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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: May 31, 2024

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: Dan Ruppert, Amtrak

Secretary: Amanda Martin, Iowa DOT

Treasurer: Tim Ziethen, Amtrak

The Executive Board will hold web- conference calls every 4 weeks on – Tuesdays at 11:30am Eastern.

During the month of May 2024, the Executive Board met once – on 5-14-24.

Highlights, decisions, updates from the NGEC during the month of May 2024:

Balance/Spend Rate Through February 2024

Forecast/Accrual Amount to Reflect Billing Lag 60 days - \$30,000.

Invoiced + Accrual Expenses to date (through February – 103,831.34

Amtrak AOP Funding - \$260,000

Remaining funds (total available less Invoiced + Accrual) - \$156,168.66.

Estimated full year (YTD Incl. Carry Over + FC + Remaining Months @ Avg Spend TD) - \$170,132.02.

Current Average Monthly Spend - \$13,260.14

Strat Cavros reported to the Board on 5-14-24 that invoiced expenses for March – reported in April - were \$15, 095.72. The invoice will be forthcoming soon to Amtrak.

Status – Completing Prior Grant Close Out documents:

On 5-22-24, Tim Ziethen reported to the Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC) that one of the items yet to be finalized is the summary document reporting on accomplishments and providing an overview. Steve Hewitt and Tim have worked on this together. Tim noted it is to be reviewed for any final edits by the Amtrak Grants office. The draft will be sent to Steve Hewitt for his final review and after that it will be completed for submittal. It is expected that it will be sent to FRA within about two weeks. The final report, which will include the summary and a financial report, is not due until July 2024, but it will be sent as soon as it is read. The final QPR that was completed previously.

New CRISI Grant Application – steps/timeline:

On 5-22-24, during the FASC meeting, Tim Ziethen walked through key areas of the previous grant application for NGEF funding submitted in the last round. The one to be submitted in this round will not change much as the NGEF mission is not changed. It is being reviewed by Tim, Steve Hewitt and Meaghan Histan Amtrak Grants. The intent is to update it where needed and to make sure that it is improved by some additional benefits and future activities being included in the application.

Tim asked that any FASC member that has suggested items that should be included provide them to Steve Hewitt by Friday 5-24-24. (No comments were provided as of 5-31-24)

Steve Hewitt noted that a few items that he believes should be included would be a line referring to connecting communities as a benefit. He added that an update of lessons learned through the many procurements that have taken place should be developed and included in the Equipment Acquisition and Ownership Recommended Practices Document which was adopted as a living document.

Steve added that developing specifications for CCTV and wayside monitoring systems should be a part of the NGEF's future activities if granted funding. Generating specifications utilizing alternate propulsion or other emerging technologies should also be included in the application.

Tim Ziethen noted that he has a request into the grants office about distributing the draft to FASC or Board members is ok. Presently, they are keeping it close because of the expectation of confidentiality. Tim is also asking if the previous submittal can be distributed so that members can look at it and provide suggested improvements.

In the meantime, Tim asks that the FASC members think about what the NGEF should be doing going forward and what it has accomplished and provide any suggestions to Steve Hewitt.

Steve Hewitt added that he has provided the TSSSA document, the two-pager backgrounder for 2024, and the Recommended Practices document to Tim Ziethen as part of the application packet. Steve is also providing some newer pictures previously submitted for either the website or the 2024 backgrounder to be added to the new application.

On 5-23-24, after reviewing the Draft application, Steve Hewitt provided edits, additional info and updates to it and submitted it to Tim Ziethen and Meaghan Histan (Amtrak Grants) .

Tim Ziethen confirmed receipt of Steve's edits and noted that they were included in the final draft along with additional edits from Tim. The draft was sent to Meaghan Histan for finalizing and submittal by the due date – 5-28-24.

First Quarterly Progress Report (QPR) under current funding source – due (internally) 4-30-24:

Tim Ziethen confirmed that he has completed the internal QPR, with the assistance of Steve Hewitt, and will provide the final copy to Steve for distribution to the NGEF Executive Board members. This internal document mirrors the prior grant QPRs that were submitted to FRA.

By-Laws Annual Review:

The 2023 review resulted in no changes being recommended – and that decision was noted on the By-Laws that were distributed and posted to the website. The By-Laws will next be reviewed by the FASC in the Fall of 2024.

NGEC two-pager updates for 2024:

The NGEC 2024 Backgrounder and Educational document has been released and remains available by request from Steve Hewitt @ shewitt109@aol.com.

As of 5-31-24, 462 copies have been distributed (hard copies and electronic). The document is also available on the NGEC website.

- Metro-North Dual Mode Locomotive Procurement:

As reported on 4-25-24:

Locomotive 301 completed factory testing and completed FAIs on March 20th.

The procurement is moving along well and they should have the Dual Mode Locomotive out of Siemens for testing in the near future.

