

T-RAPPI: A Machine Learning Model for the Corredor Metropolitano

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Abstract: The public transportation system in Lima, Peru, faces significant challenges, including bus shortages, long queues, and severe traffic congestion, which diminish service quality. These issues arise from a lack of modern management tools capable of efficiently handling the Metropolitano bus system. This paper introduces T-RAPPI, a predictive model based on Random Forest, developed to estimate bus arrival times at Metropolitano stations. Using historical data on bus arrivals and operational parameters, the model achieved exceptional accuracy, with an R^2 score of 0.9998 and a MAPE of 0.0554%, demonstrating its robustness and ability to minimize prediction errors. The implementation of T-RAPPI represents a substantial improvement over existing systems, providing operators with data-driven insights to optimize route planning and bus allocation. Additionally, the model's integration into the mobile application Metropolitano + enhances the commuting experience by offering users real-time bus arrival predictions, reducing uncertainty and wait times. Future extensions of this work could include incorporating real-time traffic and weather data to further enhance prediction accuracy and expanding the model to other transit systems in Lima and beyond.

1 INTRODUCTION


Traffic congestion in Metropolitan Lima ranks among the worst in Latin America, causing an average delay of 24 minutes for every 10 kilometers traveled (Gonzales, 2023). This situation worsens during peak hours, with average travel time per kilometer reaching 33 minutes. The public transportation system, specifically the Metropolitano, faces various issues, such as insufficient buses, long queues, and disorganization at stations (Infraestructura Vial 2024). At a broader level, congestion in Latin American cities like Bogotá, Mexico City, and Rio de Janeiro is also affected by infrastructure and operational factors that hinder the efficiency of public transportation (Calatayud et al., 2021).


The lack of appropriate technological tools within the Metropolitano limits its ability to efficiently manage passenger flow and operations, which affects the user experience and increases operating costs and reduces productivity (Rivas et al., 2022).


Implementing technological solutions could significantly enhance operational efficiency, providing users with a more comfortable and reliable service.

In this context, several Latin American capitals, such as Bogotá and Mexico City, have implemented advanced technologies, including mobile applications and real-time tracking systems to efficiently manage public transportation (Porras, 2023). Applications like TransMilenio (Colombia) and Transantiago (Chile) serve as established solutions in major regional capitals. Similarly, independent applications like Moovit provide routes for various public transportation services in over 3,400 cities across 112 countries (Santos & Nikolaev, 2021).

Despite the success of some applications, many existing solutions still have limitations. Applications like Transantiago lack advanced fleet management and user experience personalization technologies. Others, like Moovit, do not provide real-time data

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with high precision, relying only on estimations. This generates user frustration and reduces adoption.

Responding to the need for technological tools that optimize Metropolitano's transportation service, we developed a Machine Learning model called T-RAPPI, based on the Random Forest technique. This model aims to improve user experience and optimize the operational management of the Metropolitano system. T-RAPPI will provide estimated arrival times for buses, trained using historical records of bus arrivals and departures across various routes within the Metropolitano. This will provide valuable data both for users, who can plan their trips better, and operators, who can optimize route planning and bus allocation according to projected demand.

This paper covers related work in Section 2, which laid the groundwork for our solution proposal. Section 3 details the model's design (architecture, dataset, indicators, and interfaces). Section 4 presents the evaluations conducted on the solution and the results obtained. Section 5 discusses the test results, concluding with research findings and acknowledgments in Sections 6 and 7.

2 RELATED WORKS

In terms of Machine Learning (ML) models used to predict transportation demand, studies like those by Blättler and Imhof (2023) and AlKhereibi et al. (2023) highlight the effectiveness of the Random Forest (RF) method in these tasks. Blättler and Imhof employed this model to predict Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) in rural areas of Switzerland, utilizing variables such as population and proximity to train stations, achieving an explanation of 25% of the variability in services. Meanwhile, AlKhereibi et al. used RF to predict subway demand, based on historical and geospatial data related to land use, achieving an R^2 of 98.8% and a KGE efficiency of 96.93%. Both studies underscore Random Forest's capability to handle large volumes of data and complex variables.

On the other hand, Graham et al. (2023) and Hu et al. (2022) focused on using different ML techniques to predict travel times and classify passengers. Graham et al. compared methods like RF and Support Vector Machines (SVM) to estimate passenger flows and travel times, concluding that RF was the most effective according to metrics like RMSE and MAPE. Hu et al. used Backpropagation Neural Network (BPNN) to classify passengers in Beijing, achieving an accuracy of 95.4%, demonstrating ML's potential

to improve public transportation management by identifying behavior patterns.

