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2 August 2006

Mr Andy Lau
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Dear Andy,

Panel on Transport Meeting on 24 February 2006

At the meeting of the Panel on Transport on 24 February 2006, we undertook to examine the distribution of autotoll lanes at Tseung Kwan O Tunnel (TKOT) and Shing Mun Tunnels (SMT), and elaborate on the technical problems related to the use of Octopus Card for toll collection. Our findings are set out below.

Shing Mun Tunnels

2. Currently, at the toll plaza of SMT, the first and the third innermost lanes in the eastbound direction are now designated as autotoll lanes. The first lane facilitates buses pulling out from the bus bay and heavy vehicles using the innermost lanes. The other autotoll lane facilitates vehicles coming from the eastbound slip road of Wo Yi Hop Interchange and the main carriageway of eastbound Cheung Pei Shan Road.

3. Due to site constraints, the toll plaza is located at a bend. It is hence very important for motorists to be able to identify the autotoll lanes from a distance. Relocating the autotoll lane will not help achieve this objective. To assist motorists to access the autotoll lanes more easily, the Transport Department has implemented the following measures (drawing at **Annex A**) : -

- (a) Erecting a pair of more prominent advance notice signs about 260 metres before the toll booths to inform motorists that they can follow the “Autotoll” road markings to access the autotoll booths;
- (b) Painting seven sets of “Autotoll” road markings on each of the two autotoll lanes; and
- (c) Displaying a more prominent “Autotoll” sign at the canopy on the two autotoll booths.

4. The improvement measures provide clearer guidance to motorists and assist them to take the autotoll lanes in advance to reduce weaving movements.

Tseung Kwan O Tunnel

5. As regards TKOT, the autotoll booths are located at the second and fourth innermost eastbound lanes. There were comments that vehicles travelling on the outermost lanes had to weave two lanes to reach the autotoll booth at the fourth lane.

6. To improve the situation, the Transport Department has implemented the following measures (drawing at **Annex B**) in early 2006 : -

- (a) Erecting two pairs of more prominent advance notice signs about 110 metres and 300 metres before the toll booths to inform motorists that they can follow the “Autotoll” road markings to access the autotoll booths;
- (b) Mounting two “Autotoll booth” signs on the autotoll booths.
- (c) Painting 10 sets of “Autotoll” road markings on each of the two autotoll lanes; and
- (d) Painting yellow transverse bars ahead of the “Autotoll” markings from about 450 metres to 280 metres before the toll booths to advise motorists of the change of speed limit from 70 km/h to 50 km/h.

7. After the installation of the “Autotoll” markings in February this year, the Transport Department has observed a reduction in the weaving movements of vehicles at the toll plaza, since the “Autotoll” markings have provided clearer guidance to motorists and helped regulate traffic movements towards the tunnel toll booths.

Use of Octopus for Toll Payment

8. The use of Octopus Cards for payment at the toll booths of Government tunnels involves a “touch and go” system, whereby motorists passing through the Octopus toll lanes will place their Octopus Cards on the Octopus readers installed at the toll booths so that the correct tolls would be discounted.