- Multi-State Venture Rail Car Procurement as reported by Caltrans on 5-23-24 to the Technical Subcommittee:

The Cab Car FDR is approved and closed, and all coach-type FDR stages are complete. The Cab Car and Café Car MCAT simulation reports have been approved by the states and FRA.

The Cab Car Complete FAI and FRA sample car inspections are complete. The Cab Car 238.111(b) test plan has been submitted to FRA and the first two cab cars have been shipped to Stockton in preparation for testing. Prerequisite-type tests are being completed at Stockton and Oakland in advance of PTC testing, followed by 238.111 testing on the corridor.

All 137 cars are in production or have been produced at Siemens Sacramento Facility. IDOT coaches and Caltrans trainsets are currently in revenue service and additional cars are being added as they are commissioned and accepted.

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Update as of 5-23-24:

On 5-23-24, Dan Ruppert reported the following to the Technical Subcommittee:

On the new Acela: Work continues on qualification for revenue service. Testing continues. Dan noted that there is capital work being done on the railroad – being busy is good – it does slow the testing down a bit. Still, overall, progressing well.

On the ALC42: There are 52 currently in service with 7 more in transit. The initial order of 75 will wrap up later this year. Option orders will begin in FY2025.

On the Airo: 43 are in production, 39 coach and 4 ALC42E's. Various FAI's are in process.

On the Long-Distance Fleet: This is an open procurement and they are progressing with the RFP.

- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement as of 5-23-24:

PDRs are continuing.

- VIA Rail Equipment Procurements:

A detailed update presentation was provided to the NGEC during the Annual Meeting on 2-2-24.

The presentation is posted in the Meetings section of the website at www.ngec.org

- Document Control Update as of 5-23-24:

On 5-23-24, Tammy Krause provided the following update to the Technical Subcommittee:

1. Updating the DCRs for the Single Level Specification – I am putting together the table format of the received DCRs for the Single Level and the DCRs that were approved for the other specifications. This will be sent to the working groups by the 22nd.
2. I am working with the Technical Writer on the Amtrak sub-specs to remove the Amtrak references. This is ongoing and we will submit them for approval when we finish.
3. I have attached a revised timeline/work list for the TSC. This will have the TSC completing the Single Level Specification Revision by /9/24 and the Dual Mode Locomotive by 8/5/24.

Steve Hewitt pointed out that the dates on the revised timeline do not match the dates that the Technical subcommittee will be meeting.

Following the meeting, Tammy took another look at the timeline and revised it with corresponding dates matching up with the NGENC Technical subcommittee's schedule.

- Filling Vacancies:

Vacancies exist on the Specification Review Panels

Current status as of 5-31-24:

Vacancies still exist on certain Review Panels. On 5-14-24, Melina Lopez, IDOT placed her name in the interim to fill a vacancy on the Locomotive Review Panel. Remaining vacancies are all slated for Caltrans. Steve Hewitt has had several email conversations with Kyle Gradinger, Caltrans, regarding the vacancies. Caltrans wishes to remain on the Panels but has yet to determine who will serve.

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

Melina Lopez, IDOT

Jason Biggs, Washington State DOT

Melissa Shurland, FRA

Trainset Review Panel:

Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT – Chair

Ed Engle, Iowa DOT

Jason Biggs, Washington State DOT

Vacant Caltrans

Melissa Shurland, FRA

Single Level Rail Car Review Panel:

Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT -- Chair

Ed Engle, Iowa DOT

Jason Biggs, WSDOT

Vacant Caltrans

Melissa Shurland, FRA

DMU Review Panel Members:

Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT -- Chair

Melissa Shurland, FRA

Brian Beeler, for Maine DOT

Vacant - Caltrans

- NGEC website issues:

On 5-14-24, Steve Hewitt raised the issue of the NGEC website crashing, and asked AASHTO to provide the Board members with a summary of what had happened and a status.

Shayne Gill explained that all of AASHTO's websites were attacked and, like any big corporation, it was a large-scale cyber-attack and will take time to get all of the sites up to date. He urged patience and complimented Barley Fields for working so diligently to get the NGEC up and running and current.

Steve Hewitt acknowledged Barley for all her efforts in a difficult situation and noted that he wanted the Board to be aware because the cyber-attack did impact the NGEC website – in case they went on it – or an industry member went on and was looking for information. Only a snapshot back to 2022 was recovered and all of the 2023 and 2024 information needs to be up-loaded. Steve thanked Barley for her work on this and understands it will take time. Steve also noted that he had briefly mentioned the attack to the Technical Subcommittee members on the 5-9 and 5-23-24 meetings as information.

During the week of 5-26-24, Steve Hewitt responded to several requests from Barley Fields as she works her way through the website.

- 2025 NGEC Annual Meeting:

Over the past few months, AASHTO has been searching for a home for the 2025 Rail Winter Meeting. They searched the DC and Virginia area and found a home in **Crystal City, VA at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View**. This is not in our usual location but the hotel does offer easy access to Reagan National Airport (DCA) and DC via the Metro for those who really want to go into the city. They were unable to use the Hyatt Regency as another group is booked in the large ballroom and thus, we wouldn't be able to continue to increase our meeting size.

