

TRANSPORTATION CAREER PATHWAYS IN VERMONT



Get Moving:
Careers in Public Works



TRC UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
TRANSPORTATION
RESEARCH CENTER

DEPARTEMENTS OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW) CAREER PATHWAYS: INTRODUCTION

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IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

- Does operating heavy equipment excite you?
- Do you enjoy working for your community?
- Could you help your community recover from a disaster?

WHAT IS A DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)?

DPWs are municipal departments that focus on building and maintaining public infrastructure like roads, the sewer and storm water systems, public buildings such libraries and town halls, the water supply, among many other things essential for public life.

DEPARTMENTS OF PUBLIC WORKS IN VERMONT

Every city and town in Vermont has a Department of Public Works. Men and women of the public works departments are on the front lines of building and supporting communities. Typical work for DPW employees could cover several different tasks, from paving and plowing roads to tree conservation and water operations. When Tropical Storm Irene washed-out bridges, roads, pipes, power lines, and other essential infrastructure, the employees of DPWs throughout the state were among the first on the scene rebuilding what their communities had lost.



Career biography of Loren Ward

Loren Ward grew up in the Chittenden County town of Westford. As a teenager attending BFA Fairfax, he was interested in machinery and equipment and took odd jobs throughout his high school days. Like many Vermonters then and now, he had a natural attraction to working with his hands and being outdoors. He could hardly be content working a desk job, pushing a pencil around and typing on a screen all day. No, Loren always desired to be outdoors, braving the elements and getting some serious calluses in the process.

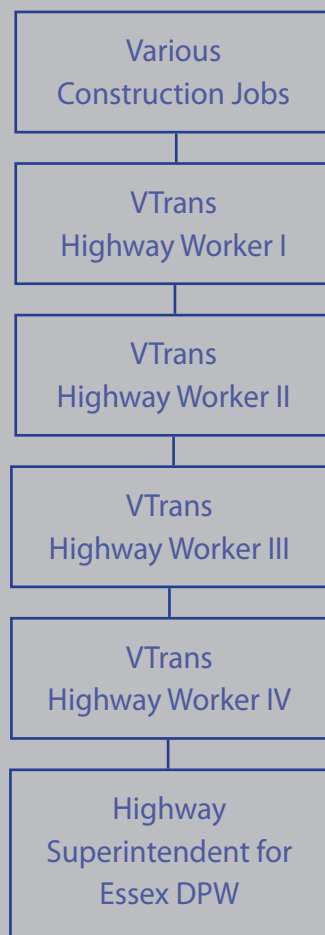
Soon after high school Loren picked up construction jobs in the Westford area for a few years. Getting his bearings with construction equipment, Loren made switched jobs and began working for the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). For seven years he stayed with the agency and experimented with a few different positions within the agency. He began doing a lot of plow work to get his foot in the door. Once in the door, his curiosity and desire to learn more about operating heavy equipment helped him excel at his job and advance from the entry-level Highway Worker I position to a foreman position as Highway Worker IV.

After years of experience climbing his way up the ladder at VTrans, Loren transitioned from being a shift foreman for the agency and became the highway superintendent for the Essex Department of Public Works. In that role, he is responsible for the construction and maintenance of all highway roads under the jurisdiction of the Town of Essex. The superintendent job is less about running heavy equipment and doing the on-the-ground work and more about managing his teams of the road crews to accomplish what needs to get done to keep the roads in working condition.

Loren's career represents a typical trajectory for people who make lifelong careers in transportation: he began at an entry-level position, gained experience, skills, and knowledge while working on-the-job and was promoted, eventually achieving management level where leadership becomes the most valuable skill. Commitment to mastering the technical aspects of the front-line enabled him to move up the ladder and make a great living.

He advises people thinking about getting into the transportation field that although it can be hard work and wintertime involves long hours of plowing, the work is very rewarding, you work outside ninety percent of the time, you get to meet great people, and you are not doing the same thing every day. The job doesn't get boring, every day there is something new and unique to do. If you want to work outside, make a great living, work with heavy equipment and be close to home, then working for a local department of public works is the way to go!

Loren Ward's Career Pathway



DPW CAREER PATHWAYS: ROAD CREW CAREER PATHWAY

Requirements for Entry

High school education or GED; 6 months experience in highway maintenance, construction, Vermont driver's license. Commercial Driver's License.

Maintenance Worker I

Job Description: Manual work of routine nature and light truck operation on public works projects and snow and ice removal; all other related work as required.

Requirements For Advancement

Two years experience in highway maintenance, construction procedures and methods, equipment operation or a related field.

Maintenance Worker II

Job Description: Skilled manual work and heavy truck operation on public works projects and snow and ice removal; occasional use of construction equipment; all other related work as required.

