Pavement Crack Detection and Classification using Deep Learning Techniques

Shaik Yacoob[1*], B.Sindhu[2], M.A. Neha Nousheen[3], R. Varshitha[4], B.Ayyappa[5], K.Vamsi Babu[6]

[1,2,3,4,5,6] Department of Computer Science and Engineering,
Godavari Institute of Engineering and Technology (A),
Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh, India

[1*]shaikyacoob@gmail.com, [2]hod.aiml@giet.ac.in,
[3]nehanousheen95@gmail.com,[4]ravadavarshitha@gmail.com,
[5]bhimaarapuayyappa143@gmail.com,[6]vamsi.victor8999@gmail.com

Abstract. Ensuring road safety is a global priority, with the prompt identification of pavement cracks playing a crucial role in preventing accidents and minimizing infrastructure damage. This study introduces an innovative approach to enhance road safety by employing deep learning techniques for the automated detection of pavement cracks. Untreated pavement cracks can result in costly repairs and pose hazards to road users. Utilizing Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), this method analyzing pavement images, automatically detecting crack and classifying them based on the severity levels. The accurate identification and classification of pavement cracks facilitate more effective and targeted maintenance, ultimately contributing to safer roads. This research provides a promising solution to the pressing issue of the road pavement deterioration. Images undergo preprocessing to enhance quality and eliminate noise, followed by the application of a CNN model trained on a substantial dataset of annotated road images. The CNN model excels in identifying the crack of various sizes and shapes, ensuring a high level of detection accuracy.

Keywords: Road safety, Pavement crack detection, Deep learning technique, Convolutional Neural Network, Infrastructure maintenance, Intelligent transportation systems.

1. Introduction

Pavement is a durable and hard substance that is constructed as a stable and safe area for various purposes, such as walking, driving, or other activities. Pavements are commonly used for transportation and infrastructure purposes as discussed in [3] There are several types of pavements, each designed to meet specific needs, and Pavements can be designed to withstand the weight and load of the expected traffic, protect against weathering and wear, and provide adequate traction to prevent accidents. Pavement engineering involves designing, constructing, and maintaining these surfaces to ensure their longevity and functionality. The choice of pavement material and construction methods depends on factors such as traffic volume, climate, budget, and the intended use of the area.

1.1 Pavement Crack Detection

Pavement crack detection is the process that involves identifying and locating cracks or fissures in the road surfaces or pavements. These cracks can occur in

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various forms, such as longitudinal cracks (i.e., running parallel to the direction of the road), transverse cracks (running perpendicular to the road), alligator cracks (a network of interconnected cracks resembling alligator scales), and other types of pavement distress.[1,2,3]

Identifying such cracks in their early stages of development helps prevent further deterioration of the road surface and allows for timely maintenance.[2] Cracks in the pavement can pose safety hazards for drivers and pedestrians, as they can lead to accidents and injuries. Detecting and repairing these cracks is essential for road safety. [5]

These are physical openings that develop on the surface of road pavements, sidewalks, driveways, and other paved surfaces. These cracks can vary in size, shape, and severity and can result from a combination of factors, including environmental conditions, traffic loads, and the quality of pavement materials. In the pages that follow, delve into the technical aspects ofour approach, discuss real-world implementation scenarios, and explore the transformative potential of deep learning in the realm of road maintenance and safety, thereby improving the lives of countless individuals who rely on these critical transportation networks every day. The use of detecting such pavement cracks is essential and used Deep learning techniques in order to accomplish this goal as it is capable of learning complex patterns and relationships within data. One of the applications is the computer vision, it means taking the input more likely to see and understand the data through images or videos. Such images contribute to the process of the model [4].

Fig. 1. Pavement Crack detection

2. Literature Survey

In 2018, Lei Zhang et al. [6] delved into the significance of road crack detection in road maintenance and safety management. The early detection of cracks is imperative for various reasons. Leveraging deep learning, specifically deep Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), has revolutionized computer vision tasks such as image recognition, object detection, and segmentation. This paper addresses the critical challenge of road crack detection through the utilization of deep CNNs, known for their effectiveness in learning intricate features from images. The model is designed to automatically learn features and patterns distinguishing road cracks from non-cracked surfaces, contributing to the training of proposed systems [11][10].

