

Kaipara would be removed, and the district would be brought into direct railway communication with deep-water harbours both at Whangarei and Auckland.

We are of opinion that the completion of this line, as recommended, would supply the requirements of the district lying to the west of the Main Trunk line for many years to come, as the whole of this country would then be within reasonable distance of railway communication.

RAILWAY ROUTES : TE TIO NORTHWARDS

Under the first clause of our order of reference we were directed to inquire into and ascertain the best route along which the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway from Te Tio northwards should be constructed in the interests of the community as a whole, giving due consideration to the development of settlement, engineering questions, and the volume and direction of traffic.

The North Auckland Main Trunk Railway as at present authorized follows, from Okaihau, a valley leading down to the upper waters of the Waihou River, which it is proposed to cross at a point about 65 chains in width ; with a further crossing of the Oriri River—a branch of the Waihou—of about 25 chains in width in order to reach the authorized terminus of the proposed railway at Te Tio—a point at the junction of the Mangamuka River with the Waihou River branch of the Hokianga Harbour. The evidence tendered us at Kohukohu was to the effect that it is desirable to bring the railway to Te Tio in order that there might be an exchange of traffic between the navigation of the Hokianga Harbour and the railways at a deep-water point.

We were not convinced that it was essential in the interests of the Dominion that the railway should be brought to deep water within Hokianga Harbour, if provision was made for it to touch the harbour at such a point that launch and barge traffic could be served at all states of the tide.

Considerable local evidence was adduced by residents of the Umawhera district that a practicable railway-line could be found, starting near Rangiahua and passing across country towards Mangamuka, thus cutting out the connection to Te Tio and shortening the Main Trunk line between Rangiahua Station and Mangamuka by several miles. On our return to Wellington we submitted this proposal to the officers of the Public Works Department, who reported (see Exhibit attached) to the effect that the cost of the two routes would be practically the same, and that, although the Te Tio route is a longer one, it has, apart from the crossing of the rivers, no works likely to involve difficulty in construction, and that it has easy grades and curves ; whereas the shorter route involves two tunnels and considerable curvature and heavy grades. Under these circumstances we have not recommended to Your Excellency that any change should be made in the authorized route as far as Te Tio.

We are of opinion that in the interests of the Dominion it is not at present necessary or desirable that the railway should be extended farther north than Mangamuka.

We have been advised that various roads are in course of construction or are proposed to be laid out which will serve the purposes of road carriage for the northern districts to Mangamuka. In this connection we urge that the Government, with the co-operation of the different local bodies, should arrange for the construction of well-graded and properly formed and metalled main roads, having as their objective the easy transit of live-stock and goods between the proposed terminus at Mangamuka and the northern districts.

Had we at the present time to definitely report upon a route for the extension of the railway to serve the northern districts we would recommend a line running on the Te Karae—Broadwood route, believing that this line would at present serve the greatest amount of valuable land, and the area which is capable of the most development, and is at the same time the least served by water carriage. For this purpose the line would probably deviate from the railway at some point between Te Tio and Mangamuka. We are of the opinion, however, that this line should not be authorized until greater development is indicated in the northern districts, as we cannot foresee in what direction developments are likely to take place.