

Finland aims to build first ever green highway

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A power cable is seen plugged into a Tesla Roadster in 2008. Finland wants to build the world's first "green highway," with service stations offering charging points for electric cars and pumps filled with local biofuels, the project manager said Thursday.

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"The aim is to create the model for an ecological highway that could be used even on an international level," said Aki Marjasvaara with the Loviisa municipality spearheading the project.

"No other such project exists. This would set an example to the world," he told AFP.

The project concerns the remaining eastern 130-kilometre (81-mile) stretch yet to be built on a highway linking Turku on Finland's southwestern coast with Vaalimaa near the Russian border.

The town of Loviisa, located east of Helsinki and near the beginning of where the last leg of the highway will be built, proposed making the final stretch of road "green" and has taken charge of the project.

The plan involves using waste and other resources from the region that the new road will pass through to produce [ethanol](#), other biofuels and electricity to keep the most environmentally-friendly cars on the green highway running.

Pumps with [fossil fuels](#) will also be available for "normal" cars.

Other proposals include installing geothermal heat pumps and providing information to users on their [emission levels](#) and the impact they are having on the environment.

The project also aims to provide "smart" lighting for the new highway.

Systems would automatically switch off lights at entry points where there are no cars and adjust lighting levels along the motorway to compensate for weather conditions.

The Loviisa municipality is working on a study of whether the project is possible, and the report outlining various options and cost is expected to be published in March 2011, Marjasvaara said.

But "before that, we have to clarify if a project like this is big enough to get EU support," he explained.

If the project goes through, Marjasvaara said he expected it to be at least

partially financed through investments from large companies like Fortum, Neste Oil and Ensto.

Construction, he said, could begin as early as the second half of next year.

The town of Loviisa hopes the highway will be completed by 2016 at a total cost of about 700 million euros (900 million dollars).

The aim in the long term is to create a stretch of highway that is carbon neutral, the municipality said in a statement.

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