In 2017, Xianglong Wang et al. [8] focused on the application of deep learning methods for pavement crack analysis, particularly in the context of grid-base detection. Pavement crack analysis is vital for assessing road conditions, planning maintenance, and ensuring road safety. Utilizing deep learning for grid-based pavement crack analysis offers a systematic and automated approach to evaluating road conditions, identifying cracks, and prioritizing maintenance efforts.

In 2018, N.A.M. Yusof et al. [7] addressing the crucial matter of crack detection and classification in pavement images using deep learning techniques. The paper provides details about the training process of the deep-learning model, including the utilization of the created dataset for training. The authors evaluate the model's performance using relevant metrics to assess its accuracy in crack detection and classification.

In the same year, E. Salari et al. [5] made a significant contribution by conducting an extensive comparative study of deep learning methods for pavement crack detection. The paper evaluates and compares various deep learning architectures, including CNN and their variants, aiming to determine most effective approach for this specific task.

3. Existing Model

The existing system places a strong emphasis on automated algorithms for the detection and classification of pavement cracks. It predominantly focuses on pixel-based analysis of road pavement images, aiming to generate a comprehensive result through image analysis. Following this, the system proceeds to classify the identified types of cracks within the image, a step that traditionally requires a considerable amount of time [1].

Disadvantages

It is difficult to detect and identify the cracks. This usually includes identifying cracks as many factors as the pixel-based analysis can lead to Difficulty in handling the least/low images and it finally takes more time to detect the cracks in the pavement, thereby classifying them based on the severity[13].

Architecture of the Proposed system

To ensure the best classification output our proposed system is responsible for acquiring pavement images using cameras mounted on inspection vehicles, drones, or stationary cameras along the roads. It may include image-capturing hardware and data retrieval components. [3] Deep learning modules are at the core of its application to utilize a pre-trained deep CNN as the feature extraction backbone, which can be fine-tuned for crack detection and classification. This system is made more accurate with the development of a reporting system that provides, detailed information about the detected cracks, their types, and severity levels in a user-friendly format with separate classification heads like the Crack Detection, Crack Type Classification, and Crack Severity Classification thereby training the model in detecting them.[14]. The input images undergo a comprehensive traversal across all layers, facilitating the model's intricate processing to generate outputs for crack detection and subsequent classification. The efficacy of any model hinges on rigorous training and meticulous testing to optimize its utility. The envisioned system meticulously trains the model with an ample dataset of diverse crack images, ensuring robust performance. The accuracy of the resultant output is intricately tied to the quality of the input images, which can encompass various crack types and orientations. The primary objective of the proposed system is to adeptly identify cracks irrespective of their appearance in the input images[15].

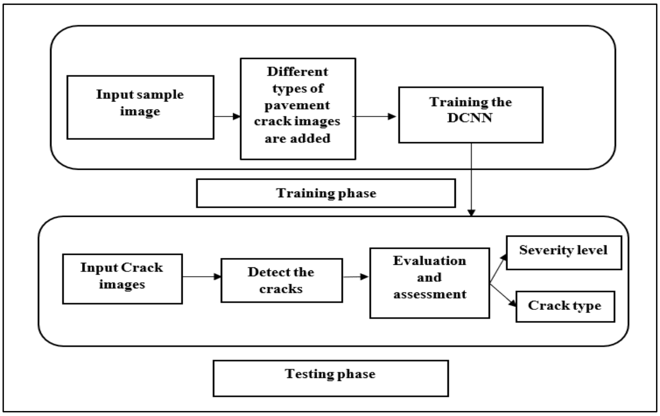

Fig. 2. Architecture of Proposed Model

4. Methodology

The methodology employed in research on "Pavement Crack Detection and Classification using Deep Learning" encompasses crucial stages. Initially, a diverse dataset containing pavement images with and without cracks is gathered and subjected to preprocessing. Subsequently, this dataset is divided into training, validation, and testing sets[9]. A suitable deep learning architecture, typically a CNN, is chosen and trained using the designated training data. The model undergoes fine-tuning and validation through the provided validation dataset, with its accuracy assessed against testing data. Post-processing techniques are implemented as necessary for result refinement [10]. The finalized model is then applied for practical purposes, with a specific emphasis on monitoring and maintenance to ensure sustained accuracy. Ethical considerations and data security are integral components of this study, and meticulous documentation is upheld throughout the process to ensure transparency and accountability.

