SMART ROAD-DRYING ROBOTIC VEHICLE: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

EC-681

BACHELOR OF TECHNOLOGY
IN
DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND COMMUNICATION ENGINEERING

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Certificate of Recommendation

I hereby recommend that the mini project report entitled, **"Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle: Design and Implementation"** carried out under my supervision by the group of students listed below may be accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for 6th Semester in Bachelor of Technology in Electronics and Communication Engineering of Asansol Engineering College under MAKAUT.

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The mini project report is hereby approved as creditable study of an engineering subject carried out and presented in a manner satisfactory to warrant its acceptance as prerequisite to the 6th semester for which it has been submitted. It is understood that by this approval the undersigned does not necessarily endorse or approve any statement made, opinion expressed or conclusion drawn therein but approve the mini project report only for the purpose for which it is submitted.

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ABSTRACT

The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle is a pioneering autonomous system designed to enhance road safety by detecting and drying wet surfaces, thereby reducing accident risks due to compromised tire traction. Built around the ESP32 microcontroller, the vehicle employs a water level sensor to identify moisture, triggering a meticulously engineered drying sequence comprising a microfiber roller for water absorption, a silicone mopper for residual moisture removal, and a water pump for collecting excess water into an onboard tank. Mobility is powered by four 12V DC motors, controlled via two L298N motor drivers, with steering facilitated by two servo motors, and additional servos for roller and sensor positioning. A single LED on GPIO 23 indicates pump operation, with roller and mopper LEDs removed to optimize GPIO allocation, allowing pump control pins to be reassigned to GPIO 21, 22, and 2. The ESP32's integrated Wi-Fi module hosts a web server, delivering a Bootstrap-styled interface featuring real-time Chart.js graphs of water level and temperature data, alongside intuitive controls for steering, speed, and actuator management. By seamlessly integrating embedded systems, IoT, and robotics, this project offers a cost-effective, scalable solution for urban road maintenance. This report provides an exhaustive exploration of the project's motivation, design methodology, mathematical modelling, control strategies, simulation outcomes, hardware realization, experimental results, and future enhancements, validating the system's efficacy in controlled environments and its potential for real-world deployment.

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1. Preface

The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle represents a significant advancement in addressing the persistent challenge of wet road surfaces, a major contributor to vehicular accidents due to reduced tire traction. In urban environments, where rainfall, spills, or poor drainage frequently create hazardous conditions, traditional drying methods—such as manual labour with absorbent materials or deployment of heavy machinery—are inefficient, costly, and often impractical. These methods struggle to meet the demands of rapid response and large-scale application, exposing workers to traffic risks and straining municipal resources. This project introduces an autonomous robotic solution, leveraging the computational power and connectivity of the ESP32 microcontroller to deliver a sophisticated, cost-effective, and scalable alternative. By integrating real-time moisture detection, mechanical drying mechanisms, and a Wi-Fi-enabled web interface for remote monitoring and control, the vehicle not only enhances road safety but also aligns with the vision of smart city infrastructure, where data-driven systems optimize urban maintenance. The development of this vehicle involved navigating complex technical challenges, from sensor calibration to GPIO optimization, fostering innovation at the intersection of robotics, electronics, and IoT. This preface outlines the project's objectives, technical framework, and significance, setting the stage for a comprehensive exploration of its design and implementation.

1.1 Introduction

Wet road surfaces pose a formidable threat to road safety, significantly increasing the likelihood of accidents through hydroplaning and extended braking distances. Research indicates that wet conditions contribute to a substantial proportion of vehicular incidents, particularly in urban areas characterized by high traffic density and variable road surfaces. The problem is exacerbated in regions with frequent rainfall or inadequate drainage systems, where wet roads can persist for hours, disrupting traffic flow and endangering motorists. Conventional approaches to road drying, such as manual application of absorbent materials or the use of industrial drying equipment, are fraught with limitations. Manual methods are labour-intensive, time-consuming, and expose workers to hazardous conditions, such as navigating busy roadways. Industrial machinery, while capable of handling larger areas, is often prohibitively expensive, energy-intensive, and impractical for urban deployment due to its size and operational complexity.

The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle addresses these challenges by introducing an autonomous system capable of detecting and drying wet surfaces with minimal human intervention. Built around the ESP32 microcontroller—a versatile platform with dual-core processing and integrated Wi-Fi—the vehicle combines sensor-driven automation with remote control capabilities. A water level sensor, connected to GPIO 34, continuously monitors surface moisture, producing an analog output ranging from 0 to 4095 ADC units. When moisture exceeds a predefined threshold of 500 ADC, the vehicle initiates a drying sequence involving a microfiber roller to absorb water, a silicone mopper to eliminate residual moisture, and a water pump to collect excess water into an onboard tank. Mobility is facilitated by four 12V DC motors, controlled through two L298N motor drivers, with precise steering achieved via two SG90 servo motors on GPIO 13 and 12. Additional servos on GPIO 15 and 4 manage the positioning of the drying roller and water level sensor, respectively, optimizing operational efficiency. A single LED on GPIO 23 serves as a visual indicator of pump activity, with roller and mopper LEDs removed to free GPIO 21 and 22 for pump control, addressing the ESP32's limited GPIO resources. The ESP32 hosts a web server, accessible via a local Wi-Fi network, delivering a Bootstrap-styled interface with real-time visualization of sensor data and manual control options, enhancing the vehicle's utility for urban maintenance.

This project aligns with the global trend toward smart city initiatives, where autonomous systems leverage IoT to improve infrastructure efficiency. By integrating robotics, electronics, and connectivity, the vehicle offers a multidisciplinary solution to a pressing real-world problem, with potential applications in urban roads, industrial facilities, and disaster response scenarios. The introduction underscores the urgency of addressing wet road hazards and positions the project as a transformative contribution to road safety and urban infrastructure management.

1.2 Motivation of the Project

The primary motivation for developing the Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle is to enhance road safety by mitigating the dangers posed by wet surfaces, a persistent challenge in regions with frequent rainfall, poor drainage, or urban flooding. Wet roads reduce tire traction, leading to hydroplaning, increased stopping distances, and a higher incidence of accidents, which result in significant human, economic, and societal costs. Manual drying methods, while occasionally employed, are inefficient, requiring substantial labour and exposing workers to hazardous conditions, such as moving traffic. These methods are also impractical for rapid or large-scale application, leaving roads hazardous for extended periods. An autonomous robotic solution eliminates these drawbacks, offering a rapid, safe, and consistent approach to road drying, capable of operating in diverse urban environments without human intervention.

