

The expenditure on this line during the past financial year was £67,432 at the western end, and £21,443 at the eastern end, or a total of £88,875. For the current year a vote of £100,000 is proposed.

MOUNT EGMONT BRANCH.

The quarry-site has been finally fixed on a ridge to the south of the Mangamawhete Creek, where there is a mass of rock sufficient to provide nearly 2,000,000 cubic yards of metal. Formation-work extending over 60 chains was completed during the year, and some culverts put in. There still remains to be done some alteration of grades at the selected quarry-site, and the installation of the machinery for quarrying and crushing the rock and transporting it down the mountain-side to the railway.

During the last financial year £5,933 was expended on this line, and for the current year a vote of £7,500 is proposed.

It is also proposed to construct a short branch line from the main line near Marton to a point in the Rangitikei River bed, whence a very considerable quantity of excellent road-metal can be obtained.

It is confidently expected that the South Taranaki and other intervening districts where metal is scarce can be supplied from this proposed new source with this very necessary material at quite a moderate cost.

Provision for the authorization of this branch line will be made in the Railways Authorization Bill, and an amount of £7,500 is provided on the estimates to enable its construction to be proceeded with.

OPUNAKE BRANCH.

Surveys along alternative suggested routes between the main line and Opunake were completed during the year, and after full consideration a route was adopted from Te Roti, along section boundaries north of Skeet Road, past Kapuni, Auroa, and Pihama, to a station-site near Opunake. It is proposed to commence construction-work on this line forthwith, and a tender has already been accepted for the first section. The survey of the Manaia Branch is proceeding, and work will be commenced thereon as soon as it is warranted by the progress made on the Opunake line.

The expenditure during the past financial year in connection with the surveys amounted to £828, and for the current year a vote of £40,000 is proposed.

OHAKUNE-RAETIHI BRANCH.

The tenders received for formation contracts on this line were not very satisfactory, and only one contract was let, the work covered by which is practically finished. The Railway Department is doing the formation-work for the first 15 chains, which is inside the Ohakune Station-yard, and bushfelling and formation-work is in hand under the co-operative system over nearly five miles of the remainder of the route.

The expenditure on this line during the past financial year amounted to £5,031, and for the current year a vote of £30,000 is proposed.

FEATHERSTON-MARTINBOROUGH.

The survey of the route for the branch to Martinborough was completed and estimates prepared, but no construction-work has yet been undertaken. The survey shows that the proposed line will be 11 miles 50 chains long, mostly of inexpensive formation, but two substantial bridges over the Tauherinikau and Ruamahanga Rivers respectively will bring the cost per mile up to the average figure of recent years.

The expenditure out of last year's vote amounted to only £311, but for the current financial year a vote of £15,000 is proposed.

SOUTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK.

Earthworks on the section between Ward and Mills were completed during the year, and the combined road and railway bridge over the Ure River has been