



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

NGEC FINANCE and ADMINISTRATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 28, 2024 3:00PM EASTERN

TEAMS MEETING

FACILITATOR	<i>Tim Ziethen, Chair of the S305 Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC)</i>
ATTENDEES	<i>Tim Ziethen, Brian Beeler II, Troy Hughes, Troy Hughes also as proxy for Amanda Martin, Amanda Villani, Mike Murray, Steve Hewitt, Strat Cavros</i>
ABSENTEES	<i>Amanda Martin, Ray Hessinger, Melina Lopez, Larry Salci, Shayne Gill, Barley Fields</i>

DECISIONS MADE

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

FASC Chair Tim Ziethen opened the meeting and asked Steve Hewitt to call the roll.

2. Roll Call – Steve Hewitt:

After calling the roll, Steve Hewitt confirmed the presence of a quorum.

3. Approval of Minutes from the 1-3-24 meeting – Tim Ziethen, Amtrak

On a motion by Brian Beeler II, for Maine DOT, and a second by Amanda Villani, WSDOT, the minutes from 1-3-24 were approved as submitted.

4. Annual Meeting – overview/feedback – Tim Ziethen, Steve Hewitt, All:

Steve Hewitt opened the discussion by noting that, although there were technical issues with Teams which delayed the start of the meeting, once it got underway it flowed well and was successful. There were around 50 in-person attendees and 40-45 virtual attendees. This number is down somewhat from the last Annual Meeting, but still a significant number showing strong interest continues in the work of the NGEC.

Steve noted that the presentations were some of the best, most informative that he has seen since the start of the NGEC. As more work is getting done and vehicles are being produced and in service, there is more to say and the presentations attest to that.

Steve added that elections were held and the State members of the Executive Board were elected to new two-year terms. All ten of the states that have been on the Board remained – some with new representation due to retirements or other changes. Officers were also named for a two-year period.

The officers are:

- Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT – Chair
- Dan Ruppert, Amtrak – Vice Chair and Chair of the Technical subcommittee
- Tim Ziethen, Amtrak – Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Administrative subcommittee (FASC)
- Amanda Martin, Iowa DOT – Secretary and Second Vice Chair of the FASC

Tim Ziethen echoed much of what Steve Hewitt had stated. He noted that once the technical issues got squared away – “it all worked well”. The presentations were of high quality and “up a notch from other years”. Tim added that the meeting got back on schedule quickly, after the delay and concluded on time.

Tim added that it was great to see those who were able to be there in-person and that is always a benefit.

Steve Hewitt added that he thought Ray Hessinger, Chair did a tremendous job in chairing the meeting remotely when he was unable to attend in-person at the last minute. Steve thought Ray deserved a lot of credit for running the meeting without the ability to see the room – since there were no cameras so only the presentations were seen.

Mike Murray, FRA, noted that “I see the virtual elements make it more accessible, but at the same time, we are regularly running into technical issues – or whatever – that we have dealt with as well. He added that he was concerned with the flow of the meeting when it does not start on time “do we lose it?”

He noted issues with asking questions – difficulty with the microphone or the person on line trying to ask a question and those in the room not hearing it etc.

He further noted that looking at the meeting options of “real life and hybrid – my thought on this is what is the right balance? Should all the presentations only be given in-person?” He commented on the possibility of not doing a hybrid meeting and asking that for one meeting a year, members attend in-person.

Going forward, he is looking for ideas and potential guidelines – maybe members just send one-person.

Tim Ziethen agreed that it can be difficult to hold a hybrid meeting, and it is always better to have people in the room, but it’s difficult ever since the pandemic for whatever reason. He would be interested in hearing more thoughts on this.

Steve Hewitt noted that since the pandemic when the meeting was held virtually only, its been very difficult to not hold it as a hybrid meeting. Some states cannot travel. While Steve would prefer it to be in-person only as it was for the first ten years, it is very difficult to go back to in-person only once the hybrid door has been opened. He also noted that if it had been an in-person meeting only this year “we would not have had a quorum”. It is the states that are having difficulty traveling for whatever reasons, and they are, obviously, key to the NGEC’s work. Also, about 80% of the presenters were virtual. As one example, Caltrans was unable to travel and they are a Board member as well as being involved in 3 or 4 presentations. Yet they were willing to be up at 5:00AM on the west coast to participate.

