

SECTION 305 FINANCE and ADMINISTRATIVE SUB COMMITTEE

MINUTES MAY 26, 2021 3:00PM EASTERN CONFERENCE CALL

FACILITATOR	<i>Tim Ziethen, Chair of the S305 Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC)</i>
ATTENDEES	<i>Tim Ziethen, Brian Beeler II, Amanda Martin, Amanda Martin also as proxy for John Oimoen and Arun Rao, Troy Hughes, Ray Hessinger, Jeff Gordon, Shayne Gill, Strat Cavros, Oscar Bermudez, Jonathan Kwak, Steve Hewitt</i>
ABSENTEES	<i>Arun Rao, John Oimoen, Mike Murray, Jason Biggs, Larry Salci,</i>

DECISIONS MADE

1. Welcome and Open Meeting – Tim Ziethen, Amtrak:

Subcommittee Chair, Tim Ziethen, Amtrak, opened the conference call meeting and asked Steve Hewitt to call the roll.

2. Roll Call – Steve Hewitt:

Steve Hewitt called the roll and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

3. Approval of Minutes from the 4-28-21 conference call – Tim Ziethen, Amtrak:

On a motion by Amanda Martin, Iowa DOT, and a second by Brian Beeler II for Maine DOT, the minutes from 4-28-21 were approved as presented.

4. Treasurer’s Update – Tim Ziethen:

Tim Ziethen provided the following Treasurer’s update:

Balance and Spend Rate

Total Initial Grant Amount: \$1,250,000.
 Amount Spent through March 2021: \$748,062.38
 Balance remaining: \$ 496,665.49.
 Estimated spend at current rate for the remaining grant period (through 9-30-23): \$418,519.17.
 Current Spend Rate per month (as info and used in calculating): \$13,950.64.
 Estimated Balance at the end of the Extension Period (Contingency): \$78,146.32

5. Conveying the message (Federal Surface Transportation Authorization) - Tim/Steve:

Executing action Plan – status/activities as of 5-26-21:

2021 NGEC two-page handout - Steve:

Over 500 of these documents have been distributed electronically. Feedback has been positive, and they are proving useful in making the case with congressional staff.

Interactions with others – SPRC, Amtrak, AASHTO, Industry, Congress - Tim/Steve/Arun Rao:

Tim Ziethen reported that he has reached out to Ken Altman, Amtrak Government Affairs to ascertain around the mark ups of any of the proposed authorization bills that the NGEC is included. He has also emphasized and encouraged Amtrak Government Affairs to stress the importance of the NGEC and the value it has added in the procurement and standardization of equipment. He has also stressed the point that the specifications are being used widely.

Steve Hewitt reported that efforts continue to be made on behalf of the NGEC to have it included in the next Federal Surface Transportation Authorization.

The bill is currently being developed in the House and Senate, and SPRC, AASHTO, MPRC, Amtrak, and members of the industry (specifically Siemens) have reached out to House and Senate staff to request that the NGEC be reauthorized for the life of the bill and that it be funded at \$2.5 million over that time.

The House staff (Frances Bourne) has had a conversation with SPRC Chair Arun Rao, and with Shayne Gill, AASHTO, trying to understand why the NGEC should be continued. Both have provided feedback on the importance of the NGEC's work. Arun has pointed out the NGEC Specifications are not only used widely (all across the country and beyond our borders - VIA Rail) – but are also being relied upon by the states.

NGEC Chairman Ray Hessinger met with FRA and reiterated the same points as well as emphasizing that maintaining and updating/improving the specifications is critical going forward. The NGEC is also developing best practices (PRIIA 305-200 – Recommended Practices) and documents such as a TSSA primer that can be utilized by states during the procurement process.

Ray also gave a presentation on the NGEC (5-4-21) to the RSAC Passenger Rail Safety Working Group. He provided an overview of what it is, how it is structured and what it has accomplished.

The presentation given during the 5-4-21 meeting with the working group has or will be provided to Frances Bourne as a part of Arun's follow up with her. It has also been widely distributed to the industry and other NGEC members to add as a tool to be utilized along with the SPRC letter to House and the NGEC two-pager.

SPRC has also interacted with the Senate Commerce committee staff to request the inclusion of the NGEC with funding in their authorization legislation.

