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AI-Driven Routing Algorithms for IoT Enabled Smart-City Infrastructure

Alisha Samantaray*

School of Computer Engineering, KIIT (Deemed to Be) University, Bhubaneswar -751024, Odisha, India; 2229009@kiit.ac.in.

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Abstract

As urban infrastructure continues to develop towards increased interconnectivity, artificial intelligence (AI) has become a key enabler for enhancing IoT-integrated smart city systems. AI-based routing algorithms are essential in processing the vast quantities of data produced by IoT devices, leading to more efficient, adaptive, and durable urban services. These algorithms continually process and evaluate real-time information from connected sensors and devices, allowing for optimized routing in various applications such as traffic management, emergency response, waste collection, and energy distribution. Utilizing machine learning, reinforcement learning, and predictive analytics, AI-enhanced routing systems improve the agility and sustainability of urban infrastructure. This paper explores different AI-powered routing models and methods, examines their integration within IoT systems, and discusses issues related to data privacy, security, and scalability. In summary, AI-driven routing improves smart city infrastructure by delivering quicker, more intelligent, and adaptable solutions, which are crucial for cities looking to enhance resource utilization, decrease congestion, and foster a better quality of urban life.

Keywords: AI, Routing algorithms, IoT, Smart cities, Machine learning.

1 | Introduction

The advent of smart cities represents a transformative approach to urban living, where digital technologies and IoT (Internet of Things) devices are integrated to enhance the efficiency of city services, improve the quality of life, and promote sustainability. As cities become more interconnected, managing large-scale IoT infrastructure, which includes sensors, actuators, smart grids, and autonomous systems, poses significant challenges, particularly in data transmission and resource allocation.

Corresponding Author: 2229009@kiit.ac.in

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At the core of a smart city's infrastructure lies the IoT network, which generates massive volumes of data from diverse devices. These networks require efficient routing mechanisms for seamless device communication, reliable data delivery, and real-time responsiveness to dynamic urban conditions. However, traditional routing algorithms, which typically rely on static or pre-defined paths, struggle to handle the scale, complexity, and variability inherent in a smart city environment. This is where AI-driven routing algorithms come into play.

AI-driven routing algorithms leverage machine learning, optimization techniques, and predictive analytics to dynamically manage the flow of data across complex IoT networks. Unlike conventional methods, these intelligent algorithms can learn from patterns, predict network congestion, and reroute data in real-time, ensuring that critical information is transmitted efficiently, even in unpredictable scenarios. These algorithms are designed to balance various factors, such as latency, bandwidth constraints, energy consumption, and data priority, making them well-suited for the demands of a smart city.

The integration of AI in IoT-based smart city infrastructure offers significant benefits:

I. Traffic management: AI-driven systems can optimize traffic signals and reroute vehicles using real-time traffic data, reducing congestion and improving overall mobility.

II. Energy distribution: smart grids can utilize AI to dynamically adjust power distribution based on real-time consumption patterns, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing waste.

III. Emergency response: AI can help reroute emergency vehicles by analyzing current traffic conditions and ensuring timely response during critical incidents.

IV. Predictive maintenance: AI-based routing algorithms can identify potential network failures or bottlenecks, allowing preemptive action to maintain system performance.

This research paper explores the potential of *AI-driven routing algorithms* to enhance the efficiency and resilience of IoT-enabled smart city infrastructure. It delves into the technical mechanisms underlying these algorithms, examines their application across different smart city domains, and evaluates their impact on optimizing urban services. The paper also discusses the challenges and future directions in this area, particularly in terms of scalability, security, and energy efficiency, all of which are critical to successfully implementing AI in smart city IoT networks.

This research aims to contribute to the ongoing development of intelligent, adaptive systems that can meet the growing demands of modern urban environments by providing a comprehensive analysis of AI-driven routing algorithms.

Tables and diagrams:

Comparison of traditional VS AI-driven algorithms:

Tables 1. Comparison of traditional and AI-driven routing algorithms in IoT networks.

Feature	Traditional Routing	Ai-Driven Routing
Routing methods	Static	Dynamic
Scalability	Limited	High
Handling real-time data	Limited	Excellent
Energy Efficiency	Low	High
Response to network failure	Delayed	Immediate
Predictive Capabilities	None	High

