

Faster trip from town

Fort Canning Tunnel to be opened in Jan

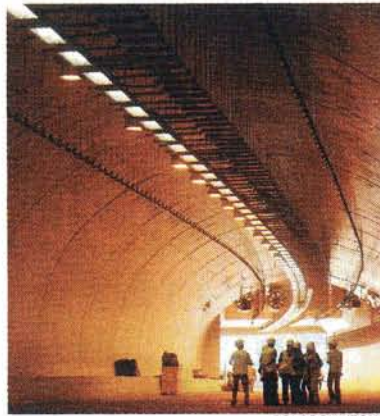
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COME January, motorists driving from Marina Centre and the New Downtown to the Orchard Road area will find the journey a breeze.

The new Fort Canning Tunnel will be open by then allowing motorists direct access to the Orchard area, bypassing two road junctions and reducing travelling time from Stamford Road to Penang Road by up to four minutes.

The tunnel will also free up a plot of land the size of a football field in front of the former National Library building, with the closure of Stamford Road.

This, said the Land Transport Authority (LTA), would allow for "better utilisation of land and to ensure a more efficient land parcellation for the Singapore Management University's (SMU) developments".



TIMESAVER: LTA engineers in the 350m-long Fort Canning Tunnel.

When the tunnel opens, motorists have two options to get to Orchard Road. They can enter the 350-metre-long, three-lane tunnel that cuts right into Fort Canning Hill from near the former National Library site, and exit at Penang Road, just before Park Mall. That would cut travelling time from five minutes to around 18 seconds.

Motorists can alternatively use the realigned Stamford Road, which will cut through the SMU

towards Queen Street.

An Electronic Road Pricing gantry will be set up at the tunnel's exit and charges will mirror existing ones at Stamford Road.

According to the LTA, about 3,000 vehicles currently pass along Stamford Road every hour during peak periods. But only about half of that volume would proceed onto Penang Road as the rest turn off at Bencoolen Street and head towards Serangoon Road.

The project will set the LTA back by nearly \$34 million.

When asked if the cost was justified for the land area reaped and the four minutes saved, LTA's director for road development and management Yap Cheng Chwee told TODAY: "I don't think it is fair to use a cost-benefit analysis to analyse the project. The main aim was better utilisation and parcellation of land around the area.

"We found that there was a need to redirect roads in the area and the tunnel was the solution. Benefits like time savings for