Steve also emphasized that at this point, through early discussions with congressional staff of preliminary drafts. It is apparent that neither the House nor Senate has included the reauthorization of the NGEC in those initial drafts. It is critical that SPRC and others continue to press for its inclusion as the drafting process continues. As noted above, SPRC and others have been providing vocal and written feedback to the House and Senate, as well as to FRA to get the NGEC on their radar and express the importance of its continuation.

Ray Hessinger added that he and Steve Hewitt have talked about the fact that they since the NGEC published its specifications no one has done a procurement of passenger rail equipment and not used those specs.

Ray added that this emphasizes the point that the NGEC should be authorized to continue to maintain and update specifications and develop new ones as needed; and it also underlines the fact that there is no real need to mandate the use of these specs.

Most entities that use the NGEC specs tinker around the edges, but do not make wholesale changes. Their changes are often improvements to the specifications. If entities are mandated to use the NGEC specs it would mean that the NGEC document control process would kick in and that involves review of change requests during the procurement to ensure compliance and can delay it. It is also a "big lift" for the NGEC in time and effort.

If the use of the specifications is outside of a mandate, the NGEC can take the as-built specifications and review them thoroughly against the NGEC specification requirements document and determine if the changes comply or not, and do they improve the specification. They can go through the full document change process and update the specs accordingly.

Mandated or not – the use of the specifications speaks extremely well of their value.

Shayne Gill commented that the questions he received during his conversation with the House T&I staff were more focused not on whether to reauthorize the NGEC - that did not seem to be in dispute – but whether or not to mandate the use of NGEC specifications.

Shayne also asked if FRA supported the NGEC – what is their position on this? If they do not support it, it will not happen. Shayne asked Jeff Gordon if he was aware of the FRA position – and his response was that he did not know as that he is not in the position to know.

Steve Hewitt emphasized that he continues to keep this discussion on the agendas of the various NGEC subcommittees to be sure to keep the issue on the radar of those who can go to congressional staff and FRA and press the issue. The NGEC, as a whole, cannot "lobby" because of its membership (FRA, Amtrak, and States), but the individual members of the NGEC – including the industry – can certainly appeal to congressional staff and members and to FRA.

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Other Issues/Questions – All:

Steve Hewitt reminded the members of the NGEN Executive Board on today's call that next Tuesday (6-1-21) they will meet with FRA Deputy Administrator Amit Bose – at his request – to discuss the American Jobs Plan and to provide input.

Asked by Shayne Gill if this is a good opportunity to raise the issue of FRA support for the NGEN reauthorization, Jeff Gordon responded "no". It would not be appropriate, as the Deputy Administrator requested the opportunity to meet with the Executive Board to discuss the American Jobs Plan and to get Board members input on that.

Adjourn:

With no other business forthcoming, Chairman Ziethen adjourned the call at 3:33pm Eastern.

By Computer: <https://stephenhewitthewittconsulting.my.webex.com/meet/shewitt109>

by phone: 1-415-655-0001

Access code: 126-073-1531

Next call – 6-23-21

Decisions - Action Items

Treasurer's Report – 5-26 -21:

Balance and Spend Rate

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

Amount Spent through March 2021: \$748,062.38

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Conveying the message (Federal Surface Transportation Authorization):

Executing action Plan – status/activities as of 5-26-21:

2021 NGEN two-page handout:

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Interactions with others – SPRC, Amtrak, AASHTO, Industry, Congress:

See discussion above under agenda item 5b.

Reauthorization efforts continue...

Quarterly Grant Progress Report to FRA for quarter ending 3-31-21:

The 3-31-21 report was completed and was submitted to FRA on time.

The next quarterly report (for the period ending 6-30-21) will be due on 7-31-21.

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Next Call -6-23-21

ATTACHMENTS



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

SECTION 305 NGEC Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC)

Web Ex video/audio information:

By Computer: <https://stephenhewitthewittconsulting.my.webex.com/meet/shewitt109>

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AGENDA

5-26-21

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| 1. Welcome/Open | Tim Ziethen |
| 2. Roll Call | Steve Hewitt |
| 3. Approval of the Minutes from 4-28-21 | Tim Ziethen |
| 4. Treasurer's Update | Tim Ziethen |
| a. Balance-Spend Rate | |
| 5. Conveying the Message (Federal Surface Transportation Authorization) | Tim/Steve |
| Executing action Plan – status/activities since last call: | |
| a. 2021 NGEC two-page handout | Steve |
| b. Interactions with others – SPRC, Amtrak, AASHTO, RSAC PRSWG, Industry, Congress | |
| 6. Other Issues/questions | All |

Next Call 6-23-21