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**SPEECH BY MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS
MR MAH BOW TAN
AT THE OPENING OF TAMPINES EXPRESSWAY (PHASE III)
ON 3 SEPTEMBER 1996 AT 9.00 AM
AT PUNGGOL BRIDGE**

The White Paper on Land Transport published in January this year set out our long-term vision of a world class land transport system for Singapore. I told Parliament that our vision cannot be achieved overnight. It will take us 10 to 15 years. But I know that Singaporeans can be impatient. They want results fast. That is why LTA must continually implement various measures and make tangible improvements to our transport system. Then Singaporeans can see and feel that we are making progress, as we work towards our objective.

Our focus is to develop a world class public transport system. Knowing the aspirations of Singapore however, the White Paper also spelt a major initiative to develop a comprehensive road network. More roads means more people can own cars. People will have better connections from place to place. There will be more routes to choose from. Traffic can be evened out, and traffic flows speeded up. Not only cars, but taxis and buses will flow better. All road users will benefit, whether you drive or use public transport.

To achieve this goal of a comprehensive road network, the LTA has drawn up an extensive road development programme. In the next five years, the Government will spend some \$1.7 billion on road building alone, an increase of

55 per cent from the last five years' spending of \$1.1 billion. This will be used to build more expressways, flyovers and roads to improve existing traffic flow and to serve new areas of development. Today's opening of the final 7.8 kilometres of the Tampines Expressway (TPE) marks the completion of one such road development project, one of many that LTA has lined up over the next few years.

I know that many motorists have been looking forward to the opening of this last stretch of the Tampines Expressway. TPE will directly link Seletar Expressway (SLE) and the Pan-Island Expressway (PIE). The completion of the entire expressway is itself an important milestone in Singapore's expressway implementation programme. TPE is the only expressway that spans the north-east region of Singapore. Its opening will benefit many residents in the north-east sector, particularly those staying in Yishun, Pasir Ris and Tampines, and later the new developments at Punggol and Sengkang.

This expressway will bring regions in the north-east within easy reach of one another. At the moment, if you want to travel from Yishun to Tampines, you have to use a more circuitous route -- SLE, CTE then PIE. Similarly, to travel from Yishun to Pasir Ris, you have to use a less direct route via SLE, CTE, Ang Mo Kio Ave 3, Hougang Ave 2, Tampines Road and TPE. With the completion of the entire TPE, you can simply travel by SLE and TPE and save 8 to 20 minutes.

At this point, I would like to make special mention of the LTA engineers and the contractors who made this project possible despite the many challenges in the construction of this stretch of the TPE. For example, To construct this bridge, Sungei Punggol had to be diverted temporarily; A special launching method was used to construct a bridge over Sungei Serangoon; and a disused

landfill was transformed into a huge expressway interchange at Lorong Halus using special construction methods.

They will be doing more to make travelling on our roads more convenient and comfortable. In the coming months, LTA will roll out its road development programme with the construction of new roads and the upgrading of existing ones. Some of these projects include:

Upgrading of the PIE/TPE Flyover;

Widening of the Pan Island Expressway from Kallang Bahru to Bedok North;

Widening of the East Coast Parkway from Fort Road to Marine Parade; and

Widening of Upper Bukit Timah Road together with Hill View Avenue and Bukit Batok Avenue 2.

We can build more expressways, flyovers and roads, and build them ahead of demand where it makes sense to do so. However, we cannot expand our road network indefinitely. We have limited land. More roads means less land for housing, industry, parks, schools and other uses.

That is why we have to take a balanced and total approach to our land transport problem. Besides increasing our road capacity, we also have to manage our roads through a judicious mix of ownership and usage restraint measures, and to improve our public transport.

The Vehicle Quota System has been the key ownership measure since its implementation in 1990. It has effectively tackled congestion by controlling the growth of our vehicle population at a rate which our road space can support. On the other hand, road pricing is the key usage control mechanism. It gets

motorists to plan their trips carefully, and make judicious decisions on where and when to drive and where and when to take the bus, the MRT or in future, the LRT.

Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) will allow us further flexibility to manage road pricing. The implementation plans for ERP are on schedule. LTA is currently conducting a final system test on the components before the gantries are installed at the current ALS and RPS gantry sites.

The introduction of ERP will allow us to release more COEs as ERP will control congestion more effectively and ensure smoother flow of traffic. The Government will then be able to release more COEs. We estimate that 15,000 - 20,000 additional COEs can be released in the next three to four years. This is equivalent to one-third to one-half the COE supply for one year.

More COEs means more people will be able to own cars. Our car to population ratio has improved from about one person to 10 cars in 1990 to one person in 8.7 cars now. By year 2010, we expect the ratio to be about one in seven. One in two households will have access to a car. The benefits from more car ownership will come if our people are more conscious of their transport needs and decide judiciously when they should use their cars and when they should take public transport, which will provide comfortable, reliable and value-for-money services.

The Government is committed to a world class transport system. It will help maintain our economic competitiveness and improve our quality of life. However, such a system will not come easy. Neither is it cheap. Expressways, flyovers and roads do not sprout out of nowhere overnight. It takes years of meticulous planning, design and construction. The vision of a world class

transport system will take time to materialise. However, if we continue to work together, road-users, road-builders, transport operators, transport planners and the various Government agencies, I have no doubt that we can achieve our vision of a world class transport system.

It now gives me great pleasure to declare the 3rd phase of the Tampines Expressway open.

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