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(54) **LATCHING ASSEMBLY FOR MULTI-FUNCTIONAL TAILGATE DOOR**

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See application file for complete search history.

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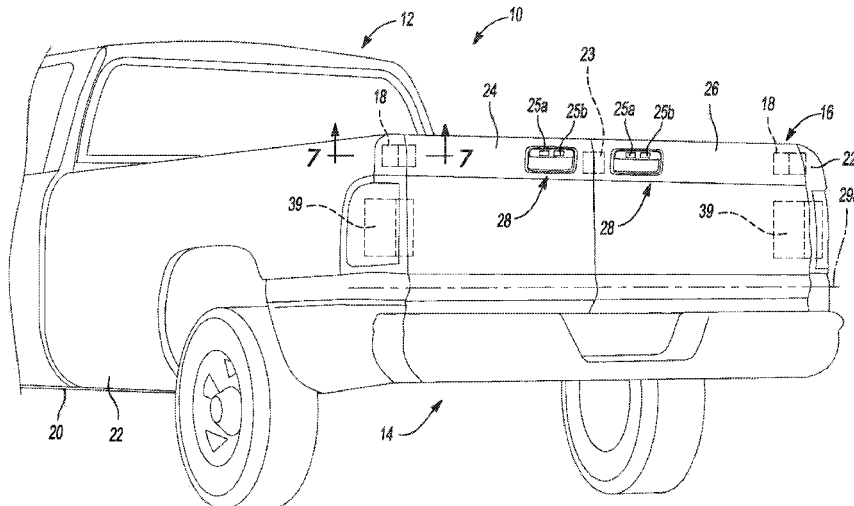
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A vehicle includes a cargo bed, one door, and a latch assembly. The cargo bed includes a plurality of walls. The one door is coupled to the cargo bed and pivotable about a horizontal axis between a closed position and a horizontal open position, and about a vertical axis between the closed position and a vertical open position. The latch assembly includes a striker pin, a latch mechanism, a receiver, and a cam. The striker pin is attached to a respective one of the plurality of walls so as to extend outwardly therefrom. The latch mechanism coupled to the door and selectively latched onto the striker pin. The receiver is coupled to the respective one of the plurality of walls. The cam is coupled to the latch mechanism and the one door. The cam and the receiver cooperate to restrict vertical movement of the one door when the one door is pivotable about the vertical axis.

