

## PASSENGERS.

An analysis of the passenger revenue for the year is as follows :—

	1929.	1928.	Variation.	Per Cent.
Passenger journeys—				
Ordinary .. .. .	9,046,267	9,272,547	—226,280	2.44
Season .. .. .	16,496,596	16,075,694	+420,902	2.62
	25,542,863	25,348,241	+194,622	0.77
Revenue—	£	£	£	
Ordinary .. .. .	1,868,048	1,886,833	—18,785	1.00
Season .. .. .	256,699	258,463	—1,764	0.68
	2,124,747	2,145,296	—20,549	0.96
Passenger train-miles.. .. .	4,833,991	4,644,905	+189,086	4.07
Revenue—				
Per mile of line .. .. .	£653	£675	—£22	3.26
Per train-mile .. .. .	105.49d.	110.85d.	—5.36d.	4.84

The variations, exclusive of season tickets, were distributed as follows :—

	1929 compared with 1928.		1928 compared with 1927.	
	Journeys.	Revenue.	Journeys.	Revenue.
	Number.	£	Number.	£
Ordinary fares .. .. .	—413,648	—148,476	—613,643	—136,994
Suburban fares .. .. .	—195,186	—10,912	—268,574	—16,036
Holiday excursion and week-end .. .. .	+114,476	+108,997	—32,548	—6,461
Other reduced fares .. .. .	+268,744	+14,992	—87,566	—8,767

The revenue from passenger traffic was £2,124,747, a decrease of £20,549 as compared with the figures for the previous year; and, while these figures show an improvement on the previous year's results (when the decrease in passenger traffic was £158,884), the shrinkage of passenger earnings is still proceeding.

The figures for the year under review show that the decrease in ordinary and suburban tickets is again the principal cause of the decline in passenger revenue. This decrease is due to the extensive use of the private motor-car, together with (in a lesser degree) the service-car organizations which have established services throughout the Dominion. The mobility of the motor-vehicle is such that for certain classes of travel the railway cannot hope to compete with it on an economic basis, and further decreases in passenger traffic by rail under the headings mentioned must be expected. For example, the service-car organizations run a number of services between the principal towns at stated hours daily, and this smaller and more mobile unit is at a great advantage in catering for the passengers who may not find it convenient to travel by the scheduled trains which run between those places. It would obviously be quite unsound for the Railway Department to endeavour to cater for this class of traffic by providing additional trains for the small number of passengers which a service-car conveys. There is another factor which, in my opinion, contributes largely to the decline in passenger traffic. People in country areas cannot conveniently use the rail for travel between neighbouring stations, because in respect to their intended journeys the location of the railway-station in many instances involves a more or less substantial measure of travel to and from the railway-stations. On the other hand, the motor-vehicle can give continuous service all along the road, whereas with trains the railway can only do so at stations which are in most cases some miles apart.

So far as the remaining figures are concerned, the results obtained from holiday excursions, week-end, and other reduced fares indicate that the railway still has a definite field in catering for bulk movement of passengers in addition to the long-distance traveller, and it is satisfactory to note that during the past year the efforts of the Department in catering for special excursion, week-end trips, and picnic parties have resulted in an increase in this class of traffic. Owing to the fact that Good Friday fell on the 29th March, 1929, as compared with the 8th April, 1928, the bookings for 1929 include the greater part of two Easter holidays. After allowing for the Easter traffic, however, the returns from holiday-excursion tickets are approximately £50,000 ahead of the previous year's figures.