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

Section 305 Next Generation Corridor Equipment Pool Committee (NGEC)

Monthly Activities Report: November 30, 2023

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

Effective 8-8-23, the Executive Board will hold web- conference calls every 4 weeks on – Tuesdays at 11:30am Eastern.

During the month of November 2023, the Executive Board met once – on the 28th.

Highlights, decisions, and action items status updates from the month of November include:

Treasurer's Report – 11-30-23:

Balance/Spend Rate Through September 2023

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

Expenses incurred through September 2023: \$1,257,530.66

Balance remaining: (\$7,530.66).

Current Spend Rate per month (as info and used in calculating): \$15,150.97.

Estimated Balance at the end of the Grant Period: (\$7,530.66).

Amtrak will pick up the overage as noted previously.

Status: 6-month no-cost grant agreement extension:

The 6-month no-cost agreement has been approved and will allow a drawdown for any additional expenses that may come in against the prior grant for 6-months.

Strat Cavros, AASHTO, confirmed that he has received and signed the 6-month no-cost extension.

Prior Grant Agreement Close-out items – actions:

Tim Ziethen reported that there will be certain close out actions required by the end of March 2024, and that he is working with the Amtrak grants office to identify what those actions are.

Status – Contract Modifications for the Sub-Contractors:

Tim Ziethen reaffirmed that the Amtrak AOP budget (\$260,000) is approved for NGEN 305 Committee – continued work funded per work plan. Tim also noted that the PO language has been sent to AASHTO and once executed, between Amtrak and AASHTO, the contract modifications extending the sub-contractor agreements through 9-30-24 can be executed by AASHTO.

Strat Cavros stated that there was some language that needed to be ironed out and that he and Tim should discuss. Once the language is resolved he will formally issue the sub-contractor modification/extension.

Seeking Long-Term Funding – discuss next steps/options:

Tim Ziethen reported that there still needs to be discussions of long-term funding. He noted that another CRISI NOFO will be coming out next year and Amtrak could, again, apply for funding for the NGEN through that program. Tim also noted that Amtrak and FRA are planning to meet to discuss other potential funding options.

Status: Requesting a Debrief with FRA on the previous CRISI Grant Application:

Tim also reported that Amtrak had its debrief with FRA on the CRISI grant application submitted for NGEN funding. FRA stated that there were no issues with the application it was well done and provided the right information, it was simply a matter of the requests coming in out-weighed the funds available, and FRA had to make decisions on which applications to award with limited funds available. Tim noted that they were encouraged to apply again in the next round as well as continue to discuss other potential options.

By-Laws Annual Review – FASC Recommendation

Tim reported that the FASC is recommending no changes to the By-Laws are needed at this time.

Steve Hewitt provided a summary of the steps in the review process that led to the decision by the FASC to recommend no changes after completing the annual review. He also pointed out that no formal action was required, unless Board members felt there were changes needed. If that were the case a Board member would be able to submit proposed changes at any time in writing. After being in their possession for 30-days, the Board could bring the proposed changes up for consideration of adoption.

With no additional comments forthcoming, the Board accepts the FASC recommendation and Steve Hewitt will note that the Annual Review took place and no formal action was required as no changes were recommended.

NGEN two-pager updates for 2024 version – FASC Recommendations:

On 11-28-23, Steve Hewitt walked through the FASC recommendations for updating the two-pager for 2024:

FASC Recommendations for updates to the two-pager for 2024:

On Page one:

- Insert a new photo.

- Change date to 2024 in the upper right-hand corner.
- Update the Timeline column by including current numbers of Charger Locomotives and Venture cars in service. (*John Oimoen, provided updated numbers (64 in service 68 by year's end) but Steve has not received numbers on the Chargers. Steve will ask Joe Paul, Amtrak, if he has updated numbers.*)
- Troy Hughes that on the timeline the updating of the 305-900 NGEC Reference specification series be included so as to show that there were activities during 2023.

Action: Joe Paul agreed there are 68 IDOT Venture cars in service today (11-28-23) and that he will provide updated numbers on the Chargers as well.

On Page two:

- Update the photos. Steve noted there are three currently on Page two and refreshing them would be good to do. (*John Oimoen sent photos of the interiors and Art Peterson sent new exterior pictures. These were all forwarded to the FASC prior to this call – 11-8-23.*)
- Steve Hewitt noted that he was aware of one additional entity - Utah Transit Authority (UTA)- that was using the NGEC specs. All other listed under Realization on the second page continue to be relevant. He asked members of FASC to let him know if there are others.
- Troy Hughes commented on the GOALS stated on page two and was concerned that it is inaccurate as the cost savings have not necessarily been realized. Steve Hewitt suggested that while it may not have happened yet, the goal to get there still exists. He suggested the line below the stated goal be removed for accuracy.

