

Freight delivery services in urban areas: Monitoring accessibility from vehicle traces and road network modelling

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# Freight delivery services in urban areas: monitoring accessibility from vehicle traces and road network modelling

## Abstract

Local Authorities plays a fundamental role in the management of city mobility and in accounting for the needs of different stakeholders involved in the urban freight transport. The aim of this study is to develop a method that could support the evaluation of the city accessibility for freight distribution services. As Local Authorities can use floating vehicle data (FVD), which are a current trend in mobility management, gaining new knowledge from data could be crucial to help the various stakeholders to better address their needs. Accessibility in urban areas is investigated through travel time estimations along the most frequently used routes connecting relevant nodes of the city and their average speed using a simplified road network model. After the description of the principal elements of the method, a test case is also presented for the urban area of Turin, Italy, to demonstrate the applicability of the procedures on a real scenario and dataset. The results confirm, also through the use of skim matrices, the value of FVD in assessing the accessibility of different zones interested in delivery operations, which may change over time, providing monitoring functions to urban logistics operators and Local Authorities in managing urban freight flows.

Keywords: urban freight logistics; urban accessibility; vehicle trajectories; traffic congestion; transport modelling; Local Authorities

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Urban freight distribution scenario and planning tools

Freight distribution is increasing its role in urban road traffic, owing to the growth of internet shopping, which is partially substituting traditional goods purchasing. In 2016, the e-commerce market accounted for 19.6 billion € in Italy, an 18% increase compared to 2015 (Freight Leaders Council, 2017), whilst the same market was 530 billion € for Europe in 2017, which was 15% higher than the previous year (European Ecommerce Report, 2017). As a result, an increasing amount of goods is travelling within cities and is delivered directly to individual consumers instead of arriving in bulk to select store locations. Obviously, this reflects the pattern of urban transport demand as an addition to the traditional distribution to shops.

At the city level, the greater number of vehicles travelling around a city to make such deliveries adds to the existing traffic characterising an already congested road network. At the environmental level, recent analyses reveal that “in Europe urban freight is responsible for 25% of urban transport related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and 30 to 50% of other transport related pollutants” (Meyer and Meyer, 2013, p. 4). Consequently, public authorities are being asked to propose and test policies to control and manage traffic in cities with the expected aim of reducing air pollution, as well as to protect historical centres and monitor land use. The methodology proposed in this paper, based on the availability of a floating vehicle data (FVD) dataset, can be a possible tool also for Local Authorities to evaluate possible effects of those actions easily reversible, for which a continuous monitoring procedure could measure the impacts directly on the field. This approach is more simply implemented if compared with other model-based approaches, which often requiring simulations. Such measures can be managed in the framework of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP), which are medium-term planning tools that are becoming mandatory for cities and metropolitan areas in European countries (ELTISplus, 2017). The evaluation of such policies and their effects on citizens and stakeholders should be assessed in both current and alternative scenarios by specific and measurable indicators. This monitoring of the planning process and of the impact of the implemented measures on city mobility is a fundamental requirement to promote actions which effectively contribute to achieving the expected benefits (Ambrosini et al., 2010). In addition, for the wider movement of goods travelling within cities, local authorities are required to propose specific regulation strategies for urban freight distribution (Kiba-Janiak, 2017). In fact, the European Union requires cities to define urban freight plans to study measures to modify the efficiency of urban logistics, with the challenging objective of reducing the related greenhouse gas emissions and noise (Fossheim & Andersen, 2017). More specifically, SUMP must include specific actions in their logistic components for the so-called Sustainable Urban Logistics Plan (SULP) (Ambrosino et al., 2015).

As confirmed in a recent aforementioned study, deliveries have a significant impact in terms of traffic congestions around a city because they account for approximately 10–15% of all urban kilometres travelled (CIVITAS WIKI consortium, 2015). More specifically, approximately 25–30% of urban deliveries are carried out by light vans in Europe (ALICE & ERTRAC, 2015). Hence, information extracted from such rich and wide datasets could provide actual feedback

52 on freight traffic trends through the definition of specific indicators. Moreover, proper analysis could help in assessing  
53 the impact of the measures proposed at the city level, for example in the Sulp (Diana et al., 2020).

### 54 *1.2. Research contributions on network monitoring and accessibility*

55 The aim of this study is to develop a method to measure city accessibility for freight distribution services using the  
56 positioning data collected during the trips taken in the van.

57 In general, their travel time and the average speed can be easily estimated along the most frequently used paths that  
58 connect relevant zones in a city if vehicle data are frequently recorded and integrated with a geographic information  
59 system (GIS) (Pascale et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2000). For example, Greaves and Figliozzi (2008) installed commercial  
60 global positioning system (GPS) devices in selected vehicles participating in a travel survey to detect the freight tour  
61 features in cities, and were able to record second-by-second trip data during delivery operations for the period of the  
62 experiment. A similar approach was applied by Ben-Akiva et al. (2016), in which GPS loggers were fitted in participants'  
63 trucks and integrated with a web-based survey to detect route choice behaviour. As an alternative, smartphones can be  
64 used to detect high resolution vehicle traces (Ge & Fukuda, 2016), as demonstrated by Gonzalez-Feliu et al. (2013), in  
65 which data were analysed at the route level with primary focus on delivery bays. No mapping was performed to a road  
66 network model. In another study, Yang et al. (2014) used second-by-second GPS data to identify urban freight delivery  
67 stops. However, in practical applications, data available from commercial services (taxi or freight vehicle fleets) may not  
68 be collected with such high sample rates, and in these cases, alternate techniques need to be applied to extract useful  
69 information.

70 Cui et al. (2016) applied a method to estimate city accessibility by using GPS data collected from a taxi service, in  
71 which the data sampling ranges were from 30 s to 2 min, which did not achieve the 1 Hz sampling rate required to reliably  
72 map traffic conditions along road links. In their study, a network model is not used and travel times are related to points  
73 on a map where positioning data are available for vehicles. Then, trips are built to estimate accessibility using a zone-  
74 based approach considering the points belonging to zones as starting or ending points. Other studies in the literature use  
75 GPS data for different applications, for instance Sharman and Roorda (2013) used GPS truck data to study the inter-  
76 arrival duration, defined as the time between arrivals at a destination of two successive vehicles operated by the same  
77 carrier. Hess et al. (2015) proposed a novel application in route choice modelling using GPS data focussing on heavy  
78 goods vehicles. With respect to traditional survey techniques, GPS data provide a better estimation of parameters such as  
79 route length, number of stops, fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Pluvinet et al., 2012).

80 GPS data sent with a random sampling rate by transponders (from 1 to 8 pings/h) on trucks were used to analyse the  
81 functional corridors of the state of Mississippi, USA by Holt et al. (2017). They collected more than 26 million individual  
82 truck data points over four years, which were mapped directly on the links of a GIS road network to assess its performance  
83 in predicting freight transport statistics, such as travel time, average speed, and congestion in relevant connections.

84 The amount of GPS data needed to provide an accurate and time-dependent speed estimation for real-time applications  
85 along selected corridors was investigated by Patire et al. (2015) for different sampling and penetration rates and for  
86 comparison with other technologies (e.g. inductive loops, Bluetooth). The study found that even though a higher average  
87 sampling rate produces more data points, it is preferable to collect data from different devices to improve the accuracy of  
88 the travel time measure on roads. Therefore, a higher penetration rate is more effective than a higher-resolution rate. For  
89 this reason, the approach developed in the present study uses an available dataset with a low sampling rate, and relies on  
90 the detection of multiple vehicles at the same node of a network model.

### 91 *1.3. Exploitation of the method*

92 As will be explained in more detail, the proposed method has a twofold relevance at the urban level. In fact, it can be  
93 exploited by public authorities to analyse the current network performance regarding freight delivery and to plan future  
94 measures (e.g. the introduction of a booking mechanism for loading/unloading bays, a special policy to dynamically  
95 manage access to restricted traffic areas, realisation of a freight route planner app to optimise deliveries (Pronello et al.,  
96 2017)), but also by delivery service operators for shifting delivery times from congested to off-peak periods. Policies that  
97 shift urban goods deliveries from daytime to off-peak hours have the potential to increase the efficiency of freight  
98 distribution and reduce negative external impacts. The interaction between public authorities and delivery service  
99 operators, sharing the monitoring approach proposed, can also lead to the redefinition of the policies, including for  
100 example the rules of restricted traffic zones (time slots, access rights, fares) or even the use of dedicated lanes for the  
101 exclusive use of commercial vehicles at certain times and along selected routes. Freight transport management in urban  
102 areas can then be based on the observed traffic conditions. For instance, Fu and Jenelius (2017) used vehicle GPS probe  
103 data, fleet management data, and logistic information to assess the impacts of specific policies in Stockholm, Norway.  
104 According to de Palma and Lindsey (2011) various congestion pricing schemes can be adopted in urban areas to reduce  
105 congestion. The traditional approaches are based on facilities use, on cordoning-off crossings to protect specific areas of  
106 the city, or on zonal pricing to modify the behaviour of freight distributors. However, considering available technologies,

107 such as a global navigation satellite system (GNSS), more advanced schemes can be applied, such as distance-based  
108 pricing specifically set for vehicle types and time of day. For example, the Off-Hours Delivery experiment in New York  
109 City, USA, with a time-of-day pricing strategy shifted only 20% of carriers, but the savings in terms of travel time to all  
110 highway users was approximately 3 to 5 min per trip and to carriers that switched to off-hours was approximately 48 min  
111 per delivery tour, with economics savings estimated between 100\$ and 200\$ million per year in travel time saving and  
112 pollution reduction (Meyer & Meyer, 2013).

113 The design process involving any of these actions needs knowledge of the network conditions and measurement of the  
114 accessibility to urban zones for delivery operations, which should be monitored during the implementation phase to adjust,  
115 if necessary, the tolling scheme. To achieve this objective, the raw data chosen for the methodology presented in the  
116 current study are van GPS traces because of their targeted information value for freight delivery in urban areas and their  
117 easy availability. Indeed, they are commonly exploited to monitor vehicle routes and to record stops for loading,  
118 unloading, and parking (Pirra & Diana, 2019). Good cooperation between the data owners (operators) and Local  
119 Authorities is fundamental because this allow the collection of such information. Therefore, Municipalities may establish  
120 some long-term agreements with those operators, such as special area access permission and operational licenses in  
121 exchange for the provision of that kind of datasets.  
122

## 123 2. Methodology

124 In this paper's framework, "accessibility" is defined as the ease and extent to which road networks enable delivery  
125 vehicle fleets to reach the various zones of a city. On the whole, a variety of methods have been developed for measuring  
126 accessibility and they can be classified according to Geurs and van Wee (2004) as the following:

- 127 - Infrastructure-based measures, which analyse the performance of a transportation infrastructure.
- 128 - Location-based measures based on indicators related to the spatial distribution of activities.
- 129 - Person-based measures at the individual level, considering individual requirements and limitations.
- 130 - Utility-based measures, which consider the benefits that people derive from levels of access based on spatially  
131 distributed activities.

