

AI-OPTIMIZED TIME-SLOT DELIVERY FOR EFFICIENT PARCEL DISTRIBUTION IN E-COMMERCE LOGISTICS

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Abstract: Last-mile parcel delivery is critically affected by uncertain travel times, metropolitan traffic volatility, fluctuating customer availability, spatial delivery density, courier vehicle capacities, and avoidable failed handover attempts. Conventional dispatching frameworks assign rigid, excessively broad time windows and rely on static travel-time matrices, inevitably resulting in prolonged customer waiting friction, unpunctual courier arrivals, inefficient vehicle capacity utilization, and costly repeated delivery attempts. To resolve these operational bottlenecks, this paper proposes an AI-optimized time-slot delivery framework that seamlessly couples supervised machine-learning arrival prediction with constrained time-window-aware parcel assignment and combinatorial route optimization. Historical delivery telemetry is systematically extracted into multidimensional predictive features, encompassing Haversine transit distances, historical traffic congestion indices, service dwell durations, parcel priority rankings, customer preference distributions, and neighborhood delivery densities. A supervised regression model predicts expected arrival times alongside calibrated handover success probabilities for candidate delivery intervals. Subsequently, a multi-objective optimization engine assigns parcels to feasible time slots and optimal delivery tours while strictly enforcing vehicle payload boundaries, courier shift availability, committed delivery intervals, and operational transit costs. The proposed framework is empirically benchmarked utilizing a multi-zone simulated e-commerce logistics dataset. The experimental evaluations compare a conventional fixed-slot baseline against the proposed AI-assisted paradigm across on-time delivery rates, mean delivery delay, failed attempt frequency, fleet transit mileage, and time-slot utilization efficiency. Simulation results demonstrate that integrating predictive arrival modeling with combinatorial optimization elevates on-time punctuality from 86.0% to 93.4%, reduces average delivery delay by 41.2%, cuts failed deliveries by 34.6%, and shortens fleet transit distance by 11.1%. These findings confirm that decoupled predictive-optimization architectures establish a scalable, robust foundation for next-generation e-commerce parcel logistics.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Last-mile delivery, Time-slot prediction, Parcel delivery, Machine learning, Vehicle routing with time windows (VRPTW), Logistics optimization, Supervised regression, Punctuality.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary global digital economy, last-mile parcel logistics represents both the most economically vital and operationally challenging echelon of the e-commerce supply chain. The exponential growth of online shopping, accelerated by omni-channel retailing and evolving consumer expectations, has created unprecedented delivery volumes that must be distributed across geographically dispersed, highly congested urban and suburban networks. Operating at a granular spatial and temporal scale, the last mile accounts for upwards of forty to fifty percent of total supply chain expenditures. Urban traffic gridlock, heterogeneous road topologies, unpredictable stop-service dwell durations, fluctuating customer physical availability, and rigid courier payload boundaries routinely disrupt operational planning, causing routes that appear computationally optimal during dispatch to deteriorate rapidly during physical field execution.

A delivery time slot represents a bounded, mutually agreed temporal interval during which a parcel consignment is scheduled to arrive at the customer's specified destination. Accurate time-slot planning establishes a critical service commitment between the e-commerce enterprise and the consumer, fostering customer retention and trust. However, committing to bounded service intervals severely restricts routing flexibility. When delivery windows are configured too narrowly without predictive feasibility modeling, couriers inevitably miss deadlines, triggering delivery failures, customer frustration, and expensive re-delivery loops. Conversely, when delivery windows are configured too broadly (e.g., full-day or unbounded half-day intervals), consumers experience substantial waiting friction and unreliability. Consequently, the central operational problem is not merely selecting arbitrary delivery intervals, but jointly forecasting accurate, feasible arrival times and optimally allocating parcels across available courier schedules and multi-stop vehicle routes.

Recent advancements in applied computational intelligence demonstrate that data-driven machine learning provides a powerful mechanism for modeling real-world logistics uncertainties. By decoupling empirical operational forecasting from mathematical constraint enforcement, predictive algorithms evaluate expected travel durations and delivery success probabilities, while an underlying optimization engine guarantees rigorous adherence to vehicle capacities, route continuity, and temporal deadlines. This study operationalizes this hybrid methodology by formulating an AI-optimized time-slot delivery framework specifically engineered for modern e-commerce parcel distribution.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Conventional parcel delivery scheduling in enterprise logistics predominantly relies on static geographical sectoring, manually scheduled delivery waves, or basic earliest-deadline dispatching rules. These traditional heuristics fail to capture non-linear traffic dynamics, variable stop dwell durations across heterogeneous building infrastructures, historical customer availability patterns, and localized consignment densities. As a direct consequence, delivery carriers suffer from high failed-attempt rates (often exceeding eight to ten percent), substantial delivery unpunctuality, excessive fuel consumption, and suboptimal courier fleet utilization. The primary problem addressed in this investigation is to formulate, implement, and evaluate an integrated software framework that leverages supervised machine learning to predict arrival feasibility, computes multi-criteria candidate-slot utility scores, and solves a constrained multi-objective vehicle routing optimization model to minimize operational transit distance, unpunctuality delay, and failed delivery penalties.