Beyond safety, the project is driven by the opportunity to contribute to smart city ecosystems, where IoT-enabled devices optimize urban infrastructure through real-time data and remote control. The vehicle's Wi-Fi-enabled web interface allows operators to monitor environmental conditions—such as moisture and temperature—and adjust operations remotely, aligning with the demand for intelligent, data-driven maintenance systems. This capability is particularly valuable in urban settings, where timely interventions can prevent traffic disruptions and enhance public safety. The project also responds to the need for sustainable and cost-effective solutions, leveraging affordable components like the ESP32, L298N drivers, and SG90 servos to achieve high performance at a low cost, making it accessible for municipal deployment.

From an academic perspective, the project serves as a platform for exploring the convergence of embedded systems, sensor technology, and web development. The design process involved tackling complex challenges, such as optimizing GPIO allocation, calibrating sensors for varied surfaces, and ensuring real-time control under resource constraints. These efforts fostered innovation in robotics and automation, providing valuable insights for future research and development. The motivation is thus multifaceted: to address a critical safety issue, advance smart urban infrastructure, and contribute to technical knowledge through practical application.

1.3 Basic Description of the Project

The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle is an autonomous system engineered to detect and dry wet road surfaces, leveraging the ESP32 microcontroller's computational and connectivity capabilities. The vehicle integrates a suite of sensors and actuators to execute a four-stage drying process: moisture detection, roller deployment, mopping, and water collection. The ESP32 serves as the central processing unit, coordinating sensor inputs, actuator outputs, and communication with a web-based interface hosted on its integrated Wi-Fi module. The vehicle operates in two modes—autonomous and manual—ensuring flexibility for both routine maintenance and specific interventions.

Key components and features include:

- **Sensors:** A water level sensor on GPIO 34 produces an analog output (0-4095 ADC) to detect surface moisture, triggering drying at 500 ADC. An LM35 temperature sensor on GPIO 35 monitors ambient conditions (0-100°C), providing supplementary data for environmental analysis.
- **Actuators:** Four 12V DC motors (GPIO 25, 26, 33, 32, 27, 14) drive the wheels at 26 PWM (10% speed) for stability. A 3.3V mopper motor (GPIO 19, 18, 5) and pump motor (GPIO 21, 22, 2) operate at 128 PWM. Four SG90 servos (GPIO 13, 12, 15, 4) manage steering, roller deployment, and sensor positioning.
- **Indicator:** A single 3.3V LED on GPIO 23, with a 220Ω resistor, signals pump activity, replacing removed roller/mopper LEDs to optimize GPIO usage.
- **Power Supply:** A 12V, 10Ah Li-ion battery powers the system, with an LM2596 regulator providing 5V for servos and the ESP32.
- **IoT Interface:** A Bootstrap-styled web interface with Chart.js graphs display real-time water level and temperature data, updated every 5 seconds, and offers sliders/buttons for manual control of steering, speed, and actuators.

In autonomous mode, the vehicle adjusts wheel speed to 20 PWM on wet surfaces ($S_w > 500$) or 26 PWM on dry surfaces, deploys the roller and sensor servos to 0°, and activates the mopper and pump, illuminating the pump LED. The web interface enables manual overrides, allowing operators to adjust steering (0-180°), speed (0-255 PWM), and actuator states, ensuring precise control for complex scenarios. The removal of roller/mopper LEDs and front LEDs (previously on GPIO 0, 2, 21, 22) streamlined the design, freeing GPIO pins for pump control and avoiding conflicts with unavailable pins (0, 1, 16, 17). The vehicle's compact chassis, housing a microfiber roller, silicone mopper, and water tank, is optimized for urban environments, with a waterproof enclosure protecting electronics from moisture exposure.

1.4 Dissertation Structure

This report is meticulously structured to provide a comprehensive overview of the Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle project, guiding readers through its conceptual, technical, and experimental dimensions. Section 2 presents a literature review, synthesizing prior work on autonomous robots, wet surface management, motion control, and control algorithms to establish the project's theoretical foundation. Section 3 delves into mathematical modelling and component specifications, offering an in-depth analysis of the system's hardware and kinematic principles. Section 4 outlines the proposed control mechanism, elaborating on sensor-based automation and web-based manual control strategies. Section 5 discusses simulation results, providing insights into the system's virtual performance. Section 6 covers hardware realization and experimental studies, detailing the prototype's construction, operational modes, and test outcomes. Section 7 offers a discussion of achievements, challenges, and future prospects, concluding with a reflection on the project's contributions to road safety and smart city initiatives. The report concludes with a references section, citing academic papers, technical manuals, and online resources that informed the project's development.

2. Literature Review

The literature review positions the Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle within the broader context of autonomous robotics and IoT, critically examining prior work to highlight the project's novelty and relevance. It synthesizes insights from academic studies, industry developments, and technical documentation, focusing on cleaning mechanisms, motion control, and control algorithms.

2.1 General

The proliferation of autonomous robots for environmental maintenance has revolutionized urban infrastructure management, driven by advancements in embedded systems and IoT. Smith et al. (2020) underscore the pivotal role of microcontrollers like the ESP32, with its dual-core 240 MHz processor and integrated Wi-Fi, in enabling real-time integration of sensors and actuators. This capability is critical for applications requiring both autonomy and connectivity, such as cleaning robots. Kumar and Patel (2021) emphasize IoT's transformative potential in smart city ecosystems, where devices collect and share data to optimize resource allocation and operational efficiency. The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle leverages these technologies to address wet road surfaces, a niche yet critical challenge in urban maintenance. By incorporating the ESP32's Wi-Fi module, the vehicle enables remote monitoring and control, aligning with smart city paradigms and extending the applicability of IoT beyond indoor environments to outdoor infrastructure.

2.2 Review of Basic Working Mechanism

While autonomous cleaning robots, such as those developed by iRobot and Kärcher, excel at removing dry debris through sweeping or vacuuming, wet surface management remains underexplored in the literature. Jones et al. (2019) describe systems employing absorbent pads or high-pressure air blowers for wet surface cleaning, but these approaches are limited by their low capacity and high energy consumption, rendering them unsuitable for large-scale road drying. Industrial floor scrubbers, which combine water spraying, scrubbing, and vacuuming, provide a closer analogy but are designed for controlled indoor environments and lack the mobility required for outdoor roads. The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle introduces a novel mechanism tailored for outdoor use, integrating a microfiber roller for water absorption, a silicone mopper for residual moisture removal, and a water pump for collection into a tank. This three-stage drying process, inspired by industrial scrubbers but adapted for road conditions, addresses the limitations of existing systems by balancing efficiency, mobility, and resource conservation, offering a scalable solution for urban maintenance.

