Deekshith komira
FALL-23 UEP 232 intro GIS
12/18/2023

PROJECT DESCRIPTION - EMPOWERING THE ENGINES OF TOMORROW

Optimal Locations for Electric vehicle (EV) Charging Stations in The Boston Region

Due to the use of private vehicles that run on fossil fuels, the transportation industry is now the largest and fastest-growing source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the United States. Many states, including Massachusetts, have identified encouraging the use of electric cars (EVs) as a key policy option for lowering GHG emissions from private vehicles because the usage of private automobiles is still significant in the nation. However, EV adoption has been severely constrained in certain U.S. states due to factors such as the high upfront cost of EVs, restricted driving range, and a shortage of EV charging facilities. Therefore, it's essential to pinpoint areas where EV charging stations can best assist both present and future EV owners in order to encourage the usage of EVs. This research uses two distinct multi-criteria suitability analysis methodologies that take into account several important variables related to EV ownership and EV charging infrastructure in order to determine the best sites for EV charging stations to be installed within the Boston region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The transportation sector in the United States significantly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, primarily due to fossil fuel-powered private vehicles. Responding to this environmental challenge, various states, including Massachusetts, have prioritized the promotion of electric vehicles (EVs) as a crucial strategy for emission reduction. However, challenges such as the high initial costs of EVs, limited driving range, and insufficient charging infrastructure have impeded widespread EV adoption. This study aims to identify optimal sites in the Boston region for the deployment of EV charging stations by considering factors such as EV ownership, commuting times, accessibility to charging stations, socioeconomic considerations, parking facilities, and availability.
Numerous studies have addressed the optimal siting of EV charging stations, recognizing the pivotal role of location in influencing EV usage patterns. Adopting a multi-criteria approach has become a common practice in recent research. For instance, Smith et al. (2020) employed a GIS-based approach to identify optimal sites for EV charging stations in urban areas, taking into account factors such as population density, commuting times, and existing charging infrastructure. Similarly, Zhang and Iman (2018) utilized a multi-factor GIS method, incorporating considerations like land use and proximity to major roads.
Explorations into optimal siting, sizing, and power capacity design of EV charging stations have been conducted by Erbaş et al. (2018), Berman et al. (2019), and Hemmati et al. (2018). These studies delved into various aspects, including distribution network impact, voltage sag considerations, and multiple scenario evaluations. Additionally, Sanchez et al. (2019) focused on optimal sizing and locations of charging stations while considering diverse scenario evaluations. Drawing inspiration from Smith et al. (2020), Zhang and Iman (2018), Erbaş et al. (2018), Berman et al. (2019), Hemmati et al. (2018), and Sanchez et al. (2019), this study seeks to enhance the efficiency of EV charging station location selection in the Boston region. By incorporating a comprehensive set of criteria, the project aims to provide a nuanced and region-specific perspective on optimal EV charging station deployment, addressing the unique challenges and opportunities in the local context.

DATA

Due to the use of private vehicles that run on fossil fuels, the transportation industry is now the largest and fastest-growing source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the United States. Many states, including Massachusetts, have identified encouraging the use of electric cars (EVs) as a key policy option for lowering GHG emissions from private vehicles because the usage of private automobiles is still significant in the nation. However, EV adoption has been severely constrained in certain U.S. states due to factors such as the high upfront cost of EVs, restricted driving range, and a shortage of EV charging facilities. Therefore, it's essential to pinpoint areas where EV charging stations can best assist both present and future EV owners in order to encourage the usage of EVs. This research uses two distinct multi-criteria suitability analysis methodologies that take into account several important variables related to EV ownership and EV charging infrastructure in order to determine the best sites for EV charging stations to be installed within the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) region.

