

VEHICLES ACTUALLY ON THE ROAD.

The number of “live” registrations on the register kept in accordance with the provisions of the Motor-vehicles Act, 1924, may be taken as a reasonable indication of the number of vehicles actually on the road. The numbers of these “live” registrations have been estimated for each month, and the monthly averages for the twelve months ended 31st March, 1930, 1931, and 1932, are given hereunder :—

Vehicle.	Monthly Averages.		
	1930.	1931.	1932.
Motor-cars	125,013	134,407	130,889
Trucks	23,512	25,294	26,232
Omnibuses	1,029	1,040	1,048
Traction-engines	173	117	123
Trailers	755	923	1,160
Tractors	293	302	426
Motor-cycles	26,266	25,167	23,487
Other motor-vehicles	445	458	441
Totals	177,486	187,708	183,776

N.B. Service-cars designed to carry not more than nine persons are included with motor-cars, while those designed to carry more than nine persons are included with omnibuses.

The above figures show a decrease of 3,932 vehicles of all classes during the year ended 31st March, 1932, as compared with the previous year. The figures for each class of vehicle indicate two broad tendencies—firstly, an increase in the traffic of commercial vehicles; and, secondly, a decrease in the traffic of motor-cars and motor-cycles. There were increases of 938 in trucks, 237 in trailers, and 124 in tractors, and decreases of 3,518 and 1,710 in the averages relating to motor-cars and motor-cycles.

3. PUBLIC WORKS ACT, 1928.

(SO FAR AS IT RELATES TO HEAVY TRAFFIC ON MOTOR-VEHICLES.)

The Motor-lorry Regulations, originally issued in 1925, have been reissued this year under the new title of “Heavy Motor-vehicle Regulations, 1932.”

A heavy motor-vehicle is defined as any motor-vehicle, other than a private motor-car, which with the load it is at any time carrying weighs more than 2 tons. Regulations as to the use of heavy motor-vehicles were first gazetted in March, 1925. These regulations were designed principally for the protection of the roads of the Dominion, and the main provisions were as follows :—

- (1) The classification of heavy motor-vehicles according to their gross weights, and the payment of heavy-traffic fees by the operators of these vehicles, ranging from £5 to £75 per annum, according to the class of the vehicle.
- (2) The fixing of speed-limits for heavy motor-vehicles, based principally on gross weight and type of tires.
- (3) The classification of the roads and streets of New Zealand according to their suitability for use by heavy motor-vehicles of various gross weights.

Since 1925 definite advances have been made in the development of the motor-vehicle in practically every department, but particularly as regards tires. In the year 1924–25 solid or semi-solid tires were being used on all commercial trucks above 2 tons rated pay-load capacity, and the balloon tire was not available in New Zealand. In the year 1926 62 per cent. of the total amount collected as heavy-traffic fees was in respect of vehicles with solid tires, while in 1932 this percentage had decreased to 20 per cent.

Over the same period there has also been a marked improvement in the roading conditions in the Dominion, and this improvement has been most marked on the main-highway system, which comprises approximately 11,000 miles of the most important rural roads and forms the backbone of the rural roading system of this country.

These two important developments in road transport—viz., improvements to the heavy motor-vehicle and improvements to the roads—had made the enforcement of the original Heavy Motor-lorry Regulations as regards speed-restrictions practically impossible, and it was therefore decided to bring out a new set of regulations more in line with modern conditions.

After extensive investigations, draft regulations were prepared and forwarded to all interested parties for consideration and constructive criticism. A conference representative of Government Departments, local bodies, motor interests, and the New Zealand Society of Civil Engineers, was then held to consider the regulations in detail, and in February, 1932, they were finally gazetted.

The main provisions relate to speed and weight of heavy motor-vehicles, and the following schedules show the details. For purposes of comparison, the speed schedule shows the previous speed-limits and those allowed under the present regulations.