

Downtown Streets to Close to Traffic on Weekends

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Streets in downtown Moscow will be closed to traffic on weekends to create large pedestrian zones in the center, according to plans worked out by city authorities, Kommersant reported Wednesday.

"The goal is to systematize pedestrian space in the city with the possibility of closing traffic on individual streets on weekends to benefit pedestrians," city Transportation Department head Maksim Liksutov said.

"The concept has already been presented to the mayor of Moscow, and within 10 days it will be finalized with his input," he said.

According to the plans, the affected streets would be closed on the eve of weekends, holidays, and for big events, like temporary exhibitions.

If street closures last for several days, Liksutov said, temporary free Wi-Fi access points could

be created. City planners used mathematical models to minimize the impact on traffic congestion in the city.

Liksutov said there is a short list of seven or eight streets to be closed, including Tverskaya Ulitsa and Nikolskaya Ulitsa.

Moscow already has some pedestrian streets, most notably the Arbat, which has been traffic-free since the beginning of the 1980s. Kiev's central Kreshchatik Street follows the model suggested by Moscow authorities, closing on weekends.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyannin suggested creating the pedestrian zones in March, when he ordered officials to develop a concept for the project. He said that "having a street for pedestrians would significantly beautify the city and attract tourists."

The new closures could go into effect this year.

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