

The number of new vehicles imported during the year still falls below the number required to offset the normal obsolescence factor without providing for the expansion of services. The average condition of vehicles in operation throughout the Dominion therefore continues to decline.

PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT.—From decisions made by municipalities it is clear that in New Zealand there will be no extension of tramway services, and in most cases there seems to be the desire to eliminate tram-cars completely, either immediately or on a long-term replacement policy in favour of trolley buses and omnibuses.

The body-building industry, however, has been working to full capacity since the conclusion of hostilities in an endeavour to meet the current demands for new passenger-service vehicles, and it is therefore clear that the main factor which will control the rate of change from tram-cars to trolley buses and omnibuses for urban transport is that of body-construction. To assist in meeting this problem the Hon. the Minister of Customs in December last gave his approval to the importation of all-steel bodies from the sterling area, but to date no relief has been obtained from this source.

REGULATION OF COMMERCIAL ROAD TRANSPORT

TRANSPORT LICENSING AUTHORITIES.—The licensing of road transport services is carried out by the three District and four Metropolitan Licensing Authorities, the Metropolitan Authorities dealing only with passenger services (including taxis) within their boundaries.

Owing to the illness of the No. 3 Licensing Authority, a deputy was appointed to carry on his duties for approximately three months.

There is no shortage of applicants seeking entry into the transport field. This is amply demonstrated by the number of applications lodged for new licences and for transfer of existing ones. During the year 2,127 such applications were dealt with. Of the 1,475 applications granted, 317 were for passenger services, 309 for taxi services, 38 for rental services, and 811 for goods services.

In all, 6,283 applications concerning transport licences were handled by the Licensing Authorities during the year; 4,873 applications came before District Authorities, and the balance, 1,410, before Metropolitan Authorities. Of 5,096 applications granted, 611 were for new licences and 596 authorized taxi-operators to charge separate fares for racegoers and early morning train passengers; 864 transferred and 1,875 amended existing licences; 1,150 licences were renewed. Fuller details of the applications dealt with by class of transport are given in Tables 15–18 inclusive in the Appendix.

PUBLIC PASSENGER-SERVICES.—Traffic volumes on buses and service cars continued on a healthy level during the year. There have been a few complaints from the public in respect of overcrowding, but, in general, these services have been operated on a highly efficient basis. The Licensing Authorities have increased fares in some cases, but, in general, the level of fares is still on the pre-war basis. Several new services have been developed to meet the demand in new housing areas.

GOODS-SERVICES.—Public road freight carriers have capably fulfilled their task in the national transport system. The demands of industry and trade on road transport, augmented by a shortage of railway rolling-stock, were met efficiently; the drive for increased production was materially aided by the speedy delivery of fertilizers to farms. On those occasions throughout the year when goods-trains were seriously restricted by lack of coal, road transport operators ably stepped into the breach to ensure the smooth flow of freight.