

# SAVE OUR STRATFORD / OKAHUKURA LINE

## Stratford Okahukura Line – key facts

143.28 km long

Opened between	and	by PWD	by NZR	Length (km)
Stratford junction	Toko	-	9 August 1902	10.12
Toko	Oruru (now Douglas)	-	1 March 1905	7.73
Douglas	Huiroa	-	1 April 1908	7.58
Huiroa	Te Wera	-	20 June 1910	11.18
Te Wera	Pohukura	Goods 26 Sep 1910 Pass 10 Jun 1911	1 August 1912	14.13
Pohukura	Whangamomona	-	1 July 1914	9.68
Whangamomona	Kohuratahi	-	7 January 1918	7.48
Kohuratahi	Tahora	-	21 November 1924	8.04
Tahora	Tangarakau	Dec 1929	4 September 1933	5.44
Tangarakau	Ohura	12 Dec 1932		31.40
Ohura	Toi Toi	Dec 1926		5.16
Toi Toi	Matiere	21 Jun 1924		9.10
Matiere	Okahukura junction	23 May 1922		16.24

### Tunnels:

No	Length (m)
1	222
2	261
3	615
4	488
5	272
6	125
7	188
8	604
9	1095
10	1293
11	1056
12	164
13	140
14	552
15	666
16	57
17	426
18	155
19	156
20	154
21	155
22	80
23	96
24	1525
<b>Total</b>	<b>10545</b>

### Private sidings etc

Description	Nearest station	Approx km from Stratford
Te Wera Quarry	Te Wera	36
Robson's sawmill	Pohokura	47
Mine	Tahora	77
Egmont Coal Co	Tangarakau	81
Tatu Coal Mine	Mangaparo	108
Private siding	Waitewhena	114
John Endean & Co tramway	Matiere	127
Tramway	Tuhua	135

- 28 level crossings, of which 3 have flashing lights and bells, & 7, are across SH43.

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- 91 bridges, the longest being the road/rail double-deck bridge across the Ongarue River at Okahukura.

It was built as both a link between Taranaki and the NIMT/Auckland, and as a means of opening up large areas of farmland. The roads in the area have always been poor, essentially because of the topography, and the relatively low population density which made it hard to justify spending much money on improvements. It was one of the last routes on NZR to run mixed trains, with the last such train running about 1970, leaving the Auckland-New Plymouth railcars covering the route.

When the railcars ceased in 1971, NZR ran a passenger service for the locals, with a daily return trip N/Plymouth- Taumarunui...usually a Dc+ car+van. It carried newspapers, mail, parcels and small lots as well as an average of perhaps a dozen passengers Mon-Friday. That was withdrawn in 1983, as local population declined and most folk had 4WD or equivalent to get themselves to town.

Over the years there was substantial, although heavily seasonal, farm traffic. In the 1970s livestock traffic disappeared as NZR moved out of carrying it, although stock numbers were not holding in what was tough country. They have since dropped in line with national trends. Farmers turned to road for wool and fertiliser...but it was not a huge traffic. The coal out of Ohura, Mangaparo, and Waitewhena essentially disappeared by the 70s with the conversion of the bigger dairy companies (the major users) to natural gas, and the steady disappearance of the smaller dairy factories that had not converted. As far as we know there is little coal mined in the area now, though there are big reserves.

There was report in 2008 of a company looking hard at mining near Aria, north of Ohura, but they saw this as a longer term prospect. They spoke of using Ohura as a railhead.

A key role of the line up to about early 1960s was essentially as the transport lifeline to people along the route.

One serious prospect for local traffic on the line in the mid to long term would be coal, from the Ohura area, and possibly some minor forestry traffic.

So any judgment about its future needs to be made essentially on its economics as a through route for traffic to/from Taranaki and the central North Island and the northern ports and cities i.e. reduced km for that traffic rather than via Marton, and its value as a diversion route when NIMT has a block of line for whatever reason. Alongside these values one also needs to consider the possible costs of upgrading the MNPL to handle the extra traffic (signalling/Xing loops, extra locos etc), if those can be justified.