



Our Vision: The NGEC will provide national leadership in standardization, acquisition, and management of passenger rail equipment.

Section 305 Next Generation Corridor Equipment Pool Committee (NGEC)

Monthly Activities Report: October 31, 2021

Submitted By: Steven J Hewitt, Program Manager, S305 NGEC

Public law 110-432 required Amtrak to:

...establish a Next Generation Corridor Equipment Pool Committee, comprised of representatives of Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration, host freight railroad companies, passenger railroad equipment manufacturers, interested States, and as appropriate, other passenger railroad operators.

"The purpose of the Committee shall be to design, develop specifications for, and procure standardized next-generation corridor equipment.

(b) Functions – the Committee may –

- 1) Determine the number of different types of equipment required, considering variations in operational needs and corridor infrastructure.*
- 2) Establish a pool of equipment to be used on corridor routes funded by participating states; and*
- 3) Subject agreements between Amtrak and States, utilize services provided by Amtrak to design, maintain and remanufacture equipment."*

Executive Board

Chair: Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT

Vice Chair: George Hull, Amtrak

Secretary: John Oimoen, IDOT

Treasurer: Tim Ziethen, Amtrak

The Executive Board holds bi-weekly conference calls – Tuesdays at 11:30am Eastern

During the month of October 2021, the Executive Board met twice via web conference, on the 5^h and the 19th.

Highlights, decisions, and action items from the month of October 2021 include:

- Technical subcommittee review of the Access Board Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding accessibility guidelines for Rail vehicles:

The intent of this effort is for states to submit their comments to the Access Board Docket on the Accessibility Requirement Guidelines Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. Amtrak has submitted its comments already and will share them with the Executive Board. Once the comments have come back (The comment period has been extended) and there is ultimately a Final Rule, the technical subcommittee (through its technical working groups) will compare them with the NGEC specifications to ensure compliance and make any necessary changes by utilizing the NGEC DCR process.

The comment period on the advanced NPRM which had been extended until July 14, 2020, has ended. As of 8-20-20, the FRA reported that the Access Board is reviewing comments received. On 8-20-20, Melissa Shurland, FRA, reported to the technical subcommittee, "we are in a holding pattern to see what the comments were and what the Access Board's disposition of them will be." Melissa will keep the NGEN technical subcommittee informed as the process is completed.

As of 10-31-21, nothing new has been reported.

- Treasurer's Report – 10-31-21:

Balance/ Spend Rate:

Total Initial Grant Amount: \$1,250,000.

Amount Spent through August 2021: \$823,248.64

Balance remaining: \$ 426,751.36

Estimated spend at current rate for the remaining grant period (through 9-30-23): \$348,834.17

Current Spend Rate per month (as info and used in calculating): \$13,953.37

Estimated Balance at the end of the Extension Period (Contingency): \$77,917.19

Quarterly Grant Agreement Progress Report to FRA was submitted on time on 10-29-21.

- 2021 NGEN two-pager:

The 2021 version of the NGEN two-page backgrounder/educational document continues to be available electronically or in hard copy by request - contact Steve Hewitt at shewitt109@aol.com. To date 615 electronic copies have been distributed.

The FASC is in the process of finalizing updates to the two-pager for the 2022 version and will discuss those changes on next week's call (11-10-21).

- Annual By-Law Review/Update:

On 10-13-21, the FASC approved proposed revisions/edits to the NGEN By-Laws. The proposed changes were provided to the NGEN Executive Board on 10-14-21. Per the By-Laws, members of the NGEN Executive Board must have proposed changes in writing at least 30 days prior to taking a vote.

The vote in consideration of the By-Laws revisions is scheduled for 11-16-21 – the next Executive Board meeting/call.

- Update – Multi-State Rail Car Procurement (provided by Caltrans) as of 10-31-21:

Design review for the standard coach is complete. The Cab Car shell final design has been approved and the first cab structures are in production. Remaining Cab Car FDRs are in the final submittal and review stage and the cab car Clearance information has been submitted to Amtrak. IDOT Café Car FDRs are in the closure stage and Galley open items are being addressed.