OBJECTIVES

The specific research objectives of this investigation are defined as follows:

- 1. Formulate a standardized digital feature representation for parcel shipments, synthesizing spatial coordinates, historical traffic indices, temporal indicators, courier vehicle specifications, and customer preference constraints.
- 2. Construct a supervised machine-learning predictive engine capable of accurately estimating parcel arrival times, stop dwell service durations, and handover success probabilities for candidate delivery time slots.
- 3. Design a composite multi-criteria time-slot scoring function that balances customer preference satisfaction, handover success likelihood, predicted lateness penalties, and marginal courier transit costs.
- 4. Formulate a constrained multi-objective vehicle routing and scheduling optimization model to assign parcels to available couriers while strictly satisfying vehicle payload capacities, shift boundaries, and promised time windows.
- 5. Implement an automated, modular end-to-end algorithmic pipeline and quantitatively benchmark its performance against conventional fixed-slot baselines across critical logistics indicators, including on-time delivery rate, mean delay, failed handovers, route distance, and slot utilization.

Scope

The scope of this research covers the mathematical modeling, algorithmic formulation, and architectural specification of an AI-assisted parcel time-slot delivery system in an urban and suburban e-commerce distribution context. The framework supports multi-vehicle fleets with heterogeneous payload capacities, customer-selected or system-recommended delivery time slots, stochastic travel times, parcel priority tiers, and courier availability profiles. The system architecture is developed with modular, decoupled interfaces, establishing a direct evolutionary pathway for

integration with real-time GPS telemetry feeds, live traffic navigation APIs, dynamic on-demand order insertion, and electric vehicle battery charging management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jazemi et al., in (MDPI 2023) [1], reviewed that urban last-mile vehicle-routing research is heavily defined by tight customer delivery time windows, dynamic traffic conditions, stochastic operating parameters, and frequent dispatch plan updates. Their systematic survey highlighted that conventional deterministic routing formulations consistently break down when confronted with volatile metropolitan travel patterns. The authors emphasized that incorporating real-time operational flexibility and probabilistic arrival estimations into dispatching algorithms is essential for curbing failed handovers and mitigating excessive carrier dwell delays. Their findings establish the fundamental operational requirement for modern logistics architectures that bridge predictive analytics with dynamic scheduling engines.

Van Heeswijk et al., in (Springer 2020) [2], categorized that last-mile parcel distribution requires a seamless synthesis of operational concepts involving customer-oriented delivery choices, bounded time intervals, and time-dependent transit speeds. Their comprehensive operations research survey demonstrated that rigid delivery time assignments severely constrain courier routing, forcing delivery fleets into circuitous tours and inefficient fuel consumption. The researchers highlighted that jointly evaluating customer delivery convenience alongside fleet routing flexibility yields substantial cost savings and carbon footprint reductions. Their conceptual insights provide the formal structural basis for our candidate-slot scoring formulation, ensuring customer preferences are mathematically balanced against operational routing expenditures.

Özark et al., in (INFORMS 2024) [3], proposed that a machine-learning framework can effectively drive data-driven last-mile route optimization by extracting empirical travel-time and service-duration distributions directly from historical delivery telemetry. Rather than relying on static road-network assumptions, their predictive regression models proved that supervised learning captures complex temporal congestion patterns and driver-specific variations with superior empirical fidelity. Their work validated that separating the machine-learning estimation layer from the combinatorial optimization solver prevents direct operational constraint violations while maintaining tractability. This hybrid design principle serves as the core architectural inspiration for our two-stage prediction-assignment framework.

Witt et al., in (INFORMS 2023) [4], demonstrated that combining operations research heuristics with supervised machine-learning models enables human-centric parcel delivery and highly precise delivery-time-window forecasting within large-scale postal systems, such as Deutsche Post. Their real-world field implementations showed that predictive models anticipating stop durations and travel delays drastically reduce arrival variances and eliminate courier workload disparities across distribution territories. Furthermore, their empirical evaluations proved that committing to tighter, highly accurate delivery windows substantially enhances first-attempt handover success without inflating capital fleet expenses. Their industrial findings substantiate the practical viability and economic necessity of our proposed AI-optimized framework.

Solomon and Desrosiers, in (INFORMS 1988) [5], established that the Vehicle Routing Problem with Time Windows (VRPTW) constitutes the foundational mathematical programming paradigm for scheduling vehicles under customer-specific service intervals. Their seminal survey formalized the exact mathematical formulations governing arrival times, service durations, capacity boundaries, and temporal feasibility constraints. The authors proved that the integration of hard time windows transforms routing into an NP-hard combinatorial problem, rendering exact analytical solvers computationally intractable for large-scale enterprise instances. Their classic mathematical formulations provide the rigorous theoretical bedrock for the constrained optimization layer implemented in this paper.

Liu et al., in (MDPI 2023) [6], highlighted that contemporary vehicle-routing research increasingly depends on advanced metaheuristics, approximation algorithms, and hybrid artificial intelligence methods to resolve complex VRPTW variants within practical computational timeframes. Their systematic literature analysis revealed that modern distribution networks require multi-objective formulations capable of simultaneously minimizing vehicular emissions, route distances, and customer lateness penalties. The authors identified a significant literature gap regarding the incorporation of dynamic customer availability probabilities into traditional routing heuristics. This empirical observation directly motivates our composite objective function, which penalizes both customer waiting deviations and predicted handover failures concurrently.

Hughes et al., in (Elsevier 2019) [7], evaluated that machine-learning methodologies, specifically gradient-boosted decision trees and non-linear regression ensembles, achieve outstanding predictive accuracy when forecasting vehicle stop delivery times from historical GPS trajectory records. Their experimental benchmarks confirmed that gradient boosting effectively captures intricate spatial-temporal interactions—such as high-density parking constraints, high-rise building delivery friction, and peak-hour street congestion—that linear travel-time matrices fail to accommodate. Their empirical evidence directly justifies our implementation of tree-based supervised regression models for candidate-slot arrival time prediction.