11 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



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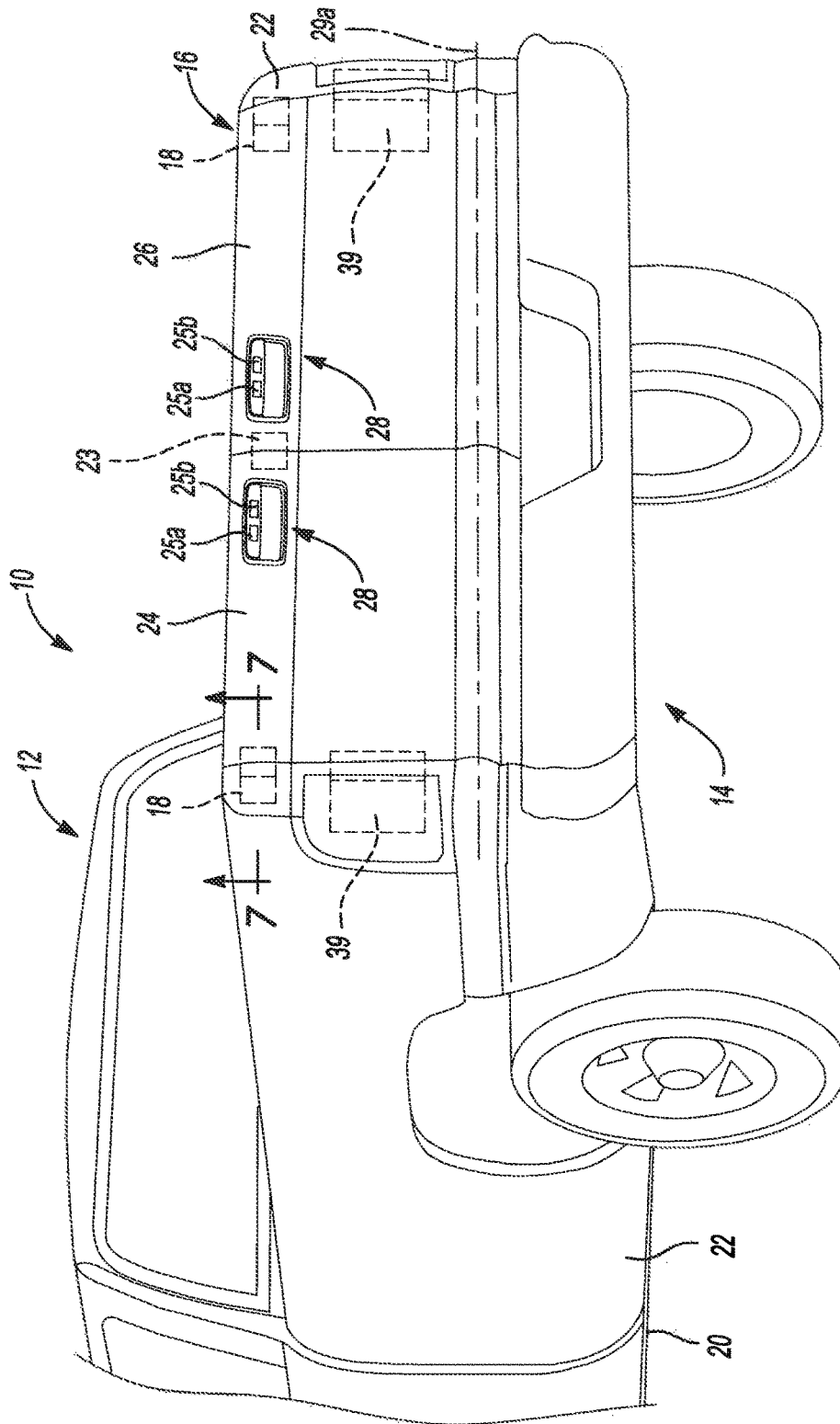
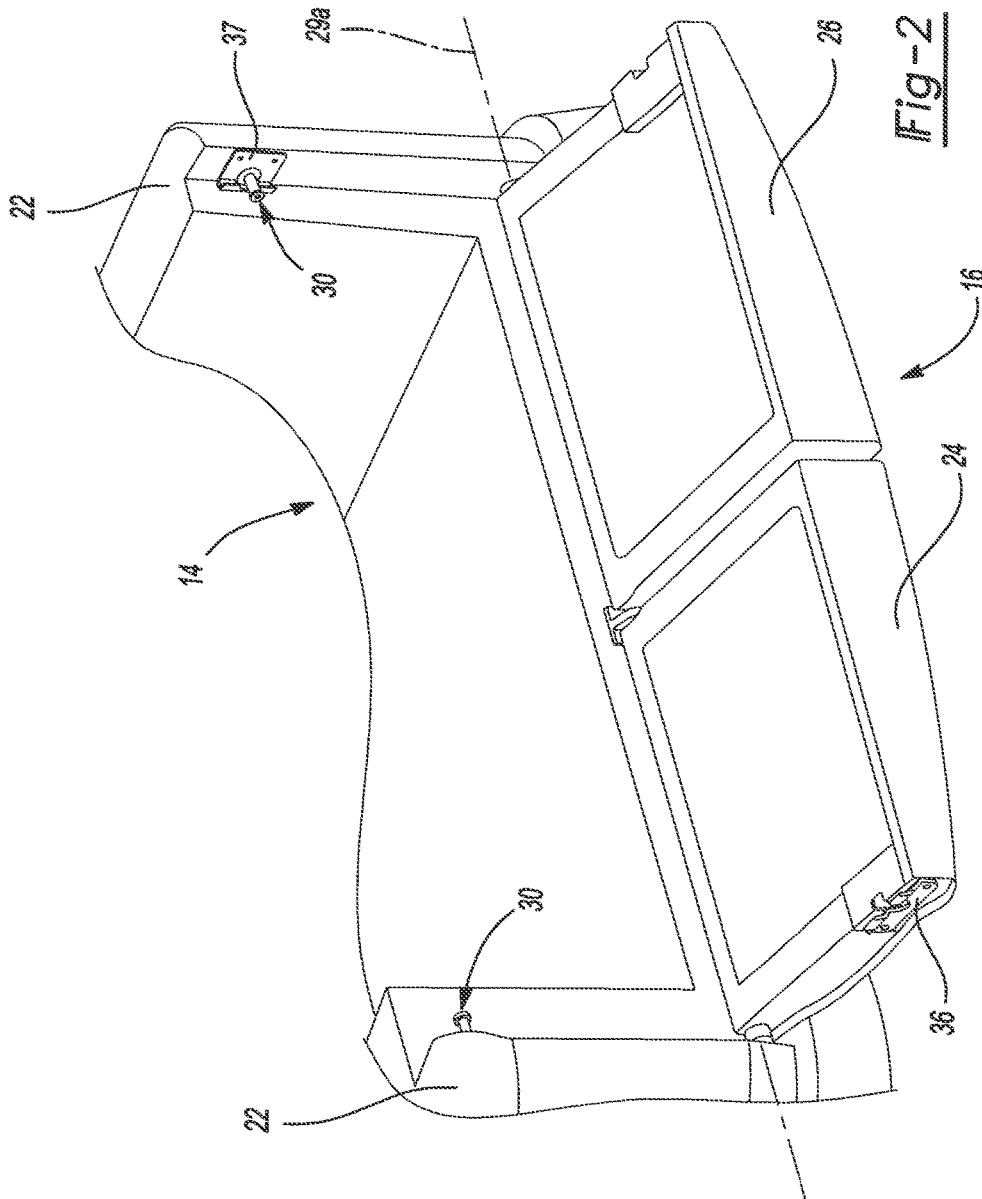


