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Moscow to Regulate Patchy Marshrutka Minicabs Sector

By The Moscow Times

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Moscow's transportation department is preparing to standardize the city's marshrutka (minibus) industry, department head and Moscow Deputy Mayor Maxim Liksutov told news agency TASS at a press conference Wednesday.

Marshrutkas, privately owned minibuses that supplement the overworked public transport system and charge slightly higher fees, have long been a feature of Moscow life. Marshrutkas differ from city buses in that they can pick up and drop off passengers anywhere along a designated route.

Proposed government regulations will require the carriers to pay the same tariffs as state-owned transportation, as well as implement timetables and assume responsibility for the quality and safety of a passenger's trip, TASS reported.

"Every year in Moscow around 20 passengers who use marshrutkas are killed," Liksutov said. Accidents are 60 percent more likely with marshrutkas than on city-sponsored transport, he added.

By the end of 2015, the Moscow city government will also require the purchase of modern buses, thus taking the infamously outdated GAZelle off the streets. These new vehicles will be larger than the typical minibus, although smaller ones will still serve the smallest routes and those where the "street layout" will not be able to handle larger buses, Liksutov told TASS.

He insisted that despite the new regulations, the private transportation sector, which serves 30 percent of passengers, will remain private.

"Our task is to maintain this market share of private carriers. We are not talking about a decrease in the share of private companies in Moscow," he said.

Standardization will also allow passengers to use their travel cards on marshrutkas, and eventually experience fare reductions of up to 40 percent, he said. Current marshrutka fares generally cost between 25 to 75 rubles ($0.63-$1.88) per trip, depending upon the route.

Every year buses, trolleybuses, streetcars and marshrutkas are responsible for transporting up to 2 billion Muscovites, TASS reported.

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