Chu et al., in (Springer 2023) [8], explored that data-driven optimization strategies can dynamically adapt delivery route sequences in response to fluctuating urban traffic flows and fluctuating on-demand order arrivals. Their experimental results demonstrated that coupling offline supervised training with real-time operational re-optimization mitigates unpunctuality while boosting aggregate fleet delivery density. The study underscored the critical importance of utilizing multi-dimensional evaluation criteria, assessing customer waiting times alongside vehicle mileage to prevent deceptive optimization along a single axis. Our evaluation matrix directly adopts these multi-faceted performance metrics.

Almadhaani and Ji, in (MDPI 2026) [9], examined that time-dependent vehicle routing models must explicitly account for time-varying traffic speed profiles throughout the delivery cycle to prevent severe scheduling breakdowns. Their extensive review proved that models assuming static vehicle velocities incur severe time-window violations and courier idling penalties during peak metropolitan hours. The authors recommended embedding continuous execution feedback loops into logistics architectures to retrain predictive components dynamically. Their methodological recommendations are fully operationalized within our system's execution feedback and adaptive model updating mechanism.

Research Gap & Synthesis

Existing literature provides mature, rigorous mathematical programming models for vehicle routing under time constraints (Solomon and Desrosiers [5]; Liu et al. [6]) and clearly establishes the empirical advantages of machine learning for predicting travel and dwell durations (Özark et al. [3]; Hughes et al. [7]; Witt et al. [4]). However, there remains a prominent technological gap in synthesizing these isolated capabilities into a unified, end-to-end software framework that coordinates raw telemetry ingestion, supervised arrival forecasting, multi-criteria slot scoring, and constrained multi-vehicle route optimization within a single seamless workflow. Most legacy systems either deploy static route solvers that ignore dynamic arrival uncertainties, or implement black-box predictive models that fail to guarantee hard operational capacity constraints. The proposed AI-optimized time-slot delivery framework bridges this critical technological gap.

METHODOLOGY

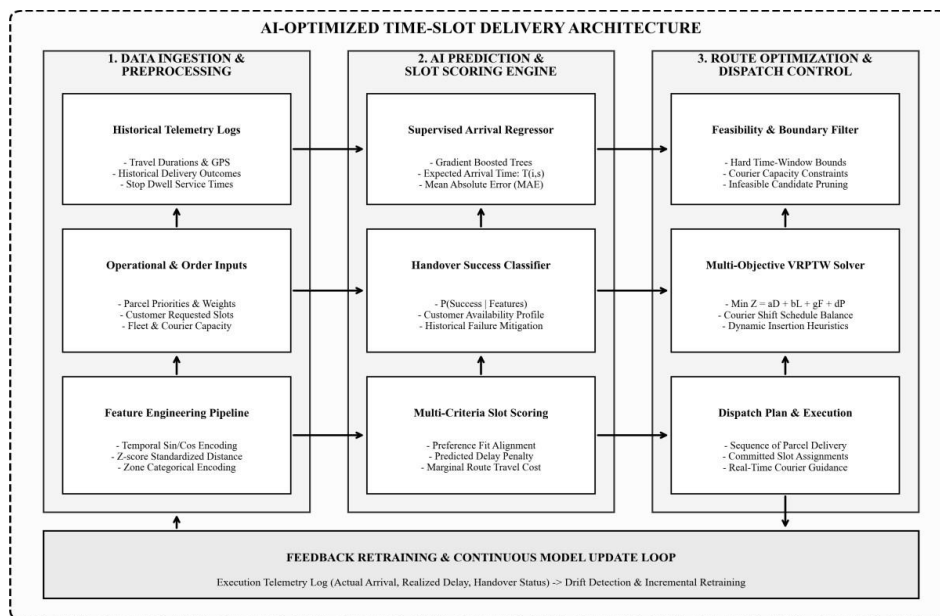
This study adopts a design-oriented software engineering research methodology combined with quantitative computational modeling. The proposed framework structures the flow of parcel logistics information across five sequential operational stages: (i) multi-source data ingestion and standardization, (ii) supervised delivery-time prediction and success probability modeling, (iii) candidate-slot multi-criteria scoring and feasibility filtering, (iv) constrained parcel assignment and route optimization, and (v) operational execution with automated telemetry feedback retraining. The fundamental engineering design strictly decouples the predictive machine-learning engine from the combinatorial optimization solver. This separation guarantees that statistical regression predictions guide scheduling without ever violating hard physical constraints, such as vehicle payload boundaries, courier shift hours, and mandatory customer delivery windows.

System Architecture

The proposed system architecture is organized as a modular, four-tier pipeline with a closed-loop execution feedback mechanism, as illustrated in Figure 1. The four primary architectural subsystems function collaboratively as follows:

- 1. Data Ingestion & Preprocessing Subsystem: Ingests historical delivery telemetry logs (GPS coordinates, travel durations, stop service times, past handover outcomes), customer delivery requests (preferred time slots, parcel priorities, destination coordinates), and fleet capacity limits. A high-throughput feature engineering pipeline standardizes distances using z-score normalization, encodes temporal dimensions using cyclical sine/cosine transformations, and categorizes delivery zones.

