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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: February 28, 2025

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 February 2025, the Executive Board met once – on the 18th.

Highlights, decisions, updates from the NGEC during the month of February 2025:

Treasurer's Report and status update on NGEC Funding:

Total Invoiced/Incurred (Including Carryover) - \$40,105.79
 Forecast Accrual Amount to Reflect Billing Lag 60 days – \$30,000.00
 invoiced + Accrual Expenses to date – \$70,105.79
 Amtrak AOP Funding - \$100,000.00
 Remaining Funds - \$29,894.21
 Estimated full year (Actuals) - \$84,126.95
 Average Monthly Spend – \$13,368.60.

Tim reiterated that the funding committed to the NGEC and allocated by Amtrak Finance is \$100,000 for FY25. Based on the average spend rate, this funding should take the NGEC through at least 3-31-25. The \$100,000, however, is available until expended.

At the current spend rate (which does not yet include "up to date" Casamar and TLK invoices) the NGEC may have "some room outside of March 2025".

Steve Hewitt reminded Tammy Krause (TLK) to review the timeline and request from AASHTO that he (Steve) sent to her and to Cameren Cordell, (Casamer) and submit invoices as requested.

Funding Discussion:

Short term I stop gap funding:

Tim Ziethen reported that he has not been able to find a source for additional short-term funding. He will continue to talk internally, but he does not see new funding being available in the short term.

Ray Hessinger conversation with Paul Nissenbaum:

Ray had not joined the meeting as of yet, but Steve Hewitt provided a brief overview of Ray's conversation with Paul Nissenbaum, FRA in Crystal City, Va, during the AASHTO Council on Rail Transportation (CORT) annual meeting.

Steve noted that Ray talked to Paul about the concept of providing for a take-down for funding the NGEC 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 require statutory authorization to do it. He was not comfortable with going forward with it under the current statute the way it is written.

Steve noted that the way forward would seem to be through legislative language and that the most likely vehicle is the Reauthorization of Surface Transportation.

Steve reported that he and Ray Hessinger had previously provided NGEC reauthorization language to AASHTO for inclusion in their principles for Surface Transportation Reauthorization. After the conversation with Paul, Steve and Ray added a percentage (1/4 %) to the take-down language already in the initial draft language sent to AASHTO.

Steve continued, stating the critical issue regarding Reauthorization is that it is 18 months away and there is no guarantee that the NGEC language will make it into the bill. There needs to be support from the states and Amtrak to whatever degree they can provide it in order to be successful.

This leads to – what are the next steps?

On the last Executive Board meeting, Mike Jenkins, Oregon DOT, recommended that the Committee, if it does not find funding, go into hibernation while efforts to fund it are continued.

Mike felt that it is much more difficult to completely start over, which is what would be the case if the NGEC simply closed out its work and stopped.

(During this discussion Chairman Ray Hessinger had joined the meeting.)

Steve addressed the questions of - If the NGEC goes into hibernation - what steps are to be taken - and what are the costs and what will the timeline be?

Steve noted that costs to be determined to include the website and what would the cost be to keep it live?

The website costs should be minimal as there would be no updates to upload once the site has been made current and hibernation begins. The question is for AASHTO as to what it would charge for keeping it live.

(Note: Prior to the completion and distribution of these minutes AASHTO informed Steve Hewitt on 2-19-25 that there would be no cost for keeping the website live without updates.)

Specification distribution upon request – who? Where?

Another question to be answered is who/what entity will take over the responsibility of responding to requests for NGEC Specifications? This responsibility currently lies with Steve Hewitt who has managed the support services for the NGEC since the beginning.

Steve Hewitt stressed the point that there should be some controls on the availability of the specs. He 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 hobbyists 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).

During the FASC meeting of 2-12-25 it was recommended that Amtrak or FRA should take this on. Whichever entity agrees to do it the link on the site would need to be changed to a point of contact to whom the request would be sent.

