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that led me to travel the globe searching out snow on five continents and experiencing in a rough guess some 500 resorts and varied cultures around the world," Wescott told selectmen. "What I have learned is that there are many ways to run ski resorts within the ski industry."

Wescott is asking his town to think "outside of the box."

Wescott presented a plan to bring back a base-to-summit gondola lift like it installed in the 1960s, but using today's more sophisticated high speed and high volume technologies. The estimated cost for an eight-passenger, detachable signature lift with full download capacity and proposed year-round use is said to be about \$10 million. The lift, based on its weight, design and the latest engineering practices, is said to be more accessible in high winds than other lifts on the mountain.

Wescott proposed that the town of Carrabassett Valley purchase the lift through a low interest municipal bond and partner with mountain operations, and that bond payments would be covered by an added cost levied on those who chose to ride the new gondola.

Although it may be "outside the box" for most North American ski resorts, the concept and practice is quite familiar around the world, but it is also familiar to the residents and municipal leaders of Carrabassett Valley.

However, unlike the partnership formed when the town invested in building the golf course, as only one example, the Wescott planned investment will not be a burden on the taxpayers.

Between running a business, serving as a board member of CVA and Maine Huts & Trails and now appointed to the Sugarloaf Golf Course Greens Committee, Wescott has been busy working with all parties involved. And not to forget to mention many other undertakings, including training to hold and protect his Olympic Gold Medal this winter in Vancouver, traveling the globe in search of an overall world cup title, and once again attempting to become a world champion.

"I am pretty confident that it will happen through the town," he said. "It's all going to be about finding the right protection between both parties in the legal language of the deal."

Wescott said the feedback he's receiving is definitely

"We're talking about something like a base to summit ride in nine minutes which is out of the wind..."

positive and explained that through the support of municipal leaders, Sugarloaf and Boyne management, this issue will hopefully be before town voters at the annual Town Meeting. This will allow for construction to occur next summer and fall.

"It's one of those situations where not only can the town do it, but they need to do it. This town would not exist to the extent that it does if it wasn't for the mountain and the mountain would not function if it was not for the support of the town. It's already been such a symbiotic relationship for so many years going back in time to a point when the town itself was being created. You needed a place for the overflow of the ski population who were coming up here and needed a place to stay," Wescott explained.

"I don't think that either one works without the other. So I think it's important for people to think back to the origins of this place, both for the mountain and the town of Carrabassett."

Signature lifts such as high-end gondolas and trams are the mainstay for the very best, top notch, world class resorts throughout the world, Wescott explained.

"My true belief is, what this does is it brings back the uniqueness of what Sugarloaf was. It's pretty rare, even within the entire United States. There are great mountains in the U.S. that are far too spread out." Sunday River which is a great resort came to mind, he said, and even Vail.

"One of our great strengths here, in particular with this lift reinstalled, is people get to literally choose any one run on the mountain and come directly back to that very same single lift."

The choice can vary from the comfort of accommodating the less experienced skier to offering some of the most challenging terrain in the country.

"If you go back and look at the New England Ski industry, we're going to go back to having the biggest vertical drop on one single lift of access."

Whiteface in New York State, Westcott thought, might have a slightly greater vertical drop, but multiple lifts are needed for summit access, he explained.

"We're talking about something like a base to summit

ride in nine minutes which is out of the wind and fully enclosed. We deal with the wind a lot here and what is a better place to ride than out of the wind completely. They are so pleasant to ride in."

"Putting that thing in alone will create such a buzz here in the New England ski industry. More than that, it's returning the mountain to its full potential."

This place also has the potential to do more year-round activities and the new lift could be a catalyst for many summertime and autumn activities as a people mover, he said.

"This affords an opportunity for people who have never stood on the top of a mountain. That's a huge experience for so many people. Take the leaf peepers for example. Step in this thing and in minutes you'll be at one of the most spectacular views in the Northeast at the height of foliage. There are things people will experience that they've never experienced before. People are coming through this region that don't have an affinity for skiing or snowboarding and the fact that we can still give them the experience of what its like to be on top of a mountain is a huge attraction. That's going to create a lot of traffic."

Wescott explained that people could eventually enjoy the summit for a dining experience, downhill mountain biking and so many other activities. It opens the door for so much, he said. Paragliding, zipline amusement rides, the compliment it adds to conference sales, there's so much one can do from atop Maine's second highest peak, he explained.

Wescott said that he's looked at the millions of visitors who flock to Mt. Desert Island and pay to ride the Mt. Washington access road in summer months.

Wescott said it's not like they're trying to attract millions skiers a year, but they're trying to attract the people who truly love skiing and are really dedicated to it and want access to the Northeast's best terrain, "who create the unique, considerate, tight-knit ski community that you want here at the Loaf."

Although there are many obstacles to overcome to get this proposal off the ground, the Carrabassett community most likely will embrace this discussion this winter.



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PET OF THE WEEK



Tory came to us in September. She's the sort of cat who likes to perch in the window and watch all the excitement going on around her.

She is a beautiful declawed calico, and would make a lovely addition to any home. So come on in for a meet and greet, and see if this lovely lady can win your heart!

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