

City Police to Eliminate 30 Street 'Traps'

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In a rare victory, a motorists' group has won a promise from Moscow traffic police to change traffic regulations at about 30 locations it identified as "traps" exploited by the notoriously corrupt police force to extort bribes from drivers.

The Federation of Car Owners has accused traffic police officers of waylaying motorists around illogically placed signposts and faded road marks only to pocket bribes or improve their performance evaluations.

A list of such [traps](#) published on the group's web site last month has now led to an official investigation by city traffic police chief Alexander Ilyin.

A police spokesman confirmed Wednesday that Ilyin sent the investigation's [results](#) to Sergei Kanayev, the head of the Federation of Car Owners' Moscow branch.

"Signposts and road marks will be altered over the spring and summer," spokesman Vyacheslav Trubin said.

The motorists' group published Ilyin's letter together with official assessments of 47 locations previously identified by the group.

The police promised improvements in about 30 places, Kanayev said.

One of the listed addresses is Pankratyevsky Pereulok, close to the Sukharevskaya metro station. The little street's western end is one-way, banning exit onto Ulitsa Sretenka. But on weekends the opposite end is blocked by a market, meaning that drivers entering from Sretenka find themselves in a veritable trap, with the only way out being to violate the one-way section — "right into the open arms of our valiant police officers," the group said on its site. About 20 drivers lost their license there between June and October last year, it said.

The police promised to put an end to the absurd situation by temporarily lifting the one-way regime. "An initiative has been sent to City Hall," it said in its assessment.

Many other examples feature solid center lines that, if crossed, can cost a driver his license for six months.

The group also accused police officers of doing little to prevent such violations. For instance, on Prospekt Mira, a six-lane thoroughfare, only the lane closest to the center is reserved for making a left turn onto Orlovo-Davydovsky Pereulok. During peak hours, many drivers illegally turn from another lane to the right, pushing cars lining up to their left over the center line.

Officers fine drivers for crossing into the lane for oncoming traffic but do not stop those turning from the second lane, the group said.

The police said that broken lines would be painted for the turning traffic.

Kanayev said Ilyin's response made him cautiously optimistic. "If they really work steadily on this, things can improve a lot," he told The Moscow Times.

But he cautioned that the whole situation only revealed fundamental problems with the traffic police. "Most drivers call us because of these absurdities, while in normal countries they would call the police," he said.

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