

MSAMA

Duțu Alin Călin

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

In 2022 it became mandatory for car companies to include an essential kit with assistance and safety sensors in their new models. However, according to DRPCIV, at the end of 2023, more than 81% of the cars in Romania had been used for more than 10 years [1], so it is clear that most of them don't have the essential set of sensors.

1.2 Objectives

This project aims to implement a system for automobiles capable of monitoring important vehicle parameters and providing assistance to drivers with older vehicle models by equipping essential sensors to ensure a safe and comfortable driving experience. The following objectives are taken into consideration:

- Implement a modular system to suit any vehicle
- Develop reliable modules that require minimal maintenance
- Create a UI application that provides important vehicle parameters

2 PROPOSED SOLUTION

2.1 Solution presentation

The project aims to implement a modular system for automotive monitoring and assistance that should be easy to use and maintain while providing reliability through a long lifespan. Knowing the project's purpose and complexity level, the following architecture has been considered:

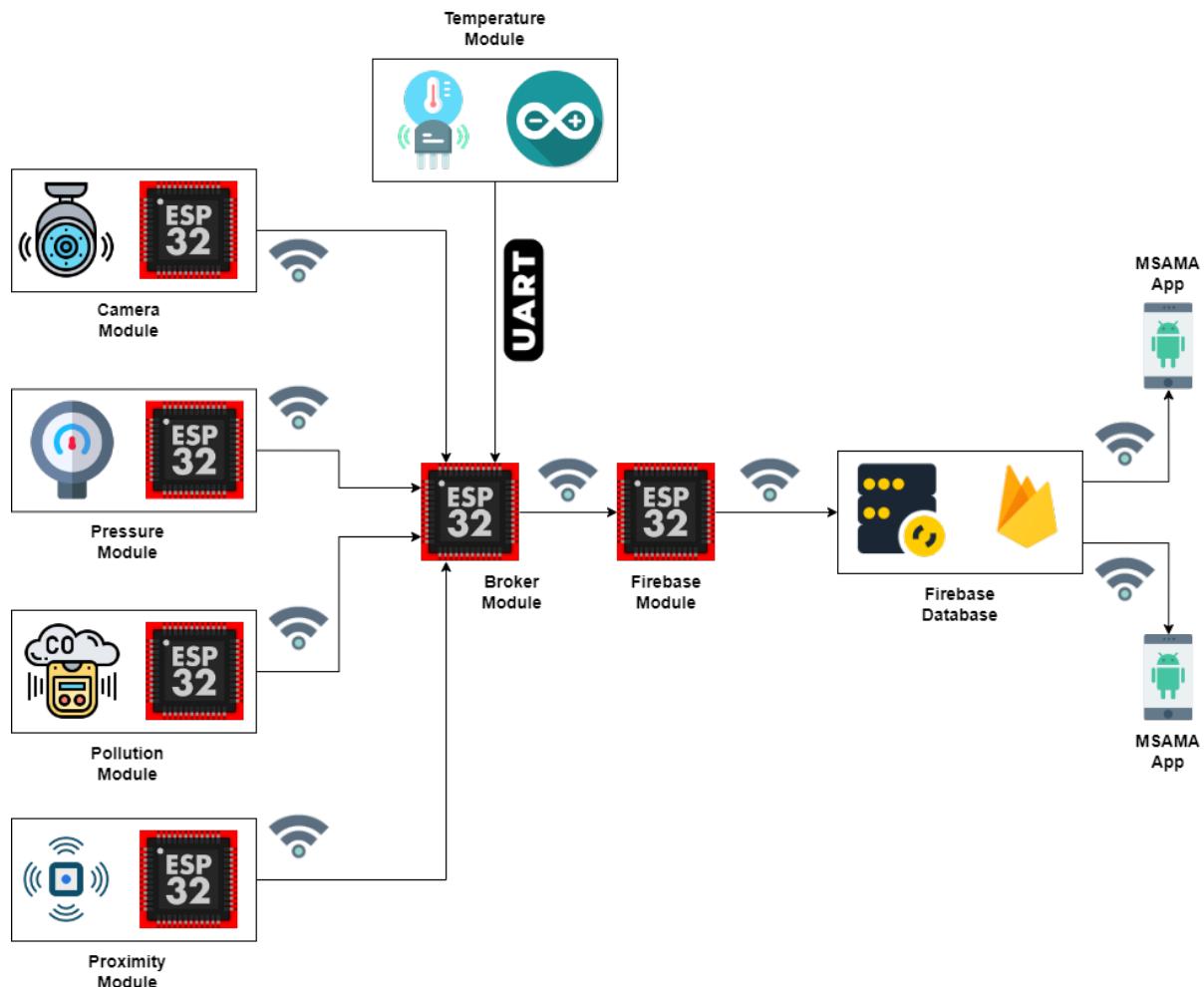


Figure 1: Architecture

There are multiple components identified in the architecture:

