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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: August 31, 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 August 2023, the Executive Board met once- on the 8th

Highlights, decisions, and action items from the month of August include:

Treasurer's Report – 8-8-23:

- On 8-8-23, Tim Ziethen reported no changes to his last report:

Balance/Spend Rate Through May 2023

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

Expenses Incurred through May 2023: \$1,198,774.76

Balance remaining: \$51,225.24.

Estimated spend at current rate for balance of the Grant: \$59,938.74
 Current Spend Rate per month (as info and used in calculating): \$14,984.68.
 Estimated Balance at the end of the Grant Period: (8,713.50) over target.

Tim believes this is close to how it will end up and that Amtrak has agreed to pick up the balance if there is minimal overage.

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

Amtrak has submitted a 6 month no-cost GARF to FRA which is now under review. The GARF extends the period of performance and will allow the NGEC to draw down expenses in the grant until they are exhausted. On 8-8-23, Tim reported that he still has not received a final response from FRA on this.

Status: NGEC 12-month Interim funding:

In July, the budget was approved (as submitted) during the Executive Session held on 7-25-23. Amtrak has said that it would fund the NGEC from its AOP for the 12-month period beginning on 10-1-23 through 9-30-24. The budget was approved for just over \$260,000. Amtrak also agreed that this funding would be provided even if Congress has not resolved the 2024 appropriations or issues a CR.

Status: 3rd Quarter Grant Progress Report to FRA:

The Quarterly Report was submitted to FRA on time.

The next report for the fourth quarter 2023 is due to FRA by October 31, 2023.

Steve Hewitt distributed the report with the DRAFT minutes from 8-8-23.

- Executive Session: 7-25-23:

Jeff Gordon, FRA, offered a motion to go into Executive Session for the purpose as stated by Tim Ziethen previously - to allow discussion without contractors present on the call before approving the proposed budget. The motion was seconded by Troy Hughes, MODOT, and, with no objections offered, the Executive Board agreed to go into Executive Session for the purpose as described above.

At 11:59 am, all contractors left the call and Steve Hewitt transferred the WebEx meeting control to Chairman Hessinger.

At the conclusion of the Executive Session – Chairman Hessinger sent the following email to Steve Hewitt:

Steve,

The results of the executive session are as follows:

The 2024 Budget is approved as presented today by unanimous voice vote.

The Executive Board and both Subcommittees are to review and update, as appropriate, their meeting cadence. Please add that issue to the agenda for the next meeting for each.

Ray

Steve Hewitt followed-up as noted and distributed the approved budget.

- 2023 NGEC two-pager:

The NGEC 2023 backgrounder/educational document was released in January and formally introduced during the Annual Meeting. To date 338 copies have been distributed (hard and soft).

- Multi-State Rail Car Procurement (provided by Caltrans) as of 8-31-23:

The remaining Cab Car FDR submittals are in the final closure stage with nearly all subsystems approved. The Cab Car MCAT simulation report has been submitted to FRA via Amtrak with additional clarifications provided. IDOT Café Car system level FDR reviews are complete and the requested MCAT simulations are in review for submittal.

The Cab Car Collision and Corner Post Appendix F test reports are approved. The Cab Car Complete FAI occurred on July 18 and the FRA Sample Car Inspection was completed on July 27. Open items from both are being addressed to prepare the cab car for PTC and 238 testing.

137 cars are in production or have been produced at Siemens Sacramento Facility. IDOT coaches are currently in revenue service and Caltrans is targeting revenue start in 2023 pending completion of final agreements.

- Metro-North Dual Mode Locomotive Equipment as of 8-17-23:

Production of Locomotives #301 and 302 remain on schedule – car shells are completed.

CtDOT executed their option for additional locomotives.

FAIs for an alluminum roof were approved.

Siemens is working with Metro-North on delay issues.

Upcoming work includes scheduling of additional of FAIs.

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Update – as of 8-17-23:

On the new Acela – Work continues on qualification items. Trainset #8 should be in by the end of the month.

On the Charger Locomotives – There are forty units thus far with thirty units in service. Overall, it's going very well.

On the Airo Trainset – the first car shell is almost complete and Final Design Review (FDR) and FAIs continue.

On the Long -Distance Procurement – they are in the second round of RFI and working toward an RFP by the end of the year.

- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement as of 8-17-23:

CTDOT's contract was awarded to Alstom on 8/3/23. The base order is for sixty cars – 19 cabs and 41 trailers. There are options for up to an additional 272 cars. CTDOT is expecting a prototype 4-car consist in mid-2026. The delivery rate is expected to be 4 cars per month. Manufacturing is in Sahagun, Mexico.