AASHTO feels that the hotel is an upgrade for us in terms of look and feel and amenities. The hotel has renovated sleeping rooms, offer lots of natural light in the meeting foyer space as well as a shuttle to and from DCA as well as to the Crystal City metro.

The Rail Meeting Date: January 28-30 with the NGEC meeting taking place on Thursday 1-30-25 in the afternoon. The exact times and further info will follow over the next few months.

Technical subcommittee

Chair: Don Ruppert, Amtrak

Vice Chair: Joe Paul, Amtrak

During the month of May 2024, the subcommittee met twice – on the 9th and 23rd:

Key decisions and action item updates from the month of April 2024, included:

- Backgrounder educational document:

The 2024 NGEC two-page educational was released on 2-2-24 at the NGEC Annual Meeting. As of 5-23-24, 462 copies have been distributed. The document is available in electronic or hard copy versions. Requests should be sent to Steve Hewitt at shewitt109@aol.com

- Document Control Update as of 5-23-24:

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

- Multi-State Car Procurement - Caltrans (Lead State) update as of 5-23-24

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 5-24-24:

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

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Updates as of 5-24-24:

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

- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement as of 5-24-24:

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

- University of Nebraska/FRA study on High Speed wireless technology:

Hamid Sharif, University of Nebraska, provided a summary presentation on the High-Speed Wireless Study during the NGEN Annual Meeting.

The presentation is available on the NGEN website at www.ngec.org.

This study has not been granted funding from FRA for its next phase. The item will be tabled until further information is received. For further information, please contact:

*Hamid Sharif
Advanced Telecommunications Engineering Lab
University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

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

Discussion: Potential future presentations – Dan/Steve:

- FRA Rolling Stock Research – Review Potential Topic List:

On 5-23-24, Melissa Shurland, FRA, provided an overview on FRA Rolling Stock Research potential topics for discussion on future NGEN Technical subcommittee calls. This list followed a discussion that Melissa Shurland and others from FRA R&D had with Steve Hewitt and Dan Ruppert last week.

1. *FRA Safety Approach for Review and Issuance of Letter of Concurrence for Use of Advanced On-Board Energy Storage Systems*
2. *Review of RDI-22 Rail Decarbonization Technology R&D*
3. *Glazing Research*
4. *Passenger Rail Equipment Crashworthiness (side Impact)*
5. *US-ISO Standards Group*
6. *WhMD (wheeled mobility device) Sled Test*

On 5-23-24, it was agreed that the first presentation will be on topic 1 (above) and will take place on 6-20-24. The FRA Office of Safety will give the presentation. Melissa Shurland will let Steve Hewitt know who the presenter will be prior to 6-20-24.

The order of the other items on the FRA list will be determined based on FRA availability. The intent is to have one topic covered each month.

- NGEN future funding – CRISI Grant Application:

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

The Finance and Administrative Subcommittee

Chair: Tim Ziethen, Amtrak

Vice Chair: Brian Beeler II, NNEPRA for Maine DOT

Second Vice Chair: Amanda Martin, Iowa 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 April 2024, the Finance and Administrative Subcommittee met once on the 24th.

Key decisions and action item updates from the month of May 2024 included:

Balance/Spend Rate Through February 2024

Forecast/Accrual Amount to Reflect Billing Lag 60 days - \$30,000.

Invoiced + Accrual Expenses to date (through February – 103,831.34

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Estimated full year (YTD Incl. Carry Over + FC + Remaining Months @ Avg Spend TD) - \$170,132.02.

Current Average Monthly Spend - \$13,260.14

Strat Cavros reported to the Board on 5-14-24 that invoiced expenses for March – reported in April - were \$15,095.72. The invoice will be forthcoming soon to Amtrak.

Status: Preparing Prior Grant Closeout Documents:

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

- Seeking Long-Term Funding:

Preparing CRISI Grant Application – steps/timeline:

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

Other potential funding opportunities:

There has been some discussion with the FRA, (while meeting about the close out of the prior grant), on possible other ways to align a federal grant with the current budget process. There are no new ideas but some that can be revisited – while also pursuing the CRISI grant

- Conveying the message as of 5-31-24:

The NGEC 2024 backgrounder/educational document was released during the 2024 Annual Meeting. To date 462 copies have been distributed (hard and soft). Contact Steve Hewitt at shewitt109@aol.com to request a copy.

- Quarterly Grant Progress Report (QPR):

The final prior grant QPR has been submitted to FRA.

An internal QPR for the period ending on 3-31-24 has been completed and will be distributed internally to Amtrak, FRA and NGEC Board Members.

- Annual NGEC By-Laws Review:

The 2023 review resulted in no changes being recommended and as noted previously in this report, the latest version has been distributed to NGEC members and is on the website.

The By-Laws will next be reviewed in the Fall of 2024.

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 May 2024. Several vacancies are yet to be filled by Caltrans as noted previously in this report.