4.1 Algorithm

Convolutional neural networks (CNNs)

CNNs serve as the fundamental algorithm for feature extraction and image analysis, comprising multiple convolutional, pooling , and fully connected layers. These components play a crucial role in crack detection [11-14]. CNN possess the ability to autonomously learn and extract features from pavement images, rendering them well-suited for crack detection and classification.

The key layers inherent in CNN encompass 1) the Input layer, 2) the Convolutional layer, 3) the Activation Layers, 4) the Pooling layers, 6) the Fully Connected Layers, and 7) the Output Layers. The incorporation of this technology in the model is warranted owing to its adeptness in intricate feature extraction. The complexities of pavement crack patterns, marked by their intricacy and variability, pose challenges for traditional computer vision techniques in detection and classification. Deep learning models, particularly CNN, demonstrate proficiency in autonomously acquiring hierarchical features from raw image data. Their capacity to effectively capture intricate patterns and variations is pivotal for successful crack detection [6]. Utilizing mature deep learning frameworks like TensorFlow and PyTorch, along with pre-trained models such as ResNet and VGG, serves as a strategic starting point for crack detection tasks, reducing the effort needed for constructing and training models from scratch.

.i) Activation Functions

Activation functions, typically ReLU (Rectified Linear Unit), are utilized on feature maps following convolution operations to infuse non-linearity into the model [7]. ReLU activation proficiently resets all negative values in the feature maps to zero and leaving positive values unaffected. This approach facilitates the network in learning intricate relationships. The activation function plays a crucial role in dampening neurons whose inputs lack significance in the context of the neural network application. This emphasizes the necessity of incorporating activation functions in neural networks, as they play a substantial role in enhancing performance in the detection of pavement images and the cracks embedded within them.

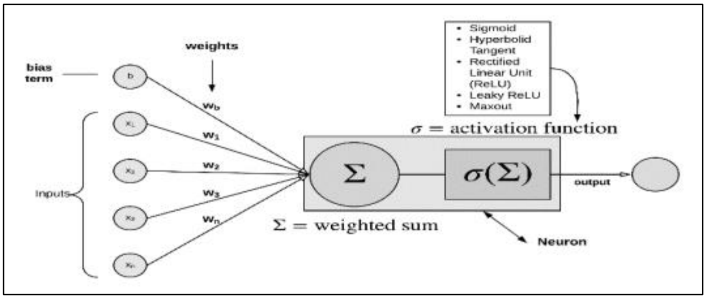

Fig. 3. Activation functions

ii) Pooling Layers

Pooling layers, frequently employing Max-Pooling or Average-Pooling, serve a critical function in decreasing the spatial dimensions of the feature maps. This down sampling process is pivotal for reducing the computational complexity of the network while preserving crucial information. The two prevalent types of pooling layers encompass:

Max Pooling:

Max pooling stands out as the predominant form of pooling layer. This type of pooling operates independently on each feature map. In each pooling operation, the feature map undergoes division into non-overlapping rectangular regions (typically 2x2 or 3x3), retaining solely the maximum value from each region. Max pooling is instrumental in preserving the most prominent features within a feature map while concurrently reducing its size. This reduction allows for matrix down-sampling and feature reduction, facilitating a more efficient representation.

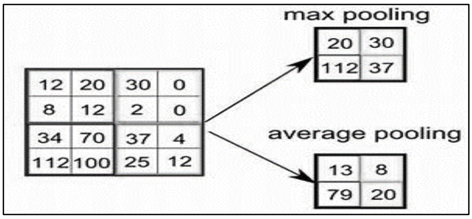

Fig. 4. Pooling layers

Average Pooling:

Similar to max pooling, average pooling divides the feature map into non-overlapping regions. In contrast to selecting the maximum possible value, it computes the average (mean) value of the elements within each region. Average pooling tends to smooth out feature maps, contributing to a reduction in sensitivity to small variations in the input.

iii) Transfer Learning

Leveraging transfer learning in CNN proves to be a potent strategy, utilizing a pre-trained CNN model to tackle tasks with restricted data. This approach is particularly advantageous when harnessing knowledge acquired from an extensive and diverse dataset in the source task. The transfer learning process commences by starting with a pre-trained CNN model (e.g., VGG, Res Net, Inception) and fine-tuning it for the dedicated pavement crack detection task. The deep neural network is characterized by numerous weights connecting layers of neurons, which are adjusted during training and applied to inputs for feed-forward output classification.

