

## Transports Québec more active regarding railway bridges' calls for tenders

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BONAVENTURE – Targeted for its slowness at issuing railway bridges' calls for tenders between the summer of 2020 and February 2022, Transports Québec has somewhat improved the situation since the end of February, as four calls for tenders were released over the last two-and-a-half months.

The second call for bids was issued on April 5 and deals with the upgrading work needed to reopen the bridge spanning over the Bonaventure River. It was issued 40 days after the publication of the Ruisseau-Leblanc Bridge replacement call for bids on February 24.

That Ruisseau-Leblanc call for tenders came 20 months and 12 days after the Ruisselet Bridge one, issued on June 12, 2020. Ruisseau-Leblanc is located at the municipal limit of Caplan and Saint-Siméon while the Ruisselet Bridge is located close, in the east part of Caplan. The Ruisseau-Leblanc Bridge replacement contract was awarded on May 10 to the lowest bidder, namely Quebec City-based Construction Polaris CMM Incorporated, at \$7,947,000. Six contractors had submitted a bid for that job.

The railway bridge located above the Bonaventure River requires repairs on abutments, piers, deck and girders. The call for tenders suggests that the contract will be awarded at a cost ranging between \$5 million and \$9,999,999. This work will begin during the 2022 work season and will continue



Photo: Courtesy of Pascal Alain



Photo: Jennifer Hayes

*The Shigawake trestle was built in 1905, as it appears in the old photo. The bridge is one of the longest railway structures between Matapédia and Gaspé. The photo on the right was taken in 2019.*

in 2023. Transports Québec doesn't give more details than that. Bidding on the Bonaventure River railroad bridge has been extended by two weeks until May 20. It was supposed to close on May 7.

Transports Québec's beginning of April press release also mentioned that "other calls for tenders will follow in the coming weeks, in particular for the rehabilitation work on the Shigawake and Petite Rivière Port-Daniel Bridges, as well as for the replacement of the culvert spanning over the Castilloux Stream.

Shortly after, on April 7, Transports Québec released a call for tenders pertaining to the refurbishment of the Shigawake trestle, which was built

in 1905. In that case, as well, the suggested cost of repairs stands between \$5 million and \$9,999,999. The call for tenders will close on May 20.

In another file, the bidding process closed on May 7 for the contract pertaining to the replacement of an important culvert in Port-Daniel-Gascons. Three contractors bid on the job and a firm called Action Progex submitted the lowest bid at \$3,141,710. The contract is not awarded yet as Transports Québec has to check the conformity of the bid. Action Progex is based in Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce.

During the summer of 2020, the Ruisselet Bridge replacement contract was awarded to Hamel Construction for \$5.7

million. The size of that structure was close to that of the Ruisseau-Leblanc bridge.

Since May 2017, the budgetary envelope earmarked for the rehabilitation of the Matapédia to Gaspé line has been endowed with an envelope of \$280.8 million, including a \$45.8 share from the federal government.

On February 3, 2022, Transports Québec officials admitted that the railway between Caplan and Port Daniel would not be reopened before the end of 2022, as announced earlier. The ministry invoked the complexity of the bridge repairs and coastal erosion to justify a reopening delay in 2024.

There is no date commitment on the Quebec govern-

ment part for the reopening of the line between Port Daniel and Gaspé. Transports Québec has owned the Matapédia-Gaspé railway since March 2015. The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, the former owner, keeps operating freight trains on the line. Traffic has been limited to the Matapédia to Caplan stretch since 2015.

Between Caplan and the McInnis Cement facility, Transports Québec also plans to widen the Port Daniel tunnel and upgrade New Carlisle's freight yard. The calls for tenders pertaining to those locations have not been issued yet.

*(With information provided by Anthony Bernard Prince)*