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A Nonlinear Spatiotemporal Optimization Method of Hypergraph Convolution Networks for Traffic Prediction

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Abstract: Traffic prediction is a necessary function in intelligent transportation systems to alleviate traffic congestion. Graph learning methods mainly focus on the spatiotemporal dimension, but ignore the nonlinear movement of traffic prediction and the high-order relationships among various kinds of road segments. There exist two issues: 1) deep integration of the spatiotemporal information and 2) global spatial dependencies for structural properties. To address these issues, we propose a nonlinear spatiotemporal optimization method, which introduces hypergraph convolution networks (HGCN). The method utilizes the higher-order spatial features of the road network captured by HGCN, and dynamically integrates them with the historical data to weigh the influence of spatiotemporal dependencies. On this basis, an extended Kalman filter is used to improve the accuracy of traffic prediction. In this study, a set of experiments were conducted on the real-world dataset in Chengdu, China. The result showed that the proposed method is feasible and accurate by two different time steps. Especially at the 15-minute time step, compared with the second-best method, the proposed method achieved 3.0%, 11.7%, and 9.0% improvements in RMSE, MAE, and MAPE, respectively.

Keywords: Intelligent transportation systems; traffic prediction; hypergraph convolution networks; spatiotemporal optimization

1 Introduction

With the rapid development of information technology, artificial intelligence [1] involves many interdisciplinary subjects such as human–machine interaction [2] and health state estimation [3], and brings new elements to intelligent transportation systems (ITS). Traffic prediction is the cornerstone of ITS [4]. By learning potential traffic information and rules, ITS can predict the traffic states in the future, so as to take appropriate traffic control measures in time. Thus, accurate and reliable prediction plays an important role in practical traffic applications, such as traffic guidance and signal control.



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Traditional traffic prediction mainly relies on subjective judgment. The data-driven method [5] relies on direct data analysis, and offers higher accuracy in the fields of intelligent recommendation [6,7], behavioral analysis [8] and blockchains [9]. It is found that the potential spatiotemporal evolution rules and characteristics of traffic states from massive data, which have become the mainstream for traffic state analysis [10,11]. Traffic data is critical for accurate traffic prediction [12]. It is a spatiotemporal dataset with spatial structure differences and dynamic changes over time. Temporally, traffic data of all nodes on the road network structure can be regarded as a time series, the observed value of each node is obviously correlated with that of its adjacent time steps [13–15]. Spatially, the traffic states of a certain road segment are correlated with the nearby locations or the relevant areas [16,17]. The prediction models that only consider the influence of historical data or adjacent road segments are not fully applicable to spatiotemporal traffic data. Nowadays, the models have evolved to the spatiotemporal dimensions.

Deep learning models have been extensively applied in traffic prediction [18]. As an important part, the graph learning methods [19,20] utilize the graph structure and the corresponding node features to learn the internal geometric relations of the structural data, by mapping the features of the graph to the feature vectors with the same dimension in the embedding spaces. To utilize such spatial features, it's appropriate to formulate traffic networks as graphs [21]. They can not only retain the original structural information and multi-dimensional features of traffic data, but also show strong expressive ability and self-training performance. Recently, traffic prediction utilizes graph learning models, which have a good interpretation for the model results [22–24].

Despite the empirical success of the aforementioned techniques, two issues in traffic prediction enabled by graph learning still exist: 1) Traffic prediction is a complex process, the nonlinear optimization parameters of multiple dependencies cannot be determined, which limits the models to capture the spatiotemporal evolution characteristics of traffic states [25]; 2) It fails to consider the higher-order relationship between spatial structures, and integrate these associated data uniformly.

Hypergraph convolutional networks (HGCN) [4] have a strong ability of higher-order spatial representation in information transfer between graph structures. Additionally, extended Kalman filter (EKF) can approximate linearize the nonlinear state-space model, and utilize the model parameters to estimate the spatiotemporal states, which are suitable for estimating the complex traffic states in road networks [26,27]. Motivated by this, a nonlinear spatiotemporal optimization method of hypergraph convolution networks (HGC-NOM) is proposed. The method utilizes the higher-order spatial features of the road network captured by HGCN, and dynamically integrates them with the historical data to weigh the influence of spatiotemporal dependencies. On this basis, EKF is used to improve the accuracy of online traffic prediction. The major contributions of this work can be summarized as follows:

(1) To optimize these nonlinear parameters of multiple dependencies in the process of spatiotemporal fusion, the proposed method utilizes recursive least squares (RLS) to identify the dynamic weights of the factors of the higher-order spatial features and the historical data, and utilizes EKF to online update the state vector-values reflecting the actual traffic environment, so as to improve the generalization ability and prediction accuracy.

(2) In view of the lack of considering correlated spatial characteristics of non-adjacent road segments, the higher-order spatial feature extraction model based on HGCN is presented. The hypergraph structures are constructed by connecting non-adjacent road segments with hyperedges. On this basis, the Laplacian matrix on the hypergraph is defined, and HGCN utilizes Chebyshev polynomials to capture the implicit spatial features of different segments.