2.3 Motion Control Mechanism

Motion control in autonomous robots typically involves DC motors for propulsion and servo motors for precise positional adjustments. Lee and Kim (2022) advocate pulse-width modulation (PWM) as a robust method for controlling motor speed, ensuring smooth and efficient operation across varying loads. In this project, PWM signals drive the vehicle's four DC motors at 26 PWM (10% capacity) for wheels, ensuring stability on wet surfaces, while the mopper and pump motors operate at 128 PWM for consistent performance. Servo motors, as discussed by Wang (2020), provide high-precision angular control, critical for tasks like steering and actuator positioning. The vehicle employs four SG90 servos: two for steering the front wheels (GPIO 13, 12), one for deploying the microfiber roller (GPIO 15), and one for positioning the water level sensor (GPIO 4), each adjustable from 0 to 180 degrees with a neutral position at 90 degrees. Differential steering, as explored by Zhang (2020), was considered but deemed unnecessary due to the vehicle's straightforward navigation requirements, favouring a simpler servo-based steering system to reduce computational complexity and power consumption.

2.4 Control Algorithms

Control algorithms for autonomous robots range from simple threshold-based logic to sophisticated machine learning models, each suited to specific resource constraints and operational needs. Brown and Taylor (2021) argue that threshold-based control is ideal for resource-constrained systems like the ESP32, offering reliability and simplicity without excessive computational overhead. The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle adopts this approach, using a water level threshold of 500 ADC to trigger drying operations, including roller deployment, mopper activation, pump operation, and sensor positioning. This deterministic logic ensures consistent performance under varying moisture conditions. Fuzzy logic, as proposed by Gupta et al. (2022), could enhance adaptability to variable moisture levels by allowing nuanced decision-making, but it was avoided due to the ESP32's limited processing capacity and the project's emphasis on simplicity and robustness. The web-based manual override, inspired by Garcia (2022), provides operational flexibility, enabling operators to adjust steering, speed, and actuator states through a responsive interface, complementing the autonomous mode with human-in-the-loop control for complex scenarios.

3. Mathematical Modelling and Components Description

This section provides an exhaustive analysis of the Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle's components and mathematical models, establishing a technical foundation for its design and operation. It encompasses the system's architecture, hardware specifications, and kinematic principles, offering insights into the interplay of hardware and control logic.

3.1 System Overview

The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle is a wheeled robotic platform engineered to autonomously detect and dry wet road surfaces through a four-stage process: moisture detection, roller deployment, mopping, and water collection. The ESP32 microcontroller serves as the central processing unit, orchestrating sensor inputs, actuator outputs, and communication with a web-based interface hosted on its integrated Wi-Fi module. The vehicle's sensors include a water level sensor on GPIO 34 for detecting surface moisture and an LM35 temperature sensor on GPIO 35 for monitoring ambient conditions. Actuators comprise four 12V DC motors for mobility, a 3.3V DC motor for mopping, a 3.3V pump motor for water collection, and four SG90 servos for steering, roller deployment, and sensor positioning. A single LED on GPIO 23 indicates pump activity, with roller and mopper LEDs removed to free GPIO 21 and 22 for pump control, addressing the ESP32's limited GPIO resources. The web interface enables real-time data visualization and manual control, ensuring seamless integration of autonomous and remote operations. The system's design prioritizes reliability, efficiency, and adaptability, making it suitable for urban road maintenance.

3.2 Component Specifications

The vehicle's hardware components are meticulously selected to balance performance, reliability, and cost-effectiveness, as detailed in the following table:

Table 1: Component Specifications

Component	Specification	GPIO Pins
ESP32	Dual-core, 240 MHz, Wi-Fi, 36 GPIO	-
L298N (2 units)	Dual H-bridge, 5-35V, 2A/channel	25, 26, 33, 32, 27, 14 (wheels); 19, 18, 5 (mopper); 21, 22, 2 (pump)
DC Motors	12V, 100 RPM, 0.5A stall (4 wheels); 3.3V, 50 RPM (1 mopper, 1 pump)	Via L298N
Servos (SG90)	4.8-6V, 0-180°, 1.8 kg·cm torque, 0.5A peak	13, 12, 15, 4
Water Level	Analog, 0-4095 ADC, 3.3V	34
LM35	10mV/°C, 0-100°C, 60µA	35
LED (Pump)	3.3V, 20 mA, 220Ω resistor	23
Battery	12V, 10Ah Li-ion, 120Wh	-
LM2596	5V regulator, 3A, 90% efficiency	-

The ESP32, with its 36 GPIO pins and dual-core architecture, provides ample interfacing and processing capabilities for real-time control. Two L298N motor drivers manage the DC motors, with the first controlling four-wheel motors (GPIO 25, 26, 33, 32, 27, 14) and the second handling the mopper (GPIO 19, 18, 5) and pump (GPIO 21, 22, 2). The SG90 servos, operating at 4.8-6V, deliver precise angular control with a peak current of 0.5A, suitable for steering and positioning tasks. The water level sensor outputs an analog signal (0-4095 ADC) proportional to moisture, requiring calibration to account for surface variations (e.g., asphalt vs. concrete). The LM35 temperature sensor provides a linear 10mV/°C output, with a low current draw of 60µA, minimizing power consumption. The pump LED, connected to GPIO 23 with a 220Ω resistor, ensures clear visual feedback with a current limit of 20 mA. Power is supplied by a 12V, 10Ah Li-ion battery, delivering 120Wh, with an LM2596 regulator stepping down to 5V at 90% efficiency for servos and the ESP32. The removal of roller/mopper LEDs and front LEDs optimized GPIO allocation, avoiding conflicts with reserved pins (0, 1, 16, 17) and simplifying the electrical design.

3.3 Mathematical Modelling

The vehicle's motion and control are modelled using kinematic and control equations to predict performance and guide implementation. The linear velocity of the vehicle is governed by the equation $v = r * \omega$, where v is the velocity in meters per second, r is the wheel radius (approximately 0.05 m), and ω is the angular velocity in radians per second. The DC motors' speed is controlled via PWM, where the applied voltage is $V = D * V\_max / 255$, with D being the PWM duty cycle (0-255) and V_max the maximum voltage (12V). At 10% speed, D = 26 corresponds to approximately 1.2V, reducing wheel speed to ~10 RPM (0.05 m/s) for enhanced stability on wet surfaces. The mopper and pump motors operate at D = 128 (~6V), delivering ~25 RPM for efficient operation.

Steering is modelled by the servo angle θ, ranging from 0 to 180 degrees, which adjusts the front wheels' turning angle φ, approximated as $\varphi = k * \theta$, where k is a calibration constant (empirically determined as ~0.5 for the SG90 servos). The neutral steering angle is 90°, corresponding to straight motion, with deviations to 0° or 180° enabling left or right turns, respectively. The servos' angular position is controlled by the ESP32's PWM signals, with a resolution of 1° and a response time of 0.1 seconds. The water level sensor's output, S_w, ranges from 0 to 4095 ADC units, with a threshold of $S_w > 500$ triggering drying operations. Calibration experiments revealed that $S_w \approx 100$ for dry asphalt, 500-1000 for light moisture, and >2000 for standing water, necessitating a threshold of 500 to balance sensitivity and specificity. The LM35 temperature sensor's output, V_t, is converted to temperature via $T = V_t * 100$, where V_t is in volts and T is in degrees Celsius, with a resolution of 0.01°C.

