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### TRANSPORT

# Somkid sets deadline for 3 projects

#### POST REPORTERS

Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak has set the first half of next year as the deadline for submitting the construction plans for an electric railway and two long-awaited motorway projects under the public-private partnership (PPP) programme.

If the projects face no setbacks, the bidding sessions should start in the second half of next year, said Mr Somkid after a meeting of the strategic steering committee under the National Council for Peace and Order.

The committee yesterday invited representatives from the Transport Ministry to clarify details of its two motorway projects. Mr Somkid wanted to know why they have not gone ahead though they have long been approved by the cabinet and their environmental impact assessment reports had already passed the National Environment Board's scrutiny.

Earlier last week, the deputy premier announced the need to fast-track eight

investment projects under the PPP. Two of them are motorways linking Ayutthaya's Bang Pa-in district with Nakhon Ratchasima and Nonthaburi's Bang Yai district with Kanchanaburi.

The move to speed them up comes even though authorities already stepped up procedures to push ahead key development projects under the PPP law, introduced in 1992 to allow companies to invest in public projects, reducing the state's borrowing to control public debt.

According to the State Enterprise Policy Office, the law's amendment in 2013 reduced the approval time for PPPs from more than 10 to two years, but the cabinet wants to see shorter procedure times for certain key projects.

Last week, Mr Somkid announced the two motorway projects, together with such projects as the Pink Line (Kae Rai-Min Buri), the Yellow Line (Lat Phrao-Samrong) and the Blue Line (Bang Sue-Tha Phra) in Bangkok, would make significant progress next year and in 2017.

The State Railway of Thailand is also asking the government to approve its new rail route project running from Chaiyaphum's Chatturat district to Loei and Nong Bua Lam Phu. Its study suggests building a single-track line because the option is expected to provide more economic benefits than a dual-track one.