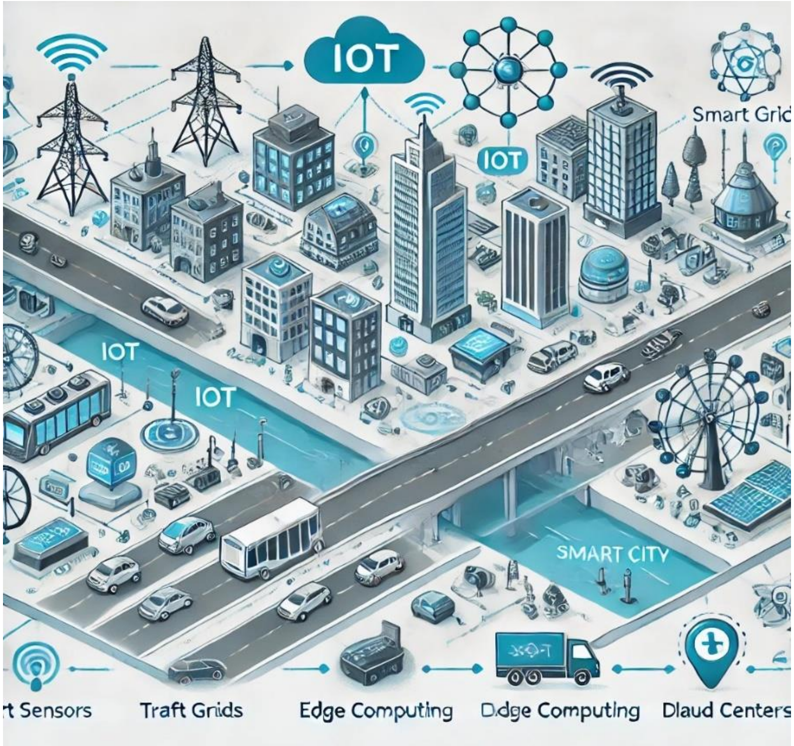

Fig.1. AI-driven routing in IoT-enabled smart cities, showcasing real-time optimization and adaptive decision-making.

IoT networks present unique challenges compared to traditional network infrastructures due to the constraints and requirements of energy efficiency, low latency, scalability, and resource limitations. The devices in these networks often have limited processing power and energy resources, making it essential for routing algorithms to minimize overhead and energy consumption while maintaining high performance. Some traditional routing algorithms that have been adapted for IoT networks include:

I. Ad hoc On-Demand Distance Vector (AODV).

II. Dynamic Source Routing (DSR).

III. Low-Energy Adaptive Clustering Hierarchy (LEACH).

IV. Routing Protocol for Low-Power and Lossy Networks (RPL).

2 | Ad hoc On-Demand Distance Vector (AODV)

The Ad hoc On-Demand Distance Vector (AODV) is a reactive routing protocol, meaning routes are established only when required by a source node. It is used in ad hoc wireless networks, which are decentralized and have no fixed infrastructure, a common characteristic of IoT networks.

How it works:

I. Route discovery: when a source node wants to send data to a destination, it sends its neighbors a Route Request (RREQ) message. Each receiving node rebroadcasts this message until it reaches the destination or a node that knows a route to the destination.

II. Route reply: once the RREQ message reaches the destination or a node with a valid route to the destination, a Route Reply (RREP) message is sent back to the source, establishing the route.

III. Route maintenance: If a route is broken (e.g., due to node mobility), an error message is sent back to the source node, prompting a new route discovery process.

Advantages:

I. On-demand operation: routes are only created when needed, reducing control message overhead.

II. Efficient for networks with low mobility: since routes are only established as needed, the protocol works well in environments where the network topology doesn't change frequently.

Limitations:

I. Scalability: AODV's broadcast-based route discovery leads to excessive overhead in large-scale networks, especially in dense environments.

II. Latency: discovering a route each time communication is required can introduce delays, particularly in dynamic environments like smart cities.

III. Energy consumption: frequent broadcasts during route discovery can drain the battery of resource-constrained IoT devices, reducing network lifetime.

3 | Dynamic Source Routing (DSR)

Dynamic Source Routing (DSR) is another reactive routing protocol for mobile ad hoc networks (MANETs). Unlike AODV, DSR uses source routing, meaning the entire path to the destination is included in the packet header.

How it works:

I. Route discovery: similar to AODV, when a source node wants to send a packet, it broadcasts a Route Request (RREQ). Each intermediate node adds its address to the RREQ packet as it is forwarded. When the RREQ reaches the destination, the destination node sends back a Route Reply (RREP), which contains the full path to the destination.

II. Source routing: once the route is discovered, the source node includes the entire route in the packet header. Every subsequent packet sent to that destination will follow the same route.

III. Route caching: each node maintains a cache of known routes. If a node receives a packet destined for another node, it can check its cache for a valid route and avoid needing a new route discovery process.

Advantages:

I. No periodic updates: DSR avoids the overhead of periodic route advertisements, making it more energy-efficient in static or slow-moving networks.

II. Route caching: route caches can speed up route discovery by allowing nodes to reuse known routes, reducing latency in low-mobility scenarios.

Limitations:

I. High overhead: including the entire route in the packet header leads to large packet sizes, especially in large networks with long routes, a significant issue for low-bandwidth and resource-constrained IoT devices.

II. Scalability: like AODV, DSR does not scale well in large networks due to the need to maintain and store route information for every active connection.

III. Increased delay in dynamic environments: When nodes move frequently, routes may quickly become outdated, leading to route failures and the need for new route discovery processes.

4 | Low-Energy Adaptive Clustering Hierarchy (LEACH)

Low-Energy Adaptive Clustering Hierarchy (LEACH) is a proactive, hierarchical routing protocol specifically designed for energy efficiency in Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs), commonly used in IoT applications. LEACH reduces energy consumption by organizing the network into clusters and rotating the role of cluster head among nodes.

How it works

I. Cluster formation: LEACH operates in rounds. At the beginning of each round, nodes self-organize into clusters. Based on a probability function, each node randomly decides whether to become a Cluster Head (CH) for that round. Non-CH nodes join the nearest cluster by sending a join request to the CH.

II. Data aggregation: each CH collects data from all nodes in its cluster and performs data aggregation (e.g., compressing or filtering redundant data) to reduce the total amount of data transmitted.

