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Cooperative Route and Speed Optimization for Semi-Autonomous Truck Platooning

Tawanda Moyo and Rumbidzai Chigumira
Chinhoyi University of Technology, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe.

Abstract:

Semi-autonomous truck platooning is a transformative technology that leverages vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communication, advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), and automation to enhance the efficiency, safety, and environmental performance of road freight transportation. Joint operation planning is crucial for coordinating the movements of multiple trucks in a platoon to optimize fuel consumption, reduce traffic congestion, and ensure safety. This paper explores the critical aspects of joint operation planning for semi-autonomous truck platooning, focusing on vehicle coordination, route optimization, fuel efficiency, traffic management, and safety protocols. The study also examines the technological, regulatory, and infrastructural challenges associated with implementing semi-autonomous truck platooning at scale.

Keywords: Vehicle coordination, route optimization, fuel efficiency, traffic management, safety protocols, vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communication, advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), platoon control algorithms.

1. Introduction:

The rapid evolution of autonomous driving technologies and intelligent transportation systems has positioned semi-autonomous truck platooning as a groundbreaking innovation for the future of freight transportation[1]. Truck platooning involves a group of trucks that travel closely together, maintaining a synchronized formation using advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) and vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communication. In this formation, the lead truck is manually driven by a human operator, while the following trucks autonomously adjust their speed, braking, and steering based on the lead truck's movements and surrounding traffic conditions[2]. By reducing the aerodynamic drag and enabling smoother traffic flow, truck platooning presents several benefits, such as enhanced fuel efficiency, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, increased road safety, and optimized use of road infrastructure. Research shows that optimizing road network design and enhancing system capacity can further improve the efficiency and stability of truck platooning in complex traffic environments[3].

Despite its promise, the successful implementation of semi-autonomous truck platooning is contingent upon effective joint operation planning, which ensures that all vehicles in the platoon work in concert to achieve shared goals[4]. Joint operation planning encompasses a range of activities, including vehicle coordination, route optimization, traffic management, and safety protocols, that must be meticulously designed to address the dynamic nature of real-world driving environments. Effective coordination among platooned trucks requires precise control algorithms to maintain safe inter-vehicle distances, synchronized speeds, and cooperative maneuvers for lane changes or merging[5]. Additionally, optimizing routes in real-time to minimize travel time, energy consumption, and operational costs is vital for realizing the economic potential of truck platooning. The Fig.1 represents V2X Communication architecture.

