

Moscow Paid Parking Cut Traffic by 25%, says Deputy Mayor

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The number of cars entering the center has fallen by a quarter since paid parking was introduced four months ago within the Boulevard Ring, Deputy Mayor Maxim Liksutov said Wednesday.

Along with that improvement, the average driving speed within the Boulevard Ring increased by 6 percent and the amount of time cars occupy parking spaces on average decreased from 4 1/2 hours to 1 1/5 hours, Liksutov said, summing up the preliminary results of the measure in an online interview with Gazeta.ru.

However, according to Leonid Mednikov of the online traffic tracker Yandex.Probki, congestion has not changed noticeably since the new parking regime arrived, and the old traffic jams remain. Possibly, he said, the speed of movement has increased slightly, but the size of any swing was insignificant.

In an effort to ease congestion and to turn people from cars to using public transport, starting from June, Moscow City Hall has been charging 50 rubles per hour for parking in the center.

This measure has been widely criticized as drivers complained they were unable to pay the fee within the assigned 15 minutes after parking because of a confusing payment system.

Most used their mobile phones to send an SMS with the parking lot number and the desired duration of stay to be charged for parking, but due to faltering mobile connections and other mistakes were unable to do so.

Liksutov criticized mobile operators, but said that if a driver has enough money on his phone account and does not make a mistake the payment should come through 97 percent of the time.

Another novelty, Liksutov said, was that starting from Nov. 1, incorrectly parked cars in the city will be towed by city hall authorities instead of the police, as is current practice.

The authorities will employ about 300 people to call tow trucks and issue fines for parking violators, he said.

Overall, to achieve a major alleviation of traffic, about half a million cars need to be removed from the streets, the deputy mayor said.

Liksutov arrived at this figure by comparing the 2.3 million cars on the city's roads in August, when, he said, there were no traffic problems, with the 2.8 million cars recorded by city hall at the end of September, when holidaymakers had returned to work and congestion had returned to its peak.

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