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City Hall Eyes $29Bln Transportation Program

By Rachel Nielsen

September 26, 2012



Moscow City Hall is seeking tens of billions of dollars to fund a gargantuan metro expansion, gigantic road projects and almost 2 million square meters of housing over the next three years.

The City Duma is now reviewing the proposed budget for 2013-15, which includes 1.4 trillion rubles ($45 billion) earmarked for the city's special investment program.

The program allocates 920 billion rubles for transportation development, City Hall's economic policy and development department said in a press release Wednesday.

The spending on the capital's transportation, addressing extreme traffic jams and overcrowded subway trains, is part of the reason the city expects to run a deficit and borrow money to close the gap.

"This is borrowing for the development of the city," Maxim Reshetnikov, head of the economic policy and development department, said at a Wednesday news conference.

Reshetnikov said that given the city's urban planning needs, this is a "sufficiently balanced budget from our point of view, notwithstanding the fact the budget is expected to have a deficit."

The capital's budget priorities are construction of additional housing stock, development of the metro system and upgrades of highways and thoroughfares.

Slightly more than 918 billion rubles is earmarked in the budget for overall transportation system development in the 2013-15 period, including about 319 billion rubles in 2015, according to Reshetnikov's slide presentation.

By comparison, the city is expecting to spend about 230 billion rubles on transportation this year.

According to the city's previously announced plans, the Moscow metro will gain 70 stations this decade. From 2013 to 2015, the amount of track in the system will grow 20 percent.

City Hall also plans to improve roads. Compared with a figure of 25 percent of roads that failed to meet standards last year, only 14 percent will be below par in 2015, Reshetnikov's presentation estimated.

The city is also planning to buy more than 1,600 buses, 430 trolleybuses and 200 tram cars and add 210 kilometers of lane space for these types of transit.

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