

WHANGAREI—NORTH AUCKLAND MAIN TRUNK.

The North Auckland Trunk Railway has now reached a point which renders it necessary to decide by what route a connection can best be made between the main line and the isolated system which has its southern terminus at Grahamtown Wharf, close to Whangarei. Careful surveys of different suggested routes have been made, and after comparison of the results it has been decided to locate the line on a route starting near Whangarei, passing through Mangapai, after skirting the harbour, going close to Maungakarama, and continuing by way of the Tauraroa Valley to a suitable junction-point with the North Auckland Trunk line. The route adopted is not quite the shortest available, but the cost of constructing the line on this location will not exceed that of the more direct lines which were examined, and the chosen route has the advantages of serving Mangapai, and permitting of a branch line being taken to Waipu later on at moderate cost. A vote of £15,000 to permit of the construction of this railway being commenced is proposed.

HUNTLY—AWAROA.

Construction-work over the first three miles has proceeded at a moderate rate during the year, and trial surveys of two alternative routes to carry the line about two miles and a half further have been completed. The combined road and railway bridge over the Waikato River has also just been completed.

The expenditure during last financial year amounted to £11,732, and for the current year a vote of £25,000 is proposed.

WAIUKU BRANCH RAILWAY.

Last year a branch railway to connect Waiuku with the Main Trunk line was authorized. Trial surveys to locate the most favourable route have been put in hand during the year and are still in progress.

The small expenditure during the past year was charged to the vote for surveys of new lines, but for the current year a special vote of £10,000 is proposed to permit of construction-work being begun.

EAST COAST MAIN TRUNK.

The permanent survey of the section between Waihi and Athenree, on which construction-works were suspended in November, 1912, has since been completed, and a vote is provided on the current year's estimates to permit of the resumption of construction-work thereon.

Formation has been completed and rails laid between Maunganui and Te Puke, a distance of thirteen miles. To facilitate ballasting operations over the next section it has been decided to retain the line in the hands of the Public Works Department for the present, but a train service carrying goods and passengers has been inaugurated for the benefit of the settlers until such time as the working can conveniently be handed over to the Railway authorities. Fair progress has been made over the next five miles and three-quarters between Te Puke and Paengaroa. Formation is approaching completion, one permanent bridge has been erected, and a start made with the platelaying.

Last year surveys were carried out to determine whether a route from Pongakawa via Lake Rotoma to Te Teko would be more favourable for the continuation of this line, but a comparison of this route with that nearer the sea-coast shows that the advantage is altogether with the coast route, which has therefore been adopted. In pursuance of this determination authority is asked in the Railways Authorization Bill for putting in hand another section of this railway between Pongakawa and Taneatua, a length of about thirty-five miles.

Hitherto the only source of supply for ballast material for the Bay of Plenty section of the East Coast line has been the quarry at Moturiki Island, close to Tauranga Harbour. As the rails have now been laid for fifteen miles from this point, it is no longer economical to carry ballast from there, and a new quarry of suitable rock has been opened up near Te Puke from which supplies will be drawn to ballast the next section of the line, and also for the formation and maintenance of roads by the local bodies of the district. A branch line two miles