

1943
NEW ZEALAND

TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT

(ANNUAL REPORT OF)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave

The Hon. J. O'BRIEN, Minister of Transport, Wellington.
SIR,—
Transport Department, 28th April, 1943.
Herewith I have the honour to submit the annual report of the Transport Department for the year ended 31st March, 1943.
I have, &c.,
G. L. LAURENSEN, Commissioner of Transport.

REPORT

1. **Introduction.**—The following are salient points recorded in this report :—
- (a) The number of all classes of motor-vehicles licensed dropped from 300,773 in 1941 to 286,809 in 1942.
 - (b) Long-distance civilian motor-vehicle traffic has largely disappeared from the roads.
 - (c) Road accidents dropped from 2,851 in 1941 to 1,939 in 1942.
 - (d) In 1942, 167 lives were lost in road accidents, compared with 175 in 1941.
 - (e) In 1942, 2,387 people were injured in road accidents, compared with 3,555 in 1941.
 - (f) There were fewer prosecutions for traffic breaches, more warnings, and fewer serious traffic offences in 1942.
 - (g) Drastic measures involving an annual saving of 25,450,000 vehicle-miles were taken to meet the shortage of commercial tires.
 - (h) Throughout the Dominion 67 Goods Transport and 18 Taxi Control Committees were set up to assist in conserving tires and petrol.
 - (i) Far-reaching measures for zoning retail deliveries by motor-vehicles were put into operation.
 - (j) Adoption of speeding and loading restrictions for the purpose of prolonging commercial tire-life.
 - (k) Organization of Traffic Control Corps and National Road Transport E.P.S.
 - (l) Ancillary trucks bearing " H " plates brought under the provisions of the Transport Act.
 - (m) Suspension of many goods and passenger road services paralleling the railways.

2. **Numbers of Motor-vehicles.**—The following summary shows the numbers of the principal types of motor-vehicles registered in the Dominion as at 31st December, 1941, and 1942 :—

Type.	Number on Register at 31st December,		Difference : + Increase ; — Decrease.
	1941.	1942.	
Cars	208,129	190,002	—18,127
Trucks and vans	47,597	44,217	— 3,380
Buses and service cars	1,332	1,360	+ 28
Taxis and rental cars	2,213	2,252	+ 39
Motor-cycles	15,678	15,480	— 198
Trailers	12,621	10,841	— 1,780
Government and local bodies and others*	13,203	22,657	+ 9,454
Total	300,773	286,809	—13,964

* Includes armed services.

3. There were nearly 20,000 less cars and just over 3,000 fewer trucks on the register at the end of 1942 as compared with 1941. Having regard to the relatively meagre petrol-allowance available for use in private cars during 1942 it is of interest that there were 190,000 cars still on the roads in 1942. The bulk of private motorists apparently prefer to keep their cars in running order rather than lay them up.

4. Roads and Road Traffic.—Long-distance private-car traffic virtually disappeared from the roads early in 1942, while long-distance truck-, bus-, and service-car traffic fell away heavily towards the end of the year. Private-car traffic is now confined largely to the towns and the immediately surrounding districts where the truck and bus traffic has also been reduced in volume. Road-maintenance is now confined almost entirely to repairs due to climatic conditions and to surface repairs on a few roads where heavy vehicle traffic has increased sharply for a short time.

5. Only a few very minor alterations have taken place during the year in respect of limitations of loads on roads. These relate in the main to roads not hitherto classified.

6. Road Accidents.—The following summary classifies the persons killed and injured during the last three years :—

	Killed.			Injured.		
	1940.	1941.	1942.	1940.	1941.	1942.
Occupants of motor-vehicles	86	76	75	2,095	1,820	1,197
Motor-cyclists and pillion-riders	26	21	26	479	397	221
Bicyclists	30	25	22	872	726	477
Pedestrians	59	53	44	724	612	492
Total	201	175	167	4,170	3,555	2,387

It is considered that the substantial decline in road accidents in 1942 is due rather to a reduction in the volume of traffic resulting from the petrol-restrictions than to an increase in relative road safety. There is reason to believe that many accidents are due to motorists and pedestrians relaxing their usual standards of care in the belief that as there is less traffic there is now not the same need to be careful.

