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Vehicular networking and road weather related research in Sodankylä

T. Sukuvaara, K. Mäenpää, and R. Ylitalo

Finnish Meteorological Institute, P.O. Box 503, 00101 Helsinki, Finland

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Correspondence to: T. Sukuvaara (timo.sukuvaara@fmi.fi)

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Abstract

Vehicular networking and especially safety-related wireless vehicular services have been under intensive research for almost a decade now. Only in recent years, also the road weather information has been acknowledged to play an important role when aiming to reduce traffic accidents and fatalities via Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). Part of the progress can be seen as a result of Finnish Meteorological Institute's (FMI) long-term research work in Sodankylä within the topic, originally started in 2006.

Within multiple research projects, FMI Arctic Research Centre has been developing wireless vehicular networking and road weather services, in co-operation with FMI meteorological services team in Helsinki. At the beginning the wireless communication was conducted with traditional Wi-Fi type local area networking, but during the development the system has been evolved to hybrid communication system of combined Vehicular area Networking (VANET system with special IEEE 802.11p protocol and supporting cellular networking based on 3G commercial network, not forgetting support for Wi-Fi-based devices also. For the piloting purposes and further research, we have established a special combined road weather station (RWS) and roadside unit (RSU), to interact with vehicles as a service hotspot. In the RWS/RSU we have chosen to build support to all major approaches, IEEE 802.11, traditional Wi-Fi and cellular 3G. We employ road weather systems of FMI, RWS and vehicle data gathered from vehicles, into the up-to-date localized weather data delivered in real-time. IEEE 802.11p vehicular networking is supported with Wi-Fi and 3G communications.

This paper briefly introduces the research work related vehicular networking and road weather services conducted in Sodankylä, as well as the research project involved in this work. The current status of instrumentation, available services and capabilities are presented in order to formulate the clear general view of the research field.

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- a. Neither RWS nor the vehicle knows anything about the IEEE 802.11p/Wi-Fi network status. They can only see if the IP address is “real” and active or not.
3. When the connection between vehicle and RWS devices has been established and the IP of the vehicle PC is visible for RWS host computer, the latter starts pushing messages to vehicle PC’s IP at a constant rate.
4. When the connection is lost the IP-address disappears and messages will not be sent anymore.
5. Up-to-date RWS data is stored and updated regularly to download folder, in order to support 3G based data fetch by the vehicles out of range.

After this procedure the cycle begins again and vehicle radio starts searching for the nearby IEEE 802.11p/Wi-Fi networks.

Server software is the same for both Wi-Fi (IEEE 802.11n) and IEEE 802.11p communication. In the software only minor difference exists between the protocol procedures, in terms of different IP and message delivery rate. The complete server side code is presented in Fig. 4. As stated before, different protocols are launched in the parallel Python software modules. During the communication tests we have used only UDP-messages, but the TCP messages are supported as well. 3G communication is purely based on TCP-messages.

There are two threads that run at all times inside the RWS server; A weather condition monitoring script and a message sending script. The weather monitor just reads the data and saves it into a table that the messaging script can read. This is done in order to speed up the sending of messages.

Vehicle computer is using the same Python communication modules as RWS, presented in Fig. 4. When starting the vehicle application program the user chooses the transmission protocol (UDP/TCP), the communication protocol (Wi-Fi/802.11p), the delay between messages and the delay for the program startup. Mac list is only checked if the servers internal Wi-Fi is chosen as the messaging platform. The messages

4 Measurement data

Vehicular networking and road weather related measurements generated in Sodankylä RWS and supporting infrastructure consists of operative example RWS services as well as specially tailored pilot measurements.

The operative RWS services are gathered into our public RWS website, found from <http://sodrws.fmi.fi> and viewed in Fig. 7. The historical data series captured from the RWS are presented in our public local database, in <http://litdb.fmi.fi/rws.php>. The website contents are tailored also to the mobile devices of Android-based operating system as well as iPhone and Jolla, aiming to present our vision of road weather services user interface scalable for different environments. In addition to this, we are collecting the measurement data into historical time series, to be exploited in the future research. An example of such data set, road frost data from the winter 2014–2015, is presented in Fig. 8. The frost measurement is conducted with multiple temperature sensors buried in different depths, indicating frost when temperature below zero. In the warm periods and at the end of winter season, frost is melting first from the ground level, which can clearly be seen in Fig. 8.

