

Bethlehem Connect

A hybrid, high-frequency electric transit plan linking Saucon Valley, Lehigh's three campuses, the Southside, Downtown, Moravian University and North Bethlehem, built on today's bus service.

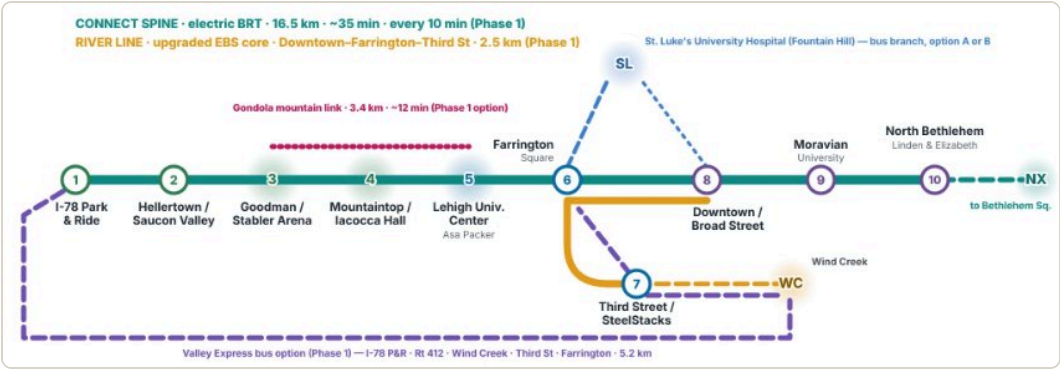
Planning phase. An independent plan; nothing is funded or built yet.

10 stations
plus 3 evaluated destinations

16.5 km
Connect Spine end to end, ~35 min

~12 min
gondola option, Goodman ↔ Asa Packer

~\$11.2M a year
screening operating cost of the Phase 1 core lines (Spine, River Line); options not costed



THE IDEA IN BRIEF

Terrain decides the mode. Mountaintop (≈275 m) sits about 180 m above Goodman and 153 m above the University Center; campus roads reach 11–13% grades. Buses can serve it today, a gondola fits the slope best, and surface rail does not fit.

Build on LANTA's Enhanced Bus Service. EBS already runs about every 15 minutes Downtown – Fahy Bridge – Southside. Phase 1 extends and electrifies it rather than duplicating it.

Serve everyone, not just Lehigh. Residents of Hellertown, the Southside and North Bethlehem; students at Lehigh, Moravian and Liberty High School; workers at St. Luke's, Wind Creek and Lehigh; visitors to SteelStacks and Stabler; regional travelers through the I-78 Park & Ride.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR

- **LVPC:** how a plan like this could be considered in the FutureLV process.
- **LANTA:** fit with EBS; boardings, GTFS and park-and-ride data.
- **Lehigh University:** the mountain link (bus or gondola), the Mountaintop and Goodman station areas, shuttle data.
- **City of Bethlehem:** fit with the draft Complete Streets Plan, the Broad and Linden St projects and the planned South Side Community Center.

PROPOSED PHASES (INDICATIVE)

P0 now – mid-2027	Conversations and data with LVPC, LANTA, Lehigh and the City; align with the FutureLV long-range plan update
Phase 1 target 2029	In and around Bethlehem and Hellertown: Connect Spine and River Line, one brand and fare with LANTA and campus shuttles if they agree; options (Valley Express, St. Luke's, Airport Link to ABE, gondola after studies) and extensions if demand
Phase 2 target 2030	Corridor options past Bethlehem to Allentown, Easton, Nazareth, Bath, Saucon Valley south and Coopersburg, on existing streets, only if LANTA agrees
Later after 2030	Full bus lanes where data support them; express tiers only if measured triggers are met; electric rail or subway only if ridership, funding and engineering gates are met

2029 and 2030 are conditional targets, not commitments: they depend on a sponsor adopting the route, funding and operating partners.

Bethlehem 2030 path (conditional targets): a River Line pilot in 2028 on leased battery-electric buses, Phase 1 by 2029 and Phase 2 by 2030, only if a sponsor, funding and approvals come first, mostly in 2027. Comparable projects often slipped 1–2 years.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER FIRST

- Who could fund about 71,000 new service hours a year, and in what shares?
- Can battery buses run all winter on 11–13% grades, and at what energy use?
- Gondola: South Mountain wind data, the Pennsylvania regulatory path, evacuation, Lehigh land and forest impacts.