Steve emphasized that most requests currently go directly to him from the industry rather than going through the website. Steve believes the interest and demand may well decrease once the NGEC goes dark and the website is the only mechanism for obtaining specs.

Steps to transitioning to hibernation

Timeline:

With the determination that a Review Panel examination of the DCRs for the Single Level Specification will not be needed, the timeline for completing the ongoing activities prior to going into hibernation, it would be possible to adopt the summary of changes on 3-4-25 or 3-18-25 and turn the document over to the Document Control Manager (Tammy Krause) to finalize and prepare for the Chair's signature.

Steve Hewitt suggested that the end of March is a possibility, but it could leak into April to complete these activities and ensure that the website is completely up to date.

Several questions still in need of answers:

Website costs, (answered above on the day after this meeting 2-19-25) invoices from TLK and Casamar and a dollar and timeline estimate for finalizing the specs (Single Level and Vehicle Weight) and the de-Amtraking of the series 305-900 sub specs is required. Also – a decision on who will be respond to requests for PRIIA Specifications.

Note: During the last week in February, invoices were received from TLK and Casamar through 12-31-24. The invoices and the activities of January and February made it clear that the timeline for exhausting the \$100,000 in FY25 funding was sooner than anticipated.

As a result, Steve Hewitt and Tim Ziethen discussed the situation and revised the budget and timeline to have document control and technical writing efforts cease at the end of February, and for Steve Hewitt to reduce his retainer in March to ½ and complete his administrative activities by 3-15-25. It was also determined that there would be one final meeting of the NGEC held on 3-4-25. During this meeting, the NGEC Executive Board will consider the final changes related to updating the PRIIA Single Level Rail Car Specification and will consider a motion to go into hibernation effective on 3-15-25.

With these modifications, the NGEC will have exhausted its funding but will stay within the \$100,000 allocated for FY25.

Chairman Hessinger and Vice Chairman Ruppert were informed of the revised budget and timeline and agreed with the new scope and budget developed by Steve Hewitt and Tim Ziethen.

Hibernation, as proposed, will result in the NGEC ceasing all activities until new funding is authorized and allocated. The likely vehicle for reauthorizing the NGEC's mission, scope and budget is the Surface Transportation Bill which will not be considered for some 18 months.

The NGEC website will stay live during this period, as agreed to by AASHTO, at no cost. However, there will be no updates or website maintenance during hibernation. Steve Hewitt will review the website in March and provide all documents necessary to bring the site up to date as of 3-15-25.

The agenda for the 3-4-25 Executive Board Meeting (found below) will address the critical items as noted and begin the process for hibernation.

NGEC Executive Board Meeting
3-4-25
11:30 AM – 12:30 Noon Eastern
 Join on your computer, mobile app or room device.

Agenda

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| 1. Welcome and Open the Meeting | Ray Hessinger |
| 2. Roll call | Steve Hewitt |
| 3. Action Items Status Review
Steve Hewitt | |
| 4. Approval of Minutes from 2-18-25 meeting
Hessinger | Ray |
| 5. Document Control – Status - priority efforts
Krause | Tammy |
| 6. Overview of the summary of DCRs as approved on 2-27-25 by the NGEC Technical SC
Krause | Tammy |
| 7. Consideration of adoption of the DCRs updating the PRIIA Single Level Car Spec | Ray |
| 8. Treasurer's Report, FASC Meeting Updates | Tim Ziethen |
| <p>Balance and Spend rate 10-1-24 through 12-31-24
 Anticipated Expenses against the remaining funds</p> <p>Revising the timeline for exhausting the NGEC funds for FY 2025</p> <p>Steps to be taken to hibernate:</p> <p>Finalize the Single Level specification
 Distribute the final series 900 Sub-specs 17 de-Amtrak and 3 as is.
 Update the website- send all updates to AASHTO by 3-15-25
 Provide the PRIIA Vehicle Specifications – current versions to the FRA, and NGEC states
 Provide the series 900 sub-specs/reference specs to the FRA, Amtrak and the NGEC states
 Provide the series 800 Drawings to the FRA, Amtrak and the NGEC states
 Complete all NGEC work by 3-15-25
 Determining who will respond/vet specification requests – setting up the automated email on the website
 Electronic vote to approve 3-4-25 Exec Board Minutes – by 3-14-25 for final posting to the website.
 Notice and thank you to the NGEC Industry participants and entire NGEC Email list.
 Final anticipated balance on 3-15-25</p> | |
| 9. Discussion: Going into hibernation | Ray Hessinger |

