

Railroads Look to Improve Image

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Musical choices on trains will be broadened thanks to installation of Wi-Fi. **Vladimir Filonov**

Car transfers, free Internet and air conditioning will be available to railroad travelers as early as this summer as Russian Railways and its subsidiaries modernize routes to improve their image.

The Federal Passenger Company, a subsidiary of Russian Railways for long-haul routes, plans to offer passengers bound for Helsinki the option of carting their car along on the trip. Passengers would have to pay 450 euros (\$559) to move their car from Moscow to Helsinki and back as well as an additional 4 euro charge for reserving the spot in one of the train's special carriages.

The service is part of Russian Railways' wider efforts to improve the company image.

"One of the primary tasks for the company is to correctly position it on the transport market and create positive associations among our clients and partners, as well as society in general," said Dmitry Murev, head of the development department at Russian Railways. "It is

important to show the audience that the Railways brand is a symbol of positive change, a step forward, innovations and initiatives.”

The first specialized train carriage made the journey this week. The service is expected to be made available to the public this summer, company spokeswoman Yelena Miroshnikova said.

Three specialized carriages have already been certified for such transport and more may be added if there is demand, according to a statement released by the company. Each of the carriages can hold three to five cars, depending on their sizes.

Passengers must ride on the same train as their cars, but cannot ride in the car carriage since it is not equipped with toilet facilities and climate control systems.

Moscow-Helsinki is the only planned route at the moment, but the Federal Passenger Company is also considering offering the service on routes between Moscow and the south of Russia, Miroshnikova said. Possible destinations include the popular summer resorts Adler, Kislovodsk and Novorossiisk.

Russian Railways also announced this week that it plans to equip commuter trains with Wi-Fi networks in 2012. The service is already available in Siberia and is nearing its launch date in Vladivostok and the Ural region, Vedomosti reported.

“I think that all commuter trains, not just the most comfortable ones, should have Wi-Fi. It’s convenient,” said Maxim Shneider, head of Russian Railways’ suburban complex.

In the Moscow region, Wi-Fi access will complement the modernized look of the carriages, which are slated for a cosmetic overhaul soon.

The Central Suburban Passenger Company, which shuttles more than 80 percent of passengers in the Moscow region, plans to spend 1.5 billion rubles (\$45 million) to get video surveillance cameras, bio-toilets, tinted windows and air conditioners on their trains.

Company heads said they hope the new image will help increase profits, Marker reported.

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