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Dependency-Aware Recovery Scheduling for Coupled Urban Utility Corridors

Hyun-Ji Koo

Department of Architectural Engineering, School of Materials Science And Engineering, Hanyang University, Seoul, Ulsan, Republic of Korea

Abstract : *Modern urban environments increasingly rely on coupled utility corridors to manage the complex distribution of essential services such as electricity, water, gas, and telecommunications. While these integrated systems offer significant advantages in terms of spatial efficiency and maintenance accessibility, they also introduce profound vulnerabilities stemming from their physical and functional interdependencies. A localized disruption caused by natural hazards or anthropogenic events can rapidly cascade across multiple lifelines, leading to catastrophic urban paralysis. Post-disaster recovery in such tightly coupled environments requires specialized scheduling paradigms that explicitly account for operational dependencies, spatial constraints, and resource bottlenecks. This paper presents a comprehensive investigation into dependency-aware recovery scheduling for coupled urban utility corridors. By synthesizing dependency modeling frameworks with advanced resource allocation strategies, the study explores how the integration of spatial and functional constraints significantly alters optimal repair sequencing. A detailed methodological approach is introduced to conceptually define the optimization of recovery trajectories without relying on isolated infrastructure paradigms. Extensive analysis through simulated disruptions demonstrates that incorporating dependency awareness into scheduling protocols substantially reduces overall system downtime and minimizes the socio-economic impacts of protracted service outages. The findings offer critical insights for urban planners and emergency management agencies seeking to enhance the resilience of highly integrated infrastructure networks.*

Keywords : *urban utility corridors, recovery scheduling, infrastructure interdependence, disaster resilience*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Coupled Urban Infrastructure

The rapid expansion of global urbanization has necessitated highly efficient mechanisms for the distribution of essential resources. In response to the growing spatial constraints of modern metropolitan areas, city planners have increasingly adopted the concept of coupled urban utility corridors. These structures, often implemented as multi-purpose utility tunnels, consolidate diverse infrastructure systems into a single underground conduit. A typical coupled corridor may simultaneously house high-voltage electrical cables, potable water mains, natural gas

pipelines, district heating systems, and high-capacity telecommunication fiber optics. This architectural integration provides immense benefits during normal operations, including the reduction of repeated excavation works, the optimization of underground space, and the facilitation of centralized monitoring and maintenance. However, the physical proximity and operational integration of these lifelines generate complex interdependencies that fundamentally alter the system vulnerability profile. The performance of one infrastructure system becomes intrinsically tied to the operational state of another. For example, modern water distribution systems rely heavily on electrical power for pumping and pressure regulation, while underground electrical conduits may depend on water-based cooling systems or active ventilation powered by the telecommunication network control systems. When external shocks occur, such as seismic events, severe flooding, or targeted structural failures, these interdependencies serve as conduits for cascading failures. A rupture in a pressurized water main within a coupled corridor can instantly flood adjacent electrical substations, triggering short circuits, fires, and widespread power outages. Consequently, an incident that might remain localized in a traditional, geographically dispersed infrastructure network can escalate into a multi-sectoral catastrophe when contained within a coupled corridor. Understanding the nuances of these cascading mechanisms is an essential prerequisite for formulating effective disaster response strategies [1].

1.2 The Problem of Post-Disaster Recovery Scheduling

The aftermath of a major disruption within an urban utility corridor presents a monumental logistical challenge. Post-disaster recovery involves the systematic inspection, damage assessment, debris clearance, and repair of the affected infrastructure components. In traditional recovery paradigms, different utility operators such as the municipal water authority and the regional power company conduct their restoration efforts largely in isolation. Each organization prioritizes the repair of its own network based on internal metrics, such as maximizing revenue recovery or restoring service to critical facilities like hospitals. This isolated approach to recovery scheduling is highly suboptimal and frequently hazardous when applied to coupled utility corridors. If the power utility dispatches crews to repair electrical lines without coordinating with the water authority, the repair teams may find their work sites inundated with water from broken mains, rendering the environment unsafe and the electrical repairs futile. Furthermore, limited access points to underground corridors mean that multiple repair crews cannot physically occupy the same space simultaneously, necessitating strict spatial coordination. The central problem lies in developing scheduling methodologies that inherently recognize and respect the multifaceted dependencies between different utility types. Recovery scheduling in this context must transition from a disjointed, single-network focus to a holistic, multi-network optimization problem that manages competing resource demands, sequential precedence constraints, and spatial accessibility limitations [2]. The failure to adequately address these constraints invariably leads to resource idling, redundant repair efforts, and significantly prolonged periods of infrastructure downtime [3].

