

DLP5531-Q1 Chipset Video Processing for Light Control Applications

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ABSTRACT

This application report describes the video processing performed by the [DLPC230-Q1](#) as part of the [DLP5531-Q1](#) chipset to display an image optimized for automotive light control applications such as high resolution headlights and other exterior lighting products. Topics include image sequencing, illumination driving architecture, dithering, gamma correction, and image resizing which all impact the final output image. This information is intended for system designers involved in video content generation and illumination design.

TI applications engineers and software tools typically configure the parameters required to optimally display video in automotive light control end applications. However, an understanding of these background concepts can benefit designers working with the DLP® Products chipset.

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1 DMD Imaging Introduction

The Digital micromirror device (DMD) mirrors have two operational states. Light reflected off of the mirrors is either reflected toward the projection lens (ON state) or toward a light absorber (OFF state). This is shown in [Figure 1](#).

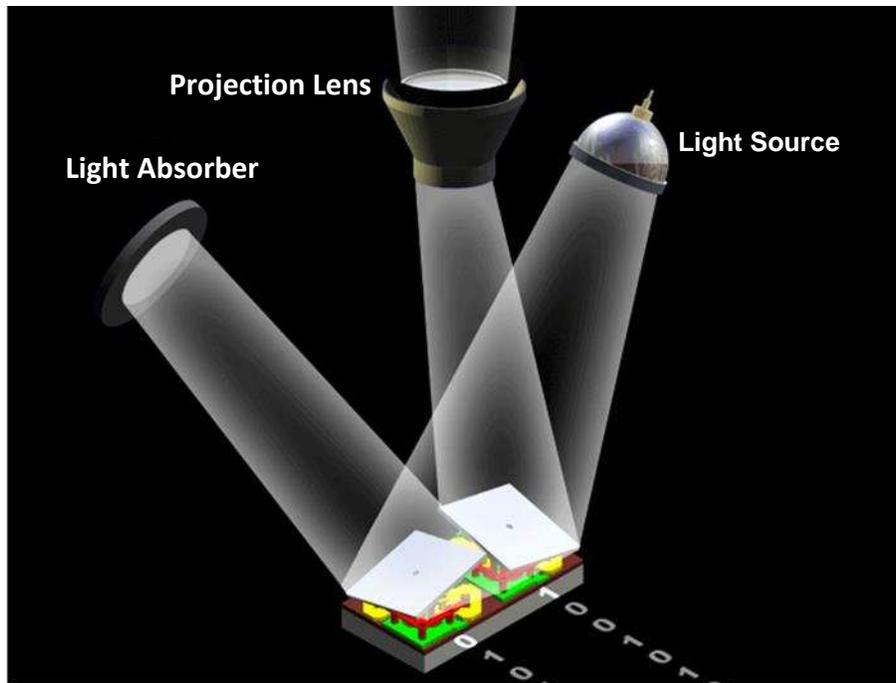


Figure 1. DMD Projection

A memory cell under each mirror determines the next state that each mirror will move to when a reset waveform is applied. The reset waveform is automatically provided by the DLPC230-Q1 controller and applies an electrostatic force to the mirrors that physically moves them to the position stored in their memory cells.

The mirror states are updated rapidly during each video frame to display different shades of gray. Although the DMD is in the ON or OFF state at any given time, the human eye integrates the brightness intensity from all of the mirror states throughout the video frame into one image.

A DMD controller, in this case the DLPC230-Q1, performs the job of converting the input video data into binary patterns that are displayed on the DMD throughout each frame.

2 Typical DLP5531-Q1 Chipset Block Diagram

The DLP5531-Q1 chipset includes three components: DLP5531-Q1, DLPC230-Q1, and TPS99000-Q1. A typical automotive exterior lighting block diagram is shown in Figure 2. The DLP5531-Q1 is a 0.55" 1.3 megapixel DMD. The DLPC230-Q1 processes video input and commands from a host processor, and then drives the DLP5531-Q1 DMD and illumination source based on these inputs. The TPS99000-Q1 includes power regulators for the DMD voltage rails, and helps to coordinate power-up and power-down for the chipset. It also includes an ADC measurement sub-system that is controlled by the DLPC230-Q1 to monitor system voltages such as input voltage rails.

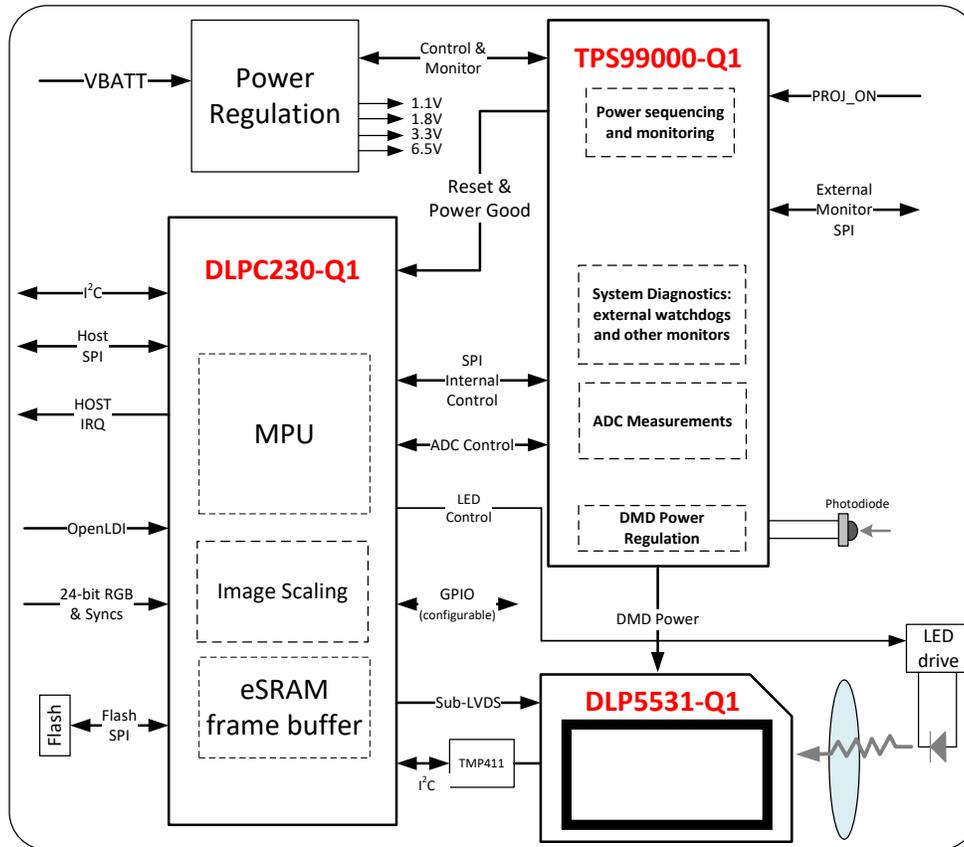


Figure 2. Typical System Block Diagram

3 DLPC230-Q1 Processing Path Overview

Figure 3 shows a block diagram of the internal blocks of the DLPC230-Q1. This document focuses on the yellow highlighted blocks which are related to the processing and displaying of video data.

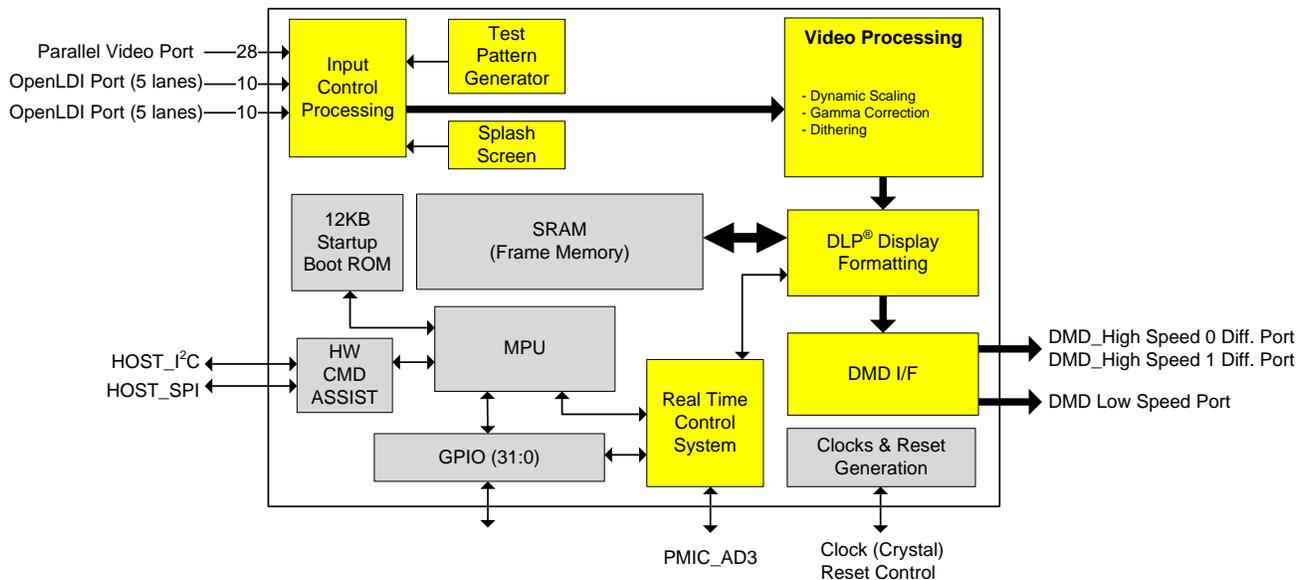


Figure 3. System Block Diagram

The video path begins with either external video input or internal image generation. The DLPC230-Q1 supports both OpenLDI (FPD-Link I) and parallel external video input. It also includes support for basic static test pattern generation and static splash images loaded from flash memory. These sources are multiplexed into the video processing block.

The video processing block performs real-time image scaling, corrects for gamma, and applies dithering. The output of the video processing is input to the formatter block to convert the image to DMD data. The formatter block includes the sequencer that breaks the image down into DMD mirror positions for display. Output data from the formatter block is then written to the DMD over its high speed and low speed ports. Signals are also output to drive illumination synchronously with DMD events throughout the video frame.

3.1 Video Input

The DLPC230-Q1 supports RGB888 video input, where each color has 8 bits per pixel. For the headlight application, the DLPC230-Q1 only uses 8-bit red data from any video source. Blue and green data are unused. It is recommended that blue and green inputs be set to zero in order to avoid unnecessary power consumption.

The DLPC230-Q1 parallel video input interface supports signal multiplexing to map any bit to any bit. This can be configured in the DLP Composer™ for Automotive tool. This tool includes help documentation to explain the usage of this interface. This allows the use of any color signals on the parallel interface as long as they are mapped to the red data. Other unused parallel data signals on the DLPC230 may be tied to ground.

The DLPC230-Q1 OpenLDI interface supports signal multiplexing for data lanes, but individual color data cannot be multiplexed. Therefore, all data lanes must be connected and the video data must be input through the red data bits.

Refer to the DLPC230-Q1 data sheet for specifications on video timing, supported resolutions, and supported frame rates.

3.2 Video Latency

The video latency of the DLP5531-Q1 chipset is one video frame. This is the time that it takes for the DLPC230-Q1 to receive the video data, process it, and display it on the DLP5531-Q1 DMD. A typical video input frame rate is 60 Hz, which is 16.66 ms.

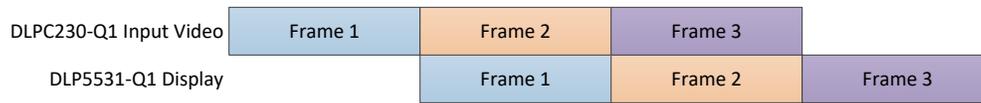


Figure 4. Video Latency

4 DMD Sequencing

The goal of DMD sequencing is to coordinate the two DMD mirror states over time to create a full bit depth image ranging from full dark (black) to full bright (white). A sequence is a look-up table programmed to SPI flash and read by the DLPC230-Q1. This look-up table defines how the DLPC230-Q1 will convert input video data to DMD instructions. The DLPC230-Q1 performs the actions in this table on each input video frame to properly display it. The sequence also defines the illumination control signals throughout the video frame in order to synchronize the illumination with DMD positions.