(3) Extensive experiments were confirmed the validity of the proposed method and the characteristic contribution of spatiotemporal fusion factors. The experimental results show that the performance of the proposed method is superior to that of the state-of-the-art methods.

The rest of the work is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the state-of-the-art methods. In Section 3, the model of HGCN is introduced. Section 4 explains the proposed method in detail. Section 5 illustrates the experimental results and discusses the feasibility. Finally, Section 6 concludes the work.

2 Related Work

Traffic prediction is the key to the realization of traffic control and guidance, and it is the premise to reduce traffic congestion and improve travel efficiency. With the rapid development of information technology, traffic spatiotemporal data is increasingly abundant. The models gradually evolve from historical statistical methods to the deep learning methods [28–30] based on spatiotemporal fusion.

Historical statistical methods mainly used the significant temporal relationship between historical data, as well as traffic flow, average speed and other parameters to make prediction. Jing et al. [31] assessed the multistep speed predictive performance of eight different models using 2-min road segment speed data collected from remote traffic microwave sensors. Kong et al. [32] utilized particle swarm optimization algorithm to calculate traffic parameters from the aspects of accuracy, immediacy and stability, and applied the fuzzy classification method to convert the predicted parameters into the congestion states recognized by residents. Liu et al. [33] integrated the traffic features extracted and the measured values of microwave sensors for state estimation, proposed a combination method of state-space model and EKF, and adaptively predicted the changes of traffic conditions. Considering the complexity of traffic conditions, Zhu et al. [34] identified the fitted historical data, weather, date attributes and other influencing factors by recursive least square parameters, and used EKF to predict the average speed. All above methods failed to consider spatial dependency, thereby limiting their ability to capture the traffic state governed by the road network structures.

The prediction model [35] based on deep learning will reflect the adaptability of data state through sample training, so as to capture the nonlinear features between different variables. Combining the acceleration of the target segments and the speed of the adjacent segments, Ye et al. [36] utilized the optimized neural network to improve the predictive performance, but the phase transition theory was needed for further improvement. Tang et al. [37] used K-means algorithm to divide the speed samples into different clusters, measured the membership degree of the samples, and established the fuzzy neural network rules to predict the traveling speed. Zhang et al. [38] constructed a multi-task learning model based on deep learning, selected the information of each link through the nonlinear causality detection method, adjusted the model parameters and optimized the traffic predictive performance. Traffic prediction is not only closely related to traffic conditions based on temporal dimension, but also affected by traffic conditions of other spatial locations, such as upstream and downstream locations, and adjacent lanes. Zhang et al. [39] constructed a residual neural network framework in traffic networks, adopted a deep learning method to dynamically aggregate spatiotemporal values and predicted the traffic flow in each region. Wu et al. [40] proposed a cross-city spatiotemporal migration learning model, obtained prior knowledge by training the traffic data of source cities, and designed a learning strategy based on generative adversarial network to improve the predictive performance. The structures of traffic networks present non-Euclidean rules [41], so these methods were limited to European structural data such as convolutional neural networks [42,43], which had difficulties in the spatial modeling of traffic networks.

Graph learning methods extract the feature information of adjacent segments, and transform the non-European road network structures [44]. Based on these characteristics, it is appropriate to formulate road networks as graphs [21]. Some scholars began to explore the spatiotemporal prediction combining deep learning [45] and graph theory. Yu et al. [22] constructed a deep learning framework based on graph convolutional network (GCN) to capture the spatiotemporal correlation of multiscale traffic networks, and satisfied the requirements of mid-and-long term prediction tasks. Due to the prominent effect of the attention mechanism in selecting key information, Guo et al. [23] proposed an attention-based GCN model, weighted fusion of three date attribute components, including recent, daily period and weekly period, and captured the dynamic spatiotemporal correlation to generate prediction results. Yu et al. [46] adopted the spatiotemporal transformer mechanism to capture the spatial interaction of crowds and complex temporal dependence, and proposed a transformerbased GCN model to predict the flow of social crowds in road networks. Combining self-attention mechanism, Ye et al. [24] established transformer model based on meta-graph learning, extracted spatiotemporal heterogeneity in traffic networks, and predicted traffic states by auto-regression. In order to find the constraints of traffic network topology and the rule of dynamic change over time. references [47,48] improved the spatiotemporal dependencies under graph learning framework, which dynamically captured the temporal dependence from the gated recurrent unit and adaptively derived the node attributes of the optimal graph structures, and proved the validity and interpretability of these traffic prediction methods.

To sum up, the existing models are lack of consideration of road network spatial features, and cannot comprehensively analyze the influences of cross-node isomorphism in urban road networks. Graph learning based models depend on the accuracy of the graph structural representation of traffic data with spatial correlations, but ignore the higher-order spatial feature extraction and nonlinear movement of spatiotemporal prediction. Therefore, considering nonlinear spatiotemporal movement and higher-order spatial relationship is a hot topic in the field of traffic prediction.