The Cab Car Collision and Corner Post Appendix F testing is scheduled to resume in November and the compression test report is in work. The FAI for the cab Side Window is occurring this week in Canada.

Ninety-four cars are in production or have been produced at Siemens Sacramento Facility. IDOT and Caltrans cars are being prepared for Conditional Acceptance and revenue service while open items are being addressed.

- Metro-North Dual Mode Locomotive Equipment as of 10-31-21:

Metro-North and Siemens continue with the initial design review of various locomotive components for approval by Metro-North.

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Update – as of 10-31-21:

On the Acela 21 – The first one should be out of Hornell and in Wilmington, DE. tomorrow (11-3-21) for testing.

On the ACL 42 Locomotive – progress is continuing with the first two being shipped for testing on the corridor. Two others are awaiting resolution of PTC issues.

On the intercity passenger rail trains – they continue to be in the initial design review phase.

- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement as of 10-31-21:

This procurement remains in the “cone of silence” period.

- VIA Rail Equipment Procurements:

On 2-23-21 at the Annual Meeting a comprehensive overview/update of the VIA Rail procurement was presented by Mario Bergeron, Bruce Cacciola, Ron Bartels, and Joe DiLiello. This full presentation was distributed to NGEC members and is posted on the NGEC website.

The next update is anticipated to take place at the NGEC Annual Meeting 2-25-22.

- Document Control Update - as of 10-31-21:

Document Control has been focused on the proposed changes to the DMU specification that were proposed by Stadler Rail. At the Technical subcommittee meeting of 10/28/21 the changes were approved by the subcommittee as it voted to send the document to the Executive Board for its consideration.

Steve Hewitt clarifies that the approved changes were sent to the Executive Board chair (Ray Hessinger) and the NGEC DMU Review Panel members and support. Larry Salci, as Review Panel Consultant will now complete his review and prepare a Review Panel Report with recommendations. Following that, the Panel will meet to consider the report and submit it to the Executive Board for its consideration of adoption.

DMU Review Panel members:

Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT – Review Panel Chairman
 Jeff Gordon, FRA
 Brian Beeler II, NNEPRA for Maine DOT
 Gurleen Boparai, Caltrans

Support:

Mike Kraft, Amtrak
 Tammy Krause, Document Control Manager
 Larry Salci, Review Panel Consultant
 Steve Hewitt, NGEC Manager

- Updates: States and Amtrak – Charger Locomotive and Rail Car Experience:

In-depth updates were provided during the 2021 Annual Meeting and were distributed to NGEC members and can be found on the NGEC website.

- Exploring/confirming funding options beyond 9-30-2023:

On 10-5-21, Mike Murray, FRA, reported that the FRA is looking at options and briefing leadership in the Office of Railroad Policy and Development. This will take a couple of months and Mike suggested that the Board not carry this as an agenda item for the bi-weekly meetings as it will take some time. When he has more information, he will let the Board know.

Tim Ziethen reported that he has reached out to Ken Altman, Amtrak Government Affairs to follow-up with him on previous discussions that an option could be Amtrak funding the NGEC through its grant. It was the general thinking that this would be a possibility as the NGEC was included as a potential type of recipient in the overall Amtrak grant request. Tim will report back once he hears from Ken Altman.

Ray Hessinger suggested that the FASC follow these issues and keep this on their monthly agenda, and report back to the NGEN Executive Board as more information is forthcoming.

The NGEN will explore potential grant opportunities and potential appropriations requests for funding beyond 2023.

NGEN Annual Meeting 2022:

As announced previously, the NGEN will hold its 2022 Annual Meeting in-person at the Hyatt Regency, Capitol Hill on February 25, 2022. The meeting will begin at 8:30am and conclude around Noon (Eastern). More details will follow as an agenda is developed and the time for the meeting draws nearer. All NGEN members have been informed of the date and location of the meeting.