As an example of the pilot measurements in Sodankylä, the data throughput estimation measurements conducted between combined RWS/RSU and passing vehicle are presented in Figs. 9 and 10. In this measurement we focused on the IEEE 802.11p based VANET (Vehicular Area Networking) communication, comparing it to the traditional Wi-Fi based communication in the same environment and conditions (based on IEEE 802.11g standard). On the RWS/RSU side the host computer located in the station was employed to broadcast data for the passing vehicles in pre-defined packet size and interval, respectively. Many different combinations were briefly tested, until the optimal rate (1500 byte packets in 1 ms interval) was found and further used in the measurements. Figure 9 presents the results with 80 km h^{-1} vehicle speed, Fig. 10 results with 100 km h^{-1} , respectively. The green colored line is the Wi-Fi measurement average and the lighter green lines are the Wi-Fi measurements. Similarly the solid orange

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Figure 1. Combined RWS/RSU.

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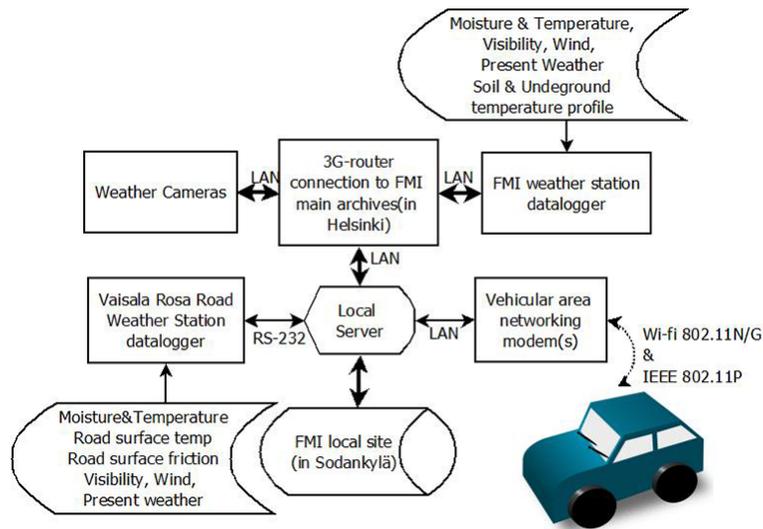


Figure 3. Communication entity of RWS/RSU.

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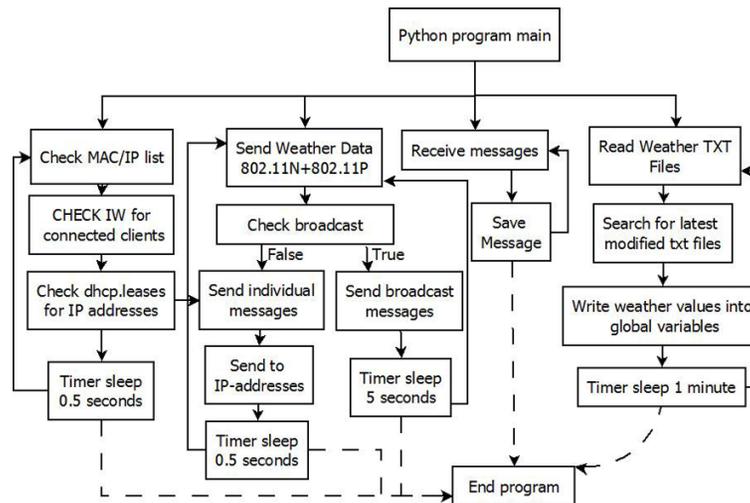


Figure 4. Operational process in RWS/RSU.

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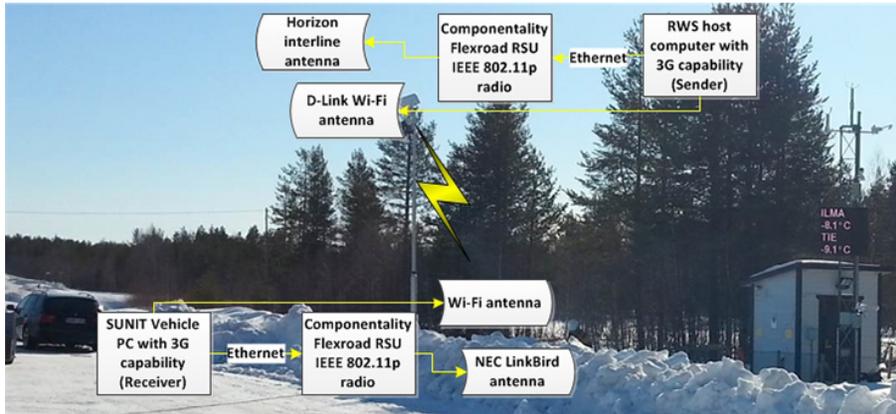


Figure 5. Devices and their connections in IEEE 802.11p communication.