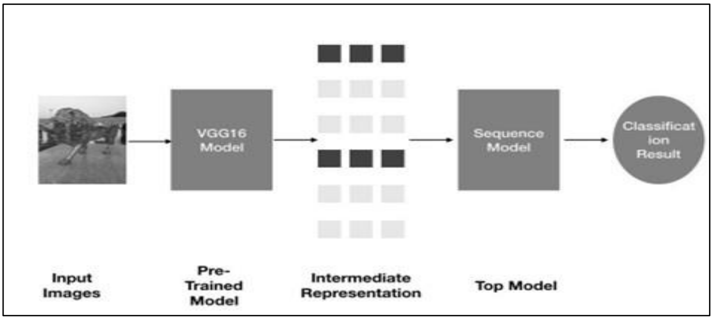

Fig. 5. Transfer learning in Convolution Neural Networks

Feature transfer

In the realm of deep learning, the network's architecture comprises multiple layers, each serving a vital role. This layered structure operates on the principle of learning diverse features across various layers. Figure 3 depicts a sample deep learning network with numerous layers categorized into three distinct types. In this application, the network processes a 3-D image (width, height, and color depth), forming the input layer responsible for mapping input to the subsequent layer.

The feature-extraction layer ensues, containing multiple internal layers with functions like convolutions (mapping spatially located neurons from the previous layer through weights to the output) and pooling (reducing the spatial size of convolution outputs). This layer generates "features" representing elements of the image, hierarchically translated into higher-level features.

The final classification layer amalgamates features from the feature-extraction layer, providing a classification. For example, it discerns whether the input image signifies a car or a motorcycle, translating distinct features into an output [7].
Within the context of "Pavement Crack Detection and Classification Using Deep Learning," data augmentation methods like random flip, color enhancement, and enlargement are commonly applied during the preprocessing phase. These techniques play a crucial role in elevating the quality of the training dataset and enhancing the model's capacity to generalize across diverse road conditions and variations in image data.

The significance of these techniques in the deep learning process for pavement crack detection and classification lies in the feature layer, which proves vital in yielding accurate results based on the crack images used to train the model. Figure 4 explicitly outlines the layers falling under feature extraction and illustrates how the input undergoes processing through different layers.

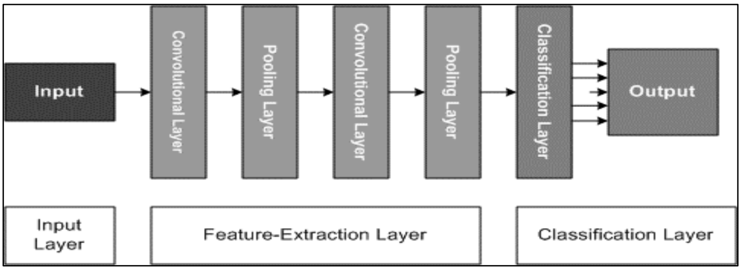

Fig. 6. Basic layers illustrated in a straightforward deep learning network.

Data Augmentation

Implement data augmentation techniques such as random flips, rotations, and color enhancements to increase the diversity of your training dataset. Augmentation helps the model generalize better to different road conditions and lighting

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i. Random Flips:

Introduce a degree of randomness by applying flips (horizontal or vertical) to each image during training with a specified probability. This technique aids the model in acquiring the ability to detect cracks from various orientations. A probability of

50% is assigned for horizontal flips, followed by an additional 50% for vertical flips. Given that pavement images can be captured from diverse angles, the random flipping process contributes to the model's proficiency in detecting cracks and features, irrespective of their orientation. This augmentation enhances the model's rotational invariance, effectively expanding the diversity of the training dataset by introducing mirrored versions of the original images.

ii. Random Rotations:

Here applying random rotations to the images to simulate variations in the camera angle or road orientation. This can be achieved by randomly choosing rotation angles within a specified range (e.g., -15 degrees to 15 degrees) for each image.

iii. Color Enhancements:

Color enhancements as part of data augmentation help the deep learning model become more robust and adaptable to the challenges of real-world pavement crack detection. [8] They simulate variations in lighting, contrast, and color conditions that the model may encounter during road inspections. By exposing the model to these diverse scenarios during training, it can learn to focus on crack patterns and features while disregarding variations caused by lighting and color changes, ultimately improving its accuracy and generalization. By training the model on images with varying brightness levels, it becomes more robust to changes in natural lighting when deployed for real-world crack detection. You can adjust the contrast by modifying the pixel values to increase or decrease the difference between the brightest and the darkest parts of the image. This can be done by stretching or compressing the pixel value range.

