

A Survey of Urban Traffic Coordination Controls in Intelligent Transportation Systems

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Abstract—The urban traffic coordination controls (UTCCs) can make full use of the mutual advantages of intersections, which makes it can improve the traffic access capacity and decrease the possibility of traffic congestion in intersections. This paper gives an overview of UTCCs. After reviewing the concept of UTCCs, we survey the several main hot topics in UTCCs: the correlation degree analysis of intersections, the division approach of traffic control subareas and the objects of coordination. This paper provides a survey of urban traffic coordination controls with the goal of promoting research in this area and concludes with some comments on future research directions.

Keywords—Coordination; Urban traffic control; Intelligent transportation systems

I. INTRODUCTION

Traffic signal control is a very important research area in intelligent transportation systems (ITS) [1][2][3][4]. In recent years of development process, the development of traffic signal control is from manual control to automatic control, from fixed-time control to variable-time control, from non-responsive control to responsive control, from single isolated intersection control to traffic trunk road coordination control, then to regional coordinated signal control[5][6]. The urban traffic coordination control is a hot topic in traffic signal control. For a traffic control area, according to the traffic condition, the function of a control for an intersection is not only to meet the control of its own needs but also to coordinate with other intersections in order to realize the urban traffic coordination controls (UTCCs). Based on this, the UTCCs can play a very important role in dealing with the traffic congestion which is caused by one intersection. According to the change of the traffic information which is referred to traffic flow, mean speed, occupancy and so on in a traffic network, the UTCCs can make full use of the advantages of the intersections and balance the traffic flow of every intersection. The traffic access capacity of the traffic network can be improved by UTCCs.

With the growth of modern urban traffic and increase of the density of the road network, the correlation between the intersections is more and more obvious. For example, in a region or the whole city, an adjustment of the traffic signal in an intersection will often affect the traffic flow of neighboring several intersections. Furthermore, with the passage of time, an intersection congestion may gradually spread to the surrounding several intersections or intersections of the area.

The urban traffic coordination control is more and more welcomed by the researchers' attention.

In this paper, UTCCs are divided into three aspects, as shown in Figure 1. The first aspect is the correlation degree analysis of intersections. The second aspect which includes the static and dynamic division is the division approach of the traffic control subareas. The last aspect is the objects of coordination. The objects of coordination are divided into adjacent intersections, agents, bandwidth, route guidance and traffic control and so on.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section II, we provide a survey on UTCCs' recent development. In Section III, we discuss some comments on future research directions about UTCCs, followed by the final conclusion in Section IV.

II. URBAN TRAFFIC COORDINATION CONTROLS

A. The correlation degree analysis of intersections

The correlation degree analysis of intersections is the basis of UTCCs, also is the groundwork of the division for traffic control subarea and the selection of the coordinated methods. The main task of the correlation degree analysis is to analyze the coupling degree between intersections which directly determine whether the intersections need to coordinate.

Yagoda *et al.* [7] define the coupling between adjacent intersections as the ratio of the value of road traffic flow to the length of the road, and put forward whether to make coordination control according to the size of coupling degree between the adjacent intersections. Pinnell *et al.* [8] analyze the influence factors about the size of the correlation degree between adjacent intersections. Those factors include intersection spacing, signal phase design, traffic flow and so on. Transportation Research Board (TRB) [9] recommends using the Whitson model to calculate adjacent intersections' correlation degree. In order to obtain a comprehensive reflection of the correlation degree by the relating factors such as road length, the travel speed, traffic flow and vehicle steering ratio, TRB introduced road travel time, the maximum traffic flow and the average traffic flow of upstream intersections into the model. Ma *et al.* [10] make a correlation degree model which took a comprehensive consideration of the signal phase, the non-uniformity of traffic flows, intersection spacing and vehicle queue length. Furthermore, they analyzed