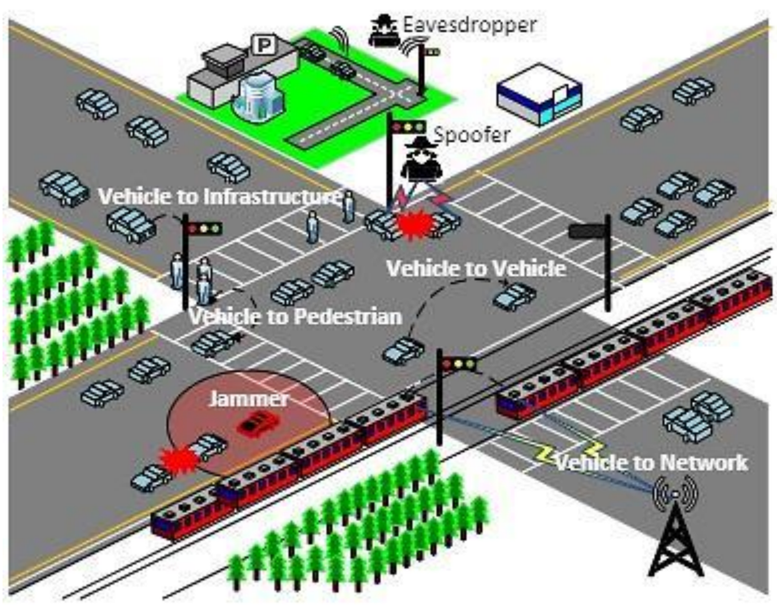

Fig.1: V2X Communication Architecture

However, realizing these benefits is fraught with challenges that span technological, regulatory, and infrastructural domains. Technologically, reliable V2V communication, robust sensor fusion, and real-time data processing are critical to ensuring the safe and efficient operation of truck platoons. From a regulatory perspective, uniform standards for platooning operations, such as minimum following distances and safety protocols, are needed to facilitate widespread adoption[6]. Moreover, existing road infrastructure must be upgraded to support the specific needs of platooning, such as designated lanes and adaptive traffic management systems. These challenges underline the need for a comprehensive approach to joint operation planning that integrates advanced technologies, adaptive regulatory frameworks, and infrastructure readiness[7].

Given these complexities, there is a significant research opportunity to develop more sophisticated joint operation planning frameworks that leverage emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML). These technologies can enhance decision-making processes in dynamic and uncertain environments, leading to more adaptive, safe, and efficient truck platooning operations. For example, an integrated model combining attention-based DCGAN and autoencoders can enhance the accuracy and reliability of OCR classification data in complex traffic environments, particularly in noisy conditions[8]. This paper aims to explore the key aspects of joint operation planning for semi-autonomous truck platooning, highlighting the critical challenges, potential solutions, and future research directions necessary to realize its full potential in the transportation sector.

2. Overview of Semi-Autonomous Truck Platooning:

Semi-autonomous truck platooning involves multiple trucks traveling in close formation, coordinated through a combination of human drivers, automation, and communication technologies. The concept relies heavily on Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) communication, which allows trucks within a platoon to share real-time data such as speed, acceleration, braking status, and road conditions. This constant exchange of information enables the trucks to move as a cohesive unit, with the lead truck setting the pace and direction while the following trucks autonomously adjust their movements. V2V communication ensures minimal gaps between trucks, reducing aerodynamic drag and, consequently, fuel consumption[9]. This coordinated movement not only improves fuel efficiency but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and enhances overall road safety by preventing accidents due to sudden braking or erratic lane changes. Efficient sensor deployment and path optimization algorithms can enhance real-time monitoring and management of complex traffic conditions, further supporting the safety and effectiveness of truck platooning[10].

Central to the functioning of semi-autonomous truck platooning is the Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) that equips each truck with technologies like adaptive cruise control (ACC), lane-keeping assist, and collision avoidance systems. These systems enable trucks to automatically respond to changes in the driving environment, such as slowing down when approaching traffic or avoiding obstacles on the road. The integration of ADAS technologies ensures that each truck within the platoon can maintain the desired speed, distance, and position relative to the other vehicles, thereby maintaining platoon stability and safety[11]. Additionally, the use of platoon control algorithms plays a critical role in managing both longitudinal and lateral dynamics, allowing trucks to safely execute maneuvers like lane changes, merging, and splitting from the platoon. The Fig.2 depicts the scenario of semi-autonomous truck platooning.