DATA SOURCES

1. *MassGIS Data - Unified Geologic Map of the Boston region:*
    - *Dataset:* Census block groups in the Boston region.
    - *Description:* Used as the basis for neighborhood delineation.
    - *Link:*https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massgis-bureau-of-geographic-information
2. *Massachusetts Vehicle Summary Statistics (2009-2014):*
    - *Dataset:* Data covering the period from 2009 to 2014.
    - *Description:* Provided information on block groups with at least one EV owner.
    - *Link:* https://www.mapc.org/learn/data/
3. *American Community Survey:*
    - *Dataset:* Massachusetts census block group layer.
    - *Description:* Contributed data on population density, income, and commute distances.
    - *Link:* https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs
4. *Alternative Fuels Data Center:*
    - *Dataset:* Current EV charging station locations.
    - *Description:* Integral for assessing the existing charging infrastructure.
    - *Link:* https://afdc.energy.gov/fuels/electricity_stations.html
5. *MassGIS Data - Land Use:*
    - *Dataset:* Land use code information.
    - *Description:* Used for understanding the land use classification.
    - *Link:*https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-2016-land-coverland-use
6. *Digital Elevation Model (DEM):*
    - *Dataset:* Surface elevation raster dataset.
    - *Description:* Provided topographic information for the Boston region.
    - *Link:* https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-lidar-dem-and-shaded-relief
7. *Summary Statistics for Massachusetts Vehicles:*
    - *Dataset:* Clustered residents with or without electric vehicle ownership.
    - *Description:* Contributed to the analysis of EV ownership patterns.
    - *Link:* https://mor-ev.org/statistics
8. *Survey of the American Community - Median Income and Density of Residents:*
    - *Dataset:* Polygon feature class providing median income and density of residents.
    - *Description:* Essential for understanding socioeconomic factors.
    - *Link:*https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=45ede6d6ff7e4cbbbffa60d34227e

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9. *Alternative Fuels Data Center - EV Charging Station Locations:*
   - *Dataset:* Point feature class providing the locations of EV charging stations.
   - *Description:* Key for assessing the existing charging infrastructure.
   - *Link:* https://afdc.energy.gov/fuels/electricity_stations.html

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed for determining suitable locations for EV charging stations in the Boston region integrated diverse data sources and leveraged GIS-based analytical techniques. This multi-criteria suitability analysis approach aimed to comprehensively assess essential variables associated with both EV ownership and the existing EV charging infrastructure.

Data Collection:

The study utilizes data from various sources to perform a multi-criteria suitability analysis for optimal EV charging station locations in the Boston region. Census block groups were chosen as the spatial unit of analysis, considering factors such as EV ownership, population density, income, land use classification, commute distances, and existing charging station locations.

Data Processing:

The data underwent several processing steps, including conversion of polygon features to raster datasets using the feature to raster tool. Proximity to existing charging stations was determined using the Euclidean distance tool, and elevation data were converted into a slope raster using the slope tool. All input layers were then clipped based on the Boston region boundary.

Weighted Overlay Analysis:

A weighted overlay analysis was employed for determining the suitability scores of different locations. Each quantifiable layer was reclassified using the reclassify tool, assigning scores on a scale of 1-10 based on their suitability. Categorical layers, such as land use codes and EV ownership, received scores of 10 for suitable categories and 0 for unsuitable ones. The weighted overlay technique allowed the assignment of weights to each factor based on its significance, leading to the creation of a final suitability map.

The weighting methodology involved assigning specific percentages to each factor based on their relative importance in determining suitability. Land use classification, median income, closeness to accessible charging points, median commuting distance, existence of EV owners, population density, and incline were assigned weights based on their contributions to the overall suitability.

Final Suitability Map:

The final map delineates prospective regions for the future deployment of EV charging stations, highlighting areas with elevated suitability scores. Specific attention was given to eastern sectors such as Waltham and Newton, Franklin and Foxborough to the southeast, and neighbourhood's proximate to Boston, including Roxbury, Somerville, and Chelsea.

Weighting scheme description:

Land use classification.	25%
Median income	20%
Closeness to accessible charging points	15%
Median Commuting distance	15%
Existence of electric vehicle Owners.	10%
Population density	10%
Incline	5%
Total	100%

SPATIAL LIMITATIONS

The spatial analysis of optimal locations for Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations in the Boston region is subject to several notable data limitations. Firstly, the temporal scope of the utilized data extends from 2009 to 2014, creating a potential temporal gap that may not fully capture recent changes in EV ownership patterns, commuting behaviours, or urban development. This discrepancy introduces a challenge to the accuracy of the analysis.