- Temperature Module - Sends temperature readings
- Camera Module - Sends camera images
- Pressure Module - Sends pressure readings
- Pollution Module - Sends CO readings
- Proximity Module - Sends distance readings
- Broker Module - Module that gathers data from sensor modules and prepares them to be sent to the database
- Firebase Module - Module that sends data to the database
- Firebase Database - Database used for storing data
- MSAMA app - Android app that gathers database data and presents it to the user

The main requirement for this setup is to ensure internet connectivity since most communication between modules uses the Wi-Fi protocol to make the setup cableless, offering modularity and ease in the installation procedure.

The database is an instance of Firebase[2] that stores the sensor data. The database can be administered, at the moment, using the Firebase web app, a great tool for administrators to manage connections and useful database settings.

3 IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

3.1 Hardware

The architecture schematic (fig. 1) offers a brief envision of the idea. However, there are more details to be discussed in this section starting with the required hardware for the project:

- 4 x ESP-WROOM-32 microcontrollers
- 1 x Arduino Uno microcontroller
- 1 x NodeMCU32S microcontroller
- 2 x HC-SR04 sensor[3]
- 1 x DHT11 sensor[4]
- 1 x Wi-Fi ESP32-CAM[5]
- 1 x BMP280 sensor[6]
- 1 x MQ7 sensor[7]
- 5 x MB102 boards, 3.3V - 5V, 700mA
- 6 x 9V battery cable adapters

3.1.1 Camera module

The camera module is used mainly to capture and provide the video output, process it, and manage Wi-Fi connections. The camera module has 2 layers of hardware:

- The camera component (ESP32-CA) - The top hardware layer, used to capture and provide the video output to the motherboard
- The motherboard component (ESP32-CAM-MB) - The bottom hardware layer, used to process the captured video and manage Wi-Fi connections to transmit the video to a live server.

This module can be powered by any external source that provides an output of at least 5V. A relevant picture of the module's hardware and the pinout of the top and bottom layers are presented in the following figures:

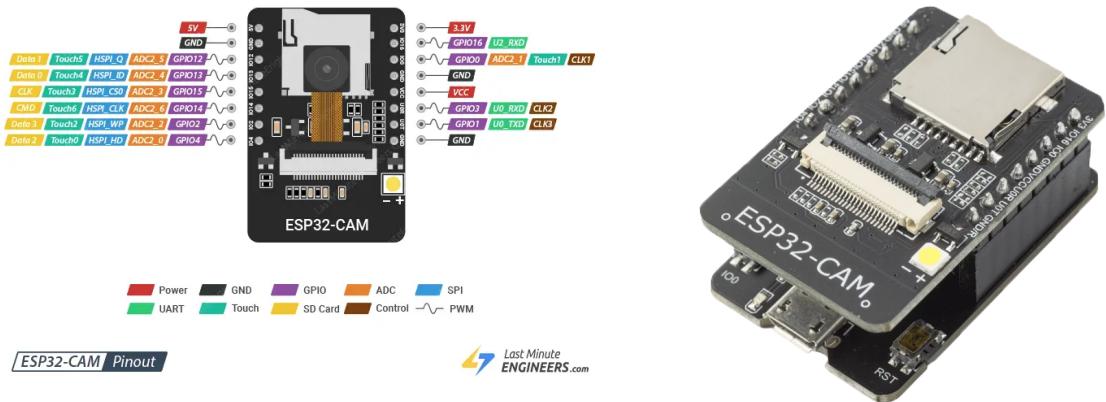


Figure 2: Camera pinout and the assembled module^[1]

