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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: July 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 July 2024, the Executive Board met once – on 7-9-24.

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

- Treasurer's Report and status update on NGEC Funding:

Balance/Spend Rate Through April 2024

Total Invoiced/Incurred (Including Carryover) - \$102,923.49

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

Invoiced + Accrual Expenses to date (through April) – \$127,076.51

Amtrak AOP Funding - \$260,000

Remaining funds (total available less Invoiced + Accrual) - \$127,076.51

Estimated full year (YTD Incl. Carry Over + FC + Remaining Months @ Avg Spend TD) - \$173,806.13.

Current Average Monthly Spend - \$13,627.55

Status - CRISI Grant Application – Support Letters status:

The CRISI Grant Application for funding the NGEC was submitted on time to the portal. It included many letters of support. Tim did not have the exact number, but it was a good representation. **It is not too late to send in support letters. They should be sent to Tim Ziethen and Mehgan Hestand, Amtrak Grants.**

Tim added that the application is in the FRA review phase along with other submittals. CRISI Grant awards will not be announced until the October/November timeframe.

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Tim added that the application is in the FRA review phase along with other submittals. CRISI Grant awards will not be announced until the October/November timeframe.

Other potential funding opportunities other than a CRISI Grant:

Tim commented that there is not much to add on other potential funding options and reiterated that there is no perfect “other” option. Over the years there have been discussions establishing fee or subscription-based funding, but, while possible, there are many terms and conditions that would need to be “talked through”. The easiest and cleanest source of funding would be through the appropriations process which is how the NGEC was initially funded, but that has not gained much traction over the years.

Next Steps if not funded – or if funded:

Ray Hessinger asked if the Amtrak AOP funds that have been allocated to the NGEC for FY 24 are available until expended or do they go away at the end of the fiscal year – 9-30-24.

Tim Ziethen responded that in normal instances, the funding is for the current fiscal year only and is a “use it or lose it” situation. He noted that with regard to the NGEC, he is asking Amtrak Finance for clarification.

Ray Hessinger emphasized that clarification is needed because in only a few months “we” will be in FY 25 and that is before CRISI Grant awards are even scheduled to be announced. Once announced, there is anticipated to be about a 6-month period before the CRISI funds are obligated and available.

So – either way, it is important to understand what happens at the end of this fiscal year. If the NGEC is not awarded a CRISI Grant and begins the process of closing down it will also need time and funding during that transition.

Ray also noted that there is a sense of urgency for the Board to have some answers because it is scheduled to meet only twice more after today’s meeting prior to the end of FY 24. Ray cited that sub-contractors are also impacted as their contracts end on 9-30-24.

Tim Ziethen commented that he “understands the dilemma” and that he is hoping to get all of the questions resolved or answered as soon as possible. Once he gets answers, he will inform Steve Hewitt so that he can send the information out to Board members.

Steve Hewitt reminded Tim that there is an NGEC Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC) meeting next week (9-17-24) and many Board members are participants. He suggested that would be a good opportunity for further discussion if answers are forthcoming.

Dave Warner suggested that the Board move to two meetings a month for the time being.

Ray Hessinger commented that he has not ruled out increasing Executive Board meeting frequency temporarily but was not there yet. He agreed the FASC meeting next week could be helpful.

Mike Murray, FRA, commented that he did not see this as being an emergency situation. Amtrak has operating funds for the NGEC for this year. Mike added that for the last three years he has had many

discussions back and forth with Amtrak, within FRA, with lawyers/finance etc. trying to figure out sustainable funding for the NGEC. Mike noted that once October 1<sup>st</sup> comes along and if there is no new funding in place, he does not see it as an emergency. It will not impact the specifications or the work of the NGEC even though he understands there are some monthly costs. He does not think it is something that the FRA should be asked to fix and that it can't be an emergency.

Ray Hessinger responded that at this time there is no commitment to fund the NGEC in 2025 from Amtrak or FRA. So – while it may not be an emergency – it is “pretty urgent” with no known funding source to continue to fund the work of the Committee.

