

Central to take first ERP test

ELECTRONIC loops at 18 sites in Central and Admiralty will be installed under the pilot stage of the Electronic Road Pricing system, Assistant Secretary for Transport, Mr Mike Clancy, said yesterday.

No other district in the colony has the same characteristics as Central and Admiralty, which best suits the pilot test, he said.

"A number of possible sites on both sides of the harbour had been examined. In Kowloon there is a more regular grid pattern of roads on fairly level terrain," he said.

Central and Admiralty, he said, offer sites of uphill and downhill gradients, merging traffic, sharp turns, and both fast and slow traffic flow.

A vehicle will be recorded as it enters, moves through and leaves the zone to test the system's recording accuracy.

Mr Clancy said selecting Central as the test area did not mean that traffic congestion was the worst there.

The area is bounded by Peddar-street to the west and Arsenal-street to the east, extending to Garden-road and Cotton Tree Drive to St John's Cathedral and Ice House-street.

Mr Clancy said electronic loops would form a cordon and screenline,

About 1,000 government and 2,000 private vehicles will be fitted with electronic number plates (ENP) for the test. Several companies in Central have agreed to allow their vehicles take part in the test. They included two trade associations, the Goods Vehicle Fleet Owners Association, three major banks, two bus companies, Hongkong Electric Holdings Ltd, and a number of transport related companies, Mr Clancy said.

Nominated members of the Executive and Legislative Councils have also agreed to have their cars fitted with ENPs. Mr Clancy hoped taxis, maxicabs and the Hongkong Automobile Association members would take part to broaden the range of vehicles for the test.

Some sites are particularly chosen next to the tram lines, MTR tunnels and taxi stations to find out if there will be electrical interference, he said.

He expected a vehicle entering Central with an ENP to be recorded three times on the average.

The 3,000 ENPs will be provided free to the participants and there will not be toll charges during the test period, he said.

The initial shipments of electronic hardware are expected to arrive next summer whereas 500 ENPs will be delivered in July next year.

The test, Mr Clancy said, would be conducted between December next year and June 1985. In mid-1985, the government will decide on whether to proceed with the \$350 million ENP system.

He said the shape and method of fitting the ENPs to vehicles had also been determined.

The new ENP, taking into account advances in technology and Hongkong conditions, looks very different from the prototype on trials in the UK 10 years ago.

It will be about the same size as a video cassette with an impact-resistant plastic casing.

The ENP for Hongkong will be fitted to the underside of the car's front passenger seat and has an H-shape bracket to be welded securely to the car.

Mr Clancy declined to disclose its manufacturing cost, fearing there might be a discrepancy with the actual turnout in future.

