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(54) **VEHICULAR AIR-CONDITIONING SYSTEM
AND CONTROL METHOD OF SAME**

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(75) Inventors: **Atsuki Nemoto**, Toyota (JP); **Kiwamu Inui**, Toyota (JP); **Masaki Morita**, Toyota (JP)

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(73) Assignee: **Toyota Jidosha Kabushiki Kaisha**, Toyota-shi, Aichi-ken (JP)

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Primary Examiner — Kang Hu

Assistant Examiner — Phillip E Decker

(74) Attorney, Agent, or Firm — Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner, LLP

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

An air-conditioner ECU sets the maximum flowrate or a set flowrate which is less than the maximum flowrate as a required flowrate V_r based on outside air temperature when a DEF mode is selected, and requires that coolant be circulated (steps 100 to 110). Also, when the coolant temperature T_w during heating is between a set temperature T_{s3} and a set temperature T_{s1} , circulation of coolant at the minimum flowrate is required (steps 134, 130, 132). When a blower fan is stopped when the coolant temperature is equal to or less than the set temperature T_{s3} and a fresh air mode is selected, the circulation of coolant at the minimum flowrate is required when the vehicle speed S_v is above a set vehicle speed (steps 134 to 146). Cool air is prevented from being blown out of an air outlet and heating of the coolant is promoted by suppressing the speed of an electric pump while maintaining the ability to prevent fogging.

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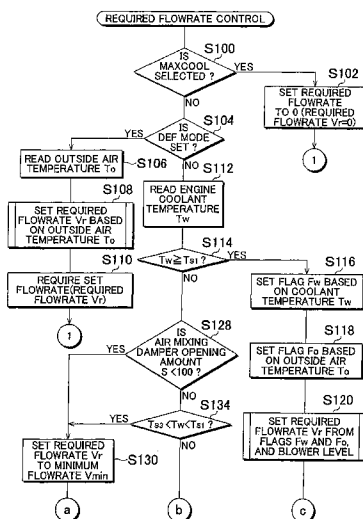
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123/41.11; 123/41.12; 701/36

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
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454/121; 123/41.11, 41.12; 701/36

See application file for complete search history.

