

In order to provide for present and future requirements in these cases the Board is investigating the possibility of acquiring land as early as possible, so that buildings or other obstructions will not be erected on the area needed for improvements. In fact, in several instances the necessary land has already been acquired. In cases of urgency the setting-back of the highway reserve will be undertaken immediately, but in other cases the land is to be reserved for road purposes in anticipation, so that actual improvements can be carried out as circumstances allow. At present the Board's investigations will apply principally to conditions on State highways, but it is prepared to co-operate with local authorities in control of main highways regarding similar action. As a matter of fact the Board has approved of a number of corner improvements submitted by local authorities and has granted assistance by way of subsidy in respect of the cost involved.

#### LIGHTING ON MAIN HIGHWAYS.

The steadily increasing motor traffic on main highways has created many problems for roading authorities, and one of the most important is that relating to safety for night travelling. Much has been done in the way of constructing wider roads, improving the alignment, and providing better visibility so as to obtain reasonably safe conditions. Notwithstanding the advances which have been made, however, the difficulties of night driving appear to have increased particularly where the density of traffic is comparatively high. The speed of modern motor-vehicles and their powerful lighting equipment combine to make night driving dangerous. In recent years many of the older countries of the world have made investigations and conducted extensive experiments in order to solve the problem of highway lighting. In New Zealand most of the road and street lighting is of the incandescent type and insufficient for the needs of modern traffic. Some improvement has been obtained by the adoption of the gaseous discharge type of lighting, but this has been confined mostly to urban streets.

Modern methods of street lighting involve considerable expense not only for the initial installation, but also for maintenance, which must include electricity-supply, and no doubt the financial aspect has been mainly responsible for the limited amount of flood lighting which has been carried out up to the present.

The New Zealand Road Safety Council prepared a report on the matter and recommended that steps be taken to adequately light sections of main highways where the average traffic amounted to 2,500 vehicles per day. These sections are confined to the suburban districts adjacent to the larger cities and are included in the State highways system. The Board agreed to adopt the Safety Council's proposals, and in order to formulate comprehensive plans for an adequate system of highway lighting obtained the services of a number of experienced electrical engineers, who agreed to act as a technical advisory committee. It is anticipated that in the near future plans will be completed for lighting certain sections of State highways so as to obviate the necessity of using strong headlights, and thus promote safer conditions.

#### STANDARDIZATION OF ROAD SIGNS.

Within recent years it was found that a variety of warning-signs were being used throughout the Dominion, especially in connection with reconstruction and repair work on roads and in denoting the existence of circumstances requiring special care on the part of motorists. It was common to find a sign purporting to give warning against dangerous conditions, when actually no particular danger existed, but conditions rather called for the exercise of greater caution. As the result of a conference of interested parties convened by the Transport Department proposals were prepared for simplifying warning-signs, and these were later included in the Traffic Sign Regulations, gazetted in April, 1937. This standardization of signs has been appreciated by roading authorities and the travelling public, and makes a further contribution towards the promotion of safety.

#### SIGNPOSTING, CENTRE-LINE MARKING, ETC.

The cost of signposting carried out on main highways by Automobile Associations during the year ended 31st March, 1938, was subsidized at the rate of £3 for £1, the cost to the Board being £4,215. The total amount contributed by the Board towards this work up to the date mentioned has been £18,619.

In cases where the Board or local authorities erected signs required by regulation, or for traffic safety, the cost was included as part of ordinary maintenance, and centre-line marking was also regarded as maintenance.

#### WORKING-CONDITIONS AND RATES OF WAGES.

The majority of main highways are under the immediate control of local authorities, which claim against the Board from time to time for subsidy payments. As these authorities paid varying rates for the different classes of labour, it has been the policy to fix wage-rates on which subsidy payments could be made.

In previous years when no industrial awards were operative the basic rates for subsidy purposes corresponded with those paid by the Public Works Department. At present most, if not all, classes of labour employed by local authorities on main highways are subject to Arbitration Court awards, and the rates and conditions prescribed therein are admissible in respect of subsidy claims.

Main highways controlled directly by the Board are administered through the Public Works Department, which has a separate agreement with the employees' union governing wages and conditions of employment.

Apart from regular maintenance activities and construction works let by public tender, the majority of the men employed by the Department are working under the co-operative contract system.