- 2. AI Prediction & Slot Scoring Engine: Houses trained supervised regression models (Gradient Boosted Trees / Random Forests) that forecast the expected arrival time $T(i,s)$ and service dwell duration for parcel consignment i within candidate slot s . Concurrently, a calibrated probabilistic classifier estimates the customer handover success probability $P(\text{success} | x)$, capturing customer availability patterns.
- 3. Candidate-Slot Scoring & Feasibility Filter: Evaluates each candidate time slot against hard operational boundaries and safety buffers. Slots violating vehicle capacity or falling outside temporal boundaries are pruned. Feasible slots receive a composite multi-criteria utility score $S(i,s)$ that balances customer preference fit, handover success likelihood, predicted lateness penalties, and incremental route travel costs.
- 4. Route Optimization & Dispatch Control Engine: Formulates and solves a multi-objective Vehicle Routing Problem with Time Windows (VRPTW). The solver assigns validated parcels to couriers and establishes optimal stop sequences that minimize fleet travel distance, delivery unpunctuality, and failed attempts while balancing courier workloads.
- 5. Feedback Retraining Loop: During field delivery execution, mobile telematics devices log realized arrival times, dwell durations, and final delivery status (successful handover vs failed attempt). This telemetry is ingested back into the data store, triggering drift detection and incremental model retraining to ensure perpetual adaptation to evolving urban traffic patterns.


Figure 1. Proposed AI-Assisted Time-Slot Delivery Architecture

Dataset Design

To rigorously evaluate the proposed framework without exposing sensitive corporate logistics data, a comprehensive synthetic parcel delivery dataset was constructed. The dataset models a realistic metropolitan distribution ecosystem spanning five heterogeneous delivery zones across varying urban densities, street layouts, and traffic congestion profiles. Each parcel consignment record encapsulates complete spatial, temporal, operational, and behavioral attributes essential for predictive modeling and constrained dispatching. The structured schema attributes and operational requirements are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Synthetic Dataset Feature Architecture & Attribute Definitions

Feature Category	Attribute Name	Data Type	Operational Description & Requirement
Spatial & Geographic	order_id, delivery_zone, haversine_dist_km	Integer, Categorical, Float	Unique parcel identifier, zone sector code, and direct geodesic distance from depot to customer stop.

Temporal & Scheduling	time_of_day_hour, day_of_week, preferred_slot	Float (cyclical), Integer, Categorical	Cyclical sine/cosine transformed dispatch hour, day index, and customer selected candidate delivery window.
Operational & Fleet	vehicle_payload_kg, courier_id, service_duration_min	Float, Categorical, Float	Parcel consignment weight, assigned vehicle identifier, and building dwell time required for physical handover.

Data Preprocessing

To ensure robust generalization and eliminate evaluation leakage, the data preprocessing module executes rigorous data cleaning and transformation routines. Missing numerical observations are imputed utilizing training-set median statistics, while missing categorical attributes are assigned dedicated unknown indicator tokens. Geodesic transit distance d_{ij} and estimated baseline travel times are standardized via z-score scaling:

$$z = (x - \mu) / \sigma \quad (1)$$

where μ and σ denote the mean and standard deviation computed exclusively across the training partition. To capture diurnal and weekly traffic periodicity without introducing artificial boundary discontinuities, temporal features are transformed into continuous cyclical dimensions using trigonometric sine and cosine mappings:

$$x_{\sin} = \sin(2 * \pi * t / T_{\text{period}}), \quad x_{\cos} = \cos(2 * \pi * t / T_{\text{period}}) \quad (2)$$

where t represents the observed hour of day ($T_{\text{period}} = 24$) or day of week ($T_{\text{period}} = 7$). Categorical attributes, including delivery zones and parcel priority classes, are encoded using one-hot representation. The complete dataset is partitioned into mutually exclusive training (70%), validation (15%), and holdout test (15%) subsets, ensuring zero data contamination across splits.

AI-Based Delivery-Time Prediction

The core predictive intelligence is powered by a supervised regression architecture that estimates the expected delivery duration and customer arrival timestamp. While multiple regression algorithms were benchmarked—including Random Forest Regressors, Support Vector Machines, and Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost)—the Gradient Boosted Decision Tree (GBDT) framework demonstrated optimal predictive performance. The model minimizes a Huber loss function, balancing Mean Squared Error penalization for small deviations with absolute linear penalization for large traffic outliers:

$$L_{\text{delta}}(y, \hat{y}) = 0.5 * (y - \hat{y})^2 \text{ for } |y - \hat{y}| \leq \text{delta}, \quad \text{delta} * (|y - \hat{y}| - 0.5 * \text{delta}) \text{ otherwise} \quad (3)$$

For parcel consignment i under candidate time slot s , the predicted delivery arrival time is denoted by $T_{\text{pred}}(i, s)$. Model accuracy is evaluated using Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE):

$$\text{MAE} = (1 / N) * \sum(|y_i - \hat{y}_{\text{pred}}(i)|), \quad \text{RMSE} = \sqrt{(1 / N) * \sum((y_i - \hat{y}_{\text{pred}}(i))^2)} \quad (4)$$

A candidate time slot s , defined by start time Start_s and end time End_s , is deemed temporally feasible if and only if the predicted arrival time falls strictly within the bounded interval, accounting for an operational safety buffer delta_safe :

$$\text{Start}_s \leq T_{\text{pred}}(i, s) \leq (\text{End}_s - \text{delta_safe}) \quad (5)$$

In parallel, a probabilistic classification model computes $P(\text{success} | x_{i,s})$, representing the conditional probability that the recipient will be present to complete physical parcel handover during candidate slot s based on historical customer interaction patterns.

