

LIFTS 2010- QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY

With financing constrained, lift installations were, too. But several significant projects went ahead nonetheless.

BY RICK KAHL

Anyone in the lift industry could be excused if they were found alone in an empty warehouse, curled up in the fetal position. Of the past 50 years, the number of installations last summer, 23, tops only 2009's 21.

But still, 2010 was a step toward normalcy. There were 10 detachable quads installed, including North America's first with heated seats, at The Canyons, Utah. There were just four in '09. Plus, in 2010, Hunter Mountain added a six-pack. Le Massif and Crystal Mountain, Wash., installed iconic gondolas. Overall, VTFH came to nearly 43,000, 60 percent greater than in 2009.

Regionally, the greatest increases in

VTFH took place in the West, as both the Pacific and Mountain regions rebounded to something approaching a normal year. Installations in Canada were down a bit more than 10 percent, but Canadian installations were the bright spot in 2009, when they nearly equaled the entire U.S. in VTFH.

And conveyor installations surged in 2010, totaling 62—more than double

(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.)

that of 2009, and the most since 2006. Both Magic Carpet and Star Lifts attribute this growth to projects postponed from 2009, the continuing growth of tubing and a switch from handle tows to conveyors, as well as more snowsport school installations. Both suppliers expect those last two trends to continue.

AERIAL LIFTS

With resorts recovering from the economic shocks of 2008-09, both Mark Bee of Doppelmayr and Rick Spear of Leitner-Poma expect two trends to drive future lift decisions: comfort and safety, especially kids' safety. Doppelmayr's heated seats have gained an audience in Europe,

NEW LIFTS BY REGION

Region	New VTFH	Surface	Gondolas/ Trams			Total
			Chairs	Funiculars		
East	9,497	-	7	-	-	7
Midwest	1,855	-	2	-	-	2
Mountain	15,665	-	5	-	-	5
Pacific	4,707	-	2	1	-	3
Canada	11,242	-	4	2	-	6
TOTALS	42,966	-	20	3	-	23

LIFT COMPARISON WITH PRECEDING YEARS

Region	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
East	12	10	13	9	8	8	5	9	7	7
Midwest	0	2	4	2	0	1	0	2	0	2
Mountain	14	5	4	25	17	11	22	11	4	5
Pacific	2	6	3	8	3	5	6	5	3	3
Canada	9	10	11	10	5	6	8	11	7	6
TOTALS	37	33	35	54	34	31	41	38	21	23

NEW LIFTS BY MANUFACTURER

Manufacturer	Surface	Chair	Gondolas/ Trams		Total Lifts	Total VTFH
			Funiculars			
Doppelmayr CTEC	-	14	3	-	17	30,074
Leitner-Poma	-	6	-	-	6	12,892
TOTALS	-	20	3	-	23	42,966

VTFH (000) COMPARISON WITH PRECEDING YEARS

Region	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
East	16,881	14,891	12,431	11,065	10,367	11,533	7,610	15,436	5,801	9,497
Midwest	0	1,744	3,120	1,130	0	638	0	1,228	0	1,855
Mountain	25,625	12,906	13,376	25,870	35,849	29,785	39,455	22,994	6,719	15,665
Pacific	4,091	11,296	6,425	15,860	4,250	9,998	16,718	5,209	960	4,707
Canada	18,042	26,244	21,294	11,675	6,533	11,767	21,610	11,777	12,601	11,242
TOTALS	64,639	67,081	56,646	65,600	56,999	63,661	85,393	56,644	26,081	42,966

EAST

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
NEW HAMPSHIRE									
Cannon Mountain	2C	Doppelmayr CTEC	200	4025	1280	1000		500	1280
Cranmore	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	150	2715	544	1600		400	870
Loon Mountain	2C	Doppelmayr CTEC	60	633	128	634		400	81
NEW YORK									
Holiday Valley	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	400	2519	528	2400		1000	1267
Hunter Mountain	6C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	700	5400	1477	2600		1000	3840
NORTH CAROLINA									
Sugar Mountain	2C	Doppelmayr CTEC	100	2191	461	1200		450	553
PENNSYLVANIA									
Shawnee Mountain	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	400	2986	669	2400		1000	1606

MIDWEST

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
MINNESOTA									
Welch Village	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	100	1209	303	2185		400	662
WISCONSIN									
Devil's Head	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	200	2644	497	2400		400	1193

MOUNTAIN

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
COLORADO									
Arapahoe Basin	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	400	2875	717	2000		1000	1434
Vail Mountain	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	750	5570	1852	2400		1000	4445
MONTANA									
Bridger Bowl	3C	Doppelmayr CTEC	400	3821	1427	1800		500	2569
UTAH									
The Canyons	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	600	5181	1484	2400		1000	3562
The Canyons	4C-Det. Bubble	Doppelmayr CTEC	1020	8709	1523	2400		1000	3655

PACIFIC

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
WASHINGTON									
Crystal Mountain	Gondola-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	500	6835	2457	900		800	2211
White Pass	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	300	4075	911	1600		1000	1458
White Pass	4C	Doppelmayr CTEC	200	3673	649	1600		450	103