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| 10. Executive Board consideration of going into hibernation post 3-31-25 | Ray Hessinger |
| 11. Other/Adjourn | Ray Hessinger |

Technical subcommittee

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

During the month of February 2025, the subcommittee met once – on 2-27-25

Key decisions and action item updates from the month of February 2025, included:

Status of open items of interest:

- 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, 490 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 2-27-25:

Status: De-Amtrak of 900 series Sub-specs:

Tammy Krause reported that she and the Technical Writer have completed de-Amtraking 17 of 20 PRIIA/Amtrak “sub-specs”. One is the Amtrak Signage Guidebook and can’t be “de-Amtraked. The other two will remain as they are for now.

Overview – Summary of DCRs for the Single Level Rail Car Specification:

The DCRs presented for consideration, other than two specific items, have already been adopted for other PRIIA specs and are being incorporated in each spec as they are updated.

At this point, Tammy went through the two DCRs to be considered along with the previously approved changes.

Stu Trout asked why the specification called out only Timken in one aspect. The consensus of attendees who commented was the language was a function of what had been in parent specifications, and the components performed satisfactorily. A DCR for a future update could change that language.

With no other discussion forthcoming, Dan Ruppert called for a motion to approve the full list of DCRs for submittal to the NGEC Executive Board for its consideration.

- Technical Subcommittee consideration of approval of the changes to the Single Level Rail Car Specification: Initial Release:

A motion to approve the DCRs as presented for submittal to the NGEC Executive Board for its consideration was offered by

Curtis McDowell for NCDOT. A second to the motion was offered by Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT.

Dan Ruppert asked if there were any comments or further discussion. Hearing none, he asked Steve Hewitt to take a roll call vote on the motion to approve.

Steve Hewitt called the roll:

Dan Ruppert, Amtrak – aye
 Mike Murray, FRA – aye

Ryan Sharpe, Caltrans – aye
 Curtis McDowell for NCDOT – aye
 Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT – aye
 Kena L. Lenderle, MODOT – aye
 Kirk Fredrickson for WSDOT – aye
 Mike Jenkins, Oregon DOT – aye

With a quorum having been confirmed and all votes cast in the affirmative, the Chair determined that consensus was achieved and the motion is approved.

Steve Hewitt will send the summary of DCRs, as approved by the Technical Subcommittee in advance of its meeting on 3-4-25.

- Multi-State Car Procurement - Caltrans (Lead State) update as of 2-27-25

Ryan Sharpe, Caltrans, provided the following update on the Venture Rail Car – multi-state – procurement:

“The Cab Car FAI and FRA sample car inspections are complete, and the FRA inspection approval has been received. The Cab Car 238.111(b) testing is complete, and cab cars are being conditionally accepted as open items are closed and FMI's are completed. Options for cab car entry into service in the trail position are being investigated while signal shunting enhancement to meet Class 1 requirements is in work. Amtrak requests for cab car modifications have been received and are under review. 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 2-27-25 as reported by Ray Hessinger, NYSDOT:

Locomotive 301 and 302 are undergoing dynamic testing in Croton.

Locomotive 303 has completed its Q40 inspection.

Locomotive 304 – production is complete with testing to begin

Locomotive 305 is in final assembly.