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Figure 6. Teconer friction measurement instrument mounted into the vehicle.

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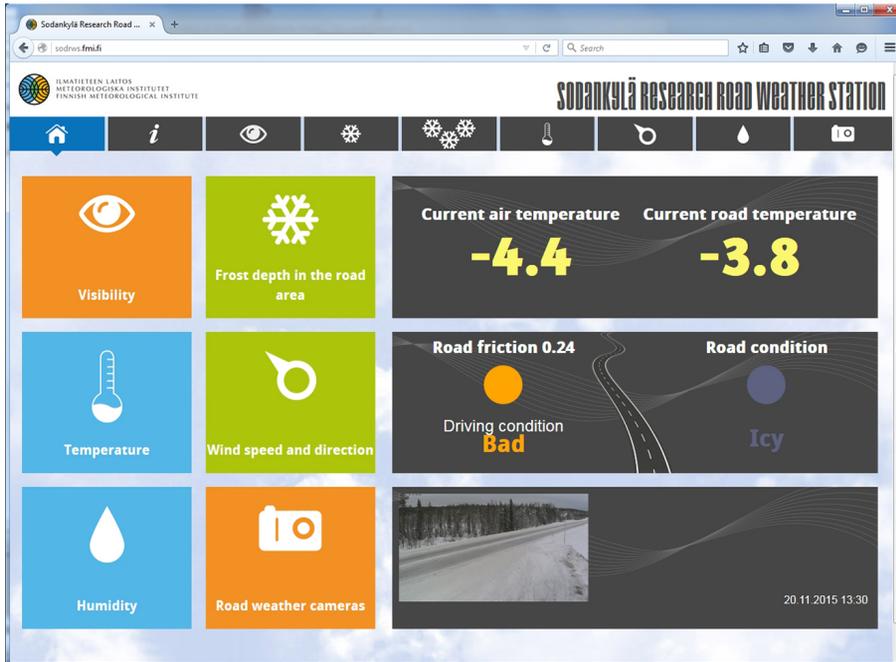


Figure 7. Road weather station website at <http://sodrws.fmi.fi>.

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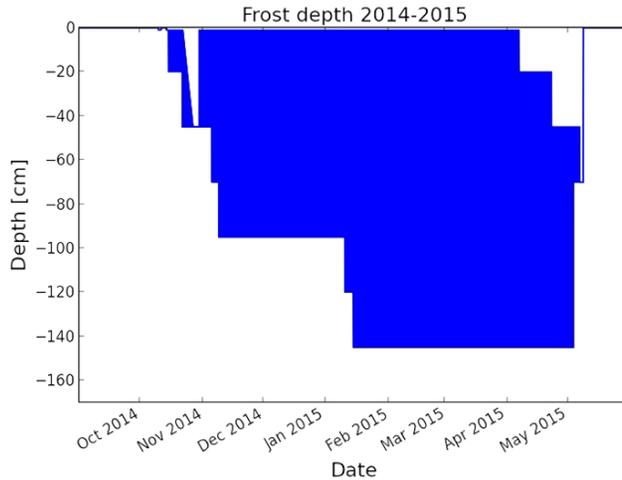


Figure 8. Frost depth data from the RWS measurements.

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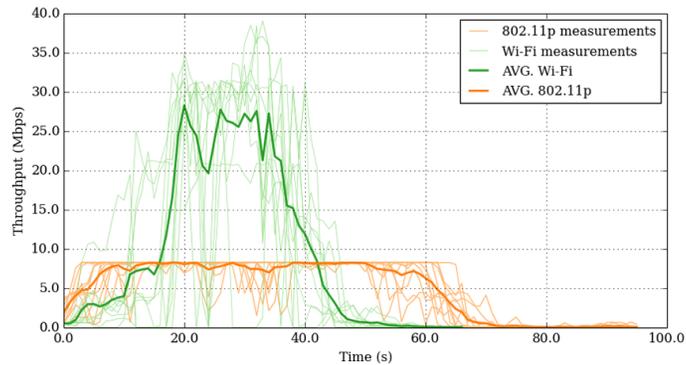


Figure 9. Data throughput from combined RWS/RSU to vehicle with 80 km h^{-1} speed.

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