

A New Off-Line LED Lighting Driver Solution with Multi-Transformer LLC Control

Application Report



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A New Off-line LED Lighting Driver Solution with Multi-Transformer LLC Control

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ABSTRACT

With TI multi-transformer LLC controller UCC25710, this application note introduces a new off line LED lighting driver solution. Compared to conventional high wattage (>100W) LED lighting driver with AC/DC plus multiple constant current DC/DC converter stages, the new topology can have higher efficiency and lower system cost. A 100W LED lighting driver reference design PMP4302A using this multi-transformer LLC control is developed. This design drives 4 LED strings with 500mA current and 15 LEDs in series for each string. The experimental results show the new topology is very suitable for general LED lighting applications for both outdoor and commercial applications with PWM or analog dimming. Meanwhile, the architecture can also be used for TV LED backlight power providing high efficiency and ultra-slim form factor.

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1 Introduction

Nowadays, LED technology has emerged as a promising lighting technology to replace the energy-inefficient incandescent lamps and mercury-based fluorescent lamps. Among general LED lighting applications, high wattage (>100W) off-line LED lighting shows great energy saving and long lifespan compared with conventional lamps, such as high pressure sodium lamps and CFL lamps. The target markets for high wattage professional LED lighting are outdoor LED street lights and other commercial LED lights.

To make the same brightness for each LED, a constant current source should be implemented for the driving system. Normally, for power ratings more than 65W, LED matrix will consist of several LED strings in parallel. And, each string should be controlled by a constant current source and each string current should be equal to insure uniform system brightness. In addition, the power system should also ensure the input current has the same phase and shape of the input AC line voltage. Thus, a PFC circuit is needed to reduce the current harmonics.

Besides the above mentioned features, efficiency and reliability are very critical for high wattage LED lighting. High efficiency is not only the basic requirement for energy saving, but also for the power system itself. Because thermal design is always a big issue for LED lighting systems it can lead to high ambient temperatures for the power. A high efficiency LED driver will help system reliability and thermal performance.

This application note presents a new multi-transformer LLC converter for high wattage LED lighting driver solution. By using the proposed topology, high efficiency and high reliability can be achieved with magnetizing balance to drive multiple LED strings. A 100W reference design PMP4302A is built to verify the overall performance with a PWM dimming interface.

2 Proposed Topology

2.1 Traditional topology for high wattage off-line LED lighting driver

Figure 1 shows a typical high wattage off line LED lighting driver topology. In this structure, the PFC stage shapes the input current to a sinusoidal wave. The boost topology is the best candidate for this stage due to its continuous input current and easy configuration. Thus for the wide range input voltage of 85V~264Vac, the output of PFC stage will be higher than the peak input voltage. 380VDC to 400VDC bus is normally selected. Because the PFC output voltage is too high and it is non-isolated, a DC/DC stage with transformer isolation is needed. Normally a half bridge LLC resonant converter is used because of its high efficiency and good EMI performance. The DC/DC stage generates the intermediate bus voltage to drive the LED strings. The output voltage level for this stage is based on the number of LEDs and the next constant-current control stage; normally it is below 60Vdc in keeping with the standard safety extra low voltage (SELV). Each LED string will have an individual constant current regulator to regulate the LED current. For most popular high brightness (HB) LED, the current specification range is from 350mA to 750mA.

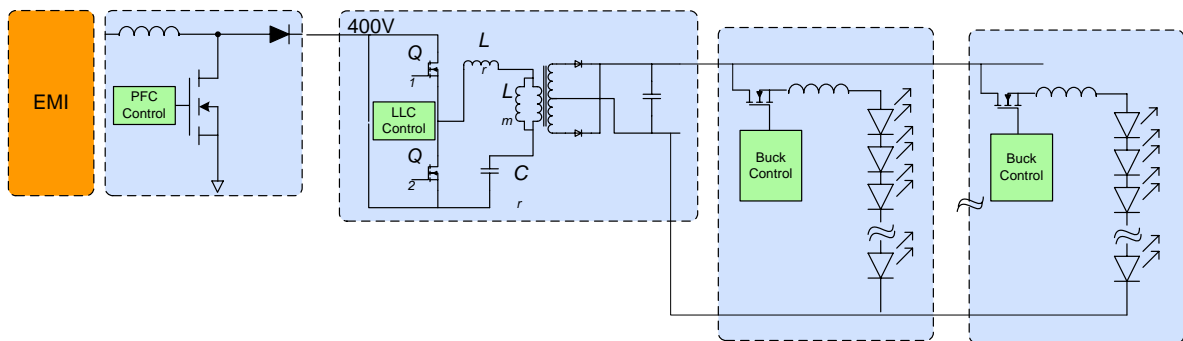


Figure 1. Traditional high wattage off-line LED lighting driver topology

Even though traditional high wattage off-line LED lighting drivers can achieve good performance, there are some drawbacks:

1. Efficiency. The traditional structure is a three stage topology, which includes PFC, isolated PWM and non-isolated DC/DC. The most optimized efficiencies for each stage are 97% for PFC stage, 96% for isolated PWM stage, and 95% for DC/DC stage. So total maximum efficiency it can achieve is about 88%. Of course, there are some methods to improve the efficiency further, such as synchronous rectifier control for both isolated PWM and DC/DC stages, but it is not cost effective.
2. Cost. From the above figure 1, there are multiple DC/DC stages on each LED string, which will lead to high cost on this stage with multiple controllers, inductors and capacitors.
3. Reliability. Because there are many external components on the traditional LED lighting topology, which will highly influence the performance.

- EMI. Because multiple switching LED drivers will generate additional high frequency switching noise on the DC/DC stages, and hence affect the measurement results of both conducted and radiated EMI in the LED lamp. More EMI design effort will be required, for example RC snubber network at switch node, EMI filter at output stage or synchronizing the multiple DC/DC controllers.

2.2 New topology for high wattage off-line LED lighting driver

To address these issues of the typical topology, this application note introduces a new topology using TI's multi-transformer LLC controller, the UCC25710. Figure 2 shows a block diagram for this new topology. It includes only two stages, the PFC and the multi-transformer LLC converter. After PFC stage, there is an isolated half bridge multi-string LLC converter, which makes the primary windings of transformers electrically connected in series. Based on the theory of magnetic balance, since the current of primary windings are the same when in series, the output current for each isolated transformer will have the same current to drive each LED string. And each transformer can drive two LED strings.

The multi-transformer LLC controller (UCC25710 in this design) is located on the secondary side, where it senses the sum of LED strings' current and regulates the sinusoidal ac current that flows through primary windings by using current loop feedback, which makes a constant current output for each LED string.

