

first levelled and prepared by piece and day-work, and now the buildings and other appliances are in course of erection by contract. The works are expected to be finished in about a fortnight.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works,
Wellington.

I have, &c.,

JOHN BLACKETT,
Engineer-in-Chief.

Enclosure No. 1.

SIR,—

New Plymouth, 5th March, 1887.

I have the honour to report on the two most feasible lines of road to connect the District of Taranaki with the central railway-line.

MIMI TO TAUMARANUI.

The first I will take is that from the coast at Mimi to the central railway-line at Taumaranui, on the Wanganui, eighty-six miles south of Te Awamutu.

Length of Road.—The length of road to make will just be fifty miles. The remaining fourteen to Waitara Railway-station is a good gravelled country road; making in all sixty-four miles from central railway to Waitara, which is distant from New Plymouth eleven miles by rail.

Main Road to Mangahia.—From the main road at Mimi to Mangahia, a distance of seven miles, the road will run up the valley of the Mimi, very easy incline, with no hills of any account. Being nearly wholly forest, it will require felling and clearing, which, together with formation and culverts, will cost £3,400. Three small bridges, costing £200, will amount to £3,600 for this section. This does not include gravelling, which will be considered afterwards on the whole length.

Mangahia to Makarakia.—From Mangahia to Makarakia is eight miles. On this portion there is a ridge to go over about 500ft. high, but which will be crossed with easy grades. There will be no bridges; but the clearing, formation, and culverts will cost £6,700.

Makarakia to Waitara (Upper).—From Makarakia to Waitara (Upper) five miles will be easy work—only one hill of any consequence, in crossing a ridge of 380ft. Above streams, two bridges of 4ft. span will be required; and the cost of clearing, formation, culverts, and bridges of this portion will be £3,500.

Waitara (Upper) to Heao (12 miles).—For the first two miles the work will be very moderate, being in good country; but the remaining ten is the heaviest portion of the whole line, and will be costly. The road will have to run up the Tangarakau Gorge for seven miles, with numerous steep papa bluffs to cut through. The grades will be easy, but side-cuttings heavy. To get into Heao, the dividing-ridge (500ft. high) has to be crossed. The work will be heavy, but no difficulty in getting good grades. In the twelve miles there will be five bridges, of from 3ft. to 50ft. spans. Cost of felling, formation, bridges, &c., of this section estimated at £10,800.

Heao to Wanganui.—From Heao to Wanganui (nine miles and a half) the line runs principally through open land, and easy country for road-making; but, for the bridging, there will be one of 100ft. span, a 50ft., and three smaller ones. At Ohura, the large bridge, there is a good ford, very shallow, excepting in floods. But in these estimates bridging of all streams has been taken into account. This nine miles and a half would cost £6,000.

Wanganui to Taumaranui.—The remaining eight miles and a half to Taumaranui is wholly up the banks of the Wanganui, and, with the exception of occasional bluffs to pass, will be easily made. But the five bridges that will be required bring up the cost to £3,700. To summarize this we have—

	£
Mimi to Mangahia, 7 miles	3,600 to prepare for gravelling.
Mangahia to Makarakia, 8 miles	6,700 "
Makarakia to Waitara (Upper), 5 miles	3,500 "
Waitara (Upper) to Heao, 12 miles	10,800 "
Heao to Wanganui, 9½ miles	6,000 "
Wanganui to Taumaranui, 8½ miles	3,700 "
Total ... (50 miles)	£34,300

Gravelling.—To estimate the gravelling is very difficult, as so little of it has been seen, and a great deal of the country shows no indication whatever of it. In one part, doubtless, stone will have to be taken from the streams and crushed for the road, which makes it rather expensive. But, so as to arrive at something like the cost of a properly-formed coach-road, I take £5 a chain as the price for gravelling—and it is not likely to exceed this. Then—

	£
To form 20ft. wide, bridging, culverting, &c.	34,300
Fifty miles of gravelling, at £400 per mile	20,000
Total cost	£54,300

Area and Quality of Land.—The line, for the first four miles after leaving the main road at Mimi, runs through a block of Native land, subdivided by the West Coast Royal Commission into allotments of from fifty to five hundred acres, which, if the road were made, would doubtless be soon occupied, as the land is good, and a great deal of it suitable for small settlers. From thence to the confiscation-line, a length of nineteen miles by the suggested road, is Crown land; and, taking a belt of ten miles, five on each side, we have 72,000 acres, of which 10,000 acres would be well