III. Communication with base station: the CH sends the aggregated data directly to the Base Station (BS) or sink node, which may be far from the clusters.

IV. Cluster head rotation: to avoid draining the battery of a single node (the CH), LEACH rotates the CH role among all nodes over time.

Advantages:

I. Energy Efficiency: LEACH is designed to minimize energy consumption by reducing the number of direct transmissions to the base station and rotating the CH role to balance energy consumption among all nodes.

II. Data aggregation: The protocol reduces redundant data transmissions by allowing CHs to aggregate data from their member nodes.

Limitations:

I. Random CH selection: the random selection of CHs may not result in the most energy-efficient network configuration. Nodes with low remaining energy may still be selected as CHs, which could shorten the network's lifetime.

II. Scalability: LEACH works well in small—to medium-sized networks but struggles to scale effectively in large IoT networks. Frequent re-clustering and cluster head rotations can introduce overhead in larger networks.

III. Fixed Clustering: LEACH uses static clustering mechanisms, which might not be well-suited for dynamic smart-city environments where devices and conditions change frequently.

5 | Routing Protocol for Low-Power and Lossy Networks (RPL)

Routing Protocol for Low-Power and Lossy Networks (RPL) is a proactive, distance-vector protocol specifically designed for low-power and lossy networks (LLNs), such as IoT networks where devices are often constrained in power, memory, and processing capacity.

How it works

I. DODAG Construction: RPL organizes the network into a Destination-Oriented Directed Acyclic Graph (DODAG). Each node ranks based on its distance to the root node (e.g., a sink or gateway). Nodes select their parent nodes based on routing metrics such as link quality, energy level, or hop count.

II. Upward and Downward Routes: RPL supports upward routing, where packets are sent towards the root, and downward routing, where packets are sent from the root to other nodes. This is useful in IoT applications where sensors may need to send data to a central controller or base station, and the controller may need to issue commands to the sensors.

III. Objective Function (OF): RPL allows the network designer to define an objective function based on specific application requirements, such as minimizing energy consumption or maximizing link reliability. The OF determines how nodes select their parents in the DODAG.

Advantages

I. Customizability: RPL can be tailored to different application requirements by adjusting the objective function and metrics used for route selection.

II. Energy Efficiency: The protocol is optimized for LLNs, prioritizing energy-efficient routing in resource-constrained environments, which is ideal for IoT applications.

III. Hierarchical structure: The DODAG structure provides an organized routing framework that simplifies upward and downward routing.

Limitations

I. Static operation: RPL works well in static or semi-static environments, but in dynamic networks with frequent topology changes (e.g., in smart cities with mobile devices), the protocol struggles to adapt quickly. This leads to inefficiencies, packet loss, or higher latency.

II. Increased overhead in dense networks: RPL's control messages for DODAG maintenance and parent selection can become frequent in large, dense IoT networks, causing overhead and reduced performance.

III. Complexity in downward routing: In applications requiring bidirectional communication (e.g., between sensors and controllers), RPL's downward routing can be inefficient and complex to manage in large networks.

Key Observations

AODV and DSR are reactive routing protocols suitable for ad hoc, small-to-medium-sized networks but face challenges in large-scale, dynamic environments. Their reliance on frequent route discovery or maintaining source routes makes them unsuitable for large-scale IoT networks with frequent topology changes.

LEACH introduces energy efficiency through clustering, but its randomized cluster head selection and fixed clustering limit its scalability and adaptability in dynamic smart-city environments.

While optimized for low-power and lossy networks, RPL struggles in highly dynamic or dense environments typical of large IoT networks in smart cities due to its static behavior and increased overhead in complex topologies.

6 | Key Limitations of Traditional Routing Algorithms

Despite their widespread application in IoT networks, traditional routing algorithms have significant limitations that make them suboptimal for large-scale smart-city environments. Below are the major limitations.

6.1 | Static Behavior

Traditional routing protocols often rely on static configurations and predetermined routes, which makes them less effective in dynamic and rapidly changing environments. Smart cities are highly dynamic, with frequent changes in network topology due to mobility (e.g., vehicles, drones) or environmental conditions (e.g., weather). These protocols struggle to adapt to such changes in real-time, leading to degraded performance and increased packet loss.

6.2 | Scalability Issues

Many traditional protocols, such as AODV and DSR, are designed for small, localized networks and do not scale well to the thousands or millions of devices typical in smart cities. As the network grows, the overhead involved in route discovery and maintenance increases dramatically, resulting in higher latency and reduced efficiency. Large-scale environments demand routing algorithms that dynamically adjust to the number of devices and topological changes without compromising performance.

6.3 | Energy Inefficiency

Energy efficiency is one of the most critical concerns in IoT networks, where many devices are battery-powered or operate in low-power modes. Traditional routing protocols often fail to consider the energy constraints of these devices, resulting in inefficient use of resources. For instance, frequent route discovery and packet retransmissions in protocols like AODV and DSR increase the energy consumption of devices, leading to faster depletion of battery life, which is unsustainable for IoT systems that need to operate over long periods. In contrast, protocols like LEACH focus on energy efficiency but are not designed for highly dynamic networks, limiting their applicability in smart-city environments where energy efficiency and adaptability are essential [1–3].