132 Additional categories are provided in Curl et al. (2011):

- 133 - Cumulative measures, which represent the accessibility at a location to another or set of destinations.
- 134 - Gravity-based measures, a weighted extension of cumulative measures.

135 The approach chosen for the present study can be categorised as a mixed approach, because the measures used, such  
136 as travel times on the road network, describe the function of the transport system (infrastructure-based). Additionally,  
137 accessibility is defined as the degree to which two zones in the study area are connected (location-based) by using the  
138 travel time and speed of a set of vehicles, estimated by their positioning data.

139 The main steps of the procedure, shown in the scheme of Fig. 1, and also applied in a case study described in Section  
140 3, can be summarised as three main steps.

### 141 2.1. Construction of the a priori network

142 The first step of the methodology requires the creation of a sketch model of the road network, called *a priori* network,  
143 in which main links, nodes, and centroids are identified and classified on a georeferenced map. In this phase, a simplified  
144 links classification may be applied, identifying the motorways and the main roads in the city using a traffic modelling  
145 tool to create this high-level representation. Node selection can be performed by considering all intersections of the urban  
146 motorways regarding their connection role in the road structure, whereas only a subset of the urban area intersections  
147 should be selected based on their relevance to routes connecting the different zones of a city. Local and secondary streets  
148 should not be included in this simplified road network model. Indeed, the focus on the zones accessibility requires to  
149 consider only the main roads that could be followed by the vehicles during their travelling around the city for their  
150 deliveries.  
151  
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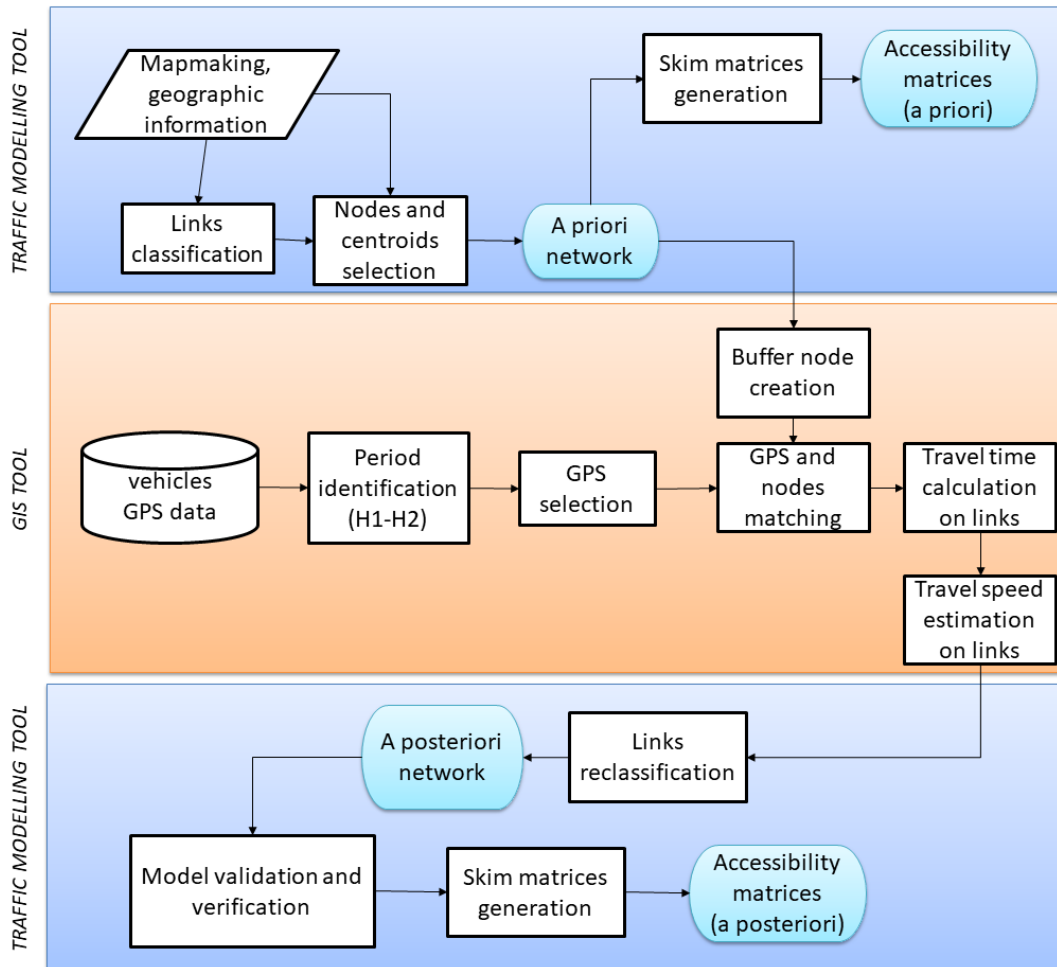


Fig. 1 Flow diagram of developed methodology and data used in the three main steps

153 2.2. Travel time estimation from GPS data

154 Travel time estimation from GPS data is performed for the links connecting the selected nodes by exploiting the  
 155 positioning data collected by light vans during their usual delivery operations in the city, which can be provided by  
 156 tracking and tracing systems already available. The travel time calculation aims to better define the network features and  
 157 road types for homogeneous time periods over a day. In this phase, a buffer for each node type is also defined to effectively  
 158 detect as many vehicles as possible at road intersections and consequently their travel times along links. Each node of the  
 159 *a priori* network and its buffer area can then be used to detect the moment when an equipped vehicle crosses the related  
 160 road intersection. Mapping the vehicles at the nodes rather than along the arcs increases the chance of detecting them in  
 161 the case of low sampling rates, because they usually spend more time at intersections (in particular when the traffic signal  
 162 is red), and because the positioning accuracy based on a satellite's line of sight is generally higher. This operation can be  
 163 implemented through the creation of a circular boundary area around each node of the network by using GIS software.  
 164 To extract information, only the vehicle positions in those areas are taken into account, storing the vehicle identifier, date  
 165 and time of passage, position (latitude, longitude), course and speed. An explorative analysis can be conducted to  
 166 determine the proper dimension(s) of the boundaries in terms of their diameter to ascertain if the number of detected  
 167 vehicles can be increased whilst taking into account the quality of vehicle positioning at intersections. Because the  
 168 accuracy of GPS positioning is reduced, especially in urban canyons, a proper boundary around each node is determined  
 169 to increase the chance of detecting vehicles at each node, as explained in the application example in Section 3.

170 The travel time along links is estimated without applying classic map matching procedures based on a link approach,  
 171 as in Holt et al. (2017), in which the vehicle position is associated to the links. Matching is accomplished by focussing on  
 172 the time when a vehicle is detected at selected nodes of the road network. The time of detection is then referred to each  
 173 vehicle travelling around the city on a specific working day (of the monthly observation period). A further key issue is to  
 174 determine whether a vehicle has actually moved along the arc in its travel between the two nodes at the arc's extremes by  
 175 comparing the course of each GPS recording, i.e. the driving direction of the vehicle, with the direction of the arc. More

176 precisely, all the courses associated with GPS recordings of the selected vehicle in its travel between the two nodes are  
 177 considered to verify that they are similar to the corresponding value of the arc bearing. Some variation in the course values  
 178 is tolerated in the algorithm to include any measures that are different from the arc bearing value simply because of the  
 179 road's curvature. More precisely, the root mean square error between all GPS courses and the bearing is computed: if it  
 180 is less than 50 degrees the vehicle is assumed travelling through the arc under consideration and without deviations (Pirra  
 181 & Diana, 2019).

182 Then, estimation of the link travel time (TT) is derived by computing the difference between the timestamps of the  
 183 first recording in the boundary around the origin node and the first recording registered in the boundary around the end  
 184 node. This value is related to phases when the vehicle is moving and those when it stops due to traffic conditions (delays  
 185 at intersections, congestion, traffic lights) or service operation (e.g. the time required to make a delivery). The overall  
 186 time interval for a series of subsequent 0 speed recordings along the selected arc is calculated and its duration is named  
 187 ST (stop time). It is possible to find various values (Ns) of ST for each link, namely  $ST_i, i = 1, \dots, N_s$ . It is thus necessary  
 188 to remove them to obtain the "real" travel time along the arc ( $TT_r$ ). However, while dealing with congestion, we could  
 189 think to consider the stops due to traffic condition as part of the time required to travel along a road. Therefore, only the  
 190  $ST_i$  associated with the deliveries has to be removed from the travel time TT. A specific threshold of 120 s is defined to  
 191 differentiate these two cases. Time ranges  $ST_i$  shorter than this value are commonly associated to typical maximum  
 192 duration of a stop for yielding or at traffic lights, whereas service stops are normally longer (S. Greaves and Figliozzi,  
 193 2008). Thus, when the computed  $ST_i$  is longer than 120 s, it is considered as a service stop and has to be removed from  
 194 TT, otherwise it could be considered as part of the time necessary to travel along the road. The final value  $TT_r$  for each  
 195 arc is thus obtained as

$$196 \quad TT_r = TT - \sum_{i=1}^{N_s} ST_i$$

197 Where  $N_s$  is the total number of stops intervals found and

$$198 \quad ST_i = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } ST_i \leq 120 \text{ s} \\ ST_i & \text{if } ST_i > 120 \text{ s} \end{cases}$$

199

### 200 2.3. Construction and validation of the a posteriori network

201 The data derived from the previous steps of the methodology are exploited to define the final network, called *a*  
 202 *posteriori*, which represents an updated model with estimated travel time information and a more realistic road  
 203 classification based on observed travel speed. In fact, the main street characteristics originally associated in the *a priori*  
 204 network are refined using the travel time information extracted from the GPS traces dataset. Moreover, the known link  
 205 lengths along with the estimated time necessary to travel along each of the arcs of the network are used to compute average  
 206 speeds, thus creating a broader and more reliable classification of the links. Many values of travel time can be associated  
 207 to a certain arc during the investigation period (one month). The speed value used to refine the links classification is  
 208 therefore computed starting from the average travel time obtained by removing the outliers to reduce the influence of  
 209 exogenous factors, such as road work, that could worsen traffic conditions on some days of the observation period. To  
 210 improve consistency, classes can be defined based on the average speed distributions of mapped links presenting at least  
 211 10 measures (after outlier removal) and the shape of the plot, as it will be clarified the case study in Section 3.3.