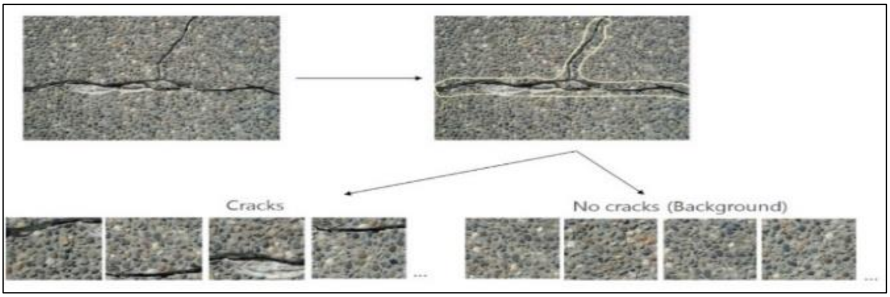

Fig. 7. Crack Detection

Classification Head

Adding a classification head to the deep learning model for Pavement Crack Detection and Classification is a critical step to categorize the detected cracks into different classes or severity levels. This allows you to provide detailed information about each identified crack, which can be valuable for road maintenance and safety assessments.

The different types of cracks include as mentioned in [12].

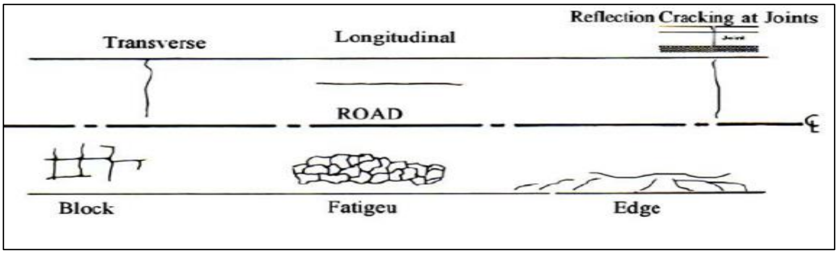

Fig. 8. Classification of the Pavement cracks

This classification allows you to provide detailed information about the nature and severity of pavement cracks, which can be valuable for road maintenance and safety assessments. To classify the cracks can Annotate your training dataset by assigning class labels to each detected crack. Each crack instance should be associated with the appropriate class label based on its characteristics. This model is highly involved in classifying which type of crack and its severity level.

5. Block Diagram

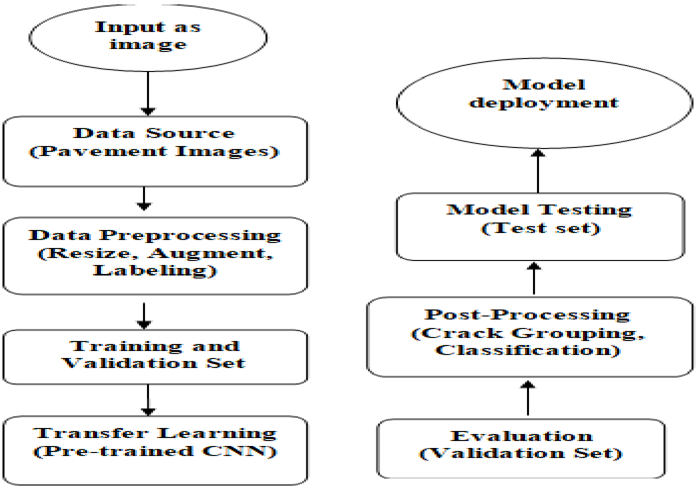

Fig. 9. Flow of the working model

It begins with the data source, which consists of pavement images captured using various camera sources these images serve as the foundation for the model. The next step involves data preprocessing, where the images undergo various transformations like resizing, augmentation, and labeling. Resizing ensures uniformity in image dimensions; augmentation enhances the dataset by applying random flips and color adjustments while labeling categorizes the images based on the types of pavement cracks present. The processed data is then divided into training and validation sets, crucial for training and evaluating the deep learning model's performance. This block diagram provides an overview of the initial stages of the proposed system, emphasizing the importance of quality data and effective preprocessing in the development of a robust pavement crack detection system.