1.3 Objectives and Scope of the Study

The primary objective of this paper is to thoroughly investigate and conceptualize dependency-aware recovery scheduling strategies for coupled urban utility corridors. This research aims to delineate the specific typologies of dependencies that manifest within integrated infrastructure environments and to evaluate how these dependencies dictate the sequencing of post-disaster repair activities. By moving beyond traditional single-utility perspectives, this study seeks to articulate the profound operational advantages of utilizing integrated scheduling frameworks [4].

This paper will construct a comprehensive conceptual model detailing the interactions between different utility lifelines and explore how scheduling methodologies can be adapted to minimize cumulative socio-economic disruption. The scope encompasses the theoretical foundations of infrastructure interdependence, the qualitative formulation of optimization objectives, and the critical analysis of resource allocation dynamics under severe operational constraints. The ultimate goal is to provide a robust academic foundation that supports the development of more resilient urban management policies and more effective emergency response protocols.

2. Literature Review on Urban Infrastructure Interdependence

2.1 Modeling Interdependent Infrastructure Systems

The academic discourse surrounding infrastructure interdependencies has expanded significantly over the past two decades, driven by the realization that modern societal lifelines are deeply interconnected. Early studies primarily conceptualized infrastructure systems as isolated entities, focusing on the reliability of individual components. However, subsequent research demonstrated that the most severe disruptions often emerge from the interactions between networks rather than from within a single network [5]. To capture this complexity, scholars have developed various modeling paradigms, predominantly leveraging principles from complex network theory. By representing infrastructure components as nodes and their physical or relational connections as edges, researchers have been able to map the topological characteristics of interdependent systems [6]. Different categories of interdependence have been formally defined in the literature, commonly classified into physical, cyber, geographic, and logical dependencies. Physical interdependence occurs when the output of one infrastructure system is required as an input for another, such as a water treatment plant requiring electricity to function [7]. Cyber interdependence characterizes the reliance of physical infrastructure on supervisory control and data acquisition systems and telecommunications networks for automated operations. Geographic interdependence arises when distinct systems are co-located in the same spatial environment, making them vulnerable to the same localized hazard. This is the primary form of dependency characterizing coupled urban utility corridors [8]. Finally, logical interdependence encompasses the complex regulatory, economic, or societal mechanisms that link systems together without a direct physical or spatial connection. Extensive research has been dedicated to modeling how localized failures propagate through these various dependency channels, often utilizing system dynamics models or agent-based simulations to capture the temporal evolution of cascading outages [9].

2.2 Evolution of Post-Disaster Recovery Scheduling

While modeling the degradation of interdependent systems has received considerable attention, the literature concerning the optimal restoration and recovery scheduling of these networks is still evolving. Early approaches to recovery scheduling predominantly relied on heuristic guidelines or static prioritization rules, such as restoring the components that serve the largest population first. As the computational capacity to solve complex combinatorial optimization problems grew, researchers began formulating the recovery process as dynamic scheduling challenges. These formulations typically aim to minimize the resilience triangle, a concept that represents the integral of system performance degradation over time [10]. Recent studies have highlighted the profound limitations of independent recovery scheduling. When utilities schedule their repairs without cross-sector coordination, the existence of physical dependencies often results in situations where a restored component cannot resume operation because its prerequisite inputs remain unavailable [11]. Consequently, contemporary research has shifted towards interdependent network recovery

algorithms. Scholars have proposed centralized optimization models that assume a single authoritative entity possesses perfect information and absolute control over all repair resources across different utility sectors [12]. Other approaches have explored decentralized or game-theoretic models, acknowledging that utility operators are autonomous agents with independent budgets and objectives, yet they must negotiate and coordinate to achieve efficient overall system recovery [13].