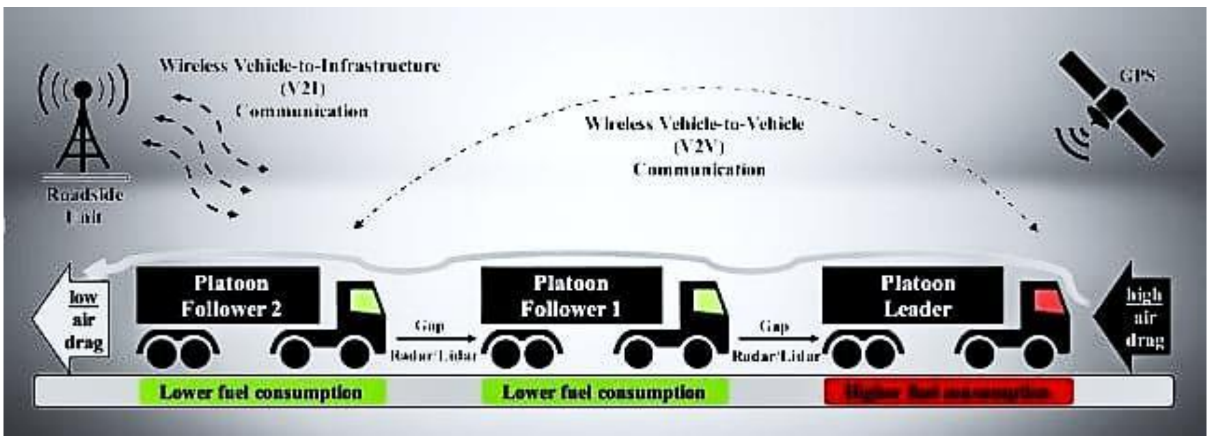

Fig.2: Semi-Autonomous Truck Platooning

The Human-Machine Interface (HMI) is another crucial component of semi-autonomous truck platooning, bridging the gap between human drivers and automated systems. The HMI provides real-time feedback to the lead driver and, when necessary, allows manual interventions to ensure safety and efficiency. The system's design ensures that drivers are fully aware of the platoon's status, road conditions, and any potential hazards, allowing them to make informed decisions. Moreover, HMI systems are essential for fostering trust and collaboration between human operators and automated systems, which is vital for the success of semi-autonomous driving technologies. Despite its promise, implementing semi-autonomous truck platooning involves several operational challenges. Coordinating the movements of multiple trucks over extended distances requires advanced algorithms capable of dynamic decision-making[12]. Furthermore, factors such as varying road conditions, traffic density, and driver behavior must be continuously monitored and addressed. To effectively manage these challenges, a semi-autonomous truck platooning system must be highly adaptable, leveraging machine learning algorithms to learn from past experiences and improve decision-making processes over time. By doing so, it can enhance route optimization, fuel efficiency, and safety, while minimizing the impact on other road users.

Overall, semi-autonomous truck platooning represents a significant leap forward in the evolution of freight transportation, promising substantial improvements in efficiency, safety, and sustainability. However, realizing these benefits requires an integrated approach that combines advanced communication technologies, automation, and human oversight. As the technology continues to mature, ongoing research and development will be crucial in addressing the current limitations and unlocking its full potential in real-world applications..

3. Joint Operation Planning in Semi-Autonomous Truck Platooning:

Joint operation planning is a critical element for the successful implementation of semi-autonomous truck platooning, as it involves the strategic coordination of multiple trucks to optimize overall performance, safety, and efficiency. The core of joint operation planning lies in achieving seamless vehicle coordination, which ensures that all trucks in a platoon maintain synchronized movements in response to real-time driving conditions. This requires advanced control algorithms to manage longitudinal and lateral dynamics, such as maintaining safe inter-vehicle distances, adjusting speeds, and executing coordinated lane changes or merging maneuvers[13]. Neural network solutions effectively predict complex environments and optimize vehicle dynamics and road load management, improving load distribution and support forces to enhance the stability and safety of semi-autonomous truck platooning[14]. Effective vehicle coordination reduces the risk of collisions, minimizes aerodynamic drag, and enhances fuel efficiency, enabling the platoon to achieve its operational goals while maintaining safety standards.

Route optimization is another vital aspect of joint operation planning in semi-autonomous truck platooning. To maximize efficiency, the system must continuously analyze traffic conditions, road topology, weather, and other relevant factors to determine the most efficient routes. Sophisticated algorithms, such as dynamic programming, machine learning, and real-time traffic prediction models, can be employed to optimize routes that minimize travel time, fuel consumption, and emissions. Route optimization is particularly important in multi-vehicle platoons, where changes in the route for one truck affect the entire group. Therefore, the planning must account for not just individual truck performance but also the collective dynamics of the platoon to ensure smooth and efficient operations[15]. The Fig.3 depicts Joint Operation Platooning Architecture.

