

## Candidate Statements for 2020 Kentucky Council Representative

Candidate: John Owen

Candidate Residence: Louisville

Candidate Status: Incumbent

### **Why are you interested in serving in a NARP/RPA Leadership Position?**

To promote the expansion of our nations passenger rail network to include more options for the mid west and middle south. To fairly represent our rail passengers from Kentucky's needs from the current system and an expanded rail network in Kentucky.

To meet with our Kentucky members throughout the year and create a one on one relationship from them to the Rail Passengers Board and Staff in Washington D.C. As being a council member is a full time activity year round not just twice a year at the annual meetings.

I want to see the organisation expand and increase our membership numbers, develop better relationships with like minded groups, and attract younger people to our midst

### **If elected to a Council position, what are the primary goals you personally would pursue?**

As you current council member I have offered several resolutions to the Council of Rep. at Rail Passengers which Of the six I offered five passed and one tabled for further discussion to improve the manner in which we set priorities and do business.

I will continue to promote the expansion of Amtrak in Kentucky and neighboring states.

Restoration of passenger service to Louisville and Lexington is tops on my list and finding multi mode solutions where no rail option exists in Kentucky and our region.

Having every Kentucky county from the Paducah area to the Big Sandy region connected to the national rail and bus grid. I would also like to see expansion of the council to better reflect our congressional districts and enable more Kentuckians to serve

### **What is your passenger rail advocacy experience?**

Current Council member from Kentucky, former N.A.R.P. Director Region 5 , Member of the Kentucky group since 1970 as junior member, holding various positions over the years of the Kentucky Rail Group including

Operations Director of the Flamingo Dinner Train which operated on the former L&N Lebanon Branch, Special Events including the Kentucky State Fair Booth an two week event, volunteer station host at Louisville Union Station and Jeffersonville IN 1999-2003, Commuter Rail Demonstration run chair 2008 for the trip on the Paducah and Louisville Railroad. Member of the Transit Authority of River T2 light rail project My current role is Chairman of the Board of the Rail Passengers Kentucky, . Member of several rail related groups throughout the Commonwealth.

Have knowledge in rail operation as a former employee of the original auto - train Corp at the Louisville Terminal. Former Ticket agent Parker Travel Maysville, KY . And have been rules qualified at Auto Train, Morehead and North Fork Railroad, Bluegrass Railroad and Kentucky Railway Lebanon Branch.

I was instrumental in forming the Dixie Rail Coalition in the 1990s between Kentucky, Tennessee , Alabama during the Kentucky Cardinal Days and organised the joint meeting between NARP Midwestern and Southern Region states in 2002 one of only two ever conducted in the history of Rail Passengers aka N.A.R.P The other in which I attended in Cincinnati in 1981 following the loss of the Cardinal service.

Former route and schedule planner Southeastern Trailways Inc

My current job as Kentucky council member also includes out reach to our border states and regional meetings. In my history I have attended meetings in Indiana, Illinois, Tennessee, Ohio, Michigan and West Virginia and organised the first ever Mississippi Rail Passengers meeting when i was a region V director where then Chairman of Amtrak John Robert Smith attended. Worked with Amtrak Charter Trains department on specials in our region and had over 900 folks tour an Amtrak Superliner Train at Chattanooga Terminal Station. And worked with them as well in Cincinnati , Paris KY, Corbin, KY, Knoxville, TN, Asheville NC, Maysville KY Birmingham AL, Nashville , TN, Kingsport TN and Elkhorn City, KY

Done rail out reach at high schools and middle schools in Kentucky and Indiana and helped bring the first ever Thomas the Tank train to Kentucky giving many children their first train ride. Saved Bluegrass Railroad from court action and order to vacate by Woodford County Court turning it around in 180 days to become an asset rather than a detriment and public nuisance in 2002 With a last minute appeal to the County Judge Gormley who offered to hear my plan if I could make the 70 mile drive from Louisville to Versailles KY to speak to he and Squires. On one hour thirty minutes notice of the hearing, That took powerful speaking skills, vision and an ability to think on my feet during my term as region V National Association director. The judge was impressed that I found him an out and he might could be a hero to all parties concerned rather than being the man who shut down a struggling not for profit tourist railway. I was hopeful when he asked the railway if they were willing to work with me and the answer was what do we have to loose from the railways board members, He then made a resolution to the squires to allow me a chance and asked the county to draw up an agreement with me the vote was seven for and one against, I had won my case The court gave me a week to draw up a written plan and two days notice to start work at Milner, KY clearing brush over growing the railroad right of way, to appease neighbors whom had complained to the court to take action. Using my position to cool down the situation between residents, the railroad and the Magistrates Our first weekends work revealed a wonderful limestone retaining wall that had been overgrown for decades and the following weekend we landscaped the station stop there. I volunteered my weekends for six months and reported my progress weekly to the County Judge and monthly to the full County Court. We painted several trackside structures, eight passenger cars and six REA waggons. retied a bridge and layed a siding by hand using county inmate work crews, we cleaned up the property, satisfied unhappy property owners and made the Judge Gormley the hero. as a side

note the one Squire who voted no voted yes to matching a grant two months later. Today it is a star attraction in Woodford County teaching folks the history of railroading in Kentucky. This is how an advocate needs to be, hands on no matter how dim the outcome seems to be, keeping the road clear to reach the desired station or goal. I have worked in the Louisville area with our Transit Authority of River City preserving many lines and services including three routes serving the impoverished and low income neighborhoods and have out reach to Louisville's black and hispanic communities engaging residents and have a director of minority affairs in our state association and a disabled transportation ombudsmen. These are things needed in our National efforts so our board can reflect all who use Amtrak and transit services