Fig-1



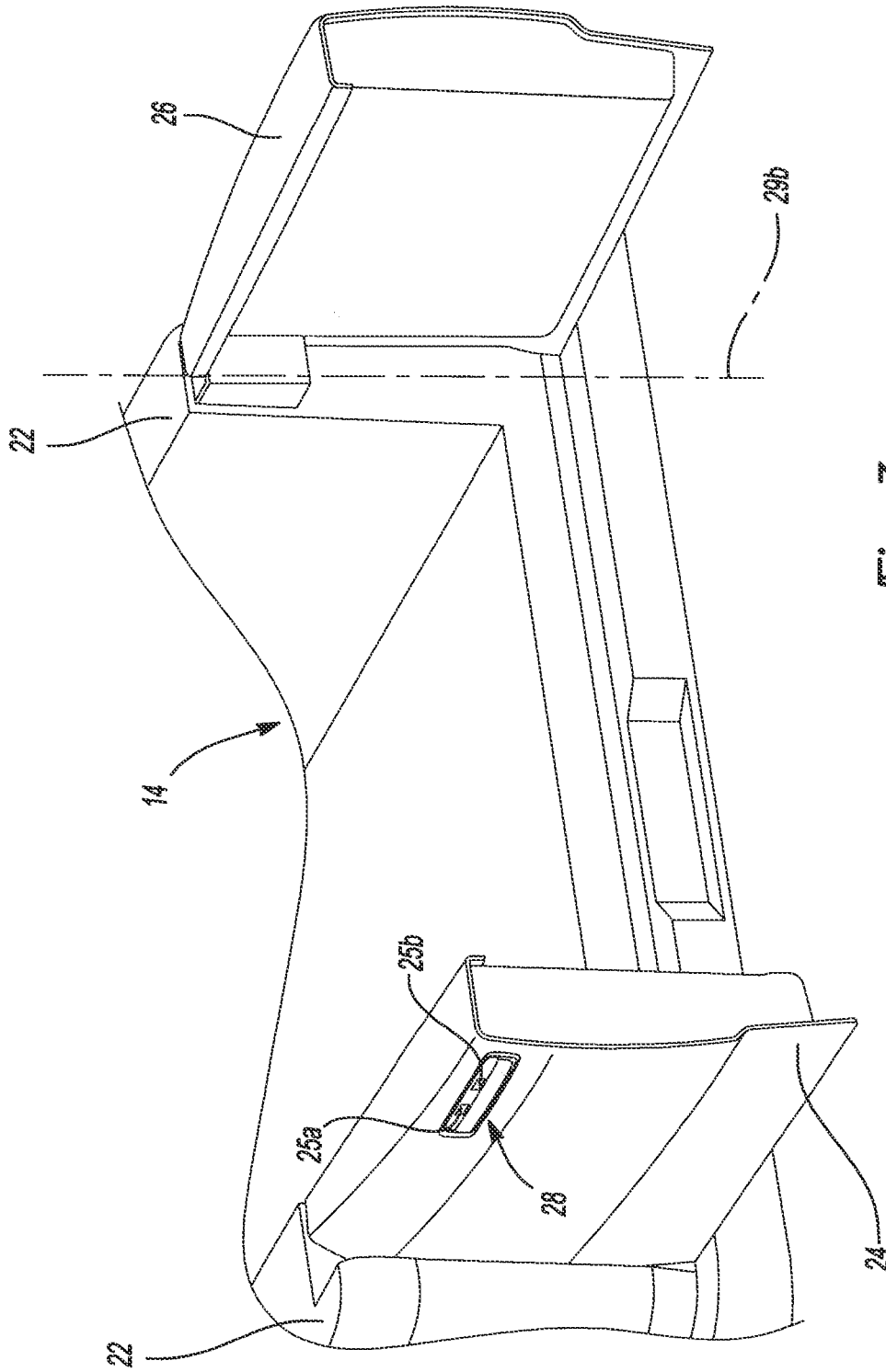


Fig-3

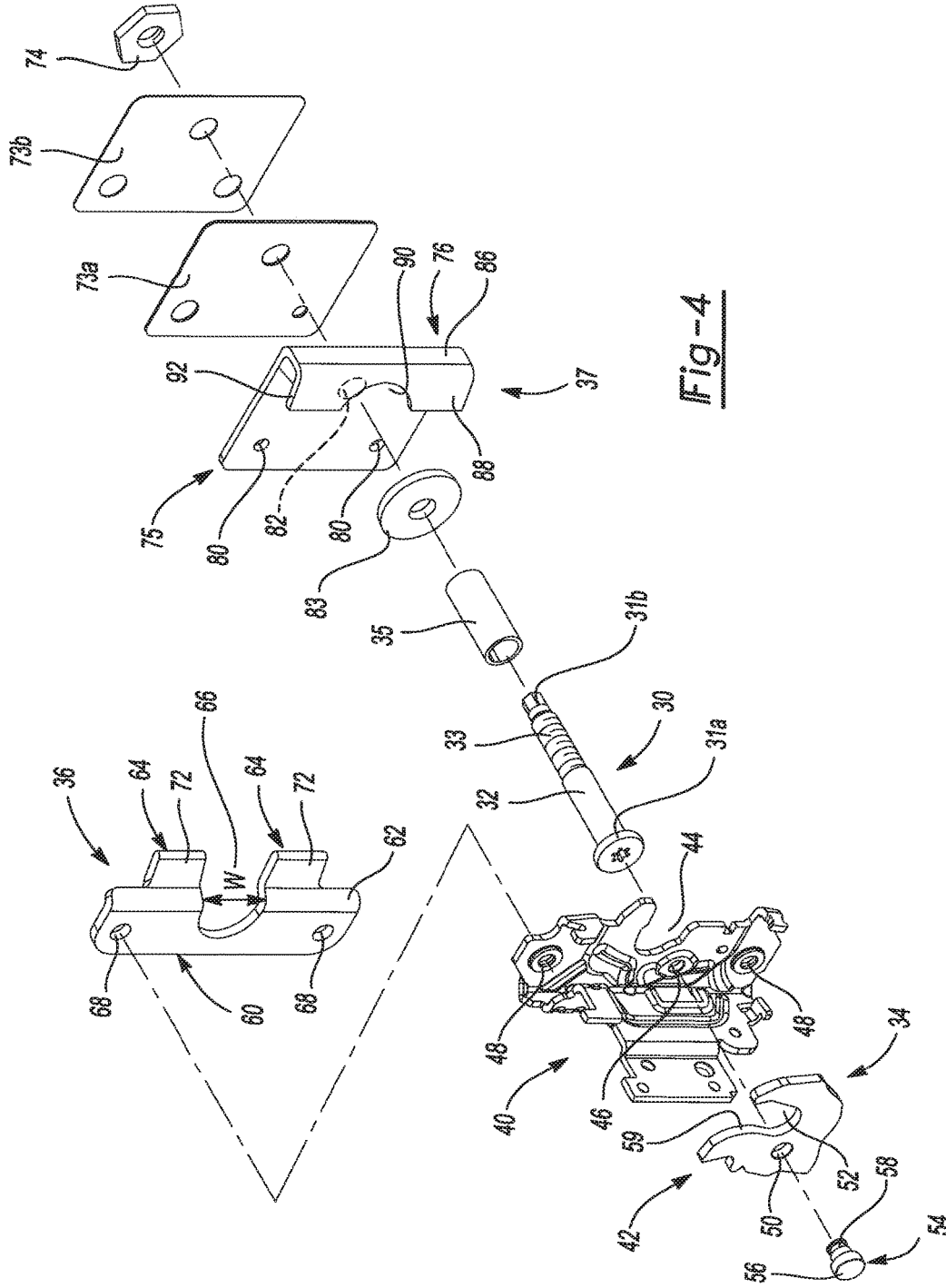


Fig-4

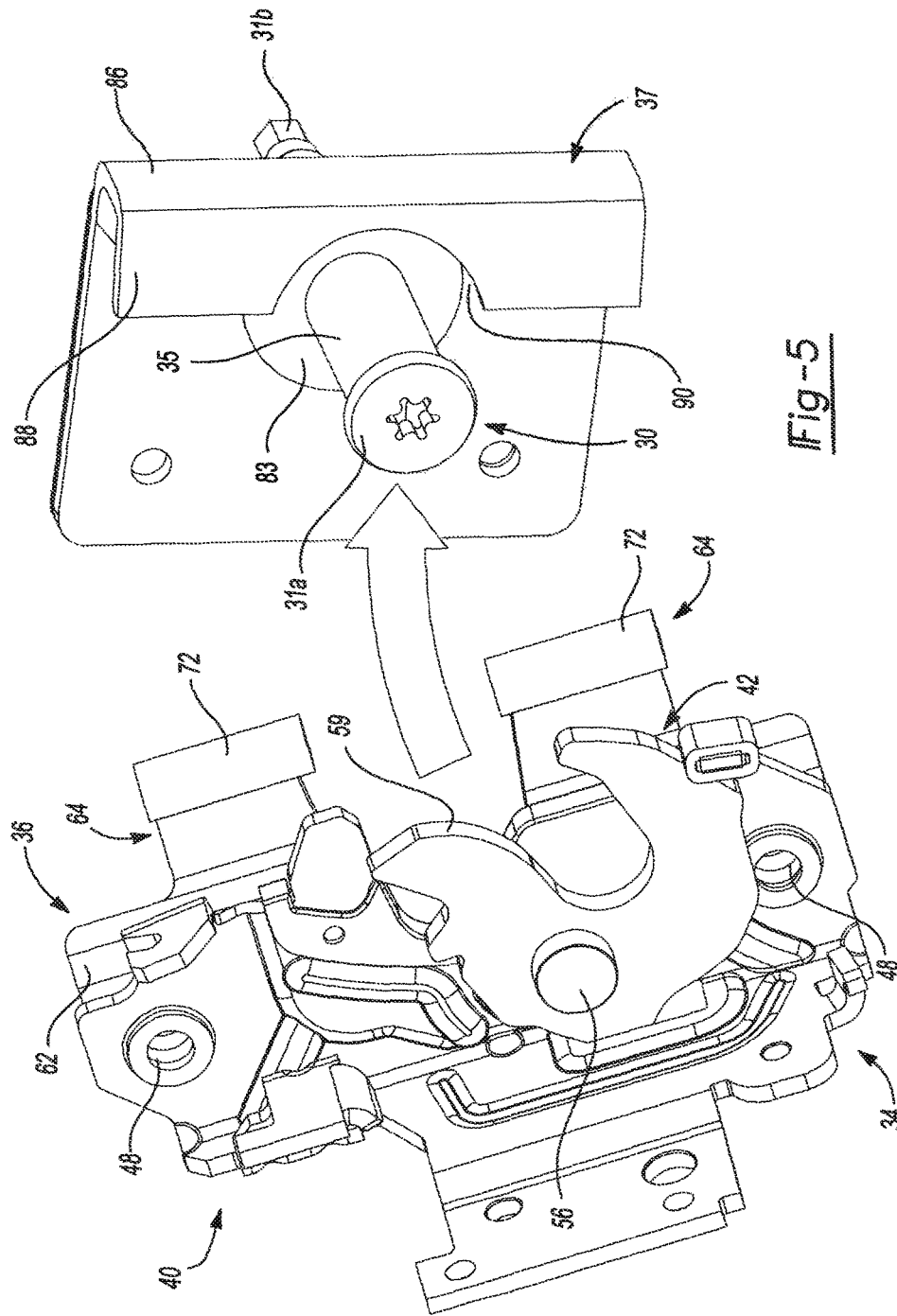


Fig-5

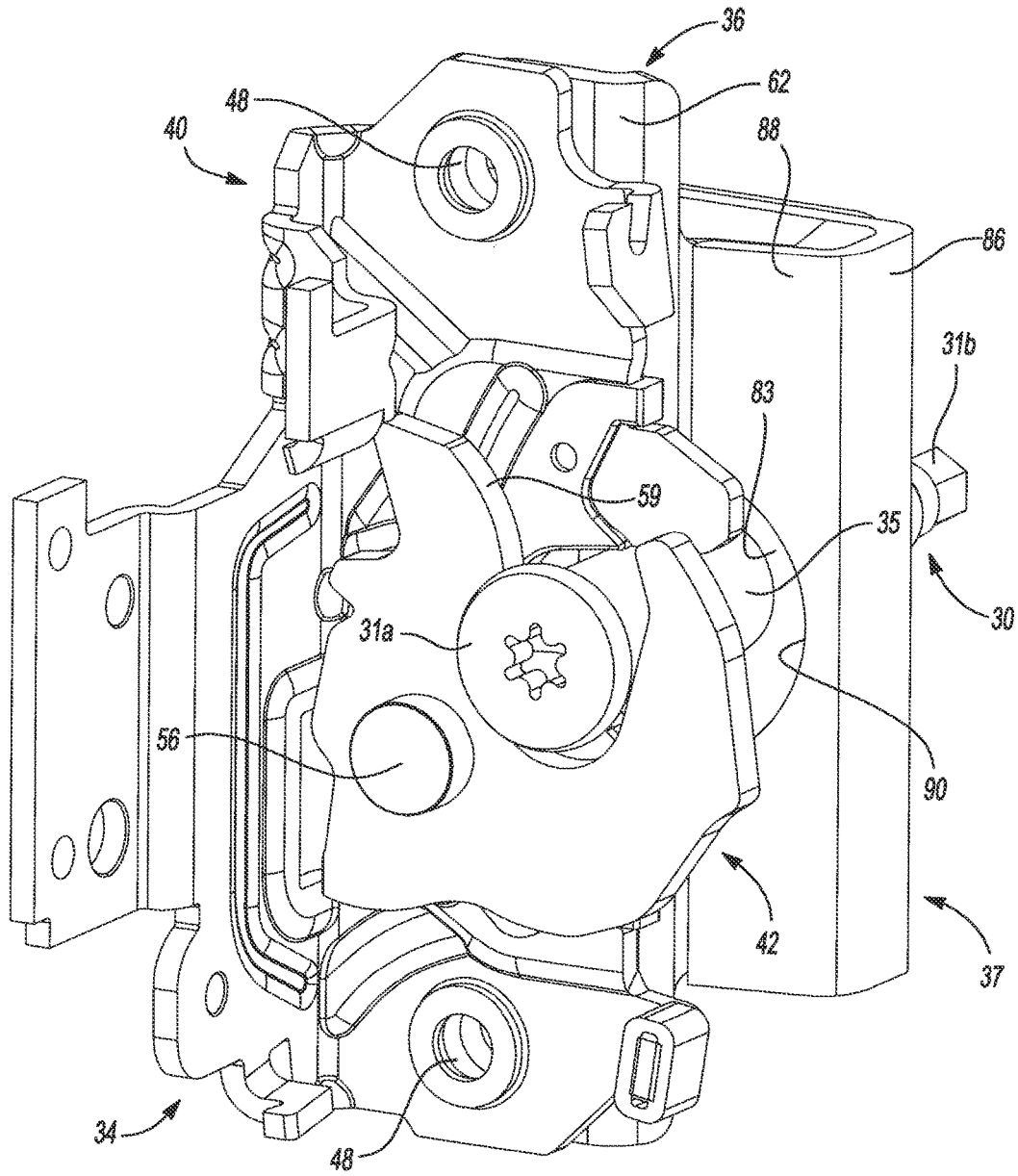


Fig-6

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LATCHING ASSEMBLY FOR MULTI-FUNCTIONAL TAILGATE DOOR

FIELD

The present disclosure relates to a latching assembly for a multi-functional tailgate door.

BACKGROUND

This section provides background information relates to the present disclosure and is not necessarily prior art.

A pickup truck disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 8,740,279, which issued Jun. 3, 2014 and is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety, includes a multi-functional tailgate spanning a width of the aft end of the cargo bed. The multi-functional tailgate is pivotably coupled to the cargo bed so that the multi-functional tailgate is allowed to pivot about a horizontal axis between a horizontal open position and a closed position. The multi-functional tailgate also includes two doors that can be latched together so as to pivot together (i.e., in the manner described above), or unlatched so as to pivot independently of each other.

In the unlatched position, each door can rotate independently about the horizontal axis (i.e., between the horizontal open position and the closed position) and about a vertical axis (i.e., between a vertical open position and the closed position). When unlatched and pivotable about the vertical axis, each door is vulnerable to door sag because the latching assembly does not adapt well to the multi-functional aspect of the tailgate door. The teachings of the present disclosure provide a latch assembly that restricts sag in each door when the multi-functional tailgate door is unlatched and pivoting about the vertical axis.