3 HGCN Model

In a simple graph, the node adjacency matrix identifies the adjacency relations between nodes [49], but cannot represent the implicit spatial characteristics of key nodes to non-adjacent nodes. Hypergraph models complex, high-order and multimodal relationship through its flexible hyperedge (i.e., the edge connects more than two nodes), realizes the recessive feature aggregation of multiple nodes, and has a good adaptability in the construction of generalized graph structures [50,51]. Fig. 1 represents the comparison of graph and hypergraph structures, in which the graph structure is represented by adjacency matrix A, while the hypergraph structure is represented by incidence matrix H.

References [52,53] gave a specific definition of hypergraph. A hypergraph can be represented as $G_H = (\mathbf{V}_H, \mathbf{E}_H, \mathbf{W}_H, \mathbf{H})$ by the sets of nodes \mathbf{V}_H and hyperedges \mathbf{E}_H , where \mathbf{W}_H and \mathbf{H} denote the hyperedge weight matrix and incidence matrix, respectively. Each hyperedge $e \in \mathbf{E}_H$ is given a nonnegative weight w(e). The structure of the hypergraph can be described by a $|\mathbf{V}_H| \times |\mathbf{E}_H|$ dimensional incidence matrix \mathbf{H} , in which h(v, e) denotes its specific element. In addition, a node v is located in a hyperedge e, h(v, e) = 1, else h(v, e) = 0. For each node $v \in \mathbf{V}_H$ and hyperedge $e \in \mathbf{E}_H$, the degrees for the node d(v) and the degrees for the hyperedge d(e) are expressed as follows:



Figure 1: Comparison of graph and hypergraph structures

V₂

V4

e

V5

e₃

V1

eı

0

1

0

H:

V₂

V3

e2

1

1

0

1

0

 e_3

0

1

1

1

In addition, \mathbf{D}_{v} is the diagonal matrix including the node degree d(v), and \mathbf{D}_{e} is the diagonal matrix including the hyperedge degree d(e).

Hypergraph learning methods show a strong ability of higher-order spatial representation by means of information transfer between hypergraph structures [54]. GCN has a good learning ability in capturing non-Euclidian spatial features, but they over-rely on the adjacency matrix, thus ignoring the higher-order relations between nodes in graphs [55].

As the most prominent hypergraph learning model, HGCN is an important improvement of GCN in spatial modeling. The existing methods mainly adopt two modes: (1) It transforms hypergraph into simple graph, and then learns the spatial dependence through the GCN model. However, the transformation process is complicated, and the higher-order feature information is lost easily. (2) The node features of hypergraph are aggregated to form hypergraph features, and the new embeddings of each node are obtained from the hyperedge associated attributes. The feature transformation of graph structures is completed by the hyperedge convolution operation, so as to discover the potential hypergraph structural features [56]. Because the second mode learns the importance of nodes and hyperedges through the hyperedge feature transformation, it is suitable for the modeling of higher-order spatial features.

Take the second mode as an example. In the hypergraph neural network mentioned in reference [50], HGCN is expressed as:

$$\mathbf{X}^{(l)} = \sigma \left(\mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \mathbf{H} \mathbf{W}_{\mathrm{H}} \mathbf{D}_{e}^{-1} \mathbf{H}^{\mathrm{T}} \mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \mathbf{X}^{(l-1)} \Theta^{(l-1)} \right)$$
(3)

where $\mathbf{X}^{(l)}$ denotes the output values of the *l*-th layer, \mathbf{H}^{T} denotes the transpose of the incidence matrix \mathbf{H}, σ is RELU activation function, and Θ is training parameters of the convolution layer.

4 Proposed Method

The change of traffic flow in a time window is dynamic and random, but also is of complex correlation, which brings some difficulties to the traffic spatiotemporal prediction. RLS will realize online estimation of system parameters, and have a great impact on model identification accuracy in the case of noises [57]. Meanwhile, EKF can be applied to nonlinear system prediction, but it is easy to be influenced by the accuracy of state estimation. In order to predict the traffic states of the road networks, as shown in Fig. 2, the method of HGC-NOM is proposed, which contains three factors: (1) the traffic flow of the forward timeslot; (2) the traffic flow of the historical simultaneous timeslot; and (3) the higher-order spatial aggregation value of the forward timeslot. Considering the effective integration of traffic data from multiple factors such as historical periods and higher-order spatial structures based on HGCN, the dynamic weights of different factors were identified by RLS, and traffic state vector values were updated online by the EKF algorithm, so as to improve the prediction accuracy in target segments.



Figure 2: Overview of proposed HGC-NOM

4.1 HGCN Application

Due to the irregular structure of the traffic networks, traffic forecasting problem presents challenges that the spatial modeling of road network structures do not possess. At the same time, each node of road network structures has a different influencing degree on its adjacent areas. For example, the intersections near the business districts usually carry a larger traffic flow, which are bound to influence the predictive performance. HGCN will extract higher-order spatial features of road network structures according to the hyperedge correlation attributes, so as to accurately and comprehensively model complex spatial relationships.

