




Comparing Object Detection, Instance Segmentation, and Semantic Segmentation for Automated Vegetation Detection in Railroad Systems

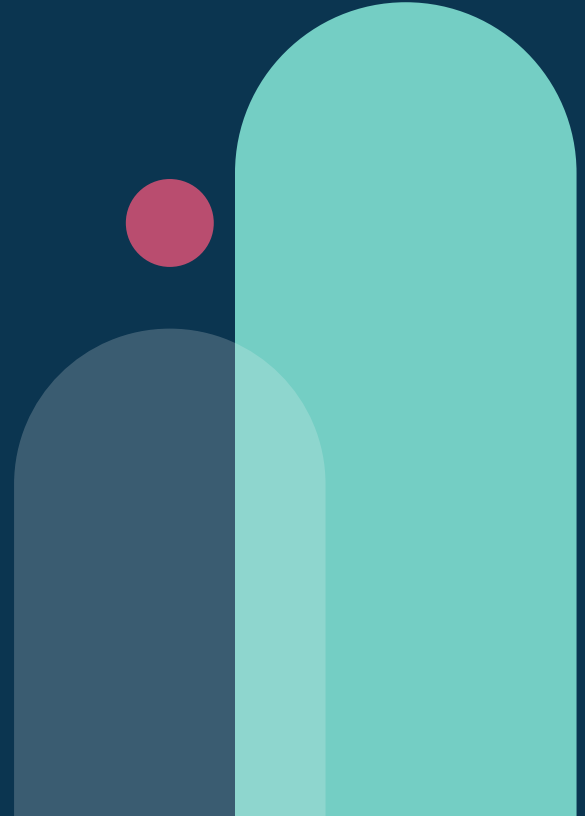
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IEEE UMECon 2025
Marshall University NSF REU Program



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Introduction

Motivation & Current Solution





140,000 miles

Length of U.S. railroad

1.5 billion

Tons of goods transported in 2023

\$233.4 billion

Railroad Industry's revenue in 2023

Consequences of Overgrown Vegetation



1

Fire Hazard

2

Slippery Rails

3

Track Deterioration

Current Solution

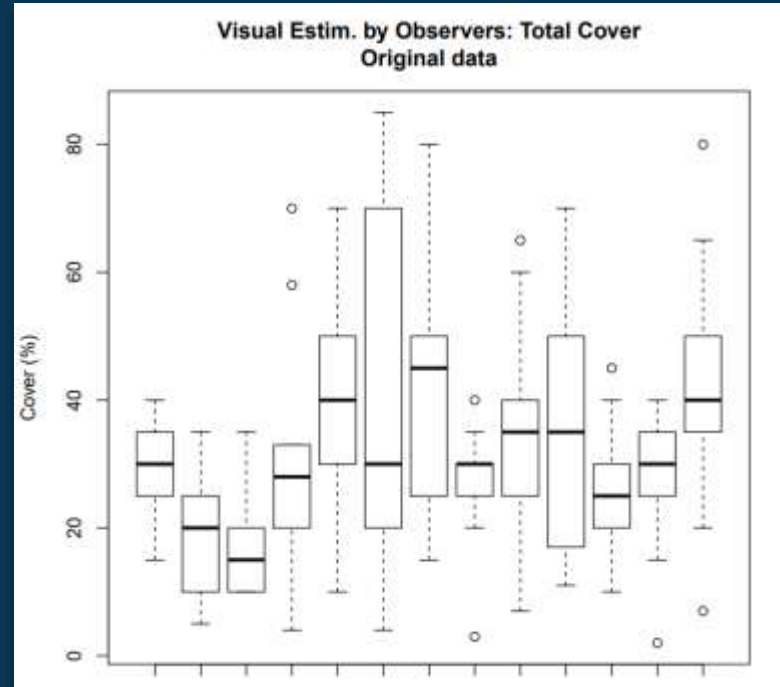
Tradition methods of rail inspection

Visual assessments conducted on site or through video footage

This is a proven flawed method

Nyberg et al. (2016)

Multiple ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) tests showed significant differences in mean rater estimates

