Nordic Semiconductor Demos Bluetooth Low Energy-Smart Advanced Navigation Remote Control

Ultra low power (ULP) RF specialist Nordic Semiconductor ASA (OSE: NOD) today demonstrates the world's first Bluetooth low energy (or Bluetooth Smart as Bluetooth low energy devices and sensors will now be marketed to consumers) smart navigation remote for the latest connected TVs and set-top boxes.

The nRFready µBlue Smart Remote reference design, based on Nordic's market leading µBlue nRF8001, is set to be a game changer for the remote control of connected TVs and set-top boxes by combining Bluetooth low energy ultra-low power wireless connectivity and interoperability - including up to one year of battery life - with advanced navigation features such as a multi-touch TouchPad™, motion control, and a QWERTY keyboard.

Unlike other RF technologies relevant to remote controls - such as ZigBee RF4CE and proprietary 2.4GHz RF - Bluetooth low energy enables connected TV manufacturers to use a single Wi-Fi / Bluetooth v4.0 combo IC for all connectivity in the box instead of having to add a dedicated radio to handle the remote. This provides significant cost savings and better co-existence performance.

"We see a revolution happening in the TV and set-top box space with the roll-out of content-on-demand, on-line gaming, social media, and other interactive digital features," comments Geir Langeland, Sales and Marketing Director at Nordic

Semiconductor. "This means that the remote control is also changing because traditional one-button-one-operation IR simply cannot cope with the demands of web-like content browsing, navigation, and interaction."

Langeland continues: "The only viable remote control technology alternative is RF which can support all of these demands and advanced features while providing a good end-user experience at a pricing level that supports mass-market consumer adoption. With the nRFready µBlue Smart Remote, Nordic Semiconductor is making it extremely easy for connected TV and set-top box manufacturers to create such remotes by delivering a complete hardware and software reference design."

The nRFready µBlue Smart Remote will be provided as a simple upgrade to Nordic's existing (proprietary) 2.4GHz RF Smart Remote. The reference design features a multi-touch enabled TouchPad™ from Synaptics, a miniaturized QWERTY keyboard, a six-axis motion sensing solution from Invensense, and a ultra-low power accelerometer from ST Microelectronics. Based on the new HID profile for Bluetooth low energy, the remote will provide seamless interoperability with a range of Bluetooth v4.0-enabled (or Bluetooth Smart Ready) host platforms including TVs, set-top boxes, smartphones, and computers.

Thomas Embla Bonnerud, Product Manager at Nordic Semiconductor, concludes: "We see a huge interest in Bluetooth Smart technology from connected TV and set-top box manufacturers because it offers a unique combination of long battery life while eliminating the need to add additional radios beyond a Wi-Fi / Bluetooth v4.0 combo IC. This keeps cost and power consumption down, while ensuring an optimal co-existence performance that neither classic Bluetooth nor ZigBee RF4CE nor proprietary 2.4GHz wireless technologies have yet managed to achieve."

The nRFready ?Blue Smart Remote will be made generally available from Q1 2012.

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