SUMMARY

This section provides a general summary of the disclosure, and is not a comprehensive disclosure of its full scope or all of its features.

In one form, the present disclosure provides a vehicle that includes a cargo bed, one door, and a latch assembly. The cargo bed includes a plurality of walls. The one door is coupled to the cargo bed and pivotable about a horizontal axis between a closed position and a horizontal open position, and about a vertical axis between the closed position and a vertical open position. The latch assembly includes a striker pin, a latch mechanism, a receiver, and a cam. The striker pin is attached to a respective one of the plurality of walls so as to extend outwardly therefrom. The latch mechanism coupled to the door and selectively latched onto the striker pin. The receiver is coupled to the respective one of the plurality of walls. The cam is coupled to the latch mechanism. The cam and the receiver cooperate to restrict vertical movement of the one door when the one door is pivotable about the vertical axis.

In some configurations, the receiver has an angled surface.

In some configurations, the cam of the latch assembly includes a mounting portion and an engagement portion. The mounting portion is coupled to the latch mechanism and the engagement portion has an angled surface.

In some configurations, a portion of the angled surface of the engagement portion contacts a portion of the angled surface of the receiver once the latch mechanism is latched onto the striker pin.

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In some configurations, the engagement portion of the cam is at least partially received in a recess of the receiver once the portion of the angled surface of the engagement portion contacts the portion of the angled surface of the receiver.

In some configurations, the cam and the receiver of the latch assembly cooperate to restrict movement of the latch mechanism along a longitudinal axis of the striker pin.

In some configurations, the cam of the latch assembly includes a cam slot that receives the striker pin once the latch mechanism is latched onto the striker pin.

In some configurations, the cam and the receiver are disposed between the latch mechanism and the corresponding wall of the cargo bed once the latch mechanism is latched onto the striker pin.

In some configurations, the receiver of the latch assembly is shaped.

In some configurations, another door is coupled to the cargo bed and pivotable with the one door about the horizontal axis.

In some configurations, the another door is pivotable independently of the one door about the horizontal and vertical axes.

Further areas of applicability will become apparent from the description provided herein. The description and specific examples in this summary are intended for purposes of illustration only and are not intended to limit the scope of the present disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The drawings described herein are for illustrative purposes only of selected embodiments and not all possible implementations, and are not intended to limit the scope of the present disclosure.

FIG. 1 is a partial perspective view of a vehicle having a pair of latch assemblies, a cargo bed and a multi-functional tailgate according to the principles of the present disclosure;

FIG. 2 is a partial perspective view of the cargo bed of FIG. 1 with left and right doors of the multi-functional tailgate in a horizontal open position;

FIG. 3 is a partial perspective view of the cargo bed of FIG. 1 with the left and right doors of the multi-functional tailgate in a vertical open position;

FIG. 4 is an exploded view of one of the latch assemblies;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the latch assembly shown in FIG. 4 in an unlatched state;

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of the latch assembly shown in FIG. 4 in a latched state; and

FIG. 7 is a cross-sectional view of the latch assembly taken along line 7-7 of FIG. 1.

Corresponding reference numerals indicate corresponding parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

With reference to FIGS. 1-3, a vehicle 10 is provided. The vehicle includes a cab 12, a cargo bed 14, a multi-functional tailgate 16, and a pair of latch assemblies 18. The cargo bed 14 is attached to an aft end 20 of the cab 12 and includes side walls 22 extending between fore and aft ends of the cargo bed 14. The multi-functional tailgate 16 spans across the aft end 20 of the cargo bed 14 and is pivotably coupled thereto. The multi-functional tailgate 16 includes left and right doors 24, 26. Each door 24, 26 of the tailgate 16 includes a handle 28 attached thereto and is independently pivotable between a closed position (FIG. 1) and a horizontal open position

(FIG. 2) about horizontal axis **29a**. Each door **24**, **26** is also independently pivotable between the closed position and a vertical open position (FIG. 3) about respective vertical axes **29b**.

Each handle **28** includes a pair of actuators **25a**, **25b** (e.g., push buttons, touchpads, etc.), which are operatively connected to a door latch assembly **23** and a respective latch assembly **18**, respectively. Actuating the actuator **25a** unlatches the door latch assembly **23** to permit the doors **24**, **26** to independently pivot about the respective vertical axis **29b** (FIG. 3) while actuating the actuator **25b** unlatches the respective latch assembly **18** to permit the doors **24**, **26** to pivot together or independently (depending on whether or not the door latch assembly **23** is unlatched) about the horizontal axis **29a**. Under some circumstances, it is more convenient to access the cargo bed **14** while the doors **24**, **26** are pivoted to the vertical open position rather than the horizontal open position.

With continued reference to FIGS. 1-3, the pair of latch assemblies **18** are positioned at opposing ends of the tailgate **16** (FIG. 1). Each latch assembly **18** couples the doors **24**, **26** to the respective side wall **22** of the cargo bed **14** via a U-frame (not shown) and allows each door **24**, **26** to be independently pivotable between the closed position (FIG. 1) and the vertical open position (FIG. 3) about the vertical axis **29b** via hinges **39**. As will be described in more detail below, each latch assembly **18** restricts vertical movement (i.e., linear movement of the doors **24**, **26** in a vertical direction and/or tilt of the doors **24**, **26** relative to the cargo bed **14**) of the doors **24**, **26** of the tailgate **16** as the doors **24**, **26** are unlatched from each other and pivotable about the vertical axis **29b**.