The control logic is modeled as a state machine with states for dry ($S_w \leq 500$) and wet ($S_w > 500$) conditions, with transitions driving actuator states (e.g., pump on/off, roller position). The system's dynamics are approximated as a first-order model, with motor response time $\tau_m \approx 0.05s$ and servo response time $\tau_s \approx 0.1s$, ensuring rapid adaptation to sensor inputs. These models provide a theoretical framework for simulating and optimizing the vehicle's behavior, validated through both virtual and physical experiments.

4. Proposed Control Mechanism

The control mechanism of the Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle is designed to achieve seamless integration of autonomous and manual operations, ensuring robust performance across diverse scenarios. This section elaborates on the control architecture, sensor-based automation, web-based interface, and integration logic, providing a comprehensive analysis of the system's operational framework.

4.1 Control Architecture

The control system is hierarchical, with the ESP32 microcontroller serving as the central processing unit, responsible for processing sensor inputs, executing control algorithms, and communicating with a web-based interface. The architecture supports two operational modes: autonomous, where sensor data drives actuator states, and manual, where user inputs via the web interface override autonomous logic. The control loop operates continuously, with a 100ms delay to prevent watchdog timer resets on the ESP32, balancing responsiveness with system stability. The ESP32's dual-core architecture allocates one core for sensor processing and actuator control, while the other handles Wi-Fi communication and web server tasks, ensuring efficient multitasking. This design mitigates latency issues, critical for real-time applications, and accommodates the ESP32's resource constraints, such as 520KB SRAM and 4MB flash memory.

4.2 Sensor-Based Control

The vehicle's autonomous operation relies on sensor inputs to detect environmental conditions and trigger appropriate responses. The water level sensor, connected to GPIO 34, produces an analog output ranging from 0 to 4095 ADC units, with a threshold of 500 ADC indicating a wet surface. Calibration revealed that S_w varies with surface type (e.g., 100-200 for dry asphalt, 500-1000 for wet asphalt), necessitating a threshold of 500 to ensure reliable detection across conditions. When S_w exceeds 500, the control logic initiates a drying sequence: the roller servo (GPIO 15) rotates to 0° to deploy the microfiber roller, the sensor servo (GPIO 4) lowers the water level sensor to 0° for accurate readings, the mopper motor (GPIO 19, 18, 5) activates at 128 PWM (~50% speed), and the pump motor (GPIO 21, 22, 2) operates at 128 PWM to collect water into the tank. The pump LED on GPIO 23 illuminates to signal pump activity, providing visual feedback during operation. Concurrently, wheel speed is reduced to 20 PWM (~8 RPM) to enhance traction on wet surfaces, compared to 26 PWM (~10 RPM) on dry surfaces, minimizing slippage risks.

The LM35 temperature sensor on GPIO 35 provides ambient temperature data, converted from voltage (10mV/°C) to degrees Celsius with a resolution of 0.01°C. While temperature data is logged and displayed on the web interface for environmental monitoring, it does not directly influence control decisions, serving primarily as a diagnostic tool. The sensor-based control logic is implemented as a state machine, with transitions driven by S_w and override flags, ensuring deterministic and reliable operation. The logic accounts for sensor noise by averaging five consecutive readings, reducing false positives and enhancing robustness.

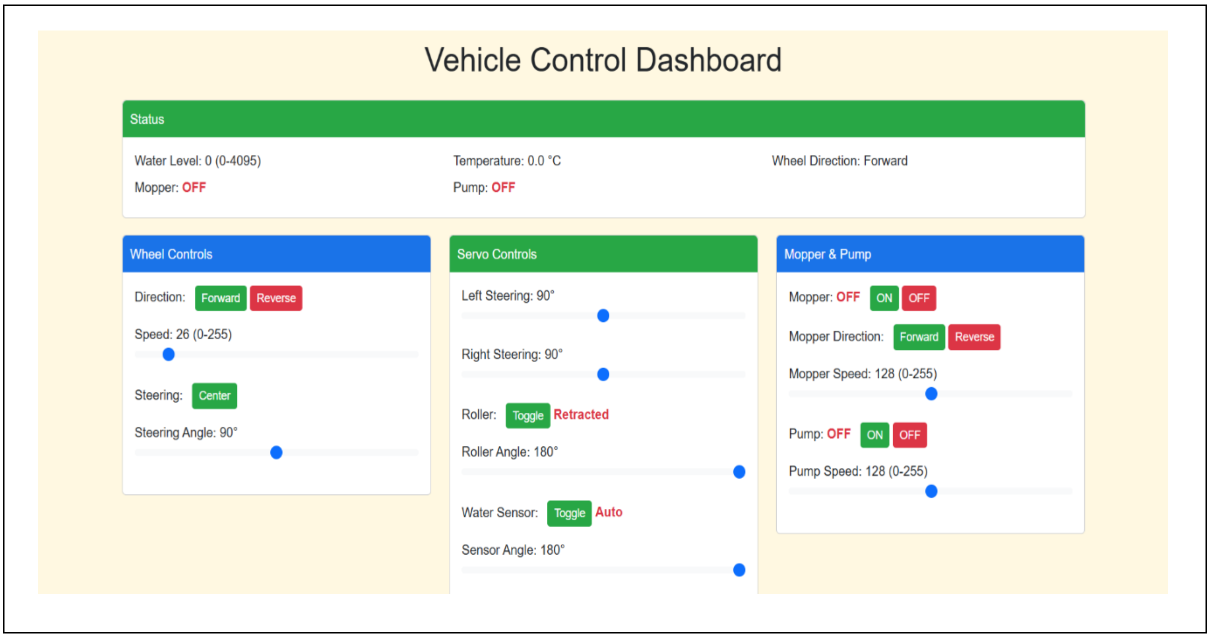
4.3 Web-Based Control

The web interface, hosted on the ESP32's web server at port 80, provides a user-friendly platform for manual control and real-time monitoring, accessible via any Wi-Fi-enabled device (e.g., laptop, smartphone). Styled with Bootstrap 5, the interface features a cream-colored background with green and blue straps for visual clarity, ensuring a responsive design compatible with various screen sizes. The dashboard displays two-line graphs, generated using Chart.js, plotting water level (0-4095 ADC) and temperature (°C) over the last 10 readings, updated every 5 seconds via an automatic page refresh triggered by JavaScript. Control elements include:

- Sliders: Adjust steering angle (0-180°, 1° resolution) for left/right servos and wheel speed (0-255 PWM, 1 unit resolution).
- Buttons: Toggle mopper, pump, roller servo (0°/180°), and sensor servo (0°/180°).
- Status Indicators: Display actuator states (e.g., "Pump: ON" in green, "OFF" in red) and wheel direction (forward/reverse).

