

H. K. Standard

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## PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

### Alan Scott defends ERP system

MR Victor Chu (Standard, October 25) is rather mixed up about the electronic road pricing system, of which a pilot stage is in preparation.

Taking his points one by one:

(a) "The reason for the scheme is to discourage the ownership of cars".

This is not so. Ample press coverage has made clear that the basic point of electronic road pricing is that it does not discourage ownership; but it does charge for the use of roads at congested times and places. This leaves it to the motorist to decide how much he uses his motor car at such times and places, in the light of the charges involved.

(b) "700 per cent (increase) in vehicle taxes and registration".

This figure is grossly incorrect. The increases in May 1982 for private cars doubled first registration tax and generally tripled annual vehicle licence fees. The 1983/4 Budget increased licence fees by on average a further 25 per cent.

(c) "Mr Scott admitted only this week that about 2,000 cars were getting off our roads every month".

I cannot imagine where Mr Chu got this, as I have never said anything of the sort. Over the period May 1, 1982 to October 1, 1983, registered private cars have decreased from 218,570 to 204,717, that is an average decrease of 815 cars per month.

(d) "What is the logic behind the scheme if there are less and less cars on the road".

Mr Chu is confusing the different aspects of numbers of cars, and of the use of cars at peak hours causing congestion. I suggest he looks around and he will then see the continuing evidence of serious congestion. Further, one must look forward a number of years and take into account the growth trends of vehicles and of usage.

(e) "Then more roads are to be dug up, so the full system can be put in".

Again, it has been fully recorded in the media that electronic loops in the roads will be put in in the same way as they are present for use in traffic light controls; they will create little disturbance in their installation and maintenance.

(f) "Infringe on the rights of the law-abiding citizens".

I take this to mean the aspect of security of data. Again it has been clearly recorded in the media, that the data involved amounts only to records, carefully controlled in a computer system to which access is strictly limited, of vehicles passing particular points in the road network at particular times. The system cannot tell who or how many people are in a motor car, or what they are doing, or where they are going (other than passing over the points in the road). This is very much less significant than the sort of information which Mr Chu would have to fill in if he were applying for say a credit card, credit facilities or a loan.

In conclusion, I must repeat that electronic road pricing is a traffic control measure, not a revenue earning measure. Does Mr Chu not see that it would be much easier to raise revenue by increasing registration taxes and licence fees across the board, than by bringing in the more equitable system of electronic road pricing?

I shall be happy to answer any other questions Mr Chu would like to put, either publicly or to my office.

A.J. Scott  
Secretary for Transport