

Russian Pensioners Protest Transport Benefits Cuts in Sochi and Krasnodar (Video)

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About 100 people blocked a central road in the Black Sea resort city of Sochi on Friday, demanding the return of transport benefits, the local Sochi.News website reported.

The municipal transport benefit program for pensioners was amended in January to include only those pensioners with an income below 7,722 rubles (\$100), the report said.

The city's mayor, Anatoly Pakhomov, came out of City Hall to meet the protesters and explain the cuts, according to the TASS news agency.

Pakhomov told the protesters that local authorities were working on a program to compensate those affected, TASS said.

The protest action caused a huge traffic jam in the city center, according to the Sochilens.ru website.

The pensioners held their ground for about an hour before being cleared by police

and Cossacks, the Caucasian Knot news portal reported.

A similar protest action was held on Friday in Krasnodar, the Yuga.ru news outlet reported.

Russia's 40 million pensioners receive an average 12,900 rubles (\$240) per month in state pension payouts, according to the data from Russia's pension fund.

But an economic crisis fueled by plunging oil prices is forcing the Russian government to consider saving on pension payouts.

In June, the Finance Ministry proposed a plan to save more than 2.5 trillion rubles (\$46 billion) over three years by raising pensions at less than the rate of inflation.

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