

LIFTS 2013-MEH

Lift sales are on a slow recovery, but we've seen worse.

BY JENNIFER ROWAN

The chairlift market and the real estate market have a lot in common—namely a slow recovery. Words of optimism like “pent-up demand” have slowly given way to the possibility of a “new normal.”

But the news is not all bad. Projects outside the industry, as well as more work updating older lifts, have largely made up the difference for lift companies. And the surface lift market continues to thrive.

Let's start with the overall numbers. Guests this season will be riding 26 new lifts, which is down from last season's total of 30, but up from the two years prior to that. The total of 26 is slightly below the five-year average of 27.6. In terms of VTFH, 2013 comes in at 48,496, which is up 7.7% over 2012, and is well

over the five-year average of 40,856.

As with the past several years, there was no region left behind, though the East hit an all-time low (since SAM started keeping track) with only two lifts.

In the Midwest there were four new lifts, though the two lifts at Mt. Brighton recycled a fair number of parts from its new owners at Vail, including sheave assemblies, chairs, and crossarms. But they will feel like new to Brighton fans.

The Mountain region saw nine new lifts, which is fairly average. The big story

(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 dividing by 1,000.)

in this region is the opening of Peak 6 at Breckenridge, and servicing this new terrain are a 6-pack and a fixed-grip quad.

The Pacific region also saw an average year, with four lifts from Alaska on down to California.

In Canada, the seven new lifts were spread out from east to west and represent an average year for lift construction.

As for type of lifts, there were five 6-packs installed, six detachable quads, and one gondola. The balance was an assortment of fixed grip triples and quads, a platter and two T-bars.

AERIAL LIFTS

If there is, indeed, a new normal in lift construction, what does this new normal look like? And will it last?

“I think that 30 should be about the

NEW LIFTS BY REGION

Region	New VTFH	Surface	Gondolas/			Total
			Chairs	Trams	Funiculars	
East	2,247	-	2	-	-	2
Midwest	3,917	-	4	-	-	4
Mountain	16,990	2	7	-	-	9
Pacific	8,248	1	3	-	-	4
Canada	17,094	-	6	1	-	7
TOTALS	48,496	3	22	1	-	26

LIFT COMPARISON WITH PRECEDING YEARS

Region	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
East	9	8	8	5	9	7	7	9	6	2
Midwest	2	0	1	0	2	0	2	3	5	4
Mountain	25	17	11	22	11	4	5	7	10	9
Pacific	8	3	5	6	5	3	3	4	2	4
Canada	10	5	6	8	11	7	6	6	7	7
TOTALS	35	54	34	31	41	38	21	23	30	26

NEW LIFTS BY MANUFACTURER

Manufacturer	Surface	Chair	Gondolas/		Total Lifts	Total VTFH
			Trams	Funiculars		
Doppelmayr	3	12	1	-	16	32,650
Leitner-Poma	-	6	-	-	6	11,572
SkyTrac	-	4	-	-	4	4,274
TOTALS	3	22	1	-	26	48,496

VTFH (000) COMPARISON WITH PRECEDING YEARS

Region	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
East	11,065	10,367	11,533	7,610	15,436	5,801	9,497	17,927	2,859	2,247
Midwest	1,130	0	638	0	1,228	0	1,855	1,474	5,181	3,917
Mountain	25,870	35,849	29,785	39,455	22,994	6,719	15,665	14,934	20,744	16,990
Pacific	15,860	4,250	9,998	16,718	5,209	960	4,707	7,259	4,079	8,248
Canada	11,675	6,533	11,767	21,610	11,777	12,601	11,242	7,629	4,649	17,094
TOTALS	65,600	56,999	63,661	85,393	56,644	26,081	42,966	49,223	37,512	48,496

EAST

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
NEW YORK									
Greek Peak	4C	Doppelmayr	300	3313	735	2400		450	1764
VERMONT									
Hermitage Club	4C	SkyTrac	150	2958	302	1600		450	483

MIDWEST

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
MICHIGAN									
Crystal Mountain	4C	SkyTrac	150	1038	294	2525		400	742
Mt. Brighton*	4C	Doppelmayr	60	742	148	2400		400	355
Mt. Brighton*	4C	Doppelmayr	60	751	151	2400		400	362
MINNESOTA									
Lutsen	6C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	500	3593	768	3200		1000	2458

