











The Sustainabot circuit board, 29 x 36 x 10 mm, consists of two layers, with parts mounted on both top and bottom sides. These consist of a number of primary components, including a Microchip 8-bit microcontroller (PIC18F26J53) with multiple in-built timing modules, and highly flexible and programmable I/O ports. In addition to the CPU, there is an EEPROM (24AA1025 / 128kB) for storing command data, MEMS accelerometer/magnetometer (LSM303DLHC) for determining compass heading, H-bridge DC motor drivers (DRV8833), digital visible light and infrared, dual light sensor (APDS9300), 3.3V/200 mA buck-boost regulator, and a lithium recharge controller chip (BQ24074RGTR). The CPU is clocked by an external 16 MHz crystal (PLL disabled), drives 3 coloured LEDs for status indication, transfers sensor data to/from MEMS sensors and EEPROM for storage via the I2C protocol, and enables various combinations of motor drive via the two dual-port H-bridge controllers (only 3 of the 4 ports connected in-circuit).

The battery monitor, while not necessary for the operation of the system, was added as an extra feature for the user. It simply consists of two 100 kOhm resistors, connected in-series across the battery terminals, with the centre tap feeding to one of the analogue input ports on the CPU. This is a simple potential divider ($/2$) enabling the overall battery potential to be measured with an ADC on the CPU, by utilising a reference of 3.3V from the board's regulator. The firmware is configured to give the user a warning via the Bluetooth port when the voltage is at, or below, 3.3V, and that a recharge is required to maintain sufficient drive current to the wheel motors.

The Bluetooth module is an HC-05 board, used for transmission/reception of data. This was configured for serial communications at 38400 BAUD; any higher and the bit-error rate would have been too great due to mismatch from the CPU's 16 MHz timing crystal. This board, or any similarly 3.3V powered Bluetooth serial communications board can be used in conjunction with the controller circuit.

Some of the CPU's ports were reconfigured to make use of one of the internal timers, to output sub-microsecond-width pulses at frequencies of 100s of kHz. This, together with the ability to define different pulse-widths for different I/O ports that rapidly switch the H-bridge circuits on/off i.e. vary the 'duty cycle', enabled us to finely control the mean current delivered to each of the two motors, a technique commonly referred to as pulse width modulation (PWM). The H-bridge controllers in the circuit are configured to operate in two different modes. For the chute, this is in a full-on/off mode, while the drive wheels operate under PWM. The advantage of using PWM is that it also allows for compensation of different motor characteristics due to subtle size variations between the motors, in addition to independent drive at different speeds/directions for slow curved turning.

The drive motors we used on this device are 700:1 planetary-drive geared motors, lightweight, and with enough torque to manoeuvre a small robot around a flat surface.

The on-board magnetometer can be used to give the robot a sense of directionality, although, sensing magnetic fields can be prone to confusion due to ferrous material such as metal table legs, under-table support structures, all capable of causing a shift locally in the Earth's magnetic field. This aside, the robot can be instructed to turn in a circle of more than 360 degrees, collecting magnetic data on the two axes parallel to the ground. From this, it is able to determine any hard- or soft-iron offsets and correct for them.