

S. C. W. P.

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All you wanted to know about ERP—on telly

By FRANCIS LI

Almost every household in Hongkong is expected to have a preview this month of the controversial Electronic Road Pricing scheme — on their television sets.

In fact, viewers of Radio Television Hongkong's Newsplus programme screened on ATV's English channel saw a film on the proposed ERP scheme last night.

The Assistant Secretary for Transport, Mr Peter Leung, said yesterday that he believed the Government-commissioned film could well be shown on the other three television channels within the month.

"They have expressed positive interest in screening the film as part of public affairs programmes," Mr Leung said.

The same film has been shown to some district boards and will be shown to the remainder in the Transport Branch's current publicity campaign. The Transport Branch is canvassing public opinion and informing community leaders on the scheme.

The film covers various aspects of the proposed project and explains the Government's rationale in putting forward ERP as a way of relieving traffic congestion.

Mr Leung said the screening of the ERP information film was another attempt to

arouse as much public interest in the scheme as possible.

He said it was not the Government's intention to get a categorical response from the public as to whether ERP should be introduced in full to Hongkong at this stage.

"What we are trying to do at present is to give as many people as possible a deeper understanding of it before we go to them again in May next year — with more information about the scheme for their final judgment," he said.

Mr Leung said the public, after viewing the film on television, should seek clarification from the Government on points they have doubts about.

Mr Leung said the many telephone inquiries he had received recently indicated a growing interest on the part of the public to know more.

Meanwhile, Mr Leung confirmed that one of the options the Government had considered was that the cost of fitting electronic number plates to registered vehicles should be shouldered by public coffers if and when the scheme is introduced.

"It is a more likely option," he admitted. No firm decision, however, had been made.

He said \$120 million, the cost of fitting 300,000 vehicles with these plates, has been included in the \$350 million budget for ERP.