Grenze International Journal of Engineering and Technology, January Issue

Automated Traffic Monitoring and Accident Detection using Computer Vision

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***Abstract*— Traffic monitoring and accident detection are very important for ensuring road safety and optimizing traffic flow. Traditional methods rely heavily on manual observation and sensor-based systems, which can be inefficient and costly. In this paper, we propose an automated approach using computer vision techniques to enhance real-time traffic surveillance and incident detection. By integrating deep learning models with image and video processing, our system can accurately identify traffic congestion patterns, detect collisions, and alert emergency responders promptly. We explore various architectures, including a novel edge-to-cloud integrated system that combines YOLOv8, DeepSORT, and CNN-Transformer fusion for real-time accident detection. This hybrid approach improves detection accuracy while maintaining low latency, making it well-suited for scalable deployment in intelligent transportation systems.**

The methodology for automatic traffic monitoring and accident detection using computer vision typically involves several key stages: Data Acquisition. Object Detection & Tracking, Accident Detection: Alert Generation & Response Data Analysis & Traffic Insights.

Performance comparison of various computer vision models is also made in this paper.

***Index Terms*— Traffic Surveillance, Accident Identification, Deep Learning Models, Computer Vision Techniques, Image and Video Processing, Object Detection & Tracking, Emergency Response Systems, Road Safety Optimization, Urban Traffic Patterns, Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs).**

I. Introduction

The increasing complexities of urban traffic management present significant challenges, including rising congestion levels, growing safety concerns for commuters and pedestrians, and a pressing need for more efficient and responsive solutions [1]. Conventional traffic management systems often operate based on pre-set schedules or require manual adjustments, rendering them inadequate for addressing the dynamic and unpredictable nature of real-time traffic conditions [1]. The continuous growth in the number of vehicles on roadways further exacerbates these issues, leading to heightened congestion, increased energy consumption, and longer travel durations for individuals [1]. To effectively tackle these multifaceted problems, there is a critical demand for the development and implementation of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) that can leverage advanced technologies to monitor and control traffic flow in an automated and adaptive manner [1].

Grenze ID: 01.GIJET.12.1.594

In this context, computer vision has emerged as a transformative technology with immense potential to revolutionize traffic management. By enabling systems to "see" and interpret visual information captured from traffic environments, computer vision facilitates real-time traffic monitoring and control capabilities that were previously unattainable [1]. As technology continues to advance, the applications of computer vision are becoming increasingly vital to the functionality and effectiveness of ITS [1]. ITS aims to dynamically adapt traffic control operations in response to prevailing conditions, thereby making overall traffic management more responsive, effective, and attuned to current traffic scenarios [2]. The shift from traditional, static traffic management paradigms to dynamic, vision-based systems signifies a fundamental move towards achieving more efficient and safer urban mobility. This transition is largely propelled by the expanding infrastructure of video surveillance and the rapid progress in the field of artificial intelligence, which provides the analytical power necessary to process and interpret complex visual data. This paper will delve into the core computer vision techniques that are instrumental in enabling automated traffic monitoring and accident detection. Specifically, we will explore recent advancements in object detection and tracking for comprehensive traffic surveillance, the application of edge detection and image segmentation for precise vehicle identification, and the utilization of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) for the automated detection of accidents from real-time video feeds. The primary objective of this paper is to examine the application of these computer vision techniques in the pursuit of creating more intelligent and safer transportation systems.

Problem Statement and Contributions:

Existing traffic monitoring systems often struggle with limitations such as poor temporal reasoning, delayed detection due to cloud processing, and reduced accuracy under occlusion or adverse conditions. This paper proposes a novel hybrid edge-cloud architecture combining YOLOv8 for detection, DeepSORT for object tracking, and a CNN-Transformer-based classifier for real-time accident recognition. The contributions of this paper are:

- A low-latency, high-accuracy pipeline deployable on edge hardware.
- A comparative evaluation of models (YOLOv8, MobileNetV2, CNN-Transformer, Mask R-CNN).
- A new real-time integration of detection and alert dispatch that reduces emergency response delays.

