of travel of ground support tractor 10 when ground support tractor 10 is moving. Ground support tractor 10 includes a steering system coupled to front steering control wheels 14a, 14b including a steering controller 20 that is operably coupled to front steering control wheels 14a, 14b such that rotation of steering controller 20 causes front steering control wheels 14a, 14b to turn. Aft drive wheels 16a, 16b of ground support tractor 10 are respectively positioned within aft wheel wells 22a, 22b which are sized to allow rotation of aft drive wheels 16a, 16b therein to control the movement of ground support tractor 10.

[0018] Ground support tractor 10 includes motion controllers 24 depicted as pedals for accelerating and stopping ground support tractor 10. The accelerator pedal is operably coupled to a powertrain of ground support tractor 10 that provides torque to aft drive wheels 16a, 16b. The brake pedal is operably coupled to a brake system that is coupled to front steering control wheels 14a, 14b and/or aft drive wheels 16a, 16b to stop the motion of ground support tractor

10. In the illustrated embodiment, the vehicle controls are depicted on the left side of ground support tractor **10** such that ground support tractor **10** is configured to have the driver on the left side of the vehicle, thus defining the left side of ground support tractor **10** as the driver side and the right side of ground support tractor **10** as the passenger side. In other embodiments, the vehicle controls may be positioned on the right side of a ground support tractor.

[0019] Structural support for ground support tractor **10** includes a chassis, depicted as wheeled chassis **26**, on or around which the various components of ground support tractor **10** are assembled. In the illustrated embodiment, ground support tractor **10** has been assembled in a cab forward configuration wherein a seat assembly **28** is coupled to wheeled chassis **26** in a forward mounting location that is above front wheel wells **18a**, **18b** and front steering control wheels **14a**, **14b**, a battery system **30** is coupled to wheeled chassis **26** in an aft mounting location that is above aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b** and aft drive wheels **16a**, **16b**, and body panels **32** of ground support tractor **10** are positioned in a cab forward orientation. As discussed herein, ground support tractor **10** can alternatively be assembled in a cab aft configuration wherein seat assembly **28** is coupled to wheeled chassis **26** in the aft mounting location that is above aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b** and aft drive wheels **16a**, **16b**, battery system **30** is coupled to wheeled chassis **26** in the forward mounting location that is above front wheel wells **18a**, **18b** and front steering control wheels **14a**, **14b** and body panels **32** of ground support tractor **10** are positioned in a cab aft orientation. In the illustrated embodiments, ground support tractor **10** includes a cabin **34** having a roof **36** that provides protection for the operators of ground support tractor **10** and the components within cabin **34**.

[0020] The present embodiments teach a wheeled chassis that is common to a ground support tractor having a cab forward orientation and a ground support tractor having a cab aft orientation. Wheeled chassis **26** may accordingly be referred to as a common chassis or a common wheeled chassis as it can be preassembled for use in either a cab forward configuration or a cab aft configuration of a ground support tractor. The present embodiments therefore provide a manufacturer with efficiency gains, reduced warehouse requirements and lower capital investments as only a single version of the wheeled chassis needs to be prefabricated in anticipation of orders, even when some customers desire ground support tractors in the cab forward configuration while other customers desire ground support tractors in the cab aft configuration.

[0021] Referring next to FIG. 2A of the drawings, a common wheeled chassis **26** will now be described in greater detail. Common wheeled chassis **26** is formed of a plurality of structural members that are interconnected by welds, bolts and/or other suitable fastening means. The structural members include a frame assembly **40** and a plurality of plate members **42** comprised of metal or metal alloy, such as steel or aluminum. Frame assembly **40** includes a left beam **40a**, a right beam **40b**, a front mounting rail **40c**, a front suspension mount **40d**, a motor mount **40e**, an aft suspension mount **40f** and an aft hitch plate **40g**. Plate members **42** form front wheel wells **18a**, **18b** and aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b** each of which is coupled to frame assembly **40**. A front suspension **44**, depicted as leaf springs, is mounted between front mounting rail **40c** and a front suspension mount **40d** with a steering rack **46** coupled to

front suspension **44**. A rear suspension **48**, depicted as leaf springs, is coupled between aft suspension mount **40f** and an aft hitch plate **40g**. In the illustrated embodiment, a drivetrain **50**, depicted as including an electric motor **50a** and a transaxle **50b**, is coupled between motor mount **40e** and rear suspension **48**. Transaxle **50b** is operably coupled to the drive axles that provide torque to aft drive wheels **16a**, **16b**.