212 At this point, model verification is necessary to ascertain if the travel time values estimated to measure the accessibility  
 213 among selected zones provide consistent values compared to those supplied by map providers on the web (e.g. Open  
 214 Street Map, Google Maps, Here). Moreover, a validation of link classifications is performed to check if the simplified  
 215 approach used yields acceptable results for the estimation of accessibility. In fact, as explained previously, each link is  
 216 assigned to a specific class according to the average speed derived from the previous step of the methodology. This new  
 217 categorised value is associated with each of the links. This is an approximation that allows better management of the  
 218 model and guarantees negligible loss of information with respect to the travel time estimated between zones. As an  
 219 alternative approach, the specific speed values estimated for each link can be used to map the accessibility to the zones  
 220 of the study area. Therefore, the validation process involves a comparison between these two scenarios to validate the  
 221 approach and the classification adopted.

222 A further step requires investigating the accessibility matrix estimation for the zones of the study area by considering  
 223 skim matrices of travel times along the best route generated by the traffic modelling tool for the *a posteriori* network at  
 224 two principal time periods of each day and comparing them to similar results from the *a priori* network. A skim matrix  
 225 includes impedances between zones and can provide numerical quantification on the accessibility of different parts of the  
 226 study area (Mcnally, 2007). Therefore, it is exploited to evaluate the city's accessibility by considering the travel time  
 227 (min) and distance (km) indicators. The analysis, performed using the OmniTRANS tool, focusses on the computation of  
 228 the shortest path between the various centroid pairs, where the algorithm considers the travel time or the distance as the  
 229 main link parameter.

230 **3. Application to a case study**

231 The proposed methodology is applied to a real case study represented by the city of Turin, capital of the Piedmont region  
232 in north-west Italy. Its centre includes more than 10,000 economic activities. The wide diffusion of e-commerce deliveries  
233 coupled with normal freight transport represents 8% of Turin's total traffic (Freight Leaders Council, 2017), with the  
234 associated need for proper accessibility evaluation. Due to the interest on the topic, the city has been actively involved in  
235 European projects dealing with urban freight mobility. Moreover, Turin has implemented a set of 'push and pull' measures  
236 combining both incentives and restrictions for those operators that follow a Freight Quality Partnership Agreement in  
237 their delivery activities. Most of these measures aim at reducing and rationalising deliveries in the city centre, which is  
238 characterised by a limited traffic zone.

239 **3.1. Construction of the a priori network**

240 A preliminary network has been imported from OpenStreetMap to map the accessibility in the selected study area (Fig.  
241 2). This network contains a large number of arcs and nodes (in our case, more than 10,000 links and 5000 nodes), in  
242 which the network connectivity is not always guaranteed and includes some link directions that need to be checked. For  
243 this reason, as described in Section 2, an *a priori* network was created manually based on this georeferenced map by  
244 selecting principal nodes and links.

245 The network in our case study contains 408 two-way links, including 84 connectors, 110 nodes and 18 centroids. Only  
246 two main types of links are defined to simplify the network:

- 247 - "Motorway" includes the links for urban motorways. The speed setting is 80 km/h according to the authors'  
248 experience of the average speed during congested periods.
- 249 - "Road2lanes" includes all other links. The speed setting is set to 30 km/h (although the maximum speed is 50  
250 km/h) to consider the presence and effect of secondary intersections along the links affecting traffic  
251 conditions.

252 One internal centroid is located at the Turin city centre, whereas 17 external centroids are chosen according to their  
253 relevance in terms of connections with the urban network, including the main high-speed road (A55 Turin Ring Road),  
254 for its relevance to freight distribution vehicles (Fig. 3).

255

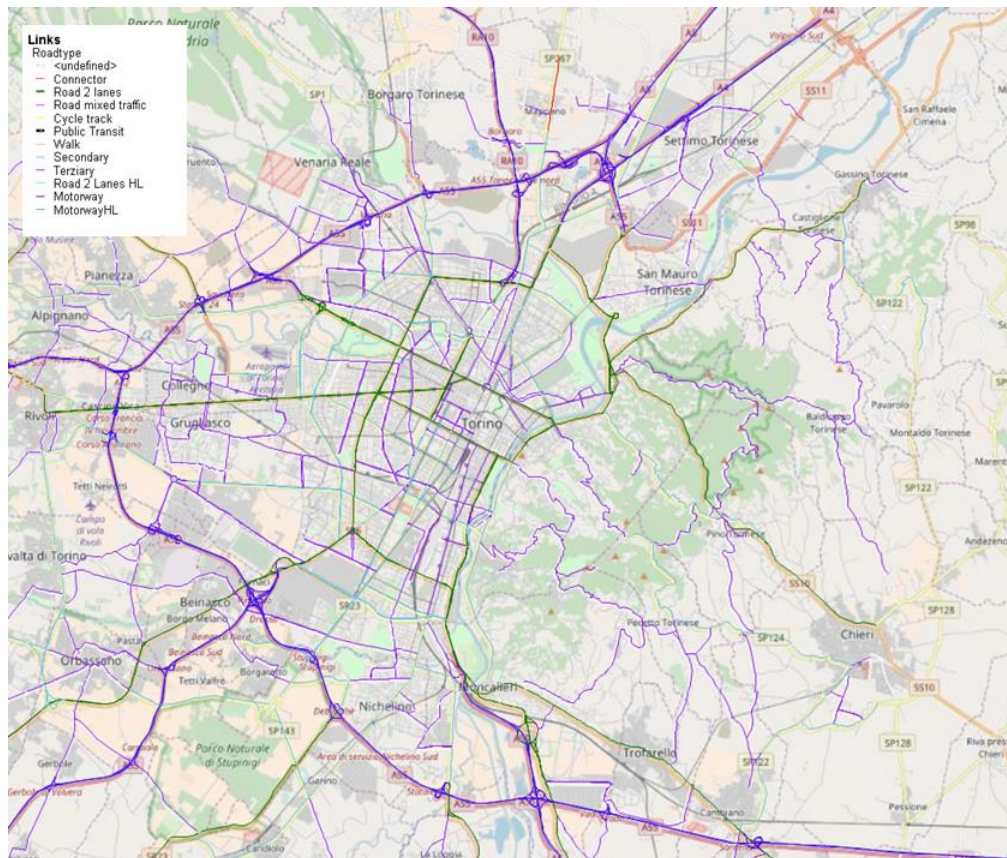
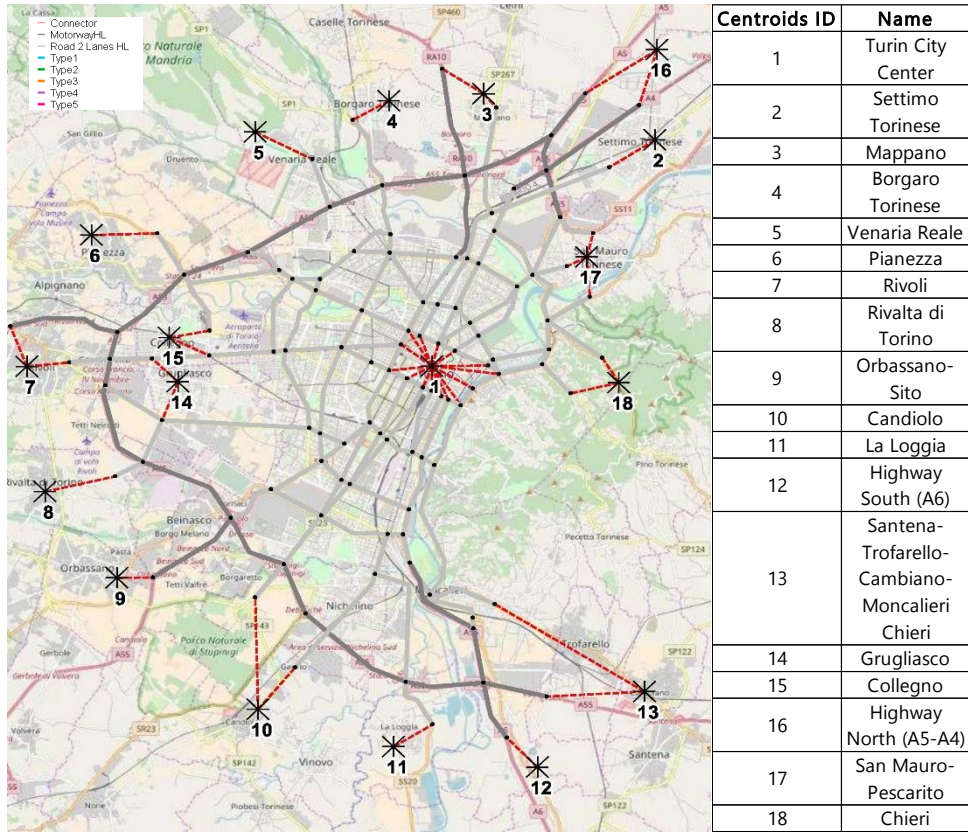


Fig. 2 Original network of Turin area (Source: OpenStreetMap)

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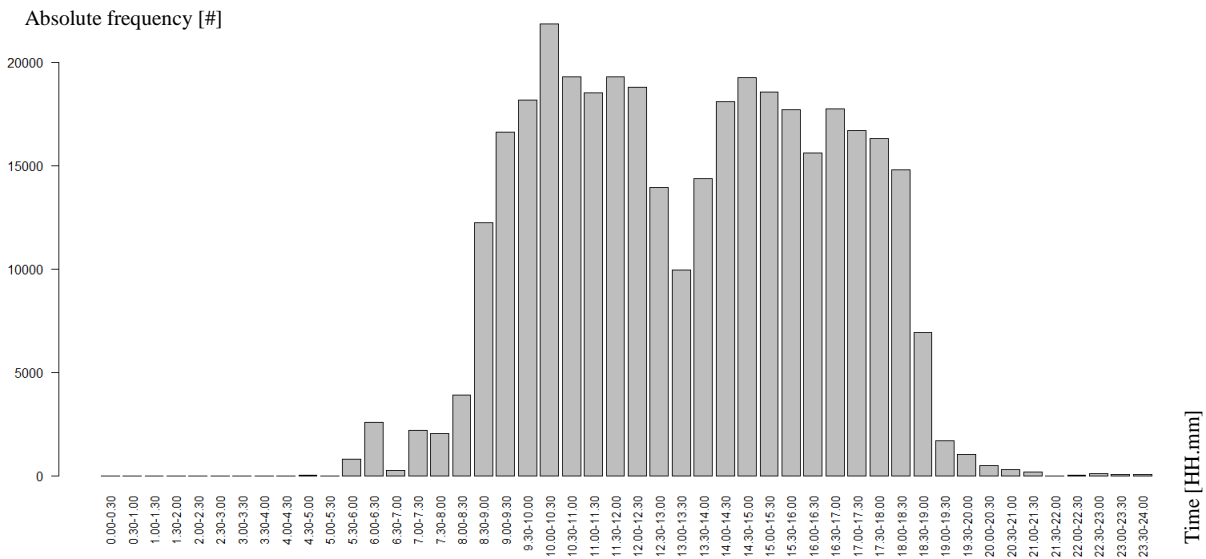
Fig. 3 *A priori* network of Turin area: Motorways in dark grey, Road2lanes in light grey and connectors in dashed red (Source: OmniTRANS model)

260

### 3.2. Travel time estimation from GPS data

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263  
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The proposed method is applied on a dataset consisting of 360,820 GPS positions in Turin related to vehicles (light vans) belonging to logistics fleets delivering goods throughout the city (Pirra & Diana, 2019). More precisely, GPS traces were collected for 28 different vans in the period from April 29 to May 29, 2017, however only 23 vehicles were detected while travelling within the selected area during work days. Each recording includes time and day, latitude and longitude, instantaneous velocity and bearing.