7. Enforcement of Traffic Laws.—Complete figures relating to traffic offences for the year ended 31st March, 1943, are not yet available, but the figures for the nine months ended December, 1942, indicate that there were fewer prosecutions, more warnings, and generally fewer serious traffic offences in 1942. Offences reported totalled 2,987 for the nine months, as against 3,680 for 1941; prosecutions and convictions showed 1,717 and 1,633 respectively, compared with 2,615 and 2,475 respectively for the calendar year 1941.

8. Commercial Tires.—The outstanding factor in the road-transport industry during the period under review was the tire-shortage resulting from the loss of Malaya, which produced over 90 per cent. of the world's supply of raw rubber. Action to meet the situation was taken straight away throughout the Allied Nations by the rapid development of plants for the production of synthetic rubber and drastic measures for the conservation of existing tires.

9. New Zealand's national economy is largely geared on motor transport, the collapse of which would call forth the utmost ingenuity and resource to prevent repercussions of a nature that are many times more serious than is generally realized. In the field of national production it is estimated that approximately one-third of the volume is directly dependent on motor transport.

10. The steps taken up to the present to meet the tire situation are—

- (a) The diversion of all possible freight and passenger traffic from road transport to the railways and coastal shipping;
- (b) The co-ordination of all classes of truck operation with the object of eliminating empty running and increasing, within the capacity of the tires, the loading of individual vehicles;
- (c) The provision of a national speed-limit of 40 miles per hour and the strict enforcement of existing speed-limits for heavy vehicles;
- (d) The provision of load-limits based on the carrying-capacity of the tires on any vehicle;
- (e) The reorganization of bus services involving an overall reduction of 25 per cent. in bus-mileage, including a 75-per-cent. reduction in Sunday services;
- (f) The elimination of contract passenger services which provided transport for picnics, sports gatherings, race meetings, &c.;
- (g) Restrictions on the cartage of live-stock in cases where it can be driven;
- (h) The zoning of cream-collection deliveries;
- (i) The zoning of delivery services operated in connection with the delivery of the following commodities: Drapery, dry cleaning, milk, meat, bread, coal and firewood, and groceries.

11. Goods Transport Control Committees.—Under the Transport Control Emergency Regulations 1942, Committees comprising representatives from the carriers, the Railways Department, the farmers, the meat-exporting interests, and stock and station agents (the last three named acting only when the transport of stock is being considered) were set up, their functions being—

- (a) To receive orders for the carriage within their respective districts of goods or stock by motor-vehicles; and
- (b) To allocate such orders among available carriers, having regard to the necessity of conserving motor-vehicles and supplies of petrol and tires and the desirability of making a fair and equitable allocation among the available carriers.

12. These Committees were decided upon in order that the practical knowledge and experience of those engaged in operating road transport might be brought to bear on meeting a serious and urgent position. Service is voluntary, and the Committees have done good work. There is a right of appeal against their decisions to the District Transport Licensing Authorities, but, considering the numerous decisions that have been given by the Committees, there have been surprisingly few appeals. In general, the Committees aim at organizing the fulfilling of the demand for road transport so that empty running is reduced to the barest possible minimum.

13. Taxi Control Committees.—Committees analogous to the Goods Transport Control Committees were set up to control taxi services in all the principal towns. Outside Auckland and Wellington, where the taxi problem has been particularly acute owing to an unusually heavy demand for taxi services, these Committees have functioned smoothly, but in Auckland and Wellington special steps have had to be taken to assist in meeting the position.

14. All public passenger and goods services paralleling the railways were reviewed by the four Transport Licensing Authorities, and in many cases the transport licenses were suspended for the duration.

15. Zoning of Cream- and Milk-collection Services.—Officers of the Transport Department and the Dairy Division of the Department of Agriculture collaborated with representatives of dairy companies in rearranging cream- and milk-collection services so as to reduce truck-mileages. Substantial savings were effected on a voluntary basis, the principal method being to divert supplies to the nearest factory.

