

Hamburg is burying the Autobahn and putting parks on top

By [Joseph Stromberg](#) Jan 9, 2015, 12:10pm EST (Extract)

A rendering of Hamburg's highway burial project. [HOCHTIEF Solutions](#)

The [Autobahn 7](#), Germany's longest highway, runs straight through Hamburg. Over the years, it's grown more and more congested, now carrying about [152,000 cars and trucks](#) per day.

To deal with the increasing traffic, the city is turning to a [pretty conventional solution](#): widening virtually the entire stretch of the highway that runs through the city.

But to deal with the noise — and the way that the highway has severed neighborhoods that were connected before it was built in the 1980s — [Fast Company reports](#) that the city has come to a pretty interesting solution: they're burying a few miles of the highway and covering it with parks, community gardens, and housing development.

([City of Hamburg](#))

The project, which is called the [Hamburger Deckel](#) and is projected to cost \$800 million, comes after 20 years of lobbying from a local residents' initiative called "Ohne Dach ist Krach" (German for "No Roof, Too Much Racket"). Burying the highway is a practical way to meet a city noise abatement ordinance passed in 2005, as the sound barriers built in most places (including virtually everywhere in the US) can only cut down on noise by a factor of [about half](#).

The tunnel project also has some other benefits: in covering what will be an eight-lane freeway, it'll provide a substantial amount of new parkland, along with space to build a neighborhood of 1700 homes. At its northern end, the new park will also link existing parkland, establishing a new greenbelt. Work is starting this year, and it's projected to be finished in 2022.

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Hamburg's project is less ambitious, in an engineering sense. Its highway is simply being slightly lowered, with a six-to-ten foot cap placed on top of it.