CANADA

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
BRITISH COLUMBIA									
Whistler Blackcomb	Group Gondola	Doppelmayr CTEC	200	2972	743	306		960	227
ONTARIO									
Craigleith Ski Club	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	300	2964	638	2200		1000	1404
Mt. St. Louis	4C	Leitner-Poma	150	1746	452	2400		450	1085
Osler Bluff	4C-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	400	3313	730	2400		1000	1752
QUEBEC									
Le Massif	Gondola-Det.	Doppelmayr CTEC	1200	9279	2175	2800		1181	6090
SASKATCHEWAN									
Table Mountain	4C-Det.	Leitner-Poma	150	1818	342	2000		375	684

CARIBBEAN

Location	Type	Manufacturer	Installed HP	Length	Vert.	Design Cap.	Initial Cap.	Speed	VTFH
PUERTO RICO									
La Marquesa*	Group Gondola	Doppelmayr CTEC	150	1992	219	600		600	131

*Not included in lift statistics.

TOWS: ROPE, HANDLE, WIRE ROPE

Harusch	4	Star Lifts**	5
Multi Skilift	3	TOTAL	12

**Includes Brückschlögl and O'Connor.

CONVEYORS

ChairKid	3	Star Lifts	36
Magic Carpet	23	TOTAL	62

6-YEAR CHART OF CONVEYOR INSTALLATIONS



and Bee expects North America to follow. “Customers love the lift. Most are really pleased about the comfort, and bubbles protect you against the wind,” he notes.

Spear says that automatic restraining bars are one of several safety options lift manufacturers are exploring. “No question, there’s a greater focus on providing more security for kids. Both Leitner-Poma and Doppelmayr are addressing kids’ safety; we have to find better ways to keep ‘em in the chairs,” he adds.

Economy is a likely third trend. With hundreds of aging chairs installed in the ‘60s, ‘70s, and ‘80s, the question has long been, “how will we replace them?” One answer: three Doppelmayr fixed-grip installations last year were economically-oriented Eco-drive designs—one each at Loon and Cranmore, N.H., and Welch Village, Minn. There are now six such lifts in operation, with one more already on order for 2011.

Another answer: a new company, Skytrac, has entered the scene (see page 20 for details). Skytrac aims to provide economical yet full-featured lifts built to North American standards.

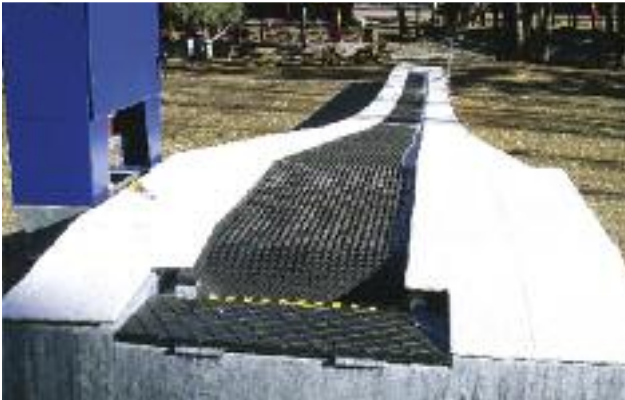
SURFACE LIFTS

For SunKid, 2010 was the biggest year ever, with 36 installations. “Some areas put their projects on hold in 2009, to see what happened with the economy, then pulled the trigger this past summer,” says Pete Kavanaugh of Star Lifts.

Jennifer Kelly of Magic Carpet agrees, and adds that conveyors are not just replacing handle tows (for both tubing and ski school), but even some shorter beginner chairlifts. Magic Carpet’s sales more than tripled, from 7 to 23.

Both suppliers said sales reflected the usual mix of 80 percent ski school/20 percent tubing. Tubing is growing as new hills are developed and as existing operations add capacity. Snowsport schools continue to add conveyors, too: Beaver Creek has 11; Okemo, six. Even smaller areas often have multiple conveyors.

No, the lift business is not back to its heyday in the ‘90s, or even to the numbers seen in the early ‘00s. But it’s on the way back up, and suppliers continue to innovate. As someone once wrote, “that which does not kill you makes you stronger.” Let’s hope so!



TOP ROW: Left, Canyons' new Doppelmayr CTEC bubble chair has heated seats—a North American first. Right, Leitner-Poma completed work on the new Roosevelt Island tram in New York in November; the lift is actually two separate trams that can operate independently, and there are numerous other redundancies built into it. The tram runs 20 hours daily and is one of two mass-transit systems available to island residents. SECOND ROW: Left, Vail's new Leitner-Poma High Noon Express is the first in the U.S. to use a newly-designed Leitner/Poma grip and terminal. Right, one of the year's three new, thrifty, Doppelmayr Eco-drive fixed-grip chairs, this one at Cranmore, N.H. THIRD ROW: Left, new Magic Carpet for the ski school at Sipapu, N.M. On the right, SunKid conveyor at Arizona Snowbowl. BOTTOM ROW: This ChairKid loading conveyor eases access to Loon's Seven Brothers triple.