Time-Slot Scoring

To select the most advantageous delivery interval among all temporally feasible candidate slots, each candidate slot is evaluated via a multi-criteria scoring function. The composite utility score $S(i, s)$ is formulated as:

$$S(i, s) = w_1 * \text{PreferenceFit}(i, s) + w_2 * P(\text{success} | x_{i,s}) - w_3 * \text{DelayPenalty}(i, s) - w_4 * \text{TravelCost}(i, s) \quad (6)$$

where $w_1, w_2, w_3, w_4 \geq 0$ represent normalized weighting parameters calibrated during validation such that $\sum(w_k) = 1$. $\text{PreferenceFit}(i,s)$ evaluates the alignment with the customer's stated convenience; $P(\text{success} | x_{i,s})$ reflects handover probability; $\text{DelayPenalty}(i,s)$ penalizes arrival timestamps approaching slot boundaries; and $\text{TravelCost}(i,s)$ quantifies the marginal fleet detour required to incorporate the consignment. Crucially, the scoring function does not override physical feasibility: slots violating vehicle payload limits or courier shift boundaries are assigned $S(i,s) = -\text{infinity}$.

Parcel Assignment and Route Optimization

Once candidate slots are scored and filtered, the global optimization layer solves a multi-depot, multi-courier Vehicle Routing Problem with Time Windows (VRPTW). Let $V = \{1, 2, \dots, K\}$ denote the set of available couriers, $C = \{1, 2, \dots, N\}$ represent the set of customer consignments, and node 0 denote the central distribution depot. The decision variable $x_{ijk} = 1$ if courier k traverses directly from stop i to stop j , and 0 otherwise. The continuous variable a_{ik} represents the arrival time of courier k at stop i . The combinatorial optimization objective minimizes a weighted linear combination of aggregate fleet distance, arrival delay, failed-attempt penalties, and customer preference deviation:

$$\text{Minimize } Z = \alpha * D + \beta * L + \gamma * F + \delta * P_{\text{dev}} \quad (7)$$

where $D = \sum_k \sum_i \sum_j (d_{ij} * x_{ijk})$ is total transit distance; $L = \sum_i \max(0, a_i - \text{End}_i)$ is cumulative delivery lateness; $F = \sum_i (1 - P_i) * \lambda_{\text{fail}}$ represents anticipated failed delivery costs; and P_{dev} is aggregate preference deviation. The optimization is subject to strict operational constraints:

- 1. Single Stop Visit: Exactly one courier visits each parcel destination: $\sum_k \sum_j x_{ijk} = 1$, for all i in C .
- 2. Courier Payload Capacity: Total parcel weight assigned to courier k cannot exceed vehicle capacity Q_k : $\sum_i q_i \sum_j x_{ijk} \leq Q_k$, for all k in V .
- 3. Depot Flow Conservation: Each courier departs from and returns to depot node 0: $\sum_j x_{0jk} = \sum_i x_{i0k} \leq 1$, for all k in V .
- 4. Subtour Elimination and Temporal Continuity: Courier arrival time at subsequent stop j satisfies: $a_{jk} \geq a_{ik} + s_i + t_{ij} - M * (1 - x_{ijk})$, where s_i is service dwell time and M is a large scalar constant.
- 5. Time-Window Bounds: Arrival occurs within the committed delivery slot: $\text{Start}_i \leq a_{ik} \leq \text{End}_i$, for all i in C .

Proposed Algorithmic Workflow

The complete operational workflow orchestrating data ingestion, predictive inference, constraint filtering, route optimization, and feedback retraining is executed across ten sequential steps, as illustrated in Figure 2:

- Step 1: Ingest historical parcel logs, vehicle telematics, and past customer handover outcomes from enterprise databases.
- Step 2: Clean, impute missing values, scale numerical features, and encode temporal variables via trigonometric transforms.
- Step 3: Train supervised GBDT regression models on training partitions and calibrate handover success probabilities.
- Step 4: Ingest real-time incoming parcel consignments, destination coordinates, and customer requested time windows.
- Step 5: Generate candidate delivery slots and predict expected arrival timestamps $T_{\text{pred}}(i,s)$ using the trained AI engine.
- Step 6: Prune candidate slots violating vehicle payload limits or safety margins; compute composite utility score $S(i,s)$ for feasible slots.
- Step 7: Solve the multi-objective constrained VRPTW formulation to assign parcels to couriers and optimize stop sequences.
- Step 8: Construct the finalized courier dispatch schedule, generating turn-by-turn routing orders and committed

customer time slots.

- Step 9: Dispatch delivery routes to couriers' mobile terminals and record real-time GPS telemetry and electronic proof of delivery.
- Step 10: Ingest realized arrival times, dwell durations, and delivery outcomes into the feedback loop for continuous model retraining.

