

LIFTS 2008—IT WAS AN AVERAGE YEAR

Depending on how you see it, an average year in lift construction can be good news or bad news.

BY JENNIFER ROWAN

Well, 38 lifts representing 56,644 VTFH ain't half bad. It's no record-setter, but it's also nothing to be alarmed by. Sometimes it's OK to be average.

If we look over the last eight years, the average number of lifts installed is 37.87, so our figure of 38 seems to be right in line. Moving to VTFH numbers (see box this page for an explanation) it appears to be the lowest to date, coming in at 56,644. But, the VTFH number is only one way to measure lift construction activity. What it doesn't take into account is that the most massive projects

sometimes reflect the least amount of VTFH. Take, for example, that new Doppelmayr CTEC Peak 2 Peak gondola at Whistler/Blackcomb, which contributed a paltry 488 VTFH to our total, and yet represents one of the biggest lift projects

(Note: VTFH measures the number of skiers and riders who can be transported 1,000 feet vertically in one hour. It is arrived at by multiplying the vertical rise in feet by the capacity in people-per-hour and divided by 1,000.)

in the history of uphill transportation. And the Leitner-Poma gondola at Winter Park weighs in with just 232 VTFH. These are some impressive connectors that aren't climbing much of anything, but they sure are moving people around the hills.

Indeed, gondolas and trams dominate the lift story this year. From the aforementioned Whistler/Blackcomb project to the replacement of Jackson Hole's storied tram (both of which will be featured in an article in the upcoming March issue), there were a total of eight

NEW LIFTS BY REGION

Region	New VTFH	Gondolas/			
		Surface	Chairs	Trams	Total
East	15,436	1	7	1	9
Midwest	1,228	-	2	-	2
Mountain	22,994	-	7	4	11
Pacific	5,209	-	5	-	5
Canada	11,777	-	8	3	11
TOTALS	56,644	1	29	8	38

LIFT COMPARISON WITH PRECEDING YEARS

Region	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
East	13	6	12	10	13	9	8	8	5	9
Midwest	34	2	0	2	4	2	0	1	0	2
Mountain	25	11	14	5	4	25	17	11	22	11
Pacific	10	10	2	6	3	8	3	5	6	5
Canada	11	21	9	10	11	10	5	6	8	11
TOTALS	63	50	37	33	35	54	34	31	41	38

NEW LIFTS BY MANUFACTURER

Manufacturer	Gondolas/				Total VTFH
	Surface	Chair	Trams	Total Lifts	
Doppelmayr CTEC	1	19	6	26	32,737
Leitner-Poma	-	10	2	12	23,907
TOTALS	1	29	8	38	56,644

VTFH (000) COMPARISON WITH PRECEDING YEARS

Region	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
East	33,695	11,358	16,881	14,891	12,431	11,065	10,367	11,533	7,610	15,436
Midwest	4,373	1,070	0	1,744	3,120	1,130	0	638	0	1,228
Mountain	52,591	21,999	25,625	12,906	13,376	25,870	35,849	29,785	39,455	22,994
Pacific	17,952	28,521	4,091	11,296	6,425	15,860	4,250	9,998	16,718	5,209
Canada	22,142	32,424	18,042	26,244	21,294	11,675	6,533	11,767	21,610	11,777
TOTALS	130,753	95,372	64,639	67,081	56,646	65,600	56,999	63,661	85,393	56,644



LEFT COLUMN--LEITNER-POMA PROJECTS:

Top: The crew gets busy splicing the rope for the new quad at Telluride.

Middle: The drive terminal for the new 8-person gondola at Winter Park.

Bottom: Revelstoke, B.C., also got a shiny new 8-person gondola. And here is where the gondolas are parked.

RIGHT COLUMN--DOPPELMAYR CTEC PROJECTS:

Top: The mid-station on Mt. Baker's replacement quad.

Middle: Boreal load tests its new replacement quad.

