

Medvedev Touts Need for Short-Haul Jet

By [Anatoly Medetsky](#)

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Medvedev, pictured here last year, said at the meeting in Novosibirsk that it was “obvious” that Russia needs a small jet of its own. **Denis Grishkin**

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on Tuesday called for the creation of a small domestic jet as the government aims to expand short-distance air travel.

Russia could develop the plane on its own or team up with a foreign manufacturer, he said at a meeting in Novosibirsk.

He ordered the Industry and Trade Ministry and United Aircraft Corporation to coordinate the idea with the airlines.

In January, the government began funding a program to subsidize the leasing of small regional jets. The subsidy ranges from 15 percent to 30 percent of the price, depending on the airliner's type and age.

This type of support chiefly helps foreign jet makers and must be a temporary measure,

Medvedev said.

"It's clear we need a jet of our own. It's obvious," Medvedev said, according to a transcript of the meeting on the Cabinet's website.

It is "unlikely" that Russia will not require outside expertise for producing jets of this type, of up to 72 seats, Medvedev said.

"But you may prove me wrong. I will be glad to hear otherwise," he said.

Leasing subsidies are 2 billion rubles (\$62.5 million) this year and about the same next year. They will climb to 2.4 billion rubles in 2014.

Airline companies have so far asked for support in buying 50 planes, which would use up 1.2 billion rubles of the subsidies, Medvedev said.

To qualify for the subsidy, jets must be younger than 10 years and seat up to 55 passengers, or up to 72 for turboprops.

Russia's Sukhoi Superjet 100, the first post-Soviet commercial design now rolling off assembly lines, can carry from 75 to 98 people.

Flights between regional capitals are not popular because they often are not profitable for airlines. Only 15 percent of passengers on domestic flights are not traveling to or from Moscow and St. Petersburg.

"Even large cities are very often not connected by direct flights," Medvedev said.

The prime minister also stressed that the government should continue to encourage small local airlines to merge.

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