

Airport traffic may get tunnel for relief

By Wilson Wong

A SECOND multi-million dollar Kai Tak airport tunnel is being considered to cope with the growth in east Kowloon traffic expected in the coming decade.

The tunnel is to be recommended in the Comprehensive Transport Study II (CTS-II) which is planning transport development in the territory for the next 15 years. Views from other departments will be sought soon.

Planners feel the second tunnel will be needed regardless of any future decision by the Government to abandon Kai Tak and build a new airport, according to senior Government sources.

"If we are to retain the present airport, the traffic will rise in the next decade to the extent the existing tunnel will not be able to cope," a source said.

"Even if the Government decides to build a new airport at a different location, the present airport site will naturally be redeveloped. This means more

traffic will be drawn to the area."

In any case, the Government will have to find a way to handle the growing traffic in east Kowloon over the next decade.

One of the options is to build a second tunnel under the airport alongside the existing one linking Kwun Tong and To Kwa Wan. It is estimated the new tunnel would double the present capacity.

The Chief Engineer of the Transport Department, Mr Alan Kam, confirmed a study is being made of the possibility of a second tunnel in east Kowloon for the Comprehensive Transport Study II, which will be completed soon.

"It is only in its preliminary stage and we are looking at it as a long-term option," he said.

It is impossible to estimate the cost for the tunnel but it will run into millions of dollars, according to sources.

Mr Kam said the study will also take into consideration the recommendations of the Metro-

politan Study — which lays out development plans for the urban area into the next century.

The CTS team under the Transport Department is projecting future traffic patterns

One concern is that the second tunnel, if constructed, may interrupt the operation of the airport. The existing tunnel was built in 1978 when the airport was being expanded and parts of the airport were being torn up for construction work anyway.

But the building of a second tunnel will not have the same advantage and any construction of the same dimension is certain to have a direct impact on the airport's normal operation.

"We will have to study the plan carefully before submitting recommendations to other departments for consideration," said Mr Kam.

The recommendations will be forwarded to other departments before being presented to the public for consultation.