The following sections use an example to demonstrate how sequencing works and then describe individual aspects in further detail.

4.1 Introduction Example

The following simplified example demonstrates how the two states of the DMD can be utilized to achieve a broad range of brightness intensities. In this example, a gray ramp image with 4 bits of depth is displayed as shown in [Figure 5](#).

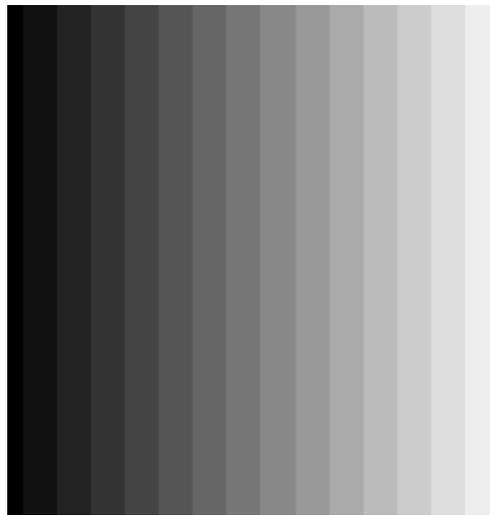


Figure 5. Sequence Example Input Image

With a basic binary bit depth of 4, there are $2^4 = 16$ possible brightness intensities.

0	0	0	0	0000
0	0	0	1	0001
0	0	1	0	0010
0	0	1	1	0011
0	1	0	0	0100
0	1	0	1	0101
0	1	1	0	0110
0	1	1	1	0111
1	0	0	0	1000
1	0	0	1	1001
1	0	1	0	1010
1	0	1	1	1011
1	1	0	0	1100
1	1	0	1	1101
1	1	1	0	1110
1	1	1	1	1111

Figure 6. 4-bit Brightness Intensity Levels

Since the DMD is a binary device, the DMD mirrors cannot directly display these intermediate values. Pulse width modulation is used to create intermediate intensity levels. The DLPC230-Q1 breaks the image into individual bit patterns of ON or OFF data, referred to as bit planes. It then transmits each of these bit planes to the DMD in rapid succession.

Figure 7 shows what these bit planes would look like given the example input video data and bit depth described above. The white regions are ON micromirrors and the black regions are OFF micromirrors.

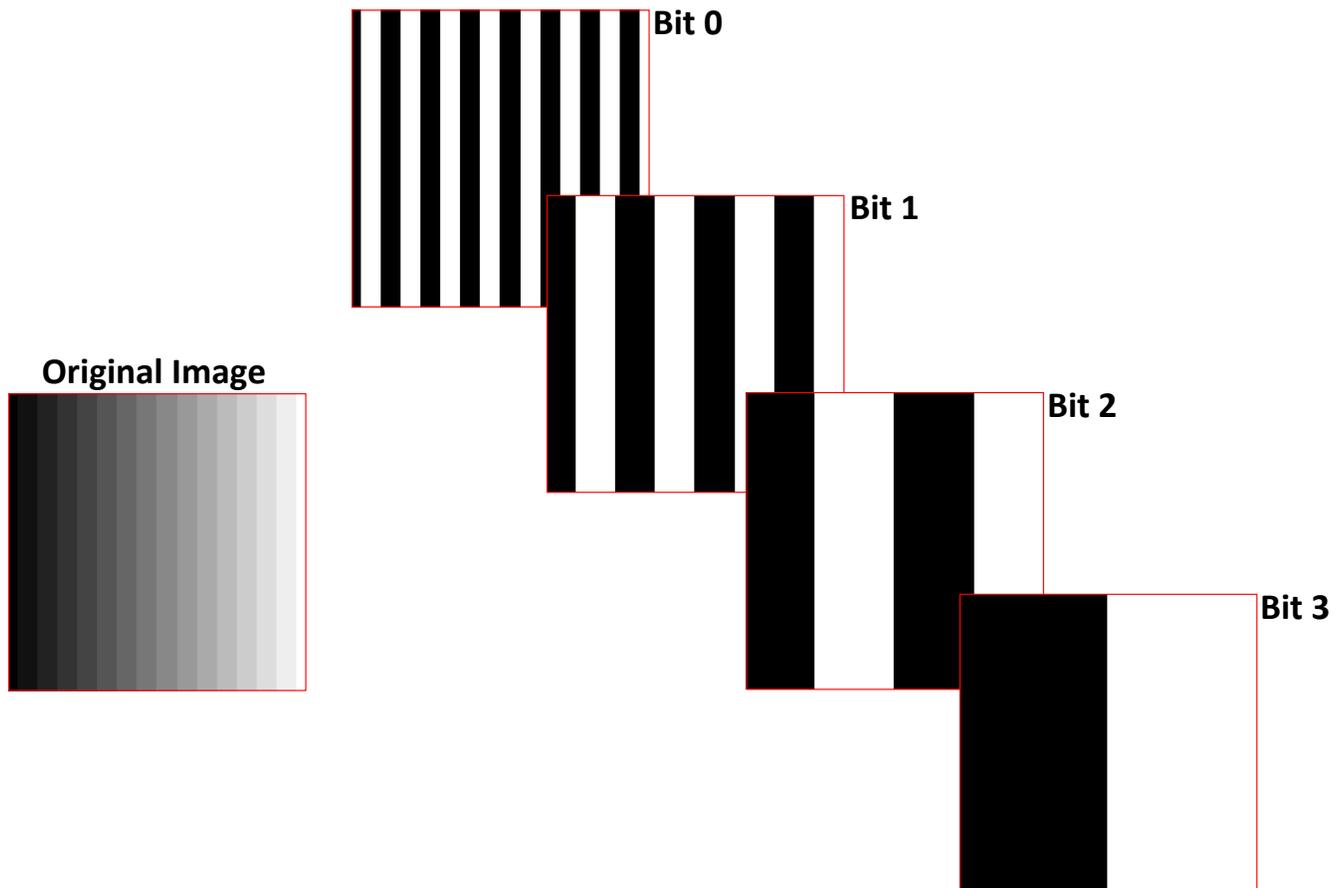


Figure 7. Sequence Example Bit Planes

This representation shows the white portions at the same intensity for each bit plane, but each bit plane must have different white intensity to represent different binary weights. Bit 0 must have half the intensity of bit 1, and bit 1 must have half the intensity of bit 2:

Table 1. 4-Bit Binary Bit Weights

Bit Plane	Relative Bit Weight
0	1
1	2
2	4
3	8

If these 4 bit planes were added on top of each other with the correct bit weight, the original image would be created.

There are two mechanisms for controlling the bit weight of each bit plane: time displayed and illumination magnitude. For the purposes of DLPC230-Q1 sequences, illumination magnitude is kept constant throughout the frame to simplify the illumination driver electronics. Therefore, time is the only mechanism used to control bit weight. The eye integrates the displayed image, which means that a bit plane that is displayed for a longer period of time will be perceived with a greater intensity.

Figure 8 demonstrates one way in which the bit planes could be displayed within the video frame to maintain their respective bit weights. Each block of time in the video frame indicates the time over which the DMD is displaying that bit plane. The time of each consecutive bit is halved in order to maintain the correct bit weights. The bit plane images are displayed with the bit weight that the eye will perceive based on time displayed. The end-user's eye will only perceive the final image shown at the bottom of Figure 8 if these bit planes are displayed at high speed. Intuitively, it is clear that the far left side of the original ramp is a pixel value of 0, and indeed the left side of each bit plane sets the micromirrors in an OFF state. Likewise, the right side of the original ramp is a pixel value of 1, and the right side of each bit plane sets the micromirrors to an ON state.

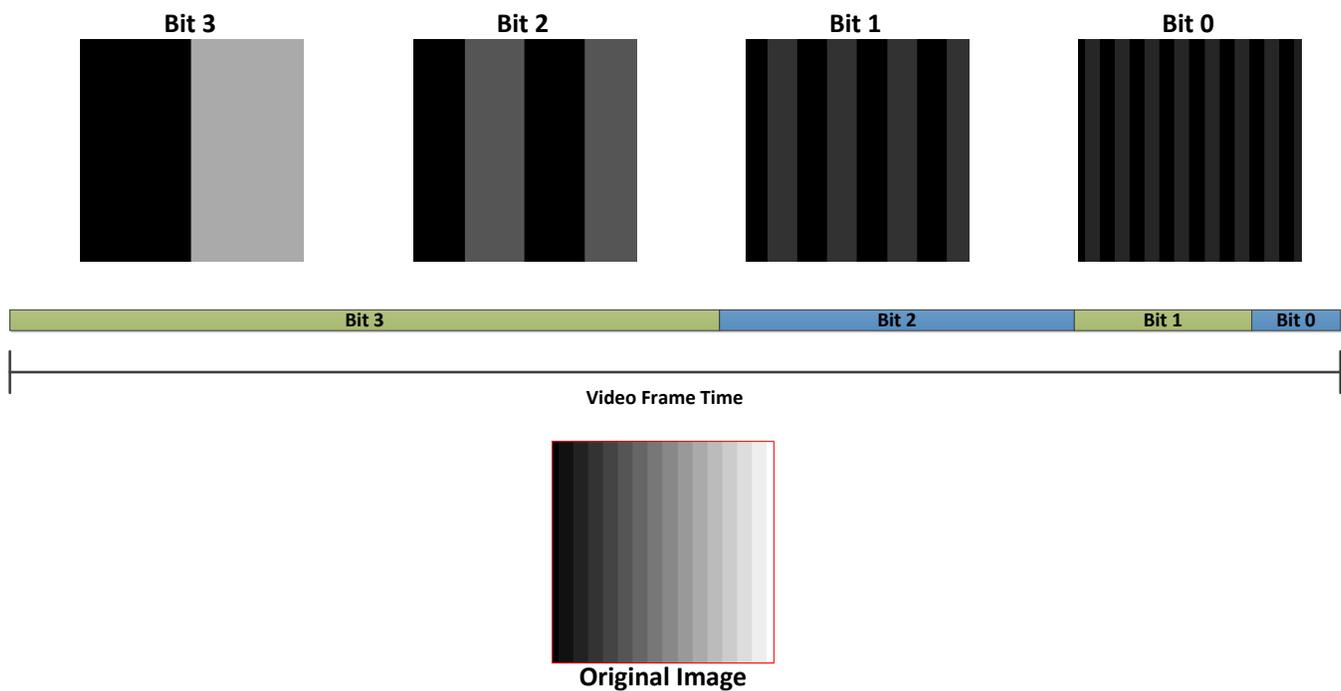


Figure 8. Sequence Example Bit Weights

The sequence look-up table defines the number of bit planes used in a video frame, the bit weights, and timing of the bits to be displayed. During operation, the DLPC230-Q1 uses that look-up table and applies it to break down and display any arbitrary video content that is provided.

4.2 Sequence Definitions

This section describes commonly used terms in sequence generation. Additional implementation detail beyond the introduction example is also provided.

4.2.1 Bit Plane

A bit plane is the binary state of all of the DMD mirrors required to represent a specific bit in the sequence. At any displaying point within the video frame, all of the DMD mirrors are displaying one specific bit plane. The number of bit planes used in a sequence varies, as do the bit weights of those bit planes. The mirror states within a bit plane are entirely dependent on the sequence definition and the input image content, which often varies every frame.

4.2.2 Complement Bit Plane

A complement bit plane is the inverse data of a specified bit plane. All ON mirrors in the bit plane are OFF and all OFF mirrors in the bit plane are ON when the complement bit plane is displayed. The use of complement bit planes is discussed further in Section 4.3.3.

4.2.3 Bit Weight

Bit weight is the relative intensity of each bit plane. This directly impacts the bit depth, and typically bit depth is used to summarize the bit weights used. Note that different bit weights are used for different sequences for optimization of brightness, which means that each sequence may have slightly different bit depth.