- VIA Rail Equipment Procurements:

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

Next Update: 2024 NGENC Annual Meeting 2-2-24

- Document Control Progress Report – 8-31-23:

Discussion – review of comments/updates to PRIIA Reference (sub-spec) 305-901:

Dave Warner shared the updated document with comments included, on his screen. Steve Hewitt pointed out that all Tech subcommittee members had been provided this same version on Monday 8-28-23.

Dave briefly scrolled through the comments noting that they were primarily “de-Amtrak” (or removal of referring to Amtrak) to clean up the document. He also pointed out that the document format had been revised as well so that this reference spec matches the format of the PRIIA Vehicle specifications.

George Hull asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, George called for a motion to approve 305-901 as revised to send it to the Executive Board for its review and consideration.

Consideration of Approval of DCRs for the 305-901 Reference (sub-spec):

On a motion by Art Peterson, for IDOT, a second by Curtis McDowell, for NCDOT, and with no objections forthcoming, Chairman Hull determined that consensus had been achieved, and the updated version of 305-901 was approved by the technical subcommittee for submittal to the Executive Board.

It was agreed that Steve Hewitt should transmit this version, with the comments included, to the Executive Board in advance of its next meeting (9-5-23). The comments will remain in order to let Board members see the changes that have been made.

On 12-13-22, Tim Ziethen reported that the CRISI Grant for funding for the NGEC was submitted on time (early). He thanked the Board for its feedback – especially in light of the short turnaround time.

The timeline for announcing which CRISI Grant applications are approved is August-September 2023.

As of 8-31-23 – The NGEC was not aware of any announcements being made.

- NGEC 2024 Annual Meeting:

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

More details to follow.

Technical subcommittee

Chair: George Hull, Amtrak

Vice Chair: Joe Paul, Amtrak

The Technical subcommittee holds bi-weekly conference calls on Thursdays at 3:00pm Eastern.

During the month of August 2023, the subcommittee met on the 17th and the 31st:

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.

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

- Backgrounder educational document:

The 2023 NGEC two-page educational document/handout was released in January and distributed widely during the Annual Meeting on 2-3-23.

It remains available in electronic or hard copy versions. Requests should be sent to Steve Hewitt at shewitt109@aol.com

To date 338 copies have been distributed.

- Document Control Update as of 8-31-23:

Please go to the Executive Board section of this report for the latest actions/decision made by the technical subcommittee and transmitted to the Executive Board on 8-31-23.

- Communications on Rail Cars Working Group and the Carbody Materials Working Group's – status as of 8-31-23:

Status: Communication on Rail Cars Working Group Activities: They are still working on finalizing the DTL software specification. They have had several meetings to discuss proposed changes – in particular those by one member. Thus far they have not been able to come to a resolution on this. Team Leader Ken Martin expects that the group will come to consensus and complete the DTL software spec by late September 2023.

Status: Carbody Materials Working Group Activities: Not much to report on this group's work as they have had difficulty getting together. It is expected that after the summer vacation season they will be able to reconvene and resume work.

- Multi-State Car Procurement - Caltrans (Lead State) update as of 8-17-23:

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 8-17-23:

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

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Updates as of 8-17-23 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 8-31-23:

Report from Hamid Sharif:

- "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. We have been doing field tests this summer to verify our lab data. We plan to publish our results this Fall. Any interested parties, please feel free to contact me for more information.

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

Please feel free to contact me to discuss any utilization of our current work or suggestions and ideas for the next phase of this project. Thank you."

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 8-31-23:

Jeff Gordon, FRA, the working group team leader, reported in March 2023, that he intends to update the document based on working group feedback rather than schedule a meeting. He will then ask for input from the members via email. His issue is that he has been called for Jury duty and if enpaneled could be servibg for 3 months and he would not be able to hold a working group meeting. If he is not enpaneled, this may change, but for now he inetends to begin updating the document based on feedback received to date.

No change in August 2023

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

See Executive Board section of this report for current status of this item.

An award announcement re: the NGEC was not forthcoming in August 2023.

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 August 2023, the Finance and Administrative Subcommittee did not meet. It's next meeting will take place on September 13, 2023.

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

- Treasurer's Update as of 7-19 - 23:

Balance/Spend Rate Through May 2023

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

Expenses Incurred through May 2023: \$1,198,774.76

Balance remaining: \$51,225.24.

Estimated spend at current rate for balance of the Grant: \$59,938.74

Current Spend Rate per month (as info and used in calculating): \$14,984.68.

Estimated Balance at the end of the Grant Period: (8,713.50) over target.

Tim noted that there is a fair amount of variance in invoices each month and historically these are "light months" so it is possible to go over budget slightly, but it will be close. If it does go over, Amtrak has agreed to pick up the "small overage." Tim also noted that he is not aware of anything "hanging out there."

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

Amtrak has submitted a 6 month no-cost GARF to FRA which is now under review. The GARF extends the period of performance and "allows us to draw down expenses in the grant until exhausted."

