Air quality measurement and logging in taxi ranks and inside of taxis

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Supervisor: Prof. MJ (Thinus) Booysen

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Abstract

English

The English abstract.

Afrikaans

Die Afrikaanse uittreksel.

Contents

List of Figures

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Nomenclature

Acronyms and abbreviations

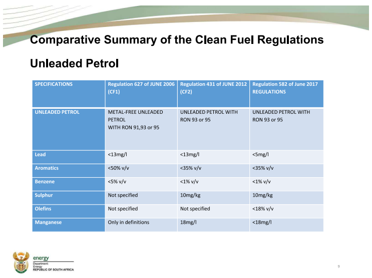
PM	Particulate Matter
VOC	Volatile Organic Compounds
UART	Universal Asynchronous Receiver / Transmitter
i2c	Inter-Integrated Circuit
UFP	Ultrafine Particle
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
CNG	Compressed Natural Gas
PPM	Parts Per Million
PPB	Parts Per Billion
NDIR	Nondispersive Infrared
PID	Photoionization Detector
FID	Flame Ionization Detector
MOS	Oxide Semiconductor Sensor
UV	Ultraviolet
AQI	Air Quality Index
IO	Inputs and Outputs
HAT	Hardware Attached on Top

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background

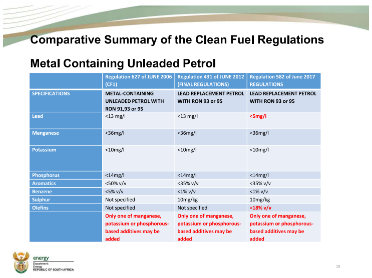
The majority of South Africa's public sector uses taxis as a means of transport. Millions of commuters use taxis frequently and depend on them for all of their mobility needs [6]. The South African government has recognized the impact of taxi emissions on air quality and has taken steps to address the issue. In 2006, the government gazetted regulations that required taxi operators to convert their vehicles to run on cleaner fuels, such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), compressed natural gas (CNG), or diesel with lower sulfur content [4].


Comparative Summary of the Clean Fuel Regulations

Unleaded Petrol

SPECIFICATIONS	Regulation 627 of JUNE 2006 (CF1)	Regulation 431 of JUNE 2012 (CF2)	Regulation 582 of June 2017 REGULATIONS
UNLEADED PETROL	METAL-FREE UNLEADED PETROL WITH RON 91,93 or 95	UNLEADED PETROL WITH RON 93 or 95	UNLEADED PETROL WITH RON 93 or 95
Lead	<13mg/l	<13mg/l	<5mg/l
Aromatics	<50% v/v	<35% v/v	<35% v/v
Benzene	<5% v/v	<1% v/v	<1% v/v
Sulphur	Not specified	10mg/kg	10mg/kg
Olefins	Not specified	Not specified	<18% v/v
Manganese	Only in definitions	18mg/l	<18mg/l

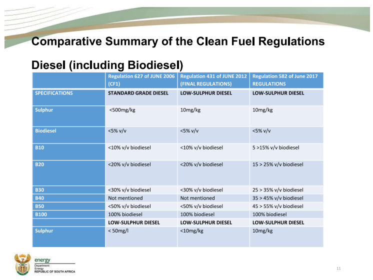
Figure 1.1: Unleaded [4]


Comparative Summary of the Clean Fuel Regulations

Metal Containing Unleaded Petrol

	Regulation 627 of JUNE 2006 (CF1)	Regulation 431 of JUNE 2012 (FINAL REGULATIONS)	Regulation 582 of June 2017 REGULATIONS
SPECIFICATIONS	METAL-CONTAINING UNLEADED PETROL WITH RON 91,93 or 95	LEAD REPLACEMENT PETROL WITH RON 93 or 95	LEAD REPLACEMENT PETROL WITH RON 93 or 95
Lead	<13 mg/l	<13 mg/l	<5mg/l
Manganese	<36mg/l	<36mg/l	<36mg/l
Potassium	<10mg/l	<10mg/l	<10mg/l
Phosphorus	<14mg/l	<14mg/l	<14mg/l
Aromatics	<50% v/v	<35% v/v	<35% v/v
Benzene	<5% v/v	<1% v/v	<1% v/v
Sulphur	Not specified	10mg/kg	10mg/kg
Olefins	Not specified	Not specified	<18% v/v
	Only one of manganese, potassium or phosphorous-based additives may be added	Only one of manganese, potassium or phosphorous-based additives may be added	Only one of manganese, potassium or phosphorous-based additives may be added

Figure 1.2: Metal+ Unleaded [4]


