Application of a parking enforcement system using smartphones

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Abstract: - To date, parking enforcement systems have only been used by parking enforcement authorities, who detect and penalize violators. This paper introduces a modified version of the parking enforcement system utilizing smartphones that allows ordinary citizens to report parking violators to parking enforcement officers. The procedures of the system are taking a picture of a vehicle in violation, receiving the violation report virtually and finally reporting if violation car still remained at same location after five minutes have passed. The proposed system contains properties for transmission and receiving data about whether the complaint report of the violator's vehicle has been received in real time. It also works in conjunction with the existing parking enforcement system. This paper describes implementation of the proposed system.

Key-Words: - Parking enforcement system, CCTV, smartphone, network packet, mobility

1 Introduction

Parking surveillance systems have been thoroughly researched. Along with the development of electronic devices, parking enforcement system has been developed and used in CCTV and PDA based mobility. Current 3rd generation mobile communication handsets, smartphones, can be used to implement a parking enforcement system. Compared to previous parking enforcement equipment, smartphones enable the use of wireless Internet and can be used anywhere due to mobility.

The smartphone parking enforcement solution utilizes GPS in order to input time and location data. In this kind of system, enforcement authorities including citizens do not have to input time or location information manually. Just by taking a picture with a smartphone, the violating car's information is retrieved from the central database and entered into the designed system's input table.

Anytime, anywhere, enforcement authorities can cite cars for parking violations. Information on car owners who frequently park illegally can be passed on to traffic wardens, anytime, anywhere.

With these features, everyone can be a warden. This system would efficiently decrease the inconvenience caused by parking violations. A brief introduction to the current parking enforcement system is provided in the next section. Application of the smartphone system for illegal parking enforcement is described in section 3. Results of implementing the method are presented in section 4. Concluding remarks are presented in the final section.

2 Review of the current parking enforcement system

Parking enforcement using cameras has been widely researched and implemented including mobile phone based enforcement, stationary unattended CCTV enforcement, mobile CCTV enforcement, and etc. In recent years, the use of smartphones as a parking enforcement system has also been studied. This section introduces several parking enforcement systems [1-3].

2.1 Enforcement personnel

In Korea, the right to enforce illegal parking violations is granted to police officers, and personnel designated by the Mayor or Governor. In previous parking enforcement systems, if there were no driver present for a parking violation vehicle, the enforcement personnel would put a citation on the windshield, take a picture and report the violation situation [4].

2.2 Fixed and mobile enforcement CCTV

In order to overcome limited time and limited human resources, the parking enforcement system has employed various unmanned enforcement equipment [5, 6]. One method is fixed unmanned enforcement CCTV, which can fall into one of 3 classes. First, in a manual unmanned enforcement system an agent in a briefing room controls a CCTV camera remotely, recognizes the violation vehicle, and reports the plate number manually. Second, a semiautomatic system exploits plate recognition using a remote image and enforces the final decision for violation a few minutes later. Third, a fully automatic parking enforcement system sends a camera image to a briefing room in real time and manages the situation. This system issues a warning broadcast for the violation vehicle. It sequentially and automatically operates plate recognition, an inquiry of vehicle ownership, confirmation of enforcement, and ticket reporting after 5 minutes[1]. It also allows violation enforcement with one or two agents.

Mobile CCTV utilizes a camera attached to a car which passes by illegally parked vehicles. The camera car takes a first shot with a rotating camera, and makes a decision whether vehicles are in violation after automatically taking a second shot 5 to 10 minutes later. This system has attached infrared light that enables plate recognition at night. It also contains a locating function using GPS information. Parking enforcement using this system minimizes the friction between car owners and enforcement officers while preventing waste of manpower. In order for the camera car to carry out enforcement activities safely, the car has special dispensation to park in some areas when carrying out enforcement. This is reviewed on a case by case basis.

2.3 Wireless Internet and mobile devices

Even though enforcement through CCTV had been used to overcome personnel limitations, in reality, the system was not able to catch many violations. However, improved performance and functionality in wireless Internet mobile devices such as PDA promised better enforcement systems [7, 8].