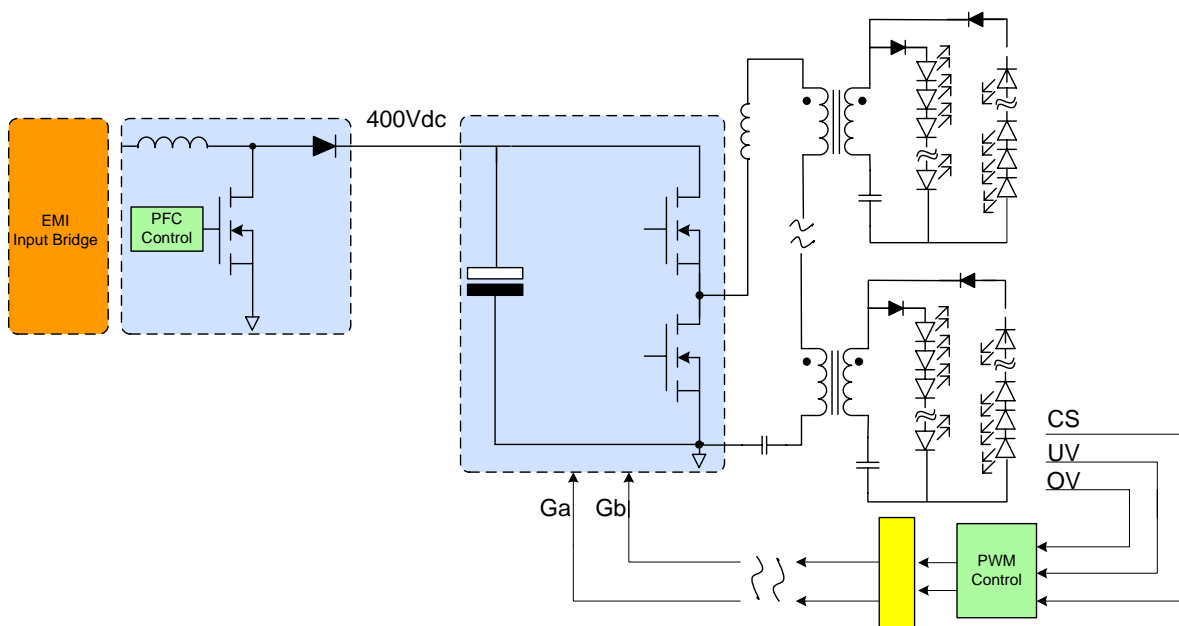


Figure 2. Proposed new high wattage off-line LED lighting driver

The new topology has some key features when compared with the traditional LED lighting driver topology:

- High Efficiency. Because it only has two stages, PFC plus multi-transformer LLC, the estimated total efficiency will be higher than 91%. The efficiency will be highly determined by the LLC converter design.

2. Low cost. Compared with the conventional topology for high wattage LED lighting, the new topology only includes two stages and fewer controllers, which is cost effective.
3. High system reliability. As we known, reliability of the LED lighting is determined by thermal management of the LEDs and the electrical drive, fault detection and protection of the system, as well as electrical component count. Because of the lower component count on this new topology and good efficiency, the reliability will be greatly improvement.
4. Good EMI performance. Because there are no multiple DC/DC stages on the output, it will help for EMI performance. Meanwhile, LLC converter is operating with ZVS operation that can help reduce noise during switching.
5. Dimming compatible. Because the LLC controller is located on the secondary side, the total current of each string is summed and feedback as a current feedback loop, which can easily implement PWM dimming or analog dimming.

Unlike the traditional LED lighting topology, the new LED lighting topology will help to reduce component count, improve efficiency, and help reduce board size.

3 New Multi-transformer LLC controller

The UCC25710 is based on the LLC resonant half bridge topology. The controller feedback loop is configured to regulate the total current of all LED strings typically with a current sense resistor. As shown in figure 3, the total current for the LED strings is sensed by R3 at the CS pin and a current loop error amplifier is designed to maintain a steady state operating voltage point of the current amplifier during dimming operation. The output of current amplifier, ICOMP, will set the control voltage to the VCO (Voltage Controlled Oscillator), which incorporates a programmable minimum and maximum frequency. This is configured to a close current feedback loop for an LLC topology with LED lighting strings. The optimum ICOMP capacitor C1 is determined based on the desired LED current and primary current response during dimming.

There are three factors that can control the VCO for LLC control. Firstly, the control voltage to the VCO is set by ICOMP (current loop error amplifier output) during LED on-times. Secondly, during start up, the soft start pin SS will control the VCO response until it exceeds ICOMP. Thirdly, during dimming the rise and fall rates of the VCO input are controlled by the voltage at the dimming slew rate capacitor C2, DSR pin, while the pedestal of VCO control level will continue to be controlled by ICOMP.

The DSR capacitor C2 and internal 44 μ A current control the slew rate of V_{VCO} during dimming off and on transitions. When turn off, DSR is discharged to ground by a 44 μ A current sink and when turn on, DSR is charged to ICOMP voltage by a 44 μ A source. This will allow potentially audible electro-mechanically induced noise to be minimized.

The LED dimming input, ILED-ON, controls the LED lighting dimming on and off. In addition, the falling, or turn-off, edge of a dimming cycle can be delayed, allowing the current loop to maintain control at low dimming duty-cycles even when the ramp rates have been slowed.

In summary, the UCC25710 device includes all of the functions necessary to implement a total LED backlight driver including GM current loop error amplifier, VCO, reference regulator, soft start, dimming duty cycle compensation and protection for OV, UV, current limit, and thermal shut down. There are additional features to minimize audible noise during dimming and provide fast LED current rise and fall times.

In addition to multi-transformer LLC topology, UCC25710 is also a good LLC controller for high-volt single LED string output applications with a dimming interface and reduced audible noise.

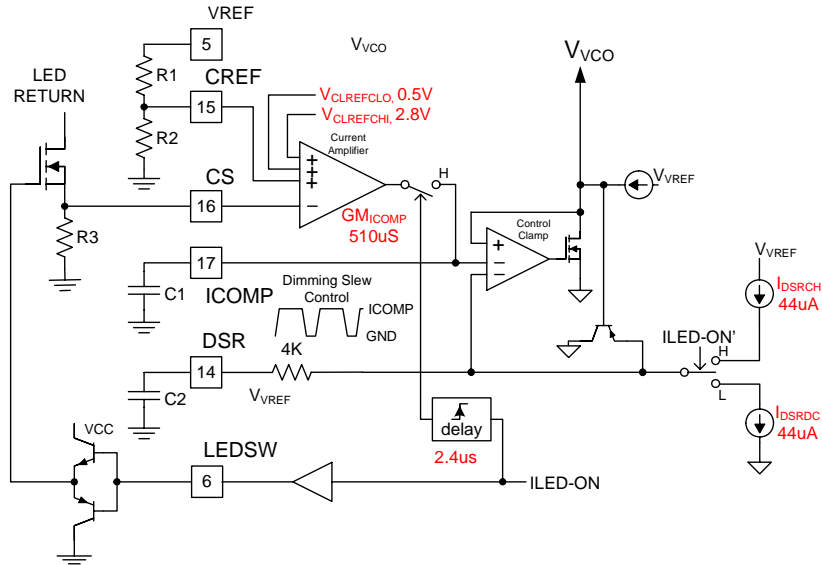


Figure 3. Simplified block diagram for multi-string LLC control UCC25710

4 LLC Multi-transformer design

The innovation of multi-transformer to match current simply uses the magnetic balance theory. As shown in figure 4, the primary windings of multiple transformers are connected in series, in the ideal case, the same primary side currents result in the same secondary side current if the transformer turns ratio is the same.

$$\begin{cases} I_{p1} = I_{p2} \\ I_{s1} = I_{s2} = n \times I_{p1} \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

The transformer is not an ideal component; it also includes magnetizing inductor, due to the existence of the magnetizing inductor in the transformer, the secondary side current will be slightly different on the output LED string. Fortunately, the magnetizing current is only a small portion of the primary side current and the current match is not sensitive to the differences in the magnetizing current. In order to achieve perfect current matching, it is recommended to increase the magnetizing inductance L_m for the multi-transformer LLC design.

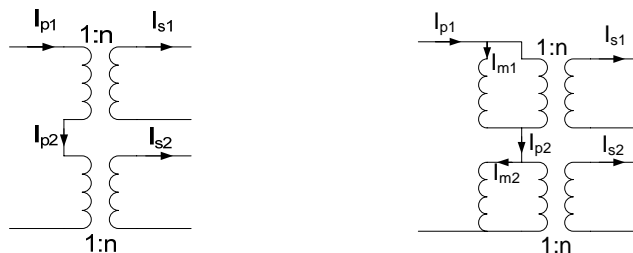


Figure 4. Multi-string transformer structures

To simplify the solution, the topology uses one transformer to drive two LED strings. In the same transformer, when the primary ac sinusoidal current is flowing positively, the secondary current is conducted with the same coupling direction. On the other hand, when the primary sinusoidal ac current is flowing reversely, the other current loop on the secondary side is conducting during the switching cycle, as shown in figure 5. The DC blocking capacitor on the output guarantees the positive current and negative current are the same during each switching cycle.

