

Putin-Linked Firm Eyes Moscow Traffic

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Cars slowly making their way toward the Kremlin in an evening traffic jam. **Vladimir Filonov**

A company linked to a friend of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is saying it is confident to win any tenders to build a citywide traffic control system for Moscow.

Representatives of Tolltec told reporters Wednesday that their firm offers an integrated solution unrivaled by competitors.

“We are a Russian firm and therefore we believe that our chances for winning future tenders are the best,” the firm’s business development director, Alexei Grishechkin, told The Moscow Times on the sidelines of a news conference Wednesday.

Tolltec was set up by executives of Neftegazoptimizatsiya, a company linked to St. Petersburg businessman Arkady Rotenberg, a close ally of Putin.

The firm’s original mandate is toll roads, such as the much-disputed Moscow-St. Petersburg highway, for which Tolltec is currently doing the project conception, Grishechkin said.

Tolltec's system is already working on St. Petersburg's major ring road, known as KAD, where a test phase was started earlier this month.

Now the company is eyeing Moscow City Hall's [plans](#) to propel the capital's traffic control system into the 21st century.

A plan to revamp the city's catastrophic traffic jams, unveiled by Mayor Sergei Sobyenin last month, calls for an "intellectual traffic control system" that covers the whole capital.

Under the plan, control of the city's traffic lights would pass from the traffic police to City Hall.

So far, police officers often manage traffic at major crossroads by hand. Some 400 traffic lights are controlled by a Soviet-era system called Start, which also belongs to police.

Vladimir Kryuchkov, who heads Intellectual Transport Systems, an industry association, told the news conference that the national market for such systems was worth \$390 million and that among the 22 market players Tolltec was the only one capable of doing the job.

"Nobody else can offer such a comprehensive solution," he said.

Kryuchkov acknowledged that the plan poses challenges because it needs to integrate existing systems.

The single biggest control system in place in the capital — the system managing traffic on the third ring road — was completed in 2009 by Siemens under a \$35 million deal signed under former Mayor Yury Luzhkov in 2006.

No tender for a new system has been announced.

Asked whether Siemens was hoping to participate in Sobyenin's plans, spokeswoman Kristina Nevskaya said the company principally does not comment on its participation in public tenders.

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