SMART PARK ASSIST

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College : Alva's Institute Of Engineering And Technology, Moodbidri
Branch : Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering
Guide(s) : Dr. Harish Bhat N
Student(s): Mr. Jeevan V
Mr. Nagabhushana H K
Ms. Lakshmi P B

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Introduction:

With the increasing number of vehicles in urban areas, parking management has emerged as a significant challenge faced by city planners and municipalities. Traditional parking systems are largely dependent on manual operations, which result in several inefficiencies such as delayed slot allocation, extended waiting times, and frequent human errors. These issues collectively lead to traffic congestion, increased fuel consumption, and environmental degradation due to rising carbon emissions. Research indicates that drivers in metropolitan cities spend an average of 15–20 minutes searching for parking spaces, which causes frustration, time loss, and adds to city traffic.

Moreover, manual ticketing, payment collection, and slot monitoring lack the precision and scalability required to handle today's vehicular volume. The need for digitization and automation in this domain is more pressing than ever, especially with the growing emphasis on smart city infrastructure and sustainable urban development. In this context, the Smart Park Assist proposes a robust, ESP32-enabled solution designed to overcome the limitations of conventional parking systems.

This system integrates RFID, IR sensors, and ESP32 microcontrollers to manage parking slots efficiently, enabling real-time slot tracking, automated gate control, and seamless digital payments. By providing pre-booking and on-the-spot access through a dedicated mobile application, the system minimizes human intervention and enhances user experience. It also supports dynamic slot allocation, instant billing based on usage, and digital transactions, making it more efficient than traditional setups.

Through this project, the aim is not only to simplify the parking process for users but also to contribute to broader goals such as traffic decongestion, reduced environmental footprint, and improved urban mobility. The project aligns with modern smart city frameworks and serves as a scalable model for future deployments across commercial, residential, and institutional spaces.

Objectives:

1. To automate parking operations using IoT and RFID technologies.
2. To provide real-time slot availability and tracking through sensors.
3. To enable advance booking via a mobile application.
4. To reduce traffic congestion and waiting times.
5. To improve overall parking space utilization and user satisfaction.

Methodology:

The Smart Park Assist System is implemented using a combination of hardware and software components to automate the parking process. The primary hardware includes ESP32 microcontrollers, IR sensors, RFID readers, RFID tags, LED indicators, and a display unit. These components are integrated to detect vehicle presence, manage entry and exit, and update the system with real-time slot availability.

1. Slot Monitoring using IR Sensors: Each parking slot is equipped with an IR sensor that detects whether the slot is occupied or vacant. The status is sent to the ESP32, which updates the system's database in real-time.
2. RFID-based Entry and Slot Allocation: Upon entry, the user taps their RFID tag at the gate. The system assigns a slot (if not already pre-booked) and updates the database. Each RFID tag is linked to a specific slot, ensuring controlled access.
3. Mobile Application Integration: A Flutter-based mobile app enables users to pre-book slots, view availability, receive parking notifications, and make digital payments. When near the gate, an "Open Gate" option appears, allowing entry through the app.
4. ESP32 Communication & Backend Logic: ESP32 boards handle sensor data, communicate with the backend server using Wi-Fi, and control gate mechanisms. The backend is developed using Golang, with data stored in PostgreSQL and Redis used for caching.

5. Automated Billing & Display: Parking duration is tracked from entry to exit by logging RFID activity and IR sensor readings. The final bill is calculated and displayed on an LED screen at the exit gate. Users must scan and pay to complete the process.
6. Real-Time Slot Display & Admin Panel: A large screen at the entrance shows available slots for users who haven't pre-booked. An admin dashboard allows monitoring of system health, occupancy, and payments.

This integrated approach ensures seamless interaction between hardware and software, creating a smart, scalable, and user-friendly parking management solution.

Result and Conclusion:

The Smart Park Assist System was successfully implemented and tested as a functional prototype, showcasing efficient automation of parking management using IoT components. Real-time slot tracking through IR sensors, RFID-based secure access, and ESP32-driven control mechanisms proved effective in reducing manual intervention. The mobile application allowed users to pre-book slots, access real-time updates, and make seamless digital payments.

