

# TRANSPORTATION CAREER PATHWAYS IN VERMONT



## *Get Moving:* Careers in Maritime



**TRC** UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT  
TRANSPORTATION  
RESEARCH CENTER

## WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS SECTION:

1. Introduction to Ferry in Vermont
2. Career Biography: Heather Stewart
3. Transportation Systems Academy and other Resources

## IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

- Do you enjoy being outside and on the water?
- Is being on a boat a big thrill?
- Do you enjoy navigation and learning how complicated machinery works?

## What is maritime transportation?

Maritime transportation consists of anything to do with movement of people and materials over bodies of water. This includes anything from massive oil tankers out on the ocean to tug boats in harbors to barges on rivers to ferryboats on a lake.

## Maritime transportation in Vermont

Vermont, being the only landlocked New England state, is separated from the Atlantic Ocean, so the maritime industry here doesn't have much to do with oil tankers. We do however have many bodies of freshwater that have industry operations, most notably Lake Champlain. Once the main source of trade and transportation routes in Vermont, industry on the lake mostly serves recreational and short-distance travel needs. Aside from bridges connecting Vermont and New York at narrow points along Lake Champlain, ferries are the main mode of transportation for people and goods wanting to travel between the states and represent the largest maritime business in Vermont.

Vermont's history with ferries has deep roots, going as far back as the late 18th century. The Vermont General Assembly voted to create The Champlain Transportation Company in 1826, which evolved into what is today's privately owned Lake Champlain Transportation Company. The LCTC ferries people to and from Vermont on sites at Burlington, Charlotte and Grand Isle and is the only operating ferry company on Lake Champlain. Employing 190 people during the Summer season and 135 year round, it is the place in Vermont to pursue a career in maritime transportation.



One business that has been interwoven in the Lake Champlain fabric longer than almost any other is the Lake Champlain Transportation Company. Long before it was formed, early ferry entrepreneurs were charging to transport people, animals and freight back and forth across the narrowest portions of the lake at least as far back as the late 1700s. Over time, ferries used power ranging from oars to horses—sails to steam. The current propulsion is supplied by diesel engines.

Heather has been working for the company for 26 years. She started as a deck hand and became a captain or “skipper” in the 1980s when one of the captains asked her, “why don’t you go out and get a license?” That was all the incentive she



needed. Heather assumed the role of Operations manager four years ago. She met her husband, Tom, aboard a ferry boat crossing the lake from Charlotte, Vermont to Essex, New York and for both of them LCTC has been what she calls a satisfying lifestyle.

In talking about her career, Heather constantly referred to Lake Champlain Transportation as “a great company.” She added that “it gets in your blood and defines who you are as a person. Once you start work here, you don’t want to leave. The average length of employment is 18 years and a few people have spent more than 40 years with us.” By way of example, she said “Captain B. J. Bombard has been

here since 1961. The 12 most senior captains each have over 30 years experience here at LCT.”

Heather’s gender has never been a factor at Lake Champlain Transportation. She says that before the Pecors took over, skippers were almost exclusively male. “Now,” she said, “men and women share the duties. It all boils down to whether you can do the job. They are so supportive.”

Heather shared a bit of humor recalling her time in radar school, saying, “The guys were giving me a hard time because I worked on a ferry boat. I told them it was fun for me for two reasons. They were always griping about how much they were away from home when they were out to sea. I told them at least I get to sleep in my own bed every night. Also, getting my start at Charlotte, I had hands-on experience using radar and radio at least ten times a day, whereas they only did about one landing a month. I got good experience here.”

The round-the-clock, all year service at Cumberland Head has meant a great deal to LCT customers and to the success of the company itself. Heather explained, “You go home and are have supper and the boats are running. You go to bed at night and the boats are running. You wake up in the morning and they are still running.”

Breaking ice with reinforced hulls, stainless steel props, special gears and powerful engines made it work. Operating all winter at the Essex/Charlotte crossing has also been met with enthusiasm.

There is more at stake than just ferrying people and vehicles across the lake — a lot more. Pilots have stopped to save victims of boating accidents. They have towed disabled craft to shore and often call the Coast Guard when they spot people and boats in distress.

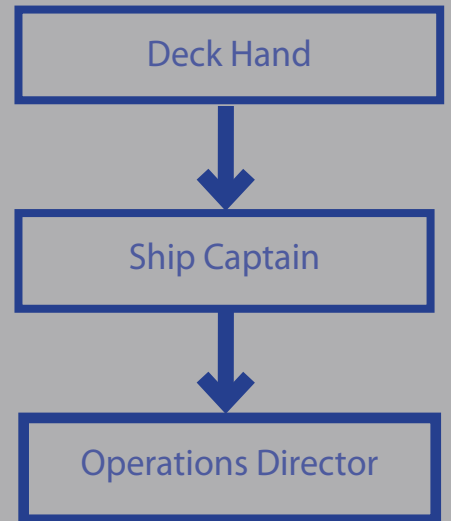
When asked if the pilots worry about storms on the sometimes rough Lake Champlain, “Not a bit,” she answered. “Our pilots are consummate professionals and the boats are built for it. when the winds are whipping and the waves slosh across the decks, you should relax and consider it a free car wash. No one likes to drive around [ the lake ] and people tell us they are grateful that we are so dependable in all kinds of weather.”

Heather cannot emphasize enough the vital role played by the employees. “Make sure to tell everyone that it’s really the people that make the whole operation work. you can have the most beautiful boats on the planet, but it’s really all about the people.”

And, by the way, Heather has never caught a glimpse of our favorite lake monster “Champ.”

She summed LCT up succinctly and eloquently: “Great boats, great people, great tradition.”

## Heather Stewart’s Career Pathway



# MARITIME CAREER PATHWAYS: DECKHAND CAREER PATHWAY

## Deckhand

An entry level position. no previous experience is required. Responsible for assisting customers in boarding the ferry, cash collection, and customer service. This position requires someone who is willing to work outdoors in all types of weather.

### Dockmaster

All the responsibilities of the dockhands, as well as supervisory capacities.

### Licence Operator (Captain) 25 GT

First type of licensing, eligible to apply for after competing 360 days (8 hour shifts) of boat experience.

### Licence Operator (Captain) 50 GT

Requires an additional 180 days of experience on the 25 GT ship, and an additional exam. After this, you will be able to operate larger ships.

### Licence Operator (Captain) 100 GT

Requires 180 days on a 50 GT ship and an additional exam. 100 GT's are the largest ships on lake Champlain

### Maritime Mechanic

Small-engine repair specialist who work mainly on inboard and outboard boat motors.

### QMED (Qualified Member of the Engineering Department)

An unlicensed junior engineer.

### Engineer

A certified engineer.

### Cheif Engineer

Responsible for all operations and maintenance that has to do with any and all engineering equipment.

## Operations Director

## Getting A Start in A Transportation Career

The University of Vermont's Transportation Research Center 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 everywhere (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.



Lake Champlain  
Ferries Routes

## Educational and Employment Resources in Maritime

### Educational Resources:

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

### For Educators

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

### Key Skills Resources:

- Vermont Boat Safety Course - <http://dmv.vermont.gov/safety/training/motorboat>
- Captains License Resources - <http://www.boatwise.com/master100gtlicense.html>

### Employment and Career Resources:

- Lake Champlain Ferries - <http://www.ferries.com/>
- Fort Ticonderoga Ferries - <http://www.forttifferry.com/>
- Resume resources - <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/veterantransportationcareers>
- My Next Move for Veterans - <http://www.mynextmove.org/vets/>
- Hero 2 Hire - <http://h2h.jobs>