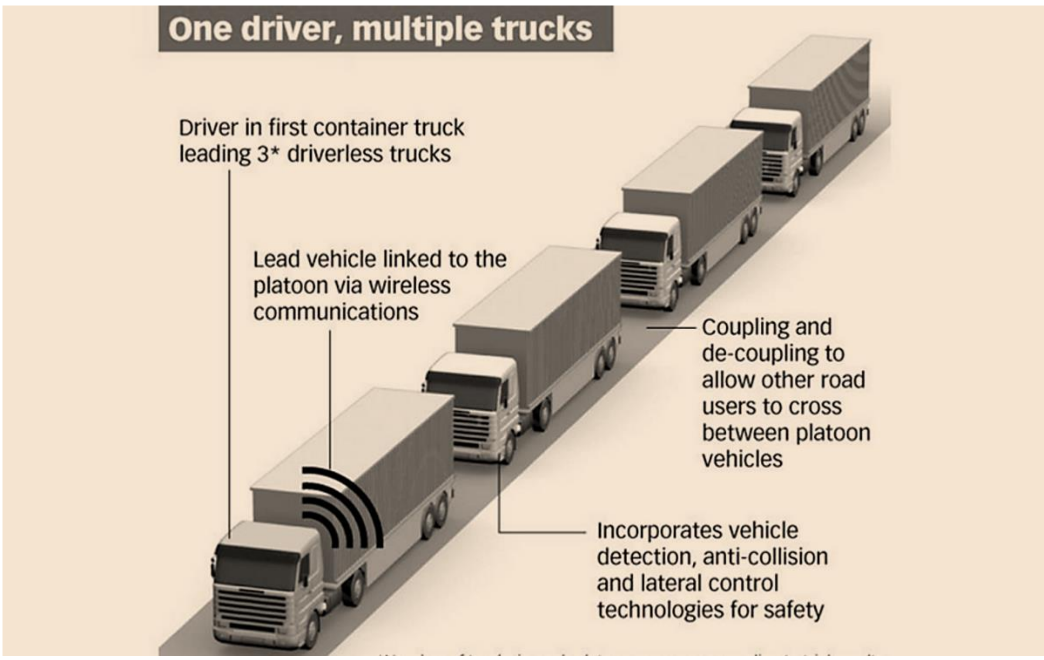

Fig.3: Joint Operation Truck Platooning Architecture

Fuel efficiency optimization is one of the primary benefits of semi-autonomous truck platooning and is heavily dependent on joint operation planning. By maintaining a close-following formation, trucks in a platoon can significantly reduce aerodynamic drag, leading to substantial fuel savings. Joint operation planning must consider factors such as acceleration and deceleration patterns, optimal speed profiles, and energy-efficient braking strategies to maximize fuel efficiency across the entire platoon. For instance, avoiding unnecessary braking and ensuring consistent speeds can prevent fuel wastage and reduce wear and tear on vehicle components[16]. These strategies require precise and continuous coordination among all trucks, highlighting the need for robust communication and control systems to facilitate such optimization.

Traffic management is also a critical component of joint operation planning for truck platooning, especially on busy highways or urban environments. The integration of platoons into existing traffic requires careful management to avoid disrupting other road users and causing congestion. Joint operation planning must incorporate adaptive platoon formation strategies, such as dynamically forming or dissolving platoons based on real-time traffic conditions, road types, and junctions. Additionally, managing the size of the platoon is crucial to prevent bottlenecks at entry and exit points and to ensure that platoons do not dominate road space, which could negatively impact overall traffic flow[17]. Effective traffic management strategies ensure that truck platooning contributes positively to the broader transportation network.

Safety protocols are paramount in joint operation planning for semi-autonomous truck platooning, given the potential risks associated with close-following vehicles operating at high speeds. Planning must incorporate robust safety mechanisms, such as coordinated emergency braking systems and evasive maneuver protocols, to handle unexpected scenarios like sudden obstacles or traffic incidents. Redundancy and fail-safe systems are critical for maintaining platoon stability in case of communication failures or sensor malfunctions. These safety protocols must be rigorously tested and validated to ensure they can handle diverse and dynamic driving conditions[18]. Additionally, joint operation planning should incorporate predictive safety models that use real-time data to anticipate potential hazards and take proactive measures to mitigate risks. The Table.1 depicts Field operational tests of truck platooning in Japan.

