

Candidate Statements for 2020 Maryland Council Representative

Candidate: James Smith

Candidate Residence: Lutherville Timonium

Candidate Status: New Candidate

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

As the current Chair and co-founder of Rail Passengers Maryland, RPA's official chapter for Maryland, I would be delighted to represent our state's membership on the Council. I have the knowledge, energy, skills, and proven ability to get things accomplished for our constituents.

We formed Rail Passengers Maryland a few years ago to give RPA members in Maryland a conduit to influence local policy, build organizational strength and create a space for like-minded passenger rail advocates to form lasting friendships. In two short years we have a website, over 90 dues paying members, and 144 followers on our Rail Passengers Maryland Facebook page.

It would be a privilege to also be able to help shape our national policy and strengthen the national organization's administrative work. Serving as a Maryland Council Representative would also improve the speed of communications on important issues between RPA and Rail Passengers Maryland.

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

Our focus needs to revolve around one simple goal: grow the organization. We need to be relevant to today's rail passenger, representing what they want today, and what they will want tomorrow. I believe we have opportunities to form bigger, stronger, more effective coalitions around the key national priorities we set. There are too many people, both inside and outside the organization, who share our vision, but are not a part of our work. We need to change that by ensuring all areas of the country have effective, inclusive, productive local groups all centered around our national priorities.

What is your passenger rail advocacy experience?

I am a founding member and chair of our Maryland's RPA chapter. I have been involved with RPA for close to a decade with my main accomplishment having set up and developed our local group. I have been a Silver Rails member of RPA, and routinely attend the national conferences/conventions. During this past year I worked with other Rail Passengers Maryland leaders and West Virginia RPA members to raise public awareness of the threat of service reductions on MARC commuter rail service into West Virginia. In addition, I have attended Day on the Hill lobbying of the Maryland Congressional delegation.