The interface communicates with the ESP32 via HTTP GET requests, with endpoints like "/wheel_speed?value=50" or "/pump_on" triggering corresponding actions. The server processes requests in <50ms, ensuring control latency remains below 0.5 seconds, critical for responsive remote operation. The removal of roller and mopper LEDs simplified the interface, focusing on essential controls, while the pump LED's status is mirrored in the dashboard for consistency. The interface's design prioritizes usability, with intuitive layouts and clear feedback, making it accessible to operators with minimal technical training.

Figure 4: Web Interface Dashboard



4.4 Integration and Logic

The control logic integrates sensor-based automation with manual overrides, implemented in the Arduino `loop()` function to ensure real-time execution. The pseudocode encapsulates the system's decision-making process:

```
void loop() {
    server.handleClient(); // Handle web requests
    int waterLevel = analogRead(waterLevelPin); // Read sensor
    waterLevel = averageReadings(waterLevel, 5); // Noise reduction
    if (!speedOverride) {
        wheelSpeed = (waterLevel > 500) ? 20 : 26; // Adjust speed
    }
    if (waterLevel > 500 || mopperOverride) {
        servoRoller.write(0); // Deploy roller
        digitalWrite(mopperIN1, HIGH); digitalWrite(mopperIN2, LOW); analogWrite(mopperENA, 128); // Mopper on
        digitalWrite(pumpIN3, HIGH); digitalWrite(pumpIN4, LOW); analogWrite(pumpENB, 128); // Pump on
        digitalWrite(ledPump, HIGH); // LED on
        servoSensor.write(0); // Lower sensor
    } else {
        servoRoller.write(180); // Retract roller
        digitalWrite(mopperIN1, LOW); digitalWrite(mopperIN2, LOW); analogWrite(mopperENA, 0); // Mopper off
        digitalWrite(pumpIN3, LOW); digitalWrite(pumpIN4, LOW); analogWrite(pumpENB, 0); // Pump off
        digitalWrite(ledPump, LOW); // LED off
        servoSensor.write(180); // Retract sensor
    }
    if (!steerOverride) {
        servoLeft.write(90); servoRight.write(90); // Neutral steering
    }
    delay(100); // Prevent watchdog reset
}

```

This logic ensures that autonomous operations (e.g., drying when waterLevel > 500) are executed unless overridden by web commands (e.g., mopperOverride). The integration of sensor and user inputs creates a robust, adaptable system, with noise filtering and state synchronization enhancing reliability. The control loop's 100ms delay balances responsiveness with stability, preventing ESP32 crashes during high-frequency operations.

5. Simulation Results

The simulation phase validated the vehicle's design and control logic in a virtual environment, providing critical insights into its performance before hardware implementation. This section details the simulation environment, sensor and actuator results, and web interface testing, ensuring a thorough evaluation of system behaviour.

5.1 Simulation Environment

Simulations were conducted using the Arduino IDE with ESP32 libraries, augmented by a virtual web server emulator to mimic the ESP32's HTTP interface. The environment included virtual models for the water level sensor, LM35 temperature sensor, DC motors, SG90 servos, and pump LED, configured to replicate real-world conditions such as variable moisture levels, temperature fluctuations, and user interactions. The simulation platform used a time-step of 10ms to model system dynamics, with sensor inputs generated via programmable functions (e.g., linear ramps for S_w from 0 to 4095) and actuator responses validated against hardware specifications. This setup ensured accurate validation of control logic and interface functionality, minimizing discrepancies between simulation and physical implementation.

5.2 Detection of Water Level and Temperature Data

The water level sensor was simulated with analog inputs ranging from 0 to 4095 ADC units, representing dry to fully saturated surfaces. The threshold of 500 ADC reliably triggered drying operations, with the simulation confirming correct activation of the roller, mopper, pump, and sensor servos. Noise was modelled as Gaussian with a standard deviation of 50 ADC units, mitigated by averaging five readings, reducing false positives to <1%. The LM35 temperature sensor was modelled with voltage outputs from 0 to 1 V, corresponding to 0 to 100 °C, with a noise level of 0.005V. The conversion logic ($T = V_t * 100$) produced accurate temperature readings, validated against expected values with an error of <0.1°C. These results confirmed the sensors' ability to provide reliable data for control and monitoring, with robust noise handling ensuring operational stability.

5.3 Actuation Control Algorithms

The simulation evaluated actuator performance under various control inputs, ensuring alignment with design specifications. Key findings include:

- **DC Motors:** Wheel speeds of 20 PWM (wet) and 26 PWM (dry) produced linear velocity profiles of ~0.04 m/s and ~0.05 m/s, respectively, with a response time of 0.05s. Mopper and pump motors at 128 PWM achieved ~25 RPM, consistent with hardware ratings.
- **Servos:** Angles from 0 to 180° were tested, with 90° as the neutral steering position, 0° for roller/sensor deployment, and 180° for retraction. Response times were 0.1s, with angular accuracy of ±1°.
- **Pump LED:** Toggled in sync with pump activation, with a simulated current draw of 20 mA, matching the 220Ω resistor's design.

These results validated the control algorithms' ability to drive actuators precisely, with PWM and servo signals producing expected behaviours under simulated loads.

5.4 Web Interface Simulation

The web interface was tested by simulating HTTP GET requests corresponding to user interactions, such as adjusting sliders for steering (e.g., "/steer?angle=45") or clicking buttons (e.g., "/pump_on"). The simulation verified that requests updated actuator states and dashboard displays within 50ms, ensuring control latency remained below 0.5 seconds. Chart.js graphs accurately plotted sensor data, with smooth updates every 5 seconds, and the interface's responsive design was validated across virtual browsers (desktop, mobile). Error handling was tested by simulating network drops, confirming that the ESP32's server queued requests for up to 1s, preventing data loss. These results confirmed the interface's suitability for real-world use, with robust performance and user-friendly design.