Comparative Summary of the Clean Fuel Regulations

Diesel (including Biodiesel)

	Regulation 627 of JUNE 2006 (CF1)	Regulation 431 of JUNE 2012 (FINAL REGULATIONS)	Regulation 582 of June 2017 REGULATIONS
SPECIFICATIONS	STANDARD GRADE DIESEL	LOW-SULPHUR DIESEL	LOW-SULPHUR DIESEL
Sulphur	<500mg/kg	10mg/kg	10mg/kg
Biodiesel	<5% v/v	<5% v/v	<5% v/v
B10	<10% v/v biodiesel	<10% v/v biodiesel	5 >15% v/v biodiesel
B20	<20% v/v biodiesel	<20% v/v biodiesel	15 > 25% v/v biodiesel
B30	<30% v/v biodiesel	<30% v/v biodiesel	25 > 35% v/v biodiesel
B40	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	35 > 45% v/v biodiesel
B50	<50% v/v biodiesel	<50% v/v biodiesel	45 > 55% v/v biodiesel
B100	100% biodiesel	100% biodiesel	100% biodiesel
	LOW-SULPHUR DIESEL	LOW-SULPHUR DIESEL	LOW-SULPHUR DIESEL
Sulphur	< 50mg/l	<10mg/kg	10mg/kg

Figure 1.3: Diesel [4]

However, the implementation of these regulations has been slow and often ineffective as seen in figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3, resulting in continued poor air quality in many areas. As a result, the effects of air quality in taxis on human health and the impact of taxi exhaust emissions are issues unique to South Africa.

The main sources of air pollution in South Africa are industrial activities, power generation, vehicle emissions, biomass burning, and domestic fuel use [7]. Among these sources, vehicle emissions are particularly relevant for taxi commuters, who are exposed to high levels of pollutants such as particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) [8]. These pollutants can have adverse effects on respiratory, cardiovascular, neurological, and immune systems, as well as increase the risk of cancer and premature death [9].

1.2. Problem Statement

Despite the popularity and importance of taxis in South Africa, there is a lack of research on the air quality inside these vehicles and at taxi ranks. Air quality is a crucial factor for human health and well-being, especially for commuters who spend long hours in taxis exposed to various pollutants. Moreover, taxi emissions contribute to the overall air pollution in crowded spaces(in this case taxi ranks), which affects the environment and the quality of life of the passers by. The closest studies being that of inside single cab taxis [2], road based pollution [10] and general pollution [3]. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive study on the air quality in taxis and taxi ranks and its impacts on human health and the environment.

1.3. Objectives

The objective of the study will be as follows:

- To measure and compare the levels of CO2, VOC, particulate matter and NOx both inside taxis and in taxi ranks to that of a known baseline.
- Identify the primary sources of air pollution in taxi ranks and within taxis and evaluate the impact of environmental factors, such as traffic congestion and weather conditions(optional- time limited).
- To investigate the potential health risks associated with exposure to air pollution in taxi ranks and within taxis, particularly for passengers, drivers and potential third parties.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of current measures in place to reduce air pollution from taxis, such as emission standards and regulations.
- Propose potential strategies to mitigate the impact of from taxis on public health and the environment such as implementing new technologies.

1.4. Scope

The scope of the project encompasses only the following:

- Building of base station and portable sensor module
- Development of communication network for satellite module and base station as well as data storage and backup

- Deployment of sensor and network
- Analysis of data gathered

1.5. Report Overview

NEED TO DO THIS

Chapter 2

Background Study

2.1. Related Work and Existing Solutions

2.1.1. Related Work

2.1.1.1. Air quality at bus stops [1]

This article was a case study of air quality monitoring at a bus stop in an underpass on the campus of Lancaster University. The bus stop was suspected to have high levels of air pollution due to the large number of vehicles passing through the tunnel. They used an Aeroqual AQY Micro Air Quality Station to measure the concentrations of NO_2, PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ at the bus stop.

2.1.1.2. Exposure to traffic air pollutants in taxicabs [2]

This study reviewed the level of pollutants present inside taxi cabs(American style taxis). The article reports that the exposure studies show that traffic related air pollutants concentrations inside taxicabs are higher than their urban background. This was a research based study.

2.1.1.3. An investigation into the environmental impact of the taxi industry in Butterworth [3]

This study analysed the environmental impact of the taxi industry in South Africa, by surveying a fleet of taxis in Butterworth, they do simple analogue measures such as dust gauges and soil and water analysis.