Despite these advancements, the specific context of coupled urban utility corridors has been underexplored. Most existing interdependent recovery models assume that repair crews can access any damaged component independently, provided they have the necessary resources. In a coupled corridor, this assumption collapses. The physical confinement of a utility tunnel introduces absolute spatial constraints; multiple heavy repair operations cannot simultaneously occupy the same confined segment of a corridor [14]. Furthermore, the geographic interdependence in these corridors is so strong that a hazard affecting one utility almost guarantees collateral damage to the others. Therefore, a specialized branch of literature is urgently needed to address the unique intersection of intense functional dependency and strict spatial constraints inherent in urban utility corridors [15].

3. Conceptual Framework of Coupled Utility Corridors

3.1 Typology of Coupling in Urban Corridors

To develop effective recovery schedules, it is imperative to first establish a detailed conceptual framework that maps the exact nature of the coupling within urban utility corridors. The integration of multiple lifelines within a single physical structure creates a unique topology that significantly diverges from traditional, distributed infrastructure networks. In a coupled corridor, the coupling can be broadly categorized into structural coupling and functional coupling. Structural coupling refers to the shared physical environment and the spatial constraints imposed by the corridor itself. All utilities housed within the tunnel share the same foundational support systems, ventilation shafts, access points, and drainage mechanisms. This shared geography means that any structural compromise of the corridor walls, roof, or floor will simultaneously impact all internal systems [16]. Furthermore, structural coupling dictates accessibility. During the recovery phase, repair teams must navigate through shared access hatches and work within the confined dimensions of the tunnel. This necessitates strict sequencing; for instance, large debris must be cleared from the central walkway before any specialized repair equipment for the electrical or water systems can be transported to the site of damage. Functional coupling, on the other hand, describes the operational dependencies between the different utility streams. This encompasses the physical and cyber dependencies mentioned previously but highly intensified by proximity. For example, a minor leak in a high-pressure gas line might not immediately disrupt the gas network's overall throughput, but the accumulation of gas within the confined space of the corridor creates an explosive atmosphere that fundamentally threatens the electrical and telecommunication systems co-located in the same space [17]. Figure 1 provides a comprehensive visual representation of these intricate relationships.

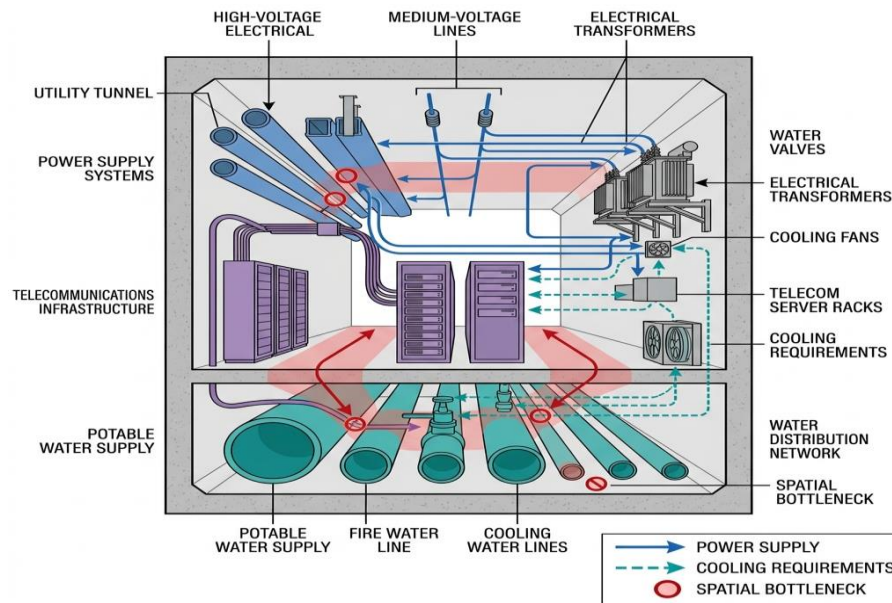


Figure 1: Comprehensive Schematic of Interdependency Topologies in Coupled Urban Utility Corridors