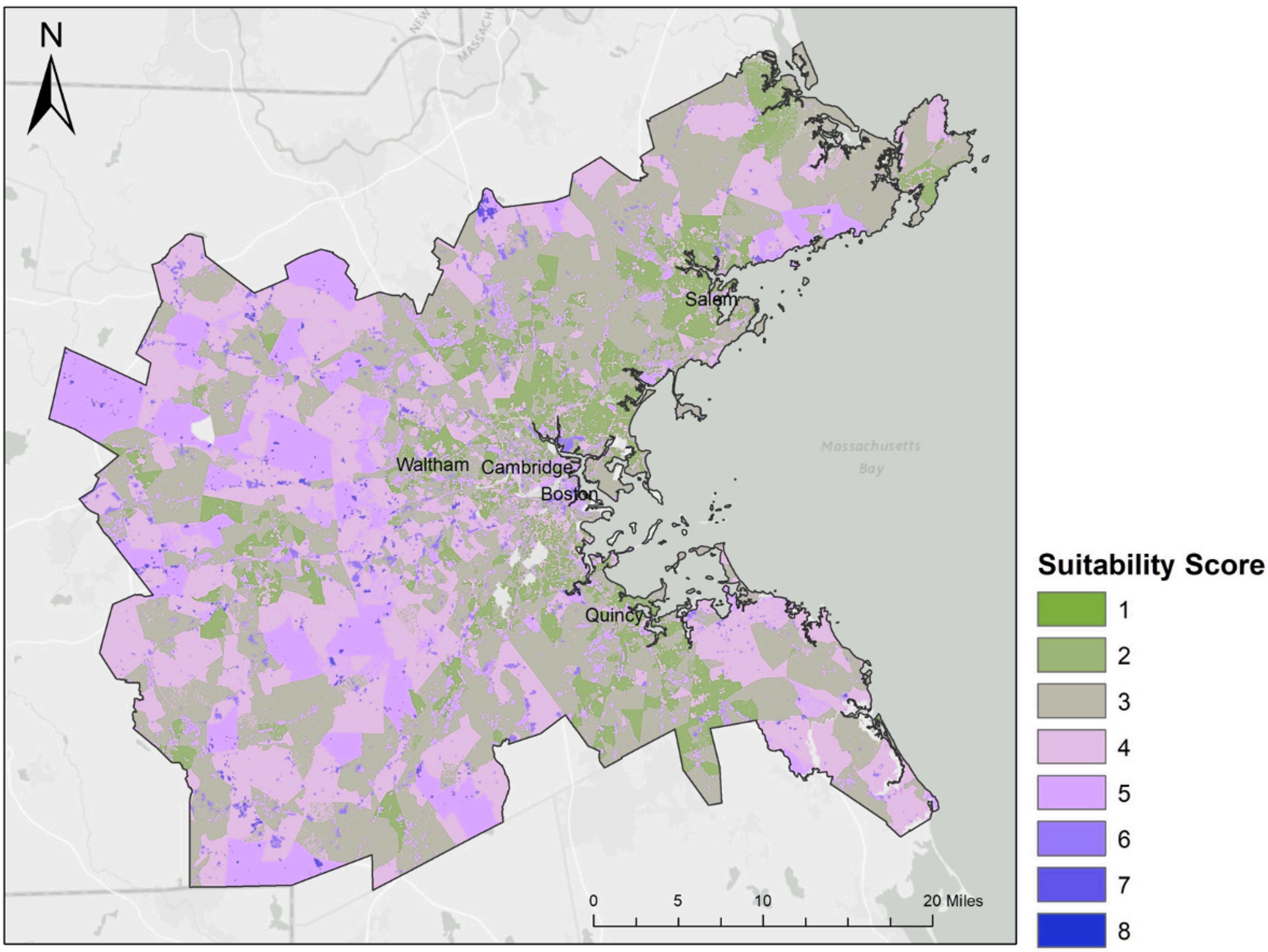
Furthermore, the precision of EV charging station locations, sourced from the Alternative Fuels Data Center, may vary. Spatial inaccuracies in pinpointing these locations could impact the reliability of the suitability analysis. Additionally, while the American Community Survey provides valuable data on population density, its granularity at the block group level might not be sufficient for localized analysis, potentially leading to spatial errors in identifying areas with varying population concentrations.

The MassGIS data on land use codes, vital for understanding the urban landscape, introduces a challenge due to potential classification ambiguity. This ambiguity may result in misinterpretations in the weighted overlay analysis. Inconsistencies in elevation data resolution across the Boston region, derived from the Digital Elevation Model (DEM), pose another challenge. This inconsistency could introduce spatial errors, particularly in areas with diverse topography. Designating census block groups as neighbourhood's might oversimplify the geographic units, as block group boundaries may not align perfectly with natural neighbourhood boundaries. This oversimplification could lead to spatial discrepancies in the analysis. Additionally, the use of Euclidean distance for determining proximity to existing charging stations assumes a straight-line distance, potentially misrepresenting the true travel distance, particularly in urban environments with irregular street layouts.