7 | Complex Quality of Service (QoS) Requirements

Smart-city applications have diverse QoS requirements, depending on the service being offered. For example:

I. Real-time traffic control requires low latency and high reliability.

II. Emergency response systems need minimal delays and high reliability.

III. Waste management systems prioritize energy-efficient data collection over latency.

Traditional routing protocols often focus on a single performance metric, such as shortest path or energy efficiency, and fail to account for the complex and multi-objective QoS requirements typical of smart-city applications. As a result, they cannot guarantee optimal performance across various applications, especially when latency, throughput, and reliability must all be considered simultaneously.

While traditional routing algorithms have served as a foundation for IoT networks, they struggle to meet the demands of large-scale, heterogeneous, and dynamic smart-city environments. Their scalability, energy efficiency, and real-time adaptability limitations have prompted the exploration of more advanced solutions, particularly those driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI), which can address these challenges by learning from network conditions and making real-time routing decisions that adapt to changing circumstances [4].

AI-driven approaches to IoT routing in smart cities

As IoT networks in smart cities grow more complex and dynamic, traditional routing protocols fail to address the unique challenges of energy efficiency, scalability, real-time decision-making, and dynamic environmental conditions. AI-driven approaches offer a powerful alternative by learning from network patterns, forecasting demand, and adapting to real-time changes. Here are some prominent AI techniques applied to IoT routing in smart cities.

Machine learning-based routing

Machine Learning (ML) algorithms have proven highly effective in enhancing routing decisions for smart-city IoT networks by learning from historical data and identifying patterns in network behavior. ML algorithms can optimize routing processes such as node clustering, traffic prediction, and congestion control. Some common ML-based approaches used in IoT routing include [5].

Support Vector Machines (SVM) for decision-making

SVM is a supervised learning technique used for classification and regression tasks. In the context of IoT routing, SVM can classify network nodes based on factors such as traffic load, energy levels, and distance to neighbors. By distinguishing between optimal and suboptimal routes, SVM helps decide the best routing paths.

SVM is particularly useful in small-to-medium-sized IoT networks where it can quickly and efficiently classify network conditions and enable informed routing decisions [6].

K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN) for clustering

KNN is a simple ML algorithm that groups nodes based on their proximity to each other. It is often used for clustering sensor nodes in large IoT networks. By grouping nodes close to one another, KNN helps minimize the energy required for communication and reduces routing overhead.

KNN-based clustering can be employed in low-power IoT environments to create localized clusters that optimize intra-cluster communication while minimizing the need for long-range transmissions.

Neural networks for traffic prediction and congestion control

Neural Networks are highly effective for predicting traffic patterns and congestion in smart-city networks, particularly in urban environments where data traffic is dynamic and unpredictable. By analyzing historical data, neural networks can forecast congestion hotspots and help reroute traffic to avoid delays. Neural networks can also be used for adaptive routing, which adjusts the routing paths in real time to prevent congestion or node overload [7].

Advantages of ML-based routing

I. Prediction and forecasting: ML models can predict traffic demand and network behavior based on historical patterns, optimizing routing for future states.

II. Adaptability: ML algorithms can adapt routing paths based on network conditions such as node energy levels, link quality, or traffic load.

III. Scalability: as smart-city IoT networks grow, ML algorithms can manage large amounts of data and identify optimal routes across vast networks.

Reinforcement Learning (RL) in routing

Reinforcement Learning (RL) suits IoT networks in dynamic and unpredictable smart-city environments. In RL, the system learns through trial and error by receiving rewards or penalties based on the success or failure of routing actions. RL-based algorithms excel at adapting to changes in the network, such as congestion, mobility, or varying traffic conditions.

Q-Learning

Q-learning is a popular RL technique in which agents learn to select optimal actions (in this case, routing decisions) by maximizing the cumulative reward over time. Each state-action pair is associated with a Q-value, representing the expected future reward for a particular action in a given state.

In IoT networks, Q-learning helps select the best path between nodes by evaluating link quality, energy consumption, and traffic load. The algorithm dynamically adjusts its routing decisions as the network evolves, learning which routes are most efficient.

Deep Q-Networks (DQN)

DQN combines Q-learning with deep neural networks to handle large state spaces, which are common in smart-city IoT networks. A deep neural network is used to approximate the Q-value function, allowing DQN to learn optimal routing policies in environments where traditional Q-learning would struggle due to the sheer complexity of the network.

DQN-based routing algorithms can adapt to highly dynamic scenarios such as varying traffic conditions, mobile nodes (e.g., autonomous vehicles), or changing environmental factors like weather. By learning from these changing conditions, DQN algorithms enable more robust and adaptive routing strategies in large IoT networks.

Advantages of RL in routing

I. Real-time adaptation: RL algorithms can adjust routing policies based on real-time feedback from the environment, making them ideal for dynamic smart-city applications.

II. Self-learning: RL enables IoT networks to self-learn and improve without human intervention, increasing efficiency as the network evolves.

III. Handling uncertainty: RL techniques excel in environments with uncertain traffic patterns and frequent topology changes, making them suitable for large and heterogeneous smart-city networks.

