

10 years without a passenger train in the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - It has been over a decade since the whistle of a passenger train has been heard on the Gaspé Peninsula

The last VIA Rail train ran on the track between Matapédia and New Carlisle on August 13, 2013.

The service had already been suspended between New Carlisle and Gaspé since December 13, 2011, following an inspection of a railway bridge in Chandler. The official suspension for that section came on December 23, 2011.

On August 22, 2013, VIA Rail explained in a press release that "this decision follows the announcement by the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie to interrupt traffic due

to the corrosion of the rails and the malfunctioning of signals at the level crossings."

The corrosion of the rails was caused by the use of salt water to carry out the weed control along the track, which was criticized a few weeks later by the Quebec Minister of Transport at the time, Parti Québécois Sylvain Gaudreault.

The problems at the level crossings had been reported on August 1 of the same year. The train had been stopped for a few days and only resumed service until August 13.

In addition, in the press release, VIA Rail indicated that the alternative bus shuttle service would end on September 17 of the same year.

The rail carrier has always indicated "the intention to resume service when the tracks

are deemed safe for the operation of passenger trains and the infrastructure will allow service to Gaspé with competitive travel times."

In 2017, the Government of Quebec started work to rehabilitate the railway on the entire line between Matapédia and Gaspé.

Freight trains currently run between Matapédia and New Richmond.

The section between New Richmond and Port-Daniel-Gascons should be open in 2024.

Quebec has so far reserved \$872 million for this work on the entire route to the Town of Gaspé which is expected to reach the Gaspé station by the end of 2026.

In the meantime, the Coalition of Gaspésians for the re-

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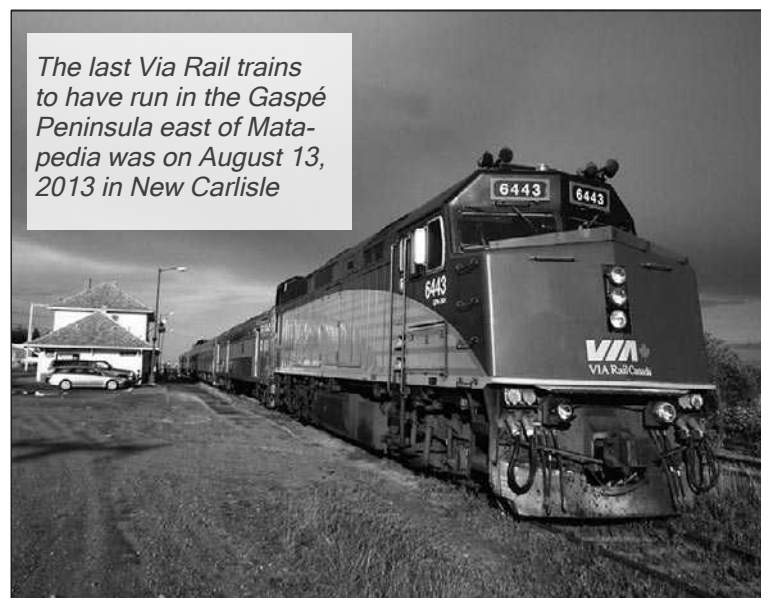


Photo: Courtesy of Taylor Main / Coalition of Gaspésians for the return of the Via Rail passenger train

turn of the passenger train is fighting for a partial return of service to New Carlisle with various actions carried out in recent months.

However, in July, Omar Alghabra, the Minister of Trans-

port Canada at the time, indicated that the eventual return to New Carlisle was part of the discussions and that to give an answer would be premature before all options were considered.