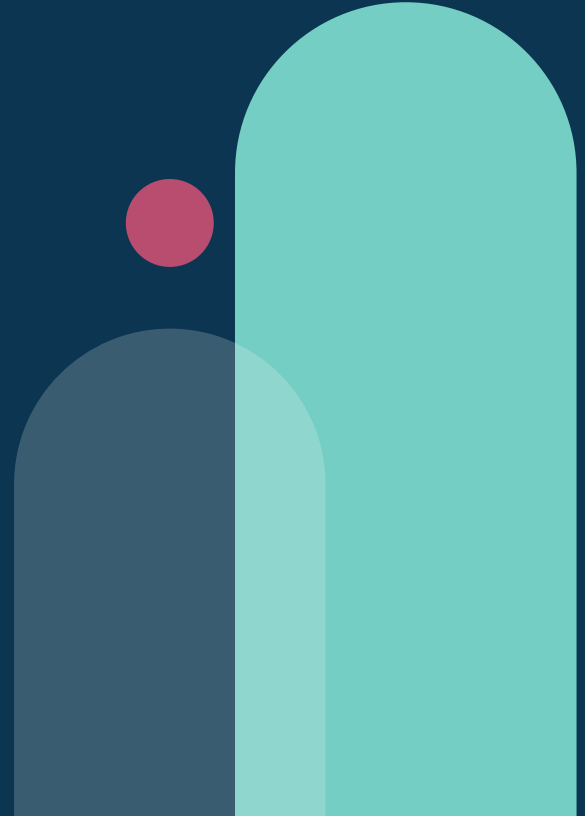


Structural vs Organic Defects



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Research Objective + Methodology



Compare modern deep learning model (YOLOv8, U-Net, DeepLabv3+) functions



- Compare YOLO Object Detection vs Instance Segmentation methods
- Compare U-Net & DeepLabv3+ Semantic Segmentation methods



Comparing domain specific vs general dataset

500 domain-specific vegetation dataset
vs 3,857 general vegetation dataset

YOLOv8: Object Detection vs. Instance Segmentation

Why YOLOv8? -> Fastest single-stage detector, with proven reliability in railroad defect real-time detection

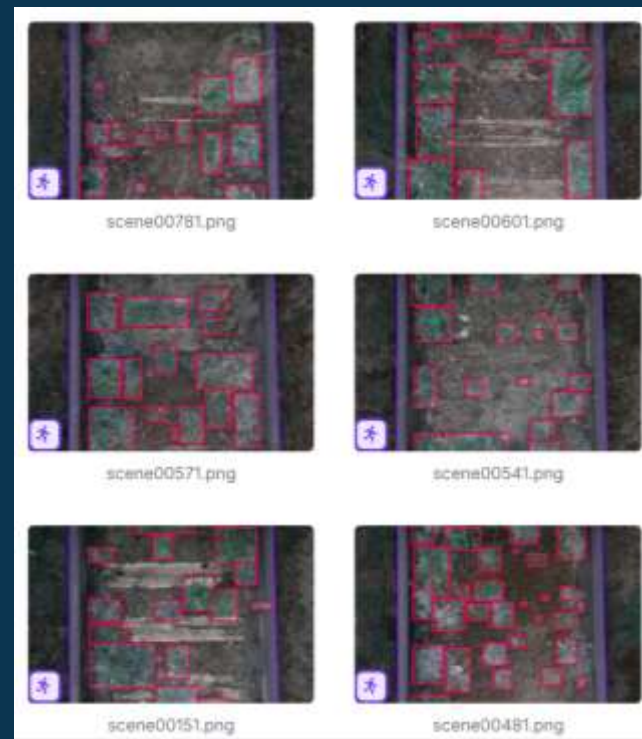
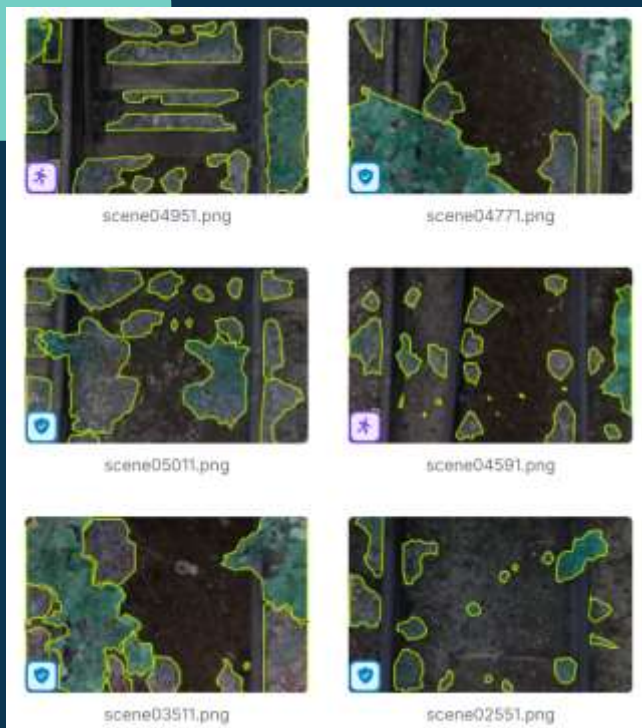
U-Net: Semantic Segmentation