266  
267

Fig. 4 Recording distributions according to the time of day for 30 min time ranges

268  
269  
270

The time periods investigated are not referred to an hourly basis; their range is selected according to the frequency of the position data collected at various moments of a day (Fig. 4). Considering the specific characteristics of the dataset (delivery operations, small number of vehicles), wide time periods must be set to capture a larger number of vehicles and

271 to refer the estimated speed to homogeneous periods. Moreover, it is necessary to recall that the vans are travelling around  
 272 the city to deliver goods to shops mainly during normal business hours. Off peak travel times are not considered in the  
 273 analysis, because the influence of congestion on the travel could is not relevant. According to such observations, the  
 274 analysis in subsequent sections is applied based on the following two-time ranges:

- 275 - H1 → 9.00 - 12.30 a.m.
- 276 - H2 → 4.00 - 6.00 p.m.

277 As discussed in the Methodology section, it is necessary to detect as many vehicles at road intersections as possible to  
 278 compute their travel times along links. Two main classes of nodes are identified to adapt a boundary area to the relevance  
 279 of the road intersection: one represents the case where a “Motorway” road is present (meaning Motorway to Motorway  
 280 and Motorway to Road2Lanes), while the other includes the crossings of “Road2lanes”. For both classes, six radii were  
 281 evaluated, from a minimum of 50 m to a maximum of 300 m, considered in 50 m increments.

282 The selected values of the radii for the different classes of nodes are given below and Fig. 5 shows examples of two  
 283 common node types.

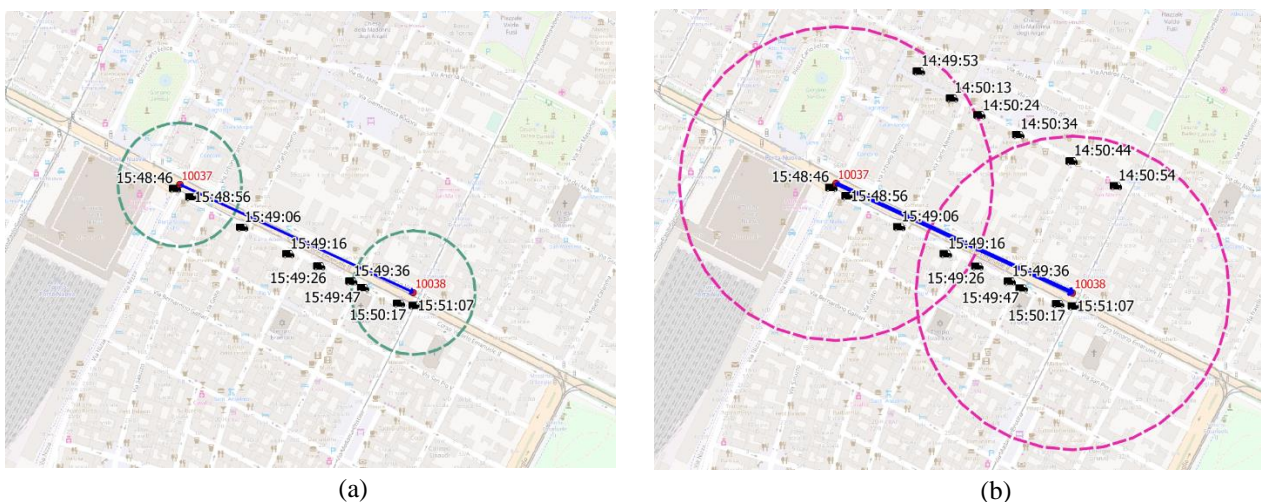
- 284 - Intersection of two “Motorway” roads or “Motorway” to “Road2Lanes” →  $r = 200$  m
- 285 - Intersection of two “Road2lanes” roads →  $r = 100$  m

286



287 Fig. 5 Examples of the two classes of nodes and positioning data: (a) intersection connecting two “Road2lanes” and (b) a node at the crossing of a  
 288 “Motorway” and a “Road2lanes” (Source: QGIS).

289 These values are selected by combining a numerical analysis with evaluation of the map. In fact, the number of links  
 290 (roads) where vehicles have travelled is computed for the various combinations of radius values. As expected, higher  
 291 numbers of passages are detected if the boundaries are wider for both classes of nodes (e.g. 250 m). However, some  
 292 problems regarding the quality of the results could arise in those cases. Fig. 6 shows an example for a link in the city  
 293 centre belonging to the “Road2lanes” class and the connecting nodes 10037 and 10038. Two different radii are proposed  
 294 for the boundaries, namely 100 m (Fig. 6(a)) and 250 m (Fig. 6 (b)), as well as a selection of positions recorded for two  
 295 vehicles travelling in that area of the city. Fig. 6(a) shows that a vehicle has effectively travelled along the selected arc  
 296 because it has been localised in the 100 m boundaries around both nodes. By contrast, the image presented in Fig. 6(b)  
 297 highlights the role of a proper radius. In this figure, the radius is set too high, and other vehicles travelling along parallel  
 298 roads can be erroneously taken into consideration. To avoid this drawback, the selected radii are those aforementioned.  
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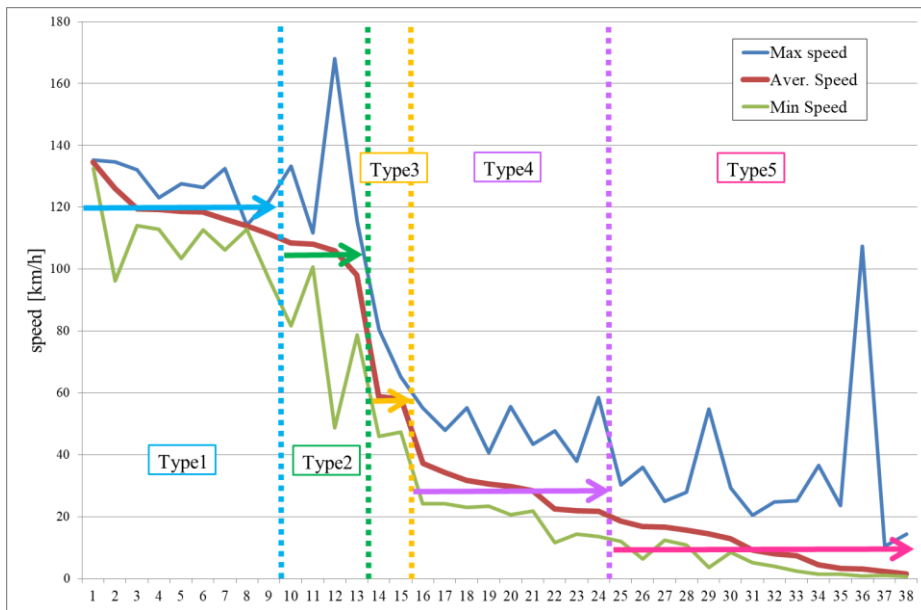
300 Fig. 6 Example of a link (blue line) connecting nodes 10037 and 10038, both representing intersections of two “Road2lanes” in the city centre. The  
 301 images represent two possible radii length: (a) 100 m and (b) 250 m (Source: QGIS).

302 As discussed previously, the procedure is conducted in two steps by dividing the recordings according to the time  
 303 ranges H1 and H2. Considering the small number of vehicles included in the dataset, the application of the methodology  
 304 described in the previous sections provides observed travel time only for a certain number of arcs in the *a priori* network.  
 305 As indicated previously, GPS traces were collected for only 23 vehicles, with 22 of them found travelling along the *a*  
 306 *priori* network arcs. However, a detailed count yielded values of travel time for 216 of the 324 arcs composing the network  
 307 in the time range H1, whereas this number declined to 155 in H2. As explained previously, the dataset encompassed one  
 308 month of recordings, thus, each link could have been travelled more than once in each time interval. For example, it is  
 309 possible to find up to 63 values for the same arc travelled by different vehicles. This is logical because, in the cited case,  
 310 the corresponding road is one of the main access routes for vehicles entering the city from the north, where some of the  
 311 main logistic structures are located. However, because a single and representative value of speed is associated with each  
 312 link during a given time period, this can be estimated by considering the average travel time. A further refinement is  
 313 actually proposed to improve the reliability of the final value obtained; the average is computed only after removal of the  
 314 outliers from all possible travel times found for each specific arc. By applying this operation, it is possible to avoid the  
 315 influence that unexpected fluctuations in the values collected could have on the final average travel time. On the whole,  
 316 outliers were found and removed from 21% of the arcs in H1 and 17% in H2.

317 *3.3. Construction of the a posteriori network*

318 As explained in Section 2, the information derived from the GPS traces dataset is exploited to compute the average  
 319 speed for each a priori network link, which is determined from the relationships among the distances between nodes and  
 320 the corresponding average travel times. In such manner, the original road characteristics associated by default to the  
 321 various arcs are now closer to reality, as perceived by vehicles travelling within the city. To gain consistency in the  
 322 classification, this operation is performed considering only those arcs with at least 10 values of computed speed after  
 323 outlier removal for H1, namely 18% of all arcs (38 of 216). The average length of these links is 1.7 km with 89% of them  
 324 longer than 500 m.