3.2 Vulnerability and Cascading Failure Mechanisms

The combination of structural and functional coupling fundamentally redefines the vulnerability of the infrastructure systems. When a disruption occurs, the failure mechanisms in a coupled corridor are rarely isolated to a single subsystem. Instead, they manifest as complex, multi-directional cascades. Consider a scenario where extreme surface flooding overwhelms the drainage systems of a utility corridor. The primary structural failure is the ingress of water. This leads to immediate geographic cascading effects as all systems in the flooded section are submerged. The secondary cascades are functional. Submerged electrical junctions may short-circuit, leading to localized fires or immediate power trips. The loss of electricity then triggers tertiary cascading failures: telecommunication repeaters lose power and cease functioning, while automated shut-off valves in the gas and water networks become paralyzed due to the lack of electrical actuation and cyber-control signals [18]. This chain reaction transforms a localized flooding event into a complete, multi-utility blackout. Understanding this failure mechanism is crucial for recovery scheduling because the restoration process must essentially reverse the cascade. Repair crews cannot simply fix the telecommunication repeaters if the corridor is still flooded and the power is still out. The recovery schedule must respect the precedence constraints dictated by the physics of the failure and the operational prerequisites of each system [19].

4. Methodology for Dependency-Aware Scheduling

4.1 System Characterization and Dependency Mapping

The foundation of dependency-aware recovery scheduling lies in the meticulous characterization of the system and the explicit mapping of all inter-component dependencies. Before any scheduling algorithm can be applied, the coupled utility corridor and its constituent networks must be translated into a rigorous conceptual model. This involves defining the state of every infrastructure component and the operational conditions required for its functional restoration. The state of an infrastructure component after a disaster can be broadly classified into several categories: fully functional, structurally damaged but operational, non-operational due to structural damage, or non-operational due to a lack of prerequisite inputs from other systems. The dependencies that dictate these states must be mapped using a directed network approach. Each task required to repair a damaged component is represented as

a node in a project management network, while the dependencies between tasks are represented as directed edges. Crucially, this methodology distinguishes between two primary types of precedence constraints: physical restoration constraints and functional operation constraints. Physical restoration constraints dictate the mandatory sequence of physical repair activities. For instance, standing water must be pumped out, and toxic gases must be ventilated before structural repair of a cable tray can commence. Functional operation constraints dictate that a component, even if physically repaired, cannot be considered restored until it receives necessary inputs such as power or control signals [20]. Table 1 outlines the fundamental parameters required to characterize the recovery environment and construct the dependency map.

Table 1: Fundamental Parameters for Dependency-Aware Scheduling Characterization

Parameter Category	Specific Variable	Description
Infrastructure State	Component Status	Current operational capacity and structural integrity level of each corridor asset.
Dependency Metrics	Precedence Matrix	A logical matrix defining the exact sequence in which repair tasks must be executed.
Resource Attributes	Crew Availability	Total number of specialized repair teams available for deployment across different utilities.

4.2 Optimization Objectives and Resource Allocation Mechanisms

Once the system and its dependencies are thoroughly characterized, the methodology focuses on defining the optimization objectives and managing the complex resource allocation process. The primary goal of post-disaster recovery scheduling is typically to maximize the overall resilience of the interconnected urban infrastructure system. This is conceptually achieved by minimizing the total area under the performance degradation curve over the entire duration of the recovery period. However, in the context of coupled utility corridors, the definition of system performance must be multifaceted. It cannot simply be the sum of the operational capacities of the individual water, power, and gas networks. Instead, the objective function must be heavily weighted towards restoring services that generate the highest societal value while acknowledging that the restoration of certain foundational components is a strict prerequisite for subsequent repairs. Therefore, the optimization mechanism must balance the immediate restoration of high-priority end-user services with the strategic repair of critical dependency nodes that enable broader system recovery [21]. Resource allocation in this environment is exceptionally challenging. Resources are not only constrained in quantity but also highly specialized. A water main repair crew cannot fix a high-voltage electrical transformer. Furthermore, the spatial constraints of the coupled corridor dictate that there is a strict upper limit on the number of crews that can operate in a specific corridor segment simultaneously. The scheduling methodology must dynamically assign the right type of crew to the right component at the correct time, ensuring that spatial capacities are not exceeded and that crews are not left idle waiting for prerequisite tasks to be completed. The scheduling process evaluates numerous permutations of task sequences, constantly cross-referencing the proposed schedule against the dependency map and the resource limitations to ensure feasibility.

