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Ministry Plans to Beam Internet to Airplanes

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Travelers are expected to enjoy cheaper Internet if base stations are built. **Vladimir Filonov**

In-flight Internet access is set to get cheaper by connecting passengers via base stations on the ground instead of satellites.

The Communications and Press Ministry proposed to build Internet transmission stations along flight routes over Russian territory, RBC reported.

"We are considering options to transmit data to the aircraft from a base station on the ground, which, in simple words, will beam the data about 100 kilometers up. The service will be available on busy air routes," Communications and Press Minister Nikolai Nikiforov said.

Flights between Moscow, St. Petersburg and Sochi will be among the first to connect to the new service.

It was not reported whether the base stations will be owned by the government or the contract

would be awarded to an existing telecommunications provider.

Current in-flight connectivity on some Russian airlines is provided by OnAir, a fully owned subsidiary of SITA. It consists of a Wi-Fi access point installed in an overhead luggage compartment which connects to the outside world over a satellite link. The satellite bandwidth is limited to 864 Kbps.

Aeroflot was the first Russian airline to provide in-flight Internet connectivity to its passengers with the introduction of the on board Internet service in 2010. By the end of 2013, the company plans to have 26 Internet enabled aircraft and 12 more over the next three years. The flag carrier charges $8 for 3MB or $22 for 9MB of downloaded or uploaded traffic.

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