4.2.4 Bit Depth

Bit depth is a single number used to describe the range of intensities that are capable of being displayed based on the selected bit weights in the sequence. For example, a bit depth of 8 means that $2^8 = 256$ unique intensities can be displayed with assumed binary weighting.

The DLPC230-Q1 is capable of using non-binary bit weights, and is almost always programmed to do so for optimal displaying.

As an example, the weights in [Table 2](#) can be used.

Table 2. Bit Weight Examples

Bit Plane	Relative Bit Weight
0	1
1	1
2	2
3	2
4	4
5	4
6	6
7	6
8	8
9	8

The bit depth for these bits is still represented in the form 2^{BitDepth} despite their non-binary weighting. To calculate this, the following formula is used:

$$\text{BitDepth} = \log_2 \frac{\sum \text{BitWeights}}{\text{LSb}} \quad (1)$$

In this example, the least significant bit (LSb) is 1 and the sum of all bit weights is 42. Therefore the bit depth using these example bit weights is 5.39.

Using the same bit weight multiple times means that some intensity levels can be generated with several different combinations of bit planes. This allows the DLPC230-Q1 to adjust which bit planes are used to create each pixel's intensity in real time. The benefit to this is to spread the frequency at which each pixel is illuminated across the video frame time. This is one mechanism used to reduce potential low frequency flickering that could be perceived by the eye.

Increasing the bit depth is usually a tradeoff with other parameters in the sequence, such as brightness. This is discussed further in [Section 4.3.1](#).

4.2.5 Bit Segment

A bit segment is a time span in the sequence during which a bit plane is displayed on the DMD.

As mentioned in the introduction example, each bit plane must be displayed for a specific amount of time to achieve its relative bit weight compared to the other bit planes. However, this time does not have to be displayed all at once. It is preferable to split the time required for a bit plane into several bit segments and distribute them across the sequence rather than display the bit plane in one long continuous interval. This is done to avoid low frequency switching artifacts that could be perceived by the end-user when displaying certain intensity levels.

[Figure 9](#) uses the simplified introduction example 4-bit sequence to demonstrate how bit segments can be used to distribute the bit weights across the sequence time.

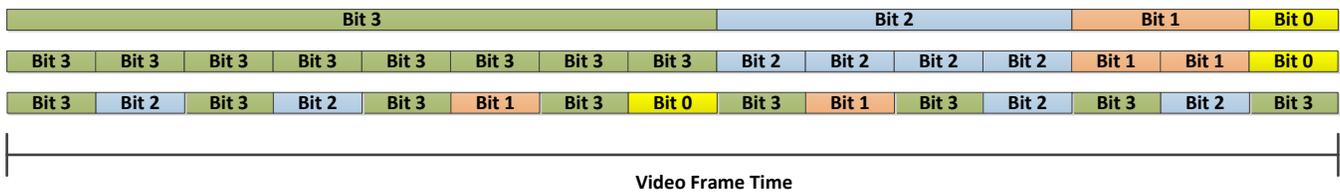


Figure 9. Bit Segments

In the top sequence each bit plane is only displayed once and bit 3 consumes half of the frame time. If a half intensity shade (b1000) were to be displayed on a micromirror, that micromirror would only be on during the bit 3 time segment. This would cause the frequency of light switching from that micromirror to be exactly the frame rate as shown in [Figure 10](#).



Figure 10. Reduced Bit Segments

If the same half intensity were displayed on the bottom sequence, the frequency of light switching would be much higher, which is more desirable to avoid any perceived brightness switching or strobing effects. This is demonstrated in [Figure 11](#).

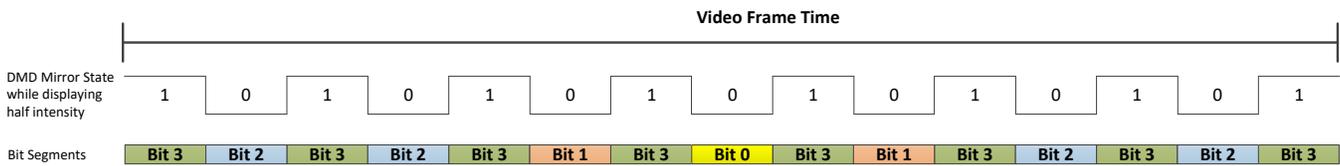


Figure 11. Increased Bit Segments

4.2.6 Reset Waveform

The DMD reset waveform is a voltage pulse that the DLPC230-Q1 commands the DLP5531-Q1 to execute after each bitplane is loaded to the DMD during the video frame. This pulse applies an electrostatic force to each micromirror in the DMD array in order to move them to the position loaded into their memory cells.

4.2.7 Refresh Rate

The human eye will integrate 60 Hz smoothly when viewing stable content, but moving content in applications such as automotive headlights adds the risk of viewing only small time portions of the total video frame. This can cause brightness flickering artifacts unless a higher refresh rate is used.

Refresh rate is the frequency at which the same content is repeatedly displayed. Increasing the refresh rate mitigates flicker and PWM artifacts. A faster refresh rate is achieved using bit segments to distribute the display of bit planes into several groups within the video frame. Generally the refresh rate is an integer multiple of the video frame rate. For example, if the bit planes are segmented and separated into 6 groups in a 60-Hz frame rate sequence, then the refresh rate is 360 Hz.

In the bit segment example in [Figure 10](#) with poorly optimized bit 3 length, if the user stops viewing the projection source halfway through the video frame then the user may perceive bit 3 as the entire intensity of the video frame. If the user then begins viewing halfway through another frame, they may only see bit 2, 1, 0, which are all off. This large brightness difference can cause flickering effects as the user and projection source move relative to each other, or when the user blinks for example. This effect is also more noticeable in peripheral vision. Designing for a higher refresh rate averages the content at a higher frequency to mitigate any potential perceived flickering effect.

When refresh rate is increased, each bit segment becomes shorter, which also helps mitigate potential PWM artifacts from low frequency switching.

4.2.8 Sub-Frame

A sub-frame is one set of bit segments used to display the video content within the video frame. The number of sub-frames is determined by the refresh rate. For example, if the refresh rate is 360 Hz and the frame rate is 60 Hz, then there are 6 sub-frames. This number of sub-frames is typical of the sequences used for automotive exterior lighting applications.

4.3 Key Parameters

Several key factors impact application-specific sequence design. Headlight sequences utilize single-color illumination and prioritize brightness and refresh rate. Other parameters that are considered are DMD micromirror landed duty cycle, number of DMD reset waveform executions, and bit depth.

4.3.1 Brightness

Brightness is the highest sequence priority for the headlight application. Maximum brightness is achieved by minimizing the time that light is off in the sequence.

There are 3 situations when light may be off during a sequence:

- Reduced DMD duty cycle at high temperature for extended automotive operating lifetime
- DMD reset waveform executions to change mirror positions
- Illumination time shorter than the DMD load time

DMD duty cycle is described in further detail in [Section 4.3.3](#).

DMD resets are described in further detail in [Section 4.3.4](#).

Illumination Time and DMD Load time are described in further detail in [Section 4.3.2](#).

4.3.2 Illumination Time and DMD Load Time

Illumination time shorter than the DMD load time can be avoided by selecting the bit weights in a way that avoids any bit segment from requiring less display time than the DMD load time. Ultimately this results in trading bit depth with brightness. For the headlight application, brightness is prioritized and sequences are designed to prevent any illumination time from being shorter than the DMD load time. The minimum reset-to-reset time for the DLP5531-Q1 chipset is approximately 105 μ s. This minimum length is determined by the DMD loading and reset time.

[Figure 12](#) demonstrates a bit segment that displays for longer than the minimum reset to reset time. This is the ideal scenario for the headlight application because the light output is maximized.

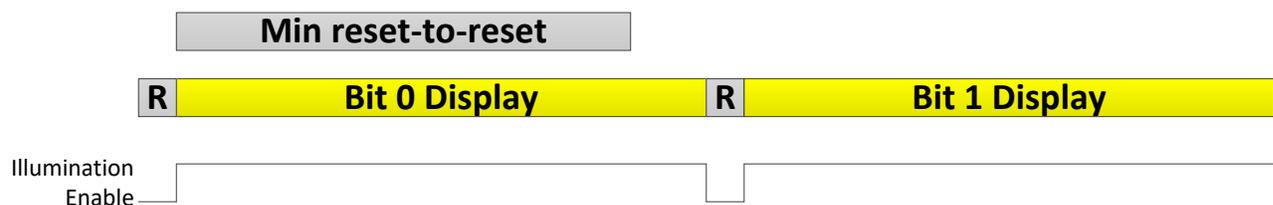


Figure 12. Optimized Illumination Time

Figure 13 demonstrates a bit segment that must display for less time than the minimum reset to reset time. This could occur if the relative bit weight of bit 0 to bit 1 forces bit 0 to be displayed for too short of a time, for example. In this scenario, the illumination must be disabled while the remaining DMD data is loaded for bit 1. This early disable of the illumination signal results in additional light loss. If bit 0 continued to be illuminated until the loading completed, the intensity of bit 0 would be too high compared to bit 1 and some pixel levels would appear too bright.

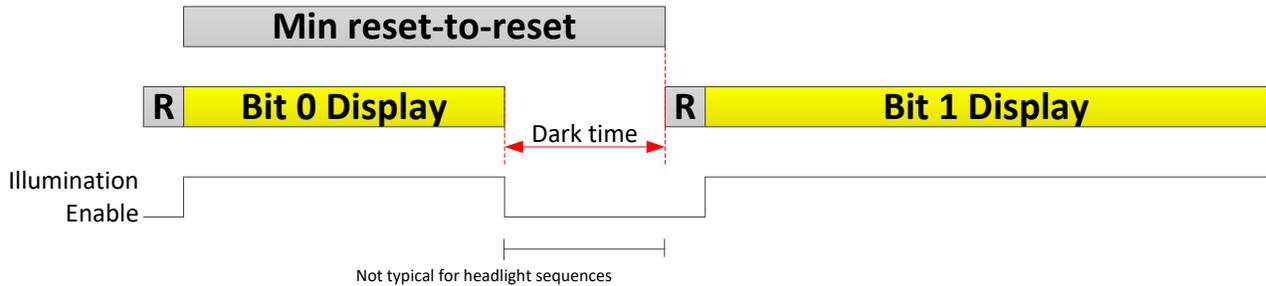


Figure 13. Unoptimized Illumination Time

Again, this scenario is typically avoided entirely for the headlight application by optimizing bit depth and the number of bit segments used in the sequence.

4.3.3 DMD Micromirror Duty Cycle

DMD micromirror duty cycle defines the percentage of time that a micromirror is in the ON state. This percentage is content-dependent as demonstrated in the previous sequence examples, and can vary for each micromirror on the DMD in the same frame based on what that micromirror is displaying.

Sequence duty cycle is commonly referred to as an ON/OFF value, and defines the percentage of time that the DMD is displaying content. The specified ON time includes reset waveform executions between ON bit segments. Light must be off during the reset waveform execution since the micromirrors are moving to their next state during this time and system contrast would be impacted by this scattered light. Illumination drive timing is defined in more detail in Section 4.4. During the OFF time, illumination is disabled and inverse video data is loaded to the DMD to exercise the DMD mirrors. This inverse data during OFF time is referred to as a complement bit plane.

Sequences are designed with a specific duty cycle that is designed to limit the maximum DMD micromirror duty cycle in order to maximize lifetime of the device over its wide automotive temperature range. Reliability and time for duty cycle operation is beyond the scope of this document, and may be found in *Reliability Lifetime Estimates for DLP553x-Q1*.

While operating at a lower duty cycle may be used to maximize the lifetime of the DMD, the tradeoff for operating at a lower duty cycle is brightness.

Two example DMD duty cycles are shown in Figure 14. This view shows sub-frames, each of which includes several bit segments. Several DMD resets occur within each sub-frame for each bit segment displayed. Illumination duty cycle will be lower than the DMD duty cycle because of the additional light loss from reset time.

