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Russia Seeks More Flights Bypassing Moscow as Drone Disruptions Mount

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Pelagia Tikhonova / Moskva News Agency

Russia's Transportation Ministry wants to redirect airline subsidies to expand direct flights between regions as drone threats repeatedly force Moscow's airports to suspend operations.

Transportation Minister Dmitry Yadrov said Thursday that his ministry would work with Russia's federal aviation agency Rosaviatsia to revise how the subsidies are allocated, the Association of Tour Operators of Russia reported.

Speaking at the Transport of Russia forum, Yadrov said government subsidies support flights on 431 routes. He put the share of flights bypassing Moscow at nearly 55% and said it could rise further.

The subsidies cover more than 300 routes under a regional aviation program, about 100 routes under a program for eligible travelers and 39 routes deemed socially important in Russia's Far East.

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Moscow's four airports imposed temporary flight restrictions 82 times in October, out of 495 such incidents nationwide, according to the aviation news outlet Aviatorshchina. All four operated under restrictions on 13 days that month, with 262 hours of disruption across the airports.

Sheremetyevo, Vnukovo and Domodedovo handled a combined 53.7 million passengers in the first nine months of 2026, down 4.2% from the same period a year earlier, Interfax reported, citing Rosaviatsia data.

The push comes as the government plans to spend nearly 10% less on subsidizing flights that bypass Moscow in 2027 and 2028 than it had previously budgeted.

The draft budget, which passed its second reading in the State Duma, earmarks 14.3 billion rubles ($174.5 million) over the two years, down from 15.9 billion rubles ($194 million) in the previous budget.

The draft sets aside 7.2 billion rubles ($87.8 million) for 2027 and 7.1 billion rubles ($86.6 million) for 2028. Funding would return to 7.2 billion rubles in 2029, matching the 2026 allocation.

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