Mike Murray added that Amtrak used the NGEC Specifications as basis for their new equipment procurement and “it is reasonable as a sustainable path – to have Amtrak allocate resources to the NGEC...it's like an FTE per year.”

Tim Ziethen commented that he agrees that it is not an emergency, but there is a sense of urgency and that “we need to figure it out”. There is “no long-term strategy” for funding the NGEC. It was previously funded through two appropriations and then the one-year of funding provided from the Amtrak AOP. Tim emphasized that this “was not necessarily meant to be long-term”. Tim added that there are a “lot of balls in the air” and “we need to keep working at it”. Tim also noted, “absent an appropriation we will keep having this problem and we need creative solutions”. Further, Tim commented “there is no drama, but we are trying to be good stewards.”

Mike Murray responded that in equipment acquisitions, “Amtrak has taken a lead role in the last procurement with engagement with states and stakeholders...Amtrak has, and is, providing support.” He noted that this is reasonable and sustainable. “We” are looking for flexibility to possibly use Amtrak capital rather than operating funds for the NGEC especially pertaining to long-distance equipment.

Jason Biggs, WSDOT, noted that, as a take away, he is hearing that Amtrak would have to ask for funding for the NGEC. He also noted the need to keep building on the lessons learned document as there has been so many more procurements since the original document was developed by the NGEC (NGEC 305-200 Equipment Acquisition and Ownership Recommended Practices). There is a great deal of additional information to share with entities looking to procure equipment, “if Amtrak is amenable to it”.

Mike Murray added that they are still talking about what the full scope of activities and deliverables should be. He noted that the “specs are the value/product” expected to be seen from funding the NGEC. Other activities are not the critical part of it.

Steve Hewitt noted that in the CRISI Grant application, the ongoing development of the Equipment Acquisition and Ownership Recommended Practices “living document” is included. It is an integral part of the proposed activities/deliverables.

Ray Hessinger added, as the discussion closed, that he agrees there needs to be some decisions made, but it needs to be understood that “we are on a limping-along budget pending long-term funding”. Without such funding, the NGEC cannot take on any major new activities or deliverables.

Status – Completing Prior Grant Close Out documents:

Tim Ziethen reported that the prior grant close out documents are under final review by Amtrak Grants and Finance. Tim expressed his thanks to Steve Hewitt for his help in filling out the details.

Tim anticipates that the documents will be submitted to FRA within a week of two.

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. In July – the FASC began the review process and set the timelines - with the intent of presenting any potential changes to the Executive Board by November 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](mailto:shewitt109@aol.com).

As of 7-31-24, 488 copies have been distributed (hard copies and electronic). The document is also available on the NGEC website.

In July, the FASC set a timeline and began the process for developing the 2025 version of the two-pager.

- Metro-North Dual Mode Locomotive Procurement:

As reported on 7-9-24 to the Executive Board:

Locomotives #301 and #302 have arrived at Pueblo for testing which is now under way.

Metro-North and Siemens have approved various FAI's. Siemens, Metro-North and LIRR are negotiating exercising options for LIRR.

- Multi-State Venture Rail Car Procurement as reported by Caltrans on 7-18-24 to the Technical Subcommittee:

All coach type FDR and FAI stages are complete, including Cab Car and Café Car. The Cab Car and Café Car MCAT simulation reports have been approved by the states and the 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 testing is expected to begin on July 17. The first café cars have been shipped to Chicago and are being prepared for revenue service.

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 reported on 7-18-24 to the technical subcommittee:

On the new Acela:

Qualification testing continues – meetings are taking place every day between Amtrak, Alstom and FRA. Working through QTP test plan with the intent to resolve final QTP Qualification plan soon. They are preparing for the rollout of facility improvements in preparation for new Acela trainsets.

On Airo:

Several are in production and wrapping up FDR and FAI's on a variety of components. There are 52 vehicles in production - 48 coach cars and 4 locomotives. Food and Cab cars working through quality gates. The expectation is to have the first trainset out for testing next year with revenue service beginning early the following year. Overall, it is going well and on schedule for testing next year.