According to the hypergraph $G_H = (\mathbf{V}_H, \mathbf{E}_H, \mathbf{W}_H, \mathbf{H})$ defined in Section 3, the hypergraph Laplacian matrix \mathbf{L}_H is constructed as follows:

$$\mathbf{L}_{\mathrm{H}} = \mathbf{I}_{N} - \mathbf{D}_{v}^{-1/2} \mathbf{H} \mathbf{W}_{H} \mathbf{D}_{e}^{-1} \mathbf{H}^{\mathrm{T}} \mathbf{D}_{v}^{-1/2}$$
(4)

where the diagonal matrix of the node degree \mathbf{D}_{v} and the diagonal matrix of the hyperedge degree \mathbf{D}_{e} are applied to the normalized incidence matrix \mathbf{H} , respectively.

To reduce the computational complexity of feature space of incidence matrix **H**, Chebyshev polynomial is adopted to fit the convolution kernel g_{θ} :

$$g_{\theta}\left(\mathbf{L}_{\mathrm{H}}\right) * x \approx \sum_{k=0}^{K} \theta_{k} T_{k}\left(\widetilde{\mathbf{L}}_{\mathrm{H}}\right) x \tag{5}$$

where T_k and θ_k denote Chebyshev polynomials and coefficients, respectively. $\tilde{\mathbf{L}}_{\mathrm{H}} = \frac{2}{\lambda_{\max}} \mathbf{L}_{\mathrm{H}} - \mathbf{I}_N$, λ_{\max} denotes eigenvalue of maximum. In addition, $T_k \left(\tilde{\mathbf{L}}_{\mathrm{H}} \right) = 2\tilde{\mathbf{L}}_{\mathrm{H}} T_{k-1} \left(\tilde{\mathbf{L}}_{\mathrm{H}} \right) - T_{k-2} \left(\tilde{\mathbf{L}}_{\mathrm{H}} \right)$, initial values $T_0 \left(\tilde{\mathbf{L}}_{\mathrm{H}} \right) = \mathbf{I}_N$ and $T_1 \left(\tilde{\mathbf{L}}_{\mathrm{H}} \right) = \tilde{\mathbf{L}}_{\mathrm{H}}$.

For the sake of simplicity, the eigenvalues of $L_{\rm H}$ are scaled by setting K = 1 and $\lambda_{\rm max} = 2$, formula (5) is modified as follows:

$$g_{\theta} \left(\mathbf{L}_{\mathrm{H}} \right) * x \approx \theta_{0} x + \theta_{1} \left(\mathbf{L}_{\mathrm{H}} - \mathbf{I}_{N} \right) x \approx \theta_{0} x - \theta_{1} \mathbf{D}_{v}^{-1/2} \mathbf{H} \mathbf{W}_{\mathrm{H}} \mathbf{D}_{e}^{-1} \mathbf{H}^{T} \mathbf{D}_{v}^{-1/2}$$
(6)

To avoid overfitting, parameters θ_0 and θ_1 are fused into a unified parameter θ , which is defined as follows:

$$\begin{cases} \theta_0 = \frac{1}{2} \theta \mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \mathbf{H} \mathbf{D}_{e}^{-1} \mathbf{H}^{\mathrm{T}} \mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \\ \theta_1 = -\frac{1}{2} \theta \end{cases}$$
(7)

According to formulas (6), (7), the hypergraph convolution operation is derived as follows:

$$g_{\theta} \left(\mathbf{L}_{\mathrm{H}} \right) * x \approx \frac{1}{2} \theta \mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \mathbf{H} \left(\mathbf{W}_{\mathrm{H}} + \mathbf{I}_{N} \right) \mathbf{D}_{e}^{-1} \mathbf{H}^{\mathrm{T}} \mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \approx \theta \mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \mathbf{H} \mathbf{W}_{\mathrm{H}} \mathbf{D}_{e}^{-1} \mathbf{H}^{\mathrm{T}} \mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2}$$
(8)

Given the input matrix $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbf{R}^{n \times c}$, where *n* and *c* represent the number of nodes and features, respectively. The output matrix \mathbf{Y} can be expressed as:

$$\mathbf{Y} = \mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \mathbf{H} \mathbf{W}_{\mathrm{H}} \mathbf{D}_{e}^{-1} \mathbf{H}^{\mathrm{T}} \mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \mathbf{X} \Theta$$
(9)

where $\Theta \in \mathbf{R}^{e \times c}$ denotes the training parameters of the convolution layer.