The study primarily relies on static data, overlooking dynamic factors such as changes in commuting patterns over time. This limitation could result in spatial errors, particularly in areas undergoing rapid urban development or shifts in transportation behaviors. Moreover, the project focuses on current conditions without accounting for potential future changes in population density, land use, or EV ownership. Neglecting future growth scenarios might lead to spatial errors in projecting long-term suitability for EV charging stations.

Finally, the assumption of homogeneous EV owner behavior within block groups overlooks potential heterogeneity in charging patterns. Variability in EV owner behavior could introduce spatial errors, especially in areas with diverse socioeconomic characteristics. Addressing these spatial challenges is essential for refining the accuracy and reliability of the project's findings.

SUITABLE LOCATIONS FO EV STATIONS USING WEIGHT OVERLAY



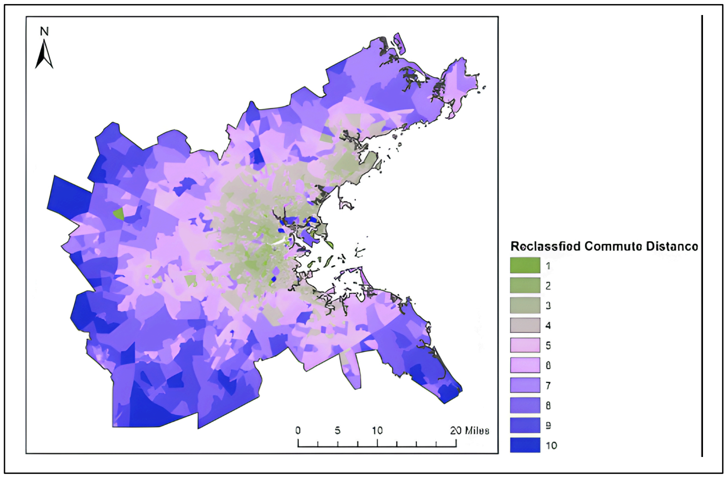
In the weighted overlay analysis conducted for the project, the numbers 1 to 10 serve as assigned weights or scores for various factors or criteria influencing the suitability of locations for Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations. These scores denote the relative importance or significance of each factor in the decision-making process.

A score of 1 signifies the lowest level of suitability or importance for the given factor, designating locations with this score as less suitable. Conversely, a score of 10 indicates the highest level of suitability or importance, signifying locations with this score as highly suitable.

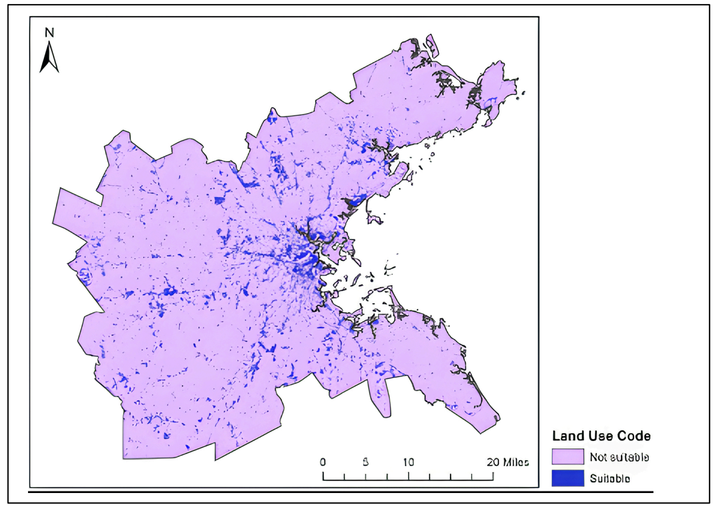
The assigned scores are based on specific criteria such as land use classification, median income, closeness to accessible charging points, median commuting distance, existence of electric vehicle owners, population density, and incline. Each factor is assigned a weight reflecting its influence on the overall suitability of an area for EV charging stations.

