

9 Jan. 1989

# \$2b remedy urged for sorry roads

By Jessie Yim

SOME Hongkong roads are deteriorating so quickly the Government needs to spend up to \$2 billion to keep them from becoming dangerous, a survey has found.

Conducted by the Highways Department, it showed almost a third of the territory's roads had less than a year of life left.

Half of the network of more than 1,400 kilometres would survive less than seven years, the survey showed.

Government highway engineer Mr Frederick Teague compared the situation with a patient diagnosed as having cancer.

He said the Highways Department was applying for \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion for a "rehabilitation programme".

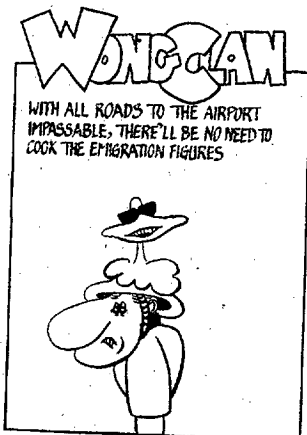
"The money will be spent over a period of a few years on a phased programme," he said.

Adding layers of material to the road surface would cause the least disruption to traffic, he said.

The process would add 15 years to the expected lifespan, similar to the expected life of a newly-laid asphalt road.

Priority will be given to roads with fewer than seven years of life remaining.

The rapid deterioration was partly due to the increase in traffic and partly to overloaded goods



vehicles, the Highways Department said.

The department will be requesting money to begin the programme this year.

"Quite a bit of this would be used to reconstruct Tuen Mun Highway," said Mr Teague, head of the department's research and development section.

The survey found that parts of the Tuen Mun Highway - which supports a heavy traffic flow between the north-western New Territories and the urban areas - had less than a year of life left, and required immediate reconstruction.

Over the past five years, the volume of traffic using the highway has increased by 19 percent a year.

It is expected to reach full capacity in the 1990s.

The reconstruction plan, described as a last resort, would cause inevitable traffic problems, Mr Teague said.

The survey also showed that Lion Rock Tunnel Road and Tai Po Road - the main routes connecting Sha Tin and Kowloon - both have less than a year of life remaining.

Tai Po Road is under reconstruction, with one extra lane to be built to provide additional traffic capacity. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Mr Teague said it was impossible to reconstruct Lion Rock Tunnel Road because of its importance to local and Hongkong-China traffic.

He said the route would require years of night-time maintenance and re-surfacing.

The two-year-old Tolo Highway also faces deterioration problems, but is nonetheless expected to last more than 15 years.

Mr Teague said traffic on the highway had increased 20 percent in the past 12 months.

The Government was trying to stop the overloading of goods vehicles as another means of slowing damage to the roads, he said.

Potential means of fighting overloading included installing a weigh bridge and increasing penalties.