Testing showed that the system significantly reduced the time taken to find and occupy parking slots compared to manual systems. RFID tags ensured that vehicles were correctly mapped to their designated slots, eliminating confusion and unauthorized parking. The LED display at the exit provided clear billing information, and the app simplified the overall parking experience.

The system also contributed to reducing fuel wastage, idle vehicle time, and traffic congestion within the parking area. Overall, the project successfully meets its objectives by offering a scalable, user-friendly, and sustainable solution. It demonstrates the potential of IoT in addressing real-world urban challenges and contributes positively to smart city infrastructure development.

Project Outcome & Industry Relevance:

The Smart Park Assist System provides an effective automated solution to parking management problems by utilizing embedded systems, real-time sensors, and RFID technology. It simplifies the entire process from slot allocation to automated billing and exit control, reducing manual workload and improving accuracy.

This system is especially useful in real-world settings such as office complexes, shopping malls, hospitals, and educational campuses where organized parking is essential. It enhances space utilization, reduces entry-exit delays, and improves overall user convenience. The mobile application ensures an easy-to-use interface for booking, slot monitoring, and payment.

From an academic and industrial perspective, this project contributes to the fields of embedded systems, automation, and system integration. It demonstrates the application of sensor-based control, RFID access, and software-hardware synchronization, making it a strong foundation for further development or deployment in smart parking environments.

Working Model vs. Simulation/Study:

The project is based on the development and demonstration of a fully functional physical working model, rather than a theoretical study or simulation. The prototype consists of integrated hardware and software components, including ESP32 microcontrollers, IR sensors, RFID readers and tags, LED indicators, and a custom-built mobile application.

The hardware was assembled and programmed to replicate a real-world parking environment where slots are monitored in real-time using IR sensors, and vehicle entry and exit are managed through RFID authentication. The ESP32 microcontrollers facilitate data collection from sensors and control the system's logic, while communication with the mobile app enables user interactions like booking, slot availability checking, and digital payments.

A display unit at the exit shows the final parking charge based on the recorded entry and exit times. The system responds dynamically to real-time conditions, confirming its viability as a physical prototype that goes beyond simulation. This hands-on implementation allowed thorough testing of various real-time scenarios and system responses, helping validate the design, logic, and user experience of the smart parking system.

The working model effectively demonstrates the feasibility of deploying this system in real-world applications, making it suitable for further scaling and integration into actual parking infrastructure.

Project Outcomes and Learnings:

The Smart Park Assist System successfully achieved its primary goal of automating parking operations using embedded hardware and sensor-based control. The project resulted in a working model that demonstrated efficient slot allocation, real-time tracking, and automated billing without the need for manual supervision. The mobile application further enhanced user interaction by enabling pre-booking, live updates, and digital payments.

Through the course of designing and implementing the system, the team gained in-depth knowledge of hardware-software integration, real-time data handling, and sensor-based automation. Practical skills were developed in programming microcontrollers (ESP32), configuring RFID systems, and integrating IR sensors for real-world applications. The team also explored concepts related to mobile app development using Flutter and learned how to link frontend interfaces with backend logic effectively.

From a broader perspective, the project improved problem-solving, teamwork, system testing, and debugging skills. It also provided valuable experience in designing user-friendly interfaces and managing the complete development lifecycle—from concept to deployment. Overall, the project offered both technical and practical learning that can be applied in future academic or industrial automation projects.

Future Scope:

The future scope of this project includes:

1. Integration of ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) to replace RFID for seamless vehicle identification.
2. Expansion to multi-level and underground parking with indoor navigation support.
3. Addition of EV charging station booking within the system for electric vehicles.
4. Use of AI algorithms to predict parking demand and optimize space utilization.
5. Development of a cloud-based admin dashboard for real-time monitoring and analytics.
6. Inclusion of voice command features and push notifications in the mobile app.
7. Deployment in malls, tech parks, hospitals, and other large-scale infrastructures.