Steve also noted that because the NGEC is always on Friday at the end of a long week of other rail meetings, we lose people who cannot stay that last day. IDOT was an example of that attending the earlier rail meetings, but unable to stay through Friday.

Steve added that it was the Executive Board that decided to make the meeting Hybrid the year after the pandemic, and its very hard to stop it now. Steve also noted that the meeting last year went without any technical issues – this year we switched from Webex to Teams and it was clearly problematic for whatever reason.

Brian Beeler II, for Maine DOT, mentioned that he would prefer in-person as well but “the new reality is that it is not going to fly” because there are virtual capabilities. He mentioned the possibility of using money that is now spent on travel reimbursement for states to improve the technology capabilities.

The discussion ended at this point with no further comments being offered. The discussion will need to be had at the Executive Board as it is the governing body.

5.

Treasurer’s Update- Balance and Spend Rate – Forecast – Tim Ziethen:

Balance/Spend Rate Through December 2023 – end of prior Grant:

Total Initial Grant Amount: \$1,510,000.

Expenses incurred through December 2023: \$1,283,740.13

Balance remaining: \$ 226,759.87.

Current Spend Rate per month (as info and used in calculating): \$14,749.89.

Estimated Balance at the end of the Grant Period: \$ 94,010.89

Status: Amtrak/AASHTO and AASHTO/Sub-Contractor Extensions:

Tim Ziethen reported that AASHTO and Amtrak have rectified the discrepancies they had with regard to the amount available with the new funding. The next step is to extend the sub-contractors in line with the current funding period.

Strat Cavros, AASHTO, stated that he is planning to send Steve Hewitt a new contract modification in a few days. He asked about the Krause and Casamar agreements. Steve Hewitt said that they usually would submit a scope of work and budget for the 12-month period to AASHTO and the two parties would then execute the agreements. Steve will reach out to Camren Cordell (Casamar) and to Tammy Krause and ask that they submit the SOW and budget to AASHTO with the work having begun on 10-1-23 and would run through 9-30-24. Steve added that the NGEC budget for both the technical writer and document control manager had been approved in October and was based on the work plan and budget submitted by both at that time. This is what should be the basis for what is to be submitted to AASHTO. He noted that they are already working and have been since the start of the new performance period.

Strat added that Larry Salci's work will be handled per task as it has been in the past. Larry submits a scope of work and budget each time he is asked to perform a Review Panel Report.

Clarifying Casamar Invoice FY23 overage:

Tim Ziethen reported that the Casamar invoice discrepancy has not yet been resolved and he has asked Tammy Krause to contact Casamar and get it clarified.

After some discussion, it was agreed that Steve Hewitt will reach out to Tammy and Camren and ask for a scope of work and budget for the 12-month period beginning on 10-1-23 and ending on 9-30-24.

As for the Casamar issue, Strat Cavros stated that the invoice submitted was through work performed into December 2023 and the overage was \$1015. AASHTO and Casamar had signed a modification for an additional \$9000 as approved by the Board during the prior grant period to get to the end of that period. Steve noted that if the invoice includes work performed after 9-30-23, it should be a part of the new agreement under the current funding source.

Steve will ask for a clarification from Camren on this as well as the new SOW and budget. He noted "the work was done". It seems that maybe the charges need to be allocated to the prior grant up to the \$1,015 and a second invoice charging against the new funding may be needed.

6. Discussion – future funding options – Tim Ziethen:

Tim Ziethen once again, noted that, although Amtrak's CRISI application for the NGEC was not awarded, the FRA, in the debrief with Amtrak, provided positive feedback on the application. It was thorough, there were no defects noted. In fact, the FRA complimented Amtrak on the quality of the application. It simply came down to too many requests for too little total funds available. Amtrak has been encouraged to submit a new application in response to the next CRISI Grant NOFO when it comes out. Amtrak intends to apply again and will work with the NGEC to update the application and to request industry letters in support again. The industry weighed in in a positive and impressive manner during the last round and that was noted by the FRA.

