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Shopping Mall Traffic Rules Drafted to Reduce Jams

By The Moscow Times

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Traffic on the MKAD leading to MEGA Mall in Kotelniki. **Alexander S.**

The Transportation Ministry has drafted tougher rules for Moscow's shopping malls to reduce the traffic jams they cause, but critics fear that the vaguely worded bill might only make the problem worse, a news report said Tuesday.

The proposed amendments to Russia's transportation laws would require that highway "entrances, exits and ramps must not impair visibility on the road or create conditions that diminish the road's capacity," Kommersant reported.

Shopping centers would be given until 2015 to sign road access agreements that specify the fees they would have to pay for their use of highway ramps and the maximum number of cars that may travel to the shopping center each day. Exceeding that number would lead to an increase in fees.

Head of the economics of transportation institute at the Higher School of Economics, Mikhail Blinkin, said the rules were "reasonable, but they should have been adopted 20 years ago."

Some of the older malls, surrounded by heavily developed urban areas, have no land to build convenient ramps, he said.

A transportation official said the vague wording of the bill would allow for new malls to be built too close to exit ramps coming from federal highways, threatening to replicate the situation on the heavily congested Moscow Ring Road and increasing traffic jams.

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