- Establishing Priorities and developing updated work plan for 2022:

Ray Hessinger has opened an ongoing discussion on establishing priorities in preparation for an updated work plan for 2022. He has asked for Executive Board members and the support team to provide input:

To date only input from Dave Warner has been received. Dave has suggested that the Reference documents (305-800 and 305-900 series) should be reviewed and updated as needed. This should be a key priority. These documents were adopted by the NGEN early on and apply across the Board to all specs. It is important that they are reviewed to ensure that they are up to date. Ray Hessinger believes this should be the first priority for the next round of updates going into 2022.

He would also like to get input from Board members on any upcoming procurements that would identify which vehicle specification should be updated next.

Ray asked Steve Hewitt to keep this as a standing agenda item for the next few calls before figuring out the priorities for 2022.

Members are asked to provide input over the next few weeks.

Technical subcommittee

Chair: George Hull, Amtrak

Vice Chair: Joe Paul, Amtrak

The Technical subcommittee holds bi-weekly conference calls on Thursdays at 3:00pm Eastern

During the month of October 2021, the technical subcommittee met twice via web conference call, on the 14th and the 28th.

Key decisions and action item updates from the month of October 2021, included:

- Backgrounder educational document:

The 2021 NGEN educational document. remains available in hard copy and/or in a PDF by sending a request to Steve Hewitt at shewitt109@aol.com.

Total distribution is approximately 615 as of 10-31-21. All distributions have been electronic to date.

- AWG/RVACC:

Technical subcommittee review of Access Board advance NPRM Accessibility Guidelines and compare with current NGEN Specifications

The intent of this effort is for states to submit their comments to the Access Board Docket on the Accessibility Requirement Guidelines (advanced) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. Amtrak has submitted its comments already. Once the comments "have come back", the technical subcommittee will compare them with the NGEN specifications to ensure compliance.

As of 10-31-21 – the Access Board continues to be in a holding pattern on this review.

- Document Control Update as of 10-31-21:

Document control has been focused on completing the list of Proposed DCRs for the DMU from Stadler. All the comments were reviewed over the past several TSC meetings. Steve Hewitt sent out the final list and status of the DCRs last week. I did receive one correction – ‘DCR#172: Final Language: Text currently says, “carbon steal”. Correct the spelling to “carbon steel”’, and I have made the correction. Hopefully, the changes are approved today and will be submitted to the Executive Board prior to their meeting on 11/2/2021. I continue my weekly meetings with the Technical Writer, and she is ready to complete the DMU specification after it is approved by the Executive Board.

Set Timelines/next steps for Tech subcommittee approval of the Trainset rewrite:

Steve Hewitt asked about the Trainset re-write and its status. Tammy responded that the only changes to this specification beyond what had previously been approved were to the format (for consistency with all PRIIA specs) and the addition of a couple of paragraphs.

Steve asked if these changes will be ready to be discussed on the next technical subcommittee call (12-9-21) and Tammy responded that they will.

Update: Electronics on Trains working group activities:

David Brabb provided the following update for inclusion in today’s minutes which Steve Hewitt read into the record:

We had our call this past Tuesday. The results of the call were that 1. we need 3 talking points and issues clarified by Siemens. And 2. we have one that Tammy is helping with. These are found in the notes document sent out yesterday.

Once these issues are clarified/resolved, 305-919 DTL Hardware Spec. revision will be issued. We will begin the outline for the 920 DTL Software Spec., and begin listing questions for the group, this month.

Our next call is planned for November 30th at 3pm eastern.

Steve Hewitt asked for clarification on the next steps. Tammy Krause responded that the 305-919 hardware specification will come from the working group to the technical subcommittee and that it will follow the Trainset specification re-write consideration.

Consideration of technical subcommittee approval of the DMU DCRs – George Hull:

After some discussion regarding DCR #84 - clarification was provided and there is no change to the DCR summary sheet as presented.

A motion to approve the summary of changes to proceed to the Executive Board and its Review Panel was offered by Jennifer Bastian, Illinois DOT, and was seconded by Ed Engle, Iowa DOT.