Table.1: Field operational tests of truck platooning in Japan. japan test platooning.

FY	Period	Location	No. of Vehicles	Control Direction *	Driver on Following Vehicle	Inter-Vehicle Time	Loading Condition/Time
2017	January–February 2018	Shin-Tomei Expressway	3 Multi-brand	CACC	Manned	1.6 s (70 km/h)	None/ daytime
		Kita-Kanto Expressway	4 Multi-brand	CACC	Manned	1.6 s (70 km/h)	None/ daytime
2018	November	Joshin-Etsu Expressway	4 Multi-brand	CACC	Manned	1.6 s (70 km/h)	Loading/ daytime
	December	Shin-Tomei Expressway	4 Multi-brand	CACC + LKA	Manned	1.6 s (70 km/h)	None/ daytime
	January–February	Shin-Tomei Expressway	3 Mono-	Electronic towing	Unmanned	0.5 s (70	None/ daytime

	2019	(15 km)	brand			km/h)	
2019	June 2019–February 2020	Shin-Tomei Expressway (140 km)	3 Mono-brand	Electronic towing + MRM	Unmanned	0.5 s (80 km/h)	None/ day and night
2020	May 2020–February 2021	Shin-Tomei Expressway (140 km)	3 Mono-brand(3 sets)	Electronic towing + MRM	Unmanned	0.5 s (80 km/h)	None/ day and night

Overall, joint operation planning for semi-autonomous truck platooning involves a complex interplay of vehicle coordination, route and fuel efficiency optimization, traffic management, and safety protocols. Addressing these elements effectively requires integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and real-time data analytics. A well-structured joint operation planning framework can significantly enhance the operational efficiency, safety, and sustainability of truck platooning, paving the way for its widespread adoption in modern freight transportation systems[19]. As the technology evolves, continuous innovation in joint operation planning will be essential to overcoming current challenges and maximizing the potential of semi-autonomous truck platooning.

4. Technological Challenges in Joint Operation Planning:

The implementation of joint operation planning for semi-autonomous truck platooning presents several technological challenges that need to be addressed to achieve safe, efficient, and scalable operations. One of the primary challenges is ensuring reliable and low-latency Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) communication. Since the trucks in a platoon rely on real-time data exchange to synchronize their movements, any delay or loss of communication can lead to dangerous situations, such as collisions or abrupt braking. V2V communication must be robust enough to handle high data volumes and maintain connectivity even in challenging environments, such as urban areas with dense buildings or rural areas with limited network coverage. Additionally, communication systems must be secure against cyber threats, as any vulnerability could be exploited to disrupt platoon operations or cause accidents[20]. To address these challenges, it is essential to develop secure and reliable continuous aggregation methods to ensure data integrity and validity in sensor networks operating in dynamic and variable environments[21].

Another significant technological challenge is sensor fusion and perception, which involves integrating data from multiple sensors, such as LiDAR, radar, cameras, and ultrasonic sensors, to create a comprehensive understanding of the environment around the platoon. Each truck in the platoon must have a clear perception of the road, traffic, obstacles, and other vehicles to make informed decisions. However, sensor data can be affected by various factors, including weather conditions (e.g., fog, rain, snow), low visibility, and sensor noise[22]. Developing advanced sensor fusion algorithms that can accurately process and interpret data under diverse conditions is crucial for maintaining the safety and reliability of truck platooning systems. Moreover, ensuring that perception systems are consistent across all trucks in the platoon is vital for synchronized operations.

Scalability and interoperability pose further challenges in joint operation planning for semi-autonomous truck platooning. As more truck manufacturers and fleet operators explore platooning, the need for standardized protocols and systems becomes evident. Trucks from different manufacturers must be able to communicate and coordinate effectively within a platoon, necessitating common standards for V2V communication, control algorithms, and data sharing. Additionally, platooning systems must be scalable to accommodate varying platoon sizes, road types, and traffic conditions. This requires flexible control systems that can adapt to different operational scenarios without compromising safety or efficiency. Ensuring interoperability and scalability is critical for the broader adoption of truck platooning across regions and fleets.