In previous enforcement methods, personnel made violation reports and input violation information to a computerized information system. Wireless Internet mobile devices improve this process by taking evidence with a violation picture, recognizing license plates in real time and receiving plate numbers automatically. With an embedded GPS receiver module, the mobile device obtains latitude and longitude coordinates at the violation point and can communicate the location and time of the violation to the data server. This system enables registration/modification/inquiry/deleting functions of the vehicle through the main server.

2.4 Enforcement using smartphones

Currently, an enforcement system using smartphones, such as a 3rd generation Android phone, is under development [9]. In this system, citizens designate themselves on a registered enforcement personnel list and report illegally parked vehicles with a picture, the time and location of the violation. Through the communication server, registered personnel recognize the violation plate and check the car registration DB. The DB server consists of information on the vehicle in violation, the registered personnel as well as car registration and provides easy access for enforcement personnel.

3 Experimental design

In this experiment, the process is carried out as follows: If a user or registered personnel witnesses a vehicle parked illegally, they take a picture of the vehicle that shows the violation situation and automatically reports the generated location and current time at the moment of the violation. Once the violation report is received by the main server, the system analyzes the received picture, converts the character string and requests violation notification to personnel if violation criteria are met. This system cannot be executed for only one report. The violation criteria combine more than two virtual reports for the same vehicle, at the same location, and a parking time exceeding 5 minutes. In order to confirm that the report has been received, the personnel can access the server and check the violation report.

In addition, once users register their vehicles on the server, they can use their smartphone to check whether or not their vehicle was reported. This process allows the violator an opportunity to avoid a citation and also effectively reduces the inconvenience caused by illegally parked vehicles.

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[1] Road Traffic Act Article 2 (Definitions) 25. 'Stop' means that the driver does not exceed five minutes before returning the car to a non-stop state.

The reporting status can be classified as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of reporting status

Reporting status	Description
Receiving first report	Receiving violation report virtually
Request report	Receiving more than two virtual reports for the same vehicle, same location, and a parking time exceeding 5 minutes
Receiving second report-approval	The personnel checks the violation report and confirms violation approval
Receiving second report-rejection	The personnel checks the violation report and confirms violation rejection with insufficient evidence

3.1 Data flow

All data sent through the socket changes into a series of byte array. Once the smartphone application is executed, it initiates communication between a server and a socket and its socket operates as an individual thread. In order to receive the necessary data for the server, the smartphone sends a commanding query. Then, the server performs query, insertion, modification, or deleting operations with the sent command. The inserting operation is carried out if a second report matches the violation criteria as described in Table 1. The evidence data is then sent to the traffic warden's PC. The traffic warden's PC checks whether the received data are the actual violation data. The received data are stored on a server and the vehicle owner is notified of the presence of a violation report. Figure 1 shows the overall data stream.
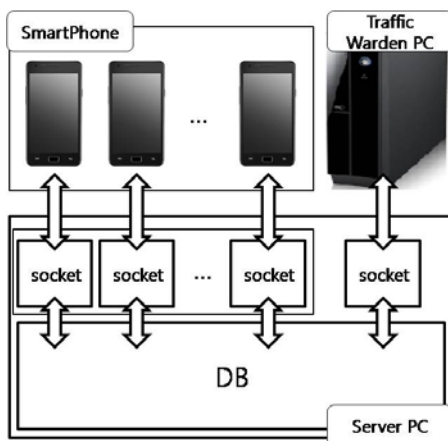

