

On the arterial highway from New Plymouth to Wanganui there are several one-way bridges which are dangerous to traffic, and a commencement has been made with a programme for providing adequate two-way structures.

In the Wanganui area the reconstruction of the Wanganui – National Park State highway has been continued on what is generally known as the Parapara Section.

The Bulls – Taihape State highway has received special attention in the way of major maintenance, due to the fact that the top metal-course had practically disappeared over a long mileage, leaving only the spawl base-course. The surface of the road has been built up by placing a stabilized top-course of graded materials, and a very great improvement has resulted.

Throughout the Taranaki and Wanganui areas several level crossing elimination schemes have been under construction, and a number have been almost completed.

Wellington District.

Work has been continued on the Whirokino Deviation, which will improve the alignment of a section of State highway and raise the level above floods. The reinforced-concrete trestle has been in progress, and the piles for the piers have been driven. The reinforcing has been set up in readiness for concreting the columns, and a commencement has been made with the concreting of the spans.

On the main highway between Shannon and Palmerston North realignment has been in progress and a considerable length completed in readiness for sealing. The general standard of this route, which traverses undulating country, has been very much improved, and numerous sharp bends have been eliminated.

A contract has been in progress in connection with the replacement of the old narrow portion of the bridge over the Oroua River at Awahuri by a new reinforced-concrete structure.

The sections of State highway passing through the boroughs of Carterton and Pahiatua have been under reconstruction. It has been necessary to reform the road in order to adjust the camber and, after strengthening the metal crust, a new pavement has been laid.

On the Featherston side of the Rimutaka Hill a commencement has been made with the widening of the narrow bridges, and a number have been completed.

General reconstruction, paving, and bridging have been in progress throughout the year, and work has been in hand on a number of level crossing elimination schemes. The Porirua overbridge and deviation have been finished, and the Paraparaumu overbridge is nearing completion.

Nelson District.

Reconstruction has been continued on the arterial highways in this district. Considerable improvement in the alignment of the Moutere Hill section between Nelson and Motueka has been in progress, and excavating plant has been used on the heavy earthwork with very satisfactory results. Between Nelson and Blenheim widening and realignment on the hill sections have been in progress, and similar reconstruction work has been in hand on the Glenhope–Murchison length.

Preparations have been commenced in readiness for sealing several miles of State highways, particularly in the immediate vicinity of Blenheim, and it is hoped to be able to arrange contracts so that a certain amount of dustless surfacing will be completed during the current year.

At the close of the year covered by this report serious flooding occurred, and, in addition to extensive general damage, three spans of the Wairau River Bridge on the Nelson–Blenheim State highway were destroyed, causing dislocation of traffic. This timber structure suffers damage by floods from time to time, and the question of building a new bridge capable of carrying two-way traffic will have to be considered before very long.

The construction of an overbridge and approaches in order to eliminate the level railway-crossing at Elevation on the Picton–Blenheim section has been practically completed.

On the main highway giving access to the Blenheim Aerodrome a contract has been arranged for erecting a bridge over the Taylor River, and on the Dashwood–Upcot main highway the construction of a suspension bridge over the Hodder River was advanced.

Consequent upon the opening-up of the Lewis Pass road, which will connect Canterbury with the Nelson and West Coast districts, it has been decided to reconstruct the road via the Maruia and Shenandoah Valleys in order to provide improved access from the Nelson district. Investigations showed that even at much greater cost the existing highway via the Matakita Valley could not be reconstructed to afford the easy alignment obtainable on the Maruia route.

Greymouth District.

With the completion of the Flowery Creek Deviation there has been provided a paved surface throughout the section of State highway between Greymouth and Hokitika. Improvements have been continued on the arterial highway from Greymouth towards Reefton, and in the course of reconstruction a deviation was made between Kamaka and Spring Creek for the purpose of eliminating two level railway-crossings and at the same time providing a higher standard of alignment.

Widening and general improvements have been continued on the Buller Gorge section and also on the Coastal Highway from Westport to Greymouth. In the Buller Gorge heavy retaining-walls have been constructed in a number of places in order to obtain increased width without disturbing the existing steep batters.

The new bridge over the Hokitika River at Kanieri has been completed and opened for traffic. The erection of a new bridge over the Orowaiti River near Westport has been practically completed. Several other structures of moderate dimensions have also been renewed.