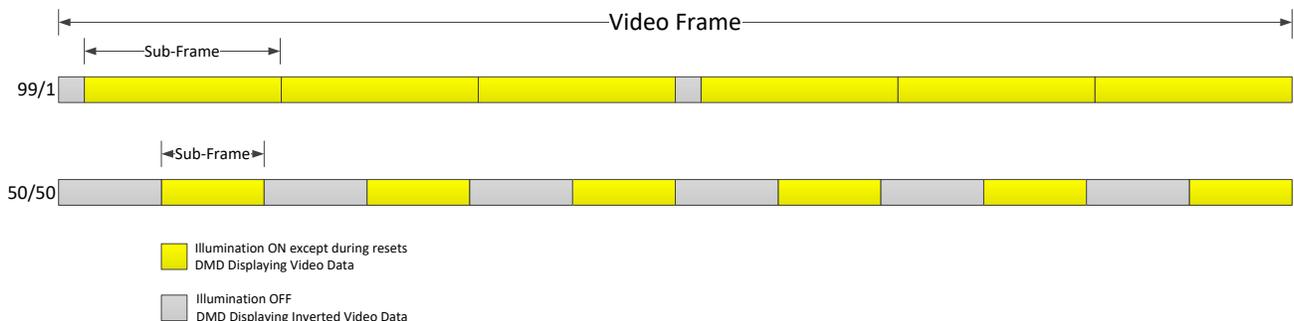


Figure 14. DMD Duty Cycle

Any integer DMD duty cycle from 99% ON to 50% ON can be supported.

4.3.4 Number of Resets

The DMD reset waveform is a fixed amount of time required to move the mirrors to their new positions. The number of times that the reset waveform is executed in a sequence is determined by the number of bit planes and the number of bit segments per bit plane. For the headlight application, this is directly related to bit depth and refresh rate. Doubling refresh rate will typically double the number of reset waveform executions. Adding one extra bit of depth will also typically double the number of reset waveform executions. These are general guidelines used when developing sequences, and there are exceptions.

Generally the reset waveform is executed 50-100 times per frame in a headlight sequence.

The tradeoff for adding additional reset waveform executions to the sequence is that illumination must be off during this time.

4.3.5 Refresh Rate

Refresh rate is defined in [Section 4.2.7](#). For headlight applications, sequences are typically designed for 360 Hz when using 60-Hz frame rate. This means that the content is displayed approximately 6 times per video frame. The maximum refresh rate varies with duty cycle and bit depth, but a typical maximum is 720 Hz for high duty cycle, low bit depth sequences while minimizing light loss.

4.3.6 Bit Depth

Bit depth is defined in [Section 4.2.4](#). For headlight applications, sequences are typically designed for approximately 5.0-6.0 bits of depth. The DLPC230-Q1 accepts video input with exactly 8 binary bits of depth regardless of sequence bit depth. The video depth is then mapped to output bit depth using the sequence and other algorithms described in this document.

Note that this bit depth value only considers sequence bit weights. The perceived system bit depth is much greater than this specified bit depth because of dithering and gamma curve correction described in [Section 5.1](#) and [Section 5.2](#).

4.4 Illumination Driver

The sequence controls when illumination signals are enabled in order to synchronize illumination with DMD reset waveform executions. The sequence bit weights and illumination signals are timed assuming ideal square pulses of light. Of course it is not possible to disable illumination instantaneously, and any rise and fall time changes the intensity of the weights. The intensity change due to rise and fall times can be perceived as non-linear pixel intensity if it is too significant. This section describes the recommended driver architecture and timing in order to achieve accurate bit weights.

There are two illumination signals driven by the DLPC230-Q1 for headlight sequences: drive control enable and shunt control enable. These two signals can be mapped to any of the four DLPC230-Q1 LEDSEL_X pins using the DLP Composer for Automotive tool. By convention, LEDSEL_0 and LEDSEL_3 are used for drive control enable and shunt control enable, respectively.

The drive control enable is intended to be used as a current drive signal. The shunt control enable signal can be used as a way to quickly redirect current away from LEDs in order to reduce rise and fall time between bit segments. With the use of a shunt signal, it is not necessary to completely disable the drive current during the reset waveform and OFF duty cycle time as long as the current does not flow through the LED.

4.4.1 Illumination Drive Timing

Figure 15 and Table 3 describe the recommended timing for LED current relative to the illumination control signals in order to maintain correct bit weights in the sequence. During the DMD reset waveform the drive control enable is kept high to maintain current within the driver control loop for this short period of time. The shunt is enabled during this time so that the current bypasses the LEDs. During DMD OFF duty cycle, the drive control enable is set low and the shunt control enable is set high. The DLP Composer for Automotive tool allows adjustment of the drive control enable and shunt control enable signal timing to account for rise and fall time delays in the driver architecture. These delays can be used to align the LED current rise and fall time with the sequence events.

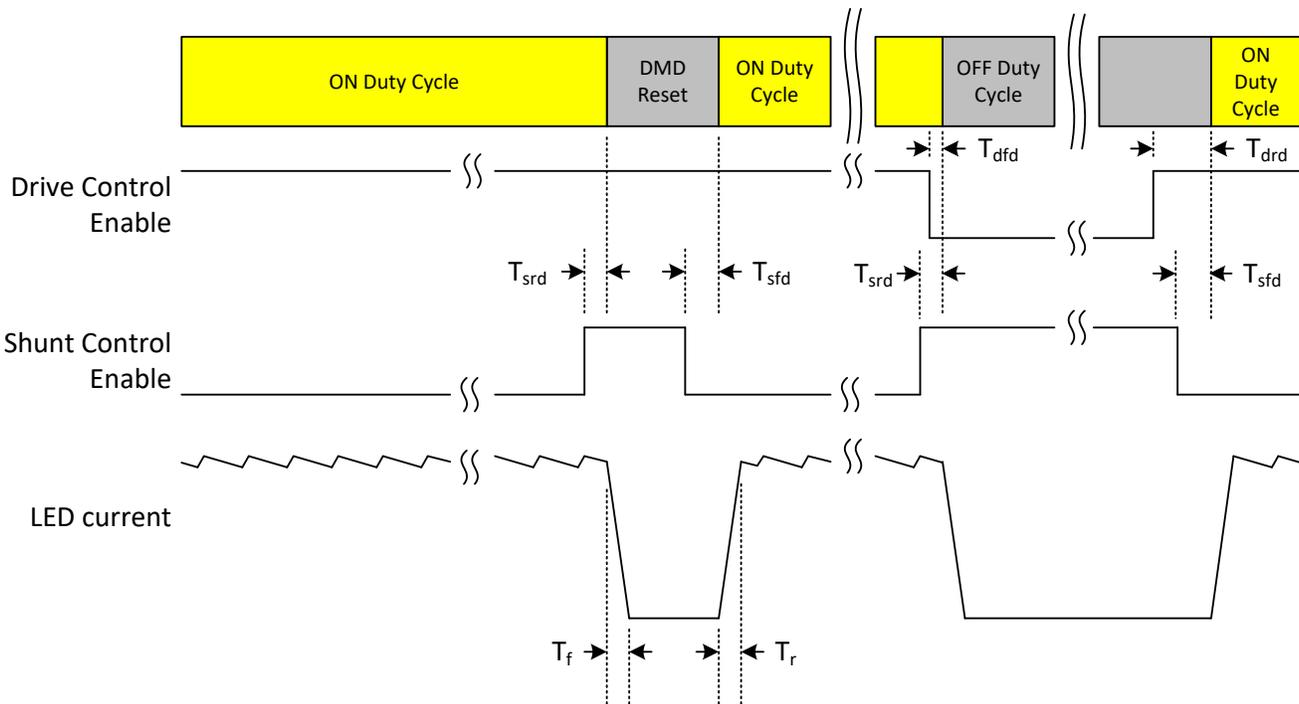


Figure 15. Illumination Driver Timing Diagram

Table 3. Illumination Driver Timing

PARAMETER	DESCRIPTION	MIN	MAX
T_f	Recommended falling edge time of LED current from start of sequence event.		2 μ s
T_r	Recommended rising edge time of LED current from end of sequence event.		2 μ s
T_{srd}	Shunt enable rising edge delay from sequence event. Positive value enables shunt prior to sequence event.	Timing configurable in DLP Composer™ for Automotive tool to account for driver-specific delay time.	
T_{sfd}	Shunt enable falling edge delay from sequence event. Positive value disables shunt prior to sequence event.		
T_{dfd}	Drive enable falling edge delay from sequence event. Positive value disables drive enable prior to sequence event.		
T_{drd}	Drive enable rising edge delay from sequence event. Positive value enables drive enable prior to sequence event.		

4.4.2 Recommended Illumination Driver Architecture

Figure 16 shows a recommended LED driver architecture to use these signals. A buck regulator, such as the TI LM3409 is controlled by the drive control enable signal. A FET is controlled by shunt control enable to quickly shunt current away from the LED. The length of the FET and LED loop should be minimized in order to minimize electromagnetic interference since a high current is switching between these two paths. This may involve minimizing cable length to the LED, or placing the FET on the same board as the LED.

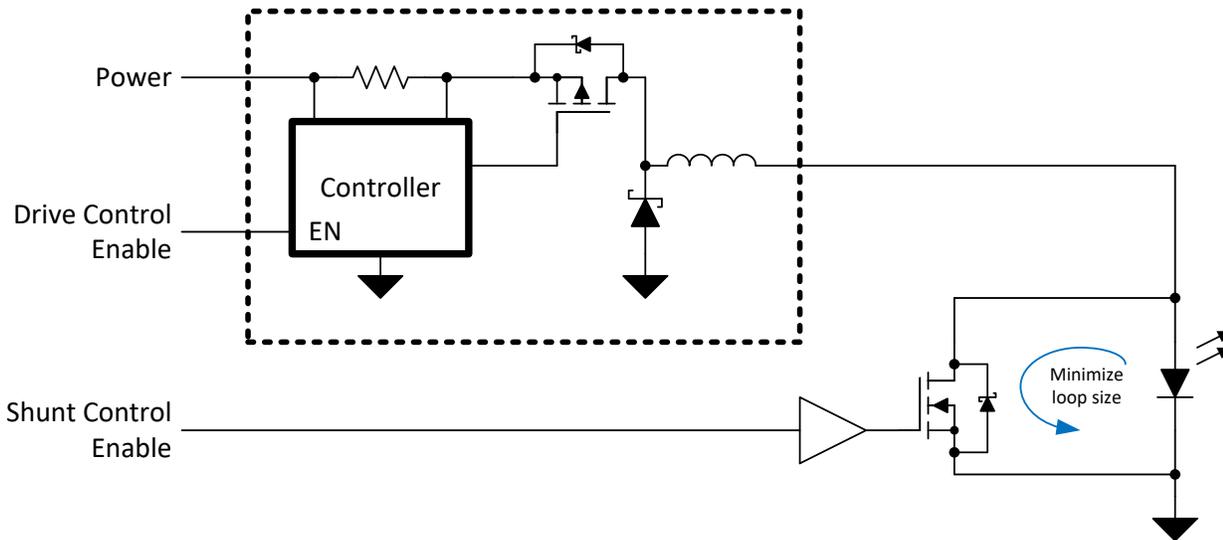


Figure 16. Recommended LED Driver Block Diagram

4.5 ADC Measurement Synchronization

In addition to illumination control signals, the DLPC230-Q1 sequences also include a trigger signal for ADC measurement capture. The ADC measurements are captured using the TPS99000-Q1 and reported back to the DLPC230-Q1. Including this trigger signal in the sequence allows ADC measurements to be captured synchronously with video frame events. Another look-up table specifies which TPS99000-Q1 ADC channel should be captured on each ADC trigger pulse.

The ADC sub-system is used for monitoring of voltage rails and DMD reset voltage levels. Additional general purpose ADC channels may optionally be connected and included in the sequence as needed using the DLP Composer for Automotive software tool.

4.6 Sequence Example

Figure 17 shows a sample sequence with more realistic timing than the previous simplified examples. This sample sequence uses 10 sub-frames within each 60-Hz frame, and the figure shows only one of those sub-frames. The portion labeled “sub-frame” is approximately 1335 μ s in length.