3.1.2 Pollution module

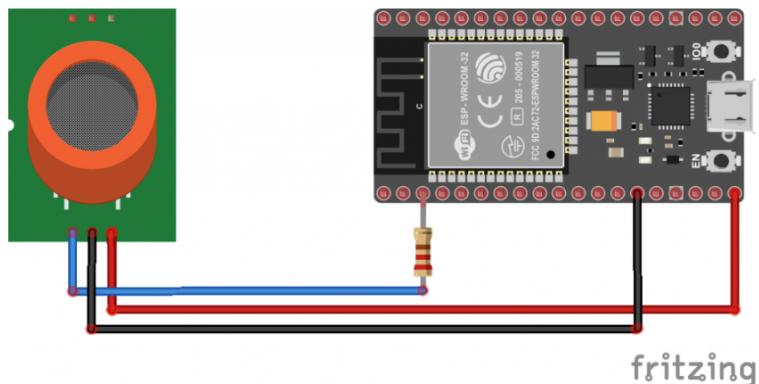


Figure 3: Pollution module

The pollution module consists of an MQ7 component that measures the quantity of CO coming from the exhaust and sends it to the ESP32 component, which transmits the data to the broker through Wi-Fi. It can be powered by any external source that provides an output of at least 5V.

^[1]ESP32-CAM - Pinout. <https://lastminuteengineers.com/esp32-cam-pinout-reference/>. Latest access: 29.09.2024

3.1.3 Pressure module

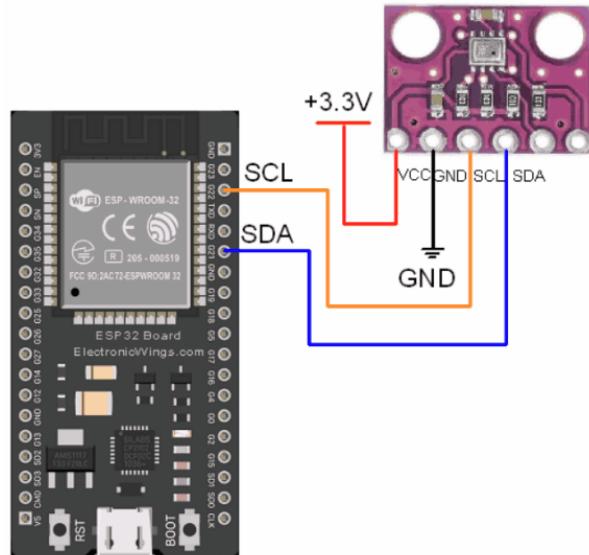


Figure 4: Pressure module [6]

The pressure module consists of a BMP280 component that measures a tire's pressure, temperature, and altitude and sends the measurements to the ESP32 component, which transmits the data to the broker through Wi-Fi. It can be powered by any external source that provides an output of at least 3.3V.

3.1.4 Proximity module

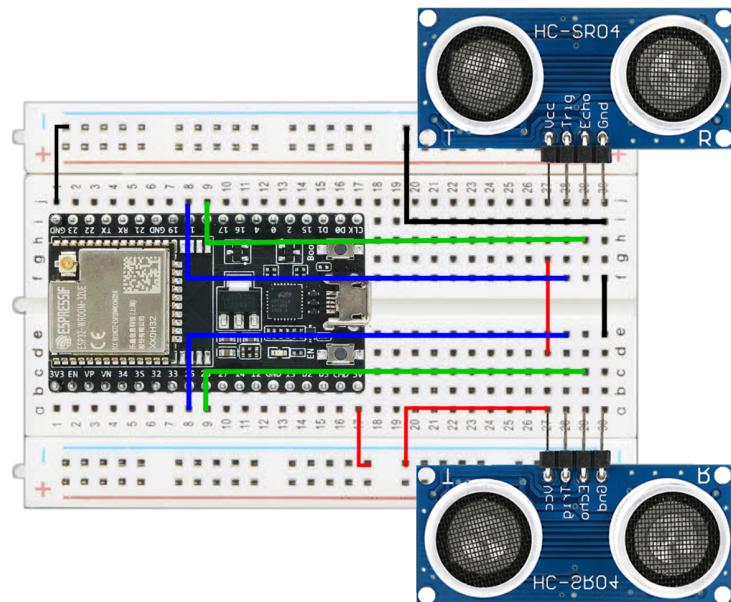


Figure 5: Proximity module

The proximity module consists of 2 HC-SR04 components that should be positioned on the front and the back of a vehicle. They measure the distance between the sensor and the closest object. The measurements are sent to the ESP32 component, which distributes them to the broker through Wi-Fi. At the moment the components are connected to the same ESP32, however, it is planned to use separate microcontrollers in the future. The module requires a power supply that offers at least 5V.