Swarm intelligence and Bio-inspired algorithms

Swarm Intelligence (SI) refers to algorithms inspired by the collective behavior of biological systems such as ant colonies, bird flocking, and fish schooling. In smart-city IoT routing, SI algorithms are useful for distributed problem-solving and optimization, especially in large-scale and dynamic networks. Some notable SI techniques applied to IoT routing include.

Ant Colony Optimization (ACO)

ACO is inspired by the behavior of ants searching for food. In this algorithm, ants lay pheromone trails as they traverse paths between nodes in the network. Over time, shorter paths accumulate more pheromones, guiding other ants toward the most efficient routes.

In IoT routing, ACO can find the shortest or most energy-efficient paths between devices, ensuring that data is transmitted with minimal delays and energy consumption. As conditions in the network change (e.g., node failure or congestion), ACO can dynamically adapt by reinforcing or degrading pheromone trails, leading to adaptive and flexible routing.

Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO)

PSO mimics the social behavior of bird flocks or fish schools, where particles (nodes) move within a search space and adjust their positions based on their own experience and the experiences of neighboring particles. In IoT routing, PSO can be used to optimize load balancing, energy distribution, or data forwarding by exploring and exploiting possible routing solutions.

PSO-based routing is particularly effective for balancing the load in dense IoT networks and ensuring that no single node becomes overloaded with traffic, improving network lifespan and overall performance.

Advantages of swarm intelligence

I. Scalability: SI algorithms like ACO and PSO are inherently scalable and can effectively handle large, distributed networks.

II. Adaptability: swarm intelligence algorithms are decentralized, allowing them to adapt quickly to changes in network topology without requiring global knowledge of the network.

III. Efficient exploration: SI algorithms simultaneously explore multiple potential solutions, ensuring optimal or near-optimal paths are found in complex networks.

Evolutionary algorithms for optimization

Evolutionary Algorithms (EAs), such as Genetic Algorithms (GA), are optimization techniques inspired by natural selection. In IoT routing, EAs find near-optimal routing solutions in large, complex networks by evolving a population of candidate solutions over successive generations.

Genetic Algorithms (GA)

In Genetic Algorithms, potential solutions (routes) are represented as chromosomes, which evolve over time through crossover, mutation, and selection processes. The fitness of each solution is evaluated based on factors such as energy efficiency, latency, and load balancing.

GAs are useful in IoT networks with vast search space for optimal routing solutions. By evolving a population of routing paths, GAs can efficiently explore the solution space and find near-optimal paths that balance multiple QoS metrics such as energy consumption, delay, and throughput.

Advantages of evolutionary algorithms

I. Multi-objective optimization: EAs can simultaneously optimize multiple conflicting objectives (e.g., energy efficiency vs. latency), making them well-suited for smart-city applications with diverse QoS requirements.

II. Handling complexity: EAs excel in environments with large search spaces, such as large-scale IoT networks, where finding the optimal routing solution by brute force is impractical.

III. Adaptation to dynamic conditions: EAs can adapt to changing network conditions (e.g., node failures or congestion) by evolving new solutions over time, ensuring continuous optimization.

AI-driven approaches to IoT routing transform smart-city infrastructures by addressing the limitations of traditional routing protocols. Techniques like Machine Learning, Reinforcement Learning, Swarm Intelligence, and Evolutionary Algorithms enable real-time adaptability, scalability, and energy efficiency while handling smart-city environments' dynamic and complex nature. These AI-based methods optimize routing paths, reduce energy consumption, and ensure that diverse QoS requirements are met, making them ideal for the future of IoT-enabled smart cities.

Applications of AI-driven routing in smart cities

AI-driven routing algorithms are crucial in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of various critical smart-city domains. By leveraging real-time data and predictive analytics, AI-based routing optimizes resource allocation, improves service delivery, and enables dynamic decision-making in areas such as traffic management, energy grids, and emergency services.

Smart traffic management

Traffic congestion is a significant issue in urban areas, leading to delays, increased fuel consumption, and environmental pollution. AI-based routing algorithms are increasingly used to address these problems by optimizing real-time traffic flow. By integrating data from sensors, traffic cameras, GPS devices, and connected vehicles, AI-driven systems can dynamically adjust traffic routes and signals, reducing congestion and improving overall traffic efficiency.

Key benefits

Dynamic route adjustments: AI algorithms can dynamically reroute vehicles to avoid congested areas based on real-time traffic data, significantly reducing delays.

Predictive traffic light control: AI-based systems can predict traffic flow patterns and adjust the timing of traffic lights to optimize vehicle movement at intersections. This reduces vehicle wait times and lowers the risk of bottlenecks.

Example study

Zhou et al. [8] implemented a deep reinforcement learning-based routing algorithm in a smart traffic management system. The study focused on reducing traffic congestion in urban areas by dynamically controlling traffic signals and routing vehicles based on real-time traffic conditions. The algorithm reduced vehicle wait times and overall traffic congestion by learning optimal traffic control strategies, showing promise for deployment in large-scale smart cities. The RL-based system learned from historical traffic data and adjusted traffic signals to optimize vehicle flow during peak hours.

Additional use cases

Smart parking systems: AI-driven routing can also help drivers find the nearest available parking spots by dynamically guiding vehicles based on parking availability and proximity.

Public transportation optimization: AI algorithms can predict traffic conditions and adjust public transportation routes and schedules to minimize delays and improve service efficiency.

