Google releases developers kit defining Ara phone platform

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(Phys.org) —"The smartphone is one of the most empowering and intimate objects in our lives. Yet most of us have little say in how the device is made, what it does, and how it looks. And 5 billion of us don't have one. What if you could make thoughtful choices about exactly what your phone does, and use it as a creative canvas to tell your own story?" That has been the enticing question posed by Project Ara, leaving

developers and other creatives eager for further developments ever since Project Ara stopped out on stage in 2013 as part of Motorola. In 2014, Project Ara remains in Google's hands and is hardly about to gather any dust. Google on Wednesday announced Project Ara's first Module Developers Kit (MDK). Google said "The MDK is a free and open platform specification and reference implementation that contains everything you need to develop an Ara module. "

Google is officially making the MDK available free for download so that developers can start looking at the platform up close and get the guidelines they need ("reference implementations for various design features") for creating smartphone components.

The kit release ATP [Advanced Technology and Projects group] announcement was made Wednesday by Paul Eremenko, the project head. This is officially Project Ara MDK "v0.10" The release comes just days ahead of Google's Project Ara conference; developers can get a good look before the event. "Today we're announcing the first release of the Project Ara Module Developers Kit (MDK) v0.10. You can download the release at projectara.com/mdk/. This is a very early version," said Eremenko, "but our goals are to give the developer community an opportunity to provide feedback and input, and to help us ensure that the final MDK—anticipated at the end of 2014 is elegant, flexible, and complete."

This is an early alpha release of the MDK. The Ara platform consists of an on-device packet-switched data network based on the MIPI UniPro protocol stack, a flexible power bus, and industrial design that mechanically unites the modules with an endoskeleton. As an early release, it relies on a prototype implementation of the Ara on-device network using the MIPI UniPro protocol implemented on FPGA and running over an LVDS physical layer, said Ara developers conference notes. Subsequent versions will be built around a more efficient and

higher [performance](link) ASIC implementation of UniPro, running over a capacitive M-PHY physical layer.

Throughout 2014, the Project Ara team will work on a series of alpha and beta MDK releases. The upcoming conference for developers, on April 15-16, will be held at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California. Developers are to get a walk-through of existing and planned features of the Ara platform, along with a briefing and community feedback sessions on the alpha MDK.

  More information: www.projectara.com/mdk/

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