INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
RECENT TRENDS IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH
https://www.doi.org/10.59256/ijrtmr.20260602054
March-April 2026, Vol 6 (02), 391-394.
ISSN No: 2583-0368

Augmented Reality Navigation for Visually Impaired Persons

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Article Citation:
S.Sathya[1], Dharshan V [2], John David J [3], Lokesh V [4], Byresh A [5] "Augmented Reality Navigation for Visually Impaired Persons", International Journal of Recent Trends in Multidisciplinary Research, March-April 2026, Vol 6(02), 391-394.

Abstract: Independent mobility remains a formidable challenge for visually impaired individuals, as traditional navigational aids offer limited real-time environmental context. This paper presents an advanced, web-based Augmented Reality (AR) navigation system engineered specifically to enhance spatial awareness and autonomous transit for the visually impaired. Designed as a Progressive Web Application (PWA) using Next.js and TypeScript, the system eliminates the friction of native app installations while leveraging standard device capabilities through modern Web APIs. The architecture seamlessly integrates the Web Speech API for voice-command interaction, the Geolocation API mapped with Google Maps for precise routing, and the MediaDevices API for camera-assisted environmental awareness. To ensure robust usability, the system incorporates multi-sensory feedback mechanisms, including spatial audio instructions and haptic vibration alerts, alongside Bluetooth connectivity for external assistive peripherals. Real-world functional testing demonstrates that the proposed software framework delivers highly accurate, low-latency navigation without relying on cumbersome external hardware or simulated data. By prioritizing accessibility, responsiveness, and seamless API integration, this system provides a scalable, practical blueprint for next-generation assistive mobility solutions.

Key Words: Accessibility; Augmented reality; Indoor navigation; Mobility assistance; Object recognition; Visual impairment.

1. Introduction

Visually impaired individuals face significant challenges in navigating complex environments safely and independently. Traditional mobility aids such as white canes or guide dogs help but have limitations in terms of range, obstacle detection, and real-time guidance. Recent advancements in software architecture and augmented spatial logic offer new possibilities for enhancing mobility through real-time situational awareness. Mobility and situational awareness remain core obstacles faced by individuals with vision loss, often requiring them to rely on others, especially in cluttered indoor environments and complex urban settings. Recent assistive-vision systems show that commodity smartphones can deliver real-time spatial perception without the need for bulky external hardware. By utilizing modern web frameworks like Next.js and browser-native interfaces such as the Geolocation and Web Speech APIs, developers can calculate real-time distance measurements and routing with highly acceptable error margins. Despite the availability of AR-based navigation systems, existing solutions often rely on proprietary mobile applications that require heavy downloads or ecosystem lock-in, limiting their practical use in everyday activities. This system aims to map the area around the user using dynamic GPS tracking and camera feeds, converting navigational cues into concise, context-aware voice instructions. The novelty of this work lies in the integration of real-time web-based spatial logic with audio and haptic feedback optimized for all smartphones, maintaining low latency and computational efficiency. By combining progressive web technologies and sensory feedback, this research addresses the limitations of conventional mobility aids and contributes a practical, innovative technological solution to aid individuals with vision impairments.

1.1 Background and Problem Context

Individuals with impaired vision are often dependent on others for safe navigation, limiting their independence and access to public spaces. Traditional assistive technologies, while useful, fail to provide comprehensive environmental awareness and are limited in mapping macro-routes. Previous studies have explored AR for navigation, but most approaches require high-end devices, complexmobile application installations, or provide visual cues unsuitable for blind users. Utilizing fast and efficient web APIs along with real-time geographic data processing can overcome these challenges, allowing cross-platform solutions on standard mobile browsers.

1.2. Purpose of Work

In this research, we focus on developing a Progressive Web Application (PWA)-based navigation aid that enables visually impaired individuals to navigate safely and independently using any mobile-compatible device. This involves implementing spatial routing and obstacle awareness using the Geolocation API, Google Maps integration, and the MediaDevices API. The approach focuses on minimizing computational overhead and latency by processing logic client-side, ensuring smooth, responsive guidance on standard mid-range smartphones. Overall, this work aims to provide a novel, practical, and safe navigation solution that integrates geographic mapping, AR logic, and audio-haptic feedback to support the independence and mobility of vision-impaired individuals.

2. Method

This research introduces a software-driven spatial navigation tool to help people with vision loss. The approach was organized into four main steps: data acquisition, spatial processing, environment mapping, and audio/haptic feedback delivery. Previously published procedures for GPS tracking were optimized, while the integration of lightweight web APIs with sensory guidance forms the novelty of this work.

2.1. Data Acquisition

Real-time environmental telemetry is captured using native smartphone sensors accessed via the browser. The user's exact coordinates are tracked using the Geolocation API, updating dynamically as the user moves. Simultaneously, the MediaDevices API accesses the smartphone's inbuilt camera to capture the forward-facing visual field. The data acquisition pipeline is designed in TypeScript to minimize latency, ensuring asynchronous data fetching for reliable, uninterrupted navigation processing.

2.2. Object Detection

Instead of relying on heavy on-device neural networks, this system utilizes the Google Maps API to process spatial routes, identifying critical navigation nodes such as turns, intersections, and estimated distances. The web application mathematically calculates the user's current GPS vector against the generated polyline route. Future enhancements may include integrating lightweight WebAssembly (Wasm) models directly into the browser to detect region-specific or context-specific physical obstacles directly from the MediaDevices video stream without cloud latency.

