

## Transports Québec launches largest call for tenders since the beginning of track repairs

GILLES GAGNÉ

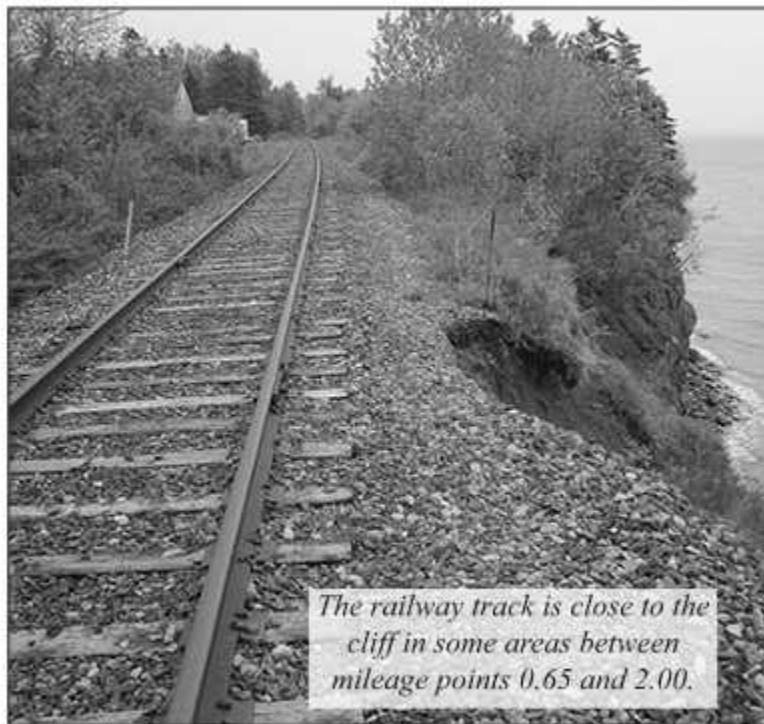
NEW CARLISLE – On June 2, Transports Québec launched its largest call for tenders since the beginning of the refurbishment in 2018 of the railway between Matapédia and Gaspé. The call for tenders involves a length of railway of 1.35 miles. This section of tracks must be moved to the north. Four retaining walls must also be created in that area. The cost is expected to be between \$40 million and \$50 million.

The large price tag suggested by Transports Québec comes as a surprise considering that the area was not judged particularly problematic five years ago, at the beginning of the refurbishment operation.

Over recent months, Transports Québec issued documents showing that a few retaining walls would be needed along some locations, including the area between New Carlisle and Paspebiac.

The June 2 call for tenders specified that the contractor selected to carry out the construction of a retaining wall and the displacement of the track will work between mileage points 0.65 and 2.00 of the Chandler subdivision. That subdivision starts at the New Carlisle station.

Using Highway 132 as a reference point, the stretch to be repaired is near Briard's



*The railway track is close to the cliff in some areas between mileage points 0.65 and 2.00.*

Photo: Anthony Bernard Prince

curve, which is located at the municipal limit between New Carlisle and Paspebiac.

A Transports Québec document mentions that the estimated amount of the contract is precisely between \$40,000,000 and \$49,999,999.99.

Over the last decades, the only railway incident that took place between New Carlisle and Paspebiac occurred at the beginning of November 2008, when a very heavy rainfall inflated a brook in the Briard's curve area enough to cause a washout, as the culvert could not contain such a high volume of water.

The railway was damaged but track inspection prevented

any train accident from happening and the railway was repaired over the following weeks.

The director of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, Luc Lévesque, did not comment on the new Transports Québec call for tenders.

The contractors' bids must be submitted before 2 p.m. on July 3. The work must be carried out and delivered within 14 months after the selection of the contractor.

After first committing to opening the line between Caplan and Port Daniel in 2022, Transports Québec postponed that step until 2024. No exact date has yet to be provided.