Why U-Net? -> U-shape encoder-decoder structure with skip connections preserves spatial detail during down sampling

DeepLabv3+: Semantic Segmentation

Why DeepLabv3+ -> U-shape encoder-decoder structure with skip connections preserves spatial detail during down sampling

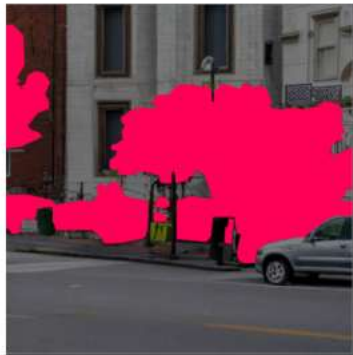
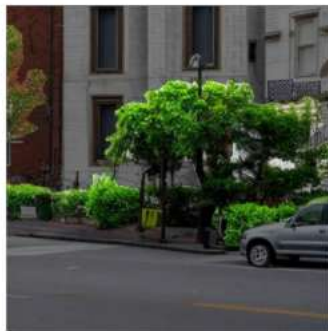
Domain-Specific Dataset



500 railroad images at 5–15 mph using Intel RealSense D435,
labeled in Roboflow (object + mask annotations)



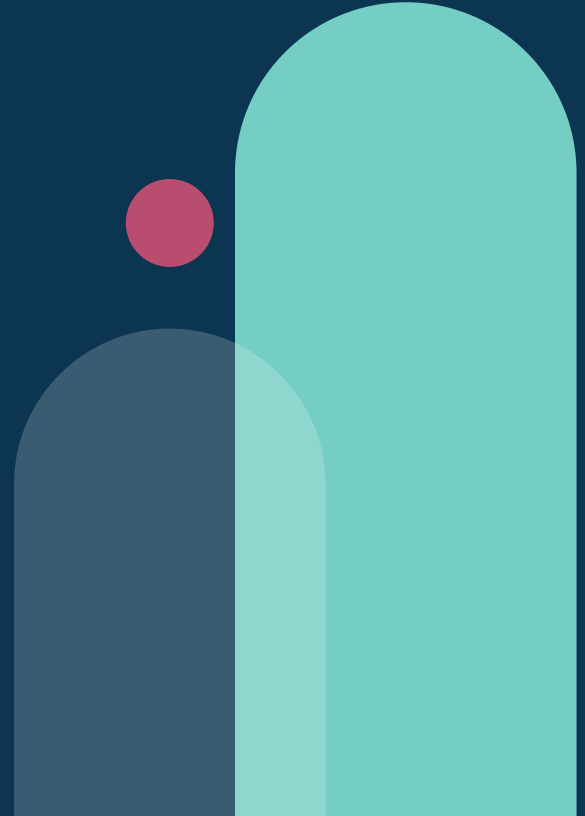
General Vegetation Dataset



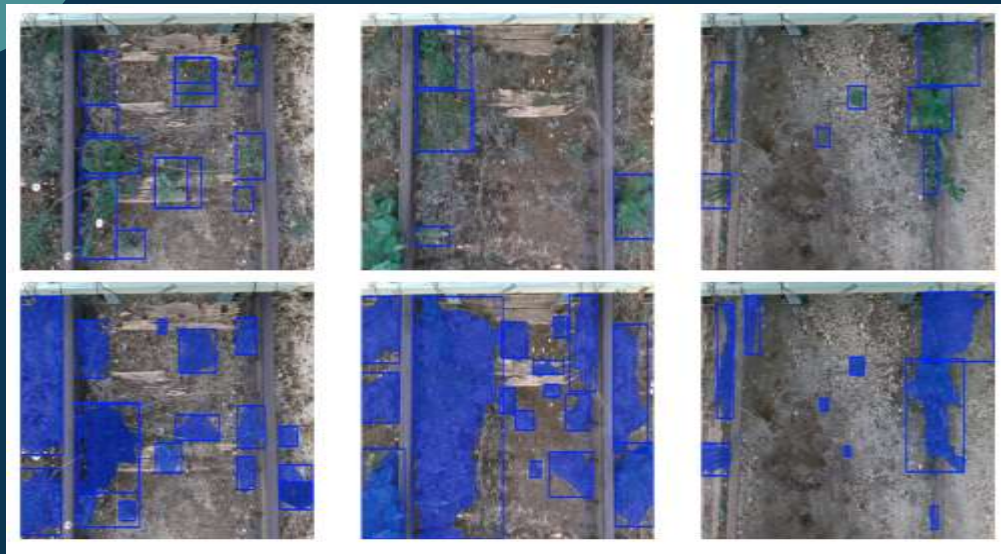
On top of the original dataset, datasets forked from Roboflow was used.
9,865 total images after augmentation (rotation, noise, crop, zoom)