This figure includes the DMD reset waveform times and OFF duty cycle times to demonstrate how the illumination signals are toggled with respect to these events.

The ADC trigger also toggles 6 times during this period, indicating that 6 ADC measurements are captured by the TPS99000-Q1 and reported to the DLPC230-Q1.

The illumination signals do not toggle at a fixed frequency. There is no single switching frequency because of the nature of the non-binary bit weights that are typical of these sequences. Exact timing is not provided to the sequence generation algorithm. The timing is optimized by the DLP Composer for Automotive tool as a result of input parameters from the user and flash project configuration files such as duty cycle, bit weight, and bit segment order.

This sub-frame does not include every bit plane, and this is typically the case. Bit planes with very small relative bit weights cannot be divided into segments for each sub-frame because this would cause significant light loss as described in [Section 4.3.1](#). It is often the case that the lower bit planes are only displayed once or twice within the entire video frame. However, these lower bits also have the least amount of brightness intensity and do not contribute significantly to any potential perceived flickering artifacts that a high refresh rate will remove. The critical factor for refresh rate is dividing up the higher bits which require a longer amount of time to display.

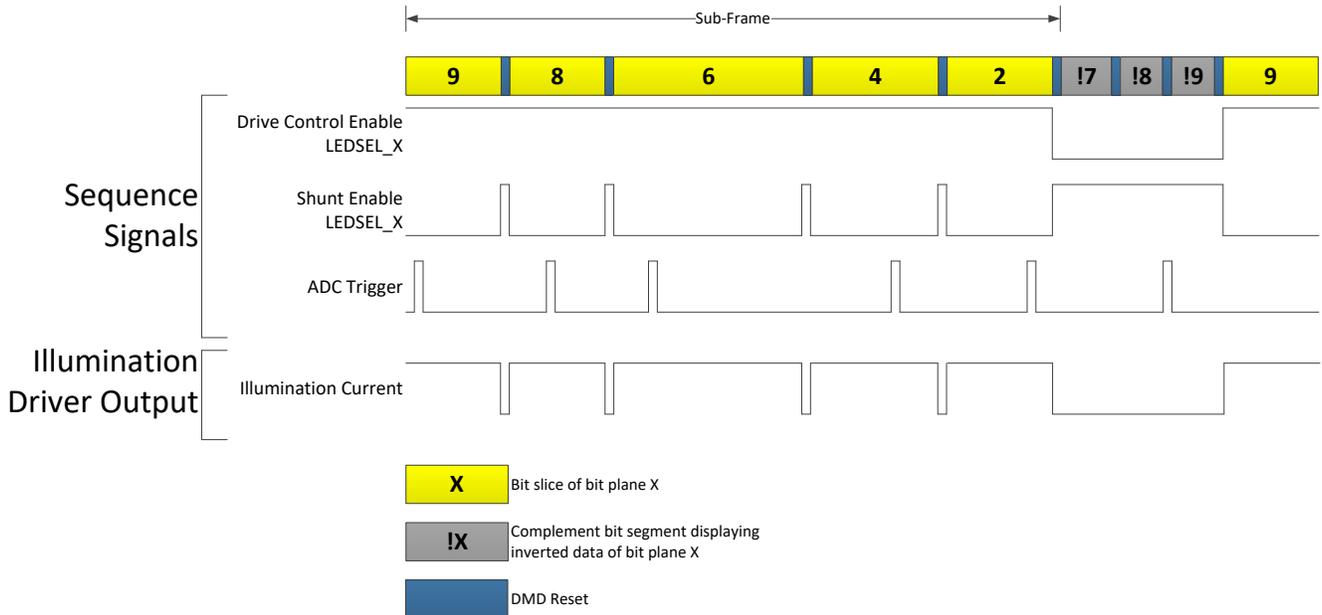


Figure 17. Example Sequence Timing

5 Video Processing

5.1 Dithering

Dithering is a method of introducing high frequency noise to an image in order to increase perceived bit depth and smooth quantization steps. This technique is commonly used in video and audio applications. The DLPC230-Q1 applies a dithering algorithm in real time to each video frame to improve the effective output bit depth to greater than 8 bits regardless of sequence bit depth.

Input video content to the DLPC230-Q1 is always 8-bit. A sequence with lower bit depth cannot always natively display every step of the 8-bit input. There are several options to render other non-native values.

One possible method of quantizing to a lower bit depth is to simply round input values to the nearest supported output value. This method is not ideal because it tends to create solid regions of a single color where the original image may appear smooth. This is demonstrated in [Figure 18\(A\)](#) with an example 8-bit input image quantized to 4-bit output using simple rounding. This conversion introduces noticeable posterization while the original image is a smooth gradient.

The same 8-bit to 4-bit example is shown in [Figure 18\(B\)](#) using the dithering algorithm that the DLPC230-Q1 utilizes. Output (B) uses the same number of bits as output (A), but it utilizes a high frequency dithering pattern to much more accurately reproduce the original image.

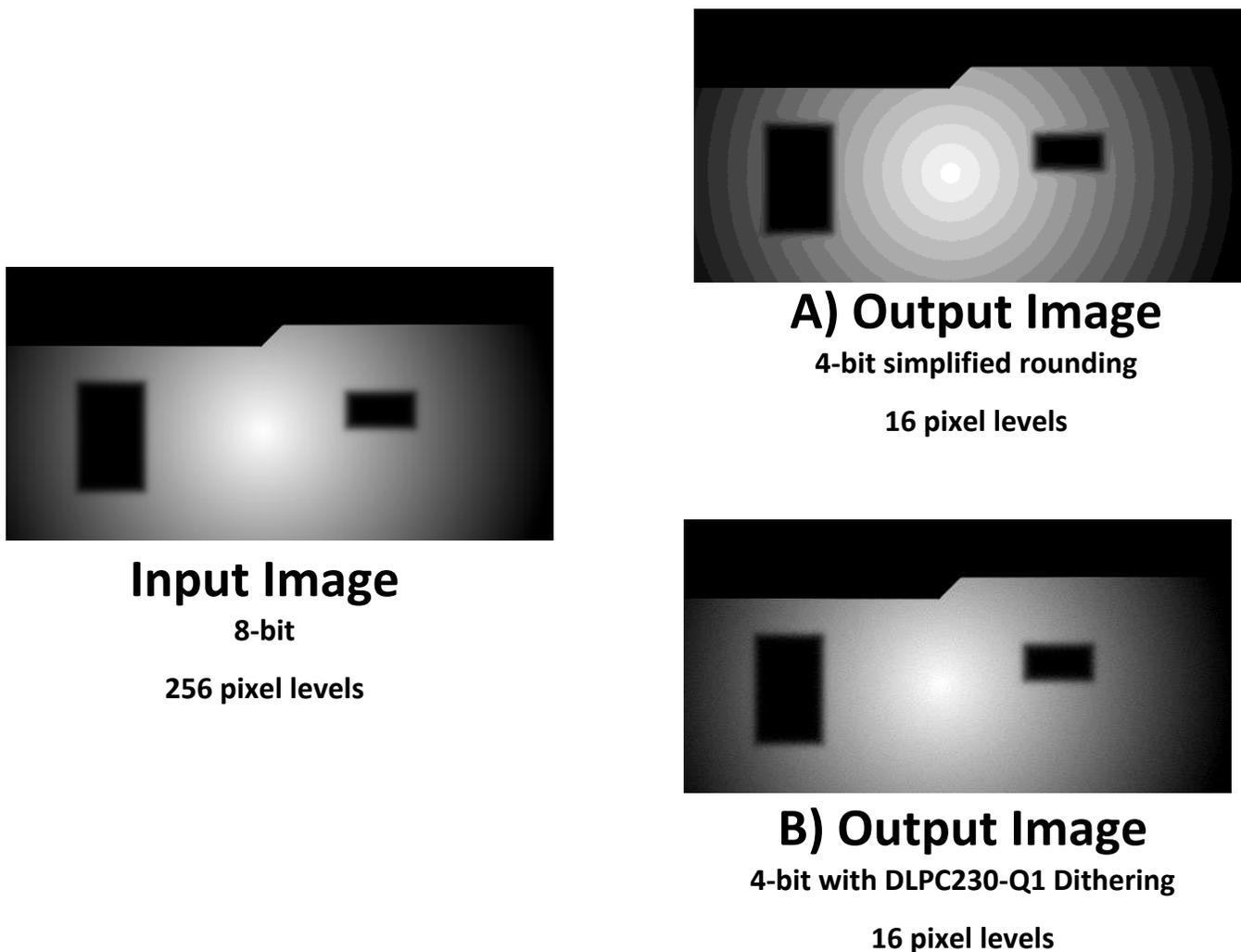


Figure 18. Dithering vs Rounding

5.1.1 Spatial Dithering

Spatial dithering is the application of a spatially high frequency dither mask to all pixels in the input video frame in order to determine whether each pixel is rounded up or down to a natively achievable brightness intensity level of the sequence. Two percentage values are calculated per pixel to determine whether it should be rounded up or down if dithering is necessary.

The first percentage value is a threshold taken from a dither mask look-up table. The DLPC230-Q1 uses a dither mask array which contains threshold percentages from 0-100%. Each pixel's x,y coordinates determine which dither mask value is selected. The high frequency characteristic of this dither mask is created by maximizing the percentage variation between neighboring percentage values. For example, it would be more ideal for 10% and 90% to be applied to two respective neighboring pixels than 10% and 11%.

The second percentage value is calculated based on the desired pixel intensity distance between the lower and upper bounding native pixel intensity levels. 0% indicates that the desired pixel intensity is the same as the lower bounding native pixel intensity level. 100% indicates that the desired pixel intensity is the same as the upper bounding native pixel intensity level. If the value is 0% or 100% then no dithering is necessary for this pixel. For any other percentage value, dithering must be applied to select the pixel output value.

These two percentage values are compared to determine whether to round the pixel intensity up or down. If the pixel intensity percentage is greater than the dither mask threshold percentage, then the pixel is rounded up to its upper bounding native pixel intensity level. If the pixel intensity percentage is less than or equal to the dither mask threshold percentage, then the pixel is rounded down.

This process is shown in [Figure 19](#).

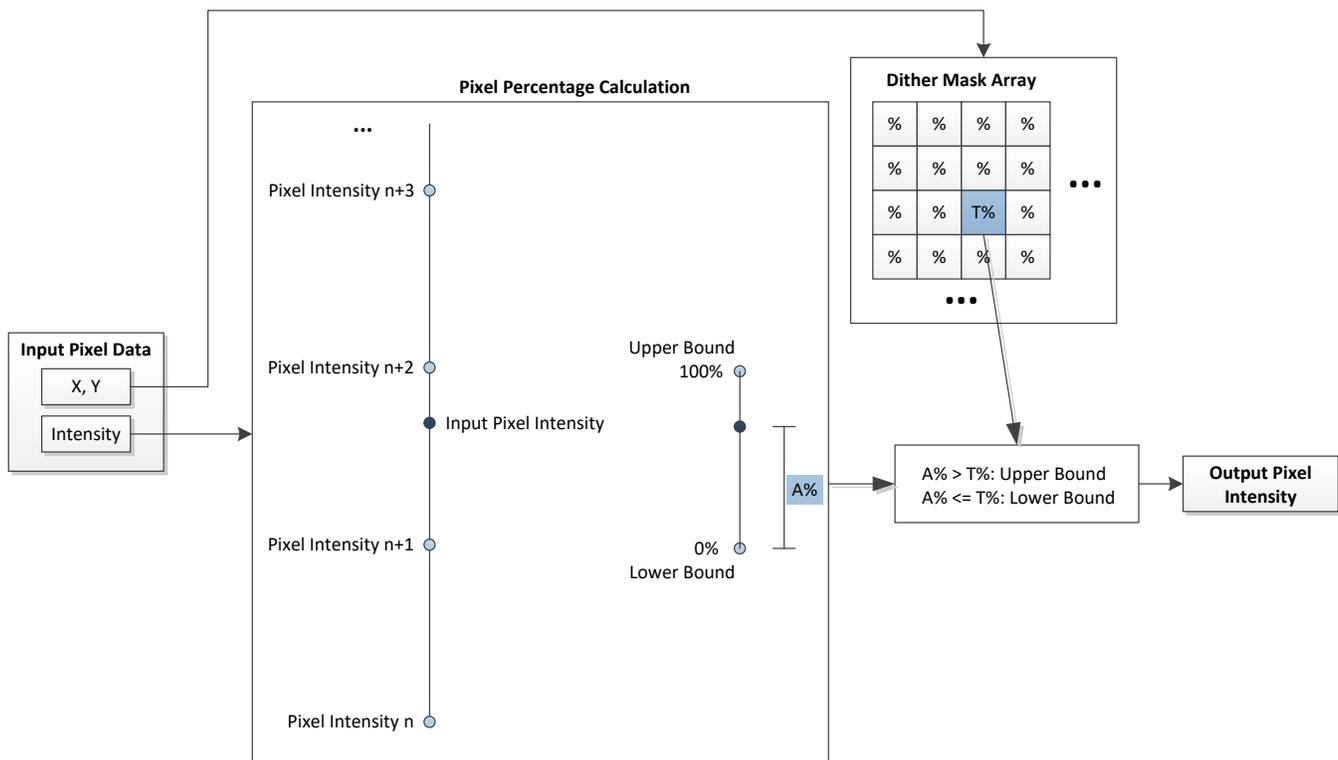


Figure 19. Dithering Process

The probability of a pixel rounding up or down is dependent on how close its intensity is to its bounding output native pixel intensity levels, and is also dependent on the dither mask that adds intentional noise to this probability. The threshold percentages contained in the dither mask array are selected in a spatially high frequency manner such that the difference between neighboring percentage thresholds is maximized. Because of this, the probability that two neighboring pixels of the same intensity will both round up or both round down is reduced.