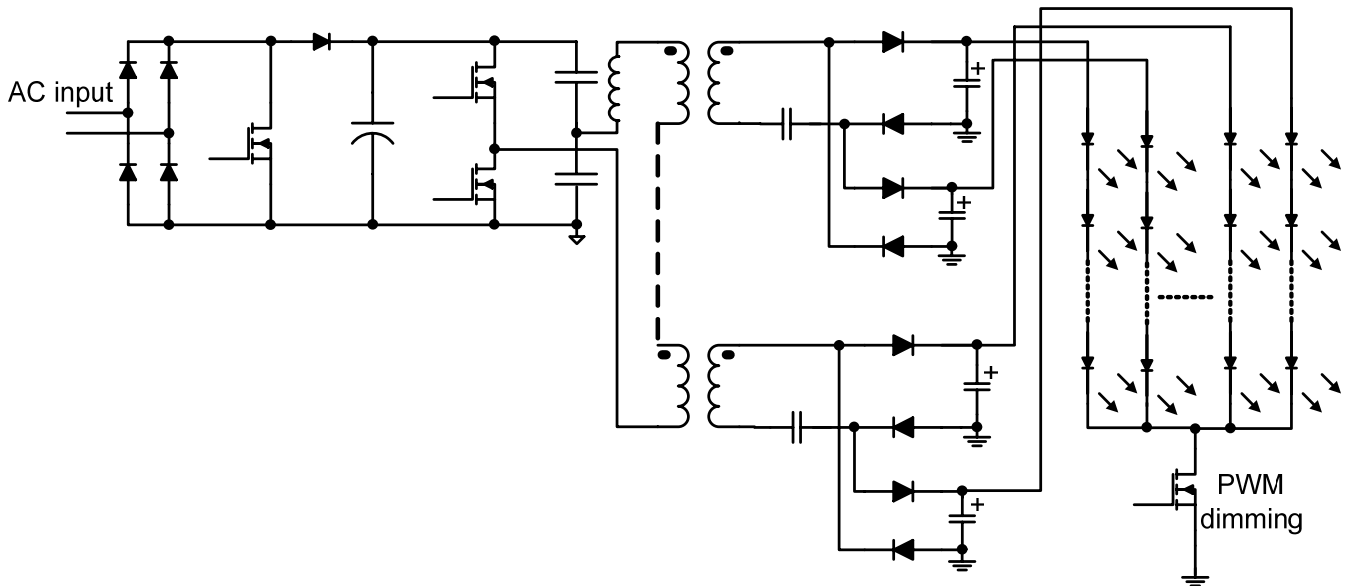


Figure 5. Simplified architecture for multi-string LLC topology with boost PFC

The design of the multi-transformer LLC transformer is similar to a conventional LLC converter design. To use the conventional LLC converter design process, the multiple transformers and reflected loads can be combined into one equivalent transformer load. Once resonant inductor L_S and magnetizing inductor L_m are determined based on a single transformer; simply divide by the number of transformers for each transformer specification target. When operation frequency is equal to the series resonant frequency, input and output voltage for this multi-string LLC converter can be expressed as:

$$V_{LED} = \frac{V_{DCBUS}}{2 \times n \times N_T} \quad (2)$$

Where, n is the primary to secondary turns ratio; V_{DCBUS} is the input voltage of the LLC converter, typically it is the output of the PFC boost converter; V_{LED} is the voltage of LED string and N_T is the number of transformer. In the practical design of 100W two string LLC converter, Input voltage is set at 340 V to 410 V from PFC with nominal point 400 V; The output is equal to 50V / 1 A with two transformer in series. So the equivalent turn ratio is $n' = n \times N_T = 4$.

Meanwhile, the operating frequency is set at around 120 KHz, which is a little higher than the resonant frequency to achieve good current matching.

MOSFET turn-off current should be able to discharge junction caps during the dead-time (500ns); the following equation should be met to get ZVS operation.

$$L_m \leq \frac{T \cdot t_{dead}}{16 \cdot C_{eq}} \quad (3)$$

In the design, it uses a simplified method applied to any resonant topology based on the assumption that input-to-output power transfer is due to the fundamental Fourier Series components of currents and voltages, which is the commonly know as FHA (First Harmonic Approximation).

In the below figure 6, the input of the equivalent network is a square waveform with 50% duty cycle, and the output is also a square waveform with 50% duty cycle, of which amplitudes are $V_{in}/2$ and nV_o respectively.

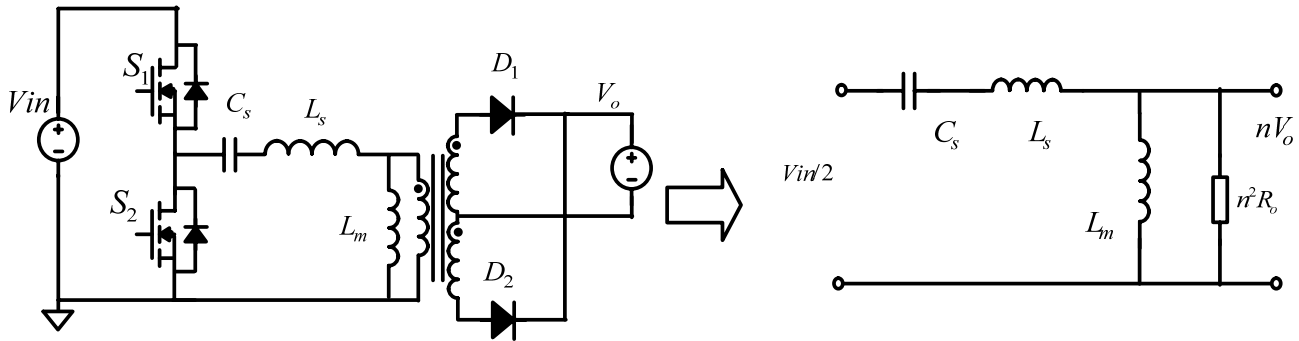


Figure 6. Simplified equivalent network for LLC topology

Considering the fundamental harmonic element of input and output, the DC gain of input to output can be expressed as the following equation:

$$\frac{nV_o}{V_{in}/2} = \left| \frac{\frac{j\omega L_m n^2 R_o}{j\omega L_m + n^2 R_o}}{\frac{1}{j\omega C_s} + j\omega L_s + \frac{j\omega L_m n^2 R_o}{j\omega L_m + n^2 R_o}} \right|$$

$$\frac{nV_o}{V_{in}/2} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{1}{\omega^2 L_m C_s}\right)^2 \left(\frac{\omega^2}{\omega_m^2} - 1\right)^2 + \left(\frac{1}{\omega C_s n^2 R_o}\right)^2 \left(1 - \frac{\omega^2}{\omega_s^2}\right)^2}} \quad (4)$$

Where, ω_s is the resonant angle frequency of L_s and C_s in series:

$$\omega_s = \frac{1}{\sqrt{L_s C_s}} \quad (5)$$

ω_m is the resonant angle frequency if C_s , L_s and L_m in series

$$\omega_m = \frac{1}{\sqrt{(L_m + L_s)C_s}} \quad (6)$$

The variables in equation (4) can be replaced by three normalized variables

f_n is the normalized frequency to the series resonant frequency of L_s and C_s .

$$f_n = \frac{\omega}{\omega_s} \quad (7)$$

Q is the load resistance normalized to the impedance of the resonant inductance at the series resonant frequency.

$$Q = \frac{n^2 \cdot R_o}{\omega_s L_s} \quad (8)$$

h is the factor for magnetizing inductance normalized to resonant inductance.

$$h = \frac{L_m}{L_s} \quad (9)$$

Using the equivalent circuit, a normalized DC gain equation is derived as follows:

$$M(f_n, h, Q) = \frac{nV_o}{V_{in} / 2} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\left(1 + \frac{1}{h} - \frac{1}{f_n^2 \cdot h}\right)^2 + Q^2 \cdot \left(\frac{1}{f_n} - f_n\right)^2}} \quad (10)$$

A plot of this equation, for various Q values, can be seen in figure 7.