325 Fig. 7 shows the approach adopted to create new classifications for the *a posteriori* network. The average speed values  
 326 for the 38 arcs are firstly organized in decreasing trend (red line), based on the corresponding minimum and maximum  
 327 values (green and blue lines). Then, five new classes are defined from the distribution of values and slopes in the plot. In  
 328 particular, the limits of Type3 have been identified according to the highest slope variations, and then, two additional  
 329 types for higher speeds and two additional types for lower speeds are introduced, approximating the shape of the average  
 330 distribution. The minimum and maximum distributions confirm that the range around the average is quite narrow, with  
 331 some exceptions, which pertain to short links that have a negligible effect on the travel time estimation along the routes.  
 332 Considering the larger size of the GPS traces dataset recorded in time period H1, this period is used as the reference for  
 333 class definition.  
 334



335 Fig. 7 Average speeds ([km/h] for the 38 arcs of the *a posteriori* network used to define the new road classifications  
 336

337 Table 1 provides further details on these new classes: their names (first column), the extreme values of average speed  
 338 used to assign each arc to the different classes (second column) and the corresponding average travel speeds that are  
 339 associated with each road type (third column). Moreover, the number of links of the *a posteriori* network that are currently

340 assigned to each of the five classes is provided, both for those arcs with at least 10 measures (fourth column) and for those  
 341 with at least 5 measures (last column). Note that the majority of arcs fall in the “slowest” class. For a deeper investigation,  
 342 it could be useful to check where the different types of links are located on the city map to gain profitable information on  
 343 how the logistic fleet “perceives” accessibility and mobility around the city.

344 Table 1 Characteristics of the *a posteriori* network road type classification (time range H1).

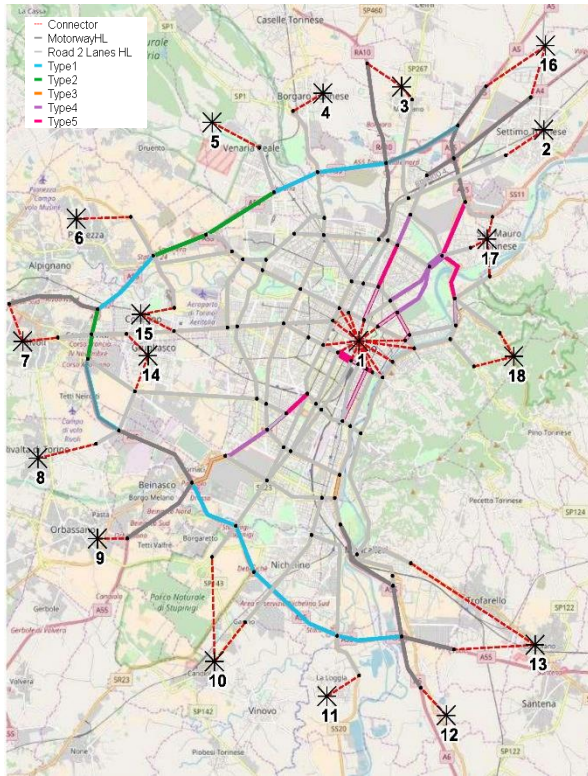
<b>New road type class</b>	<b>Criteria [km/h]</b>	<b>Average [km/h]</b>	<b>No. arcs 10 values</b>	<b>No. arcs 5 values</b>
Type1	$s^* > 110$	120	9	12
Type2	$110 \leq s < 80$	105	4	5
Type3	$80 \leq s < 40$	58	2	3
Type4	$40 \leq s < 20$	29	9	13
Type5	$s \leq 20$	10	14	44

345 \* s: speed

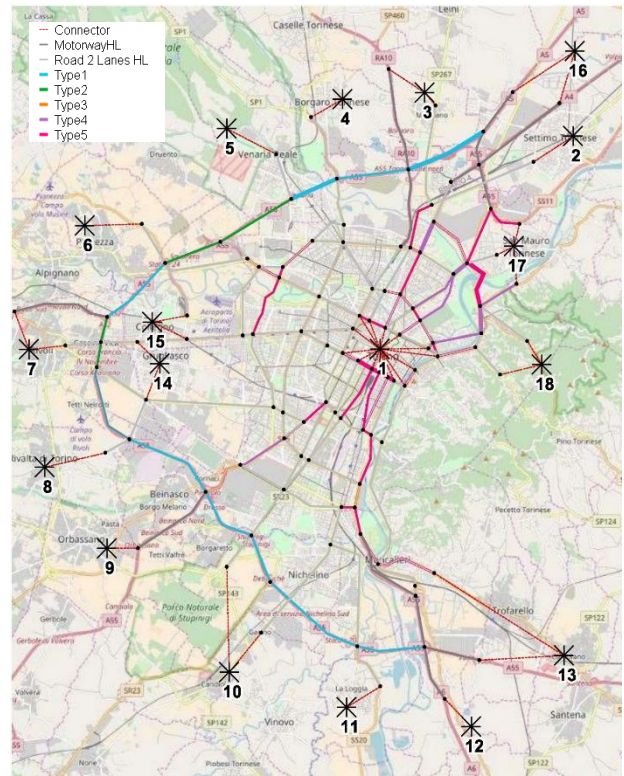
346  
 347 In Fig. 8, the *a posteriori* network for H1 refines the one presented in Fig. 3 (*a priori*). More precisely, the figure  
 348 contains the *a posteriori* network with its new classification for those arcs with at least 10 values of speed (Fig. 8(a)) and  
 349 with at least five measures (Fig. 8(b)). A total of 38 updated (coloured) arcs are highlighted in the first case, while this  
 350 number increases to 77 in the second. The comparison between the *a priori* and *a posteriori* network helps to increase  
 351 knowledge of roads that are frequently travelled by the vehicles of this specific dataset. For example, it is important to  
 352 note that many of the secondary arcs (those previously classified as “Road2lanes” in Fig. 3) are not as frequently covered  
 353 by logistic fleet routes in Fig. 8(a), with the exception of those entering the city from the north-east and the south-west  
 354 (violet and pink links). This meets expectations because the corresponding roads are along the connections between the  
 355 areas around Turin where logistic structures are mainly located. Moreover, it is worth highlighting that the average travel  
 356 speeds associated with those arcs are the lowest (29 or 10 km/h), as identified by the violet and pink coloured lines,  
 357 representing somewhat congested streets. On the other hand, higher values are found for the Turin Ring road. In fact, both  
 358 maps in Fig. 8 show cyan and green links for this road, meaning that the delivery vehicles travel at average speeds of 120  
 359 km/h and 105 km/h, respectively. These considerations are applied in the following evaluations of the results obtained by  
 360 analysing the connections of pairs of centroids through shortest paths.

361 Although the dataset for H1 with more than 10 measures of speed has been used to classify the links of the *a*  
 362 *posteriori* network, additional information could be gained considering a wider amount of links, including those with at  
 363 least five values of speed, which account for 36% of the total links travelled by the fleet. Fig. 8(b) displays them on the  
 364 map, providing a more detailed characterisation of the city centre compared to Fig. 8(a). This will be exploited in depth  
 365 in the following sections to gain knowledge regarding city accessibility as perceived by the delivery fleet. A similar  
 366 representation for the other time range (H2) is shown in Fig. 9. Here, the classification derived previously is applied and  
 367 those arcs with at least five values of average speed are displayed and a total of 44 links is found. The matching of this  
 368 map with the corresponding one for H1 (Fig. 8(b)) stresses that different roads are travelled in the two periods of the day  
 369 by fleet vehicles. Moreover, a further variation is observed when comparing the average speed of some links composing  
 370 the Turin Ring road. In fact, for H1 (Fig. 8(b)), higher speed values are detected (Type1 and Type 2, respectively 120  
 371 km/h and 105 km/h), whereas in H2 the average travel speed decreases to 58 km/h or even 10 km/h for some links (Fig.  
 372 9). During the late afternoon, these congested road conditions are familiar to frequent drivers, which is confirmed by the  
 373 information extracted from the GPS traces dataset. In addition, these measures correspond to different days of the month,  
 374 indicating that this situation is rather common and is not simply due to an unusual event, such as a car accident or the  
 375 presence of road work. The choice of more than 10 speed measures should limit the influence of such random events in  
 376 the estimated values.

377



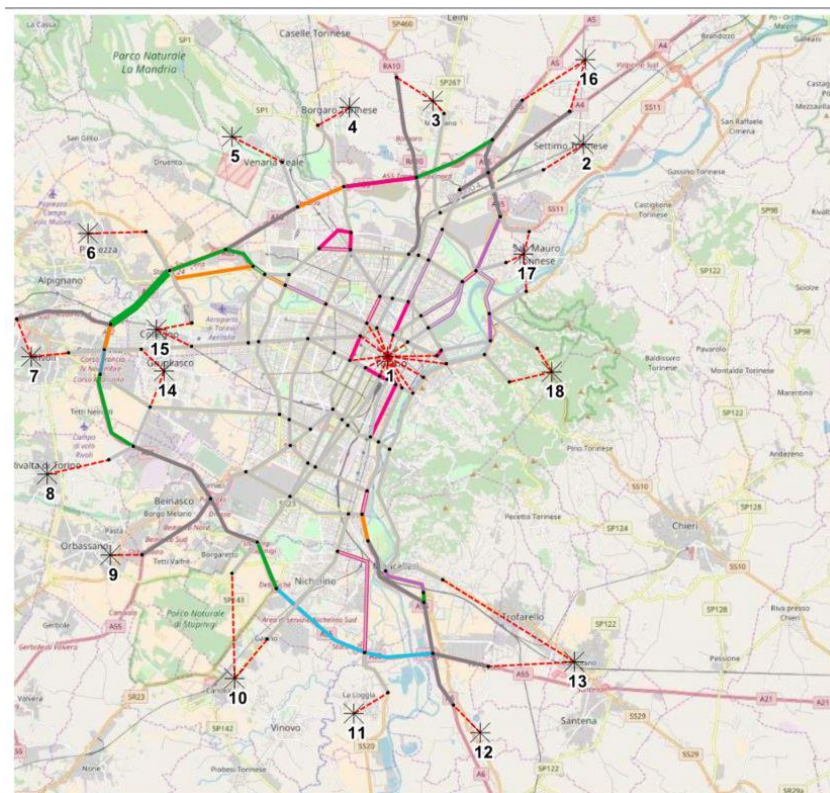
(a)



(b)

378

Fig. 8 A posteriori networks using arcs with at least (a) 10 measures and (b) 5 measures for the time interval H1 (Source: OmniTRANS)

