

The length of new bridging completed during the year was 3,107 lineal feet, and represented an increase of 443 lineal feet over the figures for the previous year. It is anticipated that construction this year will be maintained at about the same level.

Bitumen-supplies have improved and should allow the normal sealing programme to proceed.

ROAD-CONSTRUCTION

Road-construction has been undertaken on a slightly increased scale this year, 151 miles of new formation and 274 miles of new metalling being undertaken, as compared with 83 and 154 miles respectively for the previous year. In addition, good progress has been made in overtaking maintenance deferred in the past due to shortages of plant and man-power.

The roading programme in the Chatham Islands was completed with the exception of a sea wall and a small amount of metalling.

RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION AND SURVEY

Investigations into improved rail access in the metropolitan areas have continued, particularly in the Auckland Metropolitan area. In Wellington, investigation and survey has proceeded chiefly in connection with the Hutt Valley extension and the Rimutaka Deviation and Tunnel. A specification has been prepared for a contract for the Rimutaka Tunnel and a commencement has been made in opening up the access roads and approach cuttings and erecting works and camp buildings. It is proposed to concrete the portal and commence tunnelling at the west end almost immediately.

The final survey and other investigations for a railway between Edgecumbe and Murupara were completed and a start has been made on the permanent-line survey.

The first 19 miles of the Putaruru to Tokoroa railway, taken over last year from the Taupo-Totara Timber Co., has been authorized for reconstruction to Railway standards, and work is in progress.

AERODROMES

The Aerodromes Committee set up by Government to recommend on policy matters affecting aerodrome-development within the Dominion has not yet finalized its report to Government, but has continued to establish priorities for the immediate programme of aerodrome-works.

Although the desirability of major extensions to a number of airfields is appreciated, these must take second place to such vital work as hydro-electric development, land-improvement, and highways. For this reason no major works were commenced during the year, but in anticipation of the Royal visit early in 1949 urgent steps were taken to extend and improve a number of aerodromes at main centres to provide at each field at least one landing-strip or runway of a minimum length of 5,000 ft. This construction will form a first stage in the ultimate development of these aerodromes to accepted international standard for internal air services. In keeping with this policy, extensions and improvements were undertaken at the following aerodromes: Gisborne, Napier, New Plymouth, Paraparaumu, Nelson, Westport, Waitaki, and Taieri. Improvements to other aerodromes are scheduled for commencement in the near future.

The disastrous flood in the Gisborne area in May, 1948, covered the entire surface of the Gisborne Aerodrome with silt varying from 1 in. to 9 in. in depth. This aerodrome was therefore out of commission until December, 1948, and the greater part of the surface had to be worked over and a new turf established.

The Government, realizing the importance of a high standard in safety facilities and navigational aids, has put in hand appropriate installations in a number of localities. At the same time some attention has been given to improving facilities for the convenience of passengers and the more efficient handling of air freight.