Bottom: The top terminal of the new tram at Jackson Hole. The sheave is part of the double reeving for the haul rope counter weight tension system.

EAST

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed			Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
			HP	Length	Vert.				
MAINE									
Saddleback	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	200	2709	960	1475		450	1416
Sunday River	6/8 Chondola	Doppelmayr CTEC	800	6427	1138	2330		1000	2652
NEW JERSEY									
Xanadu	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	100	708	118	2400		360	283
Xanadu	Platter	Doppelmayr CTEC	15	708	118	350		300	41
NEW YORK									
Gore Mountain	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	700	6096	1437	2000		1100	2874
Whiteface	3C	Doppelmayr CTEC	400	4125	1560	1700		500	2652
PENNSYLVANIA									
Bear Creek	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	200	2661	435	1800		450	783
Hidden Valley	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	150	1449	321	2400		450	770
VERMONT									
Killington	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	600	4926	1525	2600		1000	3965

MIDWEST

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed			Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
			HP	Length	Vert.				
MICHIGAN									
Boyne Mtn.	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	150	2251	390	1800		450	702
MINNESOTA									
Welch Village	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	100	1203	296	1778		400	526

MOUNTAIN

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed			Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
			HP	Length	Vert.				
COLORADO									
Keystone	Gondola	Doppelmayr CTEC	1400	9587	2307	2400		1000	5537
Snowmass	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	800	9242	2212	2000		1000	4424
Telluride	4C	Leitner-Poma	200	1841	799	1200		450	959
Winter Park	Gondola	Leitner-Poma	200	1436	83	2800		620	232
UTAH									
Park City	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	800	7200	1743	2400		1000	4183
Snowbasin	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	200	1579	174	2600		1000	452
Solitude	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	500	3182	856	2400		1000	2054
Solitude	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	400	2868	649	2400		1000	1558
The Canyons	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	150	2229	360	2400		450	864
The Canyons	Pulsed Gondola	Doppelmayr CTEC	150	1963	166	460	150	800	76
WYOMING									
Jackson Hole	Tram	Doppelmayr CTEC	1090	12463	4084	650		2000	2655

PACIFIC

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed			Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
			HP	Length	Vert.				
ALASKA									
Alyeska	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	100	1156	288	1200		300	346
CALIFORNIA									
Badger Pass	3C	Doppelmayr CTEC	200	3364	576	1800		450	1037
Boreal Mtn.	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	60	1253	185	1900		300	352
WASHINGTON									
Mt. Baker	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	225	3408	813	1200		450	976
The Summit at Snoqualmie	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	500	4013	1041	2400		1000	2498

CANADA

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed			Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
			HP	Length	Vert.				
ALBERTA									
Lake Louise Mountain Resort	4C	Leitner-Poma	400	3258	1325	2200		450	2915
Snow Valley	4C - Pulsed	Doppelmayr CTEC	174	847	151	1378		1000	208
Worsley Clear Hill	3C	Doppelmayr CTEC	125	2437	413	1208		450	499
BRITISH COLUMBIA									
Grouse Mountain	4C	Leitner-Poma	50	666	75	1200		450	90
Grouse Mountain	4C	Leitner-Poma	150	1811	466	1500		450	699
Revelstoke	Gondola	Leitner-Poma	600	3363	919	2000		1200	1838
Revelstoke	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	800	6168	1732	1800		1000	3118
Whistler Blackcomb ¹	Gondola-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	1500	14,457	119 ²	2050 ³		1476	488
ONTARIO									
Batawa Ski Club	4C	Leitner-Poma	75	689	164	1800		450	295
QUEBEC									
Mt. St-Sauveur	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	250	2361	603	2200		450	1327
Mt. Tremblant	Gondola	Doppelmayr CTEC	300	5327	234	1280		1000	3002

1 - Provides transport in both directions. 2 - Doesn't include sag. 3 - Each way.

larger projects compared to three last year. As for the other installations, it breaks out to eight detachable quads, 16 fixed grip quads, three triples and a platter. There is one six-pack if you count Sunday River's chondola, which is a six-seater chair and an 8-person gondola.