Smart energy grids

Energy management in smart cities is becoming more complex as urban populations grow and energy demand increases. AI-driven routing algorithms play a critical role in efficiently distributing electricity, especially in smart grids incorporating renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. These algorithms help predict energy demand, manage load balancing, and ensure optimal energy routing to prevent blackouts and minimize power loss.

Key benefits

Load balancing: AI algorithms can balance energy distribution by predicting periods of high demand and routing energy to areas that need it the most, reducing strain on the grid.

Demand prediction: AI can predict energy consumption patterns in different areas of the city, allowing for better resource management and ensuring that renewable energy sources are used efficiently.

Example study

Alotaibi et al. [9] developed an AI-driven routing system for smart energy grids that optimizes power distribution by predicting consumer demand and grid performance in real time. Their system used machine learning techniques to forecast energy consumption and adjust power routing to minimize power losses and prevent grid overloads. By analyzing historical data on energy use, the system could anticipate high-demand periods and redistribute energy from lower-demand areas, ensuring optimal performance and energy efficiency.

Additional use cases

Integration of renewable energy: AI-driven routing helps manage the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources by dynamically adjusting energy flow based on the availability of solar, wind, or other renewable energy inputs.

Peak shaving: AI algorithms can predict peak usage times and adjust energy distribution to minimize the risk of overloads, helping cities reduce energy costs and improve grid stability.

Public safety and emergency response

In smart cities, public safety and emergency response depend on quick and efficient routing of resources, including emergency vehicles (e.g., ambulances, fire trucks, police vehicles). AI-based routing algorithms can dramatically reduce response times by identifying the least congested and fastest routes, ensuring that emergency services reach their destinations as quickly as possible.

Key benefits

Dynamic routing for emergency vehicles: AI-based systems can analyze real-time traffic data to identify the best routes for emergency vehicles, helping them avoid traffic jams and other obstacles.

Resource optimization: AI can optimize the allocation of emergency resources (e.g., dispatching the nearest available ambulance or fire truck) based on factors such as location, traffic conditions, and urgency of the emergency.

Example study

Reinforcement Learning (RL) based routing has been applied to optimize emergency vehicle dispatch in smart cities. The algorithm focuses on minimizing response times by routing emergency vehicles through the least congested roads. The system continuously learns from traffic patterns and adjusts its routing strategies, improving overall resource allocation and response efficiency. Studies have demonstrated faster response times, especially in densely populated urban areas with complex traffic patterns [10], [11].

Additional use cases:

I. Disaster management: in natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes or floods), AI-driven routing can help prioritize routes for emergency services, ensuring that critical areas are reached first.

II. Real-time crowd control: AI algorithms can predict crowd movements and help route security or emergency personnel to prevent overcrowding or manage evacuation routes efficiently.

Waste management and environmental monitoring

AI-driven routing also finds application in smart city waste management systems and environmental monitoring. These systems can optimize the routes of waste collection vehicles and monitor environmental factors such as air quality, pollution, and noise levels.

Key benefits:

I. Optimized waste collection routes: AI-based routing can dynamically adjust waste collection routes based on the real-time status of waste bins (e.g., how full they are), reducing unnecessary trips and improving fuel efficiency.

II. Environmental monitoring: AI algorithms can analyze data from a network of IoT sensors to detect pollution or hazardous environmental conditions, enabling the city to take proactive measures to mitigate these issues.

Example study:

A study conducted in 2021 proposed an AI-driven waste collection routing system that optimized garbage trucks' paths based on real-time waste bin data and traffic conditions. The system reduced operational costs by minimizing fuel consumption and maximizing the efficiency of waste collection services.

AI-driven routing algorithms transform how smart cities manage traffic, energy, public safety, and other essential services. These algorithms allow for real-time adjustments, predictive capabilities, and improved resource allocation, ensuring smart cities operate efficiently and sustainably. By optimizing key domains such as smart traffic management, smart energy grids, and emergency response, AI-driven routing plays a pivotal role in improving the quality of life for urban residents and making cities more resilient, efficient, and environmentally friendly.

Challenges in AI-driven IoT routing

While AI-driven routing algorithms offer significant advantages for IoT-based smart cities, several challenges hinder their widespread adoption and efficiency. Addressing these challenges is essential for successfully deploying AI in large-scale smart-city infrastructures. Some of the key challenges are:

Data privacy and security

As IoT networks generate and transmit vast amounts of sensitive data, protecting this data from cyber threats becomes a critical concern. Smart cities handle data related to traffic patterns, energy consumption, public safety, healthcare, and other essential services, all of which need to be protected to ensure citizen privacy and system integrity.

Challenges:

I. Data vulnerability: AI-driven systems often require real-time data from numerous IoT devices, making them vulnerable to cyber-attacks, data breaches, and unauthorized access.

II. Privacy concerns: sensitive data collected from citizens (e.g., location data, health data, personal information) must be anonymized and encrypted to protect individual privacy.

III. Secure data transmission: as IoT devices communicate wirelessly, there is a higher risk of data being intercepted or tampered with during transmission.

Potential Solutions:

Advanced encryption techniques: encryption algorithms like blockchain or homomorphic encryption can secure the data transmitted between IoT devices and AI algorithms.