2.1.2. Existing Solutions

2.1.2.1. Aeroqual AQY

This sensor was used in a similar study done to determine the air quality at bus stops [1]. The sensor solution used consists of sensors for the following along with provided ranges [11]:

- Particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$ & PM_{10}) 0-1000 µg
- Ozone
- Nitrogen Dioxide 0-500 ppb
- Temperature and Relative Humidity
- Dew point

This sensor lacks Carbon Dioxide measuring and lacks detailed specification on ranges' error.

2.1.2.2. Airthings View Plus

This sensor suite was designed for home use, it features:

- Particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$ 0-200µg
- Carbon dioxide 400–5000 ppm
- VOC
- Radon

This sensor was not intended to be extremely accurate and seems to be more for sensing danger than accurate measuring. It does include a handy chart for what should be considered normal levels for the different sensors as seen in Figure C.1

2.2. Air Quality Monitoring Methods

2.2.1. Sensors

2.2.1.1. Carbon Dioxide (CO_2)

There are two main types of CO2 sensors: infrared gas sensors (NDIR) and chemical gas sensors. [12] The most common and more accurate sensor type is the NDIR sensor. Chemical sensors typically use less power and can be smaller but are less accurate and are more prone to aging effects.

2.2.1.2. VOC

VOC sensors measure volatile organic compounds in the air, such as what is found in petroleum fuels. There are three main types of sensors used to detect VOC [13] [14]:

- photoionization detector (PID)
- flame ionization detector (FID)
- metal oxide semiconductor sensor (MOS)

PID sensors uses ultraviolet light to ionize the VOC molecules and measure the electric current. They are typically used for low concentrations. FID sensors, are similar to PID sensors, but use a flame instead of UV light. A MOS sensor uses a heated metal oxide film that reacts with VOC and measures the change in resistance. This sensor is typically used from low to medium concentration. [13] [14]

2.2.1.3. PM

Particulate matter sensors measure the concentration and size of airborne particles. They use different methods to detect particles, such as:

- light scattering
- light obscuration
- direct imaging

Light scattering is used for smaller sized particles(¡1 µm), while obscuration is used for larger particles [15]. Direct imaging depends on the resolution and size of the sensor, but is usually prohibitively expensive.

2.2.1.4. NO_x

NO_x sensors measure Nitrogen Oxides typically found in exhaust gases of diesel engines [16]. There are different types of NO_x sensors [17]:

- Electrochemical
- Zirconia

Electrochemical uses an electrolyte to create a current proportional to the concentration. Zirconia sensors use ceramic material and changes resistance based on concentration. Zirconia sensors typically run at lower temperatures and are more customizable. [18]

2.2.2. Air Quality Reporting

Air quality is usually reported as an index taken from various sources. We can use this standard to measure our perceived air quality of each contributing gas or particulate mater. [19]

IAQ Index			
PM2.5	VOC	CO2	
µg/m³	µg/m³	ppm	Hazard Level
<12	100	700	Good
35	200	800	Moderate
56	300	1100	Poor
150	400	1500	Unhealthy
250	500	2000	Very Unhealthy
300	600	3000	Hazardous
500	700	5000	Extreme

Figure 2.1: Air Quality index [5]

Typically the gases used to estimate the air quality form part of an index and are weighted. The AQI was developed by the US to communicate levels of air pollution to the public [20]. It is based on the levels of different pollutants in the air, such as particulate matter (PM), ozone (O3), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), sulfur dioxide (SO2) and carbon monoxide (CO). The AQI is calculated for each gas separately so it is logical to measure each and take the highest(worst) as the index value. [21]

2.3. Effects of Pollutants

2.3.1. CO_2

Exposure to CO_2 in concentrations as low as 1000 ppm can lead to adverse effects [22], this is enhanced by prolonged exposure, as would likely be experienced by the driver or passenger.
Adverse effects include [23]:

- inflammation
- reduced cognitive performance
- kidney and bone problems

2.3.2. Particulate Matter

Short-term exposure to particulate matter in the 2.5 and 10 µg range seems to to aggravate pre-existing conditions, such as respiratory and cardiovascular conditions [24], long term exposure is irrelevant in this context, as it is not measurable in the span of this study.

2.3.3. Volatile Organic Compounds

Short term exposure to VOCs can lead to eye and respiratory tract irritation, headaches, nausea and cancer [25]. The Environmental XPRT article on acceptable VOC levels in the air (2019) [26] suggests that acceptable ranges for VOC would be between 300 to 500 µg .