[0022] In the illustrated embodiment, the generally horizontally oriented upper plates of front wheel wells **18a**, **18b** together form a forward mounting location **52** of common wheeled chassis **26**. Likewise, the generally horizontally oriented upper plates of aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b** together form an aft mounting location **54** of common wheeled chassis **26**. As discussed herein, forward mounting location **52** and aft mounting location **54** are each configured to receive and support multiple different subassemblies thereon such that a ground support tractor constructed using common wheeled chassis **26** may be either a cab forward ground support tractor or a cab aft ground support tractor. According to one embodiment of the present disclosure, a subassembly including frame assembly **40**, front wheel wells **18a**, **18b**, aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b**, front suspension **44**, steering rack **46**, rear suspension **48**, drivetrain **50**, front steering control wheels **14a**, **14b** and aft drive wheels **16a**, **16b** can be prefabricated to form common wheeled chassis **26** which is suitable for use in either a cab forward configuration or a cab aft configuration of a ground support tractor. In other embodiments, a common wheeled chassis may include additional components, different components or fewer components. For example, it may be desirable to prefabricate a common wheeled chassis without one or more of the powertrain components being preinstalled. Once preassembled, common wheeled chassis **26** may be stored as inventory in anticipation of orders for either cab forward or cab aft ground support tractors such that common wheeled chassis **26** is readily available as a starting subassembly for new builds upon request.

[0023] Referring to FIGS. 2A-2G of the drawings, additional components will sequentially be added to common wheeled chassis **26** to build a ground support tractor having a cab aft configuration. Starting with common wheeled chassis **26** of FIG. 2A, an operator tub **60** has been installed between aft mounting location **54** of common wheeled chassis **26** and front wheel wells **18a**, **18b**, as best seen in FIG. 2B. Operator tub **60** is preferably a single integral plate member but could alternatively be formed from multiple plate sections that are coupled together or separately coupled to common wheeled chassis **26**. Operator tub **60** is comprised of metal or metal alloy, such as steel or aluminum. In the illustrated embodiment, operator tub **60** include a generally horizontally extending aft plate **60a**, a cabin floor **60b** and a generally vertically extending forward plate **60c**. Aft plate **60a** is coupled to aft mounting location **54** at the upper plates of aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b** using bolts or other suitable fastening means. Forward mounting rails **62a**, **62b** are respectively coupled to aft portions of front wheel wells **18a**, **18b** via mounting brackets **64a**, **64b**. A dash frame **66** is coupled forward plate **60c** using bolts or other suitable fastening means. A forward cover plate **68** has been installed between left and right beams **40a**, **40b** above front suspension **44**.

[0024] Referring to FIG. 2C of the drawings, a battery system **70** has been installed at forward mounting location **52** of common wheeled chassis **26**. Battery system **70**

including battery packs **70a**, **70b** that are mounted on a battery rack **70c**. In the illustrated embodiment, battery packs **70a**, **70b** are operably coupled to drivetrain **50** to form the powertrain of the ground support tractor. In other embodiments, the powertrain of a ground support tractor may include an internal combustion engine and a transmission. Battery packs **70a**, **70b** provide the energy necessary to power electric motor **50a** and thus the movement of the ground support tractor as well as the various electronic components thereof. Battery rack **70c** is coupled to forward mounting location **52** at the upper plates of forward wheel wells **18a**, **18b** using bolts or other suitable fastening means to secure battery packs **70a**, **70b** to wheeled chassis **26** above front wheel wells **18a**, **18b** and front steering control wheels **14a**, **14b**.