Action: John Oimoen has additional – more of a broader interior view – photos of the café car which would be “more representative of what it looks like“. John will get the photos to Steve Hewitt.

Members are asked to provide any photos they may want to include for consideration as well as any additional comments or suggestions beyond those recommended by the FASC. Steve Hewitt noted that the review and information requested should be completed by the December meeting of the Executive Board to allow MODOT graphic arts time to format and produce the 2024 version.

- Multi-State Rail Car Procurement as of 11-28-23 (provided by Caltrans):

The remaining Cab Car FDR items are in the closure stage with final submittals in work. The Cab Car MCAT simulation report has been approved by the states and the FRA. IDOT Café Car system level FDR reviews are complete and the requested Café Car MCAT simulations have also been submitted to the FRA for review.

The Cab Car Complete FAI and FRA sample car inspection occurred in July with open items in review and closure.

137 cars are in production or have been produced at Siemens Sacramento Facility. IDOT coaches are currently in revenue service and Caltrans is preparing for crew familiarization and shakedown testing of the first trainset pending completion of maintenance items and necessary training.

On 11-28-23, Kyle Gradinger, Caltrans, added that they were starting the maintenance and training today and expect to begin revenue service by the middle of next week (week of 12-3-23).

- Metro-North Dual Mode Locomotive Equipment as of 11-28-23:

Ray Hessinger reported that he has not received an update from Metro-North for October and therefore did not have much to provide beyond what was previously reported. Primary focus has been on FAIs on many types of components and everything has been proceeding on schedule.

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Update – as of 11-28-23:

On the new Acela:

Work continues on various qualifications.

On the Charger Locomotives:

Amtrak continues to take delivery of units and add routes where they are in service. All is moving along well.

On the Airo trainsets:

There are car shells in production and they are finalizing FAI's.

On the Long-Distance procurement – an RFP should be out by the end of the year.

- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement:

On 10-12-23, Marci Petterson reported to the Technical Subcommittee that the kick-off meeting was held and they have begun pre-design meetings.

There was no update provided in November.

Next Planned Update: 2024 NGEC Annual Meeting 2-2-24 (invited)

- VIA Rail Equipment Procurements:

A detailed update presentation was provided to the NGEC during the Annual Meeting on 2-3-23. The presentation is posted in the Meetings section of the website at www.ngec.org

Next Planned Update: 2024 NGEC Annual Meeting 2-2-24 (invited)

- Document Control Progress Report – 11-28-23:

Update Specification 305-901 is ready to be signed except I need to remove the signature line for Amtrak's CMO. Should be with Ray Hessinger this week for his signature.

The Materials Working Group (WG) continues to meet and work their way through the Single Level Specification. This week they worked on Dissimilar Metals, Aluminum Corrosion Protection and Aluminum Finishing.

Tammy is updating the WG Member Lists and I will be sending them to the WG Leaders. Melissa Shurland will replace Jeff Gordon on the Mechanical WG, and the Weigh WG will hopefully finish their tasks before Jeff retires.

- Filling Vacancies:

On 11-28-23, Ray Hessinger discussed several Review Panels that have vacancies. The vacancies are seats that have always been filled by IDOT and Caltrans, and still should be. It was previously agreed that these seats will remain with those two states – but neither has named their representative. There will also be a change in representation by FRA on each of the Review Panels with the year end retirement of Jeff Gordon.

NGEC Executive Board – Specification Review Panels/Members: 2023

Consultants/ Technical Support to the Review Panels:

Review Panel Consultant – Larry Salci
 NGEC Support – Steve Hewitt
 Technical Support – Tammy Krause
 Amtrak Technical Support – Mike Kraft

Bi-Level Car Review Panel:

Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT – Chair
Vacant Caltrans
 Amanda Martin, Iowa DOT
Melissa Shurland, FRA

Locomotive Review Panel:

Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT – Chair
Vacant Caltrans
Vacant - IDOT (to be vacant)
 Jason Biggs, Washington State DOT
Melissa Shurland, FRA

Trainset Review Panel:
 Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT – Chair
 Ed Engle, Iowa DOT
 Jason Biggs, Washington State DOT
Melissa Shurland, FRA

Single Level Rail Car Review Panel:
 Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT -- Chair
 Ed Engle, Iowa DOT
 Jason Biggs, WSDOT
Melissa Shurland, FRA

DMU Review Panel Members:
 Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT -- Chair
 Jeff Gordon, FRA **Melissa Shurland, FRA**
 Brian Beeler, for Maine DOT
Vacant - Caltrans

Kyle Gradinger, Caltrans will discuss Review Panel representation with Momo Tamaoki and ask for her recommendations as to Caltrans representation. He did note that Caltrans would want to remain on those panels but was not sure who would be the right person. He will get back to Steve Hewitt and Ray Hessinger.

