



Photo: G. Gagné

The Ruisseau-Leblanc Bridge must be replaced. Trains have not passed on it since 2014.

Gaspé Peninsula elected officials want a precise schedule for the complete refurbishment of the railway

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CARLETON – The prefects of the Gaspé Peninsula adopted a resolution to obtain a precise schedule for the complete refurbishment of the Caplan to Gaspé railway in February, just as Quebec's Transport Ministry launched a first call for tenders since June 2020 for the replacement of the Ruisseau-Leblanc Bridge, which is located at the municipal limit of Caplan and Saint-Siméon.

The Table des préfets de la Gaspésie wants a date and informs the government that Quebec indicated earlier this month that the 2022 deadline for Port-Daniel-Gascons and 2025 for Gaspé is no longer valid. The new calendar mentioned by the Ministry of Transport sets Port-Daniel-Gascons to 2024 and can no longer confirm a schedule for Gaspé.

“What the elected officials are saying is that we want a date. We want a time horizon

to talk to our partners and talk to our municipalities to ensure we have a timeline for developing projects in the area. They thought it important that the government of Quebec is committing to a date at this level so that it is not postponed indefinitely,” states the president of the table and prefect of the Avignon MRC, Mathieu Lapointe.

To justify these delays, the Ministry of Transport mentioned that the initial studies' 2019 preliminary updates brought more issues last summer. The track must be moved over 1.4 kilometres at Port-Daniel-Gascons while bridges like that of the Ruisseau-Leblanc area in Caplan which were to be repaired must now be rebuilt instead. Ten retaining walls must be repaired between Caplan and Port Daniel-Gascons. Work on the beach must also be carried out along some points on that Caplan-Port-Daniel-Gascons section.

The 1.4 kilometre moving of the railway track situated

just east of the Votorantim Cement plant cannot, therefore, be used as a reason to delay the train traffic resumption between Caplan and Port Daniel.

This resolution of the prefects, adopted on February 23, came one day before Quebec initiated the bidding process for the Ruisseau-Leblanc Bridge in Caplan after a 20-month delay by Transports Québec regarding bridge works on the railway. Repairs to bridges have been identified as the priority of the Matapédia to Gaspé line slightly before 2010.

In a press release, Transports Québec says that other calls for tenders will follow by the end of winter, in particular, for carrying out rehabilitation work on the bridges of the Bonaventure River in Bonaventure, in Shigawake, and the little Port Daniel River in Port Daniel-Gascons, just east of the train station. The Shigawake trestle was built around 1905. *(With information from Gilles Gagné)*