3.1.5 Temperature Module

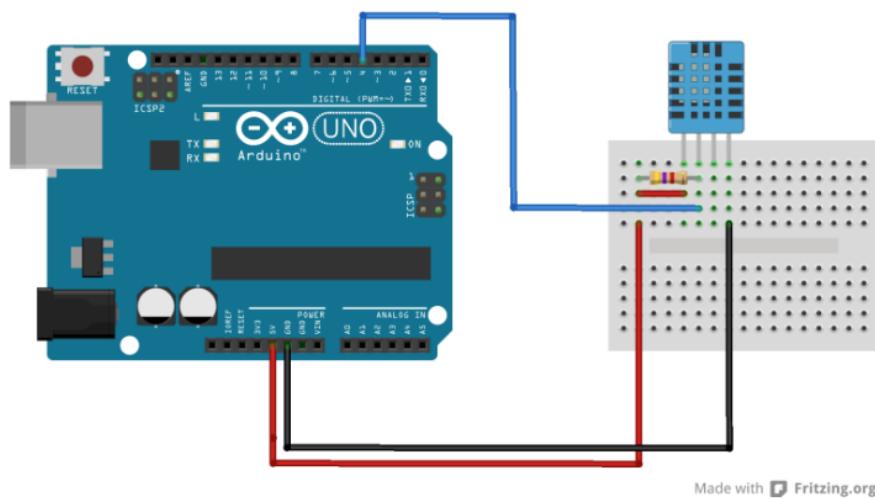


Figure 6: Temperature module

The temperature module consists of a DHT11 component that measures the inside temperature and sends the values to the Arduino Uno component, which distributes the data to the broker through UART. The module requires a power supply that offers at least 5V.

3.1.6 Broker Module

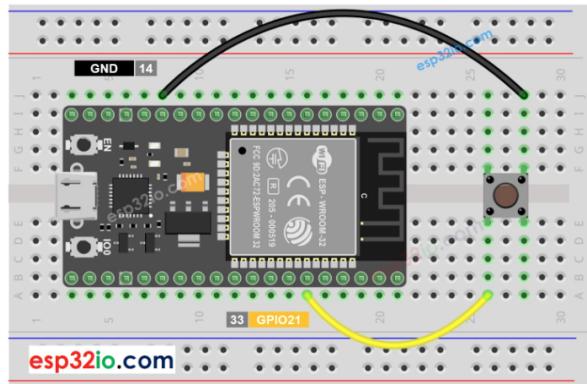


Figure 7: Broker module^[2]

The broker module consists of an ESP32 that mainly collects the data received from the modules enumerated above, processes it, and sends it to the Firebase module through Wi-Fi. Additionally, the module has a button that triggers the *gearmode* which will be thoroughly discussed in the Software section. The module requires a power supply that offers 3.3V.

3.1.7 Firebase module

The Firebase module has a simple ESP32 that sends the data to the Firebase database. Since there is only one ESP in this module a source with a 3.3V output is sufficient to power the module.

²ESP32 - button. <https://esp32io.com/tutorials/esp32-button>. Latest access: 29.09.2024

3.2 Software

3.2.1 MQTT protocol

MQTT is an OASIS standard messaging protocol for the Internet of Things (IoT). It is designed as an extremely lightweight publish/subscribe messaging transport, ideal for connecting remote devices with a small code footprint and minimal network bandwidth. MQTT today is used in various industries, such as automotive, manufacturing, telecommunications, oil and gas, etc. [8]. For the project, the MQTT is used to easily transfer data from multiple sensors to a single broker that processes all the data with some functionality additions. The MQTT communication layer has been implemented using the PicoMQTT library[9] and used in the following manner:

