

Pre-print Manuscript of Article:

Bridgelall, R., Tolliver, D. D., Rahman, M. T., Daleiden, J. F., “Pavement Performance Evaluations Using Connected Vehicles,” *International Society for Asphalt Pavements 53rd Annual Petersen Asphalt Research Conference*, Jackson Hole, WY, July 21, 2016.

1 **Pavement Performance Evaluations Using Connected**
2 **Vehicles**

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10

11 **Abstract**

12 The ability of any nation to support economic growth and commerce relies on their capacity to
13 preserve and to sustain the performance of pavement assets. The ever-widening funding gap to
14 maintain pavements challenges the scaling of existing techniques to measure ride quality. The
15 international roughness index is the primary indicator used to assess and forecast maintenance
16 needs. Its fixed simulation procedure has the advantage of requiring relatively few traversals to
17 produce a consistent characterization. However, the procedure also underrepresents roughness
18 that riders experience from spatial wavelengths that fall outside of the model’s sensitivity range.
19 This paper introduces a connected vehicle method that fuses inertial and geospatial position data
20 from many vehicles to expose roughness experienced from all spatial wavelengths. This study
21 produced both roughness indices simultaneously from the same inertial profiler. The statistical
22 distribution of their ratios agreed with a classic t-distribution. The two indices collected from
23 three different pavement sections at two different speeds exhibit a direct proportionality within a
24 margin-of-error that diminished below 2% as the extrapolated traversal volume approached 100.
25 Practitioners are currently evaluating the connected vehicle method to implement lower-cost and
26 more scalable alternatives to the international roughness index.

27 **Keywords:** Inertial profiler, intelligent transportation systems, probe vehicles, ride quality,
28 smartphone

29 **1. Introduction**

30 Highway agencies measure ride quality to guide practices in roadway asset management.
31 However, present methods that use specially instrumented vehicles and post processing are
32 difficult to scale for network wide evaluations. The international roughness index (IRI) is
33 currently the prevalent indicator of ride quality. Nearly all U.S. jurisdictions deploy laser-based
34 inertial profilers to produce the IRI, which is a single index summary of roadway roughness [1].
35 The IRI is not a direct measurement of roughness. Rather, a mathematical procedure produces
36 the IRI by operating on samples of the elevation profile. The procedure simulates the movement
37 of a fixed quarter-car model across the elevation profile. The simulation moves the quarter-car at

38 a precise speed of 80 km/h. Hence, the fixed model and the fixed simulation speed results in a
39 very high consistency of the IRI values derived from each set of elevation profile data collected.
40 However, the fixed parameters also lead to a misrepresentation of roughness that riders actually
41 experience when traveling in real vehicles at different speeds.

42 The main contribution of this research is a method of measuring ride quality from connected
43 vehicle data. Such a solution would scale to provide network wide, cost-effective, and
44 continuous performance evaluations. The connected vehicle method directly samples the inertial
45 response from many vehicles to produce an average characterization of the ride quality actually
46 experienced [2]. Rather than a direct measurement from the actual vehicle, the IRI procedure
47 uses a reference quarter-car model called the Golden Car [3]. The justification is that nearly all
48 regular passenger and commercial motor vehicles, regardless of their size and weight, provide
49 similar suspension responses because of design constraints to attenuate vibrations within the
50 common range of frequencies that cause human discomfort [4]. In particular, humans are most
51 sensitive to vibrations between 4 and 8 Hertz [5]. For example, the resonant frequency of the
52 human spine is approximately 5 Hertz [5]. The typical suspension system attempts to attenuate
53 vibrations in this frequency range and consequently result in a transfer function that exhibits a
54 sprung- and unsprung-mass resonant mode near 1 and 10 Hertz, respectively [3].

