

On the Queenstown Invercargill State highway the Lowther Deviation, which eliminates two level railway crossings, has been completed by the erection of 110 ft. of bridging, and a length of 6½ miles was reconstructed on the Caroline Dipton-Bennmore section.

Sealing was applied in Lumsden Township and Winton Borough. Flood-alleviation works at Mandeville on the Gore Lumsden highway are in progress.

On the Lumsden - Te Anau - Milford Sound highway, work has proceeded at the Hollyford end, including the Homer Tunnel in which, in spite of the four months' interruption by winter conditions, the heading was advanced by 1,216 ft., leaving 1,587 ft. to complete.

On the approach road, construction work is nearing completion. One mile of formation, 3¼ miles of gravelling, and 85 ft. of bridging were carried out during the year.

At the Milford End 50 chains of bush-clearing, 1¼ miles of formation, 142 ft. of bridging, and 2½ miles of base-course have been completed. This work is in a forward state, and access by good track to the tunnel-portal should be possible by the time the heading is through.

Much useful work was carried out on comparatively short sections of county highways, one of the principal items being the reconstruction and sealing of 1¾ miles of the North Invercargill - Waikiwi highway.

ELIMINATION OF LEVEL RAILWAY CROSSINGS.

During the past year £258,484 was spent on the elimination of level railway crossings, bringing the total to date to £654,699.

The following table shows the progress to 31st March, 1939, as compared with progress to 31st March, 1938 :—

	As at 31st March, 1938.	As at 31st March, 1939.
Work completed	50	90
Contracts let and/or work in hand	56	30
Proposals completed	5	4
Proposals in hand	42	35
Surveys, &c., in hand	38	26
Investigated and deferred	28	35
	219	220

The programme is proceeding at a rate which bears a reasonable relation to the Board's expenditure as a whole, though more progress might have been made had extra design and field staff been available and supplies of reinforcing steel been more readily obtainable.

Some of the eliminations of lesser importance have been undertaken somewhat ahead of their turn simply because plans of structures already completed have been readily adapted to meet the particular case. On the other hand, a few eliminations of first importance call for special treatment and are still awaiting survey and design.

Amongst these might be mentioned the Waikanae and Ohau overbridges in the Wellington district. Both of these overbridges are close to stream-crossings, and in each case comprehensive design is required. In the case of the Waikanae railway-crossing, further surveys and investigation work are in hand in order that alternative solutions eliminating this crossing can be considered.

STATE HIGHWAYS.

During the period the major reconstruction activities have been on the State highways, though the Board has indicated to local authorities that it is prepared to meet all of the reasonable requirements of secondary or feeder highways in order that, as far as possible, the improvement of the system as a whole will synchronize.

There has been an inclination on the part of some to suggest that too large a proportion of the funds available is being spent on the State system. However, there is no gainsaying the fact that the routes which now form the State system did have first call on county finance while they were under the control of the counties, and the Board could not, under any set of circumstances, allow feeder routes to take preference over the main arteries which are carrying by far the greater bulk of the traffic.

As the trunk routes are completed, the funds will, it is anticipated, admit of an accelerated programme on the secondary routes, though it must be borne in mind that the scope of the improvements to these routes must always be considered in relation to the traffic densities and general requirements.

VISIT OF INSPECTION TO THE SOUTH ISLAND AND CONTACT WITH LOCAL BODIES AND AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATIONS.

In accordance with the Board's usual practice, contact has been maintained with local bodies and automobile associations interested in the control of main highways, and during the year tours of inspection were made to the southern portion of the South Island during the latter part of January and early February, and the northern part of the same Island was inspected towards the end of April.

Opportunity was taken to inspect major works in progress, and several programmes for future improvements were considered in conference, in addition to which local problems brought forward by the different local-body and automobile association representatives were discussed and the Board's general policy outlined.