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Results & Discussion

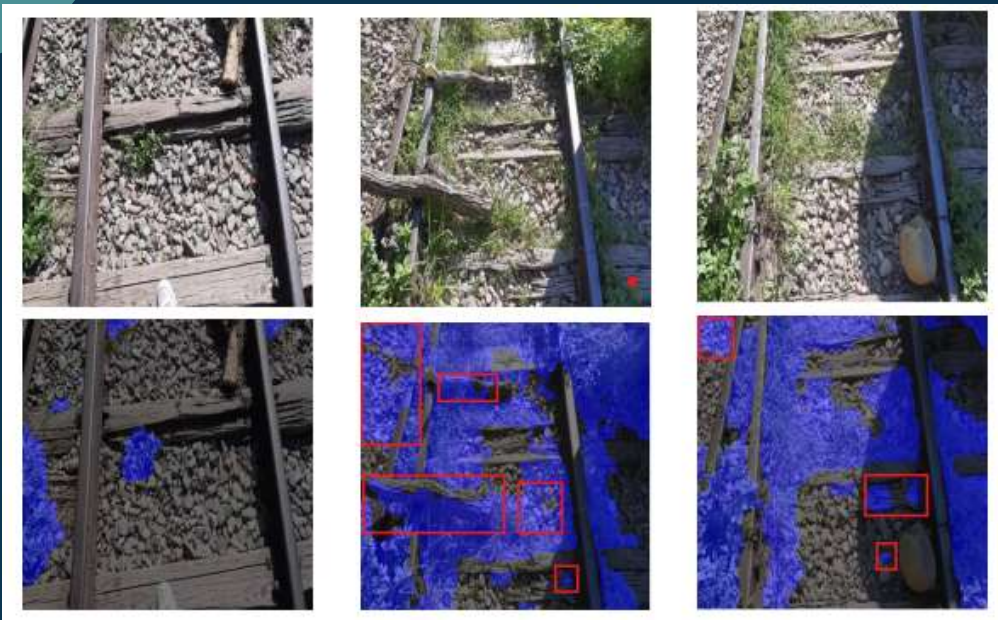


YOLOv8: Results



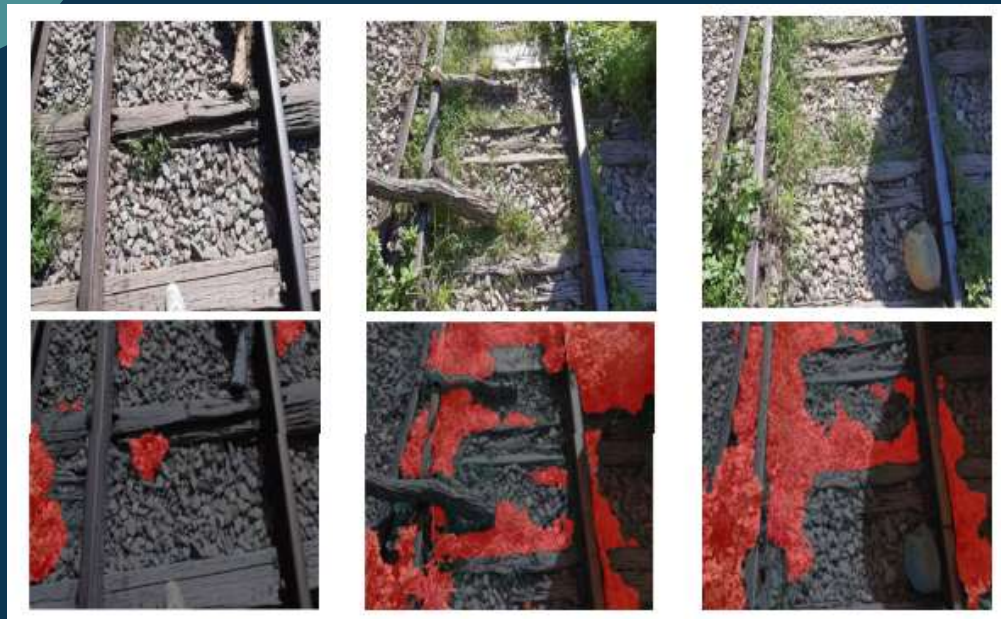
Metric	Object Detection	Segmentation
F1	0.69	0.72
Precision	1.00	1.00
Recall	0.88	0.86
mAP@0.5	0.68	0.73

U-net: Results



Metric	Value
Validation F1	0.8948
Validation Precision	0.9144
Validation Recall	0.8760
Validation IOU	0.8096
Validation Loss	0.1059

DeepLabv3+: Results



Metric	Value
Validation F1	0.9540
Validation Precision	0.9570
Validation Recall	0.9510
Validation IOU	0.9124
Validation Loss	0.053

Error Analysis



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Conclusion



Summary

- DeepLabv3+ achieved the best overall metrics ($F1 = 0.9540$)
- YOLOv8 Segmentation performed better than object detection, but still weaker than semantic segmentation models
- Semantic segmentation is more suitable for irregular vegetation detection



YOLO Training Obstacles

Training Changes which made F-1 score decrease:

- Tuned hypparameters
 - IOU, Epochs, Learning Rate
- Data Augmentation
- Changing YOLO versions, weight sizes, types of optimizers
- Refining & Editing datasets
- Including 3-5% null images in dataset

