

Only £850 was actually charged against last year's vote, but the full £5,000 will be required during the current year, and a vote for that sum is included in the estimates accordingly.

NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK.

Satisfactory progress is being made at both the Auckland and Wellington ends of this railway. At the Auckland end regular daily passenger traffic is now carried on as far as Taumarunui—a distance of 175 miles from Auckland—and the line is available for goods and material traffic to the Kakahi Bridge, nearly ten miles further. The Waitea Bridge is finished, and material trains are being run over it. The Kakahi Bridge is also approaching completion, and as soon as it is available the rails will be laid across it and on to about 188 miles, where they will be stopped for a time by the heavy work in hand there. The formation-works extend to and beyond Owango, and the construction of the service road, which is being formed to facilitate the works on the railway, is in hand to Oio. It is proposed during the current year to continue the construction of this service road. The works at the Auckland and Wellington ends of the line are making such progress that the time is not far distant when they will be in touch with each other. The service road will have to be carried through sooner or later, and as soon as it is completed a light coach can be run from the rail-head at the Auckland end to Raetihi, in the Wellington Province, connecting there with the existing coach service between Pipiriki, Waouru, and Taihape. At present passengers from the neighbourhood of Taumarunui, Piriaka, and Kakahi (which is well on towards half-way between Auckland and Wellington) desiring to travel to Wellington have either to proceed from Taumarunui by canoe down the Wanganui River, or else travel by rail to Auckland, in a direction opposite to that in which they desire to go, for a distance of 185 miles, before really proceeding in a southerly direction at all. The completion of the service road, while also greatly facilitating the construction of the railway, would at once open a new and highly interesting tourist route, and would greatly facilitate travelling between the extreme southern portion of the Auckland Province and Wellington.

At the Wellington end of the railway the section between Mangaweka and Taihape has now been completed and handed over to the Railway Department for passenger traffic. For the convenience of settlers goods had been carried over the line by the Public Works Department for some short time previously. Beyond Taihape the formation is complete as far as the tunnel at 46 miles 20 chains. A heading has been driven through this tunnel, and the rails will now be laid up to it for the transport of the materials for lining. By the time this tunnel has been lined it is expected that the formation to the Mataroa Tunnel, at 49 miles 40 chains, will be ready for the laying of the permanent-way, which would then be extended to that point in order to provide for the carriage of the lining materials for the tunnel. From Mataroa to Turangarere the formation-work is in hand, and a start has been made on the Waouru Section. Instructions have also recently been issued to make a commencement with some rather heavy cuttings a short distance beyond Waouru. The works at the southern end of the line will be gradually getting into easier country shortly, and more rapid progress can then be made.

The expenditure on the line last year amounted to £174,480, being £62,318 in excess of that for the previous year. For the current year a vote of £150,000 is asked for.

BLENHEIM-WAIPARA.

The formation-works on the section between Scargill and near the Hurunui River have practically been completed, and rail-laying has been begun. The large bridge over the Hurunui has also been finished. Some little work has been done in the Hurunui Gorge, but some treacherous ground having been met with, a slight deviation of the line will be necessary. Surveys of this have lately been made, and the new location determined upon, so that as the men finish their work on the section south of the bridge they can be moved forward to the work in the gorge and on to the Cheviot. The line as far as