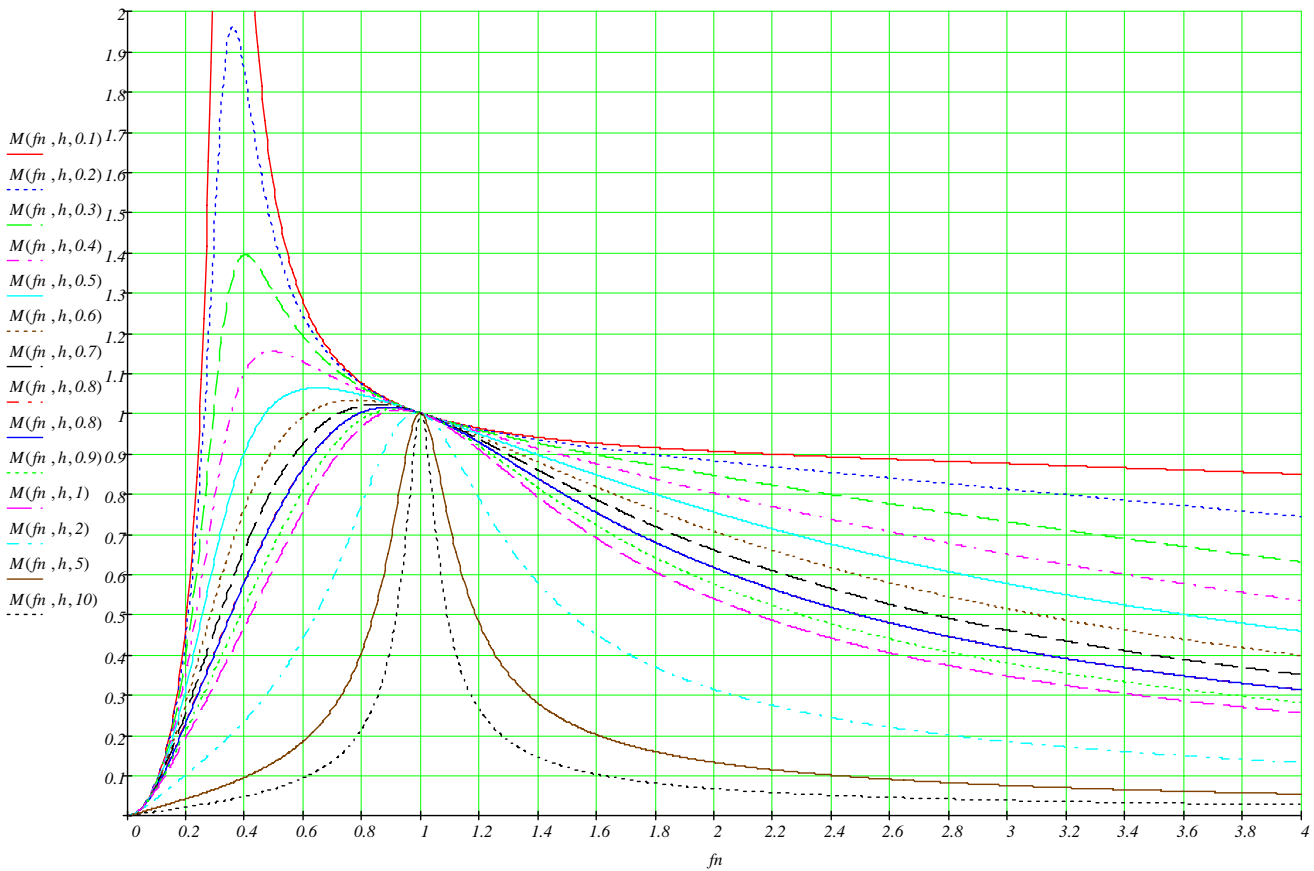


Figure 7. DC gain curve for LLC topology

DC gain curve changes with different Q , M is the normalized DC gain which is a function of h , f_n and Q . And h , f_n and Q are also normalized variables which are related to the parameters such as L_s , L_m , C_s and turn ratios of transformer.

In a real design, the value of Q is a trade-off between conduction loss, switching loss and start up current. Having curves and considering actual devices, selection of Q and h for parameter selection becomes possible. Here, it can be assumed $Q = 0.2$ and $h = 8$ as a first pass for this design. So now L_s , L_m and C_s can be calculated as below:

$$L_s = \frac{4 \cdot n'^2 \cdot R_o \cdot Q}{\pi^3 \cdot f_s} \quad (6)$$

Here R_o is the output equivalent resistor, $R_o = \frac{V_{o1} \cdot V_{o2}}{\frac{I_{o1}}{V_{o1}} + \frac{I_{o2}}{V_{o2}}} = 25$.

The resonant inductance is selected as $L_s = 100\mu H$.

$$C_s = \frac{\pi}{16 \cdot f_s \cdot n'^2 \cdot R_o \cdot Q} \quad (7)$$

The equivalent resonant capacitor is selected as $C_s = 24nF$.

$$L_m = \frac{4 \cdot n'^2 \cdot R_o \cdot h \cdot Q}{\pi^3 \cdot f_s} \quad (8)$$

The equivalent magnetizing inductance of transformer is selected as $L_m = 820\mu H$. Because this multi-transformer circuit uses two transformers in series, the inductance for each transformer is 410uH. Based on area product method for magnetic component design, a PQ2625 or equivalent core with same A_e value are chosen, then the turns for primary and secondary can be calculated accordingly. Here, we select $N_p = 30$ and $N_s = 17$.

5 100W off-line LED lighting driver design

Based on UCC28810 (Transition mode PFC), UCC27510 (LLC controller for multi-string LED lighting) and UCC28610 (auxiliary green mode Flyback controller), a 100W reference design PMP4302A is developed. This design will drive 4 strings and 15 LEDs per string. The dimensions for this demonstration board is 245mm(L)x18mm(W)x11mm(H), which is suitable for high wattage general LED lighting form factor. Figure 8 shows a photo of the PMP4302A reference design board including input EMI filter, TM PFC stage, auxiliary power supply stage and multi-string LLC stage. Table 1 gives the electrical specification for this reference design.