55 Previous work [6] demonstrated that the Road Impact Factor (RIF) index derived from the fusion
56 of connected vehicle sensor data is directly proportional to the IRI. The main benefit of a direct
57 proportionality relationship is that agencies can easily estimate the IRI from RIF-indices
58 measured using connected vehicle data. The prior experiments [6] emulated a connected vehicle
59 by using an industrial grade device aboard a regular vehicle. The device produced high quality
60 accelerometer, speed, and global positioning system (GPS) data. The RIF/IRI proportionality
61 factor for those experiments was repeatable within a margin-of-error (in a 95% confidence
62 interval) that was less than 4% after only six traversals. Hence, the main objective of this study is
63 to repeat those experiments with a much lower cost inertial, speed, and GPS data logger
64 implemented as a smartphone application (app) called PAVVET [6]. Testing with a commodity
65 data logger will demonstrate the robustness of the method when deployed for practice using
66 actual connected vehicles.

67 This paper reviews the distinguishing characteristics of the IRI and the RIF-transforms. To
68 explore their relationships, the authors conducted experiments at different speeds and on
69 different pavement sections to demonstrate their direct proportionality. The experiments used the
70 PAVVET app aboard a certified and calibrated inertial profiler to collect both the IRI and RIF-
71 indices simultaneously. The organization of this paper is as follows: the next section will review
72 the models of the IRI and connected vehicle methods to highlight their respective similarities and
73 differences. The third section will evaluate their proportionality relationship by conducting
74 statistical analysis to test the convergence of the RIF/IRI ratios as a function of traversal volume.
75 The fourth section will describe the case studies and discuss the significance of the results. The
76 final section will summarize and conclude the study.

77 **2. Ride Quality Characterizations**

78 The IRI requires relatively few traversals to produce an average value with high precision

79 because of its fixed Golden Car parameters and the precise traversal speed of 80 km h^{-1} .
 80 Conversely, the connected vehicle method encapsulates variations in actual vehicle suspension
 81 performance and speed, therefore, requiring a greater number of traversals to provide an
 82 equivalent level of precision.

83 **2.1. The International Roughness Index**

84 The definition of the IRI is the accumulated absolute rate difference between the sprung- and
 85 unsprung-mass motions of a Golden Car simulated to move at a fixed reference speed [7]. The
 86 notation for the IRI in this development is $I_{\bar{v}}^L$ and its definition is

$$I_{\bar{v}}^L = \frac{1}{L} \int_0^{L/\bar{v}} |\dot{z}_s(t) - \dot{z}_u(t)| dt \quad (1)$$

87 where $\dot{z}_s(t)$ and $\dot{z}_u(t)$ are the first derivatives of the Golden Car sprung- and unsprung-mass
 88 vertical motions, respectively. The segment length L is typically 152-meters (approximately 500-
 89 feet). The procedure fixes the speed \bar{v} to the standard reference speed of 80 km h^{-1} . Therefore,
 90 the IRI ignores any variations in the actual vehicle speed and suspension responses. Although the
 91 fixed parameters enhances the precision of indices produced within relatively few traversals, the
 92 model cannot reflect roughness produced from spatial wavelengths that fall outside of a
 93 relatively narrow range. Consequently, the IRI does not reflect the true roughness that riders
 94 experience when traveling a segment at different speeds and in different vehicles.

95 **2.2. The Road Impact Factor Transform**

96 The RIF transform integrates the product of the vertical acceleration signal $g_z(t)$ and the
 97 longitudinal speed $v(t)$ such that

$$R_{\bar{v}}^L = \sqrt{\frac{1}{L} \int_0^{L/\bar{v}} |g_z(t)v(t)|^2 dt} \quad (2)$$

98 where the RIF-index $R_{\bar{v}}^L$ is the average g-force magnitude experienced per unit of distance L
 99 traveled. For an average speed $v(t) = \bar{v}$, within some speed band, the RIF-index simplifies to

$$R_{\bar{v}}^L = \bar{v} \sqrt{\frac{1}{L} \int_0^{L/\bar{v}} |g_z(t)|^2 dt} = \bar{v} \sqrt{E_{g_z}^L} \quad (3)$$

