

So far local authorities have not taken up to any great extent the subsidy available for footpaths, but a certain amount of work has been done and there are indications that applications for assistance towards this important class of improvement will become more general in the early future.

Recently it was suggested to the Board that when eliminating bends in the course of realigning main highways, it would be of advantage to retain short metalled portions of the old road so as to allow disabled vehicles to park with safety, or perhaps to allow a convenient space for sight-seeing. This suggestion was adopted, and it is now proposed that, unless circumstances render such a course inexpedient, portions of old road will be retained at suitable distances to provide spaces for traffic to park clear of the usual trafficable road. This policy will, of course, apply to rural rather than urban or suburban districts.

VISIT OF INSPECTION TO THE NORTH ISLAND AND CONTACT WITH LOCAL BODIES.

Towards the latter part of the financial year covered by this report the Board visited the North Island for the purpose of inspecting the main highways and conferring with local authorities relative to highway matters. As was the case with a similar visit paid to the South Island in the previous year, it was three years since the Board had travelled through the North Island, and the many improvement works carried out during that period were indicative of the progress which had been made, especially in the direction of dustless surfacing, realignment, the raising of sections subject to flooding, and bridging.

During recent years good progress has been made in the direction of extending dustless surfacing, and from its inspection of main highways, in both the North and South Islands, the Board feels that it is desirable, if at all possible, to accelerate paving operations. The great increase in traffic during recent years has made it difficult, if not almost impossible, in some cases to maintain gravelled surfaces in reasonably good condition. In addition, the dust nuisance, especially during the summer season, becomes most acute and creates conditions which do not promote safety on the highways. Also from time to time representations have been made by landowners that dust from an adjoining heavily trafficked highway is injurious to pastures used for grazing. In the opinion of the Board it is very desirable and necessary to extend dustless paving, especially on heavily trafficked routes. This matter is to receive special consideration during the present financial year.

During its conferences with local authorities the Board intimated that it would always be glad to consider suggestions from them in regard to the administration of State highways. Although the Board exercises control of the State system and endeavours to provide, as far as possible, for the requirements of both arterial and local traffic, it recognizes that local governing bodies may sometimes wish to submit representations regarding the special needs of a particular district.

COMPLAINTS DURING RECONSTRUCTION.

With the increased mileage of dustless paving and the improved alignment and visibility on several highways, there has been developed a degree of travelling comfort not hitherto enjoyed by motor traffic. From complaints which are given publicity from time to time it appears as if some travellers, having become accustomed to comfortable conditions, are not prepared to make allowances where temporary inconvenience has to be suffered during the progress of highway reconstruction.

It is not always possible to arrange for by-passes when, in the course of improvements, a section of road has to be disturbed, and consequently it is necessary for traffic to use the road under abnormal conditions. Generally speaking, the average motorist is careful in negotiating these sections and shows consideration for the workmen, but, unfortunately, there are some who dislike any impediment to easy travel, and it is this latter class which is prone to make unfair criticism.

As far as possible the Board provides reasonable right-of-way for traffic during reconstruction operations, and it appreciates the assistance of road-users during the temporary period of inconvenience until the full benefit of improvement work has been obtained.

In addition to adverse comment arising from working-conditions, there is a certain amount of criticism, frequently of an extravagant nature, against the standard of construction. This mostly happens when the work is being first opened up, and the full effects of the proposals cannot be visualized. In some localities paving which was laid twenty years ago on reasonably good horizontal alignment has become disintegrated under modern and fast heavy traffic. Not only does the surface require renewal, but the foundations need correction and strengthening, and to carry out this work to the original standards would merely perpetuate conditions which are a definite hazard to safety.

The method adopted in these cases is, firstly, to make an engineering survey and investigate the possibilities of improvement, and, secondly, to formulate proposals which will give the maximum benefit at reasonable cost. In order to obtain adequate sight-distance it is often necessary to lower the crown of the road on short gradients on sections constructed many years ago and also to realign portions where visibility is limited. By these means a more uniform standard, with safer road conditions, is obtained. It is significant that within a very short time after the completion of this class of work any suggestion of criticism quickly disappears, and the improvements are accepted as normal and reasonable.

IMPROVING VISIBILITY AT CORNERS AND INTERSECTIONS.

In quite a number of localities throughout the Dominion visibility for motor traffic is extremely restricted at corners, especially where buildings are in existence. Also at intersections of side roads, some of which carry only a small amount of traffic, dangerous conditions arise from the fact that neither main-road traffic, nor vehicles emerging from the side road, have adequate sight-distance.