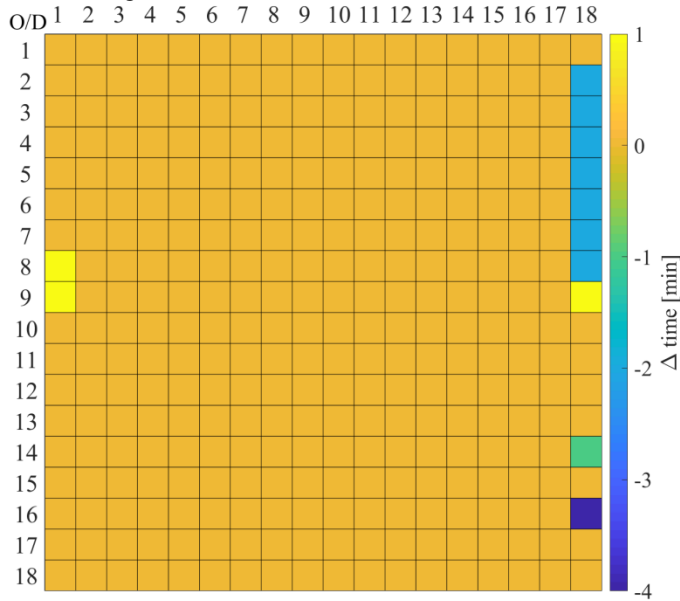


379  
380

Fig. 9 A posteriori network using arcs with at least 5 measures for the time interval H2 (refer to Fig. 6 for the legends, source: OmniTRANS)

381 3.4. Verification and validation of a posteriori network

382 As explained in Section 3.3, the arcs of the network where data are available have been assigned to one of the five  
 383 possible classes according to the computed average travel speed. As discussed in the Methodology sections, an alternative  
 384 approach would require use of specific speed values estimated for each link to evaluate the accessibility to the zones in  
 385 the study area. Hence, validation of the classification leading to the *a posteriori* network definition involves a comparison  
 386 between these two scenarios through comparison of the time necessary to travel amongst the origin/destination (O/D)  
 387 pairs of the network. In this test case, for all O/D pairs, the difference in travel time is less than 1 min, with the exception  
 388 of some routes directed to zone 18 (less than 4 min), because of low speed links (Type 5) with higher travel times (Fig.  
 389 10). Therefore, the validity of the proposed classification is confirmed when approximating specific link values with  
 390 respect to the accessibility estimation among zones.

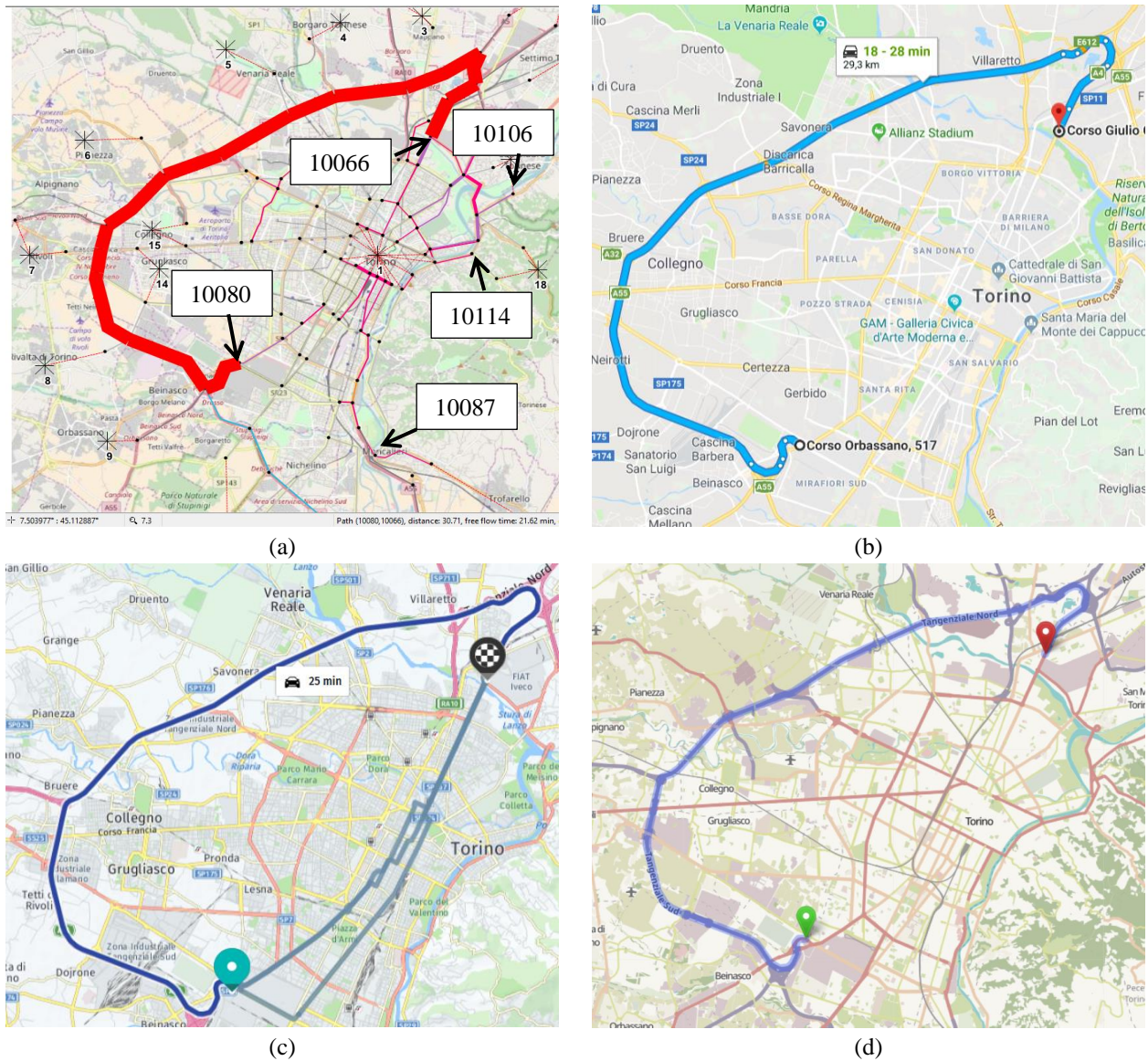


391 Fig. 10 Difference in the values of travel time [min] of shortest paths connecting 18 centroids using real speed versus the *a posteriori* H1 network  
 392 (where speeds are represented by classes).  
 393

394 The length and travel time duration of the minimum paths for some selected connections are checked with respect to  
 395 three applications available on the Web and operated by well-known map providers: Google maps  
 396 ([www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps)), Here data ([www.here.com](http://www.here.com)) and OpenStreetMap ([www.openstreetmap.org](http://www.openstreetmap.org)). The travel time  
 397 comparisons are presented in Table 2.

398 Table 2 Travel time [min] comparison for different routes between pairs of centroids using various commercial applications (see Fig. 11 for centroid  
 399 positions)

Route	<i>A posteriori</i> network	Google Maps	Here	OSM
10080-10066	22	18-28	25	20
10066-10080	28	20-35	28	21
10087-10106	36	24-50	33	31
10106-10087	27	24-50	30	32
10080-10114	34	26-45	36	33
10114-10080	25	26-50	34	32



401 Fig. 11 Minimum path comparisons using different commercial applications (example of route from node 10080 to node 10066): (a) OmniTRANS,  
 402 (b) Google Maps, (c) Here, (d) OpenStreetMap

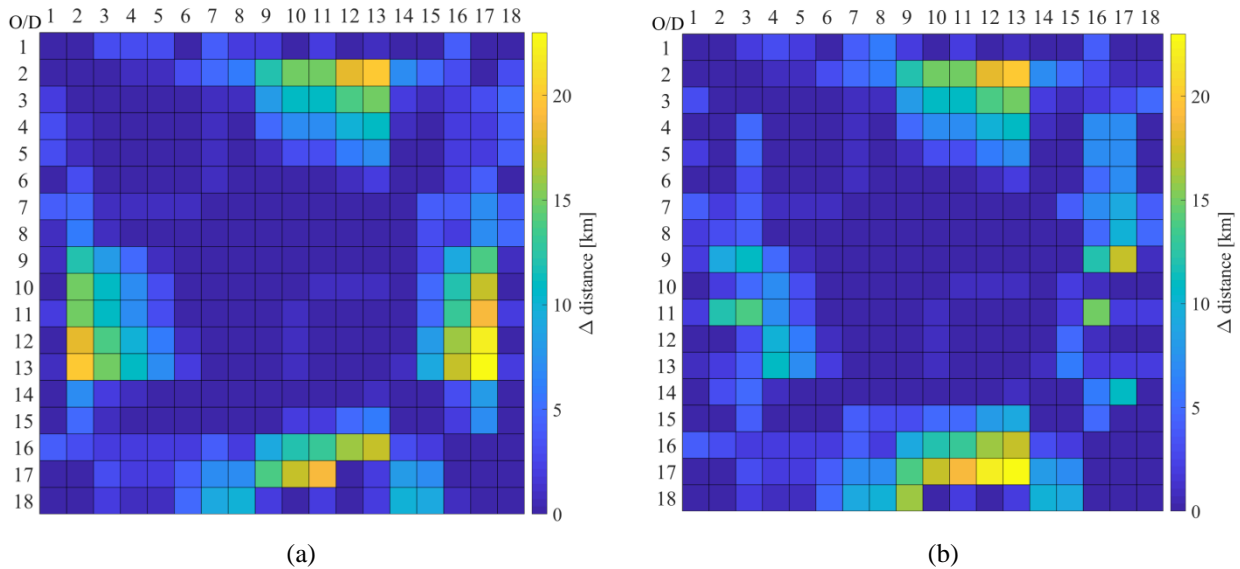
403 As indicated in Table 2, each Web service provides different values for similar routes (Fig. 11). Google Map, for  
 404 instance, specifies a range of travel time consistent with the one obtained with the presented methodology. One of the  
 405 reasons behind these differences could lie in the vehicle types included in the travel time calculation. In our case, the  
 406 recordings come from delivery vans, while other web services could also draw from other sources. It could be expected  
 407 that their duties influence the speed of the former kind of vehicle, but, as presented in the methodology section, our  
 408 procedure deals with removing the stop time required in those activities. The verification presented can indicate that  
 409 the network model will not provide out of range values for travel times between relevant zone connections and the results  
 410 that we obtain are consistent with those derived from other tools.