[0025] Referring to FIG. 2D of the drawings, a seat assembly **72** has been installed at aft mounting location **54** of common wheeled chassis **26**. Seat assembly **72** including a driver seat **72a**, a passenger seat **72b** and a seat frame **72c**. In the illustrated embodiments, seat frame **72c** is coupled to aft plate **60a** of operator tub **60** and/or the upper plates of aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b** using bolts or other suitable fastening means to secure driver seat **72a** and passenger seat **72b** to common wheeled chassis **26** above aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b** and aft drive wheels **16a**, **16b**. In other embodiment, seat assembly **72** may include a driver seat **72a** and a passenger seat **72b** that are individually coupled to aft plate **60a** of operator tub **60** and/or the upper plates of aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b**.

[0026] Referring to FIG. 2E of the drawings, details of body panels **74** positioned in a cab aft orientation will now be described. In the illustrated embodiments, body panels **74** include a front bumper **74a**, a headlight bezel **74b**, a right front fender **74c**, a left front fender (not visible), a hood **74d**, a right side skirt **74e**, a left side skirt (not visible), a right cab step **74f**, a left cab step (not visible), a right rear fender **74g**, a left rear fender **74h**, a rear bumper **74i** and a service access panel **74j**. Each of body panels **74** is preferably a single integral plate member but could alternatively be formed from multiple plate sections that are coupled together or separately coupled to common wheeled chassis **26**. As another alternative, more than one of the recited body panels **74** could be formed as a single integral plate member. Body panel **74** are comprised of metal or metal alloy, such as steel or aluminum. As best seen in FIG. 2F of the drawings, body panels **74** are coupled to common wheeled chassis **26** using bolts or other suitable fastening means to provide an outer skin for the ground support tractor that protects the various operating components of the ground support tractor disposed therein. As best seen in FIG. 2G of the drawings, a cabin **76** has been installed on common wheeled chassis **26** which completes the assembly of a ground support tractor **78** having a cab aft configuration.

[0027] Even though the assembly of ground support tractor **78** having a cab aft configuration has been described and depicted as progressing in a certain sequence, it should be understood by those having ordinary skill in the art that the subassemblies of a ground support tractor may be assembled in a variety of sequences. For example, even though FIGS. 2B-2C depict installation of operator tub **60** prior to battery system **70**, it should be understood by those having ordinary skill in the art that the battery system of ground support tractor could alternatively be installed prior to installation of the operator tub. Likewise, even though FIGS. 2D-2F depict

installation of seat assembly **72** prior to body panels **74**, it should be understood by those having ordinary skill in the art that the body panels of ground support tractor could alternatively be installed prior to installation of the seat assembly. Accordingly, it is to be understood by those having ordinary skill in the art that the assembly sequences depicted and described herein are merely for illustrative purposes and are not intended to define an actual assembly process.

[0028] Referring to FIGS. 3A-3G of the drawings, components will sequentially be added to common wheeled chassis **26** to build a ground support tractor having a cab forward configuration. As discussed herein, a subassembly including frame assembly **40**, front wheel wells **18a**, **18b**, aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b**, front suspension **44**, steering rack **46**, rear suspension **48**, drivetrain **50**, front steering control wheels **14a**, **14b** and aft drive wheels **16a**, **16b** can be prefabricated to form common wheeled chassis **26** which is suitable for use in a cab forward configuration of a ground support tractor. Referring to FIG. 3A of the drawings, a front frame extension **40h** has been installed on common wheeled chassis **26**. Referring to FIG. 3B of the drawings, operator tub **60** has been installed between forward mounting location **52** of common wheeled chassis **26** and front frame extension **40h**. As operator tub **60** may be installed for the cab forward configuration or the cab aft configuration of a ground support tractor, operator tub **60** may be referred to as a common operator tub. Aft plate **60a** of operator tub **60** is coupled to forward mounting location **52** at the upper plates of forward wheel wells **18a**, **18b** using bolts or other suitable fastening means. Forward mounting rails **62a**, **62b** of operator tub **60** are coupled to front frame extension **40h**. A dash frame **66** is coupled forward plate **60c** using bolts or other suitable fastening means. As dash frame **66** may be installed for the cab forward configuration or the cab aft configuration of a ground support tractor, dash frame **66** may be referred to as a common dash frame.