The less ideal rounding method could be applied through this same process, but it would use a fixed percentage threshold of 50% for all pixels instead of a dither mask with varying thresholds. With a fixed 50% threshold any pixel intensity level that is closer to its upper bounding intensity level would always be rounded up, and any pixel below would be rounded down.

Figure 20 shows a zoomed in version of Figure 18 to demonstrate the dither pattern on a pixel level. On close inspection it is possible to see the high frequency pixel variations that are introduced by dithering in the gray levels that cannot be achieved natively by the sequence. When viewed from a typical viewing distance, the human eye averages an area of pixels, and this creates additional unique intensity levels to increase perceived bit depth.

A lower bit depth sequence will show more apparent dithering effects than a higher bit depth sequence because of the larger step size between native intensity levels.

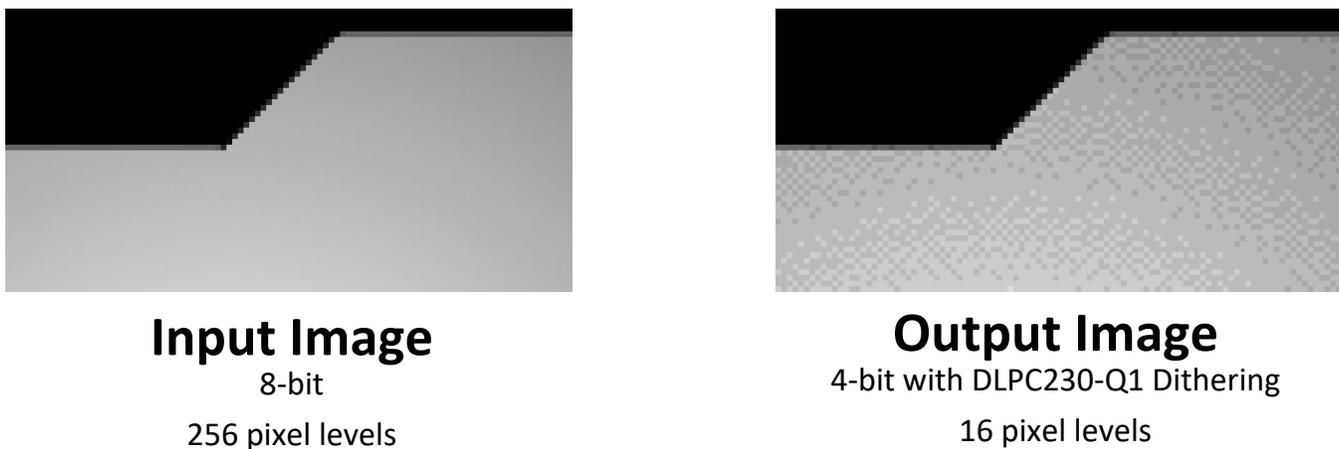


Figure 20. Dithering at Pixel-Level

5.1.2 Temporal Dithering

Temporal dithering is a time-based component to spatial dithering that can provide additional bit depth improvement. When temporal dithering is enabled, the DLPC230-Q1 rotates the dither mask each frame. This can be enabled or disabled in the DLP Composer for Automotive tool.

5.1.3 Dither vs Blur

Dithering is not a type of blurring. In blurring algorithms, the value of one pixel is dependent on the values of its neighboring pixels. Because of this, blurring can cause large variations in each pixel's value depending on surrounding content. Dithering is applied on a per-pixel basis and each pixel's value can only vary by a maximum of one output intensity step during quantization.

Specifically for headlight application consideration, dithering will not cause a pixel of value zero to become non-zero, or cause a value of maximum intensity (255) to become less than maximum intensity. Zero and maximum intensity are always native values and do not require dithering.

5.2 Gamma Correction

Gamma correction is a method of adjusting the mapping of input to output pixel intensity levels that is generally used to account for visual perception of brightness. This process is common to most display and camera systems. The human visual system does not perceive light intensity linearly. Humans are more capable of perceiving fine brightness differences in low light intensity levels than they are in bright intensity levels. Therefore, source video content is typically gamma encoded to optimize bit allocation by providing more bits to low light levels where steps in brightness will be most noticeable. Then, the display will apply a corresponding de-gamma curve to decode the input bits into corresponding display brightness.

The DLPC230-Q1 performs a programmable de-gamma operation before outputting the pixel data to the DLP5531-Q1. It increases the total bit depth during the de-gamma operation by using dithering as described in [Section 5.1](#). This bit depth increase is critical to precisely reproduce the original brightness levels.

A simple example of a gamma curve is a linear 1:1 function as shown in [Figure 21](#). This is effectively a pass-through of input to output pixel intensity where pixel intensities remain unchanged. The disadvantage of this function is that the step change between each intensity level is exactly equal, and the human eye does not perceive light in this linear manner. Because of that, it may be possible to perceive fine discrete steps in low brightness intensity levels while the bright content may appear more smoothly.

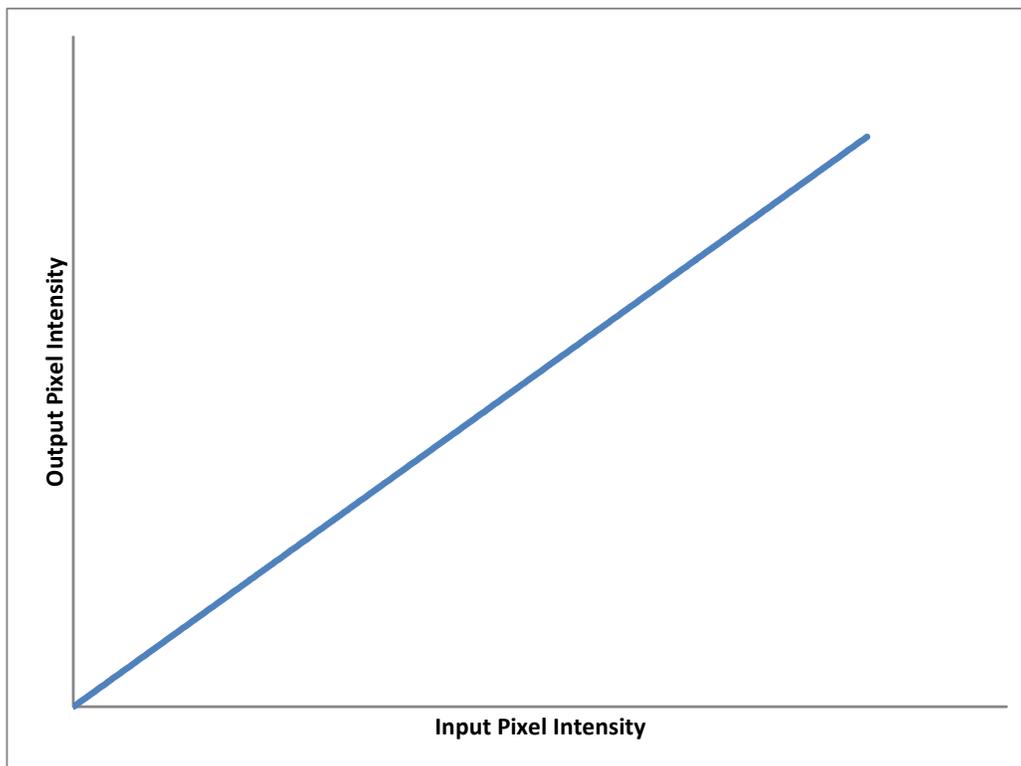


Figure 21. Gamma Curve Linear Function

A better example of utilizing gamma correction is shown in [Figure 22](#). In this case, video content is generated and encoded by a graphics processor that is providing data to the DLPC230-Q1. This graphics processor encodes the video data with the relationship $I_{out} = I_{in}^{0.5}$, where “I” indicates intensity level mapped to a 0-1 magnitude range. The “ I_{in} ” in this case is the original desired brightness intensity of the image. “ I_{out} ” is what is stored as 8-bit data for transmission to the DLPC230-Q1. This function is labeled as “Gamma Curve” in the figure.

Then, the DLPC230-Q1 is configured to map the input to output pixel data using the “De-Gamma Curve” in the figure. This function is $I_{out} = I_{in}^2$, where “I” is mapped to a 0-1 magnitude range. “ I_{in} ” here is the incoming gamma-encoded video pixel intensity, and “ I_{out} ” is the output pixel brightness. The DLPC230-Q1 increases the total pixel bits prior to applying the de-gamma curve to improve the bit precision on the dark portions before this de-gamma operation.

The net effect of performing these two operations still results in a linear 1:1 relationship between input brightness and output brightness because $I_{out} = I_{in}$. The key difference in this case is that the content was encoded with a much larger range of the total video bits allocated to the low light intensity levels where the eye will typically notice steps more easily. Then when the DLPC230-Q1 applies the de-gamma curve, it increases the number of bits allocated to each pixel. Because of this bit increase, the low intensity levels will appear more precisely to the end user.

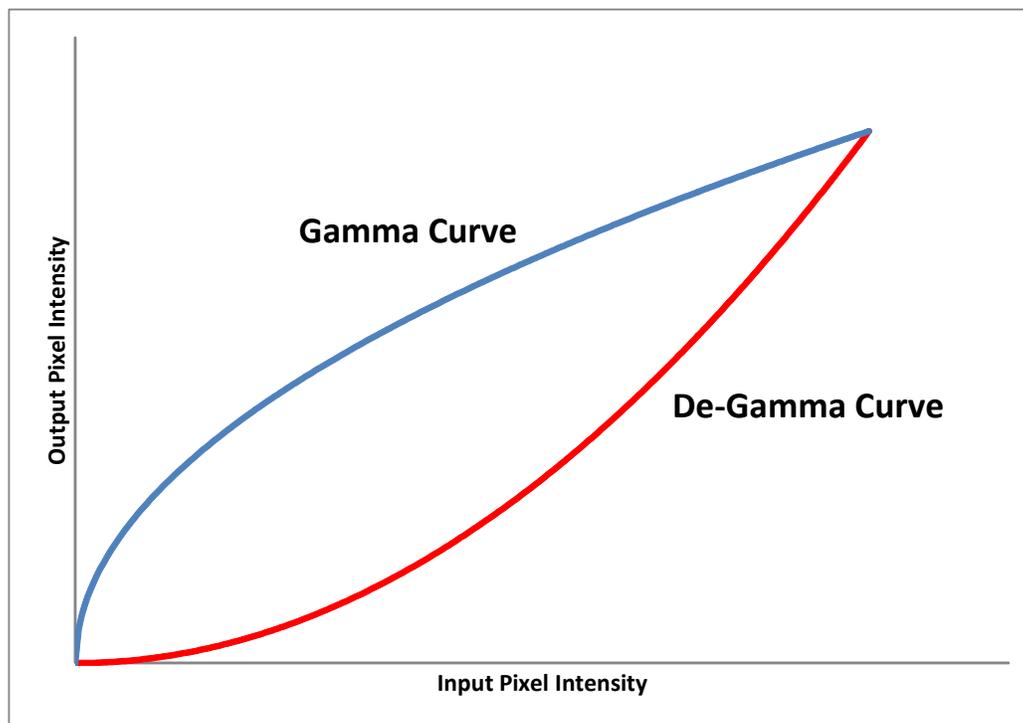


Figure 22. Gamma Curve Power Function

The de-gamma curve is applied before dithering so that dithering can take advantage of this additional bit precision. The combination of de-gamma and dithering is used to map the input pixel values to the sequence bits.

