a manner to be described. When the OS 11 calls this function, the SPP microcode 13 is notified and obtains the data represented by the parameters via the interface 14. The SPP microcode 13 processes the data and provides the result data for the call. A prototype and further details of the function 16 will be described below.

The OS 11 and SPP microcode 13 include respective exchange control portions 20 and 21 for controlling the exchange of feature information in a manner to be described in further detail. The OS 11 also includes a report portion 22 that receives the result of the exchange of feature information.

The OS 11 includes a FEATURES list 23 that comprises a list of feature word bit masks supported by the OS. This is hardcoded data. The FEATURES list 23 includes features bit masks 24 which will be further described below. A required/optional indication 25 is included indicating if a feature is a required feature or an optional feature.

In a similar manner, the OS 11 includes a SUPPORTEDFEATURES list 30 of supported features bit masks representing the features that are mutually supported by the OS 11 and SPP microcode 13. SUPPORTEDFEATURES list 30 includes features bit masks 31 with a required/optional indication 32 indicating if each supported feature is required or optional.

The SPP microcode 13 includes a FEATURES list 40 which is a list of feature word bit masks supported by SPP microcode 13. This is hardcoded data. Accordingly, the FEATURES list 40 includes features bit masks 41 with required/optional indicators 42.

The SPP microcode 13 includes a SUPPORTEDFEATURES list 50 which is a list of supported features bit masks providing indications of features mutually supported by OS 11 and SPP microcode 13. Accordingly, the SUPPORTEDFEATURES list 50 includes features bit masks 51 as well as the required/optional indicators 52.