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New Law Banishes 400 Moscow Marshrutka Routes

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Maxim Stulov / Vedomosti

Sweeping new reforms transformed Moscow's public transport system this week, with almost 400 marshrutka routes disappearing from the city.

Marshrutkas, privately owned minibuses that supplement the city's overworked public transport system, have long been a feature of Moscow life. It is hoped that the new reforms will bring more regulation into the sector.

Drivers can now only stop at designated places on their routes, must accept Troika transport cards as payment and must charge customers according to official rates. Those eligible for free travel, such as pensioners and disabled people, will now be able to travel on the private routes for free. The reforms will boost public safety and ease congestion, according to the Moscow transport department spokesperson Daniya Shumilkina.

"Ten different companies often operated the same route, overcrowding the roads," she said. "On the most popular routes, the minibuses would violate traffic rules and put lives at risk

while competing for passengers," said Shumilkina.

Many residents complained that they were not warned about the upcoming changes, which saw many routes across the city suddenly disappear.

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