

completed in December next. This will bring the railway to the Upper Mokau Valley, a distance of 34 miles from Te Awamutu, and 134 miles from Auckland. From the Mokau Valley working-surveys have been made to a point about 2 miles south of Te Koura, 66 miles from Te Awamutu, but no construction work has been put in hand beyond the Upper Mokau, except the Poro-o-tarao tunnel contract, length about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, which occurs near the forty-seventh mile. After considerable delays, this contract is now making satisfactory progress, the work being well advanced towards completion.

The amount required to be now voted to meet existing liabilities on account of these north end works, which will all probably fall due within the current year, is £57,000, leaving £177,359 for further undertakings in the future.

South End.—At the south end, the railway is completed and open for traffic from Marton Junction to Rangatira, a distance of 19 miles. Working-surveys and plans have been made from there to the end of the Paengaroa section, 51 miles from Marton; and from thence to the head of the Hautapu Valley, at 61 miles from Marton, the line has been finally located. This embraces all the rough country at the southern end of the line.

The amount required to be voted this year for south end works, in order to meet existing liabilities which will all probably come in for payment before the end of March next, is £8,000, leaving £114,756 for appropriation in succeeding years.

Road Works.—The road works, in connection with the North Island Trunk Railway, that were in progress when the last Public Works Statement was delivered, have been carried on to completion, but no new road work has been undertaken. In inland Patea a fair dray-road has been made from the Rangitikei to the Moawhanga, 16 miles, and from thence to the Hautapu, 11 miles further, the track is just passable. Following the railway-line itself there is now a good riding road all the way from Hunterville to the Mokau (about 170 miles), with a branch from Murimotu to the Wanganui River at Pipiriki, 25 miles.

The amount required to be voted this year on account of road works, in order to meet existing liabilities, is £1,900, leaving £690 for future appropriation.

Surveys.—In connection with the North Island Trunk Railway, but paid for out of the vote for "Surveys of New Lines of Railway," under Part III. of the Public Works Fund, an exploration has been undertaken for a line of railway to connect Taranaki with the Main Trunk line. This was commenced in January last, and the field work is expected to be finished about December next.

A survey is being made of two routes—the Ngaire and Waitara routes. The Ngaire line leaves the Foxton-New Plymouth Railway at a point near the Ngaire Station, about 33 miles south of New Plymouth, and practically follows the original Stratford route to Nihoniho. It then crosses the intervening range to the Ongarue Valley, near Maramata, where it merges into the central route. The Waitara line follows up the coast from Waitara to the Mimi River, and then strikes inland up the Mimi Valley, and across the intervening ranges into the Tangarakau watershed, where it joins the Ngaire route.

It is impossible to give a definite opinion with reference to either of these lines till the surveys and plans are completed. The information obtained so far shows no insuperable difficulty, but a considerable portion of the country is very rough and broken.

General.—Beyond completing the works and surveys that are actually in hand, it is not proposed to incur any further expenditure on the North Island Trunk Railway for the present.

Purchase of Native Lands.—The particulars as regards the purchase of Native lands out of the loan for this railway will be found under the heading of "Purchase of Native Lands, North Island." In my Public Works Statement of last year these particulars were given under the heading of the railway itself, but I have thought it better this year to deal with all the Native land purchases in the North Island under one heading.