Altera’s Avalon Communication Fabric

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Altera’s Avalon Bus

Something like “PCI on a chip”

Described in Altera’s Avalon Memory-Mapped Interface Specification document.

Protocol defined between peripherals and the “bus” (actually a fairly complicated circuit).
Intended System Architecture

Source: Altera
Masters and Slaves

Most bus protocols draw a distinction between

Masters: Can initiate a transaction, specify an address, etc. E.g., the Nios II processor

Slaves: Respond to requests from masters, can generate return data. E.g., a video controller

Most peripherals are slaves.

Masters speak a more complex protocol

Bus arbiter decides which master gains control
The Simplest Slave Peripheral

Basically, “latch when I’m selected and written to.”
Slave Signals

For a 16-bit connection that spans 32 halfwords,

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Avalon Slave Signals

- **clk**: Master clock
- **reset**: Reset signal to peripheral
- **chipselect**: Asserted when bus accesses peripheral
- **address[..]**: Word address (data-width specific)
- **read**: Asserted during peripheral → bus transfer
- **write**: Asserted during bus → peripheral transfer
- **writedata[..]**: Data from bus to peripheral
- **byteenable[..]**: Indicates active bytes in a transfer
- **readdata[..]**: Data from peripheral to bus
- **irq**: Peripheral → processor interrupt request

All are optional, as are many others for, e.g., flow-control and burst transfers.
In SystemVerilog

module myslave(input logic clk,
                input logic reset,
                input logic [7:0] writedata,
                input logic write,
                input logic chipselect,
                input logic [2:0] address);
Basic Slave Read Transfer

Bus cycle starts on rising clock edge
Data latched at next rising edge
Such a peripheral must be purely combinational
Slave Read Transfer w/ 1 Wait State

Bus cycle starts on rising clock edge
Data latched two cycles later
Approach used for synchronous peripherals
Basic Async. Slave Write Transfer

Bus cycle starts on rising clock edge
Data available by next rising edge
Peripheral may be synchronous, but must be fast
Basic Async. Slave Write w/ 1 Wait State

Bus cycle starts on rising clock edge
Peripheral latches data two cycles later
For slower peripherals
module VGA_LED(input logic clk, 
    input logic reset, 
    input logic [7:0] writedata, 
    input logic write, 
    input chipselect, 
    input logic [2:0] address, 

    output logic [7:0] VGA_R, VGA_G, VGA_B, 
    output logic VGA_CLK, VGA_HS, VGA_VS, 
    output logic VGA_BLANK_n, VGA_SYNC_n);

logic [7:0] hex0, hex1, hex2, hex3, 
            hex4, hex5, hex6, hex7;

VGA_LED_Emulator led_emulator(.clk50(clk), .*);
```verilog
always_ff @(posedge clk)
    if (reset) begin
        hex0 <= 8'b01100110; // 4
        hex1 <= 8'b01111111; // 8
        hex2 <= 8'b01100110; // 4
        hex3 <= 8'b10111111; // 0
        hex4 <= 8'b00111000; // L
        hex5 <= 8'b01110111; // A
        hex6 <= 8'b01111100; // b
        hex7 <= 8'b01001111; // 3
    end else if (chipselect && write)
        case (address)
            3'h0 : hex0 <= writedata;
            3'h1 : hex1 <= writedata;
            3'h2 : hex2 <= writedata;
            3'h3 : hex3 <= writedata;
            3'h4 : hex4 <= writedata;
            3'h5 : hex5 <= writedata;
            3'h6 : hex6 <= writedata;
            3'h7 : hex7 <= writedata;
        endcase
endmodule
```