

Waitara Town Bridge.—This bridge, built in 1913, consists of four 60 ft. plate-girder spans, with an 18 ft. roadway and two footways each 4 ft. wide. The piers were of concrete carried on piles. In 1935, during a heavy flood, timber carried down the river was caught up in the piles of one pier below water-level and below the level of the pier concrete, damaging the piles and allowing the pier to cant downstream. To remedy the trouble temporary timber staging was built in the river and the superstructure, which had subsided with the pier, was lifted back into place. The old pier was demolished, and a new pier, carried on reinforced-concrete cylinders sunk under an air lock, was constructed. This work was done with practically no interruption to traffic. To prevent a recurrence of the trouble, the other two piers in the river are being demolished and replaced by new cylinder piers, of sufficient width to take a wider roadway should this become necessary in the future.

Paremata Bridge, on the Paremata-Plimmerton Main Highway at the crossing of the Pahautanui arm of the Porirua Harbour, has a roadway of 22 ft. and two footways each of 4 ft. width. It is built of reinforced concrete on pile piers, and is 450 ft. long, consisting of 50 ft. spans. The cost of the bridge will be about £12,500.

Waimakariri River Bridge, on the Upper Riccarton - Arthur's Pass Main Highway at Bealey, is 880 ft. long and consists of 44 ft. spans. The roadway is 10 ft. wide, and a central span 18 ft. wide is provided for passing purposes. The bridge is of reinforced concrete on pile piers, and will cost approximately £7,000. Traffic will no longer be required to ford this river, which has always been one of the greatest obstructions on this highway.

TRAFFIC CENSUS.

The traffic census taken last year has been tabulated and is shown in graphical form on the maps attached to this report.

The census has proved invaluable to the Board in considering the relative urgency of improvement works and paving, also the bridge-width that should be adopted on each highway, and the elimination of level crossings.

Many interesting traffic features have been disclosed. For instance, much weight has often been given to "foreign" traffic—that is, traffic domiciled outside the area served by a particular highway. However, the census shows generally that traffic is intensely local, and that as a rule a large proportion of vehicles keeps within a radius of 25 miles of the centre at which it is domiciled.

Another interesting feature disclosed is the use that is made of the highways system. Four hundred miles, or 3 per cent., of the most intensely trafficked highways, carry 30 per cent. of the highways traffic. Four thousand miles, or 30 per cent. of the most densely trafficked highways, carry nearly 80 per cent. of the highways traffic. It is a coincidence that 4,000 miles is the length that the Government proposes to take over to form a State arterial system. In this system certain highways, although not amongst those with greatest traffic density, are included on account of their arterial character.

Probably next year it will be advisable to take another census, so that further traffic studies can be made, more particularly with regard to the weight of the vehicles and loads carried.

CONTACT WITH LOCAL BODIES.

It has been the practice of the Board to maintain contact with local bodies interested in the control of main highways, by paying annual visits of inspection to the various districts in the North Island and South Island respectively in alternate years. Such inspections also enable the Board as a whole to investigate local problems and conditions, and to discuss particular aspects of administration and finance with those authorities exercising local jurisdiction. By this means the Board is in a better position to co-relate applications for financial assistance, and to consider the recommendations submitted from time to time by District Highways Councils, which advisory bodies are composed of local-body representatives.

The Board had proposed to visit the South Island towards the end of the last financial year, but as Parliament assembled earlier than usual, and the Board was awaiting an indication of the Government's future highways policy, it was deemed advisable to cancel the arrangements which had been made and to defer the matter till a later occasion.

Local authorities generally have continued to satisfactorily administer highways affairs under their control. However, the Board finds it necessary to record that there have been some cases, fortunately few in number, where local authorities have been unwilling to proceed with works as planned, principally with a view to receiving greater financial aid, or of being entirely relieved of all financial responsibility. The proposal of the Government to introduce a system of State highways will obviate delay in prosecuting urgent works on arterial highways included in the new system, where previously the reluctance of a local authority to meet its obligations caused a postponement of such works.

PROPOSED STATE HIGHWAYS SYSTEM.

With the change in the Administration, an announcement has been made that legislation is to be introduced providing for a system of State highways. The proposal contemplates the transfer of control and responsibility, in respect of arterial main highways, from local authorities to the Board, and the financing of the Dominion's national highways wholly from the Main Highways Account.