7 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets



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FIG. 1

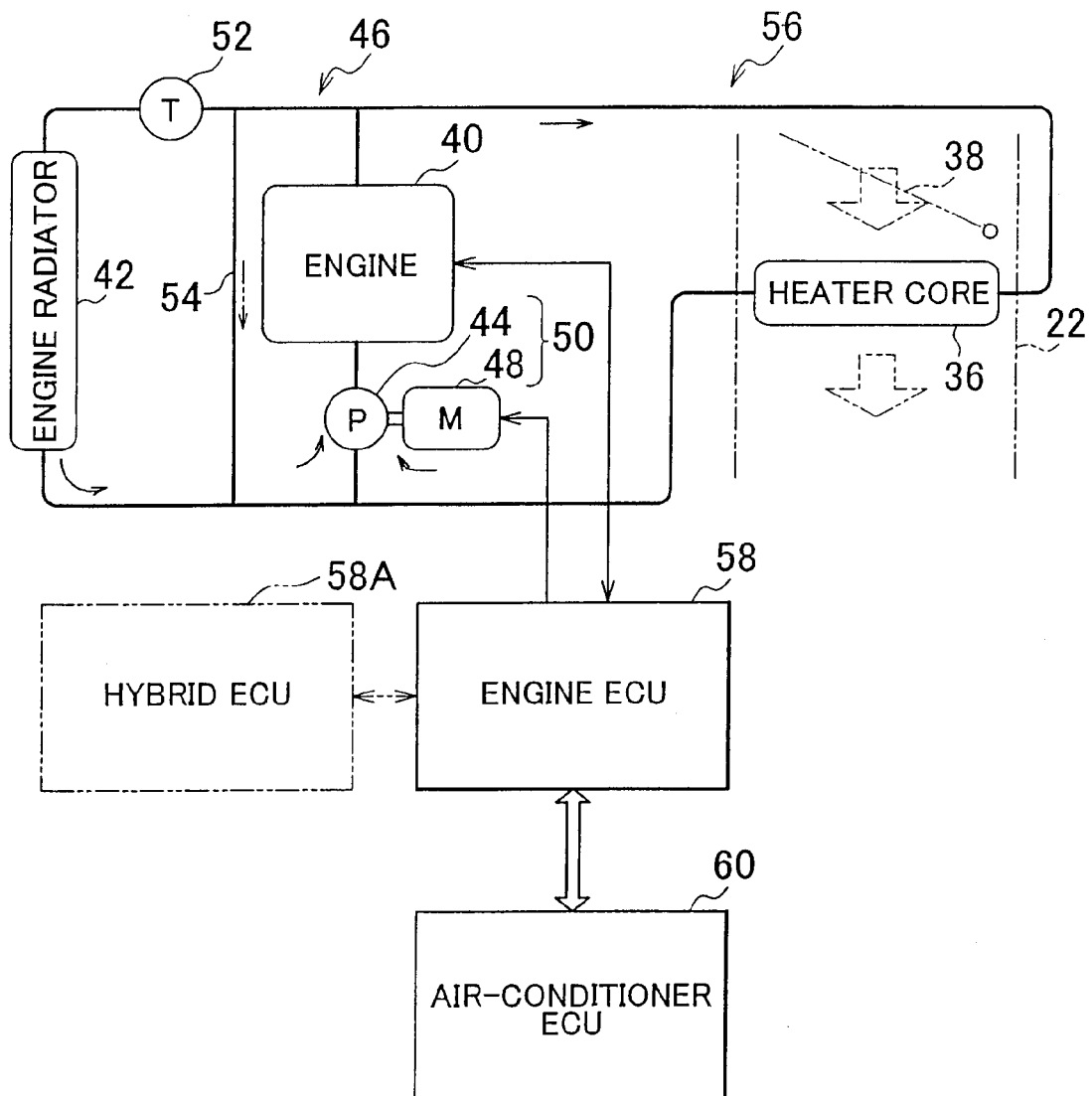


FIG. 2

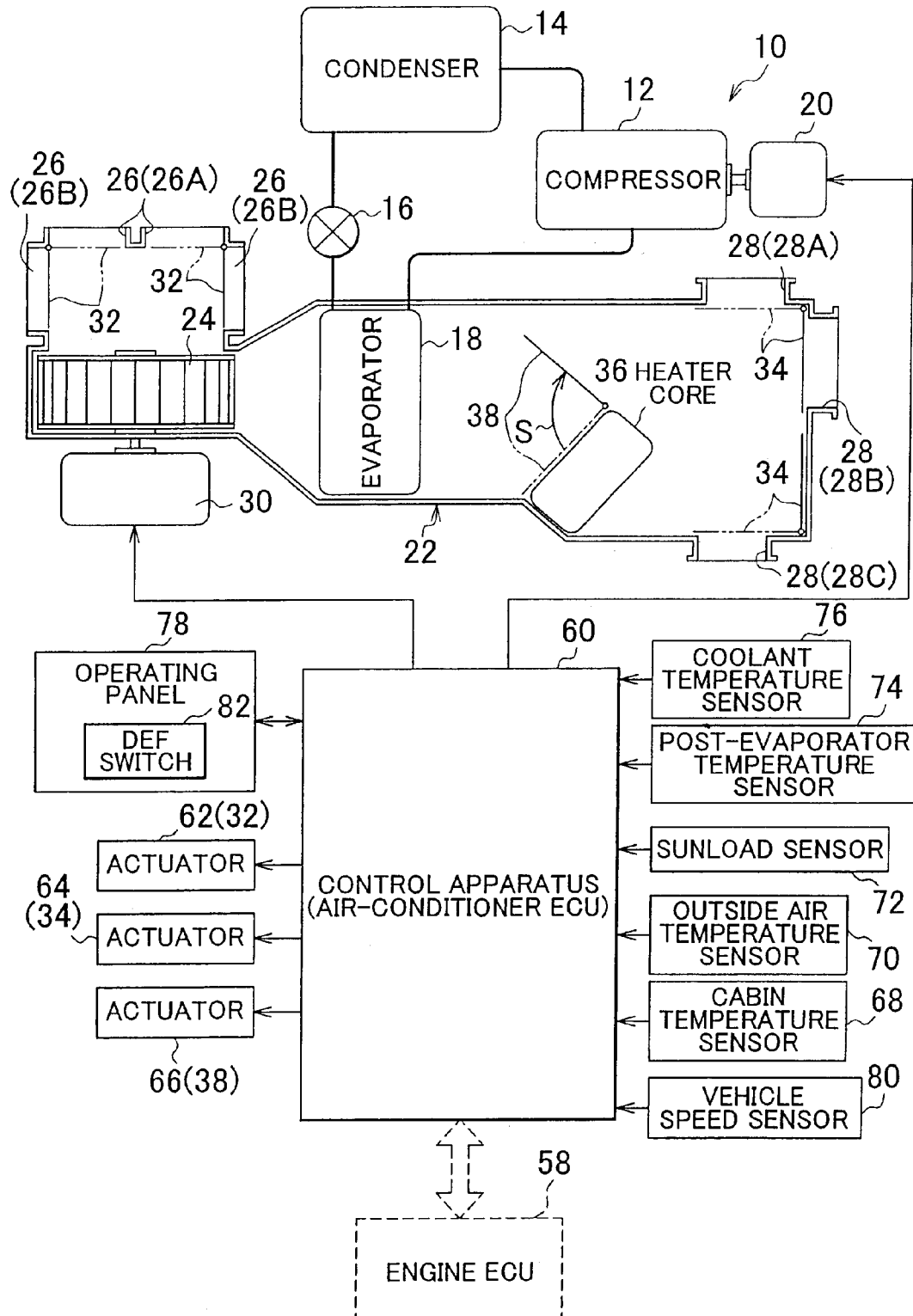


FIG. 3

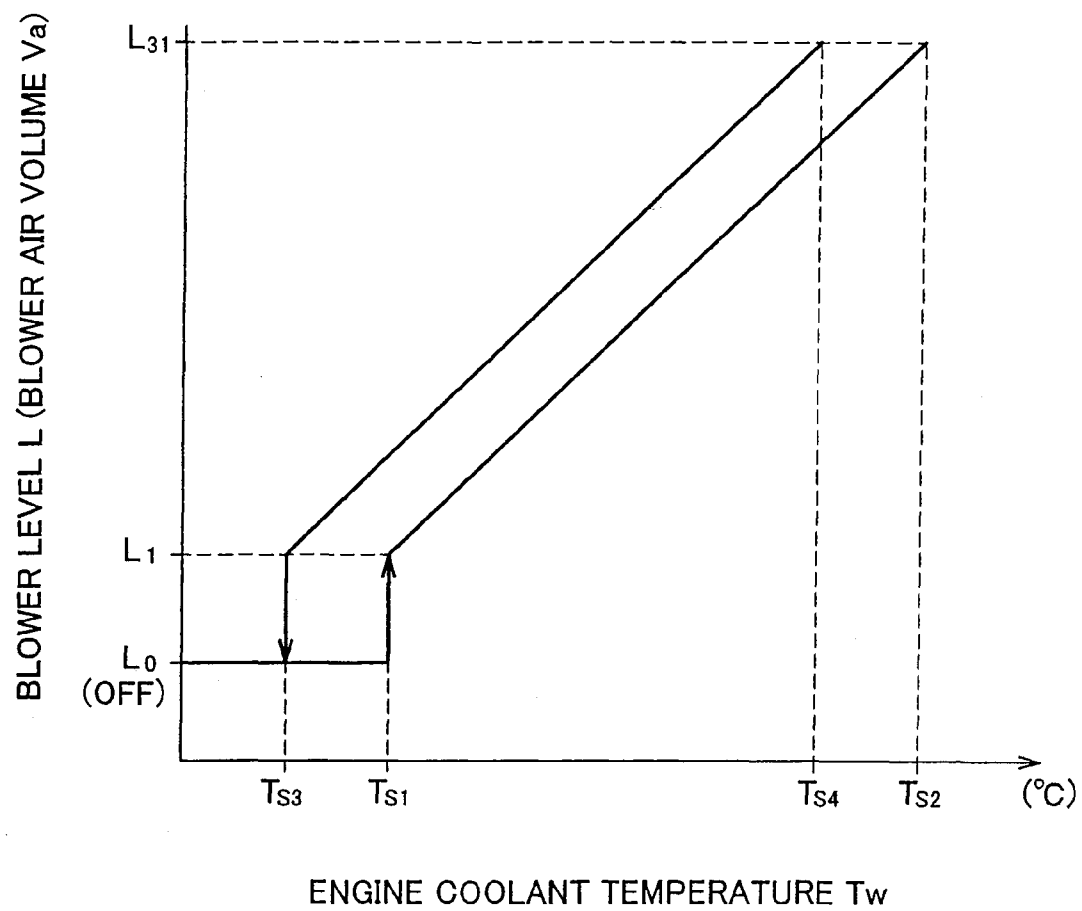


FIG. 4A

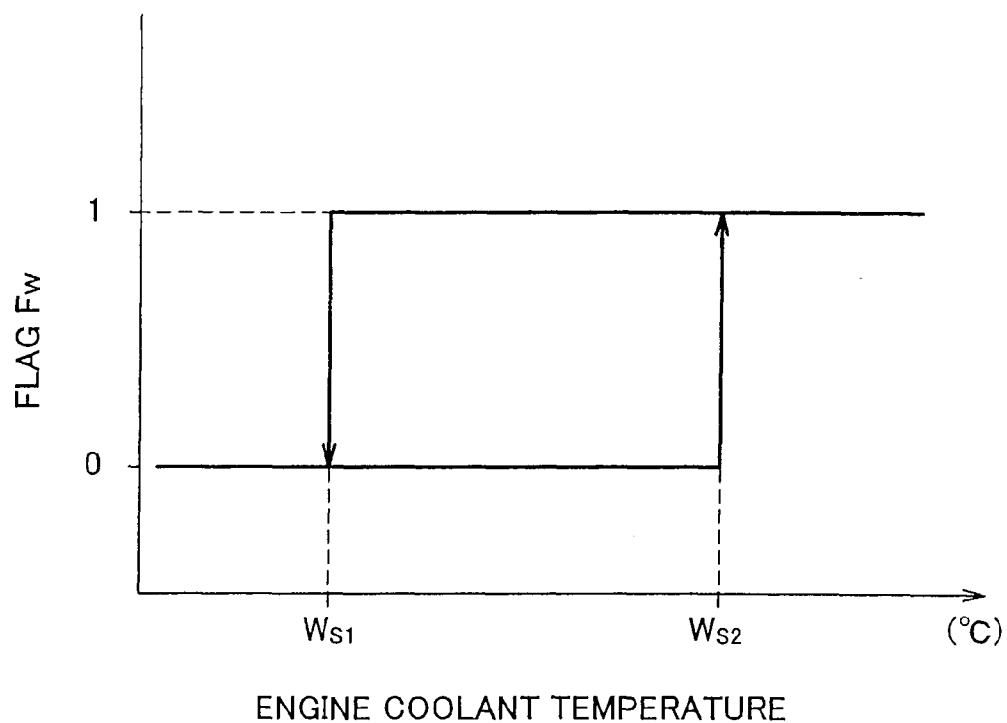


FIG. 4B

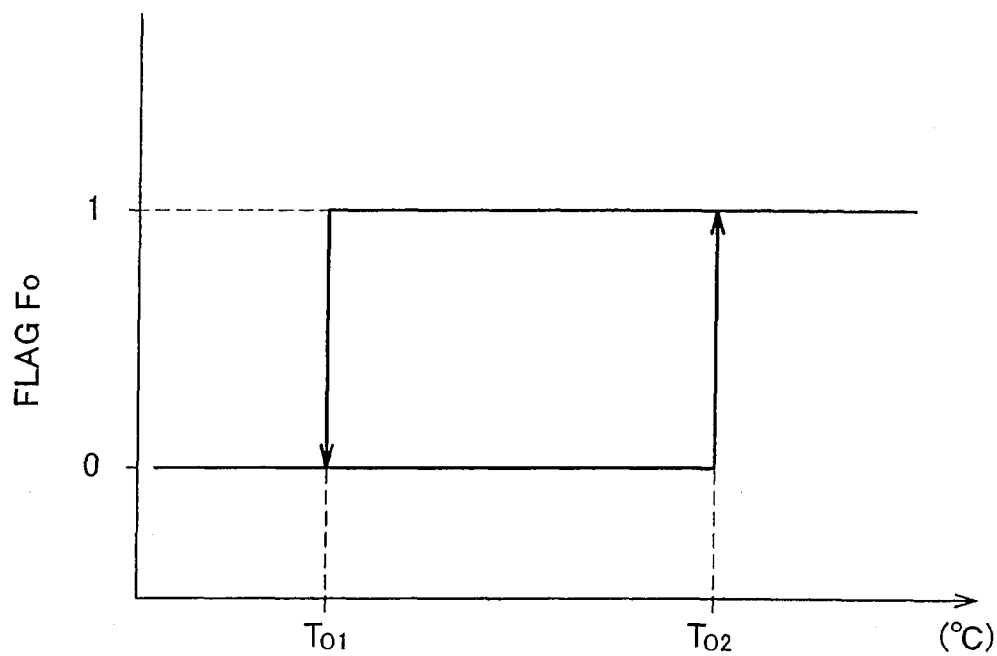


FIG. 5A

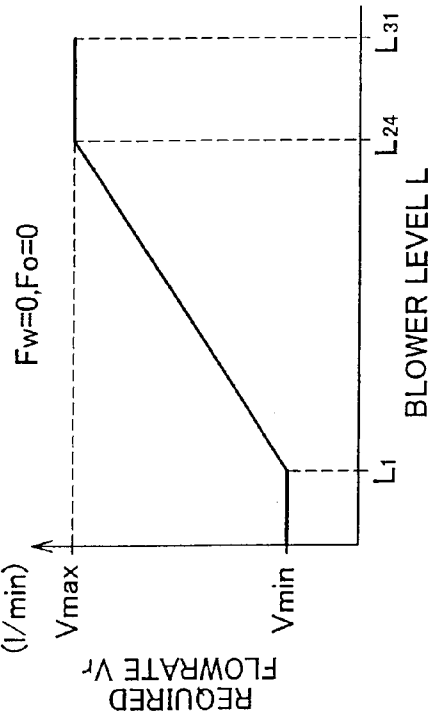


FIG. 5B

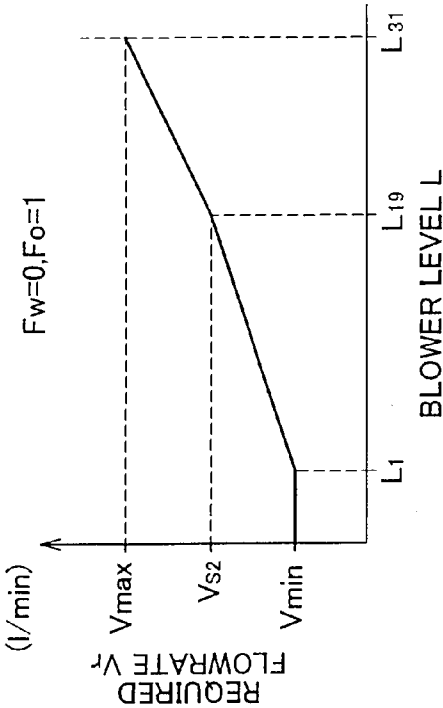


FIG. 5C

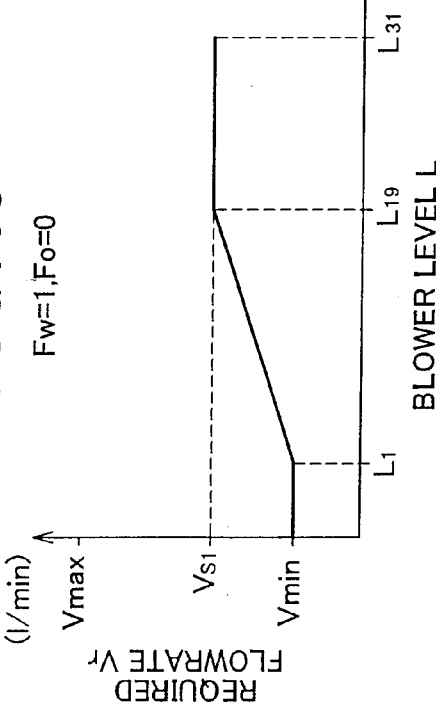


FIG. 5D

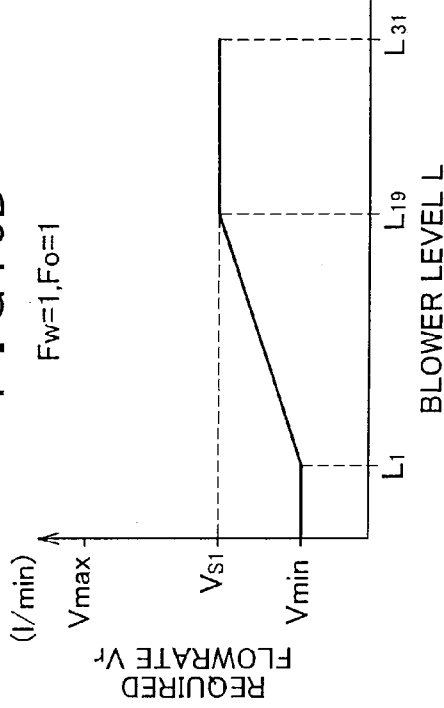


FIG. 6

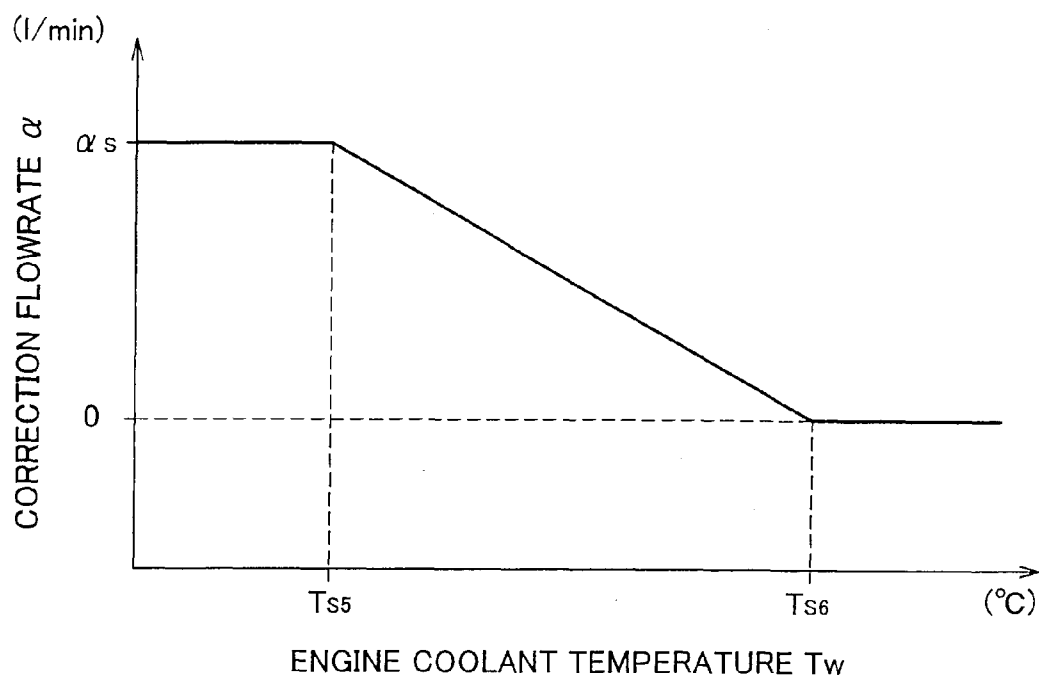


FIG. 7

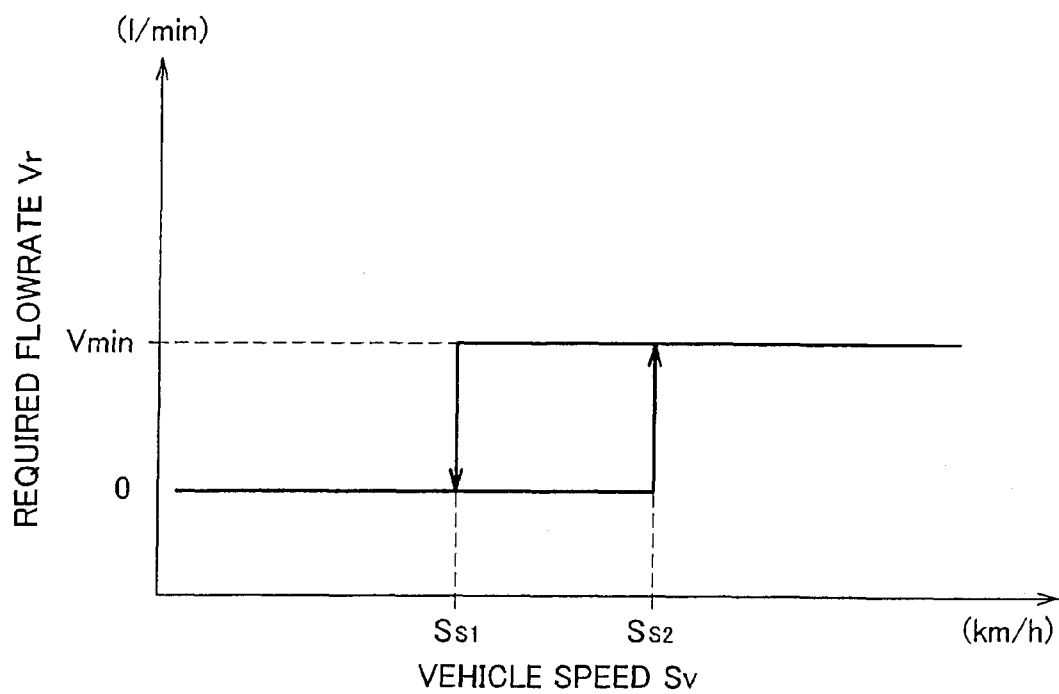


FIG. 8

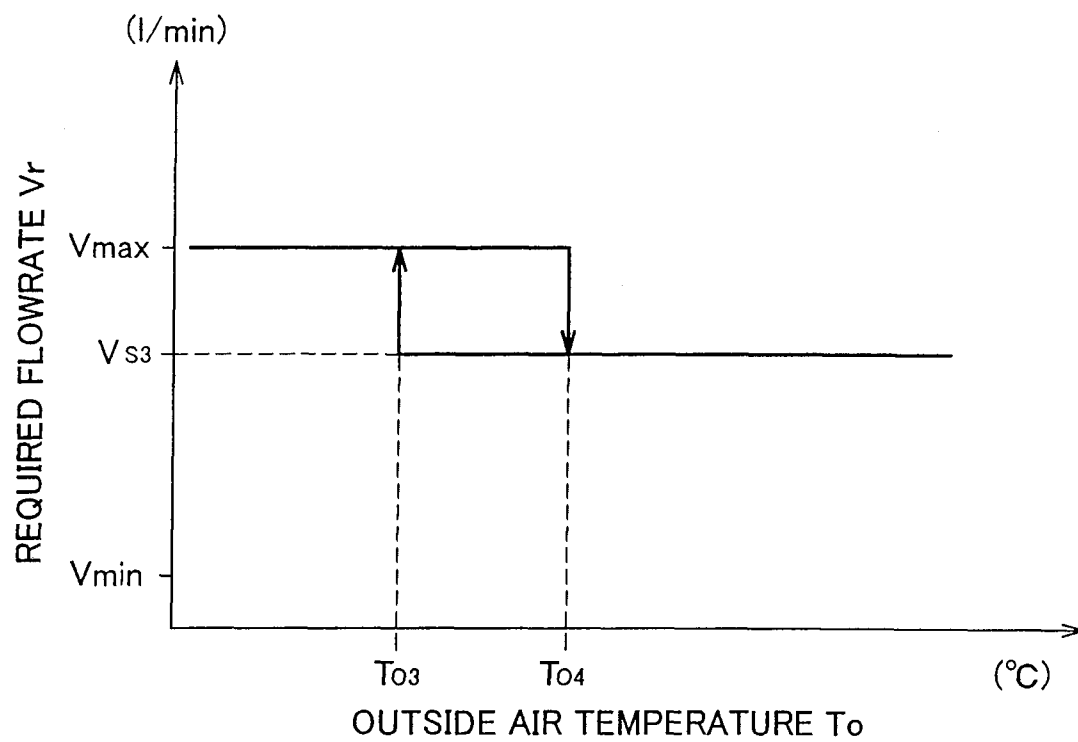


FIG. 9A

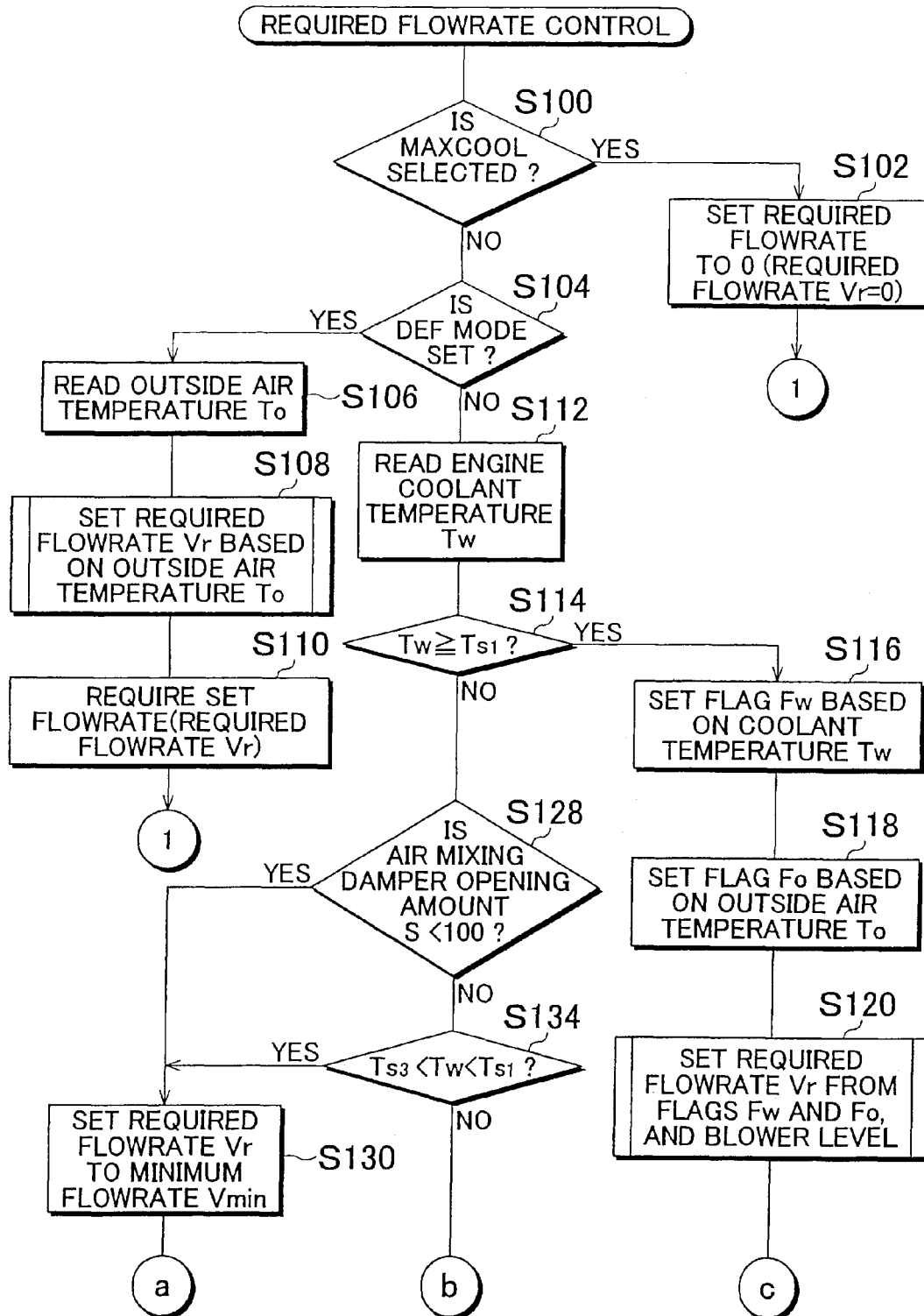
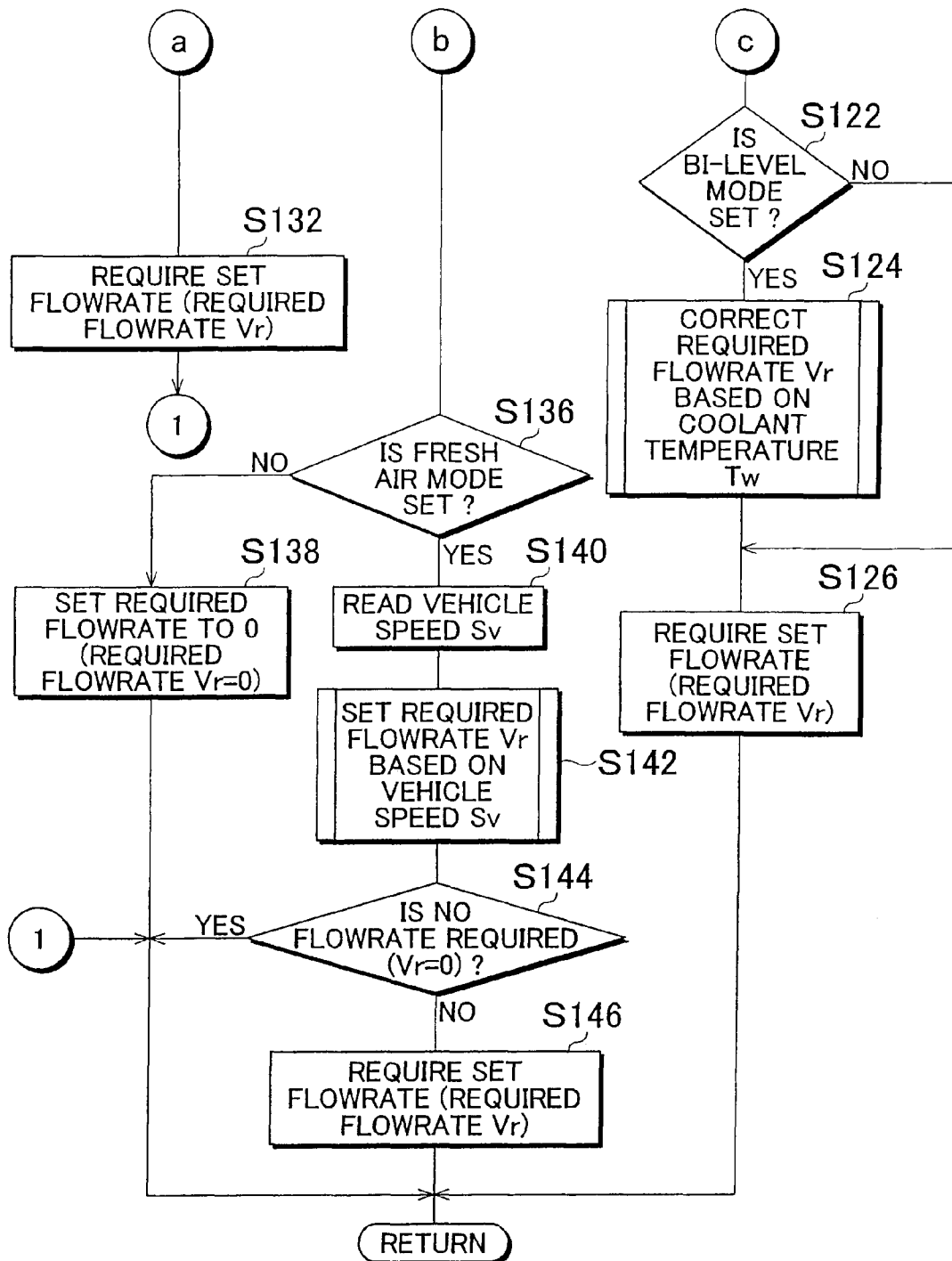


FIG. 9B



VEHICULAR AIR-CONDITIONING SYSTEM AND CONTROL METHOD OF SAME

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a national phase application of International Application No. PCT/IB2007/004240, filed Dec. 7, 2007, and claims the priority of Japanese Application No. 2006-349518, filed Dec. 26, 2006, the contents of both of which are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates to a vehicular air-conditioning system which produces a flow of supply air the temperature of which has been adjusted using coolant of an internal combustion engine, and a control method of that vehicular air-conditioning system.

2. Description of the Related Art

In an air-conditioning system (hereinafter simply referred to as "air-conditioner") provided in a vehicle having an internal combustion engine (hereinafter simply referred to as "engine") as a driving source for running, supply air is heated using engine coolant that is circulated between a heater core provided as a heat exchanger for heating, and the engine. This engine coolant is circulated between the engine, an engine radiator, and the heater core by a water pump which is driven by the driving force of the engine.

Vehicles in which engine stop control is performed, which stops the engine when a preset engine stop condition such as idling stop is satisfied in an attempt to conserve energy and reduce emissions (hereinafter this control will simply be referred to as "eco-run control"), use an electric pump which is driven by an electric motor to enable engine coolant to still be circulated even when the engine is stopped.

A hybrid vehicle that is provided with an electric motor as well as an engine as a driving source for running is one such vehicle in which eco-run control is performed. These hybrid vehicles aim to improve fuel efficiency and reduce emissions by stopping the engine not only when the vehicle is stopped but also while the vehicle is running.

However, even in a vehicle in which eco-run control is performed, when the temperatures of the engine and the engine coolant are low at engine startup, the engine is first warmed up to a temperature at which it is able to run efficiently.

With an air-conditioner, if the temperature of the engine coolant is low as is the case when the engine is warming up, for example, the desired heating ability is unable to be obtained. If the heating ability is insufficient, low temperature (i.e., cool) air is blown out which may be unpleasant for occupants. Also, if the vehicle cabin starts to be heated using engine coolant while the engine is warming up, the engine coolant may end up being cooled by the heater core, thus lengthening the time that it takes for the engine to warm up.