100 where $E_{g_z}^L$ is the longitudinal energy density of the vertical acceleration signal. The inertial
 101 signal energy is in units of joules per meter (J/m) when the sensor output is in units of volts. The
 102 associated discrete time transform is

$$R_{\bar{v}}^L = \sqrt{\frac{1}{L} \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} |g_{z[n]}v_n|^2 \delta t} \quad (4)$$

103 where the discrete time samples are $t = n \times \delta t$ with sample instant n and average sampling period
 104 δt . The inverse of the sampling period is the sample rate of the inertial sensor. The total number
 105 of samples is N , therefore, for an average sample interval of δL , the segment length is $N \times \delta L$.
 106 Hence, the instantaneous speed is $v_n = \delta L_n / \delta t_n$ and the discrete time RIF transform simplifies to

$$R_{\bar{v}}^L = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} g_{z[n]}^2 v_n} \quad (5)$$

107 For a constant speed v_c , the RIF-index is related to the root-mean-squared (RMS) value of the
 108 vertical acceleration signal g_{rms} such that

$$R_{\bar{v}}^L = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} g_{z[n]}^2 v_n} = \sqrt{v_c} \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} g_{z[n]}^2} = g_{rms} \sqrt{v_c} \quad (6)$$

109 It is evident that the RIF-index is zero when the traversal speed is zero and increases non-linearly
 110 with speed. Important work by others [8-9] attempted to relate the accelerometer signal to the IRI
 111 and they witnessed a speed dependency. However, those efforts did not provide a mathematical
 112 characterization to explain the dependency observed.

113 The RIF-transform (Equation 3) associates the RIF-index with any specified speed band whereas
 114 the IRI-transform specifies a precise speed of 80 km h⁻¹. Consequently, the RIF/IRI ratio is a
 115 function of the traversal speed. Therefore, agencies must standardize on the traversal speed
 116 selected for a given roadway facility when measuring the RIF-index to estimate the
 117 corresponding IRI.

118 2.3. The Ensemble Average RIF

119 The ensemble average of the RIF-indices (EAR) from N_v traversals across a path of length L is
 120 denoted $\bar{R}_{\bar{v}}^L$ and it is analogous to the average IRI. The EAR-index is

$$\bar{R}_{\bar{v}}^L = \frac{1}{N_v} \sum_{\rho=1}^{N_v} R_{\bar{v}}^L[\rho] \quad (7)$$

121 where $R_{\bar{v}}^L[\rho]$ is the RIF-index from the ρ^{th} traversal of the segment traveled at an average speed
 122 of \bar{v} , and \bar{v} is the batch mean speed of all traversals. In addition to compressing the inertial
 123 and position data longitudinally along the traversal direction, the EAR fuses multiple data
 124 streams within the same geospatial window of all traversals. Hence, the EAR-index represents a
 125 vertical compression of the stack of RIF-indices produced for a segment for some short time-
 126 period, for example, a few hours or a few days.

127 The EAR-index represents the average roughness that the typical vehicle occupant experiences
 128 when traveling the segment within a specified interval of speed or a speed band. For example,
 129 selecting data streams from vehicle traversals that are within 5 km/h of the IRI reference speed
 130 will produce an EAR-index that approximately summarizes roughness from the range of spatial
 131 wavelengths that the IRI is sensitive. However, producing the EAR-indices for the prevailing
 132 average speed of a given roadway facility type, such as the speed limit, would be more practical
 133 and meaningful. That is, the EAR-index will characterize ride quality from spatial wavelengths

134 that induce roughness at the prevailing speeds rather than at the IRI reference speed. Therefore,
 135 monitoring the EAR-index from the same speed band consistently will reflect changes in ride
 136 quality that the average user experiences as the road deteriorates over time.