5.1 Design Specification

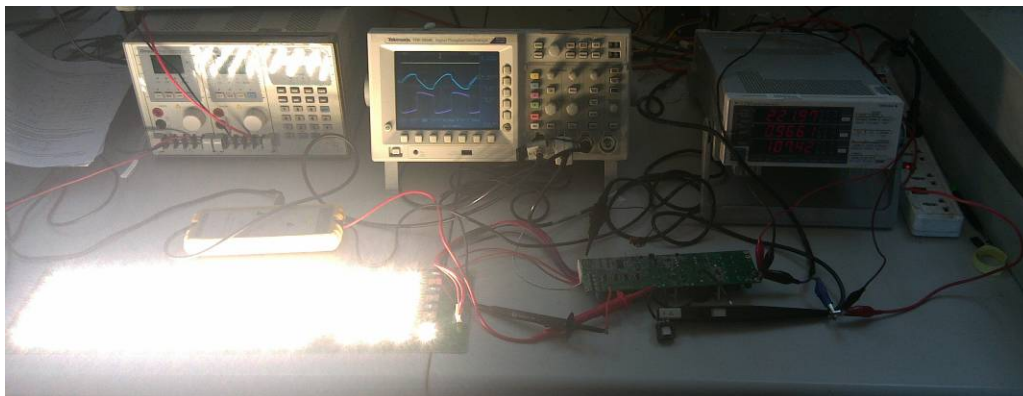
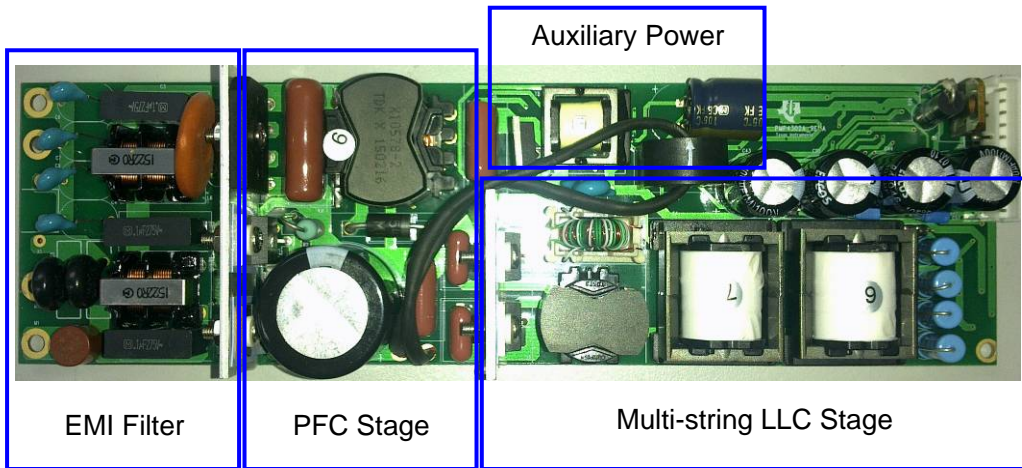


Figure 8. Demo board for PMP4302A reference design

Table 1. Electrical Design Specification

Specification Items	Min	Typical	Max
Input AC Voltage	90Vac	220Vac	264Vac
Output Voltage Tolerance		54Vdc	60Vdc
Number of LED strings		4	
Output current per string	485mA	500mA	515mA
Output current tolerance per string			+3%
PWM dimming range	1%		100%
Power Factor (90Vac~264Vac)	0.95	0.98	0.99
Efficiency @ 100% dimming	88%	91.5%	
Turn-on Delay			200ms
Output String Open Loop		Yes	
Output String Over-voltage	60Vdc w/ latch off		
Output String Under-voltage			40Vdc w/ latch off
Output String Short		Yes	
Maximum Input Current @ 90Vac 100% dimming light		1.3A	
Primary over current			2A