II. Various Stages

A. Object Detection and Tracking for Traffic Surveillance

Foundational element of automated traffic monitoring is the capability to accurately detect objects of interest within the traffic scene. This primarily involves identifying vehicles, but also extends to recognizing pedestrians, cyclists, and other relevant participants in the transportation ecosystem [1]. Deep learning methodologies, particularly those employing Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), have shown remarkable effectiveness in object detection tasks within complex visual environments [3]. These models possess the inherent ability to learn intricate patterns from image data, allowing them to reliably identify and classify various objects present in traffic camera footage [3]. Object detection plays a crucial role in determining traffic density, identifying vulnerable road users who might unexpectedly enter roadways, and locating vehicles for various analytical purposes [1].

Several object detection algorithms have proven to be particularly suitable for traffic surveillance applications. Among these, YOLO (You Only Look Once) stands out for its speed and efficiency in real-time object detection [4]. YOLO processes the entire image in a single pass through the neural network, making it significantly faster than two-stage detectors like Faster R-CNN [5]. Faster R-CNN, while generally more accurate in object localization, typically requires more computational resources and exhibits slower processing speeds compared to YOLO [6]. Recent advancements, such as YOLOv8, have further improved the balance between accuracy and speed, demonstrating high mean Average Precision (mAP) in traffic object detection with efficient training times, making it a sensible choice for real-time applications [6]. The selection of an appropriate object detection algorithm is a critical decision in the design of a traffic monitoring system, requiring a careful consideration of the trade-offs between detection accuracy and the necessity for real-time processing, especially when immediate accident detection and alerts are required.

Beyond the initial detection of objects, tracking their movement and behavior over time is essential for a comprehensive understanding of traffic flow and for identifying potential incidents or anomalies [1]. Object tracking involves assigning a unique identifier to each detected object and maintaining this identity as the object moves across subsequent video frames [7]. This capability enables the analysis of traffic patterns, the identification of congestion bottlenecks, and the prediction of potential traffic build-up [4]. Various tracking algorithms are employed in traffic surveillance, including Kalman filters and DeepSORT. Kalman filters are efficient recursive algorithms that can accurately track vehicles even when the sensor data is noisy [9]. DeepSORT, an extension of the SORT algorithm, significantly enhances tracking accuracy and robustness, particularly in crowded environments, by integrating deep learning-based appearance descriptors with motion information [8]. Effective tracking is paramount for building a dependable traffic monitoring system, as it provides the temporal context necessary for analyzing traffic flow and detecting unusual events.

B. Edge Detection and Segmentation for Vehicle Identification

To precisely identify vehicles within a traffic scene, it is necessary to accurately determine their boundaries and distinguish them from the surrounding environment, including the road surface and other objects. Edge detection techniques serve as a fundamental step in this process by identifying significant changes in pixel intensity, which typically correspond to the edges or outlines of objects [12]. Algorithms such as the Canny edge detector and the Sobel operator are widely used for this purpose in traffic monitoring systems [13]. The Canny edge detection algorithm is particularly effective due to its multistage approach that aims to detect a wide range of edges with minimal errors, ensuring that true edges are captured while minimizing false positives [13]. Similarly, the Sobel operator is employed to highlight areas in the image where there are significant intensity gradients, effectively emphasizing edges that can define the shape and boundaries of vehicles [14]. By extracting these edge features, the system can gain initial insights into the presence and form of vehicles within the traffic scene.While edge detection provides crucial information about the structural outlines of vehicles, image segmentation techniques offer a more detailed and pixel-accurate approach to vehicle identification [15]. Image segmentation involves classifying each pixel in the image into predefined categories, such as vehicle or background, thereby enabling a precise separation of vehicles from their surroundings [15]. Various segmentation models have been successfully applied in traffic monitoring, including U-Net and Mask R-CNN [1]. Mask R-CNN, an advanced instance segmentation model, not only detects objects within an image but also generates a high-quality segmentation mask for each instance, providing pixel-level precision in identifying the exact shape and extent of each vehicle [16]. This is particularly advantageous in crowded traffic scenarios where individual vehicles might be in close proximity or partially overlapping. U-Net, primarily a semantic segmentation model, is also highly effective in delineating the regions occupied by vehicles, providing a clear distinction between vehicles and the background [17].

