



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

NGEC FINANCE and ADMINISTRATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 12,
2025

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, Ray Hessinger also as proxy for Amanda Martin, Sam Mrofcza for Melina Lopez, Amanda Villani, Mike Murray, Mike Cameron, Steve Hewitt, Barley Fields</i>
ABSENTEES	<i>Amanda Martin, Melina Lopez, Kena Landerle, Shayne Gill, Strat Cavros, 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 11-20-24 and 12-4-24 meetings – Tim Ziethen, Amtrak

On a motion offered by Ray Hessinger (for Iowa DOT) and a second offered by Amanda Villani, WSDOT, the minutes from the 11-20-24 and 12-4-24 were approved as presented.

4.

Treasurer’s Report – Tim Ziethen:

Balance/spend rate through December 2024 – current funding \$100,000:

Total Invoiced/Incurred through December 2024 - \$40,105.79

Funding provided by Amtrak beginning on 10-1-24: \$100,000

Average Monthly Spend – around \$15,000.

Tim added that he has reviewed and approved the invoice for Casamar. Barley Fields, AASHTO, said that she would reply to the message to Strat and asked if there be a new date on the invoice for accounting purposes since it was quite late in being approved. Barley also asked that TLK provide an invoice for work done from August 2024 through February 2025. Steve Hewitt asked Barley to provide him with what she needs and he will reach out to Tammy Krause (TLK). Barley said she would send him the info and added that she would also want Casamar to submit an invoice for the same period.

The invoice timeline is based on the view that there is no new funding and the NGEC will need to be up to date on what the balance will be at the end of March 2025 as it begins to wind down. (see discussion).

5.
Outreach to FRA – results – Tim Ziethen/Ray Hessinger:

1. Ray Hessinger’s conversation with Paul Nissenbaum, FRA – Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT:

Ray Hessinger, NGEN Executive Board Chair, reported that he had a brief conversation with Paul Nissenbaum during the AASHTO CORT meeting in Crystal City, Va., during the last week in January 2025. He talked to Paul about the concept of providing for a take-down for funding the NGEN from CRISI grants or other FRA grants for passenger rail equipment. Paul thought the idea was novel and innovative. However, he felt that it would need statutory authorization to do it. He was not comfortable with going forward with it under the current statute the way it is written.

Tim noted “it sounds like legislative outreach is needed”.

Ray noted that reauthorization language was provided by him and Steve Hewitt to AASHTO for inclusion in their principles for Surface Transportation Authorization. After the conversation with Paul, Steve and Ray added a percentage to the take-down language to the initial draft language sent to AASHTO. Tim commented that it sounds like legislative outreach is needed.

Barley Fields, AASHTO, commented that AASHTO has included it in the principles using the language put together by Ray and Steve as a basis. It has been reported out of the Rail committee and is now with the AASHTO Policy Forum and the Board of Directors.

Tim Ziethen asked “who socializes it? Who brings it forward?”

Ray Hessinger responded that all of the states coordinate with AASHTO on Reauthorization.

Barley added that “it is in the process of being formally adopted as an AASHTO position.

Barley also clarified that AASHTO cannot lobby but they do discuss their principles for authorization on the Hill and they discuss concerns and positions of the states.

Ray Hessinger asked Tim –“ there is an annual appropriations request from Amtrak – do you also submit a request for Reauthorization?”

Tim was not sure of the process, but he will discuss it with Amtrak Government Affairs. He noted “we do provide factual information for both appropriations and authorization.”

Ray Hessinger added “if we can get Amtrak to include it (the NGEN language) in their Reauthorization effort – that would be good...and we can go to our industry members and ask them to weigh in on this mechanism for funding this organization.”

2. Amtrak conversations with FRA re: potential stop gap funding – Tim Ziethen, Amtrak:

Tim Ziethen reported that nothing has been discussed between Amtrak and FRA at this point. He has reached out to Mike Murray but they have not yet connected.

Mike Murray, FRA, responded that “we are kind of waiting for some guidance (from the new Administration) before talking about funding and policy issues.”

At this point, Tim moved the discussion to the topic of moving the NGEN into hibernation.

6.
Next Steps/Options – Tim/Ray/Steve:

NGEN Hibernation pending a funding resolution:

Tim commented “given what is going on – do we move to hibernation? Should it be considered?” He added, “What are the circumstances for us to call for that going forward.”