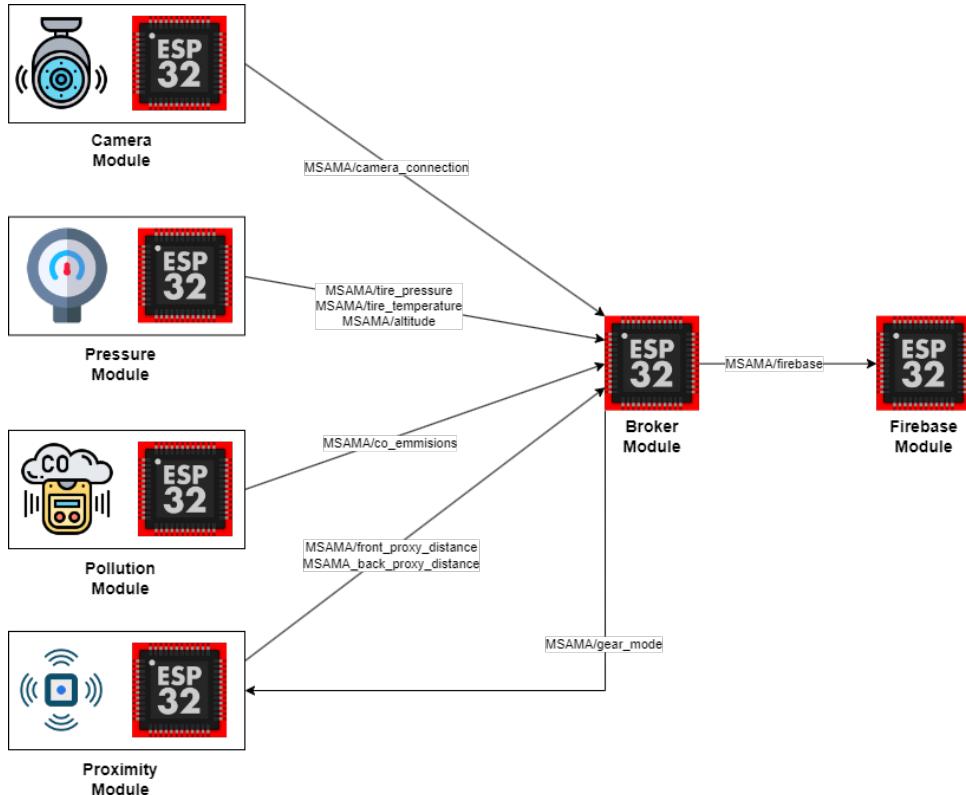


Figure 8: MSAMA MQTT network

3.2.2 Sensor modules

At initialization, every module besides the Temperature module will connect to the provided Wi-Fi followed by connecting to the MQTT broker. If one module fails to connect, it retries until it connects. If the connection with the MQTT broker is lost, the sensors at the beginning of a new loop cycle will retry until the connection with the broker is set again.

Every sensor communicates with its microcontroller through either SPI or digital reading. Every client asynchronously gets the values from the sensors and sends them to the broker through Wi-Fi if the microcontroller is an ESP 32 or UART if it is an Arduino UNO.

Additionally, the proximity sensor waits for the *gear mode* to change to parking mode to send proximity data. The *gear mode* shall be interpreted as 1 when the car is parking and 0 otherwise. The *gear mode* is controlled by the broker.

3.2.3 The Broker

The broker's main functionality is to aggregate data from sensors. It receives data through MQTT protocol topics, aggregates them, and sends them to the Firebase module through a specific MQTT topic for Firebase.

At initialization, the broker connects to a Wi-Fi network, initializes data variables to empty strings, and waits for new connections and data to be received. If no data has been received or the Firebase Module is not connected, the broker won't send any data to Firebase.

Every time a sensor connects, it is shown in the Serial interface that it is connected. If a client disconnects, there will be a time sequence of around 70 seconds enough for sensors to reconnect. At the end of a connection, the broker announces the loss of connection in the Serial interface and sets the corresponding variable to an empty string.

The broker is also in control of the gear mode feature which is triggered at the press of a button. If the *gear mode* is set to 0, everything works as usual. However, if the button is pressed, the *gear mode* is set to 1, the broker sends an activating signal to the Proximity Module through the *gear mode* topic and then, it starts receiving data from the proximity sensors as well. Due to the importance of this information, it must be processed quickly, so the broker will send more data to Firebase in a significantly shorter amount of time.

Switching back to normal mode turns off the proximity sensors and the data-sending speed gets back to normal.

3.2.4 Firebase module and database

Since Firebase is a horizontally scalable database, a must-have for an IOT project, along with great documentation, easy setup, and seamless integration, it perfectly suits the project.

The Firebase module, at startup, connects to the Internet via Wi-Fi and tries to establish contact with the Firebase database. If it doesn't connect, it retries until a connection is established and then, the module connects to the broker through MQTT. This way, the broker has immediate access to the database.

The data provided by the broker is stored in database objects and immediately available to

the user. The database objects apart from the sensor measurements, have timestamps with the time of creation used for identification.

