

H.K. Standard

25 Nov. 1985

Auto-tolls for tunnel

AUTOMATIC toll collection facilities will be installed to help ease traffic congestion at the entrances of the Lion Rock Tunnel if the government approves the expenditure.

This was disclosed by the Secretary for Transport, Mr Ian Macpherson, after he officiated the kick-off of the Community Chest's Walks for Million in Shek Kong yesterday.

Equipment purchased for the pilot scheme of the Electronic Road Pricing

system would be installed on two lanes of the tunnel initially, Mr Macpherson said.

"The idea, if it is approved, would be to have ERP just for perhaps two lanes of the Lion Rock Tunnel and it would be a voluntary system.

"If money is approved, we would try to do that very quickly, within a few months," he said.

Mr Macpherson declined to disclose how much money the government would need to put the idea to work.

"Of course we would be using the

equipment that is already in store for the pilot scheme. It would not cost all that much," he said.

But the idea to introduce a full ERP system has been frozen by the Transport Advisory Committee, the Government's top advisor on traffic matters.

Its recommendation that the system only be used temporarily to help toll

collection in tunnels, will soon be taken to the Executive Council for consideration.

The issue recently appeared in the spotlight again when the Director of Audit criticised the government's procrastination on solving traffic congestion.

The government has already spent \$36 million on the pilot scheme alone. Ten times that sum is necessary to put the system into full operation.

The system, designed to reduce traffic congestion by automatically levying

charges for road usage, has received criticism from motorists and district boards.

Yesterday's walk started at the Sheung Tsuen Playground in Shekong and finished at Tai Lam Chung Customs and Excise Training School.

All the money raised by some 5,000 walkers will be used to support the Chest's 87 member agencies in carrying out their services.

The next walkathon, the Hongkong walk, will be held at the Hongkong Stadium on December 8.

by
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