The convolution operation of the entire hypergraph convolution process is carried out according to the formulas (4)–(9), and the recursive calculation is combined with the nonlinear activation function

 σ . Finally, the convolution result of the *l*-th layer, that is the higher-order spatial aggregation value, is output, which is expressed as follows:

$$\mathbf{Y}^{(l)} = \sigma \left(\mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \mathbf{H} \mathbf{W}_{\mathrm{H}} \mathbf{D}_{e}^{-1} \mathbf{H}^{\mathrm{T}} \mathbf{D}_{\nu}^{-1/2} \mathbf{Y}^{(l-1)} \Theta^{(l-1)} \right)$$
(10)

4.2 System Identification of RLS

The traffic flow in the historical simultaneous timeslots of the previous n_t days, the traffic flow of the previous n_p timeslots during a day, and the target segment spatial value of the previous one timeslot $x_{k,s}$ (t-1) are selected. The spatial value $x_{k,s}$ (t-1) is calculated by the formulas (4)–(10). The following multiple regression equation for prediction is established:

$$x(t) = \begin{bmatrix} a_1 & a_2 & \cdots & a_{n_p} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x(t-1) \\ x(t-2) \\ \vdots \\ x(t-n_p) \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} b_1 & b_2 & \cdots & b_{n_t} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x(t-\Delta) \\ x(t-2\Delta) \\ \vdots \\ x(t-n_t\Delta) \end{bmatrix} + cx_{k,s}(t-1)$$
(11)

where x(t) is the predictive value of the road segment, $x(t-1), \dots, x(t-n_p)$ are the traffic flow of the previous n_p timeslots during a day, Δ is the number of timeslots in a day (assuming the length of the timeslot and the number of timeslots remain constant), and $x(t - \Delta), \dots, x(t - n_t \Delta)$ are the traffic flow in the historical simultaneous timeslots of the previous n_t days. $a_1 \dots a_{n_p}, b_1 \dots b_{n_t}$ and c are the influence weights of each system variable on the predictive value.

RLS is used to dynamically modify the existing results according to the new observed values, and the weighted estimator is adopted to estimate the parameters of different traffic states in real time. The state parameters are identified and updated according to formula (11). The transformed recursive equation is as follows:

$$x(t) = \varphi_k^T(t)\theta + e_k(t)$$
(12)

where φ_k^T is the traffic flow of the road segment, θ is the identified parameter vector, and $e_k(t)$ is the error caused by observation noise. φ_k^T and θ are recorded as vectors as follows:

$$\varphi_k^T(t) = \left[x(t-1), \dots, x(t-n_p), x(t-\Delta), \dots, x(t-n_t\Delta), x_{k,s}(t-1) \right]$$
(13)

$$\theta = \begin{bmatrix} a_1, \dots, a_{n_p}, b_1, \dots, b_{n_t}, c \end{bmatrix}^T$$
(14)

Combining formulas (12)–(14), the system parameter identification gain and the error covariance matrix are updated. The least-squares equation is expressed as follows:

$$K_{k}(t) = \mathbf{P}_{k}(t-1)\varphi_{k}(t) \left[\varphi_{k}^{T}(t)\mathbf{P}_{k}(t-1)\hat{\theta}_{k}(t-1)\varphi_{k}(t) + 1\right]^{-1}$$
(15)

$$\mathbf{P}_{k}(t) = \left[\mathbf{I} - K_{k}(t)\varphi_{k}(t)^{T}\right]\mathbf{P}_{k}(t-1)$$
(16)

where $K_k(t)$ is the parameter identification gain for timeslot t, P_k is the error covariance matrix, and I is the identity matrix of the identification parameter.

According to formulas (12)–(16), the recursive formula for system parameter identification during timeslot *t* is expressed as follows:

$$\hat{\theta}_{k}(t) = \hat{\theta}_{k}(t-1) + K_{k}(t) \left[x(t-1) - \varphi_{k}^{T}(t-1) \hat{\theta}_{k}(t-1) \right]$$
(17)

where $\hat{\theta}_k$ is the least-squares estimate of the system parameters, and $x(t-1) - \varphi_k^T(t-1)\hat{\theta}_k(t-1)$ is the correction term of the identified parameter estimation for timeslot t-1.

4.3 Implementation of EKF

Kalman filter (KF) is a recursive method for optimal estimation of filter state variables. It is not only used for signal filtering estimation, but also for model parameter estimation, with static linearity and stability. KF mainly solves the filtering recursion problems of discrete linear data, and has been applied in the field of traffic prediction [58]. Since KF is a linear model, the performance of the model will be limited when predicting the nonlinear and random traffic states. EKF approximate linearizes the nonlinear state-space model, and adopts KF for traffic state estimation.

According to formula (11), the standard form of the state equation and the observation equation are expressed as follows:

$$\begin{cases} \mathbf{X}(t) = f(\mathbf{X}(t-1)) + w(t-1) \\ \mathbf{Y}(t) = g(\mathbf{X}(t)) + m(t) \end{cases}$$
(18)

where $\mathbf{X}(t)$ and $\mathbf{Y}(t)$ are state and observation vector values, respectively; w(t-1) is the system process noise; m(t) is the observation noise; and $f(\mathbf{X}(t-1))$ and $g(\mathbf{X}(t))$ are nonlinear mapping functions of the state equations and observation equations, respectively. $\mathbf{X}(t-1)$, $f(\mathbf{X}(t-1))$, and $g(\mathbf{X}(t))$ are expressed as follows:

