

# LIFTS 2006—THERE WERE SOME BIG STORIES

**Sure, numbers don't lie, but they don't tell the entire story, either.**

**BY JENNIFER ROWAN**

**If you're like me, you've already checked out the tables before you started reading. And you've seen that we have an all-time low in the number of lifts that were built this past year—only 31. And you think to yourself, “Man sakes alive, I didn't think things were that bad!”**

Well, they're not. Common wisdom tells us that you can't argue with numbers, but I'm here to tell you that you can, and you should. First, let's take a look at those numbers. The 31 lifts that were installed account for 63,661 VTFH (see box on right). Well, at least that's up from

last year's 56,999. And then we take a look at who built those chairs: Doppelmayr logged 23 while Leitner-Poma came in at eight. Based on the numbers, it kinda makes you want to send sympathy cards to the fine folks at Leitner-Poma.

Well, don't. Everything in the world

*(Note: VTFH measures the number of skiers 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.)*

of uphill cable transportation is just fine, thank you. What those numbers don't tell you are the size and scope of the projects Leitner-Poma tackled. And Doppelmayr CTEC took on one more lift than last year. All in all, despite the numbers, it was a busy year for lift builders and a challenging year for engineers. And the bottom line is that guests have more ways to get to, and up into, our hills.

## Region by Region

With seven chairlifts and one gondola,

## NEW LIFTS BY REGION

Region	New VTFH	Surface	Gondolas/		
			Chairs	Trams	Total
East	11,473	—	7	1	8
Midwest	638	—	1	—	1
Mountain	29,784	—	9	2	11
Pacific	8,857	1	4 <sup>①</sup>	1 <sup>①</sup>	5
Canada	11,767	—	6	—	6
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>62,519</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>31</b>

## LIFT COMPARISON WITH PRECEDING YEARS

Region	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
East	12	10	13	6	12	10	13	9	8	8
Midwest	10	3	4	2	0	2	4	2	0	1
Mountain	24	21	25	11	14	5	4	25	17	11
Pacific	9	17	10	10	2	6	3	8	3	5
Canada	6	13	11	21	9	10	11	10	5	6
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>31</b>

## NEW LIFTS BY MANUFACTURER

Manufacturer	Surface	Chair	Gondolas/		Total VTFH
			Trams	Lifts	
Doppelmayr CTEC	1	22 <sup>①</sup>	1 <sup>①</sup>	23	46,719
Leitner-Poma	—	5	3	8	16,942
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>63,661</b>

1 - Northstar chondola listed under both Chairs and Gondolas/Trams but counted only once in totals.

## VTFH (000) COMPARISON WITH PRECEDING YEARS

Region	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
East	32,123	19,453	33,695	11,358	16,881	14,891	12,431	11,065	10,367	11,533
Midwest	5,929	2,185	4,373	1,070	0	1,744	3,120	1,130	0	638
Mountain	71,199	69,922	52,591	21,999	25,625	12,906	13,376	25,870	35,849	29,785
Pacific	22,088	46,357	17,952	28,521	4,091	11,296	6,425	15,860	4,250	9,998
Canada	15,232	28,265	22,142	32,424	18,042	26,244	21,294	11,675	6,533	11,767
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>146,571</b>	<b>166,182</b>	<b>130,753</b>	<b>95,372</b>	<b>64,639</b>	<b>67,081</b>	<b>56,646</b>	<b>65,600</b>	<b>56,999</b>	<b>63,661</b>



## LIFT CONSTRUCTION SURVEY

### LEFT COLUMN--DOPPELMAYR CTEC PROJECTS:

Top: A new detachable quad at Deer Valley will transport 2,400 people per hour.

Middle: The Canyons was the lucky recipient of two new lifts. One is a 6-pack and the other is a fixed grip quad.

Bottom: Also in Utah, Snowbird installed a new detachable quad.

### RIGHT COLUMN--LEITNER-POMA

Top: The massive gondola that went in at Breckenridge required a lot of helicopter time to put in all the towers along the 7,595-foot-long line.

Middle: The gondola at Snowmass has a 27-degree angle so a mid-station was installed, which will be used for loading only.

Bottom: Here, the top terminal of Big White's new 6-pack, which is over 6,100 feet long, is being put together.



