

December 1980

File 87a

AA hits out at transport policies

THE Government's transport policies have been attacked by the Executive Director of the Hongkong Automobile Association, Mr Phil Taylor.

He called for a review of all planned road projects, said not enough was being spent on improving roads, criticised what he imagined was bad planning and hit out at the introduction of bus- and tram-only lanes.

Mr Taylor also gave the bus companies a rocket for "inadequate, overcrowded and poor quality service".

He claimed the poor service had driven an estimated three million people daily onto public light buses, taxis and private cars.

He said the solution was the expansion of the Mass Transit Railway System and the introduction of coaches to replace PLBs.

Mr Taylor said the Government had tried to discourage the use of cars.

Parking policy had been to obstruct the efforts of private enterprise to provide off-street multi-storey parking facilities.

But the result, he alleged, was that streets

and pavements had been turned into "uncontrolled" parking lots, disrupting traffic and endangering pedestrians.

Trying to price the car out of people's pockets had also failed.

Mr Taylor said tram and bus-only lanes had led to "a waste of road space" particularly in areas where traffic snarl-ups were the result of failure to build roads and flyovers.

New towns were being built with inadequate roads and transport links.

Mr Taylor said the Government was spending about three percent of its 1980/81 budget on roads and he claimed this was well below the amount needed.

Progress with the strategic road network necessary to remove heavy traffic from urban and rural areas had been unsatisfactory. Many parts of the project had been delayed or shelved.

He gave the Island Eastern Corridor, which is two years behind, the Kaitak tunnel, three years overdue, and the shelved Connaught elevated road as examples.

"Not only are funds inadequate but the priorities

in allocating funds for particular road projects are unsatisfactory.

"There is an urgent need for a review of all road projects to decide whether the most important projects can be completed by a special emergency plan."

He said the argument that more roads would generate more traffic was "illogical".

"There is no justification for a negative attitude towards essential road development or the reduction of existing road capacity by bus and tram priority schemes. Road capacity must meet public demand."

Mr Taylor said traffic management schemes could be introduced to speed up traffic flow with synchronised traffic lights and closed circuit television to keep an eye on vehicles.

He also suggested more one-way streets and temporary flyovers as possible aids.

He warned that such measures could not be regarded as permanent substitutes for necessary long-term remedies.

But he accused the Government of having become too dependent on engineering consultants who recommended large and expensive schemes when short-term solutions were available.

Returning to parking Mr Taylor said the only solution to the problem with goods vehicles was for the Government to build special goods vehicle parks.