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28 March 1984

\$3 billion plan to ease traffic

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Residents will be given the chance to comment on a transport study completed recently in the Mid-Levels and Central district.

The Central and Western District Board will canvass the views of local residents on a consultant's recommendations for transport improvements in the district.

A large-scale inquiry will be held on April 8 and representatives from mutual aid committees, owners corporations and area committees are expected to attend.

Their views will be passed on to the district board at a full board meeting on April 19.

The transport consultants have recommended a package of traffic improvements aimed at easing congestion between Central and the Mid-Levels — at a cost of more than \$3.30 billion.

The study was arranged after objections to the proposed elevated route along Connaught Road.

The consultants developed a strategy involving the provision of short-term (1986), medium-term (1991) and long-term (1996) traffic management measures.

Their study concludes that the implementation of the short-term and medium-term measures would provide sufficient capacity up to the early 1990s.

Thereafter, congestion

would reappear (unless traffic restraint measures proved successful) and become steadily more severe until the recommended long-term measures were implemented.

However, the study recommends that if funds are not available for immediate implementation of the strategy in full, short-term and medium-term measures should immediately be taken, with the remaining long-term measures being deferred for implementation as soon as possible.

The district board's traffic and transport committee met last Thursday to discuss the study.

It decided to seek the views of the Wanchai and Eastern District Boards, as some of the proposals extended outside its boundary.

A press conference will be held today to announce details of the study.

The consultants have recommended that traffic management measures be implemented immediately, and thus provide short-term relief at a considerable number of problem locations in the study area.

These measures, which involve the modification of traffic signal controls and minor civil works, could be completed by 1986 at a cost of about \$39 million.

The study also recommends the immediate upgrading of Connaught Road and Victoria Barracks Link,

to provide medium-term relief from traffic problems in the study area.

The proposal to upgrade Connaught Road includes the building of two flyovers and a vehicular underpass. The Victoria Barracks Link would connect Queensway via Victoria Barracks Road into Kennedy Road.

The upgrading of Connaught Road could be completed by 1988 at a cost of \$402 million, and, according to the study, would provide relief in the east-west and west-east directions through Central until the early 1990s.

It would be compatible with the subsequent construction of the waterfront road through Central.

The Victoria Barracks Link could be completed by 1987 at an additional cost of \$19.5 million over the \$13.5 million for work already planned in Kennedy Road, and would provide relief to Cotton Tree Drive until the early 1990s.

The study also puts forward suggestions for improving public transport, including the construction of a \$3.1 million bus terminus on the site of Central Market by 1988.

The consultants have suggested that the existing segregated pedestrian walkway network in Central be extended at a cost of \$41 million.

And they propose that a

"pilot" escalator-assisted pedestrian route be developed along Cochrane Street and Shelley Street to link Mid-Levels with both the new bus terminus and the existing pedestrian walkway system — at a cost of \$26.5 million.

In the long-term, a new waterfront road would be built through Central, connecting with the elevated road provided as part of the upgraded Connaught Road scheme and with a proposed Wanchai bypass.

This waterfront road would run between Rumsey Street and the HMS Tamar area and most of its length would be in a submerged tunnel.

The waterfront road could not be adequately connected with the proposed elevated Gloucester Road in the east, which meant the eastward connection would have to be effected by the construction of a new road — the Island Eastern Corridor Link — on a waterfront alignment.

This new road would link with the waterfront road and the Island Eastern Corridor at Victoria Park Road.

The consultants recommended that this road should be substituted for the proposed Gloucester Road Elevated Scheme (which would not be compatible with the Waterfront Road through Central).