137 3. Statistical Analysis

138 Agencies may elect to measure and associate a calibrated RIF/IRI ratio for designated vehicles
 139 by producing the EAR-indices from several traversals of a roadway facility for which a recent
 140 IRI value is available. Alternatively, producing the EAR-index from a selected speed band by
 141 sampling the traversal data from many vehicles will obviate the need for calibration to account
 142 for the suspension behavior of a specific vehicle. Previous studies of the precision bounds in
 143 EAR-indices demonstrate that the margin-of-error, within a 95% confidence interval (MOE_{95}),
 144 diminishes rapidly after only several hours of data collection from the typical vehicle mix [10].
 145 The MOE_{95} will diminish to equivalent levels of precision within fewer traversals when using the
 146 same vehicle or vehicle type. GIS platforms that implement this connected vehicle method would
 147 select similar classes of vehicles from the data stream, traveling under similar conditions of
 148 weather, regional climate, and roadway facility type to produce EAR-indices. A data filtering
 149 approach to select such subsets from the data stream will decrease the processing load and
 150 achieve higher precision characterizations within fewer traversals. This section will develop the
 151 statistical tests to demonstrate convergence of the RIF/IRI ratios to the expected values of a
 152 classical parameterized distribution.

153 3.1. Data Distribution

154 A histogram of the RIF-indices provides a non-parametric description of the spread from many
 155 vehicle traversals. Subsequently, the least squares approximation of a classic distribution that
 156 best fits the histogram provides a parametric estimate of their expected values to forecast the
 157 achievable precision. The critical chi-squared value tests a fitted distribution for candidacy [11].

158 3.2. Chi-squared Testing

159 The critical chi-squared value “ χ^2 Data” is an evaluation of the statistic

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{(O_k - E_k)^2}{E_k} \quad (8)$$

160 where O_k are the histogram values observed in bin k and E_k are the corresponding expected
 161 values from the hypothesized distribution. The chi-squared distribution value at 5% significance
 162 ($\alpha = 5\%$) is the largest value expected with a probability of at most 5%. The chi-squared degrees
 163 of freedom (df) are one unit less than the number of histogram bins n , minus the two independent
 164 distribution parameters estimated, namely the amplitude and the mean. Estimation of the
 165 standard deviation is dependent on an estimation of the mean; hence, it does not count towards
 166 the df . Statisticians generally reject a null hypothesis that the data follow a tested distribution if
 167 the critical χ^2 value is larger than the chi-square distribution value at 5% significance, or
 168 equivalently, if the significance level calculated for the critical χ^2 value is less than 5%.

169 **3.3. Margin-of-Error**

170 The Student t -distribution is appropriate for sample sizes smaller than 30, and it approaches the
 171 Gaussian distribution for larger sample sizes [11]. The interval $\Delta R_{1-\alpha}^L$ is the margin-of-error
 172 within a $(1-\alpha)\%$ confidence interval [12] such that

$$\Delta R_{1-\alpha}^L = \pm \frac{\sigma_R^L \times t_{1-\alpha/2,df}}{\sqrt{N_v}} \quad (9)$$

173 where $t_{1-\alpha/2,df}$ is the t -score at $(1-\alpha)$ probability for a normalized cumulative t -distribution of df
 174 degrees of freedom. The standard deviation of the RIF-index is denoted σ_R^L . The ratio of $\Delta R_{1-\alpha}^L$ to
 175 the EAR-index \bar{R}_v^L is a proportional measure of the data spread as a percentage. For this study,
 176 $MOE_{0.95}$ (%) indicates that 95% of the data points are likely to be within that percentage of the
 177 EAR-index.

178 **4. Results and Discussions**

179 This section describes the case studies conducted, the method of data processing, and the results
 180 obtained from the field experiments. The final section tests the distribution of the RIF/IRI ratios
 181 against the classical parameterized t -distribution to demonstrate convergence with their expected
 182 values.