6. Results & Discussion

Utilizing state-of-the-art technology, high-resolution imagery of road surfaces was meticulously gathered employing drones equipped with advanced high-definition cameras. This collection of images, characterized by their exceptional clarity, served as the foundational dataset for both the training and testing phases of the model. The architectural framework chosen for this intricate task was a sophisticated CNN, specifically tailored for optimal feature extraction and classification. Comprising convolutional layers, strategically placed max-pooling layers, and finely tuned fully connected layers, the model was meticulously crafted to culminate in a soft max output layer, facilitating seamless multi-class classification. The model's impressive precision in detecting and classifying pavement cracks attests to its efficacy, underscoring its potential to significantly enhance road maintenance and safety standards.

6.1 Comparative Study:

The table below summarizes the comparative study of the model's performance on different types of pavement cracks:

Table 1: Comparative study of the model's performance on different types of pavement cracks

Crack Type	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)
Hairline Cracks	**90**	**88**	**89**
Moderate Cracks	**85**	**88**	**86**
Severe Structural	**89**	**90**	**89**

This proposed system can be used by Extending the model to operate in real-time can be immensely valuable for maintenance crews. This would require integrating the model with cameras and sensors on inspection vehicles, allowing for continuous monitoring of road conditions. Can also be used to implement mobile applications by developing user-friendly mobile applications for reporting and verifying pavement issues by the general public. Such applications could contribute to crowd-sourced data for better road maintenance.

The exploration on "Pavement Crack Detection and Classification using Deep Learning" marks a significant stride in advancing road infrastructure maintenance and safety. The discourse of this study encompasses critical insights into key findings, implications, limitations, and the broader application context. The precise identification and categorization of pavement cracks play a pivotal role in ensuring road safety.

It is imperative to recognize the constraints of the system. Factors such as varying lighting conditions and input image quality can impact the model's performance. Addressing these challenges effectively may necessitate further research. The proposed system unveils various avenues for future expansion. Real-time implementation, semantic segmentation, and the development of mobile applications for crowd-sourced data represent promising directions. The potential integration with geo tagging technology introduces an additional layer of practicality for localizing issues.

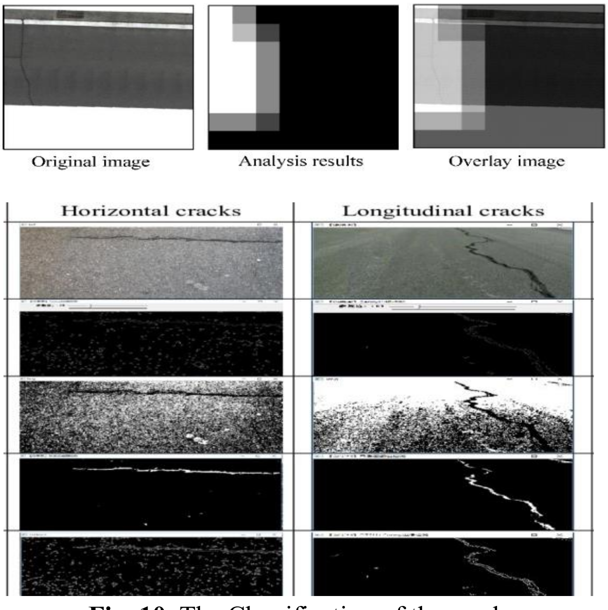

Fig. 10. The Classification of the cracks

7. Conclusion & Future Scope

The application of deep learning techniques in pavement crack detection and classification marks a significant advancement in automating essential infrastructure maintenance. Deep learning models demonstrate the capacity to automate these processes, diminishing dependence on manual inspections and substantially improving efficiency. Their ability to generalize crack patterns across diverse conditions, including varying lighting, weather, and pavement types, makes them well-suited for real-world applications. Beyond automation, these models contribute to cost savings by identifying issues early, facilitating timely repairs, and extending the lifespan of road infrastructure. Seamless integration with existing maintenance systems, ongoing research and development, adherence to regulatory standards, and incorporating a human-in-the-loop for quality control are crucial aspects for successful implementation and continued improvement in this transformative field.

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