This resulted in a proposal for technology to promote engine warm-up by suppressing the circulation of coolant when warming up the internal combustion engine.

For example, technology described in Japanese Patent Application Publication No. 10-18845 (JP-A-10-18845) aims to shorten engine warm-up time and enable heating to start earlier by reducing the flowrate of coolant that is circulated in the coolant circuit when the coolant temperature is equal to or less than a predetermined temperature.

Also, technology described in Japanese Patent Application Publication No. 6-72132 (JP-A-6-72132) stops blowing air until the temperature of the engine coolant has reached a set temperature selected according to the outside air temperature to prevent cool air from being blown out.

Meanwhile, in a vehicle that is running, the volume of supply air that is blown into the vehicle cabin changes according to the pressure (i.e., ram pressure) against the front of the vehicle, which may be unpleasant for the occupants. This resulted in a proposal of technology to correct the target supply air temperature based on the running speed of the vehicle and the ratio of outside air being introduced, which is described in Japanese Utility Model Application Publication No. 1-107610 (JP-U-1-107610).

In order to conserve energy when eco-run control is performed, it is necessary to increase the period of time for which the engine is stopped (i.e., the engine stop time), and inhibit the engine from being repeatedly stopped and restarted frequently. Further, even more energy can be saved by reducing the amount the electric pump is driven which reduces power consumption.

However, when the engine has been stopped for an extended period of time such that the temperature of the engine coolant drops and the electric pump is stopped, the heating ability of the air-conditioner also diminishes. Therefore, Japanese Patent Application Publication No. 2005-163545 (JP-A-2005-163545) proposes technology to start the engine when the temperature of the engine coolant drops, and stop the engine and drive the electric pump when the temperature of the engine coolant rises above a predetermined temperature.

However, air may end up being blown from an air outlet due to the ram pressure while the vehicle is moving, even if a blower fan of the air-conditioner is not being driven when the electric pump is stopped while the vehicle is running. Even if the target supply air temperature is adjusted according to the vehicle running speed to prevent this from happening, cool air may still end up being blown out if the temperature of the coolant is low and the heating ability is insufficient.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This invention provides a vehicular air-conditioning system which prevents an unpleasant sensation from being imparted to an occupant due to the temperature of engine coolant which serves as the heat source during heating being low, while conserving energy by appropriately controlling operation of an electric pump.

A first aspect of the invention relates to an air-conditioning system provided for a vehicle that includes an electric pump that circulates coolant at a flowrate according to a speed of the electric pump between an engine and a heater core, and drive controlling means for controlling starting/stopping of the electric pump, as well as the speed of the electric pump when the electric pump is being driven, based on a driving state of the engine, and driving the electric pump at a speed according to a required flowrate that is input when a flowrate is required. The air-conditioning system performs air-conditioning by blowing supply air, which is produced by controlling an air-heating amount by the heater core through which the coolant is circulated, out into a vehicle cabin from an air outlet. This air-conditioning system includes: a blower fan that is driven to produce the supply air; coolant temperature detecting means for detecting a temperature of the coolant; air-conditioning controlling means for air-conditioning the vehicle cabin with supply air produced by controlling the amount of air heated by the heater core, by controlling operation of the

blower fan, and stopping operation of the blower fan when the temperature of the coolant detected by the coolant temperature detecting means is equal to or less than a set temperature during heating; vehicle speed detecting means for detecting a vehicle speed; requirement setting means for setting the required flowrate of the coolant that is circulated to the heater core based on the vehicle speed detected by the vehicle speed detecting means when the blower fan is stopped by the air-conditioning controlling means because the temperature of the coolant has not reached the set temperature; and requiring means for requiring the drive controlling means to circulate the coolant of the required flowrate when the required flowrate has been set by the requirement setting means.

The vehicular air-conditioning system according to this aspect air-conditions the vehicle cabin with supply air produced by controlling the amount of air that passes through the heater core using an air mixing damper. Also, the drive controlling means controls the starting/stopping of the electric pump, as well as the speed at which the electric pump is driven, based on the driving state, such as whether the engine is operating or stopped, the speed at which the engine is operating, and the temperature of the coolant.

Here, the air-conditioning controlling means aims to conserve energy while preventing cool air from being blown out into the vehicle cabin by stopping the blower fan when the coolant temperature falls below a set temperature.

At this time, the setting means sets a required flowrate when the vehicle speed exceeds a preset speed, for example. Then the electric pump is driven and coolant is circulated based on this required flowrate.

As a result, for example, even if the vehicle speed is high and air that hits the front of the vehicle as it moves is blown from the outlet due to the ram pressure (this air is referred to as "ram air"), that air is heated by coolant that is circulated through the heater core so that it will be more pleasant for the occupant.

Also, the vehicular air-conditioning system may include switching means for switching between an outside air inlet through which air outside the vehicle is introduced as the supply air, and an inside air inlet through which air inside the vehicle cabin is introduced as the supply air. Further, the requirement setting means may set the required airflow when the switching means makes a switch such that outside air is introduced through the outside air inlet.

According to this structure, when the outside air inlet is open, coolant is circulated by driving the electric pump, which reduces the extent to which the electric pump is driven. When the outside air inlet is open, outside air (i.e., ram air) is blown from the outlet due to the ram pressure. So, by driving the electric pump only at this time, the energy can be conserved.

Also, when the switching means makes a switch such that outside air is introduced through the outside air inlet, the requirement setting means may set a minimum flowrate within a preset required flowrate settable range as the required flowrate.

Setting the required flowrate to the minimum flowrate in this way keeps the speed of the electric pump down which conserves energy, and also suppresses a drop in coolant temperature while the engine is stopped.

That is, in this aspect of the invention, when the coolant temperature is low, the air-conditioner is set to the engine warm-up promoting mode that promotes engine warm-up and suppresses a drop in coolant temperature. However, when the vehicle speed is high and the air-conditioner is in this engine warm-up promoting mode, at least the electric pump is driven to reduce an unpleasant sensation from being imparted to the

occupant. Also, by suppressing the required flowrate, the power consumption and the like is also able to be reduced.

The vehicular air-conditioning system may also include selecting means for selecting, as an outlet for the supply air, a defroster outlet that points toward a window; and outside air temperature detecting means for detecting an outside air temperature. Further, when the defroster outlet is selected by the selecting means, the air-conditioning controlling means may perform control such the supply air, which is produced by increasing the amount of air that passes through the heater core, is blown out from the defroster outlet. Also, when the defroster outlet is selected by the selecting means and the outside air temperature detected by the outside air temperature detecting means is lower than a set temperature, the requirement setting means may set a maximum flowrate within a preset required flowrate settable range as the required flowrate. Moreover, when the defroster outlet is selected by the selecting means and the outside air temperature is greater than the set temperature, the requirement setting means may set a predetermined flowrate which is lower than the maximum flowrate as the required flowrate.

According to this structure, when the mode to defog/defrost the front windshield and the like is selected, the flowrate of coolant that circulates through the heater core is increased to improve defogging/defrosting ability.

At this time, if the outside air temperature is low, coolant is circulated at the maximum flowrate. If the outside air temperature is relatively high, the required flowrate is reduced and the speed of the electric pump is inhibited from being increased more than necessary, which suppresses an increase in power consumption.

Also, the air-conditioning controlling means may stop the blower fan when the temperature of the coolant is lower than a first set temperature; the air-conditioning means may drive the blower fan when the temperature of the coolant is higher than a second set temperature which is higher than the first set temperature; and the setting means may set the required flowrate when the temperature of the coolant exceeds the first set temperature.

According to this structure, coolant can be circulated by driving the electric pump when the coolant temperature is between the first set temperature and the second set temperature at which the blower fan is stopped. As a result, the heater core can be warmed up by the time the coolant temperature reaches the second set temperature and the blower fan is driven. This makes it possible to prevent cool air from being blown into the vehicle cabin when the blower fan is operated.

That is, it is possible to prevent cool air from being blown into the vehicle cabin when the blower fan is operated by controlling the blower fan so that it starts to be driven after the electric pump starts to be driven.

Also, when the temperature of the coolant exceeds the first set temperature, the setting means may set a minimum flowrate within a preset required flowrate settable range as the required flowrate.

According to this structure, the required flowrate when the blower fan is stopped is set as the minimum flowrate so the speed of the electric pump can be kept down, thereby conserving energy.

That is, in this aspect, the drive mode of the air-conditioning system is set to the engine warm-up promoting mode when the coolant temperature is equal to or less than the first set temperature. When the coolant temperature is between the first set temperature and the second set temperature, the drive mode is set to the low flowrate mode that reduces the required flowrate. Also, when the coolant temperature is equal to or greater than the second set temperature, the drive mode may

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be set to a required flowrate mode which, for example, sets a required flowrate that keeps the speed of the electric pump down and performs control to obtain the required flowrate that was set. This enables energy to be conserved.

A second aspect of the invention relates to a control method of an air-conditioning system for a vehicle that includes an electric pump that circulates coolant at a flowrate according to a speed of the electric pump between an engine and a heater core, and drive controlling means for controlling starting/stopping of the electric pump, as well as the speed of the electric pump when the electric pump is being driven, based on a driving state of the engine, and driving the electric pump at a speed according to a required flowrate that is input when a flowrate is required. The air-conditioning system performs air-conditioning by blowing supply air, which is produced by controlling an air-heating amount by the heater core through which the coolant is circulated, out into a vehicle cabin from an air outlet. This control method includes detecting a temperature of the coolant; controlling operation of a blower fan that is driven to produce the supply air; air-conditioning the vehicle cabin with supply air produced by controlling the amount of air heated by the heater core; stopping operation of the blower fan when the detected temperature of the coolant is equal to or less than a set temperature during heating; detecting a vehicle speed; setting the required flowrate of the coolant that is circulated to the heater core based on the detected vehicle speed when the blower fan is stopped because the temperature of the coolant has not reached the set temperature; and requiring the drive controlling means to circulate the coolant of the required flowrate when the required flowrate has been set.

Accordingly, for example, even if the vehicle speed is high and air that hits the front of the vehicle as it moves (i.e., ram air) is blown from the outlet due to the ram pressure, that air is heated by coolant that is circulated through the heater core so it will be more pleasant for the occupant.

According to the invention described above, it is possible to prevent an unpleasant sensation from being imparted to the occupant when outside air (i.e., ram air) is blown from an outlet due to the ram pressure while conserving energy when coolant is circulated using the electric pump.

Also, in this invention, it is possible to prevent the speed of the electric pump from being increased more than necessary while ensuring the ability to defog/defrost the front windshield when a defogger/defroster mode for the front windshield is selected.

Furthermore, this invention makes it possible to obtain the exceptional effect of being able to minimize an unpleasant sensation being imparted to the occupant from low temperature supply air being blown out when a blower fan, which was stopped because the coolant temperature was low, is operated because the coolant temperature has increased.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing and further features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following description of example embodiments with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein like numerals are used to represent like elements and wherein:

FIG. 1 is a block diagram schematically showing a coolant circulation system according to one example embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram schematically showing an air-conditioner in the example embodiment;

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FIG. 3 is a line diagram showing an example of blower air volume with respect to the coolant temperature during a heating operation;

FIG. 4A is a line diagram showing an example of how a flag is set based on the coolant temperature, and FIG. 4B is a line diagram showing an example of how a flag is set based on the outside air temperature;

FIGS. 5A to 5D are line diagrams showing examples of how a required flowrate is set with respect to blower air volume (blower level) according to the state of the coolant temperature flag and the outside air temperature flag;

FIG. 6 is a line diagram showing an example of how a correction flowrate of the required flowrate is set with respect to the coolant temperature;

FIG. 7 is a line diagram showing an example of how the required flowrate is set with respect to vehicle speed;

FIG. 8 is a line diagram showing an example of the required flowrate is set with respect to the outside air temperature; and

FIGS. 9A and 9B are flowcharts illustrating an outline of how the required flowrate of coolant is set according to the example embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

In the following description and the accompanying drawings, the present invention will be described in more detail in terms of example embodiments. FIG. 2 is a block diagram schematically showing a vehicular air-conditioning system (hereinafter simply referred to as "air-conditioner") 10 in an example embodiment.

In this air-conditioner 10, a refrigeration cycle is created in which refrigerant is circulated by a compressor 12, a condenser 14, an expansion valve 16, and an evaporator 18.

The compressor 12 is driven by a compressor motor 20 so as to compress refrigerant. This high temperature, high pressure refrigerant is then sent to the condenser 14. In the condenser 14, the high temperature, high pressure refrigerant is cooled so that it liquefies. This liquefied refrigerant is then sent to the evaporator 18.

In the evaporator 18, the liquefied refrigerant is vaporized. At this time, air passing through the evaporator 18 is cooled. The expansion valve 16 rapidly reduces the pressure of the liquid refrigerant, and as a result, the refrigerant is nebulized (i.e., atomized) before it is sent to the evaporator 18 to improve the vaporization efficiency of the refrigerant in the evaporator 18.