REGION BY REGION

When broken out by region, it seems that everyone shared in the VTFH pie. Starting in the East, the region weighed in with nine lifts and 15,436 VTFH. That's more than double last year's figure, as well as being on the higher end of the eight-year average. Killington's monster detachable quad with 3,965 in VTFH accounts for a large part of the total.

In the Midwest, which has seen no installations in years past, skiers and riders will enjoy two spanking new quads at Boyne and Welch Village.

The Mountain region had half as many lifts as last year, coming in at 11, but still accounts for almost 41 percent of the overall VTFH. Utah saw the most action, with five impressive new lifts and a pulse gondola.

Moving west, the Pacific region garnered a little over nine percent of the total VTFH with 5,209. But the numbers aren't the real story here. It seems the big guys took a year off, while Alyeska, Badger Pass, Boreal, Mt. Baker and Summit-at-Snoqualmie are the ones giving customers something to smile about.

Moving north of the border, Canada came in with almost 21 percent of the VTFH total with 11 new installations, tying the Mountain region. As mentioned earlier, the Whistler/Blackcomb gondola stole all the thunder this year, but there were other impressive projects, too, ranging from the new gondolas at Revelstoke and Mt. Tremblant to Grouse's expanded uphill capacity with the addition of two quads.

ON THE SURFACE

Conveyor lifts continue to be strong, coming in at 59 this year as opposed to 54 last year. In the tow category, there were four new installations compared to five last year.

tubing and beginner areas continue to drive the need for these types of lifts, as resorts cater to the less experienced.



LIFT CONSTRUCTION SURVEY

CONVEYOR INVASION

Top left: This loading conveyor from Chairkid was installed on a triple at Alta. The unit has the ability to raise four feet vertically to match the height adjustment of the lift.

Top and bottom right: Buck Hill, Minn., has debuted this 800-foot Magic Carpet conveyor, 300 feet of which spans this bridge.

Bottom left: This 330-foot conveyor from Star Lifts went in at Taos. The lift will ultimately have a gallery enclosure and be used by ski school.

TOWS: ROPE, HANDLE, WIRE ROPE*

Harusch	1	Star Lifts**	2
Multi Skillift	1	TOTAL	4

**Includes Borer and O'Connor.

CONVEYORS*

Emmegi	8	Star Lifts	28
Magic Carpet	23	TOTAL	59

*Not included in lift statistics.

5-YEAR CHART OF CONVEYOR INSTALLATIONS



“Every season we see an increase in tubing conveyor sales, and these are generally longer conveyors,” says Pete Kavanaugh of Star Lifts. “We also have some areas that are using their carpets year round with the growing popularity of summer tubing.”

Another growing trend are loading conveyors. Chairkid and Emmegi each had six installations in North America on both new and existing lifts. “Loading conveyors are a tool that ski areas can employ to reduce stops, improve a lift’s operating efficiency, lower workers’

comp claims and generally improve a lift’s overall operational performance,” says Chairkid’s Marc Wood.

LOOKING AHEAD

For the future, both Leitner-Poma’s Rick Spear and Doppelmayr CTEC’s Mike Beeley stress the importance of having a snowy season this year. “Right now we are in a real wait-and-see mode,” says Beeley. “The only near term fix I see is snow, but on the bright side the fuel cost should really help the local resorts.”

Spear adds, “For obvious reasons, I

expect a slower lift year in 2009. Obviously, how much slower depends mostly on snowfall and temperatures.” But, he adds, “I am upbeat for the future of the lift business in particular and the ski business in general. I do not see the lift business growing much, but I do see it being steady and that is not a terrible thing.”

And there we have the 2008 lift construction season. Trying to guess how the 2009 construction season will pan out is anybody’s guess. The snow is flying, and they say that’s all we need. It’s time to put that theory to the test.