

Newsmaker: Businessman Sokolov Takes Over Transportation Helm

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Sokolov

The new transportation minister, Leningrad native Maxim Sokolov, 44, is a near contemporary of Dmitry Medvedev — the prime minister is just three years older. But unlike Medvedev, he is a relative newcomer to the government, only arriving in the White House in 2009 to head the department for industry and infrastructure.

Nonetheless, he has long been earmarked for promotion — in March this year Vedomosti named him as a potential candidate to head a proposed new Construction, Housing and Utilities Ministry, an idea that did not make it into Monday's reorganization.

Sokolov has more connections to real estate than transportation — last September he was elected president of the Guild of Managers and Developers, an association of real estate developers — so it is possible that he has been recruited to oversee the ambitious road- and railway-building programs the ministry launched under his predecessor.

Before joining the federal government, he did a stint in the St. Petersburg government's committee for investment and strategic projects, and later as chairman of the committee for economic development, industrial policy and trade.

But according to his official biography, he has mostly been involved in business. He studied economics and later law at St. Petersburg University — the alma mater of many members of the current government — and spent much of the 1990s as a general director of ZAO Rossi which, according to its website, is a supplier of security systems. Later he headed a company called Corporation S, where he still holds a 25 percent stake.

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