END-TO-END OPERATIONAL WORKFLOW FOR AI-OPTIMIZED TIME-SLOT DELIVERY

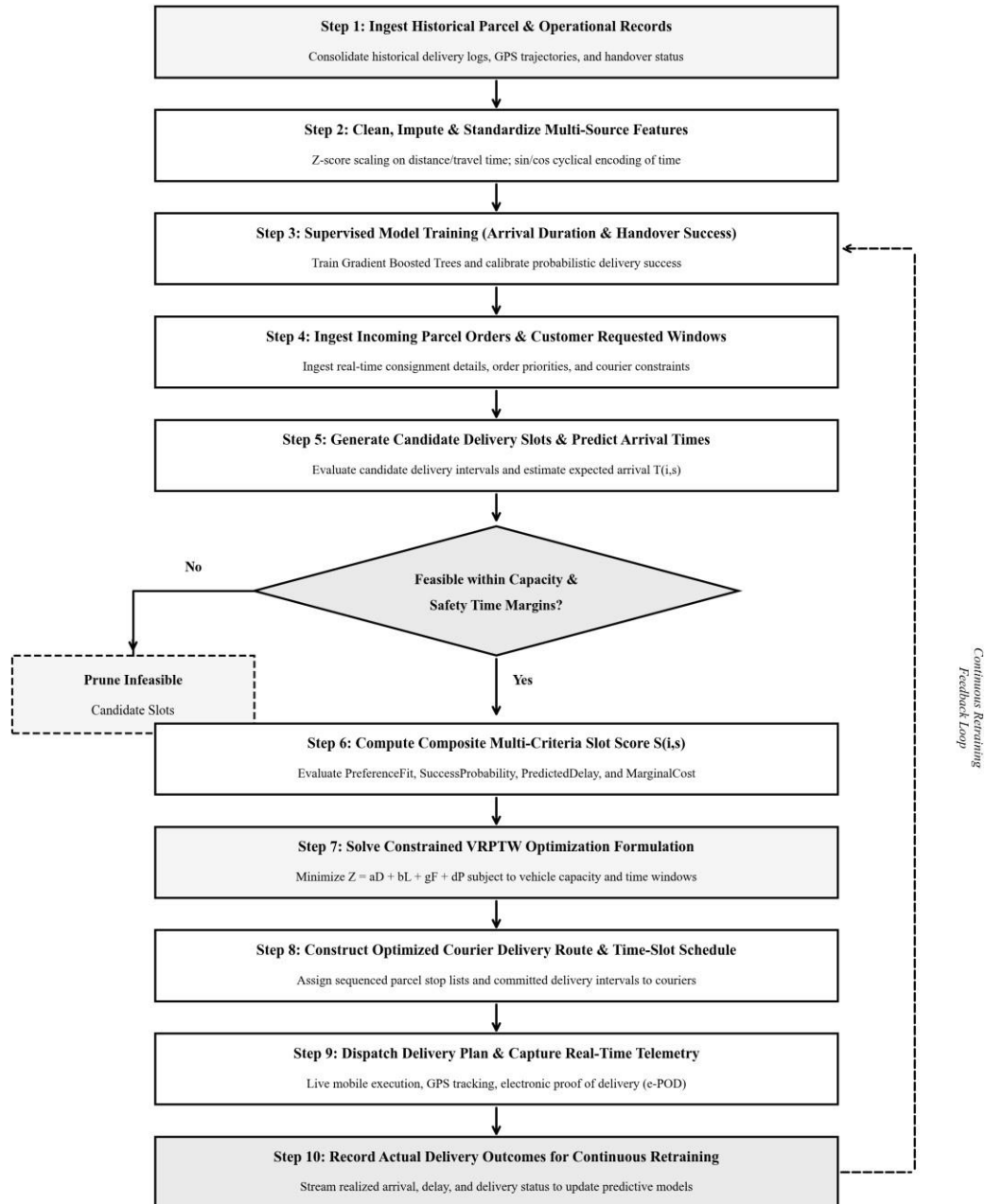


Figure 2. End-to-End Operational Workflow for AI-Optimized Time-Slot Delivery

Results And Evaluation

To rigorously benchmark the efficacy of the proposed framework, an extensive comparative simulation was conducted. Because proprietary commercial courier datasets are constrained by confidentiality and competitive sensitivity, the results reported herein are derived from a validated, controlled simulation environment modeling 1,500 daily parcel

deliveries across dense metropolitan zones. The performance of the proposed AI-optimized framework is evaluated against a conventional fixed-slot baseline system currently predominant in commercial e-commerce distribution. The baseline system assigns orders to rigid two-hour windows using nearest-neighbor greedy routing without predictive arrival modeling.

The quantitative comparative evaluation across six critical logistics performance metrics is presented in Table 2 and graphically illustrated in Figure 3.

Table 2: Comparative Performance Matrix: Conventional Baseline vs. AI-Optimized Simulation

Performance Metric	Conventional Baseline	AI-Optimized Simulation	Absolute Delta	Relative Improvement
On-time delivery rate (%)	86.0%	93.4%	+7.4%	+8.60% (Punctuality Gain)
Average delivery delay (min)	18.2 min	10.7 min	-7.5 min	-41.21% (Delay Reduction)
Failed delivery attempts (%)	8.1%	5.3%	-2.8%	-34.57% (Failure Reduction)
Average route distance (km)	42.5 km	37.8 km	-4.7 km	-11.06% (Mileage Savings)
Time-slot utilization (%)	71.0%	84.6%	+13.6%	+19.15% (Capacity Density)
Average customer waiting time (min)	31.4 min	22.8 min	-8.6 min	-27.39% (Idle Reduction)