Meanwhile, the air-conditioner 10 is provided with an air-conditioning unit 22 in which the evaporator 18 is arranged. Also, the air-conditioning unit 22 has a blower fan 24 as well as an air inlet 26 and an air outlet 28.

Air is drawn into the air-conditioning unit 22 through the air inlet 26, passed through the evaporator 18, and blown out into the vehicle cabin as supply air from the air outlet 28 by operating the blower motor 30 and driving the blower fan 24.

The air-conditioning unit 22 has two air introduction modes when producing supply air. One mode is a recirculation mode that draws in air from inside the cabin (i.e., hereinafter this air may also be referred to as "inside air" or "recirculated air"). The other mode is a fresh air mode that draws air from outside the vehicle into the vehicle cabin (hereinafter this air may also be referred to as "outside air" or "fresh air"). The air-conditioning unit 22 has two air inlets 26, i.e., an inside air inlet 26A which is open to the cabin, and an outside air inlet 26B that is open to outside the vehicle. A switching damper 32 is also provided which selectively opens either the inside air inlet 26A or the outside air inlet 26B.

By setting the air introduction mode of the air-conditioner 10, the switching damper 32 is operated according to the air introduction mode that is set such that either fresh air or recirculated air is introduced into the air-conditioning unit 22.

Also in the air-conditioner 10, the air outlet 28 includes three outlets, i.e., a defroster outlet 28A that opens toward the front windshield, not shown, of the vehicle, a dashboard outlet 28B that opens toward occupants in the cabin, and a floor outlet 28C that opens toward the feet of occupants in the front and rear seats. The defroster outlet 28A, the dashboard outlet 28B, and the floor outlet 28C are selectively opened and closed by a mode switching damper 34.

In the air-conditioner 10, there are four air-conditioning modes according to which supply air is blown out, i.e., a DEF mode that blows out supply air from the defroster outlet 28A, a FOOT mode that blows out supply air from the floor outlet 28C, a DEF/FOOT mode that blows out supply air from the defroster outlet 28A and the floor outlet 28C, and a BI-LEVEL mode that blows out supply air from the dashboard outlet 28B and the floor outlet 28C. By setting the air-conditioning mode, the mode switching damper 34 operates according to the air-conditioning mode that is selected.

Meanwhile, the air-conditioner 10 includes a heater core 36 that heats air that will become the supply air, and an air mixing damper 38 that controls the amount of air that passes through the heater core 36. The heater core 36 is arranged downstream of the evaporator 18 in the air-conditioning unit 22, and the air mixing damper 38 is arranged between the evaporator 18 and the heater core 36.

In the air-conditioning unit 22, the air that was heated by passing through the heater core 36 is mixed with air of the temperature that it was when it passed through the evaporator 18 by bypassing the heater core 36. The resultant mixed air is the air to be used for air-conditioning, i.e., the supply air. At this time, the air-conditioner 10 produces supply air of the desired temperature by controlling the amount of air that passes through the heater core 36 and the amount of air that bypasses the heater core 36 according to the opening amount of the air mixing damper 38.

Meanwhile, as shown in FIG. 1, the vehicle provided with the air-conditioner 10 has an engine 40 which serves as the driving source for running. This engine 40 is an internal combustion engine of a typical configuration in which a water jacket which is formed by a circulation path for engine coolant (hereinafter simply referred to as "coolant") is formed in a cylinder block and a cylinder head (none of which are shown).

The vehicle also has an engine radiator 42, a water pump 44, and a coolant circuit 46 through which coolant circulates between the engine 40 and the engine radiator 42.

Also, the water pump 44 is connected to an electric motor 48. The water pump 44 is an electric pump which is driven by the electric motor 48 (hereinafter, when referred to collectively, the water pump 44 and the electric motor 48 will be referred to as the "electric pump 50"). When the electric pump 50 is operated, it circulates coolant between the engine 40 and the engine radiator 42 such that coolant is cooled in the engine radiator 42, thereby suppressing an increase in the temperature of the engine 40.

A thermostat 52 is provided in the coolant circuit 46 and a bypass passage 54 is formed between the thermostat 52 and the engine 40. When the temperature of the coolant passing through the thermostat 52 is above a predetermined temperature, the thermostat 52 completely opens the coolant flow path to the engine radiator 42 to promote cooling of the coolant in the engine radiator 42. Also, when the coolant temperature falls below the predetermined temperature, the

thermostat 52 gradually narrows the flow path to the engine radiator 42 to limit the cooling of the coolant. When the coolant temperature drops even further, the thermostat 52 completely closes off the flow path to stop the coolant from being cooled.

As a result, the temperature of the coolant in the engine 40 is maintained at a set temperature that is higher than the predetermined temperature. Incidentally, in the coolant circuit 46, coolant is circulated via the bypass passage 54 when the thermostat 52 narrows the flow path to the engine radiator 42.

Meanwhile, a circulation passage 56 through which coolant is circulated is formed between the heater core 36 and the engine 40. In this circulation passage 56, the electric pump 50 sends coolant from the engine 40 to the heater core 36. Coolant that has passed through the heater core 36 is then returned to the engine 40 via the electric pump 50.

In the air-conditioner 10, the coolant that is circulated through the heater core 36 serves as the heat source to heat the air (i.e., the supply air) that passes through the heater core 36.

The ratio of the coolant flowrate between the coolant circuit 46 and the circulation circuit 56 is set. Also, the coolant flowrate changes depending on the speed of the electric pump 50 (i.e., the electric motor 48) (that is, depending on the speed of the water pump 44). Accordingly, coolant of a flowrate corresponding to the speed of the electric pump 50 is circulated through the heater core 36.

The vehicle is also provided with an engine ECU 58 that controls the driving of the engine 40. Further, the vehicle provided with the air-conditioner 10 may be a hybrid vehicle provided with an electric motor, not shown, in addition to the engine 40 as the driving source for running. In this case, a hybrid ECU 58A that controls the driving of the electric motor is provided, hence the driving of the engine 40 and the driving of the electric motor are controlled by the engine ECU 58 and the hybrid ECU 58A.

At this time, the engine ECU 58 performs engine stop control that stops the engine 40 when a preset engine stop condition is satisfied, and restarts the engine 40 when an engine restart condition is satisfied while the engine 40 is stopped. A detailed description of this kind of engine stop control will be omitted here.

The electric pump 50 is connected to the engine ECU 58. The engine ECU 58 controls the flowrate of the coolant circulating through the coolant circuit 46 and the circulation circuit 56 by controlling the starting/stopping of the electric pump 50 and the speed of the electric pump 50 while it is being driven.

At this time, the engine ECU 58 controls the starting/stopping and speed of the electric pump 50 according to the driving state of the engine 40 and the coolant temperature. Also, the engine ECU 58 conserves energy by reducing the amount of power consumed by the electric pump 50 by limiting its operation and speed.

As shown in FIG. 2, the compressor motor 20 and the blower motor 30 are connected to an air-conditioner ECU 60. This air-conditioner ECU 60 controls the cooling ability by controlling the starting/stopping and speed of the compressor motor 20, as well as controls the volume of supply air (i.e., the blower air volume V_a) by controlling the starting/stopping and speed of the blower motor 30.

The air-conditioner ECU 60 is also connected to an actuator 62 that operates the switching damper 32, an actuator 64 that operates the mode switching damper 34, and an actuator 66 that rotates the air mixing damper 38.

Further, the air-conditioner ECU 60 is connected to various sensors that detect the environmental conditions and the oper-

ating state when the air-conditioner 10 is operating. These sensors include, for example, a cabin temperature sensor 68 that detects the temperature inside the cabin, an outside air temperature sensor 70 that detects the temperature outside the vehicle (i.e., the outside air temperature), a sunload sensor 72 that detects the amount of solar radiation, a post-evaporator temperature sensor 74 that detects the temperature of the air that has passed through the evaporator 18, and a coolant temperature sensor 76 that detects the temperature of the coolant supplied to the heater core 36. Incidentally, the temperature of coolant coming from the engine 40 may be detected by the engine ECU 58 and the coolant temperature sensor 76 may detect the temperature of the coolant that actually flows through the heater core 36. Also, the coolant temperature may be predicted based on the temperature of the coolant coming from the engine 40, which is detected by the engine ECU 58, as the temperature of coolant that actually flows through the heater core 36.

The air-conditioner ECU 60 is also connected to an operating panel 78 with which the settings of the operating conditions and the like, as well as commands such as starting and stopping commands and the like are input. When the operating mode and operating conditions such as the set temperature and the like are set according to a switch operation of the operating panel 78, the air-conditioner ECU 60 controls the compressor motor 20 (i.e., the compressor 12), the blower motor 30 (i.e., the blower fan 24), and the actuators 62 to 66 and the like based on the environmental conditions and the operating conditions that were set.

For example, the air-conditioner ECU 60 sets a target supply air temperature T_{AO} to make the temperature in the cabin a set temperature T_{SET} based on the set temperature T_{SET} that was set on the operating panel 78. The air-conditioner ECU 60 then sets the opening amount S of the air mixing damper 38 based on this target supply air temperature T_{AO} . Also, when there is a command for the air-conditioner 10 to operate in an auto-mode, the air-conditioner ECU 60 sets the volume of the supply air (i.e., the blower air volume) V_a and the air-conditioning mode and the like.

The target supply air temperature T_{AO} is obtained using a general operational expression from the set temperature T_{SET} , the cabin temperature T_r detected by the cabin temperature sensor 68, the outside air temperature T_o detected by the outside air temperature sensor 70, and the amount of solar radiation ST detected by the sunload sensor 72.

$$T_{AO} = K_1 \times T_{SET} - K_2 \times T_o - K_3 \times T_r - K_4 \times ST + C \quad (\text{where } K_1, K_2, K_3, K_4, \text{ and } C \text{ are preset constants})$$

Also, the set temperature T_{SET} , the preset temperature or the cabin temperature T_r or the like is used as a reference temperature, and the blower air volume V_a is set from this reference temperature and the target supply air temperature T_{AO} . For example, when the set temperature T_{SET} is used as the reference temperature, the blower air volume V_a can be set to be low when the target supply air temperature T_{AO} is close to the set temperature T_{SET} (i.e., when the difference between the two is small) and increase as the difference between the target supply air temperature T_{AO} and the set temperature T_{SET} increases.

Also, the opening amount S of the air mixing damper 38 of the air-conditioner 10 is controlled so that the temperature when the air that has passed through the evaporator 18 and the heater core 36 has mixed with the air that has passed through the evaporator 18 but has bypassed the heater core 36 matches the target supply air temperature T_{AO} .

When the ratio of the amount of air that has passed through the heater core 36 and the amount of air that has bypassed the

heater core 36 is designated mixture ratio r , this mixture ratio r is determined by the opening amount S of the air mixing damper 38. Also, the opening amount S of the air mixing damper 38 is obtained from the mixture ratio r . This kind of mixture ratio r can be calculated from the temperature of the air that has passed through the evaporator 18 (i.e., the post-evaporator temperature T_e) and the temperature of the air that has passed through the heater core 36 (i.e., the post-heater core temperature T_h).

The mixture ratio r is obtained according to the following expression: $r = (T_{AO} - T_e) / (T_h - T_e)$. At this time, the post-evaporator temperature T_e is detected by the post-evaporator temperature sensor 74, and the post-heater core temperature T_h can be detected by providing a temperature sensor downstream of the heater core 36. Alternatively, the post-heater core temperature T_h can be calculated using the temperature T_w of coolant that passes through the heater core 36, the flowrate V_w of the coolant, the blower air volume V_a , the post-evaporator temperature T_e , and the heat efficiency determined by the particular heater core 36 used. Of these values, the flowrate V_w of the coolant flowing through the heater core 36, which is unknown, is determined by the speed of the electric pump 50. Therefore, the mixture ratio r can also be calculated by obtaining the speed of the electric pump from the engine ECU 58.

The air-conditioner ECU 60 calculates the blower air volume V_a and the mixture ratio r , sets the driving voltage of the blower motor 30 based on the blower air volume V_a , and sets the driving amount of the actuator 66 that opens and closes the air mixing damper 38 based on the mixture ratio r . The air-conditioner ECU 60 then drives the blower motor 30 and controls the opening of the air mixing damper 38 by driving the actuator 66 (i.e., performs A/M control), based on these settings, to produce supply air of the target supply air temperature T_{AO} .

In this kind of A/M control, the air-conditioner ECU 60 performs air-conditioning with the air mixing damper 38 completely closed (i.e., opening amount $S=0$) (MAXCOOL) when the cooling load is large, and increases the opening amount S of the air mixing damper 38 when the heating load increases, for example. Also, when heating at maximum capacity at that time, the air-conditioner ECU 60 sets the air mixing damper 38 completely open (i.e., opening amount $S=100$) (MAXHOT).

