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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: October 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 October 2024, the Executive Board met three times – on 10-1-24, 10-15-24 and 10-29-24.

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

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

Total Invoiced/Incurred (Including Carryover) - \$170,040.93

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

Invoiced + Accrual Expenses to date (through August 2024) – \$200,040.93

Amtrak AOP Funding - \$260,000

Remaining funds (total available less Invoiced + Accrual) - \$59,959.07

Estimated full year (YTD Incl. Carry Over + FC + Remaining Months @ Avg Spend TD) – 185,267.27.

Current Average Monthly Spend – \$14,773.66.

Note: With this type of funding, a balance does not carry-over from one fiscal year to another.

Status - CRISI Grant Application:

On 10-29-24, the official award announcements were released and Amtrak's application for a CRISI Grant to fund the NGECC was **unsuccessful**.

Next Steps if not funded by a CRISI Grant:

One-page White paper:

Tim Ziethen reported that he has spoken to Amtrak Government Affairs, and they requested a "white paper" on the NGECC. In response to this request, "Steve Hewitt wrote an outstanding summary of what the NGECC is, what it has done, and what it is planning to do". Tim has forwarded the "white paper" to Government Affairs and it will be sent "on up the line". Tim also added that he included the 2024 NGECC two-pager educational document to what he sent to Government Affairs.

Tim noted that Amtrak leadership is in NY for an Executive Summit and he believes both George Hull and Dan Ruppert are a part of it and that is why they are not participating in this meeting today.

Tim added that he does not expect to get immediate feedback because of the summit but all information requested by Government Affairs has been submitted and an internal review will take place and then "we will see about next steps" following that review.

Tim specifically thanked Steve Hewitt for the work he did on the "white paper" and, again noted that it was an "outstanding" summary.

Potential funding sources absent CRISI grant:

Ray Hessinger reported that the award announcements for CRISI Grants was released "today" and in looking through the list of awardees he did not see the Amtrak NGECC on it. "It was not successful."

Tim commented that he had not seen the list and the news is "disappointing".

Tim reiterated that George Hull had committed to funding the NGECC through December 2024, so now knowing about the Grant application not being successful, the next step will be for Government Affairs to "take it and escalate it to the senior level for a decision" and he expects "discussions to take place this week with a resolution forthcoming soon". This is a critical decision and a priority.

Tim also raised the issue of the Annual Meeting tentatively scheduled for 1-30-25, but on hold for now. He asked what the drop-dead deadline for AASHTO is as far as an in-person meeting.

Ray Hessinger responded that the deadline that the AASHTO Meeting Planner gave to him and Steve Hewitt is 11-15-24 – which is only around two-weeks from now.

Tim asked AASHTO if there is any flexibility in that deadline.

Strat Cavros, AASHTO responded "If our planer said 11-15-24, then that is the deadline".

Steve Hewitt concurred that the impression he got from Kamasha Hendrickson, AASHTO's Meeting Planner was 11-15-24 is definitely the absolute drop-dead date. Steve added, "it's kind of a drop-dead date for us too. We have not prepared an agenda. We have not contacted speakers or planned presentations, or even promoted the meeting to the industry, so – we are running out of time as well."

Ray Hessinger agreed and added "the Annual Meeting is the single largest expense we have and I have a hard time seeing it beyond this year and with the CRISI Grant being unsuccessful, I am leaning towards taking a regular call (Teams Meeting) and designating it as the Annual Meeting.

Steve Hewitt noted that "right now there would be no funding for the meeting as the Amtrak commitment at the moment is through December 2024. The 2024 Annual Meeting has already been held and the next one would be in 2025 – so we do not know if we will still exist at that time". He added that, if the funding is extended or a further commitment from Amtrak is resolved, holding even a virtual meeting (if that was

decided) it would not be on the scheduled date of 1-30-25, as members attending the other rail meetings that week in Crystal City, Va. would be traveling home that afternoon if there is not an in-person meeting.

Ray Hessinger added that since the Executive Board will meet again on 11-12-24, this will be the “go-no-go date” for an in-person Annual Meeting.

Tim Ziethen added “I expect to have and I am optimistic we will get (internally) to a decision point quickly”.

Overview of potential By-Law changes:

Tim noted that on 10-23-24, he had provided the Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC) with suggested edits or changes to the NGEC By-Laws based on input previously provided by George Hull.