Regarding the prediction of occupancy and wait times in transportation, Glück et al. (2022) and Ding et al. (2022) presented innovative ML-based solutions. Glück et al. used K-nearest neighbors (KNN) to predict vehicle occupancy in real-time, reaching an accuracy of 80% in short-term predictions. Meanwhile, Ding et al. developed the Du-Bus system, which estimates bus wait times without GPS data, achieving an MAE of 0.78 minutes. Both studies highlight ML's potential to enhance public transport user experience through precise and real-time predictions.

Finally, Müller-Hannemann et al. (2022), Yin and Zhang (2023), and Imoize et al. (2022) explored how ML techniques can optimize route planning and resource management in transport systems. The first study utilized Support Vector Regression (SVR) to assess the robustness of transportation schedules, overcoming traditional simulation limitations with a Relative Mean Error below 1%. Yin and Zhang proposed a method to predict bus travel time based on driver driving styles, improving predictive accuracy by using trip histories. Lastly, Imoize et al. focused on an adaptive traffic management system based on IoT and ML for smart cities, which optimizes traffic flow and reduces accidents. These studies underline how ML can improve both planning and operational efficiency in public transport and urban traffic.

3 SYSTEM DESIGN

3.1 Architecture

The RF T-RAPPI model will be integrated into a mobile application called 'Metropolitano +', allowing guides and users to view the model's predictions, including upcoming bus arrivals at stations. This application will be developed in Flutter and will be available for mobile devices with the Android operating system. The model's processed data will be managed in the cloud using Firebase services. The structure of the application is as follows:

- **Users:** The application is designed for two types of users: regular users and service guides. Both will connect to the application via an Android device with network connectivity.
- **'Metropolitano +':** This application will contain the ML model and present model-fed reports on bus arrivals and general service information.

- **Flutter/Dart:** These will be the framework and language used for developing the application's front end, targeting Android.
- **T-RAPPI Model:** The T-RAPPI model will be integrated into the back end, processing data stored in the database to generate predictions. Through the construction of decision trees, the model will deliver precise results on bus arrivals at stations.
- **Firebase Cloud Storage:** Firebase's cloud database service will store application information, including credentials and data for various modules, as well as the datasets that enable the T-RAPPI model to make predictions.
- **Firebase ML Kit:** A Firebase service for ML model development in mobile applications.
- **Firebase Authenticator:** Manages user credentials for application access.
- **Firebase Hosting:** Manages the deployment of the mobile application.

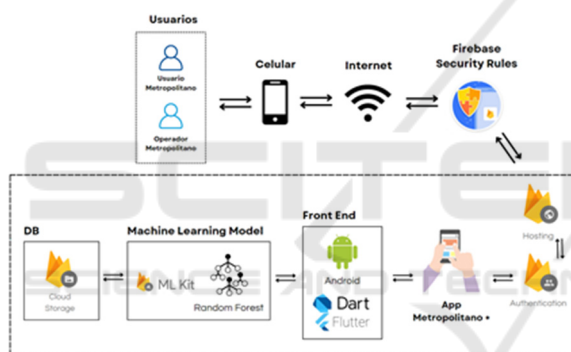


Figure 1: Physic Architecture of the 'Metropolitano +' app.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Dataset

For developing the T-RAPPI model, a dataset containing detailed information on the arrival and departure times of Metropolitano buses at various stations was used. This data was provided by Lima and Callao's Urban Transport Authority (ATU) via their transparency portal, covering the period from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, and includes records of scheduled bus arrival and departure times at different stations, as well as service frequency by line and schedule.

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To ensure the data was suitable for modeling, a thorough preprocessing pipeline was applied. Records with missing arrival or departure times were removed to prevent inaccuracies in predictions. Outliers, such as extreme arrival times caused by reporting errors or exceptional events, were identified and excluded.

Once cleaned, the dataset was transformed to make it suitable for the RF algorithm. Categorical variables, including bus lines, station names, and service types, were encoded numerically using one-hot encoding. Numerical features, such as time intervals and station occupancy rates, were normalized to ensure consistent scaling, enhancing the algorithm's ability to process the data effectively.

