

probably be completed by the time the rail-laying reaches Kokonga, so that the work of laying the permanent-way will probably proceed uninterruptedly as far as the Taieri Bridge. Work at the Taieri Bridge is now in hand, and we have every reason to believe that it will be completed within the contract time. If this anticipation is realised the rail-laying can proceed uninterruptedly from the bridge to Eweburn, as the formation-works between Komako and Eweburn are mostly of a very light character. The vote taken for this railway last year was £25,000; but such excellent progress was made with the work that no less than £29,176 was expended, and this year we ask for a vote of £30,000.

ROXBURGH EXTENSION.

The promised survey of the projected Heriot-Roxburgh railway is now in progress, and nearing completion. The full report on the survey is not yet to hand; but the progress reports of the surveyor show that a practicable line can be got, but that it will be of a very heavy and expensive character. It is probable that it will turn out to be better to connect Roxburgh with the Lawrence Railway than with the Heriot line. From the nature of the country to be traversed by this line, it is a matter for consideration whether this should not be one of the proposed light railways to which reference has already been made in this Statement. To cover the cost of further surveys, and for preliminary expenses in connection with this proposed railway, a vote of £2,000 is provided in the Estimates.

CATLIN'S RIVER RAILWAY.

This railway is now finished and open for traffic to Owaka. Petitions have been presented to Parliament praying for an extension of the line; but, seeing that the most advantageous route for the extension can only be ascertained after survey, it is impossible to take any action in this direction at present beyond putting the survey in hand. This will be done immediately. The vote for the Catlin's River Railway last year was £7,000, but £8,663 was expended. This year we ask for a vote of £7,000 to meet liabilities and to pay for the completion of the line to Owaka.

SEAWARD BUSH RAILWAY.

The earthworks, fencing, and flood-openings (fifty-two 20ft. spans) have been in hand during the year, and considerable progress has been made. The erection of the large bridge over the Mataura River has only recently been commenced, although the contract time for the work has already expired. The delay has been caused by the time taken in getting the requisite iron from England, and in working and fitting the same in the colony. This delay will retard the opening of the line to Waimahaka; but it is hoped that the bridge will be finished by about April next, and all earthwork will be completed by the time the bridge is ready. There will still remain to be constructed fifty-eight 20ft. flood-openings on the eastern side of the river, in addition to the laying of the rails and the construction of the station-buildings at Waimahaka. The vote taken for this railway last year was £8,000, but such good progress was made with the work in hand that £9,164 was expended. This year we ask for a vote of £12,000, to meet payments on the Mataura Bridge contract, and to complete the earthworks, &c., on the line.

FOREST HILL TRAMWAY.

This tramway was originally authorised under "The Railways Authorisation Act, 1885," and ten miles of the line, from Winton to the Hokonui coal-mines, were constructed several years ago. The line was leased to the Hokonui Railway and Coal Company for a term of seven years, and this lease expires next year; but, work having stopped at the coal-mines, there is now practically no return from the line, which has cost the colony about £15,000. Under these circumstances, the House is brought face to face with this position: Is this large expenditure to remain unproductive, and the works be allowed to fall into disrepair, or, by the expenditure of a small sum in extending the same, shall traffic be secured which will give a handsome return on the additional cost, and at the same time produce a return on the original outlay?