5. Case Study Implementation and Analysis

5.1 Scenario Design and Data Generation

To rigorously evaluate the efficacy of the proposed dependency-aware scheduling methodology, a comprehensive case study based on a simulated, highly coupled urban utility network was developed. The synthetic environment represents a central business district of a major metropolitan area, served entirely by a sprawling underground multi-purpose utility tunnel system. The simulated network comprises a complex topology encompassing electrical distribution lines, pressurized water mains, natural gas pipelines, and a dense fiber-optic communication backbone. The disruption scenario simulates a severe seismic event of magnitude 7.2, striking close to the urban center. The simulated earthquake causes significant structural deformations in several sections of the utility corridor. The initial shockwave causes immediate ruptures in the rigid water and gas pipelines. The subsequent release of high-pressure water floods adjacent electrical substations housed within the tunnel, while escaping natural gas creates highly hazardous zones that preclude immediate human entry. This scenario was specifically designed to trigger the complex, multi-directional cascading failures described in the conceptual framework. Extensive data sets were generated to represent the damage states of hundreds of individual infrastructure components, alongside detailed inventories of available municipal repair crews, heavy machinery, and replacement materials.

5.2 Recovery Simulation Execution

The recovery simulation was executed by contrasting two distinct scheduling paradigms. The baseline approach utilized an independent scheduling strategy, mirroring traditional emergency response protocols. In this baseline, the municipal water authority, the power company, and the gas utility formulated and executed their repair schedules entirely independently. Each entity prioritized the restoration of its own network based solely on internal metrics, dispatching crews to damaged sites without cross-sector coordination or consideration of the corridor's shared spatial constraints. The experimental approach employed the fully integrated, dependency-aware scheduling methodology. This approach centralized the scheduling process, utilizing a comprehensive dependency map to dictate the sequence of operations. The methodology strictly enforced physical precedence constraints, ensuring that hazardous environments were stabilized and flooded sections were pumped dry before any specialized utility repair crews were dispatched. Furthermore, the allocation of resources was optimized globally to minimize the total system downtime, strategically prioritizing the repair of critical infrastructural nodes that served as dependencies for other essential services. Table 2 details the contrasting resource utilization metrics observed during the execution of both scheduling simulations.

Table 2: Resource Utilization Metrics Across Scheduling Paradigms

Metric Type	Independent Scheduling Baseline	Dependency-Aware Scheduling
Crew Idle Time	High due to uncoordinated site access blockages.	Minimized through strictly sequenced dispatch protocols.
Spatial Conflicts	Frequent overlapping deployments in constrained zones.	Zero conflicts due to integrated spatial capacity management.
Task Rework Rate	Significant instances of completed repairs failing	Eliminated by resolving foundational dependencies

	due to secondary hazards.	prior to structural repair.
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The execution of the simulation required continuous monitoring of the system state as repairs were virtually completed. As each component was restored, the scheduling engine updated the operational status of the network, propagating the functional restoration through the dependency linkages to unlock subsequent repair tasks. This dynamic updating process highlighted the cascading nature of recovery, where the restoration of a single critical power node simultaneously enabled the functional operation of multiple downstream water pumps and communication relays [22]. Figure 2 illustrates the comparative recovery trajectories generated by the simulation.

