

Mayor Scraps Plan for 4th Ring Road

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Migrant workers standing by the side of the Moscow Ring Road. The 74-kilometer Fourth Ring Road would have run between it and the Third Ring Road. **Igor Tabakov**

The Mayor's Office will redirect funds from road construction to public transportation and "carefully study" allegations of corruption by city officials, Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said, further chewing away at his predecessor's legacy.

Speaking late Wednesday during a live call-in [show](#) — reminiscent of the traditional shows hosted by his former boss, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin — Sobyenin eschewed any radical announcements about ex-Mayor Yury Luzhkov.

But in what seemed like a nearly fatal blow to one of Luzhkov's major initiatives, Sobyenin gave a clear thumbs down to the construction of a fourth ring road around the city. He argued that it would cost a whopping 1.5 trillion rubles (\$49 billion) and that it was probably better to invest the funds in public transport.

"The effectiveness of such roads is clearly doubtful, which is why we will consider again

whether it is worth spending such money while there's a budget deficit," he said in the show, broadcast on TV Center, the channel controlled by City Hall.

Construction of the road — a 74-kilometer ring between the Third Ring Road and the Moscow Ring Road — began in 2007. Sobyenin said the section under construction would be finished.

The mayor said that road would cost 7 billion rubles (\$228 million) per kilometer, a figure close to the 7.4 billion rubles claimed by opposition leader Boris Nemtsov in a report last year.

While Nemtsov argued that corruption drove prices to exorbitant heights (roads in the United States cost about \$6 million per kilometer), Sobyenin maintained that this was purely because of the need to knock down "colossal amounts" of buildings adjacent to the new road.

A plan forwarded by Sobyenin has earmarked 203 billion rubles (\$6.63 billion) for transport next year, and he promised to push metro construction to 15 kilometers per year.

The mayor treaded carefully when asked about corruption accusations against metro chief Dmitry Gayev, saying that "firings will not solve problems."

Last week, federal prosecutors accused Gayev of embezzling \$3.6 million and urged Sobyenin to fire him. The mayor promised to make a decision before the end of the year, after receiving results of an Audit Chamber investigation.

Audit Chamber head Sergei Stepashin said Thursday that the investigation found "problems," among other things with metro construction, and that results would be presented Dec. 28, Interfax reported.

Sobyenin also commented on riots targeting ethnic minorities earlier this month, promising that police would prevent any repetition of the chaos.

Football fans and nationalists staged a violent protest against migrants near the Kremlin on Dec. 11 after a fan was killed by a North Caucasus native. City police have since detained thousands of people to prevent further riots.

Sobyenin said those responsible were "bandits" who had "nothing to do with sports."

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