A temporal index was also introduced by aggregating records based on date and time intervals. This adjustment allowed the model to capture patterns related to peak and off-peak hours, significantly improving its ability to predict future events based on historical trends.

The data was divided into two subsets for modeling:

- **70% of the dataset** was allocated for training, allowing the RF algorithm to learn patterns from historical data and develop predictive rules based on decision tree construction.
- **The remaining 30%** was reserved as a test set to evaluate the model's predictive ability on unseen data. This split ensures the model generalizes well and does not overfit the training data. Evaluation metrics like accuracy and MSE were used to assess its performance.

Additionally, a 5-fold cross-validation was used for a more robust evaluation, ensuring that the model's performance is not dependent on a single data partition.

3.2.2 Model

The T-RAPPI model is a prediction system based on an RF algorithm, designed to forecast bus arrival times at Lima's Metropolitano stations. It utilizes historical data on bus arrivals and departures, station occupancy, and other contextual variables like traffic.

The workflow follows a structured approach, starting with data preprocessing, feature extraction, and model construction.

During preprocessing, Metropolitano data is cleaned and prepared by removing missing or anomalous values and transforming categorical variables into numerical ones through encoding. Numerical features are normalized, and the data is split into training, test, and validation sets without mixing examples. As the dataset contains temporal data, a temporal index is created to improve the model's accuracy in predicting future sequences.

The RF algorithm was chosen after conducting a comprehensive benchmarking process involving several predictive modeling techniques, including Gradient Boosting Machines (GBMs), SVR, and neural networks. RF excelled in accuracy and robustness when handling noisy data, offered interpretability by providing clear insights into feature importance, and demonstrated computational efficiency on moderate-sized datasets, making it ideal for real-time applications. Additionally, its resistance to overfitting and versatility in handling mixed data types (numerical and categorical) make it the optimal choice for predicting arrival times across diverse operational scenarios.

3.2.3 Training

The training of the T-RAPPI model is based on the RF algorithm, a supervised learning method that combines the results of multiple decision trees to improve accuracy and reduce the risk of overfitting. In each iteration, the model selects a random subset of features and data to train several independent decision trees (bagging). The trees then vote on the final prediction, making the model more robust against errors or noise in the data.

The hyperparameters adjusted in this process include:

- **n_estimators:** the number of trees in the forest. A higher number of trees improves model stability, although it increases computation time.
- **max_depth:** the maximum depth of each tree, controlling how extensively each tree can grow. A very high value could lead to overfitting, while a low value could underfit the model.
- **min_samples_split:** the minimum number of samples required to split a node, which ensures that nodes do not split when samples are insufficient.
- **max_features:** The maximum number of features selected to split at each node. This parameter controls the randomness of the forest and improves its generalization ability.

Regarding the computational resources used for training, the T-RAPPI model was executed on Google Colaboratory (free plan), which provided access to 1.5 GB of RAM (out of 12.7 GB available) and 32.5 GB of disk space (out of 107.7 GB available). During the training process, GPUs were not used, as the free plan was sufficient for the current scope of the project. However, future improvements, such as integrating real-time data or scaling the model, could benefit from utilizing more advanced resources like GPUs for faster processing.

To ensure the robustness and reliability of the T-RAPPI model, a 5-fold cross-validation process is implemented. In this technique, the dataset is divided into five subsets, and the model is trained five times, each time using a different subset as the test set and the others as the training set. This process helps prevent the model from overfitting the training data.

3.2.4 Evaluation and Statical Analysis

Table 1: Metrics used to evaluate the T-RAPPI model.

#	Metric	Description	Formule
1	MAPE	Evaluates the average error as a percentage between predicted and actual values, useful for understanding the magnitude of relative error.	$MAPE = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \left \frac{y_i - \hat{y}_i}{y_i} \right \times 100 \quad (1)$
2	R ²	Measures the proportion of variance explained by the model, indicating how well the model fits the data. An R ² close to 1 implies a good fit.	$MAPE = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \left \frac{y_i - \hat{y}_i}{y_i} \right \times 100 \quad (2)$
3	RMSE	Measures the magnitude of prediction errors, penalizing larger errors by squaring them.	$RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (\hat{y}_i - y_i)^2} \quad (3)$
4	MAE	Is the average of absolute errors between predictions and actual values. Unlike RMSE, it does not penalize large errors as severely.	$MAE = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \hat{y}_i - y_i \quad (4)$
5	Max Error	Measures the maximum absolute difference between predicted and actual values in the dataset.	$Max\ Error = \max_{i=1} y_i - \hat{y}_i \quad (5)$
6	Explained Variance	Measures the proportion of total variance in the data explained by the model. A higher value implies a better model fit.	$Explained\ Variance = 1 - \frac{Var(y - \hat{y})}{Var(y)} \quad (6)$
7	Median Absolute Error	Measures the median of absolute errors between predictions and actual values.	$MedAE = mediana(y_i - \hat{y}_i) \quad (7)$

