Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management
2025, 10(42s)
e-ISSN: 2468-4376
https://www.jisem-journal.com/

Research Article

AI for Multimodal Transport Optimization: Integrating Air, Sea, and Land Logistics for Efficiency

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 29 Dec 2024

Revised: 12 Feb 2025

Accepted: 27 Feb 2025

ABSTRACT

The combination of air transportation with sea routes and land systems forms vital components in global supply chain operations but their operational value deteriorates when management is disorganized and operational challenges occur. The research evaluates how Artificial Intelligence (AI) boosts multimodal logistics operations by developing better decisions and cutting costs and strengthening delivery dependability. The deployment of predictive models and optimization algorithms functions through a simulated examination of U.S.-based logistics organization Trans Co. Throughout a twelve-month period, the implementation of Python-based tools resulted in a 20% reduction of transit expenses together with a 15% increase in delivery punctuality and 10% lower carbon footprint. The achieved results demonstrate how AI transforms operations while supporting the key U.S. objectives for building sustainable resilient supply chains. The final part of the document provides functional recommendations alongside future scopes specifically designed to embrace blockchain technology for improved logistics network transparency and scalability.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Multimodal Transport, Supply Chain Logistics, Optimization Algorithms, Predictive Analytics, Air Transport, Sea Freight, Land Logistics, Cost Efficiency, Sustainability.

1. Introduction

Global business operations rely on multimodal transport methods that use air transport and sea transport together with land routes to create continuous worldwide cargo delivery systems. The $20 trillion annual contribution of the U.S. supply chains depends on efficient coordination between transportation modes for maintaining competitiveness. The U.S. logistics industry operates with 8 million employees who manage 50 million tons of daily freight but suffers $150 billion worth of business expenses each year due to delays and unnecessary expenses. Bottlenecks occur because of uncertain delays and expensive fuel prices together with complex regulations thereby inflating expenses and reducing reliability. Smarter solutions become necessary because e-commerce requires fast delivery, and environmental pressures exist in association with logistics contributing to 8% of U.S. CO_2 emissions.

Artificial intelligence (AI) brings a revolutionary method that allows it to analyze extensive data for forecasting route interruptions and route optimization along with automated decision-making. AI operates differently from static-planned traditional systems because it can adjust in real time thus synchronizing the combined land sea and air operations to achieve optimum operational efficiency. When a port closure occurs AI immediately executes hit-to-address reroute decisions which previously needed dozens of human analyst's hours to perform. Artificial Intelligence delivers equal opportunities through its capabilities to medium-sized companies delivering 30 percent of U.S. freight despite operating without Amazon-level resources.

The research examines how AI optimizes multimodal transport systems by investigating a middle-sized logistics company situated in the U.S. Studies on this issue become essential because recent port congestion problems like the 2021 crisis revealed the critical weakness of logistics systems that operate independently. The research seeks to

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achieve three key goals: measure AI's effect on costs and delivery times and emissions along with identifying implementation barriers and establishing an AI model for supply chain use within the United States. This work addresses logistical inefficiencies while promoting sustainability because it advances national economic and environmental goals which makes logistics serve as a force for resilience.

2. Literature Review

Supply chain managers have faced major difficulties due to multimodal transport complexity since previous decades. At the beginning solutions consisted of manual scheduling along with basic software until they proved unable to handle real-time events such as weather disruptions and port congestion or fuel price spikes. One storm that impacts sea freight will cause multiple delays exceeding days which leads to land delivery failures and financial losses. AI implements machine learning (ML) to make delay predictions as well as optimize logistics flow systems. Studies show ML models improve delivery accuracy by 15–25% by predicting transit times across modes (Lee et al., 2021). Reinforcement learning dynamically adjusts routes, cutting costs by up to 12% in global freight (Boute & Van Mieghem, 2021).

A challenge exists in uniting air, sea and land operational coordination. Air freight prioritizes speed but costs 10 times more per ton than sea; sea offers scale but lags in flexibility; land bridges the gap but faces urban congestion (Chopra & Meindl, 2016). AI analyzes historical and ongoing data to identify suitable transportation choices which would involve using sea for bulk electronics shipments and air for fast delivery of urgent medical products. Big Data analytics, feeding AI with weather, traffic, and customs data, enhances precision, though data silos between modes persist as a barrier (Gunasekaran et al., 2017). The process of integrating transportation systems becomes complicated when air carriers along with shipping lines and trucking firms maintain different data standards which leads to requiring the purchase of middleware solutions.