When the cabin is being air-conditioned (i.e., heated) using coolant and the speed of the electric pump 50 is reduced to save energy, the flowrate V_w of the coolant that is circulated through the heater core 36 is reduced so the desired heating effect may not be able to be achieved.

Therefore, in the air-conditioner 10, the air-conditioner ECU 60 sets the flowrate of the coolant as the required flowrate V_r so that it will not be unpleasant for the occupants while suppressing the flowrate V_w of the coolant, based on the blower air volume V_a and the coolant temperature T_w and the like.

The air-conditioner ECU 60 directs the engine ECU 58 to drive the electric pump 50 (i.e., directs the engine ECU 58 to circulate coolant) to achieve the required flowrate V_r that is set according to preset conditions such as the blower air volume V_a and the coolant temperature T_w and the like.

Also, the engine ECU 58 drives the electric pump 50 based on the driving state of the engine 40 and the coolant temperature, as well as controls the speed of the electric pump 50 so that the flowrate V_w of coolant that flows through the heater core 36 comes to match the required flowrate V_r when a signal indicative of the required flowrate V_r of the coolant is received from the air-conditioner ECU 60.

In the heater core **36**, it is difficult to heat the air passing through it uniformly due to temperature swings at the surface of the heater core **36** when the coolant flowrate V_w drops. Also, the heat exchange efficiency drops when the flowrate V_w becomes too large.

In the air-conditioner **10**, a minimum flowrate V_{min} and a maximum flowrate V_{max} of the required flowrate V_r are set within a range between a minimum value of the flowrate V_w of coolant to the heater core **36** which is determined from the viewpoint of preventing swings in temperature at the surface of the heater core **36**, and a maximum value of the flowrate V_w of coolant to the heater core **36** which is determined from the viewpoint of conserving energy. The air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate V_r within this range between the minimum flowrate V_{min} and the maximum flowrate V_{max} (i.e., $V_{min} \leq V_r \leq V_{max}$). Incidentally, in the following description, the minimum flowrate V_{min} is 6 l/min (liters per minute) and the maximum flowrate V_{max} is 16 l/min.

Meanwhile, if the coolant temperature is low when an ignition switch, not shown, is turned on and the engine **40** is started, the engine ECU **58** performs a warm-up operation for the engine **40**. At this time while the coolant temperature is low, the engine ECU **58** stops the electric pump **50** to promote a rise in coolant temperature.

Also, when the coolant temperature drops due to the engine **40** being stopped, the engine ECU **58** stops the electric pump **50** to suppress a drop in coolant temperature.

Here, when the coolant temperature is low during a heating operation, the air-conditioner ECU **60** stops the blower fan **24** to prevent cool air from being blown into the vehicle cabin.

When the temperature T_w of the coolant that circulates through the heater core **36** reaches a predetermined temperature, the air-conditioner ECU **60** drives the blower fan **24** at the minimum air volume and increases the speed of the blower fan **24** to increase the blower air volume V_a as the temperature T_w of the coolant increases. Also, when the temperature T_w of the coolant that circulates through the heater core **36** drops, the air-conditioner ECU **60** reduces the blower air volume V_a and then stops the blower fan **24** (i.e., the blower motor **30**) when the temperature T_w of the coolant falls to a predetermined temperature or below.

FIG. **3** is a line diagram showing an example of the blower air volume V_a (blower level L) with respect to the coolant temperature T_w . Incidentally, in FIG. **3** the blower air volume V_a corresponds to the blower level L which changes in 31 steps from L_1 to L_{31} . The driving voltage of the blower motor **30** is set according to the blower level L .

As shown in FIG. **3**, in the air-conditioner ECU **60** a set temperature T_{S1} which is a second set temperature, and a set temperature T_{S2} which is higher than the set temperature T_{S1} are set (i.e., $T_{S1} < T_{S2}$, e.g., $T_{S1} = 40^\circ \text{C.}$ and $T_{S2} = 65^\circ \text{C.}$). The air-conditioner ECU **60** stops the blower fan **24** (i.e., blower level L) until the coolant temperature T_w reaches the set temperature T_{S1} . When the coolant temperature T_w reaches the set temperature T_{S1} , the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the blower air volume V_a to the lowest air volume (i.e., blower level L_1) and drives the blower fan **24**. Also, after the blower fan **24** starts, the blower level L is increased as the coolant temperature T_w rises until the coolant temperature T_w reaches the set temperature T_{S2} .

Further, in the air-conditioner ECU **60**, a set temperature T_{S3} which is a first set temperature that is lower than the set temperature T_{S1} , and a set temperature T_{S4} which is lower than the set temperature T_{S2} are set so there is hysteresis in the blower level L with respect to the coolant temperature T_w (i.e., $T_{S3} < T_{S1} < T_{S4} < T_{S2}$, e.g., $T_{S3} = 36^\circ \text{C.}$ and $T_{S4} = 61^\circ \text{C.}$ when the temperature width is a hysteresis of 4°C.). When the

coolant temperature T_w drops, the air-conditioner ECU **60** reduces the blower level L from the set temperature T_{S4} according to the coolant temperature T_w . When the coolant temperature T_w falls below the set temperature T_{S3} , the air-conditioner ECU **60** stops the blower fan **24** (sets the blower level to L).

The air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the blower level L to the upper limit of the blower air volume V_a with respect to the coolant temperature T_w , for example, and drives the blower fan **24**.

In this case, when attempting to raise the coolant temperature during a warm-up operation when the engine **40** is first started, for example, the air-conditioner ECU **60** outputs a command to circulate coolant before the coolant temperature reaches the set temperature T_{S1} .

For example, when the coolant temperature T_w reaches the set temperature T_{S3} which is lower than the set temperature T_{S1} which is the temperature at which the blower fan **24** starts to be driven, the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate V_r to the minimum flowrate V_{min} and outputs a command to circulate coolant. As a result, the heater core **36** is warmed up by the engine ECU **58** driving the electric pump **50** and circulating coolant.

Also, when the coolant temperature T_w exceeds the set temperature T_{S1} , the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate V_r based on the blower air volume V_a (i.e., the blower level L), the outside air temperature T_o detected by the outside air temperature sensor **70**, and the coolant temperature T_w .

At this time, the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets a flag F_o with respect to the outside air temperature T_o and a flag F_w with respect to the coolant temperature T_w , and then sets the required flowrate V_r from a preset map according to the states of the flags F_o and F_w .

FIG. **4A** is a line diagram showing an example of how the flag F_w is set. Set temperatures W_{S1} and W_{S2} which are applied to increasing and decreasing the flowrate through the thermostat **52** are used to set the flag F_w . When the temperature T_w of the coolant that flows through the thermostat **52** becomes equal to or higher than the set temperature W_{S2} (e.g., 87°C.), the thermostat **52** completely opens. When the temperature T_w of coolant that flows through the thermostat **52** becomes lower than or equal to the set temperature W_{S1} (e.g., 83°C.), the thermostat **52** completely closes.

At this time, the air-conditioner ECU **60** resets the flag F_w ($F_w = 0$) if the coolant temperature T_w is equal to or less than the set temperature W_{S1} ($T_w \leq W_{S1}$), and sets the flag F_w to 1 ($F_w = 1$) if the coolant temperature T_w is equal to or greater than the set temperature W_{S2} ($T_w \geq W_{S2}$). Also, after the flag F_w is set the air-conditioner ECU **60** then resets the flag F_w when the coolant temperature T_w drops to the set temperature W_{S1} .

FIG. **4B** is a line diagram showing an example of how the flag F_o is set. The air-conditioner ECU **60** resets the flag F_o ($F_o = 0$) if the outside air temperature T_o is equal to or less than a set temperature T_{O1} (for example, $T_{O1} = -9^\circ \text{C.}$) (i.e., $T_o \leq T_{O1}$), and sets the flag F_o to 1 ($F_o = 1$) if the outside air temperature T_o becomes equal to or greater than the set temperature T_{O2} (for example, $T_{O2} = -7^\circ \text{C.}$).

FIGS. **5A** to **5D** are show examples of maps of the required flowrate V_r with respect to the blower level L according to the state of the flags F_w and F_o . FIG. **5A** corresponds to a case in which the thermostat **52** is closed (flag $F_w = 0$) and the outside air temperature T_o is low (flag $F_o = 0$). FIG. **5B** corresponds to a case in which the thermostat **52** is closed (flag $F_w = 0$) and the outside air temperature T_o is high (flag $F_o = 1$). Also, FIG. **5C** corresponds to a case in which the thermostat **52** is open (flag $F_w = 1$) and the outside air temperature T_o is low (flag

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Fo=0), and FIG. 5D corresponds to a case in which the thermostat **52** is open (flag Fw=1) and the outside air temperature To is high (flag Fo=1).

Here, the heating ability of the air-conditioner **10** increases when the coolant temperature Tw is high. With any given coolant temperature Tw, the heating ability can be increased by increasing the required flowrate Vr of coolant, while energy can be conserved by reducing that required flowrate Vr.

Therefore, in the air-conditioner ECU **60**, when the coolant temperature Tw is high (i.e., flag Fw=1), energy can be conserved by setting the upper limit of the required flowrate Vr of the coolant to a set flowrate Vs1 that is less than the maximum flowrate Vmax (e.g., set flowrate Vs1=10/min) (applies to FIG. 5C or 5D).

Also, when the coolant temperature Tw is low, the heating ability can be maintained by having the air-conditioner ECU **60** be able to select any required flowrate Vr up to the maximum flowrate Vmax. At this time, if the outside air temperature To is low (i.e., flag Fo=0, FIG. 5A), the required flowrate Vr is increased with respect to the blower level L more so than it is when the outside air temperature To is high (i.e., flag Fo=1, FIG. 5B). Incidentally, in FIG. 5B (flag Fw=0, flag Fo=1), the gradient of the required flowrate Vr with respect to the blower level L is set lower than that in FIG. 5A (flag Fw=0, flag Fo=0). For example, a set flowrate Vs2=14 l/min as a required flowrate Vr corresponding to the blower level L of L19 in FIG. 5B (flag Fw=0, flag Fo=1) is set lower than the required flowrate Vr corresponding to the blower level L of L19 in FIG. 5A (flag Fw=0, flag Fo=0).

Meanwhile, in the air-conditioner **10**, the BI-LEVEL mode is set which blows out supply air both toward the occupant from the dashboard outlet **28B** and toward the feet of the occupant from the floor outlet **28C**. When the BI-LEVEL mode is selected or set as the air-conditioning mode, the air-conditioner ECU **60** corrects the required flowrate Vr by adding a correction flowrate α to the required flowrate Vr according to the coolant temperature Tw (i.e., $Vr=Vr+\alpha$). At this time, if the coolant temperature Tw is low, the correction flowrate α is increased to make the occupant feel warm. If, on the other hand, the coolant temperature Tw is high, the correction flowrate α is reduced to prevent the occupant from feeling too hot.

FIG. 6 shows an example of a map of the correction flowrate α with respect to the coolant temperature Tw at this time. On this map, the maximum value of the correction flowrate α is the correction flowrate α (e.g., $\alpha=3$ l/min). If the coolant temperature Tw is equal to or less than a set temperature Ts5 (Tw \leq Ts5, e.g., Ts5=55° C.), the flowrate α is set as the correction flowrate α . Also, if the coolant temperature Tw is equal to or greater than a set temperature Ts6 (Tw \geq Ts6, e.g., Ts6=70° C.), it is determined that the heating ability is good enough to obtain a sufficient feeling of warmth so no correction is made (i.e., correction flowrate $\alpha=0$). If the coolant temperature Tw is between the set temperature Ts5 and the set temperature Ts6 (i.e., Ts5<Tw<Ts6), the correction flowrate α is reduced as the coolant temperature Tw increases.

Meanwhile, the air-conditioner ECU **60** is connected to a vehicle speed sensor **80** that detects the running speed of the vehicle. Therefore, the air-conditioner ECU **60** is able to detect the running speed of the vehicle (hereinafter simply referred to as the "vehicle speed Sv") using this vehicle speed sensor **80**. Incidentally, the vehicle speed Sv is also detected by the engine ECU **58**. The vehicle speed Sv detected by the engine ECU **58** may be the vehicle speed Sv that is obtained by the air-conditioner ECU **60**.

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If the coolant temperature Tw is less than the set temperature Ts1 or the set temperature Ts3, the air-conditioner ECU **60** stops requiring a flowrate (i.e., required flowrate Vr=0) and stops the blower fan **24** (see FIG. 3). However, if this is done while the fresh air mode is set, unheated ram air will be blown from the outlet by the ram pressure generated as the vehicle moves.

Therefore, if the vehicle speed Vs detected by the vehicle speed sensor **80** rises beyond a set speed, the air-conditioner ECU **60** outputs a command to circulate coolant while leaving the blower fan **24** stopped. The required flowrate Vr at this time is preferably low so the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets it to the minimum flowrate Vmin.