The computational demands associated with joint operation planning also present a considerable challenge. Managing a platoon of semi-autonomous trucks requires real-time decision-making capabilities powered by advanced algorithms, such as deep reinforcement learning, optimization models, and predictive analytics. These algorithms must process vast amounts of data, including traffic patterns, road conditions, vehicle dynamics, and environmental factors, to make split-second decisions that optimize route planning, fuel efficiency, and safety. High computational requirements necessitate powerful onboard processing units and efficient data management systems that can handle real-time computations without causing delays. Balancing computational power with energy consumption and system reliability is crucial for ensuring sustained and efficient platoon operations. Finally, the integration of machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) into joint operation planning introduces both opportunities and challenges. While AI and machine learning can significantly enhance decision-making processes by enabling adaptive learning from past experiences, they also require large datasets for training and validation[23]. Additionally, machine learning models can suffer from issues like model drift, where their performance deteriorates over time due to changes in environmental conditions or driving patterns. Ensuring that AI models are continuously updated and retrained to adapt to new scenarios is a significant challenge that requires robust data collection, management, and processing frameworks. Moreover, incorporating explainability and transparency into AI-driven decision-making processes is essential to foster trust among drivers, fleet operators, and regulatory bodies.

Addressing these technological challenges is vital for the successful deployment of semi-autonomous truck platooning systems. Overcoming these hurdles will require concerted efforts from researchers, technology developers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to develop robust, scalable, and secure joint operation planning frameworks that can unlock the full potential of this transformative technology in the transportation sector.

5. Regulatory and Infrastructural Challenges:

The deployment of semi-autonomous truck platooning is not only a technological endeavor but also one that faces significant regulatory and infrastructural challenges. One of the primary regulatory challenges is the lack of uniform standards and guidelines for truck platooning across different regions and countries. Currently, traffic laws and regulations vary widely, particularly concerning vehicle following distances, lane usage, speed limits, and driver responsibilities. These inconsistencies create barriers to the cross-border and interstate deployment of truck platoons, as trucks may need to adapt to different regulatory environments. Establishing harmonized standards that govern the formation, operation, and disbanding of platoons is critical for enabling seamless operations across regions, fostering widespread adoption, and ensuring safety on public roads[24]. To advance the application of such new technologies, it is necessary to further enhance deep ultraviolet (DUV) LED technology to provide better lighting solutions, which is particularly important for truck platooning in low-visibility or nighttime conditions[25].

Another regulatory hurdle involves liability and insurance frameworks for semi-autonomous truck platooning. Determining liability in the event of an accident or malfunction within a platoon can be complex, as it involves multiple parties, including the lead driver, the following vehicles, and the platooning system providers. Current insurance models are not well-suited to handle the shared responsibility between human drivers and automated systems, necessitating new liability frameworks that clearly delineate accountability. Regulatory bodies must work closely with insurance companies, vehicle manufacturers, and technology providers to develop comprehensive policies that address these challenges while protecting the interests of all stakeholders[26]. Moreover, regulations must adapt to technological advancements and the evolving capabilities of autonomous systems.

Infrastructural challenges also pose significant obstacles to the effective implementation of semi-autonomous truck platooning. Most road networks and highways are not currently designed to accommodate the unique requirements of truck platoons. For instance, existing roads may lack the necessary dedicated lanes, adaptive traffic signals, and road markings that can support platooning. The infrastructure must be upgraded to incorporate smart technologies such as road sensors, connected traffic lights, and digital signage to facilitate efficient communication between vehicles and the road environment. Moreover, infrastructure needs to support safe platoon merging and splitting, especially near on-ramps, off-ramps, and interchanges. Such upgrades require significant investment and collaboration between government bodies, transportation agencies, and private stakeholders[27].

