

VIA Rail and RéGIM to resume shuttle service during Christmas holidays

— Gilles Gagné

CARLETON - For the second consecutive year the *Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie - Îles-de-la-Madeleine* (RéGIM), will provide a shuttle service linking the VIA Rail train station in Campbellton to Gaspé during the Christmas holidays.

The two-way bus service will start on December 19 and finish on January 5. The shuttle will make stops in Nouvelle, New Richmond, Caplan, Bonaventure, New Carlisle, Port Daniel, Chandler, Grand River, Cape Cove, Barachois and finally Gaspé.

The stops will be at pre-determined restaurants and convenience stores and the list can be obtained from the RéGIM. The service aims to temporarily replace the VIA Rail train in the Gaspé Peninsula, a service suspended since the end of September 2013.

The decision to have the

shuttle service return is because the pilot project for the 2017-2018 Christmas break was a success, with 204 passengers.

“Last year’s results lead us to believe that Gaspésians really need this type of service. We are satisfied with last year’s results and we are glad to count on VIA Rail’s collaboration again this year. Moreover, those shuttles, synchronized with the train’s schedule, allow people to increase their mobility in a collective transport context that totally fits our objectives,” says Daniel Côté, president of RéGIM and mayor of Gaspé.

The president of VIA Rail, Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, says he is glad that the 2017 pilot project met the RéGIM’s expectations and that of the Ocean train’s passengers. The Ocean links Halifax and Montreal through the Matapedia Valley. Gaspésians have used that train since the suspension of the Montreal to Gaspé train.

Mr. Desjardins-Siciliano points out that VIA Rail has signed approximately 20 agreements similar to the RéGIM one across the country in order to increase people’s mobility through collective transport.

“Considering the busy Christmas break period, the shuttle service represents an excellent option for Gaspe-

sians,” adds Mr. Desjardins-Siciliano.

Train riders will be able to select Gaspesian departure or arrival points such as New Carlisle or Chandler while making reservations on VIA Rail’s website or phone service.

The budget required to offer the service last year came from the FARR development fund.

FARR means *Fonds d’aide au rayonnement des régions*. It supports regional initiatives. A sum of \$34,500 was allotted to the shuttle service.

“This year, we are waiting on an answer from the (Transport) department regarding a program that could fund the project,” points out Mariline Lamy-Poirier, communication officer for RéGIM.