



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

NGEC FINANCE and ADMINISTRATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES

MARCH 27, 2024

3:00PM EASTERN

TEAMS MEETING

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| FACILITATOR | <i>Tim Ziethen, Chair of the S305 Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC)</i> |
| ATTENDEES | <i>Tim Ziethen, Tim also as proxy for Mike Murray, Brian Beeler II, Melina Lopez, Steve Hewitt, Strat Cavros, Shayne Gill, Barley Fields</i> |
| ABSENTEES | <i>Mike Murray, Amanda Martin, Ray Hessinger, Troy Hughes, Amanda Villani, Larry Salci</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 could not confirm the presence of a quorum.

Due to the lack of a quorum, it was agreed that the meeting would be held and minutes would be taken for the record but no formal votes would take place.

3. Approval of Minutes from the 2-28-24 meeting – Tim Ziethen, Amtrak

Due to the lack of a quorum, this item was tabled.

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

Balance/Spend Rate Through January 2024

New Report based on funding via Amtrak AOP FY 10-1-23 thru 9-30-24:

Amtrak AOP Funding - \$260,000
 Invoiced through January – 57,343.07
 Forecast/Accrual Amount to Reflect Billing Lag 60 days - \$30,000.
 Invoiced and Accrual Expenses to date – 87,343.07.
 Remaining funds (including 60 day forecast for billing) - \$172,656.93.
 Estimated full year (YTD + FC + remaining months at Avg Spend TD) - \$162,061.69.
 Current Average Monthly Spend - \$12,453.10

Strat Cavros, AASHTO, reported that he is about to submit the invoice for February in the amount of approximately \$16,488.

Tim noted that amount would keep the monthly spend rate right around the anticipated trend of around \$15,000. Tim will update the report once the invoice has been received from AASHTO.

Seeking Long-Term Funding – next steps:

Amtrak expects to get the details regarding the CRISI grant process (NOFO) and Tim is in communication with the Amtrak grants office to coordinate that application process.

Shayne Gill, AASHTO, reported that he heard in a States for Passenger Rail Coalition (SPRC) meeting this week that the NOFO is expected to be out in April or May 2024.

Tim stated that he has heard something to that effect and commented that it is a bit later than last year. He also noted that Amtrak Grants is watching for it. Tim and the grants office will look at the application that was submitted last year to see where it can be strengthened. It was considered a very good application, so finding ways to improve it will not be easy. Tim will look for input from NGEN/FASC members as well. He does not want to simply re-submit the same app – rather submit a new application with improvements over the last one.

Status – Contract Extensions:

Strat Cavros, AASHTO, reported that Steve Hewitt's contract extension has been executed.

Strat also reported that AASHTO has signed the TLK - Tammy Krause- contract extension and is awaiting Tammy's signature. Once Tammy signs it will be fully executed.

Casamar has not yet submitted the Scope of Work and Not to Exceed budget for the Technical Writer contract extension to AASHTO.

Steve Hewitt provided what he knows of issues related to the Casamar extension:

This past week, Tammy Krause sent the following email to Ray Hessinger and Tim Ziethen with a CC to Steve Hewitt:

Tammy to Tim and Ray with a CC to Steve:

Right now, Camren Cordell is billed at \$106.00 per hour and that has been since 2018. Is it possible for Casamar to increase her rate? And if so, by what percentage? There is no escalation in the contract.

Steve Hewitt responded to Tammy just to remind her (and Casamar) that the Scope of Work and Budget had been approved back in the Fall of 2023, and there should be no changes:

Steve Hewitt to Tammy Krause, Ray Hessinger and Tim Ziethen:

Remember - this contract is based on the scope and budget approved by the Board last fall for the period beginning on 10/1/23 thru 9/30/24. To change the rate now would be to change the scope of work which was based on x amount of work at x amount of dollars. My thinking is that such a change would need to be requested before the next funding period. This is simply formalizing what had been approved last Fall by the Board. That is when a rate change should have been requested.

A discussion ensued with Steve reiterating that he is simply trying to keep the Board consistent and in compliance with decisions made.

Shayne and Tim commented that it would be beneficial to begin the process for the next budget early so it is set in advance.