FIG. 7 is a line diagram showing an outline of how the required flowrate Vr is set at this time. Set speeds Ss1 and Ss2 (Ss1<Ss2, e.g., Ss1=45 km/h and Ss2=50 km/h) are set in the air-conditioner ECU **60**. If the vehicle speed Sv becomes equal to or greater than the set speed Ss2, (i.e., Sv \geq Ss2), then the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the minimum flowrate Vmin as the required flowrate Vr and outputs a command to operate the electric pump **50** (i.e., outputs a command to circulate coolant). Also, if the vehicle speed Sv becomes equal to or less than the set speed Ss1 (i.e., Sv \leq Ss1), the air-conditioner ECU **60** stops requiring a flowrate (i.e., required flowrate Vr=0).

Also, the air-conditioner **10** has a DEF switch **82** provided on the operating panel **78**. When the front windshield fogs up and an occupant operates the DEF switch **82** to defog it, the air-conditioner ECU **60** performs air-conditioning with the air-conditioning mode set to the DEF mode.

When air-conditioning is performed in the DEF mode, the air-conditioner ECU **60** increases the heating ability by increasing the required flowrate Vr of the coolant. Also, the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate Vr at this time based on the outside air temperature To detected by the outside air temperature sensor **70**.

FIG. 8 is a line diagram showing an example of the required flowrate Vr with respect to the outside air temperature To when the DEF mode has been set. Incidentally, in the air-conditioner **10**, the required flowrate Vr is divided into two levels, i.e., the maximum flowrate Vmax and a set flowrate Vs3 that is slightly less than the maximum flowrate Vmax (e.g., Vs3=14 l/min). The air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate Vr to one of these based on the outside air temperature To.

Also, in the air-conditioner ECU **60**, a set temperature To3 and a set temperature To4 (To3<To4, e.g., To3=0° C. and To4=2° C.) are set as the outside air temperature To when the required flowrate Vr is set. When the outside air temperature To is equal to or greater than the set temperature To4 (i.e., To \geq To4), the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate Vr to the set flowrate Vs3, and when the outside air temperature To is equal to or less than the set temperature To3 which is less than the set temperature To4 (i.e., To \leq To3), the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate Vr to the maximum flowrate Vmax. Incidentally, when the outside air temperature To becomes equal to or greater than the set temperature To4 while the required flowrate Vr is set to the maximum flowrate Vmax, the air-conditioner ECU **60** reduces the required flowrate Vr to the set flowrate Vs3, and if the outside air temperature To becomes equal to or less than the set temperature To3 while the required flowrate Vr is set to the set flowrate Vs3, the air-conditioner ECU **60** increases the required flowrate Vr to the maximum flowrate Vmax.

Incidentally, when the DEF mode is selected, the air-conditioner ECU **60** increases the blower air volume Va (i.e.,

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increases the blower level L), for example, to promote defogging/defrosting of the windshield.

Hereinafter, the operation of this example embodiment will be described.

When an ignition switch, not shown, is turned on and the vehicle provided with the air-conditioner **10** starts to run, the vehicle runs with the engine ECU **58** and the hybrid ECU **58A** controlling the driving of the engine **40** and an electric motor, not shown.

Also, if the temperature of the coolant of the engine **40** is low when the ignition switch, not shown, is turned on, the engine ECU **58** performs an operation to warm up the engine **40**. While the coolant temperature is low at this time, the engine ECU **58** stops the electric pump **50** in an attempt to promote engine warm-up. Incidentally, the vehicle may be provided with an exhaust heat recovery system that heats coolant using the heat of the exhaust from the engine **40**. In this case, even when the engine **40** is being warmed up, the electric pump **50** may be operated to circulate coolant to improve exhaust heat recovery efficiency and promote engine warm-up.

Meanwhile, when the vehicle starts to run, the engine ECU **58** and the hybrid ECU **58A** control the operation of the engine **40** and the electric motor, not shown. At this time the engine ECU **58** performs eco-run control which stops the engine **40** when a preset engine stop condition is satisfied and starts the engine **40** when an engine restart condition is satisfied while the engine **40** is stopped.

If the coolant temperature at this time decreases, the engine ECU **58** stops the electric pump **50** in an attempt to keep the coolant temperature from dropping further.

Incidentally, in a hybrid vehicle, when the vehicle is decelerating, regenerative power generation is performed by driving a motor-generator to apply a load against the rotation of the tires which causes the vehicle to decelerate. The power that is generated (i.e., regenerated power) is stored in a battery (i.e., charges the battery) as power for running. When regenerative power generation is performed, the speed of the electric motor **50** may be increased using the regenerated power. As a result, the power generation efficiency improves.

When the operating condition is set, the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the target supply air temperature T_{AO} based on the operating condition and the environmental conditions, and air-conditions the cabin while performing air mixing damper control (AIM control) that controls the opening amount S of the air mixing damper **38** to obtain supply air of the target supply air temperature T_{AO} .

At this time, in the air-conditioner **10** in this example embodiment, the required flowrate V_r of the coolant is set according to the outside air temperature T_o , the vehicle speed S_v , and the coolant temperature T_w and the like. The air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate V_r of the coolant and outputs a command to the engine ECU **58** to circulate the coolant of the required flowrate V_r to the heater core **36**. Also, upon receiving the command from the air-conditioner ECU **60** to circulate the required flowrate V_r of coolant, the engine ECU **58** operates the electric pump so that the flowrate V_w of the coolant circulated to the heater core **36** matches the required flowrate V_r .

Here, required flowrate control of the coolant by the air-conditioner ECU **60** will be described with reference to the flowchart shown in FIGS. **9A** and **9B**. The routine shown in the flowchart is executed when the ignition switch of the vehicle, which is not shown, is turned on and there is a command to operate the air-conditioner **10**. The routine ends when either the air-conditioner **10** or the ignition switch is turned off. Also, in the air-conditioner **10**, the target supply air

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temperature T_{AO} is set based on the set operating condition and the environmental conditions, and the cabin is air-conditioned while controlling the opening amount S of the air mixing damper **38** based on the set target supply air temperature T_{AO} .

In the flowchart shown in FIGS. **9A** and **9B**, it is first determined in step **100** whether MAXCOOL, in which the air mixing damper **38** is completely closed (i.e., opening amount $S=0$), is set. If the heating load is small and the cooling load is large, it is not necessary to heat the supply air using the heater core **36** so the air-conditioner ECU **60** performs air-conditioning (cool operation) at MAXCOOL in which the air mixing damper **38** is completely closed.

Therefore at this time, the determination in step **100** is yes (Y) so the process proceeds on to step **102** where the required flowrate V_r is set to 0. Accordingly, the engine ECU **58** controls the electric pump **50** based on the speed of the engine **40**. When the engine **40** stops, the electric pump **50** also stops.

If, on the other hand, there is a heating load, the air mixing damper **38** is opened according to that heating load (i.e., not MAXCOOL). Therefore the determination at this time in step **100** is no (N) so the process proceeds on to step **104** where it is determined whether the DEF mode is set.

The windows of the vehicle tend to fog up when the surface temperature is low due to a low outside air temperature. When the front windshield fogs up, it impairs forward visibility. If the DEF switch **82** is turned on at this time, the air-conditioner ECU **60** switches the air-conditioning mode to the DEF mode such that supply air is blown out from the defroster outlet **28A** toward the front windshield. At this time, the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the air mixing damper **38** to the maximum opening amount (MAXHOT) to prevent the front windshield from fogging up.

Also, if the DEF switch **82** is turned on such that air-conditioner ECU **60** switches the air-conditioning mode to the DEF mode, the determination in step **104** is yes so the process proceeds on to step **106**.

In step **106**, the outside air temperature T_o detected by the outside air temperature sensor **70** is read, and in the next step, step **108**, the required flowrate V_r of the coolant is set based on the outside air temperature T_o .

As shown in FIG. **8**, in the air-conditioner **10**, the required flowrate V_r with respect to the outside air temperature when the DEF mode is selected is set and the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate V_r based on the outside air temperature T_o and the map shown in FIG. **8**.

Here, if the outside air temperature T_o is equal to or greater than the set temperature T_{O4} (i.e., $T_o \geq T_{O4}$), the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate V_r to the set flowrate V_{S3} which is lower than the maximum flowrate V_{max} . On the other hand, if the outside air temperature T_o is equal to or less than the set temperature T_{O3} , the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate V_r to the maximum flowrate V_{max} .

Then, in step **110** in FIG. **9A**, the air-conditioner ECU **60** directs the engine ECU **58** to generate a flowrate such that coolant will flow through the heater core **36** at the set required flowrate V_r . Accordingly, the engine ECU **58** controls the speed of the electric pump **50** to obtain the required flowrate V_r , and as a result, the air-conditioner **10** prevents the front windshield from fogging up with a large heating capability.

Here, in the air-conditioner **10**, the set temperatures (i.e., the set temperatures T_{O3} and T_{O4}) with respect to the outside air temperature are temperatures at which it can be determined whether moisture adhered to the front windshield may freeze.

That is, if the set temperature $T_{O3}=0^\circ\text{C.}$, it can be determined whether the outside air temperature T_o is below the

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freezing point (i.e., $T_o \leq 0^\circ \text{C}$). If the outside air temperature T_o is below the freezing point, moisture adhered to the front windshield may freeze. In order to defrost the windshield, a large amount of heat must be able to be supplied. Therefore, if the outside air temperature T_o is equal to or less than the set temperature T_{O3} (i.e., $T_{O3} = 0^\circ \text{C}$), the required flowrate V_r is set to the maximum flowrate V_{max} in order to thaw frozen moisture adhered to the front windshield and prevent more moisture from freezing to the front windshield.

Also, when the outside air temperature T_o is relatively high, moisture adhered to the front windshield will not freeze so a large heating capability for defrosting is not necessary. Therefore, it can be determined that only a heating capability for defogging the front windshield, which fogs up due to increased humidity in the cabin from the occupants in the cabin breathing and the like, is necessary. Thus, the speed of the electric pump **50** will increase unnecessarily if the required flowrate V_r is set to the maximum flowrate V_{max} at this time.

Therefore, if it is determined that the outside air temperature T_o is a temperature at which frost will not form on the front windshield and the like, the air-conditioner ECU **60** sets the required flowrate V_r to the set flowrate V_{S3} which is lower than the maximum flowrate V_{max} . As a result, the speed of the electric pump **50** can be reduced so that energy can be saved while still maintaining the ability to defog the front windshield.

Incidentally, in this example embodiment, the required flowrate V_r when the DEF mode is selected is divided into two levels, but it may also be divided into three or more levels based on the outside air temperature T_o . Also, the set temperatures T_{O3} and T_{O4} with respect to the outside air temperature T_o are only examples. Any appropriate set temperature may be applied as long as it is a temperature that enables energy to be saved while maintaining the ability to defog/defrost the front windshield.

On the other hand, if the DEF is not selected, the determination in step **104** is no and the process proceeds on to step **112**. In step **112** the air-conditioner ECU **60** reads the coolant temperature T_w detected by the coolant temperature sensor **76**, and then in step **114** the air-conditioner ECU **60** determines whether the coolant temperature T_w is equal to or greater than the set temperature T_{S1} (see FIG. 3, e.g., 40°C).

When the coolant temperature T_w exceeds the set temperature T_{S1} during a heating operation, the air-conditioner ECU **60** operates the blower fan **24** to air-condition (i.e., heat) the cabin. Therefore, when the determination in step **114** is yes, the process proceeds on to step **116**, where a flag F_w based on the coolant temperature T_w is set (see FIG. 4A). Then in step **118**, a flag F_o based on the outside air temperature T_o is set (see FIG. 4B).

Then in step **120**, the air-conditioner ECU **60** selects a map of the required flowrate V_r with respect to the blower air volume V_a (i.e., the blower level L) from FIGS. 5A to 5D based on the flags F_w and F_o , and sets the required flowrate V_r based on the selected map and the blower air volume V_a (i.e., the blower level L).

Also, in step **122**, it is determined whether the air-conditioning mode is set to the BI-LEVEL mode in which the dashboard outlet **28B** and the floor outlet **28C** are selected.

If the BI-LEVEL mode is selected at this time, the determination in step **122** is yes and the process proceeds on to step **124**. In step **124** a correction coefficient α is set based the coolant temperature T_w and a map of the correction coefficient α with respect to the coolant temperature T_w shown in FIG. 6, and the required flowrate V_r is corrected with the correction flowrate a that was set (i.e., $V_r = V_r + \alpha$).

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When the required flowrate V_r is set in this way, a circulation command is output to circulate coolant to the heater core **36** at the set required flowrate V_r in step **126**.