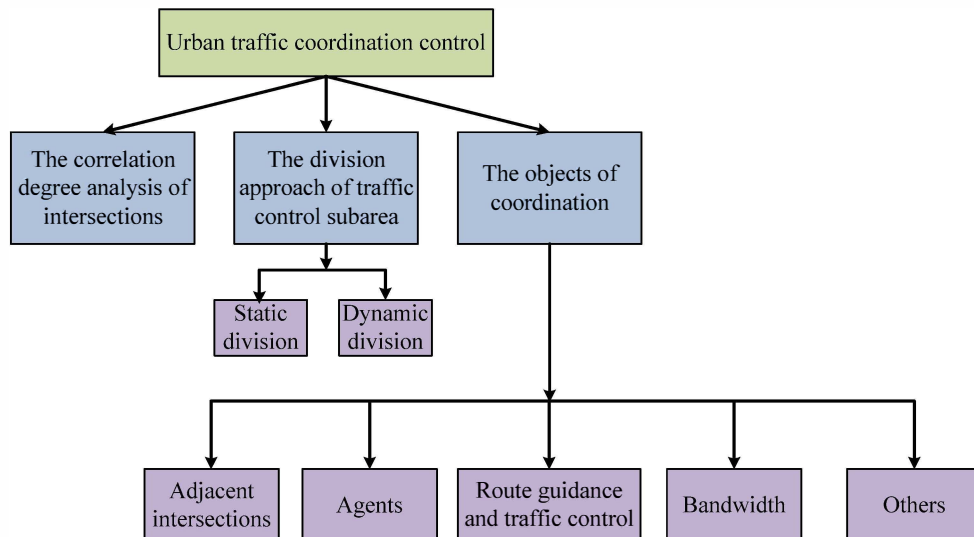


Fig.1 The classification of urban traffic coordination control

the effects of intersection spacing, vehicle queue length and the signal phase on correlation degree of Routes. Lu *et al.* [11] put forward a quantitative traffic description parameter which is called the adjacent intersections correlation degree. What's more, they gave the definition of mix correlation degree between multiple intersections and the calculation formula of this correlation degree.

B. Division of traffic control subareas

The division of traffic control subareas is an important topic in urban traffic coordination control. The appropriate division of traffic control subareas plays a crucial role in control plan implementation, operation efficiency, reliability of the urban traffic coordination control system.

Walinchus [12] first proposes the concept of the traffic control subarea. Walinchus thought that the dividing line of the control subareas should be in administrative boundaries or a place where the flow characteristics and road characteristics are greatly changed. The necessity of the division of control subarea is stated in [12]. Some researchers [13][14][15] summarize the influences in the division of control subarea. These influences include the consistency of the traffic condition, the administrative division, the road geometry characteristic, the neighboring intersection spacing, road traffic flow speed, traffic flow, intersection signal timing and so on.

The division methods for control subareas are mainly divided into the static and dynamic division way.

1) Static division

Static division is that the intersections and road sections in subarea is fixed in quite a long period after the division.

Both the Traffic Network Study Tool (TRANSYT) [16] and the Split Cycle and Offset optimization Technique (SCOOT) [17][18] use static division control strategy. According to the traffic flow, the properties of roads, relationship of locations and the demand of coordination control in control area, designers should fix the program of the

division in advance. However, the Sydney Coordinated Adaptive Traffic System (SCATS) [19] [20] adopt semi-dynamical division control strategy. It should determine the minimum control unit in advance which is the basic unit of the urban control system. And according to the differences between the control signal cycles of the control subareas, the separation and merger of the minimum control units can be achieved by a vote counting method.

2) Dynamic division

The traditional method for static division of traffic signal control subarea cannot adapt the rapid change of the traffic flow in urban traffic network. So some researches study on the dynamic division for the urban traffic signal control subarea. Dynamic division is that the intersections and road sections in subarea is variable based on the traffic condition in a traffic control area.

Based on the consideration that the factors which affect the coordination between intersections are not independent except the static factors like the space between intersections, Liu *et al.* [21] analyze the related attributes, which include the intersection space, the difference of intersection cycles, traffic flow and the discrete degree of traffic flow, and propose a new method with grey correlation degree for traffic subarea division. Li *et al.* [22] put forward the application of the fuzzy reasoning theory to divide the control subareas and propose the concept of coordination coefficient which is used to express the size of the demand of coordination control between intersections. The coordination coefficient can be calculated by fuzzy reasoning method and the judgment rule of the division of traffic control subareas with coordination coefficient is presented. Through the classification of urban traffic congestion, an idea, which is based on the static regional control, about using different judgment standards for dynamic zoning control is proposed [23]. Shang *et al.* [24] propose a traffic control subarea division method which based on the traffic saturation, the cycle and the distance between adjacent intersections. The paper [25] put forward a method with Back Propagation (BP) neural network