183 **4.1. The Case Study Setting**

184 The three pavement sections analyzed are along the frontage road sections of Texas State
 185 Highway 130, which is about 20 miles northeast of Austin, Texas. Each test site is a 210-meter
 186 section of asphalt pavement. The inertial profiler traversed each segment at approximately
 187 72 km h^{-1} (45 MPH) and 97 km h^{-1} (60 MPH) to observe any differences in the roughness indices
 188 produced.

189 **4.2. The IRI Data Collection and Processing**

190 The authors used a calibrated and certified Ames Engineering Model 8300 inertial profiler. The
 191 host vehicle is a Ford E150 XLT Wagon. Resource constraints limited the number of traversals
 192 to 8 or 9 per test site. The authors subsequently used the ProVAL software to process the
 193 elevation profile samples to produce the mean IRI from the left wheel path (LWP) and right
 194 wheel path (RWP) height sensors [13].

195 **4.3. The RIF Data Collection and Processing**

196 The PAVVET data logger produced samples of the tri-axial acceleration, orientation, speed,
 197 time, and geospatial position coordinates from the smartphone's integrated sensors. The mounted
 198 orientation for the smartphone was vertical so that the operator could verify its operation and
 199 initiate data logging by tapping the screen. Post processing produced the resultant vertical
 200 acceleration and the corresponding RIF-index [14]. A 21-tap finite impulse response (FIR) low-

201 pass filter with cutoff frequency of 20 Hz [15] adequately removed the noise and isolated the
 202 quarter-car sprung- and unsprung-mass modes needed to produce the RIF-indices. The RIF-
 203 transform also removes any offset in the resultant vertical acceleration to ignore static g-forces
 204 from the earth’s gravity.

205 The maximum update rate achieved for the inertial sensors of the smartphone was approximately
 206 93 Hz. Previous studies recommended that agencies standardize the inertial sample rate and the
 207 sensor mount apparatus to improve the precision of measurements with fewer traversal samples
 208 [15]. The data processing algorithm interpolated the distance between inertial samples by using
 209 the instantaneous speed and sample time increments. The update rate achievable from the
 210 integrated GPS receiver of the smartphone was 1 Hz. Hence, the GPS output provided a course
 211 geospatial position estimate of the path origin.

212 **4.4. Experimental Results**

213 Table 1 summarizes the data from the traversals of the three test sites at two speeds. The second
 214 column lists the number of traversals for each of the three test sites, and at each of the two
 215 average speeds. The third and fourth columns list the associated EAR-indices and margins-of-
 216 error, respectively. The fifth and sixth columns list the corresponding IRI and its associated
 217 margins-of-error, respectively. The last column lists the EAR/IRI ratios. As expected, the EAR-
 218 indices and the IRI for each traversal speed agree in their relative change across test sites (Figure
 219 1a). The EAR/IRI ratios are consistent across test sites (Figure 1b).