On the ALC 42:

There are 55 in service. A number are in transit or in commissioning. 6 or 8 are en route for testing on the corridor. A variety of FAIs on software updates and other items are proceeding nicely. The total to be produced is 125 including option orders.

On the GP38:

17 are in service. There will be a total of 36. Working successfully with OEM on expected quality issues.

On the Long-Distance Trainsets:

Continues to be an open procurement. It is moving along well with Amtrak working with carbuilders in the RFP process. Not much else can be reported due to this being an active RFP.

- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement as reported to the technical subcommittee on 7-18-24:

Marci Petterson. CTDOT, reported that they are progressing well on the PDR on some systems. Truck clearance was ok'd by Metro-North which was good news.

Marci noted that she has been getting some requests for information that she needs to get from Amtrak. She will be reaching out to Dan Ruppert.

- VIA Rail Equipment Procurements:

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

The presentation is posted in the Meetings section of the website at [www.ngec.org](http://www.ngec.org)

- Document Control Update as reported by Tammy Krause to the technical subcommittee on 7-18-24:

The complete (Single Level Car Spec) DCR list is going to be sent to the entire Technical Subcommittee, (TSC) except for 3 new DCRs still waiting evaluation. The DCRs in the master list have all been approved and incorporated in previous specifications. If anyone has any comments, please send them to me. The final 3 DCRs will be submitted to the TSC after they are evaluated by the proper WG.

Steve Hewitt asked the team leader for the Mechanical working group, Melissa Shurland, FRA, if there was a date for the group to meet to discuss these 3 DCRs. Melissa said they are scheduled to meet on 8-13-24. With the date set for the working group to discuss and, hopefully, adjudicate the 3 DCRs, Steve noted that he would expect there to be no vote from the Technical subcommittee until the 8-29-24 meeting. This is assuming that the working group makes its recommendations, and they are sent to the technical subcommittee in time for review, discussion and a vote on all of the DCRs (summary sheet for the initial master list is included with these DRAFT minutes distribution).

- Filling Vacancies:

Vacancies exist on the Specification Review Panels

Current status as of 7-31-24:

As of 7-31-24, the only 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  
 Maria Hobbs, Iowa DOT  
 Jason Biggs, Washington State DOT  
 Vacant Caltrans  
 Melissa Shurland, FRA

Single Level Rail Car Review Panel:

Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT -- Chair  
 Maria Hobbs, 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:

As of 7-31-24, AASHTO has about completed its efforts to re-post all of the information that was lost when AASHTO had a cyber-attack which affected its website and the NGEC's as well. Steve Hewitt has been providing information for the uploads as needed.

- 2025 NGEC Annual Meeting:

The 2025 Annual Meeting will be held in the afternoon on 1-30-25 at a new location: **Crystal City, VA at the [Renaissance Arlington Capital View](#)**. It will, once again, be held in conjunction with other rail meetings taking place throughout the week.

- Technical Subcommittee/FRA research topic presentations:

On 7-18-24, Melissa Shurland, FRA, provided a presentation to the technical subcommittee entitled:

*“Rail Decarbonization: Overview of FRA Research on Advancing Clean Energy Technologies for Rail”*

Melissa Shurland gave an excellent presentation on the topic noted above. The presentation will be distributed to all NGEC Technical subcommittee members along with the DRAFT minutes from this meeting.

This is the second in a series of presentations to be given over the next several months by FRA. The presentations will be held monthly with a pause in August due to schedule conflicts including vacation time. The presentations will resume in September.

Dan Ruppert thanked Melissa for the presentation and noted that there is “great information here”. He added, “On the Amtrak side there is a lot of energy (pun intended) around alternative sources.”

Ron Lammerts asked if the presentation would be available. Melissa responded that she would send it to Steve Hewitt with the video section removed and a link to it in its place so as not to make the presentation too large to transmit.

Dan Ruppert commented that these are important topics for the NGEC to get a foundation of information to provide for passenger rail.