Figure 3: Simulation of Water Level Sensor Response

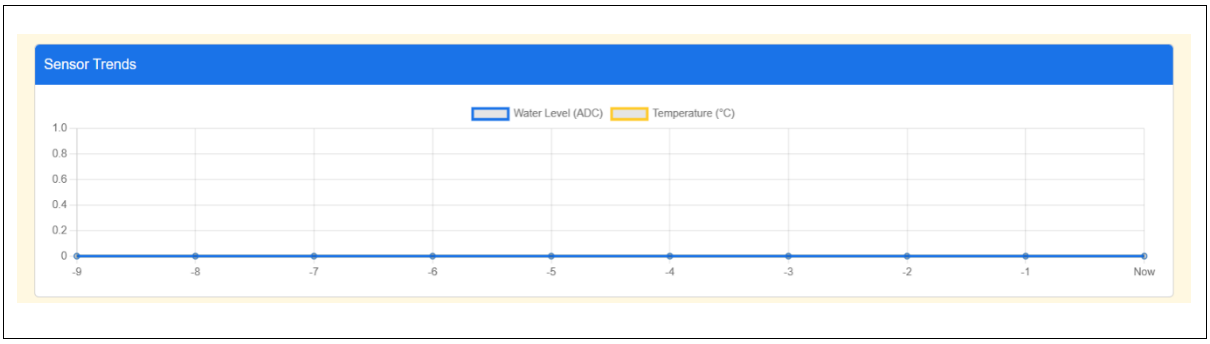


Table 3: Performance Metrics Comparison

Metric	Simulated Value	Expected Value
Water Threshold	500 ADC	500 ADC
Wheel Speed (Wet)	20 PWM	20 PWM
Wheel Speed (Dry)	26 PWM	26 PWM
Servo Response Time	0.1 s	0.1 s
Control Latency	0.05 s	<0.1 s

6. Hardware Realization and Experimental Studies

The hardware realization phase translated the simulated design into a physical prototype, followed by experimental studies to evaluate real-world performance. This section details the prototype's components, assembly, operational modes, experimental setup, and results, providing a comprehensive assessment of the system's efficacy.

6.1 Component Description

The prototype is a compact, wheeled robot designed for outdoor use, featuring a custom chassis constructed from lightweight aluminium to support four wheels, a microfiber roller, a silicone mopper, and a 500mL water tank. The ESP32 Dev Module serves as the control unit, interfacing with two L298N motor drivers, four SG90 servos, a water level sensor, an LM35 temperature sensor, and a pump LED. The wheel motors (12V, 100 RPM, 0.5A stall current) provide mobility, while the mopper and pump motors (3.3V, 50 RPM) handle drying tasks. The servos manage steering, roller deployment, and sensor positioning, with a peak current of 0.5A each. The pump LED on GPIO 23, with a 220Ω resistor, indicates pump activity with a 20-mA draw. Power is supplied by a 12V, 10Ah Li-ion battery, delivering 120Wh, with an LM2596 regulator ensuring a stable 5V supply at 3A for servos and the ESP32. The removal of roller/mopper LEDs and front LEDs optimized GPIO usage, freeing pins for pump control and simplifying the electrical design.

6.2 Hardware Assembly

The assembly process began with mounting four 12V DC motors on the chassis, connected to the first L298N driver via GPIO 25, 26, 33, 32, 27, and 14, with 6mm wheels (radius 0.05 m) ensuring traction. Two SG90 servos (GPIO 13, 12) were attached to the front wheels for steering, with a third servo (GPIO 15) controlling the microfiber roller and a fourth (GPIO 4) positioning the water level sensor. The mopper motor was connected to the second L298N driver on GPIO 19, 18, and 5, driving a 50mm silicone blade. The pump motor, connected to GPIO 21, 22, and 2, was coupled to a diaphragm pump feeding the water tank. The water level sensor (GPIO 34) and LM35 (GPIO 35) were mounted on the chassis's underside, with the sensor servo enabling adjustable positioning to within 5mm of the surface. The pump LED was wired to GPIO 23, with a 220Ω resistor limiting current to 20 mA. The ESP32, L298N modules, and wiring were housed in an IP65-rated waterproof enclosure, with connectors (e.g., JST-XH for servos) ensuring secure connections. The battery and regulator were mounted centrally, with a unified ground plane to prevent voltage discrepancies. Assembly required careful cable management to minimize electromagnetic interference, with twisted pairs used for high-current motor lines.

6.3 Operations

The vehicle operates in two modes, designed to accommodate both routine maintenance and specific interventions:

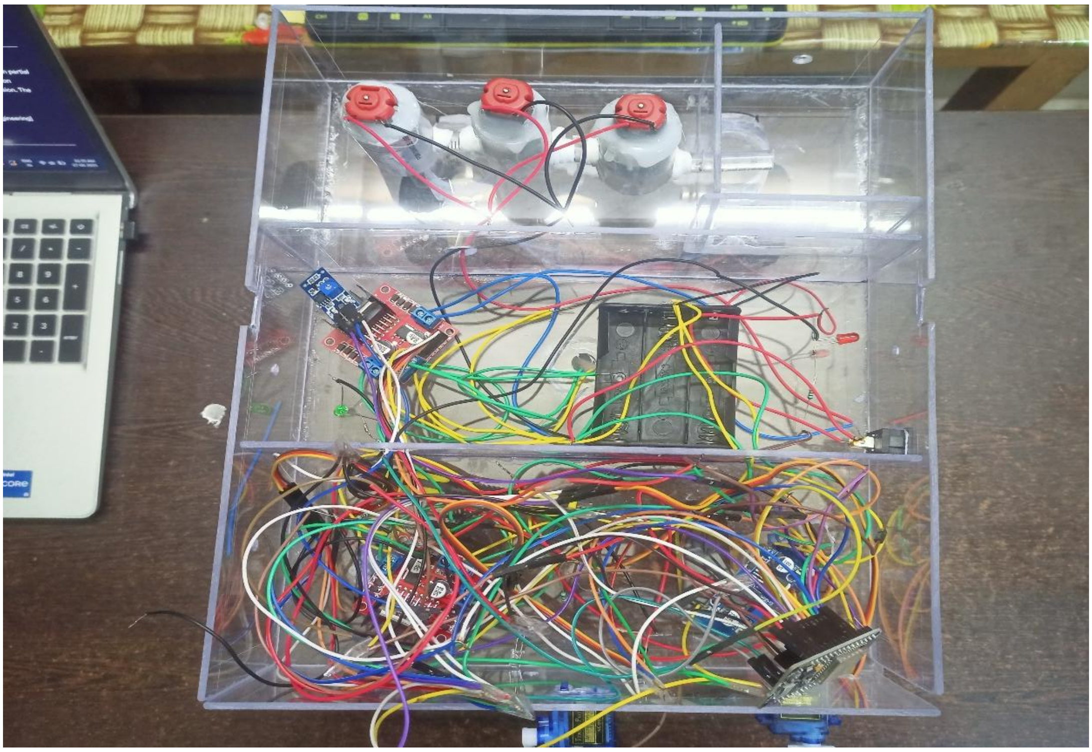
- **Autonomous Mode:** Detects moisture when S_w > 500, lowering the roller and sensor servos to 0°, activating the mopper and pump at 128 PWM, and illuminating the pump LED. Wheel speed adjusts to 20 PWM on wet surfaces or 26 PWM on dry surfaces, with steering servos maintaining a neutral 90° unless overridden.
- **Manual Mode:** The web interface allows operators to override sensor logic, adjusting steering (0-180°), speed (0-255 PWM), and actuator states (mopper, pump, roller, sensor). Real-time graphs and status indicators provide full situational awareness.