411 **4. Discussion on the accessibility results**

412 **4.1. Time and distance influence on route selection**

413 The relevance of time for the best route selection can be measured by comparing the travel length for the shortest paths  
 414 found (considering time as the link attribute) to the length of the path between the same pair of centroids on the basis of  
 415 distance attributes. Fig. 12 visualises these differences between lengths obtained for the two types of path calculations,  
 416 considering each time range (H1 and H2) separately. It is interesting to note the polarisation of greater variations in certain  
 417 zones, meaning that the contribution of the GPS dataset has a relevant influence on the travel time necessary to go from

418 specific centroids to others. However, the absence of a complete refinement of the network has a definite impact, as no  
 419 information could be added to a more “static” component of the network, such as the distance, which is computed based  
 420 on the lengths of the arcs. For example, assuming time as the attribute, although the length of the path from 13 to 17 is  
 421 23 km greater than the case of assuming distance, 18 min have been saved, as shown in the first row of Table 3. Fig. 13  
 422 shows the changes in this path, presumably as a result of congestion and the refined information regarding the travel speed  
 423 contained in the *a posteriori* network. It is interesting to note that in the second time range (H2), the major change is  
 424 symmetrical to the case of H1 (last two rows of Table 3). The information derived by such type of value analysis could  
 425 provide useful insight as to the level of efficiency of the network. In fact, if the reduction of time necessary to connect  
 426 two centroids is associated with an increase in the kilometres travelled, this would imply greater consumption of resources  
 427 by the vehicles related to the distance, such as fuel or tyres.  
 428

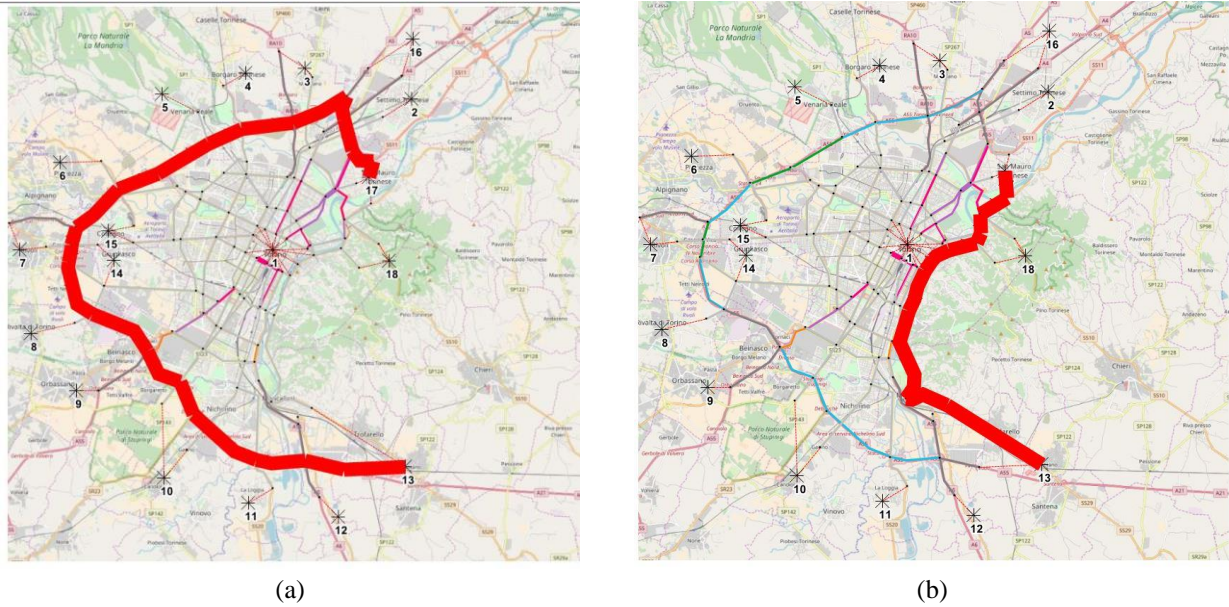


429 Fig. 12 Length variation [km] of shortest path for time/distance-based algorithm in the two time ranges: (a) H1 and (b) H2

430 Table 3 Shortest paths comparison for a particular route (centroids 13-17)

	From	To	Distance_T* [km]	Travel time_T* [min]	Distance_D* [km]	Travel time_D* [min]	Δ distance [km]
<b>H1</b>	13	17	46.3	42	23.0	60	23.3
	17	13	24.7	49	23.0	60	1.7
<b>H2</b>	13	17	24.7	50	23.0	60	1.7
	17	13	46.3	48	23.0	60	23.3

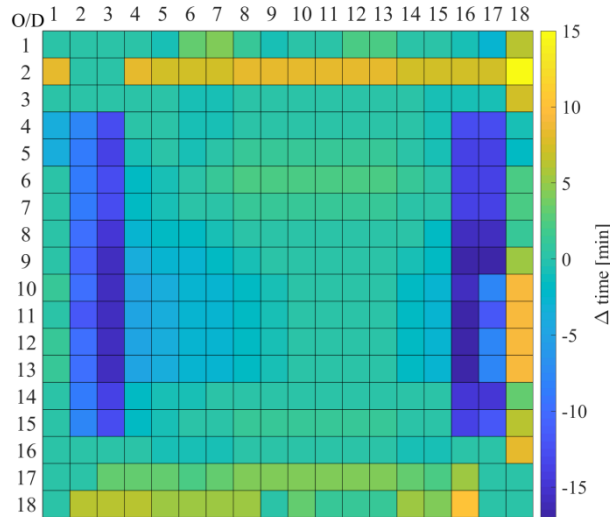
431 \*"T" = shortest path based on the travel time / "D" = shortest path based on the distance  
 432



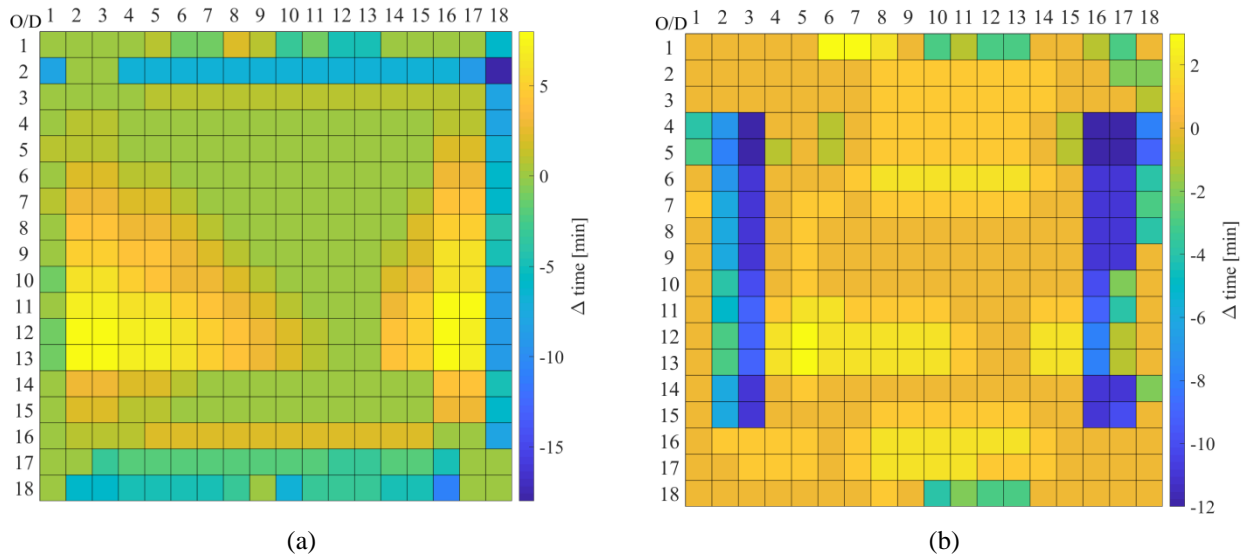
433 Fig. 13 Different shortest paths connecting centroids 13 and 17 for time range H1: (a) 46.3 km and (b) 24.7 km (source: OmniTRANS).

434 4.2. Skim matrices comparison for the two time periods

435 The influence of floating car data (FCD) integration on the travel time matrices is highlighted in this section by  
 436 considering that in different time periods, the speed may change on the congested links. In Fig. 14, the differences of  
 437 travel time between the best paths (selected on the basis of the time attributes) of the two time periods are depicted for  
 438 the various zones. The highest value corresponds to approximately 15 min and the same connections can be slower or  
 439 faster for the two periods, depending on the pairs of zones.



440 Fig. 14 Travel time difference [min] between time ranges H1 and H2 for the scenarios of the *a posteriori* network with at least 5 measures.  
 441



442 Fig. 15 Travel time difference [min] between the *a priori* and *a posteriori* scenarios for time range: (a) H1 and (b) H2. In both cases, the *a posteriori*  
 443 network with at least 5 measurements is considered.

444 The valued added by the refinement process on the network model by separating the time periods is confirmed in Fig.  
 445 15, where the differences are apparent by comparing the travel time as estimated by the skim matrix for the *a priori* and  
 446 *a posteriori* networks of H1 and H2. In both cases, a low value, seen as a difference and not as an absolute value,  
 447 corresponds to more time required to connect a specific pair of centroids in the *a posteriori* scenario. For example, as  
 448 confirmation of the discussion in Section 3.3, paths reaching centroid 18 in Fig. 15(a) are usually associated with negative  
 449 values mainly because most of the nearby links are characterised by low speed values in the *a posteriori* case, as can be  
 450 observed by comparing Fig. 3 and Fig. 8(a). However, the richness given by the knowledge derived with the refinement  
 451 of the *a priori* network is confirmed by the fact that 77% of the values are different from zero in both cases.

#### 452 4.3. Insight on accessibility for specific zones

453 A further challenging application of the method focusses on the measurement of the accessibility to and from crucial  
 454 centroids for delivery operations, such as the city centre for its business relevance, the connections with external  
 455 metropolitan areas, or the zones where depots are located. This information, in terms of travel time, may be helpful to  
 456 properly plan delivery trips by fleet managers or to support location decisions for logistic structures within a city. In fact,  
 457 the knowledge of the shortest paths for different network configurations (in H1 and H2 time periods in this case) could  
 458 provide interesting feedback on the accessibility of various zones under investigation.

459 A first focus could be the city centre, i.e. centroid 1, as origin (Fig. 16(a)) or destination (Fig. 16(b)) of all possible  
 460 connections with other centroids. For instance, in the first case, few variations in values are found, meaning that both the  
 461 time range and the refinement of the *a priori* network seem to have minor influence on the travel time when the routes  
 462 are oriented towards the city centre.