The de-gamma curve can be configured using the DLP Composer for Automotive tool and does not necessarily need to follow a power relationship. The input is a list of 256 floating point values that must include 0 and 255 as endpoints. This list of points is used to describe a monotonic de-gamma curve that indicates how the DLPC230-Q1 will map the 8-bit input to values that will then be mapped to sequence bits. These values are represented in floating point since the precision of the data is increased to greater than 8-bit before applying this function in hardware.

6 Pixel Mapping and Image Resizing

6.1 Diamond Pixel DMD Array

There are two common pixel orientations used in DMD devices: diamond and orthogonal (also referred to as "Manhattan"). The DLP5531-Q1 DMD is a diamond pixel array. The difference between these two orientations is shown in [Figure 23](#).

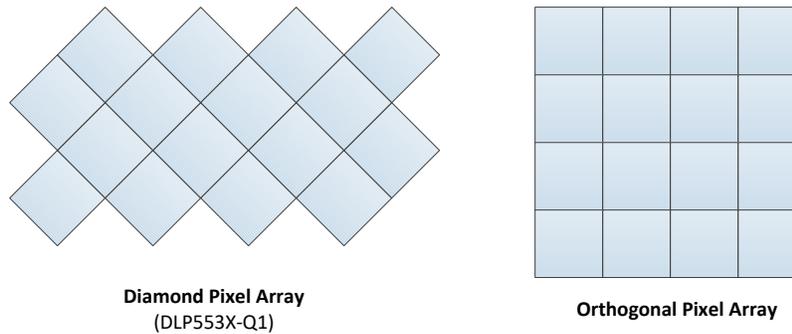


Figure 23. Diamond and Orthogonal Pixels

The DLP5531-Q1 has 1152×1152 diamond micromirror pixels as shown in [Figure 24](#). Due to the diamond orientation, rows overlap by half a pixel while columns do not overlap. Therefore, the physical aspect ratio of the DMD active mirror array is actually 2:1.

Pixel 0,0 is at the bottom left corner of the DMD. The DLPC230-Q1 supports digital flipping of the image about both axes to accommodate optical folds.

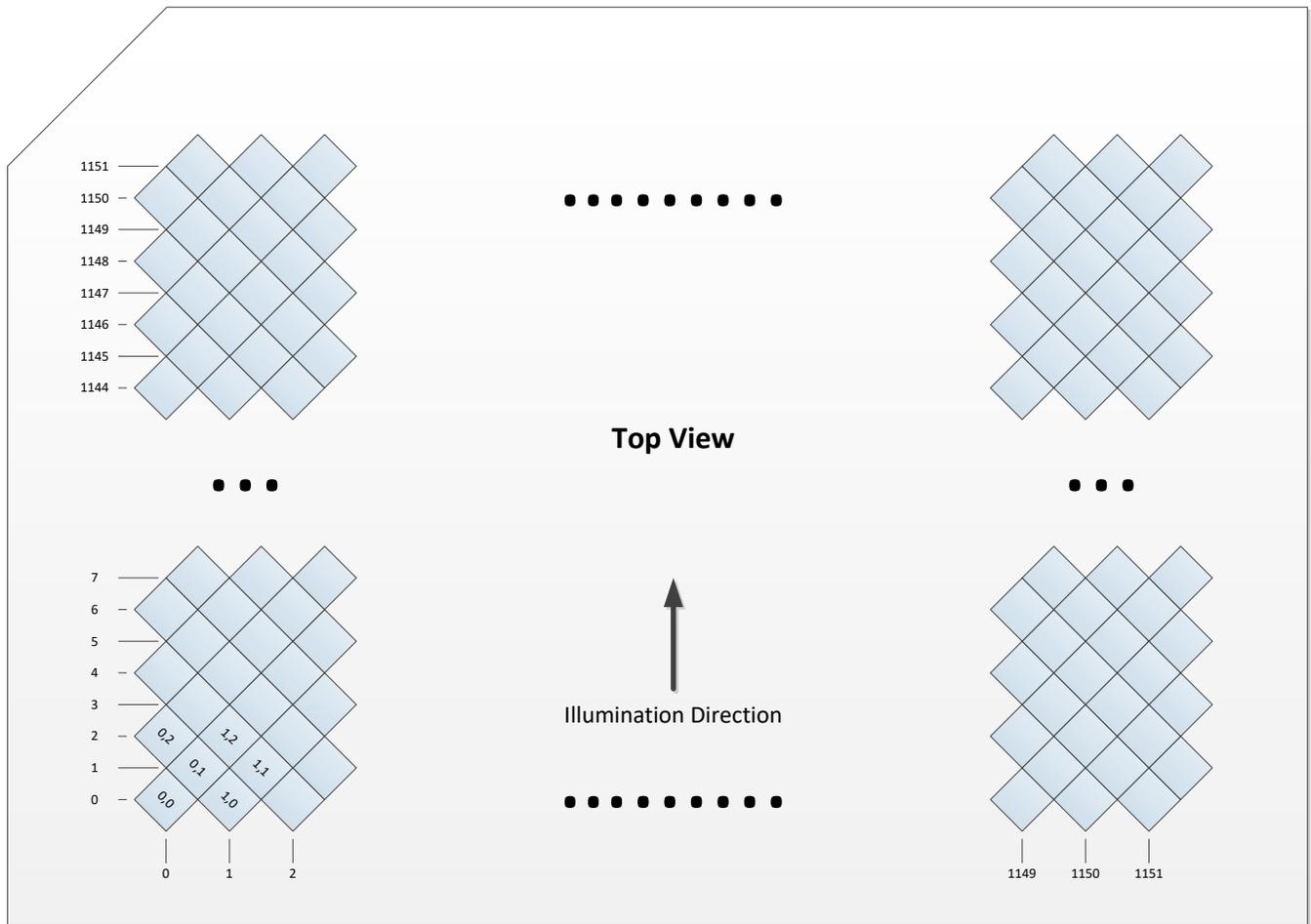


Figure 24. DLP5531-Q1 DMD Array

Figure 25 highlights alternating columns (top-down).

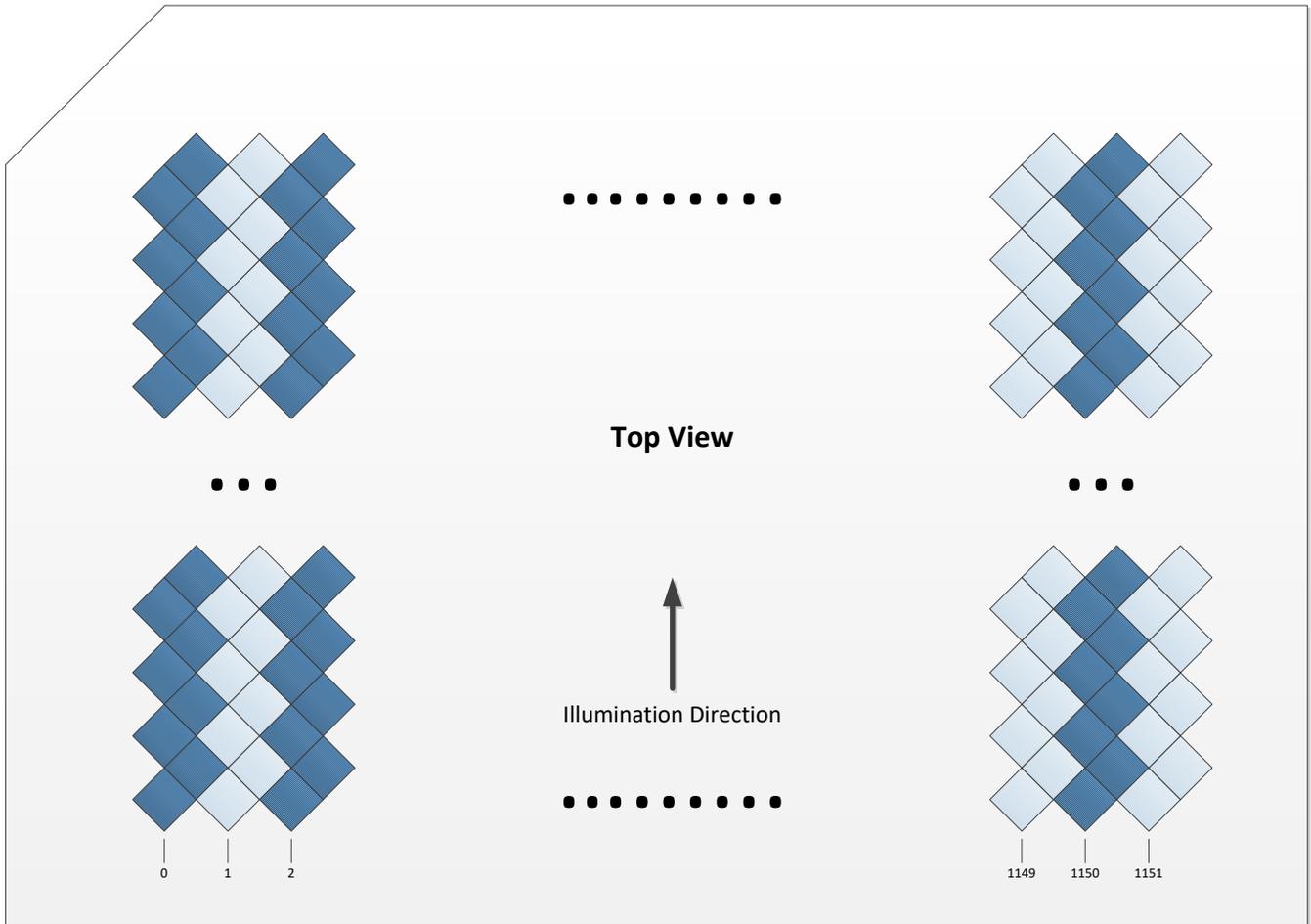


Figure 25. DLP5531-Q1 DMD Array Columns

Figure 26 highlights alternating rows (left-right).

