

TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR RAILWAY-CONSTRUCTION.

In addition to the amounts already mentioned, a vote of £70,000 is proposed for permanent-way materials, £2,000 for surveys of new lines, and £1,000 for land claims and other old liabilities on construction account. These items bring the total proposed appropriation for railway-construction purposes (exclusive of the Waikaka Branch Railway Account) up to £775,000. This is less than last year's vote, but is still a very substantial sum, and its expenditure will add materially to our existing railway facilities.

OTHER RAILWAY-WORKS.

The amount expended on additions to open lines during the year was £308,150. The bulk of this expenditure was on rolling-stock, and the remainder on essential works to enable the Railway Department to deal efficiently with its business. For the current year a vote of £350,000 is required under this head.

Considerable progress has been made in connection with the Hutt Railway and Road improvement, notwithstanding the fact that unforeseen difficulties occurred in connection with obtaining suitable rock for the sea-wall. The quarries at Pencarrow, from which the bulk of the stone is obtained, are capable of supplying ample quantities of suitable material, but the transport of the same by water to the works is affected by weather-conditions. The line has already been duplicated for about four miles, extending from Lower Hutt to Paparangi Point. A further extension of the duplication to Ngahauranga will probably be opened during the present financial year, and when this is done the formation of the main road will be completed and the metalling of same put in hand. The vote proposed for the current year is £70,000.

Under "The Railways Improvements Authorisation Act, 1904," work has been carried out between Auckland and Penrose, Addington and Rolleston, and Dunedin and Mosgiel. In connection with the first-mentioned work provision has been made for the substitution of bridges in place of level crossings over all public roads, and also for the reconstruction of the Parnell Bridge, which has been designed to cross the road in one span instead of three as formerly. The duplication is making good progress, and, with the exception, perhaps, of the Parnell Bridge, will be nearly completed by the end of the financial year.

Very good progress has been made on the Addington-Rolleston duplication, the formation being already complete, so that platelaying can be put in hand shortly. An important part of the work is the remodelling of the Addington Junction station-yard. This is an intricate undertaking; and a little time will be occupied in carrying it out; but the work will probably be completed by about the end of the financial year.

The Dunedin-Mosgiel duplication is also progressing favourably. The foundations and abutments of the bridges between Dunedin and Caversham are completed, and contracts have been let for the superstructures. A large amount of earthwork has also been done, and a commencement with the new Caversham Tunnel is about to be made. A start will also shortly be made with the formation-works between Caversham and Mosgiel. The line will cross practically the whole of the main roads between Dunedin and Mosgiel by means of bridges, thus obviating the existing level crossings. The work is one of considerable magnitude, and cannot be completed within the current year.

The total expenditure out of the Railways Improvements Authorisation Act Account last year amounted to £81,957.

For the current year provision has been made on the estimates to the extent of £200,000—namely, Auckland-Penrose, £60,000; Addington-Rolleston, £40,000; and Dunedin-Mosgiel, £100,000.

WELLINGTON-MANAWATU RAILWAY.

As the North Island Main Trunk line is expected to be completed by the end of next year, it is desirable that the question of the purchase of the Wellington-Manawatu Railway should again receive attention, as, if it is decided