/content/Vegetation-with-only-collected-data_SAM_Annotated-2-1	414 images with only field data (segmentation); no tuned parameters; normal	no tuned parameters	(mask F-1 score) 0.71	upgrade	train3
/content/Vegetation-with-only-collected-data_SAM_Annotated-2-1	414 images with only field data (segmentation); no tuned parameters; normal	optimizer=SGD	(mask F-1 score) 0.71	-	train 4
/content/Vegetation-with-only-collected-data_SAM_Annotated-2-1	414 images with only field data (segmentation); no tuned parameters; normal	optimizer=AdamW	(mask F-1 score) 0.72	upgrade	train5
/content/Vegetation-with-only-collected-data_SAM_Annotated-2-1	414 images with only field data (segmentation); no tuned parameters; normal	yolov11n-seg	(mask F-1 score) 0.72	-	train6
/content/Vegetation-with-only-collected-data_SAM_Annotated-2-1	414 images with only field data (segmentation); no tuned parameters; medium	yolov8 n to m (weight size)	(mask F-1 score) 0.71	downgrade	train7

Future Work Considerations



- Integrate binary railway masks for selecting ROI
- Train YOLOv8 using general vegetation dataset & UNet/DeepLabv3+ using domain specific dataset
- Evaluating model variants



Thank You!

This research was supported by the NSF REU Program for Data Analytics at Marshall University.

Special thanks to my research mentor Dr. Husnu Narman, and program chairs Dr. Haroon Malik and Dr. Yousef Fazea.

