

Central Bank Tries to Get Ordinary Russians to Finance Bridge to Crimea

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The cost of the bridge across the Kerch Strait to Crimea is estimated at up to \$4.3 billion.

The Central Bank is hoping to get Russians to fund the construction of a bridge to newly annexed Crimea through an infrastructure bond offer next year, the bank's deputy chief said.

The move is a way to spare Russia's budget and fiscal reserves, which are overloaded with project-funding and financial-aid requests amid Western sanctions that are sapping the economy of income and investment.

"This idea is interesting because the bridge can really generate profits," Central Bank deputy chief Sergei Shvetsov said Friday.

Russian citizens "can participate in this, and it will reduce budget expenses," he was quoted by the TASS news agency as saying.

The cost of the bridge across the Kerch Strait to Crimea is estimated at up to 228 billion rubles

(\$4.3 billion). Russia's Transportation Minister Maxim Sokolov said in September that construction was already under way and would be finished in 2018.

Currently the only overland route from the Russian mainland to Crimea passes through eastern Ukraine.

The high cost of construction and possible hazards during inclement winter weather have prompted Crimea's envoy to the Kremlin, Georgy Muradov, to propose replacing the planned bridge with a tunnel. The cost of the tunnel would range between 60 billion and 80 billion rubles (\$1.1 billion to \$1.5 billion), according to Muradov's estimates.

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