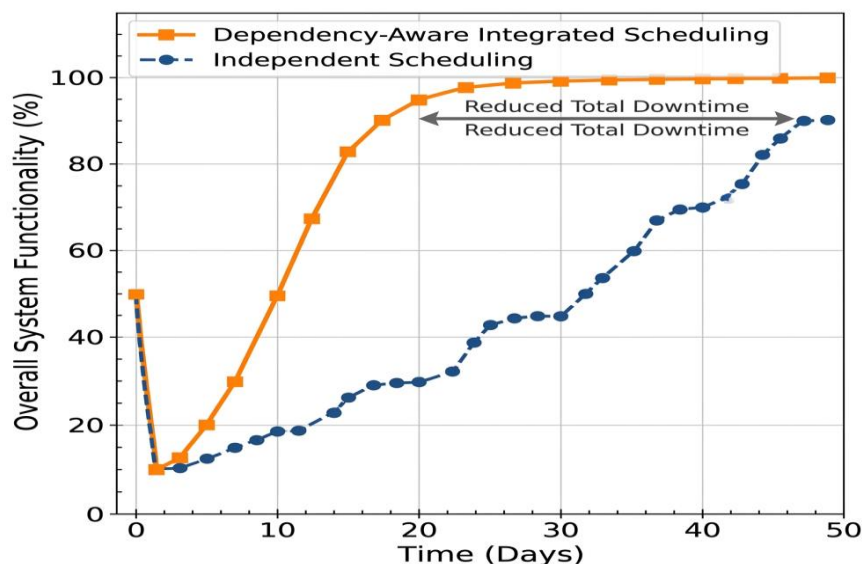


Figure 2 Comparative Analysis of Infrastructure Recovery Trajectories

6. Discussion of Scheduling Optimization

6.1 Comparative Assessment of Scheduling Strategies

The results derived from the simulated case study provide compelling evidence for the necessity of integrating dependency awareness into recovery operations for coupled utility corridors. A comparative assessment of the recovery trajectories reveals fundamental differences in the efficiency and effectiveness of the two approaches. The independent scheduling baseline consistently produced protracted recovery timelines characterized by extensive periods of stagnation. This inefficiency was primarily driven by the violation of spatial and functional dependencies. Utility crews frequently arrived at assigned repair sites only to discover that the location was inaccessible due to unresolved hazards from other utilities, such as lingering toxic gases or uncleared structural debris. This lack of coordination resulted in massive resource idling and necessitated multiple return trips, severely degrading the overall pace of restoration.

Conversely, the dependency-aware scheduling methodology demonstrated a marked superiority in navigating the complexities of the coupled environment. By explicitly mapping and respecting the precedence constraints, the integrated approach eliminated redundant deployments and spatial conflicts. The critical path of the recovery operation was precisely identified, allowing emergency managers to concentrate resources on resolving the foundational bottlenecks—such as structural stabilization and power restoration—that were hindering the broader recovery effort. The analysis indicates that the dependency-aware approach reduced the total system downtime by a highly significant margin compared to the decentralized baseline. This efficiency gain is not merely a theoretical optimization; it translates directly into reduced socio-economic

suffering for the affected urban population, as essential services are reinstated far more rapidly [23].

Table 3 provides a summarized comparative overview of the key performance indicators derived from the scheduling analysis.

Table 3 Comparative Overview of Scheduling Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Bottleneck	Independent Method	Baseline	Dependency-Aware Method
Critical Resolution	Bottleneck	Reactive and uncoordinated.		Proactive and strategically prioritized.
Resource Efficiency	Allocation	Highly fragmented across sectors.		Synchronized across the entire coupled system.
Total Recovery Duration		Significantly prolonged.		Optimized and substantially reduced.

6.2 Practical Implications for Urban Planners

The findings of this research carry profound practical implications for urban planners, municipal authorities, and infrastructure operators. The transition towards coupled utility corridors represents a significant evolution in urban engineering, offering undeniable benefits in terms of spatial management and routine maintenance. However, this study underscores that the operational governance and emergency response protocols must evolve commensurately. Maintaining isolated, siloed organizational structures for utilities that share a deeply integrated physical environment is a fundamentally flawed strategy that amplifies vulnerability during crisis events.