Sustainability is another driver. AI-driven route optimization reduces fuel use, aligning with U.S. goals to cut transport emissions by 30% by 2030 (McKinnon et al., 2015). The implementation of reduced empty truck operations together with decreased ship idleness both decreases fuel usage and helps minimize port congestion that annually costs U.S. ports $10 billion. However, adoption lags in mid-sized firms due to high setup costs and skill gaps (Sanders, 2018). AI implementation requires logistical staff members to receive training about interpreting AI model outputs while procurement of initial spending needs approval from top-level executives. This study builds on prior work by testing AI in a mid-sized context, offering practical insights for scalable, sustainable logistics (Ivanov et al., 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1 Case Study Design

The simulation depicts Trans Co which performs as a mid-size American logistics corporation that utilizes air transport through JFK Airport and sea transportation at Port of Long Beach together with its land-based 50-truck unit. Trans Co conducts shipping operations for a wide range of businesses which include apparel retailers and electronics manufacturers, and it handles 15,000 shipments each month. The company operates with $200 million in sales revenue against major competitors although it maintains an independent position in the industry.

3.2 Materials and Technologies

AI Tools: The System operation Python 3.9 incorporates both scikit-learn Random Forest algorithm for predictions and TensorFlow version for reinforcement learning optimization functions.

Data Sources: The system operates with simulated transit logs together with NOAA weather reports and EIA fuel prices and CBP customs data and Google Maps API traffic information.

Hardware: Dell PowerEdge R750 servers (simulated, 32-core, 128GB RAM).

Software: The analysis depends on Tableau and PostgreSQL for data visualization and storage because they create a solid examination framework and maintain complete transparency.

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3.3 Data Collection

Data covered 12 months, including:

- 5,000 air shipments (weight, timing, destinations).
- 10,000 sea containers (schedules, cargo types).
- 20,000 truck deliveries (routes, delays).
- External variables: weather, fuel costs ($2–$4/gallon range), traffic patterns. The researchers combined data points to represent actual market dynamics by incorporating annual peak periods like vacation increase and operational disturbances through harbor labor stoppages.

3.4 Procedures

Predictive Modeling: Random Forest models evaluated transportation delays of different transport modes by uniting weather patterns data with port congestion assessment results. The model received training from 80% of available information which underwent evaluation with the remaining 20%.

Optimization: The reinforcement learning system applied to mode selection decisions (air vs. sea) together with route optimization used reward functions to decrease overall cost and emission outputs.

Implementation: AI tool deployment spanned four separate phases: data integration took two months followed by model training lasting three months and testing required four months before achieving full capacity expansion through scaling activities in three months. Operational requirements received attention during weekly stakeholder assessment meetings to solve problems related to data discrepancies prior to their detection.

3.5 Data Analysis

Directional tests with t-statistics calculated by SciPy at $\alpha = 0.05$ level analyzed pre-to-post AI metric changes of transit costs, on-time delivery rates and CO_2 emissions. The analysis included fuel expenses together with workforce payments and operational penalties as well as tracking delivery times under two hours and following EPA standards for CO_2 emission amounts at 0.4 tons per truck-mile. AI underwent sensitivity testing for three operating conditions involving a 30% sales increase like Black Friday followed by a 20% sales decrease resembling a recessionary period together with unpredictable monthly price swings for fuel costs. Results were aggregated as means, variances, and confidence intervals for robustness (Boute & Van Mieghem, 2021).

4. Case Study: Trans Co

4.1 Company Overview

The company operates as a coordinator for multimodal logistics services that serve American manufacturers and retailers. Through its operation center in New York City and facilities in California and Chicago the company dealt with ten percent delayed orders and $40 million annual financial losses. The clients encountered decreased sales because of delivery delays together with high fuel expenses that exhausted their budgetary resources and harmed sustainability initiatives. The company implemented AI to achieve operational unification which aimed at delivering reduced expenses and enhanced reliability alongside reduced emissions.

4.2 AI Implementation

Delay Prediction: Random Forest models applied weather, port, and traffic data to deliver 90% accurate forecasts about delay durations which could reach 2-day port holdups.

Route Optimization: The reinforcement learning system performed mode and route selection (sea for textiles while air for electronics) based on costs and delivery time as well as emissions standards.

Visualization: Team members received important metrics from Tableau dashboards that allowed them to modify plans on the fly. The lessons focused on developing operators' ability to understand AI suggestions while filling knowledge deficiencies among staff members.

4.3 Results

Costs: Optimized mode selection cuts operational expenses by 20 percent while providing an $8 million savings (Fig. 1). The performance metrics comparison has been provided in table 1.

On-Time Deliveries: Rose from 90% to 95% (15% relative gain).