2.3.4. NO_x

Symptoms from exposure to NO_2 include inflammation of the airways, increase susceptibility to respiratory infections and to allergens as well as aggravating pre-existing lung or heart conditions. The safe amount that should not me exceeded regularly is 200µg. [27]

Chapter 3

System Design

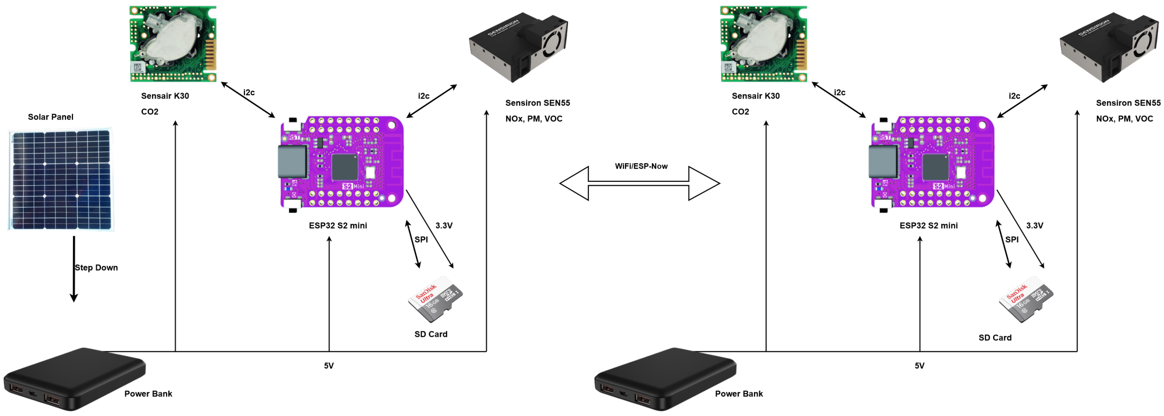


Figure 3.1: Hardware and Interface Overview
(Base station on the left and Satellite station on the right)

3.1. Hardware Overview

3.1.1. Microcontroller

An essential part of this project is the microcontroller, since it contains and controls many of the aspects needed for the project to work. Choosing a microcontroller comes down to it's features. For this project the features considered were:

- Speed
- Communication capabilities
- Expandability / IO
- Storage
- Power draw
- Size

- Cost

A few common microcontroller boards available at the time of writing are compared in the table below along with their respective specifications:

		ESP32-S2 lolin mini	ESP8266 NodeMCU	Raspberry Pi Zero W
Speed		Tensilica Xtensa LX7 32 bit Single-Core @ 240Mhz	Tensilica LX106 32 bit @ 80 MHz (up to 160 MHz)	BCM2835 1GHz
Communication	Wifi	802.11b/g/n	802.11b/g/n max 65mbps	802.11b/g/n
Expandability / IO	I2C	2	1	2
	ADC	20 x 12bit	1 x 10 bit	8 x 17 bit
	CAN/TWAI	X		Needs HAT
	GPIO	43	17	40
	UART	X	X	X
Storage		Micro SD and USB OTG	Needs module	Micro SD and USB OTG
Power draw		190mA peak when sending WiFi	250mA peak	260mA at idle
Size		34.3*25.4mm	49*26mm	60*30mm

Table 3.1: Microcontroller option and Specifications

3.1.2. ESPNow/WiFi

3.1.3. Sensors

3.1.4. CO_2

3.1.5. PM, NO_x, VOC

3.2. Metrics

Chapter 4

Detailed System Design

4.1. ESP32

4.2. Sensors

4.2.1. CO_2

4.2.2. PM, NO_x, VOC

Chapter 5

Results

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusion

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Appendix A

Project Planning Schedule

This is an appendix.

Appendix B

Outcomes Compliance

This is another appendix.

Appendix C

Appendix

Threshold levels

Radon (pCi/L)
- ≥4 pCi/L
- ≥2.7 and <4 pCi/L
- <2.7 pCi/L

Radon (Bq/m^3)
- ≥150 Bq/m^3
- ≥100 and <150 Bq/m^3
- <100 Bq/m^3

Particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$)
- ≥25 $\mu g/m^3$
- ≥10 and <25 $\mu g/m^3$
- <10 $\mu g/m^3$

Carbon dioxide (CO_2)
- ≥1000 ppm
- ≥800 and <1000 ppm
- <800 ppm

Humidity
- ≥70 %
- ≥60 and <70 %
- ≥30 and <60 %
- ≥25 and <30 %
- <25 %

Temperature (°F)
- >77 °F
- ≥64 and ≤77 °F
- <64 °F

Temperature (°C)
- >25 °C
- ≥18 and ≤25 °C
- <18 °C

Airborne chemicals (VOC)
- ≥2000 ppb
- ≥250 and <2000 ppb
- <250 ppb

Figure C.1: Airthings table