16. Delivery Zoning Schemes under the Delivery Emergency Regulations 1942.—The zoning of the delivery of various commodities previously carried out under the control of the Hon. the Minister of Supply and Munitions was in June, 1942, transferred to the administration of the Hon. the Minister of Transport. The new regulations provided for the appointment of Zoning Officers, and two such officers were appointed—one, Mr. H. M. Christie, of Wellington, for the North Island, and the other, Mr. T. H. Langford, of Christchurch, for the South Island. Mr. Langford was formerly the No. 3 Transport Licensing Authority and early in 1943 it was found necessary to reappoint him to this position owing to the growth in the licensing work.

17. Zoning schemes have now been provided for the principal household commodities in nearly all the main towns of New Zealand and in numerous other towns, as well as in many rural areas. Worthy of particular mention are schemes for the zoning of bread deliveries in force in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and milk deliveries in the same centres. Also, in most towns deliveries of meat have been confined to three deliveries per week in December, January, and February, and two days per week in the remaining months, while deliveries of groceries are limited to one day per week throughout the year.

18. In the majority of the schemes a Committee has been appointed to assist and advise the Minister in dealing with complaints and other matters arising from the scheme. The usual Committee consists of two representatives of the local authority concerned, a representative of the respective vendors, and the Zoning Officer, for whom the District Oil Fuel Controller generally acts as Deputy. No payments are made to the members of these committees and the time and services which they freely render in this way are very much appreciated.

19. In the regulations provision is made for the issue of warrants setting forth the terms of any scheme and upon the issue of such a warrant the scheme is legally enforceable. In addition to the gazetted schemes, there are numerous others which have been arranged on a voluntary basis by the vendors and the District Oil Fuel Controllers. Steps are now being taken to *Gazette* all schemes in force as it has been decided, in the meantime, to make tires available to the vendors who are delivering under legally gazetted zoning schemes.

20. As at the 28th February, 1943, there were 100 zoning schemes actually gazetted (76 in the North Island and 24 in the South Island) and these in some cases cover a number of commodities. As an example of the savings that have been effected in particular areas the following figures are given: In Christchurch 10,400 gallons of petrol are being saved each month through the zoning of milk deliveries, while in Auckland there is a saving of 2,142 gallons monthly as a result of zoning bread deliveries.

21. Summary of Truck-mileages saved.—It is estimated that the conservation programme carried out during the year has resulted in an annual saving of 25,450,000 vehicle-miles. Of this figure, 14,250,000 miles represent savings effected in public-passenger and goods-transport services and 11,200,000 miles in respect of privately-operated trucks—*i.e.*, trucks not carrying for hire or reward. On the basis of an average of 10 miles per gallon for petrol-consumption, and an average tire-life of 25,000 miles per set of tires, these savings represent 2,500,000 gallons of petrol and 6,000 commercial tires.

22. Prolonging Tire-life.—Special attention has been directed wherever possible to the effect of the three main factors affecting tire-life—*viz.*, speeds, loads, and inflations—the object being to ensure the maximum service from commercial tires in use. A reduction of speed from 35 to 25 miles per hour will result in an increase of at least 20 per cent. in tire-life; an overload of 20 per cent. will reduce tire-life by 30 per cent.; while a reduction of 30 per cent. in correct tire-inflation will reduce tire-life by 32 per cent. Consistent high speeds, overloads, and underinflation combined have rapidly disastrous effects on tire-life, and the regulations relating to speeding and overloading are being rigorously enforced.

23. War Measures.—*Additional Functions of Traffic Staff.*—A great deal of work has been occasioned in connection with the enforcement of emergency legislation affecting motor transport, regular inspection of oil-fuel reserves stored at kerbside stations, testing of military drivers qualifying for licenses, and the training of emergency traffic control units throughout the Dominion. The latter organization was placed on a military footing in 1942 and is now known as the Traffic Control Corps. The Corps now forms a special branch of the Home Guard, instead of the Emergency Reserve Corps as formerly.

24. National Road Transport E.P.S.—This organization was set up to meet the need for long distance essential transport beyond the scope of the local E.P.S. Both goods and passenger carrying vehicles are being included and in many areas the organization is now complete.

25. Additional Duties of Vehicle Inspectors.—The Vehicle Inspectors have been occupied for a considerable time on the inspection of vehicles for impressment for the armed forces; also checking and reporting on tires and gas-producers.