[0029] Referring to FIG. 3C of the drawings, battery system **70** has been installed between aft mounting location **54** and frame assembly **40** of common wheeled chassis **26**. More specifically, battery rack **70c** is coupled to aft mounting location **54** at the upper plates of aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b** and is coupled to frame assembly **40** via pillars **80a**, **80b** using bolts or other suitable fastening means to secure battery packs **70a**, **70b** to wheeled chassis **26** above aft wheel wells **22a**, **22b** and aft drive wheels **16a**, **16b**. As battery system **70** may be installed for the cab forward configuration or the cab aft configuration of a ground support tractor, battery system **70** may be referred to as a common battery system. Referring to FIG. 3D of the drawings, seat assembly **72** has been installed at forward mounting location **52** of common wheeled chassis **26**. In the illustrated embodiments, seat frame **72c** is coupled to aft plate **60a** of operator tub **60** and/or the upper plates of forward wheel wells **18a**, **18b** using bolts or other suitable fastening means to secure driver seat **72a** and passenger seat **72b** to common wheeled chassis **26** above front wheel wells **18a**, **18b** and front steering control wheels **14a**, **14b**. As seat assembly **72** may be installed for the cab forward configuration or the cab aft configuration of a ground support tractor, seat assembly **72** may be referred to as a common seat assembly.

[0030] Referring to FIG. 3E of the drawings, details of body panels **84** positioned in a cab forward orientation will

now be described. In the illustrated embodiments, body panels **84** include a front bumper **84a**, a headlight bezel **84b**, a right front quarter panel **84c**, a left front quarter panel **84d**, a right side panel **84e**, a left side panel **84f**, a right side skirt **84g**, a left side skirt **84h**, a battery cover **84i**, a rear bumper **84j** and a rear storage rail **84k**. Each of body panels **84** is preferably a single integral plate member but could alternatively be formed from multiple plate sections that are coupled together or separately coupled to common wheeled chassis **26**. As another alternative, more than one of the recited body panels **84** could be formed as a single integral plate member. Body panel **84** are comprised of metal or metal alloy, such as steel or aluminum. Body panels **84** and body panels **74** share some common members such the right side skirts, the left side skirts and the rear bumpers. As these body panels may be installed for the cab forward configuration or the cab aft configuration of a ground support tractor, these body panels may be referred to as common body panels. Other body panels **84** are unique to the cab forward orientation such as front bumper **84a**, quarter panels **84c**, **84d**, side panels **84e**, **84f**, battery cover **84i** and rear storage rail **84k**. Likewise, certain body panels **74** are unique to the cab aft orientation such as front bumper **74a**, the front fenders, hood **74d**, the cab steps, rear fenders **74g**, **74h** and service access panel **74j**. As best seen in FIG. 3F of the drawings, body panels **84** are coupled to common wheeled chassis **26** using bolts or other suitable fastening means to provide an outer skin for the ground support tractor that protects the various operating components of the ground support tractor disposed therein. As best seen in FIG. 3G of the drawings, a cabin **76** has been installed on common wheeled chassis **26** which completes the assembly of ground support tractor **86** having a cab aft configuration. As cabin **76** may be installed for the cab forward configuration or the cab aft configuration of a ground support tractor, cabin **76** may be referred to as a common cabin.

[0031] The foregoing description of embodiments of the disclosure has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the disclosure to the precise form disclosed, and modifications and variations are possible in light of the above teachings or may be acquired from practice of the disclosure. The embodiments were chosen and described in order to explain the principals of the disclosure and its practical application to enable one skilled in the art to utilize the disclosure in various embodiments and with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. Other substitutions, modifications, changes and omissions may be made in the design, operating conditions and arrangement of the embodiments without departing from the scope of the present disclosure. Such modifications and combinations of the illustrative embodiments as well as other embodiments will be apparent to persons skilled in the art upon reference to the description. It is, therefore, intended that the appended claims encompass any such modifications or embodiments.