With reference to FIGS. 4-7, each latch assembly **18** includes a striker pin **30**, a latch mechanism **34**, a cam **36**, and a receiver **37**. The striker pin **30** is attached to a corresponding side wall **22** (FIG. 7) such that the striker pin **30** extends outwardly therefrom. The striker pin **30** includes a circular head portion **31a**, an end portion **31b**, a cylindrical-shaped latch shaft **32** and a threaded cylindrical-shaped wall shaft **33**. As shown in FIG. 3, the latch shaft **32** and the wall shaft **33** are disposed between the head portion **31a** and the end portion **31b**. The latch shaft **32** has a larger diameter than the wall shaft **33** and the wall shaft **33** is threadably attached to the side wall **22** of the cargo bed **14** via a hex nut **74** (FIG. 7). As shown in FIGS. 5-7, a bushing **35** is sleeved over the latch shaft **32** of the striker pin **30** to reduce wearing of the latch shaft **32**, for example.

The latch mechanism **34** is coupled to the tailgate **16** and the cam **36**, and is configured to latch onto the latch shaft **32** of the striker pin **30**, thereby restricting the doors **24**, **26** from pivoting to the horizontal open position (FIG. 2) about the horizontal axis **29a**. As shown in FIGS. 4-7, the latch mechanism **34** includes a latch plate **40** and a latch fork **42**. The latch plate **40** includes a U-shaped slot **44** (FIG. 4), a latch fork aperture **46** (FIG. 4), and a pair of cam apertures **48**. The slot **44** is generally disposed between the pair of cam apertures **48** and receives the latch shaft **32** of the striker pin **30** therein once the latch mechanism **34** latches onto the latch shaft **32** of the striker pin **30**. The latch fork aperture **46** is also disposed between the pair of cam apertures **48**.

The latch fork **42** is operatively connected to the handle **28** of a respective door **24**, **26** via a wire (not shown) or the like and includes a latch plate aperture **50** and a U-shaped slot **52**. As shown in FIG. 4, the latch plate aperture **50** is aligned with the latch fork aperture **46** of the latch plate **40**. A fastener **54** (e.g., rivet or bolt) including a head **56** and a shaft **58** pivotably attaches the latch fork **42** and the latch

plate **40**. That is, the shaft **58** of the fastener **54** extends through the latch fork aperture **46** of the latch plate **40** and the latch plate aperture **50** of the latch fork **42** such that the latch fork **42** is pivotable relative to the latch plate **40** from a latched state (FIG. 6) to an unlatched state (FIG. 5) when the actuator **25b** is actuated.

The slot **52** includes a rounded surface **59** that facilitates alignment of the striker pin **30** within the slot **52**. That is, if the striker pin **30** contacts the rounded surface **59** while the latch mechanism **34** is being latched onto the striker pin **30**, the striker pin **30** traverses along the surface **59** until the slot **52** and the striker pin **30** are aligned, thereby allowing the striker pin **30** to be received therein.

The cam **36** is coupled to the latch plate **40** and includes a mounting portion **60**, a descending portion **62**, an engagement portion **64**, and a U-shaped slot **66**. The mounting portion **60** includes a pair of apertures **68** that are aligned to corresponding cam apertures **48** (FIG. 4). A fastener (not shown) extends through each aperture **48**, **68** to couple the mounting portion **60** of the cam **36** and the latch plate **40** together and to the U-frame (not shown). The descending portion **62** is attached on either end to the mounting portion **60** and the engagement portion **64**. As shown in FIGS. 4 and 7, the descending portion **62** is angled downward toward the engagement portion **64** from the mounting portion **60**. The engagement portion **64** includes an angled surface **72** that contacts the receiver **37** once the latch mechanism **34** is latched onto the striker pin **30** (FIG. 7).

As shown in FIG. 4, the U-shaped slot **66** extends through the engagement portion **64**, the descending portion **62**, and partially through the mounting portion **60**. The width **W** of the slot **66** is larger than widths of the U-shaped slots **44**, **52** of the latch plate **40** and the latch fork **42**, respectively. An entire diametrical surface of the latch shaft **32** of the striker pin **30** and the bushing **35** sleeved thereon are received in the slot **66** of the cam **36** once the latch mechanism **34** latches onto the striker pin **30** (FIG. 7).

The J-shaped receiver **37** is coupled to the side wall **22** of the cargo bed **14** via bracket plates **73a**, **73b** (FIG. 7). The receiver **37** includes an attachment plate **75** and a substantially L-shaped flange **76**. The attachment plate **75** abuts against the bracket plate **73a** on a side thereof and includes a pair of wall apertures **80** and a striker pin aperture **82**. The striker pin aperture **82** receives the wall shaft **33** of the striker pin **30** when the striker pin **30** is attached to the side wall **22** of the cargo bed **14**. A washer **83** is disposed between the latch shaft **32** of the striker pin **30** and the attachment plate **75** of the receiver **37**.

As shown in FIG. 7, the flange **76** extends perpendicularly from the attachment plate **75** and cooperates therewith to form a recess **84** that receives the engagement portion **64** of the cam **36** once the latch mechanism **34** is latched onto the latch shaft **32** of the striker pin **30**. The flange **76** includes an extension member **86** and a contact member **88**. The extension member **86** is perpendicular to the attachment plate **75** and angled relative to the contact member **88**.