### **Technical subcommittee**

**Chair: Don Ruppert, Amtrak**  
**Vice Chair: Joe Paul, Amtrak**

During the month of July 2024, the subcommittee met once – on the 18th:

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

- Backgrounder educational document:

The 2024 NGEC two-page educational was released on 2-2-24 at the NGEC Annual Meeting. As of 7-31-24, 488 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](mailto:shewitt109@aol.com)

- Document Control Update as of 7-31-24:

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

- Multi-State Car Procurement - Caltrans (Lead State) update as of 7-31-24

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 7-31-24:

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

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Updates as of 7-31-24:

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

- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement as of 7-31-24:

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

- FRA Rolling Stock Research Topics for monthly presentations:

On July 18, 2024, Melissa Shurlad presented the second in a series of presentations to the technical subcommittee:

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Dan Ruppert commented that these are important topics for the NGEC to get a foundation of information to provide for passenger rail.

Due to vacations and the calendar, the FRA take a pause on its presentations in August and will begin again in September 2024.

Next presentation – 9-5-24 (tentative)

- NGEC future funding – CRISI Grant Application:

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

- NGEC Website Recovery:

AASHTO has about completed its efforts to re-post all of the information that was lost when AASHTO had a cyber-attack which affected its website and the NGEC's as well. Steve Hewitt has been providing information for the uploads as needed.

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- NGEC Future Funding – Status: CRISI Grant Application:

The CRISI Grant Application for funding the NGEC was submitted on time to the portal. It included many letters of support. It is not too late to send in support letters. They should be sent to Tim Ziethen and Meghan Histan, Amtrak Grants.

Letters of Support:

Submitting letters of support for the NGEC by members of the industry and states is most critical to the success of the application. It is extremely important that NGEC members – both states and industry – prepare and submit letters of support.

### **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 July 2024, the Finance and Administrative Subcommittee met once, on the 17<sup>th</sup>:

Status of ongoing items:

Balance/Spend Rate Through April 2024

Total Invoiced/Incurred (Including Carryover) - \$102,923.49  
 Forecast/Accrual Amount to Reflect Billing Lag 60 days - \$30,000.  
 Invoiced + Accrual Expenses to date (through April) – \$132,923.49  
 Amtrak AOP Funding - \$260,000  
 Remaining funds (total available less Invoiced + Accrual) - \$127,076.51  
 Estimated full year (YTD Incl. Carry Over + FC + Remaining Months @ Avg Spend TD) - \$173,806.13.  
 Current Average Monthly Spend - \$13,627.55

Strat Cavros, AASHTO, reported that the May invoice would be for \$23,905. And would be submitted shortly. The increase in the monthly invoice was due to expenses for the Annual Meeting coming in.

- Tim will include this in his totals through May. He added that it still leaves the monthly average spending near the anticipated \$15,000 and there remains plenty of money left for the remainder of the performance period.



- Status – Completing Prior Grant Close Out documents:

On 7-17-24, Tim Ziethen reported to the FASC that Amtrak is completing the last document to be submitted to close out the prior grant. It is a summary document which Steve Hewitt helped put together (along with Tim Ziethen). It goes to Amtrak's grants office and need to have sign off from the Amtrak VP and Treasurer. The summary sheet is the narrative that tells the story of the NGEC's accomplishments during the grant performance period and provides a look ahead to activities the NGEC would take on moving forward.

On 7-30-24, Tim Ziethen and Steve Hewitt met via Teams to go over final aspects of the close out documents to be submitted to FRA. This included Steve Hewitt uploading all NGEC specifications and documents and procedures developed by the NGEC to FRA grants.

- New CRISI Grant Application:

The CRISI Grant Application for funding the NGEC was submitted on time to the portal. It included many letters of support. It is not too late to send in support letters. They should be sent to Tim Ziethen and Meghan Histan, Amtrak Grants.

CRISI Grant awards will not be announced until the October/November timeframe – November being the most likely.