463  
 464

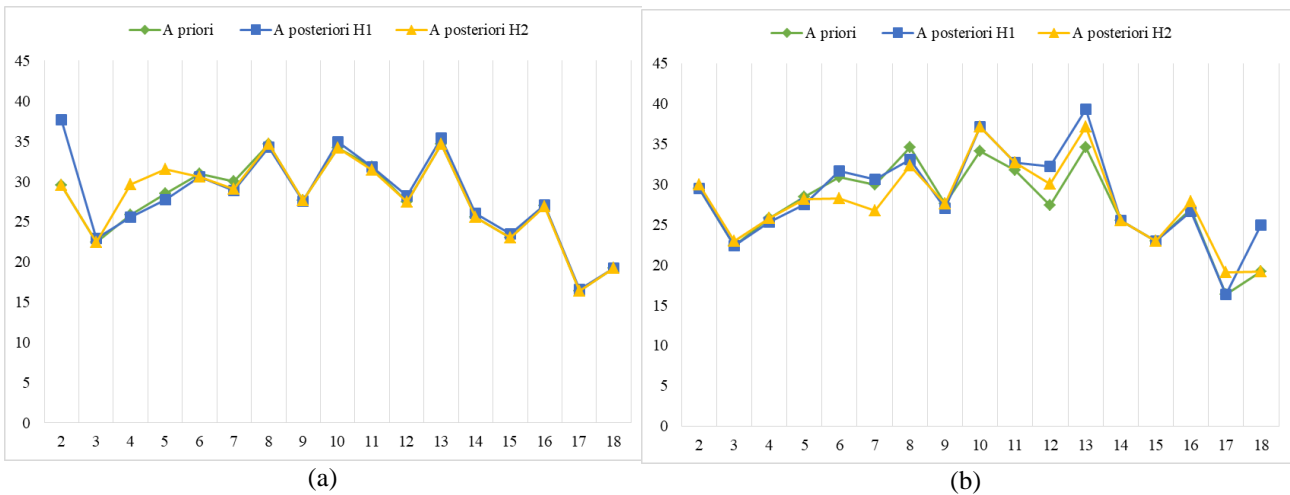


Fig. 16 Comparison between the travel time [min] for three different scenarios involving: (a) to and (b) from the city centre (centroid 1).

465

466 The accessibility of the Motorways located in the northern part of the city (i.e. to and from Milan) is another example  
 467 of applying the proposed method to measure the quality of the network with respect to external stakeholders, as shown in  
 468 Fig. 17. In this case, reaching other zones is strongly influenced by the time period, as confirmed by the differences  
 469 between H1 and H2, as well as by the refinement process of the network with respect to the *a priori* design. Finally,  
 470 similar charts are shown in Fig. 18 for centroid 17, which approximates the position of the area where a cluster of depots  
 471 managed by freight distribution companies is currently located. Most of the variations are found, as for the previous  
 472 centroid, for travel along paths connecting to that specific zone rather than for those leaving it, as shown in Fig. 18(a) and  
 473 (b), respectively.

474 It is worth observing that the assumptions adopted for the speed values in the *a priori* network produce travel time  
 475 values in Fig. 17 and Fig. 18 that are intermediate between those in H1 and H2. This reveals that the authors' knowledge  
 476 of the average speed used to preliminarily classify the links seems to be affected by the average traffic conditions in the  
 477 two periods.  
 478

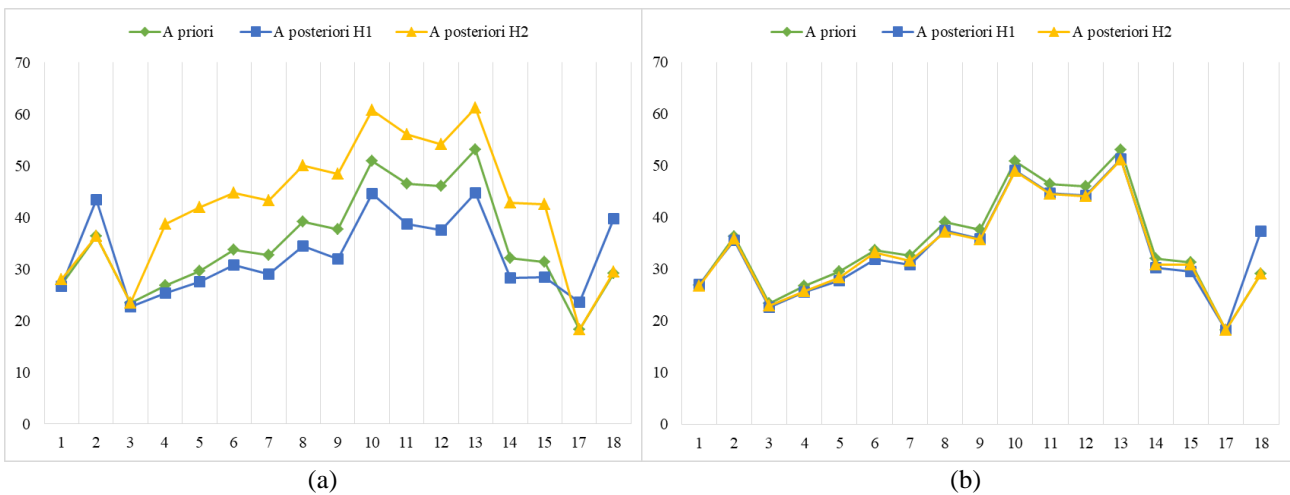


Fig. 17 Comparison between the travel time in three different scenarios involving: (a) to and (b) from Motorway North (centroid 16)

479

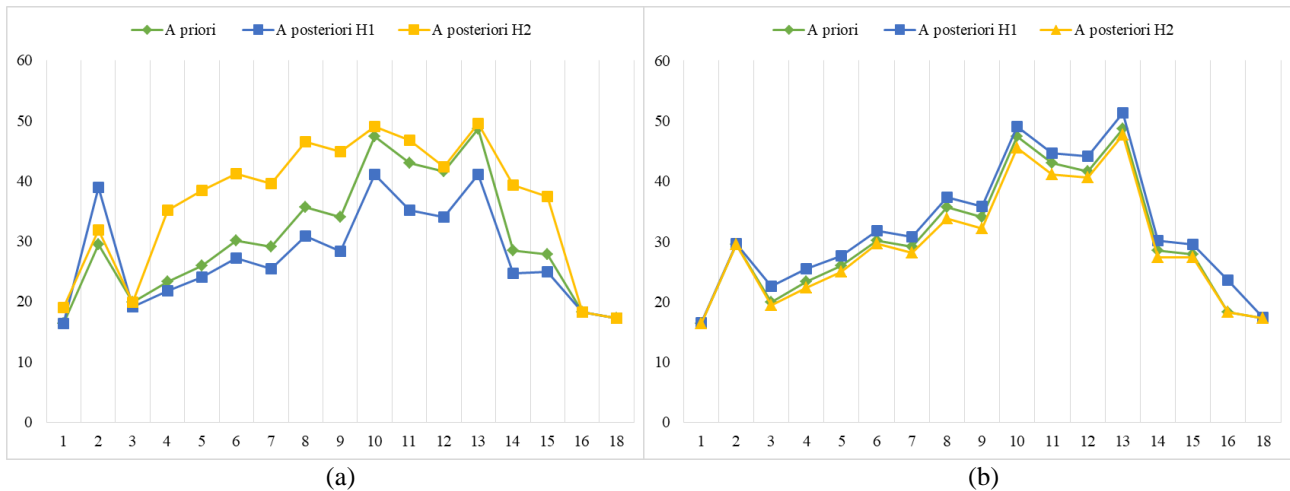


Fig. 18 Comparison between the travel time in three different scenarios involving: (a) to and (b) from the depots area (centroid 17)

480

## 481 Conclusion

482 The methodology presented in this paper was developed to investigate accessibility in urban areas, as perceived by  
 483 freight distribution services operating using delivery vans, through the estimation of the average speed in a road network  
 484 model. The low time resolution (sampling rate) of positioning data affected the model design, because not all road links  
 485 connecting consecutive intersections could be included, only relevant arterials. For this reason, an approach based on  
 486 nodes was adopted to detect vehicle positions along their travel routes, whereas the link information was used only to  
 487 check a vehicle's direction. A classification of the links was also performed to simplify the model management based on  
 488 the estimated speed between nodes of the road network.

489 The main results deriving from the case study in Turin confirm that the FCD values available from common  
 490 commercial services can be used to improve the knowledge of the road network performance for various applications. In  
 491 this study, high-level accessibility matrices were built to compare different zones of the city interested in delivery  
 492 operations by analysing the most used urban connections. These first results are related to a specific type of trajectory  
 493 data, collected by light duty vehicles, and they depict a well-defined situation that could be undoubtedly informative for  
 494 certain stakeholders, such as public authorities and urban logistics operators.

495 The comparison of the travel time connecting different areas is another important characteristic to take into account.  
 496 From the results of the application, for example, Motorway North (centroid 16) can be reached from some zones in  
 497 approximately 20 min in the morning, but this value increases to 35 min if the same route is taken in the afternoon.  
 498 However, the period does not significantly affect accessibility when considering travel in the opposite direction. This kind  
 499 of information could provide useful suggestions on the creation of specific time ranges that could be exploited efficiently  
 500 for the delivery operations along the day.

501 The proposed method and the derived accessibility matrices can be exploited by Local Authorities to obtain a global  
 502 picture of the current network performance for management purposes. Furthermore, better knowledge of different  
 503 scenarios can support the planning of future measures to regulate urban freight deliveries. The monitoring of the  
 504 accessibility can help in the validation of reversible measures proposed at the city level such as: (a) use of reserved lanes  
 505 also for delivery vans, (b) regulation of the time ranges for entering the city centre, (c) exploitation of special permissions.

506 Other stakeholder categories that might benefit from the results, such as travel time to reach an established zone, are  
 507 van/fleet operators. They could exploit such findings as support for: (a) their decisions when planning delivery routes, (b)  
 508 choosing the optimal time range(s) for parcel distribution by shifting from congested to off-peak periods, and (c) providing  
 509 more accurate delivery time windows to end users. Overall, Local Authorities have to be able to access and manage this  
 510 kind of information because they are expected to take into account the needs of different stakeholders acting in the field  
 511 to be sure of creating the proper strategy for freight transport at the city level.

512 Based on the proposed framework, future work could try to apply the methodology by extending the focus to other  
 513 urban areas where deliveries or city logistic operations are relevant. Besides, the availability of a more extensive database  
 514 and integrating the trajectories of more freight operators could extend the knowledge pertaining to urban accessibility.  
 515 Targeted analyses could also focus on different period of the year (summer/winter) or days of the week, to identify  
 516 particular trends. The power of the approach proposed lies in the possibility of evaluating and monitoring the effects of  
 517 reversible actions proposed at the city level (access in certain areas, use of reserved lanes, etc.) that would require a  
 518 simulation model not always easily to be implemented. With all these aims, a network modelling tool, although here  
 519 applied with only a small portion of its functionalities, could be used to manage additional associated information, such  
 520 as traffic flow on links or the travel demand between specific zones.

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