

S. C. M. I. -

6 Jan 1986

\$3m sought for tunnel auto toll 7-11

By LOUIS LIU

The Legislative Council's Finance Committee will soon be asked to approve a \$3.3 million project to allow vehicles fitted with electronic number plates to be driven through an auto toll lane in the Lion Rock Tunnel.

The costs of the interim project will cover the installation of the system at the tunnel, as well as marketing surveys required to lead up to a full system.

Instead of having to hand in prepaid vouchers, vehicles fitted with electronic number plates can be driven through the auto toll lane and booth — one lane and one booth in each direction — and have their tolls recorded electronically.

The auto toll system, coupled with the introduction of prepaid vouchers and the installation of three additional toll booths, is expected to provide relief for congestion, especially at the Kowloon-bound section of the tunnel.

Initially, about 400 vehicles from major commercial fleets, including 250 Kowloon Motor Bus Co buses, are expected to join the scheme.

The Government has plans to extend the interim system to cover other categories of vehicles on a voluntary basis, as well as installing it at the Aberdeen Tunnel and the Cross Harbour Tunnel, one year

after auto toll is introduced in the Lion Rock Tunnel.

The Government is expected to invite Transpotech, the British consultant in charge of the electronic road pricing pilot scheme, to act as managing consultant of the auto toll project.

Transpotech's project director, Mr Ian Catling, said part of the \$3.3 million will be used for the shifting work — reinstalling gadgets from the ERP pilot scheme control centre to the tunnel. Additional micro-computers are also required for accounting purposes.

He said the costs will also cover marketing researches into the demand for a full auto toll system.

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The decision to use electronic road pricing technology for auto toll was reached after the Executive Council ruled last month to shelve the full introduction of the controversial ERP scheme after a \$37 million two-year pilot study.