With no further discussion forthcoming, George Hull asked Steve Hewitt to call the roll of voting members:

George Hull, Amtrak – in favor
 Jeff Gordon, FRA – in favor
 Gurleen Boparai, Caltrans – in favor
 Curtis McDowell for NCDOT – in favor
 Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT – in favor
 Ed Engle, Iowa DOT – in favor
 Jennifer Bastian, IDOT – in favor
 Jennifer Bastian as proxy for MODOT – in favor

Jason Biggs, WSDOT – in favor
 Mike Jenkins, Oregon DOT – in favor

With a quorum having been established and all votes having been cast in the affirmative, Chairman Hull determined that consensus has been achieved and the changes, as approved, will be sent on to the NGENC Executive Board Chairman Ray Hessinger.

George Hull thanked the members of the subcommittee for their hard work in adjudicating the DMU DCRs and noted that he was pleased to get this accomplished and moving forward to the Executive Board.

- Multi-State Car Procurement - Caltrans (Lead State): Progress reports from the lead state on the PRIIA multi-state car procurement is provided on each technical subcommittee call and each Executive Board call.

See the update provided in the Executive Board section of this report.

- Metro North Dual Mode Locomotive Procurement:

See the update provided in the Executive Board section of this report.

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Updates: Progress reports are provided by AMTRAK Acting CMO and NGENC Vice Chair George Hull on a regular basis.

See the update provided in the Executive Board section of this report.

- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement:

See the update provided in the Executive Board section of this report.

- University of Nebraska study on High Speed wireless technology as of 10-31-21:

Hamid reported that work is continuing with the results of propagation modeling on the 160Mega Hertz channel and performance modeling on different channels including propagation and velocity in different rail environments (such as going through tunnels). Two abstracts have been produced and will be presented.

For any questions or more information, please contact Hamid Sharif-Kashani at hamidSharif@UNL.edu.

- Working Group on Specification Wright Issues as provided by Jeff Gordon, FRA on 9-30-21:

The 9-27-21 call was canceled as the strawman that was to be developed was not yet complete. Jeff Gordon reported that he has not yet scheduled the next call but will do so in the near future.

The last update was provided on 9-2-21:

The NGENC Vehicle Weight Working Group has its 8th meeting on August 9. There were 11 members in attendance.

We discussed lateral imbalance and some ideas for how this parameter can be defined in a common way for all specifications. Some carbuilders expressed concern that the clearer definition of the vehicle condition(s) under which the imbalance is evaluated is required. Discussions ensued about clearance issues and that lateral imbalance is most often corrected by ballasting.

It was noted that the specifications do not explicitly require that production cars must be vertically plumb (although carbuilders achieve this by ballasting as required). Some carbuilders do not consider imbalance until all requirements related to wheel load equalization, derailment safety, ride quality and clearance are addressed.

It was noted that generally food service (café) cars pose the greatest challenge as it relates to lateral imbalance.

The Working Group lead proposed to assemble the information the group has deliberated upon to date and synthesize this into a single document for review at the next WG meeting on September 27 at 1pm ET. This document will eventually become the Working Group's report to the Technical Subcommittee.

Please let Jeff know if you are interested in attending the next WG meeting.

The next meeting of this group is expected to take place in the second week of November 2021.

- Technical subcommittee schedule revision for November 2021:

Due to the fact that the subcommittee calls for November fall on holidays (Veterans Day and Thanksgiving Day) it was decided that there would be no calls in November.

The next call will take place on 12-9-21.

The Finance and Administrative Subcommittee

Chair: Tim Ziethen, Amtrak

Vice Chair: Brian Beeler II, NNEPRA for Maine DOT

Second Vice Chair: John Oimoen, Illinois DOT

The Finance and Administrative subcommittee (FASC) will hold a conference call every four weeks on Wednesdays at 3:00pm Eastern.

During the Month of October 2021, the Finance and Administrative Subcommittee met on 10-13-21:

- Treasurer's Report as of 10-31-21:

Total Initial Grant Amount: \$1,250,000.