John Oimoen, IDOT stated that he is still in the process of filling the vacancy left by Jennifer Bastian leaving IDOT, and he currently does not have anyone to take her place on these panels. He agreed that IDOT should retain its seat on the panels it has been on but may not have a name until after the Annual Meeting.

Jeff Gordon, FRA, stated that he would suggest that Melissa Shurland, who will take his place on the Technical subcommittee when he retires at the end of the year, be named as the FRA's Review Panels representative at least for the time being.

Steve Hewitt has made the FRA representation change and will await word from Caltrans and IDOT.

- NGENC 2024 Annual Meeting:

The NGENC Annual meeting for 2024 is scheduled for 2-2-24 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel Capitol Hill, Washington, DC.

On 11-28-23, Ray Hessinger and Steve Hewitt presented an updated DRAFT agenda and asked that the members inform ray and Steve as to who will be their presenters on specific agenda items. Some speakers were confirmed on 11-28-23, but additional speakers still need to be named.

This year the Officers will be elected to new two year terms as will the states. States were asked to let Steve Hewitt and Ray Hessinger know if they intend to remain on the Board and to confirm representation.

On 11-29-23, George Hull, Amtrak, informed Steve Hewitt, and Ray Hessinger that he is appointing his Deputy CMO as Chair of the Technical subcommittee and to take his place as Vice Chair of the NGENC Executive Board.

Ray Hessinger appointed a nominating committee (per the By-Laws) to present nominees for the slate of officers and for state Executive Board members.

As for the officers, both Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT (Chair) and John Oimoen, IDOT (Secretary) have expressed their interest in remaining in their current roles. The Vice Chair is always a representative from the Amtrak CMO office and the Treasurer is also an Amtrak representative.

Below is an updated link for the 2024 Winter Rail Meeting provided by Kamasha Hendrickson, AASHTO Senior Meeting Planner:

The per diem rate is now \$193 per night (single/Double rooms).

<https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/WASRW/G-HTO4>

Cut-Off Date: January 5, 2024

- Considering the question of changing web-conference service provider from WebEx to Teams:

Based on input from both FRA and Amtrak and no concerns expressed by the Technical Subcommittee members or the Executive Board, Ray Hessinger determined that the preference is to switch from WebEx to Teams. Steve Hewitt has researched costs and reported to the Board that moving to Teams requires a minimal expense and he will absorb the cost.

Technical subcommittee

Chair: George Hull, Amtrak

Vice Chair: Joe Paul, Amtrak

Note: On August 8th the technical subcommittee discussed the cadence of its meetings as directed by the Executive Board and determined that the meetings would remain bi-weekly with the Chair and Steve Hewitt making the determination to cancel an up-coming meeting if the agenda was light.

During the month of November 2023, the subcommittee met once – on the 9th:

Key decisions and action item updates from the month of November 2023, included:

- Backgrounder educational document:

The 2023 NGEC two-page educational remains available in electronic or hard copy versions. Requests should be sent to Steve Hewitt at shewitt109@aol.com

To date 368 copies have been distributed.

The FASC is in the process of developing the 2024 version of the two-pager. (see Exec Board section of this report for updates recommended to the Board on 11-28-23)

- Document Control Update as of 11-28-23:

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

- Communications on Rail Cars Working Group & the Carbody Materials Working Group's status - 10-12-23:

The Communications Working Group met last week and have finalized their changes to the DTL Section of the Single Level Specification. The Working Group decided to create the section for the Single Level and it will be applied to other specifications. They have submitted a DCR with all of the changes.

No update provided in November.

- Multi-State Car Procurement - Caltrans (Lead State) update as of 11-28-23:

See Executive Board section of this report for the status of the Venture car multi- state procurement.

- Metro North Dual Mode Locomotive Procurement as of 11-28-23:

See Executive Board section of this report for the status of this procurement.

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Updates as of 11-28-23 reported by George Hull, Amtrak:

See Executive Board section of this report for the status of this procurement.

- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement:

See Executive Board section of this report for the status of this procurement.

- University of Nebraska/FRA study on High Speed wireless technology as of 11-28-23:

Hamid Sharif, University of Nebraska, provided an update on the High-Speed Wireless Study. He gave a brief background/overview of the study and the progress thus far in its current phase:

The University of Nebraska Advanced Telecommunications Engineering Lab has been studying the sub-giga-Hertz frequencies for rail applications to ease the current spectrum saturation for railroads, under the direction of FRA. We have studied the 160 MHz frequency as an example of these sub-giga Hertz bands. Theoretical and computer models were designed to represent a typical Transmitter, a Receiver, and a channel model for this frequency band. Then, different applications and rail scenarios were simulated, and performance data were collected.

