

The expenditure on this railway last year amounted to £6,811, and for the present year a vote of £8,000 is asked for.

RIVERSDALE—SWITZERS.

The combined road and railway bridge over the Mataura River has been finished, and was opened for road traffic in April last. Formation-works on this railway, with the exception of the embankments leading on to the bridge at each end, were completed several years ago for a distance of seven miles. An extension of about 55 chains would bring the line to a point where a station could be conveniently located alongside the main road to Switzers. To complete the line to this point, including rails, sleepers, station buildings, &c., would cost about £17,000. When opportunity offers this work should be taken in hand.

The expenditure on the work during last financial year amounted to £2,639, and a vote of £2,000 is asked for this year to meet expenditure already incurred.

OREPUKI—WAIATU.

As mentioned in my last year's Statement, the section to Waihoaka was handed over to the Railway Department for regular traffic in October, 1903. The expenditure out of last year's vote amounted to £3,956.

TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR RAILWAY-CONSTRUCTION.

Including the amounts for the Paeroa-Waihi and the Coal Creek lines, which are both chargeable to special separate accounts, and the votes for old land-claims (£1,000), surveys of new lines (£3,000), and permanent-way materials (£60,000), the total proposed appropriations for railway-construction purposes amount to £484,000.

ROADS AND BRIDGES.

The ordinary work of the Department of Roads for the year was comprised under four votes (three under the Public Works Fund and one under the Government Loans to Local Bodies Account) containing together 2,051 items, each of which represented a separate work. The total amount voted for expenditure under these four votes was £400,704, out of which the actual net expenditure (inclusive of a sum of £398 charged to Unauthorised) was £322,694. In addition to this, the sum of £19,099 was expended by the Department on road-works, &c., out of the Land for Settlements Account. The actual net expenditure, therefore, out of all votes and accounts for road-works under the control of the Roads Department was £341,793.

The total authorisations outstanding at the 31st March, 1903, out of all votes and accounts was £337,689. During the year 1903-4 there was authorised the sum of £261,163, making a total issue of £598,852, of which a gross sum of £345,777 was expended and £94,493 cancelled, leaving £158,582 of authorities outstanding at the 1st April, 1904, which is £179,107 less than at the beginning of the year.

The total length of roads dealt with by the Department of Roads during the past year amounted, in all, to 5,458 miles—viz., 426 miles dray-roads and 201 miles bridle-roads constructed; 577 miles dray-roads and 239 miles bridle-roads improved; 2,696 miles dray-roads and 1,319 miles bridle-roads maintained. There were also, including those subsidised by Government, 118 bridges of over 30 ft. span built, totalling 10,428 ft., and 490 miles of engineering survey completed. These figures include 82 miles of roads constructed, improved, or maintained, and twelve bridges, totalling 495 ft., and 81 miles of engineering survey, on estates purchased under the Land for Settlements Act, the cost of which is charged to the Land for Settlements Account. They also include 78 miles of roads improved or maintained out of moneys under the control of the Minister of Mines.

In addition to the above, the Department manages the work of legalising, closing, and deviating roads for Government and local bodies, and taking land therefor under the Public Works and other Acts, and settling disputes between