

Traffic Plan Crashes City's Web Site

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Cars waiting on Bolshoi Kamenny Bridge for a Kremlin motorcade to pass, a regular occurrence that snarls traffic. **Vladimir Filonov**

City Hall's web site crashed Wednesday after Mayor Sergei Sobyenin published his long-awaited [plan](#) to fight Moscow traffic jams, a dire problem that has caused frustrated motorists to half-jokingly make an online call to arms.

The plan proposes replacing traffic police officers with automated regulation systems, limiting new construction in order to widen roads for extra lanes, barring trucks from the city during daylight hours, introducing toll roads, and banning most ground-level pedestrian crossings.

The public transportation system also faces an overhaul, with trolleybuses being prohibited from the city center and the ubiquitous minivan shuttle buses — the notoriously dangerous *marshrutki* — replaced with larger buses. Also, the Glonass satellite navigation system will be used to monitor traffic jams.

Traffic experts cautiously praised the proposals as feasible. But they said Sobyanin must prove that the plan, which draws on many suggestions put forth by former Mayor Yury Luzhkov, is not a publicity stunt and will not be impeded by corruption as it is implemented.

The urgency of the issue was highlighted Tuesday night when drivers on the Moscow Ring Road got caught in a four-hour jam that some speculated was caused by traffic police blocking roads for the cortege of visiting Finnish President Tarja Halonen.irate drivers fumed on Yandex Maps, which tracks city traffic jams. Comments ranged from, "Why don't we get together and buy Medvedev a helicopter," to the more extreme, "Please someone give me a gun and one bullet and I'll resolve this."

One person wrote, "Don't worry people, it's just Sobyanin testing his anti-traffic jam plan."

The publication of the plan Wednesday morning on City Hall's web site crashed the site's server as thousands of people tried to read it, a city government official [told](#) RIA-Novosti.

Readers are invited to leave suggestions on the web site, and Sobyanin has said the best proposals will be incorporated in a revised version of the plan that will be released in about a month.

The current plan offers no spending estimates.

Spokespeople for City Hall and its transportation department refused to comment on the plan Wednesday.

City police chief Vladimir Kolokoltsev said Wednesday that he has forwarded proposals on how to fight traffic jams to Sobyanin, RIA-Novosti [reported](#). Kolokoltsev did not elaborate.

Some elements of Sobyanin's plan echo proposals considered by Luzhkov, including the introduction of reversible traffic lanes and the construction of large parking lots on the city's outskirts.

"So far there have been only declarations. Almost nothing has been done," Vyacheslav Lysakov, head of the Freedom of Choice motorists movement, said of City Hall's previous attempts to ease traffic.

The head of the Moscow branch of the Federation of Russian Car Owners, Sergei Kanayev, said the measures proposed by Sobyanin might be efficient if implemented properly.

"It all depends on whether the officials want to collect money and launder it or solve the problem," Kanayev said by telephone.

Lysakov called Sobyanin's proposals "sensible" but said it would be difficult to create new parking lots and extra traffic lanes because the authorities would need to first demolish existing buildings, including malls and apartment complexes.

Another proposal, to ban trucks from entering the city during the daytime, would require the construction of special parking lots outside Moscow and negotiations with labor unions over the fact that truck drivers would be forced to work nightshifts, Lysakov said.

He also voiced wariness about the idea about toll roads, saying free-of-charge alternative routes must be made available. Worldwide, toll-free roads remain much more widespread than toll ones, he said.

On the other hand, paid parking lots are a necessary measure that authorities will have to introduce despite public grumbling, Kanayev said, adding that they would probably account for 80 percent of all parking space in the city.

Lysakov said fees at existing downtown parking lots are too high and must be reduced.

He also condemned the proposal to banish trolleybuses from the city center, saying electric transport is currently popular in Europe as an alternative to dirtier, gas-fueled vehicles.

Replacing traffic police officers with automated video surveillance systems may also cause trouble because of the numerous officials who use flashing blue lights on the roofs of their cars to ignore traffic rules, Lysakov said. The movement of those vehicles can only be controlled by humans, he said.

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