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Pulkovo On Track for Expansion

By Lena Smirnova

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The St. Petersburg airport that welcomed economic forum visitors last year will be revamped by the end of 2013. **Ekaterina Kuzmina**

St. Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport will meet a milestone next week when it completes the of its new passenger terminal, the airport's operator Northern Capital Gateway announced Wednesday.

Russia's third-largest airport is modernizing Pulkovo-1 and building a new passenger terminal connected to it, with the aim of becoming a major connection route for northern Europe.

"We understand that we can't present ourselves as a fully formed transit point in the world in which we exist," said Sergei Edmin, general director of Northern Capital Gateway. "The infrastructure that we are creating, it will allow us to become that."

Work on the new terminal is expected to be completed by the end of 2013. As a result, the total area of Pulkovo will more than triple. Northern Capital Gateway is also planning to build

a business center, hotel and multilevel parking lot as part of the complex. Two facilities for private business travel will also be constructed.

The Northern Capital Gateway consortium became the airport operator in 2010 as part of a state-private sector partnership between the company, Pulkovo Airport and St. Petersburg's government. This is the first time such a mechanism has been used to reconstruct a Russian airport.

The partnership agreement gives Northern Capital Gateway rights to Pulkovo until 2039 and requires the operator to pay the city 11.5 percent of its profits beginning in 2013.

The company expects to pay 1.2 million euros ($1.4 million) by the end of 2014 for reconstruction work. All of the investments will come from the private sector.

Expansion of the airport's pool of airlines and destinations is a priority, said Edmin, who hopes to see more airlines flying routes to France and Italy.

Northern Capital Gateway is in discussions with Delta, Aeroflot and Transaero to create a direct route to North America. About 70,000 passengers from there arrive at the airport via connecting flights each year, according to airport estimates.

Fuel supplier Saveks will also see its monopoly broken at Pulkovo. Rosneft has signed an agreement to work in the airport when the new terminal is completed, and Shell is actively campaigning for a spot, Edmin said.

About 1,600 new parking places will be completed as part of the reconstruction project, but talks about establishing a rail terminal connecting to the city center have stalled. The terminal will require new rail routes to be built and investors are still looking for government help in financing the project, Edmin said.

"From our side, we have allocated space for all their infrastructure. We are waiting for them and hope that this project will be decided on sooner or later," Edmin said.

Pulkovo Airport carried more than 9.6 million passengers in 2011 and is expected to make 20 million to 25 million euros in profits this year, Edmin said. Considering the construction improvements, the airport is expected to increase its capacity to 35 million travelers by the end of the 30-year state-private sector partnership.

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