Amount Spent through August 2021: \$823,248.64

Balance remaining: \$ 426,751.36

Estimated spend at current rate for the remaining grant period (through 9-30-23): \$348,834.17

Current Spend Rate per month (as info and used in calculating): \$13,953.37

Estimated Balance at the end of the Extension Period (Contingency): \$77,917.19

Quarterly Grant Agreement Progress Report to FRA was submitted on time on 10-29-21.

Follow up Discussion regarding future funding options beyond 9-30-2023:

Mike Murray, FRA, had reported to the Executive Board on 10-5-21 that the FRA is looking at options and briefing leadership in the Office of Railroad Policy and Development. This will take a couple of months and Mike suggested that the Board not carry this as an agenda item for the bi-weekly meetings as it will take some time. When he has more information, he will let the Board know. Ray Hessinger suggested, at that time, that this information be reported to the FASC on its next call (today) and that the FASC keep track of it.

On today's call, Mike Murray reiterated that it would take several months and that he does not feel it should be discussed on every call. It was agreed that once FRA has a response Mike Murray will report it to either the Executive Board or the FASC whichever meets first.

Tim Ziethen reported that he has reached out to Ken Altman, Amtrak Government Affairs, and Tim has confirmed that Amtrak is supportive of the work of the Committee (NGEC) and that funding through either Amtrak or FRA are the best options, but other options could also be explored.

For now, this item will be carried as an open item to be tabled until such time as additional information is forthcoming.

- Conveying the message as of 10-31-21:

Developing the 2022 NGEC two-pager/comments received:

Steve Hewitt reported that he had received only a few comments (from Ray Hessinger and Jeff Gordon).

All suggested changes were sent within the email message yesterday (10-12-21) to the FASC members with no additional comments being received.

Changes:

On the front page:

Change the date to 2022

Update Timeline to include the TSSSA document released in September 2021 and update the DMU and Trainset Specs to Fall 2021 or a month if approved (likely December 2021).

Page two:

On the third set of Results change the first bullet to say:

Standardized specifications ensure rolling stock designs suited for use across North America.

Discussion:

Additional changes were recommended during today's discussion:

Add the number of units that have been entered into service since the first Charger was delivered (July 2017)

Add the number of coach cars entered into service since the first car was delivered in February 2020.

Steve Hewitt will reach out to IDOT and Caltrans to confirm these numbers.

Request the use of a picture of the VIA Rail Trainset that has just been delivered (VIA Rail used NGEC specs as the base spec)

Steve Hewitt will reach out to VIA Rail for permission to use a picture of their new Trainset and request that they provide the picture they would like used.

If approved by VIA Rail – the Trainset picture would be on the front page replacing the Charger which is also on page two.

Additionally, it was suggested that the NGEC website be added to the top of the front page in the green section. It currently is not included on the two-pager but should be.

On the next FASC call (11-10-21), this item will be on the agenda to follow-up on today's discussion and to obtain any additional suggestions for improvements to the document for 2022.

- Annual By-Laws Review:

On 10-13-21, Steve Hewitt reported that he and John Oimoen, IDOT, and Jeff Gordon, FRA, conducted a review of the NGEC By-Laws (an exercise required annually under the current grant agreement) and have recommended a few benign edits, more in line with word smithing and consistency.

Steve Hewitt walked through the document and highlighted all of the proposed changes.

Only one change was of substance and that was a recommendation by Steve Hewitt to revise the wording for what constitutes a quorum for the Executive Board using the same language that is currently in the Technical subcommittee and the Finance and Administrative subcommittee's (FASC) section of the By-Laws. This would be a change that would simply make sense and create consistency across the document.

After much discussion, it was agreed that the requirements for the Executive Board and the Technical subcommittee and the FASC should be the same across the board. It was also agreed that the language

used in in the Technical subcommittee and the FASC requirements which call for a majority of state members plus one Amtrak and one FRA representative is the preferred language and, for the sake of consistency and because it simply makes sense – that language is what should be used.