26. Regulation of Commercial Road Transport.—In addition to their usual functions of considering applications for transport licenses, amendments, renewal, and transfer of licenses under the Transport Licensing Act, the four District Transport Licensing Authorities have carried out

considerable additional duties involved in acting as Appeal Authorities in connection with the impressment of vehicles for the armed services and the operations of Transport Control Committees. Their main additional function has been in dealing with applications for transport licenses in respect of ancillary trucks bearing “H” plates, which were brought under their control in March, 1943. Reviews of passenger and goods transport services running alongside the railway also occupied a good deal of their time during the year.

27. Appeals.—During the calendar year 1942, 218 appeals against the decision of Licensing Authorities were lodged. Of these, 118 related to goods-services and 100 to passenger-services.

The following table sets out the detailed position for the year 1942 :—

District.	On hand 31st De- cember, 1941.	Lodged during Year.	Appeals withdrawn.	Licensing Authorities' Decision upheld.	Decision modified.	Decision reversed.	Referred back.	Under Action at 31st Decem- ber, 1942.
GOODS-SERVICES								
No. 1	6	25	2	23	1	..	..	5
No. 2	2	57	7	3	4	..	2	43
No. 3	13	27	5	10	2	4	5	14
No. 4	5	9	..	6	1	1	..	6
Totals ..	26	118	14	42	8	5	7	68
PASSENGER-SERVICES								
No. 1	1	13	1	8	1	2	..	2
No. 2	3	50	1	6	25	4	..	17
No. 3	2	21	..	11	2	..	..	10
No. 4 .. ..	..	10	6	..	..	..	1	3
Metropolitan ..	3	6	..	2	..	3	..	4
Totals ..	9	100	8	27	28	9	1	36

28. Inspection of Motor-vehicles.—All motor-vehicles operated in the Dominion are required to undergo a periodical mechanical inspection, and the vehicles may be classified into three main divisions :—

- (1) Passenger-service vehicles licensed under the Transport Licensing Act :
- (2) Goods-service vehicles licensed under the Transport Licensing Act :
- (3) Other vehicles.

29. (1) Passenger-service Vehicles.—These vehicles are examined by officers of the Department specially appointed for the purpose. The vehicles comprising this class are those which carry passengers for hire or reward, and include omnibuses, service cars, passenger-trucks, school vehicles, rental vehicles, and taxis (including taxis in the four main centres, which are inspected by the Metropolitan Licensing Authorities).

30. (2) Goods-service Vehicles.—All goods-service vehicles licensed under the Transport Licensing Act are subjected to a thorough mechanical inspection each six months, and the maximum permissible load which can be transported in safety is inscribed in the certificate of fitness.

The following table gives the number of passenger and goods vehicles which operate in the four licensing districts :—

District.	Number.		Total.
	Passenger-service Vehicles.	Goods-service Vehicles.	
No. 1 : Auckland	1,374	2,797	4,171
No. 2 : Wellington	1,152	2,488	3,640
No. 3 : Christchurch	748	1,317	2,065
No. 4 : Dunedin	468	952	1,420
Total	3,742	7,554	11,296

31. (3) Other Vehicles.—All motor-vehicles other than those coming within the scope of the Transport Licensing Act are required to undergo a periodical inspection each half-year. The issue of warrants of fitness to these vehicles is undertaken by motor garages approved for the purpose, and some of the municipalities. The inspection includes a check of brakes, lights, steering-gear, wheel-alignment, windscreen-wiper, rear-vision mirror, warning-device, and door-fastenings.

32. Gas-producers.—These plants are manufactured under license from the Factory Controller. The issue of permits to fit them was transferred from the Factory Controller to the Oil Fuel Controller last June, and since that date permits have been issued for 196 cars, 96 trucks in the North Island, and 35 cars and 8 trucks in the South Island. Declarations at the time of registration of motor-vehicles indicate that there are 1,339 cars and 361 trucks fitted with gas-producers in the North Island, and 434 cars and 146 trucks in the South Island.