## EAST

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH*
<b>NEW YORK</b>									
Belleayre Mountain	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	600	5196	1138	2400	2400	1000	2731
Windham Mountain	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	500	3762	1045	2400	2400	1000	2508
<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>									
Bear Creek	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	150	1980	380	2200	2200	450	836
Blue Mountain	6C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	600	4299	1054	3000	3000	1000	3162
Liberty Mountain	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	100	1889	270	1800	1800	400	486
Ski Roundtop	3C	Doppelmayr CTEC	50	1096	218	1000	1000	400	218
<b>VERMONT</b>									
Stowe Mountain	Gondola	Leitner-Poma	150	1483	15	1200	1200	800	18
<b>WEST VIRGINIA</b>									
Snowshoe Mountain	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	400	2585	631	2400	2400	1000	1514

## MIDWEST

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH*
<b>MINNESOTA</b>									
Buck Hill	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	100	1113	266	2400	2400	375	638

## MOUNTAIN

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH*
<b>COLORADO</b>									
Breckenridge	Gondola	Leitner-Poma	1000	7595	391	2800	2800	1000	1095
Crested Butte	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	500	3458	1024	2400	2400	1000	2458
Snowmass	4C	Leitner-Poma	75	1480	210	1200	1200	400	252
Snowmass	Gondola	Leitner-Poma	1200	8652	1365	2800	2800	1000	3822
Wolf Creek	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	400	2673	711	2400	2400	1000	1706
<b>UTAH</b>									
Deer Valley	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	500	4686	1169	2400	2400	1000	2806
Powder Mountain	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	600	5763	1293	2400	2400	1000	3103
Snowbird	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	1200	8031	2421	2400	2400	1000	5810
The Canyons	6C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	1000	6566	1734	3200	3200	1000	5549
The Canyons	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	400	4619	1533	1800	1800	475	2759
<b>WYOMING</b>									
Jackson Hole	2C	Doppelmayr CTEC	150	2024	849	500	500	500	425

## PACIFIC

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH*
<b>CALIFORNIA</b>									
Bear Valley	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	500	4400	953	2400	2400	1000	2287
Northstar	8/6 Chondola	Doppelmayr CTEC	600	5106	1064	2400	2400	1000	2554
Northstar	Platter	Doppelmayr CTEC	20	1290	121	600	600	400	73
<b>OREGON</b>									
Mt. Bachelor	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	700	4778	1363	2800	2800	1000	3816
Portland Tram <sup>①</sup>	Tram	Doppelmayr CTEC	600	3437	496	1014	2000	2000	503
<b>WASHINGTON</b>									
Mt. Baker	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	275	3037	906	1400	1400	450	1268

## CANADA

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH*
<b>QUEBEC</b>									
Big White	6C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	700	6108	1480	2600	2600		3848
Silver Star	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	250	2438	751	2000	2000	450	1502
Sun Peaks	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	400	1118	1024	2400	2400	450	2458
Whistler	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	900	6694	508	2800	2800	1000	1422
<b>QUEBEC</b>									
Mont Blanc	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	250	2303	594	2400	2400	2400	1426
Ski Bromont	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	200	2956	617	1800	1800	450	1111

\* Calculations based on design capacity

1 - Not included in totals

the East weighs in with 11,473 VTFH, which accounts for 18 percent of the total. But outside of the gondola at Stowe, Vt., all the action was to the south. Pennsylvania areas installed four new lifts, New York gained two and West Virginia has a new high-speed quad.

The Midwest boosted its lift installation numbers over last year's by 100 percent—with one quad at Buck Hill, Minn. But while there may have been only one new lift, many areas opened with new lifts for their customers in the form of second-hand installations.

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The Mountain states kicked lift installation butt with almost 47 percent of the total VTFH (29,785). The big news, though, was not in VTFH, but the fact that Colorado is now home to two spanking-new gondolas: one at Snowmass and one at Breckenridge. The Breckenridge gondola (see the November 2006 SAM Construction Site) was not built to get people up the hill, but to take them from the town to the lifts. As Leitner-Poma's Tom Clink put it, "This gondola is more like three separate gondolas. There are two mid-stations with six 35-tire stations. It's a huge project."

Utah saw a flurry of new lifts, with The Canyons installing two out of the five. Outside of Colorado and Utah, Wyoming was the only other Mountain state to install a lift with a double at Jackson Hole.

Moving west, the Pacific region went from three lifts in 2005 to five lifts in 2006 and had almost 16 percent of the VTFH pie. Of note was an 8-person/6-pack chondola that went in at Northstar Resort, Calif. Oregon and Washington also hit the charts with one lift each.