What is claimed is:

1. A ground support tractor having cab forward and cab aft configurations, the ground support tractor comprising:

a common chassis having a forward mounting location and an aft mounting location; and

an operator tub coupled to the common chassis;

wherein, in the cab forward configuration, the operator tub is coupled to the forward mounting location; and

wherein, in the cab aft configuration, the operator tub is coupled to the aft mounting location.

2. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 1 wherein, the operator tub is a common operator tub.

3. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 1 further comprising a battery system coupled to the common chassis; wherein, in the cab forward configuration, the operator tub is positioned forward of the battery system; and wherein, in the cab aft configuration, the operator tub is positioned aft of the battery system.

4. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 3 wherein, in the cab forward configuration, the battery system is coupled to the aft mounting location; and wherein, in the cab aft configuration, the battery system is coupled to the forward mounting location.

5. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 3 wherein, the battery system is a common battery system.

6. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 1 further comprising a dash frame coupled to the operator tub.

7. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 6 wherein, the dash frame is a common dash frame.

8. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 1 further comprising a cabin coupled to the common chassis and positioned above the operator tub.

9. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 8 wherein, the cabin is a common cabin.

10. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 1 further comprising a seat assembly coupled to the operator tub.

11. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 10 wherein, the seat assembly is a common seat assembly.

12. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 1 further comprising first and second drive wheels coupled to the common chassis;

wherein, in the cab forward configuration, the operator tub is positioned forward of the first and second drive wheels; and

wherein, in the cab aft configuration, the operator tub is positioned at least partially above the first and second drive wheels.

13. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 12 wherein, the common chassis further comprises first and second aft wheel wells; and

wherein, the first and second drive wheels are respectively positioned within the first and second aft wheel wells.

14. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 12 further comprising a seat assembly coupled to the operator tub;

wherein, in the cab forward configuration, the seat assembly is positioned forward of the first and second drive wheels; and

wherein, in the cab aft configuration, the seat assembly is positioned above the first and second drive wheels.

15. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 1 further comprising first and second steering control wheels coupled to the common chassis;

wherein, in the cab forward configuration, the operator tub is positioned at least partially above the first and second steering control wheels; and

wherein, in the cab aft configuration, the operator tub is positioned aft of the first and second steering control wheels.

16. The ground support tractor as recited in claim 15 wherein, the common chassis further comprises first and second forward wheel wells; and

wherein, the first and second steering control wheels are respectively positioned within the first and second forward wheel wells.

17. The ground support tractor as recited in claim **15** further comprising a seat assembly coupled to the operator tub;

wherein, in the cab forward configuration, the seat assembly is positioned above the first and second steering control wheels; and

wherein, in the cab aft configuration, the seat assembly is positioned aft of the first and second steering control wheels.

18. A ground support tractor having cab forward and cab aft configurations, the ground support tractor comprising:

a common chassis including a frame with first and second forward wheel wells coupled thereto and with first and second aft wheel wells coupled thereto, the common chassis having a forward mounting location positioned above the first and second forward wheel wells and an aft mounting location positioned above the first and second aft wheel wells; and

an operator tub coupled to the common chassis;

wherein, in the cab forward configuration, the operator tub is coupled to the forward mounting location and positioned at least partially above the first and second forward wheel wells; and

wherein, in the cab aft configuration, the operator tub is coupled to the aft mounting location and positioned at least partially above the first and second aft wheel wells.

19. The ground support tractor as recited in claim **18** further comprising:

first and second steering control wheels respectively positioned within the first and second forward wheel wells; and

first and second drive wheels respectively positioned within the first and second aft wheel wells.

20. The ground support tractor as recited in claim **19** wherein, in the cab forward configuration, the operator tub is positioned at least partially above the first and second steering control wheels and forward of the first and second drive wheels; and

wherein, in the cab aft configuration, the operator tub is positioned at least partially above the first and second drive wheels and aft of the first and second steering control wheels.

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