Steve Hewitt reviewed the process for approving By-Law changes and noted the FASC meets on 11-6-24 (next week) and all members have received the suggested edits Tim had made and they have been asked to provide any comments to Tim Ziethen and Steve Hewitt by 11-4-24. It is possible that the FASC will be able to approve the changes for submittal to the Executive Board during the 11-6-24 meeting. If approved, they would be transmitted to the Executive Board via the NGEC Chair Ray Hessinger and could be discussed on the 11-12-24 Board meeting but no vote can take place until the Board members have had the changes in their possession – in writing – for 30 days. This would mean that the soonest the Executive Board could vote on the By-Law changes during a meeting would be on 12-10-24. (An electronic vote could take place, if necessary, right after the 30-day period – which would be 12-6-24.)

At this point, Tim Ziethen gave a brief preview/heads-up to the Executive Board of the nature of the changes or edits being proposed:

The edits are making some things “optional” by adding the word “may” in place of “shall”, based on George thinking it is possible that some of the technical updates could be taken over by Amtrak.

There is also “may” in reference to contract language with AASHTO. This would make it optional rather than a requirement. Tim noted that this would also include the program manager – currently contracted through AASHTO as well as other sub-contractor agreements that AASHTO manages for the NGEC.

Tim emphasized he is not “telegraphing intent” simply providing options.

There is no change suggested to the management of the website - (Currently handled by AASHTO).

As for the Annual Meeting, the “scope of what the Annual Meeting would look like” includes “language that focuses on travel expenses be borne by members and that it could be held at an Amtrak facility”. Tim added “there are no primary objections...but this would provide flexibility...and introduce the option to change things around. It does not require anything to change...it leaves the ability to expand – depending on scope and funding.”

Tim also noted that there is no change to the NGEC mission, just some re-prioritizing. For example, in the scope of work for Subcommittees, items have been re-ordered based on prioritization.

NGEC two-pager updates for 2024:

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

To date: 488 copies have been distributed.

Note: The process for updating the two-pager for 2025 had begun within the FASC. This item is also on hold - awaiting decisions related to future funding of the NGEC.

- Metro-North Dual Mode Locomotive Procurement:

Locomotives 301 and 302 are at Pueblo for type testing which is progressing well.

Locomotive 302 is in final assembly at the Siemens plant.

On 10-29-24, Ray Hessinger reported that the first two units left testing at Pueblo last week and were en route to Croton on Hudson to Metro-North.

- Multi State Venture Car Procurement as of 10-10-24:

All coach type FDR and FAI stages are complete, including Cab Car and Café Car.

The Cab Car FAI and FRA sample car inspections are complete, and the first cars have been conditionally accepted. The Cab Car 238.111(b) testing is complete, and the test report is nearly complete. The IDOT café cars are being shipped to Chicago and placed into revenue service as available.

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

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Update as of 10-1-24:

On the new Acela:

QTP2 testing has been completed and they are working on the report. Workshops are being planned with the builder, FRA and Amtrak.

All in all, the project continues to progress well and there is a sense of “optimism”.

On Airo:

This procurement is progressing well and is on schedule. There are 70 cars in production - 66 coach cars and 4 locomotives.

They are wrapping up FAIs.

The intent is to have the first trainset on the corridor for one year of testing in the spring of 2025.

On the ALC 42:

Dan reported that this procurement continues in a “steady state” of progress with one or two per month entering into service.

On the Long-Distance Trainsets:

Continues as an active RFP. It is moving along well with Amtrak working with carbuilders – with questions going back and forth with Amtrak “hoping to award the contract sometime next year”.

On the GP38:

Progressing well – 19 in service with several on-site for conditional acceptance in Wilmington and Albany. “Moving along well.”

- VIA Rail Equipment Procurements:

A detailed update presentation was provided to the NGECC 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:

The Mechanical Working Group (WG) met on September 24th and they are down to their last DCR. They have reached out to the AAR with a question about this DCR and will meet again to discuss it after they receive the information. I mentioned last month that they are forming a smaller task force for working on the door section in the single-level spec.

The Communications Working Group is continuing their work on the DTL specs to be included in the various equipment specifications. Their next meeting will be on November 12, 2024.

I have continued to meet weekly with the Technical Writer to work on the de-Amtrakking the PRIIA specs.

- Filling Vacancies:

Vacancies exist on the Specification Review Panels

Current status as of 10-31-24:

Caltrans has appointed Ryan Sharpe to the Single Level Rail Car Spec Review Panel. No representative from Caltrans has been named to the other panels as of yet.

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

Ryan Sharpe, Caltrans

Melissa Shurland, FRA

DMU Review Panel Members:

Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT -- Chair

Melissa Shurland, FRA

Brian Beeler, for Maine DOT

Vacant - Caltrans

- 2025 NGEC Annual Meeting:

The 2025 Annual Meeting is scheduled to 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.

Note: Due to the unresolved funding issues – planning for the Annual Meeting is on hold. The deadline for letting AASHTO know what the NGEC plans to do is 11-15-24.