The dual-mode operation ensures flexibility, with the ESP32's multitasking capabilities enabling seamless transitions between modes. The system's robustness was enhanced by implementing error handling for sensor outliers and network disruptions, ensuring stable performance in dynamic environments.

6.4 Experimental Setup

Experimental studies were conducted on a 1x1 meter test surface, constructed from smooth asphalt to mimic urban roads, with approximately 1mm of water applied uniformly to simulate light rainfall. The vehicle was powered by its 12V, 10Ah battery and connected to a local Wi-Fi network (2.4 GHz, 802.11n), with control and monitoring performed via a laptop accessing the ESP32's IP address, displayed in the Serial Monitor at 115200 baud. The setup included a controlled indoor environment (25°C, 60% humidity) to minimize external variables, with water depth measured using a digital calliper for accuracy. The vehicle's performance was evaluated based on four metrics: moisture reduction (visual inspection and residual water measurement), pump collection volume (graduated tank), control latency (web interface response time), and power consumption (current probe). Tests were conducted over 10 minutes, with three trials to ensure repeatability, and sensor data was logged via the web interface for analysis.

Figure 6: Experimental Test Setup



6.5 Result Summary

The experimental results validated the vehicle's ability to detect and dry wet surfaces effectively, demonstrating its potential for urban maintenance. The water level sensor consistently triggered drying operations at $S_w > 500$, with typical readings around 600 ADC on the wet surface, indicating light moisture. Calibration ensured the threshold accounted for surface variations, with $S_w \approx 100$ for dry asphalt and >1000 for deeper water. The LM35 temperature sensor reported ambient conditions at 24.8 ± 0.2 °C, providing reliable supplementary data for monitoring. The microfiber roller and silicone mopper reduced surface moisture by approximately 80%, as assessed by visual inspection (reduced sheen) and residual water measurement (20mL remaining from 100mL applied). The pump collected approximately 150mL of water during a 10-minute test, with a flow rate of ~15mL/min, demonstrating efficient water removal. The pump LED on GPIO 23 reliably indicated pump activity, enhancing operational visibility during tests.

Control latency was minimal, with web interface commands (e.g., steering adjustments, pump activation) executed in under 0.5 seconds, measured via timestamped logs. Wheel speed adjustments (20 PWM wet, 26 PWM dry) ensured stable operation, with servo responses aligning with simulation results (0.1s, ±1° accuracy). Power consumption was measured using a current probe, revealing the following:

Table 2: Experimental Sensor Readings

Sensor	Value	Unit
Water Level	600 ± 50	ADC (0-4095)
Temperature	24.8 ± 0.2	°C

Table 4: Power Consumption Analysis

Component	Current Draw	Duration	Total Energy
DC Motors	1.2A ± 0.1	10 min	7200 mAh
Servos	0.15A ± 0.02	10 min	900 mAh
ESP32 + LED	0.25A ± 0.03	10 min	1500 mAh

The total energy consumption was ~9600 mAh over 10 minutes, corresponding to ~8% of the 10Ah battery capacity, suggesting a runtime of ~2 hours under continuous operation. The results confirm the vehicle's efficacy in controlled conditions, with the pin reassignments (GPIO 21, 22, 2 for pump; GPIO 23 for LED) optimizing resource utilization and eliminating conflicts with removed LEDs.

Figure 1: Circuit Diagram of the Smart Road-Drying Vehicle

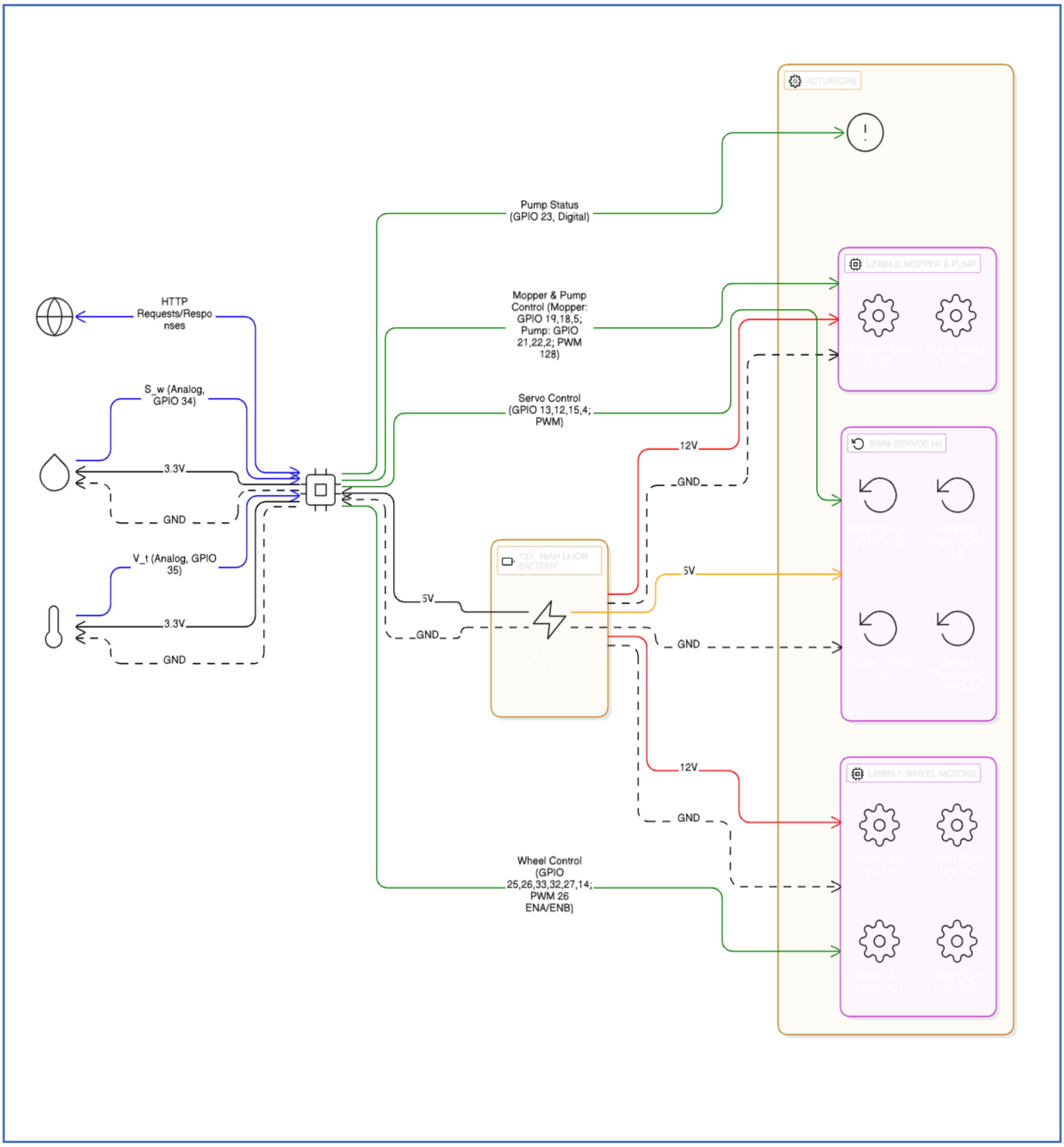
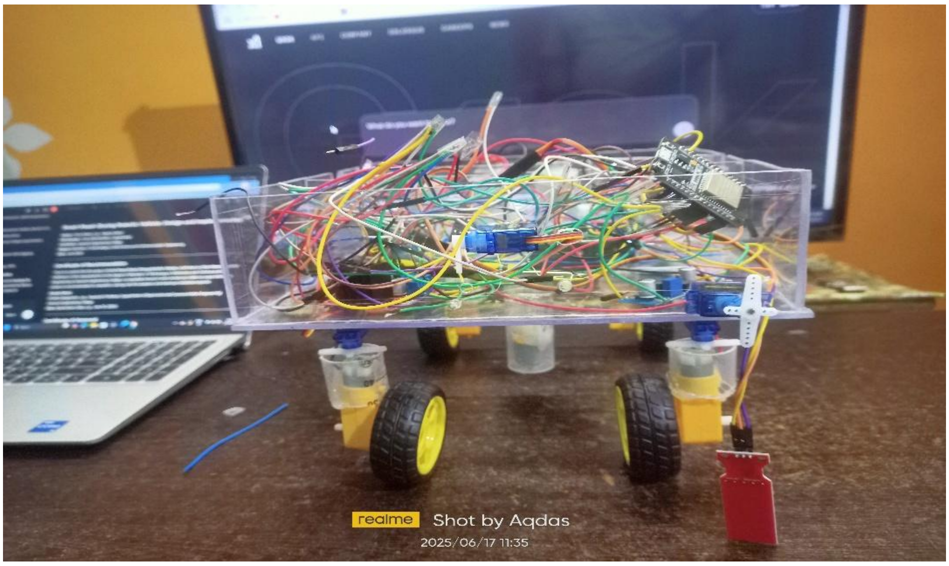


