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The assistance program for the improvement of rail infrastructures is dedicated to the restructuring of Québec's rail network. It focuses particularly on the secondary network and has two components :

- [rehabilitation of secondary lines operated by shortline rail companies](#)
- [installation of infrastructures linked to rail lines with intermodal potential](#)

The assistance program is a transitional measure geared to the rationalization of the secondary rail network by the major rail companies and the transfer of that network to shortline rail companies. Beyond that, it aims to achieve a better balance of modes within Québec's transport system, in the interests of environmental protection and safety.

Objectives

The objectives of the department's program are :

- to foster the maintenance of rail infrastructures in Québec, in order to ensure the integrity of the rail network and Québec's transportation system;
- to revitalize rail transport as a complement to the other modes of transport and thereby provide for intermodality.

The program seeks not to develop the current network, but to improve it and render it accessible via intermodal nodes and industrial branch lines.

Criteria for evaluating projects

Depending on whether they have to do with the [rehabilitation of secondary lines operated by shortline rail companies](#) or with the [installation of infrastructures linked to rail lines with intermodal potential](#), projects are evaluated on the basis of the following criteria, which allow them to be prioritized. The list is not exhaustive, however.

- the importance of the line for the region's transport system and economy;
- economic advantages for shippers;
- the condition of the track and structures;

- the existence of a rehabilitation program for the track and structures;
- safety in railway activities;
- modal transfer (heavy and outsized traffic, environmental protection, transport safety, protection of the road network).

Procedure

For 2000-2001, applicants must submit their projects to the department before May 31, 2000 by completing the appropriate form and providing the information required. The department will then analyse the projects on the basis of the eligibility of applicants and expenses, on the one hand, and specific evaluation criteria, on the other. Finally, the department will announce the projects accepted and the amount of the subsidies granted.

In subsequent fiscal years, projects must be submitted before December 31; the Minister will announce the amount of the subsidies granted near the end of April, each year.

The main stages that projects go through are :

- filing of the application for assistance, by the applicant, with the Service du transport ferroviaires, routier des marchandises, no later than December 31 of each year;
- analysis of the application and decision by the department on granting or refusing financial assistance;
- negotiation and signature of an agreement between the Minister and the applicant, which must include the following elements :
 - the estimated cost of eligible work and the timetable for carrying out the work;
 - the amount of the government's financial contribution for carrying out the work;
 - the terms and conditions of the government's financial contribution and the commitments by the parties;
 - the terms and conditions of payment of the government contribution and the deadlines for the start and end of work.
- carrying out of the work, inspection by a department representative and payment of the department's financial contribution upon presentation of supporting documents for the work carried out.

Definitions

Reload centre : a site for the consolidation and storage of products, located near shippers specialized in a given field: timber, wood chips, automobiles, etc. The proximity of the centre allows shippers to use rail transport and to have access to reloading equipment.

Shortline railway : a local or regional carrier that operates what is called a secondary or low-density line and generally ships freight only to or from the territory served.

Industrial branch line : a rail line serving a company or group of companies (an industrial park) or a reloading centre, or providing access to a port.

Regular railway maintenance : regular maintenance usually assured by local teams that includes :

- inspection of the railroad track;
- repair or replacement of damaged or broken rails;
- occasional replacement of ties in an advanced state of deterioration;
- inspection and adjustment of switches and other track components;

- control of vegetation;
- snow removal;
- maintenance of fences and signs;
- maintenance of signals;
- additional minor work, as needed.

Regular maintenance of structures (bridges and culverts) : regular maintenance generally assured by local teams that includes :

- removal of debris obstructing watercourses;
- adjustment of certain ties to improve safety;
- addition of spikes on ties;
- occasional addition of stringers;
- brush-cutting to prevent the risk of fire.

Secondary line : a regional railway that generally provides access to a main line and that has a low density of traffic compared to main lines.

Secondary network : all secondary lines in the rail network.

Rehabilitation : a major improvement of the railway. Usually, the railway has deteriorated to such an extent that trains must travel at slower speeds or maintenance costs have become excessive. In such cases, it is necessary to replace the ballast, to replace more ties than required during a normal cycle of use and, often, to completely replace some or all rails.

Siding : a track adjacent to the main track of a shortline railway that allows trains to meet or pass one another, or allows for shunting to make up a train.

Additional information

For further information, contact the department's [general information service](#).

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Rehabilitation of secondary lines operated by shortline rail companies

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Forms of assistance and eligibility

Financial assistance is provided in the form of a subsidy and is intended to support various types of projects to rehabilitate secondary lines operated by shortline rail companies.

Rail lines targeted

Lines that are operated by shortline rail companies and are in need of rehabilitation to attain a quality of tracks and structures providing safe travel at speeds deemed acceptable for the profitability of operations.

Eligible enterprises

Rail companies operating secondary lines, having at least 75% of the volume of their activities in for-hire public transportation and whose shareholding is independent of major rail companies (Canadian National, St. Lawrence & Hudson, CSX Corporation).

Eligible projects

- rehabilitation of the track and structures, excluding regular maintenance;
- construction of sidings.