Federated learning: this technique allows machine learning models to be trained across decentralized devices without transferring raw data, enhancing privacy while still benefiting from AI capabilities

Computational complexity

AI-driven routing algorithms, particularly those based on deep learning and reinforcement learning, often require substantial computational resources to train and execute. However, many IoT devices, especially in smart-city applications, are resource-constrained in processing power, memory, and energy capacity.

Challenges:

Resource limitations: many IoT devices (such as sensors, cameras, and wearables) have limited processing power and memory capacities, making it difficult to run complex AI algorithms directly on them.

High computational demand: training and running deep learning models on large-scale IoT networks can be computationally intensive, making real-time decision-making impractical in resource-constrained environments.

Potential solutions:

Edge computing: instead of relying on cloud-based AI models, edge computing allows computations closer to the data source (e.g., at the device or gateway level). This reduces latency and offloads the computational burden from IoT devices.

Model Compression: Techniques like model pruning, quantization, and knowledge distillation can reduce the size and complexity of AI models, making them more suitable for resource-limited IoT devices.

Scalability

As smart-city infrastructures expand, with millions of interconnected IoT devices continuously added, routing algorithms must scale while maintaining efficiency and performance. Large-scale networks introduce challenges related to increased traffic, dynamic topologies, and the sheer volume of data that needs to be processed.

Challenges:

I. Dynamic network topologies: IoT networks in smart cities are dynamic, with devices being added, removed, or moved frequently (e.g., vehicles or drones), making it difficult to maintain stable routing paths.

II. Traffic overload: as the number of devices increases, routing algorithms must process more data, which can lead to network congestion and degrade the overall performance.

III. Latency: scaling AI-driven algorithms to large networks while maintaining low latency for time-sensitive applications (e.g., emergency response) is a significant challenge.

Potential Solutions:

I. Hierarchical routing: implementing hierarchical or cluster-based routing can reduce network complexity by organizing IoT devices into smaller, manageable groups, making it easier to scale routing decisions.

II. Decentralized AI: distributed AI techniques, where multiple nodes collaboratively participate in routing decisions, can help spread the computational load and ensure that the system scales effectively as the network grows.

Energy efficiency

Many IoT devices in smart-city applications, such as sensors, wearables, and environmental monitoring devices, are battery-powered. These devices must operate for extended periods without frequent battery replacements or recharging. Therefore, energy-efficient routing algorithms are essential for prolonging device lifespans.

Challenges:

I. High energy consumption: AI algorithms, especially those requiring frequent data transmission and complex computations, can drain battery power quickly, reducing device lifespans.

II. Balancing energy and performance: AI-based routing algorithms must balance optimal routing decisions and energy conservation to ensure IoT devices remain operational for extended periods.

Potential Solutions:

Energy-Aware Routing: AI-driven algorithms can incorporate energy awareness, optimizing routes based on devices' remaining energy levels and selecting paths that minimize energy consumption.

Sleep scheduling: techniques such as duty cycling and sleep scheduling can be implemented where IoT devices are put into low-power or sleep mode when not actively transmitting data, conserving energy.

AI-driven IoT routing algorithms hold immense potential for optimizing smart-city infrastructures. However, challenges such as data privacy, computational complexity, scalability, and energy efficiency must be addressed to ensure these algorithms' successful and sustainable deployment in real-world scenarios. Future research should focus on developing AI solutions that balance performance with these challenges, ensuring that smart-city IoT networks are secure, scalable, and energy-efficient.

Emerging trends and future directions

The future of AI-driven routing algorithms for IoT in smart cities is marked by rapid advancements and innovations addressing current challenges, such as scalability, privacy, and computational efficiency. Several emerging trends are expected to shape the landscape of smart-city routing algorithms and their effectiveness.

Federated learning

Federated learning is an emerging paradigm in AI that enables model training across multiple distributed devices (such as IoT sensors, cameras, or smartphones) without transferring the raw data to a centralized server. This method helps enhance privacy and reduce computational load on the cloud by keeping data on local devices while still benefiting from collective learning.

Key Benefits:

I. Enhanced privacy: sensitive data remains on the local device, reducing the risk of data breaches during transmission.

II. Reduced network load: since only model updates are shared, not raw data, the amount of data transmitted between devices and the cloud is minimized.

III. Decentralized decision-making: federated learning enables distributed IoT devices to collaborate in training AI models, improving the system's adaptability and resilience in dynamic environments.

Future directions:

In smart cities, federated learning could be applied to real-time traffic management, where vehicles and traffic lights collaboratively improve routing algorithms without centralizing traffic data.

In public health, federated learning can analyze city-wide health sensor data, ensuring privacy while optimizing emergency responses.

Edge Computing

Edge computing is an emerging trend that shifts data processing and AI computation closer to IoT devices (at the "edge" of the network) rather than relying on centralized cloud-based processing. This significantly reduces latency, minimizes bandwidth usage, and offloads some computational tasks from the cloud, particularly useful for time-sensitive applications in smart cities.

Key benefits:

I. Reduced Latency: Since data is processed closer to its source, edge computing enables faster decision-making, which is crucial for applications like traffic management or emergency response systems.

II. Scalability: By distributing processing across many edge devices, large-scale IoT networks can be scaled without overwhelming a centralized cloud system.