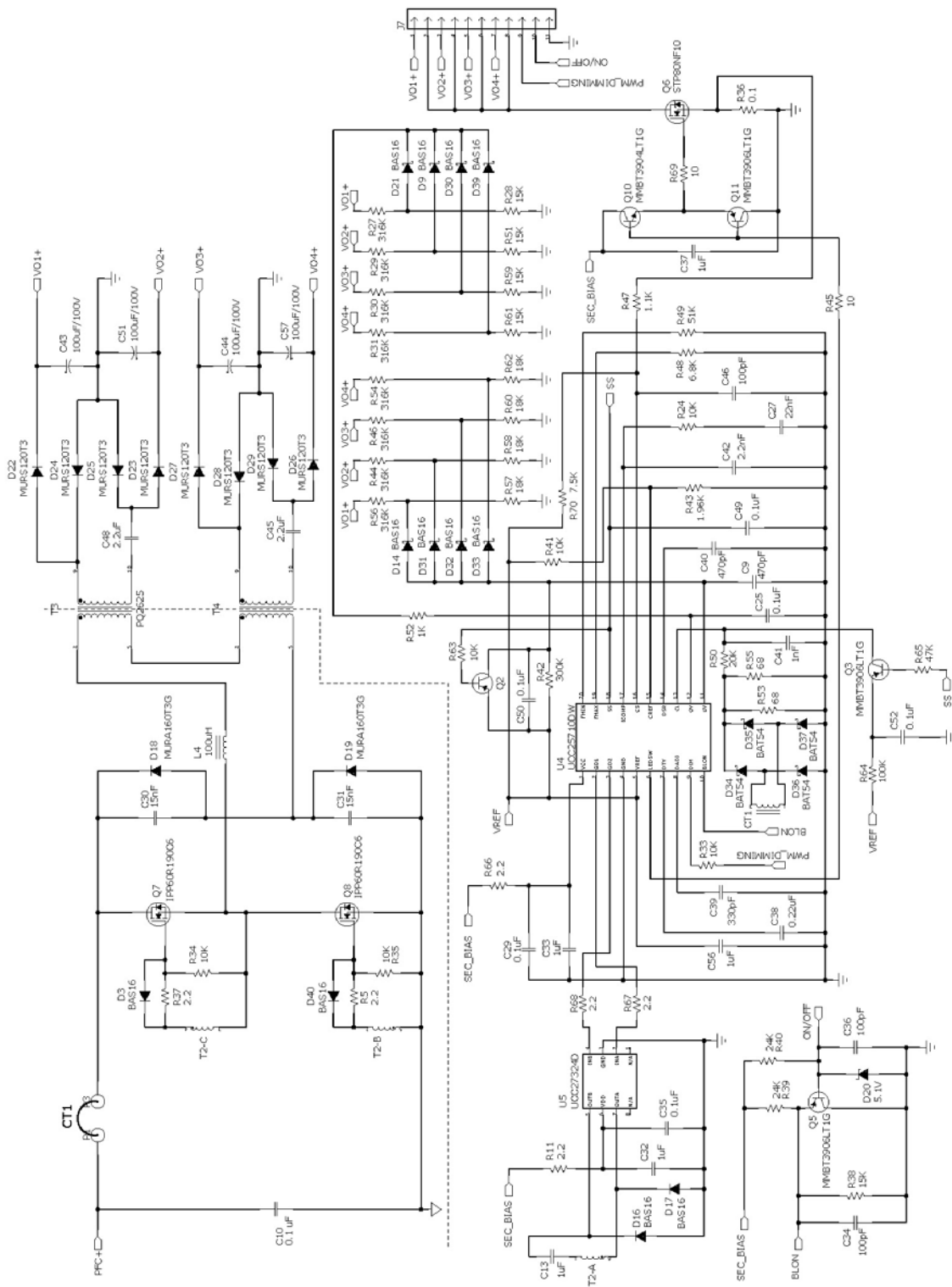


Figure 10. Multi-string LLC stage schematic of PMP4302A

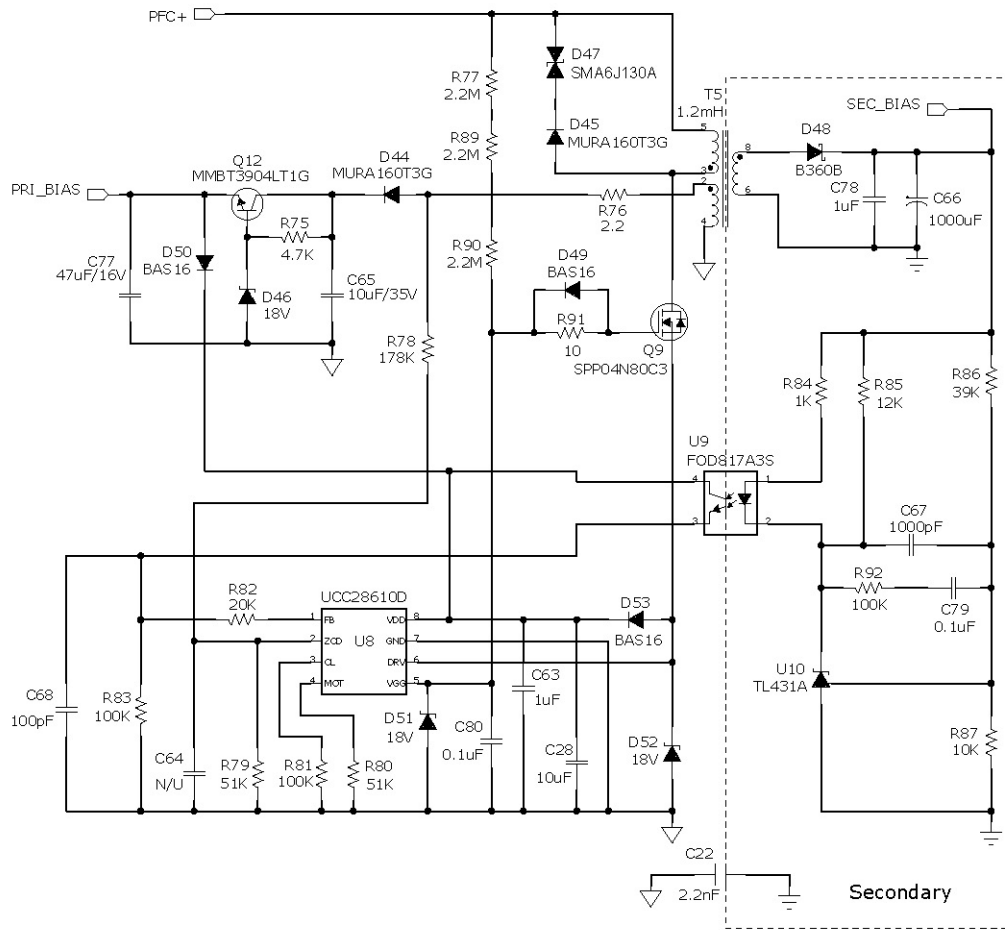


Figure 11. Auxiliary Flyback stage schematic of PMP4302A

5.3 Output Current Matching

Because of transformer’s magnetic balance with primary windings in series, the multi-transformer LLC converter can achieve good current matching performance. There are two considerations to improve current matching performance between the strings:

1. It is recommended to set the operating frequency above resonance when at nominal input voltage range of the LLC converter. This improves LED current matching and transient response during dimming. This will also make the output current operate in continuous current mode, and it will have a much smaller difference in current between each string.
2. In a real transformer, the magnetizing current of the transformer has an influence on output current matching. A smaller magnetizing current will have good current matching performance. It is important to set the equivalent magnetizing inductance of the transformer as high as possible to minimize the magnetizing current.

Table 2 gives the output current on each LED string with input voltage from 90Vac to 264Vac at 100% dimming. Table 3 also shows the output current but with PWM dimming duty cycle from 5% to 100% at 90Vac, 230Vac and 264Vac input. The output current matching tolerance is less than +3% according to the below data.

Table 2. Output current with input voltage

Vin	Io1(A)	Io2(A)	Io3(A)	Io4(A)
90	0.5086	0.5065	0.5064	0.5023
100	0.5083	0.5063	0.5068	0.5025
110	0.5081	0.5062	0.5067	0.5028
130	0.5081	0.5061	0.5077	0.5029
160	0.5079	0.5057	0.5073	0.503
180	0.5077	0.5056	0.5073	0.503
200	0.5076	0.5055	0.5075	0.5032
220	0.5076	0.5054	0.5074	0.5032
230	0.5077	0.5055	0.5076	0.5033
264	0.5078	0.5056	0.5075	0.5031

Table 3. Output current with PWM dimming and input voltage

90Vin								
Dimming	Io1(mA)	Io2(mA)	Io3(mA)	Io4(mA)	Max(mA)	Min(mA)	Ave(mA)	%
5%	25.1	24.6	25.8	25.7	25.8	24.6	25.3	2.371542
10%	50.4	49.7	51.4	51.4	51.4	49.7	50.725	1.675702
20%	100.9	100.1	102.8	102.5	102.8	100.1	101.575	1.329067
30%	151.4	150.4	154.1	153.8	154.1	150.4	152.425	1.213712
40%	201.9	200.7	205.4	204.9	205.4	200.7	203.225	1.156354
50%	252.5	251	256.3	255.6	256.3	251	253.85	1.043924
60%	302.8	301.5	307.7	307.4	307.7	301.5	304.85	1.016894
70%	353.5	351.8	358.6	357.8	358.6	351.8	355.425	0.956601
80%	403.9	402.2	409.7	408.8	409.7	402.2	406.15	0.923304
90%	454.3	452.2	461.1	460.1	461.1	452.2	456.925	0.973902
99%	499.3	496.7	507.2	506.2	507.2	496.7	502.35	1.045088
100%	503.9	501.4	512.4	511.7	512.4	501.4	507.35	1.084064
230Vin								
Dimming	Io1(mA)	Io2(mA)	Io3(mA)	Io4(mA)	Max(mA)	Min(mA)	Ave(mA)	%
5%	25.2	24.5	25.9	25.7	25.9	24.5	25.325	2.764067
10%	50.4	49.7	51.5	51.3	51.5	49.7	50.725	1.774273
20%	100.9	100.1	102.7	102.5	102.7	100.1	101.55	1.280158
30%	151.4	150.4	154.1	153.6	154.1	150.4	152.375	1.21411
40%	201.9	200.9	205.1	204.9	205.1	200.9	203.2	1.033465
50%	252.4	251.1	256.4	255.8	256.4	251.1	253.925	1.043615
60%	302.9	301.4	307.7	307	307.7	301.4	304.75	1.033634
70%	353.5	351.8	358.6	357.8	358.6	351.8	355.425	0.956601
80%	403.9	402.2	409.7	408.8	409.7	402.2	406.15	0.923304
90%	454.3	452.2	461.1	460.1	461.1	452.2	456.925	0.973902
99%	499.3	496.7	507.2	506.2	507.2	496.7	502.35	1.045088
100%	503.9	501.4	512.4	511.7	512.4	501.4	507.35	1.084064

264Vin								
Dimming	Io1(mA)	Io2(mA)	Io3(mA)	Io4(mA)	Max(mA)	Min(mA)	Ave(mA)	%
5%	25.1	24.6	25.8	25.7	25.8	24.6	25.3	2.371542
10%	50.4	49.7	51.4	51.4	51.4	49.7	50.725	1.675702
20%	100.9	100.1	102.8	102.5	102.8	100.1	101.575	1.329067
30%	151.4	150.4	154.1	153.8	154.1	150.4	152.425	1.213712
40%	201.9	200.7	205.4	204.9	205.4	200.7	203.225	1.156354
50%	252.5	251	256.3	255.6	256.3	251	253.85	1.043924
60%	302.8	301.5	307.7	307.4	307.7	301.5	304.85	1.016894
70%	353.5	351.8	358.6	357.8	358.6	351.8	355.425	0.956601
80%	403.9	402.2	409.8	408.6	409.8	402.2	406.125	0.935673
90%	454.3	452.4	461.1	460.3	461.1	452.4	457.025	0.951808
99%	499.4	496.7	507.2	506.2	507.2	496.7	502.375	1.045036
100%	503.9	501.4	512.4	511.7	512.4	501.4	507.35	1.084064

5.4 Efficiency

Efficiency is a key benefit for this solution. Efficiency is also related to component selection and transformer design. The figure below is the efficiency curve for the PWM dimming version, and it shows the highest efficiency is above 91%. For a non-dimming version only one schottky diode is used for each string and there is no need for the PWM dimming MOSFET on the output side, this can further improve overall efficiency by another 1~2%.