On the other hand, if the coolant temperature T_w is lower than the set temperature T_{S1} , the determination in step **114** is no and the process proceeds on to step **128**. In step **128**, it is determined whether the opening amount of the air mixing damper **38** is less than completely open. That is, it is determined whether the setting is neither MAXHOT with insufficient heating capability nor MAXCOOL with unnecessary heating capability.

Here, if the temperature of the supply air is being controlled using the air mixing damper **38** when the coolant temperature T_w is less than the set temperature T_{S1} , the air-conditioner **10** is performing a cooling operation so the determination in step **128** is yes and the process proceeds on to step **130** where the required flowrate V_r is set to the minimum flowrate V_{min} . Then in step **132**, a flowrate command is output to the engine ECU **58** so that coolant is circulated at the minimum flowrate V_{min} .

On the other hand, when the air mixing damper **38** is completely open (i.e., $S=100$), the determination in step **128** is no and the process proceeds on to step **134**. In step **134**, it is determined whether the coolant temperature T_w is within a range from the set temperature T_{S3} to the set temperature T_{S1} .

Here, if the coolant temperature T_w is between the set temperature T_{S3} and the set temperature T_{S1} (i.e., $T_{S3} < T_w < T_{S1}$), the determination in step **134** is yes so the process proceeds on to step **130**.

If the coolant temperature T_w has not reached the set temperature T_{S1} when a heating operation is performed, the air-conditioner ECU **60** stops the blower fan **24** to prevent supply air of an unadjusted-temperature (i.e., cool air) from being blown out.

Also, if the coolant temperature T_w reaches the set temperature T_{S1} while the engine **40** is being warmed up, the air-conditioner ECU **60** drives the blower fan **24** and starts to warm-up the engine **40**.

However, while the engine **40** is warming up, the electric pump **50** is stopped to promote warm-up of the engine **40** so the temperature T_w of the coolant in the heater core **36** is low. Also, if the blower fan **24** and the electric pump **50** are driven at the timing when the coolant temperature T_w reaches the set temperature T_{S1} , the temperature T_w of the coolant that is initially sent to the heater core **36** is likely low, which would result in cool air being blown out when the blower fan **24** is operated.

Therefore, a determination as to whether the coolant temperature T_w has risen to a temperature just under the set temperature T_{S1} is made based on whether the coolant temperature T_w is within the range from the set temperature T_{S3} to the set temperature T_{S1} . When the coolant temperature T_w is within this range, the process proceeds on to step **130** where the required flowrate V_r is set to the minimum flowrate V_{min} . Then in step **132**, a command is output to circulate coolant at the minimum flowrate V_{min} .

As a result, the heater core **36** can be warmed up so even if the blower fan **24** is driven and air starts to be blown out when the coolant temperature T_w reaches the set temperature T_{S1} , cool air will not be blown into the vehicle cabin so an unpleasant sensation will not be imparted to the occupants.

If, on the other hand, the coolant temperature T_w is equal to or less than the set temperature T_{S3} (i.e., $T_w \leq T_{S3}$), the determination in step **134** is no so the process proceeds on to step **136**. That is, if the coolant temperature T_w is low and the blower fan **24** is stopped while a heating operation is being

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performed, then it is determined in step 136 whether the air-conditioning mode is set to the fresh air mode and not the recirculation mode.

Here, when the recirculation mode is set instead of the fresh air mode and the inside air inlet 26A is opened by the switching damper 32, the determination in step 136 is no and the process proceeds on to step 138 where the required flowrate is set to zero (i.e., required flowrate $V_r=0$). As a result, the engine ECU 58 is not directed to circulate coolant so a decrease in the coolant temperature is suppressed and energy is saved.

In contrast, when the fresh air mode is selected and the outside air inlet 26B is opened, the determination in step 136 is yes and the process proceeds on to step 140. In step 140, the vehicle speed S_v detected by the vehicle speed sensor 80 is read. Then in step 142, the required flowrate V_r is set based on the vehicle speed S_v and the map of the required flowrate with respect to the vehicle speed S_v shown in FIG. 7.

Here, if the vehicle accelerates and the vehicle speed S_v becomes equal to or greater than a set speed S_{s2} (e.g., $S_{s2}=50$ km/h) (i.e., $S_v \geq S_{s2}$), the required flowrate V_r is set to the minimum flowrate V_{min} . Also, if the vehicle decelerates and the vehicle speed S_v becomes equal to or less than a set speed S_{s1} (e.g., $S_{s1}=45$ km/h) (i.e., $S_v \leq S_{s1}$), then a flowrate is not required so it is set to 0 (i.e., required flowrate $V_r=0$).

In this way, when the required flowrate V_r is set based on the vehicle speed S_v while the blower fan 24 is stopped because the coolant temperature T_w is low, then it is determined in step 144 whether no flowrate is required (i.e., required flowrate $V_r=0$). When a flowrate is required (in this case, the minimum flowrate V_{min}), the determination in step 144 is no so the process proceeds on to step 146 where a command to circulate the coolant based on the setting is output.

Typically, air (i.e., ram air) hits the front of a vehicle as it moves (that is, pressure is applied to the front of a vehicle as it moves). If at this time the air-conditioner 10 is in the fresh air mode and the outside air inlet 26B, which is communicated with the outside of the vehicle, is open, outside air is introduced into the air-conditioning unit 22 and blows out from the outlets 28 even if the blower fan 24 is stopped. If the air-conditioner 10 is set to perform a heating operation at this time, the floor outlet 28A is open so cool air would be blown out at the feet of the occupants, which would be unpleasant.

Here, if the air-conditioner 10 is set to the fresh air mode when the coolant temperature T_w is low and the blower fan 24 is stopped, the air-conditioner ECU 60 outputs a command to circulate coolant.

When engine coolant is circulated to the heater core 36 as a result, the air that has been drawn in from the outside air inlet 28B by the ram pressure can be heated, thus preventing cool air from being blown out of the outlets 28 which would be unpleasant for the occupants.

Setting the flowrate V_w of the coolant at this time to the minimum flowrate V_{min} makes it possible to suppress cooling of the coolant as well as keeps the speed of the electric pump 50 to the lowest speed necessary, thereby keeping power consumption down.

Incidentally, in the foregoing description, the set speed S_{s1} is 50 km/h and the set speed S_{s2} is 45 km/h. However, these speeds are only examples, i.e., the invention is not limited to these speeds. For example, the minimum speed at which the supply air is blown by the ram pressure or a speed that is set according to the minimum speed may also be used.

In this way, when the coolant temperature T_w is equal to or less than the set temperature T_{s3} , the air-conditioner 10 is set to an engine warm-up promoting mode which promotes

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engine warm-up and suppresses a decrease in coolant temperature. This mode stops the blower fan 24 and enables the electric pump 50 to be stopped. Also, when the coolant temperature T_w is within the range from the set temperature T_{s3} to the set temperature T_{s1} , the air-conditioner 10 is set to a low flowrate control mode which suppresses the flowrate of coolant and operates the electric pump 50 before operating the blower fan 24. When the coolant temperature T_w exceeds the set temperature T_{s1} , the air-conditioner 10 is set to a required flowrate control mode that requires a flowrate of the required flowrate V_r that keeps the speed of the electric pump 50 down based on the coolant temperature T_w and the blower air volume V_a and the like. By setting the air-conditioner 10 to one of these modes depending on the conditions, air-conditioning is able to be performed efficiently while conserving energy when circulating coolant using the electric pump 50.

Incidentally, in the example embodiment described above, the electric pump 50 is controlled by the engine ECU 58. Alternatively, however, the electric pump 50 may also be controlled by the air-conditioner ECU 60 or by a controller that is provided separately as a cooling apparatus.

Also, the invention is not limited to the structure described in the foregoing example embodiments. That is, the invention may be applied to a vehicle having any one of various configurations that performs engine stop control, such as a hybrid vehicle, as well as to an air-conditioning system provided in a vehicle.

The invention claimed is:

1. A control method of an air-conditioning system for a vehicle that includes:

an electric pump that circulates coolant at a flowrate according to a speed of the electric pump between an engine and a heater core; and

an engine controlling device that controls starting/stopping of the electric pump, as well as the speed of the electric pump when the electric pump is being driven, based on a driving state of the engine, and driving the electric pump at a speed according to a required flowrate that is input when a flowrate is required; wherein

the air-conditioning system performing air-conditioning by blowing supply air, which is produced by controlling an air-heating amount by the heater core through which the coolant is circulated, out into a vehicle cabin from an air outlet,

the control method comprising:

detecting a temperature of the coolant;

controlling operation of a blower fan that is driven to produce the supply air;

air-conditioning the vehicle cabin with supply air produced by controlling the amount of air heated by the heater core;

stopping operation of the blower fan when the detected temperature of the coolant is equal to or less than a set temperature during heating;

detecting a vehicle speed;

determining whether vehicle speed exceeds a preset vehicle speed;

setting the required flowrate of the coolant that is circulated to the heater core based on the detected vehicle speed when the blower fan is stopped because the temperature of the coolant has not reached the set temperature and when the vehicle speed exceeds the preset vehicle speed; setting the required flowrate of the coolant that is circulated to the heater core to 0 when the blower fan is stopped because the temperature of the coolant has not reached the set temperature and when the vehicle speed is equal to or less than the preset vehicle speed; and

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requiring the engine controlling device to circulate the coolant of the required flowrate when the required flowrate has been set.

2. An air-conditioning system provided for a vehicle that includes:

an electric pump that circulates coolant at a flowrate according to a speed of the electric pump between an engine and a heater core; and

an engine controlling device that controls starting/stopping of the electric pump, as well as the speed of the electric pump when the electric pump is being driven, based on a driving state of the engine, and drives the electric pump at a speed according to a required flowrate that is input when a flowrate is required;

the air-conditioning system performing air-conditioning by blowing supply air, which is produced by controlling an air-heating amount by the heater core through which the coolant is circulated, out into a vehicle cabin from an air outlet,

the air-conditioning system further comprising:

a blower fan that is driven to produce the supply air;

a coolant temperature detecting device that detects a temperature of the coolant;

an air-conditioning controlling device that:

controls operation of the blower fan and air-conditions the vehicle cabin with supply air produced by controlling the amount of air heated by the heater core, and stops operation of the blower fan when the temperature of the coolant detected by the coolant temperature detecting device is equal to or less than a set temperature during heating;

sets the required flowrate of the coolant that is circulated to the heater core; and

requires the engine controlling device to circulate the coolant of the required flowrate when the required flowrate has been set; and

a vehicle speed detecting device that detects a vehicle speed;

wherein the air-conditioning system is configured such that when the air-conditioning controlling device stops the blower fan because the temperature of the coolant is less than the set temperature and when the vehicle speed detecting device detects that the vehicle speed exceeds preset speed, the air-conditioning controlling device sets the required flowrate of the coolant based on the vehicle speed; and

wherein when the air-conditioning controlling device stops the blower fan because the temperature of the coolant is less than the set temperature and when the vehicle speed detecting device detects that the vehicle speed is equal to or less than the preset speed, the required flowrate is set to 0.

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3. The vehicular air-conditioning system according to claim 2, further comprising:

a switching device that switches between an outside air inlet through which air outside the vehicle is introduced as the supply air, and an inside air inlet through which air inside the vehicle cabin is introduced as the supply air, wherein the air-conditioning controlling device sets the required airflow when the switching device makes a switch such that outside air is introduced through the outside air inlet.

4. The vehicular air-conditioning system according to claim 3, wherein when the switching device makes a switch such that outside air is introduced through the outside air inlet, the air-conditioning controlling device sets a minimum flowrate within a preset required flowrate settable range as the required flowrate.

5. The vehicular air-conditioning system according to claim 2, further comprising:

a selecting device that selects, as an outlet for the supply air, a defroster outlet that points toward a window; and an outside air temperature detecting device that detects an outside air temperature,

wherein when the defroster outlet is selected by the selecting device, the air-conditioning controlling device performs control such the supply air, which is produced by increasing the amount of air that passes through the heater core, is blown out from the defroster outlet;

wherein when the defroster outlet is selected by the selecting device and the outside air temperature detected by the outside air temperature detecting device is lower than a set temperature, the air-conditioning controlling device sets a maximum flowrate within a preset required flowrate settable range as the required flowrate; and

wherein when the defroster outlet is selected by the selecting device and the outside air temperature is greater than the set temperature, the air-conditioning controlling device sets a predetermined flowrate which is lower than the maximum flowrate as the required flowrate.

6. The vehicular air-conditioning system according to claim 2, wherein the air-conditioning controlling device stops the blower fan when the temperature of the coolant becomes lower than a first set temperature; the air-conditioning device drives the blower fan when the temperature of the coolant becomes higher than a second set temperature which is higher than the first set temperature; and the setting device sets the required flowrate when the temperature of the coolant exceeds the first set temperature.

7. The vehicular air-conditioning system according to claim 6, wherein when the temperature of the coolant exceeds the first set temperature, the air-conditioning controlling device sets a minimum flowrate within a preset required flowrate settable range as the required flowrate.

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