III. Improved Energy Efficiency: Localized data processing can reduce energy consumption by minimizing the need for long-distance data transmission.

Future directions:

Real-time environmental monitoring: edge devices with AI capabilities can quickly analyze environmental data (e.g., air quality, temperature, or noise levels) and adjust smart-city systems in real-time.

Autonomous Vehicles: AI-driven edge computing can help autonomous vehicles make split-second navigation and obstacle-avoidance decisions in urban environments without relying on the cloud.

Hybrid AI approaches

Hybrid AI approaches involve combining multiple AI techniques (such as reinforcement learning, swarm intelligence, evolutionary algorithms, and machine learning) to address the complexity and diversity of challenges in smart-city systems. Hybrid methods leverage the strengths of different techniques to improve decision-making, optimize resource allocation, and enhance the overall performance of IoT networks.

Key benefits:

Enhanced problem solving: by combining the exploration capabilities of swarm intelligence with the learning efficiency of reinforcement learning, hybrid approaches can find more optimal solutions for complex routing problems in smart cities.

Increased flexibility: hybrid AI models can adapt to dynamic changes in the network, such as fluctuating traffic conditions, energy demand, or emergencies.

Improved Efficiency: Hybrid approaches can balance computational load and energy consumption while making accurate routing decisions.

Future directions:

Smart Traffic Systems: A hybrid model combining reinforcement learning for traffic prediction and swarm intelligence for optimal pathfinding can improve real-time urban traffic management.

Energy Grids: Combining genetic algorithms and machine learning for load balancing and predictive maintenance can optimize energy distribution in smart cities, reducing power wastage and improving grid resilience.

Quantum computing

Quantum computing has the potential to revolutionize AI-driven routing algorithms by significantly improving optimization speeds and computational power. Quantum algorithms can explore large search spaces more efficiently than classical algorithms, making them ideal for solving complex routing and optimization problems in real-time smart-city environments.

Key benefits:

I. Faster optimization: quantum computing allows for near-instantaneous evaluation of many possible routes in a network, which can greatly enhance routing efficiency and decision-making in real-time scenarios.

II. Handling complex data: quantum systems are well-suited for analyzing vast amounts of interconnected data from various IoT devices in smart cities, making it easier to optimize resources such as traffic flow, energy distribution, and emergency responses.

III. Improved problem-solving in high-dimensional spaces: quantum algorithms can quickly explore and find optimal or near-optimal solutions in large and complex systems, a common challenge in smart-city networks.

Future Directions:

Quantum-enhanced traffic management: quantum computing can drastically improve real-time traffic optimization by simultaneously evaluating millions of possible routing scenarios, minimizing congestion and delays.

Energy grid optimization: quantum algorithms can optimize energy routing across a smart city's grid, balancing demand, minimizing power losses, and more effectively integrating renewable energy sources.

The future of AI-driven routing algorithms for IoT-based smart cities is highly promising, driven by advancements in federated learning, edge computing, hybrid AI techniques, and quantum computing. These trends address the current challenges in terms of scalability, computational complexity, and data privacy and open new possibilities for enhancing the efficiency, sustainability, and resilience of smart-city infrastructures. As these technologies mature, they will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of smart cities, improving quality of life, and driving innovation in urban management systems.

8 | Conclusion

AI-driven routing algorithms are revolutionizing how IoT-enabled smart cities manage their urban infrastructure, offering innovative solutions to the challenges posed by complex, dynamic, and large-scale networks. By integrating machine learning, reinforcement learning, bio-inspired algorithms, and evolutionary techniques, these AI approaches significantly improve the efficiency, scalability, and adaptability of routing decisions in smart-city environments.

The applications of AI-driven routing span critical areas such as smart traffic management, energy grids, and public safety, demonstrating their potential to optimize urban operations. However, several challenges remain, including data privacy, energy efficiency, and the computational complexity of AI algorithms. Addressing these challenges is essential to successfully deploy AI-driven routing in smart cities, ensuring enhanced performance and the sustainability and security of IoT networks.

As technologies such as federated learning, edge computing, hybrid AI approaches, and quantum computing continue to develop, the future of smart-city routing is poised for further innovation. These advancements promise to make AI-driven solutions more scalable, efficient, and capable of meeting the evolving demands of urban environments, paving the way for smarter, more sustainable cities.

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Author Contributaion

Alisha: Conceptualization and Framework Development: Established the study's foundational structure, focusing on AI-driven routing algorithms tailored for IoT-enabled smart city infrastructure.

Literature Review and Background Research: Conducted comprehensive research and review of relevant literature, including analysis of current challenges in scalability, privacy, computational efficiency, and energy efficiency, to contextualize the study within existing works.

Methodology Design: Developed the methodology to address critical challenges in implementing AI-driven routing algorithms in large-scale smart-city IoT networks.

Writing—Original Draft Preparation: Wrote the initial draft, covering core sections on the challenges, solutions, and emerging trends such as federated learning, edge computing, hybrid AI, and quantum computing.

Data Analysis and Interpretation: Analyzed case studies and simulation results, interpreting findings to refine proposed solutions and enhance applicability for smart city infrastructure.

Review and Editing: Revised and edited the paper, ensuring consistency, coherence, and alignment with industry standards for smart-city infrastructure research.

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Data Availability

The data used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publications of this paper.

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