

# Ambitious plans to link NT new towns in the pipeline

WHILE the much touted mono rail system as an answer to the metro appears to have been dropped, other ambitious plans such as building an electric railway at Tuenmun and a Shatin to Taipo highway link are going forward.

The Government is planning to invite tenders from interested local and overseas companies for the construction of an electric railway at Tuenmun by the end of the year, sources said.

Such a system operating on dual fixed tracks, is capable of carrying between 10,000 to 15,000 passengers an hour and is seen by officials as the main mode of public transport for the Tuenmun New Town in the future.

Tuenmun is expected to have a population of more than 480,000 by 1985, and other forms of public transport planned include

## Electric railway tenders to be called

the operation of express bus coaches using the new Tuenmun highway linking up with Tsunwan and other parts of Kowloon and Hongkong.

Sources said the project for Tuenmun had attracted international interest with inquiries from companies both in Europe and Asia and the Government was planning to hold talks with interested groups on the construction and manufacture of such a system by the end of the year.

There has also been proposals for an extension of the Kowloon-Canton Railway line from Taipo to Tuenmun via Yuenlong to serve the western part of the New Territories, but officials pointed out that this proposal was still in the very early stages of discussion and no decision had been made on it.

The second new township of Shatin is expected to have a population of about 500,000 by 1984.

The KCR will be the main form of transportation for residents in Shatin wishing to travel to Kowloon and other parts of the New Territories. The

completion of double-tracking to Shatin by early 1977 will enable an efficient shuttle service to be in operation.

In addition franchised bus companies will provide local services in the area and also "feeder" services to the railway station for Shatin residents.

The third township of Tsunwan with an estimated population of one million by 1985, will be served by a combination of expanded bus and ferry services. There is also the prospect that a branch line of the mass transit railway will be built to serve the needs of the area by 1989/91.

At present there are some 26 different bus routes serving Tsunwan carrying about 335,000 passengers a day in addition to the ferry service linking the district with Tsing Yi Island and Hongkong Island.

Detailed planning for the Shatin to Taipo highway link is expected to start next year with work to begin in 1978.

"It is part of the five-year plan for the New Territories which we are studying. The planning of the Shatin to Taipo link is well in hand and investigations including bore holes are expected to be completed later this year," he said.

The Shatin-Taipo highway is a seven kilometre six-lane link along the coast formed by reclamation. It is planned to be ready by 1980-81.

The other highway planned linking Tsunwan with Shatin is a five kilometre, four-lane highway via the Jubilee Reservoir, a large part through tunnels. Planning for this project is expected to start next year.

## MONORAIL

In addition, another scheme, the Tsunwan by-pass, providing a fast link between Tsunwan and Tuenmun Road with Kwaiching, crossing Tsunwan Bay, is also under study by Government.

But, the proposed monorail system for Kowloon appears to have been shelved indefinitely as the consortium, the Hongkong Aerial Rapid Transport System has failed to conduct a feasibility study after the Government gave them the go-ahead more than a year ago.

A government spokesman said the consortium had not informed the Government of its future intentions since September last year, when Hutchison International withdrew its participation in the four-member consortium. The company had cited its uncertain financial position at that time for its withdrawal from the project.

The spokesman said that the consortium had not been given a deadline to undertake the feasibility study, estimated to cost between \$500,000 and \$1 million. "No consideration has been given to this. The original proposal came from the company and they are bearing the cost of the study," he said.

He did not rule out the possibility that other private groups might be invited to submit proposals in the future should the Hongkong Aerial Rapid Transport System fail to respond, but said this had not yet been considered.

Sources said the Government was still prepared to wait to see if the project was feasible or not, taking into consideration the mass transit railway system being built and that a monorail system was not top priority as it is a rapid transit system, not a mass transit system and would only complement public transport needs in Kowloon.