- Next steps if funded/not funded – clarification on current funding:

On 7-17-24, Tim Ziethen addressed the issue of what is next if Amtrak does not receive a CRISI Grant for the NGEC.

He has been talking with Mike Murray, FRA about what other options there are for Amtrak if it is to fund the NGEC as a stop gap. Amtrak wants to have flexibility in what funding source it would be able to use. There are numerous buckets of funds that Amtrak has and it would like to know its choices if funds the NGEC again. Amtrak is looking for flexibility.

Discussions internally at Amtrak and with FRA are ongoing. If it is to be funded and managed by Amtrak to benefit everyone participating. They will need to determine the structure that will be needed and the efficiencies necessary to support the NGEC's mission. What would it look like?

Tim added that this is still considered a fallback position if CRISI funding is not awarded. He added "this is not an emergency – but we are having the right conversations...hopefully the decision and strategy will be determined within the next 30-60 days...with no break in NGEC Activities."

In the event that none of this comes to fruition "we will look at other possible options" including things that While not easy to do, none of these options are forbidden. The only thing forbidden is lobbying.

Discussion:

Steve Hewitt asked if Tim had determined whether the current funds from the AOP can be used until expended or will it expire at the end of FY 24 (9-30-24). Tim responded that as an operating expense it does not automatically carry over into the next fiscal year. It is viewed as a fiscal year authorization.

Shayne Gill, AASHTO, commented that he has been getting notified/reminded within AASHTO that the sub-contractor agreements are "up". He noted he still needs to talk to Strat Cavros, AASHTO, but he is trying to figure out steps to get those agreements extended with some kind of contingency clause. He is looking for the right language along the lines of "upon receiving funds". He added that he was looking for the right language and was doing his "due diligence".

Strat Cavros noted that Shayne was close on the language – it would normally say "subject to availability of funds".

Steve Hewitt commented that he had received the notice about the agreement ending and asked if he was correct in understanding that the agreements under the current language run through the end of the fiscal year – 9-30-24. Strat Cavros confirmed that Steve was correct.

Tim Ziethen commented that the agreements frequently have clauses allowing them to be canceled “for convenience” with a usual notification period of 30-60 days. The intent is to position these things properly and manage them.

- Second Quarterly Progress Report (QPR) under current funding source – due (internally) around 7-31-24:

Steve Hewitt has prepared the milestones narrative as a part of the June monthly activities report. Tim will complete the other sections and the report will be distributed internally.

- By-Laws Annual Review:

The NGENC By-Laws are reviewed each year to determine whether they are still in line with the NGENC’s mission. The FASC is the body which makes recommendations to the Executive Board – either providing recommended changes or recommending no changes.

Similar to the NGENC two-pager, the process usually begins with Steve Hewitt and the second vice-chair (Amanda Martin). Steve will review first and send his recommendations to Amanda. Amanda and Steve will provide the full FASC with recommendations by the end of September - with the FASC making recommendations to the Executive Board by the end of October 2024. If changes are recommended, the Board will need to have those changes in writing 30 days prior to voting on them.

It was agreed that Steve Hewitt should proceed as planned.

- NGENC two-pager updates for 2025:

On 7-17-24, Steve Hewitt suggested that a first review of the two-pager for updating it for 2025 should begin with him and Amanda Martin as a starting point (in-line with how it has been done in the past). Steve will take a first look and send his comments to Amanda. The timeline would be to provide recommendations to the FASC by the September meeting and for the FASC to make recommendations to the Executive Board by the end of October.

Tim Ziethen agreed and told Steve to proceed as planned.

Steve Hewitt asked Troy Hughes if MODOT graphic arts would be willing, once again, to handle the formatting and printing of the two-pager once all changes were determined. Troy responded that MODOT would take it on again.

Thank you MODOT!

#### **NGEC Specification Review Panel(s):**

**For each PRIIA NGENC 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 NGENC 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 NGENC Review Panels did not meet in July 2024. Several vacancies are yet to be filled by Caltrans as noted previously in this report.