After conducting modeling and simulation testing, they began to conduct field testing. Up to now the data from the field testing is close to the modeling and simulations.

They will continue on this phase through the end of December and will look to FRA for funding to continue the study in different areas.

Additionally, as they plan for the next phase of this project, they are interested in hearing any suggestions for implementing any other sub-giga frequencies or any specific rail application utilizing the 160 MHz.

Hamid also noted that he has been invited by Steve Hewitt to give a presentation on the study during the Annual Meeting of the NGEC in Washington, DC on 2-2-24.

Hamid Sharif
Advanced Telecommunications Engineering Lab
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Phone: 402-917-6363
Email: HSHARIF@UNL.EDU

- Working Group on Specification Weight Issues as of 11-9-23:

On 11-9-23, Jeff Gordon reported that the working group met earlier in the day with 7 members present. Jeff had "fluffed" up the DRAFT document and distributed it to members of the group. He has highlighted the areas that needed additional input/changes and asked that members return it to him by 11-25-23. He has scheduled the next meeting for 12-4-23 with the intent of adjudicating the document to send it on to the full Technical subcommittee

- Status: NGEC Funding – CRISI Grant Timeline – path forward:

The NGEC did not receive a 2022 CRISI Grant. The announcement of grants awarded was released on 9-25-23 and the NGEC was not included in the award list.

See the Executive Board section of this report for more detail on a potential path forward.

- Follow-up: Question of changing the web-confereneec service provider from WebEx to Teams:

As reported in the Executive Board section of this report, the NGEC will move to Teams as the web conference service. The change will likely take place after the first of the year (2024).

- 2024 NGEC Annual Meeting:

A DRAFT agenda has been presented to the Executive Board, with some speakers yet to be determined. The current draft has been circulated to NGEN members – including the industry – and will be reviewed with the Technical subcommittee on 12-7-23 and, again, with the Board on 12-19-23.

AASHTO has provided the hotel link for the rail meetings to be held during that week. As always, the NGEN is a part of several meetings held in conjunction with AASHTO's Council on Rail Transportation.

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The per diem rate is now \$193 per night (single/Double rooms).
<https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/WASRW/G-HTO4>
 Cut-Off Date: January 5, 2024

AASHTO Meeting Planner:

Kamasha Hendrickson, CMP, CGMP
 Senior Meeting Planner
 American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
 555 12th St, NW, Suite 1000
 Washington, DC 20004
 Tel: 202-624-5403
 E-mail: khendrickson@ashto.org

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 November, the Finance and Administrative Subcommittee met once on the 8th.

Note: The FASC discussed its' cadence of once every four weeks, and, like the Tech subcommittee, it left the cadence as is with the Chair and Steve Hewitt making the determination to cancel an up-coming meeting if the agenda was light.

Key decisions and action item updates from the month of November 2023 included:

Treasurer's Update- Balance and Spend Rate – Forecast as provided by Tim Ziethen to the Executive Board on 11-28-23:

Balance/Spend Rate Through November 2023

Total Initial Grant Amount: \$1,250,000.
 Expenses incurred through September 2023: \$1,257,530.66
 Balance remaining: (\$7,530.66).
 Current Spend Rate per month (as info and used in calculating): \$15,150.97.
 Estimated Balance at the end of the Grant Period: (\$7,530.66).

Amtrak will pick up the overage as noted previously.

- Conveying the message as of 9-13-23:

The NGEC 2023 backgrounder/educational document was released in January and formally introduced during the Annual Meeting. To date 368 copies have been distributed (hard and soft).

On 11-9-23, the FASC approved recommended updates (in draft form) and asked Steve Hewitt to send on to the Executive Board for its review and comment.

See the Executive Board section of this report for a detailed description of the recommended changes and future action requires.

The NGEC website is up and running at: www.ngec.org. Steve Hewitt reviews the website periodically and sends updates and/or changes to AASHTO – the maintainer of the site.

- Quarterly Grant Agreement Progress Report to FRA

All reports have been submitted on time.

The report for the period ending 9-30-23 was submitted on 10-30-23.

The next report will be due on 1-31-24.

- Annual NGEC By-Laws Review:

On 11-8-23, FASC accepted the recommendation from Steve Hewitt and John Oimoen to inform the Executive Board that no changes were required for the NGEC By-Laws. On 11-28-23, the Board accepted the FASC recommendation and asked Steve Hewitt to make a notation on the front page of the By-Laws.

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.

The NGEC Review Panels did not meet in November. Vacancies are being filled as discussed during the 11-28-23 Executive Board meeting.