4 RESULTS

To model the variation in travel times within the Metropolitano system, we used an approach based on the RF algorithm. This model, named T-RAPPI, is suitable for regression problems, as it is robust against outliers and capable of capturing complex, non-linear relationships.

The dataset used to train the T-RAPPI model includes multiple relevant features for predicting variation, such as variables like SERVICE, PROG. TIME MINUTES, VISUAL OCCUPANCY, among others. The target variable, VARIATION, was used to assess how well the T-RAPPI model can predict the differences between actual and scheduled times.

To evaluate T-RAPPI's effectiveness, we used the metrics detailed in the previous section. The values obtained are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: T-RAPPI model Parameters.

Metric	Value
MAE	0.0062
RMSE	0.0912
MAPE	0.0554%
R^2	0.9998
Max Error	4.0
Explained Variance Score	1.0
MedAE	0.0

- The R^2 score of 0.9998 indicates that the model is able to explain nearly all variability in the data, suggesting that the predictions are extremely accurate.
- The MAE of 0.0062 and RMSE of 0.0912 confirm that the average error in the predictions is very low.
- The MAPE of 0.0554% indicates that the percentage error is less than 0.1% on average, a strong indicator of a highly accurate model.
- The Max Error of 4.0 shows that the greatest absolute error between predictions and actual values was 4 units, which is reasonable given the target variable's range.
- The Explained Variance Score of 1.0 and the Median Absolute Error of 0.0 reinforce that the model captures nearly all information in the data without significant errors.

4.1 Graphics

Below, we present graphs that demonstrate the effectiveness and results of the T-RAPPI model:

Scatter Plot of Predictions vs. Actual Values: This plot shows the relationship between the model's predictions and the actual values. Ideally, the points should align with the diagonal line representing a perfect prediction. In this case, the predictions are very close to the line, indicating a high degree of accuracy.

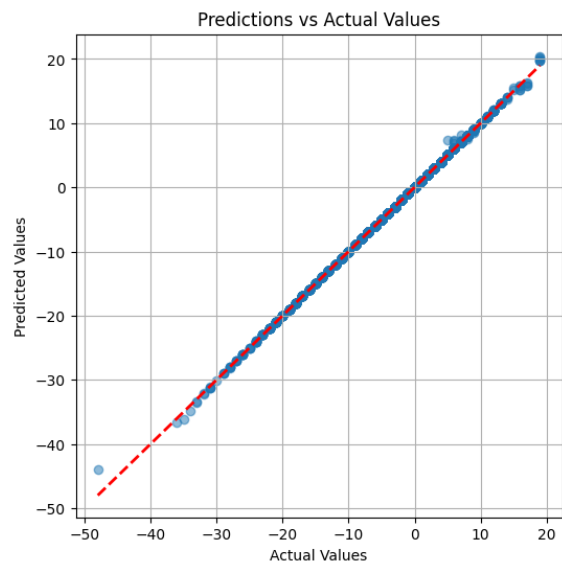


Figure 2: Scatter Plot of Predictions vs. Real Values.

Error Histogram (Residuals): This plot shows the distribution of prediction errors. The errors are symmetrically distributed around 0, suggesting that the model does not exhibit bias towards overestimations or underestimations.

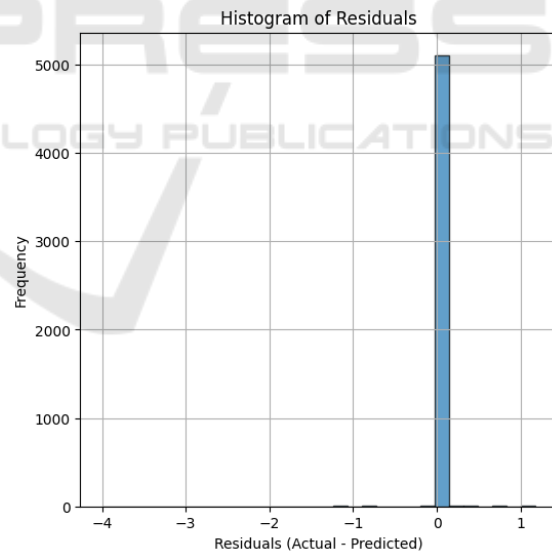


Figure 3: Error Histogram.