for traffic control subarea division. The input of the neural network is the traffic flow, distances between intersections and circles. The neural network's output is the coordination coefficient of the adjacent intersections. This paper [26] discusses automatic traffic control subarea division process which on the basis of the cycle, the distance or the traffic flow respectively. After analyzing the characteristics of the big city traffic signal control system, Shi *et al.* points out that it is necessary to classify the control area dynamically according to the variation of real-time traffic flow [27]. Zang *et al.* analyze the necessity of dynamic division for urban traffic signal subarea and set up a new optimization control model [28]. Duan *et al.* use the hypergraph to express the road network and achieve the control subarea division through hypergraph partitioning algorithm [29]. Lu *et al.* establish a control subarea division model by using the quantitative analysis method about the correlation degree between the adjacent intersections [30]. Yang *et al.* put forward the concept about the subarea of cycle and the ratio of phase offset to split. Based on this, a dynamic division method of the traffic control zone is presented in detail [31]. After confirming the control zone associated with the oversaturated area computing the correlation degree between the intersections, Yang *et al.* propose an approach for traffic control subarea division under oversaturated condition [32]. Ma *et al.* design a traffic subarea division expert system using fuzzy logic. What's more, some characteristics of traffic subarea division system are analyzed [33]. These characteristics include the topological of roads, statistical traffic flow, some abnormal states and so on. Guo *et al.* [34] consider the following influencing factors of the traffic signal subarea division: distance between intersections, major road traffic flow, major road traffic capacity and signal cycle. Based on this, a new traffic signal control division approach using fuzzy C-means clustering is presented in detail. Li *et al.* [35] point out that the rules of the traffic signal subarea division are the distance, the cycle, the traffic flow, the saturation, split and phase offset. And an automatic method of the division and integration of traffic signal control subarea based on distance and cycle rule is put forward. Considering the travel time and incident workload, Yun *et al.* put forward an optimization model of traffic networks subarea division for incident management systems [36].

III. THE OBJECTS OF COORDINATION

A variety of methods and techniques have been developed to coordinate urban traffic signal control. In general, these methods and techniques can be sorted into the following categories based on the objects of coordination.

A. Adjacent intersections

The study of the control in an isolated intersection cannot meet the control demand of the ITS. The coordination model and algorithm of adjacent intersections is a very important research field in ITS. Li *et al.* [37] propose algorithms based on the fuzzy rules and High-order generalized neural networks for two adjacent intersections. Dotoli *et al.* [38] adopt an optimization model to coordinate two adjacent intersections located in an urban area. But they only consider the coordination algorithms of two adjacent intersections. For the coordination of two more intersections, considering that it may

cause parking times and operational delays, if each natural intersection is regarded as a minimal control unit for a bi-direction traffic truck line, Zhou *et al.* [39] put forward a conception of new intersection. This new intersection is consists of two or three natural intersections which correlate with each other. And the coordinated controller using Fuzzy control is adopted to control adjacent new intersections. Li *et al.* put forward a new coordinated signal control algorithm based on mobile agent technology to coordinate between intersections, regions, vehicles and video cameras [40].

B. Agents

Wang points out "from control algorithms to control agents", because the agent-based control methods provide a cheap, reliable and flexible approach for intelligent, effective control and management of traffic and transportation systems in connected environments [41]. One control agent cannot meet the control demand of ITS, so there are two or more control agents in a urban traffic signal control system. The coordination between control agents is a hot topic in ITS. Bazzan points out that the coordination of traffic signal agents is dependent on the stability of the traffic conditions [42]. If the local traffic condition changes frequently, the coordination is reached slowly. In [42], a coordination concept which makes use of techniques of evolutionary game theory is used. In this coordination concept, intersections in an arterial are modeled as individually-motivated agents or players who should take into account not only their own local goals but also a global one. Katwijk *et al.* use the concepts form domain of agent and multi-agent systems to describe the traffic management instruments which could just as easily be expressed as cooperating agents in a heterogeneous multi-agent environment [43]. Considering the coordination of multi-junction control, Zhao *et al.* put forward a coordination method based on multi-agent technology to coordinate the traffic when traffic jams occur [44]. Liu *et al.* do some study about traffic flow area coordination control. In this paper, there are two types of Agents: intersection agent and segment agent and a coordination algorithm for intersection agent are proposed [45]. Du proposes an urban traffic coordination control system by using multi-agent and game-theory. Each agent in this system chooses the appropriate strategy according to the traffic information which is has and enables their benefit to achieve Nash balance [46]. Some other papers study on coordination of traffic signal control using game theory [47][48][49]. Li *et al.* improve the traffic signal control agent with Q-learning method. Based on this, a new approach which combines game theory and society rules is proposed to coordinate two traffic signal control agents [50]. Wei *et al.* take a traffic signal control agent as a control agent and adopt a approach of distributed reinforcement learning to the coordinated traffic signal control system based on multi-agent [51]. Dai *et al.* propose a multi-agent coordination model to improve the efficiency and relieve traffic congestion [52].

C. Route guidance and traffic control

How to coordinate the traffic signal control and route guidance is one important research in ITS. The route guidance usually based on traffic assignment theoretically, so the study on coordination between traffic control and guidance has a close relationship to the study on combining traffic control and

assignment. The thought of integrating the control and route guidance was proposed by Allsop[53], Maher and Akcelik[54], and Gartner[55]. From then on, some papers study on model and algorithm about combining traffic signal control and route guidance [56][57][58][59][60]. Some researchers also study on the coordination model and method between the urban traffic control system and route guidance system [61][62][63]. Dai *et al.* try to coordinate the fixed timing control of different time of the day and outdoor guidance system by assuming that the signal timing parameters can be regulated in a week interval according to statistical intersection delays, and the guidance information is explicit traffic condition estimation with fuzzy matching from congestion measurement of intersections [64].

