

# \$20 toll for peak hours in tunnel

By JEREMY LAU

MOTORISTS will have to pay \$20, double the present rate, for using the Cross Harbour Tunnel during peak hours if a Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) recommendation is accepted by the Executive Council. According to the recommendation endorsed yesterday by the committee, private cars, taxis and goods vehicles will have to pay passage tax of \$15 and the toll of \$5 for crossing between 7 am and 10 am and between 4 pm and 8 pm.

Franchised buses will still be exempted from the passage tax introduced in 1984 in an attempt to contain the ever-growing traffic at the tunnel linking Hung-hom and Wan Chai.

Private cars, taxis and goods vehicles are presently charged \$10 for using the tunnel with \$5 going to the Government and the remaining \$5 to the Cross Harbour Tunnel Company.

The suggestion is certain to rekindle a dispute between the Government and the company, which has been repeatedly refused an increase in its revenue.

The Government expected that by increasing its tax during peak hours, about 11,000 vehicles would turn to the Eastern Harbour Crossing (EHC), which is still running in the red since its opening in September 1989.

This will greatly help relieve the congestion at the Cross Harbour Tunnel, where the daily throughput stands at 122,000, including 58,000 private cars, 26,000

(Cont'd on Page 2, Col 7)

# Plan for \$20 peak tunnel toll

(Cont'd from Page 1)

taxis, 26,000 goods vehicles, 9,000 public and private buses and 3,000 motorcycles.

The recommendation will also help boost the present daily traffic flow of about 40,000 vehicles at the second tunnel that links Cha Kwo Ling in Kwun Tong and Quarry Bay.

The EHC will need a daily traffic flow of about 60,000 to break even.

A TAC member said implementation of the recommendation would be subject to further discussions between the Transport Department and the Cross Harbour Tunnel Company.

The member said there might be problems in implementing the recommendation including possible accidents which could happen between motorists vying for lanes before the designated peak hours and arguments arising between taxi drivers and passengers.

"The passengers may not be willing to pay the extra \$10 even though they take the taxis during designated peak hours because the peak hours may have already been over by the time the taxis return to the other side of the harbour.

"Similar arguments will also happen when the passengers take the taxis to

cross the harbour at the end of the off-peak hours," the member said.

The member added that chaos would be created when motorists slowed down their vehicles at the end of the peak hours to get around the extra payment.

A spokesman for the Transport Branch said the Government had some improvement measures apart from differential tolls within the Cross Harbour Tunnel.

The Government last month proposed a \$5 increase in passage tax but the TAC deferred a decision pending more information about the user profile at the tunnel.