

Heavylift transport by Omnitrans

Cable car wire for a ski resort

The forwarding company Omnitrans recently shouldered responsibility for the logistics requirements of a major gondola project in Canada. Its task involved the transport of five very heavy reels of wire rope from Switzerland to Canada.

Steel cable manufactured by the respected Swiss company Fatzer, based in Romanshorn, needed to be transported to Canada, where it is being used in the construction of a gondola lift in Whistler (British Columbia). The new aerial transport system is scheduled to connect the peaks of Blackcomb Mountain and Whistler Mountain from December of this year. The Whistler Blackcomb ski resort is the official alpine skiing venue for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, which will be held in Vancouver (Canada).

Record-beating aerial transport

The record-breaking cableway will span 4.4 km between Whistler Mountain, which is 2,182 m high, and Blackcomb Mountain, which is 2,440 m. The gondola system will be built by the aerial cable car specialists Doppelmayr (Austria) and Garaventa AG (Switzerland) and will surpass two world records at one go. The distance between the two supporting masts which are set the farthest apart from each other will be 3,024 m. Also, the gondolas will dangle 415 m above the floor of the Fitzsimmons Creek valley – the highest ever in the history of aerial cable car construction.

The USA-based Omnitrans Corporation, together with its Swiss partner General Transport, headquartered in Basel, took charge of transporting the five enormous reels of wire rope required for this project from Switzerland to Canada. To start off, the approximately 460 t of towing and carrying cables were loaded onto an inland barge in the Rhine river port of Basel. From there the heavy load sailed down the river to Vlissingen (Netherlands). The steel cable reels were then transferred to



Coils of steel rope on their way to the construction site of a record-breaking aerial tramway in Whistler Mountain (Canada).

the «Star Indiana» freighter operated by

the global shipping line Star Shipping, before setting out on their journey of several weeks across the Atlantic Ocean, through the Panama Canal, and up the Pacific west coast of the USA to Vancouver WA (USA). This port was chosen because of its 140 t Liebherr cranes, which were capable of handling the massive reels without difficulty.

Tricky task

The next-to-last part of the journey between Vancouver and the US-Canadian border was arranged on special railway wagons operated by the US company Burlington Northern & Santa Fe (BNSF). At the frontier, responsibility for the load was transferred to Canadian National Rail (CN Rail), for carriage to the resort. The transfer of the steel cable units from the railway cars to suitable Goldhofer heavylift trailers was achieved with the help of a hydraulic sliding system brought over from Montreal (Canada) especially for this purpose. Finally, the reels were hauled up Whistler Mountain by truck. This was where what may have been the trickiest part of the



undertaking began – to convey the steel cables to the aerial tramway construction site on the mountain. The task required the shipment to overcome gradients of up to 21.5%.

Omnitrans Corporation Ltd was established in New York City NY in 1972, where it is still headquartered. Additional branches were later opened at New York's John F. Kennedy airport and in Boston MA (USA). The company offers a complete range of freight forwarding services and it is among the leading US enterprises operating in the country's ski, sport article, cable car and ski lift industry, as well as in the provision of wine production supplies and materials for the US wine industry. Omnitrans is also active in the chemicals and paper sector, and offers heavylift transport of large machinery and helicopters for the petrochemical industry.