In Canada, which accounted for 18.5 percent of the total VTFH, the lift-building season brought in five new quads and a 6-pack at Big White.

## The Conveyor Story

Conveyor lifts continue to reign supreme



## LIFT CONSTRUCTION SURVEY

### CONVEYOR INVASION

Top left: Elm Creek, Minn., built side-by-side conveyors with an overall capacity of 4,000 people per hour. One conveyor came from Star Lifts, the other from Magic Carpet.

Bottom left and right: This Magic Carpet installation at Ski Big Bear, Pa., is 350 feet long and, at build-out, had a hand rail.

Top right: This 460-foot-long Star Lifts conveyor at Snow Creek, Mo., will service the area's Tornado Tube Alley.

### TOWS: ROPE, HANDLE, WIRE ROPE\*

Multi Skilift	3	Star Lifts**	7
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>

\*\*Includes Borer, Brückschlögl and O'Connor.

### CONVEYORS\*

Kaser Skicarpet NA 16	Star Lifts	35
Magic Carpet	23	<b>TOTAL</b>
		<b>74</b>

\*Not included in lift statistics.

### 5-YEAR CHART OF CONVEYOR INSTALLATIONS



at beginner areas and tubing hills across the country. A total of 74 conveyors went in averaging almost 300 feet in length. The longest conveyor award goes to Snowbird, Utah, and Big Boulder, Pa. Each put in 600-footers from Star Lifts. Breaking out the manufacturers, Star Lifts' 35 conveyors accounted for 47 percent of the total lifts put in; Magic Carpet had 31 percent with 23 conveyors; and Kaser took 21 percent of the total with 16 carpets. At presstime, Magic Carpet still had some orders pending, which could bring the total number of convey-

ors closer to the 80 installed in 2005.

So, will the conveyor stampede continue? According to Pete Kavanaugh of Star Lifts, "Conveyors will likely continue the strong sales for a few more years, but then there will come a saturation point. Still, there are many uses for the technology, such as in loading areas."

On the surface lift side, a total of eight lifts were installed this year. For Multi Skilifts, three handle tows went to tubing areas. At Star Lifts, two carousels, three handle tows and two rope tows went out to ski areas.

### The Big Buyers

So, who had the deep pockets for lifts in 2006? No one, really. Intrawest bought two lifts, as did American Skiing Company. Booth Creek's Northstar installed the chondola and a platter and Snow Time Inc. had a triple and a quad at Ski Roundtop and Liberty respectively. Aspen Skiing Company's Snowmass went big with a quad and a gondola and Vail Resorts' lift budget was all thrown at the Breckenridge gondola project. The

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## Lift Construction

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new kids on the block, such as Moonlight and Tamarack, concentrated on other expenditures, which precluded chairlifts. In the end, lift buying was spread around, and guests from Belleayre to Big White are all winners.

## Looking Ahead

Looking into the crystal ball of lift installations, what can we expect in the future? Are gondolas making a big re-entry? "I hate to say that gondolas are a trend," says Clink. "It just happened that two areas needed transportation [Breckenridge and Stowe]."

Doppelmayr CTEC's Jan Leonard thinks the numbers will be about the same, or a little more, for next year. The big difference is that his company already has eight detachables and four fixed grips on the books. The old days of waiting until the end of the season to order a lift just aren't possible anymore. Never mind the permitting process, the problem is longer lead times on ordering the bigger items, such as engines and gear boxes. "While prices have stabilized, companies are not stocking bigger ticket items," says Leonard. "Big engines over 600hp need six to eight months lead times," concurs Clink. To hedge their bets, the folks at Doppelmayr CTEC are ordering engines and gear boxes in advance, at least on orders they have on the books.

Off the hill, Clink sees a wealth of opportunity in cable transportation systems in more urban environments. Currently, Leitner-Poma is looking at several city projects. And Doppelmayr CTEC's tram in Portland, Ore., is a case in point. Getting people off the streets and into the air is a great way to move them around a city.

So, that's the story for lifts in 2006. While the numbers tell one story, the reality is that last year's projects were big, innovative and time-consuming. The way we move people around our mountains and around our communities is an ever-present problem, and lift companies are coming up with good solutions. ■

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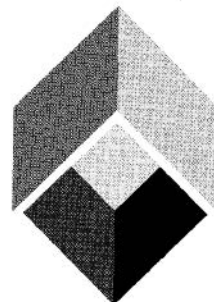
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