

Charges on New Bypass Start Jan. 1

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Congestion is easing on three main highways on the west side of the Moscow region thanks to the new road.

Drivers who have been enjoying the jam-free 18.5 kilometer ride along the newly built multi-billion dollar highway that bypasses Odintsovo to link the Moscow Ring Road with Minskoye Shosse will have to start paying for that pleasure from Jan. 1.

The toll booths near where the road begins at the MKAD, across from Molodogvardeyskaya Ulitsa in the western part of the city, and toward the end, after it passes over Mozhaiskoye Shosse and finally links with M1 "Belarus" or Minskoye Shosse just before Zaitsovo, have been without semaphore gates since Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev attended the christening at the end of November. The road is set to off-load clogged roads on the west side of the Moscow region.

Eventually there will be three toll charge points each way along the road. For cars it will cost 150 rubles (\$4.5) to go all the way from MKAD to M1 between 6 a.m. and midnight and 80 rubles at night.

The bypass has been running in trial operation since Medvedev officially opened the thoroughfare by driving Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin on it in a BMW X5. "I hope the money they will charge for driving on this road will be modest and acceptable to the residents of Moscow, the Moscow region and for the population of our country in general," Medvedev said at the opening, Rossiskaya Gazeta reported

The fee can be paid in several ways: by cash at the tollbooth; or with an RDIF card or a Russian version of an "E-Zpass," which is called a transponder. The road operator Glavnaya Doroga, says on its website that the transponder is available for purchase at its Odintsovo office, and will also soon be obtainable at sales counters located next to the existing toll booths.

Avtodor, the state corporation that oversees all toll road construction in the country and operates paid sections of the M4 "Don" highway, also offers transponders for sale, which it says will work for Odintsovo bypass and the M4.

The fees are expected to help recoup the 25 billion rubles (\$750 million) spent on construction of the bypass, 11 billion of which came from the state and 14 billion from private investors — including Portugal's Brisa, Austria's Alpine Bau, and Stroigazconsulting, who estimate the payback period at 16 to 18 years.

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