

the plans for the extension have been prepared. This line is only authorised as far as the left bank of the Waipaoa River, and it will therefore be necessary to make provision in the Railways Authorisation Bill of the present session for the extension from that point to Karaka. The expenditure during last year was somewhat heavy, having amounted to £20,556 without permanent-way materials, or £27,381 inclusive of the latter. For the current year a vote of £20,000 is provided.

STRATFORD-KAWAKAWA.

The section of the above railway between Stratford and Toko, 6 miles 26 chains in length, the construction of which was only begun on the 1st April, 1901, was sufficiently advanced in June last to admit of goods traffic being carried over it. It has since been completed and handed over to the Railway Department for regular working, and was opened for public traffic on Coronation Day, the 9th ultimo.

Exploration of a number of alternative routes beyond the Township of Toko has resulted in the selection of a line following the Ohura Road to about 11 miles. Beyond this point there is still a little doubt as to the route to be adopted. As the construction of this railway is somewhat of a new departure, being a light line, but on the New Zealand standard gauge, it will be of interest to honourable members to know what its cost has been. The expenditure to 31st ultimo on the 6 miles 26 chains section to Toko has amounted to £23,929, but some liabilities for land claims and a few other unsettled matters have yet to be met, which will probably amount to about £5,000, making a total cost of, say, £29,000, equal to £4,594 per mile, exclusive of rolling-stock, or £5,500 per mile including rolling-stock. The average cost of the New Zealand railways at date, including rolling-stock, is £8,159 per mile. The difference in this case is due partly to the easy nature of the country traversed, but largely, however, to the method of construction adopted. It is proposed that the further section of the line now to be undertaken between Toko and the end of the Oruru Section, at 11 miles, shall be of the same character. For the current year a vote of £15,000 is proposed.

NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK.

Very considerable work has been done on this line, the expenditure during the year having been the largest since the initiation of the work. For the information of honourable members I give the figures showing the amount expended on the line each year since the construction of the work began:—

1884-85 ...	£ 2,441	1889-90 ...	£ 23,594	1894-95 ...	£ 34,624	1899-1900...	£ 46,178
1885-86 ...	58,339	1890-91 ...	10,318	1895-96 ...	32,502	1900-1 ...	116,903
1886-87 ...	102,355	1891-92 ...	19,149	1896-97 ...	29,873	1901-2 ...	184,561
1887-88 ...	102,776	1892-93 ...	47,684	1897-98 ...	46,245		
1888-89 ...	42,577	1893-94 ...	40,496	1898-99 ...	53,150	Total ...	993,765

As mentioned in my last year's Statement, regular traffic is carried on by the Railway Department at the northern end of the line as far as the Poro-otarao Tunnel. From that point to Ongarue, a distance of rather more than fourteen miles, the line is complete and all station buildings provided. Goods traffic has been carried on over this length for some months, and the section is to be handed over to the Railway Department for regular working on the 13th of next month. Some heavy slips took place on this section in the early part of the year, which delayed the work considerably. The ground, however, seems now to be becoming more stable, and the slips are consequently less troublesome.

The rails are also laid for eight miles beyond Ongarue, and the earthworks are fully three-fourths completed for a further distance of five miles, and about half done on another section of two miles and a half, which brings the line to Taumarunui. The bridge-work on this section is, however, much behindhand, due to the delay of the contractors for the manufacture of the iron and steel work.