As of 7-31-23 FRA continues its review process.

Update: NGEC 12-month Interim funding Proposal 7-19-23:

Tim Ziethen reported that Amtrak has a placeholder in the AOP to fund baseline operations of the NGEC with an adjustment for "known work already approved" by the Board based on estimates provided. The Draft includes built-in contingencies.

The current version of the DRAFT budget is (Tim shared it on the screen with the FASC members on the call) the same as what was discussed at the 7-11-23 NGEC Executive Board meeting. There may be some adjustments/refinements later today as he (Tim) is meeting with Strat Cavros, AASHTO, to go over the line

items pertaining to AASHTO's professional services and other less defined line items such as website maintenance. Tim added that had put in a placeholder for \$500 per month for this website maintenance and asked Strat or Shayne if there could potentially clarify if this was a separate item. Shayne Gill clarified that the website maintenance costs are not separated out from other AASHTO activities – rather they are built in. The separate contract with the website designer did not include continued maintenance. The ongoing maintenance of the site is handled by AASHTO, but not as a separate cost.

Tim noted that he has developed the budget using the last 12-month average spend and will be confirming those numbers with Stat this afternoon.

Tim described one line item as including miscellaneous expenses and Annual meeting Travel. It also includes \$10,000 for reimbursing Amtrak for any carryover from the current grant.

Ray Hessinger mentioned that the House T&I Committee is talking about cutting Amtrak funds – “how will this impact us.”

Tim responded, “good question – we are discussing this internally – but we are hopeful it will get worked out. I have no particular insight on this one - it is a concern, but no one has come back to me to say remove the NGENC placeholder.” Tim added that he is monitoring this as closely as possible. Obviously if there is a shutdown – “all bets are off.”

He did add “while some believe that IJA money solves everything – it does not – there is no ability to re-direct to operating support.”

Tim asked if there were other questions. Steve Hewitt commented that the regular order of things would be for the FASC to consider the DRAFT Budget to move it forward to the executive Board as a recommendation. Steve noted that the Executive Board is expected to discuss the Draft Budget on its next call (7-25-23) in Executive Session. It would be appropriate to have the FASC recommend that it be moved to the Board for consideration with the understanding that FRA has asked for an Executive Session discussion.

Tim agreed, and called for a motion to recommend the DRAFT budget be moved forward to the Executive Board for its consideration with the understanding that after he has talked to AASHTO later there may be some tweaks or adjustments.

Steve Hewitt suggested that the FASC recommendation to the Board should include “a not to exceed” number and the understanding that it could be further refined (after Tim’s discussion with AASHTO later today).

John Oimoen, IDOT offered a motion to move it forward to the Executive Board with the understanding as described above. The motion was seconded by Amanda Martin, Iowa DOT.

Tim asked if there were any objections. Hearing none he determined that consensus was achieved and the motion was approved.

Tim will provide Steve Hewitt with the “refined/adjusted” Draft after his conversation with AASHTO today. Steve Hewitt will forward that draft to the FASC along with the meeting minutes and will send it to all Board members along with the 7-25-23 Executive Board agenda.

The recommended budget (adjusted) will be attached to the email transmitting these minutes to FASC members and will be sent to the Executive Board along with the 7-25-23 meeting agenda on Friday 7-21-23.

Note: The budget was approved by the Executive Board as recommended by the FASC. The Board, in Executive Session

- Conveying the message as of 8-31-23:

The NGENC 2023 background/educational document was released in January and distributed widely during the 2-3-23 NGENC Annual Meeting. It can be requested in hard or soft copy by contacting Steve Hewitt at shewitt109@aol.com

To date 338 copies have been distributed.

The NGEC website is up and running at: www.ngec.org.

- Quarterly Grant Agreement Progress Report to FRA

All reports have been submitted on time.

The report for the period ending 9-30-23 is due to FRA by 10-31-23.

- By-laws changes to allow activities that will increase public awareness:

The By-Laws were updated in December 2022 and will again be reviewed in the Fall of 2023.

Note: It is has been determined that no changes to the By-Laws will be required for the proposed new (interim) funding source.

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 Bi-Level Rail Car Specification Review Panel was convened by the Chair in January and on February 14th the Panel went through the DRAFT Review Panel Report and Recommendations prepared by technical consultant Larry Salci. The Panel recommended approximately twenty additional revisions and on February 17th approved the Report and its Recommendations as revised by Mr. Salci in an electronic vote. On 2-21-23, the Report and its Recommendations were adopted by the Executive Board and the changes that will comprise 305-001 Revision D were sent to the technical writer for incorporation into the spec.

The Bi-Level Specification 305-001 Revision D has been completed and is available by request through Steve Hewitt.

The NGEC Review Panels did not meet in August 2023.

On 9-5-23, the Executive Board will fill look to vacancies that have occurred in recent months on some of the Review Panels.