

SECTION 305 FINANCE and ADMINISTRATIVE SUB COMMITTEE

MINUTES APRIL 28, 2021 3:00PM EASTERN CONFERENCE CALL

FACILITATOR	<i>Tim Ziethen, Chair of the S305 Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC)</i>
ATTENDEES	<i>Tim Ziethen, Tim Ziethen also as proxy for John Oimoen, Amanda Martin, Amanda Martin also as proxy for Arun Rao, and for Troy Hughes, Jeff Gordon, Brian Beeler II, Ray Hessinger, Mike Murray, Shayne Gill, Strat Cavros, Oscar Bermudez, Steve Hewitt</i>
ABSENTEES	<i>Arun Rao, John Oimoen, Troy Hughes, Jason Biggs, Larry Salci,</i>

DECISIONS MADE

1. Welcome and Open Meeting – Tim Ziethen, Amtrak:

Subcommittee Chair, Tim Ziethen, Amtrak, opened the conference call meeting and asked Steve Hewitt to call the roll.

2. Roll Call – Steve Hewitt:

Steve Hewitt called the roll and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

3. Approval of Minutes from the 3-31-21 conference call – Tim Ziethen, Amtrak:

On a motion by Amanda Martin, Iowa DOT, and a second by Brian Beeler II for Maine DOT, the minutes from 3-31-21 were approved as presented.

4. Treasurer’s Update – Tim Ziethen:

Tim Ziethen provided the following Treasurer’s update:

Balance and Spend Rate

Total Initial Grant Amount: \$1,250,000.
 Amount Spent through February 2021: \$736,122.37
 Balance remaining: \$ 508,605.50.
 Estimated spend at current rate for the remaining grant period (through 9-30-23): \$433,645.84.
 Current Spend Rate per month (as info and used in calculating): \$13,988.58.
 Estimated Balance at the end of the Extension Period (Contingency): \$74,959.66

5. Conveying the message (Federal Surface Transportation Authorization) - Tim/Steve:

Executing action Plan – status/activities as of 4-28-21:

2021 NGEC two-page handout - Steve:

Approximately 450 of these documents have been distributed electronically. Feedback has been positive, and they are proving useful in making the case with congressional staff.

Interactions with others – SPRC, Amtrak, AASHTO, Industry, Congress - Tim/Steve/Arun Rao:

Arun was not available for today’s call, but Steve Hewitt reported that SPRC had sent a letter requesting the reauthorization of the NGEC and providing suggested language, scope, and funding.

After sending the letter, Arun received a call from the House Railroad subcommittee (Majority) Frances Bourne, asking

about the NGEC:

Are the specs being used? Isn't the work done if specifications have been completed and standardization is occurring? Why not ask that states be required to use NGEC specifications if using federal dollars?

Arun responded that the specifications are not only being used widely across the country and beyond (VIA Rail, Canada) but they are being relied upon. They have saved millions of dollars as they are used as the baseline specification and there is no need to start from scratch which would be at a cost estimated to be about \$2 million.

Arun also noted that the work is not complete – the specifications need to be maintained and updated constantly as they are used, and changes are developed that will keep them current and useful and if the NGEC is not reauthorized the specs would become obsolete. Arun also noted there may be additional specs yet to be developed as technology changes.

The last question, Arun did not specifically respond to as there are different views on this – the specs are being widely used now without there being a federal requirement which could potentially add more onerous requirements where not necessary.

Steve Hewitt also reported on his interaction with Siemens. He provided Siemens with the SPRC letter and Steve Morrison, Siemens, said they will support the NGEC and would utilize the letter and the information provided. They will also stress that the NGEC work is good for the industry as a whole – beyond just one company.

Steve Hewitt also noted that he has provided the letter to the 200+ NGEC industry members and will discuss it on the 4-29-21 NGEC Technical subcommittee call.

Shayne Gill, AASHTO, also reported on a call he had with Frances Bourne. He was asked pretty much the same questions and provided similar responses. Shayne emphasized that the NGEC is needed, that it has worked well towards the goal of revitalizing the passenger rail manufacturing and supply industry in the US, and it has been successful in achieving the objectives of developing and maintaining standardized specifications.

Shayne also emphasized that AASHTO supports the NGEC and its continuation (reauthorization) and recognizes the value it has added in cost savings and job creation.

Ray Hessinger reported on his discussion with Paul Nissenbaum, FRA, who asked some similar questions. He wondered if the NGEC had run its course and achieved its objectives. Ray advocated for the reauthorization of the NGEC and noted the importance of continuously maintaining and updating the NGEC specs to keep them current and useful. He too noted that their use is widespread throughout the US and beyond (Canada – VIA Rail). Ray also noted that the NGEC continues to develop new products/documents – the most recent of which is the PRIIA Recommended Practices 305-200 document which will be of great value for those who are new to passenger rail equipment procurement by identifying best practices as well as being a guideline for those who have gone through the process and can refer to lessons learned and best practices.

The Committee is now in the process of developing a TSSSA primer for use by procuring entities as well.

The word is getting out, and it is a positive that the House Rail Subcommittee has reacted to the SPRC letter and language and has reached out to ask questions and gain an understanding of what the NGEC is and what value it brings. The effort will need to continue, but the NGEC is, at least, on their radar now with a raised profile.