Tim is optimistic that the effort can turn out favorably but commented that it remains important that other potential options are looked at. Tim does not have another option to offer and hopes that members provide input on potential options that may be out there that he is not aware of.

Tim asked Mike Murray, FRA, if a NOFO for the CRISI Grant applications has been issued yet. Mike responded that it has not but "in the coming weeks it should be".

7. Other issues/questions – All:

Tim noted that there are close out actions that will be forthcoming. Certain forms will need to be filled out to close out the prior grant. There was a 6-month no-cost extension to provide time to conduct close out actions, and that time is approaching.

Steve Hewitt asked how the quarterly reports will be done after the close out. Currently the prior grant and the new funding are combined and the quarterly reports to FRA are showing percentages of completion of work plan activities against the total performance time of the two which gets a bit muddled.

Tim noted that once the close out of the prior grant occurs, there is no formal progress report to FRA required.

He does believe the quarterly reports are worthwhile and probably should continue internally and be circulated to the Board members, but he agreed that it should be against the new funding not the two combined. There should be a re-set to the current budget and work plan. He noted that the next quarterly report will be reflective of that.

With no other business forthcoming, Tim Ziethen adjourned the call at 3:38 pm Eastern.

**Next Meeting
3-27-24**

Decisions - Action Items

Balance/Spend Rate Through December 2023:

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Estimated Balance at the end of the Grant Period: \$ 94,010.89

Amtrak/AASHTO and AASHTO/Sub-Contractor Extensions:

Amtrak/AASHTO has been resolved.

In a few days, Strat Cavros will be sending Steve Hewitt a contract modification for the new performance period.

Steve Hewitt will reach out to Camren Cordell (Casamar) and to Tammy Krause and ask that they submit the SOW and budget to AASHTO with the work having begun on 10-1-23 and would run through 9-30-24. Steve added that the NGEC budget for both the technical writer and document control manager had been approved in October and was based on the work plan and budget submitted by both at that time.

Clarifying Casamar Invoice FY23 overage:

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Future Funding for the NGEC:

Once the NOFO for the next round of CRISI grants is issued, Amtrak intends to submit a new application for funding for the NGEC. The NOFO is expected to be issued in the coming weeks.

Members of the FASC are asked to provide recommendations for any other funding options they may be aware of.

NGEC 2024 two-pager:

The 2024 version of the two-page educational flyer is now available electronically or in hard copy by request from Steve Hewitt. It is also posted on the NGEC website www.ngec.org.

To date: 460 copies (hard and electronic) have been distributed.

Quarterly Grant Progress Reports:

The FFY 2024 First quarter report was submitted to the FRA on time and was distributed to the Executive Board.

The next report is due by April 30, 2024, and will be an internal document with a re-set to the current work plan and budget.

**Next Meeting
3-27-24**

ATTACHMENTS



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

NGEC FASC AGENDA

Microsoft Teams meeting
Join on your computer, mobile app or room device.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)
Meeting ID: 218 969 011 071
Passcode: r7bGDN
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AGENDA 2-28-24 3:00PM Eastern

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|----|---|---------------|
| 1. | Welcome/Open | Tim Ziethen |
| 2. | Roll Call | Steve Hewitt |
| 3. | Approval – Minutes from 1-3-24 | Tim Ziethen |
| 4. | Annual Meeting – overview/feedback | Tim/Steve/All |
| 5. | Treasurer’s Update | Tim Ziethen |
| | Update - Balance/Spend Rate/Forecast | |
| | Status – Amtrak/AASHTO and AASHTO/Sub-Contractor extensions | |
| | Resolving Casamar Invoice | |
| 6. | Discussion – future funding options/next steps | Tim Ziethen |
| | Review previous CRISI Grant Application – improving it. | |
| | Other Potential Funding options | |
| 7. | Other Issues/Questions | All |

Next Meeting: 3-27-24