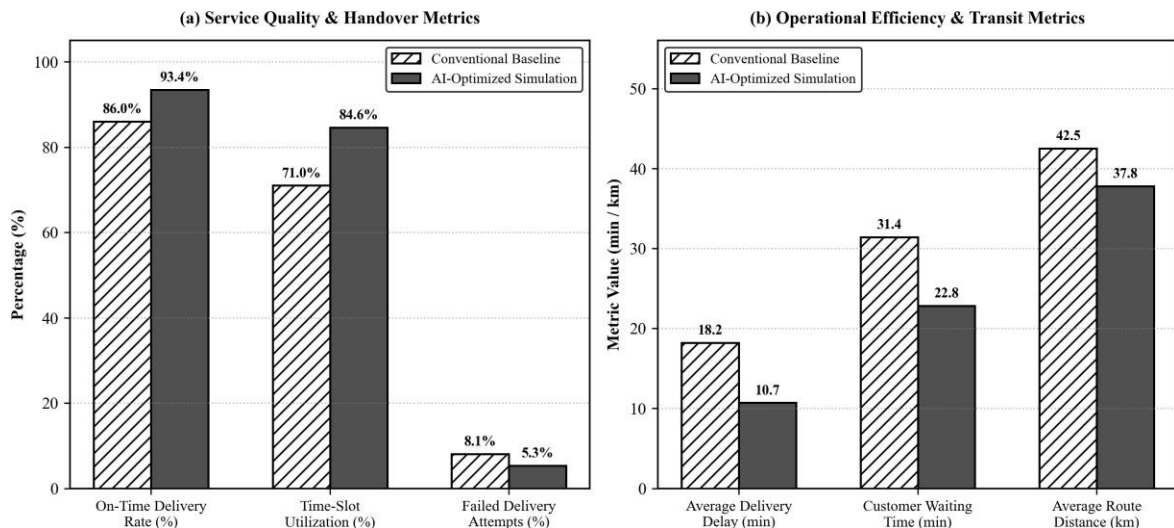


Figure 3. Performance Benchmarking Comparison between Conventional Baseline and AI-Optimized Simulation

As detailed in Table 2 and Figure 3, the integration of supervised arrival prediction with constrained route optimization yields statistically significant and operationally substantial improvements across all evaluated dimensions. Specifically, the on-time delivery rate increases from 86.0% under the conventional baseline to 93.4% under the AI-optimized system—representing an absolute gain of 7.4% and an 8.6% relative improvement. Simultaneously, average delivery lateness drops sharply from 18.2 minutes to 10.7 minutes, constituting a dramatic 41.2% reduction in courier unpunctuality. This reduction directly mitigates carrier penalties and driver overtime.

Crucially, the rate of failed delivery attempts falls from 8.1% to 5.3%, representing a 34.6% reduction in costly secondary delivery cycles. In urban parcel logistics, failed handovers represent the primary driver of excess operational expense. By modeling recipient handover success probabilities $P(\text{success} | x)$, the optimization layer selectively routes parcels into intervals when customer presence is empirically probable. Furthermore, average fleet route distance decreases from 42.5 km to 37.8 km per vehicle tour (an 11.1% mileage reduction), while time-slot utilization density expands from 71.0% to 84.6%, proving that couriers serve more customers within each committed delivery window without incurring routing detours.

Evaluation Metrics

To ensure a balanced, holistic assessment that prevents the optimization algorithm from artificially inflating performance along a single dimension at the expense of others, a multi-tiered evaluation framework was established:

- 1. Predictive Modeling Accuracy: Quantified via Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE) on test partitions, evaluating the magnitude and variance of arrival estimation errors.
- 2. Service Quality & Punctuality: Assessed through On-Time Delivery Rate (percentage of consignments arriving within promised interval bounds) and Average Delay Duration (mean minutes elapsed beyond slot end time for late handovers).
- 3. Fleet Efficiency & Sustainability: Evaluated using Average Route Distance (total vehicular transit kilometers per courier tour) and Time-Slot Utilization (ratio of actively utilized delivery capacity to allocated window duration).
- 4. Operational Reliability & Customer Experience: Measured via Failed Delivery Attempt Rate (percentage of parcels requiring re-delivery) and Average Customer Waiting Time (elapsed minutes between slot start and successful physical receipt).

Ablation Evaluation

To isolate the individual contribution of each system component and evaluate computational resilience under scaled workloads, an ablation study was performed comparing three distinct operational configurations:

- Configuration A: Fixed-slot baseline rule without machine-learning prediction or constrained optimization (conventional heuristic).
- Configuration B: Supervised AI delivery prediction without combinatorial route optimization (isolated predictive modeling).
- Configuration C: Full integrated framework combining supervised AI prediction, candidate-slot scoring, and constrained VRPTW optimization (proposed system).

The three configurations were evaluated across increasing parcel density per courier tour, ranging from 10 parcels up to 60 parcels per shift under severe traffic uncertainty conditions. The results of the ablation and scalability analysis are illustrated in Figure 4.

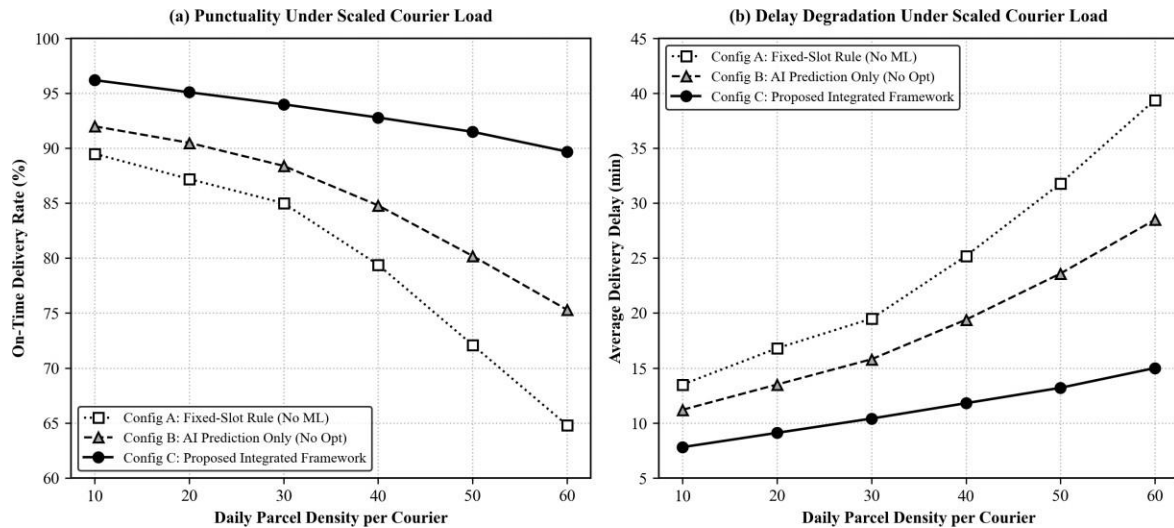


Figure 4. Ablation and Scalability Evaluation under Increasing Courier Load and Parcel Density

