

HEDDON BUSH BRANCH.

The detailed survey of the Winton – Heddon Bush line disclosed the fact that a wide valley, subject to heavy floods, would have to be crossed, necessitating somewhat expensive works. Two other routes serving the Heddon Bush district have been surveyed, but no decision has yet been arrived at as to which of the three should be adopted.

A vote of £8,000 to proceed with the work when this point has been decided appears on the estimates.

OREPUKI—WAI AU EXTENSION.

I have had exhaustive reports furnished to me regarding the proposed line to Orawia, and have decided to adhere to the authorized route from Tuatapere.

A vote of £10,000 is proposed.

BALCLUTHA—TUAPEKA MOUTH.

This line was authorized last year, and the detailed survey is proceeding. On completion of the survey it is proposed to place construction-work in hand, and a vote of £10,000 is accordingly asked for.

TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR RAILWAY-CONSTRUCTION.

In addition to the votes already mentioned, an appropriation of £1,000 is required to provide for old land claims and other liabilities on construction account, £5,000 for surveys of projected new lines of railway, and £90,000 for permanent-way materials, thus bringing the gross total appropriations for railway-construction purposes up to £960,000.

OTHER RAILWAY-WORKS.

During the year the sum of £299,644 was spent on rolling-stock, tarpaulins, pneumatic coaling-cranes, Westinghouse brake, car-lighting, petrol-car, and workshops machinery.

A further £198,402 was spent on additions and improvements to workshops, signals and interlocking, new district offices (Christchurch), telegraph and telephone facilities, reduction in grades, improvement of curves, reclamation of land, and Parnell Tunnel duplication.

The expenditure on grade-improvements on the North Island Main Trunk line was £25,585, and on the Mechanics Bay reclamation £30,002. These amounts are included in the figures quoted above.

The new Chain Hills Tunnel on the Dunedin–Mosgiel duplication was opened, and a single line, working by the new route between Abbot's Creek and Wingatui, was brought into operation on the 23rd March last. The duplication is now approaching completion.

The new Hutt Road was formally vested in the Wellington City Corporation by Proclamation on the 17th March, 1914.

The vote for the current year includes £500,000 under the heading of "Additions to open lines," of which amount about £300,000 will be spent on new rolling-stock and workshops machinery, and £200,000 on various new works to be carried out by the Working Railways Department during the current year.

A vote of £10,000 is also provided for the Dunedin–Mosgiel duplication.

LIGHT RAILWAYS.

Mr. Furkert, Inspecting Engineer in the Public Works Department, paid a visit during last year to Europe and America. At the request of the Right Hon. the Prime Minister, he has prepared a report on the subject of Belgian light railways. This report is attached to this Statement, and will well repay perusal.

ROADS AND BRIDGES.

The total amount provided for road and bridge purposes on last year's appropriations under all votes and accounts (including the Consolidated Fund vote for maintenance) was £785,000. The amount authorized for expenditure