



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

NGEC FINANCE and ADMINISTRATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES

NOVEMBER 20,
2024

3:00PM EASTERN

TEAMS MEETING

FACILITATOR	<i>Tim Ziethen, Chair of the S305 Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC)</i>
ATTENDEES	<i>Tim Ziethen, Brian Beeler II, Ray Hessinger, Kevin Myles for Mike Murray, Troy Hughes, Troy Hughes also as proxy for Amanda Martin and Melina Lopez, Curt Massie for Amanda Villani, Steve Hewitt, Strat Cavros</i>
ABSENTEES	<i>Amanda Martin, Melina Lopez, Amanda Villani, Mike Murray, Shayne Gill, Barley Fields, 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 confirmed the presence of a quorum.

3. Approval of Minutes from the 10-23-24 meetings – Tim Ziethen, Amtrak

On a motion by Troy Hughes, MODOT, and a second offered by Brian Beeler II for Maine DOT, the minutes from 10-23-24 were approved as submitted.

4. Treasurer’s Report – Tim Ziethen:

Tim Ziethen provided the following update:

Current 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
 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.

Strat Cavros, AASHTO, noted that the September invoice was sent – or will be sent today – in the amount of \$14,246.

**5.
Funding discussion – Amtrak gap funding of \$100k through 3-31-24 – Tim Ziethen:**

Tim Ziethen reported on what he deemed as a “partial success” in obtaining a commitment from Amtrak Finance for the NGEN in the amount of \$100,000 for the period beginning on 10-1-24 through 3-31-24.

Tim added that he has requested Amtrak Procurement to provide AASHTO with a note extending the current agreement through 3-31-24 and commented that he would anticipate that this would then enable AASHTO to do the same with the subcontractor agreements.

Tim also noted that George Hull, Amtrak CMO “went to the mat with Finance to try to get full funding (for FY25) but this (\$100,000) was all he was able to get” which is enough for about 6-months total and maybe a little more.

**6.
What’s Next? – Tim Ziethen:**

Status: Amtrak Governmental Affairs Efforts/white paper:

Tim reported that they have exhausted all options for Amtrak Mechanical and he will now facilitate follow-up discussions with Amtrak Government Affairs to see “what can and cannot be facilitated”. Tim anticipates having Steve Hewitt and Ray Hessinger – and – perhaps others join a conversation with him and Amtrak Government Affairs. He first wants to have his own discussion with Government Affairs before setting up the broader conversation. (Ray and Steve commented that they would be happy to participate in the conversation when Tim deems it to be appropriate.) Tim is hoping to get answers about what “Amtrak writ large” would be able to do to further fund the NGEN.

Tim added that the white paper that Steve Hewitt had prepared was sent to Amtrak Government Affairs and that he was going to re-send it and follow-up to ask for next steps and to “see what we (Amtrak) are able and willing to do”.

Other options:

Tim noted that another option would be to talk to FRA. He would consider this to be “step 2” with the Amtrak Government Affairs effort as “step 1”. If Amtrak determines that there is “nothing beyond \$100,000” he would go to FRA as the next step. All of this, according to Tim, could happen quickly.

He would reconvene a meeting of the NGEN FASC in 2 to 4 weeks to discuss what Amtrak Government Affairs says and walk through next steps.

Review of Amtrak proposed changes to the NGEN By-Laws if funded beyond 3-31-24

After a brief discussion, it was agreed that a review and consideration of approval of the Amtrak suggested changes to the NGEN By-Laws should be tabled until more is known about how the NGEN will be funded and what changes would then be needed. It is a bit premature to vote or discuss these changes at this time. He also noted that only Steve Hewitt has commented on the initial edits Amtrak had requested, and he would be working from that version if the discussion were to take place.

Discussion:

Kevin Myles, FRA, asked who at FRA Tim would be conversing with. Kevin intends to push this within his area (Research). He noted that two of the specifications identified in the white paper were ones that he had requested and that are specs “we need” so he wants to make sure there is funding going forward to make that happen. He asked Tim who he plans to talk to – “is it Paul Nissenbaum”?

Tim said he plans to talk to Amtrak Government Affairs to set up the conversation with FRA when that step is needed and that it “could be with Paul or his designee...I’m open to any point of contact.”

Kevin commented that he believes “we should shake th tree with Research at FRA” as well and he will.

Tim added that he will ask Government Affairs and/or get a name from Mike Murray, FRA. Tim added that he is certainly “open to talking with Paul”.

Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT, (and NGEN Executive Board Chair) commented that he has talked to Paul previously and he is aware of the NGEN situation. Paul could be reached out to again, but it may also make sense to reach out to Michael Lestingi, FRA Executive Director. Ray pointed out that Michael was involved with the NGEN in his former role at FRA for years. (Michael was FRA’s representative on the NGEN Executive Board and as a member of the FASC).

Steve Hewitt added "so was Nissenbaum". He was a long-time member of the NGEC Executive Board prior to Michael Lestingi. He agreed with Ray Hessinger that approaching Michael is a great idea.

Tim commented that he wants to first get "an Amtrak writ large" perspective and then determine what is next.

Steve Hewitt asked who Tim who he has been talking to at FRA – and Tim responded that it was Mike Murray (current FRA representative on the NGEC Executive Board and the FASC).

Troy Hughes, MODOT, commented he was "thinking out loud" about the fact that the "work we do saves people money (when procuring equipment) and continued, "when an entity gets a grant, could a part of that money go to this Committee (the NGEC)".

