

<i>Branches.</i>				Length, Miles.	Cost.
Subsidiary main line in lieu of Canterbury Branches	...	...	...	85	£380,000
South Ashburton to Ashburton Forks	...	...	...	20	55,000
Albury extension	...	...	...	20	110,000
Waikaka to Heriot Burn	...	...	...	25	115,000
Edendale or Greenhills to Toitoes	...	...	...	26	110,000
Otautau to Nightcaps	...	...	...	16	75,000
Totals for Branch Lines	...	...	...	192	845,000
Totals for Main Lines and Branches in Extensions, First Class	...	...	...	488	£3,115,000

EXTENSIONS, SECOND CLASS.

				Length, Miles.	Cost.
Palmerston to Waihemo	...	...	...	12	£55,000
Clutha to Catlin's River	...	...	...	18	95,000
Waimea to Switzers	...	...	...	15	70,000
Lumsden (Elbow) to Mararoa	...	...	...	35	180,000
Totals for Extensions, Second Class	...	...	...	80	£400,000

FUTURE EXTENSIONS.

First Class.—Brunnerton to Buller Valley, Albert Town to Hokitika *via* Haast's Pass, Amberley to Hurunui, Kakanui to Livingston, Switzers to Kelso, Otautau to Waiau and Mararo.

Second Class.—Westport to Foxhill, Ngakawau towards Karamea, Nelson to Picton, Hurunui to Blenheim, Upper Clutha Valley to Waitaki Valley *via* Lindis Pass, Waitaki Valley to Albury Branch *via* McKenzie Plains, Livingston to Duntroon, Kingston to Cromwell, Kelso to Lawrence, Greenhills to Catlin's River, Nightcaps to Upper Oreti, Orepuki to Waiau.

The general map accompanying my annual report shows such of the lines above enumerated as have been surveyed, and I think the routes of the others can be followed from the descriptions already given.

I have, &c.,

W. N. BLAIR,

Engineer in Charge, Middle Island.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

Enclosure in Appendix E.

REPORT ON ROUTE FOR TAPANUI BRANCH RAILWAY.

The ENGINEER in CHARGE, Middle Island, to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Public Works Office, Dunedin, 14th May, 1878.

I have the honor to enclose herewith a plan showing the various lines suggested in the vicinity of the Tapanui Township, and to submit the following memoranda thereon:—

The blue line going right into the township is the one originally surveyed by the provincial authorities, and was apparently intended to terminate at the township, without reference to further extension.

I recently made a careful examination of the whole country between the Clutha River at Beaumont, and the Mataura at Gore, and I had no hesitation in concluding that the Tapanui Railway should and could be made an instalment of a railway system that would ultimately open up the whole of this rich agricultural country, and that the best method of obtaining this object was to continue it up the Pomahaka Valley to Kelso. By this means communication is immediately afforded to the populous settlements on the western side of the Pomahaka, opposite Kelso, as well as the Heriot Burn District, and the branch will form a connection with a through railway which is, sooner or later, bound to be constructed from the main line at Wakaka to the Beaumont and Tuapeka. If the line now proposed is brought right into Tapanui, it cannot possibly regain the Pomahaka Valley; it can only be produced through McKellar's Plain. The advantages it presents in affording direct communication to those places are not, in my opinion, to be compared with the benefits that will result from following the Pomahaka Valley; besides, they are by no means remote from the Kelso line. The Tapanui Township is only about 90 chains from it; and the traffic from McKellar's Plain can reach the line by the present road to Kelso, or by the Crookston or Heriot Burns, as easily as it can to the Tapanui Township. Of course, the Tapanui Township is a very important centre, consequently its claims to a direct railway communication are intitled to great consideration. I have given them every possible consideration, but fail to see that they are sufficient to alter the conclusions arrived at.

With the view of coming as close as possible to the Tapanui Township, I have had an alternative line surveyed (coloured green on plan): it is 24 chains longer than the direct red line, but brings the line 24 chains nearer the township. I do not, however, recommend its adoption; it makes a very objectionable detour on the line, and would not, I am convinced, give complete satisfaction to the residents of Tapanui.

I have, &c.,

W. N. BLAIR,

Engineer in Charge, Middle Island.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.