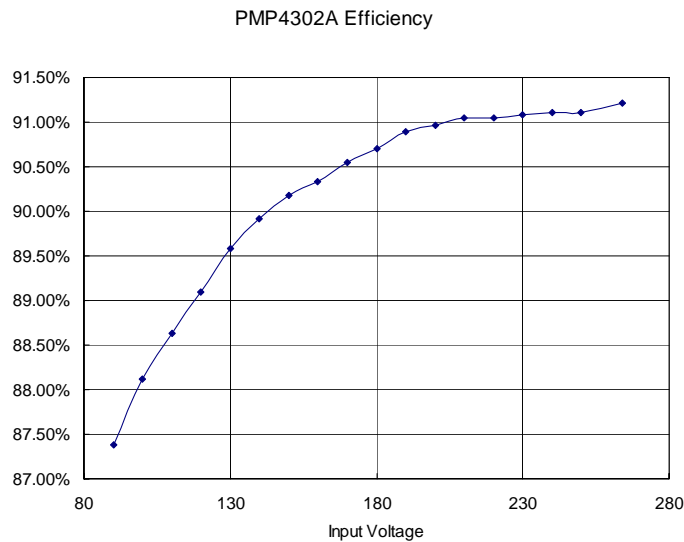
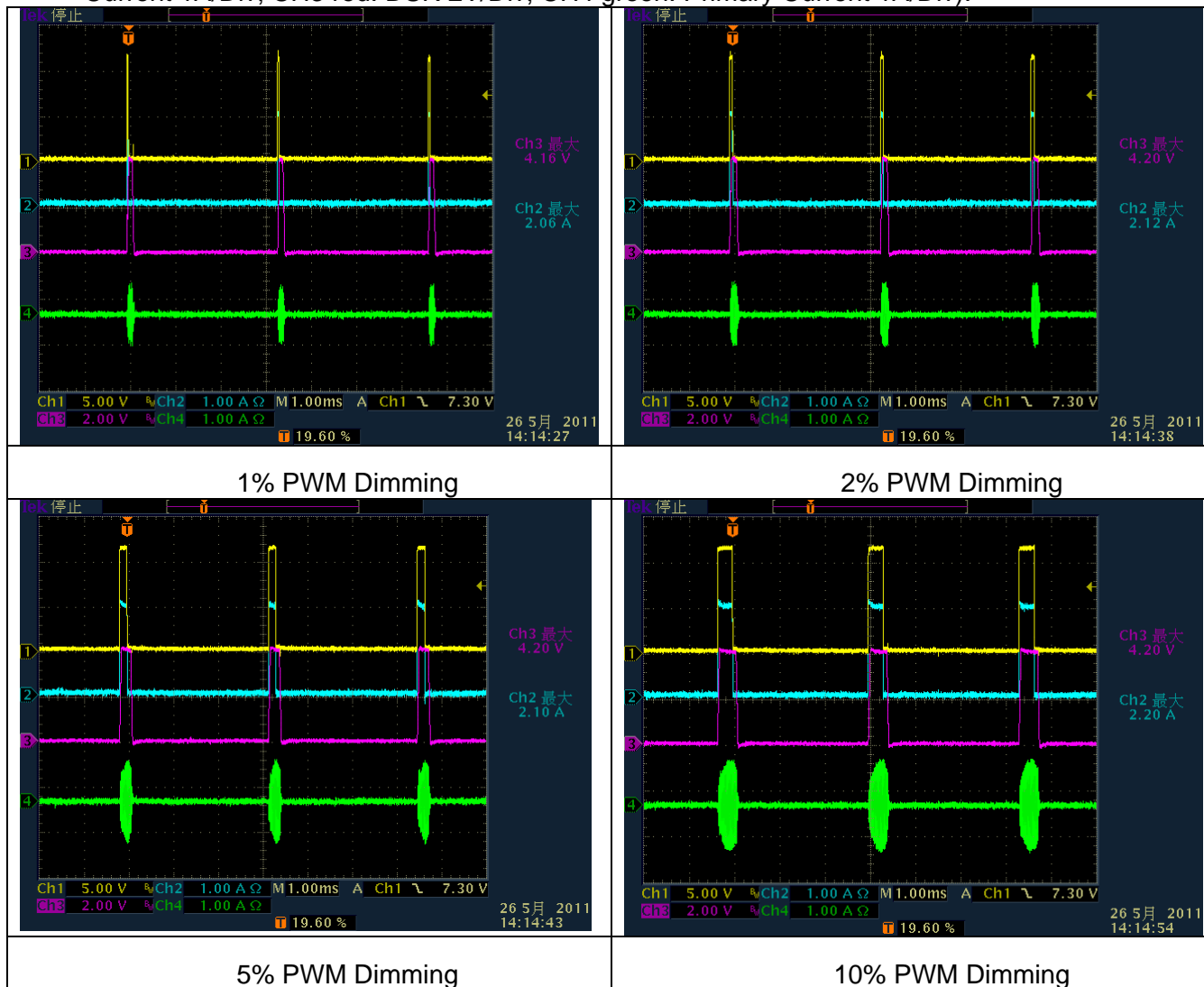


Figure 12. Efficiency curve for PWM dimming version

5.5 Dimming waveform

This solution can support group PWM dimming from 1% to 100% range. In order to get a linear dimming performance, the UCC25710 has a small delay time which allows the current loop to maintain control at low PWM dimming duty cycles. Meanwhile, the DSR (Dimming Slew Rate) function is used to control the rise and fall time of the VCO control voltage, allowing potentially audible electro-mechanically induced noise to be minimized. Figure 13 shows the operating waveforms during dimming. (CH1 yellow: LEDSW MOSFET Vgs 5V/Div; CH2 blue: LED Output Current 1A/Div; CH3 red: DSR 2V/Div; CH4 green: Primary Current 1A/Div).



