

The Government is anxious to have the best opinion available in connection with this very contentious matter, and has no intention of proceeding with any such works until the report referred to has been obtained and definite recommendations received.

NEWMARKET—NEW LYNN DUPLICATION.

In submitting proposals with regard to this work the General Manager and Chief Engineer of Railways included details of an alternative route from Auckland new station to Morningside, crossing Beach Road by overbridge and tunnelling under the city by a tunnel 116 chains long.

The work of duplicating between Newmarket and New Lynn was estimated to cost £300,000, as against the duplicated tunnel route costing—Auckland City to Morningside, £449,000; Morningside—New Lynn duplication, £167,000: total, £616,000.

This route will reduce the distance from Auckland to Morningside by approximately one mile and a half, and the travelling-time by about fifteen minutes. The bulk of the suburban traffic to and from that direction will be much better provided for by the alternative route than by the existing train and tram facilities. One underground station would be required in the vicinity of the Town Hall.

In view of the decided advantages to be obtained and the comparative costs of the two works, the Government has decided to adopt the major scheme. So far as electrification is concerned, this section will be included in those to be reported on by Messrs. Merz and McLellan. Apart from the question of electrification, however, it is estimated the saving in working-expenses will almost pay full interest on the cost of construction.

DUPLICATION OF LYTTTELTON TUNNEL.

Both the General Manager and Chief Engineer of Railways are of the opinion that there is at present no justification for the duplication of the Lyttelton Tunnel, and indeed that view is to a large extent justified by a close investigation of the business done over a period of years. It has been pointed out that when the 1914 proposals for duplication were made, traffic had increased progressively for some years, and the figures for the years 1913–14, on which the proposals were based, represented practically the peak of the business. From 1915 until date the Christchurch goods business has remained practically stationary. The Lyttelton traffic declined sharply for the five years 1915–20, and, although it has increased since 1920, the goods tonnage is below that handled in 1910. The alteration in the scheme for dealing with goods traffic, and the location of the marshalling-yard in the vicinity of Woolston instead of at Middleton, is the result of a close investigation made of the tonnage recently. These investigations show that the great bulk of the shipping traffic is either from or to Christchurch, and that considerable economy can be effected in operating by abandoning the projected yard at Middleton and substituting one near Woolston.

The proposal to duplicate the tunnel, however, has been the subject of very careful consideration by the Government, and the decision to proceed with the work has been arrived at after every aspect had been closely investigated. The position of the Port of Lyttelton and “the Hole in the Hill” as the gateway of the South Island has been recognized. Through this centre flows the growing inter-Island traffic and a large proportion of the overseas business of the South Island. There is, therefore, justification from a national aspect in the interests of reasonable conditions of travel, for taking a more liberal view of this undertaking than is strictly warranted by a survey of traffic volume. Apart from this, the Government had already approved the work in the schedule of the Railways Improvement Authorization Act, 1914, and considered itself more or less in duty bound to give effect to the previous proposal.