Shayne Gill also noted that it is important that FRA and Amtrak weigh in and "speak highly of the importance of the Committee and of its accomplishments." All should be saying the same thing. (Amtrak, AASHTO, FRA and SPRC as well as the industry). Additionally, he commented on the value and usefulness of the NGEC two-pager in making the case for the NGEC. It is a great tool for conveying the message.

Posing the question to FRA grants re: current funding availability if no authorization -Jeff Gordon:

Jeff Gordon read the following FRA response to the question posed and provided it to Steve Hewitt for inclusion in the minutes of this call (4-28-21):

Response presented on 4/28/2021 FASC call:

Generally, committees and entities are authorized to exist until explicitly abolished by law. The FY14 money (\$1.25M) is part of an active grant with an entity (here NGEC) that still exists. As long as the NGEC still exists, it may spend down the previously appropriated no year funds.

Posing the question to Amtrak grants re: same question as above – Tim:

Tim Ziethen was pleased to hear the FRA response and said that he was not sure that Amtrak would have anything to add to that.

Tim added that Amtrak is supportive of the NGECC and its reauthorization. He will share with Ken Altman, Amtrak Government Affairs, the outreach by Frances Bourne.

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Status: Preparation of the Quarterly Grant Agreement Report to FRA – period ending 3-31-21 -Tim:

Tim reported that he has prepared the Quarterly Grant Agreement Report to FRA, and it was reviewed and edited by Steve Hewitt. Tim will finalize it and have Amtrak Grants review it once more and will then submit it on time to FRAS. Once it has been sent to FRA, Tim will provide the final version to Steve Hewitt for distribution to the NGECC executive Board members.

Adjourn:

With no other business forthcoming, Chairman Ziethen adjourned the call at about 3:28pm Eastern.

By Computer: <https://stephenhewitthewittconsulting.my.webex.com/meet/shewitt109>

by phone: 1-415-655-0001

Access code: 126-073-1531

Next call – 5-26-21

Decisions - Action Items

Treasurer's Report – 4-28 -21:

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Conveying the message (Federal Surface Transportation Authorization):

Executing action Plan – status/activities as of 4-28-21:

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Interactions with others – SPRC, Amtrak, AASHTO, Industry, Congress:

On 4-28-21, Steve Hewitt reported that SPRC had sent a letter requesting the reauthorization of the NGECC and providing suggested language, scope, and funding.

After sending the letter, Arun Rao received a call from the House Railroad subcommittee (Majority) Frances Bourne, asking about the NGECC:

Are the specs being used? Isn't the work done if specifications have been completed and standardization is occurring?

Why not ask that states be required to use NGEC specifications if using federal dollars?

Arun responded that the specifications are not only being used widely across the country and beyond (VIA Rail, Canada) but they are being relied upon. They have saved millions of dollars as they are used as the baseline specification and there is no need to start from scratch which would be at a cost estimated to be about \$2 million.

Arun also noted that the work is not complete – the specifications need to be maintained and updated constantly as they are used, and changes are developed that will keep them current and useful and if the NGEC is not reauthorized the specs would become obsolete. Arun also noted there may be additional specs yet to be developed as technology changes.

The last question, Arun did not specifically respond to as there are different views on this – the specs are being widely used now without there being a federal requirement which could potentially add more onerous requirements where not necessary.

Arun will be sending a follow-up email with additional information to Frances Bourne.

Steve Hewitt also reported on his interaction with Siemens. He provided Siemens with the SPRC letter and Steve Morrison, Siemens, said they will support the NGEC and would utilize the letter and the information provided. They will also stress that the NGEC work is good for the industry as a whole – beyond just one company.

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Posing the question to Amtrak grants re: same question as above:

Tim Ziethen was pleased to hear the FRA response and said that he was not sure that Amtrak would have anything to add to that.

Tim added that Amtrak is supportive of the NGEN and its reauthorization. He will share with Ken Altman, Amtrak Government Affairs, the outreach by Frances Bourne.

Quarterly Grant Progress Report to FRA for quarter ending 3-31-21:

The report is complete and will be submitted to FRA on time. (due 4-30-210)

By Computer: <https://stephenhewitthewittconsulting.my.webex.com/meet/shewitt109>

by phone: 1-415-655-0001

Access code: 126-073-1531

Next Call -5-26-21

ATTACHMENTS



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

SECTION 305 NGEN Finance and Administrative Subcommittee (FASC)

Web Ex video/audio information:

By Computer: <https://stephenhewitthewittconsulting.my.webex.com/meet/shewitt109>

by phone: 1-415-655-0001

Access code: 126-073-1531

AGENDA

4-28-21

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|---|--------------|
| 1. Welcome/Open | Tim Ziethen |
| 2. Roll Call | Steve Hewitt |
| 3. Approval of the Minutes from 3-31-21 | Tim Ziethen |
| 4. Treasurer's Update | Tim Ziethen |
| a. Balance-Spend Rate | |
| 5. Conveying the Message (Federal Surface Transportation Authorization) | Tim/Steve |

Executing action Plan – status/activities since last call:

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------|
| a. | 2021 NGEN two-page handout | Steve |
| b. | Interactions with others – SPRC, Amtrak, AASHTO, Industry, Congress | Tim/Steve/Arun Rao |
| c. | Posing the question to FRA grants re: current funding availability if no authorization | Jeff Gordon |
| d. | Posing the question to Amtrak grants re: same question as above | Tim |
| 6. | Status: Preparation of the Quarterly Grant Agreement Report to FRA – period ending 3-31-21 | Tim |
| 7. | Other Issues/questions | All |

Next Call 5-26-21