Tim Ziethen commented "funding currently does not require the use of the NGEC specs" but he noted language could possibly be added to a procurement grant that would require the entity to use a PRIIA spec and "possibly" – a portion would go to the NGEC for management and maintenance of the specification.

Tim added that he was not sure if it would require language through appropriations or simply a policy change by FRA. Tim also noted that there is a mechanism today within the FRA grants whereby a small percentage is held back for safety etc. Maybe language similar to that could be included in the grant.

Ray Hessinger commented to Troy "this is a novel concept – not sure we have looked at that". It would take a very small percentage to fund the NGEC. As an example, Ray did a quick back of the envelope calculation and said one procurement of around \$1 billion providing a ½ percent would result in the NGEC getting about \$5 million. Such an amount would "fund us for a decade".

Tim Ziethen added that there "may be a direct or indirect way to do it". New language within the terms and conditions would be needed.

Ray Hessinger noted that it (language) may need to be in the NOFO and he added "Troy, you may be on to something".

Steve Hewitt agreed that this seems to be a good idea but it is more of a long-term fix. It should be looked into, but there is needs to be a short-term fix to keep the NGEC up and running beyond March 2025.

In summing up today's discussion, Tim Ziethen commented "it feels like a solution is in there somewhere". We have funding through March...we may have a conversation with Ray and Steve and others with Amtrak Government Affairs" and after that "the next step would be with FRA".

Tim also asked if there was a plan to hold a virtual Annual Meeting sometime after the DC meetings of SAIPRC and others at the end of January 2025.

Ray Hessinger said that it is his intent that a virtual Annual Meeting will be held at some point, but it has not been set yet.

Steve Hewitt commented that the NGEC Bu-Laws require an Annual Meeting with invites going to all NGEC members including the industry participants.

Ray concurred and reiterated that it would be all virtual.

Steve added that he had contacted Kamasha Hendrickson, AASHTO's meeting planner to let her know the in-person meeting scheduled for 1-30-25 is canceled and he will inform the Technical subcommittee members including the industry on its next call – 11-21-24 – and follow that with an email to all NGEC members.

Ray Hessinger added that he has raised the NGEC issue with the SPRC Executive Committee and they may have an NGEC discussion during their meeting in January.

Steve Hewitt noted that there are many things (included in the white paper) that the NGEC should be doing and intends to do – but it needs long-term funding to make that happen. Right now, the short-term funds have only allowed the NGEC to limp along and do only the bare minimum.

7.

Consideration of FASC Approval of NGEC By-Law Changes if deemed appropriate/necessary – Tim:

Tabled – see discussion above.

<p>8. Discussion: Steps to transition closing out the NGEK if that is the end result – Tim:</p> <p>This item is tabled until there is a need for it after all options have been exhausted.</p>
<p>9. Other issues/questions – All:</p> <p>With no other business forthcoming, Tim Ziethen adjourned the call at 3:30pm Eastern.</p>
<p>Next Meeting 12-4-24</p>

Decisions - Action Items

Current balance/spend rate through August 2024:

Total Invoiced/Incurred (Including Carryover) - \$170,040.93
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Future Funding for the NGEK:

CRISI Grant Application:

CRISI Grant awards have been announced – the Amtrak application for NGEK funding was unsuccessful.

Future Funding:

See discussion under item 5 above.

Actions:

Step 1:

Tim Ziethen to talk with Government Affairs to determine with Amtrak writ large what – if anything – can be done internally. He may have a follow-up conversation with Government Affairs that would include Ray Hessinger and Steve Hewitt and possibly others from the NGEK.

Step 2:

If there is not a solution coming out of the Amtrak internal discussions. Tim will next reach out to FRA.

Tim will also report to the NGEK Executive Board on 11-26-24 regarding today’s FASC discussions including the concept presented by Troy Hughes, MODOT and the steps noted above.

NGEK 2024 two-pager – public awareness:

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 NGEK website www.ngec.org.

To date: 487 copies (hard and electronic) have been distributed.

NGEK 2025 two-pager:

This item is on hold until decisions on the future of the NGEC are made.
2024 Annual By-Laws Review: This item was tabled until there is a funding solution and source identified.
Annual Meeting: The in-person Annual Meeting has been canceled. A virtual meeting will be scheduled at a later date once the future of the NGEC is clearer.
Next Meeting 12-4-24

ATTACHMENTS



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Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC)

**Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)
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Meeting ID: 252 723 675 90
Passcode: uwnpAp**

**AGENDA
11-20-24
3:00PM Eastern**

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| 1. Welcome/Open | Tim Ziethen |
| 2. Roll Call | Steve Hewitt |
| 3. Approval – Minutes from 10-23-24 | Tim Ziethen |
| 4. Treasurer’s Update | Tim Ziethen |
| Balance/Spend Rate/Forecast | |
| 5. Funding Discussion – Amtrak gap funding of \$100K through 3-31-24 | Tim Ziethen |
| 6. What’s next? | |

Status: Amtrak Governmental Affairs Efforts/white paper
Amount and length of funding if provided additional funds beyond 3-31-24

Review of Amtrak proposed changes to the NGEC By-Laws if funded beyond 3-31-24

- 7. Consideration of FASC approval of NGEC By-Law changes if deemed appropriate/necessary Tim Ziethen
- 8. Discussion: Steps to transition closing out the NGEC if that is the end result Tim Ziethen
- 9. Other Issues/Questions All

Next Meeting 12-4-24