D. Bandwidth

The arterial bandwidth coordination control is an important way for urban traffic signal control systems. Mogan and Little *et al.* put forward the control signal timing design method for arterial bandwidth coordination control and set up the MAXBAND model which is a mixed integer linear programming model[65][66][67]. Based on the MAXBAND model, Gartner and Stamatiadis *et al.* propose the MULTIBAND model whose bandwidth is variable [68][69][70]. Tian *et al.* put forward an arterial bandwidth coordination control method based on the division of traffic signal control subarea [71]. Zang *et al.* propose a control method optimizing phase offset for neighboring intersections on arterial road by using improved genetic algorithm (GA) in order to realize hierarchical cooperative control [72]. Shen *et al.* put forward a novel traffic arterial dynamic bidirectional green wave coordinate control strategy by exchanging messages and cooperating between centre coordination agent and local control agents [73]. Ma *et al.* [74] put forward a phase sequence optimization model for coordinating signalized intersections in arterial systems based on NEMA phase which is design by National Electrical Manufacturers Association for phase configuration in software and hardware devices' TS-2 standards [75]. To maximize the possibility for vehicles in each direction along the arterial road, Kong *et al.* present a new intelligent control strategy whose structure contains two layers: the coordination layer and the control layer [76]. Zhou uses arterial road coordination control method to map out each signal coordination control program and then uses graphic method for each phase of the traffic signal [77].

E. Others

There are also some others objects for urban traffic coordination controls in an urban control system. Porche *et al.* try to maximize the whole control system performance by coordinating local adaptive traffic signal controllers and propose a multi-layer approach for controlling the infrastructure in an urban street network [78]. Papageorgiou *et al.* point out that the fixed-time coordinated control and coordinated traffic-responsive strategies cannot meet well the control demand of saturated traffic conditions [79]. In practice, the optimal results which calculate in theory may not be feasible to actually achieve these optimal performances, but the results maybe show that some substantial improvements are possible by simply using the current physical roadway infrastructures more effectively. Considering this, Shah *et al.* develop heuristic algorithms and an optimization model using

the space-time network to solve this problem [80]. Qian *et al.* use a fuzzy coordinated control method to solve the congestion problem in Chang'an Street in Beijing. What's more, the use k -NN method to forecast the traffic flows in 2-min interval to overcome hysteresis problem in fuzzy method [81]. Yang *et al.* adopt a linear program to solve the problem of optimizing and coordinating city area traffic signal control [82]. Shen *et al.* put forward the road network traffic intelligent coordination control technique with bus priority by regarding the whole road network as a large-scale system and the intersections as subsystems [83]. After analyzing the loop characteristic of partially urban road network in China, Ma *et al.* propose urban loop-road traffic coordination control system based on split-layer parallel cusp catastrophe particle swarm optimization algorithm to reduce delay and the stopping rate in the region [84]. Gündogan *et al.* present a low-cost real-time coordinated traffic signal control system based on a pattern recognition method using feed forward artificial neural networks for megacities [85].

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We have reviewed the urban traffic coordination controls in the current literature. Since much research on urban traffic signal coordination controls is ongoing, this survey is by no means complete. In the current literature, most urban traffic signal problems are studied in algorithms or models about several intersections or control agents. Seldom consider the traffic signal coordination in the whole city or a big region. The reason for this is the real-time problem of the urban traffic control system. It is very time-consuming for processing the traffic data of a whole city or a big region and running the control algorithms based on one or two computers. The real-time demand of control system cannot be guaranteed. In order to ensure the real-time demand of the UTCCs, the following problems need to be solved: the problem of the massive traffic data real-time processing problem, the runtime of the control algorithms or systems and reliability problems.

An urban traffic coordination control system based on cloud computing can solve these problems related with real-time. The future research may be involved in studying how to build such a system which can be called "Intelligent traffic cloud". This system not only can store and process massive traffic data in time but also can coordinate different intersections by parallel computing. There are several following key problems that "Intelligent traffic cloud" needs to be considered.

- 1) How find the intersections or regions which need to be coordinated with others in a city? It is unnecessary for every intersection or region to coordinate with others. But we should know whether the intersection or region need to coordination with others according to traffic conditions.
- 2) How to mine the useful information which can be used for the coordination from huge traffic data? The traffic data for a city is massive and find the useful data for the coordinated intersections or regions is a key problem for coordination.
- 3) How to realize the parallel computing? There may be several intersections or regions need to be coordinated in one

time. The system needs to deal with these coordination problems at the same time.

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