$$\mathbf{X}(t-1) = \left[x(t-1)\cdots x\left(t-n_p\right)x(t-\Delta)\cdots x\left(t-n_t\Delta\right)x_{k,s}(t-1)\right]^{\mathrm{T}}$$
(19)

$$f(\mathbf{X}(t-1)) \approx f\left(\widehat{\mathbf{X}}(t-1)\right) + \mathbf{A}(t-1)\left(\mathbf{X}(t-1) - \widehat{\mathbf{X}}(t-1)\right)$$
(20)

$$g(\mathbf{X}(t)) \approx g\left(\widehat{\mathbf{X}}(t)\right) + \mathbf{B}(t)\left(\mathbf{X}(t) - \widehat{\mathbf{X}}(t)\right)$$
(21)

where $\hat{\mathbf{X}}$ is the estimated value of \mathbf{X} , and \mathbf{A} and \mathbf{B} are the system state matrix and the observation matrix, respectively.

According to formulas (18)–(21), A and B are derived as follows:

$$\mathbf{A}(t-1) = \frac{\partial f\left(\hat{\mathbf{X}}(t-1)\right)}{\partial \mathbf{X}(t-1)}$$
(22)

$$\mathbf{B}(t) = \frac{\partial g\left(\hat{\mathbf{X}}(t)\right)}{\partial \mathbf{X}(t)}$$
(23)

The two components of state vector $\mathbf{X}(t-1)$ in formula (19) are x(t-n) and $x_{k,s}(t-1)$. They are partial derivatives. A and **B** are converted to a Jacobian matrix:

$$\begin{cases} \mathbf{A} (t-1) = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{A}_1 & \mathbf{A}_2 \end{bmatrix} \\ \mathbf{B} (t) = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \end{cases}$$
(24)

The corresponding parameters A_1 and A_2 in formula (24) are calculated as follows:

$$\begin{cases} \mathbf{A}_1 = \begin{bmatrix} a_1, \dots, a_{n_p}, b_1, \dots b_{n_l} \end{bmatrix}^T \\ \mathbf{A}_2 = c \end{cases}$$
(25)

Since the specific values of parameters A_1 and A_2 corresponding to formula (25) are calculated by formula (17), then A(t-1) and B(t) are known values. Combining with the KF, the time update of formula (11) is expressed as follows:

$$\mathbf{X}(t)^{-} = f(\mathbf{X}(t-1))$$
⁽²⁶⁾

$$P(t)^{-} = \mathbf{A}(t-1) P(t-1)^{+} \mathbf{A}(t-1)^{T} + \mathbf{Q}$$
(27)

where $\mathbf{X}(t)^{-}$ is the prior estimate of the state vector at timeslot *t*, *P* is the covariance of the state vector estimation error, and \mathbf{Q} is the covariance matrix of the process noise.

According to formulas (18), (23), and (26), (27), the observation update of formula (11) is expressed as follows:

$$G(t) = P(t)^{-} \mathbf{B}(t)^{T} \left(\mathbf{B}(t) P(t)^{-} \mathbf{B}(t)^{T} + \mathbf{R} \right)^{-1}$$
(28)

$$P(t)^{+} = (\mathbf{I} - G(t) \mathbf{B}(t)) P(t)^{-}$$
⁽²⁹⁾

$$\mathbf{X}(t)^{+} = \mathbf{X}(t)^{-} + G(t)\left(\mathbf{Y}(t) - g\left(\mathbf{X}(t)^{-}\right)\right)$$
(30)

where G(t) is the Kalman gain at timeslot t, $\mathbf{X}(t)^+$ is the posterior estimate of the state vector at timeslot t, and \mathbf{R} is the covariance matrix of the observation noise.

5 Experiments

5.1 Data Preparation

The dataset from the Chengdu branch of Didi Chuxing was adopted, the timespan is from October to November 2016. The geographic area is located at 30.66° N $\sim 30.73^{\circ}$ N, 104.02° E $\sim 104.10^{\circ}$ E, which is shown in Fig. 3. Three periods of traffic prediction in different road segments are adopted: the first and last weekdays, other weekdays, and weekends. All the dataset was downloaded from https://outreach.didichuxing.com. Each record includes: 1) driver ID; 2) order ID; 3) timestamp; 4) latitude; 5) longitude; and 6) vehicle status. The raw data format is shown in Table 1.



Figure 3: Geographical areas in Chengdu, China

Item	Description	
Driver ID	Desensitization	
Order ID	Desensitization	
Timestamp	Unix epoch	
Latitude	dd.dddd	
Longitude	ddd.dddd	
Status	0: empty; 1: passenger; 2: parking	

Table 1: The raw data format

The average speed was taken as the experimental data, and it was processed according to two-time steps (15 and 30 min). The travel speed is calculated as follows:

$$d_{tra} = t_{int} \left(\frac{v_0}{2} + \sum_{i=1}^{k-1} v_i + \frac{v_k}{2} \right)$$
(31)
$$v_{tra} = \frac{d_{tra}}{t_k - t_0}$$
(32)

where d_{tra} is the travel distance, t_{int} is the fixed time interval, $v(\cdot)$ is the instantaneous speed, v_{tra} is the travel speed, and $t(\cdot)$ is the GPS positioning time.