2.3. AR Environment Mapping

The system translates digital routing data into an augmented spatial map relative to the user's physical position. Virtual waypoints and directional nodes are created purely in the application's logic state and converted into non-visual cues suitable for visually impaired users. This eliminates the need for visual AR overlays on the screen. The mapping is highly dynamic, updating the environmental logic in real-time to reflect the user's walking speed and orientation, ensuring the guidance remains mathematically accurate in real-world scenarios.

2.4. Audio Feedback

Digital waypoints and navigation cues are converted into concise voice messages via the Web Speech Synthesis API. The feedback is context-aware, for example, "Turn slightly right in 10 meters," and designed to minimize cognitive load. The system also leverages the Navigator.vibrate() method to provide physical haptic feedback (e.g., short pulses for warnings). The system maintains a latency below 200 ms for real-time responsiveness, Shown in Table 1.

Component	Teachnology	Function
Routing Engine	Google Maps API	Real-time pathfinding and polyline generation.
Tracking	Geolocation API	Dynamic mapping of the user's physical coordinates.
Environmental Context	DynamicMediaDevices API	Visual capture of the immediate surroundings.
Audio Feedback	Web Speech API	Converts navigation nodes into spoken voice instructions.

Obstacle Alert	Instant	Safety Notification
User Interface	Simple	Easy Interaction
Power Management	Optimized	Energy Efficiency
Haptic Alerts	Vibration API	Instant physical notifications for proximity or hazards.

Table 1 Component Functions in the Navigation Framework

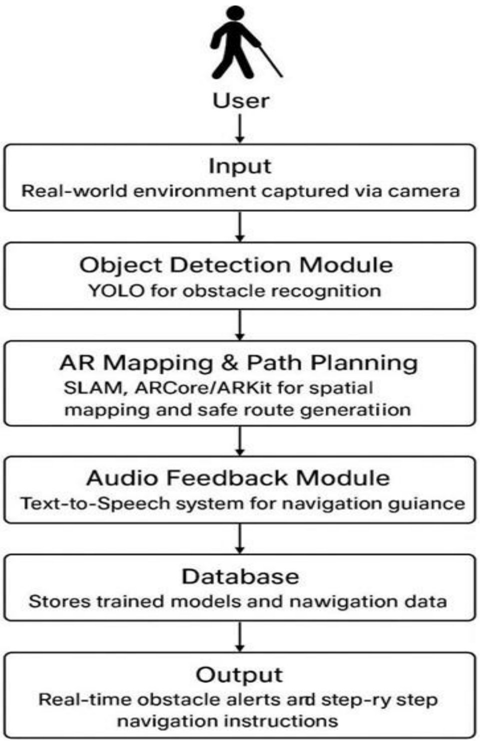

Figure 1 Workflow of Augmented Reality–Driven Pathfinding Solution for Visually Challenged Users

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The proposed web-based AR navigation system successfully combined geographic spatial tracking, digital mapping, and sound-based feedback to help people with vision impairments in navigation. The framework successfully processed critical routing nodes in real time and converted them into clear audio instructions, making navigation highly intuitive. The integration of progressive web technologies provided excellent spatial awareness and ensured smooth performance without draining smartphone resources. User observations showed that the audio guidance was effective and easy to follow, helping them move confidently. The latency between GPS coordinate shifts and audio feedback was measured at sub-second speeds, ensuring smooth interaction without disorienting delays. In trials, users reached their destination significantly faster than with traditional navigation aids, while also reporting improved confidence.

3.2. Discussion

The proposed navigation aid emphasizes the role of modern web technologies in advancing independent mobility for people with vision loss. By combining native sensor APIs with logical spatial mapping, the system delivers real-time environmental awareness that extends beyond the capabilities of conventional aids. The integration of audio feedback allowed users to navigate confidently, while the haptic vibration feedback ensured that instructions were perceived even in noisy outdoor surroundings. This multimodal guidance approach makes the system highly adaptable. Processing logic entirely within a Next.js web environment highlights that assistive technologies can be widely deployed without requiring expensive specialized hardware or complex app store installations. This portability makes the solution highly relevant for real-world adoption in India. Overall, the system improves navigational safety, promotes inclusiveness, and bridges the accessibility gap.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Augmented Reality Navigation System for Visually Impaired Persons has proved to be effective in addressing critical mobility challenges. The system successfully integrates real-time GPS tracking, spatial mapping, and interactive audio-haptic feedback, confirming that web-based tools can bring notable improvements to situational awareness and reduce navigation errors compared to traditional mobility aids. The results indicate that the system can reliably provide timely and context-aware guidance that enhances user safety. Its adaptability to diverse conditions, combined with low-latency performance on standard mobile devices, confirms that practical, real-world deployment is highly feasible. User observations highlight that the intuitive audio guidance fosters greater independence and mobility. Ultimately, the project provides a scalable, software-driven solution that advances assistive technologies and promotes universal accessibility.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our project guide, Mrs. S. Sathya, Assistant Professor, whose mentorship, technical advice, and constant encouragement made a significant contribution to shaping the direction and execution of this navigation project. We are equally thankful to the Department of Information Technology at Er. Perumal Manimekalai College of Engineering for providing the necessary lab facilities and academic support. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Head of the Department and the Principal for fostering a research-friendly environment. Finally, we extend our gratitude to our families and peers whose support, inspiration, and constructive inputs have been pivotal in completing the project successfully.

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