

S.R.M.P.

18 May 1983

Bus feeder route bids flout conditions

The Executive Council will soon be confronted with counterproposals submitted by the two major bus companies on the operation of feeders to the underground railway on both sides of the harbour.

The bus firms' refusal to meet Government-set conditions is expected to pose a problem. Both bus companies have committed themselves to run the five feeders, the franchise rights for which were openly pursued by the Mass Transit Railway Corpn until recent weeks, only on a trial basis.

The traffic manager of China Motor Bus, Mr Peter Stobart, said the Transport Department was told yesterday that the company would run the two feeders on the Island for a trial period of three months.

Mr Stobart said the two routes — from Admiralty station to Wanchai Reclamation and to City Garden in North Point — required 10 extra

double-deckers to give frequencies of every eight to 10 minutes.

The CMB announcement came days after its Kowloon counterpart had promised a trial period of up to six months on three proposed feeders.

However, both operators indicated that they would dispute the need for these routes — at frequencies deemed necessary by the MTRC — with passenger figures at the end of the trials.

KMB maintains that the existing feeders in the Kowloon urban area and the New Territories are adequate, and it does not believe the three new feeders will result in "measurable increases" in MTR ridership.

However, informed sources said that Exco had spelt out several conditions when it offered the bus operators first option on the feeders.

In the case of CMB, it would have to guarantee to maintain the feeders up to 1985, when the MTR Island Line opens.

KMB was to undertake to run the three proposed feeders — Diamond Hill station to San Po Kong, Tsimshatsui station to Tsimshatsui East and a circular route in Tsun Wan — as long as required.

The choice now facing decision-makers is to accept the counterproposals or reject them and reconsider the MTRC's application.

But a rejection would probably antagonise CMB, which has already threatened to sue the Government if the MTRC is allowed to run the feeders, for breaching the company's franchise.

A MTRC spokesman, Mr Tony Turner, yesterday said the MTR would decide on its next course of action after Exco made a final ruling.

But he said the MTR was not happy with the qualifications appended by the two bus companies. If the MTRC was given the rights to operate, it would comply with the conditions laid down to the two operators, he added.