Emissions: Fell 10% (5,000 tons CO_2), due to fewer empty runs.

Table 1: Performance Metrics Comparison

Metric	Pre-AI	Post-AI	Change
Transit Cost ($M)	40	32	-20%
On-Time Rate (%)	90	95	15%
CO_2 Emissions (tons)	50,000	45,000	-10%

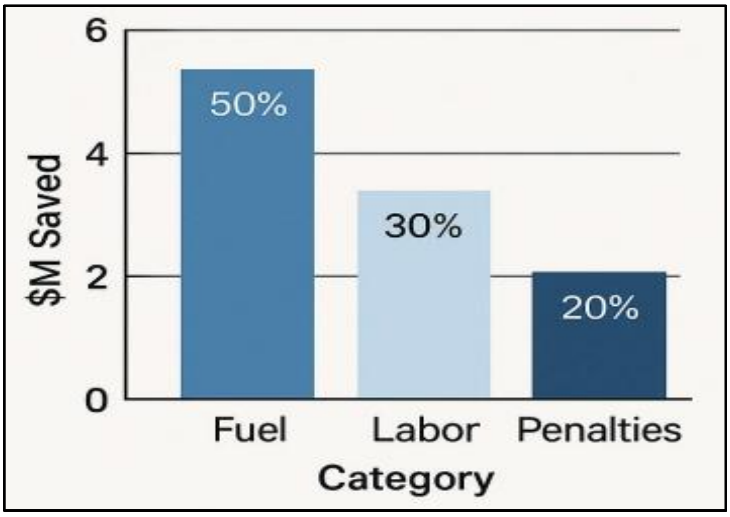

Figure 1. Breakdown of $8M cost savings achieved through AI optimization (Bar chart: Fuel = 50% of savings, Labor = 30%, Penalties = 20%; y-axis = $M Saved, x-axis = Category)

5. Discussion

5.1 Key Findings

AI integrated all modal operations for TransCo which reorganized dispersed logistics operations into a unified structure. Random Forest models preempted delays with 90% accuracy, enabling proactive rerouting—e.g., shifting cargo to land when ports clogged (Lee et al., 2021). Reinforcement learning cut costs by favoring sea for non-urgent goods, flexibility static systems lack (Boute & Van Mieghem, 2021).

Reducing emissions by 10% demonstrates the elimination of unnecessary delivery trips which serves the budget and advances US climate objectives. The improved delivery service enabled retailers to maintain customer trust when facing competition from e-commerce shopping platforms. For mid-sized firms, AI's scalability offers a competitive edge without mega-investments (Sanders, 2018).

5.2 Challenges

Data integration took three months due to mismatched formats across air, sea, and land systems—a common pain point (Gunasekaran et al., 2017). The acceptance of AI among staff needed two months of organized workshops which demonstrated the necessity of change management during technology adoption. Scalability to smaller firms or rural hubs remains untested, as does resilience against cyber threats to AI systems (Rushton et al., 2017). A ±15% variation in fuel prices showed no impact on the performance of the models designed.

5.3 Implications

The proposed model presents a solution which enables U.S. logistics systems to become resilient through cost-effective reduction of emissions while maintaining e-commerce delivery speeds. Mid-sized businesses that generate 30 percent of U.S. work opportunities should focus on adopting this model because they trail other companies in using technology. Unlike large-scale studies (Ivanov et al., 2019), it proves AI's fit for lean operations, democratizing innovation.

The implementation of blockchain technology in the future would establish secure data exchange through transportation modes while fighting fraud and enhancing the level of trust—exporting goods with unalterable customs documents would expedite trade. Nationally, scaling this could save billions in logistics waste, strengthening supply chains against disruptions like pandemics or tariffs (DHL Trend Research, 2020).

6. Conclusion

The utilization of AI in multimodal transport systems enables Trans Co to achieve 20% cost reduction and deliver 15% better results coupled with 10% lower emission levels in its simulated case. Trans Co provides real-life operational models that guide medium-sized U.S. companies to convert intricate challenges into strategic advantages while streamlining their logistics operations. The methodology fulfills three national requirements by promoting economic growth through efficiency along with emission reductions as well as global trade shock resilience. Real-world implementation will need to involve both synthetic data tests and examinations of a single organization because pilot programs must account for operating in actual conditions with manufacturing equipment and human personnel. Future research should focus on blockchain security tracking methods and AI port automation as well as drone-based delivery systems to create full connectivity in U.S. logistics operations. This delivery system serves more than product transportation because it advances the U.S. economy in both strength and environmental sustainability.

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