220 **Table 1. Summary of traversal parameters.**

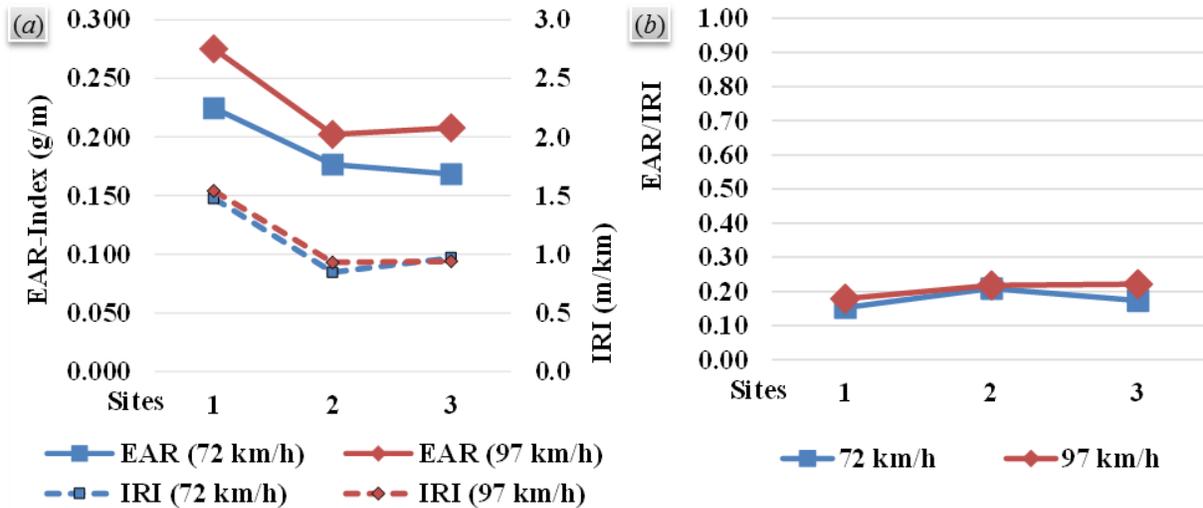
Site	N_v	\bar{R}_{72}^{210} (g/m)	MOE _{95(EAR)} (%)	I_{72}^{210} (m/km)	MOE _{95(IRI)} (%)	RIF/IRI
1	7	0.225	9.5%	1.474	2.4%	0.15
2	8	0.177	13.6%	0.846	2.3%	0.21
3	8	0.168	7.4%	0.969	2.0%	0.17

Site	N_v	\bar{R}_{97}^{210}	MOE _{95(EAR)}	I_{97}^{210}	MOE _{95(IRI)}	RIF/IRI
1	8	0.275	9.5%	1.540	7.2%	0.18
2	9	0.202	14.2%	0.930	18.4%	0.22
3	9	0.208	7.2%	0.939	3.1%	0.31
Mean			10.2%		5.9%	

221 Differences in the EAR/IRI ratios arise from differences in the spatial wavelength composition
 222 of the pavements where the RIF and the IRI exhibit different sensitivities. The plots in Figure 1a
 223 show the EAR-index in units of g-force/meter (g/m) on the left axis, and the IRI in units of m/km
 224 on the right axis because of their different scales. As Equation (3) posited, the higher speed
 225 traversals produced larger EAR-indices. As anticipated, the IRI is relatively unchanged with
 226 traversal speeds because the inertial profiler maintains a fixed sample interval, and the IRI
 227 procedure uses a precise traversal speed rather than the actual vehicle speed.
 228

229 As described previously, the IRI does not reflect variations in the actual vehicle speed and

230 suspension response whereas the RIF-indices do. Hence, with only 7 to 9 traversals available per
 231 test site, the MOE₉₅ for the RIF-indices were generally greater than the corresponding values for
 232 the IRI. The average MOE₉₅ for the RIF-indices and the IRI was approximately 10% and 6%,
 233 respectively. This similarity in results indicates the potential for the RIF-indices to approach the
 234 precision of the IRI procedure within relatively few additional traversals.

