

Regular reviews needed for ERP to be effective

I REFER to the letter, "How will ERP changes help solve traffic jams?" (ST, Sept 24), by Mr Andy Chua Ping Hong.

Mr Chua is right that ERP is intended to alleviate congestion on our roads. For ERP to remain effective, regular reviews are required to adjust its coverage and rates in response to changes in traffic conditions. The extension of ERP hours on the CTE and the implementation of new gantries from Nov 1 are part of such on-going reviews, to address congestion that built up on the identified roads.

Contrary to what Mr Chua has pointed out, ERP

has been effective in encouraging motorists to consider alternatives, and this has kept traffic on the priced roads flowing smoothly. The merit of ERP is that it places the decision as to whether to drive, travel at a different time, use a different route or take public transport into the hands of motorists.

Those who are prepared to pay a congestion charge for a smooth ride will also have the option to do so. Some may decide, given the extension of ERP hours on the CTE, that they prefer to take public transport or a different route rather than pay ERP. But the decision is

theirs to make, based on their individual circumstances.

With ERP, the Government has been able to rely more on usage charges and less on ownership taxes to manage traffic demand. As a result, annual vehicle-ownership revenue has fallen from \$3.4 billion in 1997 to \$1.7 billion in 2006, compared to about \$90 million in annual ERP revenue collected during that period.

The use of ERP to manage traffic has also made it possible for more Singaporeans to own cars than we otherwise could, and our vehicle population has grown from 680,000 to 800,000 over the same period.

ERP has thus proven to be a more effective approach to managing traffic demand, while costing motorists less overall.

Mr Chua asked about the

longer-term plans to manage road congestion. There is no single solution. To keep our roads smooth-flowing, we will continue with a holistic and integrated approach using all the tools available, including building more roads, regulating vehicle growth, implementing traffic-engineering solutions, managing traffic demand through ERP and promoting the use of public transport.

More information on the Government's approach to dealing with congestion is available on the Ministry of Transport's website (http://app.mot.gov.sg/data/s_07_08_23.htm).

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