Ray Hessinger responded “A short term resolution is unlikely so, from that stand point we need to take action to hibernate. Whatever we decide, it means it will be 18 months out before there is a resolution for it (through Reauthorization).” He continued, “we cannot stretch out for 18 months” with the current funding.

Tim Ziethen asked "do we need to look at alternative funding models? Do we discuss a subscription or other mechanism?"

Tim noted several possibilities which have previously been discussed and were not approved by the NGEC Board. He suggested looking at the possibility of asking the industry to contribute – and possibly the states.

Tim noted that he knows it would be difficult.

Ray Hessinger noted that at recent SAIPRC meetings the idea of state DOTs contributing received no support –"it is a challenge".

Ray also added that he is not sure about the industry. It would be difficult with the potential of there being conflicts of interest real or perceived.

Steve Hewitt echoed what Ray said, adding that there was an NGEC Task Force established early on; to look at future funding of the NGEC and it went through all of these proposals or concepts. It presented its findings and potential funding option to the NGEC executive Board at that time. The Board concluded that the NGEC is a federal responsibility and should be funded accordingly. The best-case scenario was that it be funded through the annual appropriations, but that has not happened.

Tim Ziethen turned back to hibernation mode– "Is there a way or a notification? Who do we communicate it with?" Tim added, "the statute does not discuss a way to wrap it up."

He asked, "Hibernation with notification or close-out with notification?"

Ray Hessinger asked what the Amtrak internal process would be since the funding (\$100,000) is coming from Amtrak now.

Tim was not sure what the process would be but will check on it.

Hibernation:

The discussion ensued around what hibernation would look like.

The website should stay up-maintained. It would be necessary to know all of the costs associated with keeping the website on line through AASHTO.

Working on specifications would stop

All meetings would stop.

Steve Hewitt noted that the costs to AASHTO for the website should be minor as there would be no updates required since no work would take place and no updates would be sent to AASHTO for posting. Steve added that it would be necessary to get the website completely up to date in advance of hibernation. This process usually includes Steve Hewitt reviewing the site periodically and sending any corrections, updates or corrections to Barley Fields. This would need to occur at the end to be sure it is as up to date as possible when the hibernation begins. After that, the costs should be inconsequential, but AASHTO will need to weigh in on those costs and its willingness to continue to manage the site.

Requests for specifications

Ray noted that currently when there is a request for an NGEC specification, Steve Hewitt vets the request and determines if it is a legitimate request. There is some labor involved. It is possible we could reimburse Steve for doing it or we could put them on the website and say, 'here they are have at it'".

Tim Ziethen responded that there is also the possibility that Amtrak could "pick it up". He would have to talk

to George Hull, Amtrak CMO, about it first.

It was also mentioned that FRA receives and hold all of the NGEC information, including the specs and it is possible that they could be asked to take on this responsibility.

Tim said it seems like these are the alternate possibilities, or "have Steve do it or go dark".

Steve Hewitt commented that the concept of Amtrak or FRA taking on the responsibility would be a possibility. He did not think that he should be considered for continuing to do it through hibernation. Steve also did not think it was a good idea to post them on the website for all to see and all to access. There is intellectual properties involved and the NGEC put in a document control process to protect those properties to a certain extent and some control should continue to be in effect.

Brian Beeler II, NNEPRA for Maine DOT, weighed in on the topic of specification availability. He noted that they are public documents and should be simply posted on the website and available to the public.

Steve Hewitt stressed the point that there should be some controls on the availability of the specs. Steve again cited the document control process and the reasons for it. He also noted that the requests that he receives are sometimes from other countries or from hobbyist's or various advocacy groups or individuals. Making them available on the website could present a variety of issues including security.

There is currently a mechanism on the website. When an individual or entity requests a spec, an email notification sends the request to Steve Hewitt and he responds as appropriate. There is a notice on the site that the Chair of the NGEC can refuse the request and Steve Hewitt act for the chair and/or discusses it if there is a request that Steve is not sure of the right response. (This seldom occurs).

Steve recommended that Amtrak or FRA – whichever agrees to take this on – names a contact and the automatic email request would go to that individual.

Many requests go directly to Steve Hewitt from the industry without going through the website since Steve is known as the point of contact for all things related to the NGEC. If the NGEC goes into hibernation a notification of the situation and the process would need to go out to all those who are on the NGEC distribution lists.