Another infrastructural challenge is the availability of reliable communication networks to support real-time data exchange between trucks in a platoon. Semi-autonomous truck platooning relies heavily on robust Vehicle-to-Infrastructure (V2I) and Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) communication systems to operate safely and efficiently. Inconsistent or weak network coverage, particularly in remote or rural areas, can lead to communication failures that compromise platoon safety. The development of dedicated short-range communication (DSRC) and 5G networks is essential to provide the high bandwidth, low latency, and reliable connectivity needed for real-time decision-making and synchronization among platooning vehicles. Investment in these communication networks and their integration into the broader intelligent transportation systems (ITS) is a crucial step toward overcoming this challenge. Public perception and acceptance also play a significant role in the regulatory and infrastructural landscape for truck platooning. There are concerns related to road safety, job displacement for truck drivers, and potential disruptions to existing traffic patterns. Addressing these concerns requires clear communication from regulatory authorities and industry stakeholders about the safety benefits, economic advantages, and operational guidelines for truck platooning[28]. Public pilot projects, demonstrations, and transparent sharing of safety data can help build public trust and acceptance. In addition, regulations must include comprehensive training and certification programs for human drivers involved in platooning operations to ensure they are well-prepared to interact safely and effectively with semi-autonomous systems.

Overall, the successful deployment of semi-autonomous truck platooning hinges on the development of a supportive regulatory framework and the enhancement of road infrastructure. Achieving this will require close collaboration between policymakers, transportation authorities, technology developers, and industry stakeholders to create standardized, scalable, and adaptable solutions. Addressing these regulatory and infrastructural challenges is essential to fully unlock the potential of truck platooning and realize its benefits for the future of freight transportation[29].

6. Future Directions and Research Opportunities:

Future research in semi-autonomous truck platooning offers a vast landscape of opportunities to enhance operational efficiency, safety, and scalability. One promising direction is the development of more advanced machine learning algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI) models to optimize joint operation planning under dynamic and uncertain environments. These models can leverage real-time data to improve decision-making processes related to route optimization, fuel efficiency, traffic management, and emergency handling, thereby increasing the robustness and adaptability of platooning systems. Another critical area is the exploration of cooperative perception and control strategies that allow trucks to share sensor data and collectively perceive and respond to their environment[30]. This collaborative approach can improve safety and efficiency, particularly in complex traffic scenarios. Research is also needed to address the integration of semi-autonomous truck platoons with connected and automated vehicle (CAV) ecosystems, including mixed traffic conditions involving both autonomous and human-driven vehicles. Additionally, there is a growing need to study the socio-economic and environmental impacts of widespread platooning adoption, including regulatory implications, infrastructure investments, and public acceptance. Finally, developing robust cybersecurity frameworks to protect platooning systems from potential cyber-attacks and data breaches is vital for ensuring safety and trust. As these areas are explored, interdisciplinary research combining transportation engineering, computer science, economics, and public policy will be key to advancing the field and enabling the widespread adoption of semi-autonomous truck platooning in real-world applications[31].

7. Conclusion:

Semi-autonomous truck platooning represents a transformative innovation in the freight transportation sector, promising significant improvements in fuel efficiency, safety, and traffic flow management. The success of this technology hinges on effective joint operation planning that integrates advanced communication systems, real-time data analytics, AI-driven decision-making, and robust safety protocols. However, realizing the full potential of truck platooning requires addressing several technological, regulatory, and infrastructural challenges. Reliable V2V communication, sensor fusion, and AI integration must be refined to ensure seamless coordination among trucks, while consistent regulations and upgraded infrastructure are essential for safe and efficient operations across diverse regions. Future research should focus on enhancing machine learning algorithms, cooperative control strategies, cybersecurity, and understanding the socio-economic impacts to facilitate broader adoption. As stakeholders from various domains collaborate to overcome these challenges, semi-autonomous truck platooning has the potential to revolutionize modern transportation, leading to a more sustainable, efficient, and safer freight ecosystem.

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