

The results of all the summer series have not yet come to hand from the various districts, and there remains a considerable amount of work before the data may be brought to a useful form. It is intended first to prepare maps showing the relative traffic density on the rural highways, and also to compile a series of tables setting out the character as well as volume of traffic, and to group the highways according to their relative use by motor-vehicle traffic.

In passing it may be mentioned that the average number of motor-vehicles per day ranged from over 2,600 on the No. 1 Main Highway south of Auckland to only eight on the Lake Pukaki-Hermitage Main Highway.

9. TRANSPORT LICENSING ACT, 1931.

A. PASSENGER-SERVICES.

During the year under review the various Licensing Authorities considered applications for the renewal of licenses which had expired, as well as a number relating to new services, and a large number relating to temporary licenses for services running to race meetings, shows, and other similar events. In order to spread the peak of work which is involved in hearing applications, the continuous and seasonal applications in the North Island have been made to expire on 28th February, while those in the South Island expire on 31st August.

(a) CONTINUOUS PASSENGER-SERVICE LICENSES.

Altogether 771 applications were received during the year for the renewal of this class of license and for a small number of new licenses. Of these applications 720 were granted, 16 refused, 30 withdrawn by the applicants, and 5 were deferred. In the previous year 759 applications were considered, and of these, 664 were granted, 51 were refused, 26 were withdrawn, and 18 were deferred.

(b) SEASONAL PASSENGER-SERVICE LICENSES.

Applications in respect of renewals of existing licenses and new licenses numbered 33 for the year, as compared with 33 for the previous year: 27 were granted, 2 were withdrawn, and 4 were deferred for further consideration. These figures compare with 25 granted, 2 refused, 3 withdrawn, and 3 deferred for the previous year.

(c) TEMPORARY PASSENGER-SERVICE LICENSES.

Notwithstanding that arrangements were made for a number of operators who operated special services on a more or less regular basis to race meetings, &c., to procure continuous or seasonal licenses, thus obviating the necessity for them to procure large numbers of temporary licenses, the number of applications for temporary passenger-service licenses considered during the year under review numbered 2,548, against 1,783 for the previous year. Only 32 applications were refused, as compared with 27 for the previous year.

The increase in the number of applications for temporary licenses was spread over the various districts as follows: Auckland Metropolitan District, 262; No. 1 District, 139; No. 2 District, 182; No. 4 District, 57; No. 5 District, 70; No. 6 District, 50; No. 7 District, 34; No. 8 District, 45. The Nos. 9 and 10 Districts showed decreases of 2 and 65 respectively.

(d) FINANCES AND TRAFFIC STATISTICS.

General.

Operators applying for licenses were required to forward with their applications for licenses schedules setting out traffic statistics, revenue accounts, and capital investment. A considerable proportion of the applicants were unable to furnish reliable figures, but there were sufficient reasonably correct returns received to enable a fairly accurate estimate of the state of the industry to be made. These original returns examined in conjunction with later and more accurate returns and data from other sources indicate that the chief figures immediately prior to the Act coming into operation were approximately as under:—

Number of services	..	..	..	..	900
Vehicle mileage	..	..	..	..	32,000,000
Passengers carried	..	..	..	..	17,000,000
Revenue	..	..	..	..	£1,200,000
Expenditure	..	..	..	..	£1,240,000
Loss	..	..	..	..	£40,000
Capital employed	..	..	..	..	£1,500,000

The standard of service rendered by the industry as a whole was relatively low. The greater proportion of the operators were centred around routes paralleling the railway, and competition was unregulated between the rail and the road operators and between the latter themselves.

There was little incentive for an operator to improve the standard of his service. If he maintained a good time-table or endeavoured to keep his vehicles in first-class condition, he was invariably subjected to fresh competition; it was quite a common occurrence for a new entrant into the field to obtain a vehicle under a "hire-purchase" arrangement, to cut the existing fares, and then "cream" the more heavily patronized trips. If he failed, he merely lost the vehicle, which in any case had usually had its serviceability impaired in the meantime, while the regular operator was usually either forced off the road or was financially embarrassed.