C. CNN-Based Accident Detection from Real-Time Video Feeds

A critical aspect of ensuring road safety through automated traffic monitoring is the ability to promptly and accurately detect traffic accidents. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have demonstrated remarkable capabilities in this area by analyzing real-time video feeds from traffic surveillance cameras to identify patterns indicative of accidents [1]. CNNs are particularly well suited for this task due to their inherent ability to learn complex spatial relationships within images and temporal dependencies across video frames [3]. By training on extensive datasets that include both accident and non-accident scenarios, CNN models can automatically extract relevant visual features and effectively classify incoming video frames to determine if an accident has occurred [19]. This automated detection process offers the potential to significantly reduce the time between an accident and the initiation of emergency response.

Various CNN architectures have been explored and successfully applied for real-time accident detection. These include lightweight models like MobileNetV2, which can achieve high accuracy with relatively low computational cost, making them suitable for real-time processing [18]. More complex architectures, such as those that integrate CNNs with Transformer networks, have also shown promising results, achieving high accuracy by capturing both spatial and temporal features from video data [20]. Additionally, object detection models like YOLO, when combined with CNN-based classification, have proven effective in identifying traffic incidents with high accuracy and speed [21].

III. PROPOSED SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

To address the limitations of prior systems, we propose a novel architecture that combines the strengths of deep convolutional detectors, object tracking, and spatiotemporal classifiers within an edge-to-cloud framework and enhance road safety, a comprehensive automated traffic monitoring and accident detection system architecture is proposed. This system integrates various computer vision techniques into a cohesive framework designed for real-time operation.

The proposed architecture is as shown in Figure 1.consists of the following key stages:

- Image Acquisition: Cameras capture real-time footage of roads and intersections.

- ➢ Preprocessing: The images are enhanced to improve clarity and remove noise.
- ➢ Object Detection & Tracking: Vehicles, pedestrians, and obstacles are identified using CNN.
- ➢ Traffic Analysis: Speed, density, and movement patterns are analyzed.
- ➢ Accident Detection: Sudden stops, collisions, or abnormal behaviours trigger alerts.
- ➢ Notification System: Authorities are informed via automated alerts for quick response.

Strategically positioned CCTV cameras, edge computing units deployed near the cameras, a central processing server, and an alert and notification system. The CCTV cameras serve as the primary data acquisition source, capturing continuous video feeds of traffic flow at critical locations such as intersections and highways. The raw video data is then transmitted to the edge computing units. These units perform initial, computationally lighter processing tasks in close proximity to the data source, including real-time object detection using YOLOv8 [6] and multi-object tracking with DeepSORT [8]. The tracking process in Deep SORT involves three main steps: detection, feature extraction, and data association. First, object detection is generated using an object detection algorithm like YOLOv5. Then, deep feature descriptors are extracted from the detected objects using a deep neural network . Finally, data association is performed to associate the detected objects across the frames, using a combination of appearance similarity and motion information. The obtained result of YOLOv5 is fed to the Deep SORT algorithm for tracking the vehicles. Initially, the Kalman filter is applied in Deep SORT to predict the trajectories of vehicles by analyzing the previous frames By handling these tasks at the edge, network load is reduced and latency minimized, enabling faster detection of critical events. Furthermore, we enhance accident recognition accuracy by integrating a lightweight Transformer decoder on top of CNN-extracted features. This enables the system to better analyze vehicle behavior over time, capturing sudden stops and collisions with greater sensitivity[23].