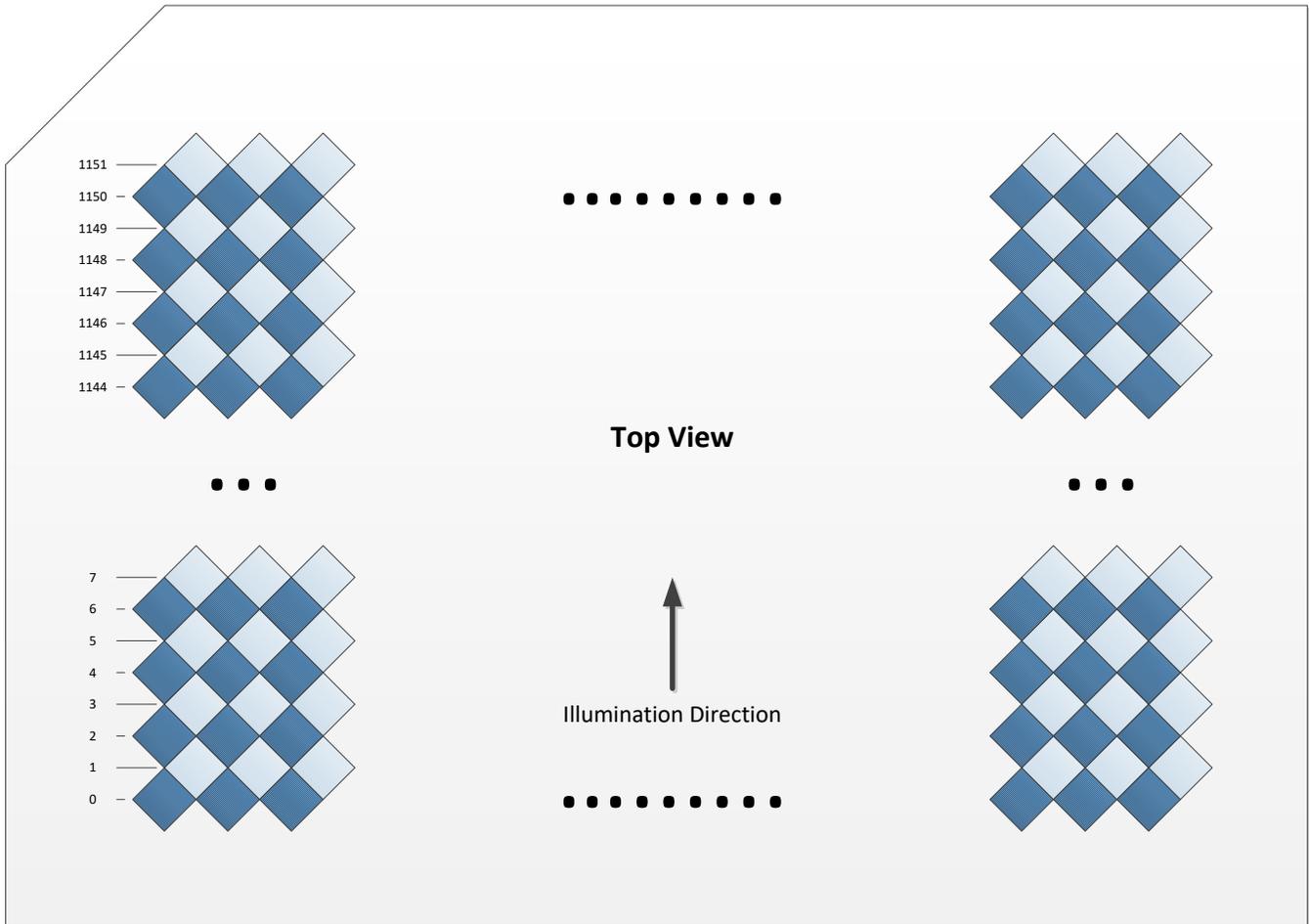


Figure 26. DLP5531-Q1 DMD Array Rows

The most commonly used input resolutions have a 2:1 aspect ratio, such as 1152 x 576. The DLPC230-Q1 will then perform scaling to address 1152 x 1152 pixels, and the physical geometry of the diamond DMD pixels will then display the output with the original 2:1 aspect ratio. Figure 27 shows an example of this process.

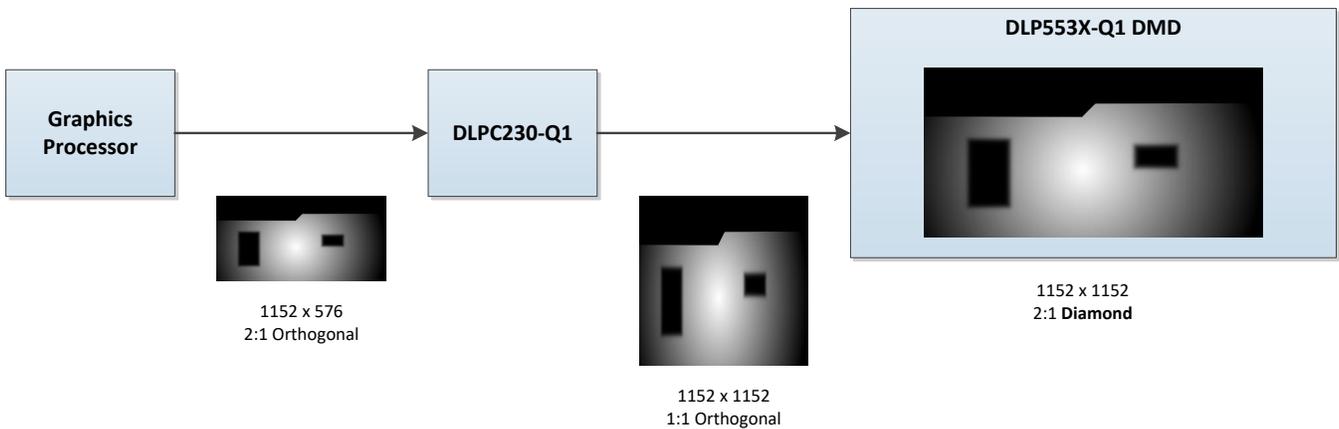


Figure 27. Scaling 2:1 Video Input

The benefit of providing a 2:1 aspect ratio resolution is that the graphics processor does not need to consider aspect ratio distortion. The scaling process is handled by the DLP5531-Q1 chipset.

For most content, the diamond pixel array will not impact the display of the original image. Content that spans multiple pixels will be displayed as desired because the diamond edges are not perceivable. If features within the video must be accurate on a pixel-level, then the native resolution of 1152 × 1152 must be input to the DLPC230-Q1 so that scaling is not used and each input pixel directly maps to an output DMD mirror. An example of mapping a 1-pixel width diagonal line from diamond to orthogonal pixels is shown in Figure 28. The orthogonal array represents the video content that would need to be input to the DLPC230-Q1 at 1152 × 1152 resolution in order to display these diagonal lines on the DMD.

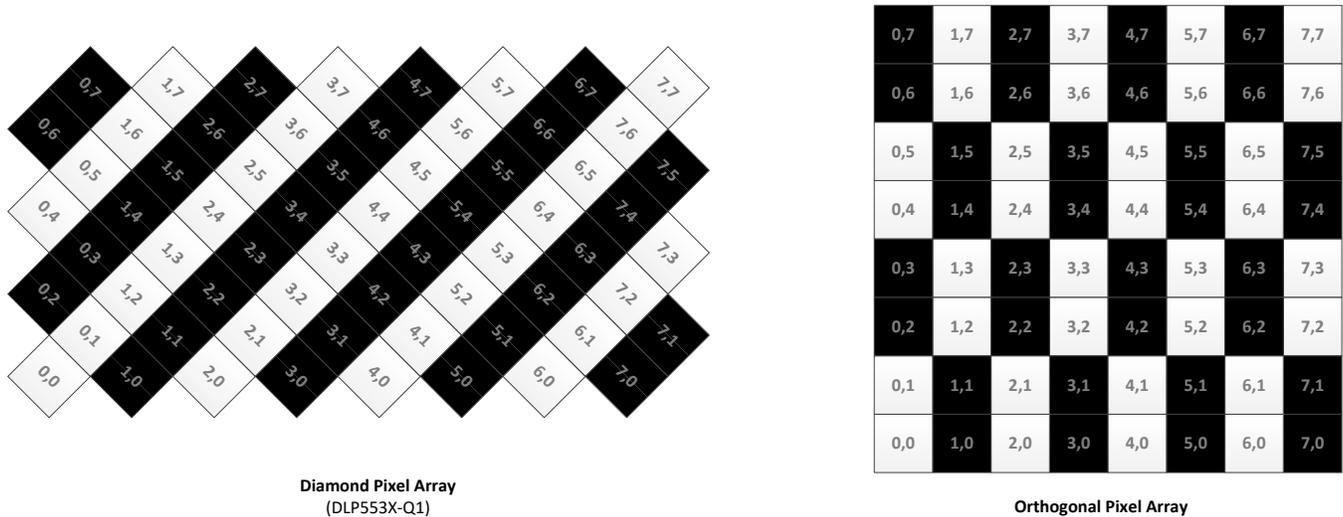


Figure 28. Diamond Pixel Diagonal Lines 1 Pixel

As features become larger, such as wider diagonal lines, they will appear more similar on both arrays. This is demonstrated with a 4-pixel width diagonal line in Figure 29. The orthogonal array displays a similar diagonal line, but with 2x vertical scaling. This example with larger features is more typical of how content will appear.

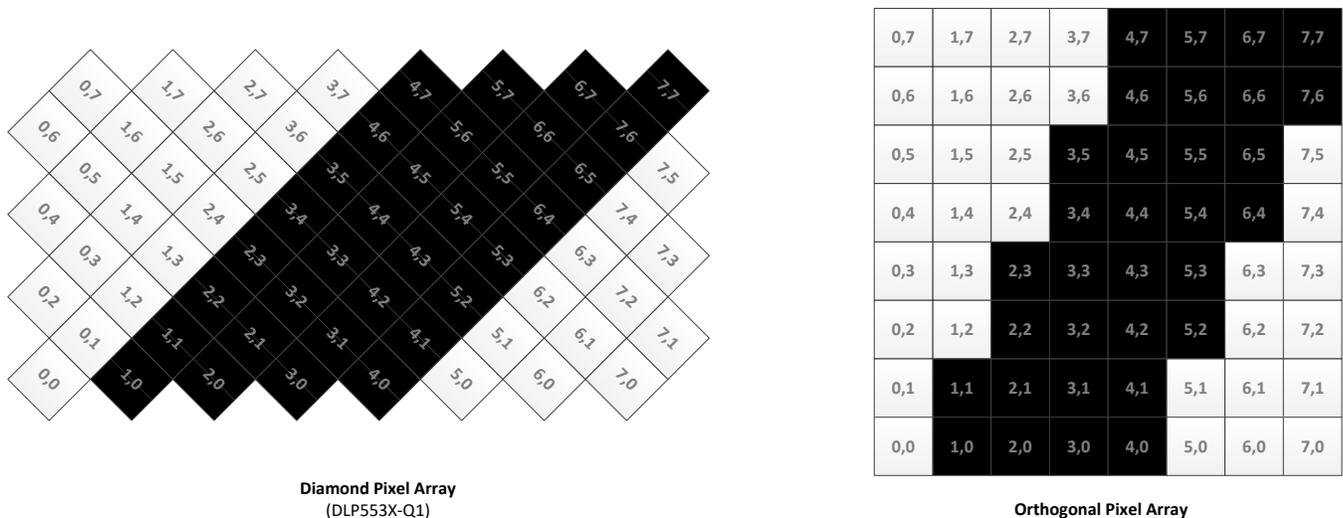


Figure 29. Diamond Pixel Diagonal Lines 4 Pixels

6.2 Resolution Support

The DLPC230-Q1 includes both image scaling and line replication to support a range of input resolutions and size them to the full DMD area. Image scaling uses polyphase filtering, and is the preferred method of resizing because it can reduce aliasing. Replication is only used for low input resolutions when the scaling limit is reached. This directly replicates each row of pixels as they are output to the DMD.

All supported input resolutions are specified in the DLPC230-Q1 data sheet. [Table 4](#) shows examples of how several image resolutions are resized. Note that the output resolution in all cases is the full DMD array resolution in order to maximize light output.

Table 4. Resolution Resizing Examples

Input Resolution	Output Resolution	Horizontal Scaling	Vertical Scaling	Vertical Replication
1152 × 1152	1152 × 1152	1x	1x	1x
1152 × 576	1152 × 1152	1x	2x	1x
576 × 288	1152 × 1152	2x	2x	2x

1152 × 576 and 576 × 288 input will appear on the DMD at the correct 2:1 aspect ratio because of the diamond pixel array, as described in [Figure 27](#).

1152 × 1152 input will appear to be scaled vertically by 0.5x on the DMD, meaning the aspect ratio will change from 1:1 input to 2:1 output. Video content may need to be scaled accordingly. Because of this aspect ratio adjustment, this resolution is only recommended if higher resolution is necessary or if direct pixel mapping is necessary.

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