FRA monthly presentation to the NGEC Technical subcommittee – October:

Presentation: “Overview of Planned Sled Testing with Autonomous Wheelchair Securement Systems & ATD Restraint”

Presenter: Kristine Severson, Volpe:

Kristine Severson, Volpe provided an excellent and quite comprehensive presentation “*Overview of Planned Sled Testing with Autonomous Wheelchair Securement Systems & ATD Restraint*”.

The presentation is rather large to distribute, but the plan is to provide Steve Hewitt, Dan Ruppert and Joe Paul access to it on the Volpe website and Steve will ask AASHTO to post it.

Once again, we thank Melissa Shurland for arranging this presentation - the fourth in a series - and we thank Kristine Severson for giving the presentation.

Technical subcommittee

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

During the month of October 2024, the subcommittee met once – on the 10th:

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

- Backgrounder educational document:

The 2024 NGEC two-page educational was released on 2-2-24 at the NGEC Annual Meeting. As of 8-31-24, 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

Updating this document for 2025 is on hold until the future of the NGEC is determined.

- Document Control Update – as of 10-10-24

The Mechanical Working Group (WG) met on September 24th and they are down to their last DCR. They have reached out to the AAR to answer a question about it and will meet again to discuss after they received the information. I mentioned last month that they are forming a smaller task force for working on the door section in the single-level spec. If anybody has any interest in participating in this please reach out to Melissa Shurland, Steve Hewitt or myself.

The Communications WG is continuing their work on the DTL specs to be included in the various equipment specifications. Their next meeting will be on November 12, 2024 at 2:00 central time.

Tammy Krause has continued to meet weekly with the Technical Writer to work on the de-Amtrakking the PRIIA specs.

- Multi-State Car Procurement - Caltrans (Lead State) update as of 10-10-24

All coach type FDR and FAI stages are complete, including Cab Car and Café Car.

The Cab Car FAI and FRA sample car inspections are complete, and the first cars have been conditionally accepted. The Cab Car 238.111(b) testing is complete, and the test report is nearly complete. The IDOT café cars are being shipped to Chicago and placed into revenue service as available.

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

- Metro North Dual Mode Locomotive Procurement as of 10-10-24:

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

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Updates as of 10-10-24:

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On the GP38:

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- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement as of 9-26-24:

AS of 9-26-24 CTDOT reported that they were still working system PDRs with progress being made.

No update was provided October.

FRA monthly presentation to the NGECE Technical subcommittee – October 10, 2024:

Presentation: “Overview of Planned Sled Testing with Autonomous Wheelchair Securement Systems & ATD Restraint”

Presenter: Kristine Severson, Volpe:

Kristine Severson, Volpe provided an excellent and quite comprehensive presentation “*Overview of Planned Sled Testing with Autonomous Wheelchair Securement Systems & ATD Restraint*”.

The presentation is rather large to distribute, but the plan is to provide Steve Hewitt, Dan Ruppert and Joe Paul access to it on the Volpe website and Steve will ask AASHTO to post it.

Once again, we thank Melissa Shurland for arranging this presentation - the fourth in a series - and we thank Kristine Severson for giving the presentation.

- NGECE future funding – CRISI Grant Application:

On 10-29-24, the Executive Board Chair – Ray Hessinger, reported that the Amtrak application for funding for the NGECE was unsuccessful.

The Executive Board is looking at its options for the continuation of the NGECE.

- 2025 NGEAC 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.

Due to funding uncertainty a decision on the NGEAC Annual Meeting taking place is on hold. A decision is expected to take place on 11-12-24 during the next Executive Board meeting.

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 September 2024, the Finance and Administrative Subcommittee did not meet:

Status of ongoing items:

- Balance/Spend Rate Through August 2024

Total Invoiced/Incurred (Including Carryover) - \$170,040.93

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

Invoiced + Accrual Expenses to date (through August 2024) – \$200,040.93

Amtrak AOP Funding - \$260,000

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Estimated full year (YTD Incl. Carry Over + FC + Remaining Months @ Avg Spend TD) – 185,267.27.

Current Average Monthly Spend – \$14,773.66.

Note: With this type of funding, a balance does not carry-over from one fiscal year to another.

- Status - CRISI Grant Application:

This application was unsuccessful as noted in the Executive Board section of this report.

- Next steps if not funded by CRISI:

See Executive Board Section of this report for current status.

- By-Laws Annual Review:

See Executive Board Section of this report for current status.

- NGEAC two-pager updates for 2025:

See Executive Board Section of this report for current status.

NGEAC Specification Review Panel(s):

For each PRIIA NGEAC 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 NGEAC 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 October 2024. Several vacancies are yet to be filled by Caltrans as noted previously in this report.