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ERP cordon in Orchard Road

Transit traffic discouraged in shopping belt; evening ERP on CTE

By Christopher Tan and Goh Chin Lian

MOTORISTS living in places such as Ang Mo Kio, Yishun and Sembawang will have to pay a toll to drive home on the Central Expressway from Aug 1.

Evening [Electronic Road Pricing \(ERP\)](#) will be introduced there between 6pm and 8pm on weekdays to address the slow traffic conditions along the highway.

A new gantry will be put up between the Pan-Island Expressway exit and the Braddell Road exit.

The levy has been proposed on several occasions because of the congestion on the highway, and an extra lane was introduced in 2003 to deal with it.

However, this failed to improve the situation, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) said. Average speeds of north-bound traffic can be as slow as 25kmh in the early evening

It is also levying extra charges on those using Orchard Road, saying that traffic there has worsened to the point that it is moving at about 15kmh between noon and 8pm.

Two new gantries will be introduced at the congested shopping street. One will be near Handy Road, in front of the former Cathay cinema. Another will be in Orchard Road next to the YMCA.

The gantries, together with nine existing ones that control traffic flow in and out of the shopping belt, will separate Orchard Road from the rest of the Central Business District.

At the same time, ERP hours for the shopping area will be extended to 8pm on weekdays. They now end at 7pm.

Tolls will also be re-introduced at the thoroughfare on Saturdays, from noon to 8pm.

The new controls are meant to discourage motorists from using the road to get to other destinations, such as Marina Bay and Suntec City.

The LTA said a recent survey revealed that up to one-third of vehicles using Orchard Road are on their way to other places, affecting 'genuine shoppers'.

'The shopping experience starts not only when you actually shop, but on the journey there,' LTA chief executive Yam Ah Mee said yesterday.

To deter transit motorists, rates at the Handy Road gantry will range from \$1 to \$2.50 for cars between 8am and 10am. Charges will not kick in at other entrances to the street until noon.

Then, visitors will have to pay 50 cents most of the time, against \$1.50 for those who drive through

and pass the Handy Road gantry.

Most retailers contacted by The Straits Times support the move.

Mr Tang Wee Sung, chairman of the Orchard Road Business Association and chairman of department store C.K. Tang, said the concept would work as long as charges are reasonable.

'One dollar is still tolerable, though not anything above that,' he said, but added that he wished the association had been consulted.

The executive director of the Singapore Retailers Association, Ms Lau Chuen Wei, said: 'Hopefully, the ERP will make Orchard Road a smoother ride.'

However, MP Ong Kian Min, who chairs the Government Parliamentary Committee on Transport, said he is not convinced by the arguments for the ERP extension.

He added: 'It's not good timing to have both increases in ERP and public transport fares at the same time.'