Requirements for Advancement

Five year experience in highway maintenance, construction procedures and methods, equipment operation or a related field.

Maintenance Worker III

Job Description: Highly skilled manual work, heavy truck operation and construction equipment operation on public works projects, and snow and ice removal; all other related work as required.

Requirements for Advancement

Seven years experience in highway maintenance, construction procedures and methods, and equipment operation.

Maintenance Worker IV

Job Description: Skilled manual work and equipment operation and supervisory work in directing work crews on public works projects and snow/ice removal; all other related work as required.

Highway Superintendent

Oversees and manages all construction and maintenance of all highway roads under the jurisdiction of the town.

Getting a Start in a Transportation Career

The University of Vermont's Transportation Research Center (TRC) has worked with high schools, career centers and Adult Education programs to generate awareness about careers in the transportation industry and develop programs to provide the necessary skills to gain entry-level positions in all modes of transportation (aviation, transit, highway, maritime, pipeline and railway). Careers in transportation are not limited to any single mode; many of the skills in one area of transportation can be applied to many or all of the others. In many cases, getting your foot in the door in one mode of transportation gives you access to jobs in the other modes.



A Good Start in Transportation Work:

- Offers you lifelong job opportunities in an industry that is every where (you can work in the community you grew up in or find work anywhere in the country with the right skills).
- Provides essential services for our communities and business.
- Has great opportunities for advancement, as a high percentage of current workers will be retiring in the next decade.

Educational and Employment Resources for Jobs in Public Works

Educational Resources:

- Career and Technical Centers in Vermont- goo.gl/nwBVO
- Community College of Vermont Applied Business Practices (with a focus on transportation) - goo.gl/mHRWO
- Vermont Technical College - <http://www.vtc.edu>

For Educators

- Transportation Systems Academy - <http://www.uvm.edu/~transctr/>

Key Skills Resources:

- Work Zone Flagging - Green Mountain Flagging <http://www.gmfvt.com/>
- Commercial Drivers Licences Schools in Vermont - http://dmv.vermont.gov/commercial_trucking
- Vermont Dept. of Motor Vehicles CDL Manual - <http://dmv.vermont.gov>

Employment and Career Resources:

- Resume resource <http://www.resumebuilder.com/>
- Occupational Information Network (O*NET) - <http://www.onetonline.org> (*Onet is a free online database of occupational information. Students, job seekers, businesses, and counselors should use Onet to explore careers in transportation.*)

For Veterans:

- US Department of Transportation Veterans Transportation Career Center - <http://www.dot.gov/veteranstransportationcareers>
- My Next Move for Veterans - <http://www.mynextmove.org/vets/>
- Hero 2 Hire - <http://h2h.jobs>

Looking for Job With a DPW Road Crew?

Check out :

- Your town website, or that of surrounding towns.
- Vermont Local Roads post jobs throughout vermont - <http://www.vermontlocalroads.org/>
- Vermont League of Cities and Towns - <http://www.vlct.org/marketplace/classifiedads/>
- Private companies such as Green Mountain Flagging - <http://www.gmfvt.com/employment/>

Sample Jobs Postings

(Taken from Actual Job Posting)

HELP WANTED

ROAD FOREMAN NEEDED

This person will be the working supervisor of the Town Highway Crew (3-4 people) and will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Highway Department. The Road Foreman will work with the supervision of the Road Commissioner or Selectboard.

The Road Foreman should have the following qualifications:

Ability to supervise others and work with the public; Have working knowledge of road construction and maintenance, culvert installation, etc.; Possess at least a high school diploma or GED; Commercial Driver's License, with proper endorsements; and Possess public works experience or related construction work.

The position is full-time, Monday - Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and includes health insurance options and twelve paid holidays. It requires a flexible schedule which may include nights, weekends and holidays. Salary and benefit package will be negotiated with the Selectboard.

HELP WANTED

GRADER OPERATOR NEEDED

Experienced grader operator is invited to join the Town of Sharon road crew. Responsibilities include heavy equipment operation/maintenance, road repairs, winter plowing and maintenance. HS Diploma/GED, VT driver's & CDL "B" licenses, 2+ yrs exp in similar position. Great work environment with competitive salary & benefits.

HELP WANTED

ROAD CREW

The Town is looking for a highly skilled, technical worker in the maintenance, repair and construction of town roads. Occasionally requires significant physical effort and often requires moderate physical effort. This job is performed outside in a variety of weather conditions with exposure to traffic, equipment operation and construction activities. Must be able to operate town trucks (with or without snowplows), perform physical labor and operate heavy equipment. Three to five year experience and Commercial Driver's License required.