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\$3m study of car parking under way

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The Transport Department has hired a consultancy firm at a cost of \$3m to carry out the first comprehensive study on car parking, it was announced yesterday.

The Deputy Commissioner for Transport, Pang Haichung, said the Hong Kong-based consultancy Ove Arup had been commissioned to carry out a "parking demand" study.

Pang said the study, which started last October, would take a year to complete.

"It's the first wide-ranging study on the parking problem in Hong Kong which will look into both public and private car parking," he said.

Pang said the Transport Department had looked at car parking in the past but it lacked the manpower and resources for a wide-ranging investigation. The study is expected to provide comprehensive information on the supply and demand for parking spaces in the territory.

"It will identify the existing and projected supply, demand and shortfalls in parking provision and make recommendations to address identified problems," Pang said.

At the end of 1992 there were 448,000 parking spaces and 414,638 licensed vehicles, he said.

One vehicle may require parking at both ends of its trip and the number of car parking spaces needed to be doubled to meet demand, Pang said.

Twenty-three new car parks, providing 6,000 car parking spaces, and 60 car parks on short-term tenancies will be opened in the next six months, the Lands Department announced yesterday.

There are now 142 short-term car parks occupying land that has been earmarked for long-term development.

The Secretary for Transport, Haider Barma, said the Government wanted to control the growing number of vehicles in the territory.

Barma said the Government would formulate a long-term policy when the study was

completed. Two weeks ago, it announced the formation of an inter-departmental think-tank to review Hong Kong's transport problems.

Legislators criticised the Government for failing to resolve the growing car-parking problem.

The Liberal Party transport spokesman, Miriam Lau, was "very disappointed" that the Government had shown "neither the will nor the sincerity" to confront the issue.

United Democrat Albert Chan said the Government should introduce short-term measures to deal with the problem and not wait until the outcome of the study.

"In Tsuen Wan, more than 400 people were queuing up for only 200 spaces," he said.

Chan asked the Lands Department to ease restrictions on parking spaces imposed on private developers.

Residents in public and private residential estates have taken to the street protesting against rising car parking rates charged by operators in the past few weeks.