

Candidate Statements for 2020 Maryland Council Representative

Candidate: Melvyn Sacks

Candidate Residence: Silver Spring

Candidate Status: Incumbent

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

My interest in trains goes back to my youth and whenever I had the chance I would ride the private railroads. When going to college in the Midwest from New York I would ride the New York Central or the Santa Fe railroad. As passenger trains became threatened I communicated with my elected officials to ensure that passenger trains continued to be a major mode of transportation in the United States, and I would like to continue to serve on the Council to advance passenger rail in the U.S.

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

I will continue to contact my elected representatives, by written communication and in person, to urge them to increase or at least maintain a satisfactory budget that will allow a robust passenger network. I will advocate for comfortable and innovative accommodations, capital expenditures to strengthen our rail infrastructure, and high-speed rail, light rail, commuter rail, and subways networks.

I have met several times with Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), now a Maryland U.S. Senator, who is on the appropriation and budget Committee and expressed the importance of supporting Amtrak, High-Speed Rail, and Federal funds for Maryland rail projects, including the purple and red light rail lines in Maryland. This is in addition to a conference with the staff of Maryland Representative Jamie Raskin and Senator Ben Cardin for the same purpose. I have met several times with my Maryland state representatives and expressed the need for supporting Amtrak, MARC commuter rail and especially the light rail "Purple Line". The Purple Line is in the process of being constructed, and will link two populated counties in suburban Maryland. This is a major step in public transportation that will greatly relieve congestion in the Washington, D.C. area.

What is your passenger rail advocacy experience?

In this conservative political environment of spending cuts it is essential to impress on our political leaders the necessity of maintaining a satisfactory national rail network, and to maintain, if not significantly improve, our transportation infrastructure which must include passenger rail. In addition, with global warming an increasing threat to our way of life, we must advocate the energy efficiency of passenger trains, and the positive effects to the environment compared to other modes of transportation.

As cities are building new light rail and commuter rail networks we must urge our political leaders to expand these modes and provide necessary funding. I have traveled on many of the world's railroads and transit systems, from Vietnam and Russia to high speed trains in Europe and the subways of Buenos Aires and Helsinki, and I would like the United States to be at least an equal to the world's best rail networks.

As a long-time member of the RPA Council I have written responses to editorials and letters-to-the-editor on Amtrak matters, and I will like to continue to do this necessary work. I will also continue to attend Amtrak and other rail related hearings and to report back to our regional RPA representative on these matters.

I am a former president of the Transportation Research Forum, and I am a member of the Vehicle Technology Society. At the Transportation Research Forum government transportation policy is discussed, often with high-level Federal and transportation officials. At the Vehicle Technology Society, railroad technology is examined which may include parameters of electrified rail, the efficacy of braking systems, and signaling technology.

I organize and moderate rail transportation seminars, including Amtrak viability and investments in high-speed rail, in my role as Chairman of the Evening Seminar Committee of the Society of Government Economists. At one seminar on Amtrak I organized we had more than eighty professionals from government and industry participating. I have been involved in meetings for the construction and completion of the Purple light-rail line through Montgomery and Prince George's County.

At the Export-Import Bank of the United States where I worked as an economist, I led a performance and financing study of world-wide passenger and freight locomotives. I examined technological, financing, marketing procedures of U.S. passenger and freight rail locomotives and systems relative to other countries. The study included detail on rail infrastructure and operation, maintenance requirements contingent to specific use, environment and location of rail systems. I studied differentials in electric and diesel-electric and passenger and freight locomotives.