Road Development Projects Underway

Several multi-billion rupee road devlopment projects are to be launched very soon. These road networks will mainly be utilized to ease congestion on the present roads that link the commercial capital Colombo to the suburbs. Several road rehabilitation projects are also under foot to better the current state of the city roads and the perennial traffic blocks which is a negative force in a fast developing city.

The road projects will look upon foreign collaboration in the form of monetary grants, soft loans, aid and by involving foreign companies in infrastructure development on BOT (Build, Own, Transfer) basis. This way the capital expenditure of each project will be put up by the developer and that company will maintain the road for an agreed period of time and hand it over to the government.

Work on Baseline Road has already commenced. One of Colombo’s most congested ring roads, Baseline Road, will soon be widened and extended right upto Maliban Junction in Ratmalana. This will facilitate traffic moving from the North of Colombo to the South, avoiding central city limits. The present phase will widen the two lane road into a six lane accessway with an overpass to avoid the railway crossing at Dematagoda. It will stretch from the Kelanitissa Power Station to Borella Cemetary. The next phase would link the road to High Level Road at Edmonton Lane, Kirulapone and then go upto Ratmalana. The first phase will be completed in 1998. The cost of it, some 2.6 billion rupees will come as a soft loan from Japanese OECF (Overseas Economic Co-operation Fund).

To ease traffic blocks at the Maradana junction, a flyway over the traffic lights linking Darley Road to Maradana Road is presently well under way as is the widening of Deans Road which links the Town Hall area to Maradana. The Marine Drive was initially planned to run parallel to the southern railway track easing the traffic on Galle road. Due to various constraints this project was slow in getting started and today work already commenced from Bambalapitiya, Melbourne Avenue upto Ramakrishna Mission in Wellawatte with the hope of extending it upto Fort. The process of land acquisition is ΠΟΥ underway. Duplication Road, another parallel road going south- wards will be extended to Wellawatte canal. Work has already. way. commenced from the Wellawatte bridge end. Both projects are funded by the

government.

In addition, three other new roadways are in the pipeline. One is the outer ring road linking Panadura to the Wattala area. This will be parallel to the Baseline Road Extension and will cross the High Level Road at Mattegoda/ Kottawa and the Kandy Road at Kirillawala.

The largest road project under study is the expressway from Mattegoda to Matara. This road will run some 10km interior to the present Galle Road and end in an area called Godagama in Matara. The 133 km road will have controlled access and will probably be a toll road done under BOT terms. It will cost an estimated 20 billion rupees. The Road Development Authority (RDA) speaking to Business Today said that President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga has instructed them to complete land acquisition by mid-1997 so that the project can get under way.

The last major roadway, and by far the most controversial, is the Colombo-Katunayake Expressway. The earlier plan for this road was dismissed by the government due to strong protests from the residents. The new plan is to lead 90 percent of the expressway through marshy land on the west of the present Negombo Road. Work on this is expected to commence this year or early next year. The estimated cost is five billion rupees and it will most probably be done on a BOT basis.

Finally the present Sri Lanka- Japanese Friendship bridge over the Kelani Ganga at Thotalanga will be widened into a fourlane bridge by removing the old British steel bridge. The Road Development Authority has signed up 1.2 billion rupees Japanese aid to commence the project in six months.