Next Steps:

Steve Hewitt recommended that the work that is underway be completed as previously decided by the Executive Board. There is the completion of the update to the Single level Spec which will be voted on by the Tech subcommittee on Thursday 2-13-25. If approved it is sent to the Chair (Ray Hessinger) and it would normally then go to Review Panel Consultant Larry Salci to review and determine compliance with the NGEC requirements document for that spec. Ray would then convene the Single Level Specification Review Panel. The panel would consider Mr. Salci's recommendations and submit their report and recommendation to the Executive Board for consideration of adoption.

Steve added, once the Board has adopted the updates, the technical writer and document control manager insert those changes into the spec itself.

Describing the process, Steve laid out the timeline and stated that the work would take the Committee through March.

Tim Ziethen said that there should be funds available – possibly – into early April – depending on whether Larry is needed.

Steve said that would be something Ray and the Board may need to determine.

For all these reasons it is important for there to be a "best guess" estimate of what expenses will be

forthcoming and what money will be left when the Committee goes into hibernation to cover any costs that AASHTO may incur.

7. Recommendations to the NGEC Executive Board – Tim Ziethen:

It was agreed that there would be no formal recommendation from the FASC, but that Tim Ziethen would update the Board on today's discussions and let the Board make the final determination of how to go forward. The Executive Board meets on 2-18-25 and will likely need to meet again – at last once – likely twice in March.

It was also agreed that the FASC should meet on schedule in 4 weeks – 3-12-25.

8. Questions/Issues/Next FASC Meeting –Tim/All:

With no other business forthcoming, Tim Ziethen adjourned the call at 4:00pm Eastern.

Next Meeting
3-12-25

Decisions - Action Items

Balance/spend rate through December 2024 – current funding \$100,000:

Total Invoiced/Incurred through December 2024 - \$40,105.79
Funding provided by Amtrak beginning on 10-1-24: \$100,000
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This is the general update provided by Tim Ziethen on 2-12-25, but a more formal spreadsheet of the expenses will be inserted once Tim has provided it to Steve Hewitt.

Future Funding for the NGEC:

Future Funding:

See discussion under items 5 and 6 above.

Actions:

It was agreed that there would be no formal recommendation from the FASC, but that Tim Ziethen would update the Board on today's discussions and let the Board make the final determination of how to go forward. The Executive Board meets on 2-18-25 and will likely need to meet again – at last once – likely twice in March.

It was also agreed that the FASC should meet on schedule in 4 weeks – 3-12-25.

NGEC 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 NGEC website www.ngec.org.

To date: 488 copies (hard and electronic) have been distributed.

NGEC 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 was a funding solution and source identified.

Annual Meeting:

The in-person Annual Meeting has been canceled. It is unlikely that funds will be available for the NGEC to continue actively beyond March 2025 – and there will not be an Annual Meeting in 2025.

**Next Meeting
3-12-25**

ATTACHMENTS



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Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC)

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Meeting ID: 252 723 675 90

Passcode: uwnpAp

AGENDA

2-12-25

3:00PM Eastern

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Welcome/Open | Tim Ziethen |
| 2. Roll Call | Steve Hewitt |
| 3. Approval – Minutes from 12-4-24 | Tim Ziethen |
| 4. Treasurer’s Update | Tim Ziethen |
| Balance/Spend Rate/Forecast - current Funding (\$100,000) | |
| 5. Outreach to FRA – results: | Tim Ziethen/Ray Hessinger |
| 1. Ray Hessinger conversation with Paul Nissenbaum | Ray |
| 2. Amtrak to FRA re: potential stop gap funding | Tim |
| 6. Next Steps/Options: | Tim/Ray/Steve |
| Reauthorization: | |
| 1. Review/discuss proposed Statute Changes: | |
| 2. Develop a strategy to move forward on Reauthorization | |

Appropriations:

1. Request Appropriations for the NGEC? – who? Amount?

NGEC Hibernation pending a funding resolution:

1. How would it work?
2. What would the cost be?
3. Web site?
4. Steps to transitioning to hibernation

Close Out NGEC:

1. Steps?
7. Recommendations to the NGEC Executive Board Tim
8. Questions/Issues/Next FASC Meeting? Tim

Next Meeting
3-12-25