Metro-North announced this week that it has engaged Siemens for an electric battery locomotive which will take power from overhead catenary or an on-board battery.

- Amtrak Equipment Procurement Updates as of 2-27-25 reported by Dan Ruppert, Amtrak:

On the new Acela:

Amtrak is close to getting new trains in service soon. Dan was unable to provide specifics but noted there has been a lot of movement and very good progress.

On Airo:

There are 83 coaches and 9 Locomotives completed. 23 coaches are in final assembly. Progressing well.

On the Long Distance “Charger” Locomotive:

70 units out of the initial order of 75 have been accepted. Up to this point there has been an average of 2 per month getting accepted. With Amtrak having picked up the option for 50 additional locomotives, the number of acceptances per month is expected to slow down to about one per month. Dan also noted progress has continued in improving reliability.

On the Long Distance Fleet:

This remains as an open procurement with Amtrak continuing to work with potential bidders.

- Connecticut DOT Rail Car Procurement as of 1-16-25:

"We are working through IDR. In December 2024, we visited Alstom's prototype center to see the mockup for the coach per the current design and have a few in-person design meetings with their India design team. We are heavily scheduled with design reviews through mid-February. We'll return to the prototype center for more in-person meetings during the last week of this month, and to see modifications to the mock up that were changed per our comments from the last meeting, as well as reviewing the cab mock-up with reps from our service providers who have been heavily involved with the cab layout and design elements."

A February update was not provided.

- NGEC future funding

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

Amtrak has agreed to provide short-term funding for the first 6-months of FY 2025 through 3-31-25) n the amount of \$100,000.

- 2025 NGEC Annual Meeting:

Due to the unresolved funding issues, the NGEC in-person Annual Meeting scheduled for 1-30-25 has been **CANCELED**. If the funding issue is resolved the Annual Meeting will take place as a virtual meeting at a date yet to be determined.

- **Status Update NGEC Funding and schedule as reported by Steve Hewitt on 2-27-25:**

Steve Hewitt reported that the issue of securing long-term funding for the NGEC has not been resolved. The Committee is currently funded temporarily by Amtrak in the amount of \$100,000 for FY 25. (Amtrak also funded the NGEC in FY 2024).

The current funding began on 10-1-24 and was estimated to carry the NGEC through 3-31-25. However, based on actual invoices received through 12-31-24 and estimates for the cost of completing priority activities, it has become clear that the NGEC will have exhausted its full allocation as early as the end of this month (February) with minimal funds remaining for transitional/administrative work (such as getting the website fully up to date) to be completed by 3-15-25..

The NGEC Executive Board meets on Tuesday 3-4-25 2025 and will consider a motion to go into hibernation while efforts continue by Amtrak, the states, and FRA to find a solution for funding the NGEC long-term. This solution may come via the Surface Transportation Authorization bill which is about 18 months out.

Some discussion ensued regarding hibernation and what it means.

Steve Hewitt explained that the NGEC Executive Board is considering a recommendation to go into hibernation rather than close up shop. It is believed that hibernation would allow the NGEC to pick up where it left off whenever long-term funding is provided. This would be an easier and smoother transition than shutting down and starting from scratch.

The hope is that there will be funding at some point and that the work of the Committee will be reauthorized.

Dan Ruppert commented that he had "nothing to add to a sad story" and it is an "unfortunate situation we find ourselves in".

Ray Hessinger concurred with Steve and Dan's comments and added that he will request that copies of the PRIIA specs and other pertinent documents be distributed to Amtrak, FRA and the State members of the NGEC as a way to protect against something happening with a hard drive or similar.

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 February 2025, the Finance and Administrative Subcommittee did not meet.

See the Executive Board portion of this report for all Funding and administrative updates as of 2-28-25.

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 Review Panels did not meet in February 2025. Several vacancies are yet to be filled by Caltrans as noted previously in this report.