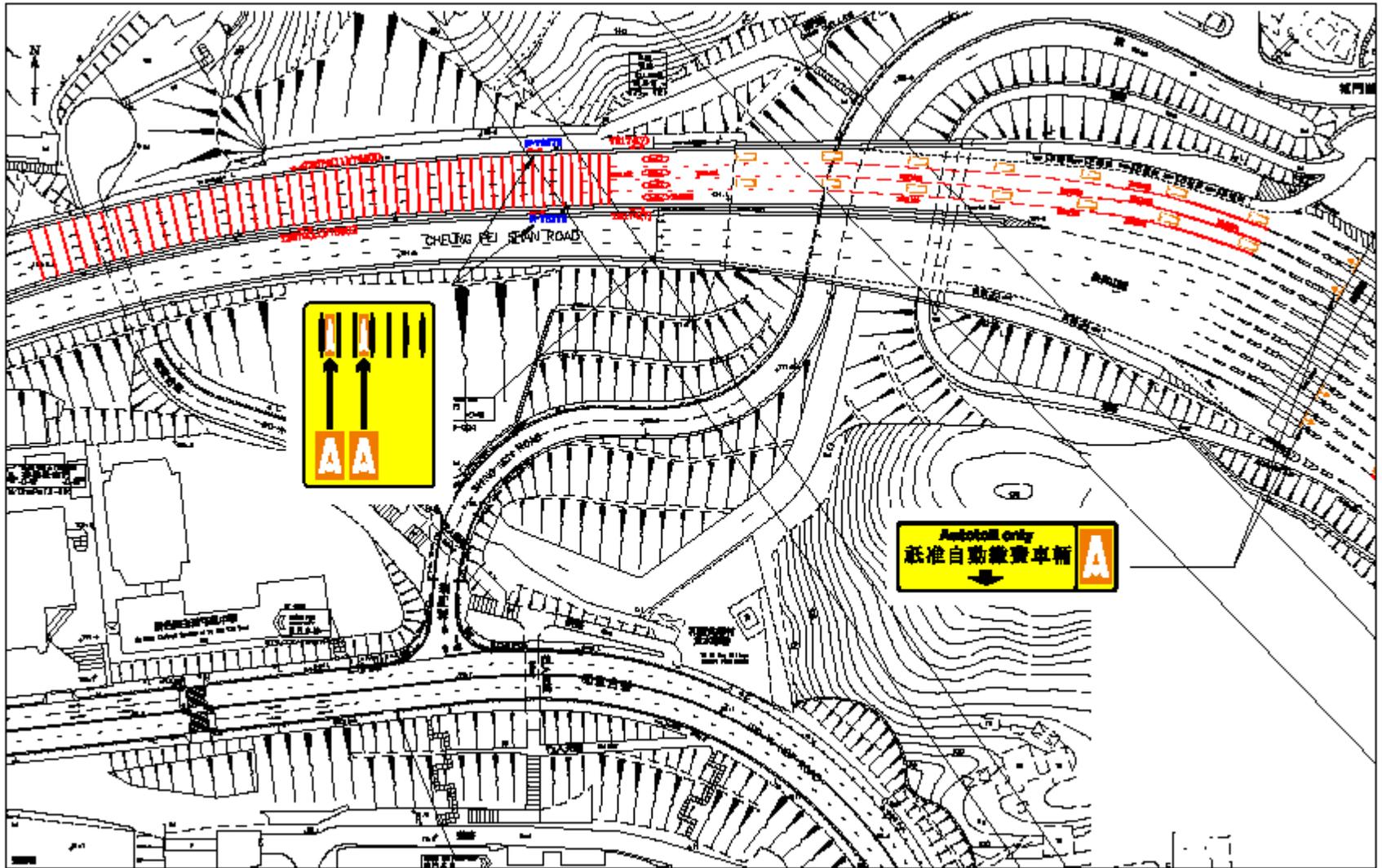
9. After careful examination, we are of the view that the proposed Octopus system would unlikely bring about additional advantages from both the traffic management and cost effectiveness perspectives. The following are the main considerations: -

- (a) Unlike the Autotoll system, Octopus does not allow free flow of vehicles, as motorists would still need to stop their vehicles at the toll booth, open the window, take out their Octopus Cards and place them on the card reader. The time required is comparable to an exact toll lane.
- (b) However, in some incidents, the processing time could be even longer. For instance, if the motorist's Octopus Card has a negative balance and does not have an auto-upload function, he will have to settle the toll by cash separately. Also, if the vehicle is not close enough to the Octopus reader, or if the driver drops the Octopus Card, additional time will be needed for the motorists to rectify the situation. This will inevitably affect the traffic throughput.
- (c) Unlike the Autotoll system, there is no saving in manpower for the Octopus system. In particular, for tunnels which charge differential tolls for different vehicle classes, the toll booths for Octopus Cards will have to be manned by staff, such that the proper toll amount can be inputted for each vehicle before the driver uses the Octopus Card to settle the payment.

Yours sincerely,

(Elizabeth Tai)
for Secretary for the Environment,
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Encl.



Scale: 1:1000
比例: 1:1000

Shing Mun Tunnels and Approaches 城門隧道及接駁道路



