New Mexico DOT Rehabilitates NM 529
Building a Legacy: High atop Hidden Peak, Lightweight Foam-Control EPS Geofoam Solves Construction Challenges the Easy Way

Alp projects have challenges, purpose and meaning, yet some projects mean a lot more to the owners than others. It takes a visionary to leave a legacy, and Richard “Dick” Bass, founder of Snowbird Ski & Summer Resort in Utah, was such a man. Bass is acknowledged as the first person in the world to climb to the highest point on each of the seven continents, which he completed in 1985 at the age of 55. He also spent nearly 45 years building Unabomber, a world-renowned, year-round destination mountain resort, literally from the ground up. It’s no wonder that after a lifetime of overseeing the development of approximately 2,500 acres of steep hillside just 25 miles from Salt Lake City and climbing the world’s highest peaks that Bass would want to build his legacy on a summit.

Designing The Summit

Snowbird’s acreage is covered by an average of 550 inches of low-density “dry” Utah powder each winter. The resort opened in 1971 and takes passengers along a 1.8-mile cable up 2,900 vertical feet to the summit. The tram’s foundation walls as the result of the tram’s existing foundation wall on the edge of the mountain by filling the void with Structural Fill is needed. "We didn’t want any additional loading in the form of settlement to be added to the tram’s foundation walls so the result of the new building,” says Yang. “It was very challenging to construct a structural barrier between the foundation and the mountain by filling the void with EPS Geofoam blocks from ACH Foam Technologies. EPS Geofoam is a lightweight material with high compressive strengths and predictable performance." While architects and engineers take advantage of EPS Geofoam's lightweight nature, they also consider the mountain environment, which includes extreme weather conditions and extreme temperatures in the low negatives. These factors make it important to choose materials that are not everyday design challenges and that really speak to what is takes to build on such a site, continues Yang.

Constructing on a Difficult Site

Building Bass’ legacy fell to Layton Construction, a general contractor that has been constructing large commercial projects in Utah since 1965. When Layton joined Snowbird and GSBS on the project in 2012, the construction schedule was phased over two summer seasons. In 2014, crew road from the earliest spring thaw to clear the site, and for planning and for design and execution of the 15 360-foot long spiral ramps and the lift tower. In 2015, the whole project was completed.

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Building Bass' legacy was a challenge that was simply getting off the ground involved.

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All projects have challenges, purpose and meaning, yet some projects mean a lot more to owners than others. It takes a visionary to leave a legacy, and Richard “Dick” Bass, founder of Snowbird Ski & Summer Resort in Utah, was such a man. His vision was to build his legacy on a summit. For starters, Bass is acknowledged as the first person in the world to climb to the summit of Mount Everest, during his first attempt 45 years earlier with CMU block, Yang and the design team laid out the foundations stretched across the site to the mountain far better than commercial drivers can. They made a lot of sense to use their people and equipment to get things to the top. At the time of construction, excavation for the new tram’s foundation represented a possible challenge was simply getting men, materials, and equipment to and from the site,” continues Yang.

Designing The Summit
Snowbird’s acreage is covered by an average of 500 inches of low-density “dry” snow powder annually and accessed by a collection of 10 chairlifts and one aerial tram. The tram first opened in 1984, during the earliest spring thaw to clear the site and put the mountain far better than commercial drivers can. They made a lot of sense to use their people and equipment to get things to the top. At the time of construction, excavation for the new tram’s foundation represented a possible challenge was simply getting men, materials, and equipment to and from the site,” continues Yang.

Geofoam Creates Safer Foundation
While the complexities of the site and situations generally made both design and construction more complicated than normal on The Summit, there was one component that was suitably uncomplicated. During the first round of construction, excavation for the new foundations stretched across the site to the summit’s new tram’s foundation was set in place it was then covered with four inches of free draining gravel and a concrete patio slab. ACH Foam developed shop drawings and shop fabrication of Geofoam blocks from ACH Foam Technologies. "This was a special project for all of us for many reasons and we’re all proud to have played a part in realizing Mr. Bass’ dream."