Feature Importance Chart: Highlights the most relevant variables in the model. REFERENCE and STATUS are the key contributors, while other features, grouped as Other Features, showed minimal impact on predictions. This approach simplifies visualization and confirms the evaluation of all variables.

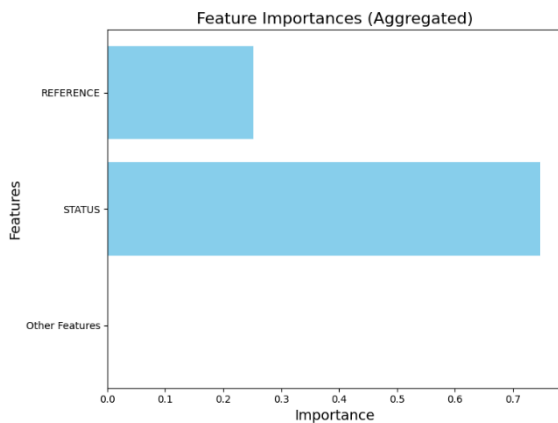


Figure 4: Feature Importance Chart.

RMSE Chart by Real Value Intervals: This chart shows RMSE across different intervals of the target variable. The model maintains low error across all value ranges.

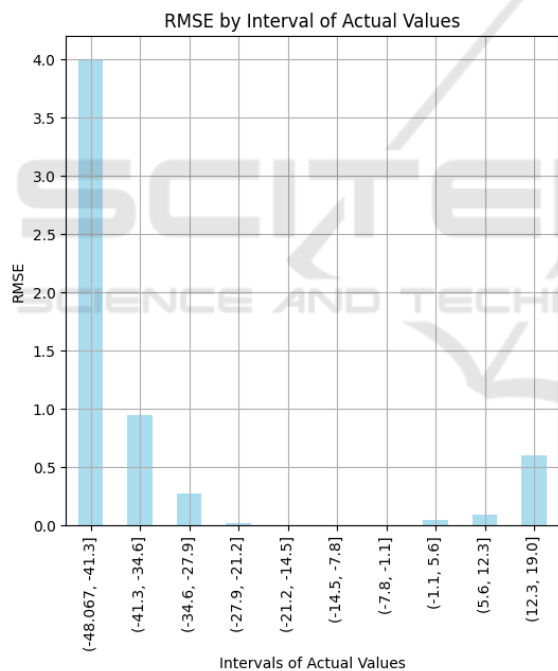


Figure 5: RMSE Chart by Real Value Intervals.

4.2 Cross Validation

To evaluate the model's generalization ability and avoid overfitting on the training data, we performed 5-fold cross-validation. In each iteration, one subset is used as the test set while the other four serve as training sets. This process is repeated five times, so each subset serves as the test set once. Finally, results from the five iterations are averaged, providing a

more robust and representative assessment of the model's performance.

The cross-validation results showed some variability in MSE across folds. Below are the key results:

- Average MSE: 0.0323
- Standard Deviation of MSE: 0.0292

The following bar chart visualizes the MSE obtained in each of the five folds during cross-validation:

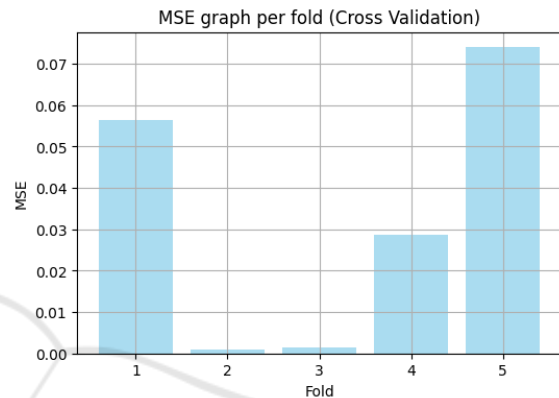


Figure 6: MSE graph per fold (Cross Validation).

In this graph, each bar represents the MSE of a specific fold, allowing us to observe how error varies across different data subsets.