3.2.5 Android application

This app was created with the MIT App Inventor tool along with other plugins that completed the implementation such as FastBase[10], for communication with Firebase, and CustomWebView[11] to show the dashcam output. The MSAMA app has 3 interactive screens:

- Car status screen
- Dashcam screen
- Parking mode screen

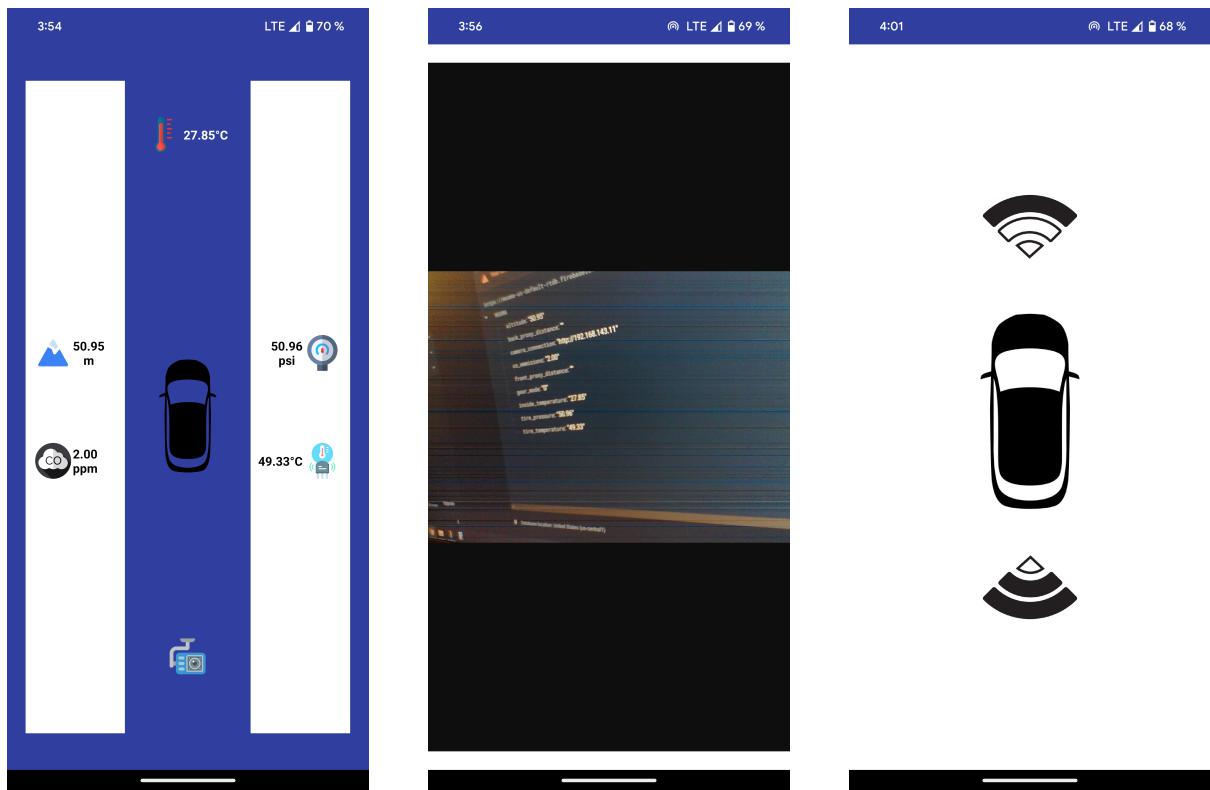


Figure 9: Car status, Dashcam, and Parking screens

Car status screen

This screen is used to show the data saved in the Firebase Database. The app fetches the database once every 2 seconds and updates the data accordingly. If an empty string is received for a specific value, then the precedent value is going to disappear along with the unit measurement from the screen.

Additionally, if there is a camera link that is associated with the camera being on, the camera button will be visible, but if not, it will be invisible and therefore inaccessible.

Dashcam screen

The dashcam screen is used to show live what is the camera capturing. The user can go back to the first screen by pressing the back button from the app UI.

Parking mode screen

The parking mode screen is automatically activated when the *gear mode* is set to 1. The user cannot go back through the phone UI, as a safety feature. It will automatically go back to the first screen when *gear mode* is set to 0.

On this screen, the app shows visual and auditive feedback based on the proxy values fetched in the database.

3.3 Testing

For testing the hardware reliability and software functionalities, the following methods have been used:

- Smoke tests - Testing that hardware connections are working and data is successfully sent to the user in the Android App.
- Stress tests - Testing the broker's computational power to the limit by pairing and operating all modules at once
- Fuzz testing - Testing modules with different inputs to check for any inconsistencies in the measured input

4 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this program aims to provide valuable insights into the process of creating a system for automotive that is capable of monitoring multiple aspects of a car and providing assistance to the drivers. Although this is only a project concept, the research and development opened new and unique opportunities. The software, combined with the hardware and the right idea could offer a great product that might be useful for a big category of users.

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