

concentrate men and materials on this section when works are nearing completion on the North Auckland Main Trunk Railway at Kirikopuni. The survey beyond Rangiahua is now being vigorously proceeded with, and when this and the estimates are completed I hope to be able to determine the point at which the railway will most economically link up with the proposed roading programme for the Far North.

On the East Coast Main Trunk Railway, from Waihi to Taneatua, construction work from Waihi to the 14-mile peg is in hand by the Department. Rails are laid as far as Athenree, and this section should be ready for traffic by the end of the year, and to be handed over to the Railway Department in June next; meanwhile it will be available for use by the contractor referred to in the next paragraph, and for ordinary goods traffic.

The contract for construction of a section of this railway for a distance of 18 miles 18 chains was let on the 27th March, 1924, to Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth, and Co. (Limited), as already stated. As yet only preliminary work, such as clearing, fencing, preparation of stacking-yards, opening up of cuttings has been done. Practically the whole of the plant and material required is on order, and some of the major plant items are now arriving. Five of the six steam-shovels are now in the country, two of which are actually in position. One hundred and twenty men are at work, and it is anticipated that when the works are in full swing four hundred to five hundred men will be employed.

The following is a list of plant already ordered, two-thirds of which is now available in the Dominion: 6 steam-shovels; 7 small locomotives; 200 trucks; 24 ballast-wagons; 2 stone-crushers; 1 cable-way excavator; 1 10-ton crane for bridge-work; 2 50-ft. pile-driving outfits equipped with steam-hammers; 2 launches; 1 towing-scow; a number of punts; 3 motor-lorries.

From 35 m. to Tauranga formation is nearing completion, and the section from Tauranga to near Te Puna should be ready for goods traffic by end of July next.

From Tauranga to Pekatahi, a distance of 58½ miles, the line is completed except for final ballasting throughout and permanent bridges between Matata and Pekatahi. This section should be completed in two years and a half, by which time the whole line between Waihi and Taneatua should be ready to be handed over to the Railway Department. Beyond Pekatahi the Whakatane Bridge is in hand, and the line into Taneatua should be ready for traffic within twelve months' time.

On the Napier-Gisborne line work is being concentrated on the Tutira Section, so that this railway may reach as soon as possible a point where it will connect with the main road between Napier and Gisborne. This point lies near Tutira, and when the line reaches here the worst portion of the road between Napier and Wairoa will be cut out, and the road distance between these places shortened by about 26 miles.

It was hoped to reach Tutira by the end of next year, but serious floods have delayed the works for a few months. To overcome this delay, however, it has been decided to concentrate twelve steam-shovels on this section, and ten of them are now at work. In addition to this the tunnels are all well under way, and should be done as soon as the steam-shovels complete their work.

It is expected therefore that the date at which Tutira will be reached will not be much behind the specified time. Ahead of Tutira are several large viaducts, one of these (the Mohaka) being the largest in New Zealand. The designs for these viaducts are all nearing completion, and are now so far advanced that the manufacture and erection of the steel work can keep pace with the rest of the work on the railway.

On the Waikokopu line traffic is already being run by the Public Works Department, and ballasting, station-yards, and buildings should be completed by the middle of next year. The Waikokopu Wharf is nearing completion, and several vessels have been successfully worked at it.