Steve Hewitt reminded them that the Board did exactly that for this fiscal year. The budgets and scope of work for the sub-contractors and all NGEN activities were approved in advance of an anticipated short term – 12-months funding. The problem is that the approval of Amtrak's AOP which has the NGEN funding within it was not approved until the last minute. Amtrak had committed the funding in anticipation of approval by Congress. The sub-contractors and AASHTO were operating at risk for several months until the funding was in place. Once that occurred, AASHTO and Amtrak had to first extend their contract for support management of the NGEN and, in turn, AASHTO extended Steve Hewitt's contract and asked for the two sub-contractor's to submit their SOW and Not to Exceed Budget to AASHTO for the period that began 10-1-23 through 9-30-24.

Steve noted that the steps were taken to have everything in place well in advance, but the wait for confirmation of funding delayed executing contracts for the subcontractors. In Steve's view, there could well be a similar situation this year as there is no funding commitment beyond the current Amtrak funding. Steve agrees the process should begin

now, and now is the time for any changes in rates to be submitted for the next fiscal year and contract extensions, but now the sub-contractor extensions should hold to what was already approved by the NGENC FASC and subsequently the NGENC Executive Board.

Steve had informed Tammy and Camren Cordell to simply submit the approved SOW and budget approved last Fall to AASHTO in the format AASHTO would need to execute an extension. Steve emphasized that the fiscal year is already 6 months in and these contracts need to be executed – there is some urgency.

Tim agreed and understood that an increase in the Casamar hourly rate would impact the amount of work to be done even with the bottom line being the same. He also agreed that starting the process soon for the next fiscal year budget is the right way to go.

Tim Ziethen asked Steve Hewitt what the process would be for beginning to look at the next budget. Steve responded that it should be exactly what was done for the current fiscal year. The budget is developed by the FASC – including SOW's and Budgets from the sub-contractors – and the FASC sends it on to the Executive Board for its approval. Once approved, it is the basis for the various contract extensions to be executed. The issue, once again, will be a funding commitment for the next fiscal year (10-1-24 through 9-30-25). Since that remains an unknown, the situation could be very much the same as the current one – where the funding comes in after the beginning of the fiscal year and contract extensions get executed after the work has already begun.

Getting back to the Casamar issue, Strat emphasized that it needs to get done soon since "we" are already 6 months in.

Tim and Steve agreed and it was determined that Tim Ziethen will reach out to Tammy Krause to see where things are with Casamar and be sure it is understood what is being requested for executing the FY 2024 contract extension.

Steve Hewitt will provide Tim with the SOW and budget submitted last Fall by Casamar and approved by the NGENC executive Board. It is that document which should be the basis for the AASHTO/Casamar extension. Steve will look back at the minutes to see when the Board approved the SOW and Budget for Casamar.

The last thing Steve received from Tammy in response to his reminder was that she would let Casamar know.

Inserted here is the SOW and Budget submitted by Camren Cordell and approved by the FASC and the Executive Board prior to the start of FY24 (**Budget approval date was 7-25-24 in Executive Session**):

Exec Board Approved Scope and budget for the Technical Writer:

Technical Writer Work Scope for PRIIA
Casamar
October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024

The technical writer will provide as-needed support to the PRIIA organization. The tasks that this includes are:

- Providing the editing and updating of the existing PRIIA specifications,
- Providing the technical writing for the creation of new PRIIA documents,
- Providing the technical writing for the creation of new PRIIA specifications,
- Attending Weekly Status Meeting,
- Additional technical writing is needed as requested.

The estimated hours for these tasks are:

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|---|-------------|
| Technical Writing/Updating Locomotive Specification | = 125 hours |
| Updating PRIIA Sub Specifications | = 40 hours |
| Weekly Status Meetings | = 20 hours |
| Miscellaneous Tasks | = 15 hours |
| Updating Files | = 10 hours |

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| Total Hours | = 210 hours |
| Rate | @ \$106.07 |
| Total Estimated | \$ 22,274.70 |

Clarifying Casamar Invoice FY23 overage:

Tim Ziethen asked if the Casamar invoice discrepancy has been resolved yet.

Steve Hewitt reported that following the 2-28-24 FASC meeting, he had reached out to Tammy Krause and Camren Cordell to resolve the issue, but to his knowledge it was not yet done. The invoice submitted originally was for work 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 asked 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 \$1,015 and a second invoice charging against the new funding may be needed.