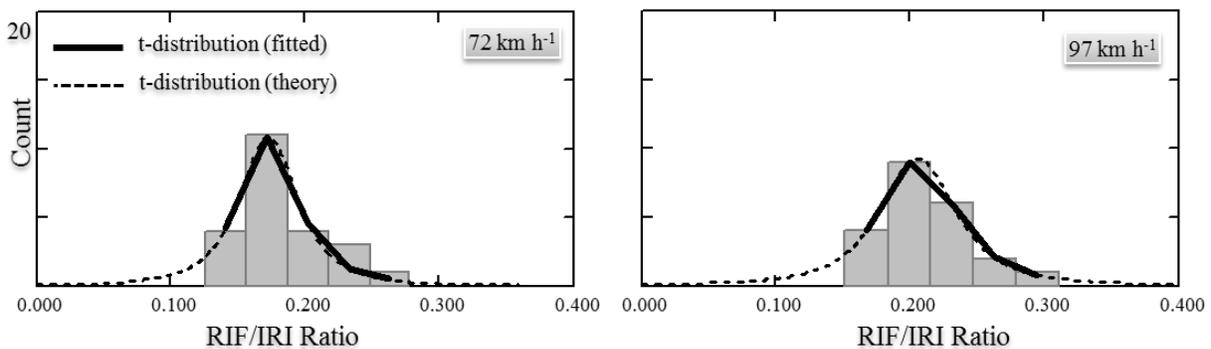


235
 236 **Figure 1. a) Relative change in the a) roughness indices and b) their ratios across test sites.**

237

238 **4.5. Convergence of RIF/IRI Proportionality**

239 As shown in Figure 2, the histograms of the RIF/IRI ratios at two different speeds demonstrate
 240 agreement with the well-established *t*-distribution that is appropriate for data sets smaller than 30
 241 samples.



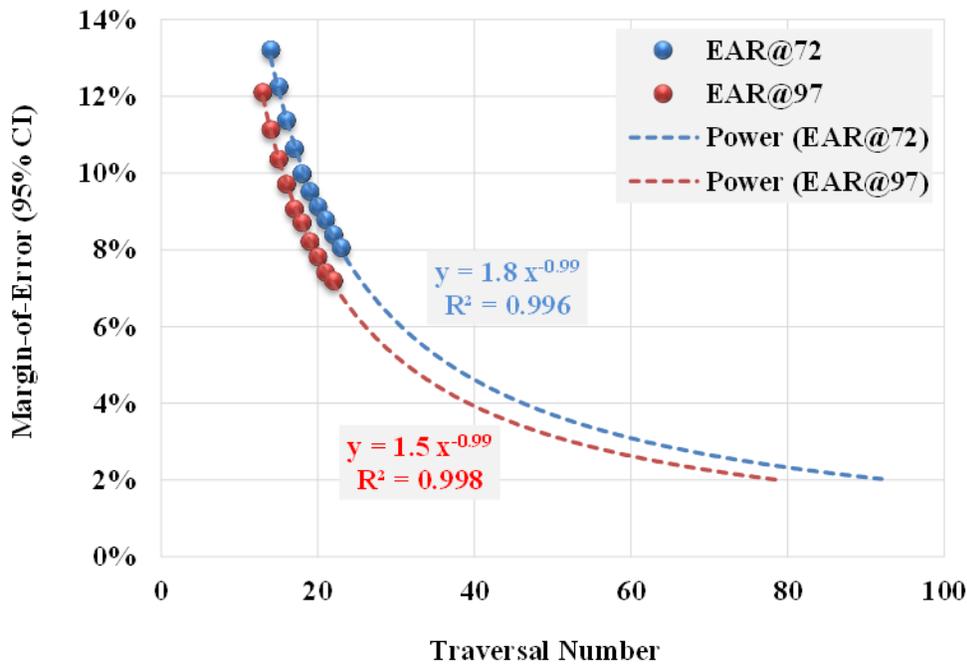
242
 243 **Figure 2. Distribution of RIF/IRI ratios at each traversal speed.**

244 The law of large numbers in probability theory dictates that the average value from many trials
 245 will converge to the expected value [12]. Therefore, the RIF/IRI proportionality must converge
 246 to a mean value with increasing levels of precision as the traversal volumes from connected

247 vehicles increase beyond 30. This guaranteed convergence in connected vehicle environments
 248 obviates the need to calibrate the RIF/IRI ratio for individual vehicles.