The contact member **88** includes a U-shaped slot **90** (FIGS. 4-6) and an angled surface **92** (FIGS. 4 and 7). The slot **90** accommodates a portion of the striker pin **30** once the latch mechanism **34** latches onto the striker pin **30** and the bushing **35** sleeved thereon. The angled surface **92** contacts the angled surface **72** of the engagement portion **64** (FIG. 7) once the latch mechanism **34** latches onto the striker pin **30** and the bushing **35** sleeved thereon. In this way, the cam **36** and the receiver **37** cooperate to restrict movement of the latch mechanism **34** along a longitudinal axis **94** of the

striker pin 30. This also restricts vertical movement of the doors 24, 26 as the doors 24, 26 are unlatched and pivotable about the vertical axis 29b.

With continued reference to FIGS. 1-7, operation of the latch assembly 18 will be described in detail. It should be understood that although operation of the latch assembly 18 will be explained with respect to the door 24 of the tailgate 16 and the corresponding side wall 22, operation of the latch assembly 18 will function identically or in a similar manner with respect to the door 26 of the tailgate 16. A vehicle user (not shown) can initially have the door 24 of the multi-functional tailgate 16 pivoted about the horizontal axis 29a to the horizontal open position (FIG. 2) for access to the cargo bed 14. If the user determines that accessing the cargo bed 14 is more convenient while the door 24 is pivoted to the vertical open position (FIG. 3) about the vertical axis 29b, the user will first pivot the door 24 from the horizontal open position (FIG. 2) to the closed position (FIG. 1) about the horizontal axis 29a such that the latch mechanism 34 latches onto the striker pin 30.

During rotation of the door 24 toward the closed position, the latch mechanism 34 is initially slidable along the striker pin 30 to accommodate build variation between both the latch mechanism 34 and the striker pin 30. The angled surface 72 of the cam 36 provides clearance to the angled surface 92 of the receiver 37 so that the angled surfaces 72, 92 of the cam 36 and the receiver 37, respectively, contact one another regardless of the latch mechanism 34 adjustment along the striker pin 30. FIG. 7 shows an example of the angled surfaces 72, 92 of the cam 36 and the receiver 37, respectively, contacting each other. In some configurations, for example, a front portion of the angled surface 72 of the cam 36 will only contact a front portion of the angled surface 92 of the receiver 37 (i.e., when there is a greater adjustment of the latch mechanism 34 along the striker pin 30 to accommodate for build variation). That is, the latch mechanism 34 can slide further along the latch shaft 32 of the striker pin 30 towards the head portion 31a when the door 24 is rotated to the closed position, thereby causing the front portion of the angled surface 72 of the cam 36 to only contact the front portion of the angled surface 92 of the receiver 37.

While the door 24 is in the closed position and unlatched from the door 26, the user is allowed to pivot the door 24 about the vertical axis 29b. The cam 36 cooperates with the receiver 37 to restrict movement of the latch mechanism 34 along the longitudinal axis 94 of the striker pin 30. This also restricts vertical movement of the door 24.

It should be understood that although the benefits of latch assembly 18 described herein are with respect to the multi-functional tailgate 16 coupled to the cargo bed 14 of an automotive vehicle, the latch assembly 18 could be utilized on various other applications that involve a multi-functional door that is able to pivot about multiple axes or on applications where a latch mechanism sliding along a striker pin is undesirable.

What is claimed is:

1. A vehicle comprising:
 - a cargo bed including a plurality of walls;
 - one door coupled to the cargo bed and pivotable about a horizontal axis between a closed position and a horizontal open position, the one door also pivotable about a vertical axis between the closed position and a vertical open position; and
 - a latch assembly including a striker pin, a latch mechanism, a receiver, and a cam, the striker pin attached to a respective one of the plurality of walls so as to extend outwardly therefrom, the latch mechanism coupled to the one door and selectively latched onto the striker pin, the receiver coupled to the respective one of the plurality of walls, the cam coupled to the latch mechanism and the one door,
 - wherein the cam and the receiver cooperate to restrict vertical movement of the one door when the one door is pivotable about the vertical axis.
2. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the receiver has an angled surface.
3. The vehicle of claim 2, wherein the cam of the latch assembly includes a mounting portion and an engagement portion, and wherein the mounting portion is coupled to the latch mechanism and the engagement portion has an angled surface.
4. The vehicle of claim 3, wherein a portion of the angled surface of the engagement portion contacts a portion of the angled surface of the receiver once the latch mechanism is latched onto the striker pin.
5. The vehicle of claim 4, wherein the engagement portion of the cam is at least partially received in a recess of the receiver once the portion of the angled surface of the engagement portion contacts the portion of the angled surface of the receiver.
6. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the cam and the receiver of the latch assembly cooperate to restrict movement of the latch mechanism along a longitudinal axis of the striker pin.
7. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the cam of the latch assembly includes a cam slot that receives the striker pin once the latch mechanism is latched onto the striker pin.
8. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the cam and the receiver are disposed between the latch mechanism and the corresponding wall of the cargo bed once the latch mechanism is latched onto the striker pin.
9. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the receiver of the latch assembly is J-shaped.
10. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein another door is coupled to the cargo bed and pivotable with the one door about the horizontal axis.
11. The vehicle of claim 10, wherein the another door is pivotable independently of the one door about the horizontal and vertical axes.

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