The cross-validation results reinforce that the Random Forest model performs well on most data subsets, although certain specific folds (folds 1 and 5) exhibited higher errors. These results suggest that the model has a good generalization capability, but it might benefit from further fine-tuning of hyperparameters or additional analysis of data in folds with higher errors. Overall, the model has shown to be robust and precise in predicting the variable VARIATION.

5 DISCUSSIONS

The results obtained with the T-RAPPI model, based on RF, indicate a significant improvement in predicting bus arrival times for Lima's Metropolitano system. This outcome provides a modern and efficient solution to the historical lack of advanced technological tools for public transportation management in the city.

5.1 Implications of the Results

The predictive model developed offers a clear improvement in the ability to accurately forecast bus arrival times at Metropolitano stations, with an R^2 of 0.9998, indicating that nearly all data variability is explained by the model. These results significantly enhance the operational management of the Metropolitano system, allowing for more efficient planning by operators. Users also benefit, as they gain access to precise arrival time information, improving their experience and reducing frustration from long waiting times.

5.2 Comparison with Other Studies

Direct comparisons between T-RAPPI and previous studies are limited due to differences in datasets and contexts. For example, Glück et al. (2022) used KNN to predict vehicle occupancy with 80% accuracy, highlighting the challenges of high accuracy in complex systems. T-RAPPI, however, demonstrated better accuracy in predicting bus arrival times, showing the suitability of the RF algorithm for operational data with temporal dependencies.

Other studies, like those by Blättler and Imhof (2023) and AlKhereibi et al. (2023), focus on geospatial data, while T-RAPPI uses historical operational records from Lima's Metropolitano system, tailoring it to the city's unique conditions. Though direct comparisons are difficult, T-RAPPI highlights the versatility of Random Forest across different data types and contexts.

In conclusion, the differences in datasets and objectives highlight the diversity of approaches in public transportation research, with T-RAPPI contributing by effectively utilizing historical operational data for arrival time prediction within Lima's transit system.

5.3 Utility in an Operational Environment

The T-RAPPI model has direct applicability in the operational environment of the Metropolitano. By integrating it into the 'Metropolitano +' mobile application, the model can be used by both Metropolitano guides and users. Guides can use predictions to optimize bus allocation, manage service frequencies, and respond more quickly to passenger demand variations. Meanwhile, users benefit from the ability to plan their trips with greater certainty, reducing waiting times and the stress associated with service uncertainty.

A broader application of this type of model could be considered in terms of improving not only the efficiency of transportation systems but also resource optimization in other public service systems. For example, in the context of emergency management or urban planning, where response times and resource distribution could benefit from robust predictive models.

5.4 Future Perspective

One key challenge is its reliance on historical data, which may reduce accuracy in unexpected situations, such as sudden traffic disruptions, extreme weather, or operational anomalies. To improve the model's adaptability, integrating real-time data on traffic and weather conditions would be a valuable enhancement, enabling more accurate predictions in dynamic scenarios.

Future extensions could also explore applying the model to other transit lines in Lima or adapting it to different cities. However, this would require addressing challenges such as differences in data availability, transit systems, and urban layouts, which may demand adjustments to the model's features and preprocessing methods.

Despite these challenges, T-RAPPI provides a solid foundation for advancing urban transit management. With further refinements and the inclusion of new data sources, it has the potential to become a more versatile tool for improving public transportation systems across different regions.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This study introduces and evaluates T-RAPPI, a Random Forest-based model designed to predict bus arrival times in Lima's Metropolitano transportation system. The model achieves high accuracy, with an R^2 of 0.9998 and an extremely low average error, showcasing its robustness and effectiveness. Its impact lies in improving operational planning and user experience by providing precise predictions that aid decision-making for system operators and users, optimizing resources and reducing waiting times.

Key advantages of the model include its ability to handle large data volumes and its flexibility to adapt to various operational scenarios, making it a valuable tool for transportation systems with similar characteristics. However, a noted limitation is its reliance on historical and operational data, which may reduce accuracy in the face of extraordinary events or sudden changes in traffic conditions.

The T-RAPPI model is integrated into the 'Metropolitano +' mobile application, ensuring usability for both operators and end-users. This integration enables operators to make more informed decisions and improve service efficiency, while users can better plan their trips.

Future work suggests incorporating real-time variables, such as weather and traffic conditions, to enhance the model's accuracy. Additionally, expanding its application to other public transportation systems in Lima and other cities could provide a more comprehensive and robust solution for urban transportation management.

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