249 The critical chi-squared values calculated from Equation 8 are at 23.0% and 97.4% significance
 250 for the 72 km h⁻¹ and 92 km h⁻¹ traversals, respectively. These significance levels are much
 251 greater than 5%. Therefore, the chi-squared tests cannot reject a hypothesis that the distribution
 252 of the RIF/IRI ratios follows the *t*-distribution. Even with 22 to 23 samples, the MOE₉₅ is 8.1%
 253 and 7.2% for the 72 km h⁻¹ and 92 km h⁻¹ traversals, respectively. This strong agreement with the
 254 classic distribution indicates that additional vehicle traversals will further increase the precision
 255 of estimating the IRI from connected vehicle data.

256 The trend of increasing precision becomes clear by plotting the MOE₉₅ calculated after including
 257 data from each additional traversal (Figure 3). Extrapolating the trends based on the model
 258 indicated on the plots suggests that the MOE₉₅ will diminish beyond 2% as the traversal volume
 259 approaches 100. The model for these case studies has a decay exponent of nearly -1.0, which is
 260 almost twice the theoretical floor of -0.5 (the inverse square root operation) established in
 261 Equation (9), thereby, demonstrating a much faster convergence. The coefficients of
 262 determination (*R*²) for the models are nearly unity, indicating a near perfect goodness-of-fit with
 263 the data.



264
 265 **Figure 3. Margin-of-error trend for the RIF/IRI ratios.**

266 The Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volume medians are 23,000 and 82,000 passenger
 267 cars per lane for rural and urban interstate facilities, respectively [16]. Therefore, as connected
 268 vehicle environments mature, the MOE₉₅ will become negligible well within one hour of data
 269 collection.

270 **5. Summary and Conclusions**

271 The connected vehicle method validated in this research breaks through long-standing
272 constraints to reduce the cost, expand the reach, and increase the frequency of ride quality
273 characterizations. The technique leverages the large volume of sensor data expected from
274 connected vehicles to produce a consistent characterization of roughness that represents the
275 average ride quality for any roadway facility. The case studies of this research demonstrated that
276 the margin-of-error would diminish below 2% as the traversal volume approaches 100.

277 International standards for vibration safety result in a high consistency of suspension system
278 performance to suppress roughness that produces human discomfort in a specific frequency
279 range. Such safety standards preclude large variations in vehicle suspension responses,
280 regardless of the vehicle size and weight; the IRI relies on this fact. Consequently, guidelines for
281 the consistent performance of suspension systems place practically achievable bounds on the
282 number of traversals that will produce an accurate and high-precision characterization of the true
283 ride quality that any roadway facility provides.

284 The case studies conducted for this research used a certified and calibrated inertial profiler to
285 demonstrate the direct proportionality relationship between the RIF-indices of the connected
286 vehicle method, and the IRI. This relationship will extend investments in IRI datasets through
287 simple scaling. Therefore, agencies have the flexibility of continuing use of the IRI while
288 expanding applications that utilize the RIF-transform. Unlike the procedure to produce the IRI,
289 the computational simplicity of the RIF-transform enables low-power mobile devices such as
290 smartphones to compute them directly for real-time observation and reporting. Their
291 computational simplicity minimizes the cost of adoption worldwide.

292 The connected vehicle approach addresses the IRI utility gaps by extending roughness
293 characterizations for all roadway facility types, and at all speeds. Moreover, the average
294 roughness indices from large traversal volumes produce a more statistically significant measure
295 of the ride quality that users actually experience. The connected vehicle approach samples the
296 inertial response of actual vehicles that use every roadway facility to provide a more complete
297 characterization of the roadway network and its present ability to serve the traveling public.
298 Furthermore, the accuracy and precision of applications that forecast pavement deterioration and
299 localize anomalies will improve continuously with the ever-increasing volume of connected
300 vehicle data.

301 Future research will examine applications of the RIF-transform to establish rules for maintenance
302 decision support for different roadway facility types and under different environmental and usage
303 considerations.

304 **Acknowledgements**

305 The University Transportation Center, a program of the United States Department of
306 Transportation, sponsored this research through its Mountain Plains Consortium (MPC).

307

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