The instantaneous speed *v* is calculated as follows:

$$v = \frac{r * \arccos\left\{\sin\left(x_{1}\right) * \sin\left(x_{2}\right) + \cos\left(x_{1}\right) * \cos\left(x_{2}\right) * \cos\left(y_{1} - y_{2}\right)\right\}}{|T_{1} - T_{2}|}$$
(33)

where r is the earth radius, x_1 and x_2 are the latitudes of the adjacent positions, y_1 and y_2 are the longitudes of the adjacent positions, and T_1 and T_2 are the time stamps of the adjacent positions.

Thus, the formula for calculating the average speed is as follows:

$$\overline{v}(t) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} v_{tra_i}(t)/n \tag{34}$$

where $\overline{v}(t)$ is the average speed during timeslot *t*, *n* is the number of travel speed samples, and $v_{tra_i}(t)$ is the *i*-th travel speed at timeslot *t*.

To evaluate the performance of the proposed method, RMSE, MAE and MAPE were used as experimental evaluation metrics:

$$RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i}^{n} \left(\hat{v}\left(t_{i}\right) - \overline{v}\left(t_{i}\right)\right)^{2}}$$
(35)

$$MAE = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i}^{n} \left| \hat{v}\left(t_{i}\right) - \overline{v}\left(t_{i}\right) \right|$$
(36)

$$MAPE = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i}^{n} \frac{\left| \hat{v}\left(t_{i}\right) - \overline{v}\left(t_{i}\right) \right|}{\overline{v}\left(t_{i}\right)}$$
(37)

where $\hat{v}(t_i)$, $\overline{v}(t_i)$ are the predicted value and estimated value at timeslot t_i , respectively, and n is the timeslot number.

5.2 Comparative Results

The proposed method was compared with state-of-the-art methods for traffic prediction.

(1) **RNN** [59]: Recurrent neural network, a typical deep learning framework that uses neurons with self-feedback to recursively process various time-series data, including traffic prediction tasks.

(2) **LSTM** [60]: Long short-term memory network, a deep learning framework based on time loops, is suitable for predicting traffic information based on time series with long intervals.

(3) **TGC-LSTM** [61]: Based on the deep learning framework of GCN and LSTM, the correlation norm of graph convolution features is added to the loss function to learn the interaction between road segments, and predict the traffic states in traffic networks.

(4) **DKFN** [25]: The KF model based on deep neural network predicts the traffic states of the road network through the combination modeling of self-dependence and adjacent node dependence, and KF is used to optimize the predictive values.

(5) **ST-GDN** [62]: Spatial-temporal graph diffusion network, which learns not only a resolutionaware self-attention network to encode the multi-level temporal signals, but also the comprehensive high-order dependencies across different regions.

(6) **HGC-NOM**: The proposed method finds the high-order spatial characteristics of different segments through HGCN, uses RLS to dynamically weigh the spatiotemporal influencing factors of traffic flow, and adopts EKF to predict the traffic states of the road network.

(7) **GC-NOM**: This is a comparison for HGC-NOM, which combines the spatiotemporal factors and used EKF to predict the traffic states of the road network, but only find the spatial characteristics of different segments through GCN.

Table 2 shows the performance of the compared methods under different time steps. The conclusions are as follows:

Method	15-min			30-min		
	RMSE	MAE	MAPE	RMSE	MAE	MAPE
RNN	0.0883	0.0689	19.17%	0.0883	0.0707	19.24%
LSTM	0.0862	0.0665	18.88%	0.0877	0.0690	19.02%
TGC-LSTM	0.0834	0.0609	16.49%	0.0845	0.0647	16.67%
DKFN	0.0822	0.0605	16.21%	0.1294	0.0956	24.69%
ST-GDN	0.0820	0.0593	16.28%	0.0840	0.0618	16.88%
HGC-NOM	0.0796	0.0531	14.93%	0.0829	0.0605	16.65%
GC-NOM	0.0860	0.0606	16.32%	0.0858	0.0621	17.33%

Table 2: Comparative analysis of predictive performance

(1) From the perspective of the time scales, the three evaluation metrics of the compared methods all increase with the increase of the time step. A possible explanation for this may be that more traffic

states belong to the same predictive unit with the expansion of the time step range, while the complexity and randomness of traffic environment bring some errors to the predictive evaluation.

(2) The proposed HGC-NOM method is superior to other compared methods in evaluation metrics. Especially at the 15-min time step, HGC-NOM has a more significant performance advantage. Compared with the second-best method, that is, ST-GDN, HGC-NOM achieves 3.0%, 11.7%, and 9.0% improvements in RMSE, MAE, and MAPE, respectively.