33. Condition of Commercial Motor-vehicles.—Owing to the difficulty of obtaining spare parts and the serious shortage of qualified mechanics and drivers (due to the number called to the armed forces) to maintain, repair, and drive the vehicles, in conjunction with the considerably increased amount of haulage to be done, a large number of the vehicles are fast approaching the end of their useful and economical life, with an estimated increase on the rate of depreciation of approximately 25 to 30 per cent.

34. The following table indicates the present approximate age of the commercial trucks in the Dominion :—

Age.	Percentage of Trucks on the Road.	
	Heavy (over 2 Tons Gross Weight).	Light (not exceeding 2 Tons Gross Weight).
1 year	2	2
2 years	4	4
3 „	9	9
4 „	12	13
5 „	13	14
6 „	12	11
7 „	7	8
8 „	6	5
9 years and over	35	31
Total	100	100

The principal point disclosed in the above figures is that just over 70 per cent. of the trucks on the road in the Dominion to-day are five years old or over. Motor-trucks represent a vital national asset, and careful handling and prudent and prompt maintenance of them was never so important as it is to-day.

35. **Changes in Transport Law of New Zealand.**—The following are the principal enactments passed during the period 1st April, 1942, to the 28th February, 1943 :—

Motor-vehicles Registration Emergency Regulations 1942 (Serial No. 1942/152).—These regulations, as a war measure, provide that instead of the registration-plates being changed annually to indicate that license fees have been paid stickers are to be issued for attaching to the windscreen.

Motor-vehicles Insurance (Third-party Risks) Regulations 1939, Amendment No. 2 (Serial No. 1942/153).—These regulations provide for alterations in some of the classes of Third-party Insurance premiums chiefly on account of the reduced use of motor-vehicles on the roads.

Road Transport Emergency Regulations 1942 (Serial No. 1942/154).—These regulations give the Minister of Transport power to direct the use of any motor-vehicles on the roads in pursuance of the war effort.

Motor-vehicles Emergency Regulations 1940, Amendment No. 1 (Serial No. 1942/185).—These regulations contain substituted provisions for those previously issued relating to the issue of drivers' licenses by the Commissioner of Transport to members of the armed forces.

Transport Control Emergency Regulations 1942 (Serial No. 1942/190).—These regulations set up goods transport control committees and taxicab control committees for the purpose of intensified control over goods-service and taxicab-services in order, chiefly, to conserve tires.

Transport (Farmers' Tractor) Emergency Order 1942 (Serial No. 1942/196).—These relate to the exemption of farmers' tractors from license fees when used for various farming purposes.

Traffic Emergency Regulations 1942 (No. 2), (Serial No. 1942/230).—These provide a maximum speed-limit, on the main roads throughout New Zealand, of 40 miles per hour, and also authorizes the fixing of maximum loads for tires. The principal purpose of the regulations is the conservation of tires.

Transport (Goods) Emergency Regulations 1943 (Serial No. 1943/17).—These regulations bring all "H" plate trucks, with certain exceptions, under the Transport Licensing control, whether or not the trucks are used for hire or reward.

Delivery Emergency Regulations 1942 (Serial No. 1942/191); Amendments No. 1 (Serial No. 1942/250); and No. 2 (Serial No. 1943/16).—These regulations bring the delivery zoning schemes under the administration of the Minister of Transport. Formerly the administration was under the Minister of Supply.

36. **Meeting Emergency.**—Developments in the war situation may render it necessary at any time to make rapid readjustments in the Dominion's road transport system. The existing emergency control machinery is designed to meet any such situation that may develop so that the less-essential forms of transport may be eliminated in accordance with the needs of the times.

The organization of the Lines of Communication M.T. companies and the Traffic Emergency Corps ensure that the maximum possible military advantage may, should the occasion ever arise, be derived from civil road transport and the traffic control system.

37. **Staff.**—Some eighty officers of the Department are serving with the armed forces. Messrs. G. N. Harrison, W. D. A. McLeod, J. B. Monro, L. J. Dawes, and H. W. Farquharson have paid the supreme sacrifice, and Messrs. S. G. Cotterell and F. A. E. Field have been reported missing. They were all very promising officers, and their loss is deeply mourned by their fellow-officers.

I would like to express my thanks to all officers in the Department for the splendid service they have rendered under trying conditions.

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