

Venerable Metro Builder Up for Sale

By [The Moscow Times](#)

November 23, 2010

The  Moscow Times

The government plans to sell the 79-year-old company that built Moscow's subway system as Mayor Sergei Sobyenin seeks to expedite the expansion of the capital's transportation network to ease traffic congestion.

Moscow Metrostroi will be sold at auction on Dec. 23, the Federal Property Agency said on its web site. Bids will start at 2.2 billion rubles (\$70.5 million) and rise in increments of 20 million rubles. Foreign bidders will be allowed, said Vladimir Ryzhkov, a spokesman for the property agency.

The Moscow subway, inaugurated in 1935 when Josef Stalin ruled the Soviet Union, now counts 182 stations and more than 300 kilometers of track, according to the company's web site. Sobyenin on Monday ordered the city government to expand the underground network by 50 kilometers within four years, Kommersant reported.

Moscow drivers suffer the longest traffic jams of the world's 20 major cities, a study said in July. The Moscow subway is a focus of city planning because of the worsening gridlock.

The system is the second-busiest in the world after Tokyo's subway, according to the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Moscow's subway carried up to 9 million riders a day in 2009, according to the MTA.

President Dmitry Medvedev in September fired Mayor Yury Luzhkov, citing in part his failure to curb worsening traffic congestion.

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