Figure 1. The overall data stream

3.2 Smartphone activity

The internal process can be made by socket communications. An activity component forms a byte stream to send to a server, data moves to the service area and finally communicates with each other through a socket of service. For requesting data from the server, the activity remains at idle status until the sent data is received. However, if the requested server data were transferred to a service, the activity clears the idle status and uses the service data. Figure 2 describes the activities on smartphones.
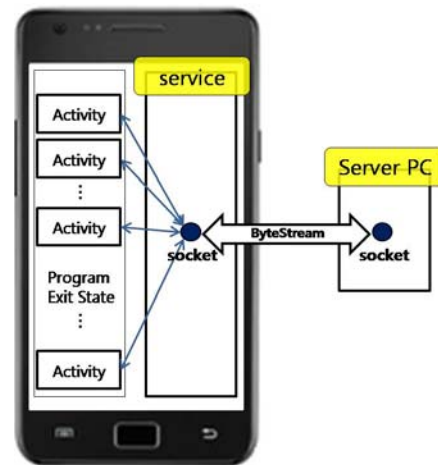

Figure 2. The Android phone program architecture

3.2 Server - Thread

The overall framework is described in Figure 3. This system involves an external viewer and its internal related data for communicating with the DB. Two threads can be exploited: One is for communicating with the warden PC and the other is for communicating with the general users. The termination of each thread can be recognized by disconnection or application termination.

3.3 Server - Database

In our experiment, we used Oracle database with reporting data and registered users as the utilizing tables. If the vehicle has been reported, the vehicle owner's license plate number must be registered with the server for the vehicle owner to be made aware of the violation state. It is possible to register the owner's vehicle by sending a plate picture and the owner's phone number. If the user wants registration, a user needs to fill out information such as the connection socket number, the registrant identification number, vehicle number, phone number, and etc. Since smartphones have registrant
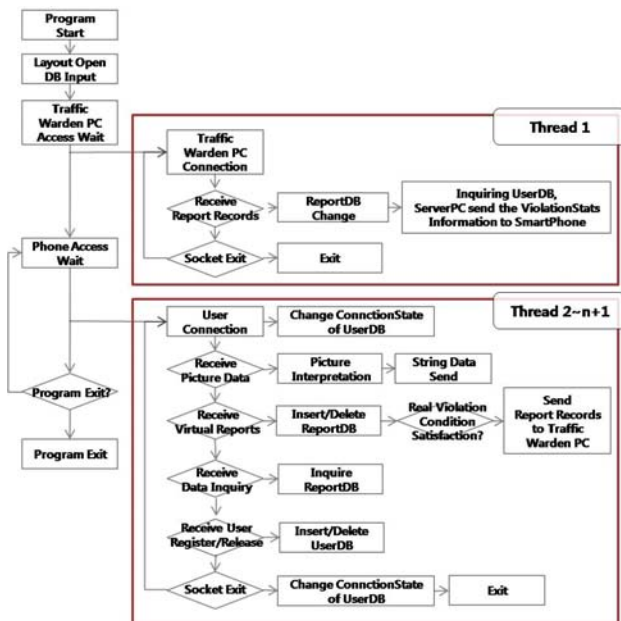
Figure 3. Description of system program

identification numbers, a connection socket number can be assigned after checking the registration state.

Reported data are stored in a report table and each record has a cardNum key value generated by analyzing a picture as shown in Figure 4. When a smartphone receives a violation report, a report record is generated and it is possible to inquire or delete data through the already stored report. In general, the stored record can be used in inquiring.

Figure 4. Class structure

3.4 Network transmission/receiving packet design

This experiment was designed to transmit or receive data sections simply using JAVA socket class. The first byte of data represents the activity command and the rest of the bytes are used for transformed data. It is not possible to send a picture all at once due to the large volume. Therefore, data can be segmented, transmitted and stored into JPEG image format.

4 Results

When the smartphone executed the parking enforcement application, it was connected to a socket of the server; the server manages the registered user list. Using the smartphone's embedded camera, the already registered personnel can take a violation picture and obtained the current location coordinates using the location-based service. The registered personnel then sent the additional information regarding the violation situation and time to the server PC. Due to the large volume of data required for the picture, the data was segmented for transmission. The plate number was analyzed and converted into character strings to be used in the database. This stored virtual complaint was then compared to the violation criteria to confirm that it was the same vehicle number, the same violation location, and 5 minutes had passed since the first virtual report. In this case, the violation criteria were met. After the warden PC received two more virtual reports, it reviewed the previous violation report and sent the registered user a warning message about the presence of a violation. The registered user then checked the violation status by using his smartphone to access the server. In this experiment, we used 3 Android phones, one server and one warden PC in a Wi-Fi zone. The next section describes three experiments: concurrent connection, receiving report, and smartphone background experiments.