MOUNTAIN

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
COLORADO									
Breckenridge	6C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	900	5902	1502	3000		1000	4506
Breckenridge	4C	Leitner-Poma	150	2582	338	2000		453	676
Copper Mountain	Platter	Doppelmayr	24	879	263	534		300	140
Copper Mountain	T-Bar	Doppelmayr	100	2034	463	977		600	452
Vail Mountain	6C-Det.	Doppelmayr	780	4284	1108	3600		1000	3989
Wolf Creek	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr	428	4447	1079	1800		1000	1942
MONTANA									
Bridger Bowl	3C	SkyTrac	300	4362	831	1800		550	1496
Bridger Bowl	3C	SkyTrac	300	3619	863	1800		550	1553
TEXAS									
El Paso**	Tram	Leitner-Poma	75	3379	1621	50		571	81
UTAH									
Snowbird	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr	428	4017	1242	1800		1000	2236

PACIFIC

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
ALASKA									
Alyeska	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr	800	4307	1401	2400		1000	3362
CALIFORNIA									
Sugarbowl	3C	Doppelmayr	236	2911	906	1800		500	1631
Sugarbowl	T-Bar	Doppelmayr	14.75	1127	73	344		400	25
WASHINGTON									
Stevens Pass	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr	488	3973	1346	2400		1000	3230

CANADA

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
ALBERTA									
Kinosoo	4C	Doppelmayr	100	1496	220	2100		453	462
BRITISH COLUMBIA									
Squamish	Gondola-Det.	Doppelmayr	750	7008	2786	1200		984	3343
Whistler	6C-Det.	Doppelmayr	930	5599	1723	3600		1000	6203
ONTARIO									
Blue Mountain	6C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	500	3901	715	3600		1000	2574
Craigleith	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	300	2195	522	2000		1000	1044
Devil's Glen	4C	Leitner-Poma	100	1148	262	1200		453	314
QUEBEC									
Mont-Sainte Anne	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr	500	5922	1752	1800		1000	3154

MEXICO

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
VERACRUZ									
Orizaba**	Pulsed Gondola	Leitner-Poma	150	3163	978	229		1000	224

* Sheave assemblies, chairs and crossarms were recycled from another lift. ** Not included in totals.

TOWS: ROPE, HANDLE, WIRE ROPE

Harusch	3	TOTAL	6
Multi Skillift	3		

CONVEYORS

ChairKid	4	Star Lifts	31
Magic Carpet	14	TOTAL	49

6-YEAR CHART OF CONVEYOR INSTALLATIONS



average number of new lifts,” says Rick Spear from Leitner-Poma, “and I predict we’ll get there in 2014. Last year was an echo from the terrible snow year the year before.”

Mark Bee from Doppelmayr is also hopeful the pattern will break and that 2014 will see more lifts, but it all depends on Mother Nature. “What materializes will largely depend on early season numbers,” Bee says. “Most of the market likes to feel comfortable with these numbers before making big decisions like a new lift.”

Over at SkyTrac, Jan Leonard was pleased with the four lifts the company installed. “We had three early orders, which was great,” he says. Leonard does feel that summer activities are affecting lift sales. “Any money that was spent last year appeared to go toward summer operations.”

Two things that the lift companies agreed on are the importance of projects outside the ski industry, as well as the growing importance of work on existing lifts. SkyTrac and Doppelmayr reported a considerable volume of work in lift modifications and relocations, while Leitner-Poma took on the enormous Big Roller in Las Vegas and will start tackling the new automatic people mover in Miami Airport’s new Terminal E.

SURFACE LIFTS

Conveyors saw a healthy rebound from 32 in 2012 to 49 in 2013. And tows increased from 5 in 2012 to 6 in 2013.

“Tubing continues to be a big market for us,” says Jennifer Kelly from Magic Carpet. “And we are also doing a lot of work repowering conveyors for more capacity.” Kelly also says that canopies are much sought after by areas who have snow removal issues.

Over at Star Lifts, the number of installations more than doubled from 2012 to 2013. “Projects that were backburned in 2012 came on line in 2013,” says Pete Kavanagh from Star Lifts. “I also think that terrain-based learning is having an impact on conveyor sales.”

At presstime, the snow was flying from one end of the continent to the other, which will make for good early season numbers. Beyond that, it’s anybody’s guess.



TOP ROW: Left: A terminal is installed for Lutsen Mountain's new detachable 6-pack from Leitner-Poma, which covers almost 3,600 feet. Right: Breckenridge installed two Leitner-Poma lifts—a detachable 6-pack and a fixed-grip quad. Shown here is the lower end of the fixed-grip quad. SECOND ROW: Both pictures are of Doppelmayr's detachable quad installed at Snowbird, Utah, which will carry 1,800 people per hour this winter. THIRD ROW: Left. These two conveyors by Star Lifts were installed in the beginner area at Brian Head, Utah, which is under new ownership. Right. This 410-foot conveyor from Magic Carpet was installed at Fernwood Resort in Pennsylvania. BOTTOM ROW: Crystal Mountain, Mich., is the proud new owner of this fixed grip quad from SkyTrac.