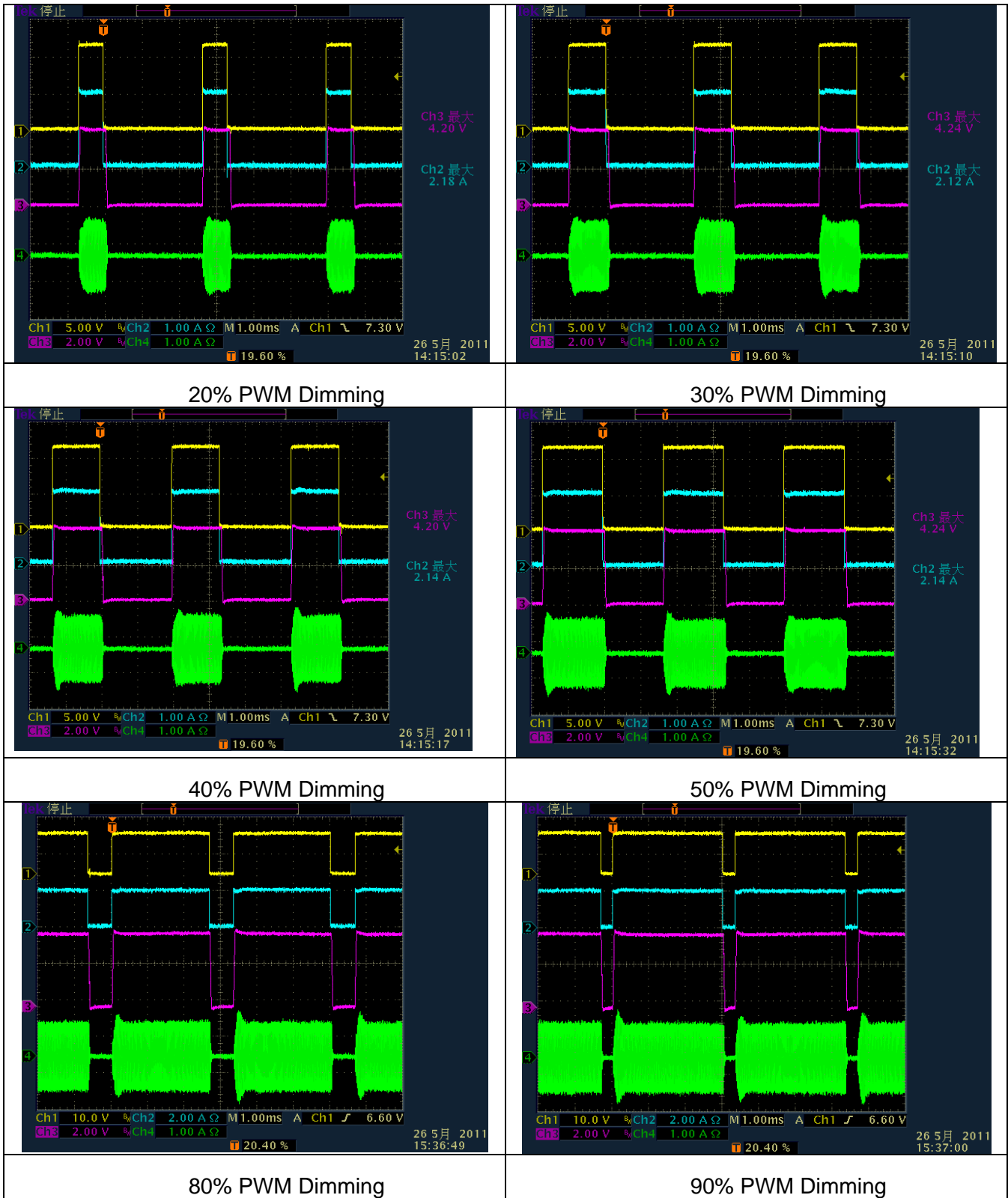


Figure 13. Operating waveforms during PWM dimming

5.6 LLC stage waveforms

Figure 14 shows operating waveform for the LLC stage at full load, it shows the output current is operating in CCM in order to achieve perfect current matching performance. Here, CH1 (yellow) is Primary MOSFET Vds waveform with 100V/Div; CH2 (blue) is LED Output Current with 200mA/Div and CH4 (green) is primary current with 1A/Div.

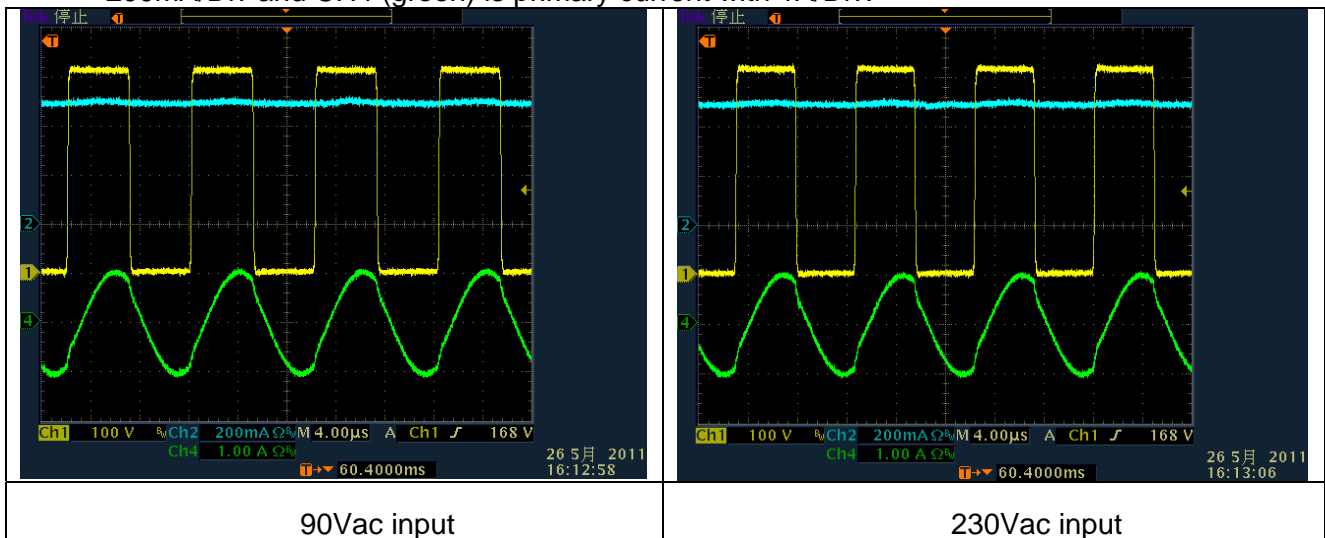


Figure 14. LLC stage waveforms at full load

5.7 EMI performance

EMI is another benefit with this multi-string LLC topology. Figure 15 shows the test result for conducted noise for this PMP4302A reference design.

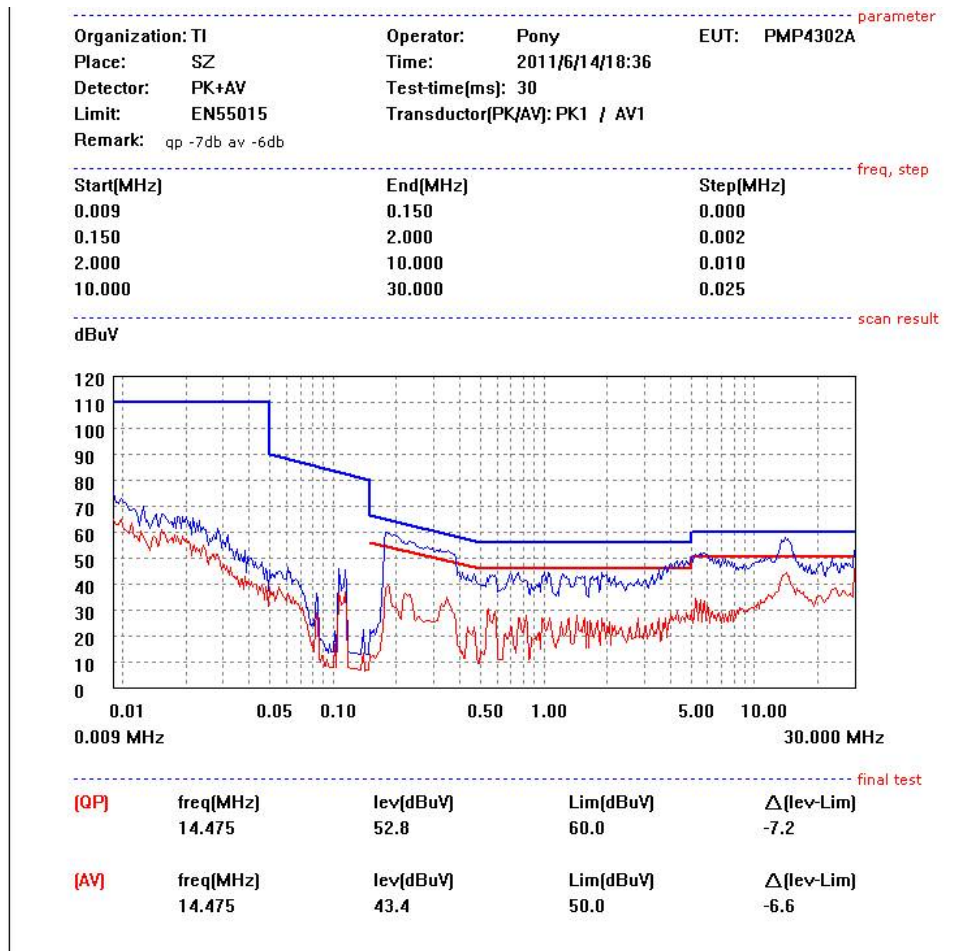


Figure 15. EMI conducted test results, EN55015 limits.

6 Conclusion

This application note presents a new multi-transformer LLC topology for general LED lighting. It demonstrates high efficiency and PWM dimming. A 100W LED lighting driver to drive 4 LED strings verified the performance for this proposed topology.

References

1. *UCC25710 datasheet, Texas Instruments (SLUSAD7A)*
2. *UCC28810 datasheet, Texas Instruments (SLUS865)*
3. *UCC28610 datasheet, Texas Instruments (SLUS888D)*

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