RNN and LSTM achieved good performance in traffic prediction based on temporal features. Since LSTM memorizes information through cell states, it has more advantages in predictive performance than RNN. By integrating GCN and LSTM, more accurate prediction results can be obtained. Compared with the single model LSTM, TGC-LSTM is more suitable for learning the spatiotemporal dependencies of the road network, and its performance is improved accordingly. DKFN utilizes the historical and spatial observation of adjacent nodes to dynamically adjust the weight coefficient of predictive model. In short-term (e.g., 15 min) traffic prediction, its performance is better than the previous three methods. Since KF is applied to linear systems, the randomness of traffic states increases with the increase of the time step, and the predictive performance significantly weakens under the 30-min time step. Compared to RNN, LSTM, TGC-LSTM, and DKFN, ST-GDN incorporates the global context enhanced region-wise explicit relevance into a graph diffusion paradigm to capture comprehensive high-order region dependencies. HGC-NOM achieved better performance than the above five methods. Meanwhile, the performance of HGC-NOM is also better than that of GC-NOM, which proves the efficiency of higher-order spatial features.

5.3 Feasibility

Combined with experimental data, the multiple regression equation in Section 4.2 contains three factors: (1) the average speed of the forward timeslot (AS-ft); (2) the average speed of the historical simultaneous timeslot (AS-hst); and (3) the higher-order spatial aggregation value of the forward timeslot (HSAV-ft). In order to demonstrate the influence of three factors on traffic prediction, according to the multiple regression equation, four influencing cases are selected. They respectively leave out the average speed of the forward timeslot (Miss-AS-ft), the average speed of the historical simultaneous timeslot (Miss-AS-hst), the higher-order spatial aggregation value of the forward timeslot (Miss-HSAV-ft), and without any missing factor (Normal-case).

In order to evaluate the predictive performance of different segments in road networks, we take the 15-min span as an example. The average speed during the rush hours (7 am–9 am and 5 pm–7 pm) in November, 2016 was selected. On this basis, three representative segments in a road network are taken (as shown in Table 3).

ID	Name	Category
1877	North third section of first ring road	Urban express road
1918	First section of renmin road	Main urban road
2271	Jiulidi south road	Secondary main road

 Table 3: Road segment description

The RMSE of four influencing cases based on HGC-NOM are showed in Figs. 4–6, the acronyms "f_weekdays" and "o_weekdays" represent the first and last weekdays, and other weekdays, respectively.

From the perspective of road segment, the performance of segment 1877 is better than that of the other two roads at various periods. We take the Normal-case of evening rush hours as example, compared with segment 1918, segment 1877 achieves 82.4%, 15.9%, and 0.8% improvements in f_weekdays, o_weekdays, and weekends, respectively. In contrast to segment 2271, segment 1877 achieves 67.9%, 22.7%, and 25.7% improvements in f_weekdays, o_weekdays, and weekends, respectively. The possible reason is that segment 1877 is an urban express road. Compared with the main urban road and secondary main road, traffic interference of traffic signal and non-motor vehicle is relatively less, which may improve the prediction accuracy.



Figure 4: Performance of segment 1877 in morning rush hours (a) and evening rush hours (b)



Figure 5: Performance of segment 1918 in morning rush hours (a) and evening rush hours (b)

From the temporal perspective, the predictive performance of the three segments in morning rush hours is better than the performance in evening rush hours, especially there are more errors during the evening rush hour in the first and last weekdays. A possible reason is the heavy traffic flow of commuters on weekdays, whereas people traveled relatively less on weekends and traffic congestion weakened. At the same time, people traveled less on weekends or during normal hours, so its predictive performance is significantly better than the same time on weekdays. From the perspective of the feature contribution of the four influencing cases, the larger the RMSE of the previous three cases, the greater the feature contribution to the proposed method. It can be seen that RMSE in the previous three cases are greater than those in the normal case, which verifies that the three influencing factors have different feature contributions to HGC-NOM. HSAV-ft contributes more to HGC-NOM in general, followed by AS-ft and AS-hst. At the same time, it is found that the influence of HSAV-ft weakens in the secondary main road, which may be that the correlated degree between the secondary main road and other types of road segments is relatively low.



Figure 6: Performance of segment 2271 in morning rush hours (a) and evening rush hours (b)

6 Conclusions

In this paper, we propose an optimized method of traffic prediction (named HGC-NOM). It incorporates the higher-order spatial aggregation model HGCN and EKF algorithm to address two issues: 1) the limitation of capturing the spatiotemporal evolution characteristics of traffic states and 2) the lower-order connectivity of spatial structures. Combined with the high-order spatial features captured by HGCN, HGC-NOM dynamically adjusts the weight coefficients of the multiple regression equation in spatiotemporal dimensions through RLS, and utilizes EKF to reduce the nonlinear impact of the traffic environment. Based on the traffic data in Chengdu, China, an experiment validating the proposed method is carried out, and the result indicates that HGC-NOM achieves high accuracy. However, there still exist limitations while applying the proposed method to large-scale road networks, in future we will work toward improving the adaptation of the proposed method on higher-order spatial correlations.

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