4.1 Connection experiment

Once the smartphone begins the application program, activity components such as the foreground and service components such as the background are connected and socket communication is initiated. On a smartphone, a socket is connected to the server and the server will assign a register ID number. A user registration can be active on only one smartphone and a registered user can check in real time when his car was reported. Figure 5 describes one example for the field values of Oracle database in communication.

4.2 Receiving a report

In order to report a vehicle in violation, the registered personnel takes a picture and obtains the location using the smartphone's location based service. The registered personnel then sends the violation information to a server. Figure 6 shows an example of violation reporting status. For the same vehicle, the same location, and a time difference of more than 5 minutes, the reporting state depends on
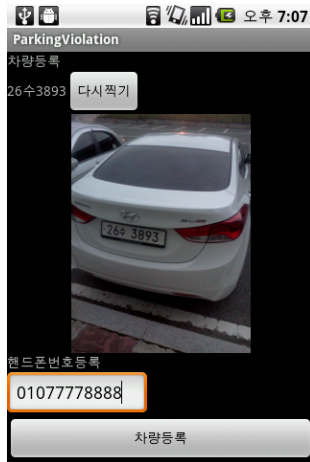
(a)

(b)

Figure 5. (a) Registered user's smartphone screen view and (b) an example for Oracle database

Receiving first report, Request report, Receiving second report-approval, or Receiving second report-rejection as described in Table 1.

When a violation report for a registered user's vehicle is received, the background on his smartphone can be warned in real time. Whenever a new report table from the server pc is added, new values are compared with the previously registered records such as the vehicle number, latitude and longitude. If there is more than a 5 minute difference, the record data from the warden PC will be transmitted through a socket to a server. The transmitted data is reviewed one more time on the warden PC before the approval or refusal of the violation report is sent to the server PC. If a violation report is approved on the server PC, the violation vehicle number is searched for on the registered user table. If there is a match, a unique ID is assigned, whether or not his car's violation will be transmitted using a belonging socket.

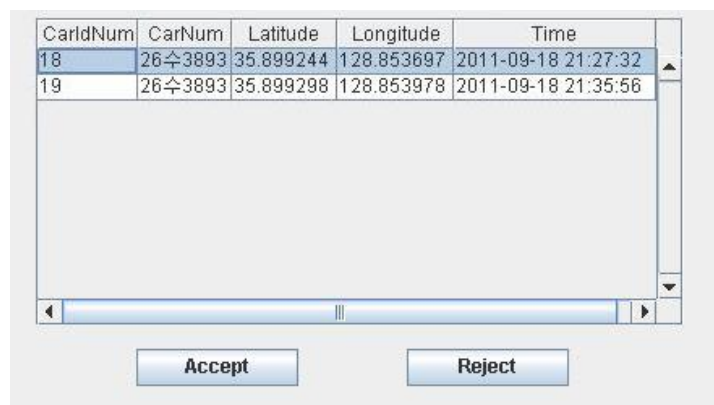**Figure 6**. An example of violation reporting status

Figure 7. An example of violation reporting status

Since a relating socket through a service component is communicated on a smartphone, a user can receive the presence of a violation report via background activity on a smartphone even though an application program is terminated. Once a violation report has been approved, a user will receive a warning message as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. An example of violation reporting status

5 Conclusion

This paper described the development of a smartphone application having high fast development focused on and designed for a real applicable environment. Unlike previous or existing parking enforcement system models, the designed system has pursued a registered personnel complaint reporting system model. Once this kind of system has been customized, it is possible to enable concurrent access. However, the system needs to protect the users' privacy through encryption of transmitted data, limitations of number of inquiry, and etc.

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