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## Partial tunnel scheme proposed

# Advisers want ERP shelved

By LOUIS LIU

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The Transport Advisory Committee has recommended that the controversial Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) scheme be shelved because of vigorous public opposition.

But the committee proposed that ERP be used in Hongkong's tunnels, so that the technology can be monitored, and cut the cost of tunnel operations.

The committee advised that private motorists should be free to choose whether to have an electronic number plate fixed to their cars to join a partial ERP scheme.

It is understood that many public transport operators favour a scaled-down ERP scheme in the tunnels, which would cut waiting time on the approach roads.

A Government-appointed consultant, Transpotech of England, is still drawing up a plan for use of the electronic system in the tunnels, and is studying its financial feasibility.

An Executive Council ruling on the project, originally scheduled for last month, has been delayed.

In a vigorous debate at the Transport Advisory Committee meeting, many members agreed that the $36.5 million pilot scheme had proved ERP was a viable solution to the territory's traffic congestion problem, but noted the public outcry against the ambitious project during the past two years.

The scheme, which uses electronic technology to record vehicles' use of roads and determine the amount of road tax due, was badly received by the public.

Last summer, none of 19 district boards consulted on the scheme was in favour, although seven boards suggested shelving the idea rather than kill it altogether.

The Government felt that if the technological side could be kept alive, there would be a better chance of the scheme going ahead in the future.

Transport officials were convinced that with continued prosperity and the development of new towns, traffic congestion would be affecting the territory in five or six years.

At yesterday's meeting, the Transport Advisory Committee also decided to extend the period for monitoring the performance of China Motor Bus in maintenance until March.

This was to allow the committee to study an organisation and management consultant's report commissioned by CMB, and to assess its effect on the company's ability to sustain the improvements.

It was also to give CMB more time to complete action on those recommendations which are still outstanding.

The committee decision was taken after considering the sixth progress report of the working group on CMB maintenance, which found that CMB's progress in implementing the recommendations of the working group so far has been positive.

The top transport advisory body was also convinced that there were clear signs that the company is putting a real effort into making the necessary improvements.

But it noted that progress on matters of a more fundamental nature involving organisation and management was slow.

A new engineer manager to head the company's engineering department has not yet been recruited and the report produced by the consultant engaged to study the organisation and management structure of the engineering department has not yet been made available to the Transport Department.

But in making its interim assessment of CMB, the committee noted that safety standards on buses had been steadily raised through an improved servicing system, the establishment of a quality ontrol section and better aff supervision and training.

Spot checks had found a nificant reduction in safety cts.