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| NetSpeed Gemini  Technical Reference Manual  Version: GEMINI-18.04  Revision: 0.0 |

NetSpeed Gemini Technical Reference Manual

About This Document

This document is written for system designers, system integrators, and programmers who are designing or programming a System-on-Chip (SoC) using NetSpeed System’s Gemini Cache Coherent Interconnect.

Audience

This document is intended for users of NocStudio:

* NoC Architects
* NoC Designers
* SoC Architects

Prerequisite

Before proceeding, you should generally understand:

* Basics of Network on Chip technology
* AMBA interconnect standards

Related Documents

The following documents can be used as a reference to this document.

* NetSpeed NocStudio Gemini User Manual
* NetSpeed Gemini IP Integration Spec

Customer Support

For technical support about this product, please contact [support@netspeedsystems.com](mailto:support@netspeedsystems.com)

For general information about NetSpeed products refer to: [www.netspeedsystems.com](http://www.netspeedsystems.com)

Revision History

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# Introduction

## NetSpeed Gemini Overview

NetSpeed Gemini is a cache-coherent, high-performance Network-on-chip (NoC) IP that is used for rapidly designing and analyzing highly efficient and scalable cache-coherent interconnects for a wide variety of SoCs. To quickly produce efficient high-performance cache-coherent NoC IPs, Gemini uses a requirements-driven design approach and an innovative directory-based design. Using Gemini, SoC architects can connect anywhere from 1 to 64 fully cache-coherent CPU clusters, GPUs or other compute units. It also supports 1 to 200 I/O coherent and non-coherent agents. Gemini is built upon following the following fundamental design principles.

### Requirements driven approach

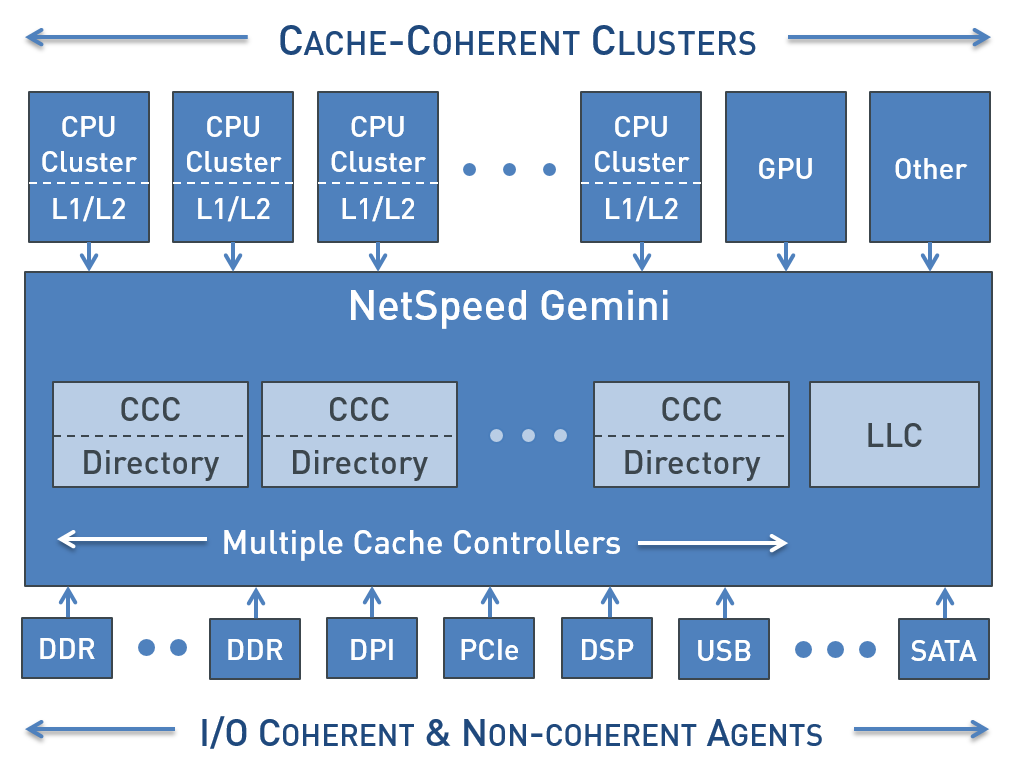
Gemini is based on a highly distributed architecture, where both the interconnect fabric and the coherency components can be scaled independently. Based on system requirements such as cache capacity and total coherent bandwidth, coherency components are added, customized and placed in the interconnect. The fabric itself can be designed and customized based on fine-grained requirements such as total and per-flow system bandwidth and chip layout. Gemini uses an algorithmic directory whose capacity scales linearly with number of caches and limits all unnecessary snoop traffic giving power efficiency and faster responses. Furthermore, the directory is partitioned in several slices and distributed across the fabric to provide unlimited scalability and flexibility. Another unique advantage of Gemini is that it can support both coherent and non-coherent traffic in the same design, which avoids the need to build multiple interconnects and inefficient bridges to connect them. Figure 1 illustrates the logical picture of a Gemini interconnect, where a variety of non-coherent and coherent masters and slaves are interconnected through a fabric which includes a distributed cache coherency directory and last level cache (LLC).

Figure 1: NetSpeed Gemini Overview

### Physically aware latency optimized design

Gemini design is physically aware of the layout of the on-chip system components producing an interconnect topology that is customized for the SoC layout. Being physically aware ensures that wiring congestions does not occur late in the design cycle and appropriate number of buffers and pipeline stages are present at various fabric channels to enable smooth backend design. Furthermore, Gemini’s IP components can be partitioned, distributed and co-located near the coherent masters that typically utilize them, providing improved latency and power efficiency. Latency sensitive traffic can use dedicated connections to reduce arbitration and congestions, and 16 levels of QoS are supported for fine-grained bandwidth allocation and prioritization. Based on the system traffic specification and SoC physical layout, Gemini NoC topology, coherency and fabric components, and their placements are automatically computed using machine-learning and graph theory algorithms to optimize the design for area & power.