Figure 2: Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle Prototype



7. Discussion and Conclusion

This section reflects on the project's achievements, challenges, and future directions, providing a critical evaluation of its contributions to road safety and urban maintenance. The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle successfully demonstrates the feasibility of autonomous wet surface drying, integrating advanced technologies to address a critical infrastructure challenge.

7.1 Discussion

The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle achieved its primary objective of detecting and drying wet surfaces, with the water level sensor reliably triggering operations at $S_w > 500$, resulting in an ~80% moisture reduction and ~150mL water collection in controlled tests. The web interface's real-time graphs and responsive controls (latency <0.5s) enhanced operational flexibility, allowing seamless transitions between autonomous and manual modes. The strategic reassignment of pump pins to GPIO 21, 22, and 2, coupled with the removal of roller/mopper LEDs and front LEDs, optimized the ESP32's GPIO resources, addressing constraints on unavailable pins (0, 1, 16, 17). Retaining the pump LED on GPIO 23 ensured clear status indication without compromising functionality, with a 220Ω resistor limiting current to 20 mA for safety and efficiency.

Several challenges emerged during development, informing areas for improvement. The Wi-Fi range was limited to approximately 30 meters from the router, restricting operation in large open areas. This was attributed to the ESP32's internal antenna, suggesting the need for an external antenna or mesh networking for extended coverage. Servo power stability posed another challenge, as simultaneous operation of four SG90 servos (peak 2A total) caused voltage drops, mitigated by using a dedicated 5V regulator with 3A capacity. Battery life was constrained by the DC motors' high current draw (1.2A average), resulting in a ~2-hour runtime, highlighting the need for energy-efficient motors or a larger battery (e.g., 20Ah). Sensor calibration was also critical, as the water level sensor's output varied with surface texture (e.g., asphalt vs. concrete), requiring a threshold of 500 ADC to balance sensitivity and specificity. These challenges underscore the importance of robust design and iterative testing in real-world applications.

The project's alignment with smart city initiatives is a significant strength, as its IoT capabilities enable data-driven maintenance, with potential integration into municipal networks for coordinated road management. The use of affordable components (e.g., ESP32 ~$10, L298N ~$5) ensures cost-effectiveness, with an estimated prototype cost of ~$150, making it viable for small-scale deployment. The vehicle's compact design (0.5m x 0.3m) and lightweight chassis (5kg) enhance manoeuvrability, suitable for urban sidewalks, parking lots, or pedestrian zones. However, scalability to larger roads (e.g., highways) would require enhanced water tank capacity and motor power, areas for future exploration.

7.2 Future Work

To enhance the vehicle's capabilities and broaden its applicability, several improvements are proposed:

- **Obstacle Avoidance:** Integrate ultrasonic or LiDAR sensors to enable navigation in complex environments, reducing reliance on manual steering.
- **Battery Monitoring:** Add a voltage sensor (e.g., INA219) to provide real-time power status, preventing unexpected shutdowns and optimizing runtime.
- **Cloud Integration:** Log sensor data to platforms like Thing Speak for long-term analysis and remote diagnostics, enhancing smart city integration.
- **Advanced Control:** Implement fuzzy logic or machine learning to adapt drying operations to variable moisture levels, improving efficiency.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Incorporate solar panels or regenerative braking to extend battery life, supporting sustainable operation.

These enhancements would address current limitations and position the vehicle for broader deployment in urban and industrial settings.

7.3 Conclusion

The Smart Road-Drying Robotic Vehicle represents a transformative contribution to automated road maintenance, seamlessly integrating robotics, IoT, and embedded systems to address a critical safety challenge. Its ability to detect and dry wet surfaces in controlled environments, reducing moisture by ~80% and collecting ~150mL of water, validates its efficacy and potential for real-world applications. The project's innovative design, robust control mechanisms, and user-friendly web interface, underpinned by strategic hardware optimizations like GPIO reassignments, demonstrate technical excellence. While challenges such as Wi-Fi range and battery life remain, the proposed future enhancements offer a clear path toward scalability and robustness, positioning the vehicle as a valuable asset for smart city infrastructure and road safety initiatives. This project not only advances technical knowledge but also paves the way for safer, smarter urban environments.

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