The following email was sent to AASHTO on 3-19-24 from tammy Krause to Barley Fields, AASHTO:

Barley,

I met with the technical writer yesterday (March 18th) about the 10 hours that need to be invoiced correctly. She gave me the information and I will work with Mary at Casamar to get this resolved. I also received a proposed contract from Casamar to review so that it can be submitted to AASHTO.

It was agreed that Tim Ziethen will follow up with Tammy to try to resolve the invoice issue and the Casamar extension.

Steve Hewitt reiterated that Casamar did the work and should be paid – its just a matter of clarifying which funding source it should be charged against.

Steve will provide Tim with the Casamar SOW and Budget as approved by the Executive Board on 7-25-24 for FY24.

5.

Discussion – future funding options – Tim Ziethen:

Future funding options appear to be limited. The primary funding opportunity seems to be applying for a CRISI Grant again this year (anticipated NOFO – April or May). Amtrak will once again apply for CRISI funds for the NGEN in the upcoming round.

Other options previously discussed included subscription fees and/or annual federal appropriations.

In 2015, the Executive Board determined that the subscription fee concept would not work for a variety of reasons, and expressed the point of view that the NGEN's funding is a federal responsibility and should be funded accordingly.

Federal appropriation requests to date have not been enacted and the CRISI Grant application during the last round was well received but not awarded due to the number of applications vs available funding.

6.

Other issues/questions – All:

Tim Ziethen reported that he had received the close out documents and instructions for the prior grant. He has sent copies to Steve Hewitt. Most of the information will be obtained from the quarterly activities reports generated by Steve Hewitt.

Steve and Tim will meet to discuss what needs to be done on 4-4-24 at 1:30pm. Steve Hewitt has sent a Teams meeting link to Tim Ziethen for that discussion.

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

**Next Meeting
4-24-24**

Decisions - Action Items

Balance/Spend Rate Through January 2024

New Report based on funding via Amtrak AOP FY 10-1-23 thru 9-30-24:

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Strat Cavros, AASHTO, reported that he is about to submit the invoice for February in the amount of approximately \$16,488.

Amtrak/AASHTO and AASHTO/Sub-Contractor Extensions:

Amtrak/AASHTO has been resolved.

Steve Hewitt's extension has been executed.

Tammy Krause's extension has been partially executed – awaiting Tammy's signature.

Casamar's SOW and Not To Exceed Budget has not been submitted to AASHTO. (see discussion under agenda item 4.)

Tim Ziethen will follow up with Tammy Krause on the status of Casamar's extension submittal to AASHTO.

Steve Hewitt will provide Tim Ziethen with the SOW and Budget previously approved by the Executive Board as a part of the NGEN FY 2024 budget – approved 7-25-24.

Clarifying Casamar Invoice FY23 overage:

This issue remains unresolved. Tim Ziethen will follow up on this with tammy Krause.

Prior Grant Close Out – next steps:

Tim Ziethen reported that he had received the close out documents and instructions for the prior grant. He has sent copies to Steve Hewitt. Most of the information will be obtained from the quarterly activities reports generated by Steve Hewitt.

Steve and Tim will meet to discuss what needs to be done on 4-4-24 at 1:30pm. Steve Hewitt has sent a Teams meeting link to Tim Ziethen for that discussion.

Future Funding for the NGEN:

Once the NOFO for the next round of CRISI grants is issued, Amtrak intends to submit a new application for funding for the NGEN. The NOFO is expected to be issued in the coming weeks. (April/May)

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

NGEN 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 NGEN website www.ngen.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

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| budget. |
| Next Meeting 4-24-24 |

ATTACHMENTS



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Microsoft Teams meeting
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**AGENDA
3-27-24
3:00PM Eastern**

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| 1. Welcome/Open | Tim Ziethen |
| 2. Roll Call | Steve Hewitt |
| 3. Approval – Minutes from 2-28-24 | Tim Ziethen |
| 4. Treasurer’s Update | Tim Ziethen |
| Update - Balance/Spend Rate/Forecast – New Report Status – Contract Extensions Status: Resolving Casamar Invoice Closing out the prior grant – documents – next steps | |
| 5. Discussion – future funding options/next steps | Tim Ziethen |
| Review previous CRISI Grant Application – improving it. Other Potential Funding options | |
| 6. Other Issues/Questions | All |

Next Meeting 4-24-24