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Parking Woes Due to Office Workers

By Roland Oliphant

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On any given weekday there are at least 6,000 cars within the Garden Ring with no place to park, new research has found.

The report claims that the daily flood of white-collar drivers commuting to work in the center is responsible for the chaotic scramble for more parking spaces than are available.

"We think there are about 100,000 office workers and administrative staff driving to work inside the Garden Ring every day," said Andrei Malkov, an analyst at Cushman & Wakefield which published the research.

About 18,000 of those vehicles have access to office parking, and only 1,000 find free city parking. Another 75,000 park on the street or in courtyards.

"That leaves at least 6,000 with nowhere to go," Malkov said. "They can use paid parking in shopping centers and so on, but that's not an answer for everyone — there's not enough spaces, and it is expensive."

There are about 10 commercial parking lots with a total of 3,500 parking places inside the Garden Ring, according to the Cushman & Wakefield survey. Fees range from 50 to 200 rubles per hour, meaning parking for an eight-hour workday would cost up to 1,600 rubles ($50).

The number of parking places in Moscow has more than doubled since 2006, but shortages remain acute, the report says.

According to city regulations, office buildings inside the Garden Ring (Zone 1) should have a ratio of one parking space per 70 to 80 square meters of office space. The ratio goes down to one space for 50 to 60 square meters for offices built between the Garden Ring and the Third Ring (Zone 2), as well as between the Third Ring and the MKAD (Zone 3).

Malkov's team found that the ratio was closer to 110 square meters in Zones 1 and 2, and just under 90 in Zone 3.

In November, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin unveiled a new plan to fight the city's traffic problems calling for the construction of large "park and ride" lots on the city's outskirts and the introduction of fees for parking on the streets.

The plans have been hailed by traffic experts as workable, but skeptics recall that former Mayor Yury Luzhkov had similar ideas.

"There are two, maybe three park-and-ride schemes now operating, out of about some 40 sites proposed under former Mayor Yury Luzhkov's administration," Malkov pointed out. "So it really depends on how these plans are realized."

The increasing paid street parking will be unpopular, but the financial deterrent could make a serious difference, Malkov said. "Russians aren't accustomed to paying for parking yet. If you restrict their access to free parking, they are much more likely to leave their cars at home or carpool with colleagues."

But that will only help resolve the parking problem if it is accompanied by a simultaneous improvement in public transportation, he said.

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