

Transports Québec awards three important contracts to upgrade culverts and carry out track relocation

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – Transports Québec awarded three important contracts totalling \$68.2 million over the last month-and-a-half for the upgrading of the Matapedia to Gaspé railway line.

Despite these important contracts, trains cannot go east of New Richmond, which is a seven-mile regression considering that traffic was limited to Matapedia to Caplan since the spring of 2015.

Due to certain contracts awarded over the course of the summer, trains cannot go east of Garrett Road, at the west end of the New Richmond area of Black Cape. For now, the main contract consists of replacing a culvert at Henderson Road, a contract not included in the \$68.2 million awarded since August 25.

Traffic between New Richmond and Caplan has been light for years. It is mainly due to the decline of grain traffic of the Caplan customers. However, train service advocates are eager to see progress east of New Richmond, six years and five months after the May 5, 2017, announcement that Transports Québec will refurbish the line to Gaspé.

Briard's curve track relocation underway

Meanwhile, the contract to move the track about 15 metres to the north over 1.2 miles between New Carlisle and Paspébiac was awarded on August 25 to Pomerleau Inc. for \$38.5 million, the largest single contract signed for the Gaspé Peninsula railroad since Transports Québec took over the line in 2015. As the citizens of New Carlisle and Paspébiac have noticed since mid-September, the contractor is well installed, and work is underway.

Another major contract was awarded recently, this time around on September 20, as Hamel Construction will replace 12 culverts for a total



Photo: G. Gagné

Work has been underway for close to a month in the Briard's curve area, at the municipal limit of New Carlisle and Paspébiac.

sum of \$21,230,000.

One culvert is located between Caplan and New Carlisle, precisely in Bonaventure. The other 11 culverts are located between New Carlisle and Port-Daniel, in fact three in Hopetown, one in Shigawake and seven in Port-Daniel.

In the meantime, the Caplan culvert, located just east of the former station, will be ready soon. This contract was awarded early in 2023.

Track to be moved in Black Cape

Although the contract to move the track in Black Cape area, east of Henderson Road, has not been awarded yet, the bidding process ended on October 4 after several extensions. Six contractors submitted a bid. Saint-Omer and New Richmond-based Construction LFG presented the lowest bid at \$8,466,173.

The contract calls for moving the track 15 metres to the north over a length of 975 metres. Transports Québec usually takes a few weeks to study the bids and release the name of the contractor selected.

The communication branch of that ministry doesn't directly answer the questions posed to clarify why such important works were not carried out earlier, considering that the decision to upgrade and repair the railroad goes back more than six years and given that Gaspésians are eager to regain additional services east of New Richmond as soon as possible.

Communication officer, Caroline Rondeau, strictly points out that "as for the work in New Richmond, it is linked to the movement of the railway line which required more in-depth studies in rock mechanics. After additional analyses, the intervention strategy, namely the construction of retaining walls, was revised for rock cutting to ensure

the sustainability of the rail corridor. This method is also less expensive and less time-consuming to carry out so that all the planned work fits into the schedule for the reopening of the section between Caplan and Port-Daniel-Gascons, scheduled for the end of the year 2024."

The overall cost to rehab-

itate the railway line to Gaspé is \$871.8 million. The breakdown consists of \$54.5 million for the Matapedia-Caplan portion, \$299.7 million for the Caplan to Port Daniel section and \$517.6 million authorized for the Port Daniel-Gaspé portion of the line.

(With information provided by Anthony Bernard Prince)