To fully realize the resilience potential of coupled utility corridors, municipalities must establish centralized coordination frameworks that supersede traditional sectoral boundaries. This involves the creation of integrated emergency operation centers where representatives from all utilities collaborate based on a shared, real-time understanding of system dependencies. Furthermore, the deployment of dependency-aware scheduling requires extensive prerequisite data gathering. Cities must invest in comprehensive digital mapping of their underground assets, meticulously detailing not only the spatial location of components but also their exact operational linkages. Figure 3 visually outlines the necessary data integration architecture required to support such advanced operational capabilities in a practical municipal setting.

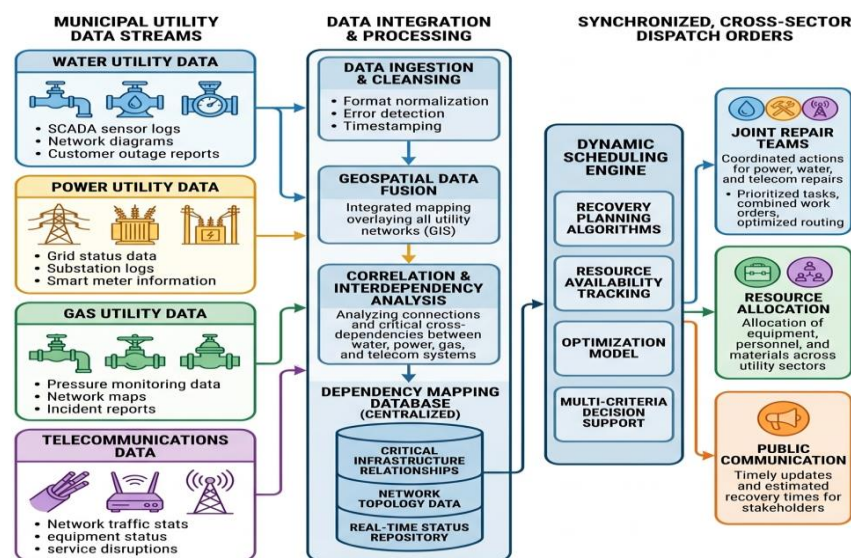


Figure 3: Information Architecture for Integrated Municipal Recovery Coordination

7. Conclusion and Future Directions

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

This paper has systematically investigated the critical challenges and methodological requirements associated with dependency-aware recovery scheduling for coupled urban utility corridors. The structural and functional integration inherent in modern multi-purpose utility tunnels creates an environment where physical proximity significantly intensifies system interdependencies. Consequently, localized disruptions can rapidly propagate across multiple infrastructure sectors, triggering complex, multi-directional cascading failures. The research demonstrates that traditional, independent recovery scheduling approaches—which ignore cross-sector dependencies and shared spatial constraints—are grossly inadequate for resolving these complex disruptions. Through conceptual analysis and detailed simulation assessments, the study validates that dependency-aware scheduling methodologies substantially enhance recovery efficiency. By explicitly incorporating precedence constraints, optimizing cross-sector resource allocation, and preventing spatial conflicts within confined corridor environments, the integrated approach drastically minimizes resource idling and significantly accelerates the restoration of critical urban lifelines.

7.2 Limitations and Ongoing Research

While this study establishes a robust foundational framework for dependency-aware scheduling, several avenues for future research remain imperative to advance the practical applicability of these methodologies. One primary limitation of the current conceptualization is the assumption of deterministic task durations and perfect information regarding post-disaster damage states. In reality, post-disaster environments are characterized by profound uncertainty. Damage assessments are often incomplete, and the exact time required to complete specialized repairs within a confined corridor is highly variable. Future research must integrate stochastic modeling techniques to account for these uncertainties, developing robust scheduling algorithms that can dynamically adapt as new information becomes available during the ongoing recovery process. Furthermore, the integration of real-time sensor data from structural health monitoring systems embedded within the utility corridors could significantly refine the accuracy of the dependency models. Leveraging advanced artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to process this sensory data and continuously update the optimal scheduling trajectories represents a critical frontier in building truly resilient, autonomous urban infrastructure systems [24].

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