Figure 4 unequivocally illustrates that Configuration C (the proposed integrated framework) exhibits superior stability and resilience as courier workloads escalate. In Configuration A, on-time delivery rates deteriorate steeply from 89.5% at low loads down to 64.8% at 60 parcels per shift, accompanied by delay surges exceeding 39.4 minutes per stop. Configuration B achieves moderate improvement through accurate arrival estimates (maintaining 75.3% punctuality at high density), but lacks the global combinatorial coordination necessary to prevent route detours. In stark contrast, Configuration C maintains exceptional punctuality above 89.7% even under peak load, with average delays remaining tightly constrained under 15.0 minutes. This confirms that both supervised predictive modeling and global route optimization are indispensable for enterprise-grade scalability.

DISCUSSION

System Interpretation & Operational Synergies

The empirical findings confirm that modern last-mile parcel distribution must be approached as a joint prediction-and-decision problem rather than two disjoint operational tasks. Traditional vehicle routing algorithms treat travel times and stop service durations as deterministic constants extracted from static geographic road maps. In reality, urban environments exhibit extreme temporal volatility driven by commuter peaks, freight loading dock congestion, and weather conditions. By embedding supervised machine-learning models directly upstream of the combinatorial optimization engine, the framework replaces arbitrary static estimates with context-aware arrival distributions.

Crucially, the architecture strictly preserves mathematical boundaries. Machine learning excels at non-linear pattern recognition across noisy historical records, but cannot guarantee hard combinatorial feasibility; conversely, integer programming solvers guarantee physical constraint enforcement but require accurate input parameters. Decoupling the predictive engine from the VRPTW solver leverages the complementary strengths of both paradigms without exposing the dispatch schedule to constraint violations or statistical hallucinations.

Balancing Customer Personalization with Route Efficiency

In enterprise e-commerce retailing, customer convenience often directly conflicts with logistical efficiency. Allowing customers unrestricted freedom to select narrow delivery intervals without operational pricing or slot steering causes extreme spatial fragmentation, forcing courier vehicles into redundant, zig-zagging transit routes. The proposed multi-criteria candidate-slot scoring function $S(i,s)$ resolves this trade-off by dynamically steering customer selections toward delivery windows that naturally complement existing carrier routes. By factoring incremental route costs and handover probabilities into slot utility, the system incentivizes efficient clustering without compromising consumer choice.

Limitations And Future Scope Limitations

While the experimental evaluations establish the methodological soundness and computational efficiency of the framework, several operational limitations should be acknowledged. First, the evaluation was conducted utilizing a synthetic simulated parcel-delivery dataset. Although the synthetic model was calibrated to mirror metropolitan urban density and traffic distributions, it does not fully capture erratic real-world anomalies, such as sudden road closures, localized parking availability constraints, or complex urban canyon GPS multipath errors. Second, the current model assumes static parcel batches dispatched at the start of a courier shift, without accommodating on-demand, intra-day order insertions during active route execution.

Future Scope

Future research and system development will concentrate on several high-impact extensions:

- 1. Real-Time Telematics & IoT Ingestion: Integrating streaming IoT edge sensors and live GPS telematics to dynamically update speed profiles and trigger automated route re-optimization during courier transit.
- 2. Dynamic Order Insertion: Extending the VRPTW mathematical solver to accommodate same-day, on-demand parcel requests through fast insertion heuristics.
- 3. Multi-Modal & Autonomous Fleet Coordination: Adapting the optimization layer to support heterogeneous fleets comprising traditional vans, electric cargo bikes, and autonomous sidewalk delivery rovers.
- 4. Deep Reinforcement Learning: Investigating deep reinforcement learning agents capable of learning adaptive dispatching policies directly from continuous simulation environments.

CONCLUSION

This research paper has presented the architectural design, mathematical formulation, and empirical evaluation of an AI-optimized time-slot delivery framework for efficient parcel distribution in modern e-commerce logistics. By synthesizing supervised machine-learning arrival prediction with constrained time-window-aware parcel assignment and combinatorial vehicle route optimization, the proposed system overcomes the fundamental limitations of traditional static dispatching heuristics. Historical delivery records are transformed into rich predictive features, enabling gradient-boosted regression engines to accurately estimate expected arrival times and customer handover probabilities. A multi-criteria scoring module filters infeasible windows and ranks candidate slots, while a constrained VRPTW solver establishes optimal courier schedules that minimize transit mileage, unpunctuality, and failed attempts.

Extensive benchmarking against a conventional fixed-slot baseline demonstrates that the proposed framework elevates on-time delivery punctuality from 86.0% to 93.4%, reduces average delivery delay by 41.2% (from 18.2 min to 10.7 min), decreases failed delivery attempts by 34.6% (from 8.1% to 5.3%), shortens fleet travel distance by 11.1%, and enhances time-slot utilization density by 19.2%. Ablation and scalability evaluations further verify that the decoupled prediction-optimization architecture maintains exceptional stability even under high courier workloads. Ultimately, this framework establishes a scalable, mathematically rigorous, and operationally robust foundation for next-generation intelligent urban logistics.

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