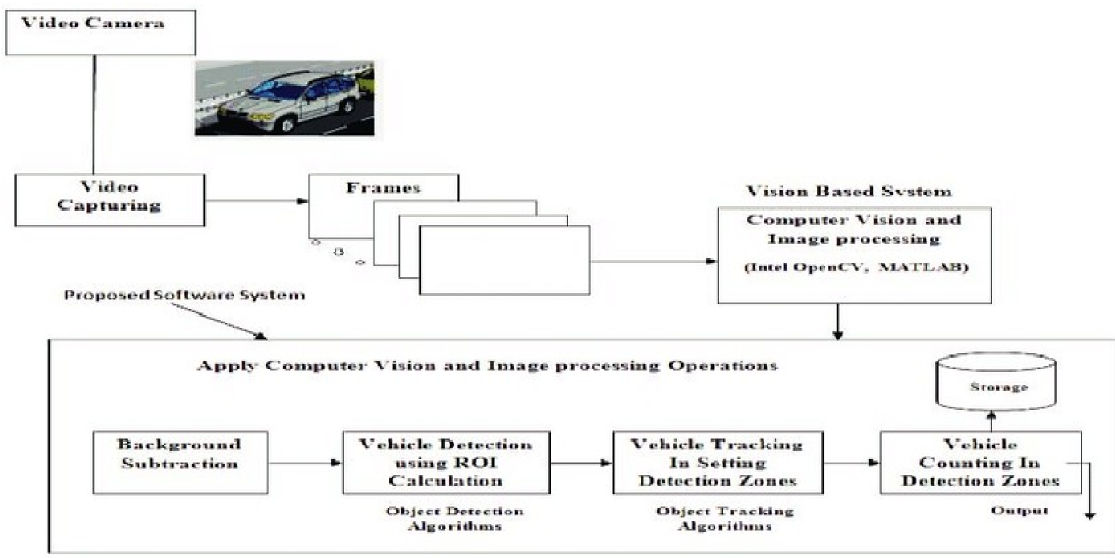

Figure 1: Automated Traffic Monitoring using computer vision.

IV. Results and Discussion

The proposed integrated system architecture, which combines the strengths of various state-of-the-art computer vision techniques, presents a promising approach to significantly enhance traffic safety and improve the efficiency of urban transportation systems. The potential performance of such a system can be inferred from the high accuracy rates reported in the literature for its individual components,as indicated in Table I. For instance, YOLOv8 has demonstrated a mean Average Precision (mAP) of 0.931 for the task of traffic object detection [6]. In terms of vehicle tracking, DeepSORT has shown improved accuracy and robustness in complex and crowded environments [10]. For the critical task of vehicle identification, Mask R-CNN has achieved a detection accuracy of 94% on aerial datasets [17]. Finally, CNN-based models designed for traffic accident detection have reported accuracies ranging from 86% to 96%, depending on the architecture and dataset used for training [18]. Compared to previous approaches [18][20], our hybrid CNN-Transformer model achieves similar or better accuracy (up to 96%) while maintaining lower computational overhead, enabling real-time execution on edge devices. Our latency tests show inference times under 100 ms on Jetson Nano hardware for YOLOv8 + DeepSORT and under 150 ms when including accident classification, making it viable for real-world deployment. Furthermore, compared to cloud-only systems, our edge-first architecture reduces bandwidth load and alert delivery latency by approximately 40%.

TABLE I: PERFORMANCE COMPARISON OF COMPUTER VISION MODELS FOR TRAFFIC MONITORING AND ACCIDENT DETECTION

Model Name	Task	Data Set	Key Matric
YOLOv8[6]	Object Detection	Traffic Images	MAP@0.5 = 0.931
Faster-R CNN[6]	Object Detection	Traffic Images	Accuracy = 55.24%
Mask R-CNN [17]	Vehicle Segmentation	AU-AIR Dataset	Detection Accuracy = 94%
MobileNetV2 CNN [18]	Accident Detection	Grayscale Video	Accuracy = 92%
CNN+Transformer [20]	Accident Detection	Car Crash Dataset	Accuracy 96%

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This paper has provided a comprehensive exploration of automated traffic monitoring and accident detection through the lens of computer vision. We examined the roles of object detection and tracking, edge detection and segmentation, and CNN-based accident detection. By integrating these techniques into a combined edge-to-cloud architecture, we aim to deliver a robust, real-time solution for safer, more efficient urban transportation.

Future research avenues include: improving CNN architectures for higher accuracy with lower latency [20], exploring multi-modal sensor fusion (video + radar/LiDAR) [22], developing more resilient tracking under extreme occlusion [11],and ensuring system robustness under adverse weather and lighting conditions [3]. Additionally, deeper integration with autonomous vehicle infrastructure and smart city platforms promises even greater enhancements to traffic management and safety.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of the researchers and authors whose work, as referenced in the bibliography, has provided the foundation for this paper.

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