Limit of funding

A maximum of \$5600/km for each shortline rail company may be granted for projects to rehabilitate the track and structures or to construct sidings.

General conditions

- Applicants must ensure at least 50% of the cost of the project in order to obtain a subsidy.
- A maximum of 25% of the total annual budget of the program may be granted to the same company during a given fiscal year.
- Funding for projects that have obtained assistance from another Québec government department or agency will be reduced by an amount equal to that assistance.
- Sale of a rail line within five years of obtaining a subsidy must be approved by the Québec government.

- Failure to comply with the conditions for receiving financial assistance will result in the recall of the subsidy.

Information required 🔥

The application for assistance must contain the information listed below. In all cases, the department reserves the right to demand additional information for the analysis of the file.

General description of applicant

- name and address;
- brief history of the rail company;
- description of the rail network or line;
- map of the network or line;
- location of current suppliers;
- freight traffic (tonnage, types of freight, origin, destination) for each subdivision of the rail network or line;
- name of person in charge of the project.

Detailed report on the condition of the tracks and structures, and any speed limits

Description of investment project and detailed estimate of related costs

- detailed specifications of work, whether done on own account or under contract, approved by an expert;
- timetable for carrying out work.

Presentation of the shortline rail company's maintenance and rehabilitation program for tracks and structures

If such a program exists,

- provide the amounts of maintenance and rehabilitation expenditures for the last two years;
- demonstrate that the investment project for which funding is sought comes under that program.

Demonstration that the project meets the evaluation criteria of the program

Demonstration that the company has good prospects for growth and profitability, and that the project will have an impact on its operations :

- location of potential suppliers, if applicable;
- financial statements (income statement, balance sheet, statement of changes in financial position).

Eligible expenses 🔥

Construction of a siding

The rehabilitation of the track and structures must make it possible to travel safely at speeds deemed acceptable for the profitability of operations. Expenditures on structures must be related to the work recommended by structural experts.

Expenditures related to the track must not include regular maintenance. This is to avoid the funding of operations, which is not the goal of the program.

Eligible expenditures may include the following, for example :

- Track
 - replacement of rails;
 - replacement of ties;
 - spreading of ballast.
- Structures
 - replacement of stringers;
 - renewal of deck;
 - repair of piers.

Construction of a siding

The purpose of constructing a siding is to allow the railway greater efficiency in its operations (assembly of cars, track repair, etc.).

Eligible expenditures may be related, for example, to :

- switches;
- preparation of track infrastructure;
- rails and track materials;
- ties.

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Installation of infrastructures linked to rail lines with intermodal potential

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Forms of assistance and eligibility



Financial assistance is provided in the form of a subsidy and is intended to support various types of projects to install infrastructures related to rail lines with intermodal potential.

Rail lines targeted

Lines that can no longer meet transport demand for the following reasons :

- absence or obsolescence of infrastructures for direct service to certain shippers;
- no access to port facilities;
- absence of adequate reloading equipment or centres.

Eligible enterprises

Companies, municipalities, organizations, persons or groups of persons working in the transport field, whose place of business is in Québec.

Eligible projects

- construction of industrial branch lines;
- installation of a reload centre.

Limit of funding

- A maximum of \$200 000 may be granted for setting up a reload centres or an intermodal yard.
- A maximum of \$125 000 may be granted for the construction of an industrial branch line.

General conditions

- Applicants must ensure at least 50% of the cost of the project in order to obtain a subsidy.
- The department's contribution is limited to 33 1/3% in the case of industrial branch lines, reload centres and intermodal yards.
- A maximum of 25% of the total annual budget of the program may be granted to

- the same company during a given fiscal year.
- Funding for projects that have obtained assistance from another Québec government department or agency will be reduced by an amount equal to that assistance.
- Failure to comply with the conditions for receiving financial assistance will result in the recall of the subsidy.

Information required

The application for assistance must contain the information listed below. In all cases, the department reserves the right to demand additional information for the analysis of the file.

General description of applicant

- name and address;
- applicant's activities and brief history;
- name of person in charge of the project.

Description of investment project and detailed estimate of related costs

- detailed specifications of work, whether done on own account or under contract, approved by an expert;
- description of the rail line or network involved in the project;
- map of site and rail line serving it;
- location of current and potential shippers;
- types of freight to be handled;
- timetable for carrying out work and start date of activities.

Demonstration that the project meets the evaluation criteria of the program

Business plan containing the following information :

- current pro forma financial statement;
- projected traffic;
- marketing plan.

Eligible expenses

Setting up a reload centre

The purpose of setting up a reload centre is to enable specialized shippers in fields such as timber or wood chips to use rail transport from a regional centre that has the equipment required to reload freight.

Eligible expenditures may be related, for instance, to :

- materials required to prepare the ground (asphalt or other);
- installation of fences;
- safety materials;
- switches;
- equipment required for reloading.

Construction of an industrial branch line

The purpose of constructing an industrial branch line is to enable the railway to directly

serve a shipper or reload centre.

The eligible expenditures are the same as those described for the construction of a siding, to which may be added a level crossing, if applicable. However, the purchase of land is not an eligible expenditure.

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