## Configurability Options

NetSpeed Gemini provides user configurability and flexibility across multiple design dimensions. In addition to providing flexibility of number of ports, coherency participation, etc., significant configurability is also provided to the architect in defining the cache hierarchy and asymmetric traffic based on the system characteristics such as hit rates. Gemini is configured and optimized using NocStudio - an architecture exploration platform based on machine learning and graph theory algorithms. Using NocStudio, architects can design interconnects with high level specification and tradeoff power, performance and area with real-time feedback on SoC bandwidth and latency, coherency performance etc. from NocStudio SoC performance simulator.

## Interfaces

### Ports and Port Protocols

Since Gemini is an extension of Orion, it supports all of the Orion functionality and port types. This means AXI4, AXI3, AXI-lite, AHB and APB port types can all be added to a Gemini configuration.

In addition to non-coherent port types, Gemini support 3 additional port protocols. These are ACE, ACE-lite, and ACE-lite+DVM.

### ACE

The ACE interface protocol is used for fully cache coherent agents, like a CPU or a coherent GPU. ACE includes read and write channels, and their corresponding response channels. It also has channels for snoops and snoop responses. Finally, it has additional signals called RACK and WACK used as part of the coherency protocol to indicate response arrival.



Figure 2: ACE Port

The figure above shows the ACE port, including the various channels.

Note that the CD channel, which is used for snoop data response, is an optional channel. Gemini allows an ACE port to be configured with or without the CD channel.

### ACE-lite

The second standard port protocol in the coherency space is the ACE-lite port. This port is designed for agents without caches that want to perform reads and writes to the coherent address space. WriteUnique (or WriteLineUnique) allows writes to perform coherent snoops and invalidation/flushes of a cache line before writing to the line. This ensures writes will be seen by cache coherent devices since they’ll have to read the new cache line value from memory. A ReadOnce command reads a copy of a line but goes through the coherency mechanism to make sure that it sees the most recent copy.



Figure 3: ACE-lite

The figure above shows the ACE-lite port interfaces. There is no snoop or snoop response channels, and no RACK or WACK signals.

### ACE-lite+DVM

Unlike the ACE and ACE-lite channels, there is no explicit reference to the ACE-lite+DVM port protocol within the AXI4/ACE specification. This hybrid protocol looks similar to an ACE interface without the CD channel but behaves differently.

This protocol is intended to be used by agents that have no caches but do have a built-in MMU. The MMU-400 or MMU-500 products are examples of this protocol.



Figure 4: ACE-lite+DVM

As shown in the figure, this agent has the typical read and write paths of an ACE-lite agent, IO coherent reads and writes. It also has a snoop and snoop response channel (AC and CR), which are used only for DVM snoops since the agent never keeps a cached copy of a line. Since the DVM protocol does not use a CD bus (it never sends data with the snoop response), it is not included in this interface. It also has no need for the RACK or WACK signaling.

### ACE-lite Converted Bridges

Some components use older non-coherent protocols, like AXI 4. While the components are built as non-coherent, they may want to participate in the coherency protocol using IO coherency. Gemini supports conversion from some of these legacy protocols to ACE-lite. Eligible requests will convert simple reads and writes into ReadOnce and WriteUnique requests.

The following protocols can be converted to ACE-lite:

1. AHB-lite Master
2. AXI 4 Master
3. AXI 3 Master

The conversion hardware is built into the Gemini bridges and can be enabled during NoC construction using NocStudio. A bridge property called *cc\_acelite\_conversion* will convert the bridge to Ace-lite.

Bridges setup for ACE-lite conversion allow both IO-coherent and non-coherent requests to be made. For any address range that does not support coherency, the request will stay as ReadNoSnoop or WriteNoSnoop, with AxDOMAIN set to System Shareable or Non-Shareable, depending on the AxCACHE bits. When AxCACHE[3:2]==2’b00, the request is mapped to System Shareable. Otherwise, it is mapped to Non-Shareable.

For coherency ranges, the AxCACHE bits control whether a request will participate in the coherent protocol. If AxCACHE bits indicate non-cacheable (AxCACHE[3:2]==2’b00), the requests will be sent as WriteNoSnoop and ReadNoSnoop with AxDOMAIN = System Shareable.

If AxCACHE[3:2] indicates a cacheable space, the request will be converted to a ReadOnce or WriteUnique, with AxDOMAIN equal to Outer Shareable.

Note that in the non-converted bridges, these would be sent as Non-Shareable domain and WriteNoSnoop or ReadNoSnoop.

One exception to this conversion is when a request is sent with AxLOCK==1. Since ACE doesn’t support the Exclusive functionality for ACE-lite, this request will be issued as ReadNoSnoop or WriteNoSnoop with either System or Non-Shareable domain.

### Master and Slave ports

The port protocols described above (ACE, ACE-lite, ACE-lite+DVM, and legacy->ACE-lite converted) cannot be used uniformly as master or slave ports. The following table describes the limitations.

Table 1: Coherency Port Protocol Restrictions

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Protocol | Master Port Type | Slave Port Type | Description |
| ACE | Yes | No | ACE port is used by coherent masters. ACE slave interface only exists on interconnect IP, so agents cannot use this as a slave port type. |
| ACE-lite | Yes | Yes | An ACE-lite slave can accept barriers, cache maintenance operations, as well as reads and writes. |
| ACE-lite+DVM | Yes | No | Like the ACE port, only a master can utilize this port protocol. |
| ACE-lite conversion | Yes | No | Only masters can convert to ACE-lite. |