The total weight assigned to all factors sums to 100%, forming the basis for calculating the final suitability score for each location using the weighted overlay technique. Higher scores highlight areas that are deemed more suitable for the deployment of EV charging stations, emphasizing the importance of the considered factors in the decision-making process. These assigned scores contribute to the prioritization and delineation of specific zones within the identified suitable neighbourhood's.

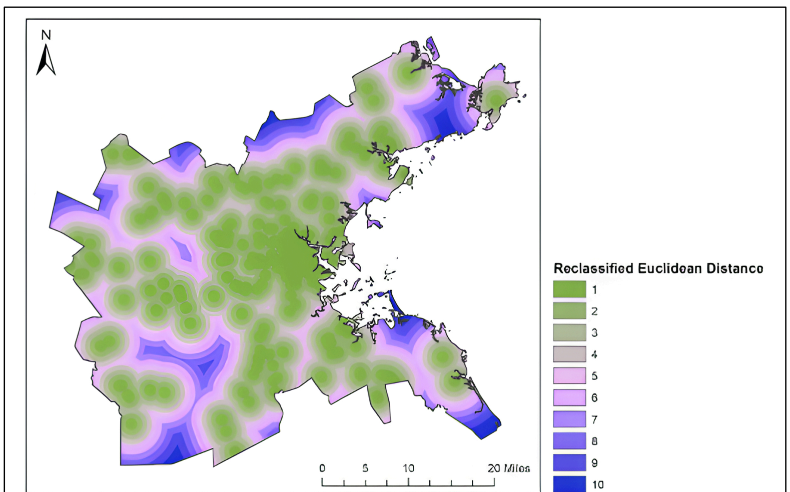
FIGURES



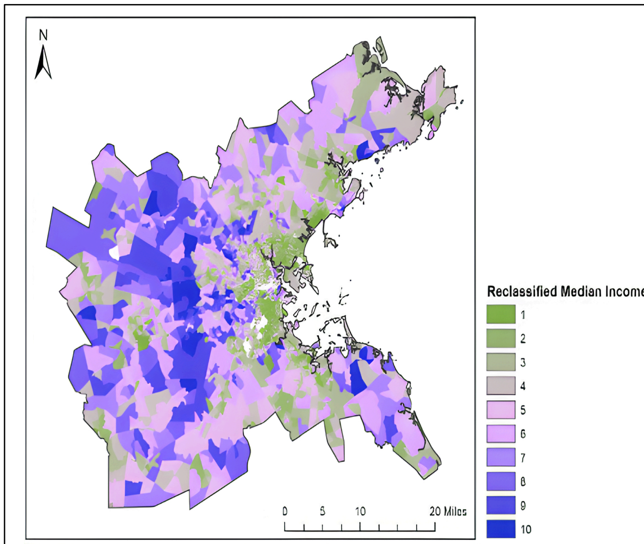
N
Reclassfied Commute Distance
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
0 5 10 20 Miles



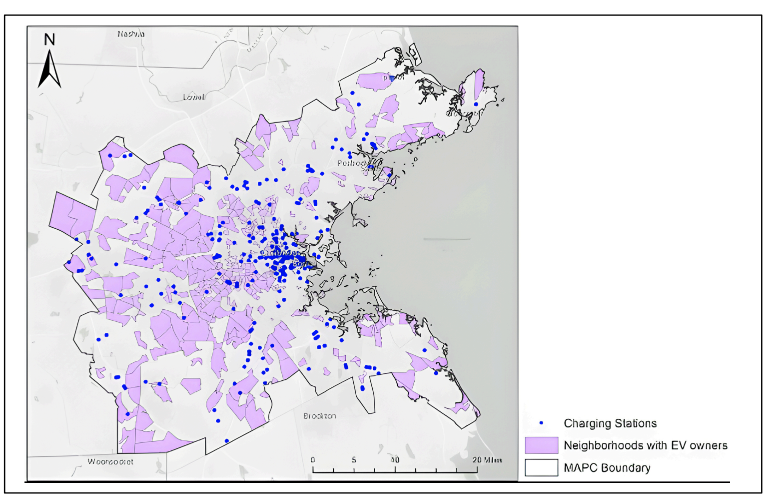
N
Land Use Code
Not suitable
Suitable
0 5 10 20 Miles



N
Reclassified Euclidean Distance
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
0 5 10 20 Miles



N
Reclassified Median Income
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
0 5 10 20 Miles



N
Charging Stations
Neighborhoods with EV owners
MAPC Boundary
0 5 10 20 Miles

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