Tim Ziethen called for a motion to approve the changes as suggested with the caveat that Steve Hewitt will make those changes to the Executive Board Quorum requirements consistent with the wording of the two subcommittees.

On a motion by Brian Beeler II, for Maine DOT and a second by Jeff Gordon, FRA the proposed changes be approved with the caveat that Steve Hewitt make the changes to the Quorum requirements so that they are the same across the board and that the language is to be that currently used in the Technical subcommittee and the FASC requirements.

With no further discussion and no objections, Tim Ziethen determined that consensus was achieved, and the motion is approved.

Steve Hewitt is directed to make the changes as noted and provide the Executive Board members with a redline version showing the changes. The Board must have the proposed changes to the By-laws in writing for thirty (30) days before they can be brought forward for a vote by the Executive Board members.

- Quarterly Grant Progress Report:

The quarterly report for the period ending 9-30-21 was submitted by the deadline of 10-31-21.

Next Report will be for the period ending 12-31-21 and will be due to FRA on 1-31-22.

- Developing a plan to increase NGEC awareness:

On 10-13-21, Tim Ziethen noted that the reauthorization effort proved that the NGEC is a well-kept secret.

He asked the following questions:

What should we do?

Who should we call or contact?

What do we say?

Should we put together a plan?

Tim asked Steve Hewitt how the NGEC currently conducts outreach, and Steve reported that the NGEC uses its two-pager as its primary source of conveying the message and that it uses organizations such as SPRC to transmit it to congressional staff as a part of its outreach.

Steve also noted that it is transmitted to all 300+ NGEC members on the email list and to organizations such as TRB, SPRC and others, and is posted to the NGEC website by AASHTO.

Ray Hessinger suggested that since the "stuff we do is inside baseball and we may well be the best kept secret in all of transportation", the NGEC needs to find a way to be more of a "public face" when it takes an action such as the release of the Recommended Practices document or the TSSSA primer. Currently, only those who are involved with the NGEC are made aware of what the NGEC produces. Ray went on to suggest that it may well be that the NGEC should develop a one page "presser" when a new document is approved that would be transmitted along with the two-pager to industry publications such as Railway Age.

Tim Ziethen asked "are we allowed to publish or advertise? Ray responded that he was not suggesting the NGEC advertise; he was suggesting it reported news of the NGEC activities in the form of a press release.

Steve Hewitt added that it would have to be determined how the presser would be sent out. Would it be transmitted from the Chair or who/how?

Tim Ziethen asked would a legal opinion be required and, if so, who. Steve Hewitt responded that in the past it was always Amtrak Legal that provided opinions on such matters. Ray Hessinger agreed and noted that Amtrak is the grantee so it would have to come from Amtrak's legal department.

Steve Hewitt suggested that this discussion would need to be elevated to the Executive Board for its input and direction.

Ultimately, it was agreed that Tim Ziethen would report out on this discussion to the Executive Board on its next call as a part of his FASC update. Ray Hessinger would support the discussion by elaborating on his suggestion of doing "pressers".

NGEC Specification Review Panel(s):

For each PRIIA NGEC specification a Review Panel has been established to compare the specification (as developed by the technical subcommittee) against a Requirements document previously adopted by the Executive Board. As the Review Panel completes its work, it prepares a report with recommendations. This report is submitted to the Executive Board for its consideration. Once accepted by the Board, the specification is subsequently formally adopted by the Executive Board. As part of the Document Control process, any proposed revisions to a PRIIA NGEC specification must go through the Review Panel process as well. At such times, the Review Panel, previously established for a specification, is re-convened by the Executive Board chair.

As of 10-31-21 – the DMU Review Panel has received the summaries of changes to the DMU specification as approved by the Technical subcommittee on 10-28-21. The Panel expects to meet on 11-17-21 to review the Review Panel Report and Recommendations that is